

CHARLES SPURGEON

Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Victorian England's best-known Baptist minister, was born on June 19, 1834 in Kelvedon, Essex and spent his childhood and early teenage years in Stambourne, Colchester, and Newmarket. In 1856 he married Susannah Thompson; their only children, twin sons Thomas and Charles, were born on September 20, 1857.

Spurgeon had no formal education beyond Newmarket Academy, which he attended from August 1849 to June 1850, but he was very well-read in Puritan theology, natural history, and Latin and Victorian literature. His lack of a college degree was no hindrance to his remarkable preaching career, which began in 1850, when he was only fifteen years old. A few months after his conversion to Christianity, he began preaching at Teversham. The next year, he accepted his first pastorate, at the Baptist Chapel in Waterbeach. The church quickly grew from fewer than a dozen congregants to more than four hundred, and Spurgeon's reputation as a preacher caught the attention of New Park Street, London's largest Baptist church. He was invited to preach there in December 1853 and, following a brief probationary period, he agreed to move to London and become the church's new pastor.

Spurgeon's New Park Street congregation grew rapidly as well, soon becoming too large for the 1200-seat auditorium. On August 30, 1854, the membership agreed to enlarge the chapel; during the remodeling, services were held at the 5,000-seat Exeter Hall, a public auditorium in Strand Street. The renovations to New Park Street were complete in May 1855, but the chapel was still too small, and in June a committee was formed to oversee the construction of the church's new home, the 5,000-seat Metropolitan Tabernacle. The congregation moved once again, meeting in Exeter Hall and the 8,000-seat Surrey Gardens Music Hall until the Tabernacle was dedicated on March 18, 1861.

Spurgeon began publishing shortly after he started preaching. In January 1855, Passmore and Alabaster inaugurated the "Penny Pulpit," publishing one sermon every week; the series continued until 1917, a quarter-century after Spurgeon's death. Every year these sermons were reissued in book form, first as *The New Park Street Pulpit* (6 volumes, 1855-1860) and later as *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* (57 volumes, 1861-1917). Spurgeon published scores of religious books in addition to his sermons; the most significant works include *Lectures to My Students* (1890), a collection of talks delivered to the students of his Pastors' College, and the 7-volume *Treasury of David* (c. 1869), a best-selling devotional commentary on the Psalms.

Spurgeon's work in London was not limited to preaching and sermon-publishing. He also served as president of the Pastors' College, which he founded in 1857; established the Stockwell Orphanage, which opened for boys in 1867 and girls in 1879; and oversaw evangelistic and charitable enterprises such as almshouses, organizations for distributing food and clothing to the poor, and a book fund for needy ministers.

Spurgeon's preaching was both enormously popular and highly controversial. Some regarded him as the greatest orator since Whitefield; others criticized him as theatrical, awkward, and even sacrilegious. Two of his most controversial works were his "Baptismal Regeneration" sermon and his "Down Grade" articles. On June 5, 1864, he preached a sermon entitled "Baptismal Regeneration," objecting to Anglican teachings on the sacramental power of infant baptism. Over 350,000 copies were sold, and the furor it provoked led to Spurgeon's withdrawal from the Evangelical Alliance, an ecumenical association of Dissenters and Evangelical Anglicans

The "Down Grade" controversy began in 1887, when Spurgeon published a series of articles declaring that evolutionary thinking and liberal theology threatened to "Down Grade" the church. In this case, he was concerned not with Anglican teaching, but with what he believed to be doctrinal error, particularly Unitarian ideas, within the Baptist Union. He discussed his concerns in private letters to ministers such as Samuel Booth and Joseph Parker and in several articles published in *The Sword and the Trowel*, the Metropolitan Tabernacle's monthly periodical. When these articles did not receive the response Spurgeon wanted--the matter was not discussed at the Union's 1887 meeting in Sheffield and some members of his own congregation dismissed or made light of it--he concluded that he had no choice but to resign from the Union, which he did on October 28.

Illness forced Spurgeon to keep a low profile during the last few years of his life. He preached his final sermon at the Metropolitan Tabernacle on June 7, 1891. He died in France on January 31, 1892; on February 9, over 60,000 people filed past his casket in the Tabernacle. He was buried at Norwood Cemetery on February 11.

CHARLES SPURGEON

DEVOTIONALS:

1) MORNINGS & EVENINGS

(Daily Devotions for Mornings & Evenings)

2) Faith's Checkbook

(A Treasury of Daily Devotions)

CHARLES SPURGEON

(DAILY DEVOTIONAL FOR:)

MORNINGS & EVENINGS

January 1st – Morning

"They did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year."—Joshua 5:12.

ISRAEL'S weary wanderings were all over, and the promised rest was attained. No more moving tents, fiery serpents, fierce Amalekites, and howling wildernesses: they came to the land which flowed with milk and honey, and they ate the old corn of the land. Perhaps this year, beloved Christian reader, this may be thy case or mine. Joyful is the prospect, and if faith be in active exercise, it will yield unalloyed delight. To be with Jesus in the rest which remaineth for the people of God, is a cheering hope indeed, and to expect this glory so soon is a double bliss. Unbelief shudders at the Jordan which still rolls between us and the goodly land, but let us rest assured that we have already experienced more ills than death at its worst can cause us. Let us banish every fearful thought, and rejoice with exceeding great joy, in the prospect that this year we shall begin to be "for ever with the Lord."

A part of the host will this year tarry on earth, to do service for their Lord. If this should fall to our lot, there is no reason why the New Year's text should not still be true. "We who have believed do enter into rest." The Holy Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance; He gives us "glory begun below." In heaven they are secure, and so are we preserve in Christ Jesus; there they triumph over their enemies, and we have victories too. Celestial spirits enjoy communion with their Lord, and this is not denied to us; they rest in His love, and we have perfect peace in Him: they hymn His praise, and it is our privilege to bless Him too. We will this year gather celestial fruits on earthly ground, where faith and hope have made the desert like the garden of the Lord. Man did eat angels' food of old, and why not now? O for grace to feed on Jesus, and so to eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan this year!

January 1st - Evening

"We will be glad and rejoice in Thee." (Song of Solomon 1:4)

We will be glad and rejoice in Thee. We will not open the gates of the year to the dolorous notes of the sackbut, but to the sweet strains of the harp of joy, and the high sounding cymbals of gladness. "O come, let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise unto the rock of our salvation." We, the called and faithful and chosen, we will drive away our griefs, and set up our banners of confidence in the name of God. Let others lament over their troubles, we who have the sweetening tree to cast into Marah's bitter pool, with joy will magnify the Lord. Eternal Spirit, our effectual Comforter, we who are the temples in which Thou dwellest, will never cease from adoring and blessing the name of Jesus. We WILL, we are resolved about it, Jesus must have the crown of our heart's delight; we will not dishonour our Bridegroom by mourning in His presence. We are ordained to be the minstrels of the skies, let us rehearse our everlasting anthem before we sing it in the halls of the New Jerusalem.

We will BE GLAD AND REJOICE: two words with one sense, double joy, blessedness upon blessedness. Need there be any limit to our rejoicing in the Lord even now? Do not men of grace find their Lord to be camphire and spikenard, calamus and cinnamon even now, and what better fragrance have they in heaven itself? We will be glad and rejoice IN THEE. That last word is the meat in the dish, the kernel of the nut, the soul of the text. What heavens are laid up in Jesus! What rivers of infinite bliss have their source, ay, and every drop of their fulness in Him! Since, O sweet Lord Jesus, Thou art the present portion of Thy people, favour us this year with such a sense of Thy preciousness, that from its first to its last day we may be glad and rejoice in Thee. Let January open with joy in the Lord, and December close with gladness in Jesus.

January 2 — Morning

"Continue in prayer." Colossians 4:2

It is interesting to remark how large a portion of Sacred Writ is occupied with the subject of *prayer*, either in furnishing *examples*, enforcing *precepts*, or pronouncing *promises*. We scarcely open the Bible before we read, "Then began men to *call* upon the name of the Lord;" and just as we are about to close the volume, the "Amen" of an earnest supplication meets our ear. Instances are plentiful. Here we find a wrestling Jacob—there a Daniel who prayed three times a day—and a David who with all his heart called upon his God. On the mountain we see Elijah; in the dungeon Paul and Silas. We have multitudes of *commands*, and myriads of *promises*.

What does this teach us—but the sacred *importance* and *necessity* of prayer? We may be certain that whatever God has made *prominent* in His Word, He intended to be *conspicuous* in our lives. If He has said much about prayer, it is because He knows we have much *need* of it. So deep are our necessities, that until we are in heaven we must not cease to pray. Do you *need* nothing? Then, I fear you do not know your poverty. Have you no *mercy* to ask of God? Then, may the Lord's mercy show you your misery! *A prayerless soul is a Christless soul*. Prayer is the lisping of the believing infant, the shout of the fighting believer, the requiem of the dying saint falling asleep in Jesus. It is the breath, the watchword, the comfort, the strength, the honor of a Christian. If you are a child of God, you will seek your Father's face, and live in your Father's love. Pray that this year you may be holy, humble, zealous, and patient; have closer communion with Christ, and enter oftener into the banqueting-house of His love. Pray that you may be an example and a blessing unto others, and that you may live more to the glory of your Master. The motto for this year must be, "Continue in prayer."

January 2 — Evening

"Let the people renew their strength." Isaiah 41:1

All things on earth need to be *renewed*. No created thing continues by itself. "You renew the face of the year," was the Psalmist's utterance. Even the trees, which do not wear themselves with care, nor shorten their lives with labor—must drink of the rain of heaven, and suck from the hidden treasures of the soil. The cedars of Lebanon, which God has planted, only live because day by day they are full of sap freshly drawn from the earth. Neither can man's life be sustained without renewal from God. As it is necessary to repair the waste of the *body* by the frequent meals—so we must repair the waste of the *soul* by feeding upon the Book of God, or by listening to the preached Word, or by the soul-fattening table of the ordinances. How weak are our *graces* when *means* are neglected! What poor starvelings some saints are—who live without the diligent use of the Word of God and secret prayer! If our piety can live without God—it is not of divine creating; it is but a dream; for if God had begotten it, it would wait upon Him as the flowers wait upon the dew.

Without constant restoration we are not ready for the perpetual assaults of hell, or the stern afflictions of heaven, or even for the strifes within. When the whirlwind shall be loosed, woe to the tree that has not sucked up fresh sap, and grasped the rock with many intertwined roots. When tempests arise, woe to the mariners that have not strengthened their mast, nor cast their anchor, nor sought the haven. If we allow the good to grow weaker, the evil will surely gather strength and struggle desperately for the mastery over us; and so, perhaps, a painful desolation, and a lamentable disgrace may follow. Let us draw near to the footstool of divine mercy in humble entreaty, and we shall realize the fulfillment of the promise, "Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength."

January 3 — Morning

"I will give *you* for a covenant of the people." Isaiah 49:8

Jesus Christ is Himself the sum and substance of the covenant, and is one of its gifts. He is the property of every believer. Believer, can you estimate what you have gotten in Christ? "In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." Consider that word "God" and its infinity, and then meditate upon "perfect man" and all his beauty; for all that Christ, as God and man, ever had, or can have, is yours—out of pure free favor, given over to you to be your guaranteed property forever.

Our blessed Jesus, as **God**, is omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent. Will it not console you to know that all these great and glorious attributes are altogether yours? Has he *power*? That power is yours to support and strengthen you, to overcome your enemies, and to preserve you even to the end. Has He *love*? Well, there is not a drop of love in His heart which is not yours; you may dive into the immense ocean of His love, and you may say of it all, "It is mine!" Has He *justice*? It may seem a stern attribute—but even that is yours, for He will by His justice see to it that all which is promised to you in the covenant of grace shall be most certainly secured to you.

And all that He has as perfect **man** is yours. As a perfect man the Father's delight was upon Him. He stood accepted by the Most High. O believer, God's acceptance of Christ is your acceptance; for know you not that the love which the Father set on a perfect Christ, He sets on you now? For all that Christ did is yours. That perfect righteousness which Jesus wrought out, when through His stainless life He kept the law and made it honorable, is yours, and is imputed to you. Christ is in the covenant. "My God, I am yours — what a comfort divine! What a blessing to know that the Savior is mine! In the heavenly Lamb thrice happy I am, And my heart it does dance at the sound of His name."

January 3 — Evening

"The voice of one crying in the wilderness

—Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." Luke 3:4

The voice crying in the wilderness demanded a *way* for the Lord, a way *prepared*, and a way prepared in the *wilderness*. I would be attentive to the Master's proclamation, and give Him a road into my *heart*, cast up by gracious operations, through the desert of my nature.

The four directions in the text must have my serious attention.

- 1. Every valley must be exalted.* Low and groveling thoughts of God must be given up; doubting and despairing must be removed; and self-seeking and carnal delights must be forsaken. Across these deep valleys—a glorious causeway of grace must be raised!
- 2. Every mountain and hill shall be laid low.* Proud creature-sufficiency, and boastful self-righteousness, must be leveled, to make a highway for the King of kings. Divine fellowship is never promised to haughty, high-minded sinners. The Lord has respect unto the lowly, and visits the contrite in heart—but the lofty are an abomination unto Him. My soul, beseech the Holy Spirit to set you right in this respect.
- 3. The crooked shall be made straight.* The wavering heart must have a straight path of decision for God and holiness marked out for it. Double-minded men are strangers to the God of truth. My soul, take heed that you are in all things honest and true, as in the sight of the heart-searching God.
- 4. The rough places shall be made smooth.* Stumbling-blocks of sin must be removed, and thorns and briers of rebellion must be uprooted. So great a visitor must not find miry ways and stony places when He comes to honor His favored ones with His company. Oh that this evening the Lord may find in my heart a highway made ready by His grace, that He may make a triumphal progress through the utmost bounds of my soul, from the beginning of this year even to the end of it.

January 4 — Morning

"Grow in *grace*, and in the *knowledge* of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." 2 Peter 3:18

"Grow in grace" not in one grace only—but in *all* grace.

Grow in that root-grace, faith. Believe the promises more firmly than you have done. Let faith increase in fullness, constancy, simplicity.

Grow also in love. Ask that your love may become extended, more intense, more practical, influencing every thought, word, and deed.

Grow likewise in humility. Seek to lie very low, and know more of your own nothingness. As you grow downward in humility, seek also to grow upward—having nearer approaches to God in prayer and more intimate fellowship with Jesus.

May God the Holy Spirit enable you to "grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior." He who does not grow in the knowledge of Jesus, refuses to be blessed. To *know* Him is "life eternal," and to *advance* in the knowledge of Him is to increase in happiness. He who does not long to know more of Christ—knows nothing of Him yet. Whoever has sipped this wine—will thirst for more; for although Christ does satisfy—yet it is such a satisfaction, that the appetite is not glutted—but whetted. If you know the love of Jesus—as the deer pants for the water-brooks, so will you pant after deeper draughts of His love. If you do not desire to know Him better—then you love Him not, for love always cries, "Nearer, nearer!" Absence from Christ is hell—but the presence of Jesus is heaven.

Do not then, rest content without an ever increasing acquaintance with Jesus. Seek to know more of Him in His divine nature, in His human relationship, in His finished work, in His death, in His resurrection, in His present glorious intercession, and in His future royal advent. Abide close by the Cross, and search the mystery of His wounds. An increase of love to Jesus, and a more perfect apprehension of His love to us is one of the best tests of growth in grace.

January 4 — Evening

"And Joseph knew his brethren—but they did not know him." Genesis 42:8

This morning our desires went forth for growth in our acquaintance with the Lord Jesus; it may be well tonight to consider a kindred topic, namely—our heavenly Joseph's knowledge of us. This was most blessedly perfect, long before we had the slightest knowledge of Him.

"His eyes beheld our substance—yet being imperfect, and in His book all our members were written, when as yet there was none of them." Before we had a *being* in the world—we had a being in His heart. When we were *enemies* to Him—He knew us, our misery, our madness, and our wickedness. When we wept bitterly in despairing repentance, and viewed Him only as a stern judge—He viewed us as His well beloved brethren, and His affections yearned towards us. He never mistook His chosen—but always beheld them as objects of His infinite affection. "The Lord knows those who are His," is as true of the *prodigals* who are feeding swine—as of the *children* who sit at the table.

But, alas! we knew not our royal Brother, and out of this ignorance grew a multitude of sins. We withheld our hearts from Him—and allowed Him no entrance to our love. We mistrusted Him—and gave no credit to His words. We rebelled against Him—and paid Him no loving homage. The Sun of Righteousness shone forth—and we could not see Him. Heaven came down to earth—and earth perceived it not.

Let God be praised, those days are over with us; yet even now it is but little that we know of Jesus, compared with what He knows of us. We have but *begun* to study Him—but He knows us *altogether*. It is a blessed circumstance that the ignorance is not on His side—for then it would be a hopeless case for us. He will not say to us, "I never knew you," but He will confess our names in the day of His appearing, and meanwhile will manifest Himself to us as He does not unto the world.

January 5 — Morning

"And God saw the light, that it was *good*; and God *divided* the light from the darkness." Genesis 1:4

Light might well be *good*, since it sprang from that fiat of goodness, "Let there be light." We who *enjoy* it, should be more *grateful* for it than we are—and see more of God in it and by it. *Physical* light is said by Solomon to be sweet—but *gospel* light is infinitely more precious, for it reveals eternal things, and ministers to our immortal natures.

When the Holy Spirit gives us spiritual light, and opens our eyes to behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ—we behold SIN in its true colors, and OURSELVES in our real position; we see the Most Holy GOD as He reveals Himself, the plan of MERCY as He propounds it, and the WORLD to come as the Word describes it.

Spiritual light has many beams and prismatic colors—but whether they are knowledge, joy, holiness, or life—all are divinely good. If the light received is thus good, what must the essential light be, and how glorious must be the place where He reveals Himself. O Lord, since light is so good—give us *more* of it, and more of Yourself, the true light.

No sooner is there a good thing in the world, than a *division* is necessary. Light and darkness have no communion; *God* has divided them—let *us* not confound them. Sons of light must not have fellowship with deeds, doctrines, or deceits of darkness. The children of the day must be sober, honest, and bold in their Lord's work, leaving the works of darkness to those who shall dwell in it forever.

Our Churches should by *discipline* divide the light from the darkness; and we should by our distinct separation from the world do the same. In judgment, in action, in hearing, in teaching, in association, we must discern between the precious and the vile, and maintain the great distinction which the Lord made upon the world's first day. O Lord Jesus, be our light throughout the whole of this day, for Your light is the light of men.

January 5 — Evening

"And God saw the light." Genesis 1:4

This morning we noticed the *goodness* of the light, and the Lord's *dividing* it from the darkness; we now note the special eye which the Lord had for the light. "God *saw* the light" He looked at it with delight, gazed upon it with pleasure; He saw that it "was good." If the Lord has given you light, dear reader, He looks on that light with peculiar interest; for not only is it dear to Him as His own handiwork—but because it is like Himself, for "He is light."

It is pleasant to the believer—to know that God's eye is thus tenderly observant of that work of grace which He has begun. He never loses sight of the treasure, which He has placed in our earthen vessels. Sometimes *we* cannot see the light—but *God* always sees the light, and that is much better than our seeing it. Better for the *judge* to see my innocence, than for *me* to think I see it. It is very comfortable for *me* to know that I am one of God's people—but whether I know it or not, if the *Lord* knows it, I am still safe. This is the foundation, "The Lord knows those who are His."

You may be sighing and groaning because of inbred sin, and mourning over your darkness—yet the Lord sees "light" in your heart, for He has put it there—and all the cloudiness and gloom of your soul cannot conceal your light from His gracious eye! You may have sunk low in despondency, and even despair; but if your soul has any longing towards Christ, and if you are seeking to rest in His finished work, God sees the "light." He not only *sees* it—but He also *preserves* it in you. "I, the Lord, do keep it." This is a precious thought to those who, after anxious watching and guarding of themselves, feel their own powerlessness to do so. The light thus *preserved* by His grace, He will one day *develop* into the splendor of noonday, and the fullness of glory. The light *within*—is the dawn of the eternal day!

January 6 — Morning

"Casting all your care upon Him—for He cares for you." 1 Peter 5:7

It is a happy way of soothing sorrow, when we can feel, "HE cares for me." Christian! do not dishonor religion by always wearing a brow of worry—come, cast your burden upon your Lord. You are staggering beneath a weight—which your *Father* would not feel. What seems to you a crushing burden—would be to *Him* but as the small dust of the scale. Nothing is so sweet as to

"Lie passive in God's hands,
And know no will but His."

O child of suffering—be patient. God has not passed you over in His providence. He who is the feeder of sparrows—will also furnish you with what you need. Do not sit down in despair; hope on, hope ever. Take up the arms of faith—against a *sea of trouble*, and your your distresses shall end. There is One who cares for you! His eye is fixed on you! His heart beats with pity for your woe! His omnipotent hand shall yet bring you the needed help! The darkest *cloud*—shall scatter itself in *showers of mercy*. The blackest *gloom*—shall give place to the morning. If you are one of His family—He will bind up your wounds, and heal your broken heart. Do not doubt His grace, because of your troubles—but believe that He loves you as much in seasons of distress—as in times of happiness. What a serene and quiet life might you lead—if you would leave *providing*—to the God of providence!

With a little oil in the cruse, and a handful of meal in the barrel, Elijah outlived the famine, and you will do the same. If God cares for you—why need you care too? Can you trust Him for your soul—and not for your body? He has never refused to bear your burdens—He has never fainted under their weight. Come, then, soul! Be done with fretful worry—and leave all your concerns in the hand of a gracious God!

January 6 — Evening

"Now the hand of the Lord was upon me in the evening." Ezekiel 33:22

In the way of *judgment*, this may be the case; and, if so—be it mine to consider the reason of such a visitation, and hear the rod, and Him who has appointed it. I am not the only one who is chastened in the night season; let me cheerfully submit to the affliction, and carefully endeavor to be profited thereby.

But the hand of the Lord may also be felt in another manner, *strengthening* the soul, and lifting the spirit upward towards eternal things. O that I may in this sense feel the Lord dealing with me! A sense of the divine presence and indwelling, bears the soul towards heaven as upon the wings of eagles. At such times we are full to the brim with spiritual joy, and forget the cares and sorrows of earth; the invisible is near, and the visible loses its power over us. The servant-body waits at the foot of the hill, and the master-spirit worships upon the summit in the presence of the Lord. O that a hallowed season of divine communion may be given to me this evening! The Lord knows that I need it very greatly! My graces languish, my corruptions rage, my faith is weak, my devotion is cold; all these are reasons why His healing hand should be laid upon me. His hand can cool the heat of my burning brow, and stay the tumult of my palpitating heart. That glorious right hand which molded the world—can new-create my mind; the unwearied hand which bears the earth's huge pillars up—can sustain my spirit; the loving hand which encloses all the saints—can nourish me; and the mighty hand which breaks in pieces the enemy—can subdue my sins. Why should I not feel that hand touching me this evening? Come, my soul, address your God with the potent plea, that Jesus's hands were pierced for your redemption, and you shall surely feel that same hand upon you, which once touched Daniel and set him upon his knees that he might see *visions* of God.

January 7 — Morning

"For me—to live is Christ." Philippians 1:21

The believer did not always live to Christ. He began to do so when God the Holy Spirit convinced him of sin, and when by grace he was brought to see the dying Savior making an atoning sacrifice for his guilt. From the moment of the new and celestial birth—the man begins to live to Christ. Jesus is to believers the one pearl of great price—for whom we are willing to part with all that we have. He has so completely won our love, that it beats alone for Him; to His glory we would live, and in defense of His gospel we would die. He is the pattern of our life, and the model after which we would sculpture our character.

Paul's words mean more than most men think; they imply that the *aim* and *end* of his life was Christ—nay, his life *itself* was Jesus. In the words of an ancient saint, he did eat, and drink, and sleep—Christ. Jesus was his very breath, the soul of his soul, the heart of his heart, the life of his life. Can you say, as a professing Christian, that you live up to this idea? Can you honestly say that, for you to live is Christ?

Your *business*—are you doing it for Christ? Is it not done for self-aggrandizement and for family advantage? Do you ask, "Is that an evil reason?" For the Christian it is. He professes to live for Christ; how can he live for another object without committing a spiritual adultery?

Many there are, who carry out this principle in *some measure*; but who is there that dare say that he has lived wholly for Christ as the apostle did? Jesus alone is the true life of a Christian—its source, its sustenance, its model, its end, all gathered up in one word. Lord, accept me; I here present myself, praying to live only in You and to You. Let me be as the bullock which stands between the plough and the altar, to work or to be sacrificed; and let my motto be, "Ready for either."

January 7 — Evening

"My sister, my spouse." Song of Solomon 4:12

Observe the sweet titles with which the heavenly Solomon with intense affection, addresses His bride the church.

My sister—one near to me by ties of nature, partaker of the same sympathies. My spouse—nearest and dearest, united to me by the tenderest bands of love; my sweet companion, part of my own self.

My sister—by my Incarnation, which makes me bone of your bone and flesh of your flesh. My spouse—by heavenly betrothal, in which I have espoused you unto myself in righteousness.

My sister—whom I knew of old, and over whom I watched from her earliest infancy. My spouse—taken from among all others, embraced by arms of love, and affianced unto me forever.

See how true it is—that our royal Kinsman is not ashamed of us, for He dwells with manifest delight upon this two-fold relationship. We have the word "my" twice in our verse—as if Christ dwelt with rapture on His *possession* of His Church. "His delights were with the sons of men," because those sons of men were His own chosen ones. He, the Shepherd, sought the sheep—because they were His sheep. He has gone about "to seek and to save that which was lost," because that which was lost—was His long before it was lost to itself or lost to Him. The church is the *exclusive portion* of her Lord; none else may claim a partnership, or pretend to share her love. Jesus, your church delights to have it so!

Let every believing soul drink solace out of these wells. Soul! Christ is near to you in ties of relationship; Christ is dear to you in bonds of marriage union—and you are dear to Him. Behold, He grasps both of your hands with both His own, saying, "My sister, my spouse!" Mark the two sacred holdfasts by which your Lord gets such a *double hold* of you—that He neither can nor will ever let you go. Be not, O beloved, slow to return the hallowed flame of His love.

January 8 — Morning

"The iniquity of the holy things." Exodus 28:38

What a *veil* is lifted up by these words—and what a *disclosure* is made! It will be humbling and profitable for us to pause awhile, and see this sad sight. The iniquities of our *public worship*—its hypocrisy, formality, lukewarmness, irreverence, wandering of heart and forgetfulness of God—what a full measure have we there! The iniquities of our *work* for the Lord—its ambition, selfishness, carelessness, slackness, unbelief—what a mass of defilement is there! Our *private devotions*—their laxity, coldness, neglect, sleepiness, and vanity—what a mountain of dead earth is there! If we looked more carefully—we would find this *iniquity of the holy things*, to be far greater than appears at first sight.

Payson, writing to his brother, says, "My parish, as well as my heart, very much resembles the garden of the sluggard; and what is worse, I find that very many of my desires for the improvement of both, proceed either from pride or vanity or indolence. I look at the weeds which overspread my garden, and breathe out an earnest wish that they were eradicated. But why? What prompts the wish? It may be that I may walk out and say to myself, 'In what fine order is my garden kept!' This is pride. Or, it may be that my neighbors may look over the wall and say, 'How finely your garden flourishes!' This is vanity. Or I may wish for the destruction of the weeds, because I am weary of pulling them up. This is indolence."

Even our desires after holiness—may be polluted by ill motives. Under the greenest sods—worms hide themselves; we need not look long to discover them. How cheering is the thought, that when the High Priest bore the *iniquity of the holy things* he wore upon his brow the words, "Holiness to the Lord!" Just so, while Jesus bears our sin, He presents before His Father's face, not *our unholiness*—but *His own holiness*. O for grace to view our great High Priest by the eye of faith!

January 8 — Evening

"Your love is better than wine." Song of Solomon 1:2

Nothing gives the believer so much joy—as fellowship with Christ. He has enjoyment as others have, in the common mercies of life; he can be glad both in God's *gifts* and God's *works*. But in all these separately, yes, and in all of them added together—he does not find such substantial delight—as in the matchless person of his Lord Jesus! He has *wine* which no vineyard on earth ever yielded; he has *bread* which all the richest grain-fields could never bring forth.

Where can such sweetness be found—as we have tasted in communion with our Beloved? In our esteem, the joys of earth are little better than husks for swine—when compared with Jesus, the heavenly manna. We would rather have one *mouthful* of Christ's love, and a *sip* of his fellowship—than a whole world full of carnal delights! What is the chaff—compared to the wheat? What is the sparkling plastic—compared to the true diamond? What is a dream—compared to the glorious reality? What is time's mirth, in its best form—compared to our Lord Jesus in His most despised estate?

If you know anything of spiritual life, you will confess that your highest, purest, and most enduring joys—must be the fruit of the *tree of life*, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God. No spring yields such sweet water—as that well of God which was dug with the soldier's spear! All earthly bliss is of the earth, earthy—but the comforts of Christ's presence are like Himself, heavenly. We can review our communion with Jesus, and find no dregs in this wine, no dead flies in this ointment. The joy of the Lord is solid and enduring. Vanity has not looked upon it—but discretion and prudence testify that it abides the test of years, and is in time and in eternity—worthy to be called *the only true delight!* For nourishment, consolation, exhilaration, and refreshment, no wine can rival the love of Jesus. Let us drink to the full!

January 9 — Morning

"I will be their God!" Jeremiah 31:33

Christian! here is all you can require. To make you happy—you need something that shall *satisfy* you—and is not this enough? If you can pour this promise into your cup—you will say, with David, "My cup runs over! I have more than heart can wish!" When this is fulfilled, "I am your God," —are you not possessor of all things? *Desire* is insatiable as *death*—but He who fills all in all, can fill it. The capacity of our *desires*—who can measure? but the immeasurable wealth of God can more than overflow it. I ask you—if you are not complete—when God is yours? Do you need anything but God? Is not His all-sufficiency enough to satisfy you—if all else should fail?

But you want more than quiet satisfaction; you desire rapturous delight. Come, soul, here is music fit for heaven in this your portion, for God is the Maker of Heaven. Not all the music blown from sweet instruments, or drawn from living strings—can yield such melody as this sweet promise, "I will be their God!" Here is a deep sea of bliss, a shoreless ocean of delight; come—bathe your spirit in it; swim an age—and you shall find no shore; dive throughout eternity—and you shall find no bottom.

"I will be their God!" If this does not make your eyes sparkle, and your heart beat high with bliss—then assuredly your soul is not in a healthy state.

But you need more than *present* delights—you crave something concerning which you may exercise hope; and what more can you hope for than the fulfillment of this great promise, "I will be their God!" This is the masterpiece of all the promises; its enjoyment makes a heaven below—and will make a heaven above. Dwell in the light of your Lord, and let your soul be always ravished with His love. Get out the marrow and fatness which this portion yields you. Live up to your privileges, and rejoice with unspeakable joy.

January 9 — Evening

"Serve the Lord with gladness." Psalm 100:2

Delight in *divine service* is a sign of acceptance with God. Those who serve God with a sad countenance, because they do what is unpleasant to them, are not serving Him at all; they bring the *form* of homage—but the *life* is absent. Our God requires no *slaves* to grace His throne; He is the Lord of the empire of *love*, and would have His servants dressed in the *livery of joy*. The angels of God serve Him with songs, not with groans; a murmur or a sigh would be a mutiny in their ranks.

That obedience which is not voluntary—is disobedience, for the Lord looks at the heart, and if He sees that we serve Him from force, and not because we love Him—He will reject our offering. Service coupled with cheerfulness is heart-service, and therefore true service. Take away joyful willingness from the Christian, and you have removed the test of his *sincerity*. If a man is forced to battle, he is no patriot; but he who marches into the fray with flashing eye and beaming face, singing, "It is sweet for one's country to die," proves himself to be sincere in his patriotism.

Cheerfulness is the support of our *strength*; in the joy of the Lord, we are strong. *Joy* acts as the remover of difficulties. It is to our service—what *oil* is to the wheels of a railway carriage. Without *oil* the axle soon grows hot, and accidents occur; and if there is not a holy cheerfulness to oil our wheels, our spirits will be clogged with weariness. The man who is cheerful in his service of God, proves that obedience is his element; he can sing, "Make me to walk in Your commands—it is a delightful road." Reader, let us put this question—do you serve the Lord with gladness? Let us show to the people of the world, who think our religion to be slavery—that it is to us a delight and a joy! Let our *gladness* proclaim that we serve a good Master.

January 10 — Morning

"There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness!" 2 Timothy 4:8

Doubting one! You have often said, "I fear I shall never enter heaven." Fear not! All the people of God shall enter there. I love the quaint saying of a dying man, who exclaimed, "I have no fear of going *home*; I have sent all before me; God's finger is on the latch of my door, and I am ready for Him to enter." "But," said one, "are you not afraid lest you should miss your inheritance?" "Nay," said he, "nay; there is one *crown* in heaven, which the angel Gabriel could not wear—it will fit no head but mine. There is one *throne* in heaven which Paul the apostle could not fill—it was made for me, and I shall have it."

O Christian, what a joyous thought! Your portion is secure— "there remains a rest." "But cannot I forfeit it?" No—it is certain. If I am a child of God—I shall not lose it. It is mine as securely as if I were there! Come with me, believer, and let us sit upon the top of Nebo, and view the goodly land, even Canaan. See that little *river of death* glistening in the sunlight, and across it do you see the pinnacles of the eternal city? Do you mark the pleasant country, and all its joyous inhabitants? Know, then, that if you could fly across you would see written upon one of its many mansions, "This remains for such a one; preserved for him only. He shall be caught up to dwell forever with God."

Poor doubting one, see the lovely inheritance—it is yours! If you believe in the Lord Jesus, if you have repented of sin, if you have been renewed in heart—you are one of the Lord's people, and there is a *place* reserved for you, a *crown* laid up for you, a *harp* specially provided for you. No one else shall have *your* portion, it is reserved in heaven for you, and you shall have it before long, for there shall be no *vacant thrones* in glory, when all the chosen are gathered in.

January 10 — Evening

"In my flesh shall I see God." Job 19:26

Mark the subject of Job's devout anticipation "I shall see *God*." He does not say, "I shall see the *saints*" though doubtless that will be untold felicity—but, "I shall see *God*." It is not, "I shall see the pearly gates, I shall behold the walls of jasper, I shall gaze upon the crowns of gold," but "I shall see *God*." This is the sum and substance of heaven; this is the joyful hope of all believers. It is their delight to see Him now in the ordinances, by faith. They love to behold Him in communion and in prayer; but there in heaven—they shall have an open and unclouded vision, and thus seeing "Him as He is," they shall be made completely like Him. *Likeness to God*—what more can we wish for? And a sight of God—what can we desire better?

Some read the passage, "Yet, I shall see God in my flesh," and find here an allusion to Christ, as the "Word made flesh," and that glorious beholding of Him which shall be the splendor of the latter days. Whether so or not—it is certain that Christ shall be the object of our eternal vision; nor shall we ever need any joy beyond that of seeing Him. Do not think that this will be a narrow sphere for the mind to dwell in. It is but *one* source of delight—but that source is *infinite*. All His attributes shall be subjects for contemplation, and as He is infinite under each aspect, there is no fear of exhaustion. His works, His gifts, His love to us; and His glory in all His purposes, and in all His actions, these shall make a theme which will be *ever new*.

The patriarch looked forward to this sight of God as a personal enjoyment. "Whom my eye shall behold—and not another." Take realizing views of heaven's bliss; think what it will be to you. "Your eyes shall see the King in His beauty!" All earthly brightness fades and darkens—as we gaze upon it—but here is a brightness which can never dim, a glory which can never fade, "I shall see God."

January 11 — Morning

"These have no root." Luke 8:13

My soul, examine yourself this morning by the light of this text. You have received the Word with joy; your feelings have been stirred and a lively impression has been made; but, remember, that to receive the Word in the *ear* is one thing—and to receive Jesus into your very *soul* is quite another. Superficial feeling is often joined to inward hardness of heart, and a *lively* impression of the Word is not always a *lasting* one.

In the parable, the *seed* in one case fell upon ground having a rocky bottom, covered over with a thin layer of earth; when the seed began to take root, its downward growth was hindered by the hard stone, and therefore it spent its strength in pushing its green shoot aloft as high as it could—but having no inward moisture derived from root nourishment, it withered away. Is this my case? Have I been making a fair show in the flesh, without having a corresponding inner life? Good growth takes place *upwards* and *downwards* at the same time. Am I rooted in sincere fidelity and love to Jesus? If my heart remains unsoftened and unfertilized by grace, the good seed may germinate for a season—but it must ultimately wither, for it cannot flourish on a rocky, unbroken, unsanctified heart.

Let me dread a godliness as rapid in growth and as lacking in endurance as *Jonah's gourd*; let me count the cost of being a follower of Jesus, above all let me feel the energy of His Holy Spirit, and then I shall possess an abiding and enduring seed in my soul. If my mind remains as obdurate as it was by nature, the *sun of trial* will scorch, and my hard heart will help to cast the heat the more terribly upon the ill-covered seed, and my religion will soon die, and my despair will be terrible. Therefore, O heavenly Sower, *plough* me first, and then cast the truth into me, and let me yield You a bounteous harvest.

January 11 — Evening

"I have prayed for you." Luke 22:32

How encouraging is the thought of *the Redeemer's never-ceasing intercession for us*. When we pray—He pleads for us. And when we are not praying—He is advocating our cause, and by His supplications shielding us from unseen dangers. Notice the word of comfort addressed to Peter, "Simon, Simon, Satan has desired to have you—that he may sift you as wheat; but" what? "But go and pray for yourself." That would be good advice—but it is not so written. Neither does he say, "But I will keep you watchful, and so you shall be preserved." That would be a great blessing. No, it is, "But *I* have prayed for you, that your faith fail not."

We little know what we owe to our Savior's prayers! When we reach the hill-tops of heaven, and look back upon all the way whereby the Lord our God has led us—how we shall praise Him who, before the eternal throne, undid the mischief which Satan was doing upon earth. How shall we thank Him because day and night, He pointed to the wounds upon His hands, and carried our names upon His breastplate!

Even *before* Satan had begun to tempt, Jesus had entered a plea in heaven. *Mercy* outruns *malice*. Mark, He does not say, "Satan has desired to have you." He checks Satan even in his very desire, and nips it in the bud. He does not say, "But I have *desired* to pray for you." No—but "I *have* prayed for you—I have done it already; I have gone to court and entered a counter-plea even before an accusation is made." O Jesus, what a comfort it is, that you have pleaded our cause against our *unseen enemies*; countermined their mines, and unmasked their ambushes. Here is a matter for joy, gratitude, hope, and confidence!

January 12 — Morning

"You are Christ's." 1 Corinthians 3:23

"You are Christ's." You are His by *donation*—for the Father gave you to the Son. You are His by His bloody *purchase*—for He paid the price for your redemption. You are His by *dedication*—for you have consecrated yourself to Him. You are His by *relation*—for you are named by his name, and made one of His brethren and joint-heirs.

Labor practically to show the world that you are the servant, the friend, the bride of Jesus. When tempted to sin, reply, "I cannot do this great wickedness—for I am Christ's!" Immortal principles forbid the friend of Christ to sin. When wealth is before you to be won by sin, say, "I am Christ's!" and touch it not. Are you exposed to difficulties and dangers? Stand fast in the evil day, remembering that you are Christ's. Are you placed where others are sitting down idly, doing nothing? Rise to the work with all your powers; and when the sweat stands upon your brow, and you are tempted to loiter, cry, "No, I cannot stop, for I am Christ's, and cannot loiter."

When the siren song of pleasure would tempt you from the path of right, reply, "Your music cannot charm me—I am Christ's." When the cause of God invites you—give your goods and yourself away, for you are Christ's. Never belie your profession. Be ever one of those whose manners are Christian, whose speech is like the Nazarene, whose conduct and conversation are so redolent of heaven—that all who see you may know that you are the Savior's, recognizing in you His *features of love* and His *countenance of holiness*. "I am a Roman!" was of old a reason for integrity; far more, then, let it be your argument for holiness, "I am Christ's!"

January 12 — Evening

"I have yet to speak on God's behalf." Job 36:2

We ought not to court publicity for our virtue, or notoriety for our zeal; but, at the same time, it is a sin to be always seeking to hide that which God has bestowed upon us for the good of others. A Christian is not to be a *village in a valley*—but "a city set upon a hill;" he is not to be a candle *under* a bushel—but a candle *on* a candlestick, giving light to all. Retirement may be lovely in its season, and to hide one's self is doubtless modest—but the hiding of Christ in us can never be justified, and the keeping back of truth which is precious to ourselves, is a sin against others, and an offence against God.

If you are of a nervous temperament and of retiring disposition, take care that you do not too much indulge this *trembling propensity*, lest you should be useless to the church. Seek in the name of Him who was not ashamed of you—to do some little violence to your feelings, and tell to others what Christ has told to you. If you cannot speak with *trumpet* tongue, use the *still small voice*. If the *pulpit* must not be your tribune, if the press may not carry your words on its wings—yet say with Peter and John, "Silver and gold have I none—but such as I have, I give you."

By Sychar's well talk to the Samaritan woman—if you cannot on the mountain preach a sermon; utter the praises of Jesus in the house—if not in the temple; in the field—if not upon the exchange; in the midst of your own household—if you cannot in the midst of the great family of man. From the hidden springs within, let sweetly flowing rivulets of testimony flow forth, giving drink to every passer-by. Hide not your talent; trade with it; and you shall bring in good interest to your Lord and Master. To speak for God will be refreshing to ourselves, cheering to saints, useful to sinners, and honoring to the Savior. *Dumb children* are an affliction to their parents. Lord, unloose all Your children's tongues.

January 13 — Morning

"Jehoshaphat built a fleet of trading ships to go to Ophir for gold, but they never set sail—they were wrecked at Ezion-Geber." 1 Kings 22:48

Solomon's ships had returned in safety—but Jehoshaphat's vessels never reached the land of gold. Providence prospers one, and frustrates the desires of another, in the same business and at the same spot—yet the Great Ruler is as good and wise at one time as another. May we have grace today, in the remembrance of this text, to bless the Lord for ships broken at Ezion-geber, as well as for vessels freighted with temporal blessings. Let us not envy the more successful, nor murmur at our losses as though we were singularly and specially tried. Like Jehoshaphat, *we* may be precious in the Lord's sight, although *our schemes* end in disappointment.

The secret cause of Jehoshaphat's loss is well worthy of notice, for it is the root of very much of the suffering of the Lord's people; it was his alliance with a sinful family, his fellowship with sinners. In 2 Chron. 20:37, we are told that the Lord sent a prophet to declare, "Because you have joined yourself with Ahaziah, the Lord has broken your works." This was a fatherly chastisement, which appears to have been blessed to him; for in the verse which follows our text—we find him refusing to allow his servants to sail in the same vessels with those of the wicked king.

Would to God that Jehoshaphat's experience might be a warning to the rest of the Lord's people—to avoid being unequally yoked together with unbelievers! A life of misery is usually the lot of those who are united in marriage, or in any other way of their own choosing—with the men of the world. O for such love to Jesus that, like Him, we may be holy, harmless, undefiled, and *separate from sinners*; for if it is not so with us, we may expect to hear it often said, "The Lord has broken your works."

January 13 — Evening

"But as one of them was chopping, his axe-head fell into the river. "Ah, my lord!" he cried. "It was a borrowed axe!" "Where did it fall?" the man of God asked. When he showed him the place, Elisha cut a stick and threw it into the water. Then the axe-head rose to the surface and floated." 2 Kings 6:5-6

The axe-head seemed hopelessly lost, and as it was borrowed, the honor of the prophetic band was likely to be imperilled, and so the name of their God to be compromised. Contrary to all expectation, the iron was made to mount from the depth of the stream and to float; for things impossible with man are possible with God.

I knew a man in Christ but a few years ago who was called to undertake a work far exceeding his strength. It appeared so difficult as to involve absurdity in the bare idea of attempting it. Yet he was called thereto, and his faith rose with the occasion; God honored his faith, unlooked-for aid was sent, and "the axe-head floated."

Another of the Lord's family was in grievous financial straits, he was able to meet all claims, and much more if he could have realized a certain portion of his estate—but he was overtaken with a sudden pressure; he sought for friends in vain—but faith led him to the unfailing Helper, and lo, the trouble was averted, his footsteps were enlarged, and "the axe-head floated."

A third had a sorrowful case of depravity to deal with. He had taught, reproved, warned, invited, and interceded—but all in vain. *Old Adam* was too strong for *young Melancthon*, the stubborn spirit would not relent. Then came an agony of prayer, and before long a blessed answer was sent from heaven. The hard heart was broken, and "the axe-head floated."

Beloved reader, what is your desperate case? What heavy matter have you in hand this evening? Bring it here. The God of the prophets lives, and lives to help His saints. He will not allow you to lack any good thing. Believe in the Lord Almighty! Approach Him pleading the name of Jesus, and "the axe-head shall float." You too shall see the finger of God working marvels for His people. According to your faith be it unto you, and yet again "the axe-head shall float."

January 14 — Morning
"Mighty to save." Isaiah 63:1

By the words "to save" we understand the whole of the great work of salvation, from the first holy desire—onward to complete sanctification. Indeed, here is all mercy in one word. Christ is not only "mighty to save" those who repent—but He is able to *make* men repent. He will carry those who believe those to heaven; but He is, moreover, mighty to give men new hearts and to work faith in them. He is mighty to make the man who hates holiness—love it; and to constrain the despiser of His name—to bend the knee before Him.

Nay, this is not all the meaning, for the divine power is equally seen in the after-work. The life of a believer is a *series of miracles* wrought by "the Mighty God." The bush burns—but is not consumed. He is mighty to *keep* His people holy—after He has made them so; and to *preserve* them in his fear and love—until he consummates their spiritual existence in heaven. Christ's might does not lie in *making* a believer—and then *leaving* him to shift for himself; but He who *begins* the good work *carries it on*; He who imparts the first germ of life in the dead soul—prolongs the divine existence, and strengthens it—until it bursts asunder every bond of sin, and the soul leaps from earth, perfected in glory.

Believer, here is encouragement. Are you praying for some beloved one? Oh, do not give up your prayers, for Christ is "mighty to save." *You* are powerless to reclaim the rebel—but your *Lord* is Almighty. Lay hold on that mighty arm—and rouse it to put forth its strength.

Does your own case trouble you? Fear not, for His strength is sufficient for you. Whether to begin with others, or to carry on the work in you, Jesus is "mighty to save;" the best proof of which lies in the fact that He has saved you. What a thousand mercies—that you have not found Him mighty to destroy!

January 14 — Evening

"Beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me!" Matthew 14:30

Sinking times are *praying* times with the Lord's servants. Peter neglected prayer at starting upon his venturesome journey—but when he began to sink—his danger made him a suppliant, and his cry though late—was not *too* late.

In our hours of bodily pain and mental anguish—we find ourselves as naturally driven to prayer, as the wreck is driven upon the shore by the waves. The *fox* flees to its hole for protection; the *bird* flies to the woods for shelter; and even so the *tried believer* hastens to the mercy seat for safety. Heaven's great harbor of refuge is *All-prayer*; thousands of weather beaten vessels have found a haven there, and the moment a storm comes on, it is wise for us to make for it with all sail.

Short prayers are long enough. There were but *three words* in the petition which Peter gasped out—but they were sufficient for his purpose. Not length—but strength is desirable. A sense of need is a mighty teacher of brevity. If our prayers had less of the *tail feathers of pride*—and more *wing*—they would be all the better. Verbiage is to devotion, as chaff to the wheat. Precious things lie in small compass, and all that is real prayer in many a long address might have been uttered in a petition as short as that of Peter.

Our extremities are the Lord's opportunities. Immediately a keen sense of danger forces an anxious cry from us—the ear of Jesus hears—and with Him ear and heart go together—and the hand does not long linger. At the last moment we appeal to our Master—but His swift hand makes up for our delays by instant and effectual action. Are we nearly engulfed by the boisterous waters of affliction? Let us then lift up our souls unto our Savior, and we may rest assured that He will not allow us to perish. When we can do nothing—Jesus can do all things; let us enlist His powerful aid upon our side, and all will be well.

January 15 — Morning

"Do as you have said." 2 Samuel 7:25

God's *promises* were never meant to be thrown aside as waste paper; He intended that they should be used. God's *gold* is not miser's money—but is minted to be traded with. Nothing pleases our Lord better, than to see His promises put in circulation. He loves to see His children bring them up to Him, and say, "Lord—do as You have said."

We glorify God when we plead His promises. Do you think that God will be any the poorer—for giving you the riches He has promised? Do you dream that He will be any the less holy—for giving holiness to you? Do you imagine He will be any the less pure—for washing you from your sins? He has said "Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Faith lays hold upon the promise of pardon, and it does not delay, saying, "This is a precious promise—I wonder if it is true?" but it goes straight to the throne with it, and pleads—Lord, here is the promise, Do as You have said!"

Our Lord replies, "Be it unto you even as you will." When a Christian grasps a promise, if he does not take it to God, he dishonors Him; but when he hastens to the throne of grace, and cries, "Lord, I have nothing to recommend me but this—You have said it;" then his desire shall be granted. Our *heavenly Banker* delights to cash His own notes.

Never let the promise *rust*. Draw the Word of promise out of its scabbard, and use it with holy violence. Do not think that God will be troubled by your importunately reminding Him of His promises. He loves to hear the loud outcries of needy souls. It is His delight to bestow favors. He is more ready to hear—than you are to ask. The *sun* is not weary of shining, nor the *fountain* of flowing. It is God's nature to keep His promises; therefore go at once to the throne with, "Do as You have said."

January 15 — Evening

"But I give myself unto prayer." Psalm 109:4

Lying tongues were busy against the reputation of David—but he did not defend himself; he moved the case into a higher court, and pleaded before the great King Himself. Prayer is the safest method of replying to words of hatred. The Psalmist prayed in no cold-hearted manner—he gave himself to the exercise—threw his whole soul and heart into it—straining every sinew and muscle, as Jacob did when wrestling with the angel. Thus, and thus only, shall any of us benefit at the throne of grace. As a shadow has no power because there is no substance in it, even so that supplication, in which a man's heart is not thoroughly present in agonizing earnestness and vehement desire, is utterly ineffectual, for it lacks that which would give it force. "Fervent prayer," says an old divine, "like a cannon planted at the gates of heaven, makes them fly open."

The common fault with the most of us, is our readiness to yield to distractions. Our thoughts go roving hither and thither, and we make little progress towards our desired end. Like quicksilver, our mind will not hold together—but rolls off this way and that. How great an evil this is! It injures us, and what is worse, it insults our God. What would we think of a petitioner, if, while having an audience with a prince, he should *beplaying with a feather or catching a fly!*

Continuance and perseverance are intended in the expression of our text. David did not cry once, and then relapse into silence; his holy clamor was continued until it brought down the blessing. Prayer must not be our occasional work—but our daily business, our habit and vocation. As artists give themselves to their models, and poets to their classical pursuits, so must we *addict* ourselves to prayer. We must be immersed in prayer as in our element, and so pray without ceasing. Lord, teach us so to pray—that we may be more and more prevalent in supplication.

January 16 — Morning

**"Do not be afraid—for I Myself will help you—declares the Lord, your Redeemer,
the Holy One of Israel." Isaiah 41:14**

This morning let us hear the Lord Jesus speak to each one of us: "I Myself will help you." "It is but a small thing for Me, your God, to help you. Consider what I have done already. What! not *help* you? Why, I *bought* you with My blood. What! not help you? I have *died* for you! And if I have done the greater—will I not do the lesser? Help you! It is the least thing I will ever do for you; I have done more, and will do more. Before the world began I chose you. I made the covenant for you. I laid aside My glory and became a man for you. I gave up My life for you. And if I did all this, I will surely help you now. In helping you, I am giving you what I have bought for you already. If you had need of a thousand times as much help—I would give it to you. You require little compared with what I am ready to give. It is much for you to need—but it is nothing for me to bestow. 'Help you?' Fear not! If there were an *ant* at the door of your granary, asking for help—it would not ruin you to give him a handful of your wheat! Just so, you are nothing but a tiny insect at the door of My all-sufficiency. 'I Myself will help you.'"

O my soul, is not this enough? Do you need more *strength* than the omnipotence of the United Trinity? Do you need more *wisdom* than exists in the Father? Do you need more *love* than displays itself in the Son? Do you need more *power* than is manifest in the influences of the Spirit? Bring your empty pitcher here! Surely this *well* will fill it. Haste, gather up your needs, and bring them here—your emptiness, your woes, your troubles. Behold, this river of God is full for your supply. What more can you desire? Go forth, my soul, in this your might. The Eternal God is your helper!

"Fear not, I am with you, oh, be not dismayed!
I, I am your God, and will still give you aid."

January 16 — Evening

"The Messiah shall be cut off—but not for himself." Daniel 9:26

Blessed be His name, there was no cause for death in Himself. Neither *original* nor *actual* sin had defiled Him—and therefore death had no claim upon Him. No man could have taken His life from Him justly, for He had done no man wrong; and no man could even have slain Him by force—unless He had been pleased to yield Himself to die. But lo, *one* sins—and *another* suffers. Justice was offended by *us*—but found its satisfaction in *Him*. Rivers of tears, mountains of offerings, seas of the blood of bullocks, and hills of frankincense, could not have availed for the removal of sin; but Jesus was cut off for us, and the cause of *wrath* was cut off at once—for *sin* was put away forever.

Herein is *wisdom*, whereby substitution, the sure and speedy way of atonement, was devised! Herein is condescension, which brought Messiah, the Prince, to wear a crown of thorns, and die upon the cross! Herein is *love*, which led the Redeemer to lay down His life for His enemies! It is not enough, however, to admire the spectacle of the *innocent*—bleeding for the *guilty*, we must make sure of our interest therein. The special object of the Messiah's death was the salvation of His church—have *we* a part and a lot among those for whom He gave His life a ransom? Did the Lord Jesus stand as *our* representative? Are *we* healed by His stripes? It will be a terrible thing indeed—if we would come short of a portion in His sacrifice; it were better for us that we had never been born.

Solemn as the question is, it is a joyful circumstance, that it is one which may be answered clearly and without mistake. To all who believe on Him—the Lord Jesus is a *present* Savior; and upon them all the blood of reconciliation has been sprinkled. Let all who trust in the merit of Messiah's death, be joyful at every remembrance of Him, and let their holy gratitude lead them to the fullest consecration to His cause.

January 17 — Morning

"I looked, and there before me was *the Lamb*." Revelation 14:1

The apostle John was privileged to look within the gates of heaven, and in describing what he saw, he begins by saying, "I looked, and there before me was the Lamb!" This teaches us that the chief object of contemplation in the heavenly state, is "the Lamb of God." Nothing else attracted the apostle's attention, so much as that Divine Being, who has redeemed us by His blood. He is the theme of the songs of all glorified spirits and holy angels.

Christian, here is joy for you; you have looked, and you have seen the Lamb. Through your tears—your eyes have seen the Lamb of God taking away your sins. Rejoice, then. In a little while, when your eyes shall have been wiped from tears—you will see the same Lamb exalted on His throne! It is the joy of your heart to hold daily fellowship with Jesus; you shall have the same joy to a higher degree in heaven; you shall enjoy the constant vision of His presence; you shall dwell with Him forever! "I looked, and there before me was the Lamb!"

Why, that Lamb is heaven itself; for as holy Rutherford says, "Heaven and Christ are the same thing!" To be with Christ is to be in heaven—and to be in heaven is to be with Christ. That prisoner of the Lord very sweetly writes in one of his glowing letters, "O my Lord Jesus Christ, if I could be in heaven without you—it would be a hell; and if I could be in hell, and have you still—it would be a heaven to me, for you are all the heaven I want." It is true, is it not, Christian? Does not your soul say so?

"Not all the harps above
Can make a heavenly place,
If God His residence remove,
Or but conceal His face."

All you need to make you blessed, supremely blessed, is "to be with Christ."

January 17 — Evening

"One evening David got up from his bed and strolled around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing—a very beautiful woman." 2 Samuel 11:2

At that hour David saw Bathsheba. We are never out of the reach of temptation. Both at home and abroad we are liable to meet with allurements to evil. The *morning* opens with peril, and the shadows of evening find us still in jeopardy. They are well kept—whom God keeps—but woe unto those who go forth into the world, or even dare to walk their own house unarmed. Those who think themselves secure, are more exposed to danger than any others. The armor-bearer of Sin—is self-confidence.

David should have been engaged in fighting the Lord's battles, instead of which he tarried at Jerusalem, and gave himself up to luxurious repose, for he arose from his bed at eventide. *Idleness* and *luxury* are the devil's jackals—and find him abundant prey. In stagnant *waters*—noxious creatures swarm. Neglected *soil*—soon yields a dense tangle of weeds and briars. Oh for the constraining love of Jesus to keep us active and useful!

When I see the King of Israel sluggishly leaving his couch at the close of the day, and falling at once into temptation, let me take warning, and set holy watchfulness to guard the door. Is it possible that the king had mounted his housetop for *retirement* and *devotion*? If so, what a caution is given us to count no place, however secret, *a sanctuary from sin!*

While our hearts are so like a tinder-box, and sparks so plentiful—we had need use all diligence in all places—to prevent a *blaze*. Satan can climb housetops, and enter closets—and even if we could shut out that foul fiend, our own corruptions are enough to work our ruin—unless grace prevents it.

Reader, beware of *evening temptations*. Be not secure. The sun is down—but sin is up. We need a watchman for the *night*— as well as a guardian for the *day*. O blessed Spirit, keep us from all evil this night. Amen.

January 18 — Morning

"There remains a *rest* for the people of God." Hebrews 4:9

How different will be the state of the believer in heaven—from what it is here! Here he is born to toil and suffer weariness—but in the land of the immortal, fatigue is never known. Anxious to serve his Master, he now finds his strength unequal to his zeal: his constant cry is, "Help me to serve You, O my God." If he is thoroughly active, he will have much labor; not too much for his desire—but more than enough for his power, so that he will cry out, "I am not wearied *of* the labor—but I am wearied *in* it!"

Ah! Christian, the hot day of weariness lasts not forever; the sun is nearing the horizon; it shall rise again with a brighter day than you have ever seen, upon a land where they serve God day and night, and yet rest from their labors. Here, rest is but partial—there, it is perfect. Here, the Christian is always unsettled; he feels that he has not yet attained. There, all are at rest; they have attained the summit of the mountain; they have ascended to the bosom of their God. Higher they cannot go!

Ah, toil-worn laborer, only think when you shall rest forever! Can you conceive it? It is a rest *eternal*; a rest that "remains." Here, my best joys bear "mortal" on their brow; my fair flowers fade; my dainty cups are drained to dregs; my sweetest birds fall before Death's arrows; my most pleasant days are shadowed into nights; and the flood-tides of my bliss subside into ebbs of sorrow. But there, everything is immortal; the harp abides unruined, the crown unwithered, the eye undimmed, the voice unfaltering, the heart unwavering, and the immortal being is wholly absorbed in infinite delight. Happy day! happy! when mortality shall be swallowed up in life, and the Eternal *rest* shall begin.

January 18 — Evening

"He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures, the things concerning Himself."

Luke 24:27

The two disciples on the road to Emmaus had a most profitable journey. Their companion was the best of **teachers**; the interpreter one of a thousand, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. The Lord Jesus condescended to become a preacher of the gospel, and He was not ashamed to exercise His calling before an audience of two people, neither does He now refuse to become the teacher of even *one*. Let us court the company of so excellent an Instructor, for until He is made unto us wisdom—we shall never be wise unto salvation.

This unrivaled tutor used as His class-book the best of **books**. Although able to reveal fresh truth—He preferred to expound the old. He knew by His omniscience what was the most instructive way of teaching, and by turning at once to Moses and the prophets, He showed us that the surest road to wisdom is not speculation, reasoning, or reading human books—but meditation upon the Word of God. The readiest way to be spiritually rich in heavenly knowledge, is to dig in this mine of diamonds, to gather pearls from this heavenly sea. When Jesus Himself sought to enrich others—He wrought in the quarry of Holy Scripture.

The favored pair were led to consider the best of **subjects**, for Jesus spoke of Jesus, and expounded the things concerning Himself. Here the diamond cut the diamond, and what could be more admirable? The Master of the House unlocked His own doors, conducted the guests to His table, and placed His own dainties upon it. He who hid the treasure in the field, Himself guided the searchers to it. Our Lord would naturally discourse upon the sweetest of topics, and He could find none sweeter than His own person and work—with an eye to these—we should always search the Word. O for grace to study the Bible with Jesus as **both our teacher and our lesson!**

January 19 — Morning

"I sought him—but I found him not." Song of Solomon 3:1

Tell me where you *lost* the company of Christ—and I will tell you the most likely place to *find* Him. Have you lost Christ in the closet by restraining *prayer*? Then it is there that you must seek and find Him. Did you lose Christ by *sin*? You will find Christ in no other way but by the giving up of the sin, and seeking by the Holy Spirit to mortify the member in which the lust dwells. Did you lose Christ by neglecting the *Scriptures*? You must find Christ in the Scriptures. It is a true proverb, "Look for a thing where you dropped it—it is there." So look for Christ where you lost Him—for He has not gone away.

But it is hard work to go back for Christ. Bunyan tells us, the pilgrim found the piece of the road back to the *Arbor of Ease*, where he lost his scroll, the hardest that he had ever traveled. Twenty miles onward is easier than to go one mile back for the lost evidence. Take care, then, when you find your Master—to cling close to Him.

But how is it you have lost Him? One would have thought you would never have parted with such a precious friend, whose *presence* is so sweet, whose *words* are so comforting, and whose *company* is so dear to you! How is it that you did not watch Him every moment—for fear of losing sight of Him? Yet, since you have let Him go, what a mercy that you are seeking Him, even though you mournfully groan, "O that I knew where I might find Him!" Go on seeking, for it is dangerous to be without your Lord. Without Christ you are like a *sheep* without its shepherd; like a *tree* without water at its roots; like a *sere leaf* in the tempest—not bound to the *tree of life*. With your whole heart seek Him—and He will be found of you. Only give yourself thoroughly up to the search, and truly—you shall yet discover Him to your joy and gladness.

January 19 — Evening

"Then He opened their understanding—that they might understand the Scriptures." Luke 24:45

He whom we viewed last evening as opening *Scripture*, we here perceive opening the *understanding*. In the first work He has many fellow-laborers—but in the second He stands alone. Many can bring the *Scriptures* to the mind—but the Lord alone can prepare the *mind* to receive the Scriptures. Our Lord Jesus differs from all other teachers; they reach the ear—but He instructs the heart; they deal with the outward letter—but He imparts an inward taste for the truth, by which we perceive its savor and spirit. The most unlearned of men become ripe scholars in the *school of grace*—when the Lord Jesus by His Holy Spirit unfolds the mysteries of the kingdom to them, and grants the divine anointing by which they are enabled to behold the invisible.

Happy are we if we have had our understandings cleared and strengthened by the Master! How many men of profound learning are ignorant of eternal things! They know the killing *letter* of revelation—but its killing *spirit* they cannot discern; they have a veil upon their hearts which the eyes of carnal reason cannot penetrate.

Such was our case a little time ago; we who now see—were once utterly blind! Truth was to us—as beauty in the dark, a thing unnoticed and neglected. Had it not been for the love of Jesus—we would have remained to this moment in utter ignorance, for without His gracious opening of our understanding, we could no more have attained to spiritual knowledge than an infant can climb the Pyramids, or an ostrich fly up to the stars. Jesus' College is the only one in which God's truth can be really learned; other schools may teach us what is to be believed—but Christ's alone can show us how to believe it. Let us sit at the feet of Jesus, and by earnest prayer call in His blessed aid that our dull wits may grow brighter, and our feeble understandings may receive heavenly things.

January 20 — Morning

"Abel was a keeper of sheep." Genesis 4:2

As a shepherd, Abel sanctified his work to the glory of God, and offered a sacrifice of blood upon his altar, and the Lord had respect unto Abel and his offering. This early type of our Lord is exceedingly clear and distinct. Like the first streak of light which tinges the east at sunrise—it does not reveal everything—but it clearly manifests the great fact that the sun is coming.

As we see Abel, a *shepherd* and yet a *priest*, offering a sacrifice of sweet smell unto God—we discern our Lord, who brings before His Father a sacrifice to which Jehovah ever has respect. Abel was hated by his brother—hated without a cause; and even so was the Savior. The natural and carnal man hated the accepted man in whom the Spirit of grace was found, and rested not until his blood had been shed. Abel fell, and sprinkled his altar and sacrifice with his own blood, and therein sets forth the Lord Jesus slain by the enmity of man while serving as a priest before the Lord.

"The good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep." Let us weep over Him as we view Him slain by the hatred of mankind, staining the horns of His altar with His own blood. Abel's blood speaks. "The Lord said unto Cain—The voice of your brother's blood cries unto Me from the ground." The blood of Jesus has a mighty tongue, and the import of its prevailing cry is not *vengeance*—but *mercy*. It is precious beyond all preciousness to stand at the altar of our good Shepherd! to see Him bleeding there as the *slaughtered priest*, and then to hear His blood speaking peace to all His flock, peace in our conscience, peace between man and his offended Maker, peace all down the ages of eternity for blood-washed men. Abel is the first shepherd in order of time—but our hearts shall ever place Jesus first in order of excellence. Great Keeper of the sheep, we the people of Your pasture bless You with our whole hearts—when we see You slain for us!

January 20 — Evening

"Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken me in Your way." Psalm 119:37

There are diverse kinds of vanity. The cap and bells of the fool; the mirth of the world; the dance, the lyre, and the cup of the dissolute. All these we know to be vanities; they wear upon their forefront, their proper name and title. Far more treacherous, are those equally vain things—the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches. A man may follow vanity as truly in his business—as in the theater. If he is spending his life in amassing wealth—he passes his days in a vain show. Unless we follow Christ, and make our God the great object of life, we only differ in appearance from the most frivolous. It is clear that there is much need of the first prayer of our text.

"Quicken me in Your way." The Psalmist confesses that he is dull, heavy, lumpy—all but dead. Perhaps, dear reader, you feel the same. We are so sluggish that the best motives cannot quicken us, apart from the Lord Himself. What! will not *hell* quicken me? Shall I think of sinners perishing—and yet not be awakened? Will not *heaven* quicken me? Can I think of the glory that awaits the righteous—and yet be cold? Will not *death* quicken me? Can I think of dying, and standing before my God—and yet be slothful in my Master's service? Will not *Christ's love* constrain me? Can I think of His dear wounds, can I sit at the foot of His cross—and not be stirred with fervency and zeal? It seems so! No mere *consideration* can quicken us to zeal—but God Himself must do it, hence the cry, "Quicken me!"

The Psalmist breathes out his whole soul in vehement pleadings—his body and his soul unite in prayer. "Turn away my eyes," says the body: "Quicken me," cries the soul. This is a fit prayer for every day. O Lord, hear it in my case this night.

January 21 — Morning

"And so all Israel shall be saved." Romans 11:26

When Moses sang at the Red Sea, it was his joy to know that all Israel were safe. Not a drop of spray fell from that solid wall—until the last of God's Israel had safely planted his foot on the other side the flood. That done, immediately the floods dissolved into their proper place again—but not until then. Part of that song was, "You in your mercy have led forth the people which you have redeemed."

Just so, in the last time, when the elect shall sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and of the Lamb, it shall be the boast of Jesus, "Of all whom you have given me—I have lost none." In heaven, there shall not be a vacant throne.

"For all the chosen race
Shall meet around the throne,
Shall bless the conduct of His grace,
And make His glories known."

As many as God has *chosen*, as many as Christ has *redeemed*, as many as the Spirit has called—as many as believe in Jesus, shall safely cross the dividing sea. We are not all safely landed yet: "Part of the host have crossed the flood—and part are crossing now." The vanguard of the army has already reached the shore. We are marching through the depths; we are at this day following hard after our Leader into the heart of the sea. Let us be of good cheer: the rear-guard, shall soon be where the vanguard already is; the last of the chosen ones shall soon have crossed the sea, and then shall be heard the song of triumph, when all are secure.

But oh! if one were absent—oh! if *one* of His chosen family should be cast away—it would make an everlasting discord in the song of the redeemed, and cut the strings of the harps of paradise, so that music could never be extorted from them.

January 21 — Evening

"Now Samson was very thirsty, and he cried out to the Lord, "You have accomplished this great victory by the strength of your servant. Must I now die of thirst and fall into the hands of these pagan people?"

Judges 15:18

Samson was thirsty and ready to die. The difficulty was totally different from any which the hero had met before. Merely to get thirst assuaged, is a small matter—as compared to be delivered from a thousand Philistines! but when the thirst was upon him, Samson felt that *little present difficulty* more weighty than the *great past difficulty* out of which he had so specially been delivered.

Just so, it is very usual for God's people, when they have enjoyed a great deliverance, to find a *little trouble* too much for them. *Samson* slays a thousand Philistines, and piles them up in heaps—and then faints for a little water! *Jacob* wrestles with God at Peniel, and overcomes Omnipotence itself—and then goes "halting on his thigh!" Strange that there must be a *shrinking of the sinew*, whenever we win the day. As if the Lord must teach us our littleness, our nothingness, in order to keep us within bounds.

Samson boasted right loudly when he said, "I have slain a thousand men!" His boastful throat soon grew hoarse with thirst, and he betook himself to prayer.

God has many ways of *humbling* His people. Dear child of God, if after great mercy you are laid very low—your case is not an unusual one. When *David* had mounted the throne of Israel, he said, "I am this day weak, though anointed king." You must expect to feel weakest—when you are enjoying your greatest triumph. If God has wrought for you great deliverances in the past, your *present difficulty* is only like Samson's thirst, and the Lord will not let you faint, nor allow the daughter of the uncircumcised to triumph over you. *The road of sorrow is the road to heaven—but there are wells of refreshing water all along the route.* So, tried brother, cheer your heart with Samson's words, and rest assured that God will deliver you before long.

January 22 — Morning

"Son of man, What is the vine more than any tree, or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest?" "Son of man, how does a *grapevine* compare to a tree? Is a vine's wood as useful as the wood of a tree?" Ezekiel 15:2

These words are for the humbling of God's people; they are called God's grapevine—but what are they by nature more than others? They, by God's goodness, have become fruitful, having been planted in a good soil; the Lord has *trained* them upon the walls of the sanctuary, and they bring forth fruit to His glory. But what are they without their God? What are they without the continual influence of the Spirit, begetting fruitfulness in them?

O believer, learn to reject *pride*, seeing that you have no ground for it. Whatever you are—you have nothing to make you proud. The more you have—the more you are in debt to God—and you should not be proud of that which renders you a *debtor*. Consider your origin—look back to what you **were**. Consider what you would have been—but for divine grace! Look upon yourself as you are **now**. Does not your conscience reproach you? Do not your thousand wanderings stand before you, and tell you that you are unworthy to be called God's son? And if He has made you anything, are you not taught thereby that it is grace which has made you to differ? Great believer—you would have been a great sinner—if God had not made you to differ! O you who are valiant for truth—you would have been as valiant for error—if grace had not laid hold upon you. Therefore, be not proud, though you have a large estate—a wide domain of grace—for once, you had not a single thing to call your own—except your sin and misery! Oh! strange infatuation, that you—who have *borrowed* everything, should think of exalting yourself! That you—a poor dependent pensioner upon the bounty of your Savior, one who has a life which dies without fresh streams of life from Jesus—and yet proud! Fie on you, O silly heart!

"What makes you better than anyone else? What do you have—that God hasn't given you? And if all you have is from God—why boast as though you have accomplished something on your own?"

1 Corinthians 4:7

January 22 — Evening

"Does Job fear God for nothing?" Job 1:9

This was the wicked question of Satan, concerning that upright man of old—but there are many in the present day concerning whom it might be asked with justice, for they love God *after a fashion*, because He prospers them; but if things went badly with them—they would give up all their boasted faith in God. If they can clearly see that since the time of their *supposed* conversion, the world has gone prosperously with them, then they will love God in their poor carnal way; but if they endure adversity, they rebel against the Lord. Their love is the love of the *table*, not of the *host*; a love to the *cupboard*, not to the *master* of the house.

As for the true Christian, he expects to have his reward in the *next* life, and to endure hardness in this life. The promise of the *old* covenant—is *prosperity*; but the promise of the *new* covenant—is *adversity*. Remember Christ's words, "Every branch that produces fruit," What? "He *prunes* it, that it may bring forth fruit." If you bring forth *fruit*—you will have to endure the pruning knife.

"Alas!" you say, "that is a terrible prospect." But this affliction works out such precious results, that the Christian who is the subject of it must learn to *rejoice* in tribulations, because as his *tribulations* abound—so his *consolations* abound by Christ Jesus. Rest assured, if you are a child of God , you will be *no stranger to the "rod"*! Sooner or later, every bar of *gold* must pass through the *fire*. Fear not—but rather rejoice that such *fruitful* times are in store for you, for in them you will be weaned from earth and made fit for heaven; you will be delivered from clinging to the present world, and made to long for those eternal things which are so soon to be revealed to you. When you feel that as regards the present, you serve God for nothing—you will then rejoice in the infinite reward of the future.

January 23 — Morning

"I have exalted one chosen out of the people." Psalm 89:19

Why was *Christ* chosen out of the people? Speak, my heart, for heart-thoughts are best. Was it not that He might be able to be our brother, in the blessed tie of kindred blood? Oh, what relationship there is between *Christ* and the *believer*! The believer can say, "I have a Brother in heaven; I may be poor—but I have a Brother who is rich, and is a King, and will He allow me to lack, while He is on His throne? Oh, no! He loves me; He is my Brother!" Believer, wear this blessed thought, like a necklace of diamonds, around the neck of your memory; put it, as a golden ring, on the finger of recollection, and use it as the King's own seal, stamping the petitions of your faith with confidence of success. He is a brother born for adversity, treat Him as such.

Christ was also chosen out of the people that He might know our needs and sympathize with us. "He was tempted in all points like as we are—yet without sin." In all our sorrows we have His sympathy. Temptation, pain, disappointment, weakness, weariness, poverty—He knows them all—for He has felt them all. Remember this, Christian, and let it comfort you. However difficult and painful your road—it is marked by the footsteps of your Savior; and even when you reach the dark valley of the shadow of death, and the deep waters of the swelling Jordan—you will find His footprints there! In all places wherever we go—He has been our forerunner. Each burden we have to carry—has once been laid on the shoulders of Immanuel.

"His way was much rougher and darker than mine;
Did Christ, my Lord, suffer—and shall I repine?"

Take courage! Royal feet have left a blood-red track upon the road, and consecrated the *thorny path* forever!

January 23 — Evening

"We will remember Your love more than wine." Song of Solomon 1:4

Jesus will not let His people forget His love. If all the love they have enjoyed should be forgotten, He will visit them with fresh love. "Do you forget my cross?" says He, "I will cause you to remember it; for at My table I will manifest Myself anew to you. Do you forget all I did for you in the council-chamber of eternity? I will remind you of it, for you shall need a counselor, and shall find Me ready at your call." Mothers do not let their children forget them. If the boy has gone to Australia, and does not write home, his mother writes, "Has John forgotten his mother?" Then there comes back a sweet letter, which proves that the gentle reminder was not in vain.

So is it with Jesus, He says to us, "Remember Me," and our response is, "We *will* remember Your love!" We will remember Your love and its matchless history. It is ancient as the glory which You had with the Father, before the world was. We remember, O Jesus, Your eternal love, when You became our Surety, and espoused us as Your betrothed. We remember the love which suggested the sacrifice of Yourself, the love which, until the fullness of time, mused over that sacrifice, and long for the hour whereof in the volume of the book it was written of You, "Lo, I come!" We remember Your love, O Jesus as it was manifest to us in Your holy life, from the manger of Bethlehem to the garden of Gethsemane. We track You from the cradle to the grave—for every word and deed of Yours was love—and we rejoice in Your love, which death did not exhaust. We remember Your love which shone resplendent in Your resurrection. We remember that burning fire of love, which will never let You hold Your peace until Your chosen ones are all safely housed, until Zion are glorified, and Jerusalem settled on her everlasting foundations of light and love in heaven!

January 24 — Morning

"Surely he shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler." Psalm 91:3

God delivers His people from the snare of the fowler in two senses. *From*, and *out of*.

First, He delivers them from the snare—He does not let them enter it.

Secondly, if they should be caught therein, He delivers them out of it.

The first promise is the most precious to some; the second is the best to others.

"He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler." How?

Trouble is often the means whereby God delivers us. God knows that our backsliding will soon end in our destruction, and He in mercy sends the 'rod'. We say, "Lord—why is this?" not knowing that our trouble has been the means of delivering us from far greater evil. Many have been thus saved from spiritual ruin—by their sorrows and their crosses; these have frightened the *birds* from the *snare* of the fowler.

At other times, God keeps His people from the snare of the fowler by giving them great *spiritual strength*, so that when they are tempted to do evil, they say, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

But what a blessed thing it is that if the believer shall, in an evil hour, come *into* the net—yet God will bring him *out* of it! O backslider, be cast down—but do not despair. Wanderer though you have been, hear what your Redeemer says, "Return, O backsliding children; I will have mercy upon you!" But you say you cannot return, for you are a *captive*. Then listen to the promise, "Surely He shall *deliver* you out of the snare of the fowler!" You shall yet be brought out of all evil into which you have fallen—and though you shall never cease to repent of your ways—yet He who has loved you will not cast you away; He will receive you, and give you joy and gladness, that the bones which He has broken may rejoice. No *bird of paradise* shall die in the fowler's net!

January 24 — Evening

"Martha was cumbered about much serving." Luke 10:40

Her fault was not that she *served*—the condition of a servant well befits every Christian. "*I serve,*" should be the motto of all the princes of the royal family of heaven. Nor was it her fault that she had "*much serving.*" We cannot do *too* much. Let us do all that we possibly can; let head, and heart, and hands, be engaged in the Master's service. It was no fault of hers that she was busy preparing a feast for the Master. Happy Martha, to have an opportunity of entertaining so blessed a guest; and happy, too, to have the spirit to throw her whole soul so heartily into the engagement. Her fault was that she grew "cumbered with much serving," so that she forgot *Him*, and only remembered the *service*. She allowed *service* to override *communion*, and so presented one duty—stained with the blood of another.

We ought to be Martha and Mary in one—we should do much service, and have much communion at the same time. For this we need great grace. It is easier to *serve*—than to *commune*. Joshua never grew weary in *fighting* with the Amalekites; but Moses, on the top of the mountain in *prayer*, needed two helpers to sustain his hands! The more spiritual the exercise—the sooner we tire in it. The choicest fruits—are the hardest to rear. The most heavenly graces—are the most difficult to cultivate.

Beloved, while we do not neglect external things, which are good enough in themselves, we ought also to see to it that we enjoy living, personal fellowship with Jesus. See to it that *sitting at the Savior's feet* is not neglected, even though it is under the specious pretext of doing Him *service*. The first thing for our soul's health—the first thing for His glory—and the first thing for our own usefulness—is to keep ourselves in perpetual communion with the Lord Jesus, and to see that the vital spirituality of our piety, is maintained over and above everything else in the world.

January 25 — Morning

"I will mention the *loving kindnesses* of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord has bestowed on us." Isaiah 63:7

And can you not do this? Are there no *mercies* which you have experienced? What though you are gloomy now, can you forget that blessed hour when Jesus met you, and said, "Come unto me!" Can you not remember that rapturous moment when He snapped your fetters, dashed your chains to the earth, and said, "I came to break your bonds and set you free!" Or if the love of your *espousals* is forgotten, there must surely be some precious *milestone* along the *road of life* not quite grown over with moss—on which you can read a happy memorial of His mercy towards you? What, did you never have a *sickness* like that which you are suffering now—and did He not restore you? Were you never *poor* before—and did He not supply your needs? Were you never in *difficulties* before—and did He not deliver you? Arise, go to the *river of your experience*, and pull up a few bulrushes, and weave them into an *ark*, wherein your infant-faith may float safely on the stream.

Do not forget what your God has done for you; turn over the *book of your remembrance*, and consider the days of old. Can you not remember the *hill Mizar*? Did the Lord never meet with you at *Hermon*? Have you never climbed the *Delectable Mountains*? Have you never been helped in time of need? Nay, I know you have! Go back, then, a little way to the choice mercies of yesterday, and though all may be dark now—light up the lamps of the past, they shall glitter through the darkness, and you shall trust in the Lord until the day breaks and the shadows flee away. "I remember, O Lord, your tender mercies and your loving kindnesses, for they have been ever of old."

January 25 — Evening

"Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law." Romans 3:31

When the believer is adopted into the Lord's family, his relationship to *old Adam* and the *law* ceases at once; but then he is under a new rule, and a new covenant. Believer, you are God's child; it is your first duty to obey your heavenly Father. A *servile* spirit—you have nothing to do with: you are not a *slave*—but a *child*; and now, inasmuch as you are a *beloved* child, you are bound to obey your Father's faintest wish, the least intimation of His will. Does He bid you fulfill a sacred ordinance? It is at your peril that you neglect it, for you will be disobeying your Father! Does He command you to seek the image of Jesus? It is not your joy to do so? Does Jesus tell you, "Be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect"? Then not because the law commands—but because your Savior enjoins, you will labor to be perfect in holiness. Does He bid his saints love one another? Do it, not because the law says, "Love your neighbor," but because Jesus says, "If you love Me—keep My commandments;" and this is the commandment that He has given unto you, "that you love one another." Are you told to distribute to the poor? Do it, not because charity is a burden which you dare not shirk—but because Jesus teaches, "Give to him who asks of you." Does the Word say, "Love God with all your heart"? Look at the commandment and reply, "Ah! commandment, Christ has fulfilled you already—I have no need, therefore, to fulfill you for my salvation—but I rejoice to yield obedience to you, because God is my Father now and He has a claim upon me, which I would not dispute."

May the Holy Spirit make your heart obedient to the *constraining power of Christ's love*, that your prayer may be, "Make me to go in the path of Your commandments; for therein do I delight." Grace is the mother and nurse of holiness—and not the license for sin.

January 26 — Morning

"Your heavenly Father." Matthew 6:26

God's people are doubly His children, they are His offspring by *creation*, and they are His sons by *adoption* in Christ. Hence they are privileged to call Him, "Our Father in heaven."

Father! Oh, what precious word is that!

Here is **authority**: "If I am a Father—where is my honor?" If you are sons, where is your obedience?

Here is **affection** mingled with authority; an authority which does not provoke rebellion; an obedience demanded which is most cheerfully rendered—which would not be withheld, even if it might. The obedience which God's children yield to Him, must be *loving* obedience. Do not go about the service of God as *slaves* to their taskmaster's toil—but run in the way of His commands, because it is your Father's way. Yield your bodies as instruments of righteousness, because righteousness is your Father's will, and His will should be the will of His child.

Father! Here is a kingly attribute so sweetly veiled in love, that the King's *crown* is forgotten in the King's *face*, and His scepter becomes, not a rod of *iron*—but a silver scepter of *mercy*—the scepter indeed seems to be forgotten in the *tender hand* of Him who wields it!

Father! Here is honor and love. How great is a Father's love to his children! That which *friendship* cannot do, and mere *benevolence* will not attempt—a father's heart and hand must do for his sons. They are his offspring—he must bless them; they are his children—he must show himself strong in their defense. If an earthly father watches over his children with unceasing love and care—how much more does our heavenly Father?

Abba, Father! He who can say this, has uttered better music than cherubim or seraphim can reach! There is *heaven* in the depth of that word—Father! There is all I can *ask*; all my *necessities* can demand; all my *wishes* can desire. I have *all in all to all eternity* when I can say, *Father!*

January 26 — Evening

"All those who heard it—wondered at those things." Luke 2:18

We must not cease to *wonder* at the great marvels of our God. It would be very difficult to draw a line between holy wonder—and real worship; for when the soul is overwhelmed with the majesty of God's glory, though it may not express itself in song, or even utter its voice with bowed head in humble prayer—yet it *silently adores*. Our incarnate God is to be worshiped as "the Wonderful."

That God should consider His fallen creature, man, and instead of sweeping him away with the *broom of destruction*, should Himself undertake to be man's Redeemer, and to pay his ransom price—is, indeed marvelous! But to each believer, redemption is most marvelous—as he views it in relation to *himself*. It is a miracle of grace indeed, that Jesus should forsake the thrones and royalties above, to suffer ignominiously below for *you!* Let your soul lose itself in wonder, for wonder is in this way, a very practical emotion. Holy *wonder* will lead you to grateful *worship* and heartfelt *thanksgiving*. It will cause within you godly *watchfulness*; you will be afraid to sin against such a love as this.

Feeling the presence of the mighty God in the gift of His dear Son, you will put off your shoes from your feet, because the place whereon you stand is holy ground. You will be moved at the same time to glorious *hope*. If Jesus has done such marvelous things on your behalf, you will feel that heaven itself is not too great for your expectation. Who can be astonished at anything—when he has once been astonished at the *manger* and the *cross!* What is there wonderful left— after one has seen the Savior! Dear reader, it may be that from the quietness and solitariness of your life, you are scarcely able to imitate the shepherds of Bethlehem, who told what they had seen and heard—but you can, at least, fill up the circle of the worshipers before the throne, by astonishment at what God has done!

January 27 — Morning

"From the fullness of His grace—we have all received one blessing after another."

John 1:16

These words tell us that there is a *fullness in Christ*. There is a fullness of essential *Deity*, for "in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead." There is a fullness of perfect *manhood*, for in Him, bodily, that Godhead was revealed. There is a fullness of *atonement efficacy* in His blood, for "the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin." There is a fullness of *justifying righteousness* in His life, for "there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." There is a fullness of divine prevalence in His *plea*, for "He is able to save to the uttermost, all who come unto God by Him; seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them." There is a fullness of victory in His *death*, for through death He destroyed him who had the power of death, that is the devil. There is a fullness of efficacy in His *resurrection* from the dead, for by it "we are begotten again unto a lively hope." There is a fullness of triumph in His *ascension*, for "when He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and received gifts for men."

There is a fullness of blessings of every sort and shape; a fullness of grace to *pardon*, of grace to *regenerate*, of grace to *sanctify*, of grace to *preserve*, and of grace to perfect. There is a fullness at all times; a fullness of *comfort* in affliction; a fullness of *guidance* in prosperity. A fullness of every divine attribute—of wisdom, of power, of love; a fullness which it were impossible to survey, much less to explore. "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell." Oh, what a fullness must this be—of which all receive! Fullness, indeed, must there be when the *stream* is always flowing, and yet the *well* springs up as free, as rich, as full as ever. Come, believer, and get all your need supplied; ask largely, and you shall receive largely, for this "fullness" is inexhaustible, and is treasured up where all the needy may reach it—even in Jesus, Immanuel—God with us!

January 27 — Evening

"But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart." Luke 2:19

There was an exercise on the part of this blessed woman, of three powers of her being:

her *memory*—she *kept* all these things;

her *affections*—she kept them in her *heart*;

her *intellect*—she *pondered* them.

So that memory, affection, and understanding, were all exercised about the things which she had heard.

Beloved, *remember* what you have heard of your Lord Jesus, and what He has done for you; make your heart the golden pot of manna to preserve the memorial of the heavenly bread whereon you have fed in days gone by. Let your **memory** treasure up everything about Christ which you have either felt, or known, or believed—and then let your fond **affections** hold Him fast for evermore. Love the person of your Lord! Bring forth the alabaster box of your heart, even though it is broken, and let all the precious ointment of your affection come streaming on His pierced feet. Let your **intellect** be exercised concerning the Lord Jesus. *Meditate* upon what you read—do not stop at the surface—dive into the depths! Do not be as the *swallow* which touches the brook with her wing—but as the *fish* which penetrates the lowest wave. Abide with your Lord—let Him not be to you as a wayfaring man, that tarries for a night—but constrain Him, saying, "Abide with us, for the day is far spent." Hold Him, and do not let Him go!

The word "ponder," means to *weigh*. Make ready the balances of judgment. Oh—but where are the scales that can weigh the Lord Christ? "He takes up the *islands* as a very little thing:" who shall take *Him* up? "He weighs the mountains in scales" in what scales shall we weigh Him? Be it so, if your *understanding* cannot comprehend, let your *affections* apprehend; and if your spirit cannot compass the Lord Jesus in the grasp of *understanding*, let it embrace Him in the arms of *affection*!

January 28 — Morning

"Perfect in Christ Jesus." Colossians 1:28

Do you not feel in your own soul—that perfection is not in you? Does not every day teach you that? Every tear which trickles from your eye—weeps "imperfection"; every harsh word which proceeds from your lip—mutters "imperfection." You have too frequently had a view of your own heart—to dream for a moment of any perfection in yourself. But amidst this sad consciousness of imperfection, here is comfort for you—you are "perfect in Christ Jesus." In God's sight, you are "complete in Him;" even now you are "accepted in the Beloved."

But there is a second perfection—yet to be realized, which is sure to all the chosen seed. Is it not delightful, to look forward to the time when every stain of sin shall be removed from the believer, and he shall be presented faultless before the throne, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing? The Church of Christ then will be so pure, that not even the eye of Omniscience will see a spot or blemish in her; so holy and so glorious, that Joseph Hart did not go beyond the truth when he said—"With my Savior's garments on—Holy as the Holy One." Then shall we know, and taste, and feel the happiness of this vast but short sentence, "Complete in Christ!" Not until then shall we fully comprehend the heights and depths of the salvation of Jesus. Does not your heart leap for joy at the thought of it? As black as you are—you shall be white one day! As filthy as you are—you shall be pure. Oh, it is a marvelous salvation! Christ takes a worm—and transforms it into an seraph! Christ takes a vile and deformed thing—and makes it pure and matchless in His glory, peerless in His beauty, and fit to be His eternal companion! O my soul, stand and admire this blessed truth, of perfection in Christ.

January 28 — Evening

"And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them." Luke 2:20

What was the *subject* of their praise? They praised God for what they had *heard*—for the good tidings of great joy that a Savior was born unto them. Let us copy them; let us also raise a song of thanksgiving that we have heard of Jesus and His salvation.

They also praised God for what they had *seen*. There is the sweetest music—what we have *experienced*, what we have *felt* within, what we have made our own, "the things which we have made touching the King." It is not enough to *hear* about Jesus: mere hearing may tune the harp—but the *fingers of living faith* must create the music. If you have seen Jesus with the God-giving sight of faith, allow no cobwebs to linger among the harp-strings—but awake your psaltery and harp loud to the praise of sovereign grace!

One point for which they praised God was the agreement between what they had *heard* and what they had *seen*. Observe the last sentence, "As it was told unto them." Have you not found the *gospel* to be in yourselves, just what the *Bible* said it would be? Jesus said He would give you *rest*—have you not enjoyed the sweetest peace in Him? He said you should have *joy*, and *comfort*, and *life* through believing in Him—have you not received all these? Are not His ways—ways of pleasantness, and His paths—paths of peace? Surely you can say with the queen of Sheba, "The half has not been told to me! I have found Christ more sweet than His servants ever said He was. I looked upon His likeness as they painted it—but it was a mere *daub* compared with Himself; for the King in His beauty outshines all imaginable loveliness!" Surely what we have "seen" keeps pace with, nay, far exceeds, what we have "heard." Let us, then, glorify and praise God for a Savior so precious, and so satisfying.

January 29 — Morning

"We fix our eyes not on what is seen—but on what is unseen.

For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal!" 2 Corinthians 4:18

In our Christian pilgrimage it is well, for the most part, to be *looking forward*. Forward lies the crown, and onward is the goal. Whether it is for hope, for joy, for consolation, or for the inspiring of our love—the *future* must, after all, be *the grand object of the eye of faith!* Looking into the future—we see sin cast out, the body of sin and death destroyed, the soul made perfect, and fit to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. Looking further yet, the believer's enlightened eye can see death's river passed, the gloomy stream forded, and the hills of light attained on which stands the celestial city. He sees himself enter within the pearly gates, hailed as more than conqueror, crowned by the hand of Christ, embraced in the arms of Jesus, glorified with Him, and made to sit together with Him on His throne, even as He has overcome and has sat down with the Father on His throne.

Contemplation of my glorious *future*—may well relieve the darkness of the *past*—and the gloom of the *present*. The *joys of heaven* will surely compensate for the *sorrows of earth!* Hush, hush, my fears! Death is but a narrow stream, and you shall soon have forded it. *Time*—how short; *eternity*—how long! *Death*—how brief; *immortality*—how endless! Methinks I even now eat of Eshcol's clusters, and sip of the well which is within the gate. The road is so, so short! I shall soon be there!

"In the future, there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on that day; and not only to me, but to all those who have loved His appearing!"

2 Timothy 4:8

January 29 — Evening

"The dove came in to him in the evening." Genesis 8:11

Blessed be the Lord for another day of mercy—even though I am now weary with its toils. Unto the preserver of men, I lift my song of gratitude. The dove found no rest out of the ark, and therefore returned to it; and my soul has learned yet more fully than ever, this day, that *there is no satisfaction to be found in earthly things*—God alone can give rest to my spirit.

As to my business, my possessions, my family, my attainments—these are all well enough in their way—but they cannot fulfill the desires of my immortal nature. "Return unto your rest—O my soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you."

It was at the still hour, when the gates of the day were closing, that with weary wing the dove came back to the master. "O Lord, enable me this evening thus to return to Jesus!" The dove could not endure to spend a night hovering over the restless waste, not can I bear to be even for another hour away from Jesus, the rest of my heart, the home of my spirit. The dove did not merely alight upon the *roof* of the ark, she "came in to him." Even so would my longing spirit look into the secret of the Lord, pierce to the interior of truth, enter into that which is within the veil, and reach to my Beloved in very deed. To Jesus must I come—short of the nearest and dearest communion with Him—my panting spirit cannot stay. "Blessed Lord Jesus, be with me, reveal Yourself, and abide with me all night—so that when I awake I may be still with you!"

I note that the dove brought in her mouth an olive branch, the memorial of the past day, and a prophecy of the future. Have I no pleasing record to bring home? No pledge of loving-kindness yet to come? "Yes, my Lord, I present You my grateful acknowledgments for tender mercies which have been new every morning and fresh every evening. And now, I ask You—put forth Your hand and take Your dove into Your bosom!"

January 30 — Morning

**"When you hear the *sound of marching* in the tops of the mulberry trees,
then you shall bestir yourself." 2 Samuel 5:24**

The members of Christ's Church should be very prayerful, always seeking the unction of the Holy One to rest upon their hearts, that the kingdom of Christ may come, and that His "will be done on earth, even as it is in heaven." But there are times when God seems especially to favor Zion, such seasons ought to be to them like "the sound of marching in the tops of the mulberry trees." We ought then to be doubly prayerful, doubly earnest, wrestling more at the throne than we have been accustomed to do. Action should then be prompt and vigorous. The *tide* is flowing—now let us pull manfully for the shore. O for Pentecostal outpourings and Pentecostal labors.

Christian, in yourself there are times "when you hear the *sound of marching* in the tops of the mulberry trees." You have a peculiar power in prayer; the Spirit of God gives you joy and gladness; the Scripture is open to you; the promises are applied; you walk in the light of God's countenance; you have peculiar freedom and liberty in devotion, and more closeness of communion with Christ than was your accustomed. Now, at such joyous periods—when you hear the "sound of a marching in the tops of the mulberry trees," is the time to *bestir* yourself. Now is the time to get rid of any evil habit, while God the Spirit helps your infirmities. Spread your sail—but remember what you sometimes sing, "I can only spread the sail; You alone must breathe the auspicious gale." Only be sure you have the sail up! Do not miss the gale—for lack of preparation for it. Seek help from God, that you may be more earnest in *duty*, when made more strong in faith; that you may be more constant in *prayer*, when you have more liberty at the throne; that you may be more holy in your walk, while you live more closely with Christ.

January 30 — Evening

"In Him also, we have obtained an inheritance." Ephesians 1:11

When Jesus gave Himself for us—He gave us all the rights and privileges which went with Himself. As eternal God, He has *essential* rights to which no creature may venture to pretend—yet as *Jesus*, the Mediator, the federal Head of the covenant of grace—He has no inheritance apart from us. All the glorious consequences of His obedience unto death—are the joint riches of all who are in Him, and on whose behalf He accomplished the divine will.

See, He enters into glory—but not for Himself alone, for it is written, "Where the Forerunner has entered for us." Hebrews 6:20. Does He stand in the presence of God? "He appears in the presence of God for us." Hebrews 9:24. Consider this, believer. You have no right to heaven *in yourself*; your right lies *in Christ*. If you are *pardoned*, it is through His blood; if you are *justified*, it is through His righteousness; if you are *sanctified*, it is because He is made of God unto you sanctification; if you shall be *kept from falling*, it will be because you are preserved in Christ Jesus; and if you are *perfected* at the last, it will be because you are complete in Him.

Thus Jesus is magnified—for all is *in* Him and *by* Him; thus the *inheritance* is made certain to us—for it is obtained in Him; thus each *blessing* is the sweeter, and even heaven itself the brighter, because it is Jesus our Beloved "in whom" we have obtained all!

Where is the man who shall estimate our divine portion? Weigh the riches of Christ in scales, and His treasure in balances—and then think to count the treasures which belong to the saints. Reach the bottom of Christ's sea of joy—and then hope to understand the bliss which God has prepared for those who love Him! Overleap the boundaries of Christ's possessions, and then dream of a *limit* to the fair inheritance of the elect! "All things are yours—for you are Christ's!"

January 31 — Morning

"The Lord our Righteousness." Jeremiah 23:6

It will always give a Christian the greatest calm, quiet, ease, and peace—to think of the perfect righteousness of Christ. How often are the saints of God downcast and sad! I do not think they ought to be. I do not think they would be—if they could always see their perfection in Christ. There are some who are always talking about corruption, and the depravity of the heart, and the innate evil of the soul. This is quite true—but why not go a little further, and remember that we are "perfect in Christ Jesus!" It is no wonder that those who are dwelling upon their *own corruption* should wear such downcast looks; but surely if we call to mind that "Christ is made unto us, righteousness," we shall be of good cheer!

What though distresses afflict me, though Satan assaults me, though there may be many troublesome things to be experienced before I get to heaven, those are done for me in the covenant of divine grace; there is nothing wanting in my Lord, Christ has done it all. On the cross He said, "It is finished!" and if it is finished, then am I complete in Him, and can rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, "Not having my own righteousness, which is of the law—but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith!"

You will not find on this side heaven a holier people—than those who receive into their hearts the doctrine of Christ's righteousness. When the believer says, "I live on Christ alone; I rest on Him solely for salvation; and I believe that, however unworthy, I am still saved in Jesus;" then there rises up as a motive of gratitude this thought, "Shall I not *live* to Christ? Shall I not love Him and serve Him, seeing that I am saved by His merits?" "The love of Christ constrains us!" "Those who which live—should not henceforth live unto themselves but unto Him which died for them." If saved by *imputed* righteousness, we shall greatly value *imparted* righteousness.

January 31 — Evening

"Then Ahimaaz *ran* by the way of the plain, and overran Cushi." 2 Samuel 18:23

Running is not everything—there is much in the *road* which we select. A swift foot running up hills—will not keep pace with a slower traveler upon level ground. How is it with *my* spiritual journey? Am I laboring up the hill of my own *works*—and down into the ravines of my own *humiliations* and *resolutions*, or do I run by the plain way of "Believe and live"?

How blessed is it to wait upon the Lord by faith! The soul runs without weariness, and walks without fainting, in the way of believing. Christ Jesus is the way of life, and He is a *plain way*, a *pleasant way*, a way *suitable* for the tottering feet and feeble knees of trembling sinners! Am I found in this way—or am I hunting after another track such as priestcraft or science may promise me?

I read of the way of holiness, that the wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein. Have I been delivered from *proud reason* and been brought as a little child to rest in Jesus' love and blood? If so, by God's grace I shall outrun the strongest runner who chooses any other path.

This truth I may remember to my profit—in my daily cares and needs. It will be my wisest course to go at once to my *God*, and not to wander in a roundabout manner to this *friend* and that. *He* knows my needs and can relieve them—to whom should I repair but to *Himself* by the direct appeal of prayer, and the plain argument of the promise. "Straightforward makes the best runner." I will not parlay with the *servants*—but hasten to their *master!*

In reading this passage, it strikes me that if men vie with each other in common matters, and one outruns the other, *I* ought to be in solemn earnestness so to run that I may obtain. Lord, help me to gird up the loins of my mind, and may I press forward towards the mark for the prize of my high calling of God in Christ Jesus!

February 1 — Morning

"They shall sing in the ways of the Lord." Psalm 138:5

The time when Christians begin to sing in the ways of the Lord—is when they first lose their burden at the foot of the Cross. Not even the songs of the angels seem so sweet, as the first song of rapture which gushes from the inmost soul of the forgiven child of God! You know how John Bunyan describes it. He says when poor Pilgrim lost his burden at the Cross, he gave three great leaps, and went on his way singing, "Blessed Cross! blessed Sepulcher! blessed rather be the man who there was put to shame for me!"

Believer, do you recollect the *day* when your fetters fell off? Do you remember the *place* when Jesus met you, and said, "I have loved you with an everlasting love! I have blotted out as a cloud your transgressions, and as a thick cloud your sins—they shall not be mentioned against you any more forever!" Oh! what a sweet season is that—when Jesus takes away the pain of sin!

When the Lord first pardoned *my* sin, I was so joyous that I could scarcely refrain from dancing. I thought on my road home from the house where I had been set at liberty, that I must tell the stones in the street the story of my deliverance. So full was my soul of joy, that I wanted to tell every snow-flake that was falling from heaven—of the wondrous love of Jesus, who had blotted out the sins of one of the chief of rebels!

But it is not only at the *commencement* of the Christian life that believers have reason for song; as long as they live they discover cause to sing in the ways of the Lord, and their experience of His constant loving-kindness leads them to say, "I will bless the Lord at all times: His praise shall continually be in my mouth." See to it, brother, that you magnify the Lord this day. "As long as we tread this desert land—new mercies shall new songs demand."

February 1 — Evening

"Your love to me was wonderful." 2 Samuel 1:26

Come, dear readers, let each one of us speak for himself of the wonderful love, not of *Jonathan*—but of *Jesus*. We will not relate what we have been *told*—but the things which we have *tasted* and *handled* of the love of Christ.

"Your love to me, O Jesus, was wonderful when I was a stranger wandering far from You, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind. Your love restrained me from committing the sin which is unto death, and withheld me from self-destruction. Your love held back the *axe* when *Justice* said, "Cut it down! why does it cumber the ground?" Your love drew me into the wilderness, stripped me there, and made me feel the guilt of my sin, and the burden of my iniquity. Your love spoke thus comfortably to me, when I was sore dismayed, 'Come unto Me—and I will give you rest.' Oh, how matchless was Your love when, in a moment, You washed my sins away, and made my polluted soul, which was *crimson* with the blood of my nativity, and *black* with the grime of my transgressions, to be white as the newly fallen snow, and pure as the finest wool. How You commended Your love—when You whispered in my ears, 'I am yours—and you are Mine!' Kind were those accents when You said, 'The Father Himself loves you!' And sweet were the moments, when You manifested to me, 'the love of the Spirit.' Never shall my soul forget those chambers of fellowship where You have unveiled Yourself to me!"

Had Moses his *cleft* in the rock, where he saw the back parts of his God? We, too, have had our clefts in the rock, where we have seen the full splendors of the Godhead in the person of Christ. Did David remember the tracks of the wild goat, the land of Jordan and the Hermonites? We, too, can remember spots to memory dear, equal to these in blessedness. Precious Lord Jesus—give us a fresh draught of Your wondrous love, to begin the month with. Amen.

February 2 — Morning

"Without the shedding of blood is no remission of sin." Hebrews 9:22

This is the voice of unalterable truth. In none of the Jewish ceremonies, were sins, even typically, removed without blood-shedding. In no case, by no means—can sin be pardoned without atonement. It is clear, then, that there is no hope for me, outside of Christ; for there is no other blood-shedding which is worth a thought—as an atonement for sin. Am *I*, then, believing in Him? Is the blood of His atonement truly applied to *my* soul? All men are on a *level*—as to their need of Him. If we are ever so moral, generous, amiable, or patriotic—the rule will not be altered to make an exception for us. Sin will yield to nothing less potent—than the blood of Him whom God has set forth as an atoning sacrifice.

What a blessing that there is the *one* way of pardon! Why should we seek another? People of merely *formal religion* cannot understand how we can rejoice that all our sins are forgiven us for Christ's sake. Their works, and prayers, and ceremonies, give them very poor comfort; and well may they be uneasy, for they are neglecting the one great salvation, and endeavoring to get remission of sin—without blood.

My soul, sit down, and behold the justice of God as bound to punish sin! See that punishment all executed upon your Lord Jesus—and fall down in humble joy, and kiss the dear feet of Him whose blood has made atonement for you! It is in vain when conscience is aroused to fly to *feelings* and *evidences* for comfort—this is a habit which we learned in the Egypt of our legal bondage. The only restorative for a guilty conscience—is a sight of Jesus suffering on the cross! "The blood is the life thereof," says the Levitical law, and let us rest assured, that it is the life of *faith* and *joy* and every other holy *grace*. "Oh! how sweet to view the flowing Of my Savior's precious blood—with divine assurance knowing He has made my peace with God."

February 2 — Evening

"And these are *ancient* things." 1 Chronicles 4:22

Yet not so ancient as those precious things which are the delight of our souls. Let us for a moment recount them, counting them over as misers count their gold. The sovereign choice of the Father, by which He elected us unto eternal life, before ever the earth was, is a matter of vast antiquity, since no date can be conceived for it by the mind of man. We were chosen from before the foundations of the world. Everlasting love went with the choice, for it was not a bare act of divine will by which we were set apart—but the divine affections were concerned. The Father loved us—in and *from* the beginning. Here is a theme for daily contemplation! The eternal purpose to redeem us from our foreseen ruin, to cleanse and sanctify us, and at last to glorify us—was of infinite antiquity, and runs side by side with *immutable love* and *absolute sovereignty*.

The covenant is always described as being everlasting, and Jesus, the second party in it, had His goings forth of old; He struck hands in sacred suretyship long before the first of the stars began to shine, and it was in Him, that the elect were ordained unto eternal life. Thus in the divine purpose, a most blessed covenant union was established between the Son of God—and His elect people, which will remain as the foundation of their safety when time shall be no more!

Is it not well—to be conversant with these ancient things? Is it not shameful—that they should be so much neglected and even rejected by the bulk of professors? If they knew more of *their own sin*—would they not be more ready to adore *His sovereign grace*? Let us both admire and adore tonight, as we sing,

"A monument of grace,
A sinner saved by blood;
The streams of love I trace
Up to the Fountain, God;
And in His sacred bosom see
Eternal thoughts of Love to me!"

February 3 — Morning

"Therefore, brethren, we are *debtors*." Romans 8:12

As God's *creatures*, we are all debtors to Him—to obey Him with all our body, and soul, and strength. Having broken His commandments, as we all have, we are debtors to His *justice*, and we owe to Him a vast amount which we are not able to pay. But of the Christian it can be said—that he does not owe God's justice anything, for Christ has paid the debt His people owed; for this reason the believer owes the more, to *love*. I am a debtor to God's grace and forgiving mercy; but I am no debtor to His justice, for He will never accuse me of a debt already paid! Christ said, "It is finished!" and by that He meant, that whatever sin-debt His people owed—was wiped away forever from the book of remembrance. Christ, to the uttermost, has satisfied divine justice; the account is settled; the handwriting is nailed to the cross; the receipt is given, and we are debtors to God's justice no longer.

But then, because we are not debtors to our Lord in that sense, we become ten times more debtors to God than we would have been otherwise. Christian, pause and ponder for a moment. What a debtor you are to divine sovereignty! How much you owe to His *selfless love*, for He gave His own Son that He might die for you. Consider how much you owe to His *forgiving grace*, that after receiving ten thousand affronts from you—He loves you as infinitely as ever! Consider what you owe to His power; how He has raised you from your death in sin; how He has preserved your spiritual life; how He has kept you from falling; and how, though a thousand enemies have beset your path—you have been able to hold on your way. Consider what you owe to His immutability. Though you have changed a thousand times—He has not changed once! You are as deep in debt as you can be—to every attribute of God. To God you owe yourself, and all you have—yield yourself as a living sacrifice, it is but your reasonable service.

February 3 — Evening

"Tell me... where You feed, where You make Your flock to rest at noon." Song of Solomon 1:7

These words express the desire of the believer after Christ, and his longing for present communion with Him. Where do You feed Your flock? In Your *house*? I will go, if I may find You there. In private *prayer*? Then I will pray without ceasing. In the *Word*? Then I will read it diligently. In Your *ordinances*? Then I will walk in them with all my heart. Tell me where You feed, for wherever You stand as the *Shepherd*, there will I lie down as a *sheep*; for none but Yourself can supply my need. I cannot be satisfied to be apart from You. My soul hungers and thirsts for the refreshment of Your presence.

"Where do You make Your flock to rest at noon?" for whether at dawn or at noon, my only rest must be where You are and Your beloved flock.

My soul's rest must be a grace-given rest—and can only be found in You. Where is the shadow of that rock? Why should I not repose beneath it? "Why should I be as one who turns aside by the flocks of your companions?" You have companions—why should I not be one? Satan tells me I am unworthy; but I always was unworthy, and yet You have long loved me; and therefore my unworthiness cannot be a bar to my having fellowship with You now. It is true I am weak in faith, and prone to fall—but my very feebleness is the reason why I should always be where You feed Your flock, that I may be strengthened, and preserved in safety beside the still waters. Why should I turn aside? There is no reason why I should—but there are a thousand reasons why I should not—for Jesus beckons me to come. If He withdrew Himself a little, it is but to make me prize His presence more. Now that I am grieved and distressed at being away from Him—He will lead me yet again to that sheltered nook where the lambs of His fold are sheltered from the burning sun.

February 4 — Morning

"The love of the Lord." Hosea 3:1

Believer, look back through all your experience, and think of the way whereby the Lord your God has led you in the *wilderness*, and how He has fed and clothed you every day—how He has borne with your sins and failings—how He has put up with all your murmurings, and all your longings after the flesh-pots of Egypt—how He has opened the rock to supply you, and fed you with manna which came down from heaven. Think of how His grace has been sufficient for you in all your troubles—how His *blood* has been a pardon to you in all your sins—how His *rod* and His *staff* have comforted you. When you have thus looked back upon the love of the Lord—then let faith survey His love in the *future*, for remember that Christ's covenant and blood have something more in them than the past. He who has loved you and pardoned you, shall never cease to love and pardon.

He is Alpha, and He shall be Omega also! He is first, and He shall be last. Therefore, remember, when you shall pass through the valley of the shadow of death—you need fear no evil, for He is with you! When you shall stand in the cold floods of Jordan, you need not fear, for death cannot separate you from His love! And when you shall come into the mysteries of eternity, you need not tremble, "For I am persuaded, that neither death; nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature—shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord!" Now, soul, is not your love refreshed? Does not this make you love Jesus? Does not a flight through *illimitable plains of the ether of love* inflame your heart and compel you to delight yourself in the Lord your God? Surely as we meditate on "the love of the Lord," our hearts will burn within us, and we long to love Him more!

February 4 — Evening

"Your refuge from the avenger of blood." Joshua 20:3

It is said that in the land of Canaan, cities of refuge were so arranged, that any man might reach one of them, within half a day at the utmost. Just so, the Word of our salvation is near to us; Jesus is a *present* Savior—and the *way* to Him is short. It is but a simple renunciation of our own merit—and a laying hold of Jesus, to be our all in all.

With regard to the *roads* to the city of refuge, we are told that they were strictly maintained, every river was bridged, and every obstruction removed, so that the man who fled, might find an easy passage to the city. Once a year the elders went along the roads and saw to their upkeep, so that nothing might impede the flight of any one, and cause him, through delay, to be overtaken and slain. Just so, how graciously do the *promises* of the gospel remove stumbling blocks from the way!

Wherever there were by-roads and turnings, there were fixed up sign-posts, with the inscription upon them, "To the city of refuge!" This is a picture of the road to Christ Jesus. It is no *roundabout* road of the law; it is no obeying this, that, and the other commandment; it is a *straight* road: "Believe—and live!" It is a road so hard, that no *self-righteous* man can ever tread it—but so easy, that every *sinner*, who knows himself to be a sinner—may by it find his way to heaven.

No sooner did the man-slayer reach the outworks of the city—than he was safe! It was not necessary for him to pass far within the walls—but the suburbs themselves were sufficient protection. Learn hence, that if you do but *touch the hem of Christ's garment*, you shall be made whole; if you do but lay hold upon him with "faith as a grain of mustard seed," you are safe. "A little genuine grace—ensures the forgiveness of all our sins." Only waste no time—do not loiter along the way, for the avenger of blood is swift of foot—and it may be he is at your heels at this still hour of eventide!

February 5 — Morning

"The *Father* sent the Son to be the Savior of the world." 1 John 4:14

It is a sweet thought that Jesus Christ did not come forth without His Father's permission, authority, consent, and assistance. He was sent by the Father—that He might be the Savior of men. We are too apt to forget that, while there are distinctions as to the persons in the Trinity, there are no distinctions of honor. We too frequently ascribe the honor of our salvation, or at least the depths of its benevolence, more to Jesus Christ—than we do the Father. This is a very great mistake. What if Jesus came? Did not His Father *send* Him? If He spoke wondrously, did not His Father pour grace into His lips, that He might be an able minister of the new covenant?

He who knows the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit as he should know them—never sets one before another in his love; he sees them at Bethlehem, at Gethsemane, and on Calvary—all equally engaged in the work of salvation. O Christian, have you put your confidence in the Man Christ Jesus? Have you placed your reliance solely on Him? And are you united with Him? Then believe that you are united unto the God of heaven.

Since to the Man Christ Jesus you are brother, and hold closest fellowship, you are in eternal union thereby with God. The Eternal God, and "the Ancient of days" is your Father and your friend! Did you ever consider the depth of love in the heart of Jehovah, when God the Father equipped His Son for the great enterprise of mercy? If not—may this be your day's meditation. The Father sent Him! Contemplate that subject. Think how *Jesus works*—what the *Father wills*. In the wounds of the dying Savior—see the love of the great *I AM*. Let every thought of Jesus be also connected with the Eternal, ever-blessed God, for "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him—He has put Him to grief."

February 5 — Evening

"At that time, Jesus answered." Matthew 11:25

This is a singular way in which to commence a verse, "At that time, Jesus answered." If you will look at the context, you will not see that any person had asked Him a question, or that He was in conversation with any human being. Yet it is written, "Jesus *answered* and said, I thank You, O Father." When a man *answers*, he answers a person who has been speaking to him. *Who*, then, had spoken to Christ? His Father! Yet there is no record of it; and this should teach us that Jesus had constant fellowship with His Father, and that God spoke into His heart so often, so continually, that it was not a circumstance singular enough to be recorded. It was the habit and life of Jesus to talk with His Father.

Even as Jesus was in this world—so are we; let us therefore learn the lesson which this simple statement concerning Him teaches us. May we likewise have silent fellowship with the Father, so that often we may answer Him, and though the world knows not to whom we speak, may we be responding to that secret voice, unheard by any other ear, which our own ear, opened by the Spirit of God, recognizes with joy. God has spoken to us, let us speak to God—either to set our seal that God is true and faithful to His promise, or to confess the sin of which the Spirit of God has convinced us, or to acknowledge the mercy which God's providence has given, or to express assent to the great truths which God the Holy Spirit has opened to our understanding.

What a *privilege* is intimate communion with the Father of our spirits! It is a secret hidden from the world, a joy with which even the nearest friend cannot understand. If we would *hear* the whispers of God's love—our *ear* must be purged and fitted to listen to His voice. This very evening may our hearts be in such a state, that when *God speaks* to us—we, like Jesus, may be prepared at once to *answer* Him.

February 6 — Morning

"Praying always." Ephesians 6:18

What multitudes of prayers we have put up, from the first moment when we learned to pray. Our first prayer was a prayer for *ourselves*; we asked that God would have mercy upon us, and blot out our sin. He heard us. But when He had blotted out our countless sins—then we had more prayers for ourselves. We have had to pray for *sanctifying* grace, for *constraining* and *restraining* grace; we have been led to crave for a fresh *assurance* of faith, for the comfortable application of the *promise*, for *deliverance* in the hour of temptation, for *help* in the time of duty, and for *succor* in the day of trial. We have been compelled to go to God for our souls—as constant beggars, asking for everything.

Bear witness, children of God, you have never been able to get anything for your souls elsewhere else. All the *bread* your soul has eaten—has come down from heaven; and all the *water* of which it has drunk—has flowed from the living rock—Christ Jesus the Lord. Your soul has never grown rich in itself; it has always been a *poor pensioner upon the daily bounty of God*; and hence your prayers have ascended to heaven—for a range of spiritual mercies all but infinite. Your *needs* were innumerable, and therefore the *supplies* have been infinitely great! Your prayers have been as *varied*—as the mercies have been *countless*. Then have you not cause to say, "I love the Lord, because He has heard the voice of my supplication!" For as your *prayers* have been many, so also have been God's *answers* to them. He has heard you in the day of trouble, has strengthened you, and helped you—even when you dishonored Him by trembling and doubting at the mercy-seat. Remember this, and let it fill your heart with gratitude to God, who has thus graciously heard your poor weak prayers. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits!"

February 6 — Evening

"Pray one for another." James 5:16

As an encouragement cheerfully to offer intercessory prayer, remember that *such* prayer is the sweetest God ever hears, for the *prayer of Christ* is of this character. In all the *incense* which our Great High Priest now puts into the golden censer—there is not a single grain for *Himself*. His intercession must be the most acceptable of all supplications—and the more our prayer is like Christ's, the sweeter it will be. Thus while petitions for *ourselves* will be accepted, our pleadings for *others*, having in them more of the fruits of the Spirit, more love, more faith, more brotherly kindness, will be, through the precious merits of Jesus—the sweetest oblation that we can offer to God—the very *fat* of our sacrifice.

Remember, again, that intercessory prayer is exceedingly *prevalent*. What *wonders* it has wrought! The Word of God teems with its marvelous deeds. Believer, you have a mighty *engine* in your hand, use it well, use it constantly, use it with faith, and you shall surely be a benefactor to your brethren. When you have the *King's ear*—speak to Him for the suffering members of His body. When you are favored to draw very near to His throne, and the King says to you, "Ask—and I will give you what you will," let your petitions be, not for yourself alone—but for the many who need His aid.

If you have grace at all, and are not an intercessor, that grace must be small as a grain of dust. You have just enough grace to float your soul clear from the quicksand—but you have no *deep floods* of grace, or else you would carry in your joyous bark—a weighty cargo of the needs of others, and you would bring back from your Lord, for them, rich blessings which but for you they might not have obtained.

"Oh, let my hands forget their skill,
My tongue be silent, cold, and still,
This bounding heart forget to beat,
If I forget the mercy-seat!"

February 7 — Morning

"Arise, and depart." Micah 2:10

The hour is approaching when the message will come to us, as it comes to all, "Arise, and go forth from the *home* in which you have dwelt, from the *city* in which you have done your business, from your *family*, from your *friends*. Arise, and take your *last journey!*"

What do we know of the *journey*? What do we know of the *country* to which we are bound? We have *read* a little thereof, and a measure has been revealed to us by the *Spirit*; but how little do we know of the *realms of the future!* We know that there is a black and stormy river called "Death." God bids us to cross it, promising to be with us. And, after death, what then? What *wonder-world* will open upon our astonished sight? What *scene of glory* will be unfolded to our view? No traveler has ever returned to tell. But we know enough of the heavenly land—to make us welcome our summons there with joy and gladness!

The *journey of death* may be dark—but we may go forth on it fearlessly, knowing that God is with us as we walk through the gloomy valley, and therefore we need fear no evil. We shall be departing from all we have known and loved here—but we shall be going to our Father's *house*—to our Father's *home*, where *Jesus* is—to that royal "city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God." This shall be our last abode—to dwell forever with Him we love, in the midst of His people, in the presence of God.

Christian, meditate much on *heaven*—it will help you to press on, and to forget the *toil* of the way. This *valley of tears* is but the pathway to the better country! This present *world of woe* is but the stepping-stone to a *world of bliss*.

February 7 — Evening

"And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them—Come up hither!" Revelation 11:12

Without considering these words in their prophetic connection, let us regard them as the invitation of our great Forerunner to His sanctified people. In due time there shall be heard "a great voice from heaven" to every believer, saying, "Come up hither." This should be to the saints the subject of joyful anticipation. Instead of dreading the time when we shall leave this world to go unto the Father—we should be panting for the hour of our *emancipation*. Our song should be,

"My heart is with Him on His throne,
And ill can brook delay;
Each moment listening for the voice,
'Rise up and come away!'"

We are not called down to the *grave*—but up to the *skies*. Our heaven-born spirits should long for their native air. Yet the *celestial summons* should be the object of patient waiting. Our God knows best when to bid us "Come up hither!" We must not wish to antedate the period of our departure. I know that strong love will make us cry, "O Lord Almighty, the waves divide-and land us all in heaven;" but patience must have her perfect work. God ordains with accurate wisdom the most fitting time for the redeemed to abide below. Surely, if there could be regrets in heaven, the saints might mourn that they did not live longer here to do more good. Oh, for more *sheaves* for my Lord's garner! more *jewels* for His crown! But how, unless there is more work? True, there is the other side of it, that, living so briefly, our sins are the fewer; but oh! when we are fully serving God, and He is giving us to scatter precious seed, and reap a hundredfold, we would even say it is well for us to abide where we are. Whether our Master shall say "go," or "stay," let us be equally well pleased—so long as He indulges us with His presence.

February 8 — Morning

"You shall call his name *Jesus*." Matthew 1:21

When a person is dear, everything connected with him becomes dear for his sake. Thus, so precious is the person of the Lord Jesus in the estimation of all true believers, that everything about Him they consider to be inestimable beyond all price. "All Your *garments* smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia," said David, as if the very *garments* of the Savior were so sweetened by His person, that he could not but love them. Certain it is, that there is not a *spot* where that hallowed foot has trodden—there is not a *word* which those blessed lips have uttered—nor a *thought* which His loving Word has revealed—which is not to us precious beyond all price. And this is true of the *names* of Christ—they are all sweet in the believer's ear. Whether He is called the *Husband* of the Church, her *Bridegroom*, her *Friend*; whether He is styled the *Lamb* slain from the foundation of the world—the *King*, the *Prophet*, or the *Priest*—every *title* of our Master—Shiloh, Emmanuel, Wonderful, the Mighty Counselor—every *name* is like the honeycomb dropping with honey, and luscious are the drops that distill from it.

But if there is one name sweeter than another in the believer's ear, it is the name of Jesus. *Jesus!* it is the name which moves the harps of heaven to melody. *Jesus!* the life of all our joys. If there is one name more charming, more precious than another, it is this name. It is woven into the very warp and woof of our psalmody. Many of our hymns begin with it, and scarcely any, which are good for anything, end without it. It is the sum total of all delights. It is the music with which the bells of heaven ring; a song in a word; an ocean for comprehension, although a drop for brevity; a matchless oratorio in two syllables; a gathering up of the hallelujahs of eternity in five letters. "Jesus, I love Your charming name—'Tis music to my ear!"

February 8 — Evening

"He shall save His people from their sins." Matthew 1:21

Many people, if they are asked what they understand by salvation, will reply, "Being saved from hell—and taken to heaven." This is one *result* of salvation—but it is not one tenth of what is contained in that blessing. It is true our Lord Jesus Christ does redeem all His people from the wrath to come; He saves them from the fearful condemnation which their sins had brought upon them; but His triumph is far more complete than this. He saves His people "from their sins." Oh! sweet deliverance from our worst foes. Where Christ works a saving work—He casts Satan from his throne, and will not let him be *master* any longer.

No man is a true Christian—if sin *reigns* in his mortal body. Sin will be in us—it will never be utterly expelled, until the spirit enters glory; but it will never have *dominion*. There will be a striving for dominion—a lusting against the new law and the new spirit which God has implanted—but sin will never get the upper hand so as to be absolute monarch of our nature. Christ will be Master of the heart—and sin must be mortified. The Lion of the tribe of Judah shall prevail—and the dragon shall be cast out.

Professor! is sin subdued in you? If your *life* is unholy—your *heart* is unchanged; and if your heart is *unchanged*—you are an *unsaved* person. If the Savior has not sanctified you, renewed you, given you a hatred of sin and a love of holiness—He has done nothing in you of a saving character. The grace which does not make a man better than others—is a worthless counterfeit. Christ saves His people, not *in* their sins—but *from* them. "Without holiness—no man shall see the Lord." "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity." If not saved from sin, how shall we hope to be counted among His people. Lord, save me now from all evil, and enable me to honor my Savior.

February 9 — Morning

"And David enquired of the Lord." 2 Samuel 5:23

When David made this enquiry he had just fought the Philistines, and gained a signal victory. The Philistines came up in great multitudes—but, by the help of God, David had easily put them to flight. Note, however, that when they came a second time, David did not go up to fight them without enquiring of the Lord. Once he had been victorious, and he might have said, as many have in other cases, "I shall be victorious again; I may rest quite sure that if I have conquered once I shall triumph yet again. Why should I tarry to seek at the Lord's hands?" Not so with David. He had gained one battle by the strength of the Lord; he would not venture upon another until he had ensured the same. He enquired, "Shall I go up against them?" He waited until God's sign was given.

Learn from David—to take no step without God. Christian, if you would know the path of duty, take God for your *compass*; if you would steer your ship through the dark billows, put the help into the hand of the Almighty. Many a rock might be escaped, if we would let our Father take the helm; many a shoal or quicksand we might well avoid, if we would leave to His sovereign will—to choose and to command. The Puritan said, "As sure as ever a Christian *carves* for himself, he'll cut his own fingers;" this is a great truth. Said another old divine, "He who goes before the cloud of God's providence, goes on a fool's errand;" and so he does. We must mark God's providence leading us; and if providence tarries, tarry until providence comes. He who goes before providence, will be very glad to run back again. "I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you shall go," is God's promise to His people. Let us, then, take all our perplexities to Him, and say, "Lord, what will you have me to do?" Leave not your chamber this morning, without enquiring of the Lord.

February 9 — Evening

"Lead us not into temptation—but deliver us from evil [or, the evil one]." Luke 11:4

What we are taught to seek or shun in *prayer*, we should equally pursue or avoid in *action*. Very earnestly, therefore, should we avoid temptation, seeking to walk so guardedly in the path of obedience, that we may never *tempt the devil to tempt us*. We are not to enter the thicket, in search of the lion. Dearly might we pay for such presumption. This lion may cross our path or leap upon us from the thicket—but we have nothing to do with hunting him. He who meets with him, even though he wins the day, will find it a stern struggle. Let the Christian pray that he may be spared the encounter.

Our Savior, who had experience of what temptation meant, thus earnestly admonished His disciples, "Pray that you enter not into temptation." But let us do as we will—we shall be tempted; hence the prayer "deliver us from evil." *God had one Son without sin—but He has no son without temptation*. The natural man is born to trouble—as the sparks fly upwards; and the Christian man is born to temptation, just as certainly. We must be always on our watch against Satan, because, like a thief, he gives no intimation of his approach. Believers who have had experience of the ways of Satan, know that there are certain seasons when he will most probably make an attack, just as at certain seasons bleak winds may be expected; thus the Christian is put on a double guard by fear of danger, and the danger is averted by preparing to meet it. *Prevention* is better than *cure*: it is better to be so well armed that the devil will not attack you—than to endure the perils of the fight, even though you come off a conqueror. Pray this evening first that you may not be tempted, and next that if temptation is permitted, you may be delivered from the evil one.

February 10 — Morning

"I know how to *abound*." Philippians 4:12

There are many who know "how to be *abased*" who have not learned "how to *abound*." When they are set upon the top of a pinnacle, their heads grow dizzy, and they are ready to fall. The Christian far more often disgraces his profession in *prosperity*, than in *adversity*. It is a dangerous thing to be prosperous. The *crucible of adversity* is a less severe trial to the Christian, than the *refining-pot of prosperity*. Oh, what leanness of soul and neglect of spiritual things—have been brought on through the very *mercies* and *bounties* of God!

Yet this is not a matter of necessity, for the apostle tells us—that he knew how to *abound*. When he had much—he knew how to use it. Abundant *grace* enabled him to bear abundant *prosperity*. When he had a full sail—he was loaded with much *ballast*, and so floated safely. It needs more than human skill—to carry the *brimming cup of mortal joy* with a steady hand—yet Paul had learned that skill, for he declares, "In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being content—whether well-fed or hungry, whether in abundance or in need."

It is a divine lesson to know how to be full, for the Israelites were full once—but while the flesh was yet in their mouth, the wrath of God came upon them. Many have asked for mercies—that they might satisfy their own hearts' lust. Fullness of *bread* has often made fullness of *blood*, and that has brought on wantonness of spirit. When we have much of God's providential mercies—it often happens that we have but little of God's grace—and little gratitude for the bounties we have received. We are full and we forget God: satisfied with *earth*—we are content to do without *heaven*. Rest assured it is harder to know how to be *full*—than it is to know how to be hungry—so desperate is the tendency of human nature to pride and forgetfulness of God. Take care that you ask in your prayers that God would teach you "how to be full." "Let not the gifts Your love bestows—estrangle our hearts from You."

February 10 — Evening

"I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and, as a cloud, your sins. Return unto Me—for I have redeemed you." Isaiah 44:22

Attentively observe *the INSTRUCTIVE SIMILITUDE*: our *sins* are like a *cloud*. As clouds are of many shapes and shades, so are our transgressions. As clouds obscure the light of the sun, and darken the landscape beneath, so do our sins hide from us the light of Jehovah's face, and cause us to sit in the shadow of death. They are earth-born things, and rise from the miry places of our nature; and when so collected that their measure is full, they threaten us with storm and tempest. Alas! that, unlike clouds, our sins yield us no genial showers—but rather threaten to deluge us with a fiery flood of destruction. O you black clouds of sin, how can it be fair weather with our souls while you remain?

Let our joyful eye dwell upon the *NOTABLE ACT* of divine mercy, "blotting out." God Himself appears upon the scene, and in divine benignity, instead of manifesting His anger—He reveals His grace. He at once and forever effectually removes the mischief, not by blowing away the cloud—but by blotting it out from existence once for all. Against the justified man—no sin remains, the great transaction of the *cross* has eternally removed His transgressions from him. On Calvary's summit—the great deed, by which the sin of all the chosen was forever put away—was completely and effectually performed.

Practically let us obey the *GRACIOUS COMMAND*, "Return unto me." Why should pardoned sinners live at a distance from their God? If we have been forgiven all our sins, let no legal fear withhold us from the boldest access to our Lord. Let backslidings be bemoaned—but let us not persevere in them. To the greatest possible nearness of communion with the Lord, let us, in the power of the Holy Spirit, strive mightily to return. O Lord, this night restore us!

February 11 — Morning

"And they took knowledge of them—that they had been with Jesus." Acts 4:13

A Christian should be *a striking likeness of Jesus Christ*. You have read 'lives of Christ', beautifully and eloquently written—but the best life of Christ is His living biography, written out in the words and actions of His people. If we were what we *profess* to be—and what we *should* be—we would be *pictures of Christ!* Yes, such striking likenesses of Him, that the world would not have say, "Well, it seems *somewhat* of a likeness;" but they would, when they once beheld us, exclaim, "He has been with Jesus! He has been taught of Him—he is like Him! He has caught the very idea of the holy Man of Nazareth, and he works it out in his life and every-day actions!"

A Christian should be like Christ in his *boldness*. Never blush to own your religion; your profession will never disgrace you—take care you never disgrace that. Be like Jesus—very *valiant* for your God. Imitate Him in your *loving* spirit—think kindly, speak kindly, and do kindly, that men may say of you, "He has been with Jesus!" Imitate Jesus in His *holiness*. Was He *zealous* for His Master? So you be; ever go about doing good. Let not *time* be wasted—it is too precious. Was He *self-denying*, never looking to His own interest? Be the same. Was He *devout*? Be fervent in your prayers. Had He deference to His Father's will? So *submit* yourselves to Him. Was He *patient*? So learn to endure. And best of all, as the highest portraiture of Jesus, try to *forgive* your enemies, as He did; and let those sublime words of your Master, "Father, forgive them—for they know not what they do," always ring in your ears. Forgive, as you hope to be forgiven. Heap coals of fire on the head of your foe—by your kindness to him. Good for evil, recollect, is *godlike*. Be godlike, then; and in all ways and by all means—so live that all may say of you, "He has been with Jesus!"

February 11 — Evening

"You have left your first love." Revelation 2:4

Ever to be remembered, is that best and brightest of hours, when first we saw the Lord, lost our burden, received the scroll of promise, rejoiced in full salvation, and went on our way in peace. It was *springtime* in the soul; the winter was past; the mutterings of Sinai's thunders were hushed; the flashings of its lightnings were no more perceived. *God* was beheld as reconciled; the *law* threatened no vengeance, *justice* demanded no punishment. Then the flowers appeared in our heart—hope, love, peace, and patience sprung from the sod; the hyacinth of repentance, the snowdrop of pure holiness, the crocus of golden faith, the daffodil of early love—all decked the garden of the soul. The time of the singing of birds was come, and we rejoiced with thanksgiving; we magnified the holy name of our forgiving God, and our resolve was, "Lord, I am Yours, wholly Yours! All that I am, and all that I have—I would devote to You. You have brought me with Your blood—let me spend myself and be spent in Your service. In life and in death let me be consecrated to You!"

How have we kept this resolve? Our *espousal love* burned with a holy flame of devotedness to Jesus—is it the same now? Might not Jesus well say to us, "I have somewhat against you—because you have left thy first love"? Alas! it is but little we have done for our Master's glory. Our *winter* has lasted all too long. We are as *cold as ice*—when we should feel a summer's glow and bloom with sacred flowers. We give to God pence—when He deserves pounds; nay, deserves our heart's blood to be coined in the service of His church and of His truth.

But shall we *continue* thus? O Lord, after You have so richly blessed us, shall we be ungrateful and become indifferent to Your good cause and work? O quicken us that we may return to our first love, and do our first works! Send us a genial spring, O Sun of Righteousness.

February 12 — Morning

"For as the *sufferings* of Christ abound in us—so our *consolation* also abounds by Christ."

2 Corinthians 1:5

Here is a blessed proportion. The Ruler of Providence bears a pair of *scales*—in this side He puts His people's *trials*, and in that He puts their *consolations*. When the scale of *trial* is nearly empty—you will always find the scale of *consolation* in nearly the same condition. And when the scale of *trials* is full—you will find the scale of *consolation* just as heavy. When the black clouds gather most—the light is the more brightly revealed to us. When the night lowers and the tempest is coming on—the Heavenly Captain is always closest to His crew.

It is a blessed thing, that when we are most *cast down*—then it is that we are most *lifted up* by the consolations of the Spirit. One reason is, because trials make more room for consolation. *Great hearts can only be made by great troubles*. The *spade of trouble* digs the *reservoir of comfort* deeper, and makes more room for consolation. God comes into our heart—He finds it full—He begins to break our comforts and to make it empty; then there is more room for grace. The humbler a man lies—the more comfort he will always have, 'cause he will be more fitted to receive it.

Another reason why we are often most happy in our troubles, is this—then we have the closest dealings with God. When the barn is full—man can live without God: when the purse is bursting with gold—we try to do without so much prayer. But once take our *gourds* away—and we want our God; once cleanse the idols out of the house—then we are compelled to honor Jehovah. "Out of the *depths* have I cried unto you, O Lord." There is no prayer half so hearty—as that which comes up from the depths of the soul, through deep trials and afflictions. Hence they bring us to God, and we are happier—for nearness to God is happiness. Come, troubled believer—do not fret over your heavy troubles, for they are the heralds of weighty mercies!

February 12 — Evening

"He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever." John 14:16

The Great Father revealed Himself to believers of old before the coming of His Son, and was known to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as *God Almighty*. Then Jesus came, and the ever-blessed Son in His own proper person, was the delight of His people's eyes. At the time of the Redeemer's ascension, the Holy Spirit became the head of the present dispensation, and His power was gloriously manifested in and after Pentecost. He remains at this hour, the *present Immanuel*—God with us, dwelling in and with His people, quickening, guiding, and ruling in their midst.

Is *His presence* recognized as it ought to be? We cannot control His working; He is most sovereign in all His operations—but are we sufficiently anxious to obtain His help, or sufficiently watchful lest we provoke Him to withdraw His aid? Without Him we can do nothing—but by His almighty energy, the most extraordinary results can be produced: everything depends upon his manifesting or concealing His power. Do we always look up to Him both for our inner life and our outward service with the respectful dependence which is fitting? Do we not too often run before His call, and act independently of His aid?

Let us humble ourselves this evening for past neglects, and now entreat the heavenly *dew* to rest upon us, the sacred *oil* to anoint us, the celestial *flame* to burn within us. The Holy Spirit is no temporary gift, He abides with the saints. We have but to seek Him aright, and He will be found by us. He is jealous—but He is pitiful; if He leaves in anger—but He returns in mercy. Condescending and tender, He does not weary of us—but awaits to be gracious still.

February 13 — Morning

**"Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us
—that we should be called the sons of God! Therefore the world knows us not,
because it knew Him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God." 1 John 3:1-2**

"Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us!" Consider who we *were*, and what we feel ourselves to be even now when corruption is powerful in us—and we will wonder at our adoption into God's family. Yet we are called "the sons of God." What a high *relationship* is that of a son, and what *privileges* it brings! What care and tenderness, the son expects from his father—and what love the father feels towards the son! But all that, and more than that, we now have through Christ.

As for the temporary drawback of suffering with the elder brother, this we accept as an honor: "Therefore the world knows us not, because it knew Him not." We are content to be unknown with Him in His humiliation, for we are to be exalted with Him.

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God." That is easy to read—but it is not so easy to feel. How is it with your heart this morning? Are you in the lowest depths of sorrow? Does corruption rise within your spirit, and grace seem like a poor *spark* trampled under foot? Does your faith almost fail you? Fear not, it is neither your graces nor feelings on which you are to live—you must live simply by faith on Christ. With all these things against us, now—in the very depths of our sorrow, wherever we may be—now, as much in the *valley* as on the *mountain*, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God!"

"Ah—but," you say, "see how I am arrayed! my graces are not bright; my righteousness does not shine with apparent glory." But read the text: "It does not yet appear what we shall be—but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him." The Holy Spirit shall purify our *minds*, and divine power shall refine our *bodies*, then shall we see Him as He is.

February 13 — Evening

"There is therefore now no condemnation." Romans 8:1

Come, my soul—think on this. Believing in Jesus, you are actually and effectually cleared from all guilt; you are led out of your prison. You are no more in fetters as a bond-slave; you are delivered now from the bondage of the law; you are freed from sin, and can walk at large as a freeman—for your Savior's blood has procured your full discharge. You have a right now to approach your Father's throne. No flames of vengeance are there to scare you now; no fiery sword; justice cannot smite the *innocent*.

Your disabilities are taken away—you were once unable to *see* your Father's face—you can see it now. You could not *speak* with Him—but now you have access with boldness. Once there was a fear of hell upon you—but you have no fear of it now, for how can there be punishment for the guiltless? He who believes is not condemned, and cannot be punished. And more than all, the privileges you might have enjoyed, if you had never sinned—are yours, now that you are justified. All the blessings which you would have had if you had kept the law, and more—are yours, because Christ has kept it for you. All the love and the acceptance which perfect obedience could have obtained of God, belong to you, because Christ was perfectly obedient on your behalf, and has imputed all His merits to your account, that you might be exceeding rich through Him, who for your sake became exceeding poor. Oh! How great the debt of love and gratitude you owe to your Savior!

"A debtor to mercy alone,
Of covenant mercy I sing;
Nor fear with Your righteousness on,
My person and offerings to bring:
The terrors of law and of God,
With me can have nothing to do;
My Savior's obedience and blood,
Hide all my transgressions from view."

February 14 — Morning

"Jehoiachin changed his prison clothes—and he dined regularly in the presence of the king of Babylon for the rest of his life. As for his allowance, a regular allowance was given to him by the king, *a portion for each day*, for the rest of his life." 2 Kings 25:29-30

Jehoiachin was not sent away from the king's palace with a 'supply' to last him for months—but his provision was given him as a daily pension. Herein he well pictures the happy position of all the Lord's people. A *daily portion* is all that a man really needs. We do not need tomorrow's supplies; for that day has not yet dawned, and its needs are as yet unborn. The thirst which we may suffer in the month of June—does not need to be quenched in February, for we do not feel it yet. If we have enough for each day as the days arrive—we shall never know want. Sufficient for the day—is all that we can enjoy.

We cannot eat or drink or wear more than the day's supply of food and clothing; the surplus gives us the care of storing it, and the anxiety of watching against a thief. One staff aids a traveler—but a bundle of staffs is a heavy burden. *Enough* is not only as good as a *feast*—but is all that the greatest glutton can truly enjoy. *Enough* is all that we should expect—a craving for more than this is ungrateful.

When our Father does not give us *more*—we should be content with His *daily allowance*. Jehoiachin's case is ours—we have a *sure* portion; a portion given to us by the *king*; a *gracious* portion; and a *perpetual* portion. Here is surely ground for thankfulness.

Beloved Christian reader, in matters of grace you need a daily supply. You have no store of grace. *Day by day* must you seek help from above. It is a very sweet assurance—that a daily portion is provided for you. In the Word, through the ministry, by meditation, in prayer, and waiting upon God—you shall receive renewed strength. In Jesus, all needful things are laid up for you. Then enjoy your continual allowance. Never go hungry—while the daily bread of grace is on the table of mercy! "Give us each day—our daily bread." Luke 11:3

February 14 — Evening

"She was healed immediately." Luke 8:47

One of the most touching and teaching of the Savior's miracles, is before us tonight. The woman was very ignorant. She imagined that virtue came out of Christ by a law of necessity, without His knowledge or direct will. Moreover, she was a stranger to the generosity of Jesus' character, or she would not have gone behind to *steal the cure* which He was so ready to bestow. *Misery* should always place itself right in the *face of mercy*. Had she known the love of Jesus' heart—she would have said, "I have but to put myself where He can see me—His omniscience will teach Him my case, and His love at once will work my cure."

We admire her *faith*—but we marvel at her *ignorance*. After she had obtained the cure, she rejoiced with trembling. She was glad that the divine virtue had wrought a marvel in her; but she feared lest Christ should retract the blessing, and put a negative upon the grant of His grace. Little did she comprehend the fullness of His love!

We have not so clear a view of Him as we could wish; we know not the heights and depths of His love; but we surely know that He is too good to withdraw from a trembling soul—the gift which it has been able to obtain. But here is the marvel of it—as little as was her knowledge; her faith, because it was real faith, saved her, and saved her at once. There was no *tedious delay*—faith's miracle was instantaneous. If we have faith as a grain of mustard seed, salvation is our present and eternal possession.

If in the list of the Lord's children—we are written as the feeblest of the family—yet, being heirs through faith, no power, human or devilish, can expel us from salvation. If we dare not lean our heads upon His bosom with John—yet if we can venture in the press behind Him, and touch the hem of his garment—we are made whole. Courage, timid one! your faith has saved you—go in peace! "Being justified by faith—we have peace with God."

February 15 — Morning

"To Him be glory both *now* and *forever*." 2 Peter 3:18

Heaven will be full of the ceaseless praises of Jesus. Eternity! your unnumbered years shall speed their everlasting course—but forever and forever, "to Him be glory!"

Is He not a "**Priest** forever after the order of Melchizedek"? "To Him be glory!" Is He not **King** forever?—King of kings and Lord of lords, the everlasting Father? "To Him be glory forever!" Never shall His praises cease. That which was bought with blood, deserves to last while immortality endures. The glory of the *cross* must never be eclipsed; the luster of the grave and of the resurrection must never be dimmed. O Jesus! you shall be praised forever. Long as immortal spirits live—long as the Father's throne endures—forever, forever, unto You shall be glory!

Believer, you are anticipating the time when you shall join the saints above in ascribing all glory to Jesus; but are you glorifying Him now? The apostle's words are, "To Him be glory both now and forever!" Will you not this day make it your prayer? "Lord, help me to glorify You! I am *poor*, help me to glorify You by contentment. I am *sick*, help me to give You honor by patience. I have *talents*, help me to extol You by spending them for You. I have *time*, Lord, help me to redeem it, that I may serve you. I have a *heart* to feel, Lord, let that heart feel no love but Yours, and glow with no flame—but affection for You. I have a *head* to think, Lord, help me to think of You and for You. You have put me in this world for something, Lord—show me what that is, and help me to work out my life-purpose. I cannot do much—but as the widow put in her two mites, which were all her living, so, Lord—I cast my time and eternity too into Your treasury. I am all Yours—take me, and enable me to glorify You now, in all that I say, in all that I do, and with all that I have."

February 15 — Evening

"They have made You glad." Psalm 45:8

And who are thus privileged to make the Savior glad? His church—His people. But is it possible? He makes us glad—but how can we make *Him* glad? By our *love*. Ah! we think it so cold, so faint; and so, indeed, we must sorrowfully confess it to be—but it is very sweet to Christ. Hear His own eulogy of that love in the golden Canticle: "How sweet is your love, my treasure, my bride! How much better it is than wine! Your perfume is more fragrant than the richest of spices!" See, loving heart, how He delights in you. When you lean your head on His bosom, you not only *receive* joy—but you *give* Him joy. When you gaze with love upon His all-glorious face, you not only *obtain* comfort—but *impart* delight.

Our *praise*, too gives Him joy—not the song of the lips alone—but the melody of the heart's deep gratitude. Our *gifts*, too, are very pleasant to Him; He loves to see us lay our time, our talents, our substance upon the altar, not for the *value* of what we give—but for the sake of the *motive* from which the gift springs. To Him the lowly offerings of His saints, are more acceptable than the thousands of gold and silver. *Holiness* is like frankincense and myrrh to Him. Forgive your enemy—and you make Christ glad. Distribute of your substance to the poor—and He rejoices. Be the means of saving souls—and you give Him to see of the travail of His soul. Proclaim His gospel—and you are a sweet savor unto Him. Go among the ignorant and lift up the cross—and you have given Him honor.

It is in your power even now, to break the alabaster box, and pour the precious oil of joy upon His head—as did the woman of old, whose memorial is to this day set forth wherever the gospel is preached. Will you be backward then? Will you not perfume your beloved Lord—with the myrrh and aloes, and cassia, of your heart's praise?

February 16 — Morning

"I have learned, in whatever state I am, therewith to be *content*." Philippians 4:11

These words show us that contentment is not a *natural propensity* of man. "Ill weeds grow quickly." Covetousness, discontent, and murmuring are as natural to man—as weeds are to the soil. We need not sow thistles and weeds; they come up naturally enough, because they are indigenous to earth. Just so, we need not teach men to *complain*; they complain fast enough without any education.

But the *precious* things of the earth must be cultivated. If we would have *wheat*, we must plough and sow; if we want *flowers*, there must be the garden, and all the gardener's care. Now, *contentment* is one of the *flowers of heaven*, and if we would have it, it must be cultivated, as it will not grow in us by nature. It is the new nature alone which can produce contentment, and even then we must be especially careful and watchful, that we maintain and cultivate the grace which God has sown in us.

Paul says, "I have learned... to be content;" as much as to say, that he did not know how at one time. It cost him some pains to attain to the mastery of that great truth. No doubt he sometimes thought he had learned, and then broke down. And when at last he had attained unto it, and could say, "I have learned in whatever state I am, therewith to be content," he was an old, grey-headed man, upon the borders of the grave—a poor prisoner shut up in Nero's dungeon at Rome.

We might well be willing to endure Paul's infirmities, and share the cold dungeon with him—if we too might by any means attain unto his high degree of contentment. Do not indulge the notion that you learn without discipline. It is not a power that may be exercised naturally—but a grace to be acquired gradually. We know this from experience. Brother, hush that murmur, natural though it be, and continue a diligent pupil in the College of Contentment.

February 16 — Evening
"Your good Spirit." Nehemiah 9:20

Common, too common is the sin of *forgetting the Holy Spirit*. This is folly and ingratitude. He deserves well at our hands, for He is good, supremely good. As God, He is good essentially. He shares in the threefold ascription of Holy, holy, holy, which ascends to the Triune Jehovah. Unmixed *purity* and *truth*, and *grace* is He.

He is good *benevolently*, tenderly bearing with our waywardness, striving with our rebellious wills; quickening us from our death in sin, and then training us for heaven, as a loving nurse fosters her child. How generous, forgiving, and tender—is this patient Spirit of God.

He is good *operatively*. All His *works* are good in the most eminent degree. He suggests good thoughts, prompts good actions, reveals good truths, applies good promises, assists in good attainments, and leads to good results. There is no spiritual good in all the world—of which He is not the author and sustainer; and heaven itself will owe the perfect character of its redeemed inhabitants to His work.

He is good *officially*; whether as Comforter, Instructor, Guide, Sanctifier, Quickener, or Intercessor, He fulfils His office well, and each work is fraught with the highest good to the church of God. Those who yield to His influences *become* good, those who obey His impulses *do* good, those who live under His power *receive* good. Let us then act towards so good a person, according to the dictates of gratitude. Let us revere His person, and adore Him as God over all, blessed forever. Let us own His power, and our need of Him by waiting upon Him in all our holy enterprises; let us hourly seek His aid, and never grieve Him; and let us speak to His praise whenever occasion occurs. The church will never prosper until more reverently it believes in the Holy Spirit. He is so good and kind, that it is sad indeed that He should be grieved by our slights and negligences.

February 17 — Morning

"Isaac dwelt by the well Lahai-roi." Genesis 25:11

Hagar had once found deliverance there and Ishmael had drunk from the water so graciously revealed by the God who lives and sees the sons of men; but this was a merely casual visit, such as worldlings pay to the Lord in times of need, when it serves their turn. They cry to Him in *trouble*—but forsake Him in *prosperity*. Isaac dwelt there, and made the well of the living and all-seeing God, his constant source of supply.

The usual *tenor* of a man's life, the dwelling of his soul—is the true test of his state. Perhaps the providential visitation experienced by Hagar struck Isaac's mind, and led him to revere the place; its mystical name endeared it to him; his frequent musings by its brim at eventide made him familiar with the well; his meeting Rebecca there had made his spirit feel at home near the spot. But best of all, the fact that he there enjoyed fellowship with the living God, had made him select that hallowed ground for his dwelling. Let us learn to live in the presence of the living God; let us ask the Holy Spirit that this day, and every other day, we may feel, "You God see me!"

May the Lord Jehovah be as a well to us, delightful, comforting, unailing, springing up unto eternal life. The *bottle of the creature* cracks and dries up—but the *well of the Creator* never fails; happy is he who dwells at the well, and so has abundant and constant supplies near at hand. The Lord has been a sure helper to others—His name is Shaddai, God All-sufficient; our hearts have often had most delightful communion with Him; through Him our soul has found her glorious Husband, the Lord Jesus; and in Him this day we live, and move, and have our being. Let us, then, dwell in closest fellowship with Him. Glorious Lord, constrain us that we may never leave You—but dwell by the well of the living God.

February 17 — Evening

"The Lord was there." Ezekiel 35:10

Edom's princes saw the whole country left desolate, and counted upon its easy conquest; but there was one great difficulty in their way—quite unknown to them, "*The Lord was there*"; and in His presence lay the special security of the chosen land. Whatever may be the machinations and devices of the enemies of God's people, there is still the same effectual barrier to thwart their design. The saints are God's heritage, and He is in the midst of them, and will protect His own.

What comfort this assurance yields us in our troubles and spiritual conflicts! We are constantly opposed—and yet perpetually preserved! How often Satan shoots his arrows against our faith—but our faith defies the power of hell's fiery darts; they are not only turned aside—but they are quenched upon its shield, for "the Lord is there." Our good works are the subjects of Satan's attacks. A saint never yet had a virtue or a grace which was not the target for hellish bullets: whether it was *hope* bright and sparkling, or *love* warm and fervent, or *patience* all-enduring, or *zeal* flaming like coals of fire—the old enemy of everything that is good has tried to destroy it. The only reason why anything virtuous or lovely survives in us is this, "the Lord is there."

If the Lord be with us through *life*, we need not fear for our *dying* confidence; for when we come to die, we shall find that "the Lord is there"; where the billows are most tempestuous, and the water is most chill, we shall feel the bottom, and know that it is good—our feet shall stand upon the Rock of Ages when time is passing away.

Beloved, from the first of a Christian's life to the last—the only reason why he does not perish is because "the Lord is there." When the God of everlasting love shall change and leave His elect to perish, then may the Church of God be destroyed; but not until then, because it is written, *Jehovah-Shammah*, "The Lord is there."

February 18 — Morning

"Show me why You contend with me." Job 10:2

Perhaps, O tried soul, the Lord is doing this to develop your graces. There are some of your graces which would never be discovered if it were not for your trials. Do you not know that your faith never looks so grand in *summer* weather—as it does in *winter*? Love is too often like a glow-worm, showing but little light except it be in the midst of *surrounding darkness*. Hope itself is like a star—not to be seen in the sunshine of prosperity, and only to be discovered in the night of adversity. Afflictions are often the *black foils* in which God does set the jewels of His children's graces, to make them shine the better.

It was but a little while ago, that on your knees you were saying, "Lord, I fear I have no faith—let me know that I have faith." Was not this really, though perhaps unconsciously, praying for trials? For how can you know that you have faith—until your faith is exercised? Depend upon it, God often sends us trials—that our graces may be discovered, and that we may be certified of their existence.

Besides, it is not merely discovery, real *growth in grace* is the result of sanctified trials. God often takes away our comforts and our privileges in order to make us better Christians. He trains His soldiers, not in tents of ease and luxury—but by turning them out and using them to forced marches and hard service. He makes them ford through streams, and swim through rivers, and climb mountains, and walk many a long mile with heavy knapsacks of sorrow on their backs.

Well, Christian, may not this account for the troubles through which you are passing? Is not the Lord bringing out your graces, and making them grow? Is not this the reason why He is contending with you?

"Trials make the promise sweet;
Trials give new life to prayer;
Trials bring me to His feet,
Lay me low, and keep me there."

February 18 — Evening

"Father, I have sinned." Luke 15:18

It is quite certain, that those whom Christ has washed in His precious blood need not make a confession of sin, as *culprits* or *criminals*, before God the Judge, for Christ has forever taken away all their sins in a legal sense, so that they no longer stand where they can be condemned—but are once for all accepted in the Beloved. But having become children, and offending as children, ought they not every day to go before their heavenly Father and confess their sin, and acknowledge their iniquity in that character? Nature teaches that it is the duty of *erring children* to make a confession to their earthly father; and the grace of God in the heart teaches us that we, as Christians, owe the same duty to our heavenly father. We daily offend, and ought not to rest without daily pardon.

For, supposing that my trespasses against my Father are not at once taken to Him to be washed away by the cleansing power of the Lord Jesus, what will be the consequence? If I have not sought forgiveness and been washed from these offences against my Father, I shall feel at a distance from Him; I shall doubt His love to me; I shall tremble at Him; I shall be afraid to pray to Him; I shall grow like the prodigal, who, although still a child, was yet far off from his father.

But if, with a child's sorrow at offending so gracious and loving a Parent, I go to Him and tell Him all, and rest not until I realize that I am forgiven, then I shall feel a holy love to my Father, and shall go through my Christian career, not only as saved—but as one *enjoying present peace* in God through Jesus Christ my Lord. There is a wide distinction between confessing sin as a *culprit*—and confessing sin as a *child*. The Father's bosom is the place for penitent confessions. We have been cleansed once for all—but our *feet* still need to be washed from the defilement of our daily walk, as children of God.

February 19 — Morning

"Thus says the Lord God; I will yet for this be *enquired* of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." Ezekiel 36:37

Prayer is the forerunner of mercy. Turn to sacred history, and you will find that scarcely ever did a great mercy come to this world, unheralded by supplication. You have found this true in your own personal experience. God has given you many an unsolicited favor—but still great prayer has always been the prelude of great mercy with you. When you first found peace through the blood of the cross, you had been praying much, and earnestly interceding with God that He would remove your doubts, and deliver you from your distresses. Your assurance was the result of prayer. When at any time you have had high and rapturous joys, you have been obliged to look upon them as answers to your prayers. When you have had great deliverances out of sore troubles, and mighty helps in great dangers, you have been able to say, "I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears." Prayer is always the *preface to blessing*. It goes before the blessing—as the blessing's *shadow*.

When the sunlight of God's mercies rises upon our necessities, it casts the shadow of prayer far down upon the plain. Or, to use another illustration, when God piles up a hill of mercies, He Himself shines behind them, and He casts on our spirits the shadow of prayer, so that we may rest certain, if we are much in prayer, our pleadings are the shadows of mercy.

Prayer is thus connected with the blessing—to show us the *value* of it. If we had the blessings without asking for them, we would think them common things; but prayer makes our mercies more precious than diamonds! The things we ask for are precious—but we do not realize their preciousness until we have sought for them *earnestly*.

"Prayer makes the darkened cloud withdraw;
Prayer climbs the ladder Jacob saw;
Gives exercise to faith and love;
Brings every blessing from above."

February 19 — Evening

"He first found his own brother Simon." John 1:41

This case is an excellent pattern of all cases where spiritual life is vigorous. As soon as a man has found Christ—he begins to find others. I will not believe that you have tasted of the *honey of the gospel* if you can eat it all yourself. True grace puts an end to all spiritual monopoly. Andrew first found his own brother Simon, and then others. Relationship has a very strong demand upon our first individual efforts. Andrew, you did well to begin with Simon.

I doubt whether there are not some Christians giving away tracts at other people's houses—who would do well to give away a tract at their own; whether there are not some engaged in works of usefulness abroad—who are neglecting their special sphere of usefulness at home. You may or you may not be called to evangelize the people in any particular locality—but certainly you are called to see after your own family and friends. Let your religion begin at home. Many tradesmen export their best commodities—the Christian should not. He should have all his conversation everywhere of the best savor; but let him have a care to put forth the sweetest fruit of spiritual life and testimony in his own family.

When Andrew went to find his brother, he little imagined how eminent Simon would become. Simon Peter was worth ten Andrews so far as we can gather from sacred history, and yet Andrew was instrumental in bringing him to Jesus. You may be very deficient in talent yourself, and yet you may be the means of drawing to Christ one who shall become eminent in grace and service. Ah! dear friend, you little know the possibilities which are in you. You may but speak a word to a child, and in that child there may be slumbering a noble heart which shall stir the Christian church in years to come. Andrew has only two talents—but he finds Peter. Go you and do likewise.

February 20 — Morning

"God, who comforts those who are cast down." 2 Corinthians 7:6

And who comforts like Him? Go to some poor, melancholy, distressed child of God; tell him sweet promises, and whisper in his ear choice words of comfort; he is like the deaf adder, he listens not to the voice of the charmer, charm he ever so wisely. He is drinking gall and wormwood, and comfort him as you may, it will be only a note or two of mournful resignation that you will get from him; you will bring forth no psalms of praise, no hallelujahs, no joyful sonnets.

But let *God* come to His child, let Him lift up his countenance—and the mourner's eyes glisten with hope. Do you not hear him sing, "'Tis paradise, if You are here—if Tou depart, 'tis hell"? You could not have cheered him—but the Lord has done it; "He is the God of all comfort." There is no balm in Gilead—but there is balm in God. There is no physician among the creatures—but the Creator is *Jehovah-rophi*. It is marvelous how one sweet Word of God, will make whole songs for Christians. One Word of God is like a piece of gold, and the Christian is the gold-beater, and can hammer that promise out for whole weeks.

So, then, poor Christian, you need not sit down in despair. Go to the Comforter, and ask Him to give you consolation. You are a poor dry well. You have heard it said, that when a pump is dry, you must pour water down it first of all, and then you will get water. Just so, Christian, when you are dry, go to God, ask Him to shed abroad His joy in your heart, and then your joy shall be full. Do not go to earthly acquaintances, for you will find them *Job's miserable comforters* after all; but go first and foremost to your "God, who comforts those who are cast down," and you will soon say, "In the multitude of my thoughts within me—Your comforts delight my soul."

February 20 — Evening

"Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil."

Matthew 4:1

A *holy character* does not avert temptation—Jesus was tempted. When Satan tempts us, his sparks fall upon tinder; but in Christ's case, it was like striking sparks on water; yet the enemy continued his evil work. Now, if the devil goes on striking when there is no result, how much more will he do it when he knows what inflammable stuff *our* hearts are made of! Though you become greatly sanctified by the Holy Spirit, expect that the *great dog of hell* will bark at you still.

In the haunts of men we expect to be tempted—but even *seclusion* will not guard us from the same trial. Jesus Christ was led away from human society into the wilderness, and was tempted of the devil. Solitude has its charms and its benefits, and may be useful in checking the lust of the eye and the pride of life; but the devil will follow us into the most lovely retreats.

Do not suppose that it is only the worldly-minded who have dreadful thoughts and blasphemous temptations, for even spiritual-minded people endure the same; and in the holiest position—we may suffer the darkest temptation. The utmost consecration of spirit will not insure you against Satanic temptation. Christ was consecrated through and through. It was His food and drink to do the will of Him who sent Him—and yet He was tempted! Your hearts may glow with a seraphic flame of love to Jesus, and yet the devil will try to bring you down to Laodicean lukewarmness. If you will tell me when God permits a Christian to lay aside his armor, I will tell you when Satan has left off temptation. Like the old knights in war time, we must sleep with helmet and breastplate buckled on, for the arch-deceiver will seize our first unguarded hour—to make us his prey. May the Lord keep us watchful in all seasons, and give us a final escape from the jaw of the *lion*, and the paw of the *bear*.

February 21 — Morning
"He has said." Hebrews 13:5

If we can only grasp these words by faith, we have an all-conquering weapon in our hand. What *doubt* will not be slain by this two-edged sword? What *fear* is there which shall not fall smitten with a deadly wound before this arrow from the bow of God's covenant? Will not the distresses of *life* and the pangs of *death*; will not the *corruptions* within, and the *snares* without; will not the *trials* from above, and the *temptations* from beneath—all seem but light afflictions, when we can hide ourselves beneath the bulwark of "*He has said*"? Yes! whether for delight in our quietude, or for strength in our conflict, "*He has said*" must be our daily resort.

This teaches us the extreme value of searching the Scriptures. There may be a *promise* in the Word which would exactly fit your case—but you may not know of it, and therefore you miss its comfort. You are like prisoners in a dungeon, and there may be *one key* in the bunch which would unlock the door, and you might be free; but if you will not look for it, you may remain a prisoner still, though liberty is so near at hand.

There may be a potent medicine in the great pharmacopoeia of Scripture, and you may yet continue sick unless you will examine and search the Scriptures to discover what "*He has said*."

Should you not, besides *reading* the Bible, store your *memories* richly with the promises of God? You can recollect the sayings of great men; you treasure up the verses of renowned poets; ought you not to be profound in your knowledge of the Words of God, so that you may be able to quote them readily when you would solve a difficulty, or overthrow a doubt? Since "*He has said*" is the source of all *wisdom*, and the fountain of all *comfort*—let it dwell in you richly, as "A well of water, springing up unto everlasting life." So shall you grow healthy, strong, and happy in the divine life!

February 21 — Evening

"Do you understand what you read?" Acts 8:30

We would be abler teachers of others, and less liable to be carried about by every wind of doctrine—if we sought to have a more intelligent understanding of the Word of God. As the Holy Spirit, the Author of the Scriptures is He who alone can enlighten us rightly to understand them, we should constantly ask His teaching, and His guidance into all truth.

When the prophet *Daniel* would interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream, what did he do? He set himself to earnest prayer that God would open up the vision. The apostle *John*, in his vision at Patmos, saw a book sealed with seven seals which none was found worthy to open, or so much as to look upon. The book was afterwards opened by the Lion of the tribe of Judah, who had prevailed to open it; but it is written first, "I wept much!" The tears of John, which were his *liquid prayers*, were, so far as he was concerned, the sacred keys by which the sealed book was opened.

Therefore, if, for your own and others' profiting, you desire to be "filled with the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding," remember that *prayer is your best means of study!* Like *Daniel*, you shall understand the dream, and the interpretation thereof, when you have sought unto God; and like *John* you shall see the seven seals of precious truth unloosed, after you have wept much.

Stones are not broken, except by an earnest use of the *hammer*; and the stone-breaker must go down on his *knees*. Use the *hammer of diligence*, and let the knee of prayer be exercised—and there is not a stony doctrine in revelation which is useful for you to understand, which will not fly into shivers under the exercise of prayer and faith! You may force your way through anything with the *leverage of prayer*. Prayer is the lever which forces open the *iron chest of sacred mystery*, that we may get the treasure hidden within!

February 22 — Morning

**"His bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong
by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob." Genesis 49:24**

That strength which *God* gives to His *Josephs* is real strength; it is not a boasted valor, a fiction, a thing of which men talk—but which ends in smoke; it is true—divine strength. Why does Joseph stand against temptation? Because *God* gives him aid. There is nothing that we can do—without the power of God. All true strength comes from "the mighty God of Jacob."

Notice in what a blessedly familiar way God gives this strength to Joseph, "The arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob." Thus God is represented as putting His hands on Joseph's hands, placing His arms on Joseph's arms. Like as a father teaches his children—so the Lord teaches those who fear Him. *He puts His arms upon them!* Marvelous condescension! God Almighty, Eternal, Omnipotent, stoops from His throne and lays His hand upon the child's hand, stretching His arm upon the arm of Joseph, that he may be made strong!

This strength was also *covenant* strength, for it is ascribed to "the mighty *God of Jacob*." Now, wherever you read of the *God of Jacob* in the Bible, you should remember the covenant with Jacob. Christians love to think of God's covenant. All the power, all the grace, all the blessings, all the mercies, all the comforts, all the things we have, flow to us from the well-head, through the covenant. If there were no covenant, then we would fail indeed; for all grace proceeds from it, as light and heat from the sun. No angels ascend or descend, except upon that ladder which Jacob saw, at the top of which stood a covenant God. Christian, it may be that the archers have sorely grieved you, and shot at you, and wounded you—but still your bow abides in strength; be sure, then, to ascribe all the *glory* to Jacob's God!

February 22 — Evening

"The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power." Nahum 1:3

Jehovah "is slow to anger." When **mercy** comes into the world she drives winged steeds; the axles of her chariot-wheels are red hot with speed! But when **wrath** goes forth, it toils on with tardy footsteps, for God takes no pleasure in the sinner's death. God's *rod of mercy* is ever outstretched in His hands; His *sword of justice* is in its scabbard, held down by that *pierced hand of love* which bled for the sins of men.

"The Lord is slow to anger," because He is GREAT IN POWER. That person is truly great in power—who has *power over himself*. When God's power does restrain Himself, then it is power indeed: the power that binds omnipotence is omnipotence surpassed. A man who has a strong mind can bear to be insulted long, and only resents the wrong when a sense of right demands his action. The weak mind is irritated at a little: the strong mind bears it like a rock which moves not, though a thousand breakers dash upon it, and cast their pitiful malice in spray upon its summit.

God marks His enemies, and yet He bestirs not Himself—but restrains in His anger. If He were less divine than He is, He would long before this, have sent forth the whole of His thunders, and emptied the magazines of heaven; He would long before this have blasted the earth with the wondrous fires of its lower regions, and man would have been utterly destroyed; but the greatness of his power brings us mercy.

Dear reader, what is your state this evening? Can you by humble faith look to Jesus, and say, "My substitute, You are my rock, my trust!" Then, beloved, be not afraid of God's power; for by faith you have fled to Christ for refuge, the power of God need no more terrify you, than the shield and sword of the warrior need terrify those whom he loves. Rather rejoice, that He who is "great in power" is your Father and Friend!

February 23 — Morning

"I will never leave you." Hebrews 13:5

No promise is of private interpretation. Whatever God has said to any one saint—He has said to all. When He opens a *well* for one, it is that *all may drink*. When He opens a granary-door to give out food, there may be some one starving man who is the occasion of its being opened—but all hungry saints may come and feed too. Whether He gave the Word to Abraham or to Moses, matters not, O believer; He has given it to *you* as one of the covenanted seed. There is not a *high blessing* too lofty for you, nor a *wide mercy* too extensive for you. Lift up now your eyes to the north and to the south, to the east and to the west—for all this is yours! Climb to Pisgah's top, and view the utmost limit of the divine promise—for the land is all your own! There is not a brook of living water—of which you may not drink. If the land flows with milk and honey, eat the honey and drink the milk, for both are yours. Be bold to believe, for He has said, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you."

In this promise, God gives everything to His people. "I will never leave you." Then no *attribute* of God can cease to be engaged for us. Is He *mighty*? He will show Himself strong on the behalf of those who trust Him. Is He *love*? Then with loving-kindness will He have mercy upon us. Whatever attributes may compose the character of Deity, every one of them to its fullest extent, shall be engaged on our side. To put everything in one—there is nothing you can lack, there is nothing you can ask for, there is nothing you can need in time or in eternity, there is nothing living, nothing dying, there is nothing in this world, nothing in the next world, there is nothing now, nothing at the resurrection morning, nothing in heaven which is not contained in this text, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you!"

February 23 — Evening

"Take up the cross—and follow Me." Mark 10:21

You have not the liberty of *making* of your own cross; although unbelief is a master carpenter at cross-making. Neither are you permitted to *choose* your own cross; although self-will would gladly be lord and master. Your cross is *prepared* and *appointed* for you by divine love—and you are cheerfully to accept it. You are to take up the cross as your chosen portion, and not to stand caviling at it.

This night Jesus bids you to submit your *shoulder* to His *easy yoke*. Do not *kick* at it in petulance, or *trample* on it in vain-glory, or *fall under* it in despair, or *run away* from it in fear—but take it up like a true follower of Jesus. Jesus was a cross-bearer; He leads the way in the path of sorrow. Surely you could not desire a better guide! And if He carried a cross—what nobler burden would you desire?

The *Way of the Cross* is the way of *safety*—do not fear to tread its *thorny paths*. Beloved, the cross is not made of soft feathers, or lined with velvet—it is heavy and galling to *disobedient* shoulders! But it is not an *iron* cross, though your fears have painted it with iron colors, it is a *wooden* cross, and a man can carry it, for the Man of sorrows carried the load. Take up your cross, and by the power of the Spirit of God—you will soon be so in love with it, that like Moses, you would not exchange the *reproach of Christ* for all the treasures of Egypt!

Remember that Jesus carried it, and it will smell sweetly! Remember that the *cross* will soon be followed by the *crown*, and the thought of the coming *weight of glory*—will greatly lighten the present *heaviness of trouble*. May the Lord help you to bow your spirit in submission to the divine will before you fall asleep this night, that waking with tomorrow's sun, you may go forth to the day's cross with the holy and submissive spirit which befits a follower of the Crucified.

February 24 — Morning

"I will send down showers in season; there will be showers of blessing." Ezekiel 34:26

Here is **sovereign** grace, "I will send down showers." Is it not sovereign, divine mercy—for who can say, "I will send down showers," except God? There is only one voice which can speak to the clouds, and bid them beget the rain, "Who sends down the *rain* upon the earth? Who scatters the *showers* upon the green herb? Do not I, the Lord?" Grace is the gift of God—and is not to be created by man.

It is also **needed** grace. What would the ground do without showers? You may break the clods, you may sow your seeds—but what can you do without the rain? As absolutely needful is the *divine* blessing. In vain you labor, until God bestows the plenteous shower, and sends salvation down.

Then, it is **plenteous** grace. "I will send down *showers*." It does not say, "I will send them *drops*," but "showers." So it is with grace. If God gives a blessing, He usually gives it in such a measure that there is not room enough to receive it. Plenteous grace! Ah! we need plenteous grace to keep us humble, to make us prayerful, to make us holy; plenteous grace to make us zealous, to preserve us through this life, and at last to land us in heaven. We cannot do without *saturating showers* of grace.

Again, it is **seasonable** grace. "I will send down showers *in season*." What is your season this morning? Is it the season of drought? Then that is the season for showers. Is it a season of great heaviness and black clouds? Then that is the season for showers. "As your days—so shall your strength be."

And here is a **varied** grace. "I will give you showers of blessing." The word is in the plural. All kinds of blessings God will send. All God's blessings go together, like links in a golden chain. If He gives *converting* grace, He will also give *comforting* grace. He will send "showers of blessing." Look up today, O parched plant, and open your leaves and flowers for a heavenly watering!

February 24 — Evening

"O Lord Almighty, how long will you not have mercy upon Jerusalem?"

And the Lord answered with kind and comforting words." Zechariah 1:12-13

What a sweet answer to an anxious enquiry! This night let us rejoice in it. O Zion, there are good things in store for you; your time of travail shall soon be over; your children shall be brought forth; your captivity shall end. Bear patiently the rod for a season, and under the darkness—still trust in God, for His love burns towards you. God loves the church with a love too deep for human imagination. He loves her with all His infinite heart. Therefore let her sons be of good courage; she cannot be far from prosperity to whom God speaks "good words and comfortable words."

What these comfortable words are—the prophet goes on to tell us: "I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy." The Lord loves His church so much, that He cannot bear that she should go astray to others; and when she has done so, He cannot endure that she should suffer too much or too heavily. He will not have his enemies afflict her—He is displeased with them because they increase her misery. When God seems most to *leave* His church, His *heart* is warm towards her. History shows that whenever God uses a *rod* to chasten His servants—He always breaks it afterwards, as if He loathed the rod which gave his children pain. "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him."

God has not forgotten us, because He *smites*. His *blows* are no evidences of lack of love. If this is true of His church collectively, it is of necessity true also of each individual member. You may fear that the Lord has passed you by—but it is not so! He who counts the stars, and calls them by their names, is in no danger of forgetting His own children! He knows your case as thoroughly as if you were the only creature He ever made—or the only saint He ever loved. Approach Him and be at peace.

February 25 — Morning

"The wrath to come." Matthew 3:7

It is pleasant to pass over a country after a *storm* has spent itself; to smell the freshness of the herbs after the rain has passed away, and to note the drops while they glisten like purest diamonds in the sunlight. That is the position of a Christian. He is going through a land where the *storm* has spent itself upon His Savior's head, and if there are a few drops of sorrow falling, they distill from *clouds of mercy*, and Jesus cheers him by the assurance that they are not for his destruction.

But how terrible is it to witness the approach of a tempest: to note the forewarnings of the storm; to mark the birds of heaven as they droop their wings; to see the cattle as they lay their heads low in terror; to discern the face of the sky as it grows black, and look to the sun which shines not, and the heavens which are angry and frowning! How terrible to await the dread advance of a hurricane—such as occurs, sometimes, in the tropics—to wait in terrible apprehension until the wind shall rush forth in fury, tearing up trees from their roots, forcing rocks from their pedestals, and hurling down all the dwelling-places of man!

And yet, sinner, this is your present position. No hot drops have as yet fallen—but a *shower of fire* is coming. No terrible winds howl around you—but God's tempest is gathering its dread artillery. As yet the water-floods are dammed up by *mercy*—but the flood-gates shall soon be opened! The *thunderbolts of God* are yet in His storehouse—but lo! the tempest hastens, and how awful shall that moment be when God, robed in vengeance, shall march forth in fury!

Where, where, where, O sinner, will you hide your head, or where will you flee? O that the hand of mercy may now lead you to Christ! He is freely set before you in the gospel. His riven side is the rock of shelter. You know your need of Him—believe in Him, cast yourself upon Him, and then the fury shall be overpast forever!

February 25 — Evening

**"But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord,
and went down to Joppa." Jonah 1:3**

Instead of going to *Nineveh* to preach the Word, as God bade him, Jonah disliked the work, and went down to *Joppa* to escape from it. There are occasions when God's servants shrink from duty. But what is the consequence? What did Jonah lose by his conduct?

He lost the presence and *comfortable enjoyment of God's love*. When we serve our Lord Jesus as believers should do, our God is with us; and though we have the whole world against us—if we have God with us, what does it matter? But the moment we start back, and seek our own inventions, we are at sea without a pilot. Then may we bitterly lament and groan out, "O my God, where have You gone? How could I have been so foolish as to shun Your service, and in this way to lose all the bright shinings of Your face? This is a price too high. Let me return to my allegiance, that I may rejoice in Your presence."

In the next place, Jonah lost *all peace of mind*. Sin soon destroys a believer's comfort. It is the poisonous upas tree, from whose leaves distill deadly drops which destroy the life of joy and peace. Jonah lost everything upon which he might have drawn for comfort in any other case. He could not plead the promise of divine protection, for he was not in God's ways; he could not say, "Lord, I meet with these difficulties in the discharge of my duty, therefore help me through them." He was reaping his own deeds; he was filled with his own ways.

Christian, do not play the Jonah—unless you wish to have all the waves and the billows rolling over your head! You will find in the long run that it is far harder to shun the work and will of God—than to at once yield yourself to it. Jonah lost his time, for he had to go to Tarshish after all. It is hard to contend with God; let us yield ourselves at once!

February 26 — Morning

"Salvation is of the Lord." Jonah 2:9

Salvation is the work of God. It is He alone who *quicken*s the soul which is "dead in trespasses and sins," and it is He also who *maintains* the soul in its spiritual life. He is both "Alpha and Omega." "Salvation is of the Lord." If I am prayerful, God makes me prayerful; if I have graces, they are God's gifts to me; if I hold on in a consistent life, it is because He upholds me with His hand. I do nothing whatever towards my own preservation, except what God Himself first does in me. Whatever I have, all my goodness is of the Lord alone. Wherein I sin—that is my own; but wherein I act rightly—that is of God, wholly and completely. If I have repulsed a spiritual enemy, the Lord's strength nerved my arm. Do I live before men a consecrated life? It is not I—but Christ who lives in me. Am I holy? I did not cleanse myself—God's Holy Spirit sanctifies me. Am I weaned from the world? I am weaned by God's chastisements sanctified to my good. Do I grow in knowledge? The great Instructor teaches me. All my jewels were fashioned by heavenly art. I find in God all that I need—but I find in myself nothing but sin and misery.

"He alone is my rock and my salvation." Do I feed on the Word? That Word would be no food for me, unless the Lord made it food for my soul, and helped me to feed upon it. Do I live on the manna which comes down from heaven? What is that manna—but Jesus Christ himself incarnate, whose body and whose blood I eat and drink? Am I continually receiving fresh increase of strength? Where do I gather my might? My help comes from heaven's hills—without Jesus I can do nothing! As a branch cannot bring forth fruit, except it abides in the vine, no more can I, except I abide in Him. What Jonah learned in the great deep—let me learn this morning in my closet: "Salvation is of the Lord."

February 26 — Evening

**"Behold, if the leprosy has covered his whole body,
he shall pronounce that person clean." Leviticus 13:13**

This regulation appears somewhat strange—yet there was wisdom in it, for the growing out of the disease, proved that the constitution was sound. This evening it may be well for us to see the typical teaching of so remarkable a rule.

We, too, are lepers, and may read the *law of the leper* as applicable to ourselves. When a man sees himself to be *altogether* lost and ruined, covered all over with the defilement of sin, and in no part free from pollution; when he disclaims all righteousness of his own, and pleads guilty before the Lord—then he is clean through the blood of Jesus, and the grace of God. Hidden, unfelt, unconfessed iniquity—is the true leprosy; but when sin is *seen* and *felt*—it has received its deathblow, and the Lord looks with eyes of mercy upon the soul afflicted with it.

Nothing is more deadly than self-righteousness, or more hopeful than sincere contrition. We must confess that we are "nothing else but sin," for no confession short of this will be the whole truth; and if the Holy Spirit is at work with us, convincing us of sin, there will be no difficulty about making such an acknowledgment; it will spring spontaneously from our lips.

What comfort does the text afford to truly awakened sinners! The very circumstance which so grievously discouraged them—is here turned into a sign and symptom of a hopeful state! *Stripping* comes before *clothing*; digging out the foundation is the first thing in building—and a *thorough sense of sin* is one of the earliest works of grace in the heart.

O you poor leprous sinner, utterly destitute of a sound spot—take heart from the text, and come as you are to Jesus!

"For let our debts be what they may, however great or small,
As soon as we have nothing to pay, our Lord forgives us all.
It is perfect poverty alone that sets the soul at large;
While we can call one mite our own, we have no full discharge."

February 27 — Morning

**"You have made the Lord, who is my refuge,
even the Most High, your dwelling place." Psalm 91:9**

The Israelites in the wilderness were continually exposed to change. Whenever the *pillar* stopped its motion, the tents were pitched; but tomorrow, before the morning sun had risen, the trumpet sounded, the ark was in motion, and the fiery, cloudy pillar was leading the way through the narrow paths of the mountain, up the hillside, or along the arid waste of the wilderness. They had scarcely time to rest a little, before they heard the sound of "Away! this is not your rest; you must still be onward journeying towards Canaan!" They were never long in one place. Even wells and palm trees could not detain them. Yet they had an abiding home in their God, His cloudy pillar was their roof-tree, and its flame by night their household fire. They must go onward from place to place, continually changing, never having time to settle, and to say, "Now we are secure—in this place we shall dwell." "Yet," says Moses, "though we are always changing, Lord, you have been our dwelling-place throughout all generations."

The Christian knows no change with regard to God. He may be rich today and poor tomorrow; he may be sickly today and well tomorrow; he may be in happiness today, tomorrow he may be distressed—but there is no change with regard to his relationship to God. If He loved me yesterday, He loves me today. My unmoving mansion of rest is my blessed Lord. Let prospects be blighted; let hopes be blasted; let joy be withered; let mildews destroy everything; I have lost nothing of what I have in God. He is "my strong habitation whereunto I can continually resort." I am a pilgrim in the world—but at *home* in my God. In the earth I wander—but in God I dwell in a quiet habitation.

February 27 — Evening

"Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." Micah 5:2

The Lord Jesus had goings forth for His people as their representative before the throne, long before they appeared upon the stage of time. It was "from everlasting" that He signed the compact with His Father, that He would pay blood for blood, suffering for suffering, agony for agony, and death for death—in the behalf of His people. It was "from everlasting" that He gave Himself up without a murmuring word—that from the crown of His head to the sole of His foot He might sweat great drops of blood, that He might be spit upon, pierced, mocked, rent asunder, and crushed beneath the pains of death. His goings forth as our Surety were from everlasting.

Pause, my soul, and wonder! You have goings forth in the person of Jesus "from everlasting." Not only when you were born into the world did Christ love you—but His delights were with the sons of men—before there were any sons of men! Often did He think of them; from everlasting to everlasting He had set His affection upon them. What! my soul, has He been so long about your salvation, and will not He accomplish it? Has he from everlasting been going forth to save me—and will He lose me now? What! has He carried me in His hand, as His precious jewel—and will He now let me slip from between His fingers? Did he choose me before the mountains were brought forth, or the channels of the deep were dug—and will He reject me now? Impossible!

I am sure He would not have loved me so long—if He had not been a changeless Lover. If He could grow *weary* of me, He would have been *tired* of me long before now. If He had not loved me with a love as deep as hell, and as strong as death—He would have turned from me long ago. Oh, joy above all joys—to know that I am His everlasting and inalienable inheritance, given to Him by His Father before ever the earth was! *Everlasting love* shall be the pillow for my head this night.

February 28 — Morning

"My expectation is from Him." Psalm 62:5

It is the believer's privilege to use this language. If he is looking for anything from the world, it is a poor "expectation" indeed. But if he looks to God for the supply of his needs, whether in temporal or spiritual blessings, his "expectation" will not be a vain one. Constantly he may draw from the *bank of faith*, and get his need supplied out of the riches of God's loving-kindness.

This I know, I had rather have God for my banker—than all the *Rothschilds*. My Lord never fails to honor His promises; and when we bring them to His throne, He never sends them back unanswered. Therefore I will wait only at His door, for He ever opens it with the *hand of munificent grace*.

But we have "expectations" beyond this life. We shall die soon; and then our "expectation is from Him." Do we not expect that when we lie upon the bed of sickness—He will send angels to carry us to His bosom? We believe that when the pulse is faint, and the heart heaves heavily—that some angelic messenger shall stand and look with loving eyes upon us, and whisper, "Sister spirit, come away!" As we approach the heavenly gate, we expect to hear the welcome invitation, "Come, you who are blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!"

We are expecting harps of gold and crowns of glory; we are hoping soon to be among the multitude of shining ones before the throne; we are looking forward and longing for the time when we shall be like our glorious Lord—for "We shall see Him as He is!" Then if these are your "expectations," O my soul, live for God; live with the desire and resolve to glorify Him from whom comes all your supplies, and of whose grace in your election, redemption, and calling, it is that you have any "expectation" of coming glory.

February 28 — Evening

"The barrel of flour was not used up, and the cruse of oil did not run dry, according to the Word of the Lord, which He spoke by Elijah." 1 Kings 17:16

See the *faithfulness of divine love*. You observe that this woman had *daily necessities*. She had herself and her son to feed in a time of famine; and now, in addition, the prophet Elijah was to be fed too. But though the need was threefold—yet the supply of flour was not used up, for she had a constant supply. Each day she made calls upon the barrel—but yet each day it remained the same.

You, dear reader, have daily necessities, and because they come so frequently, you are apt to fear that the barrel of flour will one day be empty, and the cruse of oil will run dry. Rest assured that, according to the Word of God, that this shall not be the case. Each day, though it brings its trouble—shall bring its help; and though you should live to outnumber the years of Methuselah, and though your needs should be as many as the sands of the seashore—yet shall God's grace and mercy last through all your necessities, and you shall never know a real lack.

For three long years, in this widow's days, the heavens never saw a cloud, and the stars never wept a holy tear of dew upon the wicked earth. Famine, and desolation, and death, made the land a howling wilderness. But this woman never was hungry—but always joyful in abundance. So shall it be with you. You shall see the sinner's hope perish, for he trusts his native strength; you shall see the proud Pharisee's confidence totter, for he builds his hope upon the sand; you shall see even your own schemes blasted and withered—but you yourself shall find that your place of defense shall be the munition of rocks: "Your *bread* shall be given you—and your *water* shall be sure." Better have God for your guardian—than the Bank of England for your possession. You might spend the wealth of the Indies—but you can never exhaust the infinite riches of God!

February 29 — Morning

"With loving-kindness have I drawn you." Jeremiah 31:3

The thunders of the law and the terrors of judgment—are all used to bring us to Christ; but the final victory is effected by God's loving-kindness. The prodigal set out to his father's house from a sense of need; but his father saw him a great way off, and ran to meet him; so that the last steps he took towards his father's house were with the kiss still warm upon his cheek, and the welcome still musical in his ears.

"Law and terrors do but harden
All the while they work alone;
But a sense of blood-bought pardon
Will dissolve a heart of stone."

The Master came one night to the door, and knocked with the *iron hand of the law*; the door shook and trembled upon its hinges; but the man piled every piece of furniture which he could find against the door, for he said, "I will not admit the man!" The Master turned away—but by-and-bye He came back, and with His own soft hand, using most that part where the nail had penetrated, He knocked again—oh, so softly and tenderly. This time the door did not shake—but, strange to say—it opened, and there upon his knees, the once unwilling host was found rejoicing to receive his guest. "Come in, come in! You have so knocked that my affections were stirred for you. I could not think of your pierced hand leaving its blood-mark on my door, and of your going away houseless, 'Your head filled with dew, and your locks with the drops of the night.' I yield, I yield, Your love has won my heart!"

Just so in every case—God's loving-kindness wins the day. What Moses with the tablets of stone could never do—Christ does with His pierced hand! Such is the doctrine of effectual calling. Do I understand it experimentally? Can I say, "He *drew* me—and I *followed* on." If so, may He continue to draw me, until at last I shall sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb!

February 29 — Evening

"Now we have received the Spirit who is from God

—that we may understand what God has freely given us." 1 Corinthians 2:12

Dear reader, have you received the Holy Spirit into your soul? The *necessity* of the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart, may be clearly seen, in that all which has been done by God the Father, and by God the Son, must be ineffectual to us, unless the Spirit shall reveal these things to our souls. What effect does the doctrine of election have upon any man—until the Spirit of God enters into him? Election is a dead letter in my consciousness, until the Spirit of God calls me out of darkness into marvelous light. Then through my calling, I see my election, and knowing myself to be called of God, I know myself to have been chosen in the eternal purpose. A covenant was made with the Lord Jesus Christ, by His Father; but what does that covenant avail to us—until the Holy Spirit brings us its blessings, and opens our hearts to receive them?

There hang all spiritual blessings on the *nail*—Christ Jesus; but being short of stature, we cannot reach them; the Spirit of God takes them down and hands them to us, and thus they become actually ours!

Covenant blessings in themselves are like the manna in the skies, far out of mortal reach—but the Spirit of God opens the windows of heaven and scatters the living bread around the camp of the spiritual Israel. Christ's finished work is like wine stored in the wine-vat; through unbelief we can neither draw nor drink. The Holy Spirit dips our vessel into this precious wine—and then we drink; but without the Spirit we are as truly dead in sin—as though the Father never had elected, and though the Son had never bought us with His blood. The Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary to our well-being. Let us walk lovingly towards Him and tremble at the thought of grieving Him!

March 1 — *Morning*

"Awake, north wind, and come, south wind! Blow on my garden, that its fragrance may spread abroad. Let my lover come into his garden and taste its choice fruits." — Song of Solomon 4:16

Anything is better than the dead calm of indifference. Our souls may wisely desire the cold north wind of trouble—if that alone can be sanctified to the drawing forth of the perfume of our graces. We should not shrink from the most wintry blast that ever blew upon plants of grace. Did not the spouse in this verse humbly submit herself to the reproofs of her Beloved; only entreating Him to send forth His grace in some form, and making no stipulation as to the peculiar manner in which it should come? Did she not, like ourselves, become so utterly weary of deadness and unholy calm—that she sighed for any visitation which would motivate her to action?

Yet she desires the warm south wind of comfort, too—the smiles of divine love, the joy of the Redeemer's presence; these are often mightily effectual to arouse our sluggish life. She desires either one or the other, or both—so that she may but be able to delight her Beloved with the spices of her garden. She cannot endure to be unprofitable, nor can we.

How cheering a thought—that Jesus can find comfort in our poor feeble graces. Can it be? It seems far too good to be true. Well may we court trials or even death itself—if we shall thereby be aided to make glad Immanuel's heart. O that our heart were crushed to atoms, if only by such bruising, could our sweet Lord Jesus could be glorified. Graces unexercised are as sweet perfumes slumbering in the cups of the flowers. The wisdom of the great Gardener overrules diverse and opposite causes—to produce the one desired result, and makes both affliction and consolation draw forth the grateful fragrances of faith, love, patience, hope, resignation, joy, and the other fair flowers of the garden. May we know by sweet experience, what this means!

March 1 — Evening

"He is precious." — 1 Peter 2:7

As all the rivers run into the sea—so all delights center in our Beloved. The glances of His eyes outshine the sun! The beauties of His face are fairer than the choicest flowers! No fragrance is like the breath of His mouth. Gems of the mine, and pearls from the sea—are worthless things when measured by His preciousness.

Peter tells us that Jesus is precious—but he did not and could not tell us how precious—nor could any of us compute the value of God's unspeakable gift! Words cannot set forth the preciousness of the Lord Jesus to His people—nor fully tell how essential He is to their satisfaction and happiness. Believer, have you not found in the midst of plenty—a great famine if your Lord has been absent? The sun was shining—but Christ had hidden Himself—and all the world was black to you; or it was night, and since the bright and morning star was gone, no other star could yield you so much as a ray of light. What a howling wilderness is this world—without our Lord! If once He hides Himself from us, the flowers of our garden are withered; our pleasant fruits decay; the birds suspend their songs, and a tempest overturns our hopes.

All earth's candles cannot make daylight—if the Sun of Righteousness is eclipsed. He is the soul of our soul, the light of our light, the life of our life. Dear reader, what would you do in the world without Him, when you wake up and look forward to the day's battle? What would you do at night, when you come home jaded and weary—if there were no door of fellowship between you and Christ? Blessed be His name, He will not allow us to try our lot without Him, for Jesus never forsakes His own. Yet, let the thought of what life would be without Him, enhance His preciousness.

March 2 — *Morning*

"So all Israel went down to the Philistines to have their plowshares, picks, axes and sickles sharpened." — 1 Samuel 13:20

We are engaged in a great war with the Philistines of evil. Every weapon within our reach must be used. Preaching, teaching, praying, giving—all must be brought into action, and talents which have been thought too little for service, must now be employed. Plowshares, picks, axes, or sickles—may all be useful in slaying Philistines; rough tools may deal hard blows, and killing need not be elegantly done—so long as it is done effectually. Each moment of time, in season or out of season; each fragment of ability, educated or untutored; each opportunity, favorable or unfavorable, must be used—for our foes are many and our force but slender.

Most of our tools need sharpening—we need quickness of perception, tact, energy, promptness, in a word, complete adaptation for the Lord's work. Practical common sense is a very scarce thing among the conductors of Christian enterprises. We might learn from our enemies if we would, and so make the Philistines sharpen our weapons.

This morning let us note enough to sharpen our zeal during this day, by the aid of the Holy Spirit. See the energy of the Papists, how they compass sea and land to make one proselyte, are they to monopolize all the earnestness? Mark the heathen devotees, what tortures they endure in the service of their idols! are they alone to exhibit patience and self-sacrifice? Observe the prince of darkness, how persevering in his endeavors, how unabashed in his attempts, how daring in his plans, how thoughtful in his plots, how energetic in all! The devils are united as one man in their infamous rebellion, while we believers in Jesus are divided in our service of God, and scarcely ever work with unanimity. O that from Satan's infernal industry—we may learn to go about like good Samaritans, seeking whom we may bless!

March 2 — *Evening*

"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." — Ephesians 3:8

The apostle Paul felt it a great privilege to be allowed to preach the gospel. He did not look upon his calling as a drudgery—but he entered upon it with intense delight. Yet while Paul was thus thankful for his office, his success in it greatly humbled him. The fuller a vessel becomes—the deeper it sinks in the water. Idlers may indulge a fond conceit of their abilities, because they are untried; but the earnest worker soon learns his own weakness. If you seek humility—try hard work; if you would know your nothingness, attempt some great thing for Jesus. If you would feel how utterly powerless you are apart from the living God—attempt especially the great work of proclaiming the unsearchable riches of Christ—and you will know, as you never knew before, what a weak unworthy thing you are.

Although the apostle thus knew and confessed his weakness, he was never perplexed as to the subject of his ministry. From his first sermon to his last, Paul preached Christ, and nothing but Christ. He lifted up the cross, and extolled the Son of God who bled thereon. Follow his example in all your personal efforts to spread the glad tidings of salvation, and let "Christ and Him crucified" be your ever recurring theme.

The Christian should be like those lovely spring flowers which, when the sun is shining, open their golden cups, as if saying, "Fill us with your beams!" But when the sun is hidden behind a cloud—they close their cups and droop their heads. So should the Christian feel the sweet influence of Jesus; Jesus must be his sun, and he must be the flower which yields itself to the Sun of Righteousness. Oh! to speak of Christ alone, this is the subject which is both "seed for the sower, and bread for the eater." This is the live coal for the lip of the speaker, and the master-key to the heart of the hearer!

March 3 — *Morning*

"I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction." — Isaiah 48:10

Comfort yourself, tried believer, with this thought—God says, "I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction." Let affliction come—God has chosen me. Poverty, you may stride in at my door—but God is in the house already, and He has chosen me. Sickness, you may intrude—but I have a balsam ready—God has chosen me. Whatever befalls me in this valley of tears, I know that He has "chosen" me.

If, believer, you require still greater comfort, remember that you have the Jesus with you in the furnace. In that silent chamber of yours, there sits by your side One whom you have not seen—but whom you love; and oftentimes when you know it not, He makes all your bed in your affliction, and smooths your pillow for you. You are in poverty; but the Lord of life and glory is a frequent visitor to you. He loves to come into these desolate places, that He may visit you. Your Friend sticks closely to you. You cannot see Him—but you may feel the pressure of His hands. Do you not hear His voice? Even in the valley of the shadow of death He says, "Fear not, I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God."

Fear not, Christian—Jesus is with you! In all your fiery trials, His presence is both your comfort and safety. He will never leave one whom He has chosen for His own. "Fear not—for I am with you," is His sure Word of promise to His chosen ones in the "furnace of affliction." Will you not, then, take fast hold of Christ, and say, "Through floods and flames, if Jesus leads—I'll follow where He goes."

March 3 — Evening

"He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove." — Matthew 3:16

As the Spirit of God descended upon the Lord Jesus, the head, so He also, in a measure, descends upon the members of the mystical body. His descent is to us after the same fashion as that in which it fell upon our Lord.

There is often a singular **rapidity** about it—before ever we are aware, we are impelled onward and heavenward beyond all expectation. Yet is there none of the hurry of earthly haste, for the wings of the dove are as soft as they are swift. Quietness seems essential to many spiritual operations; the Lord is in the still small voice; and like the dew—His grace is distilled in silence.

The dove has ever been the chosen type of **purity**, and the Holy Spirit is holiness itself. Where He comes, everything that is pure and lovely, and of good report, is made to abound—and sin and impurity depart.

Peace reigns also where the Holy Dove comes with power; He bears the olive branch which shows that the waters of divine wrath are assuaged.

Gentleness is a sure result of the Sacred Dove's transforming power: hearts touched by His benign influence are meek and lowly henceforth and for ever.

Harmlessness follows, as a matter of course. Eagles and ravens may hunt their prey; the dove can endure wrong—but cannot inflict it. We must be harmless as doves.

The dove is an apt picture of love, the voice of the dove is full of affection. Just so, the soul visited by the blessed Spirit, abounds in love to the brethren, and in love to the lost; and above all, in love to Jesus.

The brooding of the Spirit of God upon the face of the deep, first produced order and **life**—and in our hearts, He causes and fosters new life and light. Blessed Spirit, as You rested upon our dear Redeemer, even so rest upon me from this time forward and forever!

March 4 — *Morning*

"My grace is sufficient for you." — 2 Corinthians 12:9

If none of God's saints were troubled and tried—we would not know half so well the consolations of divine grace. When we find the wanderer who has nowhere to lay his head, who yet can say, "Still will I trust in the Lord," or when we see the pauper starving on bread and water, who still glories in Jesus; when we see the bereaved widow overwhelmed in affliction, and yet having faith in Christ; Oh! what honor it reflects on the gospel.

God's grace is illustrated and magnified—in the troubles and trials of believers. Saints bear up under every discouragement, believing that all things work together for their good—and that out of apparent evils—a real blessing shall ultimately spring! They believe that their God will either work a deliverance for them speedily, or most assuredly support them in the trouble, as long as He is pleased to keep them in it. This patience of the saints proves the power of divine grace.

There is a lighthouse out at sea—it is a calm night—I cannot tell whether the edifice is firm; the tempest must rage about it—and then I shall know whether it will stand. So with the Spirit's work—if it were not on many occasions surrounded with tempestuous waters—we would not know that it was true and strong; if the winds did not blow upon it—we would not know how firm and secure it was.

The master-works of God are those men who stand in the midst of difficulties, steadfast, unmoveable, "Calm mid the bewildering cry, confident of victory." He who would glorify his God—must set his heart upon meeting with many trials. No man can be illustrious before the Lord—unless his conflicts are many. If then, yours is a much-tried path, rejoice in it, because you will the better show forth the all-sufficient grace of God. As for His failing you, never dream of it—perish the thought! The God who has been sufficient until now—should be trusted to the end!

March 4 — *Evening*

"They feast on the abundance of Your house; You give them drink from Your river of delights!" Psalm 36:8

The Queen of Sheba was amazed at the sumptuousness of Solomon's table. She was overwhelmed when she saw the provision of a single day; and she marveled equally at the company of servants who were feasted at the royal table. But what is this, compared to the feast provided by the God of grace? Thousands of his people are daily fed there! Hungry and thirsty, they bring large appetites with them to the banquet—but not one of them returns unsatisfied; there is enough for each, enough for all, enough for evermore!

Though the multitude which feeds at Jehovah's table is as countless as the sands of the sea—yet each one has his portion of food. Think how much grace one Christian requires—so much that nothing but the Infinite could supply him for one day! And yet the Lord spreads His table, not for one—but many saints; not for one day—but for many years; not for many years only—but for generation after generation!

Observe the full feasting spoken of in the text, the guests at mercy's banquet are satisfied, nay, more "they feast;" and that not with ordinary fare—but "on the abundance of Your house"—the special abundance of God's own house! And such feasting is guaranteed by a faithful promise—to all those who are sheltered under the shadow of Jehovah's wings.

I once thought, that if I might but get the broken crumbs at God's back door of grace—that I would be satisfied; like the woman who said, "the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from the master's table." But no child of God is ever served with scraps and leftovers! Like Mephibosheth, they all feast from the king's own table. In matters of grace, we all have Benjamin's portion—we all have ten times more than we could have expected! And though our necessities are great—yet are we often amazed at the marvelous plenty of grace which God gives us experimentally to enjoy!

March 5 — *Morning*

"Let us not sleep, as do others." — 1 Thessalonians 5:6

There are many ways of promoting Christian wakefulness. Among the rest, let me strongly advise Christians to converse together concerning the ways of the Lord. In "Pilgrim's Progress", Christian and Hopeful, as they journeyed towards the Celestial City, said to themselves, "To prevent drowsiness in this place—let us fall into good discourse." Christian enquired, "Brother, where shall we begin?" And Hopeful answered, "Where God began with us." Then Christian sang this song, "When saints do sleepy grow, let them come hither; and hear how these two pilgrims talk together. Yes, let them learn of them, in any wise—thus to keep open their drowsy slumbering eyes. Saints' fellowship, if it is managed well—keeps them awake, and that in spite of hell."

Christians who isolate themselves and walk alone—are very liable to grow drowsy. Hold Christian company, and you will be kept wakeful by it, and refreshed and encouraged to make quicker progress in the road to heaven. But as you thus take "sweet counsel" with others in the ways of God, take care that the theme of your converse is the Lord Jesus. Let the eye of faith be constantly looking unto Him; let your heart be full of Him; let your lips speak of His worth. Friend, live near to the cross—and you will not sleep.

Labor to impress yourself with a deep sense of the value of the place to which you are going. If you remember that you are going to heaven—you will not sleep on the road. If you think that hell is behind you, and the devil pursuing you—you will not loiter. Would the manslayer sleep with the avenger of blood behind him, and the city of refuge before him? Christian, will you sleep while the pearly gates are open—the songs of angels waiting for you to join them—a crown of gold ready for your brow? Ah! no! In holy fellowship continue to watch and pray—that you enter not into temptation.

March 5 — *Evening*

"Say unto my soul—I am your salvation." — Psalm 35:3

What does this sweet prayer teach me? It shall be my evening's petition; but first let it yield me an instructive meditation. The text informs me first of all—that David had his doubts; for why should he pray, "Say unto my soul, I am your salvation," if he were not sometimes exercised with doubts and fears? Let me, then, be of good cheer, for I am not the only saint who has to complain of weakness of faith. If David doubted, I need not conclude that I am no Christian because I have doubts. The text reminds me that David was not content while he had doubts and fears—but he repaired at once to the mercy-seat to pray for assurance; for he valued it as much fine gold. I too must labor after an abiding sense of my acceptance in the Beloved, and must have no joy when His love is not shed abroad in my soul. When my Bridegroom is gone from me, my soul must and will fast.

I learn also, that David knew where to obtain full assurance. He went to his God in prayer, crying, "Say unto my soul—I am your salvation." I must be much alone with God—if I would have a clear sense of Jesus' love. Let my prayers cease—and my eye of faith will grow dim. Much in prayer—much in heaven; slow in prayer—slow in progress.

I notice that David would not be satisfied unless his assurance had a divine source. "Say unto my soul." Lord—You must say it! Nothing short of a divine testimony in the soul will ever content the true Christian.

Moreover, David could not rest unless his assurance was made personal to him. "Say unto my soul, I am your salvation." Lord, if You would say this to all the saints, it would be nothing, unless You would say it to me. Lord, I have sinned; I deserve not Your smile; I scarcely dare to ask it; but oh! say to my soul, even to my soul, "I am your salvation!" Let me have a present, personal, infallible, indisputable sense that I am Yours—and that You are mine!

March 6 — Morning

"You must be born again." — John 3:7

Regeneration is a subject which lies at the very basis of salvation, and we should be very diligent to take heed that we really are "born again," for there are many who imagine they are, who are not. Be assured that the name of a Christian—is not the nature of a Christian; and that being born in a Christian land, and being recognized as professing the Christian religion—is of no avail whatever, unless there is something more added to it — the being "born again," by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Regeneration is a matter so **mysterious**, that human words cannot describe it. "The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."

Nevertheless, it is a change which is known and felt. It is **known** by works of holiness—and **felt** by a gracious experience.

This great work is **supernatural**. It is not an operation which a man performs for himself. It is a new principle is infused, which works in the heart, renews the soul, and affects the entire man. It is not a change of my name—but a renewal of my nature, so that I am not the man I used to be—but a new man in Christ Jesus. To wash and dress a corpse is a far different thing from making it alive! Man can do the one—God alone can do the other.

If you have then, been "born again," your acknowledgment will be, "O everlasting Father, You are my spiritual Parent; unless Your Spirit had breathed into me the breath of a new, holy, and spiritual life—I would have been to this day, 'dead in trespasses and sins.' My heavenly life is wholly derived from You—to You I ascribe it. 'My life is hid with Christ in God.' It is no longer I who live—but Christ who lives in me." May the Lord enable us to be well assured on this vital point, for to be unregenerate is to be unsaved, unpardoned, without God, and without hope!

March 6 — *Evening*

"Before destruction, the heart of man is haughty." — Proverbs 18:12

It is an old and common saying, that "coming events cast their shadows before them;" the wise man teaches us that a haughty heart is the prophetic prelude of destruction. Pride is as safely the sign of destruction, as the change of mercury in the weather-glass is the sign of rain; and far more infallibly so than that. When men have ridden the high horse—destruction has always overtaken them. Let David's aching heart show that there is an eclipse of a man's glory—when he dotes upon his own greatness. "David's conscience troubled him after he had taken a census of the troops. He said to the Lord—I have sinned greatly in what I've done. Now, Lord, because I've been very foolish, please take away Your servant's guilt!" 2 Sam. 24:10.

See Nebuchadnezzar, the mighty builder of Babylon, creeping on the earth, devouring grass like oxen, until his nails had grown like bird's claws, and his hair like eagle's feathers! Dan. 4:33. Pride made the boaster a beast—as once before it made an angel a devil. God hates high looks, and never fails to bring them down. All the arrows of God—are aimed at proud hearts! O Christian, is your heart haughty this evening? For pride can get into the Christian's heart as well as into the sinner's; it can delude him into dreaming that he is "rich and increased in goods, and has need of nothing." Are you glorying in your graces or your talents? Are you proud of yourself, that you have had holy frames and sweet experiences? Mark it, reader, there is a destruction coming to you also! Your flaunting poppies of self-conceit will be pulled up by the roots! Your mushroom graces will wither in the burning heat! Your self-sufficiency shall become as straw for the dunghill.

If we forget to live at the foot of the cross in deepest humility of heart—God will not forget to make us smart under His rod! A destruction will come to you, O unduly exalted believer—the destruction of your joys and of your comforts, though there can be no destruction of your soul. Therefore, "He who glories—let him glory in the Lord!"

March 7 — *Morning*

"Have faith in God." — Mark 11:22

FAITH is 'the foot of the soul' by which it can march along the road of the commandments. Love can make the feet move more swiftly; but faith is the foot which carries the soul. Faith is the oil, enabling the wheels of holy devotion and of earnest piety to move well. Without faith—the wheels are taken from the chariot, and we drag heavily. With faith I can do all things; without faith I shall neither have the inclination nor the power to do anything in the service of God. If you would find the men who serve God the best, you must look for the men of the most faith.

Little faith will save a man—but little faith cannot do great things for God. Poor "Little-faith" could not have fought "Apollyon;" it needed "Christian" to do that. Poor "Little-faith" could not have slain "Giant Despair;" it required "Great-heart's" arm to knock that monster down! Little faith will go to heaven most certainly—but it often has to hide itself in a nut-shell, and it frequently loses all but its jewels. Little-faith says, "It is a rough road, beset with sharp thorns, and full of dangers; I am afraid to go!" But "Great-faith" remembers the promise, "Your shoes shall be iron and brass; as your days—so shall your strength be:" and so she boldly ventures. Little-faith stands desponding, mingling her tears with the flood; but Great-faith sings, "Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name; you are mine! When you go through deep waters and great trouble—I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty—you will not drown! When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you. For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior!" and she fords the stream at once.

Would you be comfortable and happy? Would you enjoy your religion? Would you have the religion of cheerfulness, and not that of gloom? Then "have faith in God." If you love darkness, and are satisfied to dwell in gloom and misery, then be content with little faith; but if you love the sunshine, and would sing songs of rejoicing, covet earnestly this best gift, "great faith."

March 7 — *Evening*

"It is better to trust in the Lord—than to put confidence in man." — Psalm 118:8

Doubtless the reader has been tried with the temptation to rely upon the things which are seen—instead of resting alone upon the invisible God. Christians often look to man for help and counsel—and mar the noble simplicity of their reliance upon their God.

Does this evening's portion meet the eye of a child of God anxious about temporal needs? Then would we reason with him for a while. You trust in Jesus, and only in Jesus, for your salvation; then why are you troubled? "Because of my great burden!" Is it not written, "Cast your burden upon the Lord"? "Do not worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses every thought, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Cannot you trust God for temporals? "Ah! I wish I could." If you cannot trust God for temporal needs—how dare you trust Him for spiritual needs? Can you trust Him for your soul's redemption, and not rely upon Him for a few lesser mercies? Is not God enough for your needs—or is His all-sufficiency too narrow for your needs? Do you need another eye—beside that of Him who sees every secret thing? Is His heart faint? Is His arm weary? If so, seek another god; but if He be infinite, omnipotent, faithful, true, and all-wise, why do you gad you abroad so much to seek another helper? Why do you rake the earth—to find another foundation, when this is strong enough to bear all the weight which you can ever build upon?

Christian, do not mix your wine—with water; do not alloy your gold of faith—with the dross of human confidence. Wait only upon God, and let your expectation be from Him. Do not covet Jonah's gourd—but rest in Jonah's God. Let the sandy foundations of terrestrial trust be the choice of fools—but you, like one who foresees the storm, build for yourself an abiding place upon the Rock of Ages!

March 8 — *Morning*

"It is necessary to pass through many troubles on our way into the kingdom of God."

Acts 14:22

God's people have their trials. It was never designed by God, when He chose His people, that they should be an untried people. They were chosen in the furnace of affliction; they were never chosen to worldly peace and earthly joy. Freedom from the sicknesses and pains of mortality, was never promised them; but when their Lord drew up the charter of privileges, He included chastisements among the things to which they should inevitably be heirs. Trials are a part of our lot; they were predestinated for us in Christ's last legacy, "In this world you will have trouble." John 16:33. So surely as the stars are fashioned by his hands, and their orbits fixed by Him, so surely are our trials allotted to us! He has ordained their season and their place, their intensity and the effect they shall have upon us.

Godly men must never expect to escape troubles; if they do, they will be disappointed, for none of their predecessors have been without them. Mark the patience of Job; remember Abraham, for he had his trials, and by his faith under them, he became the "Father of the faithful." Note well the biographies of all the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and martyrs—and you shall discover none of those whom God made vessels of mercy, who were not made to pass through the fire of affliction. It is ordained of old, that the cross of trouble should be engraved on every vessel of mercy—as the royal mark whereby the King's vessels of honor are distinguished.

Though tribulation is thus the path of God's children, they have the comfort of knowing that their Master has traversed it before them; they have His presence and sympathy to cheer them, His grace to support them, and His example to teach them how to endure; and when they reach "the kingdom," it will more than make amends for the "much tribulation" through which they passed to enter it.

March 8 — Evening

"She called his name Ben-oni (son of sorrow)

—but his father called him Benjamin (son of my right hand)." — Genesis 35:18

To every matter there is a bright side—as well as a dark side. Rachel was overwhelmed with the sorrow of her own travail and death; Jacob, though weeping the mother's loss, could see the mercy of the child's birth. It is well for us if, while the flesh mourns over trials—that our faith triumphs in divine faithfulness. Samson's lion yielded honey, and so will our adversities, if rightly considered. The stormy sea feeds multitudes with its fishes; the wild forest blooms with beautiful flowerets; the stormy wind sweeps away the pestilence, and the biting frost loosens the soil. Dark clouds distill bright drops, and black earth grows mirthful flowers. A vein of good—is to be found in every mine of evil.

Sad hearts have peculiar skill in discovering the most disadvantageous point of view from which to gaze upon a trial; if there were only one slough in the world—they would soon be up to their necks in it; and if there were only one lion in the desert—they would hear it roar. About us all—there is a tinge of this wretched folly, and we are apt, at times, like Jacob, to cry, "All these things are against me!" Faith's way of living is to cast all care upon the Lord—and then to anticipate good results from the worst calamities. Like Gideon's men, faith does not fret over the broken pitcher—but rejoices that the lamp blazes forth the more. Out of the rough oyster-shell of difficulty—she extracts the rare pearl of honor; and from the deep ocean-caves of distress—she uplifts the priceless coral of pious experience. When her flood of prosperity ebbs—she finds treasures hidden in the sands; and when her sun of delight goes down, she turns her telescope of hope to the starry promises of heaven. When death itself appears, faith points to the light of resurrection beyond the grave—thus making our dying Benoni to be our living Benjamin!

March 9 — Morning

"Yes, He is altogether lovely!" — Song of Solomon 5:16

The superlative beauty of Jesus is all-attracting; it is not so much to be admired as to be loved. He is more than pleasant and fair—He is altogether lovely. Surely the people of God can fully justify the use of this golden word, for He is the object of their warmest love, a love founded on the intrinsic excellence of His person, and the complete perfection of His charms.

Look, O disciples of Jesus, to your Master's lips, and say, "Are they not most sweet?" Do not His words cause your hearts to burn within you as He talks with you by the way? O worshipers of Immanuel, look up to His head of much fine gold, and tell me—are not His thoughts precious unto you? Is not your adoration sweetened with affection as you humbly bow before that beautiful countenance? Is there not a charm in His every feature, and is not His whole person fragrant with such a fragrance of His good ointments, that therefore the virgins love Him? Is there one member of His glorious body—which is not attractive? Is there one portion of His person—which is not a fresh loadstone to our souls? Is there one office—which is not a strong cord to bind your heart?

Our love is not as a seal set upon His heart of love alone; it is fastened upon His arm of power also; nor is there a single part of Him upon which it does not fix itself. We anoint His whole person with the sweet spikenard of our fervent love. His whole life we would imitate; His whole character we would transcribe. In all other beings—we see some lack; but in Him there is all perfection. The best even of His favored saints have had blots upon their garments, and wrinkles upon their brows; but He is nothing but loveliness. All earthly suns have their spots; the fair world itself has its wilderness; we cannot love the whole of the most lovely thing; but Christ Jesus is gold without alloy —light without darkness — and glory without cloud. "Yes, He is altogether lovely!"

March 9 — Evening

"Abide in Me." — John 15:4

Communion with Christ—is a certain cure for every ill. Whether it is the wormwood of woe, or the cloying surfeit of earthly delight—close fellowship with the Lord Jesus will take bitterness from the one, and satiety from the other. Live near to Jesus, Christian, and it is matter of secondary importance whether you live on the mountain of honor—or in the valley of humiliation. Living near to Jesus, you are covered with the wings of God, and underneath you are the everlasting arms.

Let nothing keep you from that hallowed fellowship, which is the choice privilege of a soul wedded to the Well-beloved. Do not be content with an interview now and then—but seek always to retain His company, for only in His presence—have you either comfort or safety. Jesus should not be unto us, a friend who calls upon us now and then—but one with whom we walk evermore. You have a difficult road before you—see, O traveler to heaven, that you go not without your guide. You have to pass through the fiery furnace; enter it not unless, like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, you have the Son of God to be your companion. You have to storm the Jericho of your own corruptions; do not attempt the warfare until, like Joshua, you have seen the Captain of the Lord's host, with His sword drawn in His hand. You are to meet the Esau of your many temptations; meet him not until at Jabbok's brook you have laid hold upon the angel, and prevailed.

In every case, in every condition, you will need Jesus; but most of all, when the iron gates of death shall open to you. Keep close to your soul's Husband, lean your head upon His bosom, ask to be refreshed with the spiced wine of His pomegranate, and you shall be found of Him at the last, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. Seeing you have lived with Him, and lived in Him here—you shall abide with Him forever!

March 10 — Morning

"In my prosperity, I said—I shall never be moved." — Psalm 30:6

"Moab settled on his lees—he has not been emptied from vessel to vessel." Give a man wealth; let his ships bring home continually rich freights; let the winds and waves appear to be his servants to bear his vessels across the bosom of the mighty deep; let his lands yield abundantly; let the weather be propitious to his crops; let uninterrupted success attend him; let him stand among men as a successful merchant; let him enjoy continued health; allow him with braced nerve and brilliant eye to march through the world, and live happily; give him the buoyant spirit; let him have the song perpetually on his lips; let his eye be ever sparkling with joy — and the natural consequence of such an easy state to any man, let him be the best Christian who ever breathed, will be presumption. Even David said, "I shall never be moved;" and we are not better than David, nor half so good.

Brother, beware of the smooth places of the way. If the way is rough, thank God for it. If God should always rock us in the cradle of prosperity; if we were always dandled on the knees of fortune; if we had not some stain on the alabaster pillar; if there were not a few clouds in the sky; if we had not some bitter drops in the wine of this life—we would become intoxicated with pleasure, we would dream "we stand;" and stand we should—but it would be upon a pinnacle; like the man asleep upon the mast, each moment we should be in jeopardy. We bless God, then, for our afflictions; we thank Him for our changes; we extol His name for losses of property; for we feel that had He not chastened us thus—we might have become too secure. Continued worldly prosperity is a fiery trial. "Afflictions, though they seem severe—in mercy often are sent."

March 10 — *Evening*

"Man... is of few days, and full of trouble." — Job 14:1

It may be of great service to us, before we fall asleep, to remember this mournful fact—for it may lead us to set loose by earthly things. There is nothing very pleasant in the recollection that we are not above the shafts of adversity—but it may humble us and prevent our boasting like the Psalmist in our morning's portion, "My mountain stands firm—I shall never be moved." It may keep us from taking too deep root in this soil, from which we are so soon to be transplanted into the heavenly garden.

Let us recollect the frail tenure upon which we hold our temporal mercies. If we would remember that all the trees of earth are marked for the woodman's axe, we would not be so ready to build our nests in them. We would love others—but we would love with the love which expects death, and which reckons upon separations. Our dear relations are but loaned to us, and the hour when we must return them to the lender's hand may be even at the door.

The like is certainly true of our worldly goods. "Cast but a glance at riches, and they are gone, for they will surely sprout wings and fly off to the sky like an eagle." Proverbs 23:5 Our health is equally precarious. Frail flowers of the field—we must not reckon upon blooming forever. There is a time appointed for weakness and sickness, when we shall have to glorify God by suffering—and not by earnest activity. There is no single point in which we can hope to escape from the sharp arrows of affliction. Out of our few days—there is not one secure from sorrow. Man's life is a cask full of bitter wine; he who looks for joy in it, would sooner find honey in an ocean of brine! Beloved reader, do not set your affections upon things of earth—but seek those things which are above, for here the moth devours, and the thief breaks through—but there all joys are perpetual and eternal. The path of trouble is the way home. Lord, make this thought a pillow for many a weary head!

March 11 — Morning

"Sin... exceeding sinful." — Romans 7:13

Beware of light thoughts of sin. At the time of conversion, the conscience is so tender, that we are afraid of the slightest sin. Young converts have a holy timidity—a godly fear lest they should sin against God. But alas! very soon the fine bloom upon these first ripe fruits is removed by the rough handling of the surrounding world—and the sensitive plant of young piety turns into a willow—too pliant, too easily yielding. It is sadly true, that even a Christian may grow by degrees so callous, that the sin which once startled him does not alarm him in the least.

By degrees—men get familiar with sin. The ear in which the cannon has been booming—will not notice slight sounds. At first a little sin startles us; but soon we say, "Is it not a little one?" Then there comes another, larger, and then another—until by degrees we begin to regard sin as but a minor thing. And then follows an unholy presumption: "We have not fallen into open sin. True, we tripped a little—but we stood upright in the main. We may have uttered one unholy word—but as for the most of our life, it has been consistent." So we palliate sin; we throw a cloak over it; we call it by dainty names.

Christian, beware how you think of sin. Take heed lest you fall little by little. Sin, a little thing? Is it not a poison? Who knows its deadliness? Sin, a little thing? Do not the little foxes—spoil the grapes? Does not the tiny coral insect—build a rock which wrecks a navy? Do not little strokes—fell lofty oaks? Will not continual droppings—wear away stones? Sin, a little thing? It girded the Redeemer's head with thorns, and pierced His heart! It made Him suffer anguish, bitterness, and woe. Could you weigh the least sin in the scales of eternity—you would fly from it as from a serpent, and abhor the least appearance of evil. Look upon all sin as that which crucified your Savior—and you will see it to be "exceeding sinful."

March 11 — Evening

"You shall be called, Sought out." — Isaiah 62:12

The surpassing grace of God is seen very clearly, in that we were not only sought—but sought out. Men seek for a thing which is lost upon the floor of the house—but in such a case there is only seeking, not seeking out. The loss is more perplexing and the search more persevering, when a thing is sought out. We were mingled with the mire—we were as when some precious jewel falls into the sewer, and men gather out and carefully inspect a mass of abominable filth, and continue to stir and rake, and search among the heap until the treasure is found. Or, to use another figure, we were lost in a labyrinth; we wandered hither and there, and when mercy came after us with the gospel, it did not find us at the first coming, it had to search for us and seek us out; for we as lost sheep, were so desperately lost, and had wandered into such a strange country, that it did not seem possible that even the Good Shepherd should track our devious roamings. Glory be to unconquerable grace, we were sought out! No gloom could hide us, no filthiness could conceal us, we were found and brought home! Glory be to infinite love, God the Holy Spirit restored us!

The lives of some of God's people, if they could be written—would fill us with holy astonishment. Strange and marvelous are the ways which God used in their case to find His own. Blessed be His name, He never relinquishes the search—until the chosen are sought out effectually. They are not a people sought today and cast away tomorrow. Almightyness and wisdom combined will make no failures, they shall be called, "Sought out!" That any should be sought out is matchless grace—but that we should be sought out—is grace beyond degree! We can find no reason for it—but God's own sovereign love; and can only lift up our heart in wonder, and praise the Lord that this night we wear the name of "Sought out."

March 12 — Morning

"You shall love your neighbor." — Matthew 5:43

"Love your neighbor." Perhaps he rolls in riches—and you are poor, and living in your little cottage side-by-side with his lordly mansion. Every day you see his estates, his fine linen, and his sumptuous banquets. God has given him these gifts, covet not his wealth, and think no hard thoughts concerning him. Be content with your own lot, if you cannot better it—but do not look upon your neighbor, and wish that he were as yourself. Love him—and then you will not envy him.

Perhaps, on the other hand, you are rich—and near you reside the poor. Do not scorn to call them neighbor. Own that you are bound to love them. The world calls them your inferiors. In what are they inferior? They are far more your equals—than your inferiors, for "God has made of one blood all those who dwell upon the face of the earth." It is your coat which is better than theirs—but you are by no means better than they. They are men, and what are you more than that? Take heed that you love your neighbor even though he is in rags, or sunken in the depths of poverty.

But, perhaps, you say, "I cannot love my neighbors, because for all I do—they return ingratitude and contempt." So much the more room for the heroism of love. Would you be a feather-bed warrior, instead of bearing the rough fight of love? He who dares the most, shall win the most; and if your path of love is rough—tread it boldly, still loving your neighbors through thick and thin. Heap coals of fire on their heads, and if they are hard to please, seek not to please them—but to please your Master. Remember, that if they spurn your love, your Master has not spurned it, and your deed is as acceptable to Him as if it had been acceptable to them. Love your neighbor—for in so doing you are following the footsteps of Christ.

March 12 — Evening

"To whom do you belong?" — 1 Samuel 30:13

No neutralities can exist in Christ's religion. We are either ranked under the banner of Prince Immanuel, to serve and fight His battles—or we are vassals of the black prince, Satan. "To whom do you belong?"

Reader, let me assist you in your response. Have you been "born again"? If you have, you belong to Christ—but without the new birth, you cannot be His. In whom do you trust? For those who believe in Jesus, are the sons of God. Whose work are you doing? You are sure to serve your master, for he whom you serve is thereby owned to be your Lord. What company do you keep? If you belong to Jesus, you will fraternize with those who wear the livery of the cross. "Birds of a feather flock together." What is your conversation? Is it heavenly or is it earthly? What have you learned of your Master? — for servants learn much from their masters to whom they are apprenticed. If you have served your time with Jesus, it will be said of you, as it was of Peter and John, "They took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus." We press the question, "To whom do you belong?"

Answer honestly before you give sleep to your eyes. If you are not Christ's you are in a hard service — Run away from your cruel master! Enter into the service of the Lord of Love, and you shall enjoy a life of blessedness.

If you are Christ's let me advise you to do four things. You belong to Jesus — **obey** him; let his Word be your law; let His wish be your will. You belong to the Beloved, then **love** Him; let your heart embrace Him; let your whole soul be filled with Him. You belong to the Son of God, then **trust** him; rest nowhere but on him. You belong to the King of kings, then be **decided** for Him. Thus, without your being branded upon the brow—all will know to whom you belong.

March 13 — Morning

"Why sit we here until we die?" — 2 Kings 7:3

Dear reader, this little book was mainly intended for the edification of believers—but if you are yet unsaved, our heart yearns over you—and we would gladly say a word which may be blessed to you.

Open your Bible, and read the story of the lepers, and mark their position, which was much the same as yours. If you remain where you are—you must perish; if you go to Jesus—you can but die. "Nothing ventured—nothing won," is the old proverb, and in your case the venture is no great one. If you sit still in sullen despair, no one can pity you when your ruin comes; but if you die with mercy sought, if such a thing were possible, you would be the object of universal sympathy. None escape who refuse to look to Jesus; but you know that, at any rate, some are saved who believe in Him, for certain of your own acquaintances have received mercy—then why not you?

The Ninevites said, "Who can tell?" Act upon the same hope, and try the Lord's mercy. To perish is so awful, that if there were but a straw to catch at, the instinct of self-preservation should lead you to stretch out your hand.

We have thus been talking to you on your own unbelieving ground, we would now assure you, as from the Lord, that if you seek Him—He will be found by you. Jesus casts out none who come unto Him. You shall not perish—if you trust Him; on the contrary, you shall find treasure far richer than the poor lepers gathered in Syria's deserted camp! May the Holy Spirit embolden you to go at once, and you shall not believe in vain. When you are saved yourself, publish the good news to others. Tell the King's household first, and unite with them in fellowship; let the porter of the city, the minister, be informed of your discovery, and then proclaim the good news in every place. May the Lord save you before the sun goes down this day.

March 13 — *Evening*

"He reached out his hand and took the dove and brought it back to himself in the ark." Genesis 8:9

Wearied out with her wanderings, the dove returns at length to the ark as her only resting place. How heavily she flies — she will drop — she will never reach the ark! But she struggles on. Noah has been looking out for his dove all day long, and is ready to receive her. She has just strength to reach the edge of the ark, she can hardly alight upon it, and is ready to drop, when Noah puts forth his hand and pulls her back to himself in the ark. Mark that: "pulled back to himself in the ark." She did not fly right in herself—but was too fearful, or too weary to do so. She flew as far as she could, and then he put forth his hand and pulled her in unto him. This act of mercy was shown to the wandering dove, and she was not chidden for her wanderings. Just as she was—she was pulled into the ark.

So you, seeking sinner, with all your sin, will be received. "Only return" — those are God's two gracious words — "only return." What! nothing else? No, "only return." She had no olive branch in her mouth this time—nothing at all but just herself and her wanderings; but it is "only return," and she does return, and Noah pulls her in. Fly, you wanderer; fly you fainting one, dove as you are, though you think yourself to be black as the raven with the mire of sin—fly back, back to the Savior. Every moment you wait—does but increase your misery; your attempts to plume yourself and make yourself fit for Jesus are all vanity. Come to Him—just as you are. "Return, O backsliding Israel." He does not say, "Return, O repenting Israel" (there is such an invitation doubtless)—but "you backsliding one," as a backslider with all your backslidings about you—Return, return, return! Jesus is waiting for you! He will stretch forth His hand and "pull you in" — in to Himself, your heart's true home!

March 14 — *Morning*

"Let him who thinks he stands—take heed lest he fall." — 1 Corinthians 10:12

It is a curious fact, that there is such a thing as being proud of grace. A man says, "I have great faith—I shall not fall; poor little faith may fall—but I never shall." "I have fervent love," says another, "I can stand, there is no danger of my going astray." He who boasts of grace—has little grace to boast of. Some who do, this imagine that their graces can keep them—not knowing that the stream must flow constantly from the fountain head, or else the brook will soon be dry. If a continuous stream of oil comes not to the lamp, though it burns brightly today—it will smoke tomorrow, and noxious will be its odor.

Take heed that you don't boast in your graces—but let all your glorying and confidence be in Christ and His strength, for only so can you be kept from falling. Be much more in prayer. Spend longer time in holy adoration. Read the Scriptures more earnestly and constantly. Watch your lives more carefully. Live nearer to God. Take the best examples for your pattern. Let your conversation be redolent of heaven. Let your hearts be perfumed with affection for men's souls. So live that men may take knowledge of you—that you have been with Jesus, and have learned of Him. And when that happy day shall come, when He whom you love shall say, "Come up higher!" may it be your happiness to hear Him say, "You have fought a good fight—you have finished your course—and henceforth there is laid up for you an unfading crown of righteousness!"

On, Christian, with care and caution! On, with holy fear and trembling! On, with faith and confidence in Jesus alone, and let your constant petition be, "Uphold me, according to Your Word!" He is able, and He alone, "To keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy!"

March 14 — Evening

"I will take heed to my ways." — Psalm 39:1

Fellow-pilgrim, do not say in your heart, "I will go here and there, and I shall not sin;" for you are never so out of danger of sinning, as to boast of security. The road is very miry, it will be hard to pick your path, so as not to soil your garments. This is a world of pitch; you will need to watch often, if in handling it you are to keep your hands clean. There is a robber at every turn of the road to rob you of your jewels! There is a temptation in every mercy! There is a snare in every joy! And if you ever reach heaven at last—it will be a miracle of divine grace, to be ascribed entirely to your Father's power. Be on your guard!

When a man carries gun-powder in his hand, he should be careful that he does not go near a candle; and you too must take care that you enter not into temptation. Even your common actions are sharp-edged tools—you must mind how you handle them. There is nothing in this world to foster a Christian's piety—but everything to destroy it. How anxious should you be to look up to God—that He may keep you! Your prayer should be, "Hold me up—and I shall be safe!" Having prayed, you must also watch; guarding every thought, word, and action, with holy jealousy.

Do not expose yourselves to evil unnecessarily; but if called to exposure, if you are bidden to go where the darts are flying, never venture forth without your shield; for if once the devil finds you without yours—he will rejoice that his hour of triumph is come, and will soon make you fall down wounded by his arrows! Though you cannot be slain—you may be wounded. "Be sober; be vigilant, danger may be in an hour when all seems securest to you." Therefore, take heed to your ways, and watch unto prayer. No man ever fell into sin through being too watchful. May the Holy Spirit guide us in all our ways—so shall they always please the Lord.

March 15 — *Morning*

"Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." — 2 Timothy 2:1

Christ has grace without measure in Himself—but He has not retained it for Himself. As the reservoir empties itself into the pipes—so has Christ emptied out His grace for His people. "We have all received grace after grace from His fullness." He seems only to have—in order to dispense to us. He stands like the fountain, always flowing—but only running in order to supply the empty pitchers and the thirsty lips which draw near unto it. Like a tree, He bears sweet fruit, not to hang on boughs—but to be gathered by those who need. Grace, whether its work is to pardon, to cleanse, to preserve, to strengthen, to enlighten, to quicken, or to restore—is ever to be had from Him freely and without price; nor is there one form of the work of grace which He has not bestowed upon His people. As the blood of the body, though flowing from the heart, belongs equally to every member—so the influences of grace—are the inheritance of every saint united to the Lamb. Herein there is a sweet communion between Christ and His Church, inasmuch as they both receive the same grace. Christ is the head upon which the oil is first poured; but the same oil runs to the very skirts of the garments, so that the lowest saint has the same unction of as that which fell upon the head.

This is true communion, when the sap of grace flows from the stem to the branch, and when it is perceived that the stem itself is sustained by the very nourishment which feeds the branch. As we day by day receive grace from Jesus, and more constantly recognize it as coming from Him, we shall behold Him in communion with us, and enjoy the felicity of communion with Him. Let us make daily use of our riches, and ever repair to Him as to our own Lord in covenant, taking from Him the supply of all we need—with as much boldness as men take money from their own purse!

March 15 — Evening

"He did it with all his heart and prospered." — 2 Chronicles 31:21

This is no unusual occurrence; it is the general rule of the moral universe—that those men prosper—who do their work with all their hearts; while those are almost certain to fail—who go to their labor leaving half their hearts behind them. God does not give harvests to idle men—except harvests of thistles; nor is He pleased to send wealth to those who will not dig in the field to find its hid treasure. It is universally confessed that if a man would prosper—he must be diligent in business.

It is the same in religion as it is in other things. If you would prosper in your work for Jesus—let it be heart work, and let it be done with all your heart. Put as much force, energy, heartiness, and earnestness into religion—as ever you do into business, for it deserves far more. The Holy Spirit helps our infirmities—but He does not encourage our idleness; He loves active believers. Who are the most useful men in the Christian church? The men who do what they undertake for God with all their hearts. Who are the most successful Sunday-school teachers? The most talented? No; the most zealous; the men whose hearts are on fire, those are the men who see their Lord riding forth prosperously in the majesty of His salvation.

Whole-heartedness shows itself in perseverance. There may be failure at first—but the earnest worker will say, "It is the Lord's work, and it must be done; my Lord has bidden me do it, and in His strength I will accomplish it." Christian, are you thus "with all your heart" serving your Master? Remember the earnestness of Jesus! Think what heart-work was His! He could say, "Zeal for Your house has consumed Me!" When He sweat great drops of blood, it was no light burden He had to carry upon those blessed shoulders; and when He poured out His heart, it was no weak effort He was making for the salvation of His people. Was Jesus in earnest—and are we lukewarm?

March 16 — Morning

"I am a stranger with you." — Psalm 39:12

Yes, O Lord, with You—but not to You. All my natural alienation from You—Your grace has effectually removed; and now, in fellowship with Yourself, I walk through this sinful world as a pilgrim in a foreign country. You are a stranger in Your own world. Man forgets You, dishonors You, sets up new laws and alien customs, and knows You not. When Your dear Son came unto His own, His own received Him not. He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. Never was a foreigner so speckled a bird among the inhabitants of any land—as Your beloved Son among His mother's brethren. It is no marvel, then, if I who live the life of Jesus, should be unknown and a stranger here below. Lord, I would not be a citizen where Jesus was an alien. His pierced hand has loosened the cords which once bound my soul to earth—and now I find myself a stranger in the land. My speech seems to these Babylonians among whom I dwell—an outlandish tongue; my manners are singular; and my actions are strange. I could never be at home in the haunts of sinners.

But here is the sweetness of my lot—"I am a stranger with You." You are my fellow-sufferer, my fellow-pilgrim. Oh, what joy to wander in such blessed society! My heart burns within me by the way, when you speak to me, and though I am a sojourner, I am far more blessed than those who sit on thrones, and far more at home than those who dwell in their ivory palaces.

March 16 — *Evening*

"Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins." — Psalm 19:13

Such was the prayer of the "man after God's own heart." Did holy David need to pray thus? How needful, then, must such a prayer be for us babes in grace! It is as if he said, "Keep me back, or I shall rush headlong over the precipice of sin." Our evil nature, like an ill-tempered horse, is apt to run away. May the grace of God put the bridle upon it, and hold it in, that it rush not into mischief. What grievous sin might the best of us do—if it were not for the checks which the Lord sets upon us both in providence and in grace!

The psalmist's prayer is directed against the worst form of sin — that which is done with deliberation and wilfulness. Even the holiest people need to be "kept back" from the vilest transgressions. It is a solemn thing to find the apostle Paul warning saints against the most loathsome sins. "So put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you. Have nothing to do with sexual sin, impurity, lust, and shameful desires, and greed, which is idolatry." Colossians 3:5. What! do saints need warning against such sins as these? Yes, they do! The whitest robes, unless their purity be preserved by divine grace, will be defiled by the blackest spots.

Experienced Christian, boast not in your experience; you will yet trip—if you look away from Him who is able to keep you from falling. You whose love is fervent, whose faith is constant, whose hopes are bright, say not, "We shall never fall!" but rather cry, "Lead us not into temptation." There is enough tinder in the heart of the best of men—to light a fire that shall burn to the lowest hell—unless God shall quench the sparks as they fall. Who would have dreamed that righteous Lot could be found drunken, and committing immorality? Hazeal said, "Is your servant a dog—that he should do this thing?" and we are very apt to use the same self-righteous question. May infinite wisdom cure us of the madness of self-confidence!

March 17 — Morning

"Remember the poor." — Galatians 2:10

Why does God allow so many of His children to be poor? He could make them all rich if He pleased; He could lay bags of gold at their doors; He could send them a large annual income; or He could scatter round their houses abundance of provisions, as once he made the quail lie in heaps round the camp of Israel, and rained bread out of heaven to feed them. There is no necessity that they should be poor—except that He sees it to be best. "The cattle upon a thousand hills are His" — He could supply them; He could make the richest, the greatest, and the mightiest bring all their power and riches to the feet of His children, for the hearts of all men are in His control. But He does not choose to do so; He allows them to suffer need, He allows them to pine in poverty and obscurity.

Why is this? There are many reasons. One is, to give us, who are favored with enough, an opportunity of showing our love to Jesus. We show our love to Christ when we sing of Him and when we pray to Him; but if there were no poor ones in the world—we would lose the sweet privilege of evidencing our love, by ministering in alms-giving to His poorer brethren. He has ordained that thus we should prove that our love stands not in word only—but in deed and in truth. If we truly love Christ—we shall care for those who are loved by Him. Those who are dear to Him—will be dear to us. Let us then look upon it—not as a duty but as a privilege—to relieve the poor of the Lord's flock. Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, "Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me." Surely this assurance is sweet enough, and this motive strong enough to lead us to help others with a willing hand and a loving heart — recollecting that all we do for His people is graciously accepted by Christ as done to Himself!

March 17 — Evening

"Blessed are the peacemakers—for they shall be called the children of God." — Matthew 5:9

This is the seventh of the beatitudes: and seven was the number of perfection among the Hebrews. It may be, that the Savior placed the peacemaker the seventh upon the list because the peacemaker most nearly approaches the perfect man in Christ Jesus. He who would have perfect blessedness, so far as it can be enjoyed on earth, must attain to this seventh benediction, and become a peacemaker.

There is a significance also in the position of the text. The verse which precedes it, speaks of the blessedness of "the pure in heart—for they shall see God." It is well to understand that we are to be "first pure—then peaceable." Our peaceableness is never to be a compact with sin, or toleration of evil. We must set our faces like flints against everything which is contrary to God and His holiness. Purity being in our souls a settled matter, we can go on to peaceableness.

Not less does the verse that follows, seem to have been put there on purpose. However peaceable we may be in this world—yet we shall be misrepresented and misunderstood. And no marvel, for even the Prince of Peace, by His very peacefulness, brought fire upon the earth. He Himself, though He loved mankind, and did no evil, was "despised and rejected by men—a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." Lest, therefore, the peaceable in heart should be surprised when they meet with enemies, it is added in the following verse, "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake—for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Thus, the peacemakers are not only pronounced to be blessed—but they are compassed about with blessings. Lord, give us grace to climb to this seventh beatitude! Purify our minds that we may be "first pure, then peaceable," and fortify our souls, that our peaceableness may not lead us into cowardice and despair, when for Your sake we are persecuted.

March 18 — Morning

"You are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." — Galatians 3:26

The fatherhood of God is common to all his children. Ah! Little-faith, you have often said, "Oh that I had the courage of Great-heart, that I could wield his sword and be as valiant as he! But, alas, I stumble at every straw, and a shadow makes me afraid." Don't you know, Little-faith. Great-heart is God's child, and you are God's child too; and Great-heart is not one whit more God's child than you are. Peter and Paul, the highly-favored apostles, were of the family of the Most High; and so are you also. The weak Christian is as much a child of God—as the strong one.

All the names are in the same family register. One may have more grace than another—but God our heavenly Father has the same tender heart towards all. One may do more mighty works, and may bring more glory to his Father—but he whose name is the least in the kingdom of heaven—is as much the child of God as he who stands among the King's mighty men. Let this cheer and comfort us, when we draw near to God and say, "Our Father."

Yet, while we are comforted by knowing this, let us not rest contented with weak faith—but ask, like the Apostles, to have it increased. However feeble our faith may be, if it is real faith in Christ—we shall reach heaven at last—but we shall not honor our Master much on our pilgrimage, neither shall we abound in joy and peace. If then you would live to Christ's glory, and be happy in His service—seek to be filled with the spirit of adoption more and more completely, until perfect love shall cast out fear.

March 18 — Evening

"As the Father has loved Me—so have I loved you." — John 15:9

As the Father loves the Son, in the same manner Jesus loves His people. What is that divine method?

He loved Him without beginning, and thus Jesus loves His members. "I have loved you with an everlasting love." You can trace the beginning of human affection; you can easily find the beginning of your love to Christ—but His love to us is a stream whose source is hidden in eternity. God the Father loves Jesus without any change. Christian, take this for your comfort, that there is no change in Jesus Christ's love—to those who rest in Him. Yesterday you were on Tabor's top, and you said, "He loves me!" Today you are in the valley of humiliation—but He loves you still the same. On the hill Mizar, and among the Hermons, you heard His voice, which spoke so sweetly with the notes of love; and now on the sea, or even in the sea, when all His waves and billows go over you, His heart is faithful to His ancient choice.

The Father loves the Son without any end, and thus does the Son love His people. Saint, you need not fear the loosing of the silver cord, for His love for you will never cease. Rest confident that even down to the grave—Christ will go with you; and that up again from it—He will be your guide to the celestial hills.

Moreover, the Father loves the Son without any measure, and the same immeasurable love the Son bestows upon His chosen ones. The whole heart of Christ is dedicated to His people. He "loved us—and gave Himself for us." His is a love which passes knowledge. Ah! we have indeed an immutable Savior, a precious Savior, one who loves without measure, without change, without beginning, and without end—even as the Father loves Him! There is much food here for those who know how to digest it. May the Holy Spirit lead us into its marrow and fatness!

March 19 — Morning

"Strong in faith." — Romans 4:20

Christian, take good care of your faith—for faith is the only way whereby you can obtain blessings. If we want blessings from God, nothing can fetch them down but faith. Prayer cannot draw down answers, from God's throne except it be the earnest prayer of the man who believes. Faith is the angelic messenger between the soul—and the Lord Jesus in glory. Let that angel be withdrawn, and we can neither send up prayer, nor receive the answers. Faith is the telegraph wire which links earth and heaven — on which God's messages of love fly so fast, that before we call—He answers, and while we are yet speaking—He hears us. But if that telegraph wire of faith is snapped—how can we receive the promise?

Am I in trouble? — I can obtain help for trouble by faith. Am I beaten about by the enemy? — my soul on her dear Refuge leans by faith. But take faith away — in vain I call to God. There is no road between my soul and heaven—but faith. In the deepest wintertime, faith is the road on which the horses of prayer may travel — ay, and all the better for the biting frost; but blockade the road, and how can we communicate with the Great King? Faith links me with divinity. Faith clothes me with the power of God. Faith engages the omnipotence of Jehovah on my side. Faith insures every attribute of God in my defense. It helps me to defy the hosts of hell. It makes me march triumphant over the necks of my enemies. But without faith—how can I receive anything of the Lord? Let not him who wavers — who is like a wave of the sea — expect that he will receive anything from God! O, then, Christian, watch well your faith; for with it you can win all things, however poor you are—but without it you can obtain nothing. "If you can believe—all things are possible to him who believes."

March 19 — *Evening*

"She ate and was satisfied and had some left over." — Ruth 2:14

Whenever we are privileged to eat of the bread which Jesus gives, we are, like Ruth, satisfied with the full and sweet meal. When Jesus is the host—no guest goes empty from the table. Our head is satisfied with the precious truth which Christ reveals; our heart is content with Jesus, as the altogether lovely object of affection; our hope is satisfied, for whom have we in heaven but Jesus? and our desire is satiated, for what can we wish for more than "to know Christ and to be found in Him"? Jesus fills our conscience until it is at perfect peace; our judgment with persuasion of the certainty of His teachings; our memory with recollections of what He has done, and our imagination with the prospects of what He is yet to do.

As Ruth was "was satisfied and had some left over" so is it with us. We have had deep draughts; we have thought that we could take in all of Christ; but when we have done our best—we have had to leave a vast remainder. We have sat at the table of the Lord's love, and said, "Nothing but the infinite can ever satisfy me! I am such a great sinner—that I must have infinite merit to wash my sin away!" but we have had our sin removed, and found that there was merit to spare; we have had our hunger relieved at the feast of sacred love, and found that there was a redundance of spiritual food remaining.

There are certain sweet things in the Word of God which we have not enjoyed yet, and which we are obliged to leave for awhile; for we are like the disciples to whom Jesus said, "I have yet many things to say unto you—but you cannot bear them now." Yes, there are graces to which we have not attained; places of fellowship nearer to Christ which we have not reached; and heights of communion which our feet have not climbed. At every banquet of love there are many baskets of fragments left. Let us magnify the liberality of our glorious Boaz!

March 20 — Morning

"My beloved." — Song of Solomon 2:8

This was a golden name which the ancient Church in her most joyous moments was accustomed to give to the Anointed of the Lord. When the time of the singing of birds was come, and the voice of the turtle-dove was heard in her land, her love-note was sweeter than either, as she sang, "My beloved is mine—and I am His!" Ever in her song of songs, does she call Him by that delightful name, "My beloved!" Even in the long winter, when idolatry had withered the garden of the Lord, her prophets found space to lay aside their burden for a little season, and to say, as Elijah did, "Now will I sing to my well-beloved, a song of my beloved." Though the saints had never seen His face, though as yet He was not made flesh, nor had dwelt among us, nor had man beheld His glory—yet He was the consolation of Israel, the hope and joy of all the chosen, the "beloved" of all those who were upright before the Most High God.

We, in the summer days of the Church, are also accustomed to speak of Christ as the best beloved of our soul, and to feel that He is very precious, the "chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely one." So true is it, that the Church loves Jesus, and claims Him as her beloved, that the apostle dares to defy the whole universe to separate her from the love of Christ, and declares that neither persecutions, distress, affliction, peril, or the sword have been able to do it! Nay, he joyously boasts, "In all these things—we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us!"

O that we knew more of You, O ever precious one! My sole possession is Your love! In earth beneath, or heaven above—I have no other treasure! I ask for nothing more.

March 20 — Evening

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church." — Ephesians 5:25

What a golden example Christ gives to His disciples! Few masters could venture to say, "If you would practice my teaching, imitate my life." But as the life of Jesus is the exact transcript of perfect virtue, He can point to Himself as the paragon of holiness, as well as the teacher of it. The Christian should take nothing short of Christ for his model. Under no circumstances ought we to be content unless we reflect the grace which was in Him.

As a husband, the Christian is to look upon the portrait of Jesus—and he is to paint according to that copy. The true Christian is to be such a husband—as Christ was to His church.

The love of a husband is a **special** love. The Lord Jesus cherishes for the church a peculiar affection, which is set upon her above the rest of mankind: "I pray for them—I do not pray for the world." The elect church is the favorite of heaven, the treasure of Christ, the crown of His head, the bracelet of His arm, the breastplate of His heart, the very center and core of His love!

A husband should love his wife with a **constant** love, for thus Jesus loves His church. He does not vary in His affection. He may change in His display of affection—but the affection itself is still the same.

A husband should love his wife with an **enduring** love, for nothing "shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

A true husband loves his wife with a **hearty** love, fervent and intense. It is not mere lip-service. Ah! beloved, what more could Christ have done in proof of His love—than what He has done? Jesus has a delighted love towards His spouse—He prizes her affection, and delights in her with sweet satisfaction. Believer, you wonder at Jesus' love; you admire it — are you imitating it? In your domestic relationships, is the rule and measure of your love — "even as Christ loved the church"?

March 21 — *Morning*

"You will be scattered, each to his own home. You will leave me all alone." — John 16:32

Few had fellowship with the sorrows of Gethsemane. The majority of the disciples were not sufficiently advanced in grace to be admitted to behold the mysteries of "the agony." Occupied with the Passover feast at their own houses, they represent the many who live upon the letter—but are mere babes as to the spirit of the gospel. To twelve, nay, to eleven only, was the privilege given to enter Gethsemane and see "this great sight." Out of the eleven, eight were left at a distance; they had fellowship—but not of that intimate sort, to which men greatly beloved are admitted. Only three highly favored ones could approach the veil of our Lord's mysterious sorrow—within that veil even these must not intrude; a stone's-cast distance must be left between. He must tread the wine-press alone, and of the people there must be none with Him.

Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, represent the few eminent, experienced saints, who may be written down as "Fathers." These having done business on great waters, can in some degree measure the huge Atlantic waves of their Redeemer's passion. To some selected spirits it is given, for the good of others, and to strengthen them for future, special, and tremendous conflict—to enter the inner circle and hear the pleadings of the suffering High Priest; they have fellowship with Him in his sufferings, and are made conformable unto His death. Yet even these cannot penetrate the secret places of the Savior's woe. "Your unknown sufferings" is the remarkable expression of the liturgy. There was an inner chamber in our Master's grief, shut out from human knowledge and fellowship. There Jesus is "left all alone." Here Jesus was more than ever an "Unspeakable gift!" Is not Watts right when he sings —

"And all the unknown joys he gives,
Were bought with agonies unknown."

March 21 — *Evening*

"Can you bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion?" — Job 38:31

If inclined to boast of our abilities, the grandeur of nature may soon show us how puny we are. We cannot move the least of all the twinkling stars, or quench so much as one of the beams of the morning. We speak of power—but the heavens laugh us to scorn. When the Pleiades shine forth in spring with joy—we cannot restrain their influences; and when Orion reigns aloft, and the year is bound in winter's fetters, we cannot relax the icy bands. The seasons revolve according to the divine appointment, neither can the whole race of men effect a change therein. Lord, what is man!

In the spiritual, as in the natural world, man's power is limited on all hands. When the Holy Spirit sheds abroad His delights in the soul—none can disturb; all the cunning and malice of men are ineffectual to stay the genial quickening power of the Comforter. When He deigns to visit a church and revive it—the most inveterate enemies cannot resist the good work; they may ridicule it—but they can no more restrain it than they can push back the spring when the Pleiades rule the hour. God wills it—and so it must be.

On the other hand, if the Lord in sovereignty, or in justice—binds up a man so that he is in soul bondage, who can give him liberty? God alone can remove the winter of spiritual death from an individual, or a people. He looses the bands of Orion—and none but He. What a blessing it is that He can do it. O that He would perform the wonder tonight.

Lord, end my winter, and let my spring begin. I cannot with all my longings raise my soul out of her death and dullness—but all things are possible with You. I need celestial influences, the clear shinnings of Your love, the beams of Your grace, the light of Your countenance, these are the Pleiades to me. I suffer much from sin and temptation, these are my wintry signs, my terrible Orion. Lord, work wonders in me, and for me! Amen.

March 22 — *Morning*

"And He went a little farther, and fell on His face, and prayed." — Matthew 26:39

There are several instructive features in our Savior's prayer in His hour of trial.

It was **lonely** prayer. He withdrew even from His three favored disciples. Believer, be much in solitary prayer, especially in times of trial. Family prayer, social prayer, prayer in the Church, will not suffice. These are very precious—but the best beaten spice will smoke in your censer in your private devotions, where no ear hears—but God's.

It was **humble** prayer. Luke says He knelt—but another evangelist says He "fell on His face." Where, then, must be YOUR place, O humble servant of the great Master? What dust and ashes should cover your head! Humility gives us good foot-hold in prayer. There is no hope of prevalence with God—unless we abase ourselves that He may exalt us in due time.

It was **filial** prayer. "Abba, Father." You will find it a stronghold in the day of trial to plead your adoption. You have no rights as a subject, you have forfeited them by your treason; but nothing can forfeit a child's right to a father's protection. Be not afraid to say, "My Father—hear my cry!"

Observe that it was **persevering** prayer. He prayed three times. Cease not—until you prevail. Be as the importunate widow, whose continual coming earned what her first supplication could not win. Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.

Lastly, it was the prayer of **resignation**. "Nevertheless, not as I will—but as you will." Yield, and God yields. Let it be as God wills—and God will determine for the best. Be content to leave your prayer in his hands, who knows when to give, and how to give, and what to give, and what to withhold. So pleading, earnestly, importunately—yet with humility and resignation, you shall surely prevail.

March 22 — Evening

"Father, I will that they also, whom You have given Me—be with Me where I am."

John 17:24

O death! why do you touch the tree beneath whose spreading branches, weariness has rest? Why do you snatch away the excellent of the earth, in whom is all our delight? If you must use your axe, use it upon the trees which yield no fruit—you might be thanked then. But why will you strike down the goodly cedars of Lebanon? O stay your axe—and spare the righteous.

But no, it must not be! Death smites the goodliest of our friends; the most generous, the most prayerful, the most holy, the most devoted—must die. And why? It is through Jesus' prevailing prayer — "Father, I will that they also, whom You have given Me—be with Me where I am." It is that which bears them on eagle's wings to heaven. Every time a believer mounts from this earth to paradise—it is *an answer to Christ's prayer*. A good old divine remarks, "Many times Jesus and His people pull against one another in prayer. You bend your knee in prayer and say 'Father, I will that Your saints be with me where I am'; Christ says, 'Father, I will that they also, whom You have given Me—be with Me where I am.'" Thus the disciple is at *cross-purposes* with his Lord. The soul cannot be in both places: the beloved one cannot be with Christ and with you too. Now, which pleader shall win the day? If you had your choice; if the King should step from His throne, and say, "Here are two supplicants praying in opposition to one another, which shall be answered?" Oh! I am sure, though it were agony, you would start from your feet, and say, "Jesus, not my will—but Yours be done." You would give up your prayer for your loved one's life, if you could realize the thoughts that Christ is praying in the opposite direction — "Father, I will that they also, whom You have given Me—be with Me where I am." Lord, You shall have them. By faith we let them go.

March 23 — *Morning*

"His sweat was as it were—great drops of blood falling down to the ground." — Luke 22:44

The mental pressure arising from our Lord's struggle with temptation, so forced his frame to an unnatural excitement, that his pores sent forth great drops of blood which fell down to the ground. This proves how tremendous must have been the *weight of sin* when it was able to crush the Savior, so that he distilled great drops of blood!

This demonstrates the mighty *power of his love*. It is a very pretty observation of old Isaac Ambrose that the gum which exudes from the tree without cutting is always the best. This precious camphire-tree yielded most sweet spices when it was wounded under the knotty whips, and when it was pierced by the nails on the cross; but see, it gives forth its best spice when there is no whip, no nail, no wound.

This sets forth the *voluntariness* of Christ's sufferings, since without a lance, the blood flowed freely. No need to put on the leech, or apply the knife; it flows spontaneously. No need for the rulers to cry, "Spring up, O well;" of itself it flows in crimson torrents. If men suffer great pain of mind, apparently the blood rushes to the heart. The cheeks are pale; a fainting fit comes on; the blood has gone inward as if to nourish the inner man while passing through its trial. But see our Savior in His agony; He is so utterly oblivious of *self*, that instead of his agony driving His blood to the heart to nourish himself, it drives it outward to bedew the earth.

The agony of Christ, inasmuch as it pours him out upon the ground, pictures the *fullness of the offering* which he made for men. Do we not perceive how intense must have been the wrestling through which he passed, and will we not hear its voice to us? "You have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin." Behold the great Apostle and High Priest of our profession, who sweat even to blood rather than yield to the great tempter of your souls!

March 23 — Evening

"I tell you, if they were to keep silent, the stones would cry out!" — Luke 19:40

But could the stones cry out? Assuredly they could—if He who opens the mouth of the dumb, should bid them lift up their voice. Certainly if they were to speak, they would have much to testify in praise of Him who created them by the Word of His power; they would extol the wisdom and power of their Maker who called them into being. Shall not *we* speak well of Him who made us anew, and out of stones raised up children unto Abraham?

The old rocks could tell of chaos and order, and the handiwork of God in successive stages of creation's drama; and cannot *we* talk of God's decrees, of God's great work in ancient times, in all that He did for His church in the days of old? If the stones were to speak, they could tell of their breaker, how he took them from the quarry, and made them fit for the temple; and cannot *we* tell of our glorious Breaker, who broke our hearts with the hammer of His Word, that He might build us into His temple? If the stones should cry out they would magnify their builder, who polished them and fashioned them after the similitude of a palace; and shall not *we* talk of our Architect and Builder, who has put us in our place in the temple of the living God? If the stones could cry out, they might have a long, long story to tell by way of memorial, for many a time has a great stone been rolled as a memorial before the Lord; and we too can testify of *Ebenezers, stones of help*, pillars of remembrance.

The broken stones of the law cry out against us—but Christ Himself, who has rolled away the stone from the door of the sepulcher, speaks for us. Stones might well cry out—but we will not let them! We will hush their noise with ours; we will break forth into sacred song, and bless the majesty of the Most High God, all our days glorifying Him who is called by Jacob the Shepherd and Stone of Israel.

March 24 — Morning

"He was heard in that he feared." — Hebrews 5:7

Did this *fear* arise from the infernal suggestion that He was utterly forsaken. There may be sterner trials than this—but surely it is one of the worst to be utterly forsaken? "See," said Satan, "you have a friend nowhere! Your Father has shut up the affections of His compassion against you. Not an angel in His courts will stretch out his hand to help you. All heaven is alienated from You; You are left alone. See the companions with whom You have taken sweet counsel, what are they worth? Son of Mary, see there Your brother James, see there Your beloved disciple John, and Your bold apostle Peter—how the *cowards* sleep—when You are in Your sufferings! Lo! You have no friend left in heaven or earth. All hell is against You. I have stirred up my infernal den. I have sent my missives throughout all regions summoning every prince of darkness to set upon You this night, and we will spare no arrows, we will use all our infernal might to overwhelm You! And what will You do, You solitary one?"

It may be, this was the temptation; we think it was, because the appearance of an angel unto Him strengthening Him removed that fear. He was heard in that He feared; He was no more alone—but heaven was with Him. It may be that this is the reason of His coming three times to His disciples — as Joseph Hart puts it — "Backwards and forwards thrice He ran—as if He sought some help from man." He would see for Himself whether it were really true that all men had forsaken Him; He found them all asleep; but perhaps He gained some faint comfort from the thought that they were sleeping, not from treachery—but from sorrow, the spirit indeed was willing—but the flesh was weak. At any rate, He was heard in that He feared. Jesus was heard in His deepest woe; my soul—you shall be heard also.

March 24 — Evening

"In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit." — Luke 10:21

The Savior was "a man of sorrows," but every thoughtful mind has discovered the fact that down deep in His innermost soul—He carried *an inexhaustible treasury of pure and heavenly joy*. Of all the human race, there was never a man who had a deeper, purer, or more abiding peace—than our Lord Jesus Christ. "He was anointed with the *oil of gladness* above His fellows." His vast benevolence must, from the very nature of things, have afforded Him the deepest possible delight—for benevolence is joy.

There were a few remarkable seasons when this joy manifested itself. "At that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank you, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth." Christ had His *songs*, though it was *night* with Him; though His face was marred, and His countenance had lost the luster of earthly happiness—yet sometimes it was lit up with a matchless splendor of unparalleled satisfaction, as He thought upon the recompense of the reward, and in the midst of the congregation sang His praise unto God. In this, the Lord Jesus is a blessed picture of His church on earth. At this hour the church expects to walk in sympathy with her Lord along a thorny road; through much tribulation she is forcing her way to the crown. To bear the cross is her office, and to be scorned and counted an alien by her mother's children—is her lot; and yet the church has a deep well of joy, of which none can drink—but her own children. There are stores of wine, and oil, and corn, hidden in the midst of our Jerusalem, upon which the saints of God are evermore sustained and nurtured; and sometimes, as in our Savior's case, we have our seasons of intense delight, for "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of our God." Exiles though we are, we rejoice in our King! Yes, in Him we exceedingly rejoice, while in His name we set up our banners.

March 25 — Morning

"Betray you the Son of Man with a kiss?" — Luke 22:48

"The kisses of an enemy are deceitful." Proverbs 27:5. Let me be on my guard when the world puts on a loving face, for it will, if possible, betray me as it did my Master, with a kiss! Whenever a man is about to stab true religion, he usually professes very great reverence for it. Let me beware of the sleek-faced hypocrisy which is armor-bearer to heresy and infidelity. Knowing the deceivableness of unrighteousness, let me be wise as a serpent to detect and avoid the designs of the enemy.

The young man in the book of Proverbs, void of understanding, was led astray by the kiss of the immoral woman. May my soul be so graciously instructed all this day, that "the much fair speech" of the world may have no effect upon me. Holy Spirit, let me not, a poor frail son of man, be betrayed with a kiss!

But what if I should be guilty of the same accursed sin as Judas, that son of perdition? I have been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus; I am a member of His visible Church; I sit at the communion table—all these are so many kisses of my lips. Am I sincere in them? If not, I am a base traitor. Do I live in the world as carelessly as others do, and yet make a profession of being a follower of Jesus? Then I must expose religion to ridicule, and lead men to speak evil of the holy name by which I am called. Surely if I act thus inconsistently, I am a Judas, and it were better for me that I had never been born! Dare I hope that I am clear in this matter? Then, O Lord, keep me so. O Lord, make me sincere and true. Preserve me from every false way. Never let me betray my Savior. I do love You, Jesus, and though I often grieve You—yet I would desire to abide faithful even unto death. O God, forbid that I should be a high-soaring professor, and then fall at last into the lake of fire, because I betrayed my Master with a kiss.

March 25 — Evening

"The Son of man." — John 3:13

How constantly our Master used the title, the "Son of man!" If He had chosen, He might always have spoken of Himself as the Son of God, the Everlasting Father, the Wonderful, the Counselor, the Prince of Peace; but behold the lowliness of Jesus! He prefers to call Himself the *Son of man*. Let us learn a lesson of *humility* from our Savior; let us never court great titles nor proud degrees.

There is here, however, a far sweeter thought. Jesus loved manhood so much, that He delighted to honor it; and since it is a high honor, and indeed, the greatest dignity of manhood, that Jesus is the Son of man, He is accustomed to display this name, that He may as it were hang royal stars upon the breast of *manhood*, and show forth the love of God to Abraham's seed. *Son of man* — whenever He said that word, He shed a halo round the head of Adam's children.

Yet there is perhaps a more precious thought still. Jesus Christ called Himself the Son of man to express His oneness and *sympathy* with His people. He thus reminds us that He is the one whom we may approach without fear. As a man, we may take to Him all our griefs and troubles, for He knows them by experience; in that He Himself has suffered as the "Son of man," He is able to succor and comfort us.

All hail, O blessed Jesus! inasmuch as You are evermore using the sweet name which acknowledges that You are a brother and a near kinsman, it is to us a dear token of Your grace, Your humility, Your love!

March 26 — *Morning*

"Jesus said unto them—If you seek Me, let these go their way." — John 18:8

Mark, my soul, the *care* which Jesus manifested even in His hour of trial, towards the sheep of His hand! His love for His people is as strong in death. He resigns Himself to the enemy—but He interposes a word of power to set His disciples free. As to *Himself*, like a sheep before her shearers He is silent, and opened not His mouth. But for His *disciples'* sake—He speaks with Almighty energy. Herein is love—constant, self-forgetting, faithful love!

But is there not far more here than is to be found upon the surface? Have we not the very soul and spirit of the *atonement* in these words? The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep—and pleads that they must therefore go free. The Surety is bound, and justice demands that those for whom He stands a substitute, should go their way. In the midst of Egypt's bondage, that voice rings as a word of power, "Let these go their way!" Out of *slavery* of sin and Satan—the redeemed must come. In every cell of the dungeons of Despair, the sound is echoed, "Let these go their way!" and forth come Despondency and Much-afraid. *Satan* hears the well-known voice, and lifts his foot from the neck of the fallen; and *Death* hears it, and the grave opens her gates to let the dead arise.

Their way is one of progress, holiness, triumph, glory, and none shall dare to keep them in it. No lion shall be on their way, neither shall any ravenous beast go up thereon. "The deer of the morning" has drawn the cruel hunters upon Himself—and now the most timid roes and hinds of the field may graze at perfect peace among the lilies of his love. The thunder-cloud has burst over the Cross of Calvary—and the pilgrims of Zion shall never be smitten by the *bolts of vengeance!* Come, my heart, rejoice in the immunity which your Redeemer has secured you—and bless His name all the day, and every day!

March 26 — Evening

"When He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels." — Mark 8:38

If we have been partakers with Jesus in His *shame*—we shall be sharers with Him in the luster which shall surround Him when He appears again in *glory!* Are you, beloved, *one* with Christ Jesus? Does a *vital union* knit you to Him? Then you are today with Him in His shame; you have taken up His cross, and gone with Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach; you shall doubtless be with Him when the *cross* is exchanged for the *crown*.

But judge yourself this evening; for if you are not with Him in regeneration, neither shall you be with Him when He shall come in His glory. If you start back from the black side of communion, you shall not understand its bright, its happy period, when the King shall come, and all His holy angels with Him. Come, my soul, if you are indeed His own beloved—you cannot be far from Him. If His *friends* and His *neighbors* are called together to see His glory, what of you are *married* to Him? Shall you be distant? Though it be a day of judgment—yet you cannot be far from that heart which, having admitted angels into intimacy, has admitted you into marriage union. Has He not said to you, O my soul, "I will betroth you unto Me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness"? Have not His own lips said it, "I am married unto you, and My delight is in you"? If the angels, who are but *friends* and *neighbors*, shall be with Him, it is abundantly certain that His own beloved *Hephzibah*, in whom is all His delight, shall be near to Him, and sit at His right hand. Here is a *morning star of hope* for you, of such exceeding brilliance, that it may well light up the darkest and most desolate experience!

March 27 — Morning

"Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled!" — Matthew 26:56

He never deserted them—but *they* in cowardly fear of their lives, fled from Him in the very beginning of His sufferings. This is but one instructive instance of the *frailty of all believers—if left to themselves*. They are but *sheep* at the best—and they flee when the *wolf* comes. They had all been warned of the danger, and had promised to die rather than leave their Master; and yet they were seized with sudden panic, and took to their heels.

It may be, that I, at the opening of this day, have braced up my mind to bear a trial for the Lord's sake, and I imagine myself to be certain to exhibit perfect fidelity; but let me be very jealous of myself, lest having the same evil heart of unbelief—I should depart from my Lord as the apostles did. It is one thing to *promise*, and quite another to *perform*. It would have been to their eternal honor to have stood at Jesus' side right manfully; they fled from honor; may I be kept from imitating them!

Where else could they have been so *safe* as near their Master, who could presently call for twelve legions of angels? They fled from their *true safety*. O God, let me not play the fool also. Divine grace can make the coward brave. The smoking flax can flame forth like fire on the altar when the Lord wills it. These very apostles who were timid as hares, grew to be bold as lions after the Spirit had descended upon them; and even so—the Holy Spirit can make my cringing spirit brave to confess my Lord, and witness for His truth.

What anguish must have filled the Savior as He saw His friends so faithless! This was *one bitter ingredient in His cup*; but that cup is drained dry; let me not put another drop in it. If I forsake my Lord, I shall crucify Him afresh, and put Him to an open shame. Keep me, O blessed Spirit, from an end so shameful.

March 27 — Evening

"Yes, Lord," she said, "but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." Matthew 15:27

This woman gained comfort in her misery—by thinking *great thoughts of Christ*. The Master had talked about the *children's bread*. "Now," argued she, "since You are the Master of the table of grace, I know that You are a generous housekeeper, and there is sure to be abundance of bread on Your table; there will be such an abundance for the children—that there will be *crumbs* to throw on the floor for the dogs, and the children will fare none the worse because the dogs are fed." She thought Him one who kept so good a table—that all that she needed would only be a *crumb* in comparison. Yet remember, what she wanted was to have the devil cast out of her daughter. It was a very great thing to her—but she had such a high esteem of Christ, that she said, "It is *nothing* to Him—it is but a *crumb* for Christ to give!"

This is the royal road to comfort. Great thoughts of your *sin* alone—will drive you to despair; but great thoughts of *Christ*—will pilot you into the *haven of peace*. "My sins are many—but oh! it is nothing to Jesus to take them all away. The weight of my guilt presses me down as a giant's foot would crush a worm—but it is no more than a *grain of dust* to Him, because He has already borne its curse on the cruel tree. It will be but a small thing for Him to give me full remission, although it will be an infinite blessing for me to receive it."

The woman opens her soul's mouth very wide, expecting great things of Jesus—and He fills it with His love.

Dear reader, do the same. She confessed what Christ laid at her door—but she laid fast hold upon Him, and drew arguments even out of His hard words; she believed great things of Him, and she thus overcame Him. She won the victory by believing in Him! Her case is an instance of *prevailing faith*; and if we would *conquer* like her—we must imitate her *tactics*.

March 28 — *Morning*

"The love of Christ, which surpasses knowledge." — Ephesians 3:19

The love of Christ in its sweetness, its fullness, its greatness, its faithfulness, surpasses all human comprehension. Where shall language be found—which shall describe His matchless, His unparalleled love towards His people? It is so vast and boundless that, as the swallow but *skims* the water, and dives not into its depths—so all descriptive words but touch the surface, while immeasurable depths lie beneath. Well might the poet say, "O love—you fathomless abyss!" for this love of Christ is indeed *measureless* and *fathomless*; none can attain unto it!

Before we can have any right idea of the love of Jesus, we must understand His previous *glory* in its height of majesty, and His *humiliation* upon the earth in all its depths of shame. But who can fathom the majesty of Christ? When He was enthroned in the highest heavens—He was very God of very God; by Him were the heavens made, and all the hosts thereof. His own almighty arm upheld the spheres; the praises of cherubim and seraphim perpetually surrounded Him; the full chorus of the hallelujahs of the universe unceasingly flowed to the foot of his throne; He reigned supreme above all His creatures, as God over all, blessed forever. Who can fathom His height of glory then?

And who, on the other hand, can fathom how low He descended? To be a *man* was something, to be a man of sorrows was far more; to bleed, and die, and suffer, these were much for Him who was the Son of God; but to suffer such unparalleled agony — to endure a death of shame and desertion by His Father—this is a depth of condescending love which the most inspired mind must utterly fail to penetrate! Herein is love! and truly it is love that "surpasses knowledge." O let this love fill our hearts with adoring gratitude, and lead us to practical manifestations of its power.

March 28 — Evening

"I will accept you with your sweet savor." — Ezekiel 20:41

The merits of our great Redeemer are as sweet savor to the Most High. Whether we speak of the *active* or *passive* righteousness of Christ, there is an equal fragrance. There was a sweet savor in His *active* life by which He honored the law of God, and made every precept to glitter like a precious jewel in the pure setting of His own person.

Such, too, was His *passive* obedience, when He endured with uncomplaining submission, hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness, sweat great drops of blood in Gethsemane, gave His back to the smiters, and His cheeks to those who plucked out the hair, and was fastened to the cruel wood—that He might suffer the wrath of God in our behalf.

These two things are sweet before the Most High; and for the sake of His doing and His dying, His substitutionary sufferings and His vicarious obedience—the Lord our God accepts us. What a preciousness must there be in Him to overcome our want of preciousness! What a sweet savor—to put away our ill savor! What a cleansing power in His blood—to take away sin such as ours! and what glory in His righteousness—to make such unacceptable creatures to be accepted in the Beloved!

Mark, believer, how sure and unchanging must be our acceptance, since it is in Him! Take care that you never doubt your acceptance in Jesus. You cannot be accepted without Christ; but, when you have received His merit, you cannot be unaccepted. Notwithstanding all your doubts, and fears, and sins, Jehovah's gracious eye never looks upon you in anger; though He sees sin in you, in yourself—yet when He looks at you through Christ, He sees no sin. You are always accepted in Christ—and always blessed and dear to the Father's heart. Therefore lift up a song, and as you see the smoking incense of the merit of the Savior coming up, this evening, before the sapphire throne, let the incense of your praise go up also! "He has made us accepted in the beloved!" Ephesians 1:6

March 29 — *Morning*

"Though He was a Son—yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered."

Hebrews 5:8

We are told that the *Captain of our salvation* was made perfect through suffering, therefore we who are sinful, and who are far from being perfect—must not wonder if we are called to pass through suffering too. Shall the *Head* be crowned with thorns—and shall the other *members* of the body be *rocked upon the dainty lap of ease*? Must Christ pass through seas of His own blood to win the crown—and are we to walk to heaven dry-shod in silver slippers? No, our Master's experience teaches us that *suffering is necessary*, and the true-born child of God must not, would not, escape it if he might!

But there is one very comforting thought in the fact of Christ's "being made perfect through suffering" — it is, that He can have *complete sympathy* with us. "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to *sympathize* with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are." In this *sympathy of Christ*, we find a sustaining power. One of the early martyrs said, "I can bear it all, for Jesus suffered, and He sympathizes with me, and this makes me strong." Believer, lay hold of this thought in all times of agony. Let the thought of Jesus, strengthen you as you follow in His steps. Find a sweet support in His sympathy!

Remember that, to suffer is an honorable thing — to suffer for Christ is glory. The apostles rejoiced that they were counted worthy to do this. Just so far as the Lord shall give us grace to suffer *for* Christ, to suffer *with* Christ—just so far does He honor us. *The jewels of a Christian are his afflictions!* The regalia of the kings whom God has anointed—are their troubles, their sorrows, and their griefs. Let us not, therefore, shun being honored. Let us not turn aside from being exalted. Griefs exalt us, and troubles lift us up. "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him."

March 29 — *Evening*

"I called Him—but He gave me no answer." — Song of Solomon 5:6

Prayer sometimes tarries, like a petitioner at the gate, until the King comes forth to fill her bosom with the blessings which she seeks. The Lord, when He has given great faith, has been known to try it by *long delayings*. He has allowed His servants' voices to echo in their ears—as from a brazen sky. They have *knocked at the golden gate*—but it has remained immovable, as though it were *rusted upon its hinges*. Like Jeremiah, they have cried, "You have covered Yourself with a cloud—that our prayer should not pass through."

Thus have true saints continued long in *patient waiting* without reply, not because their prayers were not vehement, nor because they were unaccepted—but because it so pleased Him who is a Sovereign, and who gives according to His own pleasure. If it pleases Him to bid our *patience* exercise itself—shall He not do as He wills with His own! *Beggars must not be choosers*—either as to time, place, or form.

But we must be careful not to take *delays* in prayer for *denials*! God's long-dated bills will be punctually honored. Nor must we allow Satan to shake our confidence in the God of truth—by pointing to our *unanswered prayers*. Unanswered petitions are not *unheard*. God keeps a file for our prayers—they are not blown away by the wind—they are treasured in the King's archives. This is a registry in the court of heaven—wherein every prayer is recorded. Tried believer, your Lord has a **tear-bottle** in which the *costly drops of sacred grief* are stored away—and a **book** in which your holy groanings are numbered. By-and-by, your prayer shall be answered. Can you not be content to wait a little? Will not your *Lord's* time—be better than *your* time? By-and-by He will comfortably appear, to your soul's joy, and make you put away the sackcloth and ashes of long waiting—and put on the scarlet and fine linen of full fruition!

March 30 — Morning

"He was numbered with the transgressors." — Isaiah 53:12

Why did Jesus allow Himself to be enrolled among sinners? This astonishing condescension was justified by many powerful reasons.

In such a character He could the better become their advocate. In some trials there is an identification of the counselor with the client, nor can they be looked upon in the eye of the law as apart from one another. Now, when the sinner is brought to the bar, Jesus appears there Himself. He stands to answer the accusation. He points to His side, His hands, His feet—and challenges *Justice* to bring anything against the sinners whom He represents. He pleads His blood, and pleads so triumphantly, being numbered with them and having a part with them, that the Judge proclaims, "Let them go their way; deliver them from going down into the pit—for I have found a ransom!"

Our Lord Jesus was numbered with the transgressors, in order that they might feel their hearts drawn towards Him. Who can be afraid of one who is written in the same list with us? Surely we may come boldly to Him, and confess our guilt. He who is numbered with us, cannot condemn us. Was He not put down in the transgressor's list—that we might be written in the red roll of the saints? He was holy, and written among the holy; we were guilty, and numbered among the guilty; He transfers His name from yonder list—to this black indictment, and our names are taken from the indictment and written in the roll of acceptance, for there is a complete transfer made between Jesus and His people. All our estate of misery and sin—Jesus has taken; and all that Jesus has—comes to us. His righteousness, His blood, and everything that He has—He gives us as our dowry. Rejoice, believer, in your union to Him who was numbered among the transgressors; and prove that you are truly saved—by being manifestly numbered with those who are new creatures in Him!

March 30 — Evening

"Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the Lord." — Lamentations 3:40

The *spouse* who fondly loves her absent husband, longs for his return; a long protracted separation from her husband is a semi-death to her spirit. Just so, with souls who love the Savior much—they must see His face, they cannot bear that He should be away upon the *mountains of division*, and no more hold communion with them.

A reproaching glance, an uplifted finger—will be grievous to loving *children*, who fear to offend their tender father, and are only happy in his smile.

Beloved, it was so once with you. A text of Scripture, a threatening, a touch of the *rod of affliction*—and you went to your Father's feet, crying, "Show me why You contend with me!" Is it so now? Are you content to follow Jesus, *afar off*? Can you contemplate suspended communion with Christ, without alarm? Can you bear to have your Beloved walking contrary to you, because you walk contrary to Him? Have your sins separated between you and your God, and is your heart at rest? O let me affectionately warn you—for it is a grievous thing when we can live contentedly without the present enjoyment of the Savior's face.

Let us labor to feel what an evil thing this is — little *love* to our own dying Savior, little *joy* in our precious Jesus, little *fellowship* with the Beloved! Hold a *true Lent* in your souls, while you sorrow over your hardness of heart. Do not stop at sorrow! Remember where you first received salvation. Go at once to the cross! There, and there alone, can you get your heart quickened. No matter how hard, how insensible, how dead we may have become—let us go again in all the rags, poverty, and defilement of our present condition. Let us clasp that cross—let us look into those languid eyes, let us bathe in that fountain filled with blood! This alone will bring back to us our first love; this alone will restore the simplicity of our faith, and the tenderness of our heart!

March 31 — *Morning*

"With His stripes we are healed." — Isaiah 53:5

Pilate delivered our Lord to the lictors to be scourged. The *Roman scourging* was a most dreadful instrument of torture. It was made of the sinews of oxen, and sharp bones were inter-twisted among the sinews; so that every time the lash came down—these pieces of bone inflicted fearful laceration, and tore off the flesh from the victim. The Savior was, no doubt, bound to the pillar, and thus beaten. He had been beaten before; but this *scourging* of the Roman lictors—was probably the most severe of His flagellations.

My soul, stand here and weep over His poor stricken body. Believer in Jesus, can you gaze upon Him without tears, as He stands before you—the *picture of agonizing love*? He is at once as white as the **lily** for innocence, and as red as the **rose** with the crimson of His own blood. As we feel the sure and blessed healing which His stripes have wrought in us—does not our heart melt at once with love and grief? If ever we have loved our Lord Jesus—surely we must feel that affection glowing now within our bosoms.

"See how the patient Jesus stands,

Insulted in His lowest case!

Sinners have bound the Almighty's hands,

And spit in their Creator's face!

With thorns His temples gored and gashed

Send streams of blood from every part;

His back's with knotted scourges lashed.

But sharper scourges tear His heart!"

We would sincerely go to our chambers and weep; but since our business calls us away, we will first pray our Beloved to print the image of His bleeding self—upon the tablets of our hearts all the day; and at nightfall we will return to commune with Him, and sorrow that *our sin* should have cost Him so dear!

March 31 — Evening

"Then Rizpah, the mother of two of the men, spread sackcloth on a rock and stayed there *the entire harvest season*. She prevented vultures from tearing at their bodies during the day, and stopped wild animals from eating them at night." — 2 Samuel 21:10

If the love of a woman to her slain sons, could make her prolong her mournful vigil for so long a period—shall we weary of considering the sufferings of our blessed Lord? She drove away the vultures, and shall not we chase away those worldly and sinful thoughts which defile both our minds and the sacred themes upon which we are occupied? Away, you birds of evil wing! Leave the sacrifice alone!

Rizpah bore the heats of summer, the night dews and the rains, unsheltered and alone. Sleep was chased from her weeping eyes—her heart was too full for slumber. Behold how she loved her children! Shall Rizpah thus endure—and shall we give up at the first little inconvenience or trial? Are we such cowards—that we cannot bear to suffer with our Lord?

She chased away even the wild beasts, with courage unusual in her gender—and will not we be ready to encounter every foe for Jesus' sake?

Her children were slain by *other* hands than hers, and yet she wept and watched. What ought we to do—who have by our sins crucified our Lord! Our *obligations* are boundless, our *love* should be fervent and our *repentance* thorough. To watch with Jesus should be our business, to protect His honor our occupation, to abide by His cross our solace.

Those ghastly corpses might well have affrighted Rizpah! But in our Lord, at whose cross-foot we are sitting, there is nothing revolting—but everything attractive! Never was *living beauty* so enchanting, as a *dying Savior!* Jesus, we will stay with You. We ask that You graciously unveil Yourself to us; then shall we not sit beneath sackcloth—but in a royal pavilion!

April 1 — Morning

"Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth!" Song of Solomon 1:2

For several days we have been dwelling upon the Savior's sufferings, and for some little time to come, we shall linger there. In beginning a new month—let us seek the same desires after our Lord, as those which glowed in the heart of the *elect spouse*.

See how she leaps at once to Him—there are no prefatory words; she does not even mention His name; she is in the heart of her theme at once, for she speaks of Him who was the only "Him" in the world to her.

How bold is her love! It was much condescension which permitted the weeping penitent to anoint His feet with spikenard—it was rich love which allowed the *gentle Mary* to sit at His feet and learn of Him—but *here*, love—strong, fervent love, aspires to higher tokens of regard, and closer signs of fellowship. *Esther* trembled in the presence of king Ahasuerus; but here the spouse in joyful liberty of perfect love, knows no fear. If we have received the same loving spirit—we also may ask the like.

By "kisses" we suppose to be intended those *varied manifestations of affection* by which the believer is made to enjoy the love of Jesus.

The kiss of *reconciliation* we enjoyed at our conversion, and it was sweet as honey dropping from the comb.

The kiss of *acceptance* is still warm on our brow, as we know that He has accepted our persons and our works through rich grace.

The kiss of *daily, present communion*, is that which we pant after to be repeated day after day—until it is changed into the kiss of *reception*, which removes the soul from earth, and the kiss of *consummation* which fills it with the joy of heaven!

Faith is our walk—but *fellowship sensibly felt*—is our *rest*. Faith is the road—but communion with Jesus, is the *well* from which the pilgrim drinks. O lover of our souls, do not be strange to us; let the lips of Your blessing—meet the lips of our asking; let the lips of Your fullness—touch the lips of our need, and straightway *the kiss* will be effected.

April 1 — Evening

"It is time to seek the Lord!" Hosea 10:12

This month of April is said to derive its name from the Latin verb *aperio*, which signifies *to open*, because all the buds and blossoms are now opening, and we have arrived at the *gates of the flowery year*.

Reader, if you are yet unsaved, may your heart, in accord with the universal awakening of nature, be opened to receive the Lord. Every blossoming flower warns you that *it is time to seek the Lord*; do not be out of tune with nature—but let your heart bud and bloom with holy desires.

Do you tell me that the *warm blood of youth* leaps in your veins? Then, I entreat you—give your *vigor* to the Lord. It was my unspeakable happiness to be called in early youth, and I could sincerely praise the Lord every day for it. Salvation is priceless, let it come when it may—but oh! an *early* salvation has a double value in it. Young men and maidens, since you may perish before you reach your prime, "It is time to seek the Lord!" You who feel the first signs of decay—quicken your pace! That hollow cough, that hectic flush—are warnings which you must not trifle with—with *you* it is indeed time to seek the Lord.

Did I observe a little *grey* mingled with your once luxurious tresses? Years are stealing on apace, and death is drawing nearer by hasty marches—let each return of spring arouse you to set your house in order. Dear reader, if you are now *advanced* in life, let me entreat and implore you to delay no longer. There is a day of grace for you *now*—be thankful for that—but it is a limited season and grows shorter every time that clock ticks!

Here in this silent chamber, on this first night of another month, I speak to you as best I can by paper and ink, and from my inmost soul, as God's servant, I lay before you this warning, "It is time to seek the Lord!" Slight not that work, it may be your *last call from destruction*, the *final syllable from the lip of grace*.

April 2 — Morning

"He answered him to never a word." Matthew 27:14

He had never been *slow of speech* when He could bless the sons of men—but He would not say a single word for Himself. "Never man *spoke* like this Man," and never man was *silent* like Him. Was this *singular silence* the index of His perfect self-sacrifice? Did it show that He would not utter a word to stay the slaughter of His sacred person, which He had dedicated, as an offering for us? Had He so entirely surrendered Himself that He would not interfere in His own behalf, even in the minutest degree—but be bound and slain an *unstruggling, uncomplaining victim*?

Was this silence a type of the defenselessness of sin? Nothing can be said in palliation or excuse of human guilt; and, therefore, He who bore its whole weight stood speechless before His judge. Is not *patient silence*—the best *reply* to a gainsaying world? Calm endurance answers some questions, infinitely more conclusively than the loftiest eloquence. The best apologists for Christianity in the early days were its *martyrs*. The *anvil* breaks a legion of hammers—by quietly bearing their blows.

Did not the *silent Lamb of God* furnish us with a grand example of wisdom? Where every word was occasion for new blasphemy, it was the line of duty to afford *no fuel for the flame of sin*. The ambiguous and the false, the unworthy and mean, will before long overthrow and confute themselves, and therefore the true can afford to be quiet, and find silence to be its wisdom.

Evidently our Lord, by His silence, furnished a remarkable fulfillment of prophecy. A long defense of Himself would have been contrary to Isaiah's prediction. "He is led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb—so He opens not His mouth." By His quiet—He conclusively proved Himself to be the true Lamb of God. As such we salute Him this morning. Be with us, Jesus, and in the silence of our heart—let us hear the voice of Your love.

April 2 — Evening

**"He shall see His seed; He shall prolong His days,
and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand." Isaiah 53:10**

Plead for the speedy fulfillment of this promise, all you who love the Lord. It is easy work to pray when we are grounded and bottomed, as to our desires, upon God's own promise. How can He who gave the Word refuse to keep it? Immutable veracity cannot demean itself by a lie, and eternal faithfulness cannot degrade itself by neglect. God must bless His Son, His covenant binds Him to it. That which the Spirit prompts us to ask for Jesus, is that which God decrees to give Him.

Whenever you are praying for the kingdom of Christ, let your eyes behold the dawning of the blessed day which draws near, when the Crucified One shall receive His coronation in the place where men rejected Him. Courage, you who prayerfully work and toil for Christ with success of the very smallest kind, it shall not be so always; better times are before you. Your eyes cannot see the blissful future: borrow the *telescope of faith*; wipe the misty breath of your doubts from the glass; look through it and behold the coming glory.

Reader, let us ask, do you make this your constant prayer? Remember that the same Christ who tells us to say, "Give us this day our daily bread," had first given us this petition, "Hallowed be Your name; Your kingdom come; Your will be done in earth as it is in heaven." Let not your prayers be all concerning your own sins, your own needs, your own imperfections, your own trials—but let them climb the starry ladder, and get up to Christ Himself, and then, as you draw near to the blood-sprinkled mercy-seat, offer this prayer continually, "Lord, extend the kingdom of Your dear Son!" Such a petition, fervently presented, will elevate the spirit of all your devotions. Mind that you prove the sincerity of your prayer by laboring to promote the Lord's glory.

April 3 — Morning

"They took Jesus, and led Him away." John 19:16

He had been all night in agony, He had spent the early morning at the hall of Caiaphas, He had been hurried from Caiaphas to Pilate, from Pilate to Herod, and from Herod back again to Pilate. He had, therefore—but little strength left, and yet neither refreshment nor rest were permitted Him. They were eager for His blood, and therefore led Him out to die, loaded with the cross. O dolorous procession! Well may Jerusalem's daughters weep. My soul—you weep also.

What do we learn here, as we see our blessed Lord led forth? Do we not perceive that truth which was set forth in shadow by the scapegoat? Did not the high-priest bring the scapegoat, and put both his hands upon its head, confessing the sins of the people, that thus those sins might be laid upon the goat, and cease from the people? Then the goat was led away by a fit man into the wilderness, and it carried away the sins of the people—so that if they were sought for, they could not be found.

Now we see Jesus brought before the priests and rulers, who pronounce Him guilty; God Himself imputes our sins to Him, "the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all;" "He was made sin for us;" and, as the substitute for our guilt, bearing our sin upon His shoulders, represented by the cross; we see the *great Scapegoat* led away by the appointed officers of justice.

Beloved, can you feel assured that He carried *your* sin? As you look at the cross upon His shoulders, does it represent *your* sin? There is one way by which you can tell whether He carried your sin or not. Have you laid your hand upon His head, confessed your sin, and trusted in Him? Then your sin lies not on you; it has all been transferred by blessed imputation to Christ, and He bears it on His shoulder as a load heavier than the cross. Let not the picture vanish until you have rejoiced in your own deliverance, and adored the loving Redeemer upon whom your iniquities were laid.

April 3 — Evening

**"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way;
and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Isaiah 53:6**

Here a confession of sin common to all the elect people of God. They have all fallen, and therefore, in common chorus, they all say, from the first who entered heaven—to the last who shall enter there, "All we like sheep have gone astray." The confession, while thus *unanimous*, is also *special* and *particular*: "We have turned everyone to his own way." There is a peculiar sinfulness about everyone of the individuals; all are sinful—but each one with some special aggravation not found in his fellow. It is the mark of genuine repentance, that while it naturally associates itself with other penitents, it also takes up a position of loneliness. "We have turned every one to his own way," is a confession that each man had sinned against light peculiar to himself, or sinned with an aggravation which he could not perceive in others.

This confession is *unreserved*; there is not a word to detract from its force, nor a syllable by way of excuse. The confession is a giving up of all pleas of self-righteousness. It is the declaration of men who are consciously guilty—guilty with aggravations, guilty without excuse: they stand with their weapons of rebellion broken in pieces, and cry, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way."

Yet we hear no dolorous wailings attending this confession of sin; for the next sentence makes it almost a song. "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." It is the most grievous sentence of the three—but it overflows with comfort. Strange is it—that where *misery* was concentrated, *mercy* reigned; where *sorrow* reached her climax—weary souls find *rest*. The bruised Savior—is the healing of bruised hearts. See how the lowliest penitence gives place to assured confidence through simply *gazing at Christ on the cross!*

April 4 — *Morning*

**"For He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin;
that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." 2 Corinthians 5:21**

Mourning Christian! why do you weep? Are you mourning over your own corruptions? Look to your perfect Lord, and remember, you are complete in Him; you are in God's sight as perfect as if you had never sinned! Nay, more than that, the Lord our Righteousness has put a divine garment upon you, so that you have more than the righteousness of *man*—you have the righteousness of *God*.

O You who are mourning by reason of inbred sin and depravity, remember, none of your sins can condemn you. You have learned to hate sin; but you have learned also to know that sin is not yours—it was laid upon Christ's head. Your *standing* is not in yourself—it is in Christ; your *acceptance* is not in yourself—but in your Lord. You are as much accepted by God today, with all your sinfulness, as you will be when you stand before His throne, free from all corruption.

O, I beseech you, lay hold on this precious thought, *perfection in Christ!* For you are "complete in Him." With your Savior's garment on—you are holy as the Holy one. "Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, yes rather, who is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us." Christian, let your heart rejoice, for you are "accepted in the beloved" what have you to fear?

Let your face ever wear a smile; live near your Master; live in the suburbs of the Celestial City; for soon, when your time has come, you shall rise up where your Jesus sits, and reign at His right hand; and all this because the divine Lord "was made to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

April 4 — Evening

"Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord." Isaiah 2:3

It is exceedingly beneficial to our souls to mount above this present evil world to something nobler and better. The *cares of this world* and the *deceitfulness of riches* are apt to choke everything good within us—and we grow fretful, desponding, perhaps proud and carnal. It is well for us to cut down these thorns and briars—for heavenly seed sown among them is not likely to yield a harvest; and where shall we find a better sickle with which to cut them down than *communion with God* and the things of the kingdom?

In the valleys of Switzerland, many of the inhabitants are deformed, and all wear a sickly appearance, for the atmosphere is charged with the plague, and is closed and stagnant; but up yonder, on the mountain, you find a hardy race, who breathe the clear fresh air as it blows from the virgin snows of the Alpine summits. It would be well if the dwellers in the valley could frequently leave their abodes among the marshes and the fever mists—and inhale the bracing element upon the hills.

It is to such an exploit of climbing—that I invite you this evening. May the Spirit of God assist us to leave the *mists of fear*, and *the fevers of anxiety*, and all the evils which gather in this valley of earth, and to ascend the *mountains of anticipated joy and blessedness*. May God the Holy Spirit cut the cords that keep us here below—and assist us to mount!

We sit too often like chained eagles fastened to the rock, only that, unlike the eagle, we begin to love our chain, and would, perhaps, if it came really to the test, be loath to have it snapped. May God now grant us grace, if we cannot escape from the chain as to our *flesh*—yet to do so as to our spirits; and leaving the body, like a servant, at the foot of the hill, may our soul, like Abraham, attain the top of the mountain, there to indulge in communion with the Most High God!

April 5 — Morning

"On him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus." Luke 23:26

We see in Simon's carrying the cross—a picture of the work of the Church throughout all generations; she is the cross-bearer after Jesus. Mark then, Christian, Jesus does not suffer—so as to exclude your suffering. He bears a cross, not that you may *escape* it—but that you may *endure* it. Christ exempts you from sin—but not from sorrow. Remember that, and expect to suffer. But let us comfort ourselves with this thought, that in our case, as in Simon's, it is not *our* cross—but *Christ's* cross which we carry. When you are molested for your piety; when your religion brings the trial of cruel mockings upon you, then remember it is not *your* cross—it is *Christ's* cross; and how delightful is it to carry the cross of our Lord Jesus!

You carry the cross after Him. You have blessed company; your path is marked with the *footprints* of your Lord. The mark of His *blood-red shoulder*, is upon that heavy burden. It is His cross, and He goes before you as a shepherd goes before his sheep. Take up your cross daily, and follow Him.

Do not forget, also, that you bear this cross in partnership. It is the opinion of some, that Simon only carried one end of the cross, and not the whole of it. That is very possible; Christ may have carried the heavier part, against the transverse beam, and Simon may have borne the lighter end. Certainly it is so with you—you do but carry the *light* end of the cross, Christ bore the *heavier* end. And remember, though Simon had to bear the cross for a very little while, it gave him lasting honor. Even so, the cross we carry is only for a *little while* at most, and then we shall receive the crown, the glory! Surely we should love the cross, and, instead of shrinking from it—count it very dear, when it works out for us "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory!"

April 5 — Evening

"Before honor is humility." Proverbs 15:33

Humiliation of soul always brings a positive blessing with it. If we empty our hearts of *SELF*, God will fill them with His love. He who desires close communion with Christ, should remember the Word of the Lord, "To this man will I look, even to him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at My Word." *Stoop* if you would *climb* to heaven. Do we not say of Jesus, "He *descended*, that He might *ascend*"? so must you. You must grow downwards, that you may grow upwards; for the sweetest fellowship with heaven is to be had by *humble* souls—and by them alone. God will deny no blessing to a thoroughly humbled spirit. "Blessed are the poor in spirit—for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," with all its riches and treasures!

The whole *treasury of God* shall be made over by deed of gift to the soul which is humble enough to be able to receive it without growing proud because of it. God blesses us all up to the full measure and extremity of what it is safe for Him to do. If you do not get a blessing, it is because it is not *safe* for you to have one. If our heavenly Father were to let your unhumbled spirit win a victory in His holy war, you would *pilfer the crown* for yourself, and meeting with a fresh enemy you would fall a victim—so you are kept low for your own safety.

When a man is sincerely humble, and never ventures to touch so much as a grain of the praise, there is scarcely any limit to what God will do for him. Humility makes us ready to be blessed by the God of all grace, and fits us to deal efficiently with our fellow men. True humility is a flower which will adorn any garden. This is a sauce with which you may season every dish of life, and you will find an improvement in every case. Whether it is prayer or praise, whether it is work or suffering, the genuine salt of humility cannot be used in excess.

April 6 — Morning

"Let us go forth therefore unto Him, outside the camp." Hebrews 13:13

Jesus, bearing His cross, went forth to suffer outside the gate. The Christian's reason for leaving the camp of the world's *sin* and the world's *religion*—is not because he loves to be singular—but because Jesus did so—and the disciple must follow his Master. Christ was "not of the world," His life and His testimony were a constant protest against conformity with the world. Never was there such overflowing affection for men as you find in Him; but still He was "separate from sinners."

In like manner, Christ's people must "go forth unto Him." They must take their position "outside the camp," as witness-bearers for the truth. They must be prepared to tread the straight and narrow path. They must have bold, unflinching, lion-like hearts, loving Christ first, and His truth next—and Christ and His truth beyond all the world.

Jesus would have His people "go forth outside the camp" for their own sanctification. You cannot grow in grace to any high degree—while you are conformed to the world. The *life of separation* may be a path of *sorrow*—but it is the highway of *safety*; and though the separated life may cost you many pangs, and make every day a battle—yet it is a *happy* life after all. No joy can excel that of the soldier of Christ; Jesus reveals Himself so graciously, and gives such sweet refreshment, that the warrior feels more calm and peace in his daily strife—than others in their hours of rest! The *highway of holiness* is the highway of communion with Jesus. It is thus we shall hope to win the crown if we are enabled by divine grace faithfully to follow Christ "outside the camp." The *crown of glory*—will follow the *cross of separation*. A moment's shame—will be well recompensed by eternal honor; a little while of witness-bearing, will seem nothing when we are "forever with the Lord!"

April 6 — Evening

"In the name of the Lord—I will destroy them." Psalm 118:12

Our Lord Jesus, by His death, did not purchase a right to a *part* of us only—but to the *entire* man. He contemplated in His passion, the sanctification of us wholly—spirit, soul, and body; that in this *triple kingdom* He Himself might reign supreme without a rival. It is the business of the newborn nature which God has given to the regenerate, to assert the rights of the Lord Jesus Christ.

My soul, so far as you are a child of God, you must conquer all the rest of yourself which yet remains unblest; you must subdue all your powers and passions to the silver scepter of Jesus' gracious reign, and you must never be satisfied until He who is *King by purchase* becomes also *King by gracious coronation*, and reigns in you supreme!

Seeing, then, that sin has no right to any part of us—we go about a good and lawful warfare when we seek, in the name of God, to drive it out. O my **body**—you are a member of Christ: shall I tolerate your subjection to the prince of darkness? O my **soul**—Christ has suffered for your sins, and redeemed you with His most precious blood—shall I allow your *memory* to become a storehouse of evil, or your *passions* to be firebrands of iniquity? Shall I surrender my *judgment* to be perverted by error, or my *will* to be led in fetters of iniquity? No, my soul, you are Christ's, and sin has no right to you!

Be courageous concerning this, O Christian! do not be dispirited, as though your spiritual enemies could never be destroyed. You are able to overcome them—not in your own strength—the weakest of them would be too much for you; but you can and shall overcome them through the blood of the Lamb. Do not ask, "How shall I dispossess them, for they are greater and mightier than I?" You must go to the strong for strength, wait humbly upon God, and the mighty God of Jacob will surely come to the rescue, and you shall sing of victory through His grace!

April 7 — Morning

"How long, O men—will you turn My glory into shame?" Psalm 4:2

An instructive writer has made a mournful list of the 'honors' which the blinded people of Israel awarded to their long-expected King.

(1.) They gave Him a **procession** of honor, in which Roman legion, Jewish priests, men and women, took a part, with He Himself bearing His cross. This is the triumph which the world awards to Him who comes to overthrow man's direst foes. Derisive shouts are His only acclamations, and cruel taunts His only paeans of praise.

(2.) They presented Him with the **wine** of honor. Instead of a golden cup of fine wine—they offered Him the criminal's stupefying death-draught, which He refused because He would preserve an uninjured taste wherewith to taste of death; and afterwards when He cried, "I thirst," they gave Him *vinegar* mixed with *gall*, thrust to His mouth upon a sponge. Oh! wretched, detestable inhospitality to the King's Son!

(3.) He was provided with a **guard** of honor, who showed their esteem of Him by gambling over His garments, which they had seized as their booty. Such was the body-guard of the adored One of heaven—a foursome of brutal gamblers.

(4.) A **throne** of honor was found for Him upon the *bloody tree*; no easier place of rest would rebel men, yield to their vassal Lord. The bloody cross was, in fact, the full expression of the world's feeling towards Christ! "There," they seemed to say, "O Son of God, this is the manner in which God Himself would be treated—if could we reach Him!"

(5.) The **title** of honor was nominally "King of the *Jews*," but that the blinded nation distinctly repudiated, and really called Him "King of *thieves*," by preferring Barabbas, and by placing Jesus in the place of highest shame between two thieves.

His *glory* was thus in all things turned into *shame* by the sons of men—but it shall yet gladden the eyes of saints and angels, world without end!

April 7 — Evening

**"Save me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, the God of my salvation
—and my tongue will sing aloud of Your righteousness." Psalm 51:14**

In this *SOLEMN CONFESSION*—it is pleasing to observe that David plainly names his sin. He does not call it man-slaughter, nor speak of it as an imprudence by which an unfortunate accident occurred to a worthy man—but he calls it by its true name, *the guilt of bloodshed*. He did not actually kill the husband of Bathsheba; but still it was planned in David's heart that Uriah should be slain, and he was his murderer, before the Lord.

Learn in confession to be *honest* with God. Do not give *fair names* to *foul sins*. Call them what you will—they will smell no sweeter. What God *sees* them to be, that you must labor to *feel* them to be; and with all openness of heart, acknowledge their real character.

Observe, that David was evidently oppressed with the heinousness of his sin. It is easy to use words—but it is difficult to feel their meaning. The fifty-first Psalm is *the photograph of a contrite heart*. Let us seek after the same brokenness of heart; for however excellent our *words* may be, if our *heart* is not conscious of the hell-deservingness of sin—we cannot expect to find forgiveness.

Our text has in it *AN EARNEST PRAYER*—it is addressed to the God of salvation. It is His prerogative to forgive; it is His very name and office to save those who seek His face. Better still, the text calls Him the God of my salvation. Yes, blessed be His name, while I am yet going to Him through Jesus' blood, I can rejoice in the God of *my* salvation.

The psalmist ends with *A COMMENDABLE VOW*—if God will deliver him, he will sing—nay, more, he will "sing aloud." Who can sing in any other style—of such a mercy as this!

But note the subject of the song, "*Your Righteousness*." We must sing of the finished work of a precious Savior; and he who knows most of forgiving love—will sing the loudest!

April 8 — Morning

"If they do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?" Luke 23:31

Among other interpretations of this suggestive question, the following is full of teaching: "If the *innocent substitute for sinners* suffer thus, what will be done when the *sinner himself*—the *dry tree*—shall fall into the hands of an angry God?" When God saw Jesus in the sinner's place—He did not spare Him; and when He finds the unregenerate without Christ—He will not spare them. O sinner, Jesus was led away by His enemies—so shall you be dragged away by fiends to the place appointed for you! Jesus was deserted of God; and if He, who was only *imputedly* a sinner, was deserted—how much more shall you be?

"Jesus cried out in a loud voice—My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me!" What an awful shriek! But what shall be *your* cry when you shall say, "O God! O God! why have You forsaken me?" and the answer shall come back, "Because you neglected all My counsel and did not accept My correction, I, in turn, will laugh at your calamity. I will mock when terror strikes you, when terror strikes you like a storm and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when trouble and stress overcome you!"

If God spared not His own Son—how much less will He spare you! What whips of burning wire will be yours, when conscience shall smite you with all its terrors. You richest, you merriest, you most self-righteous sinners—who would stand in your place when God shall say, "Awake, O sword, against the man who rejected Me—smite him, and let him feel the smart forever!" Jesus was *spit* upon: sinner, what *shame* will be yours! We cannot sum up in one word all the *mass of sorrows* which met upon the head of Jesus who died for us, therefore it is impossible for us to tell you what *streams*, what *oceans* of grief must roll over your spirit—if you die as you now are!

By the agonies of Christ, by His wounds and by His blood, do not bring upon yourselves the wrath to come! Trust in the Son of God, and you shall never die!

April 8 — Evening

"I will fear no evil—for You are with me." Psalm 23:4

Behold, how independent of outward circumstances the Holy Spirit can make the Christian! What a bright light may shine within us—when it is all dark without! How firm, how happy, how calm, how peaceful we may be—when the world shakes to and fro, and the pillars of the earth are removed! Even death itself, with all its terrible influences, has no power to suspend the music of a Christian's heart—but rather makes that music become more sweet, more clear, more heavenly—until the last kind act which death can do—is to let the earthly strain melt into the heavenly chorus, the temporal joy into the eternal bliss!

Let us have confidence, then, in the blessed Spirit's power to comfort us. Dear reader, are you looking forward to *poverty*? Fear not; the divine Spirit can give you, in your poverty—a greater plenty than the rich have in their abundance. You know not, what joys may be stored up for you in your poor cottage, around which grace will plant the *roses of contentment*.

Are you conscious of a growing failure of your bodily health? Do you expect to suffer long nights of languishing and days of pain? O do not be sad! That sick-bed may become a throne to you. You little know—how every pang that shoots through your body—may be a refining fire to consume your dross—a beam of glory to light up the secret parts of your soul. Are the *eyes* growing dim? Jesus will be your light. Do the *ears* fail you? Jesus' name will be your soul's best music, and His person your dear delight.

Socrates used to say, "Philosophers can be happy without music;" and Christians can be happier than philosophers when all outward causes of rejoicing are withdrawn. In You, my God, my heart shall triumph, come what may of ills without! By your power, O blessed Spirit, my heart shall be exceeding glad, though all things should fail me here below!

April 9 — Morning

"A great multitude of the people followed Him, including women who mourned and wailed for Him."

Luke 23:27

Amid the rabble crowd which hounded the Redeemer to His doom, there were some gracious souls whose bitter anguish sought vent in wailing and lamentations—fit music to accompany that march of woe!

When my soul can, in imagination, see the Savior bearing His cross to Calvary—she joins the godly women and weeps with them; for, indeed, there is true cause for grief—cause lying deeper than those mourning women thought. They bewailed . . .

innocence—maltreated, goodness—persecuted, love—bleeding, meekness—dying!

But my heart has a deeper and more bitter cause to mourn— MY SINS were the scourges which lacerated those blessed shoulders, and crowned that bleeding brow with thorns! My sins cried, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" and laid the cross upon His gracious shoulders! His being led forth to die, is sorrow enough for one eternity—but MY having been His murderer—is more, infinitely more grief, than one poor fountain of tears can express! Those women who loved and wept—could not have had greater reasons for love and grief—than my heart has!

The widow of Nain saw her son restored—but I myself have been raised to newness of life! Peter's mother-in-law was cured of the fever—but I myself have been cured of the plague of sin! Mary Magdalene had seven devils cast out of her—but a whole legion of devils were cast out of me! Mary and Martha were favored with visits from Jesus—but He dwells with me! I am not behind these holy women in *debt* to Jesus—let me not be behind them, in *gratitude* or *sorrow*.

"Love and grief my heart dividing,
With my tears His feet I'll lave;
Constant still in heart abiding,
Weep for Him who died to save!"

April 9 — Evening

"Your *gentleness* has made me great." Psalm 18:35

The words are capable of being translated, "Your *goodness* has made me great." David gratefully ascribed all his greatness, not to his own goodness—but the goodness of God.

"Your *providence* has made me great," is another reading; and providence is nothing more than *God's goodness in action*. Goodness is the *bud*—of which providence is the *flower*; or goodness is the *seed*—of which providence is the *harvest*. Some render it, "Your *help*," which is but another word for providence; providence being the firm ally of the saints, aiding them in the service of their Lord.

Or again, "Your *humility* has made me great."

"Your *condescension*" may, perhaps, serve as a comprehensive reading, combining the ideas mentioned, including that of humility. It is God's making Himself little—which is the cause of our being made great. We are so little, that if God should manifest His greatness without condescension, we would be trampled under His feet; but God, who must stoop to view the *skies*, and bow to see what *angels* do—turns His eye yet lower, and looks to the *lowly* and *contrite*—and makes them great.

There are yet other readings, as for instance, the Septuagint, which reads, "Your *discipline*" Your fatherly correction, "has made me great;" while the Chaldee paraphrase reads, "Your *Word* has increased me." Still the idea is the same.

David ascribes all his own greatness—to the condescending goodness of his Father in heaven. May this sentiment be echoed in our hearts this evening while we cast our crowns at Jesus' feet, and cry, "Your gentleness has made me great!"

How marvelous has been our experience of *God's gentleness*! How gentle have been His corrections! How gentle His forbearance! How gentle His teachings! How gentle His drawings! *Meditate* upon this theme, O believer. Let *gratitude* be awakened; let *humility* be deepened; let *love* be quickened before you fall asleep tonight!

April 10 — Morning

"The place which is called Calvary." Luke 23:33

The hill of *comfort*—is the hill of *Calvary*. The *house of consolation*—is built with the wood of the cross. The temple of heavenly blessing—is founded upon the *cleft* rock—cleft by the spear which pierced His side! No scene in sacred history ever gladdens the soul—like *Calvary's tragedy*!

Light springs from the *midday-midnight* of Golgotha! Every *flower of blessing* blooms sweetly beneath the shadow of the once accursed tree. In that *place of thirst*—grace has dug a fountain which ever gushes with waters pure as crystal, each drop capable of alleviating the woes of mankind!

You who have had your seasons of trouble, will confess that it was not at Mount Olivet that you ever found comfort, not on the Mount Sinai—but Gethsemane, Gabbatha, and Golgotha have been a means of comfort to you. The bitter herbs of Gethsemane—have often taken away the bitters of your life. The scourge of Gabbatha—has often scourged away your cares. The groans of Calvary—yield us rare and rich comfort.

We would never have known Christ's love in all its heights and depths—if He had not died; nor could we guess the Father's deep affection—if He had not given His Son to die. The *common mercies* we enjoy, all sing of love; just as the sea-shell, when we put it to our ears, whispers of the deep sea whence it came. But if we desire to hear the ocean itself, we must not look at every-day blessings—but at the transactions of the crucifixion. He who would know love, let him retire to Calvary and see the Man of sorrows die!

April 10 — Evening

"Last night an angel of God stood beside me." Acts 27:23

Tempest and long darkness, coupled with imminent risk of shipwreck, had brought the crew of the vessel into a sad case; one man alone among them remained perfectly calm, and by his word—the rest were reassured. Paul was the only man who had heart enough to say, "take courage, men." There were veteran Roman legionaries on board, and brave old mariners, and yet their poor Jewish prisoner had more courage than them all. He had a *secret Friend* who kept his courage up. The Lord Jesus despatched a heavenly messenger to whisper words of consolation in the ear of His faithful servant, therefore he wore a shining countenance and spoke like a man at ease.

If we sincerely fear the Lord, we may look for timely interpositions, when our case is at its worst. Angels are not kept from us by *storms*, or hindered by *darkness*. Seraphs think it no humiliation to visit the poorest of the heavenly family. If angel's visits are few and far between at ordinary times—they shall be frequent in our *nights of tempest and tossing*. Friends may drop from us when we are under pressure—but our fellowship with the inhabitants of the angelic world shall be more abundant; and in the strength of love-words, brought to us from the throne by the way of Jacob's ladder—we shall be strong to do exploits!

Dear reader, is this an hour of distress with you? then ask for special help. *Jesus* is the *angel of the covenant*, and if His presence be now earnestly sought—it will not be denied. What that presence brings in heart-cheer, those remember who, like Paul, have had the angel of God standing by them in a night of storm, when anchors would no longer hold, and rocks were near.

"O angel of my God, be near,
Amid the darkness hush my fear;
Loud roars the wild tempestuous sea,
Your presence, Lord, shall comfort me."

April 11 — Morning

"I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint." Psalm 22:14

Did earth or heaven ever behold a sadder spectacle of woe! In *soul* and *body*, our Lord felt Himself to be weak as water poured upon the ground. The *placing of the cross in its socket* had shaken Him with great violence, had strained all the ligaments, pained every nerve, and more or less dislocated His bones. Burdened with His own weight, the *grand sufferer* felt the strain increasing every moment of those six long hours. His sense of faintness and general weakness were overpowering; while to His own consciousness He became nothing but a *mass of misery* and *swooning sickness*.

When Daniel saw the great vision, he thus describes his sensations, "There remained no strength in me, for my vigor was turned into corruption, and I retained no strength." How much more faint must have been our *greater Prophet*—when He *saw* the dread vision of the wrath of God, and *felt* it in His own soul!

To us, sensations such as our Lord endured would have been insupportable, and *kind unconsciousness* would have come to our rescue; but in His case, He was wounded, and *felt* the sword—He drained the cup and *tasted* every drop!

O King of grief! O King of wounds—how shall I grieve for You! As we kneel before our now ascended Savior's throne, let us well remember the way by which He prepared it as a *throne of grace* for us; let us in spirit drink of His cup, that we may be strengthened for our hour of heaviness whenever it may come. In His natural body every member suffered, and so must it be in the spiritual; but as out of all His griefs and woes—His body came forth uninjured to glory and power, even so shall His mystical body come through the furnace with not so much as the smell of fire upon it.

April 11 — Evening

"Look upon my affliction and my pain—and forgive all my sins." Psalm 25:18

It is well for us when *prayers about our sorrows* are linked with *pleas concerning our sins*—when, being under God's hand, we are not wholly taken up with our *pain*—but remember our *offences* against God. It is well, also, to take both *sorrow* and *sin*—to the same place. It was to *God* that David carried his *sorrow*—it was to *God* that David confessed his *sin*.

We must take our **sorrows** to God. Even your *little* sorrows you may roll upon God—for He counts the *hairs* of your head. And your *great* sorrows you may commit to Him—for He holds the *ocean* in the hollow of His hand. Go to Him, whatever your present trouble may be—and you shall find Him able and willing to relieve you.

But we must also take our **sins** to God. We must carry them to the cross, that *the blood* may fall upon them, to purge away their guilt, and to destroy their defiling power.

The special lesson of the text is this—that we are to go to the Lord with **sorrows** and with **sins** in the right frame of heart. Note that all David asks concerning his sorrow is, "*Look* upon my affliction and my pain." But the next petition is vastly more express, definite, decided, and plain, "*Forgive* all my sins!"

Many sufferers would have put it, "*Remove* my **affliction** and my pain—and *look* at my sins." But David does not say so—he cries, "Lord, as for my *affliction* and my *pain*, I will not dictate to Your wisdom. Lord, *look* at them, I will leave them to You. I would be glad to have my pain removed—but do as You will. But as for my **sins**, Lord, I know what I want with them—I must have them *forgiven!* I cannot endure to lie under their curse for a moment!"

A Christian counts his *sorrow* lighter in the scale than his *sin*. He can bear that his *troubles* should continue—but he cannot support the burden of his *transgressions*.

April 12 — Morning

"My heart is like wax—melting within Me." Psalm 22:14

Our blessed Lord experienced a terrible sinking and melting of soul. "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity—but a *wounded spirit*, who can bear?" Deep depression of spirit is the most grievous of all trials; all besides is as nothing. Well might the *suffering Savior* cry to His God, "Do not be far from me!" for above all other seasons, a man needs his God when his heart is melted within him, because of heaviness.

Believer, come near the cross this morning, and humbly adore the *King of glory* as having once been brought far lower, in mental distress and inward anguish—than anyone among us; and mark His fitness to become a faithful High Priest, who can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities.

Especially let those of us whose sadness springs directly from the withdrawal of a present sense of our Father's love, enter into near and intimate communion with Jesus. Let us not give way to despair, since through this *dark room* the Master has passed before us. Our souls may sometimes long and faint, and thirst even to anguish, to behold the light of the Lord's countenance: at such times let us stay ourselves with the sweet fact of the sympathy of our great High Priest. Our *drops of sorrow* may well be forgotten in the *ocean of His griefs*; but how high ought our love to rise! Come in, O strong and deep love of Jesus, like the sea at the flood in spring tides—cover all my anxieties, drown all my sins, wash out all my cares, lift up my earth-bound soul, and float it right up to my Lord's feet—and there let me lie, a poor broken shell, washed up by His love, having no virtue or value; and only venturing to whisper to Him that if He will put His ear to me, He will hear within my heart faint echoes of the vast waves of His own love which have brought me where it is my delight to lie, even at His feet forever!

April 12 — Evening

"The king's garden." Nehemiah 3:15

Mention of the *king's garden* by Nehemiah, brings to mind the **paradise** which the King of kings prepared for Adam. Sin has utterly ruined that fair abode of all delights, and driven forth the children of men to cultivate the ground, which yields thorns and briers unto them. My soul, remember the fall—for it was your fall. Weep much because the Lord of love was so shamefully ill-treated by the head of the human race, of which you are a member, as undeserving as any. Behold how dragons and demons dwell on this fair earth, which once was a garden of delights.

See yonder another King's garden, which the King waters with His bloody sweat—**Gethsemane**, whose bitter herbs are sweeter far to renewed souls, than even Eden's luscious fruits. There the mischief of the serpent in the first garden was undone; there the curse was lifted from earth, and borne by the woman's promised seed. My soul, think much of the agony and the passion; resort to the garden of the olive-press, and view your great Redeemer rescuing you from your lost estate. This is the garden of gardens indeed, wherein the soul may see the guilt of sin and the power of love, two sights which surpass all others.

Is there no other King's garden? Yes, **my heart**, you are, or should be such. How do the flowers flourish? Do any choice fruits appear? Does the King walk within, and rest in the bowers of my spirit? Let me see that the plants are trimmed and watered, and the mischievous foxes hunted out. Come, Lord, and let the heavenly wind blow at Your coming, that the spices of Your garden may flow abroad.

Nor must I forget the King's garden of the **church**. O Lord, send prosperity unto it. Rebuild her walls, nourish her plants, ripen her fruits, and from the huge wilderness, reclaim the barren waste, and make thereof "a King's garden."

April 13 — Morning

"A bundle of myrrh is my Beloved unto me." Song of Solomon 1:13

Myrrh may well be chosen as the type of Jesus—on account of its preciousness, its perfume, its pleasantness; its healing, preserving, disinfecting qualities; and its connection with sacrifice.

But why is He compared to "a *BUNDLE* of myrrh"?

First, for **plenty**. He is not a *drop* of it, He is a casket full. He is not a *sprig* of it—but a whole bundle. There is enough in Christ for all my necessities; let me not be slow to avail myself of Him.

Our Beloved is compared to a "bundle" again, for **variety**—for there is in Christ not only the one thing needful—but in "Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily," everything needful is in Him. Take Jesus in His different *characters*, and you will see a marvelous variety—Prophet, Priest, King, Husband, Friend, Shepherd. Consider Him in His life, death, resurrection, ascension, second advent; view Him in His virtue, gentleness, courage, self-denial, love, faithfulness, truth, righteousness. Everywhere He is *a bundle of preciousness!*

He is a "bundle of myrrh" for **preservation**—not loose myrrh—but tied up myrrh, to be stored in a casket. We must value Him as our best treasure; we must prize His Words; and we must keep our thoughts of Him and knowledge of Him as under lock and key, lest the devil should steal anything from us.

Moreover, Jesus is a "bundle of myrrh" for **sovereignty**. The emblem suggests the idea of sovereign, discriminating grace. From before the foundation of the world, He was set apart for His people; and He gives forth His perfume only to those who understand how to enter into communion with Him, to have close dealings with Him. Oh! blessed people whom the Lord has admitted into His secrets, and for whom He sets Himself apart. Oh! choice and happy who are thus made to say, "A bundle of myrrh is my Beloved unto me."

April 13 — Evening

**"And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt-offering;
and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him." Leviticus 1:4**

Our Lord's being made "sin for us" is set forth here by the very significant *transfer of sin* to the bullock, which was made by the elders of the people. The laying of the hand was not a mere touch of contact, for in some other places of Scripture, the original word has the meaning of *leaning heavily*, as in the expression, "Your wrath lies hard upon me" (Psalm 88:7). Surely this is the very essence and nature of *faith*, which does not only bring us into contact with the great Substitute—but teaches us to lean upon Him with all the burden of our guilt.

Jehovah made to meet upon the head of the Substitute, all the offences of His covenant people—but each one of the chosen is brought personally to ratify this solemn covenant act, when by grace he is enabled by faith to lay his hand upon the head of the "Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world."

Believer, do you remember that rapturous day when you first realized pardon through Jesus the sin-bearer? Can you not make glad confession, and join with the writer in saying, "My soul recalls her day of deliverance with delight! Laden with guilt and full of fears, I saw my Savior as my Substitute, and I laid my hand upon Him; oh! how timidly at first—but courage grew and confidence was confirmed until I leaned my soul entirely upon Him! And now it is my unceasing joy to know that my sins are no longer imputed to me—but laid on Him, and like the debts of the wounded traveler, Jesus, like the good Samaritan, has said of all my future sinfulness, *Set that to My account!*" Blessed discovery! Eternal solace of a grateful heart!

"My numerous sins transferred to Him,
Shall never more be found,
Lost in His blood's atoning stream,
Where every crime is drowned!"

April 14 — *Morning*

"All who see Me mock Me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads." Psalm 22:7

Mockery was a great ingredient in our Lord's woe. *Judas* mocked Him in the garden; the *chief priests* and *scribes* laughed Him to scorn; *Herod* thought Him nothing; the *servants* and the *soldiers* jeered at Him, and brutally insulted Him; *Pilate* and his guards ridiculed His royalty; and on the tree all sorts of horrid jests and hideous taunts were hurled at Him!

Ridicule is always hard to bear—but when we are in intense pain—it is so heartless, so cruel, that it cuts us to the quick. Imagine the Savior crucified, racked with anguish far beyond all mortal conception, and then picture that motley multitude, all wagging their heads and mocking in bitterest contempt, the poor suffering victim! Surely there must have been something more in the crucified One than they could see, or else such a great and mingled crowd would not unanimously have honored Him with such *contempt*. Was it not evil confessing, in the very moment of its greatest apparent triumph, that after all it could do no more than mock at that *victorious goodness* which was then reigning on the cross? O Jesus, "despised and rejected of men," how could You die for men who treated You so ill? Herein is love amazing, love divine, yes, love beyond degree.

We, too, have despised You in the days of our unregeneracy; and even since our new birth we have often set the world on high in our hearts—and yet You bleed to heal our wounds, and die to give us life. O that we could set You on a glorious high throne in all men's hearts! We would ring out Your praises over land and sea until men should as universally adore as once they did unanimously reject You!

April 14 — Evening

"Tell the righteous that it will go well for them." Isaiah 3:10

It is well with the righteous *always*. If it had said, "Tell the righteous that it will go well for them in their *prosperity*," we must have been thankful for so great a blessing, for prosperity is an hour of peril, and it is a gift from heaven to be secured from its snares. Or if it had been written, "Tell the righteous that it will go well for them when under *persecution*," we must have been thankful for so sustaining an assurance, for persecution is hard to bear.

But when no time is mentioned, all time is included. God's "shalls" must be understood always in their largest sense. From the beginning of the year to the end of the year, from the first gathering of evening shadows until the day-star shines, in all conditions and under all circumstances—it shall be well with the righteous.

It is so well with the righteous man—that we could not imagine it to be better, for he is well *fed*—for he feeds upon the flesh and blood of Jesus; he is well *clothed*—for he wears the imputed righteousness of Christ; he is well *housed*—for he dwells in God; he is well *married*—for his soul is knit in bonds of marriage union to Christ; he is well *provided for*—for the Lord is his Shepherd; he is well *endowed*—for heaven is his inheritance.

It is well with the righteous—well upon divine authority; the mouth of God speaks the comforting assurance. O beloved, if *God* declares that all is well, ten thousand devils may declare it to be ill—but we laugh them all to scorn. Blessed be God for a faith which enables us to believe God—when the creatures contradict Him. It is, says the Word, at all times well with you, you righteous one; then, beloved, if you cannot see it, let God's Word stand you in stead of sight; yes, believe it on divine authority more confidently than if your eyes and your feelings told it to you! Whom God blesses—is blessed indeed; and what His lip declares—is truth most sure and steadfast.

April 15 — Morning

"My God, my God—why have You forsaken me!" Psalm 22:1

We here behold the Savior in the *depth of His sorrows*. No other place so well shows the griefs of Christ—as Calvary; and no other moment at Calvary is so full of agony—as that in which His cry rends the air, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me!" At this moment, physical weakness was united with acute mental torture from the shame and ignominy through which He had to pass; and to make His grief culminate with emphasis, He suffered spiritual agony surpassing all expression, resulting from the departure of His Father's presence. This was the *black midnight of His horror*; then it was that He descended the abyss of suffering.

No man can enter into the full meaning of these words. Some of us think at times that we could cry, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me!" There are seasons when the brightness of our Father's smile is eclipsed by clouds and darkness; but let us remember that God never does *really* forsake us. It is only a *seeming* forsaking with us—but in Christ's case it was a *real* forsaking. We grieve at a little withdrawal of our Father's love; but the *real* turning away of God's face from His Son—who shall calculate how deep the agony which it caused Him? In our case, our cry is often dictated by unbelief; in His case, it was the utterance of a dreadful fact, for God had really turned away from Him for a season.

O you poor, distressed soul, who once lived in the sunshine of God's face—but are now in darkness; remember that He has not really forsaken you. God in the *clouds*—is as much our God as when He shines forth in all the luster of His grace. But since even the thought that He has forsaken us gives us agony—what must the woe of the Savior have been when He exclaimed, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me!"

April 15 — Evening

"Lift them up forever." Psalm 28:9

God's people need *lifting up*. They are very *heavy* by nature. They have no wings, or, if they have, they are like the dove of old which *lay among the pots*; and they need divine grace to make them mount on wings covered with silver, and with feathers of yellow gold. By nature *sparks* fly upward—but the *sinful souls* of men fall downward. O Lord, "lift them up forever!"

David himself said, "Unto You, O God, do I lift up *my* soul," and he here feels the necessity that *other* men's souls should be lifted up as well as his own. When you ask this blessing for yourself—do not forget to seek it for others also.

There are three ways in which God's people require to be lifted up.

1) They require to be elevated in **character**. Lift them up, O Lord; do not allow Your people to be like the world's people! The world lies in the wicked one—lift them out of it! The world's people are looking after silver and gold, seeking their own pleasures, and the gratification of their lusts—but, Lord, lift Your people up above all this; keep them from being "muck-rakers," as John Bunyan calls the man who was always scraping after gold! Set their hearts upon their risen Lord and the heavenly heritage!

2) Moreover, believers need to be prospered in **conflict**. In the battle, if they seem to fall, O Lord, be pleased to give them the victory. If the foot of the foe be upon their necks for a moment, help them to grasp the *sword of the Spirit*, and eventually to win the battle. Lord, lift up Your children's spirits in the day of conflict; let them not sit in the dust, mourning forever. Do not allow the adversary to vex them sorely, and make them fret; but if they have been, like Hannah, persecuted, let them sing of the mercy of a delivering God.

3) We may also ask our Lord to lift them up **at the last!** Lift them up by taking them home, lift their bodies from the tomb, and raise their souls to Your eternal kingdom in glory!

April 16 — Morning

"The precious blood of Christ." 1 Peter 1:19

Standing at the foot of the cross, we see hands, and feet, and side—all distilling crimson streams of precious blood.

It is "precious" because of its **redeeming** and **atoning** efficacy. By it the sins of Christ's people are atoned for; they are redeemed from under the law; they are reconciled to God, made one with Him.

Christ's blood is also "precious" in its **cleansing** power. It "cleanses from all sin." "Though your sins be as scarlet—they shall be as white as snow." Through Jesus' blood, there is not a spot left upon any believer, no wrinkle nor any such thing remains. O precious blood, which makes us clean, removing the stains of abundant iniquity, and permitting us to stand accepted in the Beloved, notwithstanding the many ways in which we have rebelled against our God.

The blood of Christ is likewise "precious" in its **preserving** power. We are safe from the destroying angel under the sprinkled blood. Remember it is *God's* seeing the blood—which is the true reason for our being spared. Here is comfort for us when our *eye of faith* is dim, for *God's eye* is still the same. The blood of Christ is "precious" also in its sanctifying influence. The same blood which justifies by taking away sin, does in its after-action, quicken the new nature and leads it onward to subdue sin and to follow out the commands of God. *There is no motive for holiness so great—as that which streams from the veins of Jesus!*

And "precious," unspeakably precious, is this blood, because it has an **overcoming** power. It is written, "They overcame through the blood of the Lamb." How could they do otherwise? He who fights with the precious blood of Jesus—fights with a weapon which cannot know defeat. The blood of Jesus! Sin dies at its presence; death ceases to be death; heaven's gates are opened. The blood of Jesus! we shall march on, conquering and to conquer, so long as we can trust its power!

April 16 — Evening

"And his hands were steady until the going down of the sun." Exodus 17:12

So mighty was the *prayer of Moses*, that all depended upon it. The *petitions of Moses* routed the enemy—more than the *fighting of Joshua*. Yet *both* were needed. No, in the soul's conflict, force and fervor, decision and devotion, valor and vehemence, must join their forces, and all will be well. You must wrestle with your sin—but the major part of the wrestling must be done alone in private with God.

Moses grew weary, and then his friends assisted him. When at any time your *prayer* flags, let *faith* support one hand, and let holy *hope* uplift the other—and prayer seating itself upon the stone of Israel, the rock of our salvation, will persevere and prevail.

Beware of *faintness* in devotion; if Moses felt it, who can escape? It is far easier to fight with sin in public—than to pray against it in private. It is remarked that Joshua never grew weary in the *fighting*—but Moses did grow weary in the *praying*. The more *spiritual* an exercise—the more difficult it is for flesh and blood to maintain it. Let us cry, then, for special strength, and may the Spirit of God, who helps our infirmities, as He allowed help to Moses, enable us like him to continue with our hands steady "until the going down of the sun;" until the *evening of life* is over; until we shall come to the rising of a better sun in the land where *prayer* is swallowed up in *praise!*

April 17 — Morning

"We have come to the *sprinkled blood*, which says better things than the blood of Abel." Hebrews 12:24

Reader, have you come to the *sprinkled blood*? The question is not whether you have come to a knowledge of *doctrine*, or an observance of *ceremonies*, or to a certain form of *experience*—but have you come to the *blood of Jesus*? The blood of Jesus is the life of all vital godliness.

If you have truly come to Jesus, we know how you came—the Holy Spirit sweetly brought you there. You came to the *sprinkled blood* with no merits of your own. Guilty, lost, and helpless, you came to take that blood, and that blood alone, as your everlasting hope. You came to the cross of Christ, with a trembling and an aching heart; and oh! what a precious sound it was to you—to hear the voice of the blood of Jesus! The dropping of His blood is as the music of heaven to the penitent sons of earth. We are full of sin—but the Savior bids us lift our eyes to Him, and as we gaze upon His streaming wounds, each drop of blood, as it falls, cries, "It is finished! I have made an end of sin! I have brought in everlasting righteousness." Oh! sweet language of the precious blood of Jesus!

If you have come to that blood once, you will come to it **constantly**. Your life will be "Looking unto Jesus." Your whole conduct will be epitomized in this, "To whom *coming*." Not to whom I have come—but to whom I am always coming. If you have ever come to the blood of sprinkling, you will feel your need of coming to it every day. He who does not desire to wash in it every day—has never washed in it at all. The believer ever feels it to be his joy and privilege that there is still a *fountain opened*. Past experiences are doubtful food for Christians; a present coming to Christ—alone can give us joy and comfort. This morning let us sprinkle our door-post fresh with blood, and then feast upon the Lamb, assured that the destroying angel must pass us by.

April 17 — Evening

"We would see Jesus!" John 12:21

Evermore the worldling's cry is, "Who will show us any good?" He seeks satisfaction in earthly comforts, enjoyments, and riches. But the quickened sinner knows of only one good. "O that I knew where I might find HIM!" When he is truly awakened to feel his guilt, if you could pour the gold of India at his feet, he would say, "Take it away! I want to find HIM!"

It is a blessed thing for a man, when he has brought his desires into a focus, so that they all center in one object. When he has fifty different desires, his heart resembles a mere of stagnant water, spread out into a marsh, breeding plague and pestilence; but when all his desires are brought into one channel, his heart becomes like a river of pure water, running swiftly to fertilize the fields. Happy is he who has one desire, if that one desire is set on Christ, though it may not yet have been realized. If Jesus is a soul's desire, it is a blessed sign of divine work within. Such a man will never be content with mere ordinances. He will say, "I want Christ; I must have Him—mere ordinances are of no use to me; I want Himself; do not offer me these; you offer me the empty pitcher, while I am dying of thirst; give me water, or I die! Jesus is my soul's desire. I would see Jesus!"

Is this your condition, my reader, at this moment? Have you but one desire—and is that after Christ? Then you are not far from the kingdom of heaven. Have you but one wish in your heart, and that one wish that you may be washed from all your sins in Jesus' blood? Can you really say, "I would give all I have—to be a Christian; I would give up everything I have and hope for—if I might but feel that I have a saving interest in Christ"? Then, despite all your fears, be of good cheer, the Lord loves you, and you shall come out into daylight soon, and rejoice in the liberty with which Christ makes men free.

April 18 — *Morning*

"She tied the *scarlet cord* in the window." Joshua 2:21

Rahab depended for her preservation upon the promise of the spies, whom she looked upon as the representatives of the God of Israel. Her faith was simple and firm—but it was very obedient. To tie the *scarlet cord* in the window was a very trivial act in itself—but she dared not run the risk of omitting it.

Come, my soul, is there not here a lesson for you? Have you been attentive to all your Lord's will, even though some of His commands should seem non-essential? Have you observed in his own way—the two ordinances of believers' baptism and the Lord's Supper? These neglected, argue much unloving disobedience in your heart. Be henceforth in all things blameless, even to the tying of a thread, if that is matter of command.

This act of Rahab sets forth a yet more solemn lesson. Have I implicitly trusted in the precious blood of Jesus? Have I tied the scarlet cord, as with a Gordian knot in my window, so that my trust can never be removed? Or can I look out towards the *Dead Sea of my sins*, or the *Jerusalem of my hopes*, without seeing the blood, and seeing all things in connection with its blessed power?

The passer-by can see a cord of so conspicuous a color, if it hangs from the window. It will be well for me, if my life makes the efficacy of the atonement conspicuous to all onlookers. What is there to be ashamed of? Let men or devils gaze if they will—the blood is my boast and my song.

My soul, there is *One* who will see that scarlet line, even when from weakness of faith you cannot see it yourself! Jehovah, the Avenger, will see it—and pass over you. Jericho's walls fell flat!

Rahab's house was on the wall, and yet it stood unmoved; my nature is built into the wall of humanity, and yet when destruction smites the race, I shall be secure. My soul, tie the scarlet thread in the window afresh, and rest in peace!

April 18 — Evening

"And You said, I will surely do you good." Genesis 32:12

When Jacob was on the other side of the brook Jabbok, and Esau was coming with armed men, he earnestly sought God's protection, and as a master reason he pleaded, "And You said, I will surely do you good." Oh, the force of that plea! He was holding God to His word, "You said." The attribute of *God's faithfulness* is a splendid horn of the altar to lay hold upon; but *God's promise*, which has in it the attribute and something more, is a yet mightier holdfast, "You said, I will surely do you good." Has He said—and shall He not do it? "Let God be true—and every man a liar." Shall not He be true? Shall He not keep His Word? Shall not every Word that comes out of His lips stand fast and be fulfilled?

Solomon, at the opening of the temple, used this same mighty plea. He pleaded with God to remember the Word which He had spoken to his father David, and to bless that place. When a man gives a promissory note, his honor is engaged; he signs his hand, and he must discharge it when the due time comes, or else he loses credit. It shall never be said that God dishonors His bills. The credit of the Most High never was impeached, and never shall be. He is punctual to the moment—He never is before His time—but He never is behind it.

Search God's Word through, and compare it with the experience of God's people, and you shall find the two tally from the first to the last. Many a hoary patriarch has said with Joshua, "Not one thing has failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spoke concerning you; all have come to pass." If you have a divine promise, you need not plead it with an "if," you may urge it with certainty. The Lord meant to fulfill the promise, or He would not have given it. God does not give His words merely to quiet us, and to keep us hopeful for awhile with the intention of putting us off at last; but when He speaks, it is because He means to do as He has said.

April 19 — Morning

"Behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom." Matthew 27:51

No small miracle was wrought in the rending of so strong and thick a veil; but it was not intended merely as a display of power—many *lessons* were herein taught us.

The old law of ordinances was put away, and like a worn-out vesture, rent and laid aside. When Jesus died, the sacrifices were all finished, because all fulfilled in Him, and therefore the place of their presentation was marked with an evident token of decay.

That rent also revealed all the hidden things of the old dispensation: the mercy-seat could now be seen, and the glory of God gleamed forth above it. By the death of our Lord Jesus we have a clear revelation of God, for He was "not as Moses, who put a veil over his face." Life and immortality are now brought to light, and things which have been hidden since the foundation of the world are manifest in Him.

The annual ceremony of atonement was thus abolished. The atoning blood which was once every year sprinkled within the veil, was now offered once for all by the great High Priest, and therefore the place of the symbolical rite was broken up. No blood of bullocks or of lambs is needed now, for Jesus has entered within the veil with his own blood. Hence access to God is now permitted, and is the privilege of every believer in Christ Jesus. There is no small space laid open through which we may peer at the mercy-seat—but the tear reaches from the top to the bottom. We may come with boldness to the throne of the heavenly grace.

Shall we err if we say that the opening of the Holy of Holies in this marvelous manner by our Lord's expiring cry, was the type of the opening of the gates of paradise to all the saints by virtue of the Passion? Our bleeding Lord has the key of heaven; He opens—and no man shuts; let us enter in with Him into the heavenly places, and sit with Him there, until our common enemies shall be made His footstool.

April 19 — Evening

"The Amen." Revelation 3:14

The word AMEN solemnly confirms that which went before; and Jesus is the great Confirmer; immutable, forever is "the Amen" in all His promises. Sinner, I would comfort you with this reflection.

Jesus Christ said, "Come unto me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." If you come to Him, He will say "Amen" in your soul; His promise shall be true to you. He said in the days of His flesh, "The bruised reed I will not break." O you poor, broken, bruised heart, if you come to Him, He will say "Amen" to you, and that shall be true in your soul as in hundreds of cases in bygone years.

Christian, is not this very comforting to you also, that there is not a word which has gone out of the Savior's lips which He has ever retracted? The words of Jesus shall stand when heaven and earth shall pass away. If you get a hold of but half a promise, you shall find it true. Beware of him who is called "Clip-promise," who will destroy much of the comfort of God's Word. Jesus is Yes and Amen in all His offices.

He was a *Priest* to pardon and cleanse once, He is Amen as Priest still. He was a King to rule and reign for His people, and to defend them with His mighty arm. He is an Amen King—the same still.

He was a *Prophet* of old, to foretell good things to come, His lips are most sweet, and drop with honey still—He is an Amen Prophet. He is Amen as to the merit of His blood; He is Amen as to His righteousness. That sacred robe shall remain most fair and glorious when nature shall decay.

He is Amen in every single title which He bears; your Husband, never seeking a divorce; your Friend, sticking closer than a brother; your Shepherd, with you in death's dark valley; your Help and your Deliverer; your Castle and your High Tower; the Horn of your strength, your confidence, your joy, your all in all, and your Yes and Amen in all.

April 20 — Morning

"That through death, He might destroy him who had the power of death." Hebrews 2:14

O child of God, death has lost its sting, because the devil's power over it is destroyed. Then cease to fear dying. Ask grace from God the Holy Spirit, that by an intimate knowledge and a firm belief of your Redeemer's death, you may be strengthened for that dread hour. Living near the cross of Calvary—you may think of death with pleasure, and welcome it when it comes with intense delight. It is *sweet* to die in the Lord—it is a covenant-blessing to sleep in Jesus. Death is no longer banishment, it is a return from exile, a going home to the many mansions where the loved ones already dwell.

The distance between glorified spirits in heaven and militant saints on earth seems great; but it is not so. We are not far from home—a moment will bring us there. The sail is spread; the soul is launched upon the deep. How long will be its voyage? How many wearying winds must beat upon the sail—before it shall be reefed in the port of peace? How long shall that soul be tossed upon the waves—before it comes to that sea which knows no storm? Listen to the answer, "Absent from the body—present with the Lord."

Yon ship has just departed—but it is already at its haven. It did but spread its sail—and it was there. Like that ship of old, upon the Lake of Galilee, a storm had tossed it—but Jesus said, "Peace, be still," and immediately it came to land. Do not think that a long period intervenes between the instant of death—and the eternity of glory. When the eyes close on earth—they open in heaven. The horses of fire are not an instant on the road. O child of God, what is there for you to fear in death, seeing that through the death of your Lord its *curse* and *sting* are destroyed? Now death is but a *Jacob's ladder* whose foot is in the dark grave—but its top reaches to glory everlasting.

April 20 — Evening

"Fight the Lord's battles." 1 Samuel 18:17

The army of God's elect is warring still on earth, Jesus Christ being the Captain of their salvation. He has said, "Lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Harken to the shouts of war! Now let the people of God stand fast in their ranks, and let no man's heart fail him. It is true that just now in England the battle is turned against us, and unless the Lord Jesus shall lift His sword, we know not what may become of the church of God in this land; but let us be of good courage, and play the man. There never was a day when Protestantism seemed to tremble more in the scales, than now that a fierce effort is making to restore the Romish antichrist to his ancient seat. We greatly need a bold voice and a strong hand to preach and publish the old gospel for which martyrs bled and confessors died. The Savior is, by His Spirit, still on earth; let this cheer us. He is ever in the midst of the fight, and therefore the battle is not doubtful. And as the conflict rages, what a sweet satisfaction it is to know that the Lord Jesus, in His office as our great Intercessor, is prevalently pleading for His people!

O anxious gazer, look not so much at the battle below, for there you shall be enshrouded in smoke, and amazed with garments rolled in blood; but lift your eyes yonder where the Savior lives and pleads, for while He intercedes, the cause of God is safe. *Let us fight as if it all depended upon us—but let us look up and know that all depends upon Him!* Now, by the lilies of Christian purity, and by the roses of the Savior's atonement, by the roes and by the hinds of the field, we charge you who are lovers of Jesus—to do valiantly in the Holy War, for truth and righteousness, for the kingdom and crown jewels of your Master. Onward! "for the battle is not yours but God's."

April 21 — Morning

"I know that my Redeemer lives." Job 19:25

The marrow of Job's comfort lies in that little word "My" "*My Redeemer*," and in the fact that the Redeemer *lives*. Oh! to get hold of a *living* Christ. We must get a property in Him—before we can enjoy Him. What is gold in the *mine* to me? Men are beggars in Peru, and beg their bread in California. It is gold in *my purse* which will satisfy my necessities, by purchasing the bread I need. So a Redeemer who does not redeem me—of what avail is such? Rest not content, until by faith you can say "Yes, I cast myself upon *my living* Lord; and He is *mine*." It may be you hold Him with a feeble hand; you half think it presumption to say, "He lives as *my Redeemer*;" yet, remember if you have but faith as a grain of mustard seed, that little faith entitles you to say it.

But there is also another word here, expressive of Job's strong confidence, "*I know*." To say, "*I hope so*" is comfortable; and there are thousands in the fold of Jesus who hardly ever get much further. But to reach the essence of consolation you must say, "*I know*." *Ifs*—buts, and *perhapses*, are sure *murderers of peace and comfort*. *Doubts* are dreary things in times of sorrow. Like *wasps* they sting the soul! If I have any suspicion that Christ is not mine, then there is vinegar mingled with the gall of death; but if I know that Jesus lives for me, then darkness is not dark—even the night is light about me.

Surely if Job, in those ages before the coming and advent of Christ, could say, "*I know*," we should not speak less positively. God forbid that our *positiveness* should be *presumption*. Let us see that our evidences are right, lest we build upon an ungrounded hope; and then let us not be satisfied with the mere foundation, for it is from the *upper rooms* that we get the widest prospect. A living Redeemer, truly mine—is joy unspeakable!

April 21 — Evening

"Who is even at the right hand of God." Romans 8:34

He who was once despised and rejected of men, now occupies the honorable position of the beloved and honored Son of God. The right hand of God is the place of *majesty* and *favor*. Our Lord Jesus is His people's representative. When He died for them—they had rest; He rose again for them—they had liberty; when He sat down at His Father's right hand—they had favor, and honor, and dignity. The raising and elevation of Christ—is the elevation, the acceptance, and enshrinement, the glorifying of all His people—for He is their head and representative. This sitting at the right hand of God, then, is to be viewed as the **acceptance** of the person of the Surety, the reception of the Representative, and therefore, the acceptance of our souls. O saint, see in this—your sure freedom from condemnation. "Who is he who condemns?" Who shall condemn the men who are in Jesus at the right hand of God?

The right hand is the place of **power**. Christ at the right hand of God has all power in heaven and in earth. Who shall fight against the people who have such power vested in their Captain? O my soul, what can destroy you—if Omnipotence is your helper? If the protection of the Almighty covers you—what sword can smite you? Rest secure. If Jesus is your all-prevailing King, and has trodden your enemies beneath His feet; if sin, death, and hell are all vanquished by Him, and you are represented in Him—by no possibility can you be destroyed.

April 22 — Morning

"Him has God exalted." Acts 5:31

Jesus, our Lord, once crucified, dead and buried, now sits upon the throne of glory! The highest place that heaven affords, is His by undisputed right. It is sweet to remember that the exaltation of Christ in heaven—is a representative exaltation. He is exalted at the Father's right hand, and though as *Jehovah* He had eminent glories, in which finite creatures cannot share—yet as the *Mediator*, the honors which Jesus wears in heaven are the heritage of all the saints.

It is delightful to reflect how close is Christ's union with His people. We are actually one with Him; we are members of His body; and His exaltation is our exaltation. He will give us to sit upon His throne, even as He has overcome, and has sat down with His Father on His throne. He has a *crown*, and He gives us crowns too. He has a *throne*—but He is not content with having a throne to Himself, on His right hand there must be His queen, arrayed in "gold of Ophir." He cannot be glorified without His bride.

Look up, believer, to Jesus—let the *eye of your faith* behold Him with *many crowns* upon His head; and remember that you will one day be like Him, when you shall see Him as He is; you shall not be so great as He is, you shall not be so divine—but still you shall, in a *measure*, share the same *honors*, and enjoy the same *happiness* and the same *dignity* which He possesses. Be content to live unknown for a little while, and to walk your weary way through the *fields of poverty*, or up the *hills of affliction*; for by-and-by you shall reign with Christ, for He has "made us kings and priests unto God, and we shall reign forever and ever!" Oh! wonderful thought for the children of God! We have Christ for our glorious representative in heaven's courts now—and soon He will come and receive us to Himself, to be with Him there, to behold His glory, and to share His joy!

April 22 — Evening

"You will not fear the *terror of night*." Psalm 91:5

What is this terror? It may be the cry of fire, or the noise of thieves, or the shriek of sudden sickness or death. We live in the world of death and sorrow, we may therefore look for ills as well in the night-watches as beneath the glare of the broiling sun. Nor should this alarm us, for be the terror what it may, the promise is—that the believer shall not be afraid. Why should he? Let us put it more closely, why should we? God our Father is here, and will be here all through the lonely hours; He is an almighty Watcher, a sleepless Guardian, a faithful Friend. Nothing can happen without His direction, for even hell itself is under His control. Darkness is not dark to Him. He has promised to be a wall of fire around His people—and who can break through such a barrier?

Worldlings may well be afraid, for they have an angry God above them, a guilty conscience within them, and a yawning hell beneath them! But we who rest in Jesus are saved from all these—through rich mercy. If we give way to *foolish fear* we shall dishonor our profession, and lead others to doubt the reality of godliness. We ought to be afraid of being afraid, lest we should vex the Holy Spirit by *foolish distrust*. Down, then, you dismal forebodings and groundless apprehensions, God has not forgotten to be gracious, nor shut up His tender mercies. It may be night in the soul—but there need be no terror, for the God of love changes not. Children of light may walk in darkness—but they are not therefore cast away, nay, they are now enabled to prove their adoption by trusting in their heavenly Father as hypocrites cannot do.

April 23 — Morning

"Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us." Romans 8:37

We go to *Christ* for forgiveness, and then too often look to the *law* for power to fight our sins. Paul thus rebukes us, "You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?" Galatians 3:1-3

Take your sins to Christ's cross, for the old man can only be crucified there—we are crucified with Him. The only weapon to fight sin with—is the spear which pierced the side of Jesus!

To give an illustration—you want to overcome an *angry temper*, how do you go to work? It is very possible you have never tried the right way of going to Jesus with it. How did I get salvation? I came to Jesus just as I was, and I trusted Him to save me. I must kill my angry temper in the same way! It is the only way in which I can ever kill it. I must go to the cross with it, and say to Jesus, "Lord, I trust You to deliver me from it." This is the only way to give it a death-blow.

Are you *covetous*? Do you feel the world entangle you? You may struggle against this evil so long as you please—but if it be your besetting sin, you will never be delivered from it in any way but by the blood of Jesus. Take it to Christ. Tell Him, "Lord, I have trusted You, and Your name is Jesus, for You save Your people from their sins; Lord, this is one of my sins; save me from it!"

Ordinances are nothing, without Christ as a means of mortification. Your prayers, and your repentances, and your tears—the whole of them put together—are worth nothing apart from Him. "None but Jesus can do helpless *sinner's* good;" or helpless saints either. You must be conquerors through Him who has loved you, if conquerors at all. Our laurels must grow among His olives in Gethsemane.

April 23 — Evening

"Then I saw a *Lamb*, looking as if it had been *slain*, standing in the center of the throne!" Revelation 5:6

Why should our exalted Lord appear in His wounds—in glory? The wounds of Jesus are—His glories, His jewels, His sacred ornaments. To the eye of the believer, Jesus is lovely, because He is "white and ruddy" white with innocence, and ruddy with His own blood. We see Him as the Lily of matchless purity—and as the Rose crimsoned with His own gore. Christ is lovely in His life and His teaching—but oh! there never was such a *matchless Christ* as He who hung upon the cross! There we behold all His beauties in perfection, all His attributes developed, all His love drawn out, all His character expressed!

Beloved, the wounds of Jesus are far more lovely in our eyes—than all the splendor and pomp of kings! The thorny crown is more attractive than any imperial diadem. Jesus wears the appearance of a slain Lamb—as His court dress in which He wooed our souls, and redeemed them by His complete atonement.

Nor are these only the ornaments of Christ—they are the trophies of His love and of His victory! He has redeemed for Himself a great multitude whom no man can number—and these scars are the memorials of the fight! Ah! if Christ delights to retain the thought of His sufferings for His people—how precious should His wounds be to us!

"Behold how every wound of His
A precious balm distills,
Which heals the scars that sin had made,
And cures all mortal ills.
Those wounds are mouths that preach His grace;
The ensigns of His love;
The seals of our expected bliss
In paradise above!"

April 24 — Morning

"And because of all this—we make a sure covenant." Nehemiah 9:38

There are many occasions in our experience when we may very rightly, and with benefit, renew our covenant with God. After recovery from *sickness* when, like Hezekiah, we have had a new term of years added to our life, we may fitly do it. After any deliverance from *trouble*, when our joys bud forth anew, let us again visit the foot of the cross, and renew our consecration. Especially, let us do this after any *sin* which has grieved the Holy Spirit, or brought dishonor upon the cause of God; let us then look to that blood which can make us whiter than snow, and again offer ourselves unto the Lord.

We should not only let our troubles confirm our dedication to God—but our *prosperity* should do the same. If we ever meet with occasions which deserve to be called "crowning mercies" then, surely, if *He* has crowned us—we ought also to crown our God; let us bring forth anew all the jewels of the divine regalia which have been stored in the jewel-closet of our heart, and let our God sit upon the throne of our love, arrayed in royal apparel.

If we would learn to profit by our *prosperity*, we would not need so much *adversity*. If we would gather from a *kiss* all the good it might confer upon us—we would not so often smart under the *rod*. Have we lately received some blessing which we little expected? Has the Lord put our feet in a large room? Can we sing of mercies multiplied? Then this is the day to put our hand upon the horns of the altar, and say, "Bind me here, my God; bind me here with cords of love, even forever!"

Inasmuch as we need the fulfillment of new promises from God, let us offer renewed prayers that our old vows may not be dishonored. Let us this morning make with Him a sure covenant, because of the pains of Jesus which for the last month we have been considering with gratitude.

April 24 — Evening

**"The flowers appear in the countryside. The time of singing has come,
and the turtledove's cooing is heard in our land." Song of Solomon 2:12**

Sweet is the season of *Spring*. The long and dreary *winter* helps us to appreciate its genial warmth, and its promise of *summer* enhances its present delights. After periods of depression of spirit, it is delightful to behold again the light of the Sun of Righteousness; then our slumbering graces rise from their lethargy, like the crocus and the daffodil from their beds of earth; then is our heart made merry with delicious notes of gratitude, far more melodious than the warbling of birds—and the comforting assurance of peace, infinitely more delightful than the turtledove's cooing, is heard within the soul.

Now is the time for the soul to seek communion with her Beloved; now must she rise from her native sordidness, and come away from her old associations. If we do not hoist the sail when the breeze is favorable, we shall be blameworthy; times of refreshing ought not to pass over us, *unimproved*. When Jesus Himself visits us in tenderness, and entreats us to arise, can we be so base as to refuse His request? He has Himself risen—that He may draw us after Him. He now by His Holy Spirit has revived us—that we may, in newness of life, ascend into the heavenlies, and hold communion with Himself.

Let our wintry state suffice us for coldness and indifference; when the Lord creates a *spring within*, let our sap flow with vigor, and our branch blossom with high resolve. O Lord, if it is not spring time in my chilly heart, I pray You make it so, for I am heartily weary of living at a distance from You. Oh! the long and dreary winter, when will You bring it to an end? Come, Holy Spirit, and renew my soul! Quicken me! Restore me, and have mercy on me! This very night I would earnestly implore the Lord to take pity upon His servant—and send me a happy revival of spiritual life!

April 25 — Morning

"My beloved spoke and said to me—*Rise up my love, my beautiful one, and come away!*"

Song of Solomon 2:10

Lo, I hear the voice of my Beloved! He speaks to me! Fair weather is smiling upon the face of the earth, and He would not have me spiritually asleep while nature is all around me awaking from her winter's rest. He bids me "Rise up!" and well He may, for I have long enough been lying among the *pots of worldliness*. He is risen, I am risen in Him, why then should I cleave unto the dust? From lower loves, desires, pursuits, and aspirations—I would rise towards Him.

He calls me by the sweet title of "*My love*" and regards me as beautiful! This is a good encouragement for my rising. If He has thus exalted me, and thinks me thus lovely—how can I linger in the dark tents of Kedar and find congenial associates among the world?

He bids me "Come away!" Come away further and further from everything selfish, groveling, worldly, and sinful! He calls me from the outwardly religious world which knows Him not, and has no sympathy with the mystery of the pious life.

"Come away" has no harsh sound in it to my ear—for what is there to hold me in *this wilderness of vanity and sin*? O my Lord, would that I could come away—but I am stuck among the *thorns*—and cannot escape from them as I would. I would, if it were possible, have neither eyes, nor ears, nor heart for sin!

You call me to Yourself by saying "Come away!" and this is a melodious call indeed. To come to You is to come home from exile; to come to land out of the raging storm; to come to rest after long labor, to come to the goal of my desires and the summit of my wishes! But Lord, how can a *stone* rise, how can a lump of clay come away from the horrible pit? O raise me, draw me—and I will run after You! Your grace alone can do it. Send forth Your Holy Spirit to kindle sacred flames of love in my heart—and I will continue to rise until I leave life and time behind me, and indeed come away!

April 25 — Evening

"If any man hears My voice, and opens the door—I will come in to him." Revelation 3:20

What is your desire this evening? Is it set upon heavenly things? Do you long to enjoy the Father's eternal love? Do you desire liberty in very close communion with God? Do you aspire to know the heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths? Then you must draw near to Jesus; you must get a clear sight of Him in His preciousness and completeness; you must view Him in His work, in His offices, in His person. He who understands Christ, receives an anointing from the Holy One, by which He knows all things. *Christ is the great master-key of all the chambers of God. There is no treasure-house of God which will not open and yield up all its wealth—to the soul that lives near to Jesus.*

Are you saying, "O that He would dwell in my bosom! Would that He would make my heart His dwelling-place forever!" Open the door, beloved, and He will come into your souls. He has long been knocking, and all with this object, that He may sup with you, and you with Him. He sups with you because you open your heart, and you with Him because He brings the provision. He could not sup with you if your heart was closed; nor could you sup with Him, if He did not bring provision with Him. Fling wide, then, the portals of your soul. He will come with that love which you long to feel; He will come with that joy into which you cannot work your poor depressed spirit; He will bring the peace which now you have not; He will come with His flagons of wine and sweet apples of love, and cheer you until you have no other sickness but that of "love overpowering, love divine." Only open the door to Him, drive out His enemies, give Him the keys of your heart—and He will dwell there forever! Oh, wondrous love, that brings such a guest to dwell in such a heart!

April 26 — Morning

"Do this in remembrance of Me." 1 Corinthians 11:24

It seems then, that Christians may forget Christ! There could be no need for this loving exhortation, if there were not a fearful supposition that our memories might prove treacherous. Nor is this a bare supposition. It is, alas! too well confirmed in our experience, not as a possibility—but as a lamentable fact. It appears almost impossible that those who have been redeemed by the blood of the dying Lamb, and loved with an everlasting love by the eternal Son of God—should forget that gracious Savior! But, if startling to the ear, it is, alas! too apparent to the eye to allow us to deny the crime.

Forget Him—who never forgot us! Forget Him—who poured His blood forth for our sins! Forget Him—who loved us even to the death! Can it be possible? Yes, it is not only possible—but conscience confesses that it is too sadly a fault with all of us—that we allow Him to be as a wayfaring man tarrying but for a night. He whom we should make the abiding tenant of our memories—is but a visitor therein. The cross where one would think that memory would linger, and unmindfulness would be an unknown intruder, is desecrated by the *feet of forgetfulness*.

Does not your conscience say that this is true? Do you not find yourselves forgetful of Jesus? Some *creature* steals away your heart—and you are unmindful of Him upon whom your affection ought to be set. Some *earthly business* engrosses your attention—when you should fix your eye steadily upon the cross. It is the incessant turmoil of the *world*, the constant *attraction of earthly things*—which takes away the soul from Christ. While memory too well preserves a poisonous weed, it allows the *Rose of Sharon* to wither. Let us charge ourselves to bind a heavenly forget-me-not about our hearts for Jesus our Beloved, and, whatever else we let slip—let us hold fast to Him.

April 26 — Evening

"Blessed is he who watches." Revelation 16:15

"We die daily," said the apostle. This was the life of the early Christians; they went everywhere with their lives in their hands. We are not in this day called to pass through the same fearful persecutions; if we were, the Lord would give us grace to bear the test. But the tests of Christian life, at the present moment, though outwardly not so terrible, are yet more likely to overcome us than even those of the fiery age. We have to bear the *sneer* of the world—but its blandishments, its soft words, its oily speeches, its fawning, its hypocrisy, are far worse.

Our danger is that we grow rich and become proud—that we give ourselves up to the fashions of this present evil world, and lose our faith. Or if wealth is not the worst trial, worldly care is quite as mischievous. If we cannot be *torn* in pieces by the roaring lion, if we may be *hugged* to death by the bear—the devil little cares which it is, so long as he destroys our love to Christ, and our confidence in Him.

I fear that the Christian church is far more likely to lose her integrity in these *soft and silken days*—than in those rougher times. We must be awake now, for we traverse the *enchanted ground*, and are most likely to fall asleep to our own undoing—unless our faith in Jesus is a reality, and our love to Jesus a vehement flame. Many in these days of *easy profession* are likely to prove tares, and not wheat; hypocrites with fair masks on their faces—but not the true-born children of the living God.

Christian, do not think that these are times in which you can dispense with watchfulness or with holy ardor! You need these things more than ever, and may God the eternal Spirit display His omnipotence in you, that you may be able to say, in all these softer things, as well as in the rougher, "We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us!"

April 27 — Morning

"God, even our own God." Psalm 67:6

It is strange how little use we make of the *spiritual blessings* which God gives us—but it is stranger still how little use we make of *God* Himself. Though He is "our own God," we apply ourselves but little to Him, and ask but little of Him. How seldom do we ask counsel at the hands of the Lord! How often do we go about our business, without seeking His guidance! In our troubles how constantly do we strive to bear our burdens ourselves, instead of casting them upon the Lord, that He may sustain us! This is not because we *may* not, for the Lord seems to say, "I am yours—come and make use of me as you will; you may freely come to my store, and the oftener the more welcome." It is our *own* fault if we make not free with the riches of our God.

Then, since you have such a friend, and He invites you, draw from Him daily. Never lack—while you have a God to go to; never fear or faint—while you have God to help you; go to your treasure house—and take whatever you need—there is all that you can want. Learn the divine skill of making God all things to you. He can *supply* you with all; or, better still, He can *be* to you instead of all. Let me urge you, then, to make use of your God. Make use of Him in prayer. Go to Him often, because He is your God. O, will you fail to use so great a privilege? Fly to Him, tell Him all your needs. Use Him constantly by faith at all times. If some dark providence has beclouded you—use your God as a "sun;" if some strong enemy has beset you—find in Jehovah a "shield," for He is a sun and shield to His people. If you have lost your way in the mazes of life—use Him as a "guide," for He will direct you. Whatever you are, and wherever you are, remember God is just what you need, and just where you need—and that He can do all you need.

April 27 — Evening

"The Lord is King forever and ever!" Psalm 10:16

Jesus Christ is no despotic claimant of divine right—but He is really and truly the Lord's anointed! "It has pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell." God has given to Him all *power* and all *authority*. As the Son of man, He is now head over all things to His church, and He reigns over heaven, and earth, and hell, with the keys of life and death at His belt. Certain princes have delighted to call themselves kings by the popular will, and certainly our Lord Jesus Christ is such in His church. If it could be put to the vote whether He should be King in the church, every believing heart would crown Him. O that we could crown Him more gloriously than we do! We would count no expense to be wasted that could glorify Christ. *Suffering* would be pleasure, and *loss* would be gain—if thereby we could surround His brow with brighter crowns, and make Him more glorious in the eyes of men and angels. Yes, He shall reign. Long live the King! All hail to You, King Jesus! Go forth, you virgin souls who love your Lord, bow at His feet, strew His way with the lilies of your love, and the roses of your gratitude! "Bring forth the royal diadem, and crown Him Lord of all."

Moreover, our Lord Jesus is King in Zion by right of *conquest*. He has taken by storm and captured the hearts of His people—and has slain their enemies who held them in cruel bondage. *In the Red Sea of His own blood, our Redeemer has drowned the Pharaoh of our sins!* He has delivered us from the iron yoke and heavy curse of the law—shall not the Liberator be crowned? We are His portion, whom He has taken out of the hand of the Amorite with His sword and with His bow. Who shall snatch His conquest from His hand? All hail, King Jesus! we gladly own Your gentle sway! Rule in our hearts forever, O lovely Prince of Peace.

April 28 — Morning

"Remember the Word unto Your servant, upon which You have caused me to hope." Psalm 119:49

Whatever your especial *need* may be—you may readily find some *promise* in the Bible suited to it. Are you faint and feeble because your way is rough and you are weary? Here is the promise, "He gives power to the faint." When you read such a promise, take it back to the great Promiser, and ask Him to fulfill His own Word. Are you seeking after Christ, and thirsting for closer communion with Him? This promise shines like a star upon you, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." Take that promise to the throne continually; do not plead anything else—but go to God over and over again with this, "Lord, You have said it—do as You have said."

Are you distressed because of sin, and burdened with the heavy load of your iniquities? Listen to these words, "I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions, and will no more remember your sins." You have no merit of your own to plead, why He should pardon you—but plead His written engagements and He will perform them.

Are you afraid lest you should not be able to hold on to the end, lest, after having thought yourself a child of God, you should prove a castaway? If that is your state, take this Word of grace to the throne and plead it: "The mountains may depart, and the hills may be removed—but the covenant of My love shall not depart from you."

If you have lost the sweet sense of the Savior's presence, and are seeking Him with a sorrowful heart, remember the promises: "Return unto Me—and I will return unto you." "For a small moment have I forsaken you—but with great mercies will I gather you." *Banquet your faith upon God's own Word*, and whatever your fears or needs, repair to the *Bank of Faith* with your Father's hand-written note, saying, "Remember the Word unto Your servant—upon which You have caused me to hope."

April 28 — Evening

"All the house of Israel are impudent and hard-hearted." Ezekiel 3:7

Are there no exceptions? No, not one. Even the favored race are thus described. Are the best—so bad? Then what must the worst be? Come, my heart, consider how far you have a share in this universal accusation, and while considering, be ready to take shame unto yourself however you may have been guilty.

The first charge is *impudence*, or hardness of forehead, a lack of holy shame, an unhallowed boldness in evil. Before my conversion, I could sin—and feel no remorse; hear of my guilt—and yet remain unhumbled; and even confess my iniquity—and have no inward humiliation on account of it. For a sinner to go to God's house and pretend to pray to Him and praise Him—argues a brazen-facedness of the worst kind! Alas! since the day of my new birth I have doubted my Lord to His face, murmured unblushingly in His presence, worshiped before Him in a slovenly manner, and sinned without bewailing myself concerning it. If my forehead were not as an adamant, harder than flint—I would have far more holy fear, and a far deeper contrition of spirit. Woe is me—I am one of the impudent house of Israel!

The second charge is *hard-heartedness*, and I must not venture to plead innocent here. Once I had nothing but a heart of stone, and although through grace I now have a new and fleshy heart, much of my former obduracy remains. I am not affected by the death of Jesus as I ought to be; neither am I moved by the ruin of my fellow men, the wickedness of the times, the chastisement of my heavenly Father, and my own failures—as I should be. O that my heart would melt at the recital of my Savior's sufferings and death. Would to God I were rid of this nether millstone within me—this hateful body of death. Blessed be the name of the Lord, the disease is not incurable, *the Savior's precious blood is the universal solvent*, and me, even me, it will effectually soften—until my heart melts as wax before the fire!

April 29 — Morning

"You are my hope in the day of evil." Jeremiah 17:17

The path of the Christian is not always bright with *sunshine*; he has his seasons of *darkness* and of *storm*. True, it is written in God's Word, "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace;" and it is a great truth, that religion is calculated to give a man *happiness below*—as well as *bliss above*. But experience tells us that if the course of the just be "As the shining light that shines more and more unto the perfect day," yet sometimes that light is eclipsed. At certain periods, *clouds* cover the believer's sun, and he walks in darkness and sees no light.

There are many who have rejoiced in the presence of God for a season; they have basked in the sunshine in the earlier stages of their Christian career; they have walked along the "green pastures" by the side of the "still waters." But suddenly they find the glorious sky is clouded; instead of the fertile Land of Goshen—they have to tread the barren desert; in the place of sweet waters, they find troubled streams, bitter to their taste, and they say, "Surely, if I were a child of God—this would not happen!"

Oh! say not so, you who are walking in darkness. The best of God's saints must *drink the wormwood*; the dearest of His children must *bear the cross*. No Christian has enjoyed perpetual prosperity; no believer can always keep his harp from the willows. Perhaps the Lord allotted you at first—a smooth and unclouded path, because you were weak and timid. He tempered the wind to the shorn lamb—but now that you are stronger in the spiritual life, you must enter upon the riper and rougher experience of God's full-grown children. We need *winds* and *tempests* to exercise our faith, to tear off the rotten bough of self-dependence, and to root us more firmly in Christ. The day of evil reveals to us the value of our glorious hope.

April 29 — Evening

"The Lord takes pleasure in His people." Psalm 149:4

How comprehensive is the love of Jesus! There is no part of His people's interests which He does not consider, and there is nothing which concerns their welfare which is not important to Him. Not merely does He think of you, believer, as an immortal being—but as a mortal being too. Do not deny it or doubt it: "The very hairs of your head are all numbered." It would be a sad thing for us—if this mantle of love did not cover all our concerns, for what mischief might be wrought to us—in that part of our business which did not come under our gracious Lord's inspection!

Believer, rest assured that the heart of Jesus cares about your smaller affairs. The breadth of His tender love, is such that you may resort to Him in all matters; for as a father pities his children—so does He pity you. The smallest interests of all His saints—are all borne upon the broad bosom of the Son of God. Oh, what a heart is His, that does not merely comprehend the salvation of His people—but comprehends also, all their diverse and innumerable concerns!

Do you think, O Christian, that you can *measure* the love of Christ? Think of what His love has brought you—justification, adoption, sanctification, eternal life! The riches of His goodness are unsearchable; you shall never be able to *tally* them—or even *conceive* them. Oh, the breadth of the love of Christ! Shall such a love as this have *half* our hearts? Shall it have a *cold* love in return? Shall Jesus' marvelous loving-kindness and tender care—meet with but faint response and tardy acknowledgment? O my soul, tune your harp to a glad song of thanksgiving! Go to your rest rejoicing, for you are no desolate wanderer—but a beloved child, watched over, cared for, supplied, and defended by your Lord!

April 30 — *Morning*

"And all the children of Israel murmured." Numbers 14:2

There are murmurers among Christians now, as there were in the camp of Israel of old. There are those who, when the *rod* falls, cry out against the *afflictive dispensation*. They ask, "Why am *I* thus afflicted? What have *I* done to be chastened in this manner?"

A word with you, O murmurer! Why should you murmur against the dispensations of your heavenly Father? Can He treat you more badly than you deserve? Consider what a rebel you were once—but He has pardoned you! Surely, if He in His wisdom sees fit now to chasten you—you should not complain. After all—are you smitten as badly as your sins deserve? Consider the corruption which is in your heart—and then will you wonder that there needs so much of the rod to fetch it out? Weigh yourself, and discern how much dross is mingled with your gold—and do you think the fire too hot to purge away so much dross as you have? Does not that proud rebellious spirit of yours, prove that your heart is not thoroughly sanctified? Are not those murmuring words, contrary to the holy submissive nature of God's children? Is not the correction needed?

But if you will murmur against the chastening, take heed—for it will go hard with murmurers. God always chastises His children *twice*—if they do not bear the *first* stroke patiently. But know one thing, "He does not afflict willingly—nor grieve the children of men." All His corrections are sent in love—to purify you, and to draw you nearer to Himself. Surely it must help you to bear the chastening with resignation, if you are able to recognize *your Father's hand*. For "whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives. If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons." "Murmur not as some of them also murmured—and were destroyed of the destroyer!"

April 30 — Evening

"How precious also are Your thoughts unto me, O God." Psalm 139:17

Divine omniscience affords no comfort to the ungodly mind—but to the child of God it overflows with consolation. God is always thinking upon us; He never turns aside His mind from us, and has us always before His eyes! This is precisely as we would have it—for it would be dreadful to exist for a moment, beyond the observation of our heavenly Father. His thoughts are always tender, loving, wise, prudent, far-reaching, and they bring to us countless benefits. Hence it is a choice delight, for us to remember them.

The Lord always did think upon His people—hence their election and the covenant of grace by which their salvation is secured. He always will think upon them—hence their final perseverance by which they shall be brought safely to their final rest. In all our wanderings, the watchful glance of the Eternal Watcher is evermore fixed upon us! We never roam beyond the Shepherd's eye! In our sorrows He observes us incessantly, and not a pang escapes Him! In our toils He marks all our weariness, and writes in His book all the struggles of His faithful ones. These thoughts of the Lord encompass us in all our paths, and penetrate the innermost region of our being. Not a nerve or tissue, valve or vessel, of our bodily organization is uncared for. All the 'littles' of our little world—are thought upon by the great God.

Dear reader, is this precious to you? Never be led astray by those philosophic fools who preach up an impersonal God. The Lord lives and thinks upon us! This is a truth far too precious for us to be easily robbed of it. The notice of an earthly king is valued so highly, that he who has it counts his fortune made; but what is this—compared to be thought of by the King of kings! If the Lord thinks upon us—all is well, and we may rejoice evermore!

May 1 — *Morning*

"His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers." Song of Solomon 5:13

Lo, the flowery month is come! March winds and April showers have done their work, and the earth is all bedecked with beauty. Come my soul, put on your holiday attire and go forth to gather garlands of heavenly thoughts. You know where to betake yourself, for to you "the beds of spices" are well known, and you have so often smelled the perfume of "the sweet flowers," that you will go at once to your well-beloved and find all loveliness, all joy in Him. That cheek once so rudely smitten with a rod, oft bedewed with tears of sympathy and then defiled with spittle—that cheek as it smiles with mercy is as fragrant aromatic to my heart.

You did not hide Your face from shame and spitting, O Lord Jesus, and therefore I will find my dearest delight in praising You. Those cheeks were furrowed by the plough of grief, and crimsoned with red lines of blood from Your thorn-crowned temples; such marks of *unbounded love* cannot but charm my soul far more than "pillars of perfume." If I may not see the whole of His face, I would behold His cheeks, for the least glimpse of Him is exceedingly refreshing to my spiritual sense and yields a variety of delights. In Jesus I find not only *fragrance*, but a *bed of spices*; not one flower, but all kinds of sweet flowers. He is to me my *rose* and my *lily*, my *heart's-ease* and my cluster of camphire. When He is with me it is May all the year round, and my soul goes forth to wash her happy face in the morning-dew of His grace, and to solace herself with the singing of the birds of His promises. Precious Lord Jesus, let me in very deed know the blessedness which dwells in abiding, unbroken fellowship with You. I am a poor worthless one, whose cheek You have deigned to kiss! O let me kiss You in return with the kisses of my lips.

May 1 — Evening

"I am the Rose of Sharon." Song of Solomon 2:1

Whatever there may be of beauty in the material world, Jesus Christ possesses all that in the spiritual world, in a tenfold degree. Among flowers, the *rose* is deemed the sweetest—but Jesus is infinitely more beautiful in the garden of the soul—than the rose can in the gardens of earth. He takes the first place as the *fairest among ten thousand*. He is the *sun*—and all others are the *stars*; the heavens and the day are dark—in comparison with Him, for the King in His beauty transcends all.

"I am the *Rose of Sharon*." This was the *best* and *rarest* of roses. Jesus is not "the rose" alone, He is "the *Rose of Sharon*." Just as He calls His righteousness "gold," and then adds, "the gold of *Ophir*" that is—the best of the best. He is positively lovely, and superlatively the loveliest.

There is *variety* in His charms. The rose is delightful to the eye, and its scent is pleasant and refreshing; so each of the senses of the soul, whether it be the taste or feeling, the hearing, the sight, or the spiritual smell—finds appropriate gratification in Jesus. Even the *recollection* of His love is sweet. Take the rose of Sharon, and pull it leaf from leaf, and lay the leaves in the *jar of memory*, and you shall find each leaf fragrant long afterwards, filling the house with perfume.

Christ satisfies the highest taste of the most educated spirit to the very full. The greatest amateur in perfumes is quite satisfied with the rose—and when the soul has arrived at her highest pitch of true taste, she shall still be content with Christ; nay, she shall be the better able to appreciate Him. Heaven itself possesses nothing which excels the *Rose of Sharon*. What emblem can fully set forth His beauty? Human speech and earth-born things, fail to describe Him. Earth's choicest charms added together, feebly picture His abounding preciousness. Blessed Rose, bloom in my heart forever!

May 2 — *Morning*

"I do not pray that You would take them out of the world." John 17:15

It is a sweet and blessed event which will occur to all believers in God's own time—the going home to be with Jesus. In a few more years the Lord's soldiers, who are now fighting "the good fight of faith" will be done with conflict, and have entered into the joy of their Lord. But although Christ prays that His people may eventually be with Him where He is, He does not ask that they may be taken at once away from this world to heaven. He wishes them to stay here.

Yet how frequently does the wearied pilgrim put up the prayer, "O that I had wings like a dove! For then would I fly away and be at rest!" But Christ does not pray like that, He leaves us in His Father's hands, until, like shocks of corn *fully ripe*—we shall each be gathered into our Master's garner. Jesus does not plead for our instant removal by death—for to abide in this world is needful for others—if not profitable for ourselves. He asks that we may be kept from evil—but He never asks for us to be admitted to the inheritance in glory—until we are fully matured.

Christians often want to die when they have any trouble. Ask them why, and they tell you, "Because we would be with the Lord." We fear it is not so much because they are longing to be with the Lord—as because they desire to get rid of their troubles; else they would feel the same wish to die at other times when not under the pressure of trial. They want to go home, not so much for the Savior's company—as to be at rest. Now it is quite right to desire to depart—if we can do it in the same spirit that Paul did, because to be with Christ is far better—but the wish to *escape from trouble* is a selfish one. Rather let your care and wish be to glorify God by your life here as long as He pleases, even though it be in the midst of toil, and conflict, and suffering, and leave Him to say when "it is enough."

May 2 — Evening

"These all died in faith." Hebrews 11:13

Behold the epitaph of all those blessed saints who *fell asleep* before the coming of our Lord! It matters nothing *how* they died, whether of old age, or by violent means; this one point, in which they all agree, is the most worthy of record, "they all died in faith." In faith they lived—it was their comfort, their guide, their motive and their support; and in the same spiritual grace they died, ending their life-song in the sweet strain in which they had so long continued. They did not die resting in the flesh or upon their own attainments; they made no advance from their first way of acceptance with God—but held to the *way of faith* to the end. Faith is as precious to *die* by—as to *live* by.

Dying in faith has distinct reference to the *past*. They believed the promises which had gone before, and were assured that their sins were blotted out through the mercy of God.

Dying in faith has to do with the *present*. These saints were confident of their acceptance with God, they enjoyed the beams of His love, and rested in His faithfulness.

Dying in faith looks into the *future*. They fell asleep, affirming that the Messiah would surely come, and that when He would in the last days appear upon the earth, they would rise from their graves to behold Him.

To them the pains of death were but the birth-pangs of a better state. Take courage, my soul, as you read this epitaph. Your course, through grace, is one of *faith*—and *sight* seldom cheers you; this has also been the pathway of the brightest and the best. Faith was the orbit in which these stars of the first magnitude moved all the time of their shining here; and happy are you that it is yours. Look anew tonight to Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith, and thank Him for giving you like precious faith with souls now in glory.

May 3 — Morning

"In this world you will have trouble." John 16:33

Are you asking the reason for this, believer?

Look *upward* to your heavenly Father, and behold Him pure and holy. Do you know that you are one day to be like Him? Will you *easily* be conformed to His image? Do you not require much *refining in the furnace of affliction* to purify you? Will it be an easy thing to get rid of your corruptions, and make you as perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect?

Next, Christian, turn your eye *downward*. Do you know what foes you have beneath your feet? You were once a servant of Satan—and no king will willingly lose his subjects. Do you think that Satan will let you alone? No, he will be always at you, for he "goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." Expect trouble, therefore, Christian, when you look beneath you.

Then look *around* you. Where are you? You are in an enemy's country, a stranger and a sojourner. The world is not your friend. If it is—then you are not God's friend, for he who is the friend of the world—is the enemy of God. Be assured that you shall find foe-men everywhere. When you sleep, contemplate that you are resting on the battlefield; when you walk, suspect an ambush in every hedge. As mosquitoes are said to bite strangers more than natives, so will the trials of earth be sharpest to you.

Lastly, look *within* you, into your own heart—and observe what is there. *SIN* and *SELF* are still within! Ah! if you had no devil to tempt you, no enemies to fight you, and no world to ensnare you, you would still find in yourself evil enough to be a sore trouble to you, for "the heart is deceitful above all things—and desperately wicked."

Expect trouble then—but despond not on account of it, for God is with you to help and to strengthen you. He has said, "I will be with you in trouble; I will deliver you and honor you."

May 3 — Evening

"A very present help in times of trouble." Psalm 46:1

Covenant blessings are not meant to be *looked* at only—but to be *appropriated*. Even our Lord Jesus is given to us for our *present* use. Believer, you do not make use of Christ—as you ought to do. When you are in trouble, why do you not tell Him all your grief? Has He not a sympathizing heart, and can He not comfort and relieve you? But no—you are going about to all your friends—except your best Friend, and telling your tale everywhere, except into the bosom of your Lord.

Are you burdened with this day's *sins*? Here is a fountain filled with blood—use it, saint, use it! Has a sense of *guilt* returned upon you? The pardoning grace of Jesus may be used again and again. Come to Him at once for cleansing! Do you deplore your *weakness*? He is your strength—why not lean upon Him? Do you feel *naked*? Come here, soul—put on the robe of Jesus' righteousness. Do not stand *looking* at it—but *wear* it. Strip off your own righteousness, and your own fears too—put on the fair white linen, for it was meant to wear.

Do you feel yourself *sick*? Pull the night-bell of prayer, and call up the Beloved Physician! He will give the cordial that will revive you. You are *poor*—but then you have "a kinsman, a mighty man of wealth." What! will you not go to Him, and ask Him to give you of His abundance, when He has given you this promise, that you shall be joint heir with Him, and has made over all that He *is* and all that He *has*—to be your? There is nothing Christ dislikes more—than for His people to make a *show-thing* of Him, and not to *use* Him. He loves to be employed by us. The more burdens we put on His shoulders—the more precious will He be to us.

May 4 — Morning

"Do men make their own gods? Yes—but they are not gods!" Jeremiah 16:20

One great besetting sin of ancient Israel was idolatry, and we who are the spiritual Israel are vexed with a tendency to the same folly! We no longer bow down to sticks and stones—but *Mammon* still intrudes his *golden calf*, and the shrines of *pride* are not forsaken. *SELF* in various forms, struggles to subdue the chosen ones under its dominion, and the *flesh* sets up its altars wherever it can find space for them.

Children are often the cause of much sin in believers; the Lord is grieved when He sees us doting upon them above measure; they will live to be as great a curse to us—as Absalom was to David, or they will be taken from us to leave our homes desolate. If Christians desire to grow thorns to stuff their sleepless pillows—let them dote on their children!

It is truly said that "they are not gods," for the objects of our *foolish devotion* are very doubtful blessings, the *solace* which they yield us now is dangerous, and the *help* which they can give us in the hour of trouble is little indeed.

Why, then, are we so bewitched with vanities? We pity the poor heathen who adore a god of *stone*—and yet worship a god of *gold*! Where is the vast superiority between a god of *flesh*—and one of *wood*? The principle, the sin, the folly is the same in either case, only that in our case—the crime is more aggravated because we have more light—and sin in the face of it. The heathen bows to a false deity—but the true God he has never known; we commit two evils, inasmuch as we *forsake* the living God—and *turn* unto idols. May the Lord purge us all from this grievous iniquity!

"The dearest idol I have known,
Whatever that idol be;
Help me to tear it from Thy throne,
And worship only Thee!"

May 4 — Evening

"For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable." 1 Peter 1:23

Peter most earnestly exhorted the scattered saints to love each other "with a pure heart fervently" and he wisely fetched his argument, not from the law, from nature, or from philosophy—but from that high and divine nature which God has implanted in His people. Just as some judicious tutor of princes might labor to beget and foster in them a kingly spirit and dignified behavior, finding arguments in their position and descent—so, looking upon God's people as heirs of glory, princes of the blood royal, descendants of the King of kings, earth's truest and oldest aristocracy, Peter says to them, "See that you love one another, because of your noble birth, being born of incorruptible seed; because of your pedigree, being descended from God, the Creator of all things; and because of your immortal destiny, for you shall never pass away, though the glory of the flesh shall fade, and even its existence shall cease."

It would be well if, in the spirit of humility, we recognized the true dignity of our regenerated nature, and lived up to it. What is a Christian? If you compare him with a king, he adds priestly sanctity to royal dignity. The king's royalty often lies only in his crown—but with a Christian it is *infused* into his inmost nature. He is as much above his fellows through his new birth, as a man is above the beast that perishes. Surely he ought to carry himself, in all his dealings, as one who is not of the multitude—but chosen out of the world, distinguished by sovereign grace, written among "a people belonging to God" and who therefore cannot grovel in the dust as others, nor live after the manner of the world's citizens. Let the dignity of your nature, and the brightness of your prospects, O believers in Christ, constrain you to cleave unto holiness, and to avoid the very appearance of evil.

May 5 — *Morning*

"I will be their God—and they shall be My people." 2 Corinthians 6:16

What a sweet title, "My people!" What a cheering revelation: "Their God!" How much of meaning is couched in those two words, "My people!"

Here is *speciality*. The whole world is God's—the heaven, even the heaven of heavens is the Lord's, and He reigns among the children of men. But of those whom He has chosen, whom He has purchased to Himself, He calls them especially, "My people".

In this word there is the idea of *proprietaryship*. In a special manner the "Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance." All the nations upon earth are His; the whole world is in His power; yet are His people, His chosen people, more especially His possession; for He has done more for them than others; He has bought them with His blood; He has brought them near to Himself; He has set His great heart upon them; He has loved them with an everlasting love, a love which many waters cannot quench, and which the revolutions of time shall never suffice in the least degree to diminish.

Dear friends, can you, by faith, see yourselves in that number? Can you look up to heaven and say, "*My* Lord and *my* God—mine by that sweet relationship which entitles me to call You Father—mine by that hallowed fellowship which I delight to hold with You when You are pleased to manifest Yourself unto me as You do not unto the world?"

Can you read the Book of Inspiration, and find there the evidences of your salvation? Can you read your title written in precious blood? Can you, by humble faith, lay hold of Jesus' garments, and say, "*My* Christ"? If you can, then God says of you, and of others like you, "My people;" for, if God is your God, and Christ is your Christ, the Lord has shown special, peculiar grace to you—you are the object of His choice, accepted in His beloved Son!

May 5 — Evening

"He who handles a matter wisely shall find good; and whoever trusts in the Lord—happy is he."

Proverbs 16:20

Wisdom is man's true strength; and, under its guidance, he best accomplishes the ends of his being. Wisely handling the *matter of life* gives to man the richest enjoyment, and presents the noblest occupation for his powers; hence by it he finds good in the fullest sense. Without wisdom, man is as the wild donkey's colt, running hither and thither, wasting strength which might be profitably employed. Wisdom is the compass by which man is to steer across the trackless ocean of life; without it he is a abandoned vessel, the sport of winds and waves.

A man must be prudent in such a world as this, or he will find no good—but be betrayed into unnumbered ills. The pilgrim will sorely wound his feet among the briars of the forest of life—if he does not pick his steps with the utmost caution. He who is in a wilderness infested with robber bands, must handle matters wisely if he would journey safely. If, trained by the Great Teacher, we follow where He leads, we shall find good, even while in this dark abode. There are celestial fruits to be gathered this side of Eden's bowers, and songs of paradise to be sung amid the groves of earth.

But where shall this *wisdom* be found? Many have *dreamed* of it—but have not *possessed* it. Where shall we learn it? Let us listen to the voice of the Lord, for He has declared the secret. He has revealed to men wherein true wisdom lies, and we have it in the text, "Whoever trusts in the Lord—happy is he." The true way to handle a matter wisely—is to trust in the Lord. This is the sure clue to the most intricate labyrinths of life—follow it and find eternal bliss. He who trusts in the Lord has a diploma for wisdom granted by inspiration: happy is he now, and happier shall he be above. Lord, in this sweet eventide—walk with me in the garden, and teach me the wisdom of faith.

May 6 — Morning

"We dwell in Him." 1 John 4:13

Do you need a house for your soul? Do you ask, "What is the purchase price?" It is something *less* than proud human nature will like to give. It is without money and without price. Ah! you would like to pay a respectable rent! You would love to do something to win Christ? Then you cannot have the house, for it is "without price." Will you take my Master's house on a lease for all eternity—with nothing to pay for it, nothing but the ground-rent of loving and serving Him forever? Will you take Jesus and "dwell in Him?"

See, this house is furnished with all you desire—it is filled with riches more than you will spend as long as you live. Here you can have intimate communion with Christ and feast on His love. Here are tables well-stored with food for you to live on forever! In it, when weary, you can find rest with Jesus; and from it you can look out and see heaven itself.

Will you have the house? Ah! if you are houseless, you will say, "I would like to have the house; but may I have it?" Yes! there is the key—the key is, "Come to Jesus." "But," you say, "I am too shabby for such a house." Never mind; there are garments inside. If you feel guilty and condemned, come; and though the house is too good for you, Christ will make you good enough for the house by-and-by. He will wash you and cleanse you, and you will yet be able to sing, "We dwell in Him."

Believer! thrice happy are you to have such a dwelling-place! Greatly privileged you are, for you have a "strong habitation" in which you are ever safe. And "dwelling in Him," you have not only a *perfect* and *secure* house—but an *everlasting* one. When this world shall have melted like a dream—our house shall live, and stand more imperishable than marble, more solid than granite, self-existent as God, for it is *God Himself!* "We dwell in Him."

May 6 — Evening

"All the days of my appointed time will I wait." Job 14:14

A little stay on earth—will make heaven more heavenly. Nothing makes *rest* so sweet as *toil*; nothing renders security so pleasant as exposure to alarms. The bitter cups of earthly sorrow—will give a relish to the new wine which sparkles in the golden bowls of glory. Our battered armor and scarred countenances, will render more illustrious our victory above, when we are welcomed to the seats of those who have overcome the world.

We would not have full fellowship with Christ if we did not for awhile sojourn below, for He was baptized with a baptism of suffering among men, and we must be baptized with the same if we would share his kingdom. Fellowship with Christ is so honorable that the sorest sorrow is a light price by which to procure it.

Another reason for our lingering here is for the good of others. We would not wish to enter heaven until our work is done—and it may be that we are yet ordained to minister light—to benighted souls in the wilderness of sin. Our prolonged stay here is doubtless for God's glory. A tried saint, like a well-cut diamond, glitters much in the King's crown. Nothing reflects so much honor on a workman—as a protracted and severe trial of his work, and its triumphant endurance of the ordeal without giving way in any part. We are God's workmanship, in whom He will be glorified by our afflictions. It is for the honor of Jesus that we endure the trial of our faith with sacred joy. Let each man surrender his own longings to the glory of Jesus, and feel, "If my lying in the dust would elevate my Lord by so much as an inch—let me still lie among the pots of earth. If to live on earth forever, would make my Lord more glorious, it would be my heaven to be shut out of heaven."

Our time on earth is fixed and settled by eternal decree. Let us not be anxious about it—but wait with patience until the gates of pearl shall open!

May 7 — Morning

"Great multitudes followed Him—and He healed them all." Matthew 12:15

What a mass of hideous sickness must have thrust itself under the eye of Jesus! Yet we do not read that He was disgusted—but patiently waited on every case. What a striking variety of diseases must have met at His feet! What sickening ulcers and putrefying sores! Yet He was ready for every new shape of the monster evil, and was victor over it in every form. Let the arrow fly from what quarter it might, He quenched its fiery power. The heat of fever, or the cold of dropsy; the lethargy of palsy, or the rage of madness; the filth of leprosy, or the darkness of blindness—all knew the power of His Word, and fled at His command. In every corner of the field He was triumphant over evil, and received the homage of delivered captives. He came, He saw, He conquered everywhere.

It is even so this morning. Whatever my own case may be—the beloved Physician can heal *me*. And whatever may be the state of others whom I may remember at this moment in prayer, I may have hope in Jesus that He will be able to heal them of their sins.

My child, my friend, my dearest one, I can have hope for each, for all, when I remember the healing power of my Lord; and on my own account, however severe my struggle with sins and infirmities, I may yet be of good cheer. He who on earth walked the hospitals, still dispenses His grace, and works wonders among the sons of men—let me go to Him at once in right earnest. Let me praise Him, this morning, as I remember how He wrought His spiritual cures, which bring Him most renown. It was by taking upon Himself our sicknesses. "By His stripes we are healed." The Church on earth is full of souls healed by our beloved Physician; and the inhabitants of heaven itself confess that "He healed them all." Come, then, my soul, publish abroad the virtue of His grace, and let it be "to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign which shall not be cut off."

May 7 — Evening

"Jesus said unto him—Rise, take up your bed, and walk!" John 5:8

Like many others, the impotent man had been waiting for a miracle to be wrought, and a sign to be given. Wearily did he watch the pool—but no angel came—or came not for him. Yet, thinking it to be his only chance, he waited still, and knew not that there was One near him whose word could heal him in a moment.

Many are in the same plight—they are waiting for some singular emotion, remarkable impression, or celestial vision; they wait in vain and watch for nothing. Even supposing that, in a few cases, remarkable signs are seen—yet these are rare, and no man has a right to look for them in his own case. It is a very sad reflection that tens of thousands are now waiting in the use of means, and ordinances, and vows, and resolutions, and have so waited in vain, utterly in vain. Meanwhile these poor souls forget the present Savior, who bids them look unto *Him* and be saved. He could heal them at once—but they prefer to wait for an angel and a miracle. To trust *Him* is the sure way to every blessing, and He is worthy of the most implicit confidence; but unbelief makes them prefer the cold porches of Bethesda—to the warm bosom of His love.

O that the Lord may turn His eye upon the multitudes who are in this case tonight; may He forgive the slights which they put upon His divine power, and call them by that sweet constraining voice, to rise from the bed of despair, and in the energy of faith take up their bed and walk. O Lord, hear our prayer for all such at this calm hour of sunset, and before the day breaks—may they look and live. Dear reader, is there anything in this portion for you?

May 8 — *Morning*

"The man who was healed had no idea who it was." John 5:13

Years are *short* to the happy and healthy; but thirty-eight years of disease must have dragged a very weary length along the life of *the poor impotent man*. When Jesus, therefore, healed him by a word, while he lay at the pool of Bethesda—he was delightfully sensible of a change. Even so the sinner who has for weeks and months been paralyzed with despair, and has wearily sighed for salvation—is very conscious of the change when the Lord Jesus speaks the word of power, and gives joy and peace in believing. The evil removed is too great to be removed without our discerning it; the life imparted is too remarkable to be possessed and remain inoperative; and the change wrought is too marvelous not to be perceived. Yet the poor man was ignorant of the author of his cure; he knew not the sacredness of His person, the offices which he sustained, or the errand which brought Him among men.

Just so, much ignorance of Jesus may remain in hearts which yet feel the power of His blood. We must not hastily condemn men for lack of knowledge; but where we can see the *faith* which saves the soul, we must believe that *salvation* has been bestowed. The Holy Spirit makes men penitents—long before He makes them theologians; and he who believes what he knows, shall soon know more clearly what he believes. Ignorance is, however, an evil; for this poor man was much questioned by the Pharisees, and was quite unable to cope with them. It is good to be able to answer gainsayers; but we cannot do so if we don't know the Lord Jesus clearly, and with understanding. The cure of his *ignorance*, however, soon followed the cure of his *infirmity*, for he was visited by the Lord in the temple; and after that gracious manifestation, he was found testifying that "it was *Jesus* who had made him whole." Lord, if You have saved me, show me Yourself, that I may declare You to others.

May 8 — Evening

"Acquaint yourself with Him—and be at peace." Job 22:21

If we would rightly "acquaint ourselves with God—and be at peace," we must know Him—as He has revealed Himself. Let no man be content until he knows something of the God from whom his being was derived.

Endeavor to know the *Father*; bury your head in His bosom in deep repentance, and confess that you are not worthy to be called His son; receive the kiss of His love; let the ring which is the token of His eternal faithfulness be on your finger; sit at His table and let your heart make merry in His grace.

Then press forward and seek to know much of the *Son* of God who is the brightness of His Father's glory, and yet in unspeakable condescension of grace, became man for our sakes; know Him in the singular complexity of His nature: eternal God—and yet suffering man; follow Him as He walks the waters with the tread of deity, and as He sits upon the well in the weariness of humanity. Do not be satisfied unless you know much of Jesus Christ as your Friend, your Brother, your Husband—your all.

Do not forget the *Holy Spirit*; endeavor to obtain a clear view of His nature and character, His attributes, and His works. Behold that Spirit of the Lord, who first of all moved upon chaos, and brought forth order; who now visits the chaos of your soul, and creates the order of holiness. Behold Him as the Lord and giver of spiritual life, the Illuminator, the Instructor, the Comforter, and the Sanctifier. Behold Him as, like holy unction, He descends upon the head of Jesus, and then afterwards rests upon you who are as the skirts of His garments.

Such an intelligent, scriptural, and experimental belief in the Trinity in Unity is yours if you truly know God; and such knowledge brings peace indeed.

May 9 — Morning

"Who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings." Ephesians 1:3

All the goodness of the past, the present, and the future—Christ bestows upon His people.

In the mysterious ages of the past, the Lord Jesus was His Father's first elect, and in His election—He gave us an interest, for we were chosen in Him from before the foundation of the world. He had from all eternity the prerogatives of Sonship, as His Father's only-begotten and well-beloved Son, and He has, in the riches of His grace, by adoption and regeneration, elevated us to sonship also, so that to us He has given "power to become the sons of God." The eternal covenant, based upon suretyship and confirmed by oath, is ours—for our strong consolation and security. In the everlasting settlements of predestinating wisdom and omnipotent decree—the eye of the Lord Jesus was ever fixed on us; and we may rest assured that in the whole roll of destiny—there is not a line which militates against the interests of His redeemed!

The great betrothal of the Prince of Glory is ours, for it is to us that He is affianced, as the sacred nuptials shall before long declare to an assembled universe. The marvelous incarnation of the God of heaven, with all the amazing condescension and humiliation which attended it—is ours. The bloody sweat, the scourge, the cross—are ours forever! Whatever blissful consequences flow from perfect obedience, finished atonement, resurrection, ascension, or intercession, all are ours by His own gift!

Upon His breastplate—He is now bearing our names; and in His authoritative pleadings at the throne—He remembers our persons and pleads our cause. His dominion over principalities and powers, and His absolute majesty in heaven—He employs for the benefit of those who trust in Him. His high estate is as much at our service—as was His condition of abasement. He who gave Himself for us in the depths of woe and death—does not withdraw the grant now that He is enthroned in the highest heavens!

May 9 — Evening

"Come, my Beloved, let us go forth into the field... let us see if the vines have flourished."

Song of Solomon 7:11-12

The church was about to engage in earnest labor, and desired her Lord's company in it. She does not say, "I will go," but "let us go." It is blessed working when Jesus is at our side! It is the business of God's people to be trimmers of God's vines. Like our first parents, we are put into the garden of the Lord for usefulness; let us therefore go forth into the field.

Observe that the church, when she is in her right mind, in all her many labors desires to enjoy communion with Christ. Some imagine that they cannot serve Christ actively, and yet have fellowship with Him—they are mistaken. Doubtless it is very easy to fritter away our inward life—in outward exercises, and come to complain with the spouse, "They made me keeper of the vineyards—but my own vineyard have I not kept!" But there is no reason why this should be the case—except our own folly and neglect.

Certain is it—that a professor may do nothing, and yet grow quite as lifeless in spiritual things as those who are most busy. Mary was not praised for sitting still; but for her sitting at Jesus' feet. Even so, Christians are not to be praised for neglecting duties—under the pretense of having secret fellowship with Jesus. It is not sitting—but *sitting at Jesus' feet* which is commendable. Do not think that activity is in itself an evil—it is a great blessing, and a means of grace to us. Paul called it a grace given to him to be allowed to preach—and every form of Christian service may become a personal blessing to those engaged in it. Those who have most fellowship with Christ—are not recluses or hermits, who have much time to spare—but indefatigable laborers who are toiling for Jesus, and who, in their toil, have Him side by side with them, so that they are workers together with God. Let us remember then, in anything we have to do for Jesus, that we can do it—and should do it in close communion with Him.

May 10 — Morning

"But now is Christ risen from the dead." 1 Corinthians 15:20

The whole system of Christianity rests upon the fact that "Christ is risen from the dead;" for, "if Christ is not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain—you are yet in your sins." The **divinity** of Christ finds its surest proof in His *resurrection*, since He was "Declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." It would not be unreasonable to doubt His Deity—if He had not risen.

Moreover, Christ's **sovereignty** depends upon His resurrection, "For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living."

Again, our **justification**, that choice blessing of the covenant, is linked with Christ's triumphant victory over death and the grave; for "He was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."

Nay, more, our very **regeneration** is connected with His resurrection, for we are "Begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

And most certainly our **ultimate resurrection** rests here, for, "If the Spirit of Him who raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you—He who raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwells in you." If Christ is not risen—then shall we not rise; but if He be risen—then they who are asleep in Christ have not perished—but in their flesh shall surely behold their God.

Thus, the silver thread of resurrection runs through all the believer's blessings, from his regeneration onwards to his eternal glory—and binds them together. How important then will this glorious fact be in his estimation, and how will he rejoice that beyond a doubt it is established, that "now is Christ risen from the dead!"

"The promise is fulfilled, Redemption's work is done,
Justice with mercy's reconciled, For God has raised His Son!"

May 10 — Evening

"The only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." John 1:14

Believer, *you* can bear your testimony that Christ is the only begotten of the Father, as well as the first begotten from the dead. You can say, "He is divine to me, if He is only human to all the world beside. He has done that for me—which none but a God could do! He has subdued my stubborn will, melted a heart of adamant, opened gates of brass, and snapped bars of iron! He has turned my mourning into laughter, and my desolation into joy; He has led my captivity captive, and made my heart rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Let others think as they will of Him—to *me* He must be the only begotten of the Father—blessed be His name.

And He is full of **grace**. Ah! had He not been—I would never have been saved. He drew me when I struggled to escape from His grace; and when at last I came all trembling like a condemned culprit to His mercy-seat He said, 'Your sins which are many—are all forgiven you—be of good cheer.'

And He is full of **truth**. True have His promises been, not one has failed. I bear witness that never any *servant* had such a master as I have; never any *brother* had such a kinsman as He has been to me; never any *spouse* had such a husband as Christ has been to my soul; never any *sinner* had a better Savior; never any *mourner* had a better comforter than Christ has been to my heart. I desire none beside Him. In *life*—He is my life; and in *death*—He shall be the death of death. In poverty—Christ is my riches. In *sickness*—He makes my bed. In *darkness*—He is my star. In *brightness*—He is my sun. He is my *manna* in this wilderness. He shall be heavenly manna when I come to the heavenly Canaan. Jesus is to me—all *grace* and no wrath, all *truth* and no falsehood. And of truth and grace He is full, infinitely full. My soul, this night, bless with all your might 'the only Begotten.'

May 11 — Morning

"I am with you always!" Matthew 28:20

It is well that there is One who is ever the same, and who is ever with us. It is well that there is one stable rock amidst the billows of the sea of life. O my soul, do not set your affections upon rusting, moth-eaten, decaying treasures—but set your heart upon Him who abides forever faithful to you. Do not build your house upon the moving quicksands of a deceitful world—but found your hopes upon this rock, which, amid descending rain and roaring floods, shall stand immovably secure!

My soul, I charge you—lay up your *treasure* in the only secure cabinet; store your *jewels* where you can never lose them. Put your *all* in Christ; set all your *affections* on His person, all your *hope* in His merit, all your *trust* in His efficacious blood, all your *joy* in His presence—and so you may laugh at loss, and defy destruction.

Remember that *all the flowers in the world's garden* wither and die—and the day comes when nothing will be left but the black, cold earth. *Death's black extinguisher* must soon put out your candle. Oh! how sweet to have *sunlight*—when the *candle* is gone! The *dark flood* must soon roll between you and all you have! So wed your heart to Him who will never leave you. Trust yourself with Him who will go with you through the black and surging current of death's stream, and who will land you safely on the celestial shore, and make you sit with Him in heavenly places forever.

Go, sorrowing son of affliction—tell your secret troubles to the Friend who sticks closer than a brother. Trust all your concerns with Him—who never can be taken from you, who will never leave you, and who will never let you leave Him, even "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever." "*I am with you always,*" is enough for my soul to live upon—though all others forsake me!

May 11 — Evening

"Only be strong and very courageous." Joshua 1:7

Our *God's tender love* for His servants makes Him concerned for the state of their inward feelings. He desires them to be of good courage. Some esteem it a small thing for a believer to be vexed with *doubts* and *fears*—but God does not think so. From this text, it is plain that our Master would not have us *entangled with fears*. He would have us without worry, without doubt, without cowardice. Our Master does not think so lightly of our unbelief as we do. When we are desponding we are subject to a grievous malady, not to be trifled with—but to be carried at once to the beloved Physician. Our Lord does not like to see our countenance sad.

It was a law of Ahasuerus that no one could come into the king's court dressed in mourning—this is not the law of the King of kings, for we may come mourning as we are; but still He would have us put off the garment of heaviness, and put on the garment of praise, for there is much reason to rejoice.

The Christian man ought to be of a courageous spirit, in order that he may glorify the Lord by enduring trials in an heroic manner. If he is fearful and fainthearted, it will dishonor his God. Besides, what a bad example it is! This *disease* of doubtfulness and discouragement is an epidemic which soon spreads among the Lord's flock. One downcast believer—makes twenty souls sad. Moreover, unless your courage is kept up—Satan will be too much for you. Let your spirit be joyful in God your Savior, the joy of the Lord shall be your strength, and no fiend of hell shall make headway against you—but cowardice throws down the banner.

Moreover, *labor* is light to a man of cheerful spirit; and success follows upon cheerfulness. The man who toils, rejoicing in his God, believing with all his heart—has success guaranteed. He who sows in hope—shall reap in joy. Therefore, dear reader, "be strong, and very courageous."

May 12 — Morning

"I will manifest Myself to him." John 14:21

The Lord Jesus gives *special revelations of Himself* to His people. Even if Scripture did not declare this, there are many of the children of God who could testify the truth of it—from their own experience. They have had manifestations of their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in a special manner, such as no *mere reading or hearing* could afford. In the biographies of eminent saints, you will find many instances recorded in which Jesus has been pleased, in a very special manner—to speak to their souls, and to unfold the wonders of His person; yes, so have their souls been *steeped in happiness* that they have thought themselves to be in heaven, whereas they were not there, though they were well near on the threshold of it. For when Jesus manifests Himself to His people—it is heaven on earth; it is paradise in embryo; it is bliss begun!

These special manifestations of Christ, exercise a *holy influence* on the believer's heart.

One effect will be *humility*. If a man says, "I have had such-and-such spiritual communications, therefore I am a great man," he has never had any communion with Jesus at all; for "God has respect unto the lowly—but the proud He knows afar off." He does not need to come near them to know them, and will never give them any visits of love.

Another effect will be *happiness*; for in God's presence there are pleasures for evermore.

Holiness will be sure to follow. A man who has no holiness has never had this manifestation. Some men profess a great deal; but we must not believe anyone—unless we see that his deeds answer to what he says. "Do not be deceived; God is not mocked." He will not bestow His favors upon the wicked—for while He will not cast away a godly man, neither will He respect an evil doer. Thus there will be three effects of nearness to Jesus—humility, happiness, and holiness. May God give them to you, Christian!

May 12 — Evening

"Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you into a great nation there.

I will go down to Egypt with you, and I will surely bring you back again." Genesis 46:3-4

Jacob must have shuddered at the thought of leaving the land of his father's sojourning, and dwelling among heathen strangers. It was a new scene, and likely to be a trying one—who shall venture among foreigners without anxiety? Yet the way was evidently appointed for him, and therefore he resolved to go. This is frequently the position of believers now—they are called to perils and temptations altogether untried—at such seasons let them imitate Jacob's example by offering sacrifices of prayer unto God, and seeking His direction. Let them not take a step—until they have waited upon the Lord for His blessing—then they will have *Jacob's companion* to be their friend and helper.

How blessed to feel assured that the Lord is with us in all our ways, and condescends to go down into our *humiliations* and *banishments* with us! Even beyond the ocean our Father's love beams like the sun in its strength. We cannot hesitate to go where Jehovah promises His presence; even the *valley of death* grows bright with the radiance of this assurance.

Marching onwards with faith in their God, believers shall have Jacob's promise. They shall be brought up again, whether it be from the *troubles of life* or the *chambers of death*. Jacob's seed came out of Egypt in due time, and so shall all the faithful pass unscathed through the tribulation of life, and the terror of death. Let us exercise Jacob's confidence.

"Fear not," is the Lord's command and His divine encouragement to those who at His bidding are launching upon new seas! His divine presence and preservation forbid so much as one unbelieving fear. Without our God—we should fear to move; but when He bids us to, it would be dangerous to tarry. Reader, go forward, and fear not!

May 13 — Morning

"Weeping may endure for a night—but joy comes in the morning." Psalm 30:5

Christian! If you are in a *night of trial*, think of the morrow; cheer up your heart with the thought of the coming of your Lord. Be patient, for "Lo! He comes with clouds!" Be patient! The Gardener waits until He reaps His harvest. Be patient; for you know who has said, "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be."

If you are ever so wretched now, remember "A few more rolling suns, at most—will land you on fair Canaan's coast." Your head may be crowned with *thorny troubles* now—but it shall wear a *starry crown* before long. Your hand may be filled with cares—it shall sweep the strings of the harp of heaven soon. Your garments may be soiled with dust now—they shall be snow-white by-and-by. Wait a little longer.

Ah! how despicable our troubles and trials will seem—when we look back upon them! Looking at them here in the prospect, they seem immense; but when we get to heaven we shall then "With transporting joys recount—the labors of our feet." Our trials will then seem light and momentary afflictions. Let us go on boldly; if the night is ever so dark—the morning comes; which is more than they can say—who are shut up in the darkness of hell. Do you know what it is thus to live on the future—to live on expectation—to antedate heaven? Happy believer, to have so sure, so comforting a hope. It may be all *dark* now—but it will soon be *light*. It may be all *trial* now—but it will soon be all *happiness*. What does it matter, though "weeping may endure for a night"—when "joy comes in the morning?"

May 13 — Evening

"You are my portion, O Lord." Psalm 119:57

Look at your possessions, O believer—and compare your portion with the lot of your fellow men. Some of them have their portion in the field; they are rich, and their **harvests** yield them a golden increase; but what are harvests compared with your God, who is the God of harvests? What are bursting granaries compared with Him, who is the Gardener, and feeds you with the bread of heaven?

Some have their portion in the city; their **wealth** is abundant, and flows to them in constant streams, until they become a very reservoir of gold; but what is gold compared with your God? You could not live on it; your spiritual life could not be sustained by it. Put it on a troubled conscience—and could it allay its pangs? Apply it to a desponding heart—and see if it could relieve a solitary groan, or give one grief the less? But you have God, and in Him you have more than gold or riches ever could buy.

Some have their portion in that which most men love—applause and **fame**; but ask yourself, is not your God more to you than that? What if a myriad clarions should be loud in your applause, would this prepare you to pass the Jordan, or cheer you in prospect of judgment? No! there are griefs in life which wealth cannot alleviate; and there is the deep need of a dying hour, for which no riches can provide.

But when you have God for your portion, you have more than all else put together. In Him every need is met, whether in life or in death. With God for your portion you are rich indeed, for He will supply your needs, comfort your heart, assuage your grief, guide your steps, be with you in the dark valley—and then take you home, to enjoy Him as your portion forever! "I have *enough*," said Esau; this is the best thing a worldly man can say—but Jacob replies, "I have *all* things," which is a note too high for carnal minds.

May 14 — Morning

"Joint heirs with Christ." Romans 8:17

The boundless realms of His Father's universe—are Christ's by prescriptive right. As "heir of all things," He is the sole proprietor of the vast creation of God, and He has admitted *us* to claim the whole as ours, by virtue of that deed of joint-heir-ship which the Lord has ratified with His chosen people. The golden streets of paradise, the pearly gates, the river of life, the transcendent bliss, and the unutterable glory, are, by our blessed Lord—made over to us for our everlasting possession!

All that He has—He shares with His people! The crown royal He has placed upon the head of His Church, appointing her a kingdom, and calling her sons a royal priesthood, a generation of priests and kings. He uncrowned Himself—that we might have a coronation of glory; He would not sit upon His own throne—until He had procured a place upon it for all who overcome by His blood. Crown the head—and the whole body shares the honor. Behold here the reward of every Christian conqueror! Christ's throne, crown, scepter, palace, treasure, robes, heritage—are yours! Far superior to the jealousy, selfishness, and greed, which admit of no participation of their advantages, Christ deems His happiness completed by His people sharing it. "The glory which you gave me—I have given them." "These things have I spoken unto you—that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." The *smiles of His Father* are all the sweeter to Him—because His people share them. The honors of His kingdom are more pleasing—because His people appear with Him in glory. More valuable to Him are His conquests—since they have taught His people to overcome. He delights in His throne—because on it there is a place for them. He rejoices in His royal robes—since over them His skirts are spread. He delights the more in His joy—because He calls them to enter into it.

May 14 — Evening

"He will carry the lambs in His bosom, holding them close to His heart." Isaiah 40:11

Who is He of whom such gracious words are spoken? He is the *Good Shepherd*. Why does He carry the lambs in His bosom? Because He has a tender heart, and any weakness at once melts His heart. The sighs, the ignorance, the feebleness of the little ones of His flock—draw forth His compassion. It is His office, as a faithful High Priest, to consider the *weak*. Besides, He purchased them with blood, they are His property—He must and will care for that which cost Him so dear.

He is also responsible for each lamb, bound by covenant engagements not to lose one. Moreover, they are all a part of His glory and reward. But how may we understand the expression, "He will carry them"? Sometimes He carries them by not permitting them to endure much trial. Providence deals tenderly with them. Often they are "carried" by being filled with an unusual degree of love—so that they bear up and stand fast. Though their knowledge may not be deep—they have great sweetness in what they do know. Frequently He "carries" them by giving them a very simple faith—which takes the promise just as it stands, and believingly runs with every trouble straight to Jesus. The simplicity of their faith gives them an unusual degree of confidence, which carries them above the world.

"He will carry the lambs in His bosom." Here is *boundless affection*. Would He put them in His bosom—if He did not love them much? Here is *tender nearness*—so near are they, that they could not possibly be nearer. Here is *hallowed familiarity*—there are precious love-passages between Christ and His weak ones. Here is *perfect safety*—in His bosom, who can hurt them? They must hurt the Shepherd first. Here is *perfect rest* and *sweetest comfort*. Surely we are not sufficiently sensible of the infinite tenderness of Jesus!

May 15 — *Morning*

"All who believe *are* justified." Acts 13:39

The believer in Christ receives a *present* justification. Faith does not produce this fruit by-and-by, but now. So far as justification is the result of faith, it is given to the soul in the moment when it closes with Christ, and accepts Him as its *all in all*. Are those who stand before the throne of God justified now? So are we, as truly and as clearly justified as those who walk in white and sing melodious praises to celestial harps. The thief upon the cross was justified the moment that he turned the *eye of faith* to Jesus; and Paul, the aged, after years of service, was not more justified than was that thief with no service at all.

We are *today* accepted in the Beloved, today absolved from sin, today acquitted at the bar of God. Oh! soul-transporting thought! There are some clusters of Eshcol's vine, which we shall not be able to gather until we enter heaven; but this is a bough which *runs over the wall*. This is not as the grain of the land, which we can never eat until we cross the Jordan; but this is part of the *manna in the wilderness*, a portion of our daily nutriment with which God supplies us in our journeying to and fro. We are now—even now pardoned; even now are our sins put away; even now we stand in the sight of God accepted—as though we had never been guilty. "There is therefore *now* no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."

There is not a sin in the Book of God, even now, against one of His people. Who dares to lay anything to their charge? There is neither speck, nor spot, nor wrinkle, nor any such thing remaining upon any one believer in the matter of justification in the sight of the Judge of all the earth. Let *present privilege* awaken us to *present duty*, and now, while life lasts, let us spend and be spent for our sweet Lord Jesus.

May 15 — Evening

"Made perfect." Hebrews 12:23

Recollect that there are two kinds of perfection which the Christian needs—the perfection of *justification* in the person of Jesus, and the perfection of *sanctification* wrought in him by the Holy Spirit. At present, corruption yet remains even in the hearts of the regenerate; experience soon teaches us this. Within us are still lusts and evil imaginations. But I rejoice to know that the day is coming when God shall finish the work which He has begun; and He shall present my soul, not only perfect in Christ—but perfect through the Spirit, without spot or blemish, or any such thing.

Can it be true that this poor sinful heart of mine is to become holy—even as God is holy? Can it be that this spirit, which often cries, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this sin and death?" shall get rid of sin and death—that I shall have no evil things to vex my ears, and no unholy thoughts to disturb my peace? Oh, happy hour! may it be hastened!

When I cross the Jordan, the work of sanctification will be finished; but not until that moment—shall I even claim perfection in myself. Then my spirit shall have its last baptism in the Holy Spirit's fire. Methinks I long to die—to receive that last and final purification which shall usher me into heaven. Not an angel shall be more pure than I, for I shall be able to say, in a double sense, "I am clean," through Jesus' blood, and through the Spirit's work.

Oh, how should we extol the power of the Holy Spirit in thus making us fit to stand before our Father in heaven! Yet let not the hope of *perfection* hereafter, make us content with *imperfection* now. If it does this—our hope cannot be genuine; for a good hope is a *purifying* thing, even now. The work of grace must be abiding in us now or it cannot be perfected then. Let us pray to "be filled with the Spirit," that we may bring forth increasingly the *fruits of righteousness*.

May 16 — Morning

"Who gives us richly all things to enjoy." 1 Timothy 6:17

Our Lord Jesus is ever giving—and does not for a solitary instant withdraw His hand. As long as there is a vessel of grace not yet full to the brim—the oil shall not be stopped. He is a sun ever-shining; He is manna always falling round the camp; He is a rock in the desert, ever sending out streams of life from His smitten side; the rain of His grace is always dropping; the river of His bounty is ever-flowing, and the well-spring of His love is constantly overflowing. As the King can never die—so His grace can never fail. Daily we pluck His fruit, and daily His branches bend down to our hand with a *fresh store of mercy*.

There are *seven feast-days* in His weeks, and as many as are the days, so many are the banquets in His years. Who has ever returned from His door, unblessed? Who has ever risen from His table unsatisfied; or from His bosom un-imparadised? His mercies are new every morning—and fresh every evening.

Who can know the number of His benefits, or recount the list of His bounties? Every sand which drops from the glass of time—is but the tardy follower of a myriad of mercies. The wings of our hours are covered with the silver of His kindness, and with the yellow gold of His affection. The *river of time* bears from the *mountains of eternity*—the *golden sands of His favor*. The countless stars are but as the standard-bearers of a more innumerable multitude of blessings. Who can count the *dust of the benefits* which He bestows on Jacob, or tell the number of the fourth part of His mercies towards Israel? How shall my soul extol Him—who daily loads us with benefits, and who crowns us with loving-kindness? O that my *praise* could be as ceaseless as His *bounty*! O miserable tongue, how can you be silent? Wake up, I beg you, lest I call you no more my glory—but my shame. "Awake, psaltery and harp—I myself will awake right early!"

May 16 — Evening

"This is what the Lord says: Make this valley full of ditches. For you will see neither wind nor rain, yet this valley will be filled with water, and you, your cattle and your other animals will drink." 2 Kings 3:16-17

The armies of the three kings were famishing for lack of water—God was about to send it, and in these words the prophet announced the coming blessing. Here was a case of human helplessness—not a drop of water could all the valiant men procure from the skies or find in the wells of earth. Thus often the people of the Lord are at their wits' end; they see the vanity of the creature, and learn experimentally where their help is to be found.

Still the people were to make a *believing preparation* for the *divine blessing*; they were to dig the ditches in which the precious liquid would be held. The church must by her varied agencies, efforts, and prayers, make herself ready to be blessed; she must make the ditches, and the Lord will fill them. This must be done in faith, in the full assurance that the blessing is about to descend.

By-and-by there was a singular bestowal of the needed blessing. Not as in Elijah's case, did the shower pour from the clouds—but in a silent and mysterious manner the ditches were filled. The Lord has His own sovereign modes of action—He is not tied to any manner and time, as we are—but does as He pleases among men. It is ours thankfully to *receive* from Him, and not to *dictate* to Him.

We must also notice the remarkable *abundance* of the supply—there was enough for the need of all. And so it is in the gospel blessing; all the needs of the congregation and of the entire church shall be met by the divine power in answer to prayer; and above all this, victory shall be speedily given to the armies of the Lord. What am I doing for Jesus? What trenches am I digging? O Lord, make me ready to receive the blessing which You are so willing to bestow.

May 17 — Morning

"So walk—even as Jesus walked." 1 John 2:6

Why should Christians *imitate Christ*?

They should do it for their own sakes. If they desire to be in a healthy state of soul—if they would escape the *sickness of sin*, and enjoy the *vigor of growing grace*—let Jesus be their model. For their own happiness' sake, if they would drink wine on the lees, well refined; if they would enjoy holy and happy communion with Jesus; if they would be lifted up above the cares and troubles of this world—let them walk even as Jesus walked. There is nothing which can so assist you to walk towards heaven with good speed, as wearing the image of Jesus on your heart to rule all its motions. It is when, by the power of the Holy Spirit, you are enabled to walk with Jesus in His very footsteps, that you are most happy, and most known to be the sons of God. Peter afar off—is both unsafe and uneasy.

Next, for religion's sake, strive to be like Jesus. Ah! poor religion, you have been sorely shot at by cruel foes—but you have not been wounded one-half so dangerously by your *foes*—as by your *friends*. Who made those wounds in the fair hand of godliness? The professor who used the *dagger of hypocrisy*. The man who with pretenses, enters the fold, being nothing but a wolf in sheep's clothing, worries the flock more than the lion outside. There is no weapon half so deadly—as a Judas-kiss. *Inconsistent professors* injure the gospel more than the sneering critic or the infidel.

But, especially for Christ's own sake, imitate His example. Christian, love you your Savior? Is His name precious to you? Is His cause dear to you? Would you see the kingdoms of the world become His? Is it your desire that He should be glorified? Are you longing that souls should be won to Him? If so, imitate Jesus—be an "epistle of Christ, known and read of all men."

May 17 — Evening

"You are My servant; I have chosen you." Isaiah 41:9

If we have received the grace of God in our hearts, its practical effect has been to make us God's servants. We may be *unfaithful* servants, we certainly are *unprofitable* ones—but yet, blessed be His name, we are His servants, wearing His livery, feeding at His table, and obeying His commands.

We were once the servants of sin—but He who made us free—has now taken us into His family and taught us obedience to His will. We do not serve our Master perfectly—but we would if we could. As we hear God's voice saying unto us, "You are My servant," we can answer with David, "I am your servant—You have loosed my bonds."

But the Lord calls us not only His servants—but His *chosen ones*, "I have chosen you." We have not chosen Him first—but He has chosen us. If we be God's servants, we were not always so; to sovereign grace the change must be ascribed. The *eye of sovereignty* singled us out, and the voice of unchanging grace declared, "I have loved you with an everlasting love." Long before time began or space was created—God had written upon His heart, the names of His elect people, had predestinated them to be conformed unto the image of His Son, and ordained them heirs of all the fullness of His love, His grace, and His glory.

What comfort is here! Has the Lord loved us so long—and will He yet cast us away? He knew how stiff-necked we would be, He understood that our hearts were evil—and yet He made the choice! Ah! our Savior is no *fickle lover*. He does not feel enchanted for a while with some gleams of beauty from His church's eye—and then afterwards cast her off because of her unfaithfulness. No! He married her in old eternity; and it is written of Jehovah, "He hates divorce." The eternal choice is a bond upon our gratitude, and upon His faithfulness.

May 18 — Morning

"In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And you are complete in Him." Colossians 2:9-10

All the attributes of Christ, as God and man, are at our disposal. All the fullness of the Godhead, whatever that marvelous term may comprehend, is ours to make us complete. He cannot endow us with the attributes of Deity; but He has done all that can be done, for He has made even His divine power and Godhead subservient to our salvation. His omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, immutability and infallibility, are all combined for our defense. Arise, believer, and behold the Lord Jesus yoking the whole of His divine Godhead—to the *chariot of salvation!* How vast His grace, how firm His faithfulness, how unswerving His immutability, how infinite His power, how limitless His knowledge! All these are by the Lord Jesus made the pillars of the temple of salvation; and all, without diminution of their infinity, are covenanted to us as our perpetual inheritance.

Every drop of the fathomless love of the Savior's heart is ours; every sinew in the arm of might, every jewel in the crown of majesty—the immensity of divine knowledge, and the sternness of divine justice—all are ours, and shall be employed for us. The whole of Christ, in His adorable character as the Son of God, is by Himself made over to us most richly to enjoy. His wisdom is our direction, His knowledge is our instruction, His power is our protection, His justice is our surety, His love is our comfort, His mercy is our solace, and His immutability is our trust. He makes no reserve—but opens the recesses of the Mount of God—and bids us dig in its mines for the hidden treasures. "All, all, all are yours," says He. Oh! how sweet thus to behold Jesus, and to call upon Him with the certain confidence that in seeking the interposition of His love or power—we are but asking for that which He has already faithfully promised.

May 18 — Evening

"Afterward." Hebrews 12:11

How happy are tried Christians, *afterwards*. No calm more deep than that which *follows* a storm. Who has not rejoiced in clear shinings *after* rain? Victorious banquets are for well-exercised soldiers. After killing the lion—we eat the honey; after climbing the Hill Difficulty—we sit down in the arbor to rest; after traversing the Valley of Humiliation, after fighting with Apollyon, the shining one appears, with the healing branch from the tree of life. Our sorrows, like the passing keels of the vessels upon the sea, leave a silver line of holy light behind them "afterwards." It is peace, sweet, deep peace, which follows the horrible turmoil which once reigned in our tormented, guilty souls.

See, then, the happy estate of a Christian! He has his *best things last*, and he therefore in this world receives his *worst things first*. But even his worst things are "afterward" good things, harsh ploughings—yielding joyful harvests. Even now he grows rich by his losses, he rises by his falls, he lives by dying, and becomes full by being emptied. If, then, his grievous afflictions yield him so much peaceable fruit in this life—what shall be the full vintage of joy "afterwards" in heaven? If his dark *nights* are as bright as the world's days—what shall his *days* be? If even his starlight is more splendid than the sun—what must his sunlight be? If he can sing in a dungeon—how sweetly will he sing in heaven! If he can praise the Lord in the fires—how will he extol Him before the eternal throne! If evil is good to him now—what will the overflowing goodness of God be to him then?

Oh, blessed "afterward!" Who would not be a Christian? Who would not bear the present *cross*—for the *crown* which comes afterwards? But herein is work for patience, for the rest is not for today, nor the triumph for the present—but "afterward." Wait, O soul, and let patience have her perfect work.

May 19 — Morning

"I have seen slaves on horseback—while princes go on foot like slaves." Ecclesiastes 10:7

Upstarts frequently usurp the highest places, while the truly great pine in obscurity. This is a *riddle in providence* whose solution will one day gladden the hearts of the upright; but it is so common a fact, that none of us should murmur if it should fall to our own lot.

When our Lord was upon earth, although He is the Prince of the kings of the earth—yet He walked the *footpath of weariness and service* as the Servant of servants—what wonder is it if His followers, who are princes of royal blood, should also be looked down upon as inferior and contemptible people? The world is upside down, and therefore, the first are last—and the last are first. See how the servile sons of Satan rule in the earth! What a high horse they ride! How they lift up their horn on high! Haman is in the court, while Mordecai sits in the gate; David wanders on the mountains, while Saul reigns in state; Elijah is complaining in the cave, while Jezebel is boasting in the palace; yet who would wish to take the places of the proud rebels? and who, on the other hand, might not envy the despised saints?

When the wheel turns—those who are lowest rise, and the highest sink. Patience, then, believer, *eternity will right the wrongs of time*. Let us not fall into the error of letting our passions and carnal appetites ride in triumph, while our nobler powers walk in the dust. Grace must reign as a prince, and make the members of the body instruments of righteousness. The Holy Spirit loves order, and He therefore sets our powers and faculties in due rank and place, giving the highest room to those spiritual faculties which link us with the great King. Let us not disturb the divine arrangement—but ask for grace that we may keep our body under subjection. We were not new created to allow our passions to rule over us—but that we, as kings, may reign in Christ Jesus over the triple kingdom of spirit, soul, and body, to the glory of God the Father!

May 19 — Evening

"And he prayed that he might die." 1 Kings 19:4

It was a remarkable thing that the man who was never to die, for whom God had ordained an infinitely better lot, the man who should be carried to heaven in a chariot of fire, and be translated, that he should not see death—should thus pray, "Let me die! I am no better than my fathers." We have here a memorable proof that God does not always answer prayer in *kind*, though He always does in *effect*. He gave Elijah something better than that which he asked for, and thus really heard and answered him.

Strange was it that the lion-hearted Elijah should be so depressed by Jezebel's threat as to ask to die, and blessedly kind was it on the part of our heavenly Father that He did not take His desponding servant at his word.

There is a limit to *the prayer of faith*. We are not to expect that God will give us everything we choose to ask for. We know that we sometimes ask, and do not receive, because we ask amiss. If we ask for that which is not promised—if we run counter to the spirit which the Lord would have us cultivate—if we ask contrary to His will, or to the decrees of His providence—if we ask merely for the gratification of our own ease, and without an eye to His glory—we must not expect that we shall receive.

Yet, when we ask in faith, nothing doubting, if we receive not the precise thing asked for, we shall receive an equivalent, and more than an equivalent, for it. As one remarks, "If the Lord does not pay in silver, He will in gold; and if He does not pay in gold, He will in diamonds!" If He does not give you precisely what you ask for, He will give you that which is tantamount to it, and that which you will greatly rejoice to receive in lieu thereof. Be then, dear reader, much in prayer—but take heed what you ask for!

May 20 — *Morning*

"Your marvelous loving-kindness." Psalm 17:7

When we give our *hearts* with our *alms*—we give well—but we must often plead to a failure in this respect. Not so our Master and our Lord. His favors are always performed with the love of His heart. He does not send to us the *cold* meat and the *broken* pieces from the table of His luxury—but He dips our morsel in His own dish, and seasons our provisions with the spices of His fragrant affections. When He puts the *golden tokens of His grace* into our palms, He accompanies the gift with such a warm pressure of our hand, that the manner of His giving is as precious as the blessing itself. He will come into our houses upon His errands of kindness, and He will not act as some austere visitors do in the poor man's cottage—but He sits by our side, not despising our poverty, nor blaming our weakness.

Beloved, with what smiles does He speak! What golden sentences drop from His gracious lips! What embraces of affection does He bestow upon us! If He had but given us pennies, the *manner* of His giving would have gilded them; but as it is, the costly alms are set in a golden basket by His pleasant manner of giving. It is impossible to doubt the sincerity of His charity, for there is a bleeding heart stamped upon the face of all His blessings. He gives liberally and upbraids not. Not one hint that we are burdensome to Him; not one cold look for His poor pensioners; but He rejoices to show mercy to us—and presses us to His bosom—while He is pouring out His life for us. There is a fragrance in His spikenard, which nothing but His heart could produce; there is a sweetness in His honeycomb, which could not be in it unless the very essence of His soul's affection had been mingled with it. Oh! the rare communion which such singular heartiness effects! May we continually taste and know the blessedness of His marvelous loving-kindness!

May 20 — Evening

"I drew them with cords of human kindness, with ties of love." Hosea 11:4

Our heavenly Father often draws us with the *cords of love*; but ah! how backward we are to run towards Him! How slowly do we respond to His gentle impulses! He draws us to exercise a more simple faith in Him; but we have not yet attained to Abraham's confidence; we do not leave our worldly cares with God—but, like Martha, we cumber ourselves with much serving. Our meager faith brings leanness into our souls; we do not open our mouths wide, though God has promised to fill them.

Does He not this evening draw us to trust Him? Can we not hear Him say, "Come, My child—and trust Me. The veil is rent; enter into My presence, and approach boldly to the throne of My grace. I am worthy of your fullest confidence, cast your cares on Me! Shake yourself from the dust of your cares—and put on your beautiful garments of joy." But, alas! though called with tones of love to the blessed exercise of this comforting grace—we will not come.

At another time He draws us to closer communion with Himself. We have been sitting on the *doorstep* of God's house, and He bids us advance into the *banqueting hall* and sup with Him—but we decline the honor. There are secret rooms not yet opened to us; Jesus invites us to enter them—but we hold back. Shame on our cold hearts! We are but poor lovers of our sweet Lord Jesus, not fit to be His *servants*, much less to be His *brides*, and yet He has exalted us to be bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh, married to Him by a glorious marriage-covenant. Herein is love! But it is love which takes no denial.

If we do not obey the *gentle drawings* of His love—He will send affliction to drive us into closer intimacy with Himself. Have us nearer He will. What foolish children we are to refuse those cords of love, and so bring upon our backs that scourge of small cords, which Jesus knows how to use!

May 21 — *Morning*

"If so be you have tasted that the Lord is gracious." 1 Peter 2:3

"If", then, this is not a matter to be taken for granted concerning every one of the human race.

"If", then there is a possibility and a probability that some may not have tasted that the Lord is gracious. "If", then this is not a *general* but a *special* mercy; and it is needful to inquire whether we know the grace of God by inward experience.

There is no spiritual favor which may not be a matter for heart-searching. But while this should be a matter of earnest and prayerful inquiry, no one ought to be content while there is any such thing as an "if" about his having tasted that the Lord is gracious. A jealous and holy distrust of *SELF* may give rise to the question even in the believer's heart—but the continuance of such a doubt would be an evil indeed. We must not rest without a desperate struggle to clasp the Savior in the arms of faith, and say, "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him."

Do not rest, O believer, until you have a full assurance of your interest in Jesus. Let nothing satisfy you until, by the infallible witness of the Holy Spirit bearing witness with your spirit—you are certified that you are a child of God. Oh, trifle not here; let no "perhaps" and "if" and "maybe" satisfy your soul. Build on eternal verities, and truly build upon them. Get the *sure* mercies of David, and *surely* get them. Let your anchor be cast into that which is *within the veil*, and see to it that your soul is linked to the anchor by a cable that will not break. Advance beyond these dreary "ifs", abide no more in the wilderness of doubts and fears; cross the *Jordan of distrust*, and enter the *Canaan of peace*, where the land ceases ever flows with milk and honey.

May 21 — *Evening*

"There is grain in Egypt!" Genesis 42:2

Famine pinched all the nations, and it seemed inevitable that Jacob and his family should suffer great poverty; but the God of providence, who never forgets the objects of electing love, had stored a granary for His people by giving the Egyptians warning of the scarcity, and leading them to stockpile the grain of the years of plenty. Little did Jacob expect deliverance from *Egypt*—but there was the grain in store for him.

Believer, though all things are apparently against you, rest assured that God has made a reservation on your behalf; in the roll of your griefs—there is a saving clause. *Somehow* He will deliver you, and *somewhere* He will provide for you. The quarter from which your rescue shall arise, may be a very unexpected one—but help will assuredly come in your extremity, and you shall magnify the name of the Lord. If *men* do not feed you, *ravens* shall; and if *earth* yields not wheat, *heaven* shall drop with manna. Therefore be of good courage, and rest quietly in the Lord. God can make the source of distress—the channel of delight.

The grain in Egypt was all in the hands of the *beloved Joseph*; he opened or closed the granaries at will. And so the riches of providence are all in the absolute power of our Lord Jesus, who will dispense them liberally to His people. *Joseph* was abundantly ready to support his own family; and *Jesus* is unceasing in His faithful care for His brethren. Our business is to go after the help which is provided for us—we must not sit still in despondency, but bestir ourselves. Prayer will bear us soon into the presence of our *royal Brother*—once before His throne we have only to ask and have—His stores are not exhausted; there is grain still—His heart is not hard, He will give the grain to us. Lord, forgive our unbelief, and this evening constrain us to draw largely from Your fullness—and receive grace upon grace!

May 22 — Morning

"He led them forth by the right way." Psalm 107:7

Trials and troubles often leads the anxious believer to enquire, "Why is this happening to me? I looked for light—but lo, darkness came! I looked for peace—but trouble came! Lord, you hide Your face, and I am troubled. It was but yesterday that I could read my title clear; today my evidences are bedimmed, and my hopes are clouded. Yesterday I could climb to Pisgah's top, and view the landscape o'er, and rejoice with confidence in my future inheritance; today, my spirit has no hopes—but many fears; no joys—but much distress. Is this part of God's plan with me? Can this be the way in which God would bring me to heaven?"

Yes, it is even so! The eclipse of your faith, the darkness of your mind, the fainting of your hope—all these things are but parts of God's method of making you ripe for the great inheritance upon which you shall soon enter. These *trials* are for the testing and strengthening of your faith—they are *waves* that wash you further upon the *rock*—they are *winds* which waft your ship the more swiftly towards the desired *haven*.

According to David's words, so it might be said of you, "so He brings them to their desired haven." By honor and dishonor, by evil report and by good report, by plenty and by poverty, by joy and by distress, by persecution and by peace—by all these things is the life of your souls maintained, and by each of these are you helped on your way. Oh, do not think, believer, that your *sorrows* are out of God's plan; they are necessary parts of it. "We must, through much tribulation, enter the kingdom." Learn, then, even to "Consider it a great joy, whenever you experience various trials."

"O let my trembling soul be still,
And wait Your wise, Your holy will!
I cannot, Lord, Your purpose see—
Yet all is well since ruled by Thee."

May 22 — Evening

"Behold, You are beautiful, my Beloved." Song of Solomon 1:16

From every point, our Well-beloved is most beautiful. Our various experiences are meant to furnish fresh viewpoints from which we may consider the loveliness of Jesus!

How amiable are our trials—when they carry us aloft where we may gain clearer views of Jesus, than ordinary life could afford us! We have seen Him from the languishing of a sick bed, from the borders of the grave—we have turned our eyes to our soul's spouse, and He has never been otherwise than "all beauteous." Many of His saints have looked upon Him from the gloom of dungeons, and from the red flames of the stake—yet they have never uttered a bad word about Him—but have died extolling His surpassing charms! Oh, noble and pleasant employment—to be forever gazing at our sweet Lord Jesus!

Is it not unspeakably delightful—to view the Savior in all His offices, and to perceive Him matchless in each—to shift the kaleidoscope, as it were—and to find fresh combinations of His peerless graces?

In the manger—and in eternity; on the cross—and on His throne; in the garden—and in His kingdom; among thieves—or in the midst of cherubim—He is everywhere—altogether lovely!

Examine carefully every little act of His life, and every trait of His character, and He is as lovely in the minute as in the majestic. Judge Him as you will—you cannot censure! Weigh Him as you please—and He will not be found lacking. Eternity shall not discover the shadow of a spot in our Beloved! But rather, as countless ages revolve, His hidden glories shall shine forth with yet more inconceivable splendor!

May 23 — Morning

"The Lord will perfect that which concerns me." Psalm 138:8

Most manifestly the confidence which the Psalmist here expressed was a *divine* confidence. He did not say, "I have grace enough to perfect that which concerns me—*my* faith is so steady that it will not stagger—*my* love is so warm that it will never grow cold—*my* resolution is so firm that nothing can move it." No! his dependence was on the Lord alone. If we indulge in any confidence which is not *grounded on the Rock of ages*—our confidence is worse than a dream, it will fall upon us, and cover us with its ruins—to our sorrow and confusion. All that *human nature* spins—time will unravel, to the eternal confusion of all who are clothed therein.

The Psalmist was wise, he rested upon nothing short of the Lord's work. It is the Lord who has *begun* the good work within us; it is He who has *carried it on*; and if He does not *finish* it—it never will be complete! If there is *one stitch in the celestial garment* of our righteousness, which we are to insert ourselves, then we are lost! But this is our confidence, the Lord who *began*—will *perfect*. He *has* done it all, *must* do it all, and *will* do it all. Our confidence must not be in what *we* have done, nor in what we have *resolved* to do—but entirely in what the Lord will do!

Unbelief insinuates, "You will never be able to stand. Look at the evil of your heart! You can never conquer sin! Remember the sinful pleasures and temptations of the world which beset you—you will be certainly allured by them and led astray!" Ah! yes, we would indeed perish—if left to our own strength. If we had to navigate our frail vessels over so rough a sea alone—we might well give up the voyage in despair! But, thanks be to God—*HE* will perfect that which concerns us, and bring us to the desired haven! We can never be too confident—when we confide in Him alone!

May 23 — Evening

"You have not bought any fragrant incense for Me." Isaiah 43:24

Worshippers at the temple were accustomed to bring presents of sweet perfumes to be burned upon the altar of God—but Israel, in the time of her backsliding, became ungenerous, and made but few votive offerings to her Lord. This was an evidence of coldness of heart towards God and His house. Reader, does this never occur with you? Might not the complaint of the text be occasionally, if not frequently, brought against you?

Those who are poor in pocket, if rich in faith, will be accepted none the less, because their gifts are small; but, *poor* reader, do you give in fair proportion to the Lord, or is the *widow's mite* kept back from the sacred treasury? The *rich* believer should be thankful for the talent entrusted to him—but should not forget his large responsibility, for where much is given—much will be required. But, *rich* reader, are you mindful of your obligations, and rendering to the Lord according to the benefit received?

Jesus gave His blood for us—what shall we give to Him? We are His, and all that we have, for He has purchased us unto Himself—can we act as if we were our own? O for more consecration! and to this end, O for more love!

Blessed Jesus, how good it is of You to accept our fragrant incense! Nothing is too costly as a tribute to Your unrivaled love, and yet You receive with favor, the smallest sincere token of affection! You receive our *poor forget-me-nots* and *love-tokens* as though they were intrinsically precious, though indeed they are but as the bunch of wild flowers which the child brings to its mother. May we never grow niggardly towards You, and from this hour may we never hear You complain of us again for withholding the gifts of our love. We will give You the first fruits of our increase, and pay You tithes of all, and then we will confess "of Your own—have we given You."

May 24 — Morning

"Blessed be God, who has not turned away my prayer." Psalm 66:20

In looking back upon the character of our prayers, if we do it honestly, we shall be filled with wonder that God has ever answered them. There may be some who think that their prayers are worthy of acceptance—as the Pharisee did.

But the true Christian, in a more enlightened retrospect, *weeps* over his prayers, and if he could retrace his steps—he would desire to pray more earnestly. Remember, Christian, how *cold* your prayers have been. When in your closet you should have *wrestled* as Jacob did; but instead thereof, your petitions have been *faint* and *few*—far removed from that humble, believing, persevering faith, which cries, "I will not let You go—unless You bless me!" Yet, wonderful to say, God has *heard* these cold prayers of yours, and not only heard—but *answered* them.

Reflect also, how *infrequent* have been your prayers, unless you have been in trouble, and then you have gone often to the mercy-seat. But when deliverance has come, where have been your constant supplications? You have ceased to pray as once you did—yet God has not ceased to bless. When you have neglected the mercy-seat, God has not deserted it—but the bright light of the *Shekinah glory* has always been visible between the wings of the cherubim.

Oh! it is marvelous that the Lord should regard those *intermittent spasms of importunity*, which come and go with our necessities. What a God is He thus to hear the prayers of those who come to Him when they have pressing needs—but neglect Him when they have received a mercy; who approach Him when they are *forced* to come—but who almost forget to address Him when mercies are plentiful and sorrows are few. Let *His gracious kindness* in hearing such prayers, touch our hearts, so that we may henceforth be found "Praying always—with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit."

May 24 — Evening

"Live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ." Philippians 1:27

This signifies the whole course of our life and behavior in the world. What sort of life is this?

In the first place, the gospel is very **simple**. So Christians should be simple and plain in their habits. There should be about our manner, our speech, our dress, our whole behavior—that *simplicity* which is the very soul of beauty.

The gospel is pre-eminently **true**, it is gold without dross; and the Christian's life will be lustreless and valueless without the *jewel of truth*.

The gospel is a very **bold** gospel, it fearlessly proclaims the truth, whether men like it or not. We must be equally faithful and unflinching.

But the gospel is also very **gentle**. Mark this spirit in its Founder, "a bruised reed He will not break." Some professors are sharper than a thorn-hedge; such men are not like Jesus. Let us seek to win others by the gentleness of our words and acts.

The gospel is very **loving**. It is the message of the God of love to a lost and fallen race. Christ's last command to His disciples was, "Love one another." O for more real, hearty love to all the saints—for more tender compassion towards the souls of the worst and vilest of men!

We must not forget that the gospel of Christ is **holy**. It never *excuses* sin. It *pardons* sin—but only through an atonement. If our life is to resemble the gospel, we must shun, not merely the grosser vices—but everything that would hinder our perfect conformity to Christ.

For His sake, for our own sakes, and for the sakes of others, we must strive day by day—to live our life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ!

May 25 — Morning

"Do not forsake me, O Lord! Do not be far from me, O my God!" Psalm 38:21

Frequently we pray that God would not forsake us in the hour of *trial* and *temptation*—but we too much forget that we have need to use this prayer at *all* times. There is no moment of our life, however holy—in which we can do without *His constant upholding*. Whether in light or in darkness, in communion or in temptation—we alike need the prayer, "Do not forsake, O Lord!" "Hold me up—and I shall be safe!"

A little child, while learning to walk—always needs the parent's aid. The ship left by the pilot—drifts at once from her course. We cannot do without *continuous aid* from God. Let it be your prayer today, "Do not forsake me! Father, do not forsake Your *child*—lest he fall by the hand of the enemy. Shepherd, do not forsake Your *lamb*—lest he wander from the safety of the fold. Great Gardener, do not forsake Your plant—lest it wither and die! Do not forsake me *now*, O Lord! And do not forsake me at *any moment* of my life. Do not forsake me in my *joys*—lest they absorb my heart. Do not forsake me not in my *sorrows*—lest I murmur against You. Do not forsake me in the day of my *repentance*—lest I lose the hope of pardon, and fall into despair. Do not forsake me in the day of my strongest faith—lest faith degenerate into presumption. Do not forsake me—for without You I am weak—but with You I am strong. Do not forsake me—for my path is dangerous, and full of snares—and I cannot travel without Your guidance. The hen does not forsake her brood; evermore cover me with Your feathers, and permit me to find my refuge under Your wings. Do not be far from me, O Lord, for trouble is near—and there is none to help. Leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation!"

May 25 — Evening

"They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem . . . and they told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread." Luke 24:33

"And they rose up the same hour, and returned Jerusalem ... and they told what things were done in the way, and how He was known of them." Luke 24:35

When the two disciples had reached Emmaus, and were refreshing themselves at the evening meal—the *mysterious stranger* who had so enchanted them upon the road, took bread and broke it, made Himself known to them, and then vanished out of their sight! They had constrained Him to abide with them, because the day was far spent; but now, although it was much later, their love was a lamp to their feet, yes, wings also! They forgot the darkness, their weariness was all gone, and forthwith they journeyed back the more than seven miles, to tell the gladsome news of a risen Lord, who had appeared to them by the way. They reached the Christians in Jerusalem, and were received by a burst of joyful news before they could tell their own tale.

These early Christians were all on fire to speak of Christ's resurrection, and to proclaim what they knew of the Lord; they made common property of their experiences. This evening let their example impress us deeply. We too must bear our *witness* concerning Jesus. *John's* account of the sepulcher needed to be supplemented by *Peter*; and *Mary* could speak of something further still; combined, we have a full testimony from which nothing can be spared.

We have each of us peculiar gifts and special manifestations; but the one object which God has in view, is the perfecting of the whole body of Christ. We must, therefore, bring our spiritual possessions and lay them at the apostle's feet, and make distribution unto all—of what God has given to us. Keep back no part of the precious truth—but speak what you know, and testify what you have seen. Let not the toil or darkness, or possible unbelief of your friends, weigh one moment in the scale. Up, and be marching to the place of duty—and there tell what great things God has shown to your soul!

May 26 — Morning

"Cast your burden upon the Lord—and He shall sustain you." Psalm 55:22

Care, even though exercised upon legitimate objects, if carried to excess, has in it a measure of sin. The precept to avoid anxious care, is earnestly inculcated by our Savior, again and again; it is reiterated by the apostles; and it is one which cannot be neglected without involving sin—for the very essence of *anxious care* is the imagining that we are wiser than God, and the thrusting ourselves into His place—to do for Him that which He has undertaken to do for us. We attempt to think of that, which we imagine He will forget. We labor to take upon ourselves our weary burden—as if He were unable or unwilling to take it for us!

Now this *disobedience* to His plain precept, this *unbelief* in His Word, this *presumption* in intruding upon His province—is all sinful. Yet more than this, anxious care often leads to acts of sin. He who cannot calmly leave his affairs in God's hand—but will carry his own burden, is very likely to be tempted to use *wrong means* to help himself. This sin leads to a *forsaking of God* as our Counselor, and resorting instead to human wisdom. This is going to the "broken cistern" instead of to the "fountain;" a sin which was laid against Israel of old.

Anxiety makes us doubt God's loving-kindness—and thus our love to Him grows cold. We feel mistrust, and thus grieve the Spirit of God—so that our prayers become hindered, our consistent example marred, and our life one of self-seeking. Thus, this lack of confidence in God, leads us to wander far from Him. But if through simple faith in His promise, we cast each burden as it comes upon Him, and "don't worry about anything" because He undertakes to care for us—it will keep us close to Him, and strengthen us against much temptation. "You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You!"

May 26 — Evening

"Continue in the faith." Acts 14:22

Perseverance is the *badge of true believers*. The Christian life is not only a *beginning* in the ways of God—but also a *continuance* in holiness as long as life lasts. It is with a Christian as it was with the great Napoleon—he said, "Conquest has made me what I am, and conquest must maintain me." So, under God, dear brother in the Lord, conquest has made you what you are, and conquest must sustain you. Your motto must be, "Excelsior!" He alone is a true conqueror, and shall be crowned at the last, who *continues* until war's trumpet is blown no more.

Perseverance is, therefore, the target of all our spiritual enemies.

The *world* does not object to your being a Christian *for a time*, if she can but tempt you to cease your pilgrimage, and settle down to buy and sell with her in *Vanity Fair*.

The *flesh* will seek to ensnare you, and to prevent your pressing on to glory, "It is weary work being a pilgrim—give it up. Am I always to be mortified? Am I never to be indulged? Give me at least a furlough from this constant warfare."

Satan will make many a fierce attack on your perseverance; it will be the mark for all his arrows. He will strive to hinder you in service—he will insinuate that you are doing no good; and that you need rest. He will endeavor to make you weary of suffering, he will whisper, "Curse God, and die!" Or he will attack your steadfastness, "What is the good of being so zealous? Be quiet like the rest; sleep as do others, and let your lamp go out as the other virgins do." Or he will assail your doctrinal sentiments, "Why do you hold to these doctrines? Sensible men are getting more liberal; they are removing the old landmarks—fall in with the times."

Wear your shield, Christian, therefore, close upon your armor, and cry mightily unto God, that by His Spirit you may endure to the end.

May 27 — Morning

"So Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem because he always ate at the king's table. He was lame in both feet."

2 Samuel 9:13

Mephibosheth was no great ornament to a royal table—yet he had a continual place at David's table, because the king could see in his face—the features of the beloved Jonathan. Like Mephibosheth, we may cry unto the King of Glory, "What is Your servant, that You should look upon such a dead dog as I am?" But still the Lord indulges us with most familiar fellowship with Himself, because He sees in our countenances the remembrance of His dearly-beloved Jesus.

The Lord's people are dear for another's sake. Such is the love which the Father bears to His only begotten, that for His sake He raises His lowly brethren from poverty and banishment, to courtly companionship, noble rank, and royal provision! Their *deformity* shall not rob them of their privileges. *Lameness* is no bar to sonship; the cripple is as much the heir—as if he could run like Asahel.

Our right does not limp, though our *might* may.

A king's table—is a noble hiding-place for lame legs! At the gospel feast, we learn to glory in infirmities, because the power of Christ rests upon us. Yet grievous deformities may now mar the best-loved saints. Here is one feasted by David, and yet so lame in both his feet that he could not go up with the king when he fled from the city, and was therefore maligned and injured by his servant Ziba. Saints whose faith is *weak*, and whose *knowledge* is slender, are great losers; they are exposed to many enemies, and cannot follow the king wherever he goes.

This infirmity frequently arises from *falls*. Bad nursing in their spiritual infancy—often causes converts to fall into a despondency from which they never recover, and sin in other cases brings broken bones. Lord, help the lame to leap like an deer, and satisfy all Your people with the bread of Your table!

May 27 — Evening

"Mephibosheth bowed down and said

—What is your servant that you take an interest in *such a dead dog as me!*" 2 Samuel 9:8

If Mephibosheth was thus humbled by David's kindness, what shall we be in the presence of our gracious Lord? The more grace we have—the less we shall think of ourselves; for grace, like light, reveals our impurity. Eminent saints have scarcely known to what to compare themselves, their sense of unworthiness has been so clear and keen. "I am," says holy Rutherford, "a dry and withered branch, a piece of dead carcass, dry bones, and not able to step over a straw." In another place he writes, "Except as to open outbreakings of sin—I am no different than Judas and Cain."

The basest objects in nature appear to the humbled Christian—to be better than himself, because they have never contracted sin. A dog may be greedy, fierce, or filthy—but it has no conscience to violate, no Holy Spirit to resist. A dog may be a worthless animal, and yet by a little kindness it is soon won to love its master, and is faithful unto death; but we forget the goodness of the Lord, and follow not at His call.

The term "dead dog" is the most expressive of all terms of contempt—but it is none too strong to express the self-aborrence of instructed believers. They do not affect mock modesty; they mean what they say; they have weighed themselves in the balances of the sanctuary, and found out the vanity of their hearts. At best, we are but clay, animated dust, mere walking dirt! But viewed as sinners—we are monsters indeed!

Let it be published in heaven as a wonder, that the Lord Jesus should set His heart's love upon such as we are. Dust and ashes though we are, we must and will "magnify the exceeding greatness of His grace." Could not His heart find rest in heaven? Must He needs come to these tents of Kedar for a spouse, and choose an unlovely bride? O heavens and earth, break forth into a song, and give all glory to our sweet Lord Jesus!

May 28 — Morning

"Those He predestined, He also called; and those He called, He also justified; and those He justified, He also glorified." Romans 8:30

Here is a precious truth for you, believer. You may be poor, or in suffering, or unknown—but for your encouragement take a review of your "calling" and the consequences that flow from it, and especially that blessed result here spoken of. As surely as you are God's child today—so surely shall all your trials soon be at an end, and you shall be rich to all the intents of bliss. Wait awhile, and that weary head shall wear the crown of glory, and that hand of labor shall grasp the palm-branch of victory. Lament not your troubles—but rather rejoice that before long you will be where "there shall be neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain." The chariots of fire are at your door, and a moment will suffice to bear you to the glorified. The everlasting song is almost on your lip. The portals of heaven stand open for you.

Do not think that you can fail of entering into rest. If He has called you—nothing can divide you from His love. Troubles cannot sever the bond; the fire of persecution cannot burn the link; the hammer of hell cannot break the chain. You are secure; that voice which called you at first, shall call you yet again from earth to heaven, from death's dark gloom to immortality's unuttered splendors. Rest assured, the heart of Him who has justified you—beats with infinite love towards you. You shall soon be with the glorified, where your portion is; you are only waiting here to be made fit for the inheritance, and that done, the wings of angels shall waft you far away, to the mount of peace, and joy, and blessedness, where, "Far from a world of grief and sin—with God eternally shut in," you shall rest forever and ever!

May 28 — Evening

"This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope." Lamentations 3:21

Memory is frequently the bondsman of despondency. Despairing minds call to remembrance every dark foreboding in the past, and dilate upon every gloomy feature in the present; thus memory, clothed in sackcloth, presents to the mind a cup of mingled gall and wormwood. There is, however, no necessity for this. Wisdom can readily transform memory into an *angel of comfort*. That same recollection which in its left hand brings so many gloomy omens, may be trained to bear in its right hand a wealth of hopeful signs. She need not wear a crown of iron, she may encircle her brow with a fillet of gold, all spangled with stars.

Thus it was in Jeremiah's experience—in the previous verse memory had brought him to deep humiliation of soul, "My soul has them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me"; and now this same memory restored him to life and comfort. "This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope." Like a two-edged sword, his memory first killed his *pride* with one edge, and then slew his *despair* with the other. As a general principle, if we would exercise our memories more wisely, we might, in our very darkest distress, strike a match which would instantaneously kindle the lamp of comfort. There is no need for God to create a new thing upon the earth in order to restore believers to joy; if they would prayerfully rake the ashes of the past, they would find light for the present; and if they would turn to the book of truth and the throne of grace, their candle would soon shine as aforetime.

Be it ours to remember the loving-kindness of the Lord, and to rehearse His deeds of grace. Let us open the *volume of recollection* which is so richly illuminated with memorials of mercy, and we shall soon be happy. Thus memory may be, as Coleridge calls it, "the bosom-spring of joy," and when the Divine Comforter bends it to His service, it may be chief among earthly comforters.

May 29 — Morning

"You hate wickedness." Psalm 45:7

"Be angry—and sin not." There can hardly be goodness in a man—if he is not angry at sin; he who loves truth—must hate every false way. How our Lord Jesus hated it when the temptation came! Thrice it assailed Him in different forms—but ever He met it with, "Get behind me, Satan." He hated it in others; none the less fervently because He showed His hate oftener in tears of pity—than in words of rebuke; yet what language could be more stern, more Elijah-like, than the words, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayer."

He hated wickedness so much that He bled to wound it to the heart; He died that it might die; He was buried that He might bury it in His tomb; and He rose that He might forever trample it beneath His feet. Christ is in the Gospel, and that Gospel is opposed to wickedness in every shape. Wickedness arrays itself in fair garments, and imitates the language of holiness; but the precepts of Jesus, like His scourge of small cords, chase it out of the temple, and will not tolerate it in the Church. So, too, in the heart where Jesus reigns, what war there is between Christ and Belial! And when our Redeemer shall come to be our Judge, those thundering words, "Depart, you who are cursed!" which are, indeed—but a prolongation of His life-teaching concerning sin, shall manifest His abhorrence of iniquity.

As warm as is His love to sinners—so hot is His hatred of sin; as perfect as is His righteousness, so complete shall be the destruction of every form of wickedness. O glorious champion of right, and destroyer of wrong, for this cause has God, even Your God, anointed you with the oil of gladness above Your fellows.

May 29 — Evening

"Cursed before the Lord is the man who undertakes the rebuilding of this city, Jericho." Joshua 6:26

Since he was cursed who rebuilt Jericho—much more the man who labors to restore *Popery* among us. In our fathers' days the gigantic walls of Popery fell by the power of their faith, the perseverance of their efforts, and the blast of their gospel trumpets; and now there are some who would rebuild that accursed system upon its old foundation. O Lord, be pleased to thwart their unrighteous endeavors, and pull down every stone which they build. It should be a serious business with us to be thoroughly purged of every error which may have a tendency to foster the spirit of Popery, and when we have made a clean sweep at home we should seek in every way to oppose its all too rapid spread abroad in the church and in the world. This last can be done in secret by fervent prayer, and in public by decided testimony.

We must warn with judicious boldness those who are inclined towards the errors of Rome; we must instruct the young in gospel truth, and tell them of the black doings of Popery in the olden times. We must aid in spreading the light more thoroughly through the land, for priests, like owls, hate daylight.

Are we doing all we can for Jesus and the gospel? If not, our negligence plays into the hands of the priestcraft. What are we doing to spread the Bible, which is the Pope's bane and poison? Are we casting abroad good, sound gospel writings? Luther once said, "The devil hates goose quills" and, doubtless, he has good reason, for ready writers, by the Holy Spirit's blessing, have done his kingdom much damage. If the thousands who will read this short word this night will do all they can to hinder the rebuilding of this accursed Jericho, the Lord's glory shall speed among the sons of men. Reader, what can you do? What will you do?

May 30 — Morning

**"Catch the foxes, the little foxes that ruin the vines
—for our vines have tender grapes." Song of Solomon 2:15**

A little *thorn* may cause much suffering. A little *cloud* may hide the sun. Little *foxes* spoil the vines. And little *sins* do much harm to the tender heart. These little sins burrow in the soul, and make it so full of that which is hateful to Christ—that He will hold no comfortable fellowship and communion with us. *A great sin cannot destroy a Christian—but a little sin can make him miserable!*

Jesus will not walk with His people unless they drive out every known sin. He says, "If you keep My commandments, you shall abide in My love, even as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love." Some Christians very seldom enjoy their Savior's presence. How is this? Surely it must be an affliction for a tender child to be separated from his father. Are you a child of God—and yet satisfied to go on without seeing your Father's face? What! you the spouse of Christ—and yet content without His company! Surely, you have fallen into a sad state, for the chaste spouse of Christ mourns like a dove without her mate, when he has left her.

Ask, then, the question—what has driven Christ from you? He hides His face behind the wall of your sins. That wall may be built up of *little pebbles*, as easily as of *great stones*. The sea is made of *drops*; the rocks are made of *grains*—and the sea which divides you from Christ may be filled with the drops of your little sins; and the rock which has well near wrecked your barque, may have been made by the daily working of the coral insects of your little sins. If you would live with Christ, and walk with Christ, and see Christ, and have fellowship with Christ—take heed of "little foxes that ruin the vines—for our vines have tender grapes." Jesus invites you to go with Him and catch them. He will surely, like Samson, catch the foxes at once and easily. Go with Him to the hunting!

May 30 — Evening

"That henceforth we should not serve sin." Romans 6:6

Christian, what have you to do with sin? Has it not cost you enough already? *Burnt child*—will you play with the fire? What! when you have already been between the jaws of the lion—will you step a second time into his den? Have you not had enough of the old serpent? Did he not poison all your veins once—and will you play upon the hole of the viper, and put your hand upon the cockatrice's den a second time? Oh, do not be so mad! Do not be so foolish!

Did sin ever yield you real pleasure? Did you find solid satisfaction in it? If so, go back to your old drudgery, and wear the chain again—if it delights you. But inasmuch as sin did never give you what it promised to bestow—but deluded you with lies—do not be snared a second time by the old fowler! Let the remembrance of your ancient bondage forbid you to enter the net again!

It is contrary to the designs of eternal love, which all have an eye to your purity and holiness; therefore do not run counter to the purposes of your Lord.

Another thought should restrain you from sin. Christians can never sin cheaply; they pay a heavy price for iniquity. Transgression destroys peace of mind, obscures fellowship with Jesus, hinders prayer, brings darkness over the soul. Therefore do not be the serf and bondman of sin.

There is yet a higher argument—each time you "serve sin" you have "Crucified the Lord afresh—and put Him to an open shame." Can you bear that thought? Oh! if you have fallen into any special sin during this day, it may be my Master has sent this admonition this evening, to bring you back before you have backslidden very far. Turn to Jesus anew; He has not forgotten His love to you; His grace is still the same. With weeping and repentance, come to His footstool, and you shall be once more received into His heart; you shall be set upon a rock again, and your goings shall be established.

May 31 — *Morning*

"The king himself also passed over the brook Kidron." 2 Samuel 15:23

David passed that *gloomy brook* when fleeing with his mourning company from his traitor son. The man after God's own heart was not exempt from trouble, nay, his life was full of it. He was both the Lord's *anointed*, and the Lord's *afflicted*. Why then should *we* expect to escape?

At sorrow's gates, the noblest of our race have waited with *ashes* on their heads, why then should we complain, as though some strange thing had happened unto us? The King of kings himself was not favored with a more cheerful or royal road. He passed over the filthy ditch of Kidron, through which the filth of Jerusalem flowed. *God had one Son without sin—but not a single child without the rod!* It is a great joy to believe that Jesus has been tempted in all points like as we are.

What is our *Kidron* this morning? Is it a faithless friend, a sad bereavement, a slanderous reproach, a dark foreboding? The King has passed over all these. Is it bodily pain, poverty, persecution, or contempt? Over each of these *Kidrons*—the King has gone before us. "In all our afflictions, He was afflicted." The idea of *freedom from trials* must be banished at once and forever, for He who is the Head of all saints, knows by experience the grief which we think so peculiar to ourselves. All the citizens of Zion must be part of the *Honorable Company of Mourners*, of which the Prince Immanuel is Head and Captain.

Notwithstanding the abasement of David, he yet returned in triumph to his city, and David's Lord arose victorious from the grave; let us then be of good courage, for we also shall win the day. We shall yet with joy draw water out of the wells of salvation, though now for a season we have to pass by the *noxious streams of sin and sorrow*. Courage, soldiers of the Cross, the King himself triumphed after going over Kidron—and so shall you!

May 31 — *Evening*

"Who heals all your diseases." Psalm 103:3

Humbling as is the statement—yet the fact is certain, that we are all more or less *suffering under the disease of sin*. What a comfort to know that we have a great Physician who is both *able* and *willing* to heal us! Let us think of Him for a while tonight.

His cures are very speedy—there is life in a look at Him. His cures are radical—He strikes at the center of the disease. And hence, His cures are sure and certain. He never fails, and the disease never returns. There is no relapse where Christ heals—there is no fear that His patients should be merely patched up for a season. He makes new men of them—a new heart also does He give them, and a right spirit does He put with them.

He is well skilled in *all* diseases. Physicians generally have some *specialty*. Although they may know a little about almost all our pains and ills, there is usually one disease which they have studied above all others; but Jesus Christ is thoroughly acquainted with the whole of human nature. He is as much at home with one sinner as with another, and never yet did He meet with an unusual case which was difficult to Him. He has had extraordinary complications of strange diseases to deal with—but He has known exactly with one glance of His eye—how to treat the patient.

He is the only universal doctor; and the medicine He gives is the only true universal remedy, healing in every instance. Whatever our spiritual malady may be—we should apply at once to this Divine Physician. There is no *brokenness of heart* which Jesus cannot bind up. "His blood cleanses from *all* sin." We have but to think of the myriads who have been delivered from all sorts of diseases through the power and virtue of His touch, and we shall joyfully put ourselves in His hands. We trust Him—and sin dies; we love Him—and grace lives; we wait for Him—and grace is strengthened; we see Him as he is—and grace is perfected forever!

June 1 — *Morning*

"And there was *evening*, and there was *morning*—the first day." Genesis 1:5

Was it so even in the beginning? Did light and darkness divide the realm of time in the first day? Then little wonder is it—if I have also changes in my circumstances, from the *sunshine of prosperity* to the *midnight of adversity*. It will not always be the *blaze of noon* even in my soul concerns, I must expect at seasons to mourn the absence of my former joys, and seek my Beloved in the night. Nor am I alone in this, for all the Lord's beloved ones have had to sing the mingled song of judgment and of mercy, of trial and deliverance, of mourning and of delight.

It is one of the arrangements of Divine providence, that day and night shall not cease either in the spiritual or natural creation, until we reach the land of which it is written, "there is no night there." What our heavenly Father ordains is wise and good. What, then, my soul, is it best for you to do? Learn first to be content with this divine order, and be willing, with Job, to receive evil from the hand of the Lord as well as good. Study next, to make the outgoings of the morning and the evening to rejoice. Praise the Lord for the sun of joy when it rises, and for the gloom of evening as it falls. There is beauty both in sunrise and sunset, sing of it, and glorify the Lord. Like the nightingale, pour forth your notes at all hours. Believe that the night is as useful as the day. The dews of grace fall heavily in the night of sorrow. The stars of promise shine forth gloriously amid the darkness of grief.

Continue your service under all changes. If in the day your watchword be labor, at night exchange it for watch. Every hour has its duty, so continue in your calling as the Lord's servant until He shall suddenly appear in His glory. My soul, your evening of old age and death is drawing near—dread it not, for it is part of the day; and the Lord has said, "I will cover him all the day long."

June 1 — Evening

"He will make her wilderness like Eden." Isaiah 51:3

Methinks, I see in vision—a howling wilderness, a great and terrible desert, like to the Sahara. I perceive nothing in it to relieve the eye, all around I am wearied with a sight of hot and arid sand, strewn with ten thousand blanched skeletons of wretched men who have expired in anguish, having lost their way in the pitiless wasteland. What an appalling sight! How horrible! a sea of sand without a bound, and without an oasis, a cheerless graveyard for a race forlorn!

But behold and wonder! Suddenly, upspringing from the scorching sand—I see a *plant of renown*; and as it grows it buds, the bud expands—it is a rose, and at its side a lily bows its modest head; and, miracle of miracles! as the fragrance of those flowers is diffused—the wilderness is transformed into a fruitful field, and all around it blossoms exceedingly, the glory of Lebanon is given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon. Call it not Sahara, call it Paradise. Speak not of it any longer as the valley of deathshade, for where the skeletons lay blanching in the sun, behold a resurrection is proclaimed, and up spring the dead, a mighty army, full of life immortal.

Jesus is that plant of renown—and His presence makes all things new. Nor is the wonder less in each individual's salvation. Yonder I behold you, dear reader, cast out, an unwanted infant, unswathed, unwashed, defiled with your own blood, left to be food for beasts of prey. But lo, a jewel has been thrown into your bosom by a divine hand, and for its sake you have been pitied and tended by divine providence, you are washed and cleansed from your defilement, you are adopted into heaven's family, the fair seal of love is upon your forehead, and the ring of faithfulness is on your hand—you are now a prince unto God, though once an orphan, cast away. O prize exceedingly the matchless power and grace which changes *deserts* into *gardens*, and makes the barren heart to sing for joy!

June 2 — Morning

"For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh." Galatians 5:17

In every believer's heart there is a *constant struggle* between the old nature and the new. The old nature is very active, and loses no opportunity of plying all the weapons of its deadly armory against newborn grace; while on the other hand, the new nature is ever on the watch to resist and destroy its enemy. Grace within us will employ prayer, and faith, and hope, and love—to cast out the evil; it takes unto it the "whole armor of God," and wrestles earnestly.

These two opposing natures will never cease to struggle so long as we are in this world. The battle of "Christian" with "Apollyon" lasted three hours—but *Christian's* battle with himself lasted all the way from the Wicket Gate in the river Jordan. The enemy is so securely entrenched within us that he can never be driven out while we are in this body—but although we are often in sore conflict, we have an Almighty helper, even Jesus, the Captain of our salvation, who is ever with us, and who assures us that we shall eventually come off more than conquerors through Him. With such assistance, the new-born nature is more than a match for its foes.

Are you fighting with the adversary today? Are Satan, the world, and the flesh, all against you? Do not be discouraged nor dismayed. Fight on! For God Himself is with you; *Jehovah Nissi* is your banner, and *Jehovah Rophi* is the healer of your wounds. Fear not, you shall overcome, for *who can defeat Omnipotence?* Fight on, "looking unto Jesus"; and though long and stern is the *conflict*, sweet will be the *victory*, and glorious the promised *reward*.

"From strength to strength go on;
Wrestle, and fight, and pray,
Tread all the powers of darkness down,
And win the well-fought day."

June 2 — Evening

"Good Master." Matthew 19:16

If the young man in the gospel used this title in speaking to our Lord—how much more fitly may I thus address Him! He is indeed my Master in both senses, a *ruling* Master and a *teaching* Master. I delight to run upon His errands, and to sit at His feet. I am both His *servant* and His *disciple*, and count it my highest honor to own the double character. If He should ask me why I call Him "good," I should have a ready answer. It is true that "there is none good but one, that is, God," but then He is God, and all the goodness of Deity shines forth in Him. In my experience, I have found Him good, so good, indeed, that all the good I have has come to me through Him. He was good to me when I was dead in sin, for He raised me by His Spirit's power. He has been good to me in all my needs, trials, struggles, and sorrows. Never could there be a better Master, for His service is freedom, His rule is love—I wish I were one thousandth part as good a servant.

When He *teaches* me as my Rabbi, He is unspeakably good, His doctrine is divine, His manner is condescending, His spirit is gentleness itself. No error mingles with His instruction—pure is the golden truth which He brings forth, and all His teachings lead to goodness, sanctifying as well as edifying the disciple. Angels find Him a good Master and delight to pay their homage at His footstool. The ancient saints proved Him to be a good Master, and each of them rejoiced to sing, "I am Your servant, O Lord!" My own humble testimony must certainly be to the same effect. I will bear this witness before my friends and neighbors, for possibly they may be led by my testimony to seek my Lord Jesus as their Master. O that they would do so! They would never regret so wise a deed. If they would but take His easy yoke, they would find themselves in so royal a service that they would enlist in it forever.

June 3 — *Morning*

**"These were potters, and those that dwelt among plants and hedges
—lived there in the service of the king." 1 Chronicles 4:23**

Potters were not the very highest grade of workers—but "the king" needed potters, and therefore they were in royal service, although the material upon which they worked was nothing but clay. We, too, may be engaged in the most menial part of the Lord's work—but it is a great privilege to do anything for "the king"; and therefore we will abide in our calling, hoping that, "although we have laid among the pots—yet shall we be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold."

The text tells us of those who dwelt among plants and hedges, having rough, rustic, hedging and ditching work to do. They may have desired to live in the city, amid its life, society, and refinement—but they kept their appointed places, for they also were doing the king's work. The place of our habitation is fixed, and we are not to remove from it out of whim and caprice—but seek to serve the Lord in it, by being a blessing to those among whom we reside.

These potters and gardeners had royal company, for they dwelt "with the king" and although among hedges and plants, they dwelt with the king there. No lawful place, or gracious occupation, however lowly, can debar us from communion with our divine Lord. In visiting hovels, swarming lodging-houses, workhouses, or jails—we may go with the king. In all *works of faith* we may count upon Jesus' fellowship. It is when we are in His work that we may reckon upon His smile.

You unknown workers who are occupied for your Lord amid the dirt and wretchedness of the lowest of the low, be of good cheer, for jewels have been found upon dunghills before now, earthen pots have been filled with heavenly treasure, and ill weeds have been transformed into precious flowers! Dwell with the King for His work, and when He writes His chronicles—your name shall be recorded.

June 3 — Evening

"He humbled Himself." Philippians 2:8

Jesus is the great teacher of *lowliness of heart*. We need daily to learn of Him. See the Master taking a towel and washing His disciples feet! Follower of Christ, will you not humble yourself? See Him as *the Servant of servants*—and surely you cannot be proud! Is not this sentence the *compendium of His biography*, "He humbled Himself"? Was He not on earth always stripping off first one robe of honor and then another—until, naked, He was fastened to the cross, and there did He not empty out His inmost self, pouring out His life-blood, giving up for all of us, until they laid Him penniless in a borrowed grave? How low was our dear Redeemer brought!

How then can we be proud? Stand at the foot of the cross, and count the purple drops by which you have been cleansed; see the thorn-crown; mark His scourged shoulders, still gushing with encrimsoned rills; see hands and feet given up to the rough iron, and His whole self to mockery and scorn; see the bitterness, and the pangs, and the throes of inward grief, showing themselves in His outward frame; hear the horrid shriek, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me!" If you do not lie prostrate on the ground before that cross—you have never seen it! If you are not humbled in the presence of Jesus—you do not know Him. You were *so lost* that nothing could save you—but the sacrifice of God's only begotten Son. Think of that, and as Jesus stooped for you—bow yourself in lowliness at His feet.

A sense of *Christ's amazing love to us*—has a greater tendency to humble us than even a consciousness of our own guilt. May the Lord bring us in contemplation, to Calvary, then our position will no longer be that of the pompous man of pride—but we shall take the humble place of one who loves much—because much has been forgiven him. Pride cannot live beneath the cross! Let us sit there and learn our lesson—and then rise and carry it into practice.

June 4 — *Morning*

"The kindness and love of God our Savior." Titus 3:4

How sweet it is to behold the Savior communing with His own beloved people! There can be nothing more delightful than, by the Divine Spirit, to be led into this fertile field of delight. Let the mind for an instant consider the history of the Redeemer's love—and a thousand enchanting acts of affection will suggest themselves, all of which have had for their design—the weaving of the heart into Christ, and the intertwisting of the thoughts and emotions of the renewed soul with the mind of Jesus.

When we meditate upon this amazing love, and behold the all-glorious Kinsman of the Church endowing her with all His ancient wealth, our souls may well faint for joy. Who is he who can endure such a weight of love? That *partial* sense of it which the Holy Spirit is sometimes pleased to afford, is more than the soul can contain; how transporting must be a *complete* view of it! When the soul shall have *understanding* to discern all the Savior's gifts, *wisdom* with which to estimate them, and *time* in which to meditate upon them—such as the world to come will afford us—we shall then commune with Jesus in a nearer manner than at present. But who can imagine the sweetness of such fellowship? It must be one of the things which have not entered into the heart of man—but which God has prepared for those who love Him. Oh, to burst open the door of *our Joseph's* granaries, and see the plenty which He has stored up for us! This will overwhelm us with love.

By faith we see, as in a glass darkly, the reflected image of His unbounded treasures—but when we shall actually see the heavenly things themselves, with our own eyes—how deep will be the stream of fellowship in which our soul shall bathe itself! Until then our loudest sonnets shall be reserved for our loving benefactor, Jesus Christ our Lord, whose love to us is wonderful, passing the love of women.

June 4 — Evening

"Received up into glory." 1 Timothy 3:16

We have seen our well-beloved Lord in the days of His flesh, humiliated and sore vexed; for He was "despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." He whose brightness is as the morning, wore the sackcloth of sorrow as His daily dress—shame was His mantle, and reproach was His vesture. Yet now, inasmuch as He has triumphed over all the powers of darkness upon the bloody tree, our faith beholds our King returning with dyed garments from Edom, robed in the splendor of victory. How glorious must He have been in the eyes of seraphs, when a cloud received Him out of mortal sight, and He ascended up to heaven!

Now He wears the glory which He had with God before the earth was, and yet another glory above all—that which He has well earned in the fight against sin, death, and hell. As victor He wears the illustrious crown. Hark how the song swells high! It is a new and sweeter song, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, for He has redeemed us unto God by His blood!" He wears the glory of an *Intercessor* who can never fail, of a *Prince* who can never be defeated, of a *Conqueror* who has vanquished every foe, of a Lord who has the heart's allegiance of every subject. Jesus wears all the glory which the pomp of heaven can bestow upon Him, which ten thousand times ten thousand angels can minister to Him.

You cannot with your utmost stretch of imagination, conceive His exceeding greatness; yet there will be a further revelation of it when He shall descend from heaven in great power, with all the holy angels, "Then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory." Oh, the splendor of that glory! It will ravish His people's hearts. Nor is this the end, for eternity shall sound His praise, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever!" Reader, if you would rejoice in Christ's glory hereafter, He must be glorious in your sight now. Is He so?

June 5 — Morning

"The Lord shut him in." Genesis 7:16

Noah was shut in away from all the world—by the hand of divine love. The door of *electing purpose*, interposes between us and the world which lies in the wicked one. We are not of the world even as our Lord Jesus was not of the world. Into the sin, the gaiety, the pursuits of the multitude—we cannot enter. We cannot play in the streets of Vanity Fair with the children of darkness, for our heavenly Father has shut us in.

Noah was shut in *with his God*. "Come into the ark," was the Lord's invitation, by which He clearly showed that He Himself intended to dwell in the ark with His servant and his family. Thus all the chosen dwell in God and God in them. Happy people to be enclosed in the same circle which contains God in the Trinity of His persons, Father, Son, and Spirit. Let us ever be attentive to that gracious call, "Come, my people, enter into your chambers, and shut your doors about you, and hide yourself as it were for a little moment until the indignation be overpast."

Noah was so shut in that *no evil could reach him*. Floods did but lift him heavenward, and winds did but waft him on his way. Outside of the ark, all was ruin—but inside, all was rest and peace. Without Christ we perish—but in Christ Jesus there is perfect safety. Noah was so shut in that he could not even desire to come out, and those who are in Christ Jesus are in Him forever. They shall go no more out forever, for eternal faithfulness has shut them in, and infernal malice cannot drag them out. The Prince of the house of David shuts—and no man opens; and when once in the last days as Master of the house He shall rise up and shut the door—it will be in vain for mere professors to knock, and cry ""Lord, Lord open unto us," for that same door which shuts in the wise virgins will shut out the foolish forever. Lord, shut me in by Your grace!

June 5 — Evening

"The one who does not love—does not know God, because God is love." 1 John 4:8

The distinguishing mark of a Christian is his confidence in the love of Christ—and the yielding of his affections to Christ in return. First, faith sets her seal upon the man by enabling the soul to say with the apostle, "Christ loved me—and gave Himself for me!" Then love gives the countersign, and stamps upon the heart gratitude and love to Jesus in return. "We love Him—because He first loved us."

In those grand old ages, which are the heroic period of the Christian religion, this double mark was clearly to be seen in all believers in Jesus; they were men who knew the love of Christ, and rested upon it as a man leans upon a staff whose trustiness he has tried. The love which they felt towards the Lord was not a *quiet* emotion which they *hid* within themselves in the secret chamber of their souls, and which they only spoke of in their private assemblies when they met on the first day of the week, and sang hymns in honor of Christ Jesus the crucified—but it was a passion with them of such a vehement and all-consuming energy, that it was visible in all their actions, spoke in their common talk, and looked out of their eyes even in their commonest glances. Love to Jesus was a flame which fed upon the core and heart of their being; and, therefore, from its own force—it burned its way into the outer man, and shone there. Zeal for the glory of King Jesus—was the seal and mark of all genuine Christians. Because of their dependence upon Christ's love—they dared much; and because of their love to Christ—they did much, and it is the same now.

The children of God are ruled in their inmost powers by love—the love of Christ constrains them; they rejoice that divine love is set upon them, they feel it shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Spirit, who is given unto them, and then by force of gratitude they love the Savior with a pure heart, fervently. My reader, *do you love Him?* Before you sleep—give an honest answer to a weighty question!

June 6 — *Morning*

"Behold, I am vile!" Job 40:4

One cheering word, poor lost sinner, for you! You think you must not come to God because you are vile. Now, there is not a Christian living on earth—but has been made to feel that he is vile. If *Job*, and *Isaiah*, and *Paul* were all obliged to say "I am vile," oh, poor sinner, will *you* be ashamed to join in the same confession? If *divine grace* does not eradicate all sin from the believer, how do *you* hope to do it yourself? If God loves His people while they are yet vile—do you think your vileness will prevent His loving you? Believe on Jesus, you outcast of the world's society! Jesus calls you, and such as you are.

Even now say, "You have died for sinners; I am a sinner, Lord Jesus, sprinkle Your blood on me"; if you will confess your sin you shall find pardon. If, now, with all your heart, you will say, "I am vile, wash me," you shall be washed now. If the Holy Spirit shall enable you from your heart to cry you shall rise from reading this morning's portion with all your sins pardoned; and though you did wake this morning with every sin that man has ever committed on your head, you shall rest tonight accepted in the Beloved; though once degraded with the rags of sin, you shall be adorned with a robe of righteousness, and appear white as the angels are! For "now," mark it, "*Now* is the accepted time." If you "Believe on Him—who justifies the ungodly, you are saved." Oh! may the Holy Spirit give you saving faith in Him who receives the vilest!

"Just as I am, without one plea
But that Your blood was shed for me,
And that you bidd'st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come!"

June 6 — *Evening*

"Are they Israelites? So am I!" 2 Corinthians 11:22

We have here *a personal claim*, and one that needs proof. The apostle knew that his claim was indisputable—but there are many people who have no right to the title—who yet *claim* to belong to the *Israel of God*. If we are with confidence declaring, "So am I also an Israelite," let us only say it after having searched our heart as in the presence of God. But if we can give proof that we are following Jesus, if we can from the heart say, "I trust Him wholly, trust Him only, trust Him simply, trust Him now, and trust Him ever," then the position which the saints of God hold, belongs to us—all their enjoyments are our possessions; we may be the very least in Israel, "less than the least of all saints," yet since the mercies of God belong to the saints AS SAINTS, and not as *advanced* saints, or well-taught saints—we may put in our plea, and say, "Are they Israelites? so am I! therefore the promises are mine, grace is mine, glory will be mine."

The claim, rightfully made, is one which will yield untold comfort. When God's people are rejoicing that they are His, what a happiness if they can say, "So am I!" When they speak of being pardoned, and justified, and accepted in the Beloved, how joyful to respond, "Through the grace of God, So am I."

But this claim not only has its *enjoyments* and *privileges*—but also its *conditions* and *duties*. We must share with God's people in *cloud* as well as in sunshine. When we hear them spoken of with contempt and ridicule for being Christians, we must come boldly forward and say, "So am I!" When we see them working for Christ, giving their time, their talent, their whole heart to Jesus, we must be able to say, "So do I!" O let us prove our *gratitude* by our *devotion*, and *live* as those who, having claimed a privilege, are willing to take the responsibility connected with it!

June 7 — *Morning*

"You who love the Lord—hate evil." Psalm 97:10

You have good reason to "hate evil," for only consider what harm it has already wrought you. Oh, what a world of mischief sin has brought into your heart! Sin *blinded* you so that you could not see the beauty of the Savior; it made you *deaf* so that you could not hear the Redeemer's tender invitations. Sin turned your *feet* into the way of death, and poured poison into the very fountain of your being; it tainted your heart, and made it "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Oh, what a vile creature you were—when evil had done its utmost with you, before divine grace interposed! You were an heir of wrath even as others; you ran with the multitude to do evil. Such were all of us; but Paul reminds us, "but you are washed—but you are sanctified—but you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

We have good reason, indeed, for hating evil—when we look back and trace its deadly workings. Such mischief did evil do us, that our souls would have been lost—had not omnipotent love interfered to redeem us. Even now it is an active enemy, ever watching to do us hurt, and to drag us to perdition.

Therefore "hate evil," O Christians, unless you desire trouble. If you would strew your path with thorns, and plant *nettles* in your death-pillow, then neglect to "hate evil". But if you would live a happy life, and die a peaceful death—then walk in all the ways of holiness, hating evil, even unto the end. If you truly love your Savior, and would honor Him, then "hate evil." We know of no cure for the love of evil in a Christian, like abundant fellowship with the Lord Jesus. Dwell much with Him, and it is impossible for you to be at peace with sin.

"Order my footsteps by Your Word,
And make my heart sincere;
Let sin have no dominion, Lord—
but keep my conscience clear."

June 7 — Evening

"Be zealous!" Revelation 3:19

If you would see souls converted, if you would hear the cry that "the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord"; if you would place crowns upon the head of the Savior, and His throne lifted high—then be filled with zeal. For, under God, the way of the world's conversion must be by the zeal of the church. Every grace shall do exploits—but this shall be first. Prudence, knowledge, patience, and courage will follow in their places—but zeal must lead the van. It is not the extent of your *knowledge*, though that is useful; it is not the extent of your *talent*, though that is not to be despised; it is your *zeal* which shall do great exploits.

This zeal is the *fruit of the Holy Spirit*—it draws its vital force from the continued operations of the Holy Spirit in the soul. If our inner life dwindles, if our heart beats slowly before God—we shall not know zeal; but if all is strong and vigorous within, then we cannot but feel a loving anxiety to see the kingdom of Christ come, and His will done on earth, even as it is in heaven.

A deep sense of *gratitude* will nourish Christian zeal. Looking to the hole of the pit whence we were dug, we find abundant reason why we should spend and be spent for God. And zeal is also stimulated by the thought of the *eternal future*. It looks with tearful eyes down to the flames of hell—and it cannot slumber; it looks up with anxious gaze to the glories of heaven—and it cannot but bestir itself. It feels that time is short compared with the work to be done, and therefore it devotes all that it has to the cause of its Lord.

And it is ever strengthened by the remembrance of *Christ's example*. He was clothed with zeal as with a cloak. How swift the chariot-wheels of duty went with Him! He knew no loitering by the way. Let us prove that we are His disciples by manifesting the same spirit of zeal.

June 8 — *Morning*

"Many of the Hagarites were killed in the battle—because God was fighting against them."

1 Chronicles 5:22

Warrior, fighting under the banner of the Lord Jesus, observe this verse with holy joy, for as it was in the days of old so is it now, if the war is of God—the victory is sure. The sons of Reuben, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh could barely muster forty-five thousand fighting men, and yet in their war with the Hagarites, they slew "a hundred thousand men," "for they cried to God in the battle, and He was entreated of them, because they put their trust in Him."

The Lord saves not by many nor by few; it is ours to go forth in Jehovah's name if we be but a handful of men, for the Lord Almighty is with us for our Captain. They did not neglect shield, and sword, and bow, neither did they place their trust in these weapons; we must use all fitting means—but our confidence must rest in the Lord alone, for He is the sword and the shield of His people.

The great reason of their extraordinary success lay in the fact that "God was fighting against them." Beloved, in fighting with *sin* without and within, with *error* doctrinal or practical, with *spiritual wickedness* in high places or low places, with devils and the devil's allies—you are waging Jehovah's war, and unless He himself can be conquered, you need not fear defeat. Do not cringe before superior numbers, do not shrink from difficulties or impossibilities, do not flinch at wounds or death; smite with the two-edged sword of the Spirit, and the slain shall lie in heaps! The battle is the Lord's and He will deliver His enemies into our hands. With steadfast foot, strong hand, dauntless heart, and flaming zeal—rush to the conflict, and the armies of evil shall fly like chaff before the gale.

Stand up! stand up for Jesus!
This day the noise of battle,
To him who overcomes,
He with the King of glory

The strife will not be long;
The next the victor's song—
A crown of life shall be;
Shall reign eternally!

June 8 — Evening

"You shall now see whether My Word shall come to pass unto you, or not." Numbers 11:23

God had made a positive promise to Moses— that for the space of a whole month He would feed the vast multitude in the wilderness with flesh. Moses, being overtaken by a fit of unbelief, looks to the outward means, and is at a loss to know how the promise can be fulfilled. He looked to the *creature* instead of the *Creator*. But does the Creator expect the creature to fulfill His promise for Him? No! He who makes the promise—ever fulfils it by His own unaided omnipotence. If He speaks, it is done—done by Himself. His promises do not depend for their fulfillment, upon the cooperation of the puny strength of man.

We can at once perceive the mistake which *Moses* made. And yet how commonly *we* do the same! God has promised to supply our needs, and we look to the *creature* to do what *God* has promised to do; and then, because we perceive the creature to be weak and feeble, we indulge in unbelief. Why do we look to that quarter at all? Will you look to the north pole to gather fruits ripened in the sun? Truly, you would act no more foolishly if you did this—than when you look to the weak for strength, and to the *creature* to do the *Creator's* work.

Let us, then, put the question on the right footing. The ground of faith is not the sufficiency of the visible means for the performance of the promise—but the all-sufficiency of the invisible God, who will most surely do as He has said. If after clearly seeing that the onus lies with the Lord—and not with the creature, we dare to indulge in mistrust, the question of God comes home mightily to us, "Has the Lord's hand waxed short?" May it happen, too, in His mercy, that with the question there may flash upon our souls that blessed declaration, "You shall see now whether My Word shall come to pass unto you or not."

June 9 — Morning

"The Lord has done great things for us, whereof we are glad!" Psalm 126:3

Some Christians are sadly prone to look on the dark side of everything, and to dwell more upon what they have gone through, than upon what God has done for them. Ask for their impression of the Christian life, and they will describe their continual conflicts, their deep afflictions, their sad adversities, and the sinfulness of their hearts—yet with scarcely any allusion to the mercy and help which God has vouchsafed them. But a Christian whose soul is in a healthy state, will come forward joyously, and say, "I will speak, not about myself—but to the honor of my God. He has brought me up out of an horrible pit, and out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings—and He has put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God. The Lord has done great things for me, whereof I am glad!"

Such an *abstract of experience* as this, is the very best that any child of God can present. It is true that we endure trials—but it is just as true that we are delivered out of them. It is true that we have our corruptions, and mournfully do we know this—but it is quite as true that we have an all-sufficient Savior, who overcomes these corruptions, and delivers us from their dominion.

In looking back, it would be wrong to deny that we have been in the *Slough of Despond*, and have crept along the *Valley of Humiliation*—but it would be equally wicked to forget that we have been through them safely and profitably; we have not remained in them, thanks to our Almighty Helper and Leader, who has brought us "out into a wealthy place." The deeper our troubles—the louder our thanks to God, who has led us through all, and preserved us until now. Our griefs cannot mar the melody of our praise, we reckon them to be the *bass part of our life's song*, "He has done great things for us, whereof we are glad!"

June 9 — Evening

"Search the Scriptures." John 5:39

The word here rendered "search" signifies a strict, close, assiduous, diligent search—such as men make when they are seeking gold—or hunters when they are in earnest after game. We must not rest content with having given a superficial reading to a chapter or two—but with the *candle of the Spirit*—we must deliberately seek out the hidden meaning of the Word.

Holy Scripture requires *searching*—much of it can only be learned by *careful study*. There is *milk* for babes—but also *meat* for strong men. The rabbis wisely say, that a mountain of matter hangs upon every word of Scripture. Tertullian exclaims, "I adore the fullness of the Scriptures." No man who merely *skims* the book of God—can profit thereby; we must dig and mine until we obtain the hid treasure. The *door of the Word* only opens to the *key of diligence*.

The Scriptures claim searching. They are the writings of God, bearing the divine stamp and imprimatur—who shall dare to treat them with levity? He who despises them—despises the God who wrote them! God forbid that any of us should leave our Bibles to become swift *witnesses against us* in the great day of account!

The Word of God will repay searching. God does not bid us sift a *mountain of chaff* with here and there a *grain of wheat* in it—but the Bible is *winnowed grain*—we have but to open the granary door, and find it. Scripture grows upon the student. It is full of surprises. Under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, to the searching eye—it glows with splendor of revelation, like a vast temple paved with wrought gold, and roofed with rubies, emeralds, and all manner of precious gems. No merchandise like the merchandise of Scripture truth.

Lastly, the Scriptures reveal Jesus, "The Scriptures point to Me!" No more powerful motive can be urged upon Bible readers than this—he who finds Jesus finds life, heaven, all things. Happy he who, searching his Bible, discovers his Savior!

June 10 — Morning

"We live unto the Lord." Romans 14:8

If God had willed it, each of us might have entered heaven at the moment of conversion. It was not absolutely necessary for our preparation for immortality—that we should tarry here on earth. It is possible for a man to be taken to heaven, and to be found fit to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light, though he has but just believed in Jesus. It is true that our sanctification is a long and continued process, and we shall not be perfected until we lay aside our bodies and enter within the veil. But nevertheless, had the Lord so willed it, He might have changed us from imperfection to perfection, and have taken us to heaven at once!

Why then are we here one earth?

Would God keep His children out of paradise a single moment longer, than was necessary? Why is the army of the living God still on the battle-field, when one charge might give them the victory? Why are His children still wandering hither and there through a maze—when a solitary word from His lips would bring them into the center of their hopes in heaven? The answer is—they are here that they may "live unto the Lord," and may bring others to know His love. We remain on earth as *sowers* to scatter good seed; as *ploughmen* to break up the fallow ground; as *heralds* publishing salvation. We are here as the "*salt* of the earth," to be a blessing to the world. We are here to glorify Christ in our daily life. We are here as *workers* for Him, and as "workers together with Him."

Let us see that our life answers its end. Let us live earnest, useful, holy lives, to "the praise of the glory of His grace." Meanwhile we long to be with Him, and daily sing,

"My heart is with Him on His throne,
And ill can brook delay;
Each moment listening for the voice,
'Rise up, and come away!'"

June 10 — Evening

"The Scriptures point to Me!" John 5:39

Jesus Christ is the *Alpha* and *Omega* of the Bible. He is the *constant theme* of its sacred pages; from first to last—they testify of Him. At the creation, we at once discern Him as one of the sacred Trinity; we catch a glimpse of Him in the promise of the woman's seed; we see Him typified in the ark of Noah; we walk with Abraham, as He sees Messiah's day; we dwell in the tents of Isaac and Jacob, feeding upon the gracious promise; we hear the venerable Israel talking of *Shiloh*; and in the numerous types of the law, we find the Redeemer abundantly foreshadowed. Prophets and kings, priests and preachers, all look one way—they all stand as the cherubim did over the ark, desiring to look within, and to read the mystery of God's great propitiation.

Still more manifestly in the New Testament we find our Lord—the one pervading subject. It is not a gem here and there, or dust of gold thinly scattered—but here you stand upon a solid floor of gold; for the whole substance of the New Testament is Jesus crucified, and even its closing sentence is *bejeweled with the Redeemer's name!*

We should always read Scripture in this light; we should consider the Word to be as a mirror, into which Christ looks down from heaven; and then we, looking into it, see His face reflected as in a glass—darkly, it is true—but still in such a way as to be a blessed preparation for seeing Him—as we shall see Him face to face. This volume contains Christ's love letters to us, perfumed by His love. These pages are the garments of our King, and they all smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia. Scripture is the royal chariot in which Jesus rides, and it is paved with love for the daughters of Jerusalem. The Scriptures are the swaddling bands of the holy child Jesus—unroll them and you find your Savior The quintessence of the Word of God—is Christ!

June 11 — Morning

"We love Him—because He first loved us." 1 John 4:19

There is no light in the planet—but that which proceeds from the sun; and there is no true love to Jesus in the heart—but that which comes from the Lord Jesus himself. From this overflowing fountain of the infinite love of God—all our love to God must spring. This must ever be a great and certain truth—that we love Him for no other reason than because He first loved us. Our love to Him is the lovely offspring of His love to us. Cold admiration, when studying the works of God, anyone may have—but the warmth of love can only be kindled in the heart by God's Spirit. How great the wonder—that such as we should ever have been brought to love Jesus at all! How marvelous that when we had rebelled against Him—He should, by a display of such amazing love, seek to draw us back. No! never would we have had a grain of love towards God—unless it had been sown in us by the sweet seed of His love to us.

Love to Jesus, then, has for its parent—the love of God shed abroad in the heart—but after it is thus divinely *born*, it must be divinely *nourished*. Love is an *exotic*; it is not a plant which will flourish naturally in human soil, it must be watered from above. Love to Jesus is a flower of a delicate nature, and if it received no nourishment but that which could be drawn from the rock of our hearts—it would soon wither. As love comes from heaven—so it must feed on heavenly bread. It cannot exist in the wilderness, unless it be fed by manna from on high. Love must feed on love. The very soul and life of our love to God—is His love to us.

June 11 — Evening

"There he broke the arrows of the enemy, the shields and swords and weapons of his foes." Psalm 76:3

Our Redeemer's glorious cry of "It is finished!" was the death-knell of all the adversaries of His people, the breaking of "the shields and swords and weapons of his foes." Behold the *hero of Golgotha* using His *cross* as an anvil, and His *woes* as a hammer, dashing to shivers bundle after bundle of our sins, those poisoned "arrows of the enemy"; trampling on every indictment, and destroying every accusation. What glorious blows the mighty Breaker gives with a hammer, far more ponderous than the fabled weapon of Thor! How the diabolical darts fly to fragments, and the infernal shields are broken like potters' vessels! Behold, He draws from its sheath of hellish workmanship, the dread sword of Satanic power! He snaps it across His knee, as a man breaks a dry stick, and casts it into the fire.

Beloved, no *sin* of a believer can now be an arrow mortally to wound him, no *condemnation* can now be a sword to kill him, for the punishment of our sin was borne by Christ, a full atonement was made for all our iniquities, by our blessed Substitute and Surety. Who now accuses? Who now condemns? Christ has died, yes rather, has risen again. Jesus has emptied the quivers of hell, has quenched every fiery dart, and broken off the head of every arrow of wrath! The ground is strewn with the splinters and relics of the weapons of hell's warfare, which are only visible to us to remind us of our former danger, and of our great deliverance. Sin has no more dominion over us! Jesus has made an end of it, and put it away forever. O enemy, your destructions are come to a perpetual end. Talk of all the wondrous works of the Lord, you who make mention of His name; keep not silence, neither by day, nor when the sun goes to his rest. Bless the Lord, O my soul.

June 12 — Morning

"You are weighed in the balances—and are found lacking." Daniel 5:27

It is well, to frequently weigh ourselves in the *scale of God's Word*. You will find it a holy exercise, to read some *psalm of David*, and, as you meditate upon each verse, to ask yourself, "Can I say this? Have I felt as David felt? Has my heart ever been broken on account of sin—as his was when he penned his penitential psalms? Has my soul been full of true confidence in the hour of difficulty—as his was when he sang of God's mercies in the cave of Adullam, or in the strongholds of Engedi? Do I take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord?"

Then turn to the *life of Christ*, and as you read, ask yourselves how far you are conformed to His likeness. Endeavor to discover whether you have the meekness, the humility, the lovely spirit which He constantly inculcated and displayed.

Take, then, the *epistles*, and see whether you can go with the apostle in what he said of his experience. Have you ever cried out as he did, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death"? Have you ever felt his self-abasement? Have you seemed to yourself the chief of sinners, and less than the least of all saints? Have you known anything of his devotion? Could you join with him and say, "For me to live is Christ—and to die is gain"?

If we thus read God's Word as a test of our spiritual condition, we shall have good reason to stop many a time and say, "Lord, I feel I have never yet been here, O bring me here! give me true penitence, such as this I read of. Give me real faith; give me warmer zeal; inflame me with more fervent love; grant me the grace of meekness; make me more like Jesus. Let me no longer be 'found lacking,' when weighed in the balances of the sanctuary, lest I be found lacking in the scales of judgment." "Judge yourselves—that you be not judged."

June 12 — Evening

"Who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling." 2 Timothy 1:9

The apostle uses the perfect tense and says, "Who *has* saved us." Believers in Christ Jesus are saved. They are not looked upon as people who are in a hopeful state, and *may* ultimately be saved—but they *are* already saved. Salvation is not a blessing to be enjoyed upon the dying bed, and to be sung of in a future state above—but a matter to be obtained, received, promised, and enjoyed now.

The Christian is *perfectly* saved in God's purpose; God has ordained him unto salvation, and that purpose is complete. He is saved also as to the price which has been paid for him, "It is finished" was the cry of the Savior before He died. The believer is also perfectly saved in His covenant head—for as he fell in Adam—so he lives in Christ.

This complete salvation is accompanied by a holy calling. Those whom the Savior saved upon the cross—are in due time effectually called by the power of God the Holy Spirit unto holiness. They leave their sins; they endeavor to be like Christ; they choose holiness, not out of any compulsion—but from the compulsion of a new nature, which leads them to rejoice in holiness—just as naturally as aforesaid they delighted in sin.

God neither chose them nor called them because they *were* holy—but He called them that they *would* be holy; and holiness is the beauty produced by His workmanship in them. The graces which we see in a believer are as much the work of God—as the atonement itself. Thus the fullness of the grace of God is brought out very sweetly. Salvation must be of grace, because the Lord is the author of it—and what motive but grace could move Him to save the guilty? Salvation must be of grace, because the Lord works in such a manner that our righteousness is forever excluded. Such is the believer's privilege—a present salvation; such is the evidence that he is called to it—a holy life.

June 13 — *Morning*

"Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Revelation 22:17

Jesus says, "take freely." He wants no *payment* or *preparation*. He seeks no recommendation from our virtuous emotions. If you have no holy feelings—if you be but willing, you are invited; therefore come! You have no belief and no repentance—come to Him, and He will give them to you. Come just as you are, and take "Freely," without money and without price. He gives Himself to needy ones.

The drinking fountains at the corners of our streets are valuable institutions; and we can hardly imagine anyone so foolish as to feel for his purse, when he stands before one of them, and to cry, "I cannot drink because I have not five cents in my pocket." However poor the man is, there is the fountain—and just as he is, he may drink of it. Thirsty people, as they walk by, whether they are dressed in scarlet or in broadcloth, do not look for any warrant for drinking; its being there is their warrant for taking its water freely. The liberality of some good friends has put the refreshing crystal there—and we take it, and ask no questions. Perhaps the only people who need go thirsty through the street where there is a drinking fountain, are the fine ladies and gentlemen who are in their carriages. They are very thirsty—but cannot think of being so vulgar as to get out to drink. It would demean them, they think, to drink at a common drinking fountain—so they ride by with parched lips.

Oh, how many there are who are *rich in their own good works* and cannot therefore come to Christ! "I will not be saved," they say, "in the same way as the harlot or the drunkard." What! go to heaven in the same way as a chimney sweep. Is there no pathway to glory but the path which led the thief there? I will not be saved that way. Such proud boasters must remain without the living water! But, "Whoever will—let him take the water of life freely!"

June 13 — Evening

"Remove vanity and lies far from me." Proverbs 30:8

"O my God, do not be far from me." Psalm 38:21

Here we have two great lessons—what to *deprecate* and what to *supplicate*. The *happiest* state of a Christian is the *holiest* state. As there is the most heat nearest to the sun—so there is the most happiness nearest to Christ. No Christian enjoys comfort when his eyes are fixed on vanity—he finds no satisfaction unless his soul is quickened in the ways of God. The world may win happiness elsewhere—but the Christian cannot. I do not blame ungodly men for rushing to their pleasures. Why should I? Let them have their fill. That is all they have to enjoy. A converted wife who despaired of her husband was always very kind to him, for she said, "I fear that this is the only world in which he will be happy—and therefore I have made up my mind to make him as happy as I can in it."

Christians must seek their delights in a higher sphere—than the insipid frivolities or sinful enjoyments of the world. Vain amusements are dangerous to renewed souls. We have heard of a philosopher who, while he looked up to the stars, fell into a pit; but how deeply do they fall—who look down to the earth. Their fall is fatal. No Christian is safe when his soul is slothful, and his God is far from him. Every Christian is always safe as to the great matter of his *standing* in Christ—but he is not safe as regards his *experience* in holiness, and *communion* with Jesus in this life. Satan does not often attack a Christian who is living near to God. It is when the Christian departs from his God, becomes spiritually starved, and endeavors to feed on vanities, that the devil discovers his vantage hour. He may sometimes stand foot to foot with the child of God who is active in his Master's service—but the battle is generally short. He who slips as he goes down into the Valley of Humiliation, every time he takes a false step invites Apollyon to assail him. O for grace to walk humbly with our God!

June 14 — *Morning*

"Delight yourself in the Lord." Psalm 37:4

The teaching of these words must seem very surprising to those who are strangers to *vital godliness*—but to the sincere believer it is only the inculcation of a recognized truth. The *life of the believer* is here described as *a delight in God*—and we are thus certified of the great fact that true religion overflows with happiness and joy. Ungodly people and mere professors never look upon godliness as a joyful thing; to them it is service, duty, or necessity—but never pleasure or delight. If they attend to religion at all, it is either that they may gain thereby, or else because they dare not do otherwise. The thought of delight in Christ is so strange to most men, that no two words in their language stand further apart than "holiness" and "delight." But believers who know Christ, understand that *delight* and *faith* are so blessedly united, that the gates of hell cannot prevail to separate them. Those who love God with all their hearts, find that His ways are ways of pleasantness, and all His paths are peace.

Such joys, such brimful delights, such overflowing blessednesses, do the saints discover in their Lord, that so far from serving Him from *custom*, they would follow Him though all the world casts out His name as evil. We do not *love* God because of any compulsion; our *faith* is no fetter, our *profession* is no bondage, we are not *dragged* to holiness, nor *driven* to Christian duty. No, our piety is our pleasure, our hope is our happiness, our duty is our delight!

Holiness and *delight* are as allied—as root and flower; they are, in fact, two precious jewels glittering side by side in a setting of gold!

June 14 — Evening

"O Lord, we are covered with shame—because we have sinned against You!" Daniel 9:8

A deep sense and clear sight of sin, its heinousness, and the punishment which it deserves—should make us lie low before God's throne. We have sinned as Christians. Alas! that it should be so. *Favored* as we have been—we have yet been *ungrateful; privileged* beyond most—we have not brought forth *fruit* in proportion. Who is there, although he may long have been engaged in the Christian warfare, who will not blush when he looks back upon the past?

As for our days before we were regenerated, may they be forgiven and forgotten; but since then, though we have not sinned as before—yet we have sinned against *light* and against *love*—light which has really penetrated our minds, and love in which we have rejoiced. *Oh, the atrocity of the sin of a pardoned soul!* An unpardoned sinner sins cheaply—when compared with the sin of one of God's own elect ones, who has had communion with Christ and leaned his head upon Jesus' bosom.

Look at David! Many will talk of his *sin*—but I pray you look at his *repentance*, and hear his broken bones, as each one of them moans out its dolorous confession! Mark his *tears*, as they fall upon the ground, and the *deep sighs* with which he accompanies the softened music of his harp! We have erred—let us, therefore, seek the spirit of penitence.

Look, again, at Peter! We speak much of Peter's denying his Master. But remember that it is written, "He wept bitterly!" Have we no denials of our Lord to be lamented with tears? Alas! these sins of ours, before and after conversion, would consign us to the place of inextinguishable fire—if it were not for the sovereign mercy which has made us to differ, snatching us like brands from the burning! My soul, bow down under a sense of your natural sinfulness, and worship your God. Admire the *grace* which saves you—the *mercy* which spares you—the *love* which pardons you!

June 15 — *Morning*

"And Sarah said—God has made me laugh, so that all who hear will laugh with me." Genesis 21:6

It was far *above* the power of nature, and even *contrary* to its laws—that the aged Sarah should be honored with a son. Just so, it is beyond all ordinary rules that I, a poor, helpless, undone sinner—should find grace to bear about in my soul the indwelling Spirit of the Lord Jesus. I, who once despaired, as well I might, for my nature was as dry, and withered, and barren, and accursed as a howling wilderness—even I have been made to bring forth fruit unto holiness! Well may my mouth be filled with joyous laughter, because of the remarkable, surprising grace which I have received from the Lord, for I have found Jesus, the promised seed, and He is mine forever!

This day will I lift up psalms of triumph unto the Lord who has remembered my low estate, for "my heart rejoices in the Lord; my horn is exalted in the Lord; my mouth is enlarged over my enemies, because I rejoice in Your salvation." I would have all those who hear of my great deliverance from hell, and my most blessed visitation from on high, laugh for joy with me. I would surprise my family with my abundant peace. I would delight my friends with my ever-increasing happiness. I would edify the Church with my grateful confessions—and even impress the world with the cheerfulness of my daily conversation.

Bunyan tells us that *Mercy* laughed in her sleep, and no wonder—when she dreamed of Jesus; my joy shall not stop short of hers while my Beloved is the theme of my daily thoughts. The Lord Jesus is a deep sea of joy—my soul shall dive therein, shall be swallowed up in the delights of His society. Sarah looked on her Isaac, and laughed with excess of rapture, and all her friends laughed with her; and you, my soul, look on your Jesus, and bid heaven and earth unite in your unspeakable joy.

June 15 — Evening

"These are the words of Him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. *What He opens—no one can shut; and what He shuts—no one can open!*" Revelation 3:7

Jesus is the keeper of the gates of paradise, and before every believing soul He sets an open door, which no man or devil shall be able to close against it. What joy it will be to find that faith in Him is the *golden key to the everlasting doors*. My soul, do you carry this key in your bosom, or are you trusting to some deceitful pick-lock, which will fail you at last? Hear this parable of the preacher, and remember it.

The great King has made a banquet, and He has proclaimed to all the world that none shall enter but those who bring with them the fairest flower that blooms. The men advance to the gate by thousands, and they bring each one the flower which he esteems the queen of the garden; but in crowds they are driven from the royal presence, and do not enter into the festive halls. Some bear in their hand the *deadly nightshade of superstition*, or the *flaunting poppies of Rome*, or the *hemlock of self-righteousness*—but these are not dear to the King, the bearers are shut out of the pearly gates. My soul, have you gathered the *rose of Sharon*? Do you wear the *lily of the valley* in your bosom constantly? If so, when you come up to the gates of heave— you will know its value, for you have only to show this choicest of flowers, and the Porter will open—not for a moment will He deny you admission, for to that *rose*, the Porter always opens. You shall find your way with the *rose of Sharon* in your hand up to the throne of God Himself, for heaven itself possesses nothing that excels its radiant beauty; and of all the flowers that bloom in paradise—there is none that can rival the *lily of the valley*.

My soul, get *Calvary's blood-red rose* into your hand by faith, by love wear it, by communion preserve it, by daily watchfulness make it your all in all—and you shall be blessed beyond all bliss, happy beyond any dream! Jesus, be mine forever, my God, my heaven, my all.

June 16 — Morning

"And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish." John 10:28

The Christian should never think or speak lightly of *unbelief*. For a child of God to mistrust God's love, His truth, His faithfulness, must be greatly displeasing to Him. How can we ever grieve Him—by doubting His upholding grace? Christian! it is contrary to every promise of God's precious Word that you should ever be forgotten or left to perish. If it could be so, how could He be true who has said, "Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, *they* may forget—yet will *I* never forget you." What were the value of that promise, "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, says the Lord who has mercy on you." Where were the truth of Christ's words, "I give unto My sheep eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, who gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand." Where were the doctrines of grace? They would be all disproved—if one child of God would perish. Where were the veracity of God, His honor, His power, His grace, His covenant, His oath—if any of those for whom Christ has died, and who have put their trust in Him, should nevertheless be cast away?

Banish those unbelieving fears which so dishonor God. Arise, shake yourself from the dust, and put on your beautiful garments.

Remember that it is sinful to doubt His Word wherein He has promised you that you shall never perish. Let the eternal life within you express itself in confident rejoicing.

June 16 — *Evening*

"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?

The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" Psalm 27:1

Here is personal interest—"my light," "my salvation"; the soul is assured of it, and therefore declares it boldly. Into the soul at the new birth divine light is poured as the precursor of salvation; where there is not enough light to reveal our own darkness and to make us long for the Lord Jesus, there is no evidence of salvation. After conversion our God is our joy, comfort, guide, teacher, and in every sense our light—He is light within, light around, light reflected from us, and light to be revealed to us.

Note, it is not said merely that the Lord *gives* light—but that He *is* light; nor that He *gives* salvation—but that He *is* salvation. He, then, who by faith has laid hold upon God, has all covenant blessings in his possession. This being made sure as a fact, the argument drawn from it is put in the form of a question, "Whom shall I fear?" A question which is its own answer. The powers of darkness are not to be feared, for the Lord, our light, destroys them; and the damnation of hell is not to be dreaded by us, for the Lord is our salvation.

This is a very different challenge from that of boastful Goliath, for it rests, not upon the conceited vigor of an arm of flesh—but upon the real power of the omnipotent *I AM*.

"The Lord is the strength of my life." Here is a third glowing epithet, to show that the writer's hope was fastened with a threefold cord which could not be broken. We may well accumulate *words of praise* where the Lord lavishes *deeds of grace*. Our life derives all its strength from God; and if He deigns to make us strong, we cannot be weakened by all the machinations of the adversary.

"Of whom shall I be afraid?" The bold question looks into the future as well as the present. "If God is for us," who can be against us, either now or in time to come?

June 17 — Morning

"Help, Lord!" Psalm 12:1

The prayer itself is remarkable, for it is short, seasonable, sententious, and suggestive. David mourned the fewness of faithful men, and therefore lifted up his heart in supplication—when the *creature* failed, he flew to the *Creator*. He evidently felt his own weakness—or he would not have cried for *help*. But at the same time he intended honestly to exert himself for the cause of truth, for the word "help" is inapplicable where we ourselves do nothing.

There is much of directness, clearness of perception, and distinctness of utterance in this petition of two words; much more, indeed, than in the long rambling outpourings of certain professors. The Psalmist runs straight-forward to his God, with a well-considered prayer; he knows what he is seeking, and where to seek it. Lord, teach us to pray in the same blessed manner.

The occasions for the use of this prayer are frequent. In *providential afflictions*, how suitable it is for tried believers who find all helpers failing them. Students, in *doctrinal difficulties*, may often obtain aid by lifting up this cry of "Help, Lord!" to the Holy Spirit, the great Teacher. *Spiritual warriors* in inward conflicts may send to the throne for reinforcements, and this will be a model for their request. *Workers* in heavenly labor may thus obtain grace in time of need. *Seeking sinners*, in doubts and alarms, may offer up the same weighty supplication. In fact, in all these cases, times, and places, this will serve the turn of needy souls.

"Help, Lord!" will suit us living and dying, suffering or laboring, rejoicing or sorrowing. In Him our help is found—let us not be slack to cry to Him. The answer to the prayer is certain, if it is sincerely offered through Jesus. The Lord's character assures us that He will not leave His people; His relationship as Father and Husband guarantee us His aid; His gift of Jesus is a pledge of every good thing; and His sure promise stands, "Fear not—I will help you!"

June 17 — Evening

"The Israelites sang this song—Spring up, O well! Yes, sing about it!" Numbers 21:17

Famous was the *well of Beer* in the wilderness, because it was the subject of a promise, "That is the well where the Lord said to Moses—Gather the people together and I will give them water." The people needed water, and it was promised by their gracious God. We need fresh supplies of heavenly grace, and in the covenant the Lord has pledged Himself to give us all we require.

The well next became the cause of a *song*. Before the water gushed forth, cheerful faith prompted the people to sing; and as they saw the crystal fount bubbling up, the music grew yet more joyous. In like manner, we who believe the promise of God should rejoice in the prospect of divine revivals in our souls, and as we experience them our holy joy should overflow. Are we thirsting? Let us not murmur—but sing. Spiritual thirst is bitter to bear—but we need not bear it—the promise indicates a well; let us be of good heart, and look for it.

Moreover, the well was the center of *prayer*. "Spring up, O well." What God has engaged to give—we must enquire after, or we manifest that we have neither desire nor faith. This evening let us ask that the Scripture we have read, and our devotional exercises, may not be an empty formality—but a channel of grace to our souls. O that God the Holy Spirit would work in us with all His mighty power, filling us with all the fullness of God.

Lastly, the well was the object of *effort*. "This well, which princes dug, which great leaders hollowed out with their scepters and staffs." The Lord would have us active in obtaining grace. Our swords are ill adapted for digging in the sand—but we must use them to the utmost of our ability. Prayer must not be neglected; the assembling of ourselves together must not be forsaken; ordinances must not be slighted. The Lord will give us His peace most plenteously—but not in a way of idleness. Let us, then, bestir ourselves to seek Him in whom are all our fresh springs.

June 18 — Morning

"Your Redeemer." Isaiah 54:5

Jesus, the Redeemer, is *altogether* ours—and ours *forever*. All the offices of Christ are held on our behalf. He is king for us, priest for us, and prophet for us. Whenever we read a new title of the Redeemer, let us appropriate Him as ours under that name—as much as under any other. The shepherd's staff, the father's rod, the captain's sword, the priest's mitre, the prince's scepter, the prophet's mantle—all are ours! Jesus has no dignity which He will not employ for our exaltation, and no prerogative which He will not exercise for our defense. His fullness of *Godhead* is our unfailing, inexhaustible treasure-house. His *manhood* also, which he took upon him for us, is ours in all its perfection. To us our gracious Lord communicates the spotless virtue of His stainless character; to us he gives the meritorious efficacy of His devoted life; on us he bestows the reward procured by His obedient submission and incessant service. He makes the unsullied garment of His life—our covering beauty; the glittering virtues of His character—our ornaments and jewels; and the superhuman meekness of His death—our glory. He bequeaths us his manger, from which to learn how God came down to man; and his Cross to teach us how man may go up to God.

All His thoughts, emotions, actions, utterances, miracles, and intercessions, were for us. He trod the road of sorrow on our behalf, and has made over to us as his heavenly legacy the full results of all the labors of his life. He is now as much ours as heretofore; and he blushes not to acknowledge himself "our Lord Jesus Christ," though he is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords. Christ everywhere and every way is our Christ, forever and ever most richly to enjoy. O my soul, by the power of the Holy Spirit! call him this morning, "your Redeemer."

June 18 — *Evening*

"I have come into My garden—My sister, My bride!" Song of Solomon 5:1

The heart of the believer is Christ's garden. He bought it with His precious blood, and He enters it and claims it as His own.

A garden implies separation. It is not the open common; it is not a wilderness; it is walled around, or hedged in. Would that we could see the wall of separation between the Christian and the world made broader and stronger. It makes one sad to hear Christians saying, "Well, there is no harm in this; there is no harm in that," thus getting as near to the world as possible. Grace is at a low ebb in that soul, which can even raise the question of how far it may go in worldly conformity.

A garden is a place of beauty, it far surpasses the wild uncultivated fields. The genuine Christian must seek to be more excellent in his life than the best moralist, because Christ's garden ought to produce the best flowers in all the world. Even the best is poor—compared with Christ's deservings; let us not put Him off with withered and dwarf plants. The rarest, richest, choicest lilies and roses—ought to bloom in Christ's own garden.

The garden is a place of growth. The saints are not to remain undeveloped, always mere buds and blossoms. We should grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Growth should be rapid where Jesus is the Gardener, and the Holy Spirit the dew from above.

A garden is a place of retirement. So the Lord Jesus Christ would have us reserve our hearts as a place in which He can manifest Himself, as He does not unto the world. O that Christians were more retired, that they kept their hearts more closely shut up for Christ! We often worry and trouble ourselves, like Martha, with much serving—so that we have not the room for Christ that Mary had, and do not sit at His feet as we should.

May the Lord grant the sweet showers of His grace to water His garden this day!

June 19 — Morning

"And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit." Acts 2:4

Rich would the blessings of this day be—if all of us were filled with the Holy Spirit. The consequences of this *sacred filling of the soul*, would be impossible to overestimate. Life, comfort, light, purity, power, peace; and many other precious blessings are inseparable from the Spirit's gracious presence.

As *sacred oil*—He anoints the head of the believer, sets him apart to the priesthood of saints, and gives him grace to execute his duties aright.

As the only truly *purifying water*—He cleanses us from the power of sin and sanctifies us unto holiness, working in us to will and to do of the Lord's good pleasure.

As the *holy light*—He manifested to us at first our lost estate, and now He reveals the Lord Jesus to us and in us, and guides us in the way of righteousness. Enlightened by His pure celestial ray, we are no more darkness—but light in the Lord.

As *purifying fire*—He both purges us from dross, and sets our consecrated nature on a blaze. He is the sacrificial flame by which we are enabled to offer our whole souls as a living sacrifice unto God.

As *heavenly dew*—He removes our barrenness and fertilizes our lives. O that He would drop from above upon us at this early hour! Such morning dew would be a sweet commencement for the day.

As the *heavenly Dove*, with wings of peaceful love—He broods over the souls of believers, and as a *Comforter* He dispels the cares and doubts which mar the peace of His beloved. He descends upon His chosen people, and bears witness to their sonship by working in them a filial spirit by which they cry *Abba, Father!*

As the *wind*—He brings the breath of life to men; blowing where He wills, He performs the quickening operations by which the spiritual creation is animated and sustained.

Would to God, that we might feel His presence this day and every day.

June 19 — *Evening*

"My Beloved is mine, and I am His—He feeds among the lilies. Until the day breaks, and the shadows flee away, turn, my Beloved, and be You like a roe or a young deer upon the mountains of Bether."

Song of Solomon 2:16-17

Surely if there be a happy verse in the Bible, it is this, "My Beloved is mine, and I am His." So peaceful, so full of assurance, so overrunning with happiness and contentment is it, that it might well have been written by the same hand which penned the twenty-third Psalm. Yet though the prospect is exceeding fair and lovely—earth cannot show its superior—it is not entirely a sunlit landscape.

There is a cloud in the sky which casts a shadow over the scene. Listen, "Until the day breaks, and the shadows flee away." There is a word, too, about the "mountains of *Bether*," or, "the mountains of *division*," and to our love, anything like division is bitterness. Beloved, this may be your present state of mind; you do not doubt your salvation; you know that Christ is yours—but you are not *feasting* with Him. You understand your vital interest in Him, so that you have no shadow of a doubt of your being His, and of His being yours—but still His left hand is not under your head, nor does His right hand embrace you. A shadow of sadness is cast over your heart, perhaps by affliction, certainly by the temporary absence of your Lord, so even while exclaiming, "I am His," you are forced to take to your knees, and to pray, "Until the day breaks, and the shadows flee away, turn, my Beloved." "Where is He?" asks the soul. And the answer comes, "He feeds among the lilies." If we would find Christ, we must get into communion with His people, we must come to the ordinances with His saints. Oh, for an evening glimpse of Him! Oh, to sup with Him tonight!

June 20 — Morning

"For I will give the command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as grain is sifted in a sieve—yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth." Amos 9:9

Every *sifting* comes by divine command and permission. Satan must ask permission before he can lay a finger upon Job. Nay, more, in some sense *our siftings* are directly the work of heaven, for the text says, "I will sift the *house of Israel*." Satan, like a drudge, may hold the sieve, hoping to destroy the grain; but the overruling hand of the Master is accomplishing the purity of the grain by the very process which the enemy intended to be destructive.

Precious—but much sifted grain of the Lord's floor—be comforted by the blessed fact that the Lord directs both *flail* and *sieve* to His own glory, and to your eternal profit. The Lord Jesus will surely use the fan which is in His hand, and will divide the precious from the vile. All are not Israel that are of Israel; the heap on the barn floor is not clean provender, and hence the winnowing process must be performed. In the sieve true weight alone has power. Husks and chaff being devoid of substance, must fly before the wind—and only solid grain will remain.

Observe the *complete safety* of the Lord's wheat; even the least grain has a promise of preservation. *God Himself* sifts, and therefore it is just and effectual work; He sifts them in all places, "among all nations"; He sifts them in the most effectual manner, "like as grain is sifted in a sieve"; and yet for all this, not the smallest, lightest, or most shriveled grain, is permitted to fall to the ground.

Every individual believer is precious in the sight of the Lord, a shepherd would not lose one sheep, nor a jeweler one diamond, nor a mother one child, nor a man one limb of his body, nor will the Lord lose one of His redeemed people. However little we may be, if we are the Lord's—we may rejoice that we are preserved in Christ Jesus.

June 20 — Evening

"Immediately they forsook their nets, and followed Him." Mark 1:18

When they heard the call of Jesus, Simon and Andrew obeyed at once without demur. If we would always, punctually and with resolute zeal—put in practice what we hear upon the spot, or at the first fit occasion—our attendance at the means of grace, and our reading of good books, could not fail to enrich us spiritually. He will not lose his bread—who has taken care at once to eat it; neither can he be deprived of the benefit of the doctrine—who has already acted upon it.

Most readers and hearers become moved so far as to *purpose* to amend; but, alas! the proposal is a blossom which has not been knit, and therefore no fruit comes of it; they wait, they waver, and then they forget, until, like the ponds in nights of frost, when the sun shines by day, they are only thawed in time to be frozen again.

That *fatal tomorrow* is blood-red with the murder of *fair resolutions*; it is the slaughter-house of the innocents. We are very concerned that our little book of "Evening Readings" should not be fruitless, and therefore we pray that readers may not be *readers* only—but *doers*, of the Word. The *practice* of truth is the most profitable reading of it. Should the reader be impressed with any duty while perusing these pages, let him hasten to fulfill it before the holy glow has departed from his soul, and let him leave his nets, and all that he has, sooner than be found rebellious to the Master's call. Do not give place to the devil by delay! Hasten while opportunity and quickening are in happy conjunction. Do not be caught in your own nets—but break the meshes of worldliness. Happy is the writer who shall meet with readers resolved to carry out his teachings—his harvest shall be a hundredfold, and his Master shall have great honor. Would to God that such might be our reward upon these brief meditations and hurried hints. Grant it, O Lord, unto your servant!

June 21 — Morning

"You are fairer than the children of men." Psalm 45:2

The entire *person* of Jesus is but as one gem, and His *life* is all along but one impression of the seal. He is altogether complete; not only in His several parts—but as a *gracious all-glorious whole*. His *character* is not a mass of fair colors mixed confusedly, nor a heap of precious stones laid carelessly one upon another; He is a picture of beauty and a breastplate of glory. In Him, all the "good things" are in their proper places, and assist in adorning each other. Not one feature in His glorious person attracts attention, at the expense of others; but He is perfectly and altogether lovely.

Oh, Jesus! Your power, Your grace, Your justice, Your tenderness, Your truth, Your majesty, and Your immutability make up such a man, or rather such a God-man, as neither heaven nor earth has seen elsewhere! Your infancy, Your eternity, Your sufferings, Your triumphs, Your death, and Your immortality, are all woven in one gorgeous tapestry, without seam or flaw. You are music without discord; You are many, and yet not divided; You are all things, and yet not diverse. As all the colors blend into one resplendent rainbow—so all the glories of heaven and earth meet in You, and unite so wondrously, that there is none like You in all things; nay, if all the virtues of the most excellent were bound in one bundle, they could not rival You, O mirror of all perfection! You have been anointed with the holy oil of myrrh and cassia, which Your God has reserved for You alone! As for Your fragrance, it is as the holy perfume, the like of which none other can ever mingle, even with the art of the apothecary; each spice is fragrant—but the compound is divine.

"Oh, sacred symmetry! Oh, rare combination
Of many perfects—to make one perfection!
Oh, heavenly music, where all parts do meet
In one sweet strain—to make one perfect sweet!"

June 21 — Evening

"The foundation of God stands sure." 2 Timothy 2:19

The foundation upon which our faith rests is this, that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." The great fact on which genuine faith relies is, that "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us," and that "Christ has suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God"; "Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree"; "For the chastisement of our peace was upon Him—and by His stripes we are healed." In one word, the great pillar of the Christian's hope, is the *substitutionary atonement of Christ*. The vicarious sacrifice of Christ for the guilty; Christ being made sin for us—that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him; Christ offering up a true and proper expiatory and substitutionary sacrifice in the room, place, and stead of as many as the Father gave Him, who are known to God by name, and are recognized in their own hearts by their trusting in Jesus—this is the cardinal fact of the gospel.

If this foundation were removed, what could we do? But it stands as firm as the throne of God. We know it; we rest on it; we rejoice in it; and our delight is to hold it, to meditate upon it, and to proclaim it, while we desire to be actuated and moved by gratitude for it in every part of our life and conversation. In these days a direct attack is made upon the doctrine of the *substitutionary atonement*. Men cannot bear substitution. They gnash their teeth at the thought of the Lamb of God, bearing the sin of man. But we, who know by experience the preciousness of this truth, will proclaim it in defiance of them, confidently and unceasingly. We will neither dilute it nor change it, nor fritter it away in any shape or fashion. It shall still be Christ, an atoning substitute, bearing human guilt and suffering, in the stead of men. We cannot, dare not, give it up, for it is our life, and despite every controversy we feel that "Nevertheless the foundation of God stands sure."

June 22 — *Morning*

"He shall build the temple of the Lord; and He shall bear the glory." Zechariah 6:13

Christ Himself is the builder of His spiritual temple, and He has built it on the mountains of His unchangeable love, His omnipotent grace, and His infallible truthfulness. But as it was in Solomon's temple, so in this; the materials need *making ready*. There are the "Cedars of Lebanon," but they are not framed for the building; they are not cut down, and shaped, and made into those planks of cedar, whose odoriferous beauty shall make glad the courts of the Lord's house in Paradise. There are also the rough stones still in the quarry, they must be hewn thence, and squared. All this is Christ's own work. Each individual believer is being prepared, and polished, and made ready for his place in the temple; but Christ's own hand performs the preparation-work.

Afflictions cannot sanctify, excepting as they are used by Him to this end. Our prayers and efforts cannot make us ready for heaven, apart from the hand of Jesus, who fashions our hearts aright. As in the building of Solomon's temple, "there was neither hammer, nor axe, nor any tool of iron, heard in the house," because all was brought perfectly ready for the exact spot it was to occupy—so is it with the temple which Jesus builds; the making ready is all done on earth. When we reach heaven, there will be no sanctifying us there, no *squaring* us with affliction, no *planing* us with suffering. No, we must be made fit here—all that Christ will do beforehand; and when He has done it, we shall be ferried by a loving hand across the stream of death, and brought to the heavenly Jerusalem, to abide as eternal pillars in the temple of our Lord.

"Beneath His eye and care,
The edifice shall rise,
Majestic, strong, and fair,
And shine above the skies."

June 22 — Evening

"That those things which cannot be shaken may remain." Hebrews 12:27

We have many things in our possession at the present moment, which can be shaken—and it ill becomes a Christian man to set much store by them, for there is nothing stable beneath these rolling skies; *change* is written upon all things. Yet, we have certain "things which cannot be shaken," and I invite you this evening to think of them, that if the things which can be shaken should all be taken away, you may derive real comfort from the things that cannot be shaken, which will remain.

Whatever your losses have been, or may be, you enjoy *present salvation*. You are standing at the foot of His cross, trusting alone in the merit of Jesus' precious blood, and no rise or fall of the markets can interfere with your salvation in Him; no breaking of banks, no failures and bankruptcies can touch that!

You are also a *child of God* this evening. God is your Father. No change of circumstances can ever rob you of that. Although by losses brought to poverty, and stripped bare—you can say, "He is my Father still. In my Father's house are many mansions; therefore I will not be troubled."

You have another permanent blessing, namely, the *love of Jesus Christ*. He who is God and Man, loves you with all the strength of His affectionate nature—nothing can affect that. The fig tree may not blossom, and the flocks may cease from the field—but it matters not to the man who can sing, "My Beloved is mine—and I am His!" Our best portion and richest heritage—we cannot lose. Whatever troubles come, let us play the man; let us show that we are not such little children as to be cast down by what may happen in this poor fleeting state of time. Our real country is Immanuel's land, our real hope is above the sky, and therefore, as calm as the summer's ocean; we will see the wreck of everything earthborn, and yet rejoice in the God of our salvation!

June 23 — Morning

"Ephraim is a cake not turned." Hosea 7:8

A cake not turned—is uncooked on one side; and so Ephraim was, in many respects, untouched by divine grace—though there was some partial obedience, there was very much rebellion left. My soul, I charge you, see whether this be your case. Are you *thorough* in the things of God? Has grace gone through the very center of your being—so as to be felt in its divine operations in all your powers, your actions, your words, and your thoughts? To be sanctified, spirit, soul, and body—should be your aim and prayer; and although sanctification may not be *perfect* in you anywhere in degree—yet it must be *universal* in its action; there must not be the appearance of holiness in one place—and reigning sin in another, else you, too, will be a cake not turned.

A cake not turned is soon burnt on the side nearest the fire, and although no man can have too much religion, there are some who seem burnt black with bigoted zeal for that part of truth which they have received, or are charred to a cinder with a vain-glorious Pharisaic ostentation of those religious performances which suit their humor. The assumed appearance of superior sanctity, frequently accompanies a total absence of all vital godliness. The saint in public—may be a devil in private. He deals in flour by day—and in soot by night. The cake which is burned on one side, is dough on the other. If it be so with me, O Lord, turn me! Turn my unsanctified nature to the fire of Your love and let it feel the sacred glow, and let my burnt side cool a little while I learn my own weakness and lack of heat when I am removed from Your heavenly flame. Let me not be found a double-minded man—but one entirely under the powerful influence of reigning grace; for well I know if I am left like a cake unturned, and am not on both sides the subject of Your grace—I must be consumed forever amid everlasting burnings!

June 23 — Evening

"Waiting for the adoption." Romans 8:23

Even in this world, saints are God's children—but others cannot discover them to be so, except by certain moral characteristics. The adoption is not manifested, the children are not yet openly declared.

Among the Romans a man might adopt a child, and keep it private for a long time—but there was a second adoption in public; when the child was brought before the constituted authorities, its former garments were taken off, and the father who took it to be his child gave it clothing suitable to its new condition of life.

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God—and it does not yet appear what we shall be." We are not yet arrayed in the apparel which befits the royal family of heaven; we are wearing—just what we wore as the sons of Adam; but we know that "when He shall appear" who is the "first-born among many brethren," we shall be like Him, we shall see Him as He is. You can imagine that a child taken from the lowest ranks of society, and adopted by a Roman senator, would say to himself, "I long for the day when I shall be publicly adopted. Then I shall leave off these plebeian garments, and be robed as becomes my senatorial rank".

Happy in what he has received, for that very reason he groans to get the fullness of what is promised him. So it is with us today.

We are waiting until we shall put on our proper garments, and shall be manifested as the children of God. We are young nobles, and have not yet worn our coronets. We are young brides, and the marriage day is not yet come, and by the love our Spouse bears us, we are led to long and sigh for the bridal morning.

Our very happiness makes us groan after more; our joy, like a swollen spring, longs to well up like an Iceland geyser, leaping to the skies, and it heaves and groans within our spirit for lack of space and room by which to manifest itself to men.

June 24 — Morning

"As Jesus was saying these things, a woman in the crowd called out, "Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you." He replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it."

Luke 11:27-28

It is fondly imagined by some, that it must have involved very special privileges to have been the mother of our Lord, because they supposed that she had the benefit of looking into His very heart in a way in which we cannot hope to do. There may be an appearance of plausibility in the supposition—but not much. We do not know that Mary knew more than others; what she did know—she did well to lay up in her heart. But she does not appear from anything we read in the Evangelists, to have been a better-instructed believer than any other of Christ's disciples. All that she knew—we also may discover. Do you wonder that we should say so? Here is a text to prove it, "The secret of the Lord is with those who fear Him, and He will show them His covenant."

Remember the Master's words, "I do not call you slaves anymore, because a slave doesn't know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have heard from My Father." So blessedly does this *Divine Revealer of secrets* tell us His heart, that He keeps back nothing which is profitable to us; His own assurance is, "If it were not so—I would have told you." Does He not this day manifest Himself unto us—as He does not unto the world? It is even so; and therefore we will not ignorantly cry out, "Blessed is the womb that bore you," but we will intelligently bless God that, having heard the Word and kept it, we have first of all—as true a communion with the Savior as Mary had; and in the second place—as true an acquaintance with the secrets of His heart as she can be supposed to have obtained. Happy soul to be thus privileged!

June 24 — *Evening*

**"Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said... Be it known unto you, O king
—that we will *not* serve your gods!" Daniel 3:16, 18**

The narrative of the manly courage and marvelous deliverance of the three holy *children*, or rather *champions*, is well calculated to excite in the minds of believers firmness and steadfastness in upholding the truth in the teeth of tyranny, and in the very jaws of death. Let young Christians especially learn from their example, both in matters of faith in religion, and matters of uprightness in business—never to sacrifice their consciences. Lose all rather than lose your integrity, and when all else is gone, still hold fast a clear conscience as the rarest jewel which can adorn the bosom of a mortal.

Do not be guided by the will-o'-the-wisp of *policy*—but by the pole-star of *divine authority*. Follow the right at all hazards. When you see no present advantage, walk by *faith* and not by *sight*. Do God the honor to trust Him when it comes to matters of loss for the sake of principle. See whether He will be your debtor! See if He does not even in this life prove His Word, that "Godliness, with contentment, is great gain," and that those who "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, shall have all these things added unto them."

Should it happen that, in the providence of God, you are a loser by conscience, you shall find that if the Lord does not pay you back in the *silver of earthly prosperity*, He will discharge His promise in the *gold of spiritual joy*. Remember that a man's life does not consist in the abundance of that which he possesses. To be a person of integrity, to have a heart void of offence, to have the favor and smile of God, is greater riches than the mines of Ophir could yield, or the traffic of Tyre could win. "Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and inward contention therewith." An ounce of heart's-ease, is worth a ton of gold.

June 25 — Morning

"Get up into the high mountain." Isaiah 40:9

Our knowledge of Christ is somewhat like climbing one of our Welsh mountains. When you are at the base, you see but little—the mountain itself appears to be but one-half as high as it really is. Confined in a little valley, you discover scarcely anything but the rippling brooks as they descend into the stream at the foot of the mountain. Climb the first rising knoll, and the valley lengthens and widens beneath your feet. Go higher, and you see the country for four or five miles round, and you are delighted with the widening prospect. Mount still, and the scene enlarges; until at last, when you are on the summit, and look east, west, north, and south—you see almost all England lying before you. Yonder is a forest in some distant county, perhaps two hundred miles away, and here the sea, and there a shining river and the smoking chimneys of a manufacturing town, or the masts of the ships in a busy port. All these things please and delight you, and you say, "I could not have imagined that so much could be seen at this elevation."

Now, the Christian life is of the same order. When we first believe in Christ—we see but little of Him. The higher we climb—the more we discover of His beauties. But who has ever gained the *summit*? Who has known all the heights and depths of the love of Christ, which passes knowledge? Paul, when grown old, sitting grey-haired, shivering in a dungeon in Rome, could say with greater emphasis than we can, "I know whom I have believed," for each experience had been like the climbing of a hill, each trial had been like ascending another summit, and his death seemed like gaining the top of the mountain, from which he could see the whole of the faithfulness and the love of Him to whom he had committed his soul. Get up, dear friend, into the high mountain!

June 25 — Evening

"The dove found no rest for the sole of her foot." Genesis 8:9

Reader, can you find rest apart from the ark, Christ Jesus? Then be assured, that your religion is vain. Are you satisfied with anything short of a conscious knowledge of your union and interest in Christ? Then woe unto you. If you profess to be a Christian—yet find full satisfaction in worldly pleasures and pursuits, your profession is false. If your soul can stretch herself at rest, and find the bed long enough, and the coverlet broad enough to cover her in the chambers of sin—then you are a hypocrite, and far enough from any right thoughts of Christ or perception of His preciousness.

But if, on the other hand, you feel that if you could indulge in sin without punishment—yet it would be a punishment of itself; and that if you could have the whole world, and abide in it forever, it would be quite enough misery not to be parted from it; for your God—your God—is what your soul craves after; then be of good courage, you are a child of God. With all your sins and imperfections, take this to your comfort—if your soul has no rest in sin—you are not as the sinner is! If you are still crying after and craving after something better, Christ has not forgotten you, for you have not quite forgotten Him.

The believer cannot do without his Lord; words are inadequate to express his thoughts of Him. We cannot live on the sands of the wilderness, we need the manna which drops from on high; our skin bottles of *creature confidence* cannot yield us a drop of moisture—but we drink of the rock which follows us, and that rock is Christ. When you feed on Him your soul can sing, "He has satisfied my mouth with good things, so that my youth is renewed like the eagle's," but if you have Him not, your bursting wine vat and well-filled barn can give you no sort of satisfaction—rather lament over them in the words of wisdom, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!"

June 26 — Morning

"Have you become like us?" Isaiah 14:10

What must be the apostate professor's doom when his naked soul appears before God? How will he bear that voice, "Depart, you cursed; you have rejected me, and I reject you; you have played the harlot, and departed from Me—I also have banished you forever from my presence, and will not have mercy upon you!" What will be this wretch's shame at the last great day when, before assembled multitudes, the apostate shall be unmasked? See the profane, and sinners who never professed religion, lifting themselves up from their *beds of fire* to point at him, "There he is," says one, "will he preach the gospel in hell?" "There he is," says another, "he rebuked me for cursing, and was a hypocrite himself!" "Aha!" says another, "here comes a psalm-singing Methodist—one who was always at his meeting; he is the man who boasted of his being sure of everlasting life—and here he is!"

No greater eagerness will ever be seen among Satanic tormentors, than in that day when devils drag the hypocrite's soul down to perdition. Bunyan pictures this with the solemn grandeur of poetry, when he speaks of the *back-way to hell*. Seven devils bound the wretch with nine cords, and dragged him from the road to heaven, in which he had professed to walk, and thrust him through the back-door into hell. Mind that back-way to hell, professors!

"Examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith." Look well to your state; see whether you are in Christ, or not. It is the easiest thing in the world to give a *lenient verdict* when oneself is to be tried; but O, be just and true here. Be just to all—but be rigorous in judging yourself. Remember if it is not a rock on which you build, when the house shall fall—and great will be the fall of it. O may the Lord give you sincerity, constancy, and firmness; and in no day, however evil, may you be led to turn aside.

June 26 — Evening

"Having escaped the corruption which is in the world through lust." 2 Peter 1:4

Vanish forever all thought of indulging the flesh—if you would live in the power of your risen Lord. It were ill that a man who is alive in Christ—should dwell in the corruption of sin. "Why do seek the living, among the dead?" said the angel to Magdalene. Should the living dwell in the sepulcher? Should *divine life* be immured in the charnel house of *fleshly lust*? How can we partake of the cup of the Lord—and yet drink the cup of Belial? Surely, believer, from open lusts and sins, you are delivered—have you also escaped from the more secret and delusive lime-twigs of the Satanic fowler? Have you come forth from the lust of *pride*? Have you escaped from *slothfulness*? Have you clean escaped from *carnal security*? Are you seeking day by day to live above *worldliness*, the pride of life, and the ensnaring vice of *avarice*? Remember, it is for this that you have been enriched with the treasures of God.

If you are indeed the chosen of God, and beloved by Him, do not allow all the lavish treasure of grace to be wasted upon you. Follow after holiness; it is the Christian's crown and glory. *An unholy church!* it is useless to the world, and of no esteem among men. It is an abomination, hell's laughter, heaven's abhorrence. The worst evils which have ever come upon the world—have been brought upon her by an unholy church. O Christian, the vows of God are upon you. You are God's *priest*—act as such. You are God's *king*—reign over your lusts. You are God's *chosen one*—do not associate with Belial. Heaven is your portion—live like a heavenly spirit, so shall you prove that you have true faith in Jesus, for there cannot be *faith in the heart* unless there be *holiness in the life*.

June 27 — Morning

"Only you shall not go very far away." Exodus 8:28

This is a crafty word from the lip of the arch-tyrant Pharaoh. If the poor bondaged Israelites must go out of Egypt—then he bargains with them that it shall not be very far away; not too far for them to escape the terror of his arms, and the observation of his spies. After the same fashion, the world does not like the non-conformity of nonconformity, or the dissidence of dissent—it would have us be more charitable and not carry matters with too severe a hand. *Death to the world*, and *burial with Christ*, are experiences which carnal minds treat with ridicule, and hence the ordinance which sets them forth is almost universally neglected, and even despised.

Worldly wisdom recommends the path of compromise, and talks of "moderation." According to this carnal policy, *purity* is admitted to be very desirable—but we are warned against being too precise; *truth* is of course to be followed—but error is not to be severely denounced. "Yes," says the world, "be spiritually minded by all means—but do not deny yourself a little mirthful society, an occasional ball, and a Christmas visit to a theater. What's the good of crying down a thing when it is so fashionable, and everybody does it?" Multitudes of professors yield to this cunning advice—to their own eternal ruin.

If we would follow the Lord wholly, we must go far away into the *wilderness of separation*, and leave the *Egypt of the carnal world* behind us. We must leave its maxims, its pleasures, and its religion too, and go far away to the place where the Lord calls His sanctified ones. When the town is on fire, our house cannot be too far from the flames. When the plague is abroad, a man cannot be too far from its haunts. The further from a viper the better, and the further from worldly conformity the better. To all true believers let the trumpet-call be sounded, "Therefore, come out from them and separate yourselves from them, says the Lord. Do not touch their filthy things, and I will welcome you. And I will be your Father, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." 2 Corinthians 6:17-18

June 27 — Evening

"Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called." 1 Corinthians 7:20

Some people have the foolish notion that the only way in which they can live for God is by becoming ministers, missionaries, or Bible teachers. Alas! how many would be shut out from any opportunity of magnifying God—if this were the case. Beloved, it is not office—it is *earnestness*; it is not position—it is *grace* which will enable us to glorify God.

God is most surely glorified in that cobbler's stall, where the godly worker, as he plies the awl, sings of the Savior's love; yes, glorified far more than in many a pulpit where official religiousness performs its scanty duties. The name of Jesus is glorified by the poor unlearned carter as he drives his horse, and blesses his God, or speaks to his fellow laborer by the roadside, as much as by the popular divine who, throughout the country, like Boanerges, is thundering out the gospel. God is glorified by our serving Him in our proper vocations.

Take care, dear reader, that you do not forsake the path of duty by leaving your occupation, and take care you do not dishonor your profession while in it. Think little of yourselves—but do not think too little of your callings. Every lawful trade may be sanctified by the gospel to noblest ends. Turn to the Bible, and you will find the most *menial forms of labor* connected either with most daring deeds of faith, or with people whose lives have been illustrious for holiness. Therefore do not be discontented with your calling. Whatever God has made your position, or your work—abide in that, unless you are quite sure that he calls you to something else. Let your first care be to glorify God to the utmost of your power where you are. Fill your present sphere to His praise, and if He needs you in another—He will show it to you. This evening lay aside vexatious ambition—and embrace peaceful content.

June 28 — Morning

"Looking unto Jesus." Hebrews 12:2

It is ever the Holy Spirit's work, to turn our eyes away from *self*—to Jesus. But Satan's work is just the opposite of this, for he is constantly trying to make us regard *ourselves* instead of Christ. He insinuates, "Your sins are too great for pardon; you have no faith; you do not repent enough; you will never be able to continue to the end; you have not the joy of His children; you have such a wavering hold of Jesus." All these are thoughts about *self*—and we shall never find comfort or assurance by looking within.

But the Holy Spirit turns our eyes entirely away from *self*—He tells us that we are nothing—but that "Christ is all in all." Remember, therefore, it is not your *hold* of Christ that saves you—it is Christ; it is not your *joy* in Christ that saves you—it is Christ; it is not even *faith* in Christ, though faith is the instrument—it is Christ's blood and merits. Therefore, look not so much to your *hand* with which you are grasping Christ—as to Christ. Look not to your *hope*—but to Jesus, the source of your hope. Look not to your *faith*—but to Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith. We shall never find happiness by looking at our prayers, our doings, or our feelings; it is what Jesus is, not what we are, that gives rest to the soul.

If we would at once overcome Satan and have peace with God, it must be by "looking unto Jesus." Keep your eye simply on Him; let His death, His sufferings, His merits, His glories, His intercession, be fresh upon your mind; when you wake in the morning—look to Him; when you lie down at night—look to Him. Oh! let not your hopes or fears come between you and Jesus; follow hard after Him, and He will never fail you.

"My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame—
but wholly lean on Jesus' name."

June 28 — Evening

"But Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods." Exodus 7:12

This incident is an instructive emblem of the sure victory of the divine handiwork over all opposition. Whenever a divine principle is cast into the heart, though the devil may fashion a counterfeit, and produce swarms of opponents, as sure as ever God is in the work, it will swallow up all its foes. If God's grace takes possession of a man, the world's magicians may throw down all their rods; and every rod may be as cunning and poisonous as a serpent—but Aaron's rod will swallow up their rods.

The *sweet attractions of the cross* will woo and win the man's heart, and he who lived only for this deceitful earth will now have an eye for the upper spheres, and a wing to mount into celestial heights. When grace has won the day—the worldling seeks the world to come.

The same fact is to be observed in the life of the believer. What multitudes of foes has our faith had to meet! Our old sins—the devil threw them down before us, and they turned to serpents. What hosts of them! Ah—but the *cross of Jesus* destroys them all. Faith in Christ, makes short work of all our sins. Then the devil has launched forth another host of serpents in the form of worldly trials, temptations, unbelief; but faith in Jesus is more than a match for them, and overcomes them all.

The same absorbing principle shines in the faithful service of God! With an enthusiastic love for Jesus, difficulties are surmounted, sacrifices become pleasures, sufferings are honors. But if religion is thus a consuming passion in the heart, then it follows that there are many people who profess religion—but have it not; for what they have will not bear this test. Examine yourself, my reader, on this point. Aaron's rod proved its heaven-given power. Is your religion doing so? If Christ is anything to you—He must be everything to you. O rest not, until love and faith in Jesus are the master passions of your soul!

June 29 — *Morning*

"Those who sleep in Jesus—will God bring with Him." 1 Thessalonians 4:14

Let us not imagine that the soul sleeps in insensibility. "Today shall you be with me in paradise," is the whisper of Christ to every dying saint. They "sleep in Jesus," but their *souls* are before the throne of God, praising Him day and night in His temple, singing hallelujahs to Him who washed them from their sins in His blood.

The *body* sleeps in its lonely bed of earth, beneath the coverlet of grass. But what is this sleep? The idea connected with sleep is "rest," and that is the thought which the Spirit of God would convey to us. Sleep makes each night a rest for the day. Sleep shuts fast the door of the soul, and bids all intruders tarry for a while, that the life within may enter its summer garden of ease. The toil-worn believer quietly sleeps, as does the weary child when it slumbers on its mother's breast.

Oh! happy they who die in the Lord; they rest from their labors, and their works do follow them. Their quiet repose shall never be broken, until God shall rouse them to give them their full reward. Guarded by angel watchers, curtained by eternal mysteries, they sleep on, the inheritors of glory, until the fullness of time shall bring the fullness of redemption. What an awaking shall be theirs! They were laid in their last resting place, weary and worn—but such they shall not rise. They went to their rest with the furrowed brow, and the wasted features—but they wake up in beauty and glory. The shriveled seed, so destitute of form and loveliness, rises from the dust—a beauteous flower. The *winter* of the grave—gives way to the *spring* of redemption, and the *summer* of glory. Blessed is death, since it, through the divine power, disrobes us of this work-day garment, to clothe us with the wedding garment of incorruption. Blessed are those who "sleep in Jesus!"

June 29 — Evening

"However, when ambassadors arrived from Babylon to ask about the remarkable events that had taken place in the land, God withdrew from Hezekiah in order to test him and to see what was really in his heart." 2 Chronicles 32:31

Hezekiah was growing so inwardly great, and priding himself so much upon the favor of God, that *self-righteousness* crept in, and through his carnal security, the grace of God was for a time, in its more active operations, withdrawn.

If the grace of God should leave the best Christian, there is enough of sin in his heart to make him the worst of transgressors. If left to yourselves, you who are warmest for Christ—would cool down like Laodicea into sickening lukewarmness! You who are sound in the faith—would be white with the leprosy of false doctrine! You who now walk before the Lord in excellency and integrity—would reel to and fro, and stagger with a drunkenness of evil passion.

Like the moon, we *borrow* our light; bright as we are when grace shines on us, we are darkness itself when the Sun of Righteousness withdraws Himself. Therefore let us cry to God never to leave us. "Lord, take not your Holy Spirit from us! Withdraw not from us Your indwelling grace! Have You not said, 'I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment—lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day'? Lord, keep us everywhere. Keep us when in the *valley*—that we murmur not against Your humbling hand. Keep us when on the *mountain*—that we wax not giddy through being lifted up. Keep us in *youth*—when our passions are strong. Keep us in *old age*—when becoming conceited of our wisdom, we may therefore prove greater fools than the young and giddy. Keep us when we come to *die*—lest, at the very last, we should deny You! Keep us living, keep us dying, keep us laboring, keep us suffering, keep us fighting, keep us resting, keep us everywhere, for everywhere we need You, O our God!"

June 30 — *Morning*

"And the glory which You gave me—I have given them." John 17:22

Behold the superlative liberality of the Lord Jesus, for He has given us His all. Although a pittance of His possessions would have made a universe of angels rich beyond all thought—yet He was not content until He had given us *all that He had*. It would have been surprising grace—if He had allowed us to eat the *crumbs* of His bounty beneath the table of His mercy; but He will do nothing by halves, He makes us sit with Him and share the feast! Had He given us some small pension from His royal coffers, we would have had cause to love Him eternally; but no—He will have His bride as rich as Himself, and He will not have a glory or a grace in which she shall not share. He has not been content with less than making us *joint-heirs* with Himself, so that we might have equal possessions. He has emptied all His estate into the coffers of the Church, and has all things common with His redeemed.

There is not one room in His house, the key of which He will withhold from His people. He gives them full liberty to take all that He has to be their own. He loves them to take freely of His treasure, and appropriate as much as they can possibly carry. The boundless fullness of His all-sufficiency is as free to the believer—as the air he breathes. Christ has put the *flagon of His love and grace* to the believer's lip, and bidden him drink on forever; for could he drain it, he is welcome to do so, and as he cannot exhaust it, he is bidden to drink abundantly, for it is all his own! What truer proof of fellowship can heaven or earth afford?

"When I stand before the throne
Dressed in beauty not my own;
When I see You as You are,
Love You with unsinning heart;
Then, Lord, shall I fully know—
Not until then—how much I owe!"

June 30 — Evening

"Ah Lord God, behold, You have made the heaven and the earth by your great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for You." Jeremiah 32:17

At the very time when the Chaldeans surrounded Jerusalem, and when the sword, famine and pestilence had desolated the land, Jeremiah was commanded by God to purchase a field, and have the *deed of transfer* legally sealed and witnessed. This was a strange purchase for a rational man to make. Prudence could not justify it, for it was buying with scarcely a probability that the person purchasing could ever enjoy the possession. But it was enough for Jeremiah that his God had bidden him, for well he knew that God will be justified of all His children.

He reasoned thus, "Ah, Lord God! You can make this plot of ground of use to me; You can rid this land of these oppressors; You can make me yet sit under my vine and my fig-tree in the heritage which I have bought; for You did make the heavens and the earth, and there is nothing too hard for You."

This gave a majesty to the early saints, that they dared to do at God's command, things which carnal reason would condemn. Whether it is a *Noah* who is to build a ship on dry land, an *Abraham* who is to offer up his only son, or a *Moses* who is to despise the treasures of Egypt, or a *Joshua* who is to besiege Jericho seven days, using no weapons but the blasts of rams' horns—they all act upon God's command, contrary to the dictates of carnal reason; and the Lord gives them a rich reward as the result of their obedient faith. Would to God we had in the religion of these modern times, a more potent infusion of this heroic faith in God. If we would venture more upon the naked promise of God, we would enter a world of wonders to which as yet we are strangers. Let Jeremiah's place of confidence be ours—nothing is too hard for the God who created the heavens and the earth!

July 1 — *Morning*

"In summer and in winter, shall it be." Zechariah 14:8

The streams of living water which flow from Jerusalem are not dried up by the parching heats of sultry midsummer, any more than they were frozen by the cold winds of blustering winter. Rejoice, O my soul, that you are spared to testify of the faithfulness of the Lord. The *seasons* change and *you* change—but your *Lord* abides evermore the same—and the streams of His love are as deep, as broad and as full as ever.

The heats of business cares and scorching trials make me need the cooling influences of the river of His grace; I may go at once and drink to the full from the inexhaustible fountain, for in summer and in winter it pours forth its flood. The upper springs are never scanty, and blessed be the name of the Lord, the nether springs cannot fail either. *Elijah* found Cherith to dry up—but Jehovah was still the same God of providence. *Job* said his brethren were like deceitful brooks—but he found his God an overflowing river of consolation. The Nile is the great confidence of Egypt—but its floods are variable; our Lord is evermore the same.

By turning the course of the Euphrates, Cyrus took the city of Babylon—but no power, human or infernal, can divert the current of divine grace. The tracks of ancient rivers have been found all dry and desolate—but the streams which take their rise on the *mountains of divine sovereignty and infinite love* shall ever be full to the brim. Generations melt away—but the course of grace is unaltered. The river of God may sing with greater truth than the brook in the poem, "Men may come, and men may go—but I go on forever." How happy are you, my soul, to be led beside such still waters! never wander to other streams, lest you hear the Lord's rebuke, "What have you to do in the way of Egypt—to drink of the muddy river?"

July 1 — Evening

"The voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day." Genesis 3:8

My soul, now that the cool of the day has come, retire awhile and hearken to the voice of your God. He is always ready to speak with you—when you are prepared to hear. If there is any slowness to commune it is not on His part—but altogether on your own, for He stands at the door and knocks, and if His people will but open—He rejoices to enter. But in what state is my heart, which is my Lord's garden? May I venture to hope that it is well trimmed and watered, and is bringing forth fruit fit for Him? If not, He will have much to reprove—but still I pray Him to come unto me, for nothing can so certainly bring my heart into a right condition as the presence of the Sun of Righteousness, who brings healing in His wings.

Come, therefore, O Lord, my *God*—my soul invites You earnestly, and waits for You eagerly. Come to me, O *Jesus*, my well-beloved, and plant fresh flowers in my garden, such as I see blooming in such perfection in Your matchless character! Come, O my *Father*, who is the Gardener, and deal with me in Your tenderness and prudence! Come, O *Holy Spirit*, and bedew my whole nature, as the herbs are now moistened with the evening dews. O that God would speak to me. Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears! O that He would walk with me; I am ready to give up my whole heart and mind to Him, and every other thought is hushed. I am only asking what He delights to give. I am sure that He will condescend to have fellowship with me, for He has given me His Holy Spirit to abide with me forever.

Sweet is the cool twilight, when every star seems like the eye of heaven, and the cool wind is as the breath of celestial love. My Father, my elder Brother, my sweet Comforter, speak now in loving-kindness, for You have opened my ear and I am not rebellious.

July 2 — *Morning*

"Our heart shall rejoice in Him." Psalm 33:21

Blessed is the fact that Christians can rejoice even in the deepest *distress*; although *trouble* may surround them, they still sing; and, like many birds, they sing best in their *cages*. The waves may roll over them—but their souls soon rise to the surface and see the light of God's countenance; they have a buoyancy about them which keeps their head always above the water, and helps them to sing amid the tempest, "God is with me still." To whom shall the glory be given? Oh! to Jesus—it is all by Jesus.

Trouble does not *necessarily* bring consolation with it to the believer—but the presence of the Son of God in the fiery furnace with him fills his heart with joy. He is *sick* and *suffering*—but Jesus visits him and makes his bed for him. He is *dying*, and the cold chilly waters of Jordan are gathering about him up to the neck—but Jesus puts His arms around him, and cries, "Fear not, beloved! To die is to be blessed; the waters of death have their fountain-head in heaven; they are not bitter, they are as sweet as nectar, for they flow from the throne of God." As the departing saint wades through the stream, and the billows gather around him, and heart and flesh fail him, the same voice sounds in his ears, "Fear not! I am with you! Do not be dismayed! I am your God." As he nears the borders of the infinite unknown, and is almost affrighted to enter the realm of shadows, Jesus says, "Fear not, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Thus strengthened and consoled, the believer is not afraid to die; nay, he is even willing to depart, for since he has seen Jesus as the *morning star*, he longs to gaze upon Him as the *sun* in his strength. Truly, the presence of Jesus is all the heaven we desire. He is at once "The glory of our brightest days—and the comfort of our nights."

July 2 — Evening

"Unto You will I cry, O Lord my rock! Do not be silent to me

—lest, if You be silent to me, I become like those who go down into the pit." Psalm 28:1

A *cry* is the natural expression of sorrow, and a suitable utterance when all other modes of appeal fail us; but the cry must be alone directed to the Lord, for to cry to man is to waste our entreaties upon the air. When we consider the readiness of the Lord to hear, and His ability to aid, we shall see good reason for directing all our appeals at once to the God of our salvation. It will be in vain to call to the *rocks* in the day of judgment—but *our Rock* attends to our cries.

"Do not be silent to me." Mere formalists may be content without answers to their prayers—but genuine suppliants cannot. They are not satisfied with the results of prayer itself in calming the mind and subduing the will—they must go further, and obtain actual replies from heaven, or they cannot rest; and those replies they long to receive at once, they dread even a little of God's silence.

God's *voice* is often so terrible that it shakes the wilderness; but His *silence* is equally full of awe to an eager suppliant. When God seems to close *His ear*, we must not therefore close *our mouths*—but rather cry with more earnestness; for when our note grows shrill with eagerness and grief, He will not long deny us a hearing. What a dreadful case would we be in—if the Lord should become forever silent to our prayers!

"Lest, if You be silent to me, I become like those who go down into the pit." Deprived of the God who answers prayer, we would be in a more pitiable plight than the dead in the grave, and would soon sink to the same level as the lost in hell. We must have *answers to prayer*—ours is an urgent case of dire necessity; surely the Lord will speak peace to our agitated minds—for He never can find it in His heart to permit His own elect to perish.

July 3 — *Morning*

"The sickly, thin cows—ate the healthy, well-fed cows." Genesis 41:4

Pharaoh's dream has too often been my waking experience. My days of sloth have ruinously destroyed all that I had achieved in times of zealous industry; my seasons of coldness have frozen all the genial glow of my periods of fervency and enthusiasm; and my fits of worldliness have thrown me back from my advances in the divine life.

I had need to beware of lean prayers, lean praises, lean duties, and lean experiences—for these will eat up the fat of my comfort and peace. If I neglect prayer for ever so short a time, I lose all the spirituality to which I had attained. If I draw no fresh supplies from heaven, the old grain in my granary is soon consumed by the famine which rages in my soul. When the caterpillars of *indifference*, the cankerworms of *worldliness*, and the palmer-worms of *self-indulgence*, lay my heart completely desolate, and make my soul to languish—all my former fruitfulness and growth in grace—avails me nothing whatever.

How anxious should I be to have no sickly, thin days, no ill-favored hours! If every day I journeyed towards the goal of my desires, I would soon reach it—but *backsliding* leaves me still far off from the prize of my high calling, and robs me of the advances which I had so laboriously made. The only way in which all my days can be as the "healthy, well-fed cows," is to feed them in the right meadow, to spend them with the Lord, in His service, in His company, in His fear, and in His way.

Why should not every year be richer than the past—in love, and usefulness, and joy? I am nearer the celestial hills, I have had more experience of my Lord, and should be more like Him. O Lord, keep far from me the curse of *leanness of soul*; let me not have to cry, "My leanness, my leanness, woe unto me!" but may I be well-fed and nourished in Your house, that I may praise Your name!

July 3 — Evening

"If we suffer—we shall also reign with Him." 2 Timothy 2:12

We must not imagine that we are suffering *for* Christ, and *with* Christ, if we are not *in* Christ. Beloved friend, are you trusting to Jesus alone? If not, whatever you may have to mourn over on earth, you are not "suffering with Christ," and have no hope of reigning with Him in heaven.

Neither are we to conclude that all a *Christian's* sufferings are sufferings with Christ, for it is essential that he is called by God to suffer. If we are rash and imprudent, and run into positions for which neither providence nor grace has fitted us, we ought to question whether we are not rather *sinning* than *communing with Jesus*. If we let passion take the place of judgment, and self-will reign instead of Scriptural authority—we shall fight the Lord's battles with the *devil's weapons*, and if we cut our own fingers we must not be surprised!

Again, in troubles which come upon us as the result of *sin*, we must not dream that we are suffering with Christ. When Miriam spoke evil of Moses, and the leprosy polluted her, she was not suffering for God.

Moreover, suffering which God accepts—must have God's glory as its end. If I suffer that I may earn a name, or win applause—I shall get no other reward than that of the Pharisee. It is requisite also that love to Jesus, and love to His elect, be ever the mainspring of all our suffering. We must manifest the Spirit of Christ in meekness, gentleness, and forgiveness.

Let us search and see if we truly suffer with Jesus. And if we do thus suffer, what is our "light affliction" compared with reigning with Him? Oh it is so blessed to be in the *furnace* with Christ, and such an honor to stand in the *pillory* with Him, that if there were no future reward, we might count ourselves happy in present honor. But when the recompense is so eternal, so infinitely more than we had any right to expect—shall we not take up the *cross* with alacrity, and go on our way rejoicing!

July 4 — *Morning*

"Sanctify them through Your truth." John 17:17

Sanctification begins in regeneration. The Spirit of God infuses into man that new living principle by which he becomes "a new creature" in Christ Jesus.

This work, which begins in the new birth, is carried on in two ways—*mortification*, whereby the lusts of the flesh are subdued and kept under; and *vivification*, by which the life which God has put within us is made to be a well of water springing up unto everlasting life. This is carried on every day in what is called "perseverance," by which the Christian is preserved and continued in a gracious state, and is made to abound in good works unto the praise and glory of God. And it culminates or comes to perfection, in "glory," when the soul, being thoroughly purged, is caught up to dwell with holy beings at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

But while the Spirit of God is thus the author of sanctification—yet there is a visible agency employed which must not be forgotten. "Sanctify them," said Jesus, "through your *truth*—your *Word* is truth." The passages of Scripture which prove that the *instrument* of our sanctification is the *Word of God* are very many. The Spirit of God brings to our minds the precepts and doctrines of truth, and applies them with power. These are heard in the *ear*, and being received in the *heart*—they work in us to will and to do of God's good pleasure.

The truth is the sanctifier, and if we do not hear or read the truth, we shall not grow in sanctification. We only progress in sound living as we progress in sound understanding. "Your Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." Do not say of any error, "It is a mere matter of opinion." No man indulges an error of *judgment*, without sooner or later tolerating an error in *practice*. Hold fast the truth, for by so holding the truth shall you be sanctified by the Spirit of God.

July 4 — Evening

"He who has clean hands, and a pure heart;

who has not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully." Psalm 24:4

Outward practical holiness is a very precious mark of grace. It is to be feared that many professors have perverted the doctrine of justification by faith in such a way, as to treat good works with contempt; if so, they will receive everlasting contempt at the last great day. If our hands are not clean, let us wash them in Jesus' precious blood, and so let us lift up pure hands unto God. But "clean hands" will not suffice, unless they are connected with "a pure heart." True religion is heart-work. We may wash the outside of the cup and the platter as long as we please—but if the inward parts are filthy, we are filthy altogether in the sight of God, for our *hearts* are more truly ourselves than our *hands* are; the very life of our being lies in the inner nature, and hence the imperative need of *purity within*. The pure in heart shall see God—all others are but blind bats.

The man who is born for heaven, "has not lifted up his soul unto vanity." All men have their joys, by which their souls are lifted up; the worldling lifts up his soul in carnal delights, which are mere empty vanities; but the saint loves more substantial things; like Jehoshaphat, he is lifted up in the ways of the Lord. *He who is content with husks—will be reckoned with the swine!* Does the world satisfy you? Then you have your reward and portion in this life; make much of it, for you shall know no other joy.

"Nor sworn deceitfully." The saints are men of honor still. The Christian man's word is his only oath; but that is as good as twenty oaths of other men. False speaking will shut any man out of heaven, for a liar shall not enter into God's house, whatever may be his professions or doings. Reader, does the text before us condemn you, or do you hope to ascend into the hill of the Lord?

July 5 — Morning

"Called to be saints." Romans 1:7

We are very apt to regard the New Testament saints as if they were "saints" in a more especial manner, than the other children of God. All are "saints" whom God has called by His grace, and sanctified by His Spirit; but we are apt to look upon the apostles as extraordinary beings, scarcely subject to the same weaknesses and temptations as ourselves. Yet in so doing, we are forgetful of this truth—that the nearer a man lives to God—the more intensely has he to mourn over his own evil heart; and the more his Master honors him in His service, the more also does the evil of the flesh vex and tease him day by day.

The fact is, if we had seen the apostle Paul, we would have thought him just like the rest of the chosen family. And if we had talked with him, we would have said, "We find that his experience and ours are much the same. He is more faithful, more holy, and more deeply taught than we are—but he has the same exact trials to endure. Nay, in some respects he is more sorely tried than ourselves."

Do not, then, look upon the *ancient saints* as being exempt either from infirmities or sins; and do not regard them with that *mystic reverence* which will almost make us idolaters. Their holiness is attainable even by us. We are "called to be saints" by that same voice which constrained them to their high calling. It is every Christian's duty to force his way into the *inner circle of saintship*. If these saints were superior to us in their attainments, as they certainly were, let us follow them; let us emulate their ardor and holiness. We have the same *light* that they had, the same *grace* is accessible to us—so we should not rest satisfied until we have equaled them in heavenly character! They lived *with* Jesus, they lived *for* Jesus, therefore they grew like Jesus. Let us live by the same spirit as they did, "looking unto Jesus," and our saintship will soon be apparent!

July 5 — Evening

"Trust you in the Lord forever—for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." Isaiah 26:4

Seeing that we have such a God to trust to, let us rest upon Him with all our weight; let us resolutely drive out all unbelief, and endeavor to get rid of doubts and fears, which so much mar our comfort; since there is no excuse for fear—where God is the foundation of our trust.

A loving parent would be sorely grieved if his child could not trust him; and how ungenerous, how unkind is our conduct when we put so little confidence in our heavenly Father who has never failed us, and who never will. It would be well if doubting were banished from the household of God; but it is to be feared that *old Unbelief* is as nimble nowadays, as when the psalmist asked, "Is His mercy clean gone forever? Will He be favorable no more?"

David had not made any very lengthy trial of the mighty sword of the giant Goliath, and yet he said, "There is none like it!" He had tried it once in the hour of his youthful victory, and it had proved itself to be of the right metal, and therefore he praised it ever afterwards; even so should we speak well of our God, there is none like unto Him in the heaven above—or the earth beneath, "To whom then will you liken Me, or shall I be equal? says the Holy One." There is no rock like unto the rock of Jacob!

So far from allowing doubts to live in our hearts—we will take the whole detestable crew, as Elijah did the prophets of Baal, and slay them over the brook! And for a stream to kill them at—we will select the sacred torrent which wells forth from our Savior's wounded side! We have been in many trials—but we have never yet been cast where we could not find in our God all that we needed. Let us then be encouraged to trust in the Lord forever, assured that His ever lasting strength will be, as it has been, our support and stay!

July 6 — Morning

"Whoever listens to Me will live in safety and be at ease, without fear of harm." Proverbs 1:33

Divine love is rendered conspicuous—when it shines in the midst of judgments. Fair is that *lone star* which smiles through the rifts of the thunder clouds; bright is the oasis which blooms in the wilderness of sand; so fair and so bright is *love* in the midst of wrath.

When the Israelites provoked the Most High by their continued idolatry, He punished them by withholding both dew and rain, so that their land was visited by a sore famine; but while He did this, He took care that His own chosen ones should be secure. If all other brooks are dry—yet shall there be one reserved for Elijah; and when that fails, God shall still preserve for him a place of sustenance; nay, not only so, the Lord had not simply one "Elijah," but He had a remnant according to the election of grace, who were hidden by fifties in a cave, and though the whole land was subject to famine—yet these fifties in the cave were fed, and fed from Ahab's table too by His faithful, God-fearing steward, Obadiah.

Let us from this, draw the inference, that *come what may, God's people are safe*. Let convulsions shake the solid earth, let the skies themselves be rent in twain—yet amid the wreck of worlds—the believer shall be as secure as in the calmest hour of rest. If God cannot save His people *under* heaven, He will save them *in* heaven. If the world becomes too hot to hold them, then heaven shall be the place of their reception and their safety.

Be then confident, when you hear of wars, and rumors of wars. Let no agitation distress you—but be quiet from fear of evil. Whatever disaster comes upon the earth—you, beneath the broad wings of Jehovah, shall be secure. Stay yourself upon His promise; rest in His faithfulness, and bid defiance to the blackest future, for there is nothing in it direful for you. Your sole concern should be to show forth to the world the blessedness of hearkening to the voice of wisdom!

July 6 — Evening

"How many are my iniquities and sins!" Job 13:23

Have you ever really weighed and considered how great the *sin of God's people* is? Think how heinous is *your own* transgression, and you will find that not only does a sin here and there tower up like an alp—but that your iniquities are heaped upon each other, as in the old fable of the giants who piled mountain upon mountain. What an aggregate of sin there is—in the life of one of the most sanctified of God's children! Attempt to multiply this, the sin of one only, by the multitude of the redeemed, "a number which no man can number," and you will have some conception of the *great mass of the guilt* of the people for whom Jesus shed His blood!

But we arrive at a more adequate idea of the magnitude of sin—by the greatness of the *remedy* provided. It is the blood of Jesus Christ, God's only and well-beloved Son. God's Son! Angels cast their crowns before Him! All the choral symphonies of heaven surround His glorious throne. "God over all, blessed forever. Amen." And yet He takes upon Himself the form of a servant, and is scourged and pierced, bruised and torn, and at last slain—since nothing but the blood of the incarnate Son of God could make atonement for our offences.

No human mind can adequately estimate the infinite value of that divine sacrifice, for as great as the *sin* of God's people is—the *atonement* which takes it away is immeasurably greater! Therefore, the believer, even when sin rolls like a black flood, and the remembrance of the past is bitter, can yet stand before the blazing throne of the great and holy God, and cry, "Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died; yes rather, who has risen again!"

While the recollection of his sin fills him with shame and sorrow—he at the same time makes it a dark foil—to show the brightness of mercy! Our guilt is the dark night in which the fair star of divine love shines with serene splendor!

July 7 — Morning

"Brethren, pray for us." 1 Thessalonians 5:25

This one morning in the year, we reserved to refresh the reader's memory upon the subject of *prayer for ministers*, and we do most earnestly implore every Christian household to grant the fervent request of the text first uttered by an apostle—and now repeated by us.

Brethren, our work is solemnly momentous, involving *weal* or *woe* to thousands; we treat with souls for God on eternal business, and our word is either a savor of *life* unto life—or of *death* unto death. A very heavy responsibility rests upon us, and it will be no small mercy if at the last, we are found clear of the blood of all men. As *officers in Christ's army*, we are the especial mark of the enmity of wicked men and devils; they watch for our halting, and labor to take us by the heels. Our sacred calling involves us in temptations from which you are exempt; above all it too often draws us away from our personal enjoyment of truth into a *ministerial* and *official* consideration of it. We meet with many knotty cases, and our wits are bewildered. We observe very sad backslidings, and our hearts are wounded. We see millions perishing, and our spirits sink. We wish to profit you by our preaching; we desire to be blessed to your children; we long to be useful both to saints and sinners. Therefore, dear friends, intercede for us with our God!

Miserable men are we—if we miss the aid of your prayers; but happy are we—if we live in your supplications. You do not look to us but to our Master for spiritual blessings, and yet how many times has He given those blessings through His ministers. Ask then, again and again, that we may be the earthen vessels into which the Lord may put the treasure of the gospel. We, the whole company of missionaries, ministers, city workers, and students, do in the name of Jesus beseech you, "brethren, pray for us!"

July 7 — Evening

"When I passed by you, I said unto you—*LIVE!*" Ezekiel 16:6

Saved one, consider gratefully, this *mandate of mercy*.

Note that this fiat of God is *majestic*. In our text, we perceive a sinner with nothing in him but sin, expecting nothing but wrath; but the eternal Lord passes by in His glory; He looks. He pauses, and He pronounces the solitary but royal word, "LIVE!" There speaks *a God!* Who but He could venture thus to deal with life, and dispense it with a single syllable?

Again, this fiat is *manifold*. When He says "Live!" it includes many things. Here is *judicial* life. The sinner is ready to be condemned—but the mighty One says, "Live," and he rises pardoned and absolved. It is *spiritual* life. We knew not Jesus—our eyes could not see Christ, our ears could not hear His voice—Jehovah said "Live!" and we who were dead in trespasses and sins—were quickened. Moreover, it includes *glory* life, which is the perfection of spiritual life. "I said unto you, Live!" and that word rolls on through all the years of time, until death comes, and in the midst of the shadows of death, the Lord's voice is still heard, "Live!" In the morning of the resurrection it is that self-same voice which is echoed by the arch-angel, "Live!" and as holy spirits rise to heaven to be blessed forever in the glory of their God, it is in the power of this same word, "Live!"

Note again, that it is an *irresistible* mandate. Saul of Tarsus is on the road to Damascus to arrest the saints of the living God. A voice is heard from heaven and a light is seen above the brightness of the sun, and Saul is crying out, "Lord, what will you have me to do?"

This mandate is a mandate of *free grace*. When sinners are saved, it is only and solely because God will do it to magnify His free, unpurchased, unsought grace. Christians, see your position, debtors to grace; show your gratitude by earnest, Christ-like lives, and as God has bidden you live—see to it that you live in earnest!

July 8 — Morning

"Tell me the secret of your great strength?" Judges 16:6

Where lies the secret strength of faith? It lies in the *food* it feeds on. Faith studies what the *PROMISE* is—an emanation of divine grace, an overflowing of the great heart of God; and faith says, "My God could not have given this promise, except from love and grace; therefore it is quite certain His Word will be fulfilled." Then faith thinks, "*WHO* gave this promise?" It considers not so much its greatness, as, "Who is the *author* of it?" She remembers that it is God who cannot lie—God omnipotent, God immutable; and therefore concludes that the promise must be fulfilled; and forward she advances in this firm conviction. She remembers, *WHY* the promise was given—namely, for God's glory, and she feels perfectly sure that God's glory is safe, that He will never stain His own escutcheon, nor mar the luster of His own crown; and therefore the promise must and will stand.

Then faith also considers the amazing work of Christ as being a clear proof of the Father's intention to fulfill His Word. "He who spared not His own Son—but freely delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" Moreover faith looks back upon the *PAST*, for her battles have strengthened her, and her victories have given her courage. She remembers that God never has failed her; nay, that He never did once fail any of His children. She recollects times of great peril, when deliverance came; hours of awful need, when as her day her strength was found, and she cries, "No, I never will be led to think that He can change and leave His servant now. Hitherto the Lord has helped me—and He will help me still."

Thus faith views each promise in its connection with the promise-giver, and, because she does so, can with assurance say, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life!"

July 8 — Evening

"Guide me in Your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation. I wait for You all day long."

Psalm 25:5

When the believer has begun with trembling feet to walk in the way of the Lord, he asks to be still led onward like a little child upheld by its parent's helping hand, and he craves to be further instructed in the *alphabet of truth*. Experimental heart teaching, is the theme of this prayer. David knew much—but he felt his ignorance, and desired to be still in *the Lord's school*—four times over in two verses he applies for a scholarship in the *college of grace*.

It would be well for many professors, if instead of following their own devices, and cutting out new paths of thought for themselves, they would inquire for the good old ways of God's own truth, and beseech the Holy Spirit to give them sanctified understandings and teachable hearts.

"For you are the God of my salvation." The Three-One Jehovah is the Author and Perfecter of salvation to His people. Reader, is He the God of *your* salvation? Do you find in the Father's election, in the Son's atonement, and in the Spirit's quickening, all the grounds of your eternal hopes? If so, you may use this as an argument for obtaining further blessings! If the Lord has ordained to *save* you, surely He will not refuse to *instruct* you in His ways. It is a happy thing when we can address the Lord with the confidence which David here manifests, it gives us great power in prayer, and comfort in trial.

"I wait for You all day long." *Patience* is the fair handmaid and daughter of *faith*. We cheerfully wait—when we are certain that we shall not wait in vain. It is our duty and our privilege to wait upon the Lord in service, in worship, in expectancy, in trust all the days of our life. Our faith will be tried faith, and if it is of the true kind, it will bear continued trial without yielding. We shall not grow weary of waiting upon God—if we remember how long and how graciously He once waited for us!

July 9 — *Morning*

"Do not forget all His benefits." Psalm 103:2

It is a delightful and profitable occupation—to mark the hand of God in the lives of ancient saints, and to observe His *goodness* in delivering them, His *mercy* in pardoning them, and His *faithfulness* in keeping His covenant with them.

But would it not be even more interesting and profitable for us—to mark the hand of God in our own lives? Ought we not to look upon our own history as being at least as full of God—as full of His *goodness* and of His *truth*, as much a proof of His *faithfulness* and *veracity*—as the lives of any of the saints who have gone before us? We do our Lord an injustice, when we suppose that He wrought all His mighty acts, and showed Himself strong for those in the earlier times—but does not perform wonders or lay bare His arm for the saints who are now upon the earth.

Let us review *our own* lives. Surely in these, we may discover some happy incidents, refreshing to ourselves and glorifying to our God. Have you had no deliverances? Have you passed through no rivers, supported by the divine presence? Have you walked through no fires unharmed? Have you had no spiritual manifestations of Christ to your heart? Have you had no choice favors? The God who gave Solomon the desire of his heart—has He never listened to you and answered your requests? That God of lavish bounty of whom David sang, "Who satisfies your mouth with good things," has He never satiated you with fatness? Have you never been made to lie down in green pastures? Have you never been led by the still waters?

Surely the goodness of God has been the same to us as to the saints of old. Let us, then, *weave His mercies into a song*. Let us take the pure gold of *thankfulness*, and the jewels of *praise* and make them into another crown for the head of Jesus. Let our souls give forth music as sweet and as exhilarating as came from David's harp, while we praise the Lord—whose mercy endures forever!

July 9 — Evening

"And God divided the *light* from the *darkness*." Genesis 1:4

A believer has *two principles* at work within him. In his natural state, he was subject to one principle only, which was darkness; now light has entered, and the two principles disagree. Mark the apostle Paul's words in the seventh chapter of Romans, "I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members." How has this state of things come to pass?

"The Lord divided the *light* from the *darkness*." Darkness, by itself, is quiet and undisturbed—but when the Lord sends in light, there is a conflict, for the one is in opposition to the other—a conflict which will never cease until the believer is altogether light in the Lord. If there is a division within the individual Christian, there is certain to be a division without. As soon as the Lord gives to any man light, he proceeds to separate himself from the darkness around; he secedes from a merely *worldly religion* of outward ceremonial, for nothing short of the gospel of Christ will now satisfy him; and he withdraws himself from *worldly society* and frivolous amusements.

He also seeks the company of the saints, for "we know we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." The *light* gathers to itself, and the *darkness* gathers to itself. What God has divided—let us never try to unite; but as Christ went outside the camp, bearing His reproach, so let us come out from the ungodly, and be a peculiar people. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners; and, as He was—so we are to be nonconformists to the world, dissenting from all sin, and distinguished from the rest of mankind by our likeness to our Master!

July 10 — Morning

"Fellow citizens with the saints." Ephesians 2:19

What is meant by our being citizens in heaven? It means that we are under heaven's government. Christ the *king* of heaven *reigns* in our hearts; our daily prayer is, "May Your will be done on earth—as it is in heaven." The *proclamations* issued from the throne of glory are freely received by us—the *decrees* of the Great King we cheerfully obey.

Then as citizens of the New Jerusalem, we share heaven's *honors*. The glory which belongs to beatified saints—belongs to us, for we are already sons of God, already princes of the blood imperial; already we wear the spotless robe of Jesus' righteousness; already we have angels for our servitors, saints for our companions, Christ for our Brother, God for our Father, and a crown of immortality for our reward! We share the honors of citizenship, for we have come to the general assembly and Church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven.

As citizens, we have common *rights* to all the property of heaven. Ours are its gates of pearl and walls of chrysolite; ours the azure light of the city that needs no candle nor light of the sun; ours the river of the water of life, and the twelve kinds of fruits which grow on the trees planted on the banks thereof; there is nothing in heaven that belongs not to us. "Things present—or things to come," all are ours!

Also as citizens of heaven—we enjoy its *delights*. Do they there rejoice over sinners that repent—prodigals that have returned? So do we. Do they chant the glories of triumphant grace? We do the same. Do they cast their crowns at Jesus' feet? Such honors as we have we cast there too. Are they charmed with His smile? It is not less sweet to us who dwell below. Do they look forward, waiting for His second advent? We also look and long for His glorious appearing. If, then, we are thus citizens of heaven—let our walk and actions be consistent with our high dignity!

July 10 — Evening

"And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day." Genesis 1:5

The *evening* was "darkness" and the *morning* was "light," and yet the two together are called by the name that is given to the *light* alone! This is somewhat remarkable—but it has an exact analogy in spiritual experience. In every believer there is darkness and light, and yet he is not to be named a *sinner* because there is sin in him—but he is to be named a *saint* because he possesses some degree of holiness. This will be a most comforting thought to those who are mourning their infirmities, and who ask, "Can I be a child of God—while there is so much darkness in me?" Yes! For you, like the day, take not your name from the evening—but from the morning; and you are spoken of in the Word of God—as if you were even now perfectly holy as you will be soon. You are called the child of *light*, though there is *darkness* in you still. You are named after what is the *predominating* quality in the sight of God, which will one day be the *only* principle remaining.

Observe that the *evening* comes first. Naturally we are darkness first in order of time, and the gloom is often first in our mournful apprehension, driving us to cry out in deep humiliation, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" The place of the *morning* is second, it dawns when grace overcomes nature. It is a blessed aphorism of John Bunyan, "That which is last—lasts forever." That which is first, yields in due season to the last; but nothing comes after the last. So that though you are naturally darkness, when once you become light in the Lord, there is no *evening* to follow; "your sun shall no more go down." The first day in this life is an *evening* and a *morning*; but the second day, when we shall be with God, forever, shall be a day with no evening—but one, sacred, high, eternal noon!

July 11 — Morning

"And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will Himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast." 1 Peter 5:10

You have seen the *bow of heaven* as it spans the plain—glorious are its colors, and rare its hues. It is beautiful—but, alas, it passes away, and lo, it is not. The fair colors give way to the fleecy clouds, and the sky is no longer brilliant with the tints of heaven. It is not established. How can it be? A *glorious show* made up of transitory sun-beams and passing rain-drops, how can it abide?

The *graces* of the Christian character must not resemble the rainbow in its transitory beauty—but, on the contrary, must be established, settled, abiding. Seek, O believer, that every good thing you have—may be an *abiding* thing. May your character not be a writing upon the *sand*—but an inscription upon the *rock*! May your *faith* be no "baseless fabric of a vision," but may it be built of material able to endure that awful fire which shall consume the wood, hay, and stubble of the hypocrite. May you be rooted and grounded in *love*. May your *convictions* be deep, your *love* real, your *desires* earnest. May your whole life be so settled and established, that all the blasts of hell, and all the storms of earth—shall never be able to remove you.

But notice how this blessing of being "established in the faith" is gained. The apostle's words point us to suffering as the means employed, "After you have *suffered* a little while." It is of no use to hope that we shall be well rooted—if no rough winds pass over us. Those old gnarlings on the root of the oak tree, and those strange twistings of the branches—all tell of the many *storms* that have swept over it, and they are also indicators of the depth into which the roots have forced their way. So the Christian is made strong, and firmly rooted by all the trials and storms of life. Shrink not then, from the tempestuous winds of trial—but take comfort, believing that by their rough discipline, God is fulfilling this blessing to you.

July 11 — Evening

**"Tell it to your children, and let your children tell it to their children,
and their children to the next generation." Joel 1:3**

In this simple way, by God's grace, a living testimony for truth is always to be kept alive in the land—the beloved of the Lord are to hand down their witness for the gospel, and the covenant—to their heirs, and these again to their next descendants. This is our first duty, we are to begin at the *family hearth*. He is a bad preacher—who does not commence his ministry *at home*. The heathen are to be sought by all means, and the highways and hedges are to be searched—but *home* has a prior claim, and woe unto those who reverse the order of the Lord's arrangements.

To teach our children is a personal duty; we cannot delegate it to Sunday School Teachers, or other friendly helpers; these can *assist* us—but cannot *relieve* us from the sacred obligation; proxies and sponsors are wicked devices in this case. Mothers and fathers must, like Abraham, command their households in the fear of God, and talk with their offspring concerning the wondrous works of the Most High God.

Parental teaching is a natural duty—who so fit to look to after child's well-being, as those who are the authors of his actual being? To neglect the instruction of our offspring—is worse than brutish. Family religion is necessary for the nation, for the family itself, and for the church of God. By a thousand plots, Popery is covertly advancing in our land, and one of the most effectual means for resisting its inroads is left almost neglected, namely, the instruction of children in the faith. Would that *parents* would awaken to a sense of the importance of this matter. It is a pleasant duty to talk of Jesus to our sons and daughters, and the more so because it has often proved to be an accepted work, for God has saved the children through the parents' prayers and admonitions. May every house into which this volume shall come—honor the Lord and receive His smile!

July 12 — Morning

"Sanctified by God the Father." Jude 1

"Sanctified in Christ Jesus." 1 Corinthians 1:2

"Through sanctification of the Spirit." 1 Peter 1:2

Mark the union of the Three Divine Persons in all their gracious acts. How unwisely do those believers talk, who make *preferences* in the Persons of the Trinity; who think of *Jesus* as if He were the embodiment of everything lovely and gracious, while the *Father* they regard as severely just—but destitute of kindness. Equally wrong are those who magnify the decree of the *Father*, and the atonement of the *Son*—so as to depreciate the work of the *Spirit*.

In deeds of *grace*—none of the Persons of the Trinity act apart from the rest. They are as united in their *works*, as in their *essence*. In their love towards the chosen they are one, and in the actions which flow from that great central source—they are still undivided. Specially notice this in the matter of sanctification. While we may without mistake speak of sanctification as the work of the Spirit—yet we must take heed that we do not view it as if the Father and the Son had no part therein. It is correct to speak of sanctification as the work of the Father, of the Son, and of the Spirit. Still does Jehovah say, "Let *us* make man in our own image after our likeness," and thus we are "his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them."

See the value which God sets upon real holiness, since the Three Persons in the Trinity are represented as co-working to produce a Church without "spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."

And you, believer, as the follower of Christ, must also set a high value on holiness—upon purity of life, and godliness of conversation. Value the blood of Christ as the foundation of your hope—but never speak disparagingly of the work of the *Spirit* which is your *fitness* for the inheritance of the saints in light. This day let us so live as to manifest the work of the Triune God in us!

July 12 — Evening

"His heavenly kingdom." 2 Timothy 4:18

Yonder city of the great King, is a place of *active service*. Ransomed spirits serve Him day and night in His temple. They never cease to fulfill the good pleasure of their King. They always "rest," so far as ease and freedom from care is concerned; but never "rest," in the sense of indolence or inactivity.

The heavenly Jerusalem is the place of *communion* with all the people of God. We shall sit with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in eternal fellowship. We shall hold high converse with the noble host of the elect, all reigning with Him who by His love and His potent arm—has brought them safely home. We shall not sing solos—but in *chorus* shall we praise our King.

Heaven is a place of *realized victory*. Whenever, Christian, you have achieved a victory over your lusts—whenever after hard struggling, you have laid a temptation dead at your feet—you have in that hour a foretaste of the joy that awaits you when the Lord shall shortly tread Satan under your feet, and you shall find yourself more than conqueror through Him who has loved you.

Paradise is a place of *security*. When you enjoy the full assurance of faith, you have the pledge of that glorious security which shall be yours when you are a perfect citizen of the heavenly Jerusalem. O my sweet home, Heaven! O happy harbor of my soul! Thanks, even now, to Him whose love has taught me to long for You; but louder thanks in eternity—when I shall *possess* you!

"My soul has tasted of the grapes,
And now it longs to go
Where my dear Lord His vineyard keeps
And all the clusters grow.

"Upon the true and living vine,
My famished soul would feast,
And banquet on the fruit divine,
An everlasting guest!"

July 13 — Morning

"God said to Jonah—Is it right for you to be *angry*?" Jonah 4:9

Anger is not always or necessarily sinful—but it has such a tendency to run wild, that whenever it displays itself, we should be quick to question its character, with this enquiry, "Is it right for you to be angry?" It may be that we can answer, "YES!" Very frequently, anger is *the madman's firebrand*—but sometimes it is Elijah's fire from heaven. We do well when we are angry with *sin*, because of the wrong which it commits against our good and gracious God; or with *ourselves* because we remain so foolish after so much divine instruction; or with *others* when the sole cause of anger is the evil which they do.

He who is *not* angry at transgression, becomes a *partaker* in it. Sin is a loathsome and hateful thing, and no renewed heart can patiently endure it. God himself is angry with the wicked every day, and it is written in His Word, "You who love the Lord—hate evil."

"Is it right for you to be angry?" Far more frequently, it is to be feared that our anger is not commendable or even justifiable, and then we must answer, "NO!" Why should we be *fretful* with children, *passionate* with servants, and *wrathful* with companions? Is such anger honorable to our Christian profession, or glorifying to God? Is it not just the old evil heart seeking to gain dominion, and should we not resist it with all the might of our newborn nature.

Many professors give way to *angry temper* as though it were useless to attempt resistance; but let the believer remember that he must be a *conqueror* in every point, or else he cannot be *crowned*. If we cannot control our tempers—what has grace done for us? Someone told Mr. Jay that grace was often grafted on a crab-tree stump. "Yes," said he, "but the fruit will not be crab apples." We must not make *natural infirmity* an excuse for sin—but we must fly to the cross and pray the Lord to crucify our tempers, and renew us in gentleness and meekness after His own image!

July 13 — Evening

"When I cry unto You, then shall my enemies turn back; this I know—for *God is for me.*" Psalm 56:9

It is impossible for any human speech to express the full meaning of this delightful phrase, "God is for me." He was "for us" before the worlds were made. He was "for us," or He would not have given His well-beloved son. He was "for us" when He smote the Only-begotten, and laid the full weight of His wrath upon Him—He was "for us," though He was against Him. He was "for us," when we were ruined in the fall—He loved us notwithstanding all. He was "for us," when we were rebels against Him, and with a high hand were bidding Him defiance. He was "for us," or He would not have brought us humbly to seek His face. He has been "for us" in many struggles; we have been summoned to encounter hosts of *dangers*; we have been assailed by *temptations* from without and within—how could we have remained unharmed to this hour—if He had not been "for us"?

He is "for us," with all the infinity of His *being*; with all the omnipotence of His *love*; with all the infallibility of His *wisdom*; arrayed in all His divine attributes, He is "for us," eternally and immutably "for us"; "for us" when yon blue skies shall be rolled up like a worn out vesture; "for us" throughout eternity! And because He is "for us," the voice of prayer will always ensure His help. "When I cry unto You, then shall my enemies be turned back." This is no *uncertain hope*—but a well-grounded assurance, "this I *know*." I will direct my prayer unto You, and will look up for the answer, assured that it will come, and that my enemies shall be defeated, "for God is for me." O believer, how happy are you—with the *King* of kings on your side! How safe—with such a *Protector*! How sure your cause, pleaded by such an *Advocate*! If God is *for* you—who can effectually be *against* you!

July 14 — Morning

"If you lift up your *tool* upon it—you have polluted it." Exodus 20:25

God's altar was to be built of *unhewn stones*, that no trace of human skill or labor might be seen upon it. Human wisdom delights to trim and arrange the *doctrines of the cross*—into a system more artificial and more congenial with the depraved tastes of fallen nature. Instead, however, of improving the gospel—carnal wisdom pollutes it, until it becomes another gospel, and not the truth of God at all. All alterations and amendments of the Lord's own Word—are defilements and pollutions.

The proud heart of man is very anxious to have a hand in the justification of the soul before God; *preparations* for Christ are dreamed of, *humblings* and *repentings* are trusted in, *good works* are cried up, *natural ability* is much vaunted, and by all means the attempt is made to lift up *human tools* upon the divine altar. It would be well if sinners would remember that so far from *perfecting* the Savior's work, their carnal confidences only *pollute* and *dishonor* it. The Lord alone must be exalted in the work of atonement, and not a single mark of man's chisel or hammer will be endured! There is an inherent blasphemy in seeking to *add* to what Christ Jesus in His dying moments declared to be *finished*, or to *improve* that in which the Lord Jehovah finds perfect satisfaction.

Trembling sinner, away with your tools, and fall upon your knees in humble supplication; and accept the Lord Jesus to be the altar of your atonement, and rest in Him alone. Many professors may take warning from this morning's text as to the doctrines which they believe. There is among Christians far too much inclination to *square* and *reconcile* the truths of revelation; this is a form of irreverence and unbelief, let us strive against it, and receive truth as we find it; rejoicing that the doctrines of the Word are *unhewn stones*, and so are all the more fit to build an altar for the Lord.

July 14 — Evening

"As it began to dawn, Mary Magdalene came to see the sepulcher." Matthew 28:1

Let us learn from Mary Magdalene, how to obtain fellowship with the Lord Jesus. Notice *how* she sought.

She sought the Savior *very early* in the morning. If you can wait for Christ, and be patient in the hope of having fellowship with Him at some distant season—you will never have fellowship at all; for the heart that is fitted for communion is a *hungering* and a *thirsting* heart.

She sought Him also with *very great boldness*. Other disciples fled from the sepulcher, for they trembled and were amazed; but Mary, it is said, "stood" at the sepulcher. If you would have Christ with you, seek Him boldly. Let nothing hold you back. Defy the world. Press on—where others flee.

She sought Christ *faithfully*—she stood at the sepulcher. Some find it hard to stand by a *living* Saviour—but she stood by a *dead* one. Let us seek Christ after this mode, cleaving to the very least thing that has to do with Him, remaining faithful—though all others should forsake Him.

Note further, she sought Jesus *earnestly*—she stood "weeping." Those tear-droppings were as *spells* that led the Savior captive, and made Him come forth and show Himself to her. If you desire Jesus' presence—weep after it! If you cannot be happy unless He comes and says to you, "You are My beloved!" you will soon hear His voice.

Lastly, she sought the Savior *only*. What cared she for angels, she turned herself back from them; her search was only for her Lord. If Christ be your one and only love—if your heart has cast out all rivals—you will not long lack the comfort of His presence.

Mary Magdalene *sought* thus—because she *loved* much. Let us arouse ourselves to the same intensity of affection; let our heart, like Mary's, be full of Christ—and our love, like hers, will be satisfied with nothing short of Himself! O Lord, reveal Yourself to us this evening!

July 15 — Morning

"The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar—it shall never go out." Leviticus 6:13

Keep the altar of **private prayer** burning. This is the very life of all piety.

The *sanctuary* and *family* altars borrow their fires here, therefore let this burn well. Secret devotion is the very essence, evidence, and barometer—of vital and experimental religion. Burn here the fat of your sacrifices. Let your *closet seasons* be, if possible, regular, frequent, and undisturbed. Effectual prayer avails much.

Have you nothing to pray for? Let us suggest the Church, the ministry, your own soul, your children, your relations, your neighbors, your country, and the cause of God and truth throughout the world. Let us examine ourselves on this important matter. Do we engage in private devotion with lukewarmness? Is the fire of devotion burning dimly in our hearts? Do the chariot wheels drag heavily? If so, let us be alarmed at this *sign of spiritual decay*.

Let us go with weeping—and ask for the Spirit of grace and of supplication. Let us set apart special seasons for extraordinary prayer. For if this fire should be smothered beneath the ashes of a worldly conformity—it will dim the fire on the family altar, and lessen our influence both in the Church and in the world.

The text will also apply to the altar of the **heart**. This is a golden altar indeed. God loves to see the hearts of His people glowing towards Himself. Let us give to God our hearts, all blazing with love, and seek His grace, that the fire may never be quenched; for it will not burn if the Lord does not keep it burning. Many foes will attempt to extinguish it; but if the *unseen hand behind the wall* pours the sacred oil upon it—it will blaze higher and higher. Let us use texts of Scripture as fuel for our heart's fire, they are live coals; let us attend sermons—but above all, let us be much alone with Jesus!

July 15 — Evening

"He appeared first, to Mary Magdalene." Mark 16:9

Jesus "appeared first, to Mary Magdalene," probably not only on account of her great love and persevering seeking—but because, as the context intimates, she had been a special trophy of Christ's delivering power. Learn from this, that the greatness of our sin before conversion—should not make us imagine that we may not be specially favored with the very highest grade of fellowship with Jesus. She was one who had left all to become a constant attendant on the Savior. He was her first, her chief object. Many who were on Christ's side did not take up Christ's cross; she did. She spent her substance in relieving His needs. If we would see much of Christ—let us serve Him. Tell me who they are, that sit oftenest under the banner of His love, and drink deepest draughts from the cup of communion, and I am sure they will be those who give most, who serve best, and who abide closest to the bleeding heart of their dear Lord.

But notice how Christ revealed Himself to this sorrowing one—by a word, "Mary!" It needed but one word in His voice, and at once she knew Him! And her heart owned allegiance by another word, her heart was too full to say more. That one word would naturally be the most fitting for the occasion. It implies obedience. She said, "*Master*." There is no state of mind in which this confession of allegiance will be too cold. No, when your spirit glows most with the heavenly fire, then you will say, "I am Your servant—You have loosed my bonds!" If you can say, "Master," if you feel that His will is your will, then you stand in a happy, holy place. He must have said, "Mary!" or else you could not have said, "Master."

See, then, from all this, how Christ honors those who honor Him, how love draws our Beloved, how it needs but one word of His to turn our weeping to rejoicing, how His presence makes the heart's sunshine!

July 16 — *Morning*

"They gathered *manna* every morning." Exodus 16:21

Labor to maintain a sense of your entire dependence upon the Lord's good will and pleasure, for the continuance of your richest enjoyments. Never try to live on the *old manna*, nor seek to find help in *Egypt*. All must come from Jesus, or you are undone forever. Old anointings will not suffice to impart unction to your spirit; your head must have *fresh oil* poured upon it from the golden horn of the sanctuary, or it will cease from its glory.

Today you may be upon the summit of the mount of God—but He who has *put* you there—must *keep* you there, or you will sink far more speedily than you dream. Your mountain only stands firm when He settles it in its place; if He hides His face, you will soon be troubled. If the Savior should see fit, there is not a window through which you see the light of heaven, which He could not darken in an instant. Joshua bade the sun stand still—but Jesus can shroud it in total darkness. He can withdraw the *joy* of your heart, the *light* of your eyes, and the *strength* of your life. In His hand your *comforts* lie—and at His will they can depart from you.

Our Lord is determined that we shall feel and recognize this hourly dependence, for He only permits us to pray for "daily bread," and only promises that "as our days—so our strength shall be." Is it not best for us that it should be so, that we may often repair to His throne, and constantly be reminded of His love? Oh! how rich the grace which supplies us so continually, and does not refrain itself because of our ingratitude! The *golden shower* never ceases, the *cloud of blessing* tarries evermore above our habitation. O Lord Jesus, we would bow at Your feet, conscious of our utter inability to do anything without You; and in every favor which we are privileged to receive—we would adore Your blessed name, and acknowledge Your inexhaustible love!

July 16 — Evening

"You will arise and have compassion on Zion, for it is time to show favor to her; the appointed time has come. For her stones are dear to your servants; her very dust moves them to pity." Psalm 102:13-14

A selfish man in trouble is exceedingly hard to comfort, because the springs of his comfort are entirely within himself; and when he is sad all his springs are dry. But a large-hearted man full of Christian philanthropy, has other springs from which to supply himself with comfort, beside those which lie within. He can go to his God first of all, and there find abundant help; and he can discover arguments for consolation in things relating to the world at large, to his country, and, above all, to the church.

David in this Psalm, was exceedingly sorrowful; he wrote, "I am like an owl in the desert, like a lonely owl in a far-off wilderness. I lie awake, lonely as a solitary bird on the roof." The only way in which he could comfort himself, was in the reflection that God would arise, and have mercy upon Zion; though he was sad—yet Zion should prosper; however low his own estate—yet Zion should arise.

Christian man! learn to comfort yourself in God's gracious dealing towards the church. That which is so dear to your Master, should it not be dear above all else to you? What though your way is dark—can you not gladden your heart with the triumphs of His cross, and the spread of His truth? Our own personal troubles are forgotten while we look, not only upon what God *has* done, and *is* doing for Zion—but on the glorious things He *will* yet do for His church.

Try this formula, O believer, whenever you are sad of heart and in heaviness of spirit—forget yourself and your little concerns, and seek the welfare and prosperity of Zion. When you bend your knee in prayer to God, limit not your petition to the narrow circle of your own life, tried though it is—but send out your longing prayers for the church's prosperity, "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem," and your own soul shall be refreshed!

July 17 — Morning

"Knowing, brethren beloved, your *election* of God." 1 Thessalonians 1:4

Many people want to know their election, *before* they look to Christ—but they cannot learn it thus. It is only to be discovered, by "looking unto Jesus." If you desire to ascertain your own election after the following manner, you shall assure your heart before God. Do you feel yourself to be a lost, guilty sinner? Go straightway to the cross of Christ, and tell Jesus so; and tell Him that you have read in the Bible, "Him who comes unto me, I will never cast out." Tell Him that He has said, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Look to Jesus and believe on Him—and you shall make proof of your election directly; for so surely as you believe—you are elect.

If you will give yourself wholly up to Christ and trust Him, then you are one of God's chosen ones; but if you stop and say, "I want to know first whether I am elect," you ask you know not what. Go to Jesus, just as you are—be you ever so guilty. Leave all curious inquiry about election alone. Go straight to Christ and hide in His wounds—and you shall know your election. The assurance of the Holy Spirit shall be given to you—so that you shall be able to say, "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to Him."

Christ was at the everlasting council—He can tell you whether you were chosen or not; but you cannot find it out in any other way. Go and put your trust in Him, and His answer will be, "I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you!" There will be no doubt about His having chosen you—when you have chosen Him!

July 17 — Evening

Then Elijah commanded them, "Seize the prophets of Baal. Let not one of them escape!" They seized them, and Elijah had them brought down to the Kishon Valley and slaughtered there." 1 Kings 18:40

When the prophet Elijah had received the answer to his prayer, and the *fire from heaven* had consumed the sacrifice in the presence of all the people, he called upon the assembled Israelites to take the priests of Baal, and sternly cried, "Let not one of them escape!"

So must it be with our sins—they must all die—not one must be preserved. Our *darling* sin must die. Spare it not—for its much crying. Strike, though it be as dear as an *Isaac*. Strike, for God struck at sin when it was laid upon His own Son! With stern unflinching purpose, must you condemn to death that sin which was once the idol of your heart!

Do you ask how you are to accomplish this? Jesus will be your power. You have grace to overcome sin, given you in the covenant of grace. You have strength to win the victory in the crusade against inward lusts, because Christ Jesus has promised to be with you even unto the end. If you would triumph over *darkness*, set yourself in the presence of the *Sun of Righteousness*. There is no place so well adapted for the discovery of sin, and recovery from its power and guilt—as the immediate presence of God.

Job never knew how to get rid of sin half so well as he did—when his *eye of faith* rested upon God—and then he abhorred himself, and repented in dust and ashes.

The *fine gold* of the Christian is oft becoming dim. We need the *sacred fire* to consume the *dross*. Let us fly to our God—He is a consuming fire; He will not consume our spirit—but our sins. Let the goodness of God excite us to a sacred jealousy, and to a holy revenge against those iniquities which are hateful in His sight. Go forth to battle with your sins—in His strength, and utterly destroy the accursed crew—let not one of them escape!

July 18 — Morning

"They are to move out *last*, with their banners." Numbers 2:31

The camp of Dan brought up the rear when the armies of Israel were on the march. The Danites occupied the last place—but what did the position matter—since they were as truly part of the host as were the foremost tribes; they followed the same fiery cloudy pillar, they ate of the same manna, drank of the same spiritual rock, and journeyed to the same inheritance. Come, my heart, cheer up, though you are the last and least; it is your privilege to be in the army, and to fare as they fare, who lead the van. Someone must be last in honor and esteem, someone must do menial work for Jesus—and why not I? In a poor village, among an ignorant peasantry; or in a back street, among degraded sinners—I will work on, and "go *last*, with my banners."

The Danites occupied a very *useful* place. Stragglers have to be picked up upon the march, and lost property has to be gathered from the field. Fiery spirits may dash forward over untrodden paths to learn fresh truth, and win more souls to Jesus; but some of a more conservative spirit may be well engaged in reminding the church of her ancient faith, and restoring her fainting sons. Every position has its duties, and the slowly moving children of God will find their peculiar state, one in which they may be eminently a blessing to the whole host.

The rear guard is a place of *danger*. There are foes behind us—as well as before us. Attacks may come from any quarter. We read that Amalek fell upon Israel, and slew some of the hindmost of them. The experienced Christian will find much work for his weapons in aiding those poor doubting, desponding, wavering, souls—who are hindmost in faith, knowledge, and joy. These must not be left unaided, and therefore be it the business of well-taught saints to bear their banners among the hindmost. My soul—tenderly watch to help the hindmost this day.

July 18 — Evening

"They never jostle each other; each moves in exactly the right path." Joel 2:8

Locusts always keep their rank, and although their number is legion, they do not crowd upon each other, so as to throw their columns into confusion. This remarkable fact in natural history shows how thoroughly the Lord has infused the *spirit of order* into His universe, since the smallest animate creatures are as much controlled by it as are the rolling spheres, or the seraphic messengers.

It would be wise for believers to be ruled by the same influence in all their spiritual life. In their

Christian **graces** no one virtue should usurp the sphere of another, or eat out the vitals of the rest for its own support. Affection must not smother honesty; courage must not elbow weakness out of the field; modesty must not jostle energy; and patience must not slaughter resolution.

So also with our **duties**, one must not interfere with another; public usefulness must not injure private piety; church work must not push family worship into a corner. It is ill to offer God one duty stained with the blood of another. Each thing is beautiful in its season—but not otherwise. It was to the Pharisee that Jesus said, "This you ought to have done, and not to have left the other undone."

The same rule applies to our personal position, we must take care to know our place, take it, and keep to it. We must minister as the Spirit has given us ability, and not intrude upon our fellow servant's domain. Our Lord Jesus taught us not to covet the high places—but to be willing to be the *least* among the brethren. Far from us be an envious, ambitious spirit, let us feel the force of the Master's command, and do as He bids us, keeping rank with the rest of the host.

Tonight let us see whether we are keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace, and let our prayer be that, in all the churches of the Lord Jesus, peace and order may prevail.

July 19 — Morning

"The Lord our God has showed us His glory." Deuteronomy 5:24

God's great design in all His works, is the manifestation of His own glory. Any aim less than this— is unworthy of Himself. But how shall the glory of God be manifested to such fallen creatures as we are? Man's eye is not single, he has ever a side glance towards his own honor, has too high an estimate of his own powers, and so is not qualified to behold the glory of the Lord. It is clear, then, that *self* must stand out of the way, that there may be room for God to be exalted; and this is the reason why He brings His people oftentimes into straits and difficulties, that, being made conscious of their own folly and weakness, they may be fitted to behold the majesty of God when He comes forth to work their deliverance.

He whose life is one even and smooth path, will see but little of the glory of the Lord, for he has few occasions of self-emptying, and hence—but little fitness for being filled with the revelation of God. Those who navigate little streams and shallow creeks, know but little of the God of tempests; but those who "do business in great waters," these see His "wonders in the deep." Among the *huge Atlantic* waves of bereavement, poverty, temptation, and reproach—we learn the power of Jehovah, because we feel the littleness of man. Thank God, then, if you have been led by a *rough* road—it is this which has given you your experience of God's greatness and loving-kindness. Your *troubles* have enriched you with a wealth of knowledge to be gained by no other means—your *trials* have been the cleft of the rock in which Jehovah has set you, as He did His servant Moses, that you might behold His glory as it passed by. Praise God that you have not been left to the darkness and ignorance which *continued prosperity* might have involved—but that in the great fight of affliction, you have been capacitated for the outshinings of His glory in His wonderful dealings with you.

July 19 — Evening

"He will not break a *bruised reed*, and He will not put out a *smoldering wick*." Matthew 12:20

What is *weaker* than the bruised reed, or the smoldering wick?

A *reed* that grows in the marsh, let but the wild duck land upon it, and it snaps; let but the foot of man brush against it, and it is bruised and broken; every wind that flits across the river—moves it to and fro. You can conceive of nothing more frail or brittle, or whose existence is more in jeopardy, than a bruised reed.

Then look at the smoldering wick—what is it? It has a spark within it, it is true—but it is almost smothered; an infant's breath might blow it out; nothing has a more precarious existence than its flame.

Weak things are here described—yet Jesus says of them, "I will not break a *bruised reed*; I will not put out a *smoldering wick*." Some of God's children are made strong to do mighty works for Him; God has His *Samsons* here and there—who can pull up Gaza's gates, and carry them to the top of the hill; He has a few mighties who are lion-like men. But the majority of His people are a timid, trembling race. They are like starlings, frightened at every passer-by. They are a little fearful flock. If *temptation* comes, they are captured like birds in a snare. If *trial* threatens, they are ready to faint; their frail skiff is tossed up and down by every wave; they drift along like a sea bird on the crest of the billows—weak things, without strength, without wisdom, without foresight.

Yet, as weak as they are—and because they are so weak—they have this promise made specially to them! Herein is grace and graciousness! Herein is love and loving-kindness! How it reveals the compassion of Jesus to us—so gentle, tender, considerate! We need never shrink back from His touch. We need never fear a harsh word from Him—though He might well chide us for our weakness. Bruised reeds shall have no blows from Him, and the smoldering wick no damping frowns!

July 20 — *Morning*

"The promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance." Ephesians 1:14

Oh! what enlightenment, what joys, what consolation, what delight of heart—is experienced by that man who has learned to feed on Jesus—and on Jesus alone. Yet the realization which we have of Christ's preciousness is, in this life, imperfect at the best. As an old writer says, "Tis but a taste!" We have but tasted "that the Lord is gracious," but we do not yet know how good and gracious He is; although what we know of His sweetness, makes us long for more. We have enjoyed the first fruits—and they have set us hungering and thirsting for the fullness of the heavenly vintage. Here we are like Israel in the wilderness, who had but one cluster from Eshcol—there we shall be in the vineyard!

We are but beginners now in spiritual education; for although we have learned the first letters of the alphabet, we cannot read words yet, much less can we put sentences together. As one says, "He who has been in heaven but five minutes—knows more than all the theologians on earth!"

We have many ungratified desires at present—but soon every wish shall be satisfied; and all our powers shall find the sweetest employment in that eternal world of joy. O Christian, within a very little time you shall be rid of all your trials and your troubles. Your eyes which are now suffused with tears—shall weep no longer. You shall gaze in ineffable rapture upon the splendor of Him who sits upon the throne! Nay, more—upon His throne—you shall sit! The triumph of His glory shall be shared by you! His crown, His joy, His paradise—these shall be yours! You shall be co-heir with Him who is the heir of all things!

July 20 — Evening

"What have you to do in the way of Egypt—to drink the waters of the muddy river?" Jeremiah 2:18

By wondrous miracles, by manifold mercies, by marvelous deliverances, Jehovah had proved Himself to be worthy of Israel's trust. Yet they broke down the hedges with which God had enclosed them as a sacred garden; they forsook their own true and living God, and followed after false gods. Constantly did the Lord reprove them for this infatuation, and our text contains one instance of God's expostulating with them, "What have you to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of the muddy river?" for so it may be translated. "Why do you wander afar to drink the waters of the muddy river—and leave your own cool stream from Lebanon? Why are you so strangely set on mischief, that you cannot be content with the good and healthful—but would follow after that which is evil and deceitful?"

Is there not here a word of expostulation and warning to the Christian? O believer, called by grace and washed in the precious blood of Jesus—you have tasted of better drink than *the muddy river of this world's pleasure* can give you! You have had fellowship with Christ; you have obtained the joy of seeing Jesus, and leaning your head upon His bosom. Do the trifles, the songs, the honors, the merriment of this earth—content you after that? Have you eaten the bread of angels—and can you live on swine-husks? Good Rutherford once said, "I have tasted of Christ's own manna, and it has put my mouth out of taste for the brown bread of this world's joys." Methinks it should be so with you.

If you are wandering after the muddy waters of Egypt, O return quickly to the one living fountain! The waters of the Nile may be sweet to the Egyptians—but they will prove only bitterness to you. What have you to do with them? Jesus asks you this question this evening—what will you answer Him?

July 21 — Morning

"The daughter of Jerusalem has shaken her head at you." Isaiah 37:22

Reassured by the Word of the Lord, the poor trembling citizens of Zion grew bold, and shook their heads at Sennacherib's boastful threats. *Strong faith* enables the servants of God to look with calm contempt upon their most haughty foes. We know that our enemies are attempting impossibilities. They seek to destroy the eternal life, which cannot die while Jesus lives; to overthrow the citadel, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail. They kick against the goads to their own wounding, and rush upon Jehovah's thick, studded shields, to their own hurt. We know their weakness. What are they—but men? And what is man—but a worm? They roar and swell like waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame. When the Lord arises, they shall fly as chaff before the wind, and be consumed as crackling thorns! Their utter powerlessness to do damage to the cause of God and His truth, may make the weakest soldiers in Zion's ranks laugh them to scorn!

Above all, we know that the Most High God is with us, and what enemy can conquer Him? If He comes forth from His place, the potsherds of the earth will not long contend with their Maker. His *rod of iron* shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel, and their very remembrance shall perish from the earth. Away, then, all fears—the kingdom is safe in the King's hands. Let us shout for joy, for the Lord reigns, and His foes shall be as straw for the dunghill.

July 21 — Evening

"Why do I go mourning?" Psalm 42:9

Can you answer this, believer? Can you find any reason why you are so often mourning, instead of rejoicing? Why yield to gloomy anticipations? Who told you that the *night* would never end in *day*? Who told you that the *sea of troubles* would ebb out—until there should be nothing left but long leagues of the mud of horrible poverty? Who told you that the winter of your discontent would proceed from frost to frost, from snow, and ice, and hail, to deeper snow, and yet more heavy tempest of despair? Don't you know—that *day* follows night, that *flood* comes after ebb, that *spring* and summer follow winter? Hope then! Hope ever! For God fails you not.

Don't you know—that your God loves you in the midst of all this? Mountains, when hidden in darkness, are as real as in day—and God's love is as true to you now as it was in your brightest moments. No father chastens always—your heavenly Father hates the rod as much as you do! He only cares to use it for that reason which should make you willing to receive it, namely—that it works your everlasting good. You shall yet climb Jacob's ladder with the angels, and behold Him who sits at the top of it—your covenant God. You shall yet, amidst the splendors of eternity—forget the trials of time, or only remember them to bless the God who led you through them, and wrought your everlasting good by them.

Come, *sing* in the midst of *tribulation*. *Rejoice* even while passing through the *furnace*. Make the *wilderness* to blossom like the rose! Cause the *desert* to ring with your exulting joys, for these light afflictions will soon be over, and then—"forever with the Lord," your bliss shall never wane!

July 22 — Morning

"I am married unto you." Jeremiah 3:14

Christ Jesus is joined unto His people in marriage-union. In love He espoused His Church as a chaste virgin, long before she fell under the yoke of bondage. Full of burning affection He toiled, like Jacob for Rachel, until the whole of her purchase-money had been paid, and now, having sought her by His Spirit, and brought her to know and love Him—He awaits the glorious hour when their mutual bliss shall be consummated at the marriage-supper of the Lamb!

Not yet, has the glorious Bridegroom presented His betrothed, perfected and complete, before the Majesty of heaven. Not yet, has she actually entered upon the enjoyment of her dignities as His wife and queen. She is as yet—a wanderer in a world of woe, a dweller in the tents of Kedar; but she is even now the bride, the spouse of Jesus, dear to His heart, precious in His sight, written on His hands, and united with His person!

On earth He exercises towards her—all the affectionate offices of Husband. He makes rich provision for her needs, pays all her debts, allows her to assume His name, and to share in all His wealth. Nor will He ever act otherwise to her. The word *divorce* He will never mention, for "He hates divorce."

Death must sever the marital tie between the most loving mortals—but it cannot divide the links of this *immortal marriage*. In heaven they do not marry—but are as the angels of God; yet there is this one marvelous exception to the rule, for in Heaven Christ and His Church shall celebrate their joyous nuptials. This affinity as it is more lasting, so is it more near than earthly wedlock. Let the love of husband be never so pure and fervent—it is but a faint picture of the flame which burns in the heart of Jesus! Passing all human union—is that mystical cleaving unto the Church, for which Christ left His Father, and became one flesh with her!

July 22 — Evening

"Behold the Man!" John 19:5

If there is one place where our Lord Jesus most fully becomes the joy and comfort of His people—it is where He plunged deepest into the depths of woe.

Come hither, gracious souls, and behold *the Man* in the garden of Gethsemane! Behold His heart so brimming with love—that He cannot hold it in; so full of sorrow—that it must find a vent. Behold the bloody sweat as it distills from every pore of His body, and falls upon the ground.

Behold *the Man* as they drive the nails into His hands and feet! Look up, repenting sinners, and see the sorrowful image of your suffering Lord. Mark Him, as the ruby drops stand on the thorn-crown, and adorn the diadem of *the King of Misery* with priceless gems. Behold *the Man* when all His bones are out of joint, and He is poured out like water and brought into the dust of death! God has forsaken Him, and hell compasses Him about.

Behold and see—was there ever sorrow, like unto His sorrow? All you who pass by—draw near and look upon this spectacle of grief! Unique, unparalleled, a wonder to men and angels, an unmatched prodigy! Behold the *Emperor of Woe*—who had no equal or rival in His agonies! Gaze upon Him, you mourners, for if there is not consolation in *a crucified Christ*—there is no joy in earth or heaven. If in the ransom price of His blood, there is not hope—you harps of heaven, there is no joy in you; and the right hand of God shall know no pleasures for evermore!

We have only to sit more continually at the cross foot—to be less troubled with our afflictions and woes. We have but to see His sorrows—and we shall be ashamed to mention our sorrows. We have but to gaze into His wounds—and heal our own. If we would live aright—it must be by the contemplation of His death. If we would rise to dignity—it must be by considering His humiliation and His sorrow.

July 23 — Morning

"Even *you* were just like one of them." Obadiah 1:11

Brotherly kindness was due from *Edom* to *Israel* in the time of need—but instead thereof, the men of Esau made common cause with Israel's foes. Special stress in the sentence before us is laid upon the word *you*; as when Caesar cried to Brutus, "and *you* Brutus". A bad action may be all the worse, because of the *person* who has committed it.

When we who are the *chosen favorites of heaven* sin—we sin with an emphasis. Ours is a crying offence, because we are so peculiarly indulged. If an angel should lay his hand upon us when we are doing evil, he need not use any other rebuke than the question, "What, *you*? What are *you* doing?" Much forgiven, much delivered, much instructed, much enriched, much blessed—shall *we* dare to put forth our hand unto evil? God forbid!

A few minutes of confession may be beneficial to you, gentle reader, this morning. Have you never been as the wicked? At an evening party, certain men laughed at a dirty joke—and the joke was not altogether offensive to your ear—even *you* were just like one of them. When harsh things were spoken concerning the ways of God, you were bashfully silent; and so, to on-lookers, *you* were as one of them. When worldlings were bartering in the market, and driving hard bargains, were *you* not as one of them? When they were pursuing vanity with a hunter's foot, were *you* not as greedy for gain as they were? Could any difference be discerned between *you* and them? Is there *any* difference?

Here we come to close quarters. Be honest with your own soul, and make sure that you are a new creature in Christ Jesus; but when this is sure, walk jealously, lest any should again be able to say, "Even *you* were just like one of them." You would not desire to share their eternal doom—why then be like them here on earth? Come not into their secret—lest you come into their ruin. Side with the afflicted people of God—and not with the world.

July 23 — Evening

"The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." 1 John 1:7

"Cleanses," says the text—not "*shall* cleanse." There are multitudes who think that as a dying hope, they may look *forward* to pardon. Oh! how infinitely better to have cleansing *now*—than to depend on the bare possibility of forgiveness when I come to die. Some imagine that a sense of pardon is an attainment only obtainable after many years of Christian experience. But forgiveness of sin is a *present* thing—a privilege for this day, a joy for this very hour. The moment a sinner trusts Jesus—he is fully forgiven.

The text, being written in the present tense, also indicates *continuance*; it was "cleanses" yesterday, it is "cleanses" today, it will be "cleanses" tomorrow—it will be always so with you, Christian, until you cross the river of death. Every hour you may come to this fountain—for it cleanses still.

Notice, likewise, the *completeness* of the cleansing, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from *all* sin" not only from sin—but "from *all* sin." Reader, I cannot tell you the exceeding sweetness of this word—but I pray God the Holy Spirit to give you a taste of it. Manifold are our sins against God. Whether the *bill* be little or great, the same *receipt* can discharge one as the other. The blood of Jesus Christ is as blessed and divine a payment for the transgressions of blaspheming Peter—as for the shortcomings of loving John. Our iniquity is gone, all gone at once, and all gone forever. Blessed completeness! What a sweet theme to dwell upon as one gives himself to sleep.

"Sins against a holy God;
Sins against His righteous laws;
Sins against His love, His blood;
Sins against His name and cause;
Sins immense, as is the sea—
From them all, He cleanses me!"

July 24 — Morning

"Stand still—and see the salvation of the Lord." Exodus 14:13

These words contain God's command to the believer when he is reduced to great straits and brought into extraordinary difficulties. He cannot retreat; he cannot go forward; he is shut up on the right hand and on the left; what is he now to do? The Master's word to him is, "Stand still." It will be well for him—if at such times he listens only to his Master's word, for other and evil advisers come with their suggestions.

Despair whispers, "Lie down and die—give it all up!" But God would have us put on a cheerful courage, and even in our worst times, rejoice in His love and faithfulness.

Cowardice says, "Retreat; go back to the worldling's way of action; you cannot play the Christian's part, it is too difficult. Relinquish your principles." But, however much Satan may urge this course upon you, you cannot follow it if you are a child of God. His divine fiat has bid you to go from strength to strength, and so you shall, and neither death nor hell shall turn you from your course. What, if for a while you are called to stand still—yet this is but to renew your strength for some greater advance in due time.

Haste cries, "Do something. Stir yourself; to stand still and wait, is sheer idleness." We must be doing something at once—we must do it so we think—instead of looking to the Lord, who will not only do something, but will do everything.

Presumption boasts, "If the sea is before you, march into it and expect a miracle."

But Faith listens neither to *Presumption*, nor to *Despair*, nor to *Cowardice*, nor to *Haste*—but it hears God say, "Stand still," and immovable as a rock it stands. "Stand still"—keep the posture of an upright man, ready for action, expecting further orders, cheerfully and patiently awaiting the directing voice; and it will not be long before God shall say to you, as distinctly as Moses said it to the people of Israel, "Go forward!"

July 24 — Evening

"His camp is very great." Joel 2:11

Consider, my soul, the mightiness of the Lord who is your glory and defense. He is a *man of war*, Jehovah is His name. All the forces of heaven are at His beck, legions wait at His door, cherubim and seraphim, watchers and holy ones, principalities and powers—are all attentive to His will. If our eyes were not blinded by the cataracts of the flesh—we would see horses of fire, and chariots of fire, round about the Lord's beloved.

The powers of *nature* are all subject to the absolute control of the Creator—stormy wind, and tempest, lightning, and rain, and snow, and hail, and the soft dews and cheering sunshine—come and go at His decree. He loosens the bands of Orion—and binds the sweet influences of the Pleiades. Earth, sea, and air, and the places under the earth—are the barracks for Jehovah's great armies; space is His camping ground, light is His banner, and flame is His sword.

When He goes forth to war—*famine* ravages the land, *pestilence* smites the nations, *hurricane* sweeps the sea, *tornado* shakes the mountains, and *earthquake* makes the solid world to tremble!

As for *animate* creatures, they all own His dominion, and from the great fish which swallowed the prophet, down to "all manner of flies," which plagued the field of Zoan—all are His servants, and like the palmer-worm, the caterpillar, and the cankerworm, are squadrons of His great army, for His camp is very great.

My soul, see to it that you are at peace with this mighty King, yes, more, be sure to enlist under His banner, for to *war* against Him is madness, and to *serve* Him is glory. Jesus, Immanuel, God with us, is ready to receive recruits for the army of the Lord—if I am not already enlisted—let me go to Him before I sleep, and beg to be accepted through His merits; and if I am already a soldier of the cross, let me be of good courage; for the enemy is powerless, when compared with my Lord, whose camp is very great.

July 25 — *Morning*

"She grabbed him by his garment and said, 'Sleep with me!'

But leaving his garment in her hand, he escaped and ran from the house." Genesis 39:12

In contending with certain sins, there remains no mode of victory but by *flight*. The ancient naturalists wrote much of *basilisks*, whose eyes fascinated their victims and rendered them easy victims. Just so—the mere *gaze of wickedness* puts us in solemn danger. He who would be safe from *acts of evil*—must hasten away from *occasions* of it. A covenant must be made with our eyes—not even to look upon the cause of temptation, for such sins only need a *spark* to begin with—and a blaze follows in an instant!

Who would wantonly enter the *leper's* hut and sleep amid its horrible corruption? He alone who desires to be leprous himself—would thus *court contagion*. If the mariner knew how to avoid a storm, he would do anything rather than run the risk of weathering it. Cautious pilots have no desire to try how *near* the quicksand they can sail, or how often they may touch a rock without springing a leak; their aim is to keep as nearly as possible in the midst of a safe channel.

This day I may be exposed to great peril—let me have wisdom to keep out of it and avoid it. The *wings of a dove* may be of more use to me today than the *jaws of a lion*. It is true I may be an apparent loser by declining evil company—but I had better leave my *cloak*—than lose my *character*! It is not needful that I should be *rich*—but it is imperative upon me to be *pure*. No ties of friendship, no chains of beauty, no flashings of talent, no shafts of ridicule—must turn me from the wise resolve to flee from sin. I am to *resist the devil*—and he will flee from me—but the *lusts of the flesh*, I must flee, or they will surely overcome me! O God of holiness, preserve your *Josephs*—that *Madam Bubble* bewitch them not with her vile suggestions. May the horrible trinity of the world, the flesh, and the devil—never overcome us!

July 25 — Evening

"In their affliction—they will seek Me early." Hosea 5:15

Losses and *adversities* are frequently the means which the great Shepherd uses to fetch home His wandering sheep! Like fierce dogs, afflictions chase the wanderers back to the fold! Often have we seen the Christian rendered obedient to the Lord's will—by straitness of bread and hard labor. When rich and increased in goods—many professors carry their heads much too loftily, and speak exceeding boastfully. Like David, they flatter themselves, "My mountain stands fast—I shall never be moved!"

When the Christian grows wealthy, has good health, and a happy family—he too often admits *Mr. Carnal Security* to feast at his table; and then if he is a true child of God—there is a *rod* being prepared for him. Wait awhile, and it may be you will see his substance melt away as a dream. There goes a portion of his estate—how soon the acres change hands. That debt, that dishonored bill—how fast his losses roll in, where will they end? It is a blessed sign of divine life if when these losses occur one after another—he begins to be distressed about his backslidings, and betakes himself to his God. Blessed are the *fierce waves*—which wash the mariner upon the *rock of salvation!*

Losses in business are often sanctified to our soul's *enriching*. If the chosen soul will not come to the Lord full-handed, it shall come empty-handed. If God, in His grace, finds no other means of making us honor Him among men—He will cast us into deep afflictions. If we fail to honor Him on the *pinnacle of riches*, He will bring us into the *valley of poverty*. Yet faint not, heir of sorrow, when you are thus rebuked; rather recognize the loving hand which chastens, and say, "I will arise—and go unto my Father!"

July 26 — Morning

**"Make every effort to add to your faith, goodness;
and to goodness, knowledge;
and to knowledge, self-control;
and to self-control, perseverance;
and to perseverance, godliness;
and to godliness, brotherly kindness;
and to brotherly kindness, love." 2 Peter 1:5-7**

If you would enjoy the eminent grace of the full assurance of faith, under the blessed Spirit's influence, and assistance, do what the Scripture tells you, "Make every effort." Take care that your *faith* is of the right kind—that it is not a mere belief of doctrine—but a simple faith, depending on Christ, and on Christ alone. Give diligent heed to your *courage*. Plead with God that He would give you the face of a lion, that you may, with a consciousness of right, go on boldly. Study well the Scriptures, and get *knowledge*; for a knowledge of doctrine will tend very much to confirm faith. Try to understand God's Word; let it dwell in your heart richly.

When you have done this, "Add to your knowledge self-control." Take heed to your body—be temperate without. Take heed to your soul—be temperate within. Get temperance of lip, life, heart, and thought. Add to this, by God's Holy Spirit, *patience*; ask Him to give you that patience which endures affliction, which, when it is tried, shall come forth as gold. Array yourself with patience, that you may not murmur nor be depressed in your afflictions.

When that grace is won—look to *godliness*. Godliness is something more than external religion. Make God's glory your object in life; live in His sight; dwell close to Him; seek for fellowship with Him; and you have "godliness".

And to that add *brotherly love*. Have a love to all the saints—and add to that a charity, which opens its arms to all men, and loves their souls. When you are adorned with these jewels, and just in proportion as you practice these heavenly virtues—will you come to know by clearest evidence, "your calling and election." "Make every effort," if you would get assurance, for *lukewarmness* and *doubting* very naturally go hand in hand.

July 26 — Evening

"That He may set him with princes." Psalm 113:8

Our spiritual privileges are of the highest order. "Among princes" is the place of *select society*. "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." Speak of select society—there is none like this! "We are a chosen generation, a peculiar people, a royal priesthood." "We are come unto the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven." The saints have courtly audience—princes have admittance to royalty—when common people must stand afar off. The child of God has free access to the inner courts of heaven. "For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." "Let us come boldly," says the apostle, "to the throne of the heavenly grace."

Among princes there is *abundant wealth*—but what is the wealth of princes compared with the riches of believers? for "all things are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's." "He who spared not His own Son—but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"

Princes have *special power*. A prince of heaven's empire has great influence—he wields a scepter in his own domain; he sits upon Jesus' throne, for "He has made us kings and priests unto God, and we shall reign forever and ever." We reign over the united kingdom of time and eternity.

Princes, again, have *special honor*. We may look down upon all earth-born dignity from the eminence upon which grace has placed us. For what is human grandeur compared to this, "He has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus!" We share the honor of Christ, and compared with this, earthly splendors are not worth a thought. Communion with Jesus is a richer gem than ever glittered in imperial diadem. Union with the Lord is a coronet of beauty, outshining all the blaze of imperial pomp!

July 27 — Morning

"Exceeding great and precious promises." 2 Peter 1:4

If you would know experimentally the preciousness of the promises, and enjoy them in your own heart, *meditate* much upon them. There are promises which are like grapes in the wine-press; if you will *tread* them—the juice will flow. Thinking over the hallowed words will often be the prelude to their fulfillment. While you are musing upon them, the blessing which you are seeking will insensibly come to you. Many a Christian who has thirsted for the promise—has found the favor which it ensured gently distilling into his soul, even while he has been considering the divine record; and he has rejoiced that ever he was led to lay the promise near his heart.

But besides *meditating* upon the promises, seek in your soul to *receive them as being the very words of God*. Speak to your soul thus, "If I were dealing with a *man's* promise, I would carefully consider the ability and the character of the man who had covenanted with me. So with the promise of God; my eye must not be so much fixed upon the greatness of the *mercy*—that may stagger me; as upon the greatness of the *promiser*—that will cheer me. My soul, it is God, even your God, God who cannot lie—who speaks to you! This Word of His which you are now considering, is as true as His own existence. He is an unchangeable God. He has not altered the thing which has gone out of His mouth, nor called back one single consolatory sentence. Nor does He lack any power; it is the God who made the heavens and the earth—who has spoken thus. Nor can He fail in *wisdom* as to the time when He will bestow the favors, for He knows when it is best to *give* and when better to *withhold*. Therefore, seeing that it is the Word of a God so true, so immutable, so powerful, so wise—I will and must believe the promise."

If we thus meditate upon the promises, and consider the Promiser, we shall experience their sweetness, and obtain their fulfillment!

July 27 — Evening

"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Romans 8:33

Most blessed challenge! How unanswerable it is! Every *sin* of the elect was laid upon the great Champion of our salvation—and by the atonement carried away. There is no sin in God's book against His people—He sees no sin in Jacob, neither iniquity in Israel; they are justified in Christ forever! When the *guilt* of sin was taken away—the *punishment* of sin was removed. For the Christian there is no stroke from God's angry hand—nay, not so much as a single frown of punitive justice. The believer may be *chastised* by his Father—but God the Judge has nothing to say to the Christian, except "I have absolved you—you are acquitted."

For the Christian there is no *penal death* in this world, much less any second death. He is completely freed from all the *punishment* as well as the *guilt* of sin, and the *power* of sin is removed too. It may stand in our way, and agitate us with perpetual warfare; but sin is a *conquered foe* to every soul in union with Jesus.

There is no sin which a Christian cannot overcome—if he will only rely upon his God to do it. Those who wear the white robe in heaven, overcame through the blood of the Lamb, and we may do the same. No lust is too mighty, no besetting sin too strongly entrenched; we can overcome through the power of Christ. Do believe it, Christian, that your sin is a condemned thing. It may kick and struggle—but it is doomed to die! God has written condemnation across its brow. Christ has crucified it, "nailing it to His cross." Go now and mortify it, and may the Lord help you to live to His praise, for sin with all its guilt, shame, and fear—is gone!

"Here's pardon for transgressions past,
It matters not how black their cast;
And, O my soul, with wonder view,
For sins to come—here's pardon too!"

July 28 — Morning

"So foolish was I, and ignorant; I was as a beast before You." Psalm 73:22

Remember this is the confession of the man after God's own heart; and in telling us his inner life, he writes, "So foolish was I, and ignorant." The word "foolish," here, means more than it signifies in ordinary language. David, in a former verse of the Psalm, writes, "I was envious at the foolish when I saw the prosperity of the wicked," which shows that the folly he intended had sin in it. He puts himself down as being thus "foolish," and adds a word which is to give intensity to it; "so foolish was I." How foolish he could not tell. It was a sinful folly, a folly which was not to be excused by frailty—but to be condemned because of its perverseness and wilful ignorance, for he had been envious of the present prosperity of the ungodly, forgetful of the dreadful end awaiting all such.

Are we better than David—that we should call ourselves wise! Do we profess that we have attained perfection, or to have been so chastened that the rod has taken all our wilfulness out of us? Ah, this is *pride* indeed! If David was foolish, how foolish should we be in our own esteem, if we could but see ourselves! Look back, believer—think of your doubting God when He has been so faithful to you—think of your foolish outcry of "Not so, my Father," when He crossed His hands in affliction to give you the larger blessing; think of the many times when you have read His providences in the dark, misinterpreted His dispensations, and groaned out, "All these things are against me!" when they are all working together for your good! Think how often you have chosen sin because of its pleasure, when indeed, that pleasure was a root of bitterness to you! Surely if we know our own heart we must plead guilty to the indictment of a sinful folly; and conscious of this "foolishness," we must make David's consequent resolve our own, "You shall guide me with Your counsel."

July 28 — Evening

"He went about doing good." Acts 10:38

Few words—but yet an exquisite miniature portrait of the Lord Jesus Christ. There are not many touches—but they are the strokes of a master's pencil. Of the Savior and only of the Savior is it true in the fullest, broadest, and most unqualified sense. "He went about doing good."

From this description it is evident that He did good *personally*. The evangelists constantly tell us that He touched the leper with His own finger, that He anointed the eyes of the blind, and that in cases where He was asked to speak the word only at a distance, He did not usually comply—but went Himself to the sick bed, and there personally wrought the cure.

This is a lesson to us, if we would do good—to do it ourselves. Give alms with your own hand; a kind look, or word, will enhance the value of the gift. Speak to a friend about his soul; your loving appeal will have more influence than a whole library of tracts.

Our Lord's mode of doing good sets forth His *incessant activity!* He did not only the good which came close to hand—but He "went about" on His errands of mercy. Throughout the whole land of Judea there was scarcely a village or a hamlet which was not gladdened by the sight of Him. How this reproves the creeping, loitering manner, in which many professors serve the Lord. Let us gird up the loins of our mind, and do not be weary in well doing.

Does not the text imply that Jesus Christ *went out of His way* to do good? "He went about doing good." He was never deterred by danger or difficulty. He sought out the objects of His gracious intentions. So must we. If old plans will not answer, we must try new ones, for fresh experiments sometimes achieve more than regular methods.

Christ's *perseverance*, and the *unity of His purpose*, are also hinted at, and the practical application of the subject may be summed up in the words, "He has left us an example—that we should follow in His steps."

July 29 — Morning

"Nevertheless, I am continually with You." Psalm 73:23

"Nevertheless," as if, notwithstanding all the foolishness and ignorance which David had just been confessing to God, not one atom the less was it true and certain that David was saved and accepted, and that the blessing of being constantly in God's presence was undoubtedly his. Fully conscious of his own lost estate, and of the deceitfulness and vileness of his nature—yet, by a glorious outburst of faith, he sings "nevertheless, I am continually with You."

Believer, you are forced to enter into Asaph's confession and acknowledgment, endeavor in like spirit to say "nevertheless, since I belong to Christ—I am continually with God!"

By this is meant continually upon His mind, He is always thinking of me for my good. Continually before His *eye*—the eye of the Lord never sleeps—but is perpetually watching over my welfare. Continually in His *hand*, so that none shall be able to pluck me thence. Continually on His *heart*, worn there as a memorial, even as the high priest bore the names of the twelve tribes upon his heart forever.

'You always think of me, O God. The affections of Your love continually yearn towards me. You are always making providence work for my good. You have set me as a signet upon your arm; your love is strong as death, many waters cannot quench it; neither can the floods drown it. Surprising grace! You see me in Christ, and though in myself abhorred, You behold me as wearing Christ's garments, and washed in His blood, and thus I stand accepted in Your presence. I am thus continually in Your favor, continually with You.'

Here is comfort for the tried and afflicted soul; vexed with the tempest within—look at the calm without. "Nevertheless" O say it in your heart, and take the peace it gives. "Nevertheless, I am continually with You."

July 29 — Evening

"All whom the Father gives Me—shall come to Me." John 6:37

This declaration involves the doctrine of *election*—there are some whom the Father gave to Christ. It involves the doctrine of *effectual calling*—these who are given, must and shall come; however stoutly they may set themselves against it—yet they shall be brought out of the darkness of sin—into God's marvelous light. It teaches us the indispensable necessity of *faith*—for even those who are given to Christ are not saved except they come to Jesus. Even they must come, for there is no other way to heaven but by the door, Christ Jesus. All that the Father gives to our Redeemer, must come to Him, therefore none can come to *heaven*—except they come to *Christ*.

Oh! the power and majesty which rest in the words "*shall* come." He does not say they have power to come, nor they *may* come if they wish—but they "*shall* come." The Lord Jesus does by His messengers, His Word, and His Spirit—sweetly and graciously compel men to come in, that they may eat of His marriage supper. And this He does, not by any violation of the free agency of man—but by the power of His grace. I may exercise power over another man's will, and yet that other man's will may be perfectly free, because the constraint is exercised in a manner accordant with the laws of the human mind. Jehovah Jesus knows how, by irresistible arguments addressed to the understanding, by mighty reasons appealing to the affections, and by the mysterious influence of His Holy Spirit operating upon all the powers and passions of the soul—so to subdue the whole man, that whereas he was once rebellious, he now yields cheerfully to His government, subdued by sovereign love.

But how shall those whom God has chosen be known? By this result—that they do willingly and joyfully receive Christ, and come to Him with simple and sincere faith, resting upon Him as all their salvation and all their desire. Reader, have you thus come to Jesus?

July 30 — Morning

"And when he thought thereon, he wept." Mark 14:72

It has been thought by some that as long as Peter lived, the fountain of his tears began to flow whenever he remembered his denying his Lord. It is likely that it was so, (for his *sin* was very great, and *grace* in him had afterwards a perfect work). This same experience is common to all the redeemed family according to the degree in which the Spirit of God has removed the natural heart of stone. We, like Peter, remember our boastful promise, "Though all men shall forsake You—yet I will not." We eat our own words—with the bitter herbs of repentance. When we think of what we vowed we would be, and of what we have been—we may weep whole showers of grief.

Peter *thought* on his denying his Lord. The place in which he did it, the little cause which led him into such heinous sin, the oaths and blasphemies with which he sought to confirm his falsehood, and the dreadful hardness of heart which drove him to do so again and yet again.

Can *we*, when we are reminded of our sins, and their exceeding sinfulness, remain stolid and stubborn? Will we not make our house a *Bochim*, and cry unto the Lord for renewed assurances of pardoning love? May we never take a dry-eyed look at sin, lest before long we have a tongue parched in the flames of hell.

Peter also thought upon his Master's look of love. The Lord followed up the rooster's warning voice with an admonitory look of sorrow, pity, and love. That glance was never out of Peter's mind so long as he lived. It was far more effectual than ten thousand sermons would have been without the Spirit. The penitent apostle would be sure to weep—when he recollected the Savior's full forgiveness, which restored him to his former place. To think that we have offended so kind and good a Lord—is more than sufficient reason for being constant weepers. Lord, smite our rocky hearts, and make the waters flow!

July 30 — Evening

"The one who comes to Me—I will never cast out." John 6:37

No limit is set to the duration of this promise. It does not merely say, "I will not cast out a sinner at his first coming," but, "I will never cast out." The original reads, "I will not, not ever cast out," or "I will never, never cast out." The text means, that Christ will not at first reject a believer; and that as He will not do it at first, so He will not to the last.

But suppose the believer sins after coming? "If any man sins—we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." But suppose that believers backslide? "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely—for My anger is turned away from him." But believers may fall under temptation! "God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it."

But the believer may fall into sin as David did! Yes—but He will "Purge them with hyssop, and they shall be clean; He will wash them and they shall be whiter than snow"; "From all their iniquities I will cleanse them."

"Once in Christ, in Christ forever,
Nothing from His love can sever."

"I give unto My sheep," says He, "eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand!" What do you say to this, O trembling feeble mind? Is not this a precious mercy, that coming to Christ, you do not come to One who will treat you well for a little while, and then send you about your business—but He will receive you and make you His bride, and you shall be His forever! Receive no longer the spirit of bondage again to fear—but the spirit of adoption whereby you shall cry, *Abba, Father!* Oh! the grace of these words, "I will never cast out!"

July 31 — Morning

"I in them." John 17:23

If such be the *union* which exists between our souls and the person of our Lord, how deep and broad is the channel of our *communion*! This is no narrow pipe through which a thread-like stream may wind its way, it is a channel of amazing depth and breadth, along whose glorious length a ponderous volume of living water may roll its floods.

Behold, He has set before us an open door, let us not be slow to enter. This city of communion has many pearly gates, and every gate is of one pearl, and each gate is thrown open to the uttermost that we may enter, assured of welcome. If there were but one small loophole through which to talk with Jesus, it would be a high privilege to thrust a word of fellowship through the narrow door; how much we are blessed in having so large an entrance!

Had the Lord Jesus been far away from us, with many a stormy sea between, we would have longed to send a messenger to Him to carry Him our loves, and bring us tidings from His Father's house. But see His kindness, He has built His house next door to ours, nay, more, He takes lodging with us, and tabernacles in poor humble hearts, that so He may have perpetual fellowship with us. O how foolish must we be, if we do not live in habitual communion with Him.

When the road is long, and dangerous, and difficult—we need not wonder that friends seldom meet each other—but when they live together, shall *Jonathan* forget his *David*? A wife may, when her husband is upon a journey, abide many days without holding converse with him—but she could never endure to be separated from him if she knew him to be in one of the chambers of her own house. Why, believer—do you not sit at His banquet of wine? Seek your Lord, for He is near; embrace Him, for He is your Brother. Hold Him fast, for He is your Husband; and press Him to your heart, for He is of your own flesh!

July 31 — Evening

"And these are the singers... they were employed in that work day and night." 1 Chronicles 9:33

Well was it so ordered in the temple that the *sacred chant* never ceased—for evermore did the singers praise the Lord, whose mercy endures forever. As mercy did not cease to rule either by day or by night—so neither did music hush its holy ministry.

My heart, there is a lesson sweetly taught to you in the *ceaseless song* of Zion's temple, you too are a constant debtor—see you to it that your gratitude never fails. God's praise is constant in heaven, which is to be your final dwelling-place, learn to practice the *eternal hallelujah*. Around the earth as the sun scatters his light, his beams awaken grateful believers to tune their morning hymn, so that by the priesthood of the saints, perpetual praise is kept up at all hours, they swathe our globe in a mantle of thanksgiving, and belt it with a golden belt of song.

The Lord always *deserves* to be praised for what He is in Himself, for His works of creation and providence, for His goodness towards His creatures, and especially for the transcendent act of redemption, and all the marvelous blessing flowing therefrom.

It is always *beneficial* to praise the Lord; it cheers the day and brightens the night; it lightens toil and softens sorrow; and over earthly gladness—it sheds a sanctifying radiance which makes it less liable to blind us with its glare. Have we nothing to sing about at this moment? Can we not weave a song out of our present joys, or our past deliverances, or our future hopes? Earth yields her summer fruits—the hay is housed, the golden grain invites the sickle, and the sun tarrying long to shine upon a fruitful earth, shortens the interval of shade that we may lengthen the hours of devout worship. By the love of Jesus—let us be stirred up to close the day with a psalm of sanctified gladness!

August 1 — Morning

"Let me now go to the field—and glean ears of grain." Ruth 2:2

Downcast and troubled Christian, come and glean today in the *broad field of promise*. Here are an abundance of precious promises, which exactly meet your needs. Take this one,

"He will not break the bruised reed—nor quench the smoldering wick." Does not that suit your case? A reed—helpless, insignificant, and weak; a *bruised* reed, out of which no music can come; weaker than weakness itself. A reed, and that reed *bruised*—yet, He will not break you; but on the contrary, will restore and strengthen you. You are like the *smoldering wick*—no light, no warmth, can come from you; but He will not quench you; He will blow with His sweet breath of mercy, until He fans you to a flame.

Would you glean another ear? "Come unto Me all who labor and are heavy laden—and I will give you rest." What soft words! Your heart is tender, and the Master knows it, and therefore He speaks so gently to you. Will you not obey Him, and come to Him even now?

Take another ear of corn, "Fear not, O worm Jacob—I will help you, says the Lord and your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel." How can you fear with such a wonderful assurance as this?

You may gather ten thousand such golden ears as these! "I have blotted out your sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud your transgressions." Or this, "Though your sins be as scarlet—they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson—they shall be as wool." Or this, "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come, and let him who is athirst come, and whoever will—let him take the water of life freely."

Our Master's field is very rich; behold the handfuls. See, there they lie before you, poor timid believer! Gather them up, make them your own, for Jesus bids you take them. Do not be afraid, only believe! Grasp these sweet promises, *thresh them out by meditation* and feed on them with joy!

August 1 — Evening

"You crown the year with Your goodness." Psalm 65:11

All the year round, every hour of every day, God is richly blessing us; both when we sleep and when we wake—His mercy waits upon us. The sun may leave us a legacy of darkness—but our God never ceases to shine upon His children with beams of love. Like a *river*, His loving-kindness is always flowing, with a fullness as inexhaustible as His own nature. Like the atmosphere which constantly surrounds the earth, and is always ready to support the life of man, the benevolence of God surrounds all His creatures; in it, as in their element, they live, and move, and have their being.

Yet as the sun on summer days gladdens us with beams more warm and bright than at other times; and as rivers are at certain seasons swollen by the rain; and as the atmosphere itself is sometimes fraught with more fresh, more bracing, or more balmy influences than heretofore, so is it with the mercy of God; it has its golden hours; its days of overflow, when the Lord magnifies His grace unto men. Among the blessings of the nether springs, the joyous days of *harvest* are a special season of excessive favor. It is the glory of *autumn* that the ripe gifts of providence are then abundantly bestowed; it is the mellow season of *realization*, whereas all before was but *hope* and *expectation*. Great is the joy of harvest. Happy are the *reapers* who fill their arms with the liberality of heaven.

The Psalmist tells us that the *harvest* is the crowning of the year. Surely these crowning *mercies* call for crowning *thanksgiving!* Let us render it by the inward emotions of gratitude. Let our hearts be warmed; let our spirits remember, meditate, and think upon this goodness of the Lord. Then let us praise Him with our lips, and laud and magnify His name from whose bounty all this goodness flows. Let us glorify God by yielding our gifts to His cause. A practical proof of our gratitude, is a special thank-offering to the Lord of the harvest.

August 2 — Morning

"Who works all things after the counsel of His own will." Ephesians 1:11

Our belief in God's wisdom, supposes and necessitates that He has a settled purpose and plan in the work of salvation. What would creation have been—without His design? Is there a fish in the sea, or a fowl in the air, which was left to chance for its formation? Nay, in every bone, joint, and muscle, sinew, gland, and blood-vessel—you mark the presence of a God working everything according to the design of infinite wisdom. And shall God be present in *creation*, ruling over all, and not in *grace*? Shall the *new creation* have fickle free will to preside over it—when divine counsel rules the old creation?

Look at *Providence!* We know that not a *sparrow* falls to the ground without your Father. Even the *hairs* of your head are all numbered. God weighs the mountains of our grief in scales, and the hills of our tribulation in balances. And shall there be a God in *providence* and not in *grace*? Shall the *shell* be ordained by wisdom—and the *kernel* be left to blind chance. No! He knows the end from the beginning. He sees in its appointed place, not merely the corner-stone which He has laid in fair colors, in the blood of His dear Son—but He beholds in their ordained position—each of the *chosen stones* taken out of the quarry of nature, and polished by His grace! He sees the whole from corner to cornice, from base to roof, from foundation to pinnacle. He has in His mind a clear knowledge of every stone which shall be laid in its prepared space, and how vast the edifice shall be, and when the top-stone shall be brought forth with shoutings of "Grace! Grace! unto it!"

At the last, it shall be clearly seen that in every chosen vessel of mercy, Jehovah did as He willed with His own; and that in every part of the work of grace—He accomplished His purpose, and glorified His own name!

August 2 — Evening

"So she gleaned in the field until evening." Ruth 2:17

Let me learn from Ruth, the gleaner. As she went out to gather the ears of grain, so must I go forth into the fields of prayer, meditation, the ordinances, and hearing the Word—to gather spiritual food. The gleaner gathers her portion ear by ear; her gains are little by little—so must I be content to search for single truths, if there be no greater plenty of them. Every ear helps to make a bundle, and every gospel lesson assists in making us wise unto salvation.

The gleaner keeps her *eyes open*—or she would have no load to carry home rejoicingly at eventide. I must be watchful in pious exercises, lest they become unprofitable to me. I fear I have lost much already—O that I may rightly estimate my opportunities, and glean with greater diligence.

The gleaner *stoops* for all she finds—and so must I. Proud people criticize and object—but lowly minds glean and receive benefit. A humble heart is a great help towards profitably hearing the gospel. The engrafted soul-saving Word is not received, except with meekness. A *stiff back* makes a bad gleaner; down, *master pride*, you are a vile robber, not to be endured for a moment.

What the gleaner gathers she *holds*—if she dropped one ear to find another, the result of her day's work would be but scant. She is as careful to *retain* as to *obtain*—and so at last her gains are great. How often do I *forget* all that I hear; the second truth pushes the first out of my head, and so my reading and hearing end in much ado about nothing! Do I feel duly the importance of *storing up* the truth?

A hungry belly makes the gleaner wise; if there be no *grain* in her hand, there will be no *bread* on her table; she labors under the sense of necessity, and hence her tread is nimble and her grasp is firm. I have even a greater necessity. Lord, help me to feel it, that it may urge me onward to glean in fields which yield so plenteous a reward to diligence!

August 3 — Morning

"The Lamb is the light thereof." Revelation 21:23

Quietly contemplate the Lamb as *the light of heaven*.

Light in Scripture is the emblem of JOY. The joy of the saints in heaven is comprised in this—Jesus chose us, loved us, bought us, cleansed us, robed us, kept us, glorified us—we are here entirely through the Lord Jesus. Each one of these thoughts shall be to them like a cluster of the grapes of Eshcol!

Light is also the cause of BEAUTY. Nothing of beauty is left, when light is gone. Without light no radiance flashes from the sapphire, no peaceful ray proceeds from the pearl. In the same way—all the beauty of the saints above comes from Jesus. As planets, they reflect the light of the Sun of Righteousness; they live as beams proceeding from the central orb. If He withdrew, they must die; if His glory were veiled, their glory must expire.

Light is also the emblem of KNOWLEDGE. In heaven our knowledge will be perfect—but the Lord Jesus Himself will be the fountain of it. Dark providences, never understood before, will then be clearly seen, and all that puzzles us now—will become plain to us in the light of the Lamb. Oh! what unfoldings there will be and what glorifying of the God of love!

Light also means MANIFESTATION. Light manifests. In this present world—it does not yet appear what we shall be. God's people are a hidden people—but when Christ receives His people into heaven, He will touch them with the wand of His own love, and change them into the image of His manifested glory! They were *poor* and *wretched*—but what a transformation! They were stained with *sin*—but one touch of His finger, and they are bright as the sun, and clear as crystal. Oh! what a manifestation!

All this proceeds from the exalted Lamb. Whatever there may be of effulgent splendor, Jesus shall be the center and soul of it all. Oh! to be present and to see Him in His own light, the King of kings, and Lord of lords!

August 3 — Evening

"But as He went." Luke 8:42

Jesus is passing through the throng—to the house of Jairus, to raise the ruler's dead daughter; but He is so *profuse in goodness*, that He works another miracle while upon the road. While yet this rod of Aaron bears the blossom of an unaccomplished wonder, it yields the ripe almonds of a perfect work of mercy.

It is enough for *us*, if we have some one purpose, straightway to go and accomplish it; it were imprudent to expend our energies along the way. Hastening to the rescue of a drowning friend, we cannot afford to exhaust our strength upon another in like danger. It is enough for a tree to yield one sort of fruit—and for a man to fulfill his own peculiar calling. But our Master knows no limit of power or boundary of mission. He is so *prolific of grace*, that like the sun which shines as it rolls onward in its orbit, His path is radiant with loving-kindness. He is a *swift arrow of love*, which not only reaches its ordained target—but perfumes the air through which it flies. Virtue is evermore going out of Jesus—as sweet odors exhale from flowers! And it always will be emanating from Him—as water from a sparkling fountain.

What delightful encouragement this truth affords us! If our Lord is so ready to heal the sick and bless the needy, then, my soul, do not be slow to put yourself in His way—that He may smile on *you*. Do not be slack in *asking*—if He be so abundant in *bestowing*. Give earnest heed to His Word now, and at all times, that Jesus may speak through it to your heart. Where He is to be found—there make your resort, that you may obtain His blessing. When He is present to heal, may He not heal *you*? But surely He is present even now, for He always comes to hearts which need Him. And do not you need Him? Ah, He knows how much! O Son of David, turn Your eye and look upon the distress which is now before You, and make Your suppliant whole!

August 4 — Morning

"The people who *know* their God—shall be *strong*, and do exploits." Daniel 11:32

Every believer understands, that *to know God* is the highest and best form of knowledge; and this spiritual knowledge is a source of *strength* to the Christian.

Knowledge strengthens his FAITH. Believers are constantly spoken of in the Scriptures, as being people who are enlightened and taught of the Lord. They are said to "have an anointing from the Holy One," and it is the Spirit's peculiar office to lead them into all truth, and all this for the increase and the fostering of their faith.

Knowledge strengthens LOVE, as well as faith. Knowledge opens the door—and then through that door we see our Savior! Or, to use another similitude, knowledge *paints the portrait of Jesus*, and when we see that portrait—then we love Him. We cannot love a Christ whom we do not know, at least, in some degree. If we know but little of the excellences of Jesus—what He has done for us, and what He is doing now—we cannot love Him much. The more we know Him—the more we shall love Him!

Knowledge also strengthens HOPE. How can we hope for a thing—if we do not know of its existence? Hope may be the *telescope*—but until we receive instruction, our ignorance stands in the front of the glass, and we can see nothing whatever; knowledge removes the interposing object, and when we look through the *telescope*—we discern the glory to be revealed, and anticipate it with joyous confidence.

Knowledge supplies us reasons for PATIENCE. How shall we have patience—unless we know something of the sympathy of Christ, and understand the good which is to come out of the correction which our heavenly Father sends us?

There is not one single grace of the Christian which, under God, will not be fostered and brought to perfection by *holy knowledge*. How important, then, is it that we should grow not only in *grace*—but in the "knowledge" of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

August 4 — Evening

"I smote you with blight and mildew and hail—to destroy all the produce of your labor." Haggai 2:17

How destructive is the *hail* to the standing crops, beating the precious grain upon the ground!

How grateful ought we to be when the grain is spared so terrible a ruin! Let us offer unto the Lord thanksgiving.

Even more to be dreaded are those mysterious destroyers—*blight* and *mildew*. These turn the corn into a mass of soot, or render it putrid, or dry up the grain—and all in a manner so beyond all human control, that the farmer is compelled to cry, "This is the finger of God!" Innumerable minute fungi cause the mischief, and were it not for the goodness of God, the *rider on the black horse* would soon scatter *famine* over the land. *Infinite mercy* spares the food of men—but in view of the active agents which are ready to destroy the harvest, right wisely are we taught to pray, "*Give us this day our daily bread.*" We have constant need of the blessing.

When blight and mildew come—they are chastisements from God, and men must learn to hear the rod, and Him who has appointed it.

Spiritually, *mildew* is a common evil. When our work is most promising, this *mildew* appears. We hoped for many conversions, and instead—a general apathy, an abounding worldliness, or a cruel hardness of heart! There may be no open sin in those for whom we are laboring—but there is a deficiency of sincerity and decision sadly disappointing our desires.

We learn from this—our dependence upon the Lord, and the need of prayer that no *blight* or *mildew* may fall upon our work. Spiritual pride or sloth will soon bring upon us the dreadful evil, and only the Lord of the harvest can remove it. *Mildew* may even attack our own hearts, and shrivel our prayers and pious exercises. May it please the great Gardener to avert so serious a calamity. Shine, blessed Sun of Righteousness, and drive the blights away!

August 5 — Morning

"We know that all things work together for good—to those who love God." Romans 8:28

The believer is absolutely sure, that an invisible hand is always on the world's helm, and that wherever providence may drift, Jehovah steers it. That reassuring knowledge prepares him for everything. He looks over the raging waters—and sees Jesus treading the billows; and he hears a voice saying, "It is I, do not be afraid!" He knows also, that God is always wise, and, knowing this, he is confident that there can be no accidents, no mistakes; that nothing can occur—which ought not to arise. He can say, "If I should lose all I have, it is better that I should lose than have—if God so wills. The worst calamity is the wisest and the kindest thing that could befall to me—if God ordains it."

"We know that all things work together for good—to those who love God." The Christian does not merely hold this as a *theory*—but he knows it as a matter of fact. Everything has worked for good as yet; the poisonous drugs mixed in fit proportions, have worked the cure; the sharp cuts of the lancet, have cleansed out the proud flesh and facilitated the healing. Every event as yet has worked out the most divinely blessed results; and so, believing that *God rules all*, that He governs *wisely*, that He brings good out of evil—the believer's heart is assured, and he is enabled calmly to meet each trial as it comes. The believer can in the spirit of true resignation pray, "Send me what you will, my God—so long as it comes from You! A bad portion never came from Your table—to any of Your children."

August 5 — Evening

"Shall your brethren go to war—and shall you sit here?" Numbers 32:6

Kindred has its obligations. The Reubenites and Gadites would have been unbrotherly, if they had claimed the land which had been conquered, and had left the rest of the people to fight for their portions alone. We have received much by means of the efforts and sufferings of the saints in years gone by, and if we do not make some return to the church of Christ by giving her our best energies, we are unworthy to be enrolled in her ranks. Others are combating the errors of the age manfully, or excavating perishing ones from amid the ruins of the fall—and if we fold our hands in idleness, we had need be warned, lest the *curse of Meroz* fall upon us!

The Master of the vineyard says, "Why do you stand here idle—all the day?" *What is the idler's excuse?* Personal service of Jesus becomes all the more the duty of *all*—because it is cheerfully and abundantly rendered by *some*. The toils of devoted missionaries and fervent ministers shame us—if we sit still in indolence.

Shrinking from trial, is the temptation of those who are *at ease in Zion*—they would gladly escape the *cross*—and yet wear the *crown!* To them the question for this evening's meditation is very applicable. If the most precious are *tried in the fire*, are *we* to escape the crucible? If the diamond must be polished upon the wheel, are we to be made perfect without suffering? Who has commanded the wind to cease from blowing, because our ship is on the deep? Why should we be treated better than our Lord? The *firstborn* felt the rod, and why not the younger brethren? It is a cowardly pride which would choose a *downy pillow* and a *silken couch* for a soldier of the cross. Wiser far is he who, being first resigned to the divine will, grows by the energy of grace to be pleased with it, and so learns to gather *lilies* at the cross-foot; and, like Samson, to find *honey* in the lion!

August 6 — *Morning*

"Watchman, what of the night?" Isaiah 21:11

What *enemies* are abroad during the night?

Errors are a numerous horde, and new ones appear every hour—against what heresy am I to be on my guard? *Sins* creep from their lurking places when the darkness reigns; I must myself mount the watch-tower, and watch unto prayer. Our heavenly Protector foresees all the attacks which are about to be made upon us, and when as yet the evil designed us is but in the desire of Satan, He prays for us that our faith fail not, when we are sifted as wheat. Continue O gracious Watchman, to forewarn us of our foes, and for Zion's sake hold not your peace.

"Watchman, what of the night?" What *weather* is coming for the Church? Are the clouds lowering, or is it all clear and fair overhead? We must care for the Church of God with anxious love; and now that *Popery* and *infidelity* are both threatening, let us observe the signs of the times and prepare for conflict.

"Watchman, what of the night?" What *stars* are visible? What precious *promises* suit our present case? You sound the alarm—give us the consolation also. Christ, the polestar, is ever fixed in His place, and all the stars are secure in the right hand of their Lord.

"Watchman, how much longer until morning? When will the night be over?" The Bridegroom tarries. Are there no signs of His coming forth as the Sun of Righteousness? Has not the *morning star* arisen as the pledge of day? When will the day dawn—and the shadows flee away? O Jesus, if You come not in person to Your waiting Church this day—yet come in Spirit to my sighing heart, and make it sing for joy.

August 6 — Evening

"Let the whole earth be filled with His glory! Amen, and amen!" Psalm 72:19

This is a large petition. To intercede for a whole *city* needs a stretch of faith, and there are times when a prayer for *one person* is enough to stagger us. But how far-reaching was the psalmist's dying intercession! How comprehensive! How sublime! "Let the whole earth be filled with His glory!" It does not exempt a single *country*, however crushed by the *foot of superstition*; it does not exclude a single *nation* however *barbarous*. For the cannibal as well as for the civilized, for all climes and races this prayer is uttered—the whole circle of the earth it encompasses, and omits no son of Adam. We must be up and doing for our Master, or we cannot honestly offer such a prayer.

The petition is not asked with a sincere heart unless we endeavor, as God shall help us, to extend the kingdom of our Master. Are there not some who neglect both to *plead* and to *labor*? Reader, is this your prayer? Turn your eyes to Calvary! Behold the *Lord of Life* nailed to a cross, with the thorn-crown about His brow, with bleeding head, and hands, and feet! What! can you look upon this *miracle of miracles*—the death of the Son of God, without feeling within your bosom a marvelous adoration that language never can express? And when you feel the blood applied to your conscience, and know that He has blotted out your sins, you are not a man unless you start from your knees and cry, "Let the whole earth be filled with His glory! Amen, and Amen!" Can you bow before the Crucified in loving homage, and not wish to see your Monarch master of the world? Out on you if you can pretend to love your Prince, and desire not to see Him the universal ruler. Your piety is worthless—unless it leads you to wish that the same mercy which has been extended to you—may bless the whole world. Lord, it is harvest-time, put in Your sickle and reap!

August 7 — Morning

"The upright love You." Song of Solomon 1:4

Believers love Jesus with a deeper affection than they dare to give to any other being. They would sooner lose father and mother than part with Christ. They hold all earthly comforts with a loose hand—but they carry *Him* fast locked in their hearts. They voluntarily deny themselves for His sake—but they cannot be driven to deny Him. It is scant love which the *fire of persecution* can dry up; the true believer's love is a deeper stream than this. Men have labored to divide the faithful from their Master—but their attempts have been fruitless in every age. Neither crowns of honor, now frowns of anger—have untied this more than Gordian knot. This is no passing attachment which the world's power may at length dissolve. Neither man nor devil have found a key which opens *this lock*. Never has the craft of Satan been more futile, than when he has exercised it in seeking to rend in sunder this union of two divinely-welded hearts.

It is written, and nothing can blot out the sentence, "The upright love You." The intensity of the love of the upright, however, is not so much to be judged by what it *appears*—as by what the upright *long* for. It is our daily lament that we cannot love enough. Would that our hearts were capable of holding more, and reaching further.

Alas! our longest reach is but a *span of love*, and our affection is but as a drop of a bucket compared with His deserts. Measure our love by our intentions, and it is high indeed; 'tis thus, we trust, our Lord does judge of it. Oh, that we could give all the love in all hearts in one great mass, a gathering together of all loves—to Him who is altogether lovely!

August 7 — Evening

"Satan hindered us." 1 Thessalonians 2:18

Since the first hour in which goodness came into conflict with evil, it has never ceased to be true in spiritual experience, that Satan hinders us. From all points of the compass, all along the line of battle, in the vanguard and in the rear, at the dawn of day and in the midnight hour—Satan hinders us. If we toil in the *field*—he seeks to break the ploughshare; if we build the *wall*—he labors to cast down the stones; if we would serve God in suffering or in conflict—everywhere Satan hinders us.

He hinders us when we are *first* coming to Jesus Christ. Fierce conflicts we had with Satan when we first looked to the cross and lived. Now that we are saved, he endeavors to hinder the completeness of our holy character. You may be congratulating yourself, "I have hitherto walked consistently; no man can challenge my integrity." Beware of boasting, for your *virtue* will yet be tried; Satan will direct his engines against that very virtue for which you are the most famous. If you have been hitherto a firm believer—your *faith* will before long be attacked. If you have been as *meek* as Moses—expect to be tempted to speak unadvisedly with your lips. The birds will peck at your *ripest fruit*, and the wild boar will dash his tusks at your *choicest vines*.

Satan is sure to hinder us when we are earnest in *prayer*. He hinders our importunity, and weakens our faith in order that, if possible, we may miss the blessing. Nor is Satan less vigilant in obstructing Christian *work*. There was never a revival of religion, without a revival of his opposition. As soon as Ezra and Nehemiah begin to labor, Sanballat and Tobiah are stirred up to hinder them. What then? We are not alarmed because Satan hinders us, for it is a proof that we are on the Lord's side, and are doing the Lord's work, and in His strength we shall win the victory, and triumph over our adversary!

August 8 — Morning

"They weave the spider's web." Isaiah 59:5

See the *spider's web*, and behold in it a most suggestive picture *of the hypocrite's religion*.

It is meant to *catch his prey*—the spider fattens himself on flies, and the Pharisee has his reward. Foolish people are easily entrapped by the loud professions of pretenders, and even the more judicious cannot always escape. Philip baptized Simon Magus, whose deceitful declaration of faith, was so soon exploded by the stern rebuke of Peter. *Custom, reputation, praise, advancement*, and other flies—are the small game which hypocrites take in their nets.

A spider's web is a *marvel of skill*—look at it and admire the cunning hunter's wiles. Is not a deceiver's religion equally adept? How does he make so barefaced a lie—appear to be a truth? How can he make his *tinsel* answer so well the purpose of *gold*?

A spider's web comes all from *the creature's own bowels*. The bee gathers her wax from flowers, the spider sucks no flowers, and yet she spins out her material to any length. Even so, hypocrites find their trust and hope within themselves; their anchor was forged on their own anvil, and their cable twisted by their own hands. They lay their own foundation, and hew out the pillars of their own house, disdainingly to be debtors to the sovereign grace of God.

But a spider's web is *very frail*. It is curiously wrought—but not enduringly manufactured. It is no match for the servant's broom, or the traveler's staff. The hypocrite needs no great force to blow his hope to pieces—a mere puff of wind will do it. Hypocritical cobwebs will soon come down when the *broom of destruction* begins its purifying work.

Which reminds us of one more thought, namely, that such cobwebs are not to be endured in the Lord's house—He will see to it that they and those who spin them—shall be destroyed for ever. O my soul, be resting on something better than a spider's web. The Lord Jesus is your eternal hiding-place!

August 8 — Evening

"All things are possible—to him who believes." Mark 9:23

Many professed Christians are always *doubting* and *fearing*—and they forlornly think that this is the necessary state of believers. This is a mistake, for "all things are possible—to him who believes"; and it is possible for us to mount into a state in which a *doubt* or a *fear* shall be but as a bird of passage flitting across the soul—but never lingering there.

When you read of the high and sweet communions enjoyed by favored saints, you sigh and murmur in the chamber of your heart, "Alas! these are not for me!" O climber, if you have but faith, you shall yet stand upon the sunny pinnacle of the temple, for "all things are possible—to him who believes." You hear of exploits which holy men have done for Jesus; what they have enjoyed of Him; how much they have been like Him; how they have been able to endure great persecutions for His sake; and you say, "Ah! as for me, I am but a worm; I can never attain to this!" But there is nothing which one saint was, that you may not be.

There is no elevation of grace, no attainment of spirituality, no clearness of assurance, no post of duty—which is not open to you, if you have but the power to believe. Lay aside your sackcloth and ashes, and rise to the dignity of your true position; you are *little in Israel*—because you will be so, not because there is any necessity for it. It is not fit that you should *grovel in the dust*, O child of a King. Ascend! The golden throne of assurance is waiting for you! The crown of communion with Jesus is ready to bedeck your brow. Wrap yourself in scarlet and fine linen, and eat sumptuously every day! For if you Believe, you may eat the choicest of wheat; your land shall flow with milk and honey, and your soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness. Gather golden sheaves of grace, for they await you in the fields of faith. "All things are possible—to him who believes."

August 9 — Morning

"The city has no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it." Revelation 21:23

Yonder in the better world, the inhabitants are independent of all *creature comforts*. They have no need of *clothing*; their white robes never wear out, neither shall they ever be defiled. They need no *medicine* to heal diseases, "for the inhabitant shall never say—I am sick." They need no *sleep* to revive their bodies—they rest not day nor night—but unweariedly praise Him in His temple. They need no *social relationships* to minister comfort, and whatever happiness they may derive from association with their fellows—is not essential to their bliss, for their Lord's society is enough for their largest desires. They need no *teachers* there; they doubtless commune with one another concerning the things of God—but they do not require this by way of instruction; they shall all be taught of the Lord.

Ours are the *alms* at the king's gate—but they feast at the table itself. Here we lean upon the friendly arm—but there they lean upon their Beloved and upon Him alone. Here we must have the help of our companions—but there they find all they want in Christ Jesus. Here we look to the food which perishes, and to the clothing which decays before the moth—but there they find everything in God. We use the bucket to fetch water from the well—but there they drink from the fountain head, and put their lips down to the living water. Here the angels bring us blessings—but we shall need no messengers from heaven then. They shall need no *Gabriels* there to bring their love-notes from God, for there they shall see Him face to face. Oh! what a blessed time shall that be—when we shall have mounted above every *second cause* and shall rest upon the bare arm of God! What a glorious hour when God, and not His *creatures*; the Lord, and not His works—shall be our daily joy! Our souls shall then have attained the perfection of bliss!

August 9 — Evening

"He appeared first to Mary Magdalene—out of whom He had cast seven devils." Mark 16:9

Mary of Magdala was the victim of a fearful evil. She was possessed by not *one* devil only—but *seven*. These dreadful inhabitants caused much pain and pollution to the poor frame in which they had found a lodging. Hers was a hopeless, horrible case. She could not help herself, neither could any human support avail. But Jesus passed that way, and unsought, and probably even resisted by the poor demoniac, He uttered the word of power—and Mary of Magdala became a trophy of the *healing power* of Jesus.

All the seven demons left her, left her never to return, forcibly ejected by the Lord of all. What a blessed deliverance! What a happy change! From delirium to delight, from despair to peace, from hell to heaven! At once, she became a constant follower of Jesus, catching His every word, following His winding steps, sharing His toilsome life; and withal she became His generous helper, first among that band of healed and grateful women—who ministered unto Him of their substance.

When Jesus was lifted up in crucifixion, Mary remained the sharer of His shame—we find her first beholding from afar, and then drawing near to the foot of the cross. She could not die on the cross with Jesus—but she stood as near to it as she could; and when His blessed body was taken down, she watched to see how and where it was laid. She was the faithful and watchful believer, *last* at the sepulcher where Jesus slept—*first* at the grave whence He arose. Her *holy fidelity* made her a favored beholder of her beloved Rabboni, who deigned to call her by her name, and to make her His messenger of good news to the trembling disciples and Peter. Thus grace found her a maniac—and made her a minister! Grace delivered her from Satan—and united her forever to the Lord Jesus! May I also be such a miracle of grace!

August 10 — Morning

"Christ, who is our life." Colossians 3:4

Paul's marvelously rich expression indicates, that Christ is the **source** of our life. "You has He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." That same voice which brought Lazarus out of the tomb—raised us to newness of life.

He is now the **substance** of our spiritual life. It is by His life—that we live. He is in us, the hope of glory, the spring of our actions, the central thought which moves every other thought.

Christ is the **sustenance** of our life. What can the Christian feed upon—but Jesus' flesh and blood? "This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die." O way-worn pilgrims in this wilderness of sin—you never get a morsel to satisfy the hunger of your spirits, except you find it in Him!

Christ is the **solace** of our life. All our true joys come from Him; and in times of trouble, His presence is our consolation. There is nothing worth living for—but Him; and His loving-kindness is better than life!

Christ is the **object** of our life. As the ship speeds towards the port—so hastens the believer towards the haven of his Savior's bosom. As flies the arrow to its goal—so flies the Christian towards the perfecting of his fellowship with Christ Jesus. As the soldier fights for his captain, and is crowned in his captain's victory—so the believer contends for Christ, and gets his triumph out of the triumphs of his Master. "For him to live is Christ."

Christ is the **exemplar** of our life. Where there is the same life within, there will, there must be, to a great extent, the same developments without; and if we live in near fellowship with the Lord Jesus—we shall grow like Him. We shall set Him before us as our *Divine copy*, and we shall seek to tread in His footsteps, until He shall become the crown of our life in glory. Oh! how safe, how honored, how happy is the Christian, since Christ is our life!

August 10 — Evening

"The Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins." Matthew 9:6

Behold one of the great Physician's mightiest arts—He has power to forgive sin! While here He lived below, before the ransom had been paid, before the blood had been literally sprinkled on the mercy-seat, He had power to forgive sin. Has He not power to do it now that He has died? What power must dwell in Him who to the utmost farthing has faithfully discharged the debts of all His people! He has boundless power, now that He has finished transgression and made an end of sin.

If you doubt it, see Him rising from the dead! behold Him in ascending splendor raised to the right hand of God! Hear Him pleading before the eternal Father, pointing to His wounds, urging the merit of His sacred passion! What power to forgive is here! "He has ascended on high, and received gifts for men." "He is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins." *The most crimson sins—are removed by the crimson of His blood!*

At this moment, dear reader, whatever your sinfulness, Christ has power to pardon, power to pardon *you*, and millions such as you are. A word will speak it. He has nothing more to do to win your pardon; all the *atoning* work is done. He can, in answer to your tears, forgive your sins today, and make you know it. He can breathe into your soul at this very moment—a peace with God which passes all understanding, which shall spring from perfect remission of your manifold iniquities.

Do you believe that? I trust you believe it. May you *experience* now, the power of Jesus to forgive sin! Waste no time in applying to the Physician of souls—but hasten to Him now!

August 11 — Morning

"Oh that I were as in months past." Job 29:2

Numbers of Christians can view the *past* with pleasure—but regard the *present* with dissatisfaction. They look back upon the days which they have passed in communing with the Lord—as being the sweetest and the best they have ever known—but as to the present, it is clad in a sable garb of gloom and dreariness. Once they lived near to Jesus—but now they feel that they have wandered from Him, and they say, "O that I were as in months past!" They complain that they have lost their evidences, or that they have not present peace of mind, or that they have no enjoyment in the means of grace, or that conscience is not so tender, or that they have not so much zeal for God's glory.

The *causes of this mournful state of things* are manifold. It may arise through a comparative *neglect of prayer*, for a neglected closet is the beginning of all spiritual decline. Or it may be the result of *idolatry*. The heart has been occupied with something else, more than with God; the affections have been set on the things of earth, instead of the things of heaven. A jealous God will not be content with a divided heart; He must be loved *first* and *best*. He will withdraw the sunshine of His presence from a cold, wandering heart. Or the cause may be found in *self-confidence* and *self-righteousness*. *Pride* is busy in the heart, and *self* is exalted—instead of lying low at the foot of the cross.

Christian, if you are not now as you "were in months past," do not rest satisfied with *wishing* for a return of former happiness—but go at once to seek your Master—and tell Him your sad state. Ask His grace and strength to help you to walk more closely with Him. Humble yourself before Him—and He will lift you up, and give you yet again to enjoy the light of His countenance. Do not sit down to sigh and lament; while the beloved Physician lives there is hope, nay there is a certainty of recovery for the worst cases!

August 11 — Evening

"Everlasting consolation." 2 Thessalonians 2:16

"Consolation." There is music in the word—like David's harp, it charms away the evil spirit of melancholy. It was a distinguished honor to *Barnabas* to be called "the son of consolation"; nay, it is one of the illustrious names of a greater than Barnabas, for the Lord Jesus is "the consolation of Israel."

"*Everlasting* consolation" here is the cream of all, for the *eternity* of comfort—is the crown and glory of it. What is this "everlasting consolation"? It includes a sense of pardoned sin. A Christian man has received in his heart—the witness of the Spirit that his iniquities are put away like a cloud, and his transgressions like a thick cloud. If *sin is pardoned*—is not that an everlasting consolation?

Next, the Lord gives His people an abiding sense of *acceptance in Christ*. The Christian knows that God looks upon him as *standing in union with Jesus*. Union to the risen Lord is a consolation of the most abiding order; it is, in fact, everlasting. Let *sickness* prostrate us, have we not seen hundreds of believers as happy in the weakness of disease—as they would have been in the strength of hale and blooming health? Let *death's* arrows pierce us to the heart, our comfort does not die—for have not our ears full often heard the songs of saints as they have rejoiced because the living love of God was shed abroad in their hearts in dying moments? Yes, a sense of acceptance in the Beloved is an everlasting consolation.

Moreover, the Christian has a conviction of his *security*. God has promised to save those who trust in Christ—the Christian does trust in Christ, and he believes that God will be as good as His Word, and will save him. He feels that he is safe by virtue of his being bound up with the person and work of Jesus!

August 12 — Morning

"The Lord reigns—let the earth rejoice!" Psalm 97:1

There are none causes for disquietude—so long as this blessed sentence is true. The Lord's power as readily controls the rage of the wicked—as the rage of the sea! His love as easily refreshes the poor with mercy—as the earth with showers. God's majesty gleams in flashes of fire amid the tempest's horrors; and the glory of the Lord is seen in its grandeur in the fall of empires, and the crash of thrones!

In all our conflicts and tribulations—we may behold the hand of the divine King.

"God is God—He sees and hears
All our troubles, all our tears.
Soul, forget not, 'mid your pains,
God o'er all forever reigns!"

In hell, evil spirits own, with misery—His undoubted supremacy. When permitted to roam abroad, it is with a *chain* on their leg. The *bit* is in the mouth of behemoth, and the *hook* in the jaws of leviathan. *Death's darts* are under the Lord's lock. The *grave's prisons* have divine power as their warder. The dreadful vengeance of the Judge of all the earth—makes fiends cower down and tremble, even as dogs in the kennel fear the hunter's whip.

"Fear not death, nor Satan's thrusts,
God defends whom in Him trusts;
Soul, remember, in your pains,
God o'er all forever reigns!"

In heaven none doubt the sovereignty of the King Eternal—but all fall on their faces to do Him homage. Angels are His courtiers, the redeemed His favorites, and all delight to serve Him day and night. May we soon reach the city of the great King!

"For this life's long night of sadness
He will give us peace and gladness.
Soul, remember, in your pains,
God o'er all forever reigns!"

August 12 — Evening

"The *rainbow* shall be seen in the cloud." Genesis 9:14

The *rainbow*, the symbol of the covenant with Noah, is typical of our Lord Jesus, who is the Lord's witness to the people.

When may we expect to see the token of the covenant? The rainbow is only to be seen painted upon a **cloud**. When the sinner's conscience is dark with clouds, when he remembers his past sin, and mourns and laments before God; Jesus Christ is revealed to him as the *Covenant Rainbow*, displaying all the glorious hues of the divine character and betokening peace. To the believer, when his *trials* and *temptations* surround him—it is sweet to behold the person of our Lord Jesus Christ—to see Him bleeding, living, rising, and pleading for us! God's rainbow is hung over the *cloud* of our sins, our sorrows, and our woes—to prophesy deliverance.

Nor does a cloud alone give a rainbow, there must be the **crystal drops** to reflect the light of the sun. So, our sorrows must not only threaten—but they must really fall upon us. There had been no Christ for us if the vengeance of God had been merely a threatening cloud—punishment must fall in terrible drops upon the Surety. Until there is a real anguish in the sinner's conscience, there is no Christ for him; until the chastisement which he feels becomes grievous, he cannot see Jesus.

But there must also be a **sun**; for clouds and drops of rain do not make rainbows—unless the sun shines. Beloved, our God, who is as the sun to us, always shines—but we do not always see *Him*—clouds hide His face; but no matter what *drops* may be falling, or what *clouds* may be threatening, if He does but *shine*—there will be a rainbow at once. It is said that when we see the rainbow—that the shower is over. Certain it is, that when Christ comes, our troubles will be forever ended. When we behold Jesus—our sins vanish, and our doubts and fears subside. When Jesus walks the waters of the sea, how profound the calm!

August 13 — Morning

"The cedars of Lebanon which He has planted." Psalm 104:16

Lebanon's cedars are emblematic of the Christian, in that they owe their *planting* entirely to the Lord. This is quite true of every child of God. He is not *man*-planted, nor *self*-planted—but *God*-planted. The mysterious hand of the divine Spirit dropped the living seed into a heart which He had Himself prepared for its reception. Every true heir of heaven owns the great Gardener as his planter.

Moreover, the cedars of Lebanon are not dependent upon man for their *watering*; they stand on the lofty rock, unmoistened by human irrigation; and yet our heavenly Father supplies them. Thus it is with the Christian who has learned to live by faith. He is independent of man, even in temporal things; for his continued maintenance he looks to the Lord his God, and to Him alone. The dew of heaven is his portion, and the God of heaven is his fountain.

Again, the cedars of Lebanon are not *protected* by any mortal power. They owe nothing to man for their preservation from stormy wind and tempest. They are God's trees, kept and preserved by Him, and by Him alone. It is precisely the same with the Christian. He is not a hot-house plant, sheltered from temptation; he stands in the most exposed position; he has no shelter, no protection, except this, that the broad wings of the eternal God always cover the cedars which He Himself has planted. Like cedars, believers are full of sap having vitality enough to be ever green, even amid winter's snows.

Lastly, the *flourishing* and majestic condition of the cedar is to the praise of God only. The Lord, even the Lord alone has been everything unto the cedars, and, therefore David very sweetly puts it in one of the psalms, "Praise the Lord, fruitful trees and all cedars." In the believer there is nothing that can magnify man; he is planted, nourished, and protected by the Lord's own hand, and to Him let all the glory be ascribed!

August 13 — Evening

"And I will remember My covenant." Genesis 9:15

Mark the *form* of the promise. God does not say, "And when *you* shall look upon the bow, and you shall remember My covenant, then I will not destroy the earth," but it is gloriously put, not upon *our* memory, which is fickle and frail—but upon *God's* memory, which is infinite and immutable. "The rainbow shall be in the cloud; and *I* will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant." Oh! it is not *my* remembering God—it is *God's* remembering me which is the ground of my safety. It is not *my* laying hold of His covenant—but *His* covenant's laying hold on me. Glory be to God! the whole of the bulwarks of salvation are secured by divine power, and even the minor towers, which we may imagine might have been left to man, are guarded by almighty strength!

Even the *remembrance* of the covenant is not left to our memories, for we might forget—but our Lord cannot forget the saints whom He has engraved on the palms of His hands. It is with us as with Israel in Egypt; the blood was upon the lintel and the two side-posts—but the Lord did not say, "When *you* see the blood—I will pass over you," but "When *I* see the blood—I will pass over you."

My looking to Jesus brings me joy and peace—but it is *God's* looking to Jesus which secures my salvation and that of all His elect, since it is impossible for our God to look at Christ, our bleeding Surety, and then to be angry with us for sins already punished in Him. No, it is not left with us even to be saved by remembering the covenant. There is no blend of materials here—not a single thread of the creature mars the fabric. It is not of man, neither by man—but of the Lord alone.

We should remember the covenant, and we shall do it, through divine grace; but the hinge of our safety does not hang there—it is God's remembering us, not our remembering Him; and hence the covenant is an *everlasting* covenant.

August 14 — Morning

"You, Lord, have made me glad through Your work." Psalm 92:4

Do you believe that your sins are forgiven, and that Christ has made a full atonement for them? Then what a joyful Christian you ought to be! How you should live above the common trials and troubles of the world! Since sin is forgiven—can it matter what happens to you now? Luther said, "Smite, Lord, smite—for my sin is forgiven! Since You have but forgiven me, smite as hard as You will!" And in a similar spirit you may say, "Send sickness, poverty, losses, crosses, persecution, whatever You will; You have forgiven me, and my soul is glad."

Christian, if you are thus saved, while you are glad, be grateful and loving. Cling to that cross which took your sin away; serve Him who served you. "I beseech you therefore, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Let not your zeal evaporate in some little ebullition of song. Show your love in expressive tokens. Love the brethren of Him who loved you. If there is a Mephibosheth anywhere who is lame or halt—help him *for Jonathan's sake*. If there is a poor tried believer, weep with him, and bear his cross—for the sake of Him who wept for you and carried your sins. Since you are thus forgiven freely for Christ's sake—go and tell to others the joyful news of pardoning mercy. Do not be contented with this unspeakable blessing for yourself alone—but publish abroad the *story of the cross*. Holy *gladness* and holy *boldness* will make you a good preacher, and all the world will be a pulpit for you to preach in. *Cheerful holiness* is the most forcible of sermons—but the Lord must give it to you. Seek it this morning before you go into the world. When it is the Lord's work in which we rejoice, we need not be afraid of being too glad.

August 14 — Evening

"I know their sorrows." Exodus 3:7

The child is cheered as he sings, "This my father knows"; and shall not we be comforted as we discern that our dear Friend and tender soul-husband knows all about us?

1. He is the **Physician**, and if He knows all, there is no need that the patient should know. Hush, you silly, fluttering heart—prying, peeping, and suspecting! What you don't know now, you shall know hereafter, and meanwhile Jesus, the beloved Physician, knows your soul in adversities. Why need the patient analyze all the medicine, or estimate all the symptoms? This is the Physician's work, not mine. *It is my business to trust—and His to prescribe.* If He shall write His prescription in uncouth characters which I cannot read, I will not be uneasy on that account—but rely upon His unfailing skill to make all plain in the result, however mysterious in the working.

2. He is the **Master**, and His knowledge is to serve us instead of our own; we are to obey, not to judge, "The servant knows not what his Lord does." Shall the architect explain his plans to every brick-layer on the building? If he knows his own intent, is it not enough? The vessel on the wheel cannot guess to what pattern it shall be conformed—but if the potter understands his art—what does the ignorance of the clay matter? My Lord must not be cross-questioned any more by one so ignorant as I am!

3. He is the **Head**. All *understanding* centers there. What judgment has the arm? What comprehension has the foot? All the power to *know*—lies in the head. Why should the member have a brain of its own when the head fulfils for it every intellectual office? Here, then, must the believer rest his comfort in sickness, not that *he* himself can see the end—but that *Jesus* knows all. Sweet Lord, be forever *eye*, and *soul*, and *head* for us—and let us be content to know only what You chose to reveal!

August 15 — Morning

"Isaac went out to *meditate* in the field at the eventide." Genesis 24:63

Very admirable was his **occupation**. If those who spend so many hours in idle company, light reading, and useless pastimes, could learn wisdom—they would find more profitable society and more interesting engagements in *meditation* than in the vanities which now have such charms for them. We would all know more, live nearer to God, and grow in grace—if we were more alone with God. Meditation *chews the cud*, and extracts the real nutriment from the mental food gathered elsewhere.

When Jesus is the **theme**, meditation is sweet indeed! Isaac found Rebecca while engaged in private musings; many others have found their best beloved there.

Very admirable was the choice of **place**. In the *field* we have a study hung round with texts for thought. From the cedar to the hyssop, from the soaring eagle down to the chirping grasshopper, from the blue expanse of heaven to a drop of dew—all things are full of teaching; and when the eye is divinely opened, that teaching flashes upon the mind far more vividly than from written books. Our *little rooms* are neither so healthy, so suggestive, so agreeable, or so inspiring as the *fields*. Let us count nothing common or unclean—but feel that all created things point to their Maker—and the field will at once be hallowed.

Very admirable was the **season**. The season of sunset as it draws a veil over the day, befits that repose of the soul when earthborn cares yield to the joys of heavenly communion. The glory of the setting sun excites our wonder, and the solemnity of approaching night awakens our awe.

If the business of this day will permit it, it will be well, dear reader, if you can spare an hour to walk in the field at eventide—but if not, the Lord is in the town too, and will meet with you in your chamber or in the crowded street. Let your heart go forth to meet Him.

August 15 — Evening

"And I will give you a *heart of flesh*." Ezekiel 36:26

A *heart of flesh* is known by its tenderness concerning **sin**. To have indulged a foul imagination, or to have allowed a wild desire to tarry even for a moment—is quite enough to make a heart of flesh grieve before the Lord. The heart of stone calls a great iniquity, nothing—but not so the heart of flesh.

The heart of flesh is tender to **God's will**. My *Lord Will-be-will* is a great blusterer, and it is hard to subject him to God's will; but when the heart of flesh is given, the will quivers like an aspen leaf in every breath of heaven, and bows like a willow in every breeze of God's Spirit. The natural will is cold, hard iron, which cannot to be hammered into form—but the renewed will, like molten metal, is soon molded by the hand of grace.

In the fleshy heart there is a tenderness of the **affections**. The hard heart does not love the Redeemer—but the renewed heart burns with affection towards Him. The hard heart is selfish and coldly demands, "Why should I weep for sin? Why should I love the Lord?" But the heart of flesh says; "Lord, You know that I love You—help me to love You more!"

Many are the *privileges* of this renewed heart. Tis here the Spirit dwells—tis here that Jesus rests. It is fitted to receive every spiritual blessing, and every blessing comes to it. It is prepared to yield every heavenly fruit to the honor and praise of God, and therefore the Lord delights in it. A tender heart is the best defense against sin, and the best preparation for heaven. A renewed heart stands on its watchtower looking for the coming of the Lord Jesus. Have you this heart of flesh?

August 16 — Morning

"Give unto the Lord, the glory due unto His name." Psalm 29:2

God's glory is the result of His *nature* and *acts*. He is glorious in His *character*, for there is such a store of everything that is holy, and good, and lovely in God, that He must be glorious. The *actions* which flow from His character are also glorious; but while He intends that they should manifest to His creatures His goodness, and mercy, and justice—He is equally concerned that the glory associated with them should be given only to Himself.

Nor is there anything in ourselves in which we may glory; for who makes us to differ from another? And what do we *have*—that we did not *receive* from the God of all grace? Then how careful ought we to be to walk humbly before the Lord! The moment we glorify ourselves, since there is room for *one glory* only in the universe, we set ourselves up as rivals to the Most High. Shall the *insect of an hour* glorify itself against the sun which warmed it into life? Shall the *potsherd* exalt itself above the man who fashioned it upon the wheel? Shall the *dust* of the desert strive with the whirlwind? Or the *drops* of the ocean struggle with the tempest? Give unto the Lord, all you righteous, give unto the Lord glory and strength; give unto Him the honor that is due unto His name!

Yet it is, perhaps, one of the hardest struggles of the Christian life to learn this sentence, "Not unto us, not unto us—but unto Your name be glory!" It is a lesson which God is ever teaching us, and teaching us sometimes by most painful discipline. Let a Christian begin to boast, "I can do all things," without adding "through Christ who strengthens me," and before long he will have to groan, "I can do nothing," and bemoan himself in the dust. When we do anything for the Lord, and He is pleased to accept of our doings, let us lay our crown at His feet, and exclaim, "Not I—but the grace of God which was with me!"

August 16 — Evening

"Ourselves also, who *have* the first fruits of the Spirit." Romans 8:23

Present possession is declared. At this present moment—we have the first fruits of the Spirit. We have *repentance*, that gem of the first water; *faith*, that priceless pearl; *hope*, the heavenly emerald; and *love*, the glorious ruby. We are already made "new creatures in Christ Jesus," by the effectual working of God the Holy Spirit. This is called the first fruit, because it comes first. As the wave-sheaf was the first of the harvest, so the spiritual life, and all the graces which adorn that life, are the first operations of the Spirit of God in our souls. The first fruits were the pledge of the harvest. As soon as the Israelite had plucked the first handful of ripe ears, he looked forward with glad anticipation to the time when the wagon should creak beneath the sheaves. So, brethren, when God gives us things which are pure, lovely, and of good report, as the work of the Holy Spirit, these are to us the prognostics of the coming glory.

The first fruits were always **holy** to the Lord, and our new nature, with all its powers, is a consecrated thing. The new life is not ours—that we should ascribe its excellence to our own merit; it is Christ's image and creation, and is ordained for His glory. But the first fruits were not the *harvest*, and the works of the Spirit in us at this moment are not the consummation; the perfection is yet to come. We must not boast that we have attained, and so reckon the wave-sheaf to be all the produce of the year—we must hunger and thirst after righteousness, and pant for the day of full redemption.

Dear reader, this evening open your mouth wide, and God will fill it. Let the blessing in present possession, excite in you a *sacred avarice* for more grace. Groan within yourself for higher degrees of consecration, and your Lord will grant them to you, for He is able to do exceeding abundantly above what we ask or even think!

August 17 — Morning

"I trust in the mercy of God forever and ever!" Psalm 52:8

Meditate a little on this *mercy of the Lord*.

It is **tender** mercy. With gentle, loving touch, He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds. He is as gracious in the *manner* of His mercy—as in the *matter* of it.

It is **great** mercy. There is nothing little in God; His mercy is like Himself—it is infinite. You cannot measure it. His mercy is so great—that it forgives great sins to great sinners, after great lengths of time; and then gives great favors and great privileges, and raises us up to great enjoyments in the great heaven of the great God!

It is **undeserved** mercy, as indeed all true mercy must be, for *deserved* mercy is only a misnomer for justice. There was no *right* on the sinner's part, to the kind consideration of the Most High God. Had the rebel been doomed at once to eternal fire—he would have justly merited the doom; and if delivered from wrath, sovereign love alone has found a cause, for there was none in the sinner himself.

It is **rich** mercy. Some things are great—but have little efficacy in them—but this mercy is a cordial to your drooping spirits; a golden ointment to your bleeding wounds; a heavenly bandage to your broken bones; a royal chariot for your weary feet; a bosom of love for your trembling heart!

It is **manifold** mercy. As Bunyan says, "All the flowers in God's garden are *double*." There is no single mercy. You may think you have but one mercy—but you shall find it to be *a whole cluster of mercies*.

It is **abounding** mercy. Millions have received it—yet far from its being exhausted; it is as fresh, as full, and as free as ever!

It is **unfailing** mercy. It will never leave you. If saved by sovereign mercy—mercy will be with you in *temptation*—to keep you from yielding; with you in *trouble*—to prevent you from sinking; with you *living*—to be the light and life of your countenance; and with you *dying*—to be the joy of your soul when earthly comfort is ebbing fast!

August 17 — Evening

"This sickness is not unto death." John 11:4

From our Lord's words, we learn that there is a *limit* to sickness. Here is an "unto" within which its ultimate end is restrained, and beyond which it cannot go. Lazarus might pass through death—but death was not to be the ultimatum of his sickness. In all sickness, the Lord says to the *waves of pain*, "Hitherto shall you go—but no further!" His fixed purpose is not the *destruction* of His people—but the *instruction* of His people. Wisdom hangs up the *thermometer* at the furnace mouth, and regulates the heat.

1. The limit is encouragingly comprehensive. The God of providence has limited the time, manner, intensity and effects of all our sicknesses. Each throb is decreed, each sleepless hour predestinated, each relapse ordained, each depression of spirit foreknown, and each sanctifying result eternally purposed. Nothing great or small escapes the ordaining hand of Him who numbers the hairs of our head.

2. This limit is wisely adjusted to our strength, to the end designed, and to the grace apportioned. Affliction does not come by *chance*—the weight of every stroke of the rod—is accurately measured. He who made no mistakes in balancing the clouds, and measuring out the heavens, commits no errors in measuring out the ingredients which compose the medicine of souls. We cannot suffer too much—nor be relieved too late!

3. The limit is tenderly appointed. The knife of the *heavenly Surgeon* never cuts deeper than is absolutely necessary. "He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." A mother's heart cries, "Spare my child!" but no mother is more compassionate than our gracious God. When we consider how self-willed we are—it is a wonder that we are not driven with a sharper bit!

The thought is full of consolation, that He who has fixed the bounds of our *habitation*, has also fixed the bounds of our *tribulation*.

August 18 — Morning

"We are disgraced, for we have been insulted and shame covers our faces, because *foreigners have entered the holy places of the Lord's house!*" Jeremiah 51:51

In this account the faces of the Lord's people were covered with shame, for it was a terrible thing that men should intrude into the Holy Place reserved for the priests alone. Everywhere about us we see like cause for sorrow. How many *ungodly* men are now educating with the view of entering into the ministry! What a crying sin is that solemn lie, by which our whole population is nominally comprehended in a *National Church!* How fearful it is that ordinances should be pressed upon the unconverted, and that among the more enlightened churches of our land, there should be such laxity of discipline. If the thousands who will read this portion shall all take this matter before the Lord Jesus this day, He will interfere and avert the evil which else will come upon His Church.

To adulterate the Church is to pollute a well, to pour water upon fire, to sow a fertile field with stones. May we all have grace to maintain in our own proper way the purity of the Church, as being an assembly of *believers*, and not a *nation*, not an unsaved community of unconverted men. Our zeal must, however, begin at home. Let us examine ourselves as to our right to eat at the Lord's table. Let us see to it that we have on our wedding garment, lest we ourselves be intruders in the Lord's sanctuaries. Many are called—but few are chosen; the way is narrow, and the gate is strait. O for grace to come to Jesus aright, with the faith of God's elect.

He who smote Uzzah for touching the ark, is very jealous of His two ordinances; as a true believer I may approach them freely—but as an alien I must not touch them lest I die. Heart searching is the duty of all who are baptized or come to the Lord's table. "Search me, O God, and know my way, try me and know my heart!"

August 18 — Evening

"And they gave Him to drink wine mingled with myrrh—but He received it not." Mark 15:23

A golden truth is couched in the fact that the Savior refused the myrrhed wine-cup from His lips. On the heights of heaven the Son of God stood of old, and as He looked down upon our globe He measured the long descent to the utmost depths of human misery; He cast up the sum total of all the agonies which expiation would require, and abated not a jot. He solemnly determined that to offer a sufficient atoning sacrifice, He must go the whole way, from the highest to the lowest, from the throne of highest glory to the cross of deepest woe. This myrrhed cup, with its *sedative influence*, would have stopped Him within a little of the utmost limit of misery, therefore He refused it. He would not stop short of all He had undertaken to suffer for His people!

Ah, how many of us have pined after reliefs to our grief—which would have been injurious to us! Reader, did you never pray for a discharge from *hard service or suffering* with a petulant and willful eagerness? Providence has taken from you the desire of your eyes with a stroke. Christian, did you say, "May Your will be done"? Oh, it is sweet to be able to say, "My Lord, if for other reasons I need not suffer—yet if I can honor You more by suffering, and if the loss of my earthly all will bring You glory, then so let it be. I refuse the comfort, if it comes in the way of Your honor." O that we thus walked more in the footsteps of our Lord, cheerfully enduring trial for His sake, promptly and willingly putting away the thought of *self* and *comfort* when it would interfere with our finishing the work which He has given us to do. Great grace is needed—but great grace is provided!

August 19 — Morning

"He will stand and shepherd His flock in the strength of Jehovah." Micah 5:4

Christ's reign in His Church is that of a shepherd-king.

Christ's reign has **supremacy**—but it is the superiority of a wise and tender shepherd over his needy and loving flock. He commands and receives obedience—but it is the willing obedience of the well-cared-for sheep, rendered joyfully to their beloved Shepherd, whose voice they know so well. He rules by the *force of love* and *the energy of goodness*.

Christ's reign is **practical** in its character. It is said, "He will stand and shepherd His flock." The great Head of the Church is actively engaged in *providing* for His people. He does not sit down upon the throne in empty state, or hold a scepter without wielding it in government. No, He stands and *shepherds*. The expression in the original, means to *shepherdize*, to do everything expected of a shepherd—to guide, to watch, to preserve, to restore, to tend, as well as to feed.

Christ's reign is **continual** in its duration. It is said, "He will stand and shepherd His flock"; not "He shall feed now and then, and leave His position"; not, "He shall one day grant a revival, and then next day leave His Church to barrenness." His eyes never slumber, and His hands never rest; His heart never ceases to beat with love, and His shoulders are never weary of carrying His people's burdens.

Christ's reign is **effectually** powerful in its action; "He will shepherd His flock in the strength of *Jehovah*." Wherever Christ is—there is God; and whatever Christ does—is the act of the Most High God. Oh! it is a joyful truth to consider, that He who stands today representing the interests of His people—is very God of very God, to whom every knee shall bow. Happy are we who belong to such a shepherd, whose *humanity* communes with us, and whose *divinity* protects us. Let us worship and bow down before Him as the people of His pasture!

August 19 — Morning

"Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me: for Thou art my strength."—Psalm 31:4.

Our spiritual foes are of the serpent's brood, and seek to ensnare us by subtlety. The prayer before us supposes the possibility of the believer being caught like a bird. So deftly does the fowler do his work, that simple ones are soon surrounded by the net. The text asks that even out of Satan's meshes the captive one may be delivered; this is a proper petition, and one which can be granted: from between the jaws of the lion, and out of the belly of hell, can eternal love rescue the saint. It may need a sharp pull to save a soul from the net of temptations, and a mighty pull to extricate a man from the snares of malicious cunning, but the Lord is equal to every emergency, and the most skilfully placed nets of the hunter shall never be able to hold His chosen ones. Woe unto those who are so clever at net laying; they who tempt others shall be destroyed themselves.

"For Thou art my strength." What an inexpressible sweetness is to be found in these few words! How joyfully may we encounter toils, and how cheerfully may we endure sufferings, when we can lay hold upon celestial strength. Divine power will rend asunder all the toils of our enemies, confound their politics, and frustrate their knavish tricks; he is a happy man who has such matchless might engaged upon his side. Our own strength would be of little service when embarrassed in the nets of base cunning, but the Lord's strength is ever available; we have but to invoke it, and we shall find it near at hand. If by faith we are depending alone upon the strength of the mighty God of Israel, we may use our holy reliance as a plea in supplication.

"Lord, evermore Thy face we seek: Tempted we are, and poor, and weak; Keep us with lowly hearts, and meek. Let us not fall. Let us not fall."

August 20 — Morning

"The sweet psalmist of Israel." 2 Samuel 23:1

Among all the saints whose lives are recorded in Holy Writ, David possesses an experience of the most striking, varied, and instructive character. In his history we meet with *trials* and *temptations* not to be discovered, as a whole, in other saints of ancient times, and hence he is all the more suggestive a type of our Lord.

David knew the trials of all ranks and conditions of men. *Kings* have their troubles—and David wore a crown; the *peasant* has his cares—and David handled a shepherd's crook; the *wanderer* has many hardships—and David abode in the caves of Engedi; the *captain* has his difficulties—and David found the sons of Zeruiah too hard for him.

The psalmist was also tried in his friends, his counselor Ahithophel forsook him, "He who eats bread with me—has lifted up his heel against me." His worst foes were they of his own household—his *children* were his greatest affliction.

The temptations of poverty and wealth, of honor and reproach, of health and weakness—all tried their power upon him. He had temptations from without to disturb his peace, and from within to mar his joy. David no sooner escaped from one trial—than he fell into another; no sooner emerged from one season of despondency and alarm—than he was again brought into the lowest depths—and all God's waves and billows rolled over him!

It is probably from this cause, that David's psalms are so universally the delight of experienced Christians. Whatever our frame of mind, whether ecstasy or depression, David has exactly described our emotions. He was an able master of the human heart, because he had been tutored in the best of all schools—the school of heart-felt, personal experience. As we are instructed in the same school, as we grow matured in grace and in years, we increasingly appreciate David's psalms, and find them to be "green pastures." My soul, let David's experience cheer and counsel you this day!

August 20 — Evening

"And they fortified Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall." Nehemiah 3:8

Cities well fortified have broad walls, and so had Jerusalem in her glory. The New Jerusalem must, in like manner, be surrounded and preserved by a broad wall of **nonconformity to the world**, and separation from its customs and spirit. The tendency of these days break down the holy barrier, and make the distinction between the church and the world merely nominal. Professors are no longer strict and holy, questionable literature is read on all hands, frivolous pastimes are currently indulged, and a general laxity threatens to deprive the Lord's peculiar people of those sacred singularities which separate them from the ungodly. It will be a sorry day for the church and the world—when the proposed amalgamation shall be complete, and the *sons of God* and the *daughters of men* shall be as one—then shall another deluge of wrath be ushered in! Beloved reader, be it your aim in heart, in word, in dress, in action—to maintain the broad wall, remembering that *friendship with the world* is enmity against God.

The broad wall afforded a pleasant place of **resort** for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, from which they could command prospects of the surrounding country. This reminds us of the Lord's exceeding broad commandments, in which we walk at liberty in communion with Jesus, overlooking the scenes of earth, and looking out towards the glories of heaven. Separated from the world, and denying ourselves all ungodliness and fleshly lusts, we are nevertheless not in prison, nor restricted within narrow bounds; nay, we walk at liberty, because we keep His precepts. Come, reader, this evening walk with God in His statutes. As friend met friend upon the city wall, so meet you your God in the way of holy prayer and meditation. The bulwarks of salvation you have a right to traverse, for you are a freeman of the royal city, a citizen of the metropolis of the universe!

August 21 — Morning

"He who waters—shall be watered also himself." Proverbs 11:25

We are here taught the great lesson, that to *get*—we must *give*; that to accumulate—we must scatter; that to make ourselves happy—we must make others happy; and that in order to become spiritually vigorous—we must seek the spiritual good of others. In watering others—we are ourselves watered. How?

Our *efforts* to be useful—bring out our *powers* for usefulness. We have latent talents and dormant faculties, which are brought to light by *exercise*. Our strength for labor is hidden even from ourselves—until we venture forth to fight the Lord's battles, or to climb the *mountains of difficulty*. We do not know what tender sympathies we possess—until we try to dry the widow's tears, and soothe the orphan's grief.

We often find in attempting to *teach* others—that we gain instruction for ourselves. Oh, what gracious lessons some of us have learned at sick beds! We went to teach the Scriptures, we came away blushing that we knew so little of them. In our converse with poor saints, we are taught the way of God more perfectly for ourselves and get a deeper insight into divine truth. So that watering others makes us humble. We discover how much grace there is where we had not looked for it; and how much the poor saint may outstrip us in knowledge.

Our own *comfort* is also increased—by our working for others. We endeavor to cheer them—and the consolation gladdens our own heart. Like the two men in the snow; one chafed the other's limbs to keep him from dying, and in so doing kept his own blood in circulation, and saved his own life. The poor widow of Sarepta gave from her scanty store, a supply for the prophet's needs, and from that day she never again knew what poverty was. Give then, and it shall be given unto you—good measure, pressed down, and running over!

August 21 — Evening

"I did *not* say to the descendants of Jacob—*Seek Me in vain.*" Isaiah 45:19

We may gain much solace by considering what God has *not* said. What He *has* said is inexpressibly full of comfort and delight; what He has *not* said is scarcely less rich in consolation. It was one of these "said nots" which preserved the kingdom of Israel in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, for "the Lord said not that He would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven." 2 Kings 14:27.

In our text we have an assurance that God will answer prayer, because He "did *not* say to the descendants of Jacob—*Seek Me in vain.*" You who write bitter things against yourselves, should remember that, let your doubts and fears say what they will, if God has not cut you off from mercy, there is no room for despair—even the *voice of conscience* is of little weight if it is not seconded by the *voice of God*. What God has said, tremble at! But do not allow your vain imaginings to overwhelm you with despondency and sinful despair.

Many timid people have been vexed by the suspicion that there may be something in God's decree, which shuts them out from hope—but here is a complete refutation to that troublesome fear, for no true seeker can be decreed to eternal wrath. "I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth; I have not said," even in the secret of my unsearchable decree, "Seek Me in vain." God has clearly revealed that He will hear the prayer of those who call upon Him, and that declaration cannot be contravened. He has so firmly, so truthfully, so righteously spoken, that there can be no room for doubt. He does not reveal His mind in unintelligible words—but He speaks plainly and positively, "Ask, and you shall receive." Believe, O trembler, this sure truth—that prayer must and shall be heard, and that never, even in the secrets of eternity, has the Lord said unto any living soul, "Seek Me in vain."

August 22 — Morning

**"Make this promise to me, O women of Jerusalem! If you find my Beloved One
—tell Him that I am sick with love!" Song of Solomon 5:8**

Such is the language of the believer panting after present fellowship with Jesus, he is love-sick for his Lord. Gracious souls are never perfectly at ease—except they are in a state of nearness to Christ; for when they are away from Him—they lose their peace. The nearer to Him—the nearer to the perfect calm of heaven; the nearer to Him—the fuller the heart is, not only of peace—but of life, and vigor, and joy—for these all depend on constant fellowship with Jesus.

What the *sun* is to the day, what the *moon* is to the night, what the *dew* is to the flower—such is Jesus Christ to us. What *bread* is to the hungry, *clothing* to the naked, the *shadow* of a great rock to the traveler in a weary land—such is Jesus Christ to us. Therefore, if we are not consciously one with Him, little marvel if our spirit cries in the words of the Song, "Make this promise to me, O women of Jerusalem! If you find my Beloved One—tell Him that I am sick with love!"

This *earnest longing after Jesus*, has a blessing attending it, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness"; and therefore, supremely blessed are they who thirst after the Righteous One. Blessed is that hunger, since it comes from God—if I may not have the full-blown blessedness of being *filled*, I would seek the same blessedness in its sweet bud—pining in emptiness and eagerness until I am filled with Christ. If I may not *feed* on Jesus, it shall be next door to heaven to *hunger* and *thirst* after Him. There is a hallowedness about that hunger, since it sparkles among the beatitudes of our Lord. But the blessing involves a promise. Such hungry ones "shall be filled" with what they are desiring. If Christ thus causes us to long after Himself, He will certainly satisfy those longings. And when He does come to us, as come He will—oh, how sweet it will be!

August 22 — Evening

"The unsearchable riches of Christ." Ephesians 3:8

My Master has riches—beyond the count of arithmetic, beyond the measurement of reason, beyond the dream of imagination, and beyond the eloquence of words! They are *unsearchable*! You may look, and study, and weigh—but Jesus is a greater Savior than you think Him to be—when your thoughts are at the greatest. My Lord is more ready to pardon—than you to sin; more able to forgive—than you to transgress. My Master is more willing to supply your needs—than you are to ask for them!

Never tolerate low thoughts of my Lord Jesus. When you put the crown on His head, you will only crown Him with *silver* when He deserves *gold*.

My Master has riches of happiness to bestow upon you *now*. He can make you to lie down in green pastures, and lead you beside still waters. There is no *music* like the music of His pipe—when He is the Shepherd and you are the sheep, and you lie down at His feet. There is no *love* like His, neither earth nor heaven can match it. To know Christ and to be found in Him—oh! this is life, this is joy, this is marrow and fatness, wine on the lees well refined!

My Master does not treat His servants churlishly; He gives to them as a king gives to a king! He gives them two heavens: a heaven below in *servicing* Him here—and a heaven above in *delighting* in Him forever!

His unsearchable riches will be best known in eternity. He will give you on the way to heaven all you need; your place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks, your bread shall be given you, and your waters shall be sure. But it is there, THERE, where you shall hear the song of those who triumph, the shout of those who feast, and shall have a face-to-face view of the glorious and beloved One! The unsearchable riches of Christ! This is the tune for the minstrels of earth, and the song for the harpers of heaven! Lord, teach us more and more of Jesus, and we will tell out the good news to others.

August 23 — Morning

"The sound of weeping and crying will be heard no more!" Isaiah 65:19

The glorified weep no more—for all causes of grief are gone! There are no broken friendships, nor blighted prospects in heaven. Poverty, famine, peril, persecution, and slander—are unknown there. No pain distresses, no thought of death or bereavement saddens.

They weep no more—for they are perfectly sanctified! No "evil heart of unbelief" prompts them to depart from the living God. They are without fault before His throne, and are fully conformed to His image! Well may they cease to mourn—who have ceased to sin!

They weep no more—because all fear of change is past! They know that they are eternally secure! Sin is shut out—and they are shut in!

They dwell within a city which shall never be stormed!

They bask in a sun which shall never set!

They drink of a river which shall never run dry!

They pluck fruit from a tree which shall never wither!

Countless cycles may revolve—but eternity shall not be exhausted; and while eternity endures, their immortality and blessedness shall co-exist with it. They are forever with the Lord!

They weep no more—because every desire is fulfilled! They cannot wish for anything—which they have not in full possession. Eye and ear, heart and hand, judgment, imagination, hope, desire, will—all the faculties, are completely satisfied!

As imperfect as our present ideas are of the things which God has prepared for those who love Him—yet we know enough, by the revelation of the Spirit, that the glorified saints are supremely blessed. The joy of Christ, which is an infinite fullness of delight—is in them. They bathe forever in the bottomless, shoreless sea of infinite blessedness!

That same joyful rest remains for us! It may not be far distant. Before long—the weeping willow shall be exchanged for the palm-branch of victory! Sorrow's dewdrops will be transformed into the pearls of everlasting bliss!

"The sound of weeping and crying will be heard no more!"

"Therefore comfort one another with these words."

August 23 — Evening

"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." Ephesians 3:17

Beyond measure it is desirable that we, as believers, should have the person of Jesus constantly before us, to inflame our *love* towards Him, and to increase our *knowledge* of Him. I desire that my readers were all entered as *diligent scholars in Jesus' college*, students of *Corpus Christi*, or the body of Christ, resolved to attain unto a good degree in the *school of the cross*. But to have Jesus ever near, the heart must be full of Him, welling up with His love, even to overrunning. Hence the apostle prays "that Christ may dwell in your *hearts*." See how near he would have Jesus to be! You cannot get a subject closer to you than to have it in the *heart* itself. "That He may *dwell*"; not that He may call upon you sometimes, as a *casual visitor* enters into a house and tarries for a night—but that He may *dwell*; that Jesus may become the Lord and Tenant of your inmost being—never more to go out!

Observe the words—that He may dwell in your *heart*, that *best room of the house* of manhood; not in your *thoughts* alone—but in your *affections*; not merely in the mind's meditations—but in the *heart's emotions*. We should pant after love to Christ of a most abiding character, not a love which flames up and then dies out into the darkness of a few embers—but a constant flame, fed by sacred fuel, like the fire upon the altar which never went out. This cannot be accomplished except by *faith*. Faith must be strong—or love will not be fervent; the *root* of the flower must be healthy, or we cannot expect the *bloom* to be sweet. Faith is the lily's *root*—and love is the lily's *bloom*.

Now, reader, Jesus cannot be in your heart's love—unless you have a firm hold of Him by your heart's faith; and, therefore, pray that you may always trust Christ in order that you may always love Him. If your love is cold—you can be sure that your faith is drooping!

August 24 — Morning

"The Breaker has gone up before them. He will bring you through the gates of your cities of captivity, back to your own land. Your King will lead you; the Lord Himself will guide you!" Micah 2:13

Inasmuch as *Jesus* has gone before us, things do not remain as they would have been, had He never passed that way. He has conquered every foe that obstructed the way. Cheer up O faint-hearted warrior. Not only has Christ traveled the road—but He has slain your enemies!

Do you dread *sin*? He has nailed it to His cross!

Do you fear *death*? He has been the death of death!

Are you afraid of *hell*? He has barred it against the entrance of any of His children; they shall never see the *gulf of perdition*!

Whatever *foes* may be before the Christian—they are all overcome! There are *lions*—but their teeth are broken! There are *serpents*—but their fangs are extracted! There are *rivers*—but they are bridged or fordable! There are *flames*—but we wear that matchless garment which renders us invulnerable to fire!

The sword that has been forged against us—is already blunted; the instruments of war which the enemy is preparing, have already lost their point.

The Breaker, Christ—has taken away all the power that anything can have to hurt us. Well then, the army may safely march on, and you may go joyously along your journey, for all your enemies are conquered beforehand! What shall you do—but march on to take the prey? They are beaten, they are vanquished; all you have to do is to divide the spoil. You shall, it is true, often engage in combat; but your fight shall be with a *vanquished foe*! His *head* is broken—he may attempt to injure you—but his strength shall not be sufficient for his malicious design. Your victory shall be easy, and your treasure shall be beyond all count!

**"Proclaim aloud the Savior's fame,
Who bears *the Breaker's* wondrous name;
Sweet name; and it befits Him well,
Who breaks down earth, sin, death, and hell!"**

August 24 — Evening

"If a fire gets out of control and goes into another person's field, destroying the sheaves or the standing grain, then the one who started the fire must surely make restitution for the lost crops." Exodus 22:6

But what restitution can he make who casts abroad the *fire-brands of error*, or the *coals of lust*, and sets men's souls on a blaze with *the fire of hell*? The guilt is beyond estimate—and the result is irretrievable. If such an offender is forgiven, what grief it will cause him in the retrospect, since he cannot undo the great harm which he has done!

A *bad example* may kindle a sinful flame—which years of regret cannot quench. To burn a man's house is bad enough—but how much worse to damn his soul! It may be useful to us to reflect how far we may have been guilty in the past, and to inquire whether, even in the present, there may not be any evil in us—which has a tendency to bring damage to the souls of our relatives, friends, or neighbors.

The fire of *strife* is a terrible evil—when it breaks out in a Christian church. Where converts were multiplied, and God was glorified, *jealousy* and *envy* do the devil's work most effectually! Where the *golden grain* was being housed, the fire of *enmity* comes in and leaves little else but smoke and a heap of blackness—a poor reward the toil of the *great Boaz*!

Woe unto those by whom offences come. May they never come through us, for although we cannot make restitution, we shall certainly be the chief sufferers if we are the chief offenders. Those who *feed* the fire, deserve just censure. But he who first *kindles* it—is most to blame. *Discord* usually takes first hold upon the *thorns*; it is nurtured among the *hypocrites* and false professors in the church, and away it goes among the righteous, blown by the winds of hell, and no one knows where it may end!

O Lord and giver of peace—make us peacemakers, and never let us aid and abet the men of strife, or even unintentionally cause the least division among Your people!

August 25 — Morning

"I sat down under His shadow with great delight—and His fruit was sweet to my taste!" Songs 2:3

Faith, in the Scripture, is spoken of under the emblem of all the senses.

Faith is sight, "Look unto me—and be saved."

Faith is hearing, "Hear—and your soul shall live."

Faith is smelling, "All your garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia." "Pleasing is the fragrance of your perfumes; Your Name is like perfume poured out."

Faith is spiritual touch. By faith, the woman came behind and touched the hem of Christ's garment. By faith—we handle the things of the good Word of life.

Faith is equally the soul's taste. "How sweet are Your words to my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my lips!" "Except a man eats My flesh," says Christ, "and drinks My blood, there is no life in him." This spiritual "taste" is faith in one of its highest operations.

One of the first performances of faith is hearing. We hear the voice of God, not with the outward ear alone—but with the inward ear! We hear it as God's Word, and we believe it to be so; that is the "hearing" of faith.

Then our mind looks upon the truth as it is presented to us; that is to say, we understand it, we perceive its meaning; that is the "seeing" of faith.

Next we discover its preciousness; we begin to admire it, and find how fragrant it is; that is faith in its "smell."

Then we appropriate the mercies which are prepared for us in Christ; that is faith in its "touch."

Then follow the enjoyments of spiritual peace, delight, communion; which are faith in its "taste."

Any one of these acts of faith is saving. To hear Christ's voice as the sure voice of God in the soul—will save us. But that which gives true enjoyment, is the aspect of faith wherein Christ, by holy taste, is received into us, & made, by inward & spiritual apprehension of His sweetness & preciousness, to be the food of our souls! It is then that we "sit under His shadow with great delight—find His fruit sweet to our taste!"

August 25 — Evening

"If you *believe* with all your heart—you may." Acts 8:37

These words may answer your scruples, devout reader, concerning the *ordinances*. Perhaps you say, "I would be afraid to be *baptized*—it is such a solemn thing to avow myself to be dead with Christ, and buried with Him. I should not feel at liberty to come to the *Master's table*—I would be afraid of eating and drinking damnation unto myself, not discerning the Lord's body."

Ah! poor trembler, Jesus has given you liberty, do not be afraid. If a *stranger* came to your house, he would stand at the door, or wait in the hall; he would not dream of intruding unbidden into your parlor—he is not at his home—but *your child* makes himself very free about the house; and so is it with the child of God. A *stranger* may not intrude—where a *child* may venture. When the Holy Spirit has given you to feel the spirit of adoption, you may come to Christian ordinances without fear.

The same rule holds good of the Christian's inward *privileges*. You think, poor seeker, that you are not allowed to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory; if you are permitted to get inside Christ's door, or sit at the bottom of His table—you will be well content. Ah! but you shall not have less privileges than the very greatest. God makes no difference in His love to His children. A child is a child to Him; He will not make him a hired servant; but he shall feast upon the fatted calf, and shall have the music and the dancing—as much as if he had never gone astray. When Jesus comes into the heart, He issues a general licence to be glad in the Lord. No *chains* are worn in the *court* of King Jesus. Our admission into full privileges may be *gradual*—but it is *sure*.

Perhaps our reader is saying, "I wish I could enjoy the promises, and walk at liberty in my Lord's commands." "If you *believe* with all your heart—you may." Loose the chains of your neck, O captive daughter, for Jesus makes you free!

August 26 — Morning

"He has commanded His covenant forever." Psalm 111:9

The Lord's people delight in the covenant itself. It is an *unfailing source of consolation* to them so often as the Holy Spirit leads them into its banqueting house and waves its banner of love.

They delight to contemplate the *antiquity* of that covenant, remembering that before the day-star knew its place, or planets ran their round—the interests of the saints were made secure in Christ Jesus!

It is peculiarly pleasing to them to remember the *sureness* of the covenant, while meditating upon "the sure mercies of David." They delight to celebrate it as "signed, and sealed, and ratified, in all things ordered well."

It often makes their hearts expand with joy—to think of its *immutability*, as a covenant which neither time nor eternity, life nor death, shall ever be able to violate—a covenant as old as eternity and as everlasting as the Rock of ages!

They rejoice also to feast upon the *fullness* of this covenant, for they see in it all things provided for them. God is their portion, Christ their companion, the Spirit their Comforter, earth their lodge, and heaven their home! They see in it an inheritance reserved and entailed to every soul possessing a saving interest in its ancient and eternal deed of gift.

Their eyes sparkled when they saw it as a *treasure-trove* in the Bible. But oh! how their souls were gladdened when they saw in the last will and testament of their divine kinsman, that it was bequeathed to *them!*

More especially it is the pleasure of God's people to contemplate the *graciousness* of this covenant. They see that the law was made void because it was a covenant of works and depended upon merit—but this they perceive to be enduring because grace is the *basis*, grace the *condition*, grace the *strain*, grace the *bulwark*, grace the *foundation*, grace the *topstone*. The covenant is a treasury of wealth, a granary of food, a fountain of life, a store-house of salvation, a charter of peace, and a haven of joy!

August 26 — Evening

"As soon as all the people saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet him."

Mark 9:15

How great the difference between *Moses* and *Jesus*! When the prophet of Horeb had been forty days upon the mountain, he underwent a kind of transfiguration, so that his countenance shone with exceeding brightness, and he put a veil over his face, for the people could not endure to look upon his glory. Not so our Savior. He had been transfigured with a greater glory than that of Moses, and yet, it is not written that the people were blinded by the blaze of His countenance—but rather they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet him.

The glory of the *law* repels—but the greater glory of *Jesus* attracts. Though Jesus is *holy* and *just*—yet blended with His *purity* there is so much of truth and *grace*—that sinners run to Him amazed at His *goodness*, fascinated by His *love*; they become His disciples, and take Him to be their Lord and Master.

Reader, it may be that just now, that you are blinded by the dazzling brightness of the law of God. You feel its claims on your conscience—but you cannot keep it in your life. Not that you find fault with the law, on the contrary, it commands your profoundest esteem, still you are not drawn by it to God; you are rather hardened in heart, and are verging towards desperation. Ah, poor heart! turn your eye from *Moses*, with all his repelling splendor, and look to *Jesus*, resplendent with milder glories! Behold His flowing wounds and thorn-crowned head! He is the Son of God, and therein He is greater than Moses—but He is the Lord of love, and therein more tender than the lawgiver. He bore the wrath of God, and in His death revealed more of God's justice than Sinai on a blaze—but that justice is now vindicated, and henceforth it is the guardian of believers in Jesus. Look, sinner, to the bleeding Savior—and as you feel the attraction of His love, fly to His arms, and you shall be saved!

August 27 — Morning

"How long will it be before they believe me?" Numbers 14:11

Strive with all diligence to keep out that *monster—unbelief*. It so dishonors Christ, that He will withdraw His visible presence if we insult Him by indulging it. It is true it is a *weed* which we can never entirely extract from the soil—but we must aim at its root with zeal and perseverance. Among *hateful things*—it is the most to be abhorred. Its injurious nature is so venomous, that he who exercises it and he upon whom it is exercised are both hurt thereby.

In your case, O believer! it is most wicked, for the mercies of your Lord in the past, increase your guilt in doubting Him now. When you distrust the Lord Jesus, He may well cry out, "Behold I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves." This is crowning His head with *thorns* of the sharpest kind. It is very cruel for a well-beloved wife to mistrust a kind and faithful husband. The sin is *needless, foolish, and unwarranted*. Jesus has never given the slightest ground for suspicion, and it is hard to be doubted by those to whom our conduct is uniformly affectionate and true.

Jesus is the Son of the Highest, and has unbounded wealth; it is shameful to doubt Omnipotence, and distrust all-sufficiency. The cattle on a thousand hills will suffice for our most hungry appetite, and the granaries of heaven are not likely to be emptied by our eating. If Christ were only a *cistern*, we might soon exhaust His fullness—but who can drain a *fountain*? Myriads of Christians have drawn their supplies from Him, and not one of them has murmured at the scantiness of His resources.

Away, then, with this lying traitor *unbelief*, for his only errand is to cut the bonds of communion and make us mourn an absent Savior. Bunyan tells us that unbelief has "as many lives as a cat," if so, let us kill one life now, and continue the work until the whole nine are gone. Down with you, you *traitor*—my heart abhors you!

August 27 — Evening

"Into Your hand I commit my spirit—You have redeemed me, O Lord God of truth." Psalm 31:5

These words have been frequently used by holy men in their hour of death. We may profitably consider them this evening. The object of the faithful man's solicitude in life and death, is not his body or his estate—but his soul; this is his choice treasure—if this is safe, all is well. What is this mortal state, compared with the soul?

The believer commits his soul to the hand of his God; it came from Him, it is His own, He has aforetime sustained it, He is able to keep it, and it is most fit that He should receive it. All things are safe in Jehovah's hands; what we entrust to the Lord will be secure, both now and in that day of days towards which we are hastening.

It is peaceful living, and glorious dying—to repose in the care of Jesus. At all times we should commit our all to Jesus' faithful hand; then, though life may hang on a thread, and adversities may multiply as the sands of the sea—our soul shall dwell at ease, and delight itself in quiet resting places.

"You have *redeemed* me, O Lord God of truth." *Redemption* is a solid basis for confidence. David had not known Calvary as we have done—but *temporal* redemption cheered him; and shall not *eternal* redemption yet more sweetly console us? *Past deliverances* are strong pleas for *present assistance*. What the Lord has done—He will do again, for He changes not. He is faithful to His promises, and gracious to His saints; He will not turn away from His people.

"Though You slay me—I will trust,
Praise You even from the dust,
Prove, and tell it as I prove,
Your unutterable love.

You may chasten and correct—
but You never can neglect;
Since the ransom price is paid,
On Your love my hope is stayed."

August 28 — Morning

"Olive oil for the lamps." Exodus 25:6

My soul, how much you need this, for your lamp will not long continue to burn without it. Your lamp will smoke and smell, if fire is gone—and gone it will be if oil is absent. You have no oil well springing up in your human nature, and therefore you must go to those who sell and buy for yourself—or like the foolish virgins, you will have to cry, "My lamp is gone out!"

Even the consecrated lamps could not give light without oil; though they shone in the tabernacle, they needed to be fed, though no rough winds blew upon them—they required to be trimmed; and your need is equally as great. Under the most blessed circumstances—you cannot give light for another hour—unless *fresh oil of grace* is given you.

It was not every oil that might be used in the Lord's service; neither the petroleum which exudes so plentifully from the earth, nor the oil of fishes, nor that extracted from nuts would be accepted. Only one oil was selected—and that the best *olive oil*. Pretended grace from natural goodness, fancied grace from priestly hands, or imaginary grace from religious ceremonies—will never serve the true saint of God; he knows that the Lord would not be pleased with rivers of such oil. He goes to the olive-press of Gethsemane, and draws his supplies from Him who was crushed therein. The oil of gospel grace is pure, and free from lees and dregs—and hence the light which is fed thereon is clear and bright. Our churches are the Savior's golden candelabra, and if they are to be lights in this dark world, they must have much of this holy oil. Let us pray for ourselves, our ministers, and our churches, that they may never lack oil for the light. Truth, holiness, joy, knowledge, love—these are all beams of the sacred light—but we cannot give them forth unless in private we receive fresh oil from the Holy Spirit!

August 28 — Evening

"Sing, O barren one!" Isaiah 54:1

Though we have brought forth some fruit unto Christ, and have a joyful hope that we are "plants of His own right hand planting," yet there are times when we feel very barren. Prayer is lifeless, love is cold, faith is weak—each grace in the garden of our heart languishes and droops. We are like flowers in the hot sun, requiring the refreshing shower.

In such a condition what are we to do? The text is addressed to us in just such a state. "Sing, O barren one! Break forth into loud and joyful song." But what can I sing about? I cannot talk about the present, and even the past looks full of barrenness. Ah! I can sing of Jesus Christ! I can talk of visits which the Redeemer has aforesometimes paid to me; or if not of these, I can magnify the great love with which He loved His people—when He came from the heights of heaven for their redemption. I will go to the cross again. Come, my soul, heavy laden you were once—you lost your burden there. Go to Calvary again. Perhaps that very cross which gave you *life*—may give you *fruitfulness*.

What is my barrenness? It is the platform—for His fruit-creating power. What is my desolation? It is the black setting—for the sapphire of His everlasting love. I will go in poverty, I will go in helplessness, I will go in all my shame and backsliding, I will tell Him that I am still His child, and in confidence in His faithful heart, even I, the barren one, will sing and cry aloud!

Sing, believer, for it will cheer your own heart, and the hearts of other desolate ones. Sing on, for now that you are really ashamed of being barren, you will be fruitful soon; now that God makes you loath to be without fruit—He will soon cover you with clusters. The experience of our barrenness is painful—but the Lord's visitations are delightful. A sense of our own poverty drives us to Christ, and that is where we need to be—for in Him is our fruit found!

August 29 — Morning

"Have mercy upon me, O God." Psalm 51:1

When William Carey was suffering from a dangerous illness, the enquiry was made, "If this sickness should prove fatal, what passage would you select as the text for your funeral sermon?" He replied, "Oh, I feel that such a poor sinful creature is unworthy to have anything said about him; but if a funeral sermon must be preached, let it be from the words, 'Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving-kindness; according unto the multitude of Your tender mercies—blot out my transgressions!'"

In the same spirit of humility, he directed in his will that the following inscription and nothing more should be cut on his gravestone: "William Carey, a wretched, poor, and helpless worm—on Your kind arms I fall."

Only on the *footing of free grace* can the most experienced and most honored of the saints approach their God. The best of men are conscious above all others—that they are *men* at the best. *Empty* boats float high—but *heavily laden* vessels are low in the water. Just so, mere professors can boast—but true children of God cry for mercy upon their unprofitableness.

We have need that the Lord should have mercy upon our good works, our prayers, our preachings, our alms-givings, and our holiest things. The blood was not only sprinkled upon the doorposts of Israel's dwelling houses—but upon the sanctuary, the mercy-seat, and the altar, because as sin intrudes into our holiest things, the blood of Jesus is needed to purify them from defilement. If mercy is needed to be exercised towards our pious duties—what shall be said of our sins! How sweet the remembrance, that *inexhaustible mercy* is waiting to be gracious to us, to restore our backslidings, and make our broken bones rejoice!

August 29 — Evening

"As long as he is a Nazirite, he must not eat anything that comes from the grapevine, not even the seeds or skins." Numbers 6:4

Nazirites had taken, among other vows, one which debarred them from the use of *wine*. In order that they might not violate the obligation, they were forbidden to drink the unfermented juice of grapes, nor even to eat either fresh or dried grapes. In order, altogether, to secure the integrity of the vow—they were not even allowed anything that had to do with the grapevine; they were, in fact, to *avoid the appearance of evil*.

Surely this is a lesson to the Lord's separated ones, teaching them to come away from sin in every form, to avoid not merely its grosser shapes—but even the appearance of evil. **Strict walking** is much despised in these days—but rest assured, dear reader, it is both the safest and the happiest course. He who yields a point or two to the world—is in fearful peril. He who eats the *grapes of Sodom*—will soon drink the *wine of Gomorrah!*

A little crevice in a large dyke may soon break open—so that a whole town is drowned. Worldly conformity, in any degree, is a snare to the soul, and makes it more and more liable to presumptuous sins. Moreover, as the Nazirite who drank grape juice could not be quite sure whether it might not have endured a degree of fermentation, and consequently could not be clear in heart that his vow was intact. Just so, the yielding, temporizing Christian cannot wear a conscience void of offence—but must feel that the *inward monitor* is in doubt of him. *Doubtful things*—we need not doubt about; they are wrong to us! *Tempting things*—we must not dally with—but flee from them with haste! Better be sneered at as a *Puritan*—than be despised as a hypocrite. Careful walking may involve much self-denial—but it has pleasures of its own which are more than a sufficient recompense!

August 30 — Morning

"Wait on the Lord." Psalm 27:14

It may seem an easy thing to wait—but it is one of the postures which a Christian soldier cannot learn, without years of teaching. Marching and fighting are much easier to God's warriors—than *standing still*. There are hours of perplexity when the most willing spirit, anxiously desirous to serve the Lord, knows not which part to take. Then what shall it do? Vex itself by despair? Fly back in *cowardice*, turn to the right hand in *fear*, or rush forward in *presumption*? No—but simply WAIT.

Wait in **prayer**, however. Call upon God, and spread the case before Him; tell Him your difficulty, and plead His promise of aid. In dilemmas between one duty and another, it is sweet to be humble as a child, and wait with simplicity of soul upon the Lord. It is sure to be well with us—when we feel and know our own folly, and are heartily willing to be guided by the will of God.

But wait in **faith**. Express your unstaggering confidence in Him; for unfaithful, untrusting waiting, is but an insult to the Lord. Believe that if He keeps you tarrying even until midnight—yet He will come at the right time; the vision shall come—and shall not tarry.

Wait in quiet **patience**, not rebelling because you are under the affliction—but blessing your God for it. Never murmur against the *second cause*, as the children of Israel did against Moses; never wish you could go back to the world again—but accept the case as it is, and put it as it stands, simply and with your whole heart, without any self-will, into the hand of your covenant God, saying, "Now, Lord, not my will—but Yours be done. I know not what to do; I am brought to extremities—but I will wait until You shall cleave the floods, or drive back my foes. I will wait, if You delay many a day—for my heart is fixed upon You alone, O God, and my spirit waits for You in the full conviction that You will yet be my joy and my salvation, my refuge and my strong tower!"

August 30 — Evening

"Heal me, O Lord—and I shall be healed." Jeremiah 17:14

"I have seen His ways—and I will heal him." Isaiah 57:18

It is the sole prerogative of God—to remove spiritual disease. Natural disease may be *instrumentally* healed by men—but even then the honor is to be given to God who gives *virtue* unto medicine, and bestows power unto the human frame to cast off disease.

As for *spiritual* sicknesses, these remain with the great Physician alone; He claims it as His prerogative, "I kill—and I make alive; I wound—and I heal." One of the Lord's choice titles is *Jehovah-Rophi*, the *Lord that heals you*.

"I will heal you of your wounds," is a promise which could not come from the lip of man—but only from the mouth of the eternal God. On this account the psalmist cried unto the Lord, "O Lord, heal me—for my bones are sorely vexed," and again, "Heal my soul—for I have sinned against you."

For this, also, the godly praise the name of the Lord, saying, "He heals all our diseases!" He alone who *made* man—can *restore* man! He who was at first the creator of our nature—can *new* create it. What a transcendent comfort it is—that in the person of Jesus "dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily!" My soul, whatever your disease may be, this great Physician can heal you! If He is God, there can be no *limit* to His power. Come then with the blind eye of darkened understanding, come with the limping foot of wasted energy, come with the maimed hand of weak faith, come with the fever of an angry temper, or with the plague of shivering despondency, come just as you are, for He who is God can certainly restore you of your plague!

None shall restrain the healing virtue which proceeds from Jesus our Lord. Legions of devils have been made to own the power of the beloved Physician, and never once has He been baffled! All His patients have been cured in the past—and shall be in the future, and you shall be one among them, my friend, if you will but rest yourself in Him this night!

August 31 — Morning

"On My arm, they shall trust." Isaiah 51:5

In seasons of severe trial, the Christian has nothing on earth that he can trust to, and is therefore compelled to cast himself on his God alone. When his vessel is quickly sinking, and no human deliverance can avail, he must simply and entirely trust himself to the providence and care of God. Happy storm—that wrecks a man on such a rock as this! O blessed hurricane—that drives the soul to God and God alone!

There is no getting at our God sometimes—because of the multitude of our friends. But when a man is so poor, so friendless, so helpless that he has nowhere else to turn—he flies into his Father's arms, and is blessedly clasped therein! When he is burdened with troubles so pressing and so heavy, that he cannot tell them to any but his God, he may be thankful for them; for he will learn more from his Lord then, than at any other time. Oh, tempest-tossed believer, it is a *happy trouble* which drives you to your Father!

Now that you have only your God to trust to, see that you put your full confidence in Him. Dishonor not your Lord and Master by unworthy doubts and fears; but be strong in faith, giving glory to God. Show the *world* that your God is worth ten thousand worlds to you. Show *rich men* how rich you are in your poverty, when the Lord God is your helper. Show the strong man how strong you are, in your weakness when underneath you are the everlasting arms. Now is the time for feats of faith and valiant exploits.

Be strong and very courageous, and the Lord your God shall certainly, as surely as He built the heavens and the earth, glorify Himself in your weakness, and magnify his might in the midst of your distress. The grandeur of the arch of heaven would be spoiled if the sky were supported by a single visible column, and your faith would lose its glory if it rested on anything discernible by the carnal eye. May the Holy Spirit give you to rest in Jesus this closing day of the month.

August 31 — Evening

"If we walk in the light, as He is in the light." John 1:7

"As He is in the light!" Can we ever attain to this? Shall we ever be able to walk as clearly in the light, as He is whom we call "Our Father," of whom it is written, "God is light—and in Him is no darkness at all"? Certainly, this is the *model* which it set before us, for the Savior Himself said, "Be perfect—even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect." And although we may feel that we can never *attain* the perfection of God—yet we are to *seek* after it, and never to be satisfied until we attain to it.

The youthful artist, as he grasps his first paint brush, can hardly hope to equal Raphael or Michael Angelo. But still, if he did not have a noble ideal before his mind, he would only attain to something very low and ordinary.

But what is meant by the expression that the Christian is to walk in light—as God is in the light? We conceive it to import *likeness*—but not *degree*. We are as *truly* in the light, we are as *heartily* in the light, we are as *sincerely* in the light, as *honestly* in the light—though we cannot be there in the same *measure*. I cannot dwell in the sun, it is too bright a place for my residence—but I can walk in the light of the sun. Just so, though I cannot attain to that perfection of purity and truth which belongs to the Lord Almighty by nature as the infinitely good—yet I can set the Lord always before me, and strive, by the help of the indwelling Spirit, after conformity to His image.

That famous old commentator, John Trapp, says, "We may be in the light—as God is in the light for *quality*—but not for *equality*." We are to have the same light, and are as truly to have it and walk in it—as God does, though, as for *equality* with God in His holiness and purity, that must be left until we cross the *Jordan* and enter into the perfection of the Most High God. Mark that the blessings of *sacred fellowship* and *perfect cleansing*—are bound up with *walking in the light!*

September 1 — Morning

"You shall guide me with Your counsel—and afterward receive me to glory!" Psalm 73:24

The Psalmist felt his need of *divine guidance*. He had just been discovering the *foolishness of his own heart*, and lest he should be constantly led astray by it, he resolved that *God's counsel* should henceforth guide him. A sense of our own folly—is a great step towards being wise, when it leads us to rely on the wisdom of the Lord. The *blind man* leans on his friend's arm—and reaches home in safety. Just so, should we give ourselves up implicitly to divine guidance, nothing doubting; assured that though we cannot see—it is always safe to trust the All-seeing God!

"You shall," is a blessed expression of confidence. He was sure that the Lord would not decline the condescending task. There is a word for you, O believer; rest in it. Be assured that your God will be your Counselor and Friend—He shall guide you—He will direct all your ways. In His written Word, so that you have this assurance in part fulfilled, for holy Scripture is His counsel to you. Happy are we to have *God's Word* always to guide us! What would the mariner be—without his compass? And what would the Christian be—without his Bible! This is *the unerring chart*—the *map* in which every dangerous shoal is described, and all the channels from the quicksands of destruction to the haven of salvation, mapped and marked by one who knows all the way. Blessed are You, O God, that we may trust You to guide us now, and guide us even to the end!

After this guidance through life, the Psalmist anticipates a divine reception at last, "and afterward receive me to glory!" What a thought for you, believer! God Himself will receive you to glory—you! Wandering, erring, straying—yet He will bring you safe at last to glory! This is your portion; live on it this day; and if perplexities should surround you—go in the strength of this text straight to the throne!

September 1 — Evening

"Trust in Him at all times." Psalm 62:8

Faith is as much the rule of *temporal* life—as of *spiritual* life; we ought to have faith in God for our *earthly* affairs—as well as for our *heavenly* business. It is only as we learn to trust in God for the supply of all our *daily needs*—that we shall live above the world. We are not to be idle—that would show we did not trust in God—who continues to work—but in the devil—who is the father of idleness. We are not to be imprudent or rash; that would be to trust chance, and not the living God, who is a God of economy and order. Acting in all prudence and uprightness, we are to rely simply and entirely upon the Lord at all times.

Let me commend to you a life of trust in God in *temporal* things. Trusting in God, you will not be compelled to mourn because you have used sinful means to grow rich. Serve God with integrity, and if you achieve no success—at least no sin will lie upon your conscience.

Trusting God, you will not be guilty of using deceptive means. He who trusts in deceit—sails this way today, and that way the next, like a vessel tossed about by the fickle wind. But he who trusts in the Lord is like a vessel propelled by steam, she cuts through the waves, defies the wind, and makes one bright silvery straightforward track to her destined haven. Be a man with *living principles* within; never bow to the varying customs of worldly wisdom. Walk in your path of integrity with steadfast steps, and show that you are invincibly strong in the strength which *confidence in God* alone can confer. Thus you will be delivered from carking care, you will not be troubled with evil tidings—your heart will be fixed, trusting in the Lord. How pleasant to *float along the stream of providence!* There is no more blessed way of living—than a life of dependence upon a covenant-keeping God. We have no care—for He cares for us. We have no troubles, because we cast our burdens upon the Lord.

September 2 — Morning

"Simon's mother-in-law was sick in bed with a high fever. They told Jesus about her right away."

Mark 1:30

Very interesting is this little peep into the house of the Apostolic Fisherman. We see at once that household joys and cares are no hindrance to the full exercise of ministry, nay, that since they furnish an opportunity for personally witnessing the Lord's gracious work upon one's own flesh and blood—they may even instruct the teacher better than any other earthly discipline. *Papists* and other sectaries may decry marriage—but true Christianity and *household life* agree well together.

Peter's house was probably a poor fisherman's hut—but the Lord of Glory entered it, lodged in it, and wrought a miracle in it. Should our little book be read this morning in some very humble cottage, let this fact encourage the inhabitants to seek the company of King Jesus. God is oftener in *poor huts*—than in *rich palaces*. Jesus is looking round your room now, and is waiting to be gracious to you.

Into Simon's house, sickness had entered, fever in a deadly form had prostrated his mother-in-law, and as soon as Jesus came they told Him of the sad affliction, and He hastened to the patient's bed. Have you any sickness in the house this morning? You will find Jesus by far the best physician, go to Him at once and tell Him all about the matter. Immediately lay the case before Him. It concerns one of His people, and therefore will not be trivial to Him.

Observe, that at once the Savior restored the sick woman; none can heal as He does. We may not be sure that the Lord will at once remove all disease from those we love—but we may know that believing prayer for the sick is far more likely to be followed by restoration than anything else in the world; and where this avails not, we must meekly bow to His will by whom life and death are determined. The *tender heart of Jesus* waits to hear our griefs, let us pour them into His patient ear.

September 2 — Evening

"Except you see signs and wonders—you will not believe." John 4:48

A craving after marvels was a symptom of the sickly state of men's minds in our Lord's day; they refused solid nourishment, and pined after the miraculous. The gospel which they so greatly needed they would not have. Jesus did not always choose to give the miracles which they eagerly demanded. Many nowadays must see signs and wonders, or they will not believe. Some have said in their heart, "I must feel deep horror of soul, or I never will believe in Jesus." But what if you never should feel it—as probably you never may? Will you go to hell out of spite against God, because He will not treat you like another?

One has said to himself, "If I had a dream, or if I could feel a sudden shock of I know not what, then I would believe." Thus you undeserving mortals dream that my Lord is to be dictated to by you! You are beggars at His gate, asking for mercy, and you must needs draw up rules and regulations as to *how* He shall give that mercy. Do you think that He will submit to this? My Master is of a generous spirit—but He has a right royal heart, He spurns all dictation, and maintains His sovereignty of action.

Why, dear reader, if such is your case, do you crave for signs and wonders? Is not the gospel its own sign and wonder? Is not this a miracle of miracles, that "God so loved the world—that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him might not perish"? Surely that precious word, "Whoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely" and that solemn promise, "Him who comes unto Me, I will never cast out," are better than signs and wonders! A truthful Savior ought to be believed. He is truth itself. Why will you ask proof of the veracity—of One who cannot lie? The devils themselves declared Him to be the Son of God; will you mistrust Him?

September 3 — *Morning*

"You whom my soul loves." Song of Solomon 1:7

It is well to be able, without any "if" or "but," to say of the Lord Jesus, "You whom my soul loves." Many can only say of Jesus that they *hope* they love Him; they *trust* they love Him; but only a poor and shallow experience will be content to stay here. No one ought to give any rest to his spirit until he feels quite sure about a matter of such vital importance. We ought not to be satisfied with a superficial hope that Jesus loves us, and with a bare hope that we love Him. The old saints did not generally speak with "buts," and "ifs," and "hopes," and "trusts," but they spoke positively and plainly. "I know whom I have believed," says Paul. "I know that my Redeemer lives," says Job.

Get positive knowledge of your love of Jesus, and do not be satisfied until you can speak of your interest in Him as a reality, which you have made sure by having received the witness of the Holy Spirit, and His seal upon your soul by faith. True love to Christ is in every case the *Holy Spirit's work*, and must be wrought in the heart by Him. He is the efficient cause of it.

But the *logical* reason why we love Jesus—lies in Himself. Why do we love Jesus? Because He first loved us. Why do we love Jesus? Because He "gave Himself for us." We have *life* through His death; we have *peace* through His blood. Though He was rich—yet for our sakes He became poor. Why do we love Jesus? Because of the excellency of His person. We are filled with a sense of His beauty! an admiration of His charms! a consciousness of His infinite perfection! His greatness, goodness, and loveliness, in one resplendent ray—combine to enchant the soul until it is so ravished that it exclaims, "Yes, He is altogether lovely!" Blessed love this—a love which binds the heart with chains more soft than silk, and yet more firm than adamant!

September 3 — Evening

"The Lord tries the righteous." Psalm 11:5

All events are under the control of God's Providence; consequently all the trials of our outward life are traceable at once to the great First Cause. Out of the golden gate of God's ordinance, the *armies of trial* march forth in array, clad in their iron armor, and armed with weapons of war. All providences are doors to trial. Even our *mercies*, like roses, have their *thorns*. Men may be drowned in *seas of prosperity* as well as in *rivers of affliction*. Our *mountains* are not too high, and our *valleys* are not too low for temptations; trials lurk on all roads. Everywhere, above and beneath, we are beset and surrounded with dangers. Yet no *shower* falls unpermitted from the threatening cloud; every *drop* has its order—before it hastens to the earth.

The trials which come from God are sent—to prove and strengthen our graces, to illustrate the power of divine grace, to test the genuineness of our virtues, and to add to their energy. Our Lord in His infinite wisdom and superabundant love, sets so high a value upon His people's faith, that He will not screen them from those trials by which faith is strengthened. You would never have possessed the precious faith which now supports you—if the *trial of your faith* had not been like unto fire. You are a tree that never would have rooted so well—if the wind had not rocked you to and fro, and made you take firm hold upon the precious truths of the covenant grace.

Worldly ease is a great foe to faith; it loosens the joints of holy valor, and snaps the sinews of sacred courage. The balloon never rises—until the cords are cut; affliction does this *sharp service* for believing souls. While the wheat sleeps comfortably in the husk—it is useless to man; it must be threshed out of its resting place before its value can be known. Thus it is well that Jehovah tries the righteous, for trials cause them to grow rich towards God.

September 4 — *Morning*

"I will; be thou clean." —Mark 1:41.

PRIMEVAL darkness heard the Almighty fiat, "light be," and straightway light was, and the word of the Lord Jesus is equal in majesty to that ancient word of power. Redemption like Creation has its word of might. Jesus speaks and it is done. Leprosy yielded to no human remedies, but it fled at once at the Lord's "I will." The disease exhibited no hopeful signs or tokens of recovery, nature contributed nothing to its own healing, but the unaided word effected the entire work on the spot and for ever.

The sinner is in a plight more miserable than the leper; let him imitate his example and go to Jesus, "beseeching Him and kneeling down to Him." Let him exercise what little faith he has, even though it should go no further than "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean"; and there need be no doubt as to the result of the application. Jesus heals all who come, and casts out none. In reading the narrative in which our morning's text occurs, it is worthy of devout notice that Jesus touched the leper. This unclean person had broken through the regulations of the ceremonial law and pressed into the house, but Jesus so far from chiding him broke through the law Himself in order to meet him. He made an interchange with the leper, for while He cleansed him, He contracted by that touch a Levitical defilement. Even so Jesus Christ was made sin for us, although in Himself He knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. O that poor sinners would go to Jesus, believing in the power of His blessed substitutionary work, and they would soon learn the power of His gracious touch. That hand which multiplied the loaves, which saved sinking Peter, which upholds afflicted saints, which crowns believers, that same hand will touch every seeking sinner, and in a moment make him clean. The love of Jesus is the source of salvation. He loves, He looks, He touches us, WE LIVE.

September 4 — Evening

"Just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin, shall ye have."—Leviticus 19:36.

WEIGHTS, and scales, and measures were to be all according to the standard of justice. Surely no Christian man will need to be reminded of this in his business, for if righteousness were banished from all the world beside, it should find a shelter in believing hearts. There are, however, other balances which weigh moral and spiritual things, and these often need examining. We will call in the officer to-night.

The balances in which we weigh our own and other men's characters, are they quite accurate? Do we not turn our own ounces of goodness into pounds, and other persons' bushels of excellence into pecks? See to weights and measures here, Christian. The scales in which we measure our trials and troubles, are they according to standard? Paul, who had more to suffer than we have, called his afflictions light, and yet we often consider ours to be heavy—surely something must be amiss with the weights! We must see to this matter, lest we get reported to the court above for unjust dealing. Those weights with which we measure our doctrinal belief, are they quite fair? The doctrines of grace should have the same weight with us as the precepts of the word, no more and no less; but it is to be feared that with many one scale or the other is unfairly weighted. It is a grand matter to give just measure in truth. Christian, be careful here. Those measures in which we estimate our obligations and responsibilities look rather small. When a rich man gives no more to the cause of God than the poor contribute, is that a just ephah and a just hin? When ministers are half starved, is that honest dealing? When the poor are despised, while ungodly rich men are held in admiration, is that a just balance? Reader, we might lengthen the list, but we prefer to leave it as your evening's work to find out and destroy all unrighteous balances, weights, and measures.

September 5 — *Morning*

"Woe is me—that I dwell among these scoundrels of Meshech!

It pains me—to live with these people from Kedar!" Psalm 120:5

As a Christian, you have to live in the midst of an ungodly world, and it is of little use for you to cry, "Woe is me!"

Jesus did not pray, "O that you should be taken out of the world!" And what He did not pray for—you need not desire. Better far in the Lord's strength—to meet the difficulty, and glorify Him in it.

The enemy is ever on the watch to detect inconsistency in your conduct; be therefore very holy. Remember that the eyes of all people are upon you—and that more is expected from you, than from others! Strive to give no occasion for blame. Let your goodness and piety be the only faults which they can discover in you. Like Daniel, compel them to say of you, "We will never find any charge against this man—unless we find something against him concerning the law of his God!"

Seek to be useful—as well as consistent. Perhaps you think, "If I were in a more favorable position, I might be able to serve the Lord's cause. But I cannot do any good where I am!" But the worse the people are among whom you live—the more need they have of your exertions! If they are crooked—the more necessity that you should set them straight! If they are perverse—the more need have you to turn their proud hearts to the truth. Where should the physician be—but where there are many sick? Where is honor to be won by the soldier—but in the hottest fire of the battle?

When weary of the strife and sin which meets you on every hand, consider that all the saints have endured the same trial! They were not carried on beds of down to heaven—and you must not expect to travel more easily than they! They had to hazard their lives unto the death, in the midst of the battlefield—and you will not be crowned—until you also have endured hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Therefore, "Be courageous! Be strong!" 1 Corinthians 16:13

September 5 — Evening

"Have you explored the springs from which the seas come?

Have you walked about and explored their depths?" Job 38:16

Some things in nature must remain a *mystery* to the most intelligent and enterprising investigators. Human knowledge has *bounds* beyond which it cannot pass. *Universal knowledge* is for God alone. If this is so in the things which are seen and temporal, I may rest assured that it is even more so in matters spiritual and eternal.

Why, then, have I been torturing my brain with speculations as to how to reconcile divine predestination with human responsibility? These deep and dark truths I am no more able to comprehend, than to explore the springs from which the seas come, from which old ocean draws her watery stores. Why am I so curious to know the reason of my Lord's providences, the motive of His actions, the design of His visitations? Shall I ever be able to clasp the sun in my fist, and hold the universe in my palm? Yet these are as a drop of a bucket—when compared with the Lord my God. Let me not strive to understand the infinite—but spend my strength in loving our transcendent God! What I cannot gain by *intellect*—I can possess by *affection*—and let that suffice me.

I cannot penetrate the *heart of the sea*—but I can enjoy the healthful breezes which sweep over its bosom, and I can sail over its blue waves with favorable winds. Even if I could explore the springs from which the seas come—the feat would serve no useful purpose either to myself or to others. It would not save the sinking boat, or give the drowned mariner back to his weeping wife and children!

Neither would my solving deep theological mysteries, avail me a single whit—for the *least love* to God, and the *simplest act of obedience* to Him, are better than the profoundest theoretical knowledge! My awesome God, I leave the *infinite* to You, and beg You to put far away from me such a love for the *tree of knowledge*, as might keep me from the *tree of life*!

September 6 — Morning

"That you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you *shine like lights in the universe.*" Philippians 2:15

We use lights to make **manifest**. A Christian man should so shine in his life, that a person could not live with him a week, without knowing the gospel. His conversation should be such that all who are about him should clearly perceive whose he is, and whom he serves; and should see the image of Jesus reflected in his daily actions.

Lights are intended for **guidance**. We are to help those around us who are in the dark. We are to hold forth to them the Word of life. We are to point *sinner*s to the Savior, and the *weary* to a divine resting-place. Men sometimes read their Bibles, and fail to understand them; we should be ready, like Philip, to instruct the inquirer in the meaning of God's Word, the way of salvation, and the life of godliness.

Lights are also used for **warning**. On our rocks and shoals a light-house is sure to be erected. Christian men should know that there are many false lights shown everywhere in the world, and therefore the right light is needed. The wreckers of Satan are always abroad, tempting the ungodly to sin under the name of pleasure; they hoist the wrong light, be it ours to put up the true light upon every dangerous rock, to point out every sin, and tell what it leads to—that so we may be clear of the blood of all men, shining as lights in the world.

Lights also have a very **cheering** influence, and so have Christians. A Christian ought to be a comforter, with kind words on his lips, and sympathy in his heart; he should carry sunshine wherever he goes, and diffuse happiness around him.

September 6 — Evening

"If you are led of the Spirit—you are not under the law." Galatians 5:18

We who look at his own character and position from a *legal* point of view, will not only despair when he comes to the *end* of his reckoning—but if he is a wise man, he will despair at the *beginning*; for if we are to be judged on the footing of the *law*, then no man can be justified. How blessed to know that we dwell in the domains of *grace*—and not of *law*!

When thinking of my state before God the question is not, "Am I perfect in *myself* before the law?" but, "Am I perfect in Christ Jesus?" That is a very different matter. We need not enquire, "Am I without sin naturally?" but, "Have I been washed in the fountain opened for sin and for impurity?" It is not "Am I in *myself* well pleasing to God?" but it is "Am I accepted in the Beloved?"

The Christian views his evidences from the top of *Sinai*—and grows alarmed concerning his salvation; it were better far—if he read his title by the light of *Calvary*. "Why," says he, "my *faith* has unbelief in it, it is not able to save me." Suppose he had considered the *object* of his faith instead of his faith, then he would have said, "There is no failure in *Him*, and therefore I am safe." He sighs over his hope, "Ah! my *hope* is marred and dimmed by an anxious carefulness about present things; how can I be accepted?" Had he regarded the ground of his hope, he would have seen that the promise of God stands sure, and that whatever our doubts may be, the oath and promise never fail.

Ah! believer, it is safer always for you to be led of the Spirit into *gospel liberty*—than to wear legal fetters. Judge yourself at what *Christ* is—rather than at what *you* are. Satan will try to mar your peace by reminding you of your sinfulness and imperfections; you can only meet his accusations by faithfully adhering to the gospel and refusing to wear the yoke of bondage.

September 7 — Morning

"Since they were not able to bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above where He was. And when they had broken through, they lowered the stretcher on which the paralytic was lying."

Mark 2:4

Faith is full of *inventions*. The house was full, a crowd blocked up the door—but faith found a way of getting at the Lord and placing the palsied man before Him. If we cannot get sinners where Jesus is by ordinary methods—we must use extraordinary ones. It seems, according to Luke 5:19, that a tiling had to be removed, which would make dust and cause a measure of danger to those below—but where the case is very urgent—we must not mind running some risks and shocking some proprieties. Jesus was there to heal, and therefore fall what might, faith ventured all so that her poor paralyzed charge might have his sins forgiven.

O that we had more daring faith among us! Cannot we, dear reader, seek it this morning for ourselves and for our fellow-workers, and will we not try today to perform some gallant act for the love of souls and the glory of the Lord.

The *world* is constantly inventing; genius serves all the purposes of human desire—cannot *faith* invent too, and reach by some new means the outcasts who lie perishing around us? It was the presence of Jesus, which excited victorious courage in the four bearers of the palsied man—is not the Lord among us now? Have we seen His face for ourselves this morning? Have we felt His healing power in our own souls? If so, then through door, through window, or through roof, let us, breaking through all impediments, labor to bring poor souls to Jesus! All means are good and decorous, when faith and love are truly set on winning souls. If hunger for bread can break through stone walls, surely hunger for souls is not to be hindered in its efforts. O Lord, make us quick to suggest methods of reaching your poor sin-sick ones, and bold to carry them out at all hazards!

September 7 — Evening

"There is sorrow on the sea; it cannot be quiet." Jeremiah 49:23

We know little what *sorrow* may be upon the sea at this moment. We are safe in our quiet chamber—but far away on the salt sea—the hurricane may be cruelly seeking for the lives of men. Hear how the *death fiends* howl among the storm; how every timber shakes as the waves beat like battering rams upon the vessel! God help you, poor drenched and wearied ones! My prayer goes up to the great Lord of sea and land, that He will make the storm a calm, and bring you to your desired haven!

Nor ought I to offer prayer alone, I should try to benefit those hardy men who risk their lives so constantly. Have I ever done anything for them? What can I do? How often does the boisterous sea swallow up the mariner! Thousands of corpses lie where pearls lie deep. There is death-sorrow on the sea, which is echoed in the long wail of widows and orphans. The *salt of the sea* is in many eyes of mothers and wives. Remorseless billows, you have devoured the love of women, and the stay of households!

What a resurrection shall there be from the caverns of the deep—when the sea gives up her dead! Until then, there will be sorrow on the sea. As if in sympathy with the woes of earth, the sea is forever fretting along a thousand shores, wailing with a sorrowful cry like her own birds, booming with a hollow crash of unrest, raving with uproarious discontent, chafing with hoarse wrath, or jangling with the voices of ten thousand murmuring pebbles.

The roar of the sea may be joyous to a rejoicing spirit—but to the son of sorrow—the wide, wide ocean is even more forlorn than the wide, wide world. This is not our rest, and the restless billows tell us so. There is a land where there is no more sea—our faces are steadfastly set towards it; we are going to the place of which the Lord has spoken. Until then, we cast our sorrows on the Lord who trod the sea of old, and who makes a way for His people through the depths thereof.

September 8 — *Morning*

"From Me is your fruit found." Hosea 14:8

Our fruit is found from our God as to **union**. The *fruit* of the branch is directly traceable to the *root*. Sever the connection, the branch dies, and no fruit is produced. By virtue of our union with Christ—we bring forth fruit. Every bunch of grapes have been first in the root, it has passed through the stem, and flowed through the sap vessels, and fashioned itself externally into fruit—but it was first in the stem. So also every good work was first in Christ, and then is brought forth in us. O Christian, prize this precious union to Christ; for it must be the source of all the fruitfulness which you can hope to know. If you were not joined to Jesus Christ, you would be a barren bough indeed.

Our fruit comes from God as to spiritual **providence**. When the dew-drops fall from heaven, when the cloud looks down from on high, and is about to distill its liquid treasure, when the bright sun swells the berries of the cluster, each heavenly blessing may whisper to the tree and say, "From me is your fruit found." The fruit owes much to the root—that is essential to fruitfulness—but it owes very much also to external influences. How much we owe to God's grace-providence! in which He provides us constantly with quickening, teaching, consolation, strength, or whatever else we need. To this we owe our all of usefulness or virtue.

Our fruit comes from God as to wise **husbandry**. The gardener's sharp-edged knife promotes the fruitfulness of the tree, by thinning the clusters, and by cutting off superfluous shoots. So is it, Christian, with that pruning which the Lord gives to you. "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vineyard keeper. Every branch in Me that does not produce fruit He removes, and He prunes every branch that produces fruit so that it will produce more fruit." Since our God is the author of our spiritual graces, let us give to Him all the glory of our salvation!

September 8 — Evening

"The immeasurable greatness of His power to us who believe, according to the working of His vast strength, which He exerted in Christ when He raised him from the dead." Ephesians 1:19-20

In the resurrection of Christ, as in our salvation, there was put forth nothing short of a **divine** power. What shall we say of those who think that conversion is wrought by the free will of man, and is due to his own goodness of disposition? When we shall see the dead rise from the grave by their own power—then may we expect to see ungodly sinners of their own *free will* turning to Christ. It is not the Word *preached*, nor the Word *read* in itself; all quickening power proceeds from the *Holy Spirit*.

This power was **irresistible**. All the soldiers and the high priests could not keep the body of Christ in the tomb; Death himself could not hold Jesus in his bonds—even thus irresistible is the power put forth in the believer when he is raised to newness of life. No sin, no corruption, no devils in hell nor sinners upon earth—can stay the hand of God's grace when it intends to convert a man. If God omnipotently says, "You shall!" man shall not say, "I will not."

Observe that the power which raised Christ from the dead was **glorious**. It reflected honor upon God and wrought dismay in the hosts of evil. So there is great glory to God in the conversion of every sinner.

It was **everlasting** power. "Christ being raised from the dead—dies no more; death has no more dominion over Him." So we, being raised from the dead, do not go back to our dead works, nor to our old corruptions—but we live unto God. "Because He lives—we live also." "For we are dead—and our life is hid with Christ in God." "Like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

Lastly, in the text mark the **union** of the new life to Jesus. The same power which raised the Head—works life in the members. What a blessing to be quickened together with Christ!

September 9 — Morning

"Call to Me and I will answer you and tell you great and wondrous things you do not know." Jeremiah 33:3

There are different translations of these words. One version renders it, "I will show you great and fortified things." Another, "Great and reserved things." Now, there are reserved and special things in Christian experience—all the developments of spiritual life are not alike easy of attainment. There are the common frames and feelings of repentance, and faith, and joy, and hope—which are enjoyed by the entire family. But there is an upper realm of rapture, of communion, and conscious union with Christ, which is far from being the common dwelling-place of believers. We have not all the high privilege of *John*, to lean upon Jesus' bosom; nor of *Paul*, to be caught up into the third heaven. There are heights in experimental knowledge of the things of God which the eagle's eye of acumen and philosophic thought has never seen—God alone can bear us there. But the chariot in which He takes us up, and the fiery steeds with which that chariot is dragged, are prevailing prayers.

Prevailing prayer is victorious over the God of mercy, "By his strength he had power with God—yes, he had power over the angel, and prevailed—he wept, and made supplication unto Him—he found Him in Bethel, and there He spoke with us." Prevailing prayer takes the Christian to *Carmel*, and enables him to cover heaven with clouds of blessing, and earth with floods of mercy. Prevailing prayer bears the Christian aloft to *Pisgah*, and shows him the inheritance reserved; it elevates us to *Tabor* and transfigures us, until in the likeness of his Lord, as He is, so are we also in this world. If you would reach to something higher than ordinary groveling experience, look to the Rock that is higher than you, and gaze with the *eye of faith* through the *window of importunate prayer*. When you open the window on your side, it will not be bolted on the other.

September 9 — Evening

"Twenty-four thrones surrounded Him, and twenty-four elders sat on them.

They were all clothed in white and had gold crowns on their heads." Revelation 4:4

These representatives of the saints in heaven are said to be around Christ's throne. In the passage in Canticles, where Solomon sings of the King sitting at his table, some render it "a round table." From this, some expositors, without straining the text, have said, "There is an *equality* among the saints." That idea is conveyed by the equal nearness of the twenty-four elders.

The condition of glorified spirits in heaven is that of nearness to Christ, clear vision of His glory, constant access to His court, and familiar fellowship with His person. Nor is there any difference in this respect, between one saint and another—but all the people of God, apostles, martyrs, ministers, or private and obscure Christians—shall all be seated near the throne, where they shall forever gaze upon their exalted Lord, and be satisfied with His love! They shall all be near to Christ, all ravished with His love, all eating and drinking at the same table with Him, all equally beloved as His favorites and friends, even if not all equally rewarded as servants.

Let believers on earth, imitate the saints in heaven in their nearness to Christ. Let us on earth be as the elders are in heaven, sitting around the throne. May Christ be the object of our thoughts, the center of our lives. How can we endure to live at such a distance from our Beloved? Lord Jesus, draw us nearer to Yourself. Say unto us, "Abide in Me, and I in you"; and permit us to sing, "His left hand is under my head, and His right hand embraces me."

September 10 — *Morning*

"Jesus went up on a mountain and called the ones He wanted to go with Him. And they came to Him."

Mark 3:13

Here was **sovereignty**. Impatient spirits may fret and fume, because they are not called to the highest places in the ministry. We should rejoice, that Jesus calls whom He wills. If He shall leave me to be a *doorkeeper* in His house, I will cheerfully bless Him for His grace in permitting me to do anything in His service. The call of Christ's servants comes from above. Jesus stands on the mountain, evermore above the world in holiness, earnestness, love and power. Those whom He calls must go up the mountain to Him, they must seek to rise to His level by living in constant communion with Him. They may not be able to mount to classic honors, or attain scholastic eminence—but they must like Moses go up into the mount of God and have familiar fellowship with the unseen God, or they will never be fitted to proclaim the gospel of peace.

Jesus went **alone** to hold high fellowship with the Father, and we must enter into the same divine companionship if we would bless our fellow men. No wonder that the apostles were clothed with power—when they came down fresh from the mountain where Jesus was. This morning we must endeavor to ascend the mount of communion, that there we may be ordained to the lifework for which we are set apart. Let us not see the face of man today—until we have seen Jesus. Time spent with Him, is laid out at blessed interest. We too shall cast out devils and work wonders—if we go down into the world girded with that divine energy which Christ alone can give. It is of no use going to the Lord's battle—until we are armed with heavenly weapons. We must see Jesus, this is essential. At the mercy-seat we will linger until He shall manifest Himself unto us as He does not unto the world, and until we can truthfully say, "We were with Him in the Holy Mount!"

September 10 — *Evening*

"Evening wolves." Habakkuk 1:8

While preparing the present volume, this particular expression recurred to me so frequently, that in order to be rid of its constant importunity, I determined to give a page to it. The *evening wolf*, infuriated by a day of hunger, was fiercer and more ravenous than he would have been in the morning. May not the furious creature represent our doubts and fears after a day of distraction of mind, losses in business, and perhaps ungenerous tauntings from our fellow men? How our thoughts howl in our ears, "Where is now your God?" How voracious and greedy they are, swallowing up all suggestions of comfort, and remaining as hungry as before.

Great Shepherd, slay these evening wolves, and bid Your sheep lie down in green pastures, undisturbed by insatiable unbelief. How like evening wolves—are the fiends of hell—for when the flock of Christ are in a cloudy and dark day, and their sun seems going down, they hasten to tear and to devour. They will scarcely attack the Christian in the daylight of faith—but in the gloom of soul conflict they fall upon him. O You who have laid down Your life for the sheep, preserve them from the fangs of the wolf.

False teachers who craftily and industriously hunt for the precious life, devouring men by their falsehoods, are as dangerous and detestable as evening wolves. *Darkness* is their element, *deceit* is their character, *destruction* is their end. We are most in danger from them when they wear the *sheep's skin*. Blessed is he who is kept from them, for thousands are made the prey of grievous wolves that enter within the fold of the church. What a wonder of grace it is—when fierce persecutors are converted, for then the wolf dwells with the lamb, and men of cruel ungovernable dispositions become gentle and teachable. O Lord, convert many such—for such we will pray tonight.

September 11 — *Morning*

"Come out from among them and be separate." 2 Corinthians 6:17

The Christian, while *in* the world, is not to be *of* the world. He should be distinguished from it, in the great **object** of his life. To him, "to live," should be "Christ." Whether he eats, or drinks, or whatever he does—he should do all to God's glory. You may lay up treasure—but lay it up in heaven, where neither moth nor rust corrupts, where thieves do not break through nor steal. You may strive to be rich; but be it your ambition to be "rich in faith," and good works. You may have pleasure; but when you are merry, sing psalms and make melody in your hearts to the Lord.

In your **spirit**, as well as in your *aim*—you should differ from the world. Waiting humbly before God, always conscious of His presence, delighting in communion with Him, and seeking to know His will—you will prove that you are of heavenly race.

And you should be separate from the world in your **actions**. If a thing is right, though you lose by it—it must be done; if it is wrong, though you would gain by it—you must scorn the sin for your Master's sake. You must have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness—but rather reprove them. Walk worthy of your high calling and dignity. Remember, O Christian, that you are a son of the King of kings. Therefore, keep yourself unspotted from the world. Do not soil those *fingers*—which are soon to sweep celestial strings. Do not let those *eyes* become the windows of lust—which are soon to see the King in His beauty. Do not let those *feet* be defiled in miry places—which are soon to walk the golden streets. Do not let not those *hearts* be filled with pride and bitterness—which are before long to be filled with heaven, and to overflow with ecstatic joy.

Then rise my soul! and soar away,
Above the thoughtless crowd;
Above the pleasures of the mirthful,
And splendors of the proud;
Up where eternal beauties bloom,
And pleasures all divine;
Where wealth, that never can consume,
And endless glories shine!

September 11 — Evening

"Lead me, O Lord, in Your righteousness because of my enemies." Psalms 5:8

Very bitter is the *enmity of the world* against the people of Christ. Men will forgive a thousand faults in others—but they will magnify the most trivial offence in the followers of Jesus. Instead of vainly regretting this, let us turn it to account, and since so many are watching for our halting, let this be a special motive for walking very carefully before God. If we live carelessly, the *lynx-eyed world* will soon see it, and with its hundred tongues—it will spread the story, exaggerated and emblazoned by the zeal of slander. They will shout triumphantly. "Aha! So would we have it! See how these Christians act! They are all hypocrites!" Thus will much damage be done to the cause of Christ, and much insult offered to His name.

The cross of Christ is in itself an offence to the world; let us take heed that we add no offence of our own. It is "to the Jews a stumbling block"—let us mind that we put no stumbling blocks where there are enough already. "To the Greeks it is foolishness"—let us not add our folly to give point to the scorn with which the worldly-wise deride the gospel. How jealous should we be of ourselves! How rigid with our consciences! In the presence of adversaries who will misrepresent our best deeds, and impugn our motives where they cannot censure our actions, how circumspect should we be!

Pilgrims travel as suspected people through Vanity Fair. Not only are we under surveillance—but there are more spies than we reckon of. The espionage is everywhere, at home and abroad. If we fall into the enemies' hands—we may sooner expect generosity from a wolf, or mercy from a fiend, than anything like patience with our infirmities from men who spice their infidelity towards God, with scandals against His people. O Lord, lead us ever, lest our enemies trip us up!

September 12 — *Morning*

"The Lord is a *jealous* God!" Nahum 1:2

Your Lord is very jealous of your **love**, O believer. Did He choose you? He cannot bear that you should choose another. Did He buy you with His own blood? He cannot endure that you should think that you are your own, or that you belong to this world. He loved you with such a love that He would not stay in heaven without you! He would sooner die—than you should perish; and He cannot endure that anything should stand between your heart's love and Himself.

He is very jealous of your **trust**. He will not permit you to trust in an arm of flesh. He cannot bear that you should hew out *broken cisterns*, when the *overflowing fountain* is always free to you. When we lean upon Him, He is glad—but when we transfer our dependence to another, when we rely upon our own wisdom, or the wisdom of a friend—worst of all, when we trust in any works of our own—He is displeased, and will chasten us that He may bring us to Himself.

He is also very jealous of our **company**. There should be no one with whom we converse, so much as with Jesus. To abide in Him only, this is true love; but to commune with the world, to find sufficient solace in our carnal comforts, to prefer even the society of our fellow Christians to secret fellowship with Him, this is grievous to our jealous Lord. He would sincerely have us abide in Him, and enjoy constant fellowship with Himself; and many of the trials which He sends us are for the purpose of weaning our hearts from the creature, and fixing them more closely upon Himself. Let this jealousy which would keep us near to Christ—be also a comfort to us, for if He loves us so much as to care thus about our love—we may be sure that He will allow nothing to harm us, and will protect us from all our enemies. Oh that we may have grace this day to keep our hearts in *sacred chastity* for our Beloved alone, with sacred jealousy shutting our eyes to all the *fascinations of the world!*

September 12 — Evening

"I will sing of mercy and judgment!" Psalm 101:1

Faith triumphs in trial. When *reason* is thrust into the inner prison, with her feet made fast in the stocks—*faith* makes the dungeon walls ring with her merry notes as she cries, "I will sing of mercy and of judgment. Unto you, O Lord, will I sing." Faith pulls the black mask from the face of trouble—and discovers the *angel* beneath. Faith looks up at the cloud, and sees that "Tis big with mercy and shall break, In blessings on her head."

There is a subject for song—even in the judgments of God towards us. For, first, the trial is not so heavy as it might have been. Also, the trouble is not so severe as we deserved to have borne. Also, our affliction is not so crushing as the burden which others have to carry. Faith sees that in her worst sorrow—there is nothing penal; there is not a drop of God's wrath in it; it is all sent in love. Faith *discerns love gleaming like a jewel* on the breast of an angry God! Faith says of her grief, "This is a badge of honor, for the *child* must feel the rod"; and then she sings of the sweet result of her sorrows, because they work her spiritual good. "Nay, more," says Faith, "these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for me a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory!" So Faith rides forth on the *black horse*, conquering and to conquer, trampling down carnal reason and fleshly sense, and chanting notes of victory amid the thickest of the fray!

September 13 — *Morning*

"When they walk through the *Valley of Baca* (Valley of Weeping,) they make it a well!" Psalm 84:6

This teaches us that the comfort obtained by one—may often prove serviceable to another; just as wells would be used by the company who came after. We read some book full of consolation, which is like Jonathan's rod, dropping with honey. Ah! we think our brother has been here before us, and dug this well for us—as well as for himself. Many a "Night of Weeping," "Midnight Harmonies," an "Eternal Day," "A Crook in the Lot," a "Comfort for Mourners," has been a well dug by a pilgrim for himself—but has proved quite as useful to others.

We especially notice this in the Psalms, such as that beginning, "Why are you cast down, O my soul?" Travelers have been delighted to see the footprint of man on a barren shore, and we love to see the waymarks of pilgrims while passing through the *valley of tears*.

The pilgrims dig the well—but, strange enough, it fills from the top instead of the bottom. We use the means—but the blessing does not spring from the means. We dig a well—but heaven fills it with rain. The horse is prepared against the day of battle—but safety is of the Lord. The means are connected with the end—but they do not of themselves produce it. See here the rain fills the pools, so that the wells become useful as reservoirs for the water; labor is not lost—but yet it does not supersede divine help.

Grace may well be compared to *rain* for its purity, for its refreshing and vivifying influence, for its coming alone from above, and for the sovereignty with which it is given or withheld. May our readers have showers of blessing, and may the wells they have dug be filled with water! Oh, what are means and ordinances—without the smile of heaven! They are as clouds without rain, and pools without water. O God of love, open the windows of heaven and pour us out a blessing!

September 13 — Evening

"This man receives sinners!" Luke 15:2

Observe the *condescension* of this fact. *This Man*, who towers above all other men—holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners—*this Man* receives sinners. This Man, who is no other than the eternal God, before whom angels veil their faces—this Man receives sinners. It needs an angel's tongue to describe such a mighty stoop of love. That any of *us* should be willing to seek after the lost is nothing amazing—they are of our own race. But that He, the offended God, against whom the transgression has been committed, should take upon Himself the form of a servant, and bear the sin of many, and should then be willing to receive the vilest of the vile—this is marvelous indeed!

"This Man receives sinners"; not, however, that they may remain sinners—but He receives them that He may pardon their sins, justify their persons, cleanse their hearts by His purifying Word, preserve their souls by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and enable them to serve Him, to show forth His praise, and to have communion with Him. Into His heart's love, He receives sinners. He takes them from the dunghill—and wears them as jewels in His crown! He plucks them as brands from the burning—and preserves them as costly monuments of His mercy. None are so precious in Jesus' sight—as the sinners for whom He died!

When Jesus receives sinners, He has not some out-of-doors reception place, no casual ward where He charitably entertains them as men do passing beggars—but He opens the golden gates of His royal heart, and receives the sinner right into Himself—yes, He admits the humble penitent into personal union, and makes Him a member of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. There was never such a reception as this! This fact is still most sure this evening, He is still receiving sinners—would to God sinners would receive Him!

September 14 — *Morning*

"And other boats were with Him." Mark 4:36

Jesus was the High Admiral of the sea that night, and His presence preserved the whole convoy. It is well to sail with Jesus, even though it is in a little boat. When we sail in Christ's company, we may not be sure of fair weather, for great storms may toss the vessel which carries the Lord Himself, and we must not expect to find the sea less boisterous around our little boat. If we go with Jesus—we must be content to fare as He fares; and when the waves are rough to Him, they will be rough to us. It is by tempest and tossing—that we shall come to land, as He did before us.

When the storm swept over Galilee's dark lake, all faces gathered blackness, and all hearts dreaded shipwreck. When all *creature help* was useless, the slumbering Savior arose, and with a word, transformed the riot of the tempest into the deep quiet of a calm; then the little vessels were at rest—as well as that which carried the Lord. Jesus is the star of the sea; and though there is sorrow upon the sea, when Jesus is on it there is joy too. May our hearts make Jesus their anchor, their rudder, their lighthouse, their life-boat, and their harbor. His Church is the Admiral's flagship, let us attend her movements, and cheer her officers with our presence. He Himself is the great attraction; let us follow ever in His wake, mark His signals, steer by His chart, and never fear while He is within hail. Not one ship in the convoy shall suffer wreck; the great Commodore will steer every barque in safety to the desired haven. By faith we will slip our cable for another day's cruise, and sail forth with Jesus into a sea of tribulation. Winds and waves will not spare us—but they all obey Him; and, therefore, whatever squalls may occur without, faith shall feel a blessed calm within. He is ever in the center of the weather-beaten company—let us rejoice in Him. His vessel has reached the haven, and so shall ours.

September 14 — Evening

"I acknowledged my sin to You and did not conceal my iniquity.

I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,' and You took away the guilt of my sin." Psalm 32:5

David's grief for sin was bitter. Its effects were visible upon his outward frame, "my bones became brittle from my groaning all day long; my strength was drained as in the summer's heat." No remedy could he find, until he made a full confession before the throne of the heavenly grace. He tells us that for a time he kept silence, and his heart became more and more filled with grief—like a mountain stream whose outlet is blocked up, his soul was swollen with torrents of sorrow. He fashioned excuses; he endeavored to divert his thoughts—but it was all to no purpose. Like a festering sore his anguish gathered, and as he would not use the lancet of confession, his spirit was full of torment, and knew no rest.

At last it came to this—that he must return unto his God in humble penitence, or die outright; so he hastened to the mercy-seat, and there unrolled the *volume of his iniquities* before the all-seeing One, acknowledging all the evil of his ways in language such as you read in the fifty-first and other penitential Psalms. Having done this, a work so *simple*—and yet so *difficult* to pride—he received at once the token of divine forgiveness; the bones which had been broken were made to rejoice, and he came forth from his closet to sing the blessedness of the man whose transgression is forgiven.

See the value of a grace-wrought confession of sin! It is to be prized above all price, for in every case where there is a genuine, gracious confession, mercy is freely given, not because the repentance and confession *deserve* mercy—but for Christ's sake. Blessed be God, there is always healing for the broken heart! The fountain is ever flowing to cleanse us from our sins! Truly, O Lord, You are a God "ready to pardon!" Therefore will we acknowledge our iniquities!

September 15 — *Morning*

"He shall not be afraid of evil tidings." Psalm 112:7

Christian, you ought not to dread the arrival of evil tidings; because if you are distressed by them—how are you different than men of the world? Other men have not your God to fly to; they have never proved His faithfulness as you have done, and it is no wonder if they are bowed down with alarm and cowed with fear. But you profess to be of another spirit; you have been begotten again unto a lively hope, and your heart lives in heaven and not on earthly things; now, if you are seen to be as anxious as other men—what is the value of that grace which you profess to have received? Where is the dignity of that new nature which you claim to possess?

Again, if you should be filled with alarm, as others are, you would, doubtless, be led into the sins so common to others under trying circumstances. The ungodly, when they are overtaken by evil tidings, rebel against God; they murmur, and think that God deals harshly with them. Will you fall into that same sin? Will you provoke the Lord as they do? Moreover, unconverted men often run to wrong means in order to escape from difficulties, and you will be sure to do the same if your mind yields to the present pressure.

Trust in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him. Your wisest course is to do as Moses did at the Red Sea, "Stand still and see the salvation of God!" For if you give way to fear when you hear of evil tidings, you will be unable to meet the trouble with that calm composure which nerves for duty, and sustains under adversity. How can you glorify God—if you play the coward? Saints have often sung God's high praises in the *fires*—but will your doubting and desponding, as if you had none to help you, magnify the Most High? Then take courage, and relying in sure confidence upon the faithfulness of your covenant God, "let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

September 15 — Evening

"A people *near* unto Him." Psalm 148:14

The dispensation of the **old covenant** was that of *distance*. When God appeared even to His servant Moses, He said, "Do not come any closer. Take off your sandals, for you are standing on holy ground." And when He manifested Himself upon Mount Sinai, to His own chosen and separated people, one of the first commands was, "You shall set *bounds* about the mount." Both in the sacred worship of the tabernacle and the temple, the thought of *distance* was always prominent. The mass of the people did not even enter the *outer* court. Into the *inner* court—none but the priests might dare to intrude; while into the *innermost* place, or the holy of holies, the high priest entered but once in the year. It was as if the Lord in those early ages—would teach man that sin was so utterly loathsome to Him, that He must treat men as lepers to be put outside the camp. And when He came nearest to them, He yet made them feel the width of the separation between a holy God and an impure sinner.

When the **gospel** came, we were placed on quite another footing. The word "Go" was exchanged for "Come"; distance was made to give place to nearness, and we who aforesaid were afar off, were made *near* by the blood of Jesus Christ. *Incarinate Deity* has no wall of fire about it. "Come unto me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," is the joyful proclamation of God as He appears in human flesh. He no longer teaches the leper his leprosy—by setting him at a distance—but by Himself suffering the penalty of His defilement!

What a state of safety and privilege is this nearness to God through Jesus! Do you know it by experience? If you know it, are you living in the power of it? Marvelous is this nearness—yet it is to be followed by a dispensation of greater nearness still, when it shall be said, "The tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell among them." Hasten it, O Lord!

September 16 — *Morning*

"Partakers of the divine nature." 2 Peter 1:4

To be a partaker of the divine nature is not, of course, to become God. That cannot be. The *essence* of Deity is not to be participated in by the creature. Between the creature and the Creator—there must ever be a gulf fixed in respect of essence; but as the first man Adam was made in the image of God, so we, by the renewal of the Holy Spirit, are in a yet diviner sense made in the image of the Most High God—and are partakers of the divine nature. We are, by grace, made like God.

"God is *love*"; we become love, "He who loves is born of God." God is *truth*; we become true, and we love that which is true. God is *good*, and He makes us good by His grace, so that we become the pure in heart who shall see God.

Moreover, we become partakers of the divine nature in even a higher sense than this—in fact, in as lofty a sense as can be conceived, short of our being absolutely divine. Do we not become members of the body of the divine person of Christ? Yes, the same blood which flows in the head—flows in the hand; and the same life which quickens Christ—quickens His people, for "You are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

Nay, as if this were not enough, we are **married** unto Christ. He has betrothed us unto Himself in righteousness and in faithfulness, and he who is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Oh! marvelous mystery! we *look* into it—but who shall *understand* it? One with Jesus—so one with Him that the branch is not more one with the vine—than we are a part of the Lord, our Savior, and our Redeemer!

While we rejoice in this, let us remember that those who are made partakers of the divine nature will *manifest* their high and holy relationship in their fellowship with others, and make it evident by their daily walk and conversation, that they have escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. O for more divine holiness of life!

September 16 — Evening

"Am I the sea—that You put me under guard?" Job 7:12

This was a strange question for Job to ask of the Lord. He felt himself to be too insignificant to be so strictly watched and chastened, and he hoped that he was not so unruly as to need to be so restrained. The enquiry was natural from one surrounded with such insupportable miseries—but after all, it is capable of a very humbling answer. It is true man is not the sea—but he is even more troublesome and unruly.

The **sea** obediently respects its boundary, and though it be but a belt of sand, it does not overleap the limit. Mighty as it is—it hears the divine 'hitherto'; and when most raging with tempest—it respects the God's boundaries. But self-willed man defies heaven and oppresses earth, neither is there any end to this rebellious rage.

The sea, obedient to the moon, ebbs and flows with ceaseless regularity, and thus renders an active as well as a passive obedience; but man, restless beyond his sphere, sleeps within the lines of duty, indolent where he should be active. He will neither come nor go at the divine command—but sullenly prefers to do what he should not, and to leave undone that which is required of him.

Every drop in the ocean, every beaded bubble, and every yeasty foam-flake, every shell and pebble, feel the power of God's law, and yield or move at once. O that our nature were but one thousandth part as much conformed to the will of God! We call the sea *fickle* and *false*—but how *constant* it is! Since our fathers' days, and the old time before them—the sea is where it was, beating on the same cliffs to the same tune; we know where to find it, it forsakes not its bed, and changes not in its ceaseless boom. But where is man—vain, fickle man? Can the wise man guess by what folly he will next be seduced from his obedience? We need more watching than the billowy sea, and are far more rebellious. Lord, rule us for Your own glory! Amen.

September 17 — *Morning*

"Bring him unto Me!" Mark 9:19

Despairingly the poor disappointed father turned away from the disciples, to their Master. His son was in the worst possible condition, and all means had failed—but the miserable child was soon delivered from the evil one, when the parent in faith obeyed the Lord Jesus' word, "Bring him unto Me."

Your children are a precious gift from God—but much anxiety comes with them. They may be a great *joy*—or a great *bitterness* to their parents. They may be filled with the Spirit of God, or possessed with the spirit of evil. In all cases, the Word of God gives us one recipe for the curing of all their ills, "Bring him unto Me!"

O for more agonizing prayer on their behalf, while they are yet babes! Sin is there, let our prayers begin to attack it. Our cries for our offspring should precede those cries which betoken their actual advent into a world of sin. In the days of their youth we shall see sad tokens of that dumb and deaf spirit, which will neither pray aright, nor hear the voice of God in the soul—but Jesus still commands, "Bring them unto Me." When they are grown up, they may wallow in sin and foam with enmity against God! Then, when our hearts are breaking—we should remember the great Physician's words, "Bring them unto Me!" Never must we cease to pray for them—until they cease to breathe. No case is hopeless—while Jesus lives.

The Lord sometimes allows His people to be driven into a corner—that they may experimentally know how necessary He is to them. Ungodly children, when they show us our own powerlessness against the depravity of their hearts, drive us to flee to the Strong One for strength—and this is a great blessing to us. Whatever this day's need may be, let it like a *strong current*—bear us to the *ocean of divine love*! Jesus can soon remove our sorrow. He delights to comfort us. Let us hasten to Him—while He waits to meet us!

September 17 — Evening

"Encourage him."

Deuteronomy 1:38 God employs His people to *encourage* one another. He did not say to an angel, "*Gabriel*, my servant Joshua is about to lead my people into Canaan—go, encourage him." God never works needless *miracles*; if His purposes can be accomplished by *ordinary* means, He will not use *miraculous* agency. *Gabriel* would not have been half so well fitted for the work—as *Moses*. A brother's sympathy is more precious than an angel's embassy. The angel, swift of wing, better knows the Master's bidding—than the people's temper. An angel had never experienced the hardness of the road, nor seen the fiery serpents, nor had he led the stiff-necked multitude in the wilderness as *Moses* had done.

We should be glad that God usually works *for* man *by* man. It forms a bond of brotherhood, and being mutually dependent on one another, we are fused more completely into one family. Brethren, take the text as God's message to you. Labor to *help* others, and especially strive to *encourage* them. Talk cheerily to the young and anxious enquirer, lovingly try to remove stumbling blocks out of his way. When you find a *spark of grace* in the heart—kneel down and blow it into a flame!

Leave the young believer to discover the roughness of the road by degrees—but tell him of the strength which dwells in God, of the sureness of the promise, and of the charms of communion with Christ. Aim to comfort the sorrowful, and to animate the desponding. Speak a word in season to him who is weary, and encourage those who are fearful to go on their way with gladness. God encourages you by His promises; Christ encourages you as He points to the heaven which He has won for you; and the Spirit encourages you as He works in you to will and to do of His own will and pleasure. Imitate divine wisdom, and encourage others, according to the word of this evening.

September 18 — Morning

"If we *live* in the Spirit—let us also *walk* in the Spirit." Galatians 5:25

The two most important things in our holy religion are the *life* of faith—and the *walk* of faith. He who shall rightly understand these—is not far from being a master in experimental theology, for they are vital points to a Christian. You will never find true faith, unattended by true godliness. On the other hand, you will never discover a truly holy life, which has not for its root a living faith upon the righteousness of Christ. Woe unto those who seek after the one—without the other!

There are some who cultivate *faith* and forget *holiness*; these may be very high in *orthodoxy*—but they shall be very deep in *condemnation*, for they hold the truth in unrighteousness! And there are others who have strained after holiness of life—but have denied the faith, like the Pharisees of old, of whom the Master said, they were "whitewashed sepulchers." We must have *faith*, for this is the *foundation*. We must have *holiness* of life, for this is the *superstructure*. Of what service is the mere foundation of a building to a man, in the day of tempest? Can he hide himself therein? He needs a *house* to cover him, as well as a *foundation* for that house.

Even so—we need the superstructure of spiritual life, if we would have comfort in the day of doubt. But seek not a holy life without faith, for that would be to erect a house which can afford no permanent shelter, because it has no foundation on the Rock. Let *faith* and *life* be put together, and, like the two abutments of an arch, they will make our piety enduring. Like *light* and *heat* streaming from the same sun—they are alike full of blessing. Like the two pillars of the temple—they are for *glory* and for *beauty*. They are two *streams* from the fountain of grace; two *lamps* lit with holy fire; two *olive trees* watered by heavenly care. O Lord, give us this day life *within*—and it will reveal itself *without* to Your glory.

September 18 — Evening

"And they follow me." John 10:27

We should follow our Lord—as unhesitatingly as sheep follow their shepherd, for He has a right to lead us wherever He pleases. We are not our own, we are bought with a price—let us recognize the *rights* of the redeeming blood. The *soldier* follows his captain, the *servant* obeys his master—much more must we follow our Redeemer, to whom we are a purchased possession.

We are not true to our profession of being Christians—if we question the bidding of our Leader and Commander. *Submission* is our duty—but *caviling* is our folly. Often might our Lord say to us as to Peter, "What is that to you? Follow you Me." Wherever Jesus may lead us—He goes before us. If we know not *where* we go, we know with *whom* we go. With such a companion, who will dread the perils of the road? The journey may be long—but His everlasting arms will carry us to the end.

The presence of Jesus is the assurance of eternal salvation, because He lives—we shall live also. We should follow Christ in simplicity and faith, because the paths in which He leads us—all end in glory and immortality. It is true, they may not be *smooth* paths—they may be covered with sharp flinty trials—but they lead to the "city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God." "All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep His covenant."

Let us put full trust in our Leader, since we know that, come prosperity or adversity, sickness or health, popularity or contempt—His purpose shall be worked out, and that purpose shall be pure, unmingled good to every heir of mercy. We shall find it sweet to go up the bleak side of the hill with Christ; and when rain and snow blow into our faces, His dear love will make us far more blessed than those who sit at home and warm their hands at the *world's fire*. To the top of Amana, to the dens of lions, or to the hills of leopards—we will follow our Beloved. Precious Jesus, draw us—and we will run after You!

September 19 — *Morning*

"The liberty with which Christ has made us free." Galatians 5:1

This "liberty" makes us free to *heaven's charter*—the **Bible**. Here is a choice passage, believer, "When you pass through the rivers—I will be with you." You are free to that. Here is another, "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed—but my kindness shall not depart from you." You are a welcome guest at the table of the promises. Scripture is a never-failing treasury filled with boundless stores of grace. It is the bank of heaven; you may draw from it as much as you please, without price or hindrance. Come in faith and you are welcome to all covenant blessings. There is not a promise in the Word which shall be withheld. In the depths of tribulations—let this freedom comfort you; amidst waves of distress—let it cheer you; when sorrows surround you—let it be your solace. This is your Father's love-token; you are free to it at all times.

You are also free to the **throne of grace**. It is the believer's privilege to have access at all times to His heavenly Father. Whatever our desires, our difficulties, our needs—we are at liberty to spread all before Him. It matters not how much we may have sinned—we may ask and expect pardon. It signifies nothing how poor we are—we may plead His promise that He will provide all things needful. We have permission to approach His throne at all times—in midnight's darkest hour, or in noontide's most burning heat. Exercise your right, O believer, and live up to your privilege.

You are free to **all that is treasured up in Christ**—wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. It matters not what your need is, for there is fullness of supply in Christ—and it is there for you! O what a "freedom" is yours! Freedom from condemnation, freedom to the promises, freedom to the throne of grace, and at last freedom to enter heaven!

September 19 — Evening

"For this child I prayed." 1 Samuel 1:27

Devout souls delight to look upon those mercies which they have obtained in answer to supplication, for they can see God's especial love in them. When we can name our blessings *Samuel*, that is, "*asked of God*," they will be as dear to us as her child was to Hannah. Peninnah had many children—but they came as *common* blessings unsought in prayer—Hannah's one heaven-given child was dearer far, because he was the fruit of earnest pleadings.

How sweet was that water to Samson which he found at "the well of him who prayed!" *Quassia cups* turn all waters bitter—but the *cup of prayer* puts a sweetness into the draughts it brings. Did we pray for the conversion of our children? How doubly sweet, when they are saved, to see in them our own petitions fulfilled! Better to rejoice over them as the fruit of our pleadings—than as the fruit of our bodies. Have we sought of the Lord some choice spiritual gift? When it comes to us it will be wrapped up in the gold cloth of God's faithfulness and truth, and so be doubly precious. Have we petitioned for success in the Lord's work? How joyful is the prosperity which comes *flying upon the wings of prayer!* It is always best to get blessings into our house in the legitimate way—by the door of prayer; then they are blessings indeed, and not temptations.

Even when prayer *speeds* not, the blessings grow all the richer for the *delay*; the child Jesus was all the more lovely in the eyes of Mary when she found Him after having sought Him sorrowing. That which we win by prayer—we should dedicate to God, as Hannah dedicated Samuel. The gift came *from* heaven, let it go *to* heaven. Prayer *brought* it, gratitude *sang* over it, let devotion consecrate it. Here will be a special occasion for saying, "Of Your own—have I given unto You." Reader, is prayer your *element* or your *weariness*? Which?

September 20 — *Morning*

"The sword of the Lord—and of Gideon." Judges 7:20

Gideon ordered his men to do two things—covering up a torch in an earthen pitcher, he bade them, at an appointed signal, to break the pitcher and let the light shine, and then sound with the trumpet, crying, "The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon! The sword of the Lord—and of Gideon!"

This is precisely what all Christians must do. First, you must **shine**; break the pitcher which conceals your light; throw aside the bushel which has been hiding your candle, and shine. Let your light shine before men; let your good works be such, that when men look upon you, they shall know that you have been with Jesus. Then there must be the **sound**, the blowing of the trumpet. There must be active exertions for the ingathering of sinners, by proclaiming Christ crucified. Take the gospel to them; carry it to their door; put it in their way; do not allow them to escape it; blow the trumpet right against their ears!

Remember that the true war-cry of the Church, is Gideon's watchword, "*The sword of the Lord—and of Gideon!*" God must do it, it is His own work. But we are not to be idle; instrumentality is to be used, "*The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon!*" If we only cry, "The sword of the Lord!" we shall be guilty of an idle presumption; and if we shout, "The sword of Gideon!" alone, we shall manifest idolatrous reliance on an arm of flesh—we must blend the two in practical harmony, "*The sword of the Lord—and of Gideon!*" We can do nothing of ourselves—but we can do everything by the help of our God; let us, therefore, in His name determine to go out personally and serve with our flaming torch of holy example, and with our trumpet tones of earnest declaration and testimony, and God shall be with us, and Midian shall be put to confusion, and the Lord Almighty shall reign forever and ever!

September 20 — *Evening*

"In the evening withhold not your hand." Ecclesiastes 11:6

In the *evening* of the day *opportunities* are plentiful—men return from their labor, and the zealous soul-winner finds time to tell abroad the love of Jesus. Have I no evening work for Jesus? If I have not, let me no longer withhold my hand from a service which requires abundant labor. Sinners are perishing for lack of knowledge; he who loiters may find his skirts crimson with the blood of souls. Jesus gave both His hands to the nails—how can I keep back one of mine from His blessed work? Night and day He toiled and prayed for me, how can I give a single hour to the pampering of my flesh with luxurious ease? Up, idle heart; stretch out your hand to work, or uplift it to pray. Heaven and hell are in earnest, let me be so, and this evening sow good seed for the Lord my God.

The *evening* of life has also its **calls**. Life is so short that a morning of manhood's vigor, and an evening of decay, make the whole of it. Life is so brief—that no man can afford to lose a day. It has been well said that if a great king should bring us a great heap of gold, and bid us take as much as we could count in a day, we would make a long day of it; we should begin early in the morning, and in the evening we would not withhold our hand; but to win souls is far nobler work, how is it that we so soon withdraw from it? Some are spared to a long evening of green old age; if such be my case, let me use such talents as I still retain, and to the last hour serve my blessed and faithful Lord. By His grace I will die in harness, and lay down my charge—only when I lay down my body. Age may instruct the young, cheer the faint, and encourage the desponding; if eventide has less of vigorous heat, it should have more of calm wisdom, therefore in the evening I will not withhold my hand.

September 21 — *Morning*

"I will rejoice over them to do them good." Jeremiah 32:41

How heart-cheering to the believer, is the delight which God has in His saints! We cannot see any reason in ourselves why the Lord should take pleasure in us; we cannot take delight in ourselves, for we often have to groan, being burdened; conscious of our sinfulness, and deploring our unfaithfulness. And we fear that God's people cannot take much delight in us, for they must perceive so much of our imperfections and our follies, that they may rather lament our infirmities, than admire our graces.

But we love to dwell upon this transcendent truth, this glorious mystery—that as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride—so does the Lord rejoice over us. We do not read anywhere that God delights in the cloud-capped mountains, or the sparkling stars—but we do read that He delights in the habitable parts of the earth, and that His delights are with the sons of men. We do not find it written that even angels give His soul delight; nor does He say, concerning cherubim and seraphim, "You shall be called *Hephzibah*, for the Lord *delights* in you"; but He does say all that to poor fallen creatures like ourselves, debased and depraved by sin—but saved, exalted, and glorified by His grace.

In what strong language He expresses His delight in His people! Who could have conceived of the eternal One as bursting forth into a song? Yet it is written, "He will rejoice over you with joy—He will rejoice over you with singing." As He looked upon the world He had made, He said, "It is very good"; but when He beheld those who are the purchase of Jesus' blood, His own chosen ones, it seemed as if the great heart of the Infinite could restrain itself no longer—but overflowed in divine exclamations of joy. Should not we utter our grateful response to such a marvelous declaration of His love, and sing, "I will rejoice in the Lord, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation!"

September 21 — Evening

"Gather not my soul with sinners." Psalm 26:9

Fear made David pray thus, for something whispered, "Perhaps, after all, you may be gathered with the wicked." That fear, although marred by *unbelief*, springs, in the main, from holy concern, arising from the recollection of past sin. Even the pardoned man will enquire, "What if at the end, my sins should be remembered, and I should be left out of the catalogue of the saved?" He recollects his present unfruitfulness: so little grace, so little love, so little holiness; and looking forward to the future, he considers his weakness and the many temptations which beset him, and he fears that he may fall, and become a prey to the enemy. A sense of sin and present evil, and his prevailing corruptions, compel him to pray, in fear and trembling, "Gather not my soul with sinners!"

Reader, if you have prayed this prayer, and if your character is rightly described in the Psalm from which it is taken, you need not be afraid that you shall be gathered with sinners. Have you the two virtues which David had—the *outward walking* in integrity, and the *inward trusting* in the Lord? Are you resting upon Christ's sacrifice, and can you compass the altar of God with humble hope? If so, rest assured, with the wicked you never shall be gathered, for that calamity is impossible. The gathering at the judgment is *like to like*. "Gather together first the *tares*, and bind them in bundles to burn them—but gather the wheat into my barn." If, then, you are like God's people, you shall be with God's people. You cannot be gathered with the wicked, for you are too dearly bought. Redeemed by the blood of Christ, you are His forever, and where He is, there must His people be. You are loved too much to be cast away with reprobates. Shall one dear to Christ perish? Impossible! Hell cannot hold you! Heaven claims you! Trust in your Surety and fear not!

September 22 — *Morning*

"Let Israel rejoice in *Him!*" Psalm 149:2

Be glad of heart, O believer—but take care that your gladness has its spring in the *Lord*. You have much cause for gladness in your God, for you can sing with David, "God, my exceeding joy!" Be glad that the Lord reigns—that Jehovah is King! Rejoice that He sits upon the throne—and rules all things!

Every *attribute* of God should become a fresh ray in the sunlight of our gladness. That He is *wise*—should make us glad, knowing as we do our own foolishness. That He is *mighty*—should cause us to rejoice who tremble at our weakness. That he is *everlasting*—should always be a theme of joy when we know that we wither as the grass. That He is *unchanging*—should perpetually yield us a song, since we change every hour. That He is full of *grace*, that He is overflowing with it, and that this grace in covenant He has given to us; that it is ours to cleanse us, ours to keep us, ours to sanctify us, ours to perfect us, ours to bring us to glory—all this should tend to make us glad in Him.

This gladness in God is as a deep river—we have only as yet touched its brink, we know a little of its clear sweet, heavenly streams—but *onward* the depth is greater, and the current more impetuous in its joy.

The Christian feels that he may delight himself, not only in what God **is**—but also in all that God has **done** in the past. The Psalms show us that God's people in olden times were accustomed to think much of God's **past mercies**—and to have a song concerning each of them. So let God's people now rehearse the deeds of the Lord! Let them tell of His mighty acts, and "sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously!"

Nor let them ever cease to sing, for as **new mercies** flow to them day by day, so should their gladness in the Lord's loving acts in *providence* and in *grace*—show itself in continued thanksgiving. Be glad O children of Zion and rejoice in the Lord your God!

September 22 — Evening

"When my heart is overwhelmed—lead me to the Rock that is higher than I!" Psalm 61:2

Most of us know what it is to be *overwhelmed in heart*—emptied as when a man wipes a dish and turns it upside down; submerged and sinking like a vessel mastered by the storm.

Discoveries of inward corruption will do this—if the Lord permits the great deep of our depravity to become troubled and cast up mire and dirt.

Disappointments and *heartbreaks* will do this—when billow after billow rolls over us, and we are like a broken shell hurled to and fro by the raging surf! Blessed be God, at such seasons we are not without an all-sufficient solace—our God is the harbor of weather-beaten sails, the hospice of forlorn pilgrims. Higher than *we are*—He is! His *mercy* higher than our sins! His *love* is higher than we could imagine!

It is pitiful to see unsaved men putting their trust in something *lower* than themselves; but our confidence is fixed upon an exceeding high and glorious Lord.

A *Rock* He is—since He changes not; and a *high* Rock, because the tempests which overwhelm us—roll far beneath at His feet! He is not disturbed by them—but rules them at His will. If we get under the shelter of this lofty Rock—we may defy the hurricane; all is calm under the lee of that towering cliff!

Alas! such is the confusion in which the troubled mind is often cast, that we need *piloting* to this divine shelter. Hence the prayer of the text, "When my heart is overwhelmed—lead me to the Rock that is higher than I! O Lord, our God, by Your Holy Spirit—teach us the way of faith, lead us into Your rest. The wind blows us out to sea—our puny hand cannot steer the helm! You, You alone can steer us over the wide ocean between yon sunken rocks—and safe into the fair haven. How dependent we are upon You! We need You to bring us to You! To be wisely directed and steered into safety and peace is Your gift, and Yours alone. This night be pleased to deal well with Your servants.

September 23 — *Morning*

"Accepted in the Beloved." Ephesians 1:6

What a wonderful state of privilege! It includes our justification before God—but the term "acceptance" in the Greek means more than that. It signifies that we are the objects of divine delight, nay, even of divine joy! How marvelous that we worms, we mortals, we sinners—should be the objects of divine love! But it is only "in the beloved."

Some Christians seem to think that they are accepted in their own experience. When their heart is lively, and their hopes bright—they think God accepts them, for they feel so high, so heavenly-minded, so drawn above the earth! But when their souls cleave to the dust—they fear that they are no longer accepted. If they could but see that all their high joys do not exalt them, and all their low despondencies do not really depress them in their Father's sight—but that they stand accepted in One who never alters, in One who is always the beloved of God, always perfect, always without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing—how much happier they would be—and how much more they would honor the Savior! Rejoice then, believer, in this—you are accepted "in the beloved."

You look within, and you say, "There is nothing acceptable here!" But look at Christ, and see if there is not everything acceptable there. Your sins trouble you—but God has cast your sins behind His back, and you are accepted in the Righteous One. You have to fight with corruption, and to wrestle with temptation—but you are already accepted in Him who has overcome the powers of evil. The devil tempts you—but be of good cheer, he cannot destroy you, for you are accepted in Him who has broken the red dragon's head! Even glorified souls in heaven—are not more accepted than you are! They are only accepted in heaven "in the beloved," and you are even now accepted in Christ, after the same manner!

September 23 — Evening

"Jesus said unto him—If you can believe." Mark 9:23

A certain man had a demoniac son, who was afflicted with a dumb spirit. The father, having seen the futility of the endeavors of the disciples to heal his child, had little or no faith in Christ, and therefore, when he was bidden to bring his son to Him, he said to Jesus, "If You can do anything—have compassion on us, and help us." Now there was an "if" in the question—but the poor trembling father had put the "if" in the wrong place. Jesus Christ, therefore, without commanding him to retract the "if," kindly puts it in its legitimate position. "Nay, truly," He seemed to say, "there should be no 'if' about *My power*, nor concerning *My willingness*, the 'if' lies somewhere else." "If *you* can believe, all things are possible to him who believes." The man's trust was strengthened, he offered a humble prayer for an increase of faith, and instantly Jesus spoke the word, and the devil was cast out, with an injunction never to return.

There is a lesson here which we need to learn. We, like this man, often see that there is an "if" somewhere—but we are perpetually blundering by putting it in the wrong place. "If" Jesus can help me, "if" He can give me grace to overcome temptation, "if" He can give me pardon, "if" He can make me successful?

Nay, "if" *you* can believe—He both can and will. You have misplaced your "if."

If you can confidently trust, even as all things are possible to Christ, so shall all things be possible to you. FAITH stands in God's power, and is robed in God's majesty; it wears the royal apparel, and rides on the King's horse, for it is the grace which the King delights to honor. Girding itself with the glorious might of the all-working Spirit, it becomes, in the omnipotence of God, mighty to do, to dare, and to suffer. All things, without limit, are possible to him who believes. My soul, can you believe your Lord tonight?

September 24 — Morning

"For I was ashamed to ask the king for soldiers and horsemen to accompany us and protect us from enemies along the way. After all, we had told the king—*Our God protects all those who worship Him, but His fierce anger rages against those who abandon Him.*" Ezra 8:22

On many accounts, a convoy from the king would have been desirable for the pilgrim band—but *a holy shame* would not allow Ezra to seek one. He feared lest the heathen king should think his professions of faith in God—to be mere hypocrisy, or imagine that the God of Israel was not able to preserve His own worshipers. He could not bring his mind to lean on *an arm of flesh* in a matter so evidently of the Lord; and therefore the caravan set out with no visible protection, guarded by Him who is the *sword* and *shield* of His people.

It is to be feared that few believers feel this *holy jealousy* for God. Even those who in a measure walk by faith, occasionally mar the luster of their life by craving *aid from man*. It is a most blessed thing to have no *props* and no *buttresses*—but to stand upright on the Rock of Ages, upheld by the Lord alone!

Would any true believers seek *state endowments* for their Church—if they remembered that the Lord is dishonored by their asking Caesar's aid? as if the Lord could not supply the needs of His own cause! Should we run so hastily to *friends* and *relations* for help—if we remembered that the Lord is magnified by our implicit reliance upon His solitary arm? My soul, wait only upon God!

"But," says one, "are not *means* to be used?" Assuredly they are—but our fault seldom lies in their neglect—far more frequently it springs out *offoolishly believing in them*—instead of believing in God. Few run too far in neglecting the *creature's arm*—but very many sin greatly in making too much of it. Learn, dear reader, to glorify the Lord by leaving means untried—if by using them you would dishonor the name of the Lord.

September 24 — Evening

"I sleep—but my heart wakes." Song of Solomon 5:2

Paradoxes abound in Christian experience, and here is one—the spouse was asleep, and yet she was awake. He alone can read the believer's riddle—who has *ploughed with the heifer* of his experience. The two points in this evening's text are—a mournful sleepiness and a hopeful wakefulness.

A mournful sleepiness: "I sleep". Through sin that dwells in us—we may become lax in holy duties, slothful in pious exercises, dull in spiritual joys, and spiritually supine and careless. This is a *shameful* state for one in whom the quickening Spirit dwells; and it is *dangerous* to the highest degree. Even *wise virgins* sometimes slumber—but it is high time for all to shake off the bands of sloth.

It is to be feared that many believers lose their strength, as Samson lost his locks, while *sleeping on the lap of carnal security*. With a perishing world around us—to sleep is cruel. With eternity so near at hand—it is madness. Yet we are none of us so much awake, as we should be; a few thunder-claps would do us all good, and it may be, unless we soon bestir ourselves, we shall have them in the form of war, or pestilence, or personal bereavements and losses! O that we may leave the *couch of fleshly ease* forever—and go forth with flaming torches to meet the coming Bridegroom!

A hopeful wakefulness: "My heart wakes." This is a happy sign. Life is not extinct, though sadly smothered. When our renewed heart struggles against our natural heaviness, we should be grateful to *sovereign grace* for keeping a little vitality within us. Jesus will *hear* our hearts, will *help* our hearts, will *visit* our hearts; for the voice of the wakeful heart is really the voice of our Beloved, saying, "Open to Me!" Holy zeal will surely unbar the door.

September 25 — *Morning*

"Just—and the justifier of him which believes." Romans 3:26

"Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." Conscience accuses no longer. *Judgment* now decides *for* the sinner instead of *against* him. *Memory* looks back upon past sins, with deep sorrow for the sin—but yet with no dread of any penalty to come; for Christ has paid the debt of His people to the last jot and tittle, and received the divine receipt; and unless God can be so unjust as to demand *double payment* for one debt, no soul for whom Jesus died as a substitute can ever be cast into hell.

It seems to be one of the very principles of our enlightened nature—to believe that *God is just*. We feel that it *must* be so—and this gives us terror at first. But it is marvelous, that this very same belief that God is just, becomes afterwards the pillar of our confidence and peace!

If God is just, I, a sinner, alone and without a substitute, must be punished. But Jesus stands in my stead—and is punished for me; and now, if God be just—I, a sinner, standing in Christ, can never be punished! God must change His nature before one soul, for whom Jesus was a substitute, can ever by any possibility suffer the lash of the law. Therefore, Jesus having taken the place of the believer—having rendered a full equivalent to divine wrath for all that His people ought to have suffered as the result of sin—the believer can shout with glorious triumph, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Not God, for He has justified! Not Christ, for He has died, "yes rather has risen again."

My hope is sure and steadfast—because I am a sinner for whom Christ died! My trust is not that I am holy—but that being unholy, Jesus is my righteousness! My faith does not rest upon what I *am*, or *shall be*, or *feel*, or *know*—but in what Christ is, in what He has done, and in what He is now doing for me. On the *lion of justice*—the *fair maid of hope* rides like a queen!

September 25 — Evening

"It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God."

1 Corinthians 1:30

Man's intellect seeks after rest, and by nature seeks it apart from the Lord Jesus Christ. Men of education are apt, even when converted, to look upon the *simplicities of the cross of Christ* with an eye too little reverent and loving. They are snared in the old net in which the Grecians were taken, and have a hankering to mix *philosophy* with *Scriptural revelation*. The temptation with a man of refined thought and high education, is to depart from the simple truth of Christ crucified, and to invent, as the term is, a more *intellectual* doctrine. This led the early Christian churches into Gnosticism, and bewitched them with all sorts of heresies. This is the root of Neology, and the other fine things which in days gone by were so fashionable in Germany, and are now so ensnaring to certain classes of divines.

Whoever you are, good reader, and whatever your education may be, if you are the Lord's, be assured you will find no rest in philosophizing divinity. You may receive this dogma from one great thinker, or that dream from another profound reasoner—but what the *chaff* is to the *wheat*—that will these be to the pure Word of God. All that *human reason*, when best guided, can find out—are but the A B C's of truth; and even that lacks certainty, while in Christ Jesus there is treasured up all the fullness of wisdom and knowledge.

All attempts on the part of Christians to be content with systems such as Unitarian and Broad-church thinkers would approve of, must fail. True heirs of heaven must come back to the grandly simple reality, which makes the ploughboy's eye flash with joy, and gladdens the pious pauper's heart, "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners!" Jesus satisfies the most elevated intellect when He is believingly received—but apart from Him the mind of the regenerate discovers no rest. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge." "A good understanding have all those who do His commandments."

September 26 — *Morning*

"The myrtle trees that were in the valley." Zechariah 1:8

The vision in this chapter describes the condition of Israel in Zechariah's day; but being interpreted in its aspect towards us, it describes the Church of God as we find it now in the world.

The Church is compared to a myrtle grove flourishing in a valley. It is **hidden, unobserved, secreted**; courting no honor and attracting no observation from the careless gazer. The Church, like her head, has a glory—but it is concealed from carnal eyes, for the time of her breaking forth in all her splendor has not yet come.

The idea of **tranquil security** is also suggested to us—for the myrtle grove in the valley is still and calm, while the storm sweeps over the mountain summits. Tempests spend their force upon the craggy peaks of the Alps—but down yonder where the stream flows which makes glad the city of our God—the myrtle trees flourish by the still waters, all unshaken by the impetuous wind. How great is the inward tranquility of God's Church! Even when opposed and persecuted, she has a peace which the world gives not, and which, therefore, it cannot take away! The peace of God which passes all understanding, keeps the hearts and minds of God's people.

Does not the metaphor forcibly picture the peaceful, perpetual **growth** of the saints? The myrtle tree does not shed her leaves—she is always green. Just so, the Church in her worst time—still has a blessed verdure of grace about her; nay, she has sometimes exhibited most verdure when her *winter* has been sharpest. She has prospered most, when her adversities have been most severe.

Hence the text hints at **victory**. The myrtle is the emblem of peace, and a significant token of triumph. The wreaths of conquerors were bound with myrtle and with laurel; and is not the Church ever victorious? Is not every Christian more than a conqueror through Him who loved him? Living in peace—all the saints fall asleep in the arms of victory!

September 26 — Evening

"Wail, O fir tree, for the cedar has fallen!" Zechariah 11:2

When the crash of a falling cedar is heard in the forest—it is a sign that the woodsman is abroad, and every tree may tremble, lest tomorrow the sharp edge of the axe should find *it* out. We are all like trees marked for the axe, and the fall of one—should remind us that for every one, whether great as the cedar, or humble as the fir, the appointed hour is stealing on apace!

I trust we do not, by often hearing of death, become callous to it. May we never be like the birds in the steeple, which build their nests when the bells are tolling, and sleep quietly when the solemn funeral peals are startling the air. May we regard *death*—as the most weighty of all events—and be sobered by its approach. It ill behooves us to sport—while our eternal destiny hangs on a thread. The sword is out of its scabbard—let us not trifle; it is furbished, and the edge is sharp—let us not play with it!

He who does not prepare for death—is more than a common fool—he is a madman. When the voice of God is heard among the trees of the forest—let fig tree and sycamore, and elm and cedar, alike hear the sound thereof. Be ready, *servant of Christ*—for your Master comes suddenly, when an ungodly world least expects Him. See to it that you be faithful in His work—for the grave shall soon be dug for you! Be ready, *parents*—see that your children are brought up in the fear of God, for they must soon be orphans! Be ready, *men of business*—take care that your affairs are correct, and that you serve God with all your hearts, for the days of your earthly service will soon be ended, and you will be called to give account for the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or whether they be evil. May we all prepare for the tribunal of the great King—with a care which shall be rewarded with the gracious commendation, "Well done, good and faithful servant!"

September 27 — Morning

"Happy are you, O Israel! Who is like unto you, O people saved by the Lord!" Deuteronomy 33:29

He who affirms that *Christianity makes men miserable*, is himself an utter stranger to it. It were strange indeed, if it made us wretched, for see to what a position it exalts us! It makes us *sons of God!* Do you suppose that God will give all the happiness to His enemies, and reserve all the mourning for His own family? Shall His foes have mirth and joy, and shall His children inherit sorrow and wretchedness? Shall the sinner, who has no part in Christ, call himself rich in happiness; and shall we go mourning as if we were penniless beggars? No, we will rejoice in the Lord always, and glory in our inheritance, for we "have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but we have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, *Abba, Father!*"

The *rod of chastisement* must rest upon us in our measure—but it works for us the comfortable fruits of righteousness; and therefore by the aid of the divine Comforter, we, the "people saved of the Lord," will rejoice in the God of our salvation. We are married unto Christ; and shall our great Bridegroom permit His spouse to linger in constant grief? Our hearts are knit unto Him—we are His members, and though for a while we may suffer as our Head once suffered—yet we are even now blessed with heavenly blessings in Him. We have the pledge of our inheritance in the comforts of the Spirit, which are neither few nor small. Inheritors of joy forever, we have foretastes of our portion. There are streaks of the light of joy to herald our eternal sun-rising. Our riches are beyond the sea! Our city with firm foundations lies on the other side the river! Gleams of glory from the eternal world cheer our hearts, and urge us onward. Truly is it said of us, "Happy are you, O Israel! Who is like unto you, O people saved by the Lord!"

September 27 — Evening

"My Beloved thrust His hand through the latch-opening; my heart began to pound for Him."

Song of Solomon 5:4

Knocking was not enough, for my heart was too full of sleep, too cold and ungrateful to arise and open the door—but the touch of His effectual grace has made my soul bestir itself. Oh, the long-suffering of my Beloved, to tarry when He found Himself shut out—and me asleep upon the bed of sloth! Oh, the greatness of His patience, to knock and knock again, and to add His voice to His knockings, beseeching me to open to Him! How could I have refused Him! O my base heart—blush and be confounded! But what greatest kindness of all is this, that He becomes His own porter—and unbars the door Himself. Thrice blessed is the hand which condescends to lift the latch and turn the key.

Now I see that nothing but my Lord's own power can save such a *naughty mass of wickedness* as I am; ordinances fail, even the gospel has no effect upon me, until His hand is stretched out.

Now, also, I perceive that His hand is good where all else is unsuccessful, He can open when nothing else can. Blessed be His name, I feel His gracious presence even now. Well may my affections move for Him, when I think of all that He has suffered for me, and of my ungenerous return. I have allowed my affections to wander. I have set up rivals. I have grieved Him.

Sweetest and dearest of all beloveds, I have treated You as an unfaithful wife treats her husband. Oh, my cruel sins, my cruel self. What can I do? Tears are a poor show of my repentance, my whole heart boils with indignation at myself. Wretch that I am, to treat my Lord, my All in All, my exceeding great joy—as though He were a stranger. Jesus, you forgive freely—but this is not enough, prevent my unfaithfulness in the future. Kiss away these tears, and then purge my heart and bind it with sevenfold cords to Yourself, never more to wander!

September 28 — *Morning*

"The Lord looks down from heaven; He observes all mankind." Psalm 33:13

Perhaps no figure of speech represents God in a more gracious light—than when He is spoken of as stooping from His throne, and coming down from heaven to behold the woes—and to attend to the wants of mankind. We love Him, who, when Sodom and Gomorrah were full of iniquity, would not destroy those cities until He had made a personal visitation of them. We cannot help pouring out our heart in affection for our Lord—who inclines His ear from the highest glory, and puts it to the lip of the dying sinner, whose failing heart longs after reconciliation. How can we but love Him—when we know that He numbers the very hairs of our heads, marks our path, and orders our ways!

Especially is this great truth brought near to our heart, when we recollect how attentive He is, not merely to the *temporal* interests of His creatures—but to their *spiritual* concerns. Though leagues of distance lie between the finite creature and the infinite Creator—yet there are links uniting both. When a tear is wept by you—God beholds it! "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him." Your sigh is able to move the heart of Jehovah; your whisper can incline His ear unto you; your prayer can stay His hand; your faith can move His arm. Do not think that God sits on high taking no account of you. However poor and needy you are—yet the Lord thinks upon you. For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards Him.

September 28 — Evening

"Seven times Elijah told him to go and look—and seven times he went." 1 Kings 18:43

Success is certain when the Lord has promised it. Although you may have pleaded month after month without evidence of answer, it is not possible that the Lord should be deaf when His people are earnest in a matter which concerns His glory. The prophet on the top of Carmel continued to wrestle with God, and never for a moment gave way to a fear that he should not be received in Jehovah's courts. Six times the servant returned—but on each occasion no word was spoken but "Go again." We must not dream of unbelief—but hold to our faith even to seventy times seven. Faith sends expectant hope to look from Carmel's brow, and if nothing is beheld, she sends again and again.

So far from being crushed by repeated disappointment, faith is animated to plead more fervently with her God. She is humbled—but not abashed—her groans are deeper, and her sighings more vehement—but she never relaxes her hold or stays her hand. It would be more agreeable to flesh and blood to have a speedy answer—but believing souls have learned to be *submissive*, and to find it good to wait *for* as well as *upon* the Lord.

Delayed answers often set the heart searching itself, and so lead to contrition and spiritual reformation—deadly blows are thus struck at our corruption, and the chambers of imagery are cleansed. The great danger is lest men should faint—and miss the blessing. Reader, do not fall into that sin—but continue in prayer and watching.

At last the little cloud was seen—the sure forerunner of torrents of rain, and even so with you, the token for good shall surely be given, and you shall rise as a prevailing prince to enjoy the mercy you have sought. Elijah was a man of like passions with us—his power with God did not lie in his own merits. If *his* believing prayer availed so much, why not *yours*? Plead the precious blood with unceasing importunity, and it shall be with you according to your desire!

September 29 — *Morning*

**"The priest is to examine him, and if the leprosy has covered his whole body
—he shall pronounce that person clean." Leviticus 13:13**

This morning it may be well for us to see the typical teaching of so singular a rule. We, too, are lepers, and may read the *law of the leper* as applicable to ourselves. When a man sees himself to be altogether lost and ruined, covered all over with the defilement of sin, and no part free from pollution; when he disclaims all righteousness of his own, and pleads guilty before the Lord—then is he clean through the blood of Jesus, and the grace of God. Hidden, unfelt, unconfessed iniquity is the true leprosy—but when sin is *seen* and *felt*—it has received its death blow, and the Lord looks with eyes of mercy upon the soul afflicted with it.

Nothing is more *deadly* than self-righteousness, or more *hopeful* than contrition. We must confess that we are "nothing else but sin," for no confession short of this will be the whole truth. If the Holy Spirit is at work with us, convincing us of sin, there will be no difficulty about making such an acknowledgment—it will spring spontaneously from our lips.

What comfort does the text afford to those under a deep sense of sin! Sin mourned and confessed, however black and foul, shall never shut a man out from the Lord Jesus. Whoever comes unto Him, He will never cast out. Though dishonest as the thief, though unchaste as the harlot, though fierce as Saul of Tarsus, though cruel as Manasseh, though rebellious as the prodigal son—the great heart of love will look upon the man who feels himself to have no soundness in him, and will pronounce him clean, when he trusts in Jesus crucified. Come to Him, then, poor heavy-laden sinner! Come needy, come guilty, come loathsome and bare! You can't come too filthy—come just as you are!

September 29 — Evening

"I found Him whom my soul loves—I held Him, and would not let Him go!" Song of Solomon 3:4

Does Christ receive us when we come to Him, notwithstanding all our past sinfulness? Does He never chide us for having tried all other refuges first? And is there none on earth like Him? Is He the best of all the good, the fairest of all the fair? Oh, then let us praise Him! Daughters of Jerusalem, extol Him with timbrel and harp! Down with your idols—up with the Lord Jesus! Now let the standards of *pomp* and *pride* be trampled under foot—but let the cross of Jesus, which the world frowns and scoffs at—be lifted on high! O for a throne of ivory for our *King Solomon!* Let Him be set on high forever, and let my soul sit at His footstool, and kiss His feet, and wash them with my tears.

Oh, how precious is Christ! How can it be that I have thought so little of Him? How is it I can go *abroad* for joy or comfort—when He is so full, so rich, so satisfying. Fellow believer, make a covenant with your heart that you will never depart from Him, and ask your Lord to ratify it. Bid Him set you as a signet upon His finger, and as a bracelet upon His arm. Ask Him to bind you about Him, as the bride decks herself with ornaments, and as the bridegroom puts on his jewels.

I would live in Christ's heart; in the clefts of that rock my soul would eternally abide. The sparrow has made a house, and the swallow a nest for herself where she may lay her young, even your altars, O Lord Almighty, my King and my God! And so too would I make my nest, my home, in You, and never from You may the soul of Your turtle-dove go forth again—but may I nestle close to You, O Jesus, my true and only rest!

September 30 — *Morning*

"Sing forth the honor of His name, make His praise glorious!" Psalm 66:2

It is not left to our own option—whether we shall praise God or not. Praise is God's most righteous due, and every Christian, as the recipient of His grace, is bound to praise God from day to day. It is true we have no authoritative rubric for *daily* praise; we have no commandment prescribing certain hours of song and thanksgiving—but the law written upon the heart teaches us that it is right to praise God; and the unwritten mandate comes to us with as much force as if it had been recorded on the tables of stone, or handed to us from the top of thundering Sinai.

Yes, it is the Christian's duty to praise God. It is not only a *pleasurable* exercise—but it is the *absolute obligation* of his life. Do not think you who are always mourning, that you are guiltless in this respect, or imagine that you can discharge your duty to your God without songs of praise. You are bound by the bonds of His love to bless His name so long as you live, and His praise should continually be in your mouth, for you are blessed, in order that you may bless Him. "This people have I formed for myself—they shall show forth my praise!" If you do not praise God, you are not bringing forth the fruit which He, as the Divine Gardener, has a right to expect at your hands.

Let not your harp then hang upon the willows—but take it down, and strive, with a grateful heart, to bring forth its loudest music. Arise and chant His praise. With every morning's dawn, lift up your notes of thanksgiving, and let every setting sun be followed with your song. Belt the earth with your praises; surround it with an atmosphere of melody, and God Himself will hearken from heaven and accept your music.

September 30 — Evening

"A living dog—is better than a dead lion." Ecclesiastes 9:4

Life is a precious thing—and in its humblest form it is superior to death. This truth is eminently certain in spiritual things. It is better to be the *least* in the kingdom of heaven—than the *greatest* out of it. The lowest degree of grace—is superior to the noblest development of unregenerate nature. Where the Holy Spirit implants divine life in the soul, there is a precious deposit which none of the refinements of education can equal. The thief on the cross—excels Caesar on his throne; Lazarus among the dogs—is better than Cicero among the senators; and the most unlettered Christian is in the sight of God—superior to Plato.

Life is the badge of nobility in the realm of spiritual things, and men without it are only coarser or finer specimens of the same lifeless material, needing to be quickened, for they are dead in trespasses and sins. A living, loving, gospel sermon, however unlearned in matter and uncouth in style, is better than the finest discourse devoid of unction and power. A living dog keeps better watch than a dead lion, and is of more service to his master; and so the poorest spiritual preacher is infinitely to be preferred to the exquisite orator who has no wisdom but that of words, no energy but that of sound.

The like holds good of our prayers and other pious exercises; if we are quickened in them by the Holy Spirit, they are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ, though we may think them to be worthless things; while our grand performances in which our hearts were absent, like dead lions, are mere carrion in the sight of the living God. O for living groans, living sighs, living despondencies, rather than lifeless songs and dead calms. Better anything—than death. The snarlings of the dog of hell will at least keep us awake—but dead faith and dead profession, what greater curses can a man have? Quicken us, quicken us, O Lord!

October 1 — Morning

"Pleasant fruits, new and old, which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved."—Song of Solomon 7:13.

The spouse desires to give to Jesus all that she produces. Our heart has "all manner of pleasant fruits," both "old and new," and they are laid up for our Beloved. At this rich autumnal season of fruit, let us survey our stores. We have *new* fruits. We desire to feel new life, new joy, new gratitude; we wish to make new resolves and carry them out by new labours; our heart blossoms with new prayers, and our soul is pledging herself to new efforts. But we have some *old* fruits too. There is our first love: a choice fruit that Jesus delights in it. There is our first faith: that simple faith by which, having nothing, we became possessors of all things. There is our joy when first we knew the Lord: let us revive it. We have our old remembrances of the promises. How faithful has God been! In sickness, how softly did He make our bed! In deep waters, how placidly did He buoy us up! In the flaming furnace, how graciously did He deliver us. Old fruits, indeed! We have many of them, for His mercies have been more than the hairs of our head. Old sins we must regret, but then we have had repentances which He has given us, by which we have wept our way to the cross, and learned the merit of His blood. We have fruits, this morning, both new and old; but here is the point—*they are all laid up for Jesus*. Truly, those are the best and most acceptable services in which Jesus is the solitary aim of the soul, and His glory, without any admixture whatever, the end of all our efforts. Let our many fruits be laid up only for our Beloved; let us display them when He is with us, and not hold them up before the gaze of men. Jesus, we will turn the key in our garden door, and none shall enter to rob Thee of one good fruit from the soil which Thou hast watered with Thy bloody sweat. Our all shall be Thine, Thine only, O Jesus, our Beloved!

"The hope which is laid up for you in heaven."—Colossians 1:5.

October 1 — Evening

"The Lord will give grace and glory!" Psalm 84:11

Jehovah is bounteous in His nature—to give is His delight. His gifts are precious beyond measure, and are as freely given as the light of the sun!

He freely gives grace in all its forms, to His people:

saving grace, *comforting grace,* *preserving grace,*
sanctifying grace, *directing grace,* *instructing grace,* *assisting grace!*
He gives grace . . .
abundantly, *seasonably,* *constantly, readily,* *sovereignly!*

He doubly enhances the value of His grace, by the manner of its bestowal. He generously pours into their souls without ceasing, and He always will do so, whatever may occur. Sickness may befall—but the Lord will give grace. Poverty may happen to us—but grace will surely be afforded. Death must come—but grace will light a candle at the darkest hour. Reader, how blessed it is as years roll along, to enjoy such an unfading promise as this, "The Lord will give grace!"

The little conjunction "and" in this verse is the diamond rivet binding the present with the future! Grace and glory always go together. God has married them—and none can divorce them. The Lord will never deny a soul glory—to whom He has freely given to live upon His grace. Indeed, glory is nothing more than grace in its heavenly dress; grace in full bloom; grace like autumn fruit—mellow and perfected.

How soon we may have glory—none can tell! It may be before this month has run out—that we shall see the Holy City. But be the interval longer or shorter—we shall be glorified before long. The Lord will surely give glory to all His chosen ones:

the glory of heaven, *the glory of eternity,* *the glory of Jesus!*

Oh, rare promise of a faithful God! Two golden links of one celestial chain! Whoever has grace—shall surely gain glory!

October 2 — *Morning*

"The hope which is laid up for you in heaven." Colossians 1:5

Our hope in Christ for the future, is the mainspring and the mainstay of our joy here on earth. It will animate our hearts to think often of heaven, for all that we can desire is promised there. Here on earth—we are weary and toil-worn; but yonder is the land of rest where the sweat of labor shall no more bedew the worker's brow, and fatigue shall be forever banished.

To those who are weary and woe-worn, the word "rest" is full of heaven. We are always in the field of battle; we are so tempted within, and so molested by foes without—that we have little or no peace! But in heaven we shall enjoy the victory, when the banner shall be waved aloft in triumph, and the sword shall be forever sheathed, and we shall hear our Captain say, "Well done, good and faithful servant!"

We have suffered bereavement after bereavement—but we are going to the land of the immortal, where graves are unknown things. *Here* on earth, sin is a constant grief to us—but *there* we shall be perfectly holy, for nothing which defiles shall enter into that kingdom! *Hemlock* does not spring up in the furrows of celestial fields.

Oh! is it not joy, that you are not to be in a state of banishment forever—that you are not to dwell eternally in this wilderness—but shall soon inherit everlasting glory!

Nevertheless let it never be said of us, that we are dreaming about the *future*—and forgetting the *present*. Let the future *sanctify* the present to highest uses. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the *hope of heaven* is the most potent force for the product of virtue! It is a fountain of joyous effort, it is the corner stone of cheerful holiness. The man who has this hope in him—goes about his *work* with vigor, for the joy of the Lord is his strength. He fights against *temptation* with ardor, for the hope of the next world repels the fiery darts of the adversary. He can labor without present reward, "For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come!" Hebrews 13:14

October 2 — Evening

"Daniel, you are a man *greatly loved by God.*" Daniel 10:11

Child of God, do you hesitate to appropriate this title? Ah! has your unbelief made you forget that you are greatly loved by God also? Must you not have been greatly loved—to have been bought with the precious blood of Christ? When God smote His only begotten Son for you—what was this but being greatly loved by Him? You lived in sin, and rioted in it—must you not have been greatly loved for God to have borne so patiently with you? You were called by grace and led to a Savior, and made a child of God and an heir of heaven! All this proves, does it not—a very great and super-abounding love?

Since that time, whether your path has been rough with troubles, or smooth with mercies—it has been full of proofs that you are greatly loved by God. If the Lord has chastened you—yet it was not in anger. If He has made you poor—yet in grace you have been rich. The more unworthy you feel yourself to be—the more evidence you have—that nothing but unspeakable divine love—could have led the Lord Jesus to save such a soul as yours! The more demerit you feel—the clearer is the display of the abounding love of God, in having chosen you, and called you, and made you an heir of bliss!

Now, if there is such great love from God to us—let us live in the influence and sweetness of it, and use the privilege of our exalted position as God's children. Do not let us approach our Lord as though we were strangers, or as though He were unwilling to hear us—for we are greatly loved by our loving Father!

"He who spared not His own Son—but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" Come boldly, O believer, for despite the whisperings of Satan and the doubtings of your own heart—you are greatly loved! Meditate on the exceeding greatness and faithfulness of divine love today—and so go to your bed in peace.

October 3 — *Morning*

"Are not all *angels* ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?" Hebrews 1:14

Angels are the unseen attendants of the people of God; they bear us up in their hands, lest we dash our foot against a stone. Loyalty to their Lord leads them to take a deep interest in the children of His love; they rejoice over the return of the prodigal to his father's house below, and they welcome the advent of the believer to the King's palace above. In olden times the sons of God were favored with their *visible* appearance; and at this day, although unseen by us—they minister to the heirs of salvation. Seraphim still fly with live coals from off the altar, to touch the lips of men greatly loved by God.

If our eyes could be opened, we would see horses of fire and chariots of fire around the servants of the Lord; for we have come to an innumerable company of angels, who are all watchers and protectors of the seed-royal.

To whom do we owe all this? Let the Lord Jesus Christ be forever endeared to us, for through Him we are made to sit in heavenly places far above principalities and powers. He it is whose camp is round about those who fear Him; He is the true *Michael* whose foot is upon the *dragon*. All hail, Jesus! Angel of Jehovah's presence, to You this family offers its morning vows.

October 3 — *Evening*

"He Himself has suffered being tempted." Hebrews 2:18

It is a common-place thought, and yet it tastes like nectar to the weary heart—Jesus was tempted, just as I am. You have *heard* that truth many times—have you *grasped* it? He was tempted to the very same sins into which we fall. Do not dissociate Jesus from our common manhood. It is a *dark room* which you are going through—but Jesus went through it before. It is a *sharp fight* which you are waging—but Jesus has stood foot to foot with the same enemy. Let us be of good cheer, Christ has borne the load before us, and the *blood-stained footsteps* of the King of glory, may be seen along the road which we traverse at this hour.

There is something sweeter yet—Jesus was tempted—but Jesus never sinned. Then, my soul, it is not *needful* for you to sin, for Jesus was a man, and if one man endured these temptations and sinned not, then in His power His members may also cease from sin. Some beginners in the Christian life think that they cannot be *tempted* without *sinning*—but they mistake. There is no sin in being *tempted*—but there is sin in *yielding* to temptation.

Herein is comfort for the sorely tempted ones. There is still more to encourage them if they reflect that the Lord Jesus, though tempted, gloriously triumphed, and as He overcame, so surely shall His followers also, for Jesus is the representative man for His people; the Head has triumphed, and the members share in the victory. Fears are needless, for Christ is with us, armed for our defense. Our place of safety is the bosom of the Savior. Perhaps we are tempted just now—in order to drive us nearer to Him. Blessed be any wind that blows us into the port of our Savior's love! Happy wounds, which make us seek the beloved Physician. You tempted ones, come to your tempted Savior, for He can be touched with a feeling of your infirmities, and will support every tried and tempted one.

October 4 — *Morning*

"At *evening* time—it shall be light." Zechariah 14:7

Oftentimes we look with forebodings to the time of old age, forgetful that at *evening* time—it shall be light. To many saints, old age is the choicest season in their lives. A balmy air fans the mariner's cheek as he nears the shore of immortality, fewer waves ruffle his sea, quiet reigns—deep, still and solemn. From the altar of old age—the flashes of the fire of youth are gone—but the more real flame of earnest love to Jesus remains. The pilgrims have reached the land of *Beulah*, that happy country, whose days are as the days of heaven upon earth. Angels visit it, celestial gales blow over it, flowers of paradise grow in it, and the air is filled with seraphic music. Some dwell here for years, and others come to it but a few hours before their departure—but it is an *Eden* on earth.

We may well long for the time—when we shall recline in its shady groves and be satisfied with hope—until the time of *fruition* comes. The *setting* sun seems larger than when high in the sky, and a splendor of glory tinges all the clouds which surround its going down. Pain does not break not the calm of the sweet twilight of old age, for strength made perfect in weakness, bears up with patience under it all. Ripe fruits of choice experience are gathered as the rare meal of life's *evening*, and the soul prepares itself for *rest*.

The Lord's people shall also enjoy light in the hour of death. Unbelief laments; the shadows fall, the night is coming, existence is ending. "Ah no!" cries faith, "the night is far spent, the true day is at hand. Light is come, the light of immortality, the light of the Father's countenance!"

Gather up your feet in the bed, see the waiting bands of spirits! Angels waft you away. Farewell, beloved one, you are gone—you wave your hand. Ah, now it is light. The pearly gates are open, the golden streets shine in the jasper light. We on earth, cover our eyes—but you behold the unseen! Adieu, brother, you have light at even-tide, such as we have not yet!

October 4 — Evening

"If any man sins—we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." 1 John 2:1

"If any man sins—we have an advocate." Yes, though we sin, we have Him still. John does not say, "If any man sins—he has *forfeited* his advocate," but "we *have* an advocate," sinners though we are. All the sin that a believer ever did—cannot destroy his interest in the Lord Jesus Christ, as his advocate.

The **name** here given to our Lord is suggestive. "Jesus." Ah! then He is an advocate such as we need, for Jesus is the name of one whose business and delight it is to *save*. "They shall call His name Jesus—for He shall save His people from their sins." His sweetest name implies His success.

Next, it is Jesus "Christ". *Christos*—the anointed one. This shows His *authority* to plead. Christ has a right to plead, for He is the *Father's* own appointed advocate and elected priest. If He were of *our* choosing, He might fail—but if God has laid help upon one who is mighty, we may safely lay our trouble—where God has laid His help. He is Christ—and therefore *authorized*.

He is Christ—and therefore *qualified*, for the anointing has fully fitted Him for His work. He can plead so as to move the heart of God and prevail. What words of tenderness, what sentences of persuasion will the Anointed use—when He stands up to plead for me!

One more letter of His name remains, Jesus Christ "the righteous." This is not only His *character*, but His *plea*. It is His *character*, and if the Righteous One is my advocate, then my cause is good, or He would not have espoused it. It is His *plea*, for He meets the charge of unrighteousness against me—by the plea that He is righteous. He declares Himself my substitute and puts His obedience to my account! My soul, you have a friend well fitted to be your Advocate, He cannot fail! Leave yourself entirely in His hands.

October 5 — *Morning*

"As Elijah was sleeping, an angel touched him and told him, 'Get up and eat!' He looked around and saw some bread baked on hot stones and a jar of water! He arose, and ate and drink—and went in the strength of that food for forty days and forty nights." 1 Kings 19:8

All the *strength* supplied to us by our gracious God—is meant for *service*—not for selfishness, wantonness or boasting. When the prophet Elijah found the *bread* baked on the coals, and the jar of *water* placed at his head, as he lay under the juniper tree—he was no *gentleman* to be gratified with dainty fare that he might stretch himself at his ease; far otherwise, he was commissioned to go forty days and forty nights in the strength of it, journeying towards Horeb, the mount of God.

When the Master invited the disciples to "Come and dine" with Him, after the feast was concluded He said to Peter, "Feed My sheep"; further adding, "Follow Me." Even thus it is with us—we eat the *bread of heaven*, that we may expend our strength in the Master's service. We come to the Passover, and eat of the *paschal lamb*: "Wear your traveling clothes as you eat this meal, as though prepared for a long journey. Wear your sandals, and carry your walking sticks in your hands," so as to start off at once when we have satisfied our hunger.

Some Christians are for living *on* Christ—but are not so anxious to live *for* Christ. Earth should be a preparation for heaven; and heaven is the place where saints feast most and work most. They sit down at the table of our Lord, and they serve Him day and night in His temple. They eat of heavenly food and render perfect service.

Believer, in the strength you daily gain from Christ—labor for Him. Some of us have yet to learn much concerning the design of our Lord in giving us His grace. We are not to retain the *precious grains of truth* as the Egyptian mummy held the wheat for ages, without giving it an opportunity to grow—we must sow it and water it.

Why does the Lord send down the rain upon the thirsty earth, and give the genial sunshine? Is it not that these may all help the fruits of the earth, to yield food for man? Even so the Lord feeds and refreshes our souls—that we may afterwards use our renewed strength in the promotion of His glory!

October 5 — *Evening*

"He who believes and is baptized shall be saved." Mark 16:16

Mr. MacDonald asked the inhabitants of the island of St. Kilda *how a man must be saved*.

An old man replied, "We shall be saved if we repent, and forsake our sins, and turn to God."

"Yes," said a middle-aged female, "and with a true heart too."

"Ay," rejoined a third, "and with prayer."

A fourth added, "It must be the prayer of the heart."

"And we must be diligent too," said a fifth, "in keeping the commandments."

Thus, each having contributed his *mite*, feeling that a very decent *creed* had been made up, they all looked and listened for the preacher's approbation—but they had aroused his deepest pity.

The carnal mind always maps out for itself a way in which *SELF* can work and become great—but the Lord's way is quite the reverse. *Believing* and being *baptized* are no matters of merit to be gloried in—they are so simple that boasting is excluded, and *free grace* bears the palm.

It may be that the reader is unsaved—what is the reason? Do you think the way of salvation as laid down in the text to be dubious? How can that be when God has pledged His own Word for its certainty?

Do you think it too easy? Why, then, do you not attend to it? Its ease leaves those who neglect it, without excuse. To believe is simply to trust, to depend, to rely upon Christ Jesus. To be baptized is to submit to the ordinance which our Lord fulfilled at Jordan, to which the converted ones submitted at Pentecost, to which the jailer yielded obedience the very night of his conversion. The outward sign does not save—but it sets forth to us our death, burial, and resurrection with Jesus; and, like the Lord's Supper, is not to be neglected. Reader, do you believe in Jesus? Then, dear friend, dismiss your fears—you shall be saved. Are you still an unbeliever, then remember there is but *one door*, and if you will not enter by it—you will perish in your sins!

October 6 — *Morning*

"Whoever drinks from the water that I will give him, will never get *thirsty* again—ever! In fact, the water I will give him will become a well of water springing up within him to eternal life!" John 4:14

He who is a believer in Jesus—finds enough in his Lord to satisfy him now, and to content him for evermore! The believer is not the man whose days are weary for lack of comfort—and whose nights are tedious from absence of heart-cheering thought. For he finds in piety—such a spring of joy, such a fountain of consolation, that he is content and happy!

Put him in a dungeon—and he will find good company.

Place him in a barren wilderness—he will eat the bread of heaven.

Drive him away from friendship—and he will meet the "friend that sticks closer than a brother."

Blast all his gourds—and he will find shelter beneath the Rock of Ages.

Sap the foundation of his earthly hopes—and his heart will still be fixed, trusting in the Lord.

The human heart is insatiable—until Jesus enters it, and then it is a cup full to overflowing. There is such a fullness in Christ—that He alone is the believer's ALL. The true saint is so completely satisfied with the all-sufficiency of Jesus—that he thirsts no more—except it be for deeper draughts of the living fountain!

In that sweet manner, believer, shall you THIRST. It shall not be a thirst of pain—but of loving desire. You will find it a sweet thing—to be panting after a fuller enjoyment of Jesus' love.

One in days of yore, has said, "I have constantly been sinking my bucket down into this well—but now my thirst after Jesus has become so insatiable—that I long to put the well itself to my lips, and drink!"

Is this the feeling of your heart now, believer? Do you feel that all your desires are satisfied in Jesus, and that you have no need now—but to know more of Him, and to have closer fellowship with Him? Then come continually to the fountain—and take of the water of life freely! Jesus will never think you take too much—but will ever welcome you, saying, "Drink, yes, drink abundantly, O My beloved!"

October 6 — Evening

"Miriam and Aaron criticized Moses—because he had married an *Ethiopian* woman!" Numbers 12:1

Strange choice of Moses! But how much more strange—is the choice of Him who is a prophet like unto Moses, and greater than him! Our Lord, who is pure as the lily, has entered into marriage union with one who confesses herself to be black. It is the wonder of angels—that the love of Jesus should be set upon poor, lost, guilty men!

Each believer must, when filled with a sense of Jesus' love—be also overwhelmed with astonishment, that such divine love should be lavished on an object so utterly unworthy of it. Knowing as we do—our secret guiltiness, unfaithfulness, and black-heartedness, we are dissolved in grateful admiration of the matchless freeness and sovereignty of grace! Jesus must have found the cause of His love—in His own heart. He could not have found it in us—for it is not there! Even since our conversion we have been black with sin—though sovereign grace has made us lovely in His sight.

Most tender and faithful Husband of our souls—pursue Your gracious work of conforming us to Your image, until You shall present even us poor Ethiopians unto Yourself— without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing!

Moses met with opposition because of his marriage, and both himself and his spouse were the subjects of an evil eye. Can we wonder that this vain world opposes Jesus and His spouse, and especially when *heinous* sinners are converted? This is ever the Pharisee's ground of objection, "This Man receives sinners!" Still the old cause of quarrel is revived, "Because he had married an Ethiopian woman!"

October 7 — Morning

"Why have You afflicted Your servant?" Numbers 11:11

Our heavenly Father sends us frequent troubles—to **test our faith**. If our faith is worth anything, it will stand the test. Gilding is afraid of fire—but gold is not. The plastic gem dreads to be touched by the diamond—but the true jewel fears no test.

It is a false faith—which can only trust God when friends are true, the body full of health, and the business profitable. That alone is true faith—which clings to the Lord when friends are gone, when the body is sick, when spirits are depressed, and the light of our Father's countenance is hidden. A faith which can say, in the direst trouble, "Though He slays me—yet will I trust in Him," is heaven-born faith.

The Lord afflicts His servants—to **glorify Himself**, for He is greatly glorified in the graces of His people, which are His own handiwork. "We rejoice in our afflictions, because we know that affliction produces endurance, endurance produces proven character, and proven character produces hope!" The Lord is honored by these growing virtues.

We would never know the music of the harp—if the strings were left untouched. We would never enjoy the juice of the grape—if it were not trodden in the winepress. We would never discover the sweet perfume of cinnamon—if it were not pressed and beaten. We would never feel the warmth of fire—if the coals were not utterly consumed. The wisdom and power of the great Workman are revealed by the trials through which His vessels of mercy are permitted to pass.

Present afflictions tend also to **heighten future joy**. There must be dark shadows in the picture—to bring out the beauty of the lights. Could we be so supremely blessed in heaven—if we had not known the curse of sin and the sorrow of earth? Will not *peace* be sweeter—after conflict? Will not *rest* be more welcome—after toil? Will not the *bliss* of the glorified—be enhanced the recollection of past sufferings? There are many other comfortable answers to the question with which we opened our brief meditation, let us muse upon it all day long.

October 7 — Evening

"On whom do you trust?" Isaiah 36:5

Reader, this is an important question. Listen to the Christian's answer, and see if it is yours. "On whom do you trust?"

"I trust," says the Christian, "in a triune God. I trust the **Father**, believing that He has chosen me from before the foundation of the world; I trust Him to provide for me in His providence, to teach me, to guide me, to correct me if need be, and to bring me home to His own house where the many mansions are!"

"I trust the **Son**. The man Christ Jesus—is also the true God. I trust in Him to take away all my sins by His own sacrifice, and to adorn me with His perfect righteousness. I trust Him to be my Intercessor, to present my prayers and desires before His Father's throne, and I trust Him to be my Advocate at the last great day, to plead my cause, and to justify me. I trust Him for what He is, for what He has done, and for what He has promised yet to do!"

"And I trust the **Holy Spirit**—He has begun to save me from my inbred sins; I trust Him to drive them all out. I trust Him to curb my temper, to subdue my will, to enlighten my understanding, to check my evil passions. I trust Him to comfort my despondency, to help my weakness, to illuminate my darkness. I trust Him to dwell in me as my life, to reign in me as my King, to sanctify me wholly—and then to take me up to dwell forever in glory!"

Oh, blessed trust! To trust Him . . .
whose *power* will never be exhausted,
whose *love* will never wane,
whose *kindness* will never change,
whose *faithfulness* will never fail,
whose *wisdom* will never be confounded, and
whose *perfect goodness* can never know a diminution!

Happy are you, reader—if this trust is yours! So trusting, you shall enjoy sweet peace now, and glory hereafter! The foundation of your trust shall never be removed!

October 8 — *Morning*

"Put out into deep water—and let down the nets for a catch. Simon answered, 'Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because You say so—I will let down the nets.'" Luke 5:4-5

We learn from this narrative, the *necessity of human agency*. The *catch of fish* was miraculous—yet neither the fisherman nor his boat, nor his fishing tackle were ignored; but all were used to take the fishes. Just so in the saving of souls—God works by *means*; and while the present economy of grace shall stand, God will be pleased by the *foolishness of preaching* to save those who believe. When God works without instruments, doubtless He is glorified; but He has Himself selected the plan of instrumentality as being that by which He is most magnified in the earth.

Means of themselves, are utterly unavailing. "Master, we have toiled all night—and have caught nothing!" What was the reason of this? Were they not fishermen plying their special vocation? Truly, they were no novices; they understood the work. Had they gone about the toil unskillfully? No! Had they lacked industry? No—they had *toiled*. Had they lacked perseverance? No—they had toiled *all night*. Was there a deficiency of fish in the sea? Certainly not, for as soon as the Master came, they swam to the net in shoals! What, then, is the reason? Is it because there is no power in the *means* of themselves, apart from the presence of Jesus!

"*Without* Him—we can do nothing." But *with* Christ—we can do all things. *Christ's presence confers success!* Jesus sat in Peter's boat, and His will, by a mysterious influence, drew the fish to the net. When Jesus is lifted up in His Church, His presence is the Church's power! "I, if I am lifted up, will draw all men unto me." Let us go out this morning on our work of soul-fishing, looking up in faith, and around us in solemn concern. Let us toil until night comes, and we shall not labor in vain; for He who bids us let down the net—will fill it with fish!

October 8 — *Evening*

"Praying in the Holy Spirit." Jude 20

Mark the grand characteristic of true prayer—it is "in the Holy Spirit." The *seed of acceptable devotion*, must come from *heaven's storehouse*. Only the prayer which **comes from God**—can go to God. We must shoot the Lord's arrows back to Him! Only that desire which He writes upon our heart—will move His heart and bring down a blessing—but the desires of the flesh have no power with Him.

Praying in the Holy Spirit is praying in **fervency**. *Cold prayers*—ask the Lord *not* to hear them. Those who do not plead with fervency—do not plead at all. As well speak of lukewarm fire—as of lukewarm prayer. It is essential that prayer be *red hot!*

Praying in the Holy Spirit is praying **perseveringly**. The true suppliant gathers force as he proceeds, and grows more fervent—when God *delays* to answer. The longer the gate is closed, the more vehemently does he use the knocker! The longer the angel lingers—the more resolved is he who he will never let him go without the blessing. Tearful, agonizing, unconquerable, importunate prayer—is beautiful in God's sight!

Praying in the Holy Spirit means praying **humbly**, for the Holy Spirit never puffs us up with pride. It is His office to convince of sin, and so to bow us down in contrition and brokenness of spirit. We shall never pray acceptably, unless we *cry* to God out of the depths of contrite hearts.

Praying in the Holy Spirit is **loving** prayer. Prayer should be perfumed with love, saturated with love—love to our fellow saints, and love to Christ.

Moreover, it must be a prayer full of **faith**. A man *prevails*—only as he *believes*. The Holy Spirit is the author of faith, and strengthens it, so that we pray believing God's promise.

O that this *blessed combination of excellent graces*, priceless and sweet as the spices of the merchant, might be fragrant within us because the Holy Spirit is in our hearts! Most blessed Comforter, exert Your mighty power within us, helping our infirmities in prayer!

October 9 — *Morning*

"How narrow is the gate and *difficult the road* that leads to life—and only a few ever find it!" Matthew 7:14

In some sense, the path to heaven is very safe—but in other respects, there is no road so dangerous! It is beset with difficulties. One false step—and down we go! And how easy it is to take that treacherous step—if grace is absent!

What a slippery path is that—which some of us have to tread! How many times have we to exclaim with the Psalmist, "But as for me, my feet were slipping—and I was almost gone!"

If we were strong, sure-footed mountaineers, this would not matter so much; but in ourselves, how weak we are!

Even in the best roads—we soon falter! In the smoothest paths—we quickly stumble!

These feeble knees of ours—can scarcely support our tottering weight!

A straw may trip us up—and a pebble can wound us!

We are mere infants, tremblingly taking our first steps in the walk of faith. Our heavenly Father holds us by the arms—or we would soon tumble down!

Oh, if we are kept from falling, how must we bless the patience, power and wisdom of God—who watches over us moment by moment—and day by day! Think—how prone we are to sin, how apt to choose dangerous paths, how strong our tendency to cast ourselves down —and these reflections will make us sing more sweetly than we have ever done, "Glory to Him, who is able to keep us from falling, and to present us before His glorious presence without fault and with great joy!" Jude 24

We have many foes—who try to push us down, and destroy us! The road is rough—and we are weak!

But in addition to this, enemies lurk in ambush, who rush out when we least expect them, and labor to trip us up, or hurl us down the nearest deadly precipice!

Only an Almighty arm can preserve us from these unseen foes, who are seeking to destroy us at every step! Such an arm is engaged for our defense. He is faithful, who has promised, and He is able to keep us from falling, so that with a deep sense of our utter weakness, we may cherish a firm belief in our perfect safety!

October 9 — Evening

"Jesus gave her no reply—not even a word." Matthew 15:23

Genuine seekers who as yet have not obtained the blessing, may take comfort from the story before us. The Savior did not at once bestow the blessing, even though the woman had great faith in Him. He intended to give it—but He waited awhile.

"Jesus gave her no reply—not even a word." Were not her prayers good? Never any better. Was not her case needy? Sorrowfully needy. Did she not feel her need sufficiently? She felt it overwhelmingly. Was she not earnest enough? She was intensely so. Had she no faith? She had such a high degree of it that even Jesus was amazed, and said, "O woman, *great* is your faith."

See then, although it is true that faith brings peace—yet it does not always bring *it instantaneously*. There may be certain reasons calling for the *trial* of faith, rather than the *reward* of faith. Genuine faith may be in the soul, like a hidden seed—but as yet it may not have budded and blossomed into joy and peace. A painful silence from the Savior is the grievous trial of many a seeking soul—but heavier still is the affliction of a harsh cutting reply such as this, "It is not right to take the *children's* bread, and to cast it to *dogs!*"

Many in waiting upon the Lord find immediate delight—but this is not the case with all. Some, like the jailer, are in a moment turned from darkness to light—but others are plants of slower growth. A deeper sense of sin may be given to you—instead of a sense of pardon, and in such a case you will have need of patience to bear the heavy blow. Ah! poor heart, though Christ beats and bruises you, or even slays you—trust Him; though He should give you an angry word, believe in the love of His heart. Do not, I beseech you, give up seeking or trusting my Master, because you have not yet obtained the conscious joy which you longest for. Cast yourself on Him, and perseveringly depend—even where you cannot rejoicingly hope.

October 10 — Morning

"Faultless before the presence of His glory." Jude 24

Revolve that wondrous word in your mind, "faultless!" We are far off from it now; but as our Lord never stops short of perfection in His work of love—we shall reach it one day. The Savior who will keep His people to the end, will also present them at last to Himself, as "a glorious church, having no spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing—but holy and without blemish." All the jewels in the Savior's crown—are of the top quality, and without a single flaw. All the maids of honor who attend the Lamb's wife—are pure virgins without spot or stain.

But *how* will Jesus make us faultless? He will wash us from our sins in His own blood—until we are white and fair as God's purest angel; and we shall be clothed in His righteousness, that righteousness which makes the saint who wears it positively faultless; yes, *perfect in the sight of God!* We shall be unblamably and unproveable even in His eyes. His law will not only have no charge against us—but it will be magnified in us. Moreover, the work of the Holy Spirit within us will be altogether complete. He will make us so perfectly holy—that we shall have no lingering tendency to sin. Judgment, memory, affections, will—every power and passion shall be emancipated from the *thralldom of evil*. We shall be holy even as God is holy—and in His presence we shall dwell forever!

Saints will not be out of place in heaven, their beauty will be as great as that of the place prepared for them. Oh the rapture of that hour, when the everlasting doors shall be lifted up, and we, being made fit for the inheritance, shall dwell with the saints in light. *Sin gone, Satan shut out, temptation past forever*, and ourselves "faultless" before God—this will be heaven indeed! Let us be joyful now as we rehearse the song of eternal praise, so soon to roll forth in full chorus from all the blood-washed multitude! Let us copy David's exultings before the ark as a prelude to our ecstasies before the throne!

October 10 — Evening

"And I will deliver you out of the hand of the wicked, and I will redeem you out of the hand of the cruel."

Jeremiah 15:21

Note the glorious *person* of the promise. *I will, I will*. The Lord Jehovah Himself interposes to deliver and redeem His people. He pledges Himself personally to rescue them. His own arm shall do it, that He may have the glory. Here is not a word said of any effort of our own which may be needed to assist the Lord. Neither our *strength* nor our *weakness* is taken into the account—but the lone "I", like the sun in the heavens, shines out resplendent in all-sufficiency. Why then do we calculate *our* forces, and consult with flesh and blood—to our grievous wounding? Jehovah has power enough, without borrowing from our puny arm! Peace, you unbelieving thoughts! Be still, and know that the Lord reigns!

Nor is there a hint concerning *secondary* means and causes. The Lord says nothing of friends and helpers—He undertakes the work alone, and feels no need of human arms to aid Him. Vain are all our lookings around to companions and relatives; they are *broken reeds* if we lean upon them. They are often *unwilling* when able—or *unable* when they are willing. Since the promise comes alone from God, it would be well to wait only upon Him; and when we do so, our expectation never fails us.

Who are the **wicked** that we should fear them? The Lord will utterly consume them! They are to be *pitied*, rather than *feared*! As for **cruel** ones, they are only terrors to those who have no God to fly to—for when the Lord is on our side, whom shall we fear? If we run into sin to please the wicked, we have cause to be alarmed—but if we hold fast our integrity, the rage of tyrants shall be overruled for our good. When the fish swallowed Jonah, it found him to be a morsel which he could not digest; and when the world devours the church, it is glad to be rid of it again. In all times of fiery trial, in patience let us possess our souls.

October 11 — Morning

"Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens." Lamentations 3:41

The act of prayer teaches us our *unworthiness*—which is a very beneficial lesson for such proud beings as we are. If God gave us favors without constraining us to pray for them—we would never know how poor we are—but a true prayer is an inventory of needs, a catalogue of necessities, a revelation of hidden poverty. While it is an *application to divine wealth*—it is also a *confession of human emptiness*. The most healthy state of a Christian is to be always empty in self and constantly depending upon the Lord for supplies; to be always poor in *SELF*—and rich in Jesus; weak as water personally—but mighty through God to do great exploits. And hence prayer, while it adores God, it lays the creature where it should be—in the very dust!

Prayer is in itself, apart from the *answer* which it brings, a great *benefit* to the Christian. As the runner gains strength for the race by daily exercise, so for the great *race of life*, we acquire energy by the hallowed labor of prayer. Prayer plumes the wings of God's young eaglets—that they may learn to mount above the clouds. Prayer sends God's warriors forth to combat—with their sinews braced and their muscles firm. An earnest pleader comes out of his closet, even as the sun arises from the chambers of the east, rejoicing like a strong man to run his race.

Prayer is that uplifted hand of Moses—which routs the Amalekites more than the sword of Joshua. Prayer girds human weakness with divine strength, turns human folly into heavenly wisdom, and gives the peace of God to troubled mortals. We have no idea what prayer can do!

We thank you, great God, for the mercy-seat, a choice proof of your marvelous loving-kindness. Help us to use it aright throughout this day!

October 11 — Evening

"Those He predestined—He also called." Romans 8:30

In 2 Timothy 1:9 are these words, "Who has saved us, and called us with a **holy** calling." Now, here is a touchstone by which we may try our calling. It is "a *holy* calling, not according to our works—but according to his own purpose and grace." This calling forbids all trust in our own doings, and conducts us to Christ alone for salvation—but it afterwards purges us from dead works to serve the living and true God. As He who has called you is holy—so must you be holy. If you are living in sin—you are not called by God. But if you are truly Christ's, you can say, "Nothing pains me so much as sin! I desire to be rid of it! Lord, help me to be holy." Is this the panting of your heart? Is this the tenor of your life towards God, and His divine will?

In Philippians 3:14, we are told of "the **high** calling of God in Christ Jesus." Is then your calling, a *high* calling? Has it ennobled your heart, and set it upon heavenly things? Has it elevated your hopes, your tastes, your desires? Has it upraised the constant tenor of your life, so that you spend it with God and for God?

Another test we find in Hebrews 3:1, "Partakers of the **heavenly** calling." Heavenly calling means a call from heaven. If *man* alone calls you, you are uncalled. Is your calling from God? Is it a call *to* heaven—as well as *from* heaven? Unless you are a stranger here on earth, and heaven your home—you have not been called with a heavenly calling. For those who have been so called, declare that they look for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God, and they themselves are strangers and pilgrims upon the earth.

Is your calling thus holy, high, heavenly? Then, beloved, you have been called of God, for such is the calling with which God always calls His people.

October 12 — Morning

"I will meditate on Your precepts." Psalm 119:15

There are times when *solitude* is better than *society*; and *silence* is wiser than *speech*. We would be better Christians—if we were more alone, waiting upon God, and gathering spiritual strength for labor in His service, through meditation on His Word. We ought to *muse* upon the things of God, because we thus get the real nutriment out of them.

Truth is something like the *cluster of the vine*—if we would have wine from it, we must *bruise* it; we must *press* and *squeeze* it many times. The bruiser's feet must come down joyfully upon the clusters, or else the juice will not flow; and they must carefully *tread* the grapes, or else much of the precious liquid will be wasted. So we must, by meditation, *tread the clusters of truth*—if we would get the *wine of consolation* from them.

Our bodies are not supported by merely taking food into the mouth—but the process which really supplies the muscle, and the nerve, and the sinew, and the bone—is the process of *digestion*. It is by digestion, that the food becomes assimilated with the inner life.

Just so, our souls are not nourished merely by listening awhile to this, and then to that, and then to the other part of divine truth. Hearing, reading, and learning—all require *inward digesting* to complete their usefulness, and the inward digesting of the truth lies for the most part in *meditating* upon it.

Why is it that some Christians, although they hear many sermons—make but slow advances in the divine life? Because they neglect their *closets*—and do not thoughtfully *meditate* on God's Word. They love the wheat—but they do not *grind* it; they would have the corn—but they will not go forth into the fields to gather it; the fruit hangs upon the tree—but they will not *pluck* it; the water flows at their feet—but they will not stoop to drink it. From such folly deliver us, O Lord, and be this our resolve this day, "I will *meditate* on Your precepts!"

October 12 — Evening

"The Comforter, who is the Holy Spirit." John 14:26

This age is specially, the *dispensation of the Holy Spirit*, in which Jesus cheers us, not by His *personal* presence, as He shall do by-and-by, but by the indwelling and constant abiding of the Holy Spirit, who is evermore the *Comforter* of the church. It is His office to *console* the hearts of God's people. He convinces of sin; He illuminates and instructs—but still the main part of His work lies in comforting the hearts of the renewed, in confirming the weak, and lifting up all those who are bowed down.

He does this—by revealing Jesus to them. The Holy Spirit *consoles*—but Christ is the *consolation*. If we may use the figure, the Holy Spirit is the *Physician*—but Jesus is the *medicine*. The Holy Spirit heals the wound—but it is by applying the holy ointment of Christ's grace. The Holy Spirit will not speak of His own things—but of the things of Christ. **The Holy Spirit the Comforter—but Jesus is the Comfort!**

Now, with such rich provision for his need, why should the Christian be sad and desponding? The Holy Spirit has graciously engaged to be your Comforter—do you imagine, O you weak and trembling believer, that He will be negligent of His sacred trust? Can you suppose that He has undertaken what He cannot or will not perform? If it is His especial work to *strengthen* you, and to *comfort* you—do you suppose He has *forgotten* His business, or that He will *fail* in the loving office which He sustains towards you? No! Do not think so harshly of the tender and blessed Spirit, whose name is "the Comforter." He delights to give beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. Trust in Him, and He will surely comfort you until the house of mourning is closed forever—and the marriage feast has begun!

October 13 — Morning

"Godly sorrow works repentance." 2 Corinthians 7:10

Genuine, spiritual mourning for sin—is the **work of the Spirit of God**. *Repentance* is too choice a flower to grow in nature's garden! Pearls grow naturally in oysters—but penitence never shows itself in sinners—unless divine grace works it in them. If you have one particle of real hatred for sin, God must have given it you, for human nature's thorns never produced a single fig. "That which is born of the flesh—is flesh."

True repentance has a distinct reference to the **Savior**. When we repent of sin, we must have one eye upon *SIN*—and another upon the *CROSS*! It will be better still—if we fix both our eyes upon Christ—and see our transgressions only in the light of His love.

True sorrow for sin is eminently **practical**. No man may say he *hates* sin—if he *lives* in it. Repentance makes us see the evil of sin, not merely as a theory—but experimentally—as the burnt child dreads fire. We shall be as much afraid of it, as a man who has lately been accosted and robbed—is afraid of the thief upon the highway. We shall shun sin—shun it in everything—not in great things only—but in little things; as men shun little vipers—as well as great snakes.

True mourning for sin will make us very watchful over our tongue—lest it should say a wrong word. We shall be very watchful over our daily actions—lest in anything we offend; and each night we shall close the day with painful confessions of shortcomings; and each morning awaken with anxious prayers, that this day God would preserve us—that we may not sin against Him.

Sincere repentance is **continual**. Believers repent until their dying day. Repentance is not intermittent. Every other sorrow yields to time—but this dear sorrow grows with our growth, and it is so sweet a bitter, that we thank God we are permitted to experience it, until we enter our eternal rest!

October 13 — Evening

"Love is as strong as death." Song of Solomon 8:6

Whose love can this be—which is as mighty as the conqueror of monarchs, the destroyer of the human race? Would it not sound like satire if it were applied to my poor, weak, and scarcely living love to Jesus my Lord? I do love Him, and perhaps by His grace, I could even die for Him—but as for my love in itself—it can scarcely endure a scoffing jest, much less a cruel death! Surely it is my Beloved's love which is here spoken of—the love of Jesus, the matchless lover of souls!

His love was indeed *stronger* than the most terrible death, for it endured the trial of the cross triumphantly! It was a *lingering* death—but love survived the torment! It was a *shameful* death—but love despised the shame! It was a *penal* death—but love bore our iniquities! It was a forsaken, lonely death, from which the eternal Father hid His face—but love endured the curse, and gloried over all. Never such a love—never such a death. It was a desperate duel—but love conquered.

What then, my heart? Have you no emotions excited within you at the contemplation of such heavenly affection? Yes, my Lord, I long, I pant to feel Your love flaming like a furnace within me! Come Yourself, and excite the ardor of my heart!

"For every drop of crimson blood
Thus shed to make me live,
O wherefore, wherefore have I not,
A thousand lives to give?"

Why should I despair of loving Jesus, with a love as strong as death? He *deserves* it—I *desire* it! The martyrs felt such love, and they were but flesh and blood—then why not I? They mourned their weakness, and yet out of weakness were made strong. Grace gave them all their unflinching constancy—there is the same grace for me. Jesus, lover of my soul, shed abroad such love, even Your love in my heart, this evening.

October 14 — Morning

"I consider everything a loss—compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord."

Philippians 3:8

Saving knowledge of Christ, will be a **personal** knowledge. I cannot know Jesus through another person's acquaintance with Him. No, I must know Him myself; I must know Him on my own account.

Saving knowledge of Christ, will be an **intelligent** knowledge. I must know Him, not as the visionary dreams of Him—but as the Word reveals Him. I must know His *natures*, divine and human. I must know His *offices*—His *attributes*—His *works*—His *shame*—His *glory*. I must meditate upon Him until I am "able to comprehend with all the saints what is the length and width, height and depth of God's love; and know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge!"

Saving knowledge of Christ, will be an **affectionate** knowledge of Him. Indeed, if I *know* Him at all, I must *love* Him. *An ounce of heart knowledge—is worth a ton of head learning!*

Saving knowledge of Christ, will be a **satisfying** knowledge. When I know my Savior, my mind will be full to the brim—I shall feel that I have that which my spirit panted after. "No one who comes to Me will ever be hungry, and no one who believes in Me will ever be thirsty again!"

Saving knowledge of Christ, will be an **exciting** knowledge. The more I know of my Beloved, the more I shall want to know. The higher I climb—the loftier will be the summits which invite my eager footsteps. I shall *want* the more—as I *get* the more. Like the miser's treasure, my gold will make me covet more.

To conclude, saving knowledge of Christ Jesus will be a most **happy** one. In fact, it will be so elevating, that sometimes it will completely bear me up above all trials, and doubts, and sorrows! And it will, while I enjoy it, lift me above troubles—for it will fling about me the immortality of the ever-living Savior, and gird me with the golden belt of His eternal joy. Come, my soul, sit at Jesus' feet—and learn of Him all this day!

October 14 — Evening

"Do not be conformed to this world." Romans 12:2

Reader, would you wish to leave this world in the darkness of a desponding death bed, and enter eternity as a shipwrecked mariner? Then be worldly! Join up with *Mammonites*, and refuse to go *outside* the camp bearing Christ's reproach.

But would you have a heaven *below*—as well as a heaven *above*? Would you comprehend with all saints, what are the heights and depths, and know the love of Christ which passes knowledge? Would you receive an abundant entrance into the joy of your Lord? Then come out from among them, and be separate, and touch not the unclean thing!

Would you attain the full assurance of faith? You cannot gain it while you commune with sinners. Would you flame with vehement love? Your love will be damped, by the drenchings of godless society. You cannot become a great Christian—you may be a babe in grace—but you never can be a perfect man in Christ Jesus—while you yield yourself to the worldly *maxims* and *lifestyles* of the world. *It is bad for an heir of heaven—to be a great friend with the heirs of hell.* It has a bad look when a courtier is too intimate with his king's *enemies*.

Even *small inconsistencies* are dangerous. Little thorns make great blisters. Little moths destroy fine garments. Little little frivolities and little rogueries will rob a Christian of a thousand joys. O professor, too little separated from sinners—you know not what you lose by your conformity to the world. It cuts the tendons of your strength, and makes you *creep*—where you ought to *run*. Then, for your own comfort's sake, and for the sake of your growth in grace, if you are a Christian—be a Christian—and be a marked and distinct one!

October 15 — *Morning*

"Who can endure the day of His coming? And who will be able to stand when He appears?

For He will be like a refiner's fire!" Malachi 3:2

His first coming was without external pomp or show of power, and yet in truth there were few who could abide its testing might. Herod and all Jerusalem with him, were stirred at the news of the wondrous birth. Those who supposed themselves to be waiting for Him, showed the fallacy of their professions, by rejecting Him when He came. His life on earth was a winnowing fan, which tried *the great heap of religious profession*, and few enough could abide the process.

But what will His second coming be? What sinner can endure to think of it? "He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked!" When in His humiliation He did but say to the soldiers, "I am He!"—they fell backward! What will be the terror of His enemies—when He shall more fully reveal Himself in judgement? His death shook earth and darkened heaven—what shall be the *dreadful splendor* of that day in which as the living Savior, He shall summon the living and dead before Him? O that the *terrors of the Lord* would persuade men to forsake their sins and "kiss the Son—or He will be angry, and you will perish in your rebellion, for His anger may ignite at any moment!"

Though a *lamb*, He is yet the *lion* of the tribe of Judah, rending the prey in pieces! Though He does not break the bruised reed—yet will He crush His enemies with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. None of His foes shall bear up before the tempest of His wrath, or hide themselves from the sweeping hail of His indignation!

But His beloved blood-washed people look for His appearing with joy, and hope to abide it without fear—to them He sits as a refiner even now—and when He has tried them they shall come forth as gold. Let us search ourselves this morning and make our calling and election sure, so that the coming of the Lord may cause no dark forebodings in our mind. O for grace to cast away all hypocrisy, and to be found by Him—"blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation" in the day of His appearing!

October 15 — Evening

"You must redeem the firstborn *donkey* with a *lamb*. But if you do not redeem it—you must kill the donkey by breaking its neck!" Exodus 34:20

Every firstborn creature must be the Lord's—but since the donkey was unclean, it could not be presented in sacrifice to Him. What then? Should it be allowed to go free from the universal law? By no means. God admits of no exceptions. The donkey is His due—but He will not accept it; He will not abate the claim—but yet He cannot be pleased with the victim. No way of escape remained, but redemption—the donkey must be saved by the substitution of a lamb in its place; or if not redeemed, it must die!

My soul, here is a lesson for you. That unclean donkey is yourself! You are justly the property of the Lord who made you and preserves you—but you are so sinful that God will not, cannot, accept you! It has come to this—the Lamb of God must stand in your stead—or you must die eternally! Let all the world know of your gratitude to that spotless Lamb who has died for you, and so redeemed you from the fatal curse of the law!

Must it not sometimes have been a question with the Israelite, as to which should die—the donkey or the lamb? Would not the man pause to estimate and compare? Assuredly there was no comparison between the value of a sinful man—and the spotless Lord Jesus! Yet the Lamb dies—and man the donkey is spared! My soul, admire the boundless love of God to you! Vile worms are bought—with the blood of the holy Lamb of God! Dust and ashes are redeemed—with a price far above silver and gold! What a doom would have been mine—had not plenteous redemption been found!

The breaking of the neck of the donkey was but a momentary penalty—but who shall measure the wrath to come—to which no limit can be imagined! Inestimably dear is the glorious Lamb—who has redeemed me from such a doom!

October 16 — Morning

"Jesus said unto them, *Come and dine!*" John 21:12

In these words the believer is invited to a *holy nearness* to Jesus. "Come and dine!" implies the same *table*, the same *food*; and sometimes it means to sit by His side, and lean our head upon the Savior's bosom! It is being brought into the banqueting-house, where the banner of redeeming love waves!

"Come and dine!" implies union with Jesus, because the only food that we can feast upon when we dine with Jesus—is Himself. Oh, what union is this! It is a depth which reason cannot fathom, that we thus *feed upon Jesus*. "He who eats My flesh, and drinks My blood—dwells in Me, and I in him."

It is also an invitation to enjoy fellowship with the saints. Christians may differ on a variety of points—but they all have *one spiritual appetite*. If we cannot all *feel* alike, we can all *feed* alike on the *bread of life* sent down from heaven. At the table of fellowship with Jesus—we partake of one bread and one cup. As the loving cup goes around—we pledge one another heartily therein. Get nearer to Jesus, and you will find yourself linked more and more in spirit to all who like yourself, are supported by the same heavenly manna. If we were more near to Jesus—we would be more near to one another.

We likewise see in these words—the source of strength for every Christian. To *look* at Christ is to live—but for strength to serve Him you must "come and dine!" We labor under much unnecessary weakness, on account of neglecting this percept of the Master. None of us need to put ourselves on a spiritual diet! On the contrary, we should fatten on the marrow and fatness of the gospel—that we may accumulate strength therein, and use every power to its full extent in the Master's service. Thus, then, if you would realize *nearness* to Jesus, *union* with Jesus, *love* to His people and *strength* from Jesus, "come and dine" with Him by faith!

October 16 — Evening

"With You is the fountain of life." Psalm 36:9

There are times in our spiritual experience, when human counsel or sympathy, or religious ordinances, fail to comfort or help us. Why does our gracious God permit this? Perhaps it is because we have been living too much without Him—and therefore He takes away every *prop* upon which we have been in the habit of depending, *that He may drive us to Himself!* It is a blessed thing to live at the *fountain-head*. While our water-bottles are full, we are content, like Hagar and Ishmael, to go into the wilderness; but when those are dry—nothing will serve us but our God.

We are like the prodigal, we love the swine-troughs—and forget our Father's house! Remember, we can make swine-troughs and husks—even out of the *forms of religion*. They are blessed things—but we may put them in God's place, and then they are of no value. Anything becomes an *IDOL*—when it keeps us away from God! Even the brazen serpent is to be despised as "Nehushtan!" if we worship it instead of God. The prodigal was never safer—than when he was driven to his father's bosom, because he could find sustenance nowhere else.

Our Lord favors us with a *famine*—that it may make us seek after Himself the more. The best position for a Christian—is living wholly and directly on God's grace—still abiding where he stood at first, "Having nothing, and yet possessing all things." Let us never for a moment think that our *acceptance with God*—is in our sanctification, our mortification, our graces, or our feelings. But know that because Christ offered a full atonement, therefore we are saved; for we are complete in Him. Having nothing of our own to trust to—but resting solely upon the merits of Jesus—His passion and holy life furnish us with the only sure ground of confidence. Beloved, when we are brought to a thirsting condition—we are sure to turn to the fountain of life with eagerness!

October 17 — Morning

"And David said in his heart—I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul!" 1 Samuel 27:1

The thought of David's heart at this time was a false thought, because he certainly had no ground for thinking that God's anointing him by Samuel was intended to be left as an empty unmeaning act. On no one occasion had the Lord deserted His servant; he had been placed in perilous positions very often—but not one instance had occurred in which divine interposition had not delivered him. The trials to which he had been exposed had been varied; they had not assumed one form only—but many—yet in every case He who sent the trial had also graciously ordained a way of escape.

David could not put his finger upon any entry in his diary, and say of it, "Here is evidence that the Lord will forsake me," for the entire tenor of his past life proved the very reverse. He should have argued from what God had done for him—that God would be his defender still.

But is it not just in the same way—that we doubt God's help? Is it not mistrust without a cause? Have we ever had the shadow of a reason to doubt our Father's goodness? Have not His lovingkindnesses been marvelous? Has He once failed to justify our trust? Ah, no! our God has not left us at any time. We have had dark nights—but the *star of love* has shone forth amid the blackness! We have been in stern conflicts—but over our head He has held aloft the shield of our defense. We have gone through many trials—but never to our detriment, always to our advantage; and the conclusion from our past experience is, that He who has been with us in six troubles, will not forsake us in the seventh. What we have known of our faithful God, proves that He will keep us to the end. Let us not, then, reason contrary to evidence. How can we ever be so unkind as to doubt our God? Lord, throw down the Jezebel of our unbelief, and let the dogs devour it!

October 17 — Evening

"He will carry the lambs in His arms." Isaiah 40:11

Our good Shepherd has in His flock—a variety of experiences, some are *strong* in the Lord, and others are *weak* in faith—but He is impartial in His care for all His sheep, and the *weakest lamb* is as dear to Him as the most advanced of the flock. Lambs are accustomed to lag behind, prone to wander, and apt to grow weary—but from all the danger of these infirmities, the Shepherd protects them with His arm of power. He finds new-born souls, like young lambs, ready to perish—and He nourishes them until life becomes vigorous. He finds weak minds ready to faint and die—and He consoles them and renews their strength. All the little ones He gathers in His arms—for it is not the will of our heavenly Father that one of them should perish. What a quick *eye* He must have to see them all! What a tender *heart* to care for them all! What a far-reaching and potent *arm*, to gather them all!

In His lifetime on earth He was a great gatherer of the weaker sort, and now that He dwells in heaven, His loving heart yearns towards the meek and contrite, the timid and feeble, the fearful and fainting here below.

How gently did He gather *me* to Himself, to His truth, to His blood, to His love! With what effectual grace did He compel me to come to Himself! Since my conversion, how frequently has He *restored* me from my wanderings, and once again folded me within the circle of His everlasting arms! The best of all is, that He does it all Himself personally, not delegating the *task of love*—but condescending Himself to rescue and preserve His most unworthy servant. How shall I love Him enough—or serve Him worthily? I would gladly make His name great unto the ends of the earth—but what can my feebleness do for Him? Great Shepherd, add to Your mercies this one more—a heart to love You more truly as I ought!

October 18 — *Morning*

"Your paths drop fatness." Psalm 65:11

Many are "the paths of the Lord" which "drop fatness," but an especial one is the path of **prayer**. No believer, who is much in the closet, will have need to cry, "My leanness, my leanness! Woe unto me!" Starving souls live at a distance from the mercy-seat, and become like the parched fields in times of drought. Prevalence with God in wrestling prayer is sure to make the believer *strong*—if not *happy*.

The nearest place to the gate of heaven—is the throne of the heavenly grace. Much alone with Jesus—and you will have much assurance; little alone with Jesus—and your religion will be shallow, polluted with many doubts and fears, and not sparkling with the joy of the Lord. Since the soul-enriching path of prayer is open to the very weakest saint; since no high attainments are required; since you are not bidden to come because you are an *advanced* saint—but freely invited if you are a saint at all; see to it, dear reader, that you are often in the way of private devotion. Be much on your knees, for so Elijah drew the rain upon famished Israel's fields.

There is another especial path dropping with fatness to those who walk therein, it is the secret walk of **communion with Jesus**. Oh! the delights of fellowship with Jesus! Earth has no words which can set forth the holy calm of a soul leaning on Jesus' bosom. Few Christians understand it, they live in the *lowlands*—and seldom climb to the top of Nebo; they live in the *outer* court—they do not enter the holy place, they take not up the privilege of priesthood. At a *distance* they see the sacrifice—but they do not sit down with the priest to eat thereof, and to enjoy the fat of the burnt offering. But, reader, sit ever under the shadow of Jesus; come up to that *palm tree*, and take hold of the branches thereof; let your beloved be unto you as the *apple-tree* among the trees of the woods, and you shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness. O Jesus, visit us with Your salvation!

October 18 — Evening

"Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice." 1 Samuel 15:22

Saul had been commanded to utterly slay all the Amalekites and their cattle. Instead of doing so, he preserved the king, and allowed his people to take the best of the oxen and of the sheep. When called to account for this, he declared that he did it with a view of *offering sacrifice to God*; but Samuel met him at once with the assurance that sacrifices were no excuse for an act of direct rebellion.

The sentence before us is worthy to be printed in letters of gold, and to be hung up before the eyes of the present idolatrous generation, who are very fond of the *fineries of will-worship*—but utterly neglect the laws of God. Be it ever in your remembrance, that to keep strictly in the path of your Savior's command is better than any outward form of religion; and to hearken to His precept with an attentive ear is better than to bring the fat of rams, or any other precious thing to lay upon His altar. If you are failing to keep the least of Christ's commands to His disciples, I pray you be disobedient no longer. All the pretensions you make of attachment to your Master, and all the devout rituals which you may perform, are no recompense for disobedience. "To obey," even in the slightest and smallest thing, "is better than sacrifice," however pompous.

Do not talk of Gregorian chants, sumptuous robes, incense, and banners; the first thing which God requires of His child is obedience; and though you should give your body to be burned, and all your goods to feed the poor—yet if you do not hearken to the Lord's precepts, all your *formalities* shall profit you nothing. It is a blessed thing to be as teachable as a little child—but it is a much more blessed thing when one has been taught the lesson—to carry it out to the letter. How many adorn their temples, and decorate their priests—but refuse to obey the Word of the Lord! My soul, do not come into their practice.

October 19 — Morning

"Babes in Christ." 1 Corinthians 3:1

Are you mourning, believer, because you are so *weak* in the divine life—because your *faith* is so little, your *love* so feeble? Cheer up, for you have cause for gratitude. Remember that in some things you are equal to the greatest and most full-grown Christian. You are as much bought with Christ's precious blood, as he is. You are as much an adopted child of God, as any other believer. An infant is as truly a child of its parents, as is the full-grown man. You are as completely justified, for your justification is not a thing of degrees—your little faith has made you every whit justified. You have as much right to the precious things of the covenant, as the most advanced believers, for your right to covenant mercies lies not in your growth—but in the covenant itself; and your faith in Jesus is not the *measure*—but the *token* of your inheritance in Him. You are as rich as the richest, if not in *enjoyment*—yet in real *possession*.

The smallest star that gleams—is set in heaven; the faintest ray of light—has affinity with the great orb of day. In the family register of glory—the small and the great are written with the same pen. You are as dear to your Father's heart—as the greatest in the family. Jesus is very tender over you. You are like the smoking flax; a rougher spirit would say, "put out that smoking flax, it fills the room with an offensive odor!" But He will not quench the smoking flax. You are like a bruised reed; and any less tender hand than that of the Chief Musician, would tread upon you or throw you away—but He will never break the bruised reed.

Instead of being downcast by reason of what you are, you should triumph in Christ. Am I but little in Israel? Yet in Christ I am made to sit in heavenly places. Am I poor in faith? Still in Jesus I am heir of all things. If the root of the matter is in me—I will rejoice in the Lord, and glory in the God of my salvation!

October 19 — Evening

"God, my Maker, who gives *songs in the night.*" Job 35:10

Any man can sing in the *day*. When the cup is full—man draws inspiration from it. When wealth rolls in abundance around him—any man can praise the God who gives a plenteous harvest. It is easy enough for an *Aeolian harp* to whisper music when the winds blow—the difficulty is for music to swell forth when no wind is stirring. It is easy to sing when we can read the notes by daylight; but he is skillful who sings when there is not a ray of light to read by—who sings from his heart.

No man can make a song in the night of himself; he may attempt it—but he will find that a song in the night must be *divinely inspired*. Let all things go well, I can weave songs, fashioning them wherever I go out into the flowers that grow upon my path; but put me in a desert, where no green thing grows, and with what shall I frame a hymn of praise to God? How shall a mortal man make a crown for the Lord—where there are no jewels? Let but this *voice* be clear, and this *body* full of health—and I can sing God's praise. But silence my tongue, lay me upon the bed of languishing, and how shall I then chant God's high praises, unless He Himself gives me the song? No, it is not in man's power to sing when all is adverse, unless an altar-coal shall touch his lips!

It was a divine song, which Habakkuk sang, when in the night he said, "Even though the fig trees have no blossoms, and there are no grapes on the vine; even though the olive crop fails, and the fields lie empty and barren; even though the flocks die in the fields, and the cattle barns are empty, yet I will rejoice in the Lord! I will be joyful in the God of my salvation! The Sovereign Lord is my strength!" Then, since our Maker gives songs in the night, let us wait upon Him for the music. O *chief musician*, let us not remain songless because affliction is upon us—but tune our lips to the melody of thanksgiving!

October 20 — *Morning*

"Grow up into Him in all things." Ephesians 4:15

Many Christians remain *stunted* and *dwarfed* in spiritual things, so as to present the same appearance year after year. No up-springing of advanced and refined spirituality is manifest in them. They *exist*—but do not "grow up into Him in all things." But should we rest content with being in the "green blade," when we might advance to "the ear," and eventually ripen into the "full grain in the ear?" Should we be satisfied to believe in Christ, and to say, "I am safe," without wishing to know in our own experience more of the fullness which is to be found in Him. It should not be so; we should, as good traders in heaven's market, covet to be enriched in the knowledge of Jesus.

It is all very well to keep *other* men's vineyards—but we must not neglect our own spiritual growth and ripening. Why should it always be *winter* time in our hearts? We must have our *seed* time, it is true—but O for a *spring* time—yes, a *summer* season, which shall give promise of an early *harvest*. If we would ripen in grace, we must live near to Jesus—in His presence—ripened by the sunshine of His smiles. We must hold sweet communion with Him. We must leave the distant view of His face and come near, as John did, and pillow our head on His bosom; then shall we find ourselves advancing in holiness, in love, in faith, in hope—yes, in every precious grace.

As the sun rises first on mountain-tops and gilds them with his light, and presents one of the most charming sights to the eye of the traveler; so is it one of the most delightful contemplations in the world to mark the glow of the Spirit's light on the head of some saint, who has risen up in spiritual stature, like Saul, above his fellows, until, like a mighty Alp, snow-capped, he reflects first among the chosen, the beams of the Sun of Righteousness, and bears the sheen of His effulgence high aloft for all to see, and seeing it, to glorify His Father who is in heaven!

October 20 — Evening

"Keep not back." Isaiah 43:6

Although this message referred to the seed of Israel, it may profitably be a summons to ourselves. *Backward* we are naturally to all good things, and it is a lesson of grace to learn to go *forward* in the ways of God.

Reader, are you *unconverted*—but do you desire to trust in the Lord Jesus? Then keep not back. Love invites you, the promises secure you success, the precious blood prepares the way. Let not sins or fears hinder you—but come to Jesus just as you are.

Do you long to *pray*? Would you pour out your heart before the Lord? Keep not back. The mercy-seat is prepared for such as need mercy; a sinner's cries will prevail with God. You are *invited*, nay, you are *commanded* to pray, come therefore with boldness to the throne of grace.

Dear friend, are you already saved? Then keep not back from union with the Lord's people. Neglect not the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper. You may be of a timid disposition—but you must strive against it, lest it lead you into disobedience. There is a sweet promise made to those who confess Christ—by no means miss it, lest you come under the condemnation of those who deny Him.

If you have *talents*—keep not back from using them. Do not hoard your *wealth*, nor waste your *time*; do not let your *abilities* rust, nor your *influence* be unused. Jesus kept not back—imitate Him by being foremost in self-denials and self-sacrifices.

Keep not back from close communion with God, from boldly appropriating covenant blessings, from advancing in the divine life, from prying into the precious mysteries of the love of Christ.

Neither, beloved friend, be guilty of keeping *others* back by your coldness, harshness, or suspicions. For Jesus' sake go forward yourself, and encourage others to do the like. *Hell* and the bands of *superstition* and *infidelity* are forward to the fight. O soldiers of the cross, keep not back!

October 21 — Morning

"The love of Christ constrains us." 2 Corinthians 5:14

How much you owe unto your Lord! Has He ever done anything for you? Has He forgiven your sins? Has He covered you with a robe of righteousness? Has He set your feet upon a rock? Has He established your goings? Has He prepared *heaven* for you? Has He prepared *you* for heaven? Has He written your name in His book of life? Has He given you countless blessings? Has He laid up for you a store of mercies, which eye has not seen nor ear heard?

Then do something for Jesus, which is worthy of His love. Give not a mere wordy offering to a dying Redeemer. How will you feel when your Master comes, if you have to confess that you did nothing for Him—but kept your love shut up, like a stagnant pool, not flowing forth to His work. Out on such love as that!

What do men think of a love which never *shows* itself in action? Why, they say, "Open rebuke is better than secret love." Who will accept a love so weak—that it does not actuate you to a single deed of self-denial, of generosity, of heroism, or zeal! Think how He has loved you, and given Himself for you! Do you know the power of that love? Then let it be like a rushing mighty wind to your soul—to sweep out the clouds of your worldliness, and clear away the mists of sin.

"For Christ's sake" be this the tongue of fire that shall sit upon you; "for Christ's sake" be this the divine rapture, the heavenly affection to bear you aloft from earth; the divine spirit that shall make you bold as lions and swift as eagles in your Lord's service. Love should give *wings* to the feet of service, and *strength* to the arms of labor.

Fixed on God with a constancy that is not to be shaken, resolute to honor Him with a determination that is not to be turned aside, and pressing on with an ardor never to be wearied—let us manifest the constraints of love to Jesus. May the *divine loadstone* draw us heavenward towards itself!

October 21 — Evening

"Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts?" Luke 24:38

"Why do you say—My way is hidden from the Lord, and my claim is ignored by my God?" The Lord cares for all things, and the lowliest creatures share in His *universal* providence. But His *particular* providence is over His saints. "The angel of the Lord encamps round about those who fear Him." "Precious shall their blood be in His sight." "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." "We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose."

Let the fact that, while He is the Savior of all men, He is specially the Savior of those who believe, cheer and comfort you. You are His *peculiar care*; His *regal treasure* which He guards as the apple of His eye; His *vineyard* over which He watches day and night.

"The very *hairs* of your head are all numbered." Let the thought of His special love to you be a *spiritual pain-killer*, a dear quietus to your woe! "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." God says that as much to you as to any saint of old. "Fear not, I am your shield, and your exceeding great reward." We lose much consolation by the habit of reading His promises for the *whole church*, instead of taking them directly home to *ourselves*. Believer, grasp the divine Word with a personal, appropriating faith. Think that you hear Jesus say, "I have prayed for *you*—that *your* faith fail not." See Him walking on the *waters of your trouble*, for He is there, and He is saying, "Fear not, it is I; do not be afraid." Oh, those sweet words of Christ! May the Holy Spirit make you feel them as spoken to *you*. Forget *others* for awhile—accept the voice of Jesus as addressed to *you*, and say, "Jesus whispers consolation; I cannot refuse it; I will sit under His shadow with great delight!"

October 22 — Morning

"I will love them freely." Hosea 14:4

This sentence is *a body of divinity in miniature*. He who understands its meaning, is a theologian; and he who can dive into its fullness, is a true spiritual master. It is a summary of the glorious message of salvation, which was delivered to us in Christ Jesus our Redeemer.

The meaning hinges upon the word "freely." This is the glorious, the suitable, the divine way by which love streams from heaven to earth—a spontaneous love flowing forth to those who neither deserved it, purchased it, nor sought after it. It is, indeed, the only way in which God can love such as we are.

The text is a death-blow to all sorts of *fitness*, "I will love them freely." Now, if there were any fitness necessary in us—then He would not love us freely, at least, this would be a mitigation and a drawback to the freeness of it. But it stands, "I will love you freely."

We complain, "Lord, my heart is so hard." "I will love you freely."

"But I do not feel my need of Christ as I could wish." "I will not love you because you feel your need—I will love you freely."

"But I do not feel that softening of spirit which I could desire." Remember, the softening of spirit is not a condition, for there are no conditions; the covenant of grace has no conditionality whatever; so that *we without any fitness* may venture upon the promise of God which was made to us in Christ Jesus, when He said, "He who believes on Him is not condemned."

It is blessed to know that the grace of God is free to us at all times, without preparation, without fitness, without money, and without price!

"I will love them freely." These words invite backsliders to return—indeed, the text was specially written for such, "I will heal their backsliding; I will love them freely." Backslider! surely the generosity of the promise will at once break your heart, and you will return, and seek your injured Father's face!

October 22 — Evening

"The Spirit will take from what is Mine—and make it known to you." John 16:15

There are times when all the *promises* and a *doctrines* of the Bible are of no avail, unless a *gracious hand* shall *apply* them to us. We are thirsty—but too faint to crawl to the water-brook. When a soldier is wounded in battle—it is of little use for him to know that there are those at the hospital who can bind up his wounds, and medicines there to ease all the pains which he now suffers—what he needs is to be carried there, and to have the remedies applied.

It is thus with our souls, and to meet this need there is the Spirit of truth, who takes of the things of Jesus, and *applies* them to us. Do not think that Christ has placed His joys on *heavenly* shelves—that we may climb up to them for ourselves. No, He draws near, and sheds His peace abroad in our hearts.

O Christian, if you are laboring under deep distresses, your Father does not give you promises, and then leave you to draw them up from the Word like buckets from a well—but the promises He has written in the Word He will write anew on your heart. He will manifest His love to you, and by His blessed Spirit, dispel your cares and troubles.

Be it known unto you, O mourner, that it is God's prerogative to wipe every tear from the eye of His people. The good Samaritan did not say, "Here is the wine, and here is the oil for you." No, he actually poured in the oil and the wine. Just so, Jesus not only gives you the sweet wine of the promise—but He holds the golden chalice to your lips, and pours the life-blood into your mouth!

The poor, sick, way-worn pilgrim is not merely strengthened to walk—but he is borne on eagles' wings. Glorious gospel! which provides everything for the helpless; which draws near to us—when we cannot reach after it; and brings us grace—before we seek for grace! Here is as much glory in the *giving* as in the *gift*. Happy people who have the Holy Spirit to bring Jesus to them!

October 23 — Morning

"Will you also go away?" John 6:67

Many have forsaken Christ, and have walked no more with Him; but what reason have YOU to make a change?

Has there been any reason for it in the **past**? Has not Jesus proved Himself all-sufficient? He appeals to you this morning, "Have I been a wilderness unto you?" When your soul has simply trusted Jesus, have you ever been confounded? Have you not up until now found your Lord to be a compassionate and generous friend to you; and has not simple faith in Him given you all the peace your spirit could desire? Can you so much as dream of a *better friend*—than He has been to you? Is so, then change not the old and tried—for new and false!

As for the **present**, can that compel you to leave Christ? When we are hard beset with this world, or with the severer trials within the family—we find it a most blessed thing to *pillow our head upon the bosom of our Savior*. This is the joy we have today that we are saved in Him; and if this joy is satisfying, why should we think of changing? Who barter *gold* for *dross*? We will not turn away from the *sun*—until we find a better light; nor will we leave our Lord until a brighter lover shall appear. Since this can never be, we will hold Him with an immortal grasp—and bind His name as a seal upon our arm.

As for the **future**, can you suggest anything which can arise that shall render it necessary for you to mutiny, or desert the old flag to serve under another captain? We do not think so. If life is long—He changes not. If we are *poor*, what better than to have Christ who can make us rich? When we are *sick*, what more do we want than Jesus to make our bed in our sickness? When we *die*, is it not written that "neither death, nor life, nor things present, nor things to come, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord!" We say with Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go!"

October 23 — Evening

"Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray so that you will not fall into temptation!" Luke 22:46

When is the Christian most liable to sleep?

It is when his temporal circumstances are prosperous. Have you not found it so? When you had daily troubles to take to the throne of grace, were you not more wakeful than you are now? Easy roads—make sleepy travelers!

Another dangerous time is when all goes pleasantly in spiritual matters. Bunyan's "Christian" did not sleep when lions were in the way, or when he was wading through the river, or when fighting with Apollyon! But when he had climbed half way up the Hill Difficulty, and came to a delightful arbor—he sat down, and shortly fell asleep—to his great sorrow and loss.

The enchanted ground is a place of balmy breezes, laden with fragrant perfumes and soft influences, all tending to lull pilgrims to sleep. Remember Bunyan's description, "Then they came to a warm arbor, promising much refreshing to the weary pilgrims; for it was beautified with flowers, and was furnished with a soft couch, where the weary might lean." "The arbor was called the Slothful's Friend, and was made on purpose to allure, if it might be, some of the pilgrims to take up their rest there when weary." Depend upon it—it is in easy places that men shut their eyes and wander into the dreamy enchanted ground.

Old Erskine wisely remarked, "I like a roaring devil—better than a sleeping devil." There is no temptation half so dangerous—as not being tempted. The disciples fell asleep after they had seen Jesus transfigured on the mountaintop. Take heed, joyous Christian, spiritual experiences are near neighbors to temptations! Be as happy as you will—only be watchful!

October 24 — Morning

"The trees of the Lord are full of sap." Psalm 104:16

Without *sap*—the tree cannot flourish, or even live. *Vitality* is essential to a Christian. There must be life—a vital principle infused into us by the Holy Spirit—or we cannot be *trees of the Lord*. The mere *name* of being a Christian is but a *dead* thing—we must be filled with the divine life.

This life is **mysterious**. We do not understand the circulation of the sap, by what force it rises, and by what power it descends again. So the spiritual life within us is a sacred mystery. Regeneration is wrought by the Holy Spirit entering into man and becoming man's life; and this divine life in a believer afterwards feeds upon Christ, and is thus sustained by divine food—but whence it comes and where it goes who shall explain to us?

What a **hidden** thing the sap is! The roots go searching through the soil with their little spongioles—but we cannot see them suck out the various nutrients, or transmute the mineral into the vegetable; this work is done down in the dark. Our root is Christ Jesus, and our life is hid in Him; this is the secret of the Lord. The foundation of the Christian life—is as secret as the life itself.

How permanently **active** is the sap in the cedar! In the Christian—the divine life is always full of energy—not always in fruit-bearing—but in inward operations. The believer's graces are all in constant motion! Spiritual life never ceases to palpitate within. He is not always working for God—but his heart is always living upon Him.

As the sap **manifests** itself in producing the foliage and fruit of the tree, so with a truly healthy Christian, his grace is externally manifested in his walk and conversation. If you talk with him—he cannot help speaking about Jesus. If you notice his actions—you will see that he has been with Jesus. He has so much sap within, that it must fill his conduct and conversation with life!

October 24 — *Evening*

"He poured water into a basin—and began to wash His disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around Him!" John 13:5

The Lord Jesus loves His people so much—that every day He is still doing for them, much that is analogous to the washing of their soiled feet. He accepts their poorest actions. He feels their deepest sorrows. He hears their slenderest wishes. He forgives their every transgression. In one sense, He is still their Servant—as well as their Friend and Master.

He still humbly and patiently goes among His people with the basin and the towel. He does this when day by day—He cleanses them from their constant infirmities and sins.

Last night, when you bowed the knee, you mournfully confessed your sinful conduct; and even tonight, you must mourn afresh that you have fallen again into the same folly and sin, from which special grace delivered you long ago—and yet Jesus will have great patience with you! He will hear your confession of sin; He will say, "I will—be clean!" He will again apply the blood of sprinkling, and speak peace to your conscience, and remove every vile spot!

What condescending patience there is—when the Savior bears with the oft recurring follies of His wayward disciple—day by day, and hour by hour, washing away the multiplied transgressions of His erring, but yet beloved child! To endure the constant follies and sins of His people—this is divine indeed!

While we find comfort and peace in our Lord's daily cleansing, its legitimate influence upon us will be to increase our watchfulness, and quicken our desire for holiness! Is it so with you?

October 25 — Morning

"Because of the truth, which lives in us—and will be with us forever." 2 John 2

Once let the truth of God obtain an entrance into the human heart, and subdue the whole man unto itself—no human or infernal power can dislodge it! We do not entertain it as a *guest*, but as the *master* of the house. He is no Christian, who does not thus believe. Those who feel the vital power of the gospel, and know the might of the Holy Spirit as He opens, applies, and seals the Word, would sooner be torn to pieces—than forsake the gospel of their salvation.

What thousands of mercies are enrapt up in the assurance that the truth will be with us forever; will be our living support, our dying comfort, our rising song, our eternal glory! This is Christian privilege, without it our faith would be of little worth. Some truths we outgrow and leave behind, for they are but *rudiments* and lessons for beginners. But we cannot thus deal with Divine truth, for though it is sweet food for babes, it is in the highest sense strong meat for men.

The truth that *we are sinners* is painfully with us to humble and make us watchful. The more blessed truth that whoever believes on the Lord Jesus shall be saved—abides with us as our hope and joy. Experience, so far from loosening our hold of the doctrines of grace, has knit us to them more and more firmly. Our grounds and motives for believing are now more strong, more numerous than ever, and we have reason to expect that it will be so until in death we clasp the Savior in our arms!

Wherever this abiding love of truth can be discovered—we are bound to exercise our love. No narrow circle can contain our gracious sympathies. As wide as the *election of grace*—must be our communion of heart. Much of *error* may be mingled with *truth* received, let us war with the error—but still love the brother for the measure of truth which we see in him. Above all let us love and spread the truth ourselves!

October 25 — Evening

"Ruth left and entered the field to gather grain behind the harvesters. She *happened* to be in the portion of land belonging to Boaz, who was from Elimelech's family." Ruth 2:3

"She happened." Yes, it seemed nothing but an accident—but how divinely was it overruled! Ruth had gone forth with her mother's blessing, under the care of her mother's God—to humble but honorable toil; and the providence of God was guiding her every step! Little did she know, that amid the sheaves—she would find a husband; and that he would make her the joint owner of all those broad acres; and that she a poor foreigner, would become an ancestor of the great Messiah!

God is very good to those who trust in Him, and often surprises them with *unlooked for blessings*. Little do we know what may happen to us in the future; but this sweet fact should cheer us—that nothing which is really good for us—shall be withheld from us!

The word "chance" is banished from the Christian's vocabulary—for we see the *hand of God* in everything. The *trivial* events of today or tomorrow, may involve consequences of the highest importance. Take comfort—our Lord deals as graciously with all His servants—as He did with Ruth!

How blessed would it be, if, in wandering in the field of meditation tonight—we would "happen" to come upon the place where our Kinsman Redeemer will reveal Himself to us! O Spirit of God—guide us to Him. We would sooner *glean* in His field—than bear away the whole *harvest* from any other! O for the footsteps of His flock, which may conduct us to the green pastures where He dwells!

This is a weary world when Jesus is away—we could better do without sun and moon—than without Him. But how divinely fair all things become—in the glory of His presence! Our souls know the virtue which dwells in Jesus, and can never be content without Him. We will wait in prayer this night—until we "happen" to come upon a part of the field belonging to Jesus—wherein He will manifest Himself to us!

October 26 — Morning

"You expected much—but see, it turned out to be little. And when you brought your harvest home—blew it away! *Why?* Because My house lies in ruins, says the Lord Almighty, while you are all busy building your own fine houses!" Haggai 1:9

Churlish souls stint their contributions to the ministry and missionary operations, and call such *saving* 'good economy'. Little do they dream, that they are thus impoverishing themselves. Their excuse, is that they must care for their own families—yet they forget that to neglect the house of God—is the sure way to bring ruin upon their own houses!

Our God has a method in providence—by which He can bless our endeavors beyond our expectation; or can defeat our plans to our confusion and dismay! By a turn of His hand—He can steer our vessel in a profitable channel, or run it aground in poverty and bankruptcy!

It is the teaching of Scripture, that the Lord enriches the *liberal*—and leaves the *miserly* to find out, that withholding tends to poverty. In a very wide sphere of observation, I have noticed that the most generous Christians of my acquaintance, have been always the most happy, and almost invariably the most prosperous. I have seen the liberal giver rise to wealth of which he never dreamed; and I have as often seen the miserly, ungenerous churl descend to poverty by the very stinginess by which he thought to rise.

Men trust good stewards with larger and larger sums, and so it frequently is with the Lord; He gives by *cartloads* to those who give by *bushels*. Where wealth is not bestowed—the Lord makes the *little* to be *much*—by the *contentment* which the sanctified heart feels in a portion of which has been dedicated to the Lord. *Selfishness* looks first at home—but *godliness* seeks first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Yet in the long run selfishness is loss—and godliness is great gain. It needs faith to act towards our God with an open hand—but surely He deserves it from us. All that we can do, is a very poor acknowledgment of our amazing indebtedness to His goodness!

October 26 — Evening

"The rivers run into the sea, but the sea is never full. Then the water returns again to the rivers and flows again to the sea." Ecclesiastes 1:7

Every earthly thing is on the move. *Time* knows nothing of rest. The solid earth is a rolling ball, and the great sun himself is a star obediently fulfilling its course around some greater luminary. Tides move the sea, winds stir the airy ocean, friction wears the rock—change and death rule everywhere!

The sea is not a miser's storehouse for a wealth of waters, for as by one force the waters flow into it, by another they are lifted from it. Men are born but to die—everything is hurry, worry, and vexation!

"Everything under the sun is meaningless, like chasing the wind!" Ecclesiastes 1:14

Friend of the unchanging Jesus—what a joy it is to reflect upon your changeless heritage! Your sea of bliss will be forever full—since God Himself shall pour eternal rivers of pleasure into it. We seek an abiding city beyond the skies—and we shall not be disappointed.

The passage before us may well teach us **gratitude**. *Old Father Ocean* is a great receiver—but he is a generous distributor. What the rivers bring to him—he returns to the earth in the form of clouds and rain. That man is out of joint with the universe, who *takes* all—but makes no *return*. To give to others—is but sowing seed for ourselves. He who is so good a steward as to be willing to use his substance for his Lord, shall be entrusted with more.

Friend of Jesus, are you rendering to Him according to the benefit received? Much has been given you—what is your fruit? Have you done all? Can you not do more? To be *selfish*—is to be *wicked*. Suppose the ocean gave up none of its watery treasure—it would bring ruin upon our race! God forbid that any of us should follow the selfish and destructive policy of living unto ourselves. Jesus pleased not Himself. All fullness dwells in Him—but of His fullness have all we received. O for Jesus' spirit, that henceforth we may live not unto ourselves!

October 27 — Morning

"It is a faithful saying." 2 Timothy 2:11

Paul has four of these "faithful sayings. And there lies a connection between them.

The first one lays the *foundation* of our eternal salvation in the free grace of God, as shown to us in the mission of the great Redeemer. *"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."* (1 Timothy 1:15). **Here is the root of salvation in free grace.**

The next affirms the double *blessedness* which we obtain through this salvation—the blessings of the upper and nether springs—of time and of eternity. *"Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance."* (1 Timothy 4:6). **Here the privileges of that salvation in the life which now is, and in that which is to come.**

The third shows one of the *duties* to which the chosen people are called; we are ordained to suffer for Christ with the promise that *"It is a faithful saying—If we suffer with Him—we shall also reign with Him."* (2 Timothy 2:12). **Here we have the first great branch of suffering with Christ.**

The last sets forth the active form of Christian *service*, bidding us diligently to maintain good works. *"This is a faithful saying, that those who have believed in God—might be careful to maintain good works."* (Titus 3:3). **Here we have the second great branch of serving with Christ.**

And in suffering and serving with Christ we are loaded with the fruits of the Spirit.

Treasure up these faithful sayings. Let them be the guides of our life, our comfort, and our instruction. The apostle Paul proved them to be faithful, they are faithful still, not one word shall fall to the ground; they are worthy of all acceptance, let us accept them now, and prove their faithfulness. Let these *four faithful sayings* be written on the four corners of My house!

October 27 — Evening

"We are all as an unclean thing." Isaiah 64:6

The believer is a new creature; he belongs to a holy generation and a peculiar people; the Spirit of God is in him, and in all respects he is far removed from the natural man. But for all that—the Christian is *a sinner still*. He *is* so from the imperfection of his nature—& will *continue* so to the end of his earthly life.

The *black fingers of sin* leave smuts upon our fairest robes! Sin mars our *repentance* upon the wheel, before the great Potter has finished it. Selfishness defiles our *tears*, and unbelief tampers with our *faith*. Apart from the merit of Jesus, the best thing we ever did—only swelled the number of our sins! For when we have been most pure in our own sight—yet, like the heavens, we are not pure in God's sight! And as He charged His *angels* with folly, much more must He charge us with it—even in our most angelic frames of mind.

Our *song* which thrills to heaven, and seeks to emulate seraphic strains—has human discords in it. Our *prayer* which moves the arm of God—is still a bruised and battered prayer, and only moves that arm because the sinless One, the great Mediator, has stepped in to take away the sin of our supplication.

The most golden faith or the purest degree of sanctification to which a Christian ever attained on earth—has still so much *alloy* in it—as to be only worthy of the eternal flames, in itself considered. *Every night we look into the mirror—and we see a sinner*; and have need confess, "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags!"

Oh, how precious the blood of Christ—to such hearts as ours! How priceless a gift is *His perfect righteousness*! And how bright the hope of perfect holiness hereafter!

Even now, though sin *dwells* in us, its *power* is broken. It has no dominion. It is a broken-backed snake! We are in bitter conflict with it—but it is with a *vanquished* foe—that we have to deal. In but a little while—we shall enter victoriously into the city where nothing defiles!

October 28 — Morning

"I have chosen *you* out of the world." John 15:19

Here is distinguishing grace and discriminating regard—for some are made the special objects of divine affection. Do not be afraid to dwell upon this Scriptural doctrine of *election*. When your mind is most heavy and depressed, you will find it to be a bottle of the richest cordial. Those who doubt the doctrines of grace, or who cast them into the background—miss the richest clusters of Eshcol; they lose the wines on the lees well refined, the fat things full of marrow. There is no *balm in Gilead* comparable to it! If Jonathan's honey, when but touched enlightened the eyes—this is honey which will enlighten your heart to love and learn the mysteries of the kingdom of God. Eat, and fear not any excess; live upon this choice dainty, and fear not that it will be too delicate a diet. Food from the King's table will hurt none of His courtiers.

Desire to have your mind enlarged, that you may comprehend more and more—the eternal, everlasting, sovereign love of God. When you have mounted as high as election, tarry on its sister mount, the *covenant of grace*. Covenant engagements are the munitions of stupendous rock behind which we lie entrenched! Covenant engagements with the surety, Christ Jesus, are the quiet resting-places of trembling spirits.

"His oath, His covenant, His blood,
Support me in the raging flood;
When every earthly prop gives way,
This still is all my strength and stay."

If Jesus undertook to bring me to glory, and if the Father promised that He would give me to the Son to be a part of the infinite reward of the travail of His soul—then, my soul, until God Himself shall be unfaithful, until Jesus shall cease to be the truth—you are safe! When David danced before the ark, he told Michal that election made him do so. Come, my soul, exult before the God of grace and leap for joy of heart!

October 28 — Evening

"His *head* is as the most fine gold, His *locks* are bushy, and black as a raven." Song of Solomon 5:11

All comparisons fail to set forth the beauty of Jesus—but the spouse uses the best within her reach.

By the 'head' of Jesus we may understand His deity—and the ingot of purest gold is the best conceivable metaphor—but all too poor to describe one so precious, so pure, so dear, so glorious. Jesus is not a grain of gold—but a vast globe of it—a priceless mass of treasure such as earth and heaven cannot excel. The creatures are mere iron and clay—they all shall perish like wood, hay, and stubble—but the ever-living Head of the creation, shall shine on for ever and ever! In Him is no mixture, nor smallest taint of alloy. He is for ever infinitely holy and altogether divine.

The 'bushy locks' depict His manly vigor. There is nothing effeminate in our Beloved. He is the manliest of men. Bold as a lion, laborious as an ox, swift as an eagle. Every conceivable and inconceivable beauty, are to be found in Him—though once He was despised and rejected by men. His 'bushy locks', the glory of His head, are not shorn away, He is eternally crowned with peerless majesty.

The 'black' hair indicates youthful freshness, for Jesus has the dew of His youth upon Him. Others grow languid and grey with age—but He is forever a Priest as was Melchizedek. Others come and go—but He abides as God upon His throne, world without end. We will behold Him tonight and adore Him. Angels are gazing upon Him—His redeemed must not turn away their eyes from Him. Where else is there such a Beloved? O for an hour's fellowship with Him! Away, you intruding cares! Jesus draws me—and I run after Him!

October 29 — Morning

"This, then, is how you should pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, etc." Matthew 6:9

This prayer begins where all true prayer must commence, with the *spirit of adoption*, "Our Father." There is no acceptable prayer until we can say, "I will arise, and go unto my *Father*." This child-like spirit soon perceives the grandeur of the Father "in heaven," and ascends to devout adoration, "Hallowed be Your name." The child lisping, "Abba, Father," grows into the cherub crying, "Holy, Holy, Holy!"

There is but a step from rapturous worship—to the glowing missionary spirit, which is a sure outgrowth of filial love and reverent adoration, "may Your kingdom come, may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

Next follows the heartfelt expression of dependence upon God, "Give us this day our daily bread."

Being further illuminated by the Spirit, he discovers that he is not only dependent—but sinful, hence he entreats for mercy, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors."

And being pardoned, having the righteousness of Christ imputed, and knowing his acceptance with God, he humbly supplicates for holy perseverance, "Lead us not into temptation." The man who is really forgiven, is anxious not to offend again; the possession of justification leads to an anxious desire for sanctification. "Forgive us our debts," that is justification; "Lead us not into temptation—but deliver us from evil," that is sanctification in its negative and positive forms.

As the result of all this, there follows a triumphant ascription of praise, "Yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever, Amen." We rejoice that our King reigns in providence and shall reign in grace, even unto the ends of the earth, and of His dominion there shall be no end.

Thus from a sense of adoption, up to fellowship with our reigning Lord, this *short model of prayer* conducts the soul. Lord, teach us thus to pray!

October 29 — Evening

"But they did not know who He was." Luke 24:16

The disciples ought to have recognized Jesus, they had heard His voice so often, and gazed upon that marred face so frequently, that it is amazing that they did not know Him. Yet is it not so with *you* also? Have *you* seen Jesus lately? You have been to His table, and you have not met Him there. You are in a dark trouble this evening, and though He plainly says, "It is I, do not be afraid," yet you cannot recognize Him. Alas! our eyes are blinded! We know His voice; we have looked into His face; we have leaned our head upon His bosom—and yet, though Christ is very near us, we are saying, "O that I knew where I might find Him!"

We should know Jesus, for we have the Scriptures to reflect His image, and yet how possible it is for us to open that precious book—and have no glimpse of the Well-beloved! Dear child of God, are you in that state? Jesus feeds among the lilies of the Word, and you walk among those lilies—and yet you do not see Him! He always walks through the *glades of Scripture*, and desires to commune with His people, as the Father did with Adam in the cool of the day; and yet you are in the garden of Scripture—but cannot see Him, though He is always there!

Why do we not see Him? It must be ascribed in our case, as in the disciples', to *unbelief*. They evidently did not *expect* to see Jesus—and therefore they did not recognize Him. To a great extent in spiritual things—we get what we expect of the Lord. Faith alone can bring us to see Jesus. Make it your prayer, "Lord, open my eyes—that I may see my Savior present with me!" It is a blessed thing to *want* to see Him. But oh! it is better far to *gaze* upon Him! To those who seek Him—He is kind; but to those who find Him—He is beyond expression dear!

October 30 — Morning

"I will praise You, O Lord." Psalm 9:1

Praise should always follow *answered prayer*; as the mist of earth's gratitude rises when the sun of heaven's love warms the ground. Has the Lord been gracious to you, and inclined His ear to the voice of your supplication? Then praise Him as long as you live. Let the ripe fruit drop upon the fertile soil from which it drew its life. Do not deny a song—to Him who has answered your prayer and given you the desire of your heart. To be silent over God's mercies—is to incur the guilt of ingratitude; it is to act as basely as the nine lepers, who after they had been cured of their leprosy—did not return to give thanks unto the healing Lord.

To forget to praise God—is to refuse to benefit *ourselves*; for praise, like prayer, is one great means of promoting the growth of the spiritual life. It helps to remove our burdens, to excite our hope, to increase our faith. It is a healthful and invigorating exercise which quickens the pulse of the believer, and nerves him for fresh enterprises in his Master's service.

To bless God for mercies received, is also the way to benefit our *fellow-men*; "the humble shall hear thereof and be glad." Others who have been in like circumstances shall take comfort if we can say, "Oh! magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together; this poor man cried, and the Lord heard him!" Weak hearts will be strengthened, and drooping saints will be revived as they listen to our "songs of deliverance." Their doubts and fears will be rebuked, as we teach and admonish one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. They too shall "sing in the ways of the Lord," when they hear us magnify His holy name.

Praise is the most heavenly of Christian duties. The angels do not *pray*—but they cease not to *praise* both day and night; and the redeemed, clothed in white robes, with palm-branches in their hands, are never weary of singing the new song, "Worthy is the Lamb!"

October 30 — Evening

"You who dwell in the *gardens*, the companions hearken to Your voice—cause me to hear it."

Song of Solomon 8:13

My sweet Lord Jesus remembers well the garden of Gethsemane, and although He has left that garden—He now dwells in the garden of His church—there He unbosoms Himself to those who keep His blessed company. That voice of love with which He speaks to His beloved, is more musical than the harps of heaven. There is a depth of melodious love within it, which leaves all human music far behind. Ten of thousands on earth, and millions above—are indulged with its harmonious accents. Some whom I well know, and whom I greatly envy, are at this moment hearkening to that beloved voice! O that I were a partaker of their joys! It is true, that some of these are poor, others bedridden, and some near the gates of death—but O my Lord, I would cheerfully *starve* with them, *pine* with them, or *die* with them—if I might but hear Your voice!

Once I did hear it often—but I have grieved Your Spirit. Return unto me in compassion, and once again say unto me, "I am your salvation!" No other voice can content me; I know Your voice, and cannot be deceived by another, let me hear it, I beg you. I know not what You will say, neither do I make any condition, but O my Beloved, do but let me hear You speak, and if it be a *rebuke*—I will bless You for it. Perhaps to cleanse my dull ear—may need an operation very grievous to the flesh—but let it cost what it may—I still have the one consuming desire, cause me to hear Your voice! Bore my ear afresh; pierce my ear with Your harshest notes, only do not permit me to continue deaf to Your calls. Tonight, Lord, grant Your unworthy one his desire, for I am Yours—and You have bought me with Your blood. You have opened my *eye* to see You, and the sight has saved me. Lord, open You my *ear*! I have read Your *heart*, now let me hear Your *lips*!

October 31 — Morning

"Renew a right spirit within me." Psalm 51:10

A *backslider*, if there is a spark of spiritual life left in him—will groan after *restoration*. In this *renewal*, the same exercise of grace is required—as at our *conversion*. We needed *repentance* then; we certainly need it now. We needed *faith* that we might come to Christ at first; only the like faith can bring us to Jesus now. We needed a *word* from the Most High, a word from the lip of the loving One, to end our fears then; we shall soon discover, when under a sense of present sin, that we need it now. No man can be renewed without as real and true a manifestation of the Holy Spirit's energy—just as he felt at first, because the work is as great, and flesh and blood are as much in the way now—as ever they were.

Let your personal weakness, O Christian, be an argument to make you pray earnestly to your God for help. Remember, David when he felt himself to be powerless, did not fold his arms or close his lips—but he hastened to the mercy-seat with, "renew a right spirit within me." Let not the doctrine that you, unaided, can do nothing, make you sleep; but let it be a goad in your side to drive you with a solemn earnestness to *Israel's strong Helper*. O that you may have grace to plead with God, as though you pleaded for your very life, "Lord, renew a right spirit within me!" He who sincerely prays to God to do this—will prove his honesty by using the means through which God works. Be much in prayer; live much upon the Word of God; kill the lusts which have driven your Lord from you; be careful to watch over the future uprisings of sin. The Lord has His own appointed ways; sit by the wayside and you will be ready when He passes by. Continue in all those blessed ordinances which will foster and nourish your dying graces; and, knowing that all the power must proceed from Him, cease not to cry, "Renew a right spirit within me!"

October 31 — Evening

"I knew you in the wilderness, in the land of great drought." Hosea 13:5

Yes, Lord, You did indeed know me in my *fallen sinful state*, and You did even then, choose me for Yourself. When I was loathsome and self-aborred, You received me as Your child, and You satisfied my craving needs. Blessed forever be Your name—for this free, rich, abounding mercy!

Since then, my *inward experience* has often been a wilderness; but You have owned me still as Your beloved, and poured streams of Your love and grace into me to gladden me, and make me fruitful. Yes, when my outward circumstances have been at the worst, and I have wandered in a land of drought, Your sweet presence has solaced me. You have known my soul in adversities, for no affliction dims the luster of Your love.

Most gracious Lord, I magnify You for all Your faithfulness to me in trying circumstances; and I deplore that I should at any time have forgotten You and been exalted in heart—when I have owed all to Your gentleness and love. Have mercy upon Your servant in this thing!

My soul, if Jesus thus acknowledged you in your low estate, be sure that you own both Himself and His cause, now that you are in your prosperity. Do not be lifted up by your worldly successes—so as to be ashamed of the truth or of the poor church with which you have been associated. Follow Jesus into the wilderness—bear the cross with Him when the heat of persecution grows hot. He owned you, O my soul, in your poverty and shame—never be so treacherous as to be ashamed of Him! O for more shame at the thought of being ashamed of my best Beloved! Jesus, my soul cleaves to You!

November 1 — Morning

"The Church in your house." Philemon 2

Is there a Church in your house? Are parents, children and friends—all members of it? or are some still unconverted? Let us pause here and let the question go round—Am I a member of the Church in this house? How would father's heart leap for joy, and mother's eyes fill with holy tears if from the eldest to the youngest all were saved! Let us pray for this great mercy, until the Lord shall grant it to us.

Probably it had been the dearest object of *Philemon's* desires, to have all his household saved; but it was not at first granted him in its fullness. He had a wicked servant, *Onesimus*, who, having wronged him, ran away from his service. His master's prayers followed him, and at last, as God would have it, Onesimus was led to hear Paul preach. His heart was touched, and he returned to Philemon, not only to be a faithful servant—but a brother beloved, adding another member to the Church in Philemon's house.

If there is such a Church in our house, let us order it well, and let all act as in the sight of God. Let us move in the common affairs of life with studied holiness, diligence, kindness, and integrity. More is expected of a Church, than of an ordinary household; family worship must, in such a case, be more devout and hearty; internal love must be more warm and unbroken, and external conduct must be more sanctified and Christlike. We need not fear that the smallness of our number will put us out of the list of Churches, for the Holy Spirit has here enrolled a family-church in the inspired book of remembrance. As a Church let us now draw near to the great head of the one Church universal, and let us beseech Him to give us grace to shine before men—to the glory of His name!

November 1 — Evening

"People didn't realize what was going to happen—until the Flood came and swept them all away! That is the way it will be—when the Son of Man comes!" Matthew 24:39

Universal was the doom—none escaped. The rich and poor—the learned and the illiterate, the admired and the abhorred, the religious and the profane, the old and the young—all sank in one common ruin! Some had doubtless ridiculed Noah—where were their merry jests now? Others had threatened him for his zeal which they counted madness—where were their boastings and hard speeches now? The carper who criticized old Noah's work—is drowned in the same sea which covers his sneering companions. Those who spoke patronizingly of good Noah's fidelity to his convictions—but shared not in them, have sunk to rise no more! And the workers who were paid to help build the wondrous ark, are all lost also. The flood swept them all away, and made no single exception.

Just so, final destruction is sure to every person outside of Christ! No rank, possession, or character, shall suffice to save a single soul who has not believed in the Lord Jesus. My soul, behold this wide-spread judgment and tremble at it. How astonishing was the general apathy! they were all eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage—until the dreadful morning dawned. There was not one wise man upon earth, outside of the ark. Folly duped the whole race, folly as to self-preservation—the most foolish of all follies. Folly in doubting the most true God—the most malignant of fooleries!

Strange, my soul, is it not? All men are negligent of their souls until saving grace gives them *reason*, then they leave their madness and act like rational beings—but not until then.

All who in the ark were safe—no ruin entered there. From the huge elephant down to the tiny mouse—all were safe. The timid hare was equally secure with the courageous lion, the helpless cony as safe as the laborious ox. All are safe in Jesus. My soul, are you in Him?

November 2 — *Morning*

"I am the Lord—and I do not change!" Malachi 3:6

It is well for us that, amidst all the alterations and vicissitudes of life—that there is One whom change cannot affect; One whose heart can never alter—and on whose brow *mutability* can make no furrows. All other things *have* changed—all other things *are* changing. The *sun* itself grows dim with age. The *world* is waxing old—the heavens and earth must soon pass away and perish!

There is One alone, who has immortality—of whose *years* there is no end, and in whose *person* there is no change. The delight which the *mariner* feels, when, after having been tossed about for many a day, he steps again upon the solid shore—is the satisfaction of a Christian when, **amidst all the changes of this troublous life**, he rests the foot of his faith upon this truth, "I am the Lord—and I do not change!" The stability which the anchor gives the ship when it has at last obtained a hold-fast, is like that which the Christian's hope affords him when it fixes itself upon this glorious truth.

"With Him there is no variation!" Whatever His **attributes** were of old—they are now! His power, His wisdom, His justice, His truth, are alike *unchanged*.

He has ever been the **refuge** of His people, their stronghold in the day of trouble—and He is their sure Helper still.

He is unchanged in His **love**. He has loved His people with "an everlasting love!" He loves them now as much as ever He did—and when all earthly things shall have melted in the last conflagration, His love will still wear the dew of its youth. Precious is the assurance that our God never changes! The *wheel of providence* revolves—but its *axle* is eternal love!

November 2 — Evening

"Horror grips me because of the wicked, who have forsaken Your law." Psalm 119:53

My soul, do you feel this *holy shuddering* at the sins of others? If not, you lack inward holiness. David's cheeks were wet with rivers of waters, because of prevailing unholiness. Jeremiah desired eyes like fountains, that he might lament the iniquities of Israel. Lot, a righteous man, was distressed all the immorality and wickedness around him. Those upon whom the mark was set in Ezekiel's vision, were those who sighed and cried for the abominations of Jerusalem.

It cannot but grieve gracious souls—to see what pains men take to go to hell. They know the evil of sin experimentally, and they are alarmed to see others flying like moths into its blaze! Sin makes the righteous shudder, because it violates a holy law, which it is to every man's highest interest to keep—it pulls down the pillars of the society. Sin in others horrifies a believer, because it puts him in mind of the vileness of his own heart—when he sees a heinous sinner, he cries, "*He fell today, and I may fall tomorrow!*"

Sin is horrible to a believer, because it crucified his Savior! He sees in every iniquity—the nails and spear. How can a saved soul behold that *cursed kill-Christ sin* without abhorrence?

Say, my heart—do you sensibly join in all this? It is an awful thing to insult God to His face. The *good* God deserves better treatment, the *great* God claims it, the *just* God will have it—or repay His adversary to his face! An awakened heart trembles at the *audacity of sin*—and stands alarmed at the contemplation of its punishment. How monstrous a thing is rebellion! How direful a doom is prepared for the ungodly!

My soul, never laugh at sin's fooleries—lest you come to smile at sin itself! Sin is your enemy, and your Lord's enemy—view it with detestation, for only so, can you evidence the possession of holiness, without which no man can see the Lord.

November 3 — Morning

"Behold—he prays!" Acts 9:11

Prayers are instantly noticed in heaven. The moment Saul began to pray—the Lord heard him. Here is comfort for the distressed but praying soul. Oftentimes a poor broken-hearted one bends his knee—but can only utter his wailing in the language of sighs and tears; yet that groan has made all the harps of heaven thrill with music; that tear has been caught by God and treasured in the *lachrymatory of heaven*. "You put all my tears into Your bottle," implies that they are caught as they flow!

The suppliant, who groans out his words, will be well understood by the Most High God. He may only *look up with misty eye*; but prayer is the falling of a tear! **Tears** are *the diamonds of heaven!* **Sighs** are a part of the music of Jehovah's court, and are numbered with the most sublime strains which reach the majesty on high!

Do not think that your prayer, however weak or trembling—will be unregarded. *Jacob's ladder* is lofty—but our prayers shall lean upon the Angel of the covenant and so climb its starry rounds.

Our God not only *hears* prayer—but also *loves* to hear it. "He does not forget the cry of the humble." True, He does not regard proud looks and lofty words. He no concern for the pomp and pageantry of kings. He does not listen not to the swell of martial music. He does not regard the triumph and pride of man. But wherever there is a heart full with sorrow, or a lip quivering with agony, or a deep groan, or a penitential sigh—the heart of Jehovah is open! He marks that prayer down in the registry of His memory! He puts our prayers, like rose leaves—between the pages of His book of remembrance, and when the volume is opened at last, there shall be a precious fragrance springing up therefrom!

November 3 — Evening

"Their prayer came up to His holy dwelling place, even unto heaven!" 2 Chronicles 30:27

Prayer is the Christian's never-failing resort in any *case*, in every *plight*. When you cannot use your *sword*—you may take to the weapon of all-prayer. Your *gun-powder* may be damp, your *bow-string* may be broken—but the weapon of all-prayer need never be out of order. Leviathan laughs at the *javelin*—but he trembles at prayer. *Sword* and *spear* need furbishing—but prayer never rusts; and when we think it most blunt—it cuts the best. Prayer is *an open door which none can shut!* Devils may surround you on all sides—but the way *upward* is always open, and as long as that road is unobstructed, you will not fall into the enemy's hand. We can never be taken by force or storm—so long as *heavenly help* comes down to us, to support us in the time of our necessities.

Prayer is never out of season—in summer and in winter its merchandise is precious. Prayer gains an audience with God—in the dead of night, in the midst of business, in the heat of noonday, in the shades of evening. In every condition, whether of poverty, or sickness, or obscurity, or slander, or sin—your covenant God will welcome your prayer and answer it from His holy place.

Nor is prayer ever futile. True *prayer* is evermore true *power*. You may not always get what you ask—but you shall always have your real needs supplied. When God does not answer His children according to the *letter*—He does so according to the *spirit*. If you ask for *coarse meal*—will you be angered because He gives you the *finest flour*? If you seek bodily health, should you complain if instead thereof—He makes your sickness turn to the healing of spiritual maladies? Is it not better to have the affliction *sanctified*, than *removed*? This evening, my soul, do not forget to offer your petition and request, for the Lord is ready to grant you your desires!

November 4 — *Morning*

"My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness." 2 Corinthians 12:9

A primary qualification for serving God with any amount of success, and for doing God's work well and triumphantly, is *a sense of our own weakness*.

When the Christian warrior marches forth to battle, strong in his *own* might, when he boasts, "I know that I shall conquer, *my own* right arm and my conquering sword shall get unto me the victory!" then defeat is not far distant. God will not go forth with that man who marches in his *own* strength. He who reckons on victory by his own strength—has reckoned wrongly, for "it is not by might, nor by power—but by My Spirit, says the Lord Almighty." They who go forth to fight, boasting of their prowess—shall return with their mirthful banners trailing in the dust, and their armor stained with disgrace.

Those who serve God—must serve Him in His own way, and in His strength, or He will never accept their service. God will never own that man who works, unaided by divine strength. The mere fruits of the *earth*—He casts away; He will only reap that grain, the seed of which was sown from heaven, watered by grace, and ripened by the sun of divine love. God will empty out all that you have—before He will put His own into you; He will first clean out your granaries—before He will fill them with the finest of the wheat. The river of God is full of water—but not one drop of it flows from earthly springs. God will have no strength used in His battles—but the strength which He Himself imparts.

Are you mourning over your own weakness? Take courage, for there must be a *consciousness of weakness* before the Lord will give you victory. Your *emptiness*—is but the preparation for your being filled; and your casting down—is but the making ready for your lifting up!

November 4 — Evening

"All whom the Father gives Me—will come to Me!" John 6:37

**"Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man
—but by My Father in heaven!" Matthew 16:17**

No lips can communicate the love of Christ to another—until Jesus Himself shall speak within. Descriptions all fall flat and bland—unless the Holy Spirit fills them with life and power. Until our Immanuel reveals Himself within—the soul cannot truly see Him. If you would see the sun—the sun must reveal itself, and only by its own blaze can that mighty lamp be seen. It is just so with Christ.

Purify your heart by any educational process you may select; elevate your mental faculties to the highest degree of intellectual power—yet this can never reveal Christ to your soul. The Spirit of God must come with power—and then in that mystic holy of holies—the Lord Jesus will display Himself to the sanctified eye—as He does not unto blind unbelievers. Christ must be His own mirror!

The great mass of this blar-eyed world can see nothing of the ineffable glories of Immanuel. He stands before them . . .
without beauty or loveliness,
a root out of a dry ground,
rejected by the vain, and
despised by the proud.

Only where the Spirit has touched the eye with *celestial eye-salve*, quickened the heart with divine life, and educated the soul to a heavenly taste—only then is Jesus truly understood.

"To you who believe—He is precious!" To you, He is the chief corner-stone, the Rock of your salvation, your all in all; but to others He is "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence." Happy are those to whom our Lord manifests Himself, for His promise to such, is that He will make His abode with them.

O Jesus, show Yourself to me now! Favor me with a glimpse of Your all-conquering charms!

November 5 — *Morning*

"No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper." Isaiah 54:17

This day is notable in English history, for two great deliverances wrought by God for us. On this day the plot of the *Papists* to destroy our Houses of Parliament was discovered, 1605. And secondly, today is the anniversary of the landing of King William at Torbay, by which the hope of *Popish ascendancy* was quashed, and religious liberty was secured. This day ought to be celebrated, not by the worldling's mirth—but by the songs of saints. Our Puritan forefathers most devoutly made it a special time of *thanksgiving*. We still have a record of the annual sermons preached by the godly *Matthew Henry* on this day.

Our Christian sentiments, and our love of liberty, should make us regard its anniversary with *holy gratitude*. Let our hearts and lips exclaim, "We have heard with our ears, and our fathers have told us—the wondrous things which You did in their day, and in the olden times before them!"

Lord, You have made this nation the home of the gospel; and when the foe has risen against her—You have shielded her. Help us to offer repeated songs for *repeated deliverances*. Grant us more and more a *hatred of the Romish Antichrist*, and hasten on the day of her entire extinction. Until then, we believe the promise, "No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper."

Should it not be laid upon the heart of every lover of the gospel of Jesus on this day—to plead for the overturning of Romish false doctrines—and the extension of divine truth? Would it not be well to search *our own hearts*, and turn out any of the *Popish lumber of self-righteousness* which may lie concealed therein?

November 5 — Evening

"Be thankful unto Him—and bless His name." Psalm 100:4

Our Lord would have all His people rich in high and happy thoughts concerning His blessed person. Jesus is not content that His brethren should think poorly of Him; it is His pleasure that His espoused ones should be *delighted with His beauty*. We are not to regard Him as a *bare necessary*, like to bread and water—but as a *luxurious delicacy*, as a rare and ravishing delight. To this end He has revealed Himself as the "pearl of great price" in its peerless beauty, as the "bundle of myrrh" in its refreshing fragrance, as the "rose of Sharon" in its lasting perfume, as the "lily" in its spotless purity.

As a help to high thoughts of Christ, remember the estimation that those in *heaven* have of Him— where things are measured by the right standard. Think how *God* esteems the Only Begotten, His unspeakable gift to us. Consider what the *angels* think of Him, as they count it their highest honor to veil their faces at His feet. Consider what the *blood-washed* think of Him, as day without night they sing His well deserved praises.

High thoughts of Christ will enable us to act consistently with our relations towards Him. The more *loftily* we see Christ enthroned, and the more *lowly* we are when bowing before the foot of the throne—the more truly shall we be prepared to act our part towards Him.

Our Lord Jesus desires us to think well of Him—that we may submit cheerfully to His authority. High thoughts of Him increase our love. *Love* and *esteem* go together. Therefore, believer, think much of your Master's excellencies. Study Him in His essential glory, before He took upon Himself your nature! Think of the mighty love which drew Him from His throne to die upon the cross! Admire Him as He conquers all the powers of hell! See Him risen, crowned, glorified! Bow before Him as the Wonderful, the Counselor, the mighty God—for only thus will your love to Him be what it should!

November 6 — *Morning*

"I will pour water upon him who is thirsty." Isaiah 44:3

When a believer has fallen into a low, sad state of feeling—he often tries to lift himself out of it by chastening himself with dark and doleful fears. Such is not the way to *rise* from the dust—but to *remain* in it. As well chain the eagle's wing—to make it mount; as *doubt*—in order to increase our grace. It is not the law—but the gospel which saves the seeking soul at first; and it is not a legal bondage—but gospel liberty alone, which can restore the fainting believer afterwards. Slavish fear does not bring the backslider back to God—but the *sweet wooings of love* allure him to Jesus' bosom.

Are you this morning thirsting for the living God—and unhappy because you cannot find him to the delight of your heart? Have you lost the joy of Christ, and is this your prayer, "Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation"? Are you conscious also that you are barren, like the dry ground; that you are not bringing forth the fruit unto God—which He has a right to expect of you; that you are not so useful in the Church, or in the world—as your heart desires to be? Then here is exactly the promise which you need, "I will pour water upon him who is thirsty." You shall receive the grace you so much require, and you shall have it to the utmost reach of your needs!

Water refreshes the thirsty—you shall be refreshed; your desires shall be gratified. Water quickens sleeping vegetable life—your life shall be quickened by fresh grace. Water swells the buds and makes the fruits ripen; you shall have fructifying grace—you shall be made fruitful in the ways of God. Whatever good quality there is in divine grace, you shall enjoy it to the full. You shall receive all the riches of divine grace in plenty; you shall be as it were, drenched with it—and as sometimes the meadows become flooded by the bursting rivers, and the fields are turned into pools, so shall you be. The thirsty land, shall be springs of water.

November 6 — Evening

"This is the blood of the covenant—which God has commanded you to keep." Hebrews 9:20

There is a strange power about the very *name* of blood; and the *sight* of it is always affecting. A kind heart cannot bear to see a sparrow bleed—and unless familiarized by frequent use—it turns away with horror at the slaughter of a beast! As to the blood of men, it is a sacred thing—it is murder to shed it in wrath, it is a dreadful crime to squander it in war. Is this *solemnity* occasioned by the fact that the blood is the life, and the pouring of it forth the token of death? We think so.

When we rise to contemplate the blood of the Son of God—our awe is yet more increased, and we shudder as we think of the guilt of sin, and the terrible penalty which the Sin-bearer endured. Blood, always precious—is priceless when it streams from Immanuel's side.

The blood of Jesus seals the covenant of grace, and makes it forever sure. Covenants of old, were ratified by *sacrifice*, and the everlasting covenant was ratified in the same manner. Oh, the delight of being saved upon the sure foundation of divine engagements which cannot be dishonored! Salvation by the works of the law is a frail and broken vessel, whose shipwreck is sure; but the *covenant vessel* fears no storms, for the blood ensures the whole.

The blood of Jesus made His testament valid. Wills are of no power, unless the testators die. In this light the soldier's spear is a blessed aid to faith, since it proved our Lord to be really dead. Doubts upon that matter—there can be none, and we may boldly appropriate the legacies which He has left for His people. Happy are those who see their title to heavenly blessings assured to them by a dying Savior. But has this blood no voice to us? Does it not bid us sanctify ourselves unto Him by whom we have been redeemed? Does it not call us to newness of life, and incite us to entire consecration to the Lord? O that the power of the blood might be *known*, and *felt* in us this night!

November 7 — Morning

"Behold, I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands!" Isaiah 49:16

No doubt a part of the wonder which is concentrated in the word "Behold," is excited by the unbelieving lamentation of the preceding sentence. Zion said, "The Lord has forsaken me! My God has forgotten me." How amazed the divine mind seems to be—at this wicked unbelief! What can be more astounding than the unfounded doubts and fears of God's favored people?

The Lord's loving word of rebuke should make us blush; He cries, "How can I have forgotten you—when I have engraved you upon the palms of my hands? How dare you doubt my constant remembrance, when the memorial is set upon my very flesh?" O unbelief, how strange a marvel you are! We know not which most to wonder at, the faithfulness of God—or the unbelief of His people! He keeps His promise a thousand times—and yet the next trial makes us doubt Him. He never fails; He is never a dry well; He is never as a setting sun, a passing meteor, or a melting vapor—and yet we are as continually vexed with anxieties, molested with suspicions, and disturbed with fears, as if our God were the mirage of the desert.

"Behold," is a word intended to excite admiration. Here, indeed, we have a theme for marveling! Heaven and earth may well be astonished, that *rebels* should obtain so great a nearness to the heart of infinite love, as to be engraved upon the palms of His hands. "I have engraved **you**." It does not say, "Your name." The name is there—but that is not all, "I have engraved **you**." See the fullness of this! I have engraved your person, your image, your case, your circumstances, your sins, your temptations, your weaknesses, your needs, your works! I have engraved you, everything about you, all that concerns you; I have put you altogether there. Will you ever say again that your God has forsaken you—when He has engraved you upon His own palms?

November 7 — Evening

"And you shall be My witnesses." Acts 1:8

In order to learn how to discharge your duty as a witness for Christ—look at His example. He is always witnessing—by the well of Samaria, or in the Temple of Jerusalem—by the lake of Gennesaret, or on the mountain's brow. He is witnessing night and day; His mighty prayers are as vocal to God—as His daily services. He witnesses under all circumstances; Scribes and Pharisees cannot shut His mouth; even before Pilate He witnesses a good confession. He witnesses so clearly, and distinctly—that there is no mistake in Him.

Christian, make your *life* a clear testimony. Be as the clear brook wherein you may see every stone at the bottom—not as the muddy creek, of which you only see the surface—but clear and transparent, so that your heart's love to God and man may be visible to all. You need not say, "I am true!" *Be true!* Boast not of integrity—but *be* upright. So shall your testimony be such that men cannot help seeing it.

Never, for fear of feeble man, restrain your witness. Your lips have been warmed with a coal from off the altar; let them speak as heaven-touched lips should speak. "In the morning sow your seed, and in the evening withhold not your hand." Watch not the clouds, consult not the wind—in season and out of season—witness for the Savior, and if it shall come to pass that for Christ's sake and the gospel's you shall endure suffering in any shape, shrink not—but rejoice in the honor thus conferred upon you, that you are counted worthy to suffer with your Lord. Rejoice also in this—that your sufferings, your losses, and persecutions shall make a platform—from which the more vigorously and with greater power you shall witness for Christ Jesus. Study your *great Exemplar*, and be filled with His evangelistic spirit. Remember that you need much teaching, much upholding, much grace, and much humility—if your witnessing is to be to your Master's glory!

November 8 — *Morning*

"As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord." Colossians 2:6

The *life of faith* is represented as receiving—an act which implies the very opposite of anything like merit. It is simply the acceptance of a gift. As the earth drinks in the *rain*, as the sea receives the *streams*, as the day receives the *sunlight*—so we, giving nothing, partake freely of the grace of God. The saints are not, by nature, *wells* or *streams*; they are but *cisterns* into which the living water flows; they are *empty vessels* into which God pours His salvation.

The idea of receiving implies a sense of *realization*, making the matter a reality. One cannot very well receive a shadow; we receive that which is substantial—so is it in the life of faith, Christ becomes real to us. While we are without faith, Jesus is a mere name to us—a person who lived a long while ago—so long ago that His life is only a history to us now! By an act of faith—Jesus becomes a real person in the consciousness of our heart.

But receiving also means *grasping* or getting *possession* of. The thing which I receive, becomes my own—I appropriate to myself that which is given. When I receive Jesus, He becomes my Savior, so mine that neither life nor death shall be able to rob me of Him.

All this is to receive Christ—to take Him as God's free gift; to realize Him in my heart, and to appropriate Him as mine.

Salvation may be described as the blind receiving sight, the deaf receiving hearing, the dead receiving life; but we have not only received these blessings, we have received *Jesus Himself*. It is true that He gave us life from the dead. He gave us pardon of sin; He gave us imputed righteousness. These are all precious things—but we are not content with them; we have received *Christ Himself*. The Son of God has been poured into us, and we have received Him, and appropriated Him. What a *heartful* Jesus must be—for heaven itself cannot contain Him!

November 8 — Evening

"The Master says—Where is the guestroom, where I shall eat the Passover with My disciples?" Mark 14:14

At the time of the Passover, Jerusalem was one great inn; each householder had invited his own friends—but no one had invited the Savior, and He had no dwelling of His own. It was by His own supernatural power—that He procured an upper room in which to keep the feast. It is so even to this day—Jesus is not received among men—but only where by His supernatural power and grace—He makes the heart anew. All doors are open enough to the prince of darkness—but Jesus must clear a way for Himself or lodge in the streets.

It was through the mysterious power exerted by our Lord—that the householder raised no question—but at once cheerfully and joyfully opened his guest chamber. Who he was, and what he was, we do not know—but he readily accepted the honor which the Redeemer proposed to confer upon him. In like manner it is still revealed who are the Lord's chosen, and who are not; for when the gospel comes to some, they fight against it, and will not have it—but where men receive it, welcoming it—this is a sure indication that there is a *secret work* going on in the soul, and that God has chosen them unto eternal life. Are you willing, dear reader, to receive Christ? then there is no difficulty in the way; Christ will be your guest; His own power is working with you, making you willing.

What an honor to entertain the Son of God! The heaven of heavens cannot contain Him, and yet He condescends to find a house within our hearts! We are not worthy that He should come under our roof—but what an unutterable privilege when He condescends to enter! for then He makes a feast, and causes us to feast with Him upon royal dainties, we sit at a banquet where the viands are immortal, and give immortality to those who feed thereon. Blessed among the sons of Adam—is he who entertains the angels' Lord!

November 9 — *Morning*

"As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord—so walk in Him." Colossians 2:6

If we have received Christ Himself in our inmost hearts, our new life will *manifest* its intimate acquaintance with Him by a *walk of faith* in Him.

Walking implies **action**. Our religion is not to be confined to our closet; we must carry out into practical effect that which we believe. If a man walks in Christ, then he so acts as Christ would act; for Christ being in him, his hope, his love, his joy, his life, he is the reflection of the image of Jesus; and men say of that man, "He is like his Master—he lives like Jesus Christ!"

Walking signifies **progress**. "So walk in Him." Proceed from grace to grace, run forward until you reach the uttermost degree of knowledge that a man can attain concerning our Beloved.

Walking implies **continuance**. There must be a perpetual abiding in Christ. How many Christians think that in the morning and evening they ought to come into the company of Jesus—but may give their hearts to the world all the day. This is poor living; we should always be with Him, treading in His steps and doing His will.

Walking also implies **habit**. When we speak of a man's walk and life—we mean his habits, the constant tenor of his life. Now, if we sometimes enjoy Christ, and then forget Him; sometimes call Him ours, and anon lose our hold, that is not a habit; we do not walk in Him. We must keep to Him, cling to Him, never let Him go—but live and have our being in Him. "As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord—so walk in Him"; persevere in the same way in which you have begun, and, as at the first Christ Jesus was the trust of your faith, the source of your life, the principle of your action, and the joy of your spirit—so let Him be the same until life's end; the same when you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, and enter into the joy and the rest which remain for the people of God. O Holy Spirit, enable us to obey this heavenly precept!

November 9 — Evening

"He will dwell on the heights; his refuge will be the rocky fortresses, his food provided, his water assured."

Isaiah 33:16

Do you doubt, O Christian—do you doubt as to whether God will fulfill His promise? Shall the rocky fortresses be taken by storm? Or shall the storehouses of heaven fail? Do you think that your heavenly Father, though He knows that you have need of food and clothing, will yet forget you? When not a *sparrow* falls to the ground without your Father, and the very *hairs* of your head are all numbered—will you mistrust and doubt Him?

Perhaps your affliction will continue upon you—until you dare to trust your God, and then it shall end. There have been many who have been tried and sorely vexed—until at last they have been driven in sheer desperation to exercise faith in God, and the moment of their faith has been the instant of their deliverance; they have seen whether God would keep His promise or not. Oh, I beg you—doubt Him no longer! Do not please Satan, and do not vex yourself by indulging in hard thoughts of God.

Do not think that it is a light matter to doubt Jehovah. Remember, it is a sin; and not a little sin either—but in the highest degree criminal. The angels never doubted Him, nor the devils either—we alone, out of all the beings that God has fashioned, dishonor Him by unbelief, and tarnish His honor by mistrust. Shame upon us for this! Our God does not deserve to be so basely suspected! In our past life—we have proved Him to be true and faithful to His Word; and with so many instances of His love and of His kindness as we have received, and are daily receiving, at His hands—it is base and inexcusable that we allow a doubt to sojourn within our heart. May we henceforth wage constant war against *doubts of our God*. They are enemies to our peace and to His honor. With an unstaggering faith, believe that what He has promised—He will also perform. "Lord, I believe—help my unbelief!"

November 10 — *Morning*

"The eternal God is your refuge." Deuteronomy 33:27

The word refuge may be translated "mansion," or "abiding-place," which gives the thought that God is our abode, our home. There is a fullness and sweetness in the metaphor, for dear to our hearts is our home, although it be the humblest cottage, or the scantiest garret; and dearer far—is our blessed God, in whom we live, and move, and have our being.

It is at home that we feel **safe**—we shut the world out and dwell in quiet security. So when we are with our God we "fear no evil." He is our shelter and retreat, our abiding refuge.

At home, we take our **rest**; it is there we find repose after the fatigue and toil of the day. And so our hearts find rest in God, when, wearied with life's conflict, we turn to Him, and our soul dwells at ease.

At home, also, we let our hearts **at liberty**; we are not afraid of being misunderstood, nor of our words being misconstrued. So when we are with God—we can commune freely with Him, laying open all our hidden desires; for if the "secret of the Lord is with those who fear Him," the secrets of those who fear Him ought to be, and must be, with their Lord.

Home, too, is the place of our truest and purest **happiness**—and it is in God that our hearts find their deepest delight. We have joy in Him which far surpasses all other joy.

It is also for home that we **work** and labor. The thought of home, gives strength to bear the daily burden, and quickens the fingers to perform the task; and in this sense we may also say that God is our home. Love to Him strengthens us. We think of Him in the person of His dear Son; and a glimpse of the suffering face of the Redeemer constrains us to labor in His cause. We feel that we must work, for we have brethren yet to be saved, and we have our Father's heart to make glad by bringing home His wandering sons; we would fill with holy mirth—the sacred family among whom we dwell. Happy are those who have thus the God of Jacob for their refuge!

November 10 — Evening

"It is enough for the disciple—to be as his Master." Matthew 10:25

No one will dispute this statement, for it would be unfitting for the servant to be exalted above his Master. When our Lord was on earth, what was the treatment He received? Were His claims acknowledged, His instructions followed, His perfections worshiped, by those whom He came to bless? No! "He was despised and rejected of men." His place was outside the camp! Cross-bearing was His occupation. Did the world yield Him solace and rest? "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests—but the Son of man has nowhere to lay His head." This inhospitable world afforded Him no shelter—it cast Him out—and crucified Him!

Such—if you are a follower of Jesus, and maintain a consistent, Christ-like walk and lifestyle—you must expect to be the lot of that part of your spiritual life which, in its outward development, comes under the observation of men. They will treat it as they treated the Savior—they will *despise* it.

Do not dream that worldlings will admire you, or that the more holy and the more Christ-like you are—the more peaceably people will act towards you. They did not prize the *polished gem*—how would they value the jewel in the rough? "If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of His household?" If we were more like Christ—we would be more hated by His enemies. It would be a sad dishonor to a child of God—to be the world's favorite. It is a very bad sign—to hear a wicked world clap its hands and shout "Well done!" to the Christian man. He may begin to look to his character, and wonder whether he has not been doing wrong, when the ungodly give him their approbation. Let us be true to our Master, and have no friendship with a blind and base world which scorns and rejects Him. Far be it from us—to seek a crown of honor where our Lord found a coronet of thorns! "If the world hates you, understand that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own. However, because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of it, the world hates you!" John 15:18-19

November 11 — *Morning*

"The eternal God is your refuge—and *His everlasting arms* are under you!" Deuteronomy 33:27

God—the eternal God—is Himself our support at all times—and especially when we are sinking in deep trouble! There are seasons when the Christian sinks very low in **humiliation**. Under a deep sense of his great sinfulness, he is humbled before God until he scarcely knows how to pray, because he appears, in his own sight, so worthless. Well, child of God, remember that when you are at your worst and lowest—yet "underneath" you "are His everlasting arms." Sin may drag you ever so low—but Christ's great atonement is still under all. You may have descended into the deeps—but you cannot have fallen so low as "the uttermost"; and to the uttermost He saves.

Again, the Christian sometimes sinks very deeply in sore **trials**. Every earthly prop is cut away. What then? Still underneath him are "His everlasting arms." He cannot fall so deep in distress and affliction, but what the covenant grace of an ever-faithful God will still encircle him. The Christian may be sinking under trouble from within through fierce conflict—but even then he cannot be brought so low as to be beyond the reach of "His everlasting arms." They are underneath him; and, while thus sustained, all Satan's efforts to harm him avail nothing.

This assurance of God's support—is a comfort to any weary but earnest *worker* in the service of God. It implies a promise of *strength* for each day, *grace* for each need, and *power* for each duty.

And, further, when *death* comes, the promise shall still hold good. When we stand in the midst of the swelling *river of death*, we shall be able to say with David, "I will fear no evil—for You are with me!" We shall descend into the grave—but we shall go no lower, for His everlasting arms prevent our further fall. All through life, and at its close, we shall be upheld by "His everlasting arms" arms that neither flag nor lose their strength, for "the everlasting God, the Creator of all the earth—He never grows faint or weary."

November 11 — Evening

"He shall choose our inheritance for us." Psalm 47:4

Believer, if your inheritance is a lowly one—you should be satisfied with your earthly portion; for you may rest assured that it is the fittest for you. *Unerring wisdom* ordained your lot, and selected for you the safest and best condition.

A ship of large tonnage is to be brought up the river; now, in one part of the stream there is a sandbank; should someone ask, "Why does the captain steer through the *deep* part of the channel and deviate so much from a straight line?" His answer would be, "Because I should not get my vessel into harbor at all—if I did not keep to the *deep* channel." Just so, it may be, you would run aground and suffer shipwreck, if your divine Captain did not steer you into the *depths of affliction* where *waves of trouble* follow each other in quick succession.

Some *plants* die if they have too much sunshine. It may be that you are planted where you get but little sunshine, you are put there by the loving Gardener, because only in that situation will you bring forth fruit unto perfection.

Remember this, had any other *condition* been better for you than the one in which you are—divine love would have put you there! You are placed by God in the most suitable circumstances, and if you had the choosing of your lot, you would soon cry, "Lord, choose my inheritance for me, for by my self-will I am pierced through with many sorrows!"

Be content with such things as you have, since the Lord has ordered all things for your good. Take up your own daily cross; it is the burden best suited for your shoulder, and will prove most effective to make you perfect in every good word and work to the glory of God. Down *busy self*, and *proud impatience*, it is not for you to choose—but for the Lord of Love!

"Trials must and will befall—
But with humble faith to see
Love inscribed upon them all;
This is happiness to me!"

November 12 — Morning

"The trial of your faith." 1 Peter 1:7

Untried faith may be *true* faith—but it is sure to be *little* faith—and it is likely to remain dwarfish so long as it is without trials. Faith never prospers so well—as when all things are *against* her. Tempests are her trainers, and lightnings are her illuminators. When a calm reigns on the sea, spread the sails as you will, the ship does not move to its harbor; for on a slumbering ocean the keel sleeps too. Let the winds rush howling forth, and let the waters lift up themselves, then, though the vessel may rock, and her deck may be washed with waves, and her mast may creak under the pressure of the full and swelling sail—it is then that she makes headway towards her desired haven!

No *flowers* wear so lovely a blue—as those which grow at the foot of the frozen glacier; no *stars* gleam so brightly—as those which glisten in the polar sky; no water tastes so sweet—as that which springs amid the desert sand; and no faith is so precious—as that which lives and triumphs in adversity.

Tried faith brings *experience*. You could not have believed your own *weakness*, had you not been compelled to pass through the rivers; and you would never have known *God's strength*, had you not been supported amid the water-floods.

Faith increases in solidity, assurance, and intensity—the more it is exercised with tribulation. Faith is precious, and its *trial* is precious too. Let not this, however, discourage those who are young in faith. You will have trials enough without seeking them—the full portion will be *measured out* to you in due season. Meanwhile, if you cannot yet claim the result of long experience, thank God for what grace you have; praise Him for that degree of holy confidence whereunto you have attained—walk according to that rule, and you shall yet have more and more of the blessing of God!

November 12 — Evening

"Jesus went out to the mountain to pray—and spent all night in prayer to God." Luke 6:12

If ever one might have lived without prayer, it was our spotless, perfect a Lord—and yet none was ever so much in supplication as He! Such was His love to His Father—that He loved much to be in communion with Him! Such His love for His people—that He desired to be much in intercession for them.

The fact of this *eminent prayerfulness of Jesus* is a lesson for us—He has given us an *example* that we may follow in His steps.

The **time** He chose was admirable—it was the hour of silence, when the crowd would not disturb Him; the time of inaction, when all but Himself had ceased to labor; and the season when slumber made men forget their woes, and cease their applications to Him for relief. While others found rest in sleep—He refreshed Himself with prayer.

The **place** was also well selected. He was alone where none would intrude, where none could observe—thus was He free from Pharisaic ostentation and vulgar interruption. Those dark and silent hills—were a fit oratory for the Son of God. Heaven and earth in midnight stillness—heard the groans and sighs of the mysterious Being in whom both worlds were blended.

The **continuance** of His pleadings is remarkable; the long watches were not too long; the cold wind did not chill His devotions; the grim darkness did not darken His faith, or loneliness check His importunity. We cannot watch with Him one hour—but He watched for us whole nights!

The **occasion** for this prayer is notable; it was after His enemies had been enraged—prayer was His refuge and solace; it was before He sent forth the twelve apostles—prayer was the gate of His enterprise, the herald of His new work. Should we not learn from Jesus to resort to special prayer when we are under peculiar trial, or contemplate fresh endeavors for the Master's glory? Lord Jesus, teach us to pray!

November 13 — Morning

"The branch cannot bear fruit of itself." John 15:4

How did you *begin* to bear fruit? It was when you came to Jesus and cast yourselves on His great atonement, and rested on His finished righteousness. Ah! what fruit you had then! Do you remember those early days? Then indeed the vine flourished, the tender grape appeared, the pomegranates budded forth, and the beds of spices gave forth their fragrance!

Have you *declined* since then? If you have, we charge you to remember that time of love, and repent, and do your first works. Be most in those engagements which you have experimentally proved to draw you nearest to Christ, because it is from Him that all your fruits proceed. Any holy exercise which will bring you to Him—will help you to bear fruit.

The sun is, no doubt, a great worker in fruit-creating among the trees of the orchard—and Jesus is still more so among the trees of His garden of grace. When have you been the most fruitless? Has not it been when you have lived farthest from the Lord Jesus Christ, when you have slackened in prayer, when you have departed from the simplicity of your faith, when your *graces* have engrossed your attention instead of your Lord, when you have said, "My mountain stands firm, I shall never be moved"; and have forgotten where your strength dwells? Has not it been then—that your fruit has ceased?

Some of us have been taught that we have nothing outside of Christ, by terrible abasements of heart before the Lord; and when we have seen the utter barrenness and death of all *creature* power, we have cried in anguish, "From Him—all my fruit must be found—for no fruit can ever come from me!" We are taught, by past experience, that the more simply we depend upon the grace of God in Christ, and wait upon the Holy Spirit—the more we shall bring forth fruit unto God. Oh! to trust Jesus for fruit as well as for life!

November 13 — *Evening*

"Men ought always to pray." Luke 18:1

If *men* ought always to pray and not to faint—how much more *Christian* men. Jesus has sent His church into the world on the same errand upon which He Himself came, and this mission includes intercession. What if I say that the church is *the world's priest*? Creation is silent—but the church is to find a mouth for it. It is the church's high privilege to pray with acceptance. The *door of grace* is always open for her petitions, and they never return empty-handed. The veil was rent for her, the blood was sprinkled upon the altar for her, God constantly invites her to ask what she wills. Will she refuse the privilege which angels might envy her? Is she not the bride of Christ? May she not go in unto her King at every hour? Shall she allow the precious privilege to be unused?

The church always has need for prayer. There are always some in her midst who are declining, or falling into open sin. There are *lambs* to be prayed for, that they may be carried in Christ's bosom? the *strong*, lest they grow presumptuous; and the *weak*, lest they become despairing. If we kept up prayer-meetings twenty-four hours in the day, all the days in the year, we might never be without a special subject for supplication. Are we ever without the *sick* and the *poor*, the *afflicted* and the *wavering*? Are we ever without those who seek the conversion of relatives, the reclaiming of back-sliders, or the salvation of the depraved? No! With congregations constantly gathering, with ministers always preaching, with millions of sinners lying dead in trespasses and sins; in a country over which the *darkness of Romanism* is certainly descending; in a world full of idols, cruelties, devilries—if the church does not pray—how shall she excuse her base neglect of the commission of her loving Lord? Let the church be constant in supplication! Let every private believer cast his *mite of prayer* into the treasury!

November 14 — *Morning*

"They claim to follow the Lord—but then they worship Molech, too! So now I will destroy them!"

Zephaniah 1:5

Such people thought themselves safe because they were with both parties—they went with the followers of Jehovah, and also bowed down to Molech. But duplicity is despicable and abominable with God! His soul hates hypocrisy! The idolater who distinctly gives himself to his false God, has one sin less than he who brings his polluted and detestable sacrifice unto the temple of the Lord—while his heart is with the *world!*

In the common matters of daily life, a double-minded man is despised—but in religion he is loathsome to the last degree. The penalty pronounced in the verse before us is terrible—but it is well deserved. Should *divine justice* spare the sinner, who knows the right, approves it, and professes to follow it—and all the while loves the evil, and gives it dominion in his heart?

My soul, search yourself this morning, and see whether you are guilty of double-dealing with God. You *profess* to be a follower of Jesus—do you *truly* love Him? Is your heart right with God? Are you of the family of old *Father Honest*—or are you a relative of *Mr. By-ends*? A mere profession of Christ is of little value—if I am indeed dead in trespasses and sins. To have one foot on the land of truth, and another on the sea of falsehood, will end in a terrible fall and a total ruin. Christ will be all—or nothing.

If God truly reigns in my heart—there will be no space for another reigning power. Do I rest alone on Jesus crucified, and live alone for Him? Is it my desire to do so? Is my heart set upon so doing? If so, blessed be the mighty grace which has led me to salvation! If not—O Lord, pardon my sad offence, and unite my heart to fear Your name!

November 14 — Evening

"Laban replied—It is not our *custom* here to give the younger daughter in marriage before the older one."

Genesis 29:26

We do not excuse Laban for his dishonesty—but we desire to learn from the *custom* which he quoted as his excuse. There are some things which must be taken in *order*, and if we would win the *second*—we must secure the *first*. The second may be the more lovely in our eyes—but the rule of the heavenly country must stand—the elder must be married first.

For instance, many men desire the beautiful Rachel of joy and peace—but they must first be wedded to the bleary-eyed Leah of repentance. Everyone falls in love with happiness, and many would cheerfully serve twice seven years to enjoy it. But according to the rule of the Lord's kingdom, the *Leah of real holiness* must be beloved of our soul—before the *Rachel of true happiness* can be attained.

Heaven is not first—but second, and only by persevering to the end, can we win a portion in it. The *cross* must be carried—before the *crown* can be worn! We must follow our Lord in His *humiliation*—or we shall never rest with Him in *glory*.

My soul, are you so vain as to hope to break through the heavenly rule? Do you hope for *reward without labor*—or *honor without toil*? Dismiss the idle expectation, and be content to take the difficult things—for the sake of the sweet love of Jesus, which will recompense you for all. In such a spirit, laboring and suffering, you will find that *bitters grow sweet*—and that *hard things grow easy*. Like Jacob, your years of service will seem unto you but a few days—for the love you have to Jesus. And when the dear hour of the wedding feast shall come—all your toils shall be as though they had never been! An hour with Jesus—will make up for ages of pain and labor!

November 15 — Morning

"The Lord's portion is His people." Deuteronomy 32:9

How are they His portion?

Firstly, by His own sovereign election. **He chose them**, and set His love upon them. He chose them altogether apart from any goodness in them at the time, or any goodness which He foresaw in them. He had mercy on whom He would have mercy, and ordained a chosen company unto eternal life. Thus, therefore, are they His by His unconstrained election.

They are not only His by choice—but **by purchase**. He has bought and paid for them to the utmost farthing, hence about His title to them—there can be no dispute. The Lord's portion has been fully redeemed, not with corruptible things, as with silver and gold—but with the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ! See the blood-mark upon all the elect, invisible to human eye—but known to Christ, for "the Lord knows those who are His!" He forgets none of those whom He has redeemed! He counts the sheep for whom He laid down His life, and well remembers the people for whom He gave Himself.

They are also His **by conquest**. What a battle He had in us—before we would be won! How long He laid siege to our hearts! How often He sent us terms of surrender! But we barred our gates, and fortified our walls against Him. Do we not remember that glorious hour—when He conquered our hearts? When He placed His cross against the wall, and scaled our ramparts, planting the blood-red flag of His omnipotent mercy on our strongholds? Yes, we are, indeed—the conquered captives of His omnipotent love!

Thus chosen, purchased, and subdued—the rights of our divine possessor are inalienable—we rejoice that we never can be our own; and we desire, day by day, to do His will, and to show forth His glory!

November 15 — *Evening*

"Strengthen, O God, that which you have wrought in us." Psalm 68:28

It is our wisdom, as well as our necessity, to beseech God continually to strengthen that which He has wrought in us. It is because of their neglect in this, that many Christians may blame themselves for those trials and afflictions of spirit which arise from unbelief. It is true that Satan seeks to flood the fair garden of the heart and make it a scene of desolation—but it is also true that many Christians leave the sluice-gates open themselves, and let in the dreadful deluge through carelessness, and lack of prayer to their strong Helper.

We often forget that the *Author* of our faith—must be the *Preserver* of it also. The lamp which was burning in the temple was never allowed to go out—but it had to be daily replenished with *fresh oil*; in like manner, our faith can only live by being sustained with the oil of grace, and we can only obtain this from God Himself. We shall prove to be foolish virgins—if we do not secure the needed sustenance for our lamps. He who *built* the world—*upholds* it, or it would fall in one tremendous crash! He who *made* us Christians—must *maintain* us by His Spirit, or our ruin will be speedy and final.

Let us, then, evening by evening, go to our Lord for the grace and strength we need. We have a strong argument to plead, for it is His *own work of grace* which we ask Him to strengthen, "that which You have wrought in us." Do you think He will fail to protect and sustain that? Only let your faith take hold of His strength—and all the powers of darkness, led on by the *master fiend of hell*, cannot cast a cloud or shadow over your joy and peace. Why faint—when you may be strong? Why suffer defeat—when you may conquer?

Oh! take your wavering faith and drooping graces to Him who can revive and replenish them, and earnestly pray, "Strengthen, O God, that which you have wrought in us!"

November 16 — *Morning*

"The Lord is my portion, says my soul." Lamentations 3:24

The **Lord** is my portion. It is not "The Lord is partly my portion," nor "The Lord is in my portion"; but **He Himself** makes up the sum total of my soul's inheritance! Within the circumference of that circle—lies all that we possess or desire.

The Lord is my portion—not His grace merely, nor His love, nor His covenant—but Jehovah Himself! He has chosen us for His portion—and we have chosen Him for ours. It is true that the Lord must first choose our inheritance for us, or else we would never choose it for ourselves; but if we are really called according to the purpose of electing love—we can sing,

"Loved of my God for Him again
With love intense I burn;
Chosen of Him before time began,
I choose Him in return!"

The Lord is our **all-sufficient** portion. God fills Himself; and if God is all-sufficient in Himself, He must be all-sufficient for us. It is not easy to satisfy man's desires. When he dreams that he is satisfied, in a short while, he wakes to the perception that there is somewhat yet beyond, and straightway the *horse-leech in his heart* cries, "Give, give!"

But all that we can wish for—is to be found in our divine portion, so that we ask, "Whom have I in heaven but You? There is none upon earth that I desire beside You!" Well may we "delight ourselves in the Lord" who makes us to drink of the river of His pleasures. Our faith stretches her wings and mounts like an eagle into the heaven of divine love as to her proper dwelling-place. "The lines have fallen to us in pleasant places; yes, we have a goodly heritage." Let us rejoice in the Lord always; let us show to the world that we are a happy and a blessed people, and thus induce them to exclaim, "We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you!"

November 16 — *Evening*

"Your eyes shall see the King in His beauty!" Isaiah 33:17

The more you know about Christ—the less will you be satisfied with superficial views of Him; and the more deeply you study His transactions in the eternal covenant, His engagements on your behalf as the eternal Surety, and the fullness of His grace which shines in all His offices—the more truly will you see the King in His beauty. Be much in such meditations. Long more and more to see Jesus.

Meditation and contemplation are often like windows of diamond, through which we behold the Redeemer. Meditation puts the telescope to the eye, and enables us to see Jesus in a clearer way than we could have seen Him—if we had lived in the days of His flesh. Would that our conversation were more in heaven, and that we were more taken up with the person, the work, the beauty of our incarnate Lord. More meditation—and the beauty of the King would flash upon us with more resplendence!

Beloved, it is very probable that we shall have such a sight of our glorious King as we never had before, when we come to *die*. Many saints in dying have looked up from amidst the stormy waters, and have seen Jesus walking on the waves of the sea, and heard Him say, "It is I, do not be afraid!" Ah, yes! when the tenement begins to shake, and the clay falls away—we see Christ through the rifts, and between the rafters the *sunlight of heaven* comes streaming in!

But if we want to see the "King in His beauty" *face to face*—we must go to heaven for the sight, or the King must come here in person. O that He would come on the wings of the wind! He is our Husband—and we are widowed by His absence! He is our Brother dear and fair—and we are lonely without Him. Thick veils and clouds hang between our souls and their true love—when shall the day break and the shadows flee away? Oh, long-expected day, begin!

November 17 — Morning

"To Him be glory forever! Amen" Romans 11:36

"To Him be glory forever!" This should be the **single** desire of the Christian. All other wishes must be subservient and tributary to this one. The Christian may wish for prosperity in his business—but only so far as it may help him to promote this, "To Him be glory forever!" He may desire to attain more gifts and more graces—but it should only be that "To Him may be glory forever!" You are not acting as you ought to—when you are moved by any other motive than a *single eye to your Lord's glory*.

As a Christian, you are "of God, and through God." Then see to it that you live "to God." Let nothing ever set your heart beating so mightily—as love to Him. Let this ambition fire your soul. Let this be the foundation of every enterprise upon which you enter—and your sustaining motive whenever your zeal would grow chill. Make God your only object. Depend upon it, where *SELF* begins—sorrow begins! But if God is my supreme delight and only object—to me it is equal whether He ordains life or death—ease or pain!

Let your desire for God's glory be a **growing** desire. You blessed Him in your youth, do not be content with such praises as you gave Him then. Has God prospered you in business? Give Him more—as He has given you more. Has God given you greater grace? Praise Him by stronger faith than you exercised at first. Does your knowledge grow? Then sing more sweetly. Do you enjoy happier times than you once had? Have you been restored from sickness, and has your sorrow been turned into peace and joy? Then give Him more music; put more coals and more sweet frankincense into the *censer of your praise!*

Practically in your life give Him honor, putting the "Amen!" to this doxology to your great and gracious Lord, by your own individual service and increasing holiness!

November 17 — Evening

"He who splits logs—may be endangered by them." Ecclesiastes 10:9

Opressors may take advantage of poor and needy men—as easily as they can split logs—but they had better mind, for it is a dangerous business—for a splinter from a tree has often killed the woodsman. Jesus is persecuted in every injured saint, and He is mighty to avenge His beloved ones. Success in *treading down the poor and needy* is a thing to be trembled at. If there is no danger to persecutors here—there will be great danger hereafter.

To cleave wood is a common every-day business, and yet it has its dangers; so then, reader, there are dangers connected with your calling and daily life—which it will be well for you to be aware of. We refer not to hazards by flood and field, or by disease and sudden death—but to perils of a spiritual sort. Your occupation may be as humble as log splitting, and yet the devil can tempt you in it. You may be a domestic servant, a farm laborer, or a mechanic, and you may be greatly screened from temptations to the grosser vices, and yet some *secret sin* may do you damage. Those who dwell at home, and mingle not with the rough world—may yet be endangered by their very seclusion.

Nowhere is he safe—who thinks himself so! Pride may enter a poor man's heart; avarice may reign in a cottager's bosom; impurity may venture into the quietest home; and anger, and envy, and malice may insinuate themselves into the most rural abode! Even in speaking a few words—we may sin. A little purchase at a shop—may be the first link in a chain of temptations. The mere looking out of a window—may be the beginning of evil.

O Lord, how exposed we are! How shall we be secured! To keep ourselves is work too hard for us—only You Yourself are able to preserve us in such a world of evils. Spread Your wings over us, and we, like little chicks, will cower down beneath You, and feel ourselves safe!

November 18 — *Morning*

"You are an enclosed spring, a sealed fountain." Song of Solomon 4:12

In this metaphor, which has reference to the inner life of a believer, we have very plainly the idea of **secrecy**. It is an *enclosed spring*. There were springs in the East, over which an edifice was built, so that none could reach them, but those who knew the secret entrance. Just so, is the heart of a believer when it is renewed by grace—there is a mysterious life within—which no human skill can touch. It is a secret which no other man knows; nay, which the very man who is the possessor of it—cannot explain to his neighbor.

The text includes not only secrecy—but **separation**. It is not the common spring, of which every passer-by may drink, it is one kept and preserved from all others. It is a fountain bearing a particular mark—a king's royal seal—so that all can see that it is not a common fountain—but a fountain owned by a proprietor, and placed specially by itself alone. So is it with the spiritual life. The chosen of God were separated in the eternal decree; they were separated by God in the day of redemption; and they are separated by the possession of a life which others have not. It is now impossible for them to feel at home with the world, or to delight in its pleasures.

There is also the idea of **sacredness**. The *enclosed spring* is preserved for the use of some special person—and such is the Christian's heart. It is a spring kept for Jesus. Every Christian should feel that he has God's *seal* upon him—and he should be able to say with Paul, "From henceforth let no man trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus."

Another idea is prominent—it is that of **security**. Oh! how sure and safe is the inner life of the believer! If all the powers of earth and hell could combine against it—that immortal principle must still exist, for He who gave it pledged His life for its preservation. And who "is He who shall harm you," when God is your protector?

November 18 — Evening

"You are from everlasting." Psalm 93:2

Christ is everlasting! Of Him we may sing with David, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever." Rejoice, believer, in Jesus Christ—the same yesterday, today, and forever!

Jesus always **was**. The Babe born in Bethlehem, was the Word, which was in the beginning, by whom all things were made. The title by which Christ revealed Himself to John in Patmos was, "Him who is, and who was, and who is to come." If He were not God from everlasting, we could not so devoutly love Him; we could not feel that He had any share in the eternal love which is the fountain of all covenant blessings; but since He was from all eternity with the Father, we trace the stream of divine love to Himself equally with His Father and the blessed Spirit.

As our Lord always was, so also He **is** forevermore. Jesus is not dead; "He *ever lives* to make intercession for us." Resort to Him in all your times of need—for He is waiting to bless you still.

Moreover, Jesus our Lord ever **shall be**. If God should spare your life to fulfill your full day of threescore years and ten, you will find that His cleansing fountain is still opened, and His precious blood has not lost its power! You shall find that the Priest who filled the healing fount with His own blood—lives to purge you from all iniquity! When only your *last battle* remains to be fought, you shall find that the hand of your conquering Captain has not grown feeble—the living Savior shall cheer the dying saint. When you enter *heaven*—you shall find Him there bearing the dew of His youth! And through *eternity* the Lord Jesus shall still remain the perennial spring of joy, and life, and glory to His people. You may draw *living waters* from this sacred well! Jesus always *was*, He always *is*, He always *shall be*. He is eternal in all His attributes, in all His offices, in all His might, and willingness to bless, comfort, guard, and crown His chosen people!

November 19 — *Morning*

"Be careful to devote yourself to good works." Titus 3:8

"Avoid foolish questions." Titus 3:9

Our days are few, and are far better spent in devoting ourselves to good works, than in disputing over matters which are, at best, of minor importance. Incessant discussion of subjects of no practical value, do a world of mischief. Our churches suffer much from petty wars over abstruse points and unimportant questions. After everything has been said that can be said—neither party is any the wiser! Therefore, the discussion no more promotes knowledge, than love! It is foolish to sow in so barren a field.

Questions upon . . .

points wherein Scripture is silent;

mysteries which belong to God alone;

prophecies of doubtful interpretation;

modes of observing mere human ceremonies

—**are all foolish!** Wise men will avoid them! Our business is neither to ask nor answer foolish questions—but to avoid them altogether! If we observe the apostle's precept to be careful to devote ourselves to good works—we shall find ourselves far too much occupied with profitable business—to take much interest in unworthy, contentious, and needless strivings!

There are, however, some questions which are the reverse of foolish—which we must not avoid—but fairly and honestly answer, such as these:

Am I growing in grace and Christ-likeness?

Does my life adorn the doctrine of my Savior?

What more can I do for Jesus?

Such inquiries as these, urgently demand our attention!

If we have been at all given to arguing and disputing, let us now turn to a service so much more profitable. Let us endeavor to lead others, both by our precept and example, to "avoid foolish questions."

November 19 — Evening

"O that I knew where I might find Him!" Job 23:3

In Job's uttermost extremity—he cried after the Lord. The longing desire of an afflicted child of God—is once more to see his Father's face. His first prayer is not "O that I might be healed of the disease which now festers in every part of my body!" Nor even "O that I might see my children restored from the jaws of the grave, and my property once more brought from the hand of the spoiler!" But the first and uppermost cry is, "O that I knew where I might find HIM, who is my God! that I might come even to His seat!"

God's children run home when the storm comes on! It is the heaven-born instinct of a gracious soul—to seek shelter from all troubles beneath the wings of Jehovah. "He who has made God his refuge," might serve as the title of a true believer. A hypocrite, when afflicted by God, resents the infliction, and, like a slave, would run from the Master who has scourged him! But not so the true heir of heaven—he kisses the *hand* which smote him, and seeks shelter from the rod in the bosom of the God who frowned upon him!

Job's desire to commune with God was intensified by the failure of all other sources of consolation. The patriarch turned away from his sorry friends, and looked up to the celestial throne, just as a traveler turns from his empty water *bottle*, and betakes himself with all speed to the *well*. He bids farewell to earth-born hopes, and cries, "O that I knew where I might find my God!"

Nothing teaches us so much the preciousness of the Creator, as when we learn the emptiness of all other things. Turning away with bitter scorn from *earth's hives*, where we find no honey—but many sharp stings; we rejoice in Him whose faithful Word is sweeter than honey or the honeycomb. In every trouble we should first seek to realize God's presence with us. Only let us enjoy His smile—and we can bear our daily cross with a willing heart for His dear sake!

November 20 — *Morning*

"O Lord, You have pleaded the case for my soul. You have redeemed my life." Lamentations 3:58

Observe how positively the prophet speaks. He does not say, "I hope, I trust, I sometimes think, that God has pleaded the case of my soul"; but he speaks of it as a matter of fact not to be disputed.

"You have pleaded the case of my soul." Let us, by the aid of the gracious Comforter, shake off those doubts and fears which so much mar our peace and comfort. Let this be our prayer, that we may be done with the harsh croaking voice of doubt and suspicion, and may be able to speak with the clear, melodious voice of full assurance.

Notice how gratefully the prophet speaks, ascribing all the glory to God alone! You perceive there is not a word concerning himself or his own pleadings. He does not ascribe his deliverance in any measure to any man, much less to his own merit; but it is "you" "O Lord, You have pleaded the case of my soul. You have redeemed my life." A grateful spirit should ever be cultivated by the Christian; and especially after deliverances, we should prepare a song for our God. Earth should be a temple filled with the songs of grateful saints, and every day should be a censor smoking with the *sweet incense of thanksgiving*.

How joyful Jeremiah seems to be, while he records the Lord's mercy. How triumphantly he lifts up the strain! He has been in the low dungeon, and is even now no other than the weeping prophet; and yet in the very book which is called "Lamentations," we hear the voice of Jeremy going up to heaven, "You have pleaded the case of my soul; you have redeemed my life!" O children of God, seek after a vital experience of the Lord's loving-kindness, and when you have it, speak positively of it; sing gratefully; shout triumphantly!

November 20 — Evening

"The coney is but a feeble folk—yet they make they their home in the rocky cliffs." Proverbs 30:26

Conscious of their own natural defenselessness, the coney resort to clefts in the rocky cliffs, and are secure from their enemies.

My heart, be willing to gather a lesson from these feeble folk. You are as weak and as exposed to peril as the timid coney—strive to be as wise as they are, to seek a shelter. My best security is within the munitions of an immutable Jehovah, where His unalterable promises stand like giant cliffs of rock. It will be well with you, my heart, if you can always hide yourself in the bulwarks of His glorious attributes, all of which are guarantees of safety for those who put their trust in Him.

Blessed be the name of the Lord, I have so done, and have found myself like David in Adullam—safe from the cruelty of my enemy. I experience the blessedness of the man who puts his trust in the Lord—for long ago, when Satan and my sins pursued me, I fled to the cleft of the rock—Christ Jesus! And in His riven side—I found a delightful resting-place!

My heart, run to Him anew today, whatever your present grief may be! Jesus cares for you! Jesus will console and help you!

No monarch in his impregnable fortress, is more secure than the coney in his rocky burrow. The master of ten thousand chariots is not one whit better protected—than the little dweller in the rocky cleft. In Jesus—the weak are strong, and the defenseless are safe! They could not be more *strong*—if they were giants. They could not be more *safe*—if they were in heaven! Faith gives to *men on earth*—the protection of the *God of heaven*. More they cannot need, and need not wish.

The coney cannot build a castle—but they avail themselves of what is there already. Just so, I cannot make a refuge for myself—but Jesus has provided it, His Father has given it, His Spirit has revealed it—and lo, again I enter it, and am safe from every foe!

November 21 — Morning

"Do not grieve the Holy Spirit." Ephesians 4:30

All that the believer has, must come from Christ—but it comes solely through the channel of the Spirit of grace. Moreover, as all blessings thus flow to you through the Holy Spirit, so also no good thing can come out of you in holy thought, devout worship, or gracious act—apart from the sanctifying operation of the same Spirit. Even if the good seed is sown in you—yet it will lie *dormant*—until He works in you to will and to do of His own good pleasure.

Do you desire to speak for Jesus? How can you—unless the Holy Spirit touches your tongue? Do you desire to pray? Alas! what dull work it is—unless the Spirit makes intercession for you! Do you desire to subdue sin? Would you be holy? Would you imitate your Master? Do you desire to rise to superlative heights of spirituality? Are you wanting to be made like the angels of God—full of zeal and ardor for the Master's cause? You cannot do any of these things—without the Spirit!

"Without Me—you can do nothing." O branch of the vine, you can have no fruit without the sap! O child of God, you have no life within you—apart from the life which God gives you through His Spirit! Then let us not grieve Him or provoke Him to anger by our sin. Let us not quench Him in one of His faintest motions in our soul. Let us foster His every leading, and be ready to obey His every prompting.

If the Holy Spirit is indeed so mighty—let us attempt nothing without Him! Let us begin no project, and carry on no enterprise, and conclude no transaction, without imploring His blessing. Let us do Him the due homage of feeling our entire weakness apart from Him; and then depend alone upon Him!

November 21 — Evening

"Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with Him." John 12:2

Lazarus is to be envied. It was well to be Martha and *serve* Jesus—but better to be Lazarus and *commune* with Jesus. There are times for each purpose, and each is lovely in its season—but none of the trees of the garden yield such clusters—as the *vine of communion* with Jesus. To sit with Jesus, to hear His words, to mark His acts, and receive His smiles—was such a favor as must have made Lazarus as happy as the angels!

When it has been our happy lot to feast with our Beloved in His banqueting-hall, we would not have given half a sigh for all the kingdoms of the world, if so much breath could have bought them!

Lazarus is to be imitated. It would have been a strange thing if he had *not* been at the table where Jesus was, for he had been *dead*—and Jesus had *raised* him. For the risen one to be absent when the Lord who gave him life was at his house, would have been ungrateful indeed.

We too were once dead! Yes, and like Lazarus—we were stinking in the grave of sin! Jesus raised us—and we live! Can we be content to live at a distance from Him? Do we omit to remember Him at His table, where He deigns to feast with His brethren? Oh, this is cruel! It behooves us to repent, and do as He has bidden us, for His *least wish* should be *law* to us.

To have lived without constant fellowship with one of whom the Jews said, "Behold how He loved him," would have been disgraceful to Lazarus! Is it excusable in *us*—whom Jesus has loved with an everlasting love! To have been cold to Him who wept over his lifeless corpse, would have argued great brutishness in Lazarus. What does it argue in *us*—over whom the Savior has not only wept—but bled!

Come, brethren, who read this portion—let us return unto our heavenly Bridegroom, and ask for His Spirit that we may be on terms of closer intimacy with Him, and henceforth sit at the table with Him!

November 22 — *Morning*

"Israel worked to get a wife—and to pay for her he tended sheep." Hosea 12:12

Jacob, while expostulating with Laban, thus describes his own toil, "This twenty years have I been with you. I did not bring you animals torn by wild beasts; I bore the loss myself. And you demanded payment from me for whatever was stolen by day or night. This was my situation: The heat consumed me in the daytime and the cold at night, and sleep fled from my eyes."

Even more toilsome than this, was the life of our *Savior* here below. He watched over all His sheep until He gave in as His last account, "Of all those whom You have given me I have lost none." His hair was wet with dew, and His locks with the drops of the night. Sleep departed from His eyes, for all night He was in prayer wrestling for His people. One night Peter must be pleaded for; anon, another claims His tearful intercession. No shepherd sitting beneath the cold skies, looking up to the stars, could ever utter such complaints because of the hardness of his toil—as Jesus Christ might have brought, if He had chosen to do so, because of the sternness of His service in order to procure His spouse!

It is sweet to dwell upon the spiritual parallel of Laban having required all the sheep at Jacob's hand. If they were torn of beasts, Jacob must make it good; if any of them died, he must stand as surety for the whole. Was not the toil of Jesus for His Church the toil of one who was under suretyship obligations to bring every believing one safe to the hand of Him who had committed them to His charge? Look upon toiling Jacob—and you see a representation of Him of whom we read, "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd."

November 22 — Evening

"The power of His resurrection." Philipians 3:10

The doctrine of a *risen Savior* is exceedingly precious. The *resurrection* is the corner-stone of the entire building of Christianity. It is the key-stone of the arch of our salvation. It would take a volume to set forth all the streams of living water which flow from this one sacred source—the resurrection of our dear Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. But to know that He has risen, and to have fellowship with Him as such—communing with the risen Savior by possessing a risen life—seeing Him leave the tomb by leaving the tomb of worldliness ourselves, this is even still more precious. The doctrine is the basis of the experience—but as the flower is more lovely than the root, so is the experience of fellowship with the risen Savior more lovely than the doctrine itself. I would have you believe that Christ rose from the dead so as to sing of it, and derive all the consolation which it is possible for you to extract from this well-ascertained and well-witnessed fact.

But I beseech you—rest not contented even there. Though you cannot, like the disciples, see Him visibly—yet I bid you aspire to see Christ Jesus by the *eye of faith*. And though, like Mary Magdalene, you may not "touch" Him—yet may you be privileged to converse with Him, and to know that He is risen, you yourselves being risen in Him to newness of life.

To know a *crucified* Savior as having crucified all my sins, is a high degree of knowledge; but to know a *risen* Savior as having justified me, and to realize that He has bestowed upon me new life, having given me to be a new creature through His own newness of life, this is a noble style of experience—short of it, none ought to rest satisfied. May you both "know Him, and the *power* of His resurrection." Why should souls who are quickened with Jesus, wear the grave-clothes of worldliness and unbelief? Rise, for the Lord is risen!

November 23 — Morning

"Fellowship with Him." 1 John 1:6

When we were united by faith to Christ, we were brought into such complete fellowship with Him, that we were made one with Him, and His interests and ours became mutual and identical.

We have fellowship with Christ in His **love**. What He loves—we love. He loves the saints—so do we. He loves sinners—so do we. He loves the poor perishing race of man, and pants to see earth's deserts transformed into the garden of the Lord—so do we.

We have fellowship with Him in His **desires**. He desires the glory of God—we also labor for the same. He desires that the saints may be with Him where He is—we desire to be with Him there too. He desires to drive out sin—behold we fight under His banner. He desires that His Father's name may be loved and adored by all His creatures—we pray daily, "Let Your kingdom come and Your will be done on earth, even as it is in heaven."

We have fellowship with Christ in His **sufferings**. We are not nailed to the cross, nor do we die a cruel death. But when He is reproached, we are reproached; and a very sweet thing it is to be blamed for His sake, to be despised for following the Master, to have the world against us. The disciple should not be above His Lord.

In our measure we commune with Him in His **labors**, ministering to men by the Word of truth and by deeds of love. Our food and our drink, like His, is to do the will of Him who has sent us, and to finish His work.

We have also fellowship with Christ in His **joys**. We are happy in His happiness, we rejoice in His exaltation. Have you ever tasted that joy, believer? There is no purer or more thrilling delight to be known this side heaven—than that of having Christ's joy fulfilled in us, that our joy may be full. His glory awaits us to complete our fellowship, for His Church shall sit with him upon His throne, as His well-beloved bride and queen!

November 23 — Evening

"Get up into the high mountain." Isaiah 40:9

Each believer should be thirsting for God, for the living God—and longing to climb the hill of the Lord, and see Him face to face. We ought not to rest content in the mists of the *valley*—when the summit of Tabor awaits us. My soul thirsts to drink deep of the cup which is reserved for those who reach the mountain's brow, and bathe their brows in heaven. How pure are the dews of the hills, how fresh is the mountain air, how rich the fare of the dwellers aloft, whose windows look into the New Jerusalem!

Many saints are content to live like men in coal mines—who do not see the sun; they eat dust like the serpent—when they might taste the ambrosial food of angels; they are content to wear the miner's garb—when they might put on king's robes; tears mar their faces—when they might anoint them with celestial oil.

Many a believer pines in a dungeon—when he might walk on the palace roof, and view the goodly land and Lebanon. Rouse yourself, O believer, from your low condition! Cast away your sloth, your lethargy, your coldness, or whatever interferes with your chaste and pure love to Christ, your soul's Husband. Make Him the source, the center, and the circumference of all your soul's range of delight.

What enchants you into such folly, as to remain in a pit—when you may sit on a throne? Do not live in the lowlands of bondage, now that mountain liberty is conferred upon you. Rest no longer satisfied with your dwarfish attainments—but press forward to things more sublime and heavenly. Aspire to a higher, a nobler, a fuller life! Upward to heaven! Nearer to God!

November 24 — *Morning*

"The glorious Lord will be unto us, a place of broad rivers and streams." Isaiah 33:21

Broad rivers and streams produce fertility, and **abundance** in the land. Places near broad rivers are remarkable for the variety of their plants and their plentiful harvests. God is all this to His Church. Having God—she has abundance. What can she ask for—that He will not give her? What need can she mention—which He will not supply? "In this mountain the Lord Almighty shall make unto all people a feast of fat things." Do you need the bread of life? It drops like manna from the sky. Do you need refreshing streams? The rock follows you, and that Rock is Christ. If you suffer any lack—it is your own fault; if you are straitened, you are not straitened in Him—but in your own affections.

Broad rivers and streams also point to **commerce**. Our glorious Lord is to us a place of heavenly merchandise. Through our Redeemer we have commerce with the **past**: the wealth of Calvary, the treasures of the covenant, the riches of the ancient days of election, the stores of eternity—all come to us down the broad stream of our gracious Lord. We have commerce, too, with the **future**. What galleys, laden to the water's edge, come to us from the heavenly glory! Through our glorious Lord we have commerce with **angels**; communion with the bright spirits washed in blood, who sing before the throne; nay, better still, we have fellowship with the **Infinite One**.

Broad rivers and streams are specially intended to set forth the idea of **security**. Rivers were of old a defense. Oh! beloved, what a defense is God to His Church! The devil cannot cross this broad river of God. How he wishes he could turn the current—but fear not, for God abides immutably the same. Satan may worry—but he cannot destroy us!

November 24 — Evening

"A little extra sleep, a little more slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest—and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man!" Proverbs 24:33-34

The worst of sluggards only ask for a *little* slumber; they would be indignant if they were accused of thorough *idleness*. A *little* folding of the hands to rest is all they crave, and they have a crowd of reasons to show that this indulgence is a very proper one. Yet by these *littles*—the day ebbs out, and the time for labor is all gone, and the field is grown over with thorns!

It is by *little procrastinations*—that men ruin their souls. They have no intention to delay for years—a few months will bring the more convenient season. *Tomorrow* they will attend to serious things; but the *present* hour is so occupied and altogether so unsuitable, that they beg to be excused.

Like sands from an hour-glass, time passes. *Life is wasted by driblets*, and seasons of grace lost by *little slumbers*. Oh, to be wise, to catch the *flying hour*—to use the *moments* on the wing! May the Lord teach us this sacred wisdom, for otherwise a poverty of the worst sort awaits us—eternal poverty which shall lack even a drop of water, and we shall beg for it in vain.

Like a traveler steadily pursuing his journey, poverty overtakes the slothful, and ruin overthrows the undecided—each hour brings the dreaded pursuer nearer; he does not linger along the way, for he is on his master's business, and must not tarry. As an armed man enters with authority and power—so shall poverty come to the idle, and death to the impenitent, and there will be no escape!

O that men were wise—and would seek diligently unto the Lord Jesus, before the solemn day shall dawn when it will be too late to plough and to sow, too late to repent and believe. In harvest, it is vain to lament that the seed time was neglected. As yet, faith and holy decision are timely. May we obtain them this night!

November 25 — *Morning*

"To preach deliverance to the captives." Luke 4:18

None but Jesus can give deliverance to captives. Real liberty comes from Him alone.

It is a liberty **righteously bestowed**; for the Son, who is Heir of all things, has a right to make men free. The saints honor the justice of God, which now secures their salvation.

It is a liberty which has been **dearly purchased**. Christ speaks it by His power—but He bought it by His blood. He makes you free—but it is by His own bonds. You go clear, because He bore your burden for you. You are set at liberty, because He has suffered in your stead.

But, though dearly purchased, He **freely** gives it. Jesus asks nothing of us as a *preparation* for this liberty. He finds us sitting in sackcloth and ashes, and bids us put on the beautiful array of freedom. He saves us just as we are, and all without our help or merit.

When Jesus sets free, the liberty is **perpetually** entailed; no chains can bind again. Let the Master say to me, "Captive, I have delivered you!" and it is done forever. *Satan* may plot to enslave us—but if the Lord is on our side—whom shall we fear? The *world*, with its temptations, may seek to ensnare us—but mightier is He who is for us than all those who are against us. The machinations of our own *deceitful hearts* may harass and annoy us—but He who has begun the good work in us will carry it on and perfect it to the end. The foes of God and the enemies of man may gather their hosts together, and come with concentrated fury against us—but if God acquits, who is he who condemns? Not more free is the eagle which mounts to his rocky eyrie, and afterwards outsoars the clouds, than the soul which Christ has delivered.

If we are no more under the law—but free from its curse, let our liberty be *practically exhibited* in our serving God with gratitude and delight. "I am Your servant, and the son of your handmaid—You have loosed my bonds." "Lord, what will You have me to do?"

November 25 — Evening

**"I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy;
and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." Romans 9:15**

In these words the Lord in the plainest manner claims the right to give or to withhold His *saving mercy*, according to His own sovereign will. As the prerogative of life and death is vested in the monarch, so the Judge of all the earth has a right to spare or condemn the guilty, as may seem best in His sight.

Men by their sins have forfeited all claim upon God; they deserve to perish for their sins—and if they *all* do so, they have no ground for complaint. If the Lord steps in to save any, He may do so if the ends of justice are not thwarted; but if He judges it best to leave the condemned to suffer the righteous sentence, none may arraign Him at their bar. Foolish and impudent, are all those discourses against God's sovereign grace, which are but the rebellions of proud human nature against the crown and scepter of Jehovah.

When we are brought to see our own utter ruin and ill desert, and the justice of the divine verdict against sin—we no longer cavil at the truth that the Lord is not bound to save us. We do not murmur if He chooses to save others, as though He were doing *us* an injury—but feel that if He deigns to look upon us, it will be His own free act of undeserved goodness, for which we shall forever bless His name!

How shall those who are the subjects of divine election, sufficiently adore the grace of God? They have no room for boasting, for sovereignty most effectually excludes it. The Lord's will alone is glorified, and the very notion of *human merit* is cast out to everlasting contempt! There is no more humbling doctrine in Scripture—than that of election! There are none more promotive of gratitude, and, consequently, none more sanctifying. Believers should not be afraid of it—but adoringly rejoice in it!

November 26 — *Morning*

"Whatever your hand finds to do—do it with all your might." Ecclesiastes 9:10

"Whatever your *hand* finds to do," refers to works that are possible. There are many things which our *heart* finds to do which we never shall do. It is well it is in our heart; but if we would be eminently useful, we must not be content with forming schemes in our *heart*, and *talking* of them; we must practically carry out "whatever our hand finds to do." **One good *deed* is more worth than a thousand brilliant *theories*!**

Let us not wait for large opportunities, or for a different kind of work—but do just the things we "find to do" day by day. We have no other time in which to live. The *past* is gone; the *future* has not arrived; we never shall have any time but time *present*. Then do not wait until your experience has ripened into maturity, before you attempt to serve God. Endeavor now to bring forth fruit.

Serve God now—but be careful as to the *way* in which you perform what you find to do, "do it with all your might." Do it promptly; do not fritter away your life in thinking of what you *intend* to do tomorrow, as if that could recompense for the idleness of today. No man ever served God by doing things *tomorrow*. If we honor Christ and are blessed—it is by the things which we do today.

Whatever you do for Christ—throw your whole soul into it. Do not give Christ a little slurred labor, done as a matter of course now and then; but when you do serve Him—do it with heart, and soul, and strength.

But where is the might of a Christian? It is not in himself, for he is total weakness. His might lies in the Lord Almighty. Then let us seek His help; let us proceed with prayer and faith, and when we have done what our "hand finds to do," let us wait upon the Lord for His blessing. What we do thus will be *well* done—and will not fail in its effect.

November 26 — *Evening*

"They shall rejoice, and shall see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel." Zechariah 4:10

Small things marked the beginning of the work in the hand of Zerubbabel—but none might despise it, for the Lord had raised up one who would persevere until the headstone should be brought forth with shoutings. The plumb line was in good hands.

Here is the comfort of every believer in the Lord Jesus; let the work of grace be ever so small in its beginnings, the plumb line is in good hands, a master builder greater than Solomon, has undertaken the raising of the heavenly temple, and He will not fail nor be discouraged until the topmost pinnacle shall be raised. If the plumb line were in the hand of any merely human being, we might fear for the building—but the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in Jesus' hand.

The works did not proceed irregularly, and without care, for the master's hand carried a good instrument. Had the walls been hurriedly run up without due superintendence, they might have been out of the perpendicular; but the plumb line was used by the chosen overseer. Jesus is evermore watching the erection of His spiritual temple, that it may be built securely and well. We are for haste—but Jesus is for judgment. He will use the plumb line, and that which is out of line must come down, every stone of it. Hence the failure of many a flattering work, the overthrow of many a glittering profession.

It is not for us to judge the Lord's church, since Jesus has a steady hand, and a true eye, and can use the plumb line well. Do we not rejoice to see judgment left to Him? The plumb line was in active use—it was in the builder's hand; a sure indication that he meant to push on the work to completion. O Lord Jesus, how would we indeed be glad if we could see You at Your great work. O Zion, the beautiful, your walls are still in ruins! Rise, O glorious Builder, and make her desolations to rejoice at Your coming!

November 27 — Morning

"Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord." Zechariah 3:1

In *Joshua the high priest* we see a picture of each and every child of God, who has been brought near by the blood of Christ, and has been taught to minister in holy things, and enter within the veil. Jesus has made us *priests* and *kings* unto God, and even here upon earth we exercise the priesthood of *consecrated living* and *hallowed service*.

This high priest is said to be "standing before the angel of the Lord," that is, standing to minister. This should be the perpetual position of every true believer. Every place is now God's temple, and His people can as truly serve Him in their daily employments, as in His house. They are to be always "ministering," offering the spiritual sacrifice of prayer and praise, and presenting themselves a "living sacrifice."

Notice where it is, that Joshua stands to minister—it is before the *angel of Jehovah*. It is only through a *mediator* that we poor defiled ones can ever become priests unto God. I present what I have before the messenger, the angel of the covenant, the Lord Jesus. Through Him my *prayers* find acceptance wrapped up in His prayers; my *praises* become sweet as they are bound up with bundles of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia from Christ's own garden. If I can bring Him nothing but my *tears*—He will put them with His own tears in His own bottle for He once wept. If I can bring Him nothing but my *groans* and *sighs*—He will accept these as an acceptable sacrifice, for He once was broken in heart, and sighed heavily in spirit. I myself, standing in Him, am accepted in the Beloved; and all my polluted works, though in themselves only objects of divine abhorrence, are so received, that God smells a sweet savor. He is content—and I am blessed. See, then, the position of the Christian, "a priest—standing—before the angel of the Lord."

November 27 — Evening

"The forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." Ephesians 1:7

Could there be a sweeter word in any language than that word "forgiveness," when it sounds in a guilty sinner's ear, like the silver notes of jubilee to the captive Israelite? Blessed, forever blessed be that dear *star of pardon* which shines into the condemned cell, and gives the *perishing* a gleam of hope—amid the midnight of despair!

Can it be possible that sin—such sin as mine—can be forgiven, forgiven altogether, and forever? Hell is my portion as a sinner—there is no possibility of my escaping from it while sin remains upon me. Can the load of guilt be removed? Can the crimson stain be blotted out? Can the adamantine stones of my prison-house ever be loosed from their mortices, or the doors be lifted from their hinges? Jesus tells me that I may yet be forgiven. Forever blessed be the revelation of *atoning love*, which not only tells me that pardon is possible—but that it is secured to all who rest in Jesus. I have believed in the appointed atoning sacrifice, even Jesus crucified, and therefore my sins are at this moment, and forever—forgiven by virtue of His substitutionary pains and death! What joy is this! What bliss to be a perfectly pardoned soul! My soul dedicates all her powers, to Him who of His own unpurchased love became my surety, and wrought out for me redemption through His blood.

What *riches of grace* does free forgiveness exhibit! To forgive at *all*, to forgive *fully*, to forgive *freely*, to forgive *forever*! Here is a constellation of wonders! When I think of how great my sins were, how dear were the precious drops which cleansed me from them, and how gracious was the method by which pardon was sealed home to me—I am in a maze of wondering worshipping affection! I bow before the *throne* which absolves me, I clasp the *cross* which delivers me, I serve henceforth all my days—the Incarnate God, through whom I am this night a pardoned soul!

November 28 — *Morning*

"For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in you, even as you walk in the truth." 3 John 3

The truth was in Gaius—and Gaius walked in a the truth. If the first had not been the case—the second could never have occurred. If the second could not be said of him—the first would have been a mere pretense. Truth must enter into the soul, penetrate and saturate it—or else it is of no value. Doctrines held as a matter of *mere creed*—are like bread in the hand, which ministers no nourishment to the body. But doctrine accepted by the heart, is as food digested, which, by assimilation, sustains and builds up the body.

Truth must be a living force in us, an active energy, an indwelling reality, a part of the woof and warp of our being. If truth is in us, we cannot henceforth part with it. A man may lose his garments or his limbs—but his inward parts are vital, and cannot be torn away without absolute loss of life. A Christian can die—but he cannot deny the truth.

It is a rule of nature—that the inward affects the outward, as light shines from the center of the lantern through the glass. When, therefore, the truth is kindled within, its brightness soon beams forth in the outward life and conversation.

It is said that the food of certain silkworms, colors the cocoons of silk which they spin—and just so the nutriment upon which a man's inward nature lives—gives a tinge to every word and deed proceeding from him.

To *walk in the truth*, imports a life of integrity, holiness, faithfulness, and simplicity—the natural *product* of those principles of truth which the gospel teaches, and which the Spirit of God enables us to receive. We may judge of the *secrets of the soul*—by their manifestation in the man's life. Be it ours today,

O gracious Spirit, to be ruled and governed by Your divine authority, so that nothing false or sinful may reign in our hearts, lest it extend its malignant influence to our daily walk among men.

November 28 — Evening

"He worked for the good of his people." Esther 10:3

Mordecai was a true patriot, and therefore, being exalted to the highest position under Ahasuerus, he used his eminence to promote the prosperity of Israel. In this he was a type of Jesus, who, upon His throne of glory, seeks not His own—but spends His power for His people.

It were well if every Christian would be a *Mordecai* to the church, striving according to his ability for its prosperity. Some are placed in stations of affluence and influence, let them honor their Lord in the high places of the earth, and testify for Jesus before great men. Others have what is far better, namely—close fellowship with the King of kings, let them be sure to plead daily for the weak of the Lord's people, the doubting, the tempted, and the comfortless. It will redound to their honor, if they make much intercession for those who are in darkness and dare not draw near unto the mercy seat.

Instructed believers may serve their Master greatly—if they lay out their talents for the general good, and impart their wealth of heavenly learning to others, by teaching them the things of God. The very least in our Israel may at least seek the welfare of his people; and his *desire*, if he can give no more, shall be acceptable. It is at once the most *Christ-like* and the most *happy* course for a believer—to cease from living to himself. He who blesses others—cannot fail to be blessed himself. On the other hand, to seek our own personal greatness is a wicked and unhappy plan of life, its way will be grievous and its end will be fatal.

Here is the place to ask you, my friend, whether you are to the best of your power seeking the wealth of the church in your neighborhood? I trust you are not doing it mischief by bitterness and scandal, nor weakening it by your neglect. Friend, unite with the Lord's poor, bear their cross, do them all the good you can—and you shall not miss your reward!

November 29 — Morning

"You shall not go up and down as a talebearer among your people. Rebuke your neighbor frankly —so you will not share in his guilt." Leviticus 19:16-17

Tale-bearing emits a threefold poison; for it injures the teller, the hearer, and the person concerning whom the tale is told. Whether the report is true or false, we are by this precept of God's Word, forbidden to spread it. The reputations of the Lord's people should be very precious in our sight, and we should count it shame to help the devil to dishonor the Church and the name of the Lord.

Some tongues need a *bridle* rather than a *spur*. Many glory in pulling down their brethren—as if thereby they raised themselves! Noah's two wise sons cast a mantle over their father, and he who exposed him earned a fearful curse. We may ourselves one of these dark days need forbearance and silence from our brethren—let us render it cheerfully to those who require it now. This should be our family rule, and our personal bond—SPEAK EVIL OF NO MAN!

"Rebuke your neighbor frankly—so you will not share in his guilt." The Holy Spirit, however, permits us to censure sin—and prescribes the way in which we are to do it. It must be done by rebuking our brother to his face, not by railing behind his back. This course is manly, brotherly, Christ-like, and under God's blessing will be useful. Does the flesh shrink from it? Then we must lay the greater stress upon our conscience, and keep ourselves to the work, lest by allowing sin upon our friend—we become ourselves partakers of it.

Hundreds have been saved from gross sins by the timely, wise, affectionate warnings of faithful ministers and brethren. Our Lord Jesus has set us a gracious example of how to deal with erring friends in His warning given to Peter, the prayer with which He preceded it, and the gentle way in which He bore with Peter's boastful denial that he needed such a caution!

November 29 — Evening

"Spices for the anointing oil." Exodus 35:8

Much use was made of this *anointing oil* under the *law*—and that which it represents is of primary importance under the *gospel*. The Holy Spirit, who anoints us for all holy service, is indispensable to us if we would serve the Lord acceptably. Without His aid—our religious services are but a vain oblation, and our inward experience is a dead thing. Whenever our ministry is without unction, what miserable stuff it becomes! nor are the prayers, praises, meditations, and efforts of private Christians one jot superior.

A *holy anointing* is the soul and life of piety, its absence the most grievous of all calamities. To go before the Lord without anointing, is as though some common Levite had thrust himself into the priest's office—his ministrations would rather have been *sins* than *services*. May we never venture upon hallowed exercises, without sacred anointings. They drop upon us from our glorious Head; from His anointing we who are as the skirts of His garments, partake of a plenteous unction.

Choice spices were compounded with rarest art of the apothecary to form the anointing oil, to show forth to us how rich are all the influences of the Holy Spirit. All good things are found in the divine Comforter. Matchless consolation, infallible instruction, divine quickening, spiritual energy, and divine sanctification all lie compounded with other excellencies in that sacred eye-slave, the heavenly anointing oil of the Holy Spirit. It imparts a delightful fragrance to the character and person of the one upon whom it is poured. Nothing like it can be found in all the treasuries of the rich, or the secrets of the wise. It is not to be imitated. It comes alone from God, and it is freely given, through Jesus Christ, to every waiting soul. Let us seek it, for we may have it, may have it this very evening. O Lord, anoint Your servants!

November 30 — *Morning*

Amaziah asked the man of God, "But what should I do about the silver I paid to hire the army of Israel?"

The man of God replied, "The Lord is able to give you much more than this!" 2 Chronicles 25:9

A very important question this seemed to be to Amaziah, the king of Judah; and possibly it is of even more weight with the tried and tempted Christian. To *lose money* is at no times pleasant, and when *principle* involves it, the flesh is not always ready to make the sacrifice. "Why lose that which may be so usefully employed? May not the truth itself be bought too dear? What shall we do without it? Remember the children, and our small income!" All these things and a thousand more, would tempt the Christian to put forth his hand to unrighteous gain, or keep him from carrying out his conscientious convictions, when they involve serious loss.

All men cannot view these matters in the light of *faith*; and even with the followers of Jesus, the doctrine of "We must live!" has quite sufficient weight. "The Lord is able to give you much more than this!" —is a very satisfactory answer to the anxious question. Our Father holds the purse-strings, and what we lose for His sake—He can repay a thousand-fold. It is ours to obey His will, and we may rest assured that He will provide for us. *The Lord will be no man's debtor* at the last. Saints know that a grain of *heart's-ease* is of more value than a ton of *gold*. He who wraps a *threadbare coat about a good conscience*, has gained a spiritual wealth far more desirable than anything he has lost. God's smile—and a dungeon—are enough for a true heart! God's frown—and a palace—would be hell to a gracious spirit. Let the worst come to the worst, let all the talents go, we have not lost our *treasure*, for that is above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God. Meanwhile, even now, the Lord makes the *meek* to inherit the earth, and no good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly.

November 30 — Evening

"Michael and his angels fought against the dragon—and the dragon and his angels fought back."

Revelation 12:7

War always will rage between the two great sovereignties—until one or other is crushed. Peace between good and evil is an impossibility; the very pretense of it would, in fact, be the triumph of the powers of darkness. *Michael* will always fight; his holy soul is vexed with sin, and will not endure it. *Jesus* will always be the dragon's foe, and that not in a quiet sense—but actively, vigorously, with full determination to exterminate evil.

All His servants, whether angels in heaven or messengers on earth, will and must fight; they are born to be warriors! At the cross, they enter into covenant never to make truce with evil; they are a warlike company, firm in defense and fierce in attack. The duty of every soldier in the army of the Lord—is daily, with all his heart, and soul, and strength—to fight against the dragon. The dragon and his angels will not decline the affray; they are incessant in their onslaughts, sparing no weapon, fair or foul.

We are foolish if we expect to serve God without opposition—the more zealous we are, the more sure are we to be assailed by the myrmidons of hell. The church may become slothful—but not so her great antagonist; his restless spirit never allows the war to pause; he hates the woman's seed, and would gladly devour the church if he could. The servants of Satan partake much of the old dragon's energy, and are usually an active race.

War rages all around, and to *dream of peace*—is dangerous and futile. Glory be to God, we know the *end* of the war. The great dragon shall be cast out and forever destroyed, while Jesus and those who are with Him shall receive the crown. Let us sharpen our swords tonight, and ask the Holy Spirit to strengthen our arms for the conflict. Never a battle so important; never a crown so glorious. Every man to his post, O warriors of the cross, and may the Lord tread Satan under your feet shortly!

December 1 — *Morning*

"You have made summer and winter." Psalm 74:17

My soul begin this wintry month with your God. The cold snows and the piercing winds all remind you, that He keeps His covenant with *day and night*, and tend to assure you that He will also keep that glorious covenant which He has made with you in the person of Christ Jesus. He who is true to His Word in the revolutions of the *seasons* of this poor sin-polluted world—will not prove unfaithful in His dealings with His own well-beloved Son.

Winter in the soul is by no means a comfortable season, and if it be upon you just now, it will be very painful to you—but there is this comfort, namely—that the Lord makes it. He sends the sharp blasts of adversity to nip the buds of expectation. He scatters the hoarfrost like ashes over the once verdant meadows of our joy. He casts forth His ice like morsels freezing the streams of our delight. He does it all, He is the *great Winter King*, and rules in the realms of frost—and therefore you cannot murmur.

Losses, crosses, heaviness, sickness, poverty, and a thousand other troubles—are of the Lord's sending, and come to us with wise design. Frosts kill noxious insects, and put a bound to raging diseases. *Winter in the soul* breaks up the clods, and sweetens the soul. O that such good results would always follow our winters of affliction! How we prize the fire just now! how pleasant is its cheerful glow! Let us in the same manner prize our Lord, who is the constant source of warmth and comfort in every time of trouble. Let us draw near to Him, and in Him find joy and peace in believing. Let us wrap ourselves in the warm garments of His promises, and go forth to labors which befit the season, for it is bad to be as the *sluggard* who will not plough by reason of the cold; for he shall beg in summer and have nothing!

December 1 — Evening

"O that we would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to men." Psalm 107:8

If we *complained* less, and *praised* more—we would be happier, and God would be more glorified.

Let us daily praise God for **common mercies**—common as we frequently call them, and yet so priceless, that when deprived of them—we are ready to perish! Let us bless God for the *eyes* with which we behold the sun; for the *health* and *strength* to walk abroad; for the bread we eat; for the clothing we wear. Let us praise Him that we are not cast out among the hopeless, or confined in prison among the guilty. Let us thank Him for liberty, for friends, for family associations and comforts. Let us praise Him, in fact, for everything which we receive from His bounteous hand, for we deserve little, and yet are most plenteously endowed.

But, beloved, the sweetest and the loudest note in our songs of praise should be of **redeeming love**. God's redeeming acts towards His chosen people, are forever the favorite themes of their praise. If we know what redemption means, let us not withhold our sonnets of thanksgiving. We have been redeemed from the power of our corruptions, uplifted from the depth of sin in which we were naturally plunged. We have been led to the cross of Christ—our shackles of guilt have been broken off; we are no longer slaves—but children of the living God, and can rightly expect the period when we shall be presented before the throne without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. Even now by faith we wave the palm-branch and wrap ourselves about with the fair linen which is to be our everlasting array, and shall we not unceasingly give thanks to the Lord our Redeemer? Child of God, can you be silent? Awake, awake, you inheritors of glory, and lead your captivity captive, as you cry with David, "Bless the Lord, O my soul—and all that is within me, bless His holy name!" Let the new month begin with new songs!

December 2 — Morning

"You are absolutely beautiful, my beloved! There is no flaw in you!" Song of Solomon 4:7

The Lord's admiration of His Church is very astonishing, and His description of her beauty is very glowing. She is not merely *beautiful*—but "absolutely beautiful." He views her in Himself, washed in His sin-atoning blood, and clothed in His meritorious righteousness, and He considers her to be full of loveliness and beauty. No wonder that such is the case—since it is but His own perfect excellency that He admires; for the holiness, glory, and perfection of His Church—are His own glorious garments on the back of His own well-beloved spouse!

She is not simply pure, or well-proportioned; she is positively lovely and absolutely beautiful! She has actual merit! Her *deformities of sin* are removed; but more, she has, through her Lord, obtained a meritorious righteousness by which an actual beauty is conferred upon her. Believers have a positive righteousness given to them when they become "accepted in the beloved" (Eph. 1:6).

Nor is the Church *barely* lovely, she is *superlatively* so. Her Lord styles her the "most beautiful of women." She has a real worth and excellence which cannot be rivaled by all the nobility and royalty of the world. If Jesus could exchange His elect bride for all the queens and empresses of earth, or even for the angels in heaven—He would not, for He puts her first and foremost, "most beautiful of women." She far outshines the stars!

Nor is this an opinion which He is ashamed of, for He invites all men to hear it. He sets a "behold" before it, a special note of exclamation, inviting and arresting attention. "Behold! How beautiful you are, my beloved, how beautiful!" (Song of Sol. 4:1). His opinion He publishes abroad even now, and one day from the throne of His glory He will avow the truth of it before the assembled universe. "Come, you who are blessed by My Father" (Matt. 25:34), will be His solemn affirmation of the loveliness of His elect!

December 2 — *Evening*

"Behold, all is vanity!" Ecclesiastes 1:14

Nothing can fully satisfy a person—but the Lord's love and the Lord's own self. Saints have tried other pursuits—but they have been driven out of such fatal refuges.

Solomon, the wisest of men, was permitted to make experiments for us all, and to do for us—what we must not dare to do for ourselves. Here is his testimony in his own words, "So I became greater by far than anyone in Jerusalem before me. I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind! Nothing was gained under the sun!" "Meaningless! Meaningless!" says the Teacher. "Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless."

What! the whole of it meaningless? O favored monarch, is there nothing in all your wealth? Nothing in that wide dominion reaching from the river even to the sea? Nothing in your glorious palaces? In all your music and dancing, and wine and luxury—is there nothing? "Nothing!" he says, "but a chasing after the wind!" This was his final verdict—when he had trodden the whole round of pleasure.

To embrace our Lord Jesus, to dwell in His love, and be fully assured of union with Him—this is all in all. Dear reader, you need not try other forms of pleasure in order to see whether they are better than the Christian's. If you roam the world around—you will see no sights like a sight of the Savior's face! If you could have all the comforts of life—and if you lost your Savior, you would be most wretched. But if you possess Christ—though you should rot in a dungeon—you would find it a paradise! Though you should live in obscurity, or die with famine—yet you would be satisfied with the favor and goodness of the Lord!

December 3 — *Morning*

"You are absolutely beautiful, My beloved! There is no spot in you!" Song of Solomon 4:7

Having pronounced His Church positively full of beauty—our Lord confirms His praise by a precious negative, "There is no spot in you!" As if the thought occurred to the Bridegroom that the carping world would insinuate that He had only mentioned her lovely parts—and had purposely omitted those features which were deformed or defiled—He sums up all by declaring her universally and entirely lovely, and utterly devoid of stain.

A spot may soon be removed, and is the very least thing that can disfigure beauty—but even from this little blemish, the believer is delivered in his Lord's sight. If He had said there is no hideous scar, no horrible deformity, no repulsive ulcer—we might even then have marveled. But when He testifies that she is free from the slightest spot—all these other forms of defilement are included, and the height of wonder is increased.

If He had but promised to remove all spots in heaven, we would have had eternal reason for joy. But when He speaks of it as already done—who can restrain the most intense emotions of satisfaction and delight! O my soul, here is marrow and fatness for you; eat your full, and be satisfied with royal dainties!

Christ Jesus has no quarrel with His spouse. She often wanders from Him, and grieves Him—but He does not allow her faults to affect His love. He sometimes chides—but it is always in the tenderest manner, with the kindest intentions—it is "My love" even then. There is no remembrance of our follies. He does not cherish ill thoughts of us—but He pardons and loves as well after the offence—as before it! It is well for us that it is so, for if Jesus were as mindful of injuries as we are—how could He commune with us? Our precious Husband knows our silly hearts too well—to take any offence at our follies and faults.

December 3 — *Evening*

"The Lord, mighty in battle." Psalm 24:8

Well may our God be glorious in the eyes of His people, seeing that He has wrought such wonders *for* them, *in* them, and *by* them.

For them—the Lord Jesus upon Calvary routed every foe, breaking all the weapons of the enemy in pieces by His finished work of satisfactory obedience. By His triumphant resurrection and ascension, He completely overturned the hopes of hell, leading captivity captive, making a show of our enemies openly, triumphing over them by His cross. Every arrow of guilt which Satan might have shot at us, is broken, for who can lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Vain are the sharp swords of infernal malice, and the perpetual battles of the serpent's seed, for in the midst of the church, the *lame* take the prey, and the *feeblest* warriors are crowned!

The saved may well adore their Lord for His conquests **in** them, since the arrows of their natural hatred towards Him are snapped, and the weapons of their rebellion are broken. What victories has grace won in our *evil hearts*! How glorious is Jesus when the *will* is subdued, and *sindethroned*! As for our remaining corruptions, they shall sustain an equally sure defeat, and every temptation, and doubt, and fear—shall be utterly destroyed. In the Salem of our peaceful hearts, the name of Jesus is great beyond compare—He has won our love!

Even thus securely, may we look for victories **by** us. We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. We shall cast down the powers of darkness which are in the world, by our faith, and zeal, and holiness! We shall win sinners to Jesus, we shall overturn false systems, we shall convert nations, for God is with us, and none shall stand before us.

This evening let the Christian warrior chant the war song, and prepare for tomorrow's fight. Greater is He who is in us—than he that is in the world!

December 4 — Morning

"I have many people in this city!" Acts 18:10

This should be a great encouragement to evangelize—since God has among the vilest of the vile, the most reprobate, the most debauched and drunken—an elect people who must be saved. When you take the Word to them, you do so because God has ordained you to be the messenger of life to their souls, and they must receive it—for so the decree of predestination runs. They are as much redeemed by Christ's blood—as the saints before the eternal throne! They are Christ's property—yet perhaps they are at present, lovers of the ale-house, and haters of holiness. But if Jesus Christ has purchased them—He will have them.

God is not unfaithful to forget the price which His Son has paid. He will not allow His substitutionary sacrifice to be in any case—an ineffectual, dead thing. Tens of thousands of redeemed ones are not regenerated yet—but regenerated they must be! This is our comfort when we go forth to them with the quickening Word of God.

Nay, more, these ungodly ones are prayed for by Christ before the throne. "My prayer is not for them alone," says the great Intercessor, "I pray also for those who will believe in Me through their message." Poor, ignorant souls—they do not pray for themselves—but Jesus prays for them. Their names are on His breastplate, and before long they must bow their stubborn knee, breathing the penitential sigh before the throne of grace.

"The time for figs is not yet." The predestined moment has not struck! But when it comes—they shall obey—for God will have His own redeemed people! They must obey—for the Spirit is not to be withstood when He comes forth with fullness of His saving power. They must become the willing servants of the living God. "My people shall be willing in the day of My power." "He *shall* justify many." "He *shall* see of the travail of His soul—and be satisfied."

December 4 — Evening

"Even we ourselves who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies." Romans 8:23

This *groaning* is universal among the saints—and to a greater or lesser extent, we all feel it. It is not the groan of murmuring or complaint—it is rather the note of desire than of distress. Having received the first-fruits of the Spirit, we desire the whole of our portion. We are sighing that our entire manhood, in its trinity of spirit, soul, and body, may be set free from the last vestige of the fall. We long to put off corruption, weakness, and dishonor—and to wrap ourselves in incorruption, in immortality, in glory, in the spiritual body which the Lord Jesus will bestow upon His people. We long for the manifestation of our adoption as the children of God.

"We groan," but it is "inwardly." It is not the hypocrite's groan, by which he would make men believe that he is a saint because he is wretched. Our sighs are sacred things—too hallowed for us to tell abroad. We keep our groanings to our Lord alone.

Then the apostle says we are "waiting," by which we learn that we are not to be petulant, like Jonah or Elijah, when they said, "Let me die"; nor are we to whimper and sigh for the end of life because we are tired of work, nor wish to escape from our present sufferings. We are to groan for glorification—but we are to wait patiently for it, knowing that what the Lord appoints is best. Waiting implies being ready. We are to stand at the door expecting the Beloved to open it and take us away to Himself.

This "groaning" is a test. You may judge of a man by what he groans after. Some men groan after wealth—they worship Mammon. Some groan continually under the troubles of life—they are merely impatient. But the man who sighs after God, who is uneasy until he is made like Christ—that is the blessed man. May God help us to groan for the coming of the Lord, and the resurrection which He will bring to us

December 5 — *Morning*

"Ask, and it shall be given you." Matthew 7:7

We know of a place in England still existing, where a dole of bread is served to every passerby who chooses to ask for it. Whoever the traveler may be, he has but to knock at the door of *St. Cross Hospital*, and there is the dole of bread for him. Jesus Christ so loves sinners that He has built a *St. Cross Hospital*, so that whenever a sinner is hungry, he has but to knock and have his needs supplied.

Nay, He has done better; He has attached to this Hospital of the Cross—a bath. Whenever a soul is black and filthy, it has but to go there and be washed. The fountain is always full, always effectual. No sinner ever went into it and found that it could not wash away his stains. Sins which were scarlet and crimson—have all disappeared, and the sinner has been whiter than snow!

As if this were not enough, there is attached to this Hospital of the Cross—a wardrobe, and a sinner making application simply as a sinner, may be clothed from head to foot! And if he wishes to be a soldier, he may not merely have a garment for ordinary wear—but armor which shall cover him from the sole of his foot—to the crown of his head. If he asks for a sword, he shall have that given to him, and a shield too. Nothing that is good for him shall be denied him. He shall have spending-money so long as he lives, and he shall have an eternal heritage of glorious treasure when he enters into the joy of his Lord.

If all these things are to be had by merely *knocking at mercy's door*, O my soul, knock hard this morning, and ask great things from your generous Lord. Do not leave the throne of grace until all your needs have been spread before the Lord, and until by faith you have a comfortable prospect that they shall be all supplied. No *bashfulness* need retard when Jesus invites. No *unbelief* should hinder when Jesus promises. No *cold-heartedness* should restrain when such blessings are to be obtained!

December 5 — Evening

"And the Lord showed me four carpenters." Zechariah 1:20

In the vision described in this chapter, the prophet saw *four terrible horns*. They were pushing this way and that way, dashing down the strongest and the mightiest; and the prophet asked, "What are these?" The answer was, "These are the horns which have scattered Israel." He saw before him a representation of those powers which had oppressed the church of God. There were *four horns*; for the church is attacked from all quarters.

Well might the prophet have felt dismayed; but suddenly, there appeared before him *four carpenters*. He asked, "What shall these do?" These are the men whom God has found to break those horns in pieces! God will always find men for His work, and He will find them at the *right time*. The prophet did not see the carpenters first, when there was nothing to do—but first the "horns," and then the "carpenters."

Moreover, the Lord finds enough men. He did not find three carpenters—but four; there were four horns, and there must be four workmen. God finds the right men; not four men with *pens* to write; not four *architects* to draw plans; but four *carpenters* to do rough work. Rest assured, you who tremble for the ark of God, that when the "horns" grow troublesome, the "carpenters" will be found. You need not fret concerning the weakness of the church of God at any moment; there may be growing up in obscurity the valiant reformer who will shake the nations! Chrysostoms may come forth from our Ragged Schools, and Augustines from the thickest darkness of London's poverty. The Lord knows where to find His servants. He has in ambush a multitude of mighty men, and at His word they shall go up to the battle; "for the battle is the Lord's," and He shall get to Himself the victory. Let us abide faithful to Christ, and He, in the right time, will raise up for us a defense, whether it be in the day of our personal need, or in the season of peril to His Church!

December 6 — *Morning*

"As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly." 1 Corinthians 15:48

The head and members are of one nature, and not like that monstrous image which Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream. The head was of fine gold—but the belly and thighs were of brass, the legs of iron, and the feet, part of iron and part of clay. Christ's mystical body is no absurd combination of opposites; the members were mortal, and therefore Jesus died; the glorified head is immortal, and therefore the body is immortal too, for thus the record stands, "Because I live, you shall live also." As is our loving Head, such is the body, and every member in particular. A chosen Head and chosen members; an accepted Head, and accepted members; a living Head, and living members. If the head is pure gold, all the parts of the body are of pure gold also. Thus is there a double union of nature as a basis for the closest communion.

Pause here, devout reader, and see if you can without ecstatic amazement, contemplate the infinite condescension of the Son of God in thus exalting your wretchedness into blessed union with His glory. You are so low, that in remembrance of your mortality, you may say to *corruption*, "You are my father," and to the worm, "You are my sister!" And yet in Christ you are so honored that you can say to the Almighty, "Abba, Father!" and to the Incarnate God, "You are my brother and my husband!" Surely if relationships to ancient and noble families make men think highly of themselves, we have something to glory over the heads of them all. Let the poorest and most despised believer lay hold upon this privilege; let not a senseless indolence make him negligent to trace his pedigree, and let him allow no foolish attachment to present vanities—to occupy his thoughts to the exclusion of this glorious, this heavenly honor of union with Christ!

December 6 — Evening

"With a gold belt wrapped around His chest." Revelation 1:13

"One like unto the Son of Man" appeared to John in Patmos, and the beloved disciple marked that He wore a golden belt. A belt, for Jesus never was ungirt while upon earth—but stood always ready for service, and now before the eternal throne He stays not in holy ministry—but as a priest is girt about with "the fine belt of the ephod." Well it is for us, that He has not ceased to fulfill His offices of love for us, since this is one of our choicest safeguards, that He ever lives to make intercession for us. Jesus is never an idler; His garments are never loose as though His offices were ended; He diligently carries on the cause of His people.

A *golden* belt, to manifest the superiority of His service, the royalty of His person, the dignity of His state, the glory of His reward. No longer does He cry out of the dust—but He pleads with authority, a *King* as well as a *Priest*. Safe enough is our cause in the hands of our *enthroned Melchizedek*.

Our Lord presents all His people with an example. We must never unbind our belts. This is not the time for lying down at ease, it is the season of service and warfare. We need to bind the belt of *truth* more and more tightly around our loins. It is a *golden* belt, and so will be our richest ornament, and we greatly need it, for a heart that is not well braced up with the truth as it is in Jesus, and with the fidelity which is wrought of the Spirit, will be easily entangled with the things of this life, and tripped up by the snares of temptation. It is in vain that we possess the Scriptures unless we bind them around us like a belt, surrounding our entire nature, keeping each part of our character in order, and giving compactness to our whole man. If in heaven Jesus does not loosen His belt, much less may we upon earth. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with the belt of truth!

December 7 — Morning

"God has chosen the base things of the world." 1 Corinthians 1:28

Walk the streets by moonlight, if you dare—and you will see sinners then. Watch when the night is dark, and the wind is howling, and the picklock is grating in the door—and you will see sinners then. Go to yonder jail, and walk through the wards, and mark the men with heavy over-hanging brows, men whom you would not like to meet at night—and there are sinners there. Go to the Reformatories, and note those who have betrayed a lawless juvenile depravity—and you will see sinners there. Go across the seas to the place where a man will gnaw a bone upon which is reeking human flesh—and there is a sinner there. Go where you will—you need not ransack earth to find sinners, for they are common enough. You may find them in every lane and street of every city, and town, and village, and hamlet.

It is for such that Jesus died. If you will select me the vilest specimen of humanity, if he is but born of woman, I will have hope for him yet, because Jesus Christ has come to seek and to save sinners. Electing love has selected some of the worst—to be made the best. Grace turns pebbles of the brook—into jewels for His royal crown. He transforms worthless dross—into pure gold. Redeeming love has set apart many of the worst of mankind—to be the reward of the Savior's passion. Effectual grace calls forth many of the vilest of the vile—to sit at the *table of mercy!* Therefore let none despair.

Reader, by that love looking out of Jesus' tearful eyes, by that love streaming from those bleeding wounds, by that faithful love, that strong love, that pure, unselfish, and abiding love; by the heart and by the affections of the Savior's compassion—we implore you not to turn away as though it were nothing to you; but believe on Him and you shall be saved. Trust your soul with Him and He will bring you to His Father's right hand in glory everlasting!

December 7 — Evening

"I have become all things to all people, so that I may by all means *save* some." 1 Corinthians 9:22

Paul's great object was not merely to *instruct* and to *improve*—but to *save*. Anything short of this would have disappointed him; he would have men renewed in heart, forgiven, sanctified, saved. Have our Christian labors been aimed at anything below this great point? Then let us amend our ways, for of what avail will it be at the last great day—to have taught and *moralized* men—if they appear before God unsaved? Our skirts will be blood-red, if through life we have sought *inferior* objects, and forgotten that men need to be saved.

Paul knew the ruin of man's natural state, and did not try to *educate* him—but to *save* him! He saw men sinking to hell, and did not talk of *refining* them—but of saving from the wrath to come! To compass their salvation, he gave himself up with untiring zeal to telling abroad the gospel, to warning and beseeching men to be reconciled to God. His prayers were importunate and his labors incessant. To save souls was his consuming passion, his ambition, his calling. He became a servant to all men, toiling for his race, feeling a woe within him if he preached not the gospel. He laid aside *his preferences* to prevent prejudice; he submitted his will in things indifferent; and if men would but receive the gospel, he raised no questions about forms or ceremonies. The gospel was the one all-important business with him. If he might save some—he would be content. This was the crown for which he strove, the sole and sufficient reward of all his labors and self-denials.

Dear reader, have you and I lived to win souls at this noble rate? Are we possessed with the same all-absorbing desire? If not, why not? Jesus *died* for sinners—cannot we *live* for them? Where is our tenderness? Where our love to Christ, if we don't seek His honor in the salvation of men? O that the Lord would saturate us through and through with an undying zeal for the souls of men!

December 8 — *Morning*

"But you have a few people in Sardis who have not defiled their clothes.

They will walk with Me in white, because they are worthy." Revelation 3:4

We may understand this to refer to **justification**. "They shall walk with Me in white"; that is, they shall enjoy a constant sense of their own justification by faith; they shall understand that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to them, that they have all been washed and made whiter than the newly-fallen snow.

Again, it refers to **joy** and gladness—for white robes were holiday dress among the Jews. They who have not defiled their garments shall have their faces always bright; they shall understand what Solomon meant when he said "Go your way, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart. Let your garments be always white, for God has accepted your works." He who is accepted of God shall wear white garments of joy and gladness, while he walks in sweet communion with the Lord Jesus.

Whence so many doubts, so much misery, and mourning? It is because so many believers defile their garments with sin and error, and hence they lose the joy of their salvation, and the comfortable fellowship of the Lord Jesus—they do not here below walk in white.

The promise also refers to walking in white in **heaven**, before the throne of God. Those who have not defiled their garments here on earth—shall most certainly walk in white up yonder, where the white-robed hosts sing perpetual hallelujahs to the Most High. They shall possess inconceivable joys, happiness beyond all dreams, bliss beyond imagination, and blessedness which even the stretch of desire has not reached.

The "undefiled" shall have all this—not of merit, nor of works—but of grace. They shall walk with Christ in white, for He has made them "worthy." In His sweet company they shall drink of the living fountains of waters!

December 8 — *Evening*

"By Your goodness, You provided for the poor, O God." Psalm 68:10

All God's gifts are prepared gifts—laid up in store for foreseen needs. He anticipates our needs; and out of the fullness which He has treasured up in Christ Jesus, He provides of His goodness for the poor. You may trust Him for all the necessities that can occur, for He has infallibly foreknown every one of them. He can say of us in all conditions, "I knew that you would be this and that."

A man goes a journey across the desert, and when he has made a day's advance, and pitched his tent, he discovers that he needs many comforts and necessaries which he has not brought in his baggage. "Ah!" says he, "I did not foresee this—if I had this journey to begin again—I would bring these things with me, so necessary to my comfort." But God has marked with omniscient eye, all the requirements of His poor wandering children; and when those needs occur, supplies are ready. It is goodness which He has prepared for the poor in heart, goodness and goodness only. "My grace is sufficient for you." "As your days—so shall your strength be."

Reader, is your heart heavy this evening? God knew it would be; the comfort which your heart needs—is treasured in the sweet assurance of the text. You are poor and needy—but He has thought upon you, and has the exact blessing which you require in store for you. Plead the promise, believe it and obtain its fulfillment. Do you feel that you never were so consciously vile as you are now? Behold, the crimson fountain is open still, with all its former efficacy, to wash your sin away. Never shall you come into such a position that Christ cannot aid you. No pinch shall ever arrive in your spiritual affairs—in which Jesus Christ shall not be equal to the emergency, for your history has all been foreknown and provided for in Jesus!

December 9 — *Morning*

"Therefore will the Lord wait—that He may be gracious unto you." Isaiah 30:18

God often *delays in answering prayer*. We have several instances of this in sacred Scripture. Jacob did not get the blessing from the angel until near the dawn of day—he had to wrestle all night for it. The poor woman of Syrophenicia was answered not a word, for a long while. Paul besought the Lord thrice, that "the thorn in the flesh" might be taken from him, and he received no assurance that it should be taken away—but instead thereof a promise that God's grace should be sufficient for him.

If you have been *knocking at the gate of mercy*, and have received no answer, shall I tell you why the mighty Maker has not opened the door and let you in? Our Father has reasons peculiar to Himself for thus keeping us *waiting*.

Sometimes it is to show His power and *His sovereignty*, that men may know that Jehovah has a right to give or to withhold.

More frequently the delay is for *our profit*. You are perhaps kept waiting in order that your desires may be more fervent. God knows that delay will quicken and increase desire, and that if He keeps you waiting—you will see your necessity more clearly, and will seek more earnestly; and that you will prize the mercy all the more for its long tarrying.

There may also be *something wrong in you* which has need to be removed, before the joy of the Lord is given. Perhaps your views of the Gospel plan are confused, or you may be placing some little reliance on yourself, instead of trusting simply and entirely to the Lord Jesus.

Or, perhaps God makes you tarry awhile—that He may the more fully display the *riches of His grace* to you at last. Your prayers are all filed in heaven, and if not immediately answered, they are certainly not forgotten—but in a little while shall be fulfilled to your delight and satisfaction. Let not despair make you silent—but continue instant in earnest supplication!

December 9 — Evening

"My people shall dwell in quiet resting places." Isaiah 32:18

Peace and rest do not belong to the unregenerate, they are the peculiar possession of the Lord's people, and of them only. The God of Peace gives *perfect peace* to those whose hearts are stayed upon Him. When man was unfallen, his God gave him the flowery bowers of Eden as his quiet resting places; alas! how soon sin blighted the fair abode of innocence. In the day of universal wrath, when the *flood* swept away a guilty race, the chosen family were quietly secured in the resting-place of the ark, which floated them from the old condemned world into the new earth of the rainbow and the covenant, herein typifying Jesus, the ark of our salvation. Israel rested safely beneath their blood-besprinkled habitations in Egypt, when the destroying angel smote the first-born. And in the wilderness the shadow of the pillar of cloud, and the flowing rock, gave the weary pilgrims sweet repose.

At this hour, we rest in the *promises* of our faithful God, knowing that His words are full of truth and power. We rest in the *doctrines* of His Word, which are consolation itself. We rest in the covenant of His grace, which is a haven of delight. More highly favored are we than David in Adullam, or Jonah beneath his gourd, for none can invade or destroy our shelter. The person of Jesus is the quiet resting-place of His people, and when we draw near to Him in the breaking of the bread, in the hearing of the Word, the searching of the Scriptures, prayer, or praise—we find any form of approach to Him to be the return of peace to our spirits!

December 10 — *Morning*

"And so we will be with the Lord forever!" 1 Thessalonians 4:17

Even the sweetest *visits* from Christ, how short they are—and how transitory! One moment our eyes see Him, and we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory—but in a little time, and we do not see Him, for our beloved withdraws Himself from us. Like a roe or a young deer—He leaps over the mountains of division; He is gone to the land of spices, and feeds no more among the lilies.

"If today He deigns to bless us
With a sense of pardoned sin,
He tomorrow may distress us,
Make us feel the plague within."

Oh, how sweet the prospect of the time—when we shall not behold Him at a distance—but see Him face to face; when He shall not be as a wayfaring man tarrying but for a night—but shall eternally enfold us in the bosom of His glory. We shall not see Him for only a little season—but

"Millions of years our wondering eyes,
Shall o'er our Savior's beauties rove;
And myriad ages we'll adore,
The wonders of His love"

In heaven there shall be no interruptions from care or sin; no weeping shall dim our eyes; no earthly business shall distract our holy thoughts! We shall have nothing to hinder us from gazing forever on the Sun of Righteousness with unwearied eyes! Oh, if it be so sweet to see Him now and then—how sweet to gaze on that blessed face forever—and never have a cloud rolling between, and never have to turn one's eyes away to look on a world of weariness and woe!

If to die is but to enter into uninterrupted communion with Jesus, then death is indeed *gain*, and the black drop is swallowed up in a sea of victory!

December 10 — Evening

"Whose heart the Lord opened." Acts 16:14

In Lydia's conversion, there are many points of interest. It was brought about by *providential* circumstances. She was a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira—but just at the right time for hearing Paul—we find her at Philippi. *Providence*, which is the handmaid of *grace*—led her to the right spot. Again, grace was preparing her soul for the blessing—grace preparing for grace. She did not know the Savior—but as a Jewess, she knew many truths which were excellent stepping-stones to a knowledge of Jesus.

Her conversion took place in the use of the means. On the Sabbath she went when prayer was accustomed to be made—and there prayer was heard. Never neglect the means of grace; God may bless us when we are not in His house—but we have the greater reason to hope that He will bless us—when we are in communion with His saints.

Observe the words, "Whose heart the Lord opened." Lydia did not open her own heart. Her prayers did not do it. Paul did not do it. The Lord Himself must open the heart, to receive the things which make for our eternal peace. He alone can put the key into the hole of the door, and open it, and get admittance for Himself. He is the heart's *master*—as He is the heart's *maker*.

The first outward *evidence* of the opened heart, was *obedience*. As soon as Lydia had believed in Jesus, she was baptized. It is a sweet sign of a humble and broken heart, when the child of God is willing to obey a command which is *not essential* to his salvation, which is not forced upon him by a selfish fear of condemnation—but is a simple act of obedience and of communion with his Master.

The next evidence was *love*, manifesting itself in acts of grateful *kindness* to the apostles. Love to the saints has ever been a mark of the true convert. Those who do nothing for Christ or His church, give but sorry evidence of an "opened heart". Lord, evermore give me an opened heart.

December 11 — *Morning*

"Faithful is He who calls you, who also will do it." 1 Thessalonians 5:24

Heaven is a place where we shall never sin; where we shall cease our constant watch against an indefatigable enemy, because there will be no *tempter* to ensnare our feet. There the wicked cease from troubling—and the weary are at rest. Heaven is an "undefiled inheritance"; it is the land of perfect holiness, and therefore of complete security. But do not the saints even on earth sometimes taste the joys of blissful security?

The doctrine of God's Word is—that all who are in union with the Lamb are safe; that all the righteous shall hold on their way; that those who have committed their souls to the keeping of Christ shall find Him a faithful and immutable preserver. Sustained by such a doctrine—we can enjoy security even on earth; not that high and glorious security which renders us free from every slip—but that holy security which arises from the sure promise of Jesus—that none who believe in Him shall ever perish—but shall be with Him where He is.

Believer, let us often reflect with joy on the doctrine of the *perseverance of the saints*, and honor the faithfulness of our God by a holy confidence in Him. May our God bring home to you a sense of your safety in Christ Jesus! May He assure you that your name is engraved on His hand; and whisper in your ear the promise, "Fear not, I am with you."

Look upon Him, the great Surety of the covenant, as faithful and true, and, therefore, bound and engaged to present you, the weakest of the family, with all the chosen race, before the throne of God; and in such a sweet contemplation, you will drink the juice of the spiced wine of the Lord's pomegranate, and taste the dainty fruits of Paradise. You will have a foretaste of the enjoyments which ravish the souls of the perfect saints above, if you can believe with unstagging faith that "faithful is He who calls you, who also will do it."

December 11 — *Evening*

"You serve the Lord Christ." Colossians 3:24

To what choice order of officials was this word spoken? To kings who proudly boast a divine right? Ah, no! too often do they serve themselves or Satan, and forget the God whose sufferance permits them to wear their *mimic majesty* for their little hour. Was this spoken to those so-called "right reverend fathers," or "the venerable bishops"? No, indeed, Paul knew nothing of these mere *inventions of man*. Not even to pastors and teachers, or to the wealthy and esteemed among believers, was this word spoken—but to servants, ay, and to slaves!

Among the toiling multitudes, the workers, the day laborers, the domestic servants, the drudges of the kitchen—the apostle found, as we find still, some of the Lord's chosen, and to them he says, "Whatever you do—do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that from the Lord you shall receive the reward of the inheritance—for you serve the Lord Christ."

This saying ennobles the *weary routine of earthly employments*, and sheds a halo around the most humble occupations. To wash feet may be servile—but to wash His feet is royal work. To unloose the shoe-latchet is poor employment—but to unloose the great Master's shoe is a princely privilege. The shop, the barn, the kitchen, and the office become temples—when men and women do all to the glory of God!

"Divine service" is not a thing of a few hours and a few places—but all of life becomes *holiness unto the Lord*; and every place and thing, becomes as consecrated as the tabernacle and its golden candlestick!

December 12 — *Morning*

"His ways are everlasting." Habakkuk 3:6

What He has done at one time, He will do yet again. Man's ways are variable—but God's ways are everlasting. There are many reasons for this most comforting truth—among them are the following:

The Lord's ways are the *result of wise deliberation*; He orders all things according to the counsel of His own will. Human action is frequently the hasty result of passion, or fear, and is followed by regret and alteration. But nothing can take the Almighty by surprise, or happen otherwise than He has foreseen.

His ways are the *outgrowth of an immutable character*, and in them the fixed and settled attributes of God are clearly to be seen. Unless the Eternal One Himself can undergo change—His ways, which are *Himself in action*—must remain forever the same. Is He eternally just, gracious, faithful, wise, tender? Then His ways must ever be distinguished for the same excellences. Beings act according to their nature—when those natures change, their conduct varies also; but since God cannot know the shadow of a turning, His ways will abide everlastingly the same.

Moreover there is no reason from without—which could reverse the divine ways, since they are the embodiment of *irresistible might*. The earth is said, by the prophet, to be cleft with rivers; mountains tremble; the deep lifts up its hands; and sun and moon stand still—when Jehovah marches forth for the salvation of His people. Who can stay His hand?

But it is not might alone, which gives stability; God's ways are the *manifestation of the eternal principles of right*, and therefore can never pass away. Sin breeds decay and involves ruin—but the true and the good have about them a vitality which ages cannot diminish. This morning let us go to our heavenly Father with confidence, remembering that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever—and in Him the Lord is ever gracious to His people!

December 12 — Evening

"They have dealt treacherously against the Lord." Hosea 5:7

Believer, here is a sorrowful truth! You are the beloved of the Lord, redeemed by blood, called by grace, preserved in Christ Jesus, accepted in the Beloved, on your way to heaven. Yet, "you have dealt treacherously" with God, your best friend; treacherously with Jesus, whose you are; treacherously with the Holy Spirit, by whom you have been quickened unto eternal life!

How treacherous you have been in the matter of vows and promises. Do you remember the love of your espousals, that happy time—the springtide of your spiritual life? Oh, how closely did you cling to your Master then! saying, "He shall never charge *me* with indifference! My feet shall never grow slow in the way of His service! I will not allow my heart to wander after other loves—in Him is every store of ineffable sweetness. I give all up for my Lord Jesus' sake."

Has it been so?

Alas! if conscience speaks, it will say, "He who promised so well—has performed most ill. Prayer has oftentimes been *slurred*—it has been *short*—but not sweet; *brief*—but not fervent. Communion with Christ has been forgotten. Instead of a heavenly mind, there have been carnal cares, worldly vanities and thoughts of evil. Instead of service, there has been disobedience; instead of fervency, lukewarmness; instead of patience, petulance; instead of faith, confidence in an arm of flesh! And as a soldier of the cross, there has been cowardice, disobedience, and desertion, to a very shameful degree."

"You have dealt treacherously." Treachery to Jesus! What words shall be used in denouncing it! Words avail little—let our penitent thoughts execrate the sin which is so surely in us. Treacherous to Your wounds, O Jesus! Forgive us, and let us not sin again! How shameful to be treacherous to Him—who never forgets us—but who this day stands with our names engraved on His breastplate before the eternal throne!

December 13 — *Morning*

"You are to give him *salt without limit.*" Ezra 7:22

Salt was used in every offering made by fire unto the Lord, and from its preserving and purifying properties, it was the grateful emblem of *divine grace in the soul*. It is worthy of our attentive regard that, when Artaxerxes gave salt to Ezra the priest, he set no limit to the quantity; and we may be quite certain that when the King of kings distributes *grace* among His royal priesthood, the supply is not cut short by Him. Often are we straitened in ourselves—but never in the Lord. He who chooses to gather much manna—will find that he may have as much as he desires.

There is no such famine in Jerusalem that the citizens should eat their bread by weight and drink their water *by measure*. Some things in the economy of grace are measured; for instance our *vinegar* and *gall* are given us with such exactness, that we never have a single drop too much. But no stint is made of the *salt of grace*. "Ask what you will—and it shall be given unto you." Parents need to lock up the candy cupboard, and the sweet jars—but there is no need to keep the salt-box under lock and key, for few children will eat too greedily from that. A man may have too much *money*, or too much *honor*—but he cannot have too much *grace*. When Jeshurun waxed fat in the flesh—he kicked against God. But there is no fear of a man's becoming too full of grace—an excess of grace is impossible. More *wealth* brings more care—but more *grace* brings more joy. Increased *knowledge* is increased sorrow—but abundance of the Spirit is fullness of joy.

Believer, go to the throne for a large supply of heavenly salt! It will season your afflictions, which are unsavory without salt! It will preserve your heart—which corrupts if salt is absent. And it will kill your sins—even as salt kills reptiles. You *need* much; *seek* much, and *have* much!

December 13 — *Evening*

"I will make your windows of agates." Isaiah 54:12

The church is most instructively symbolized by a building erected by heavenly power, and designed by divine skill. Such a spiritual house must not be dark, for the Israelites had light in their dwellings; there must therefore be windows to let the light in and to allow the inhabitants to gaze abroad. These windows are precious as agates—that is, the ways in which the church beholds her Lord and heaven, and spiritual truth in general, are to be had in the highest esteem.

Agates are not the most transparent of gems, they are but semi-transparent at the best. *Faith* is one of these precious agate windows—but alas! it is often so misty and beclouded, that we see but darkly, and mistake much that we do see. Yet if we cannot gaze through windows of *diamonds* and know even as we are known—it is a glorious thing to behold the altogether lovely One, even though the glass be as hazy as the agate.

Experience is another of these dim but precious windows, yielding to us a subdued religious light, in which we see the sufferings of the Man of Sorrows, through our own afflictions. Our weak eyes could not endure windows of transparent glass to let in the Master's glory—but when they are dimmed with weeping, the beams of the Sun of Righteousness are tempered, and shine through the windows of agate with a soft radiance inexpressibly soothing to tempted souls.

Sanctification, as it conforms us to our Lord, is another agate window. Only as we become heavenly, can we comprehend heavenly things. The pure in heart—see a pure God. Those who are like Jesus—see Him as He is. Because we are so little like Him, the window is but agate; because we are somewhat like Him, it is agate. We thank God for what we have—and long for more. When shall we see God and Jesus, and heaven and truth, face to face?

December 14 — *Morning*

"They go from strength to strength." Psalm 84:7

There are various renderings of these words—but all of them contain the idea of **progress**. "They go from strength to strength." That is, they grow *stronger* and stronger. Usually, if we are walking, we go from strength to weakness; we start fresh and in good order for our journey—but by-and-by the road is rough, and the sun is hot; we sit down by the wayside, and then again painfully pursue our weary way. But the Christian pilgrim having obtained fresh supplies of grace, is as vigorous after years of toilsome travel and struggle—as when he first set out! He may not be quite so elated and buoyant, nor perhaps quite so hot and hasty in his zeal as he once was—but he is much stronger in all that constitutes real power, and travels, if more slowly—far more surely.

Some gray-haired veterans have been as firm in their grasp of truth, and as zealous in diffusing it, as they were in their younger days; but, alas, it must be confessed it is often otherwise, for the love of many waxes cold and iniquity abounds—but this is their own sin and not the fault of the promise, which still holds good, "The youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall—but those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint!"

Fretful spirits sit down and trouble themselves about the future. "Alas!" say they, "we go from affliction to affliction." Very true, O you of little faith—but then you go from strength to strength also. You shall never find a *bundle of affliction* which has not bound up in the midst of it sufficient grace. God will give the *strength* of ripe manhood—with the *burden* allotted to full-grown shoulders.

December 14 — *Evening*

"I am crucified with Christ." Galatians 2:20

The Lord Jesus Christ acted in what He did as a great public representative person, and His dying upon the cross was the virtual dying of all His people. He rendered unto justice what was due, and made an expiation to divine vengeance for all their sins. The apostle of the Gentiles delighted to think that as one of Christ's chosen people, he died upon the cross in Christ. He did more than believe this doctrinally, he accepted it confidently, resting his hope upon it. He believed that by virtue of Christ's death—he had satisfied divine justice, and found reconciliation with God.

Beloved, what a blessed thing it is when the soul can, as it were, stretch itself upon the cross of Christ, and feel, "I am dead; the law has slain me, and I am therefore free from its power, because in my Surety I have borne the curse, and in the person of my Substitute, the whole that the law could do, by way of condemnation, has been executed upon me, for I am crucified with Christ."

But Paul meant even more than this. He not only believed in Christ's death, and trusted in it—but he actually felt its power in himself in causing the crucifixion of his old corrupt nature. When he saw the pleasures of sin, he said, "I cannot enjoy these—I am dead to them." Such is the experience of every true Christian. Having received Christ, he is to this world—as one who is utterly dead.

Yet, while conscious of death to the world, he can, at the same time, exclaim with the apostle, "Nevertheless I live." He is fully alive unto God. The Christian's life is a matchless riddle. No worldling can comprehend it; even the believer himself cannot understand it. Dead—yet alive! Crucified with Christ, and yet at the same time risen with Christ in newness of life! Union with the suffering, bleeding Savior—and death to the world and sin—are soul-cheering things. O for more enjoyment of them!

December 15 — *Morning*

"Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-bye. But Ruth clung to Naomi." Ruth 1:14

Both of them had an affection for Naomi, and therefore set out with her upon her return to the land of Judah. But the hour of test came; Naomi most unselfishly set before each of them the trials which awaited them, and bade them if they cared for ease and comfort—to return to their Moabitish friends. At first both of them declared that they would cast in their lot with the Lord's people; but upon still further consideration, Orpah with much grief and a respectful kiss, left her mother in law, and her people, and her God, and went back to her idolatrous friends; while Ruth with all her heart gave herself up to the God of her mother in law.

It is one thing to love the ways of the Lord when all is fair—and quite another to cleave to them under all discouragements and difficulties. The *kiss of outward profession* is very cheap and easy—but the practical cleaving to the Lord, which must show itself in holy decision for truth and holiness—is not so small a matter.

How does the case stand with us—is our heart fixed upon Jesus? Is the sacrifice bound with cords to the horns of the altar? Have we counted the cost, and are we solemnly ready to suffer all worldly loss for the Master's sake? The after gain will be an abundant recompense, for Egypt's treasures are not to be compared with the glory to be revealed.

Orpah is heard of no more; in glorious ease and idolatrous pleasure, her life melts into the gloom of death. But Ruth lives in history and in heaven, for grace has placed her in the noble line from whence sprung the King of kings. Blessed among women shall those be—who for Christ's sake can renounce all; but forgotten and worse than forgotten shall those be—who in the hour of temptation do violence to conscience and turn back unto the world. O that we may not be content with the *form of devotion*, which may be no better than Orpah's kiss! But may the Holy Spirit work in us a cleaving of our whole heart to our Lord Jesus!

December 15 — *Evening*

"Lay your *foundations* with sapphires." Isaiah 54:11

Not only that which is *seen* of the church of God—but that which is *unseen*, is fair and precious. Foundations are out of sight, and so long as they are firm it is not expected that they should be valuable; but in Jehovah's work everything is costly, nothing slurred, nothing cheap.

The deep foundations of the *work of grace*, are as sapphires for preciousness, no human mind is able to measure their glory. We build upon the covenant of grace, which is *firmer* than adamant, and as *enduring* as jewels upon which age spends itself in vain. Sapphire foundations are eternal, and the covenant abides throughout the lifetime of the Almighty.

Another foundation is the *person of the Lord Jesus*, which is clear and spotless, everlasting and beautiful as the sapphire; blending in one the deep blue of earth's ever rolling ocean—and the azure of its all embracing sky. Once might our Lord have been likened to the *ruby* as He stood covered with His own *blood*—but now we see Him radiant with the soft blue of love—love abounding, deep, eternal.

Our eternal hopes are built upon the *justice and the faithfulness of God*, which are as clear and cloudless as the sapphire. We are not saved by a compromise, by mercy defeating justice, or law suspending its operations. No! We defy the eagle's eye to detect a flaw in the groundwork of our confidence—our foundation is of sapphire, and will endure the fire.

The Lord Himself has laid the foundation of His people's hopes. It is matter for grave enquiry whether our hopes are built upon such a basis. Good works and ceremonies are not a foundation of sapphires—but of wood, hay, and stubble; neither are they laid by God—but by our own conceit. Foundations will all be tried before long—woe unto him whose lofty tower shall come down with a crash, because based on a quicksand! He who is built on sapphires may await storm or fire with equanimity, for he shall abide the test!

December 16 — Morning

"Come unto Me." Matthew 11:28

The cry of the Christian Religion is the gentle word, "Come." The Jewish *LAW* harshly said, "Go, take heed unto your steps as to the path in which you shall walk. Break the commandments, and you shall perish; keep them, and you shall live." The *LAW* was a dispensation of terror, which *drove* men before it as with a scourge; the *GOSPEL draws* with bands of love. Jesus is the good Shepherd going before His sheep, bidding them follow Him, and ever leading them onwards with the sweet word, "Come." The *LAW repels*—the *GOSPEL attracts*. The law shows the distance which there is between God and man; the gospel bridges that awful chasm, and brings the sinner across it. From the first moment of your spiritual life, until you are ushered into glory—the language of Christ to you will be, "Come, come unto Me!"

As a mother puts out her finger to her little child and woos it to walk by saying, "Come," even so does Jesus. He will always be ahead of you, bidding you follow Him as the soldier follows his captain. He will always go before you to pave your way, and clear your path, and you shall hear His animating voice calling you after Him all through *life*. In the solemn hour of *death*, His sweet words with which He shall usher you into the heavenly world shall be, "Come, you who are blessed of my Father."

Nay, further, this is not only Christ's cry to you—but, if you be a believer, this is your cry to Christ, "Come! Come!" You will be longing for His second advent; you will be saying, "Come quickly—even so come Lord Jesus." You will be panting for nearer and closer communion with Him. As His voice to you is "Come," your response to Him will be, "Come, Lord, and abide with me! Come, and occupy alone the throne of my heart! Reign there without a rival, and consecrate me entirely to Your service!"

December 16 — *Evening*

"You have neither *heard* nor *understood*; from of old your ear has not been open!" Isaiah 48:8

"You have neither **heard** nor understood!" It is painful to remember that, in a certain degree, this accusation may be laid at the door of believers, who too often are in a measure spiritually insensible. We may well bewail ourselves, that we do not hear the voice of God as we ought, "You have not heard!" There are gentle motions of the Holy Spirit in the soul which are unheeded by us. There are whisperings of divine command and of heavenly love which are alike unobserved by our leaden intellects.

Alas! we have been carelessly ignorant, "You have neither heard nor **understood!**" There are matters within our hearts which we ought to have seen: corruptions which have made headway unnoticed; sweet affections which are being blighted like flowers in the frost, untended by us; glimpses of the divine face which might be perceived—if we had not walled up the windows of our soul. But we "have not understood."

As we think of it—we are humbled in the deepest self-abasement. How must we adore the grace of God as we learn from the context—that all this folly and ignorance, on our part, was *foreknown* by God, and, notwithstanding that foreknowledge, He yet has been pleased to deal with us in a way of mercy! Admire the marvelous sovereign grace which could have chosen us—in the sight of all this! Wonder at the price that was paid for us—when Christ knew what we would be! He who hung upon the cross foresaw us as unbelieving, backsliding, cold-hearted, indifferent, careless, lax in prayer—and yet He said, "I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior! I have loved you!"

O redemption, how wondrously resplendent do you shine—when we think how black we are! O Holy Spirit, give us henceforth the *hearing ear*, and the *understanding heart!*

December 17 — Morning

"I remember you." Jeremiah 2:2

Let us note that Christ delights to think upon His Church, and to look upon her beauty. As the *bird* returns often to its nest, and as the *wayfarer* hastens to his home—so does the mind continually pursue the object of its desire. We cannot look too often upon that face which we love. We desire always to have our *precious things* in our sight.

It is just so with our Lord Jesus. From all eternity "His delights were with the sons of men." When the world was set upon its pillars, He was there—and His thoughts rolled onward to the time when His elect would be born into the world; He viewed them in the mirror of His foreknowledge. Many a time before His incarnation, He descended to this lower earth in the similitude of a man, and visited His people: on the plains of Mamre (Gen. 18), by the brook of Jabbok (Gen. 32:24-30), beneath the walls of Jericho (Josh. 5:13), and in the fiery furnace of Babylon (Dan. 3:19, 25).

Because His soul delighted in them—He could not rest away from them, for His heart longed after them. He had engraved their names upon His *hands*. Never were they absent from His *heart*, for as the breastplate containing the names of the tribes of Israel was the most brilliant ornament worn by the high priest—so the names of Christ's elect were His most precious jewels, and glittered on His heart.

We may often forget to meditate upon the perfections of our Lord—but *He* never ceases to remember us. Let us chide ourselves for past forgetfulness, and pray for grace ever to bear Him in fondest remembrance. Lord, paint upon the eyeballs of my soul—the image of Your lovely Son!

December 17 — Evening

"I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved and will come in and go out and find pasture."

John 10:9

Jesus, the great *I AM*, is the *entrance* into the true church, and the way of *access* to God Himself.

He gives to the man who comes to God by Him, **four choice privileges**:

- 1. He shall be *saved*.** The fugitive manslayer passed the gate of the *city of refuge*, and was safe. Noah entered the door of the *ark*, and was secure. None can be lost—who take Jesus as the door of faith to their souls. Entrance through Jesus into forgiveness—is the guarantee of entrance by the same door into heaven. Jesus is the *only* door, an *open* door, a *wide* door, a *safe* door; and blessed is he who rests all his hope of admission to glory, upon the crucified Redeemer!
- 2. He shall go *in*.** He shall be privileged to go in among the divine family, sharing the children's bread, and participating in all their honors and enjoyments. He shall go in to the chambers of communion with God, to the banquets of love, to the treasures of the covenant, to the storehouses of the promises. He shall go in unto the King of kings in the power of the Holy Spirit—and the secret of the Lord shall be with him.
- 3. He shall go *out*.** This blessing is much forgotten. We go out into the world to labor and suffer—but what a mercy to go in the name and power of Jesus! We are called to bear witness to the truth, to cheer the disconsolate, to warn the careless, to win souls, and to glorify God. And as the angel said to Gideon, "Go in this your might," even thus the Lord would have us proceed as His messengers, in His name and strength.
- 4. He shall find *pasture*.** He who knows Jesus shall never lack. Going in and out shall be alike helpful to him. In fellowship with God he shall grow—and in watering others he shall be watered. Having made Jesus his all—he shall find all in Jesus. His soul shall be as a watered garden, and as a well whose waters shall never fail.

December 18 — *Morning*

"Rend your heart—and not your garments." Joel 2:13

Garment-rending and other external signs of religious emotion, are easily manifested, and are frequently hypocritical. To feel true repentance is far more difficult, and consequently far less common. Unsaved men will attend to the most multiplied and minute religious ceremonies and regulations—for such things are pleasing to their flesh. But true godliness is too humbling, too heart-searching, too spiritual for the tastes of the carnal men! They prefer something more ostentatious, flimsy, and worldly. External religious rituals are temporarily comfortable; eye and ear are pleased; self-conceit is fed, and self-righteousness is puffed up. But they are ultimately delusive, for at the day of judgment, the soul needs something more substantial than religious ceremonies and rituals to lean upon.

Apart from vital godliness—all religion is utterly vain! When offered without a sincere heart, every form of religious worship is a solemn sham and an impudent mockery of the majesty of God!

Heart-rending is divinely wrought and solemnly felt. It is a secret grief which is personally experienced, not in mere form—but as a deep, soul-moving work of the Holy Spirit upon the inmost heart of each believer. It is not a matter to be merely talked of—but keenly and sensitively felt in every living child of the living God. It is powerfully humiliating and sin-purging! But also, it is sweetly preparative for those gracious consolations which proud unhumiliated souls are unable to receive! This heart-rending is distinctly differentiating, for it belongs to the elect of God—and to them alone.

The text commands us to rend our hearts—but they are naturally as hard as marble! How then, can this be done? We must take them to Calvary! A dying Savior's voice rent the rocks once—and it is just as powerful now. O blessed Spirit, let us hear the death-cries of Jesus—and our hearts shall be rent by the solemn sight!

December 18 — Evening

"Be diligent to know the condition of your flock—and pay attention to your herds." Proverbs 27:23

Every wise merchant will occasionally hold a *stock-taking*, when he will cast up his accounts, examine what he has on hand, and ascertain decisively whether his trade is prosperous or declining. Every man who is wise in the kingdom of heaven, will cry, "Search me, O God, and try me!" He will frequently set apart special seasons for self-examination, to discover whether things are right between God and his soul.

The God whom we worship is *a great heart-searcher*; and of old His servants knew Him as the "Righteous God, who searches minds and hearts!" Let me stir you up in His name— to make diligent search and solemn trial of your state, lest you come short of the promised rest.

That which every wise man does, that which God Himself does with us all, I exhort you to do with yourself this evening. Let the oldest saint look well to the fundamentals of his piety, for **grey heads may cover black hearts!** Let not the young professor despise the word of warning, for the greenness of youth may be joined to the *rottenness of hypocrisy*. The enemy still continues to sow *tares* among the wheat.

It is not my aim to introduce doubts and fears into your mind; nay, truly—but I shall hope the rather—that the *rough wind of self-examination* may help to drive them away! It is not security—but carnal security, which we would kill! It is not confidence—but fleshly confidence, which we would overthrow! It is not peace—but false peace, which we would destroy! By the precious blood of Christ, which was not shed to make you a hypocrite—but that sincere souls might show forth His praise, I beseech you, **search and look**, lest at the last it be said of you, "You are weighed in the balances, and are found lacking!"

December 19 — *Morning*

"We may throw the dice—but the Lord determines how they fall." Proverbs 16:33

If the fall of the dice is under the Lord's control—then whose is the arrangement of our whole life? If the a simple casting of the dice is guided by Him—how much more the events of our entire life—especially when we are told by our blessed Savior, "The very hairs of your head are all numbered! Not a sparrow falls to the ground without your Father!" It would bring a holy calm over your mind, dear friend, if you were always to remember this. It would so relieve your mind from worry—that you would be the better able to walk in patience, calmness, and cheerfulness, as a Christian should.

When a man is anxious—he cannot pray with faith, or serve his Master. When you worry and fret about your lot and circumstances, you are meddling with Christ's business, and neglecting your own! You have been attempting "providing" work—and forgetting that it is yours to "obey". Be wise and attend to the obeying—and let Christ manage the providing.

Come and survey your Father's storehouse, and ask whether He will let you starve—while He has laid up so great an abundance in His garner! Look at His heart of mercy—and ask if that can ever prove unkind! Look at His inscrutable wisdom—and ask if that will ever be at fault. Above all, look up to Jesus Christ your Intercessor, and ask yourself, while He pleads, can your Father deal ungraciously with you? If He remembers even sparrows, will He forget one of His poor children?

"Cast your burden upon the Lord—and He will take care of you. He will not permit the godly to slip and fall." Psalm 55:22

December 19 — Evening

"And there was no more sea." Revelation 21:1

Scarcely could we rejoice at the thought of losing the glorious old ocean. The new heavens and the new earth are none the fairer to our imagination, if, indeed, literally there is to be no great and wide sea, with its gleaming waves and shelly shores.

Is not the text to be read as a metaphor, tinged with the bias with which the Oriental mind universally regarded the sea in the olden times? A real physical world without a sea it is mournful to imagine, it would be an iron ring, without the diamond which made it precious. There must be a spiritual meaning here.

In heaven, there will be no **division**—the sea separates nations and divides peoples from each other. To John on the island of Patmos, the deep waters were like prison walls, shutting him out from his brethren and his work. There shall be no such barriers in the world to come. Leagues of rolling billows lie between us and many a kinsman whom we prayerfully remember—but in the bright world to which we go—there shall be unbroken fellowship for all the redeemed family. In this sense there shall be no more sea.

The sea is the emblem of **change**—with its ebbs—and flows, its glassy smoothness—and its mountainous billows, its gentle murmurs—and its tumultuous roarings. The sea is never the same for long. As the slave of the fickle winds and the changeful moon—its instability is proverbial.

In this mortal state—we have too much of this change. This world is constant—only in her inconstancy! But in the heavenly state—all mournful change shall be unknown, and with it all fear of storm to wreck our hopes and drown our joys. The sea of glass glows with a glory, which is unbroken by a wave! No tempest howls along the peaceful shores of paradise!

Soon shall we reach that happy land where partings, and changes, and storms shall all be ended! Jesus will waft all of His people there! Are you in Him or not? This is the grand question!

December 20 — *Morning*

"Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love!" Jeremiah 31:3

Sometimes the Lord Jesus tells His Church His *love thoughts*. He does not think it enough to tell it behind her back—but in her very presence He says, 'You are absolutely beautiful, My beloved!' It is true, this is not His ordinary method; He is a wise lover, and knows when to keep back the intimation of love—and when to let it out; but there are times when He will make no secret of it; times when He will put it beyond all dispute in the souls of His people.

The Holy Spirit is often pleased, in a most gracious manner, to witness the love of Jesus to our souls. He takes of the things of Christ—and reveals them unto us. No voice is heard from the clouds, and no vision is seen in the night—but we have a testimony more sure than either of these. If an angel should fly from heaven and inform the saint personally of the Savior's love to him—the evidence would not be one whit more satisfactory than that which is borne in the heart by the Holy Spirit! Ask those of the Lord's people who have lived the nearest to the gates of heaven, and they will tell you that they have had seasons when the love of Christ towards them has been a fact so clear and sure—that they could no more doubt it than they could question their own existence!

Yes, beloved believer, you and I have had *times of refreshing* from the presence of the Lord, and then our faith has mounted to the topmost heights of assurance. We have had confidence to lean our heads upon the bosom of our Lord, and we have no more questioned our Master's affection to us—than John did when in that blessed posture; nay, nor so much—for the *dark question*, "Lord, is it *I* who shall betray you?" has been put far from us. He has kissed us with the kisses of His mouth; and has killed our doubts—by the closeness of His embrace. His love has been sweeter than wine to our souls!

December 20 — Evening

"Call your laborers, and give them their pay." Matthew 20:8

God is a good paymaster. He pays His servants *while* at work—as well as when they have done it. One of His payments is this—a **clear conscience**. If you have spoken faithfully of Jesus to one person, when you go to bed at night you feel happy in thinking, "This day I have discharged my conscience of that man's blood." There is a great *comfort* in doing something for Jesus. Oh, what a happiness to place jewels in His crown, and give Him to see of the travail of His soul!

There is also very great reward in watching the first buddings of conviction in a soul! To say of that girl in the class, "She is tender of heart, I do hope that there is the Lord's work within." To go home and pray over that boy, who said something in the afternoon which made you think he must know more of divine truth than you had imagined! Oh, the joy of **hope**!

But as for the joy of **success**! it is unspeakable. This joy, overwhelming as it is, is a hungry thing—you pine for *more* of it. To be a soul-winner is the happiest thing in the world. With every soul you bring to Christ—you get a new heaven upon earth. But who can conceive the bliss which awaits us above! Oh, how sweet is that sentence, "Enter into the joy of your Lord!"

Do you know what the *joy of Christ* is, over a saved sinner? This is the very joy which we are to possess in heaven. Yes, when He mounts the throne, you shall mount with Him. When the heavens ring with "Well done, well done!" you shall partake in the reward! You have *toiled* with Him, you have *suffered* with Him, you shall now *reign* with Him! You have sown with Him, you shall reap with Him! Your face was covered with sweat like His, and your soul was grieved for the sins of men as His soul was—now shall your face be bright with heaven's splendor as is His countenance, and now shall your soul be filled with beatific joys even as His soul is!

December 21 — *Morning*

"He has established an everlasting covenant with me—ordered and secured in every detail!"

2 Samuel 23:5

This covenant is divine in its origin. "HE has established an everlasting covenant with me." Oh that great word, HE! Stop, my soul! God, the everlasting Father, has positively made a covenant with you; yes, that God who spoke the world into existence by a word; He, stooping from His majesty, takes hold of your hand—and makes a covenant with you! Is not this stupendous condescension, a deed which might ravish our hearts forever, if we could really understand it?

If a *king* had made a covenant with me—that would be something special. But the Prince of the kings of the earth, El-Shaddai, the Lord All-sufficient, the Jehovah of ages, the everlasting Elohim, "HE has established an everlasting covenant with me!"

But notice, it is particular in its application. "He has established an everlasting covenant with ME." Here lies the sweetness of it, to each believer. It is nothing for me that He made peace for the world; I want to know whether He made peace for *me!* It is little that He has made a covenant, I want to know whether He has made a covenant with *me*.

Blessed is the assurance that He has made an everlasting covenant with *me!* If God the Holy Spirit gives me assurance of this, then His *salvation* is mine, His *heart* is mine, He *Himself* is mine—He is *my God!*

This covenant is **everlasting** in its duration. An everlasting covenant means a covenant which had no beginning, and which shall never, never end. How sweet amidst all the uncertainties of life, to know that "the foundation of the Lord stands sure," and to have God's own promise, "I will not break My covenant, nor alter anything that has gone out of my lips." Like dying David, I will sing of this, even though my house is not so with God as my heart desires!

December 21 — Evening

"I clothed you in embroidered cloth and provided you with leather sandals. I also wrapped you in fine linen and covered you with silk." Ezekiel 16:10

See with what matchless generosity the Lord provides for His people's apparel. They are so arrayed, that the divine skill is seen producing an unrivaled embroidered work, in which every attribute takes its part, and every divine beauty is revealed.

There is no art like the art displayed in our salvation, no skillful workmanship like that beheld in the righteousness of the saints. Justification has engrossed learned pens in all ages of the church, and will be the theme of admiration in eternity. God has indeed "skillfully wrought it."

With all this beauty, there is mingled *utility* and *durability*, comparable to our being shod with leather. The animal here meant is unknown—but its skin covered the tabernacle, and formed one of the finest and strongest leathers known. The righteousness which is of God by faith endures forever, and he who is shod with this divine preparation, will tread the desert safely, and may even set his foot upon the lion and the adder.

Purity and *dignity* of our holy vesture, are brought out in the *fine linen*. When the Lord sanctifies His people, they are clad as priests in pure white. Not the *snow* itself, excels them in purity. They are in the eyes of men and angels fair to look upon, and in the Lord's eyes they are even without spot.

Meanwhile the royal apparel is delicate and rich as silk. No expense is spared, no beauty withheld, no daintiness denied.

What, then? Is there no inference from this? Surely there is gratitude to be felt and joy to be expressed. Come, my heart, refuse not your evening hallelujah!

December 22 — Morning

"I will strengthen you." Isaiah 41:10

God has the ability to discharge this engagement; for He is able to do all things. Believer, until you can drain dry the ocean of omnipotence, until you can break into pieces the towering mountains of almighty strength—you never need to fear. Do not think that the strength of *man* shall ever be able to overcome the power of *God*. While the earth's huge pillars stand—you have enough reason to abide firm in your faith. The same God who directs the earth in its orbit, who feeds the burning furnace of the sun, and trims the lamps of heaven—has promised to supply you with daily strength! While He is able to uphold the universe—do not dream that He will prove unable to fulfill His own promises.

Remember what He did in the days of old, in the former generations. Remember how He spoke—and it was done; how He commanded—and it stood fast. Shall He who created the world—grow weary? He hangs His world upon nothing—shall He who does this, be unable to support His children? Shall He be unfaithful to His Word—for lack of power? Who is it that restrains the tempest? Does not He ride upon the wings of the wind, and make the clouds His chariots, and hold the ocean in the hollow of His hand? How can He fail you?

When He has put such a faithful promise as this on record, will you for a moment indulge the thought that He has out-promised Himself, and gone beyond His power to fulfill? Ah, no! You can doubt no longer!

O you who are my God and my strength, I can believe that this promise shall be fulfilled, for the boundless reservoir of Your grace can never be exhausted, and the overflowing storehouse of Your strength can never be emptied by Your friends—or rifled by Your enemies!

"Now let the feeble all be strong,
And make Jehovah's arm their song."

December 22 — Evening

"The spot of His children." Deuteronomy 32:5

What is the *secret spot* which infallibly betokens the child of God? It were vain presumption to decide this based upon our own judgment; but God's Word reveals it to us, and we may tread surely where we have Scriptural revelation to be our guide.

In Scripture, we are told concerning our Lord, "to as many as *received Him*, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to as many as *believed* on His name." Then, if I have received Christ Jesus into my heart, I am a child of God. That reception is described in the same verse as *believing* on the name of Jesus Christ. If, then, I believe on Jesus Christ's name—that is, simply from my heart trust myself with the crucified, but now exalted, Redeemer—I am a member of the family of the Most High. Whatever else I may not have, if I have this, I have the privilege to become a child of God.

Our Lord Jesus puts it in another shape. "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." Here is the matter in a nutshell. Christ appears as a Shepherd to His own sheep—and not to others. As soon as He appears, His own sheep perceive Him—they trust Him, they are prepared to follow Him. He knows them—and they know Him. There is a mutual knowledge—there is a constant connection between them. Thus the one mark, the sure mark, the infallible mark of regeneration and adoption—is a hearty faith in the appointed Redeemer.

Reader, are you in doubt, are you uncertain whether you bear *the secret mark of God's children*? Then let not an hour pass over your head until you have said, "Search me, O God, and know my heart!" I adjure you—do not trifle concerning this! If you must trifle anywhere, let it be about some secondary matter—your *health*, or the title deeds of your *estate*; but about your *soul*—your never-dying soul and its eternal destinies, I beseech you to be in earnest! Make sure work for eternity!

December 23 — *Morning*

"Friend, move up *higher*." Luke 14:10

When first the life of grace begins in the soul, we do indeed draw near to God—but it is with great fear and trembling. The soul conscious of guilt, and humbled thereby—is overawed with the solemnity of its position; it is cast into the dust—by a sense of the grandeur of Jehovah, in whose presence it stands. With sincere bashfulness it takes the lowest place. But, in later life, as the Christian grows in grace, although he will never forget the solemnity of his position, and will never lose that holy awe which must encompass a gracious man—when he is in the presence of the God who can create or can destroy; yet his fear has all its terror taken out of it—it becomes a holy reverence, and no more an overshadowing dread.

He is called up higher, to greater access to God in Christ Jesus. Then the man of God, walking amid the splendors of Deity, and veiling his face like the glorious cherubim, with those *twin wings*, the *blood* and *righteousness* of Jesus Christ, will, reverent and bowed in spirit, approach the throne. And seeing there a God of love, of goodness, and of mercy—he will realize rather the *covenant* character of God—than His *absolute Deity*. He will see in God rather His *goodness*—than His *greatness*; and more of His *love*—than of His *majesty*. Then will the soul, bowing still as humbly as before, enjoy a more sacred liberty of intercession. For while prostrate before the glory of the Infinite God, it will be sustained by the refreshing consciousness of being in the presence of *boundless mercy* and *infinite love*, and by the realization of his acceptance "in the Beloved."

Thus the believer is bidden to come up higher, and is enabled to exercise the privilege of rejoicing in God, and drawing near to Him in holy confidence, saying, "*Abba, Father!*"

"So may we go from strength to strength,
And daily grow in grace,
Until in Your image raised at length,
We see You face to face."

December 23 — *Evening*

"*The night also is Yours.*" Psalm 74:16

Yes, Lord, You do not abdicate Your throne—when the sun goes down. Nor do You leave the world all through these long wintry nights—to be the prey of evil. Your eyes watch us as the stars, and Your arms surround us as the zodiac belts the sky. The dews of kindly sleep and all the influences of the moon are in Your hand, and the alarms and solemnities of night are equally with You.

This is very sweet to me when watching through the midnight hours, or tossing to and fro in anguish. There are precious fruits put forth by the *moon* as well as by the *sun*—may my Lord make me to be a favored partaker in them.

The **night of affliction** is as much under the arrangement and control of the Lord of Love—as the bright summer days when all is bliss. Jesus is in the tempest! His love wraps the night as a cloak—but to the *eye of faith* the sable robe is scarcely a disguise. From the first watch of the night even unto the break of day—the *eternal Watcher* observes His saints, and overrules the shadows and dews of midnight, for His people's highest good. We believe in no *rival deities* of good and evil contending for the mastery—but we hear the voice of Jehovah saying, "I create *light*—and I create *darkness*; I, the Lord, do all these things!"

Gloomy seasons of religious indifference and social sin—are not exempted from the divine purpose. When the altars of truth are defiled, and the ways of God forsaken, the Lord's servants weep with bitter sorrow. But they may not despair, for the *darkest eras* are governed by the Lord, and shall come to their end at His bidding. What may seem like *defeat* to us—may be *victory* to Him.

December 24 — *Morning*

"Though He was rich—yet for your sakes He became poor." 2 Corinthians 8:9

The Lord Jesus Christ was eternally rich, glorious, and exalted; but "though He was rich—yet for your sakes He became poor." As the rich saint cannot be true in his communion with his poor brethren—unless of his substance he ministers to their necessities; so (the same rule holding with the head as between the members), it is impossible that our Divine Lord could have had fellowship with us—unless He had imparted to us of His own abounding wealth, and had become poor—to make us rich. Had He remained upon His throne of glory, and had we continued in the ruins of the fall without receiving His salvation, communion would have been impossible on both sides.

Our position by the fall, apart from the covenant of grace, made it as impossible for fallen man to communicate with God—as it is for Belial to be in concord with Christ. In order, therefore, that communion might be compassed, it was necessary that the *rich Kinsman* should bestow his estate upon his poor relatives; that the righteous Savior should give to His sinning brethren of His own perfection; and that we, the poor and guilty—should receive of His fullness grace for grace; that thus in giving and receiving, the One might *descend* from the heights, and the other *ascend* from the depths, and so be able to embrace each other in true and hearty fellowship.

Poverty must be enriched by Him in whom are infinite treasures—before it can venture to commune; and *guilt* must lose itself in imputed and imparted righteousness, before the soul can walk in fellowship with purity. Jesus must clothe His people in His own garments—or He cannot admit them into His palace of glory! And He must wash them in His own blood—or else they will be too defiled for the embrace of His fellowship. O believer, herein is love! For *your* sake the Lord Jesus "became poor" that He might lift you up into communion with Himself!

December 24 — *Evening*

"The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all mankind shall see it together." Isaiah 40:5

We anticipate the happy day when the whole world shall be converted to Christ; when the gods of the heathen shall be cast to the moles and the bats; when Romanism shall be exploded, and the crescent of Mohammed shall wane, never again to cast its baleful rays upon the nations; when kings shall bow down before the Prince of Peace, and all nations shall call their Redeemer blessed. Some despair of this. They look upon the world as a vessel breaking up and going to pieces, never to float again. We know that the world and all that is therein is one day to be burnt up, and afterwards we look for new heavens and for a new earth.

We are not discouraged by the length of His delays; we are not disheartened by the long period which He allots to the church in which to *struggle*—with little success and much defeat. We believe that God will never allow this world, which has once seen Christ's blood shed upon it, to be always the devil's stronghold. Christ came hither to deliver this world from the detested sway of the powers of darkness.

What a shout shall that be—when men and angels shall unite to cry "Hallelujah, hallelujah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!" What a satisfaction will it be in that day—to have had a share in the fight, to have helped to break the arrows of the bow, and to have aided in winning the victory for our Lord! Happy are they who trust themselves with this conquering Lord, and who fight side by side with Him, doing their little in His name, and by His strength! How unhappy are those on the side of evil! It is a losing side, and it is a matter wherein to lose—is to lose and to be lost forever. On whose side are you?

December 25 — *Morning*

"Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel." Isaiah 7:14

Let us today go down to Bethlehem, and in company with wondering shepherds and adoring Magi, let us see Him who was born King of the Jews, for we by faith can claim an interest in Him, and can sing, "Unto *us* a child is born, unto us a son is given."

Jesus is Jehovah incarnate, our *Lord* and our *God*, and yet our *brother* and *friend*. Let us adore and admire Him!

Let us notice at the very first glance—**His miraculous conception**. It was a thing unheard of before, and unparalleled since—that a *virgin* should conceive and bear a child. The first promise ran thus, "The seed of the woman," not the offspring of the man. Since venturous woman led the way in the sin which brought forth *Paradise Lost*, she, and she alone, ushers in the *Regainer of Paradise*. Our Savior, although truly man, was as to His human nature—the Holy One of God. Let us reverently bow before the holy Child whose innocence restores to manhood its ancient glory; and let us pray that He may be formed in us, the hope of glory.

Fail not to note—His **humble parentage**. His mother has been described simply as "a virgin," not a princess, or prophetess, nor a matron of large estate. True the blood of kings ran in her veins; nor was her mind a weak and untaught one, for she could sing most sweetly a song of praise. But yet how humble her position, how poor the man to whom she stood affianced, and how miserable the accommodation afforded to the new-born King! Immanuel, God with us in our nature, in our sorrow, in our lifework, in our punishment, in our grave, and now with us—or rather we with Him, in resurrection, ascension, triumph, and *second coming* splendor!

December 25 — *Evening*

"When these celebrations ended—and sometimes they lasted several days—Job would purify his children. He would get up early in the morning and offer a burnt offering for each of them. For Job said to himself, 'Perhaps my children have sinned and have cursed God in their hearts.' This was Job's regular practice."

Job 1:5

What the patriarch did early in the morning, after the family festivities, it will be well for the believer to do for himself before he rests tonight. Amid the cheerfulness of household gatherings, it is easy to slide into sinful levities, and to forget our avowed character as Christians.

It ought not to be so—but so it is—that our days of feasting are very seldom days of sanctified enjoyment—but too frequently degenerate into *unhallowed mirth*. There is a way of joy as pure and sanctifying as though one bathed in the rivers of Eden—holy gratitude should be quite as purifying an element as grief. Alas! for our poor hearts, that facts prove that the house of *mourning* is better than the house of *feasting*.

Come, believer, in what have you sinned today? Have you been forgetful of your high calling? Have you been even as others in idle words and loose speeches? Then confess the sin, and fly to the *sacrifice*. The sacrifice sanctifies. The precious blood of the Lamb slain—removes the guilt, and purges away the defilement of our sins of ignorance and carelessness. This is the best ending of a Christmas-day—to wash anew in the cleansing fountain.

Believer, come to this sacrifice continually; if it be so good tonight, it is good every night. To live at the *altar* is the privilege of the royal priesthood; to them sin, great as it is, is nevertheless no cause for despair, since they draw near yet again to the sin-atoning victim, and their conscience is purged from dead works.

Gladly I close this festive day,
Grasping the altar's hallowed horn;
My slips and faults are washed away,
The Lamb has all my trespass borne!

December 26 — Morning

"The last Adam." 1 Corinthians 15:45

Jesus is the federal head of His elect. As in *Adam*, every heir of flesh and blood has a personal interest, because he is the covenant head and representative of the race as considered under the covenant of works. So under the covenant of grace, every redeemed soul is one with the Lord from heaven, since He is the Second Adam, the Sponsor and Substitute of the elect in the new covenant of love.

The apostle Paul declares that Levi was in the loins of Abraham when Melchizedek met him—it is a certain truth that the believer was in the loins of Jesus Christ, the Mediator, when in old eternity the covenant settlements of grace were decreed, ratified, and made sure forever. Thus, whatever Christ has done—He has wrought for the whole body of His Church. We were *crucified* in Him and *buried* with Him (Col. 2:10-13), and to make it still more wonderful, we are *risen* with Him and even *ascended* with Him to the seats on high (Eph. 2:6). It is thus that the Church has fulfilled the law, and is "accepted in the beloved." It is thus that she is regarded with delight by the righteous Jehovah, for He views her in Jesus, and does not look upon her as separate from her covenant head.

As the Anointed Redeemer of Israel, Christ Jesus has nothing distinct from His Church, but all that He has—He holds for her. Adam's *righteousness* was ours so long as he maintained it; and his *sin* was ours the moment that he committed it. And in the same manner, all that the Second Adam *is* or *does*—is ours as well as His, seeing that He is our representative. Here is the foundation of the covenant of grace. This gracious system of representation and substitution, which moved Justin Martyr to cry out, "O blessed change, O sweet substitution!" This is the very groundwork of the gospel of our salvation, and is to be received with strong faith and rapturous joy!

December 26 — Evening

"Lo, I am with you always." Matthew 28:20

The Lord Jesus is in the midst of His church; He walks among the golden candlesticks; His promise is, "Lo, I am with you always." He is as surely with us now—as He was with the disciples at the lake, when they saw coals of fire, and fish laid thereon, and bread. Not carnally—but still in real truth, *Jesus is with us!*

And a blessed truth it is, for where Jesus is, love becomes inflamed. Of all the things in the world that can set the heart *burning*, there is nothing like the presence of Jesus! A glimpse of Him so overcomes us, that we are ready to say, "Turn away Your eyes from me—for they have overcome me!" Even the smell of the aloes, and the myrrh, and the cassia, which drop from His perfumed garments, causes the sick and the faint to grow strong. Let there be but a moment's leaning of the head upon that gracious bosom, and a reception of His divine love into our poor cold hearts, and we are cold no longer—but glow like seraphs, equal to every labor, and capable of every suffering. If we know that Jesus is with us—every power will be developed, and every grace will be strengthened, and we shall cast ourselves into the Lord's service with heart, and soul, and strength; therefore is the presence of Christ to be desired above all things.

His presence will be most *realized*—by those who are most *like* Him. If you desire to see Christ, you must grow in conformity to Him. Bring yourself, by the power of the Spirit, into union with Christ's desires, and motives, and plans of action, and you are likely to be favored with His company. Remember, that His presence may be had. His promise is as true as ever. He *delights* to be with us! If He does not come, it is because we hinder Him by our indifference. He will reveal Himself to our earnest prayers, and graciously allow Himself to be detained by our entreaties, and by our tears, for these are the *golden chains* which bind Jesus to His people!

December 27 — *Morning*

"Can the *reed* grow up without mire?" Job 8:11

The *reed* is spongy and hollow, and even so is a hypocrite; there is no substance or stability in him. It is shaken to and fro in every wind—just as formalists yield to every influence. For this reason the *reed* is not broken by the tempest, neither are hypocrites troubled with persecution.

I would not willingly be a deceiver or be deceived; perhaps the text for this day may help me to try myself whether I be a hypocrite or not.

The *reed* by nature lives in water, and owes its very existence to the mire and moisture wherein it has taken root; let the mire become dry, and the *reed* withers very quickly. Its greenness is absolutely dependent upon circumstances, a present abundance of water makes it flourish, and a drought destroys it at once.

Is this my case? Do I only serve God when I am in good company, or when religion is profitable and respectable? Do I love the Lord only when temporal comforts are received from His hands? If so I am a base hypocrite, and like the withering *reed*—I shall perish when death deprives me of outward joys.

But can I honestly assert that when bodily comforts have been few, and my surroundings have been rather adverse to grace, than at all helpful to it—I have still held fast my integrity? Then have I hope that there is genuine vital godliness in me. The *reed* cannot grow without mire—but plants of the Lord's right hand planting can and do flourish even in the year of drought. A godly man often grows best—when his worldly circumstances decay. He who follows Christ for his bag—is a Judas! Those who follow Christ for loaves and fishes—are children of the devil. But those who follow Him out of love to Himself—are His own beloved ones. Lord, let me find my life in You, and not in the mire of this world's favor or gain!

December 27 — Evening

"Jehovah shall guide you continually." Isaiah 58:11

"Jehovah shall guide you." Not an angel—but JEHOVAH Himself shall guide you. Moses said, "If Your presence does not go with me—carry us not up hence." Christian, God has not left you in your earthly pilgrimage to an angel's guidance—*He Himself* leads the van. You may not see the cloudy, fiery pillar—but Jehovah will never forsake you.

Notice the word *shall*, "Jehovah *shall* guide you." How certain this makes it! How sure it is that God will not forsake us! His precious "shalls" and "wills" are better than men's oaths. "I will never leave you, nor forsake you."

Then observe the adverb "continually". We are not merely to be guided sometimes—but we are to have a perpetual monitor. We are not occasionally to be left to our own understanding, and so to wander—but we are continually to hear the guiding voice of the Great Shepherd; and if we follow close at His heels, we shall not err—but be led by a right way to a city to dwell in.

If you have to change your position in life; if you have to emigrate to distant shores; if it should happen that you are cast into poverty, or uplifted suddenly into a more responsible position than the one you now occupy; if you are thrown among strangers, or cast among foes—yet tremble not, for "the Lord shall guide you continually." There are no *dilemmas* out of which you shall not be delivered, if you live near to God, and your heart is kept warm with holy love. He does not go amiss—who goes in the company of God. Like Enoch, *walk with God*, and you cannot mistake your road. You have *infallible wisdom* to direct you, *immutable love* to comfort you, and *eternal power* to defend you. "Jehovah" mark the word, "Jehovah shall guide you continually."

December 28 — *Morning*

"The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God." Galatians 2:20

When the Lord in mercy passed by and saw us in our blood, He first of all said, "Live!" He did this first, because *life* is one of the absolutely essential things in spiritual matters, and until it be bestowed we are incapable of partaking in the things of the kingdom. Now the life which grace confers upon the saints at the moment of their quickening, is none other than the life of Christ, which, like the sap from the stem, runs into us, the branches, and establishes a living connection between our souls and Jesus.

Faith is the grace which perceives this union, having proceeded from it as its first-fruit. Faith is the *neck* which joins the *body* of the Church to its all-glorious *Head*. Faith lays hold upon the Lord Jesus with a firm and determined grasp. She knows His excellence and worth, and no temptation can induce her to repose her trust elsewhere!

Jesus is so delighted with this heavenly grace—that He never ceases to strengthen and sustain her by the loving embrace and all-sufficient support of His eternal arms. Here, then, is established a living, sensible, and delightful union which casts forth streams of love, confidence, sympathy, delight, and joy, whereof both the bride and bridegroom love to drink. When the soul can evidently perceive this oneness between itself and Christ, the pulse may be felt as beating for both, and the one blood as flowing through the veins of each. Then is the heart as near heaven as it can be on earth, and is prepared for the enjoyment of the most sublime and spiritual kind of fellowship.

December 28 — Evening

"I did not come to send *peace* on earth—but a *sword*." Matthew 10:34

The Christian will be sure to make enemies. It will be one of his objects to make none; but if to do the right, and to believe the true, should cause him to lose every earthly friend—he will count it but a small loss, since his great Friend in heaven will be yet more friendly, and reveal Himself to him more graciously than ever. O you who have taken up His cross—do you know what your Master said? "I have come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother; and a man's foes shall be they of his own household."

Christ is the great Peacemaker; but before peace, He brings war. Where the light comes, the darkness must retire. Where truth is, the lie must flee; or, if it abides, there must be a stern conflict, for the truth cannot and will not lower its standard, and the lie must be trodden under foot. If you follow Christ, you shall have all the *dogs of the world* yelping at your heels! If you would live so as to stand the test of the last tribunal, depend upon it—*the world will not speak well of you!* He who has the friendship of the world—is an enemy to God! But if you are true and faithful to the Most High God—men will resent your unflinching fidelity, since it is a testimony against their iniquities.

Fearless of all consequences, you must do the right. You will need the *courage of a lion*—to unhesitatingly pursue a course which shall turn your best friend into your fiercest foe! But for the love of Jesus—you must thus be courageous. For the truth's sake to hazard reputation and affection, is such a deed that to do it constantly you will need a degree of moral courage which only the Spirit of God can work in you. Do not turn your back like a coward—but play the man. Follow right manfully in your Master's steps, for He has traversed this rough way before you. Better a brief warfare—and eternal rest; than false peace—and everlasting torment!

December 29 — *Morning*

"Hitherto has the Lord helped us." 1 Samuel 7:12

The word "hitherto" seems like a hand pointing in the direction of the **past**. Twenty years or seventy, and yet, "hitherto the Lord has helped us!" Through poverty, through wealth, through sickness, through health, at home, abroad, on the land, on the sea, in honor, in dishonor, in perplexity, in joy, in trial, in triumph, in prayer, in temptation— "hitherto has the Lord helped us!"

We delight to look down a long avenue of trees. It is delightful to gaze from end to end of the long vista, a sort of *verdant temple*, with its branching pillars and its arches of leaves. Just so—look down the long aisles of your years, at the green boughs of mercy overhead, and the strong pillars of loving-kindness and faithfulness which bear up your joys. Are there no birds in yonder branches singing? Surely there must be many, and they all sing of mercy received "hitherto."

But the word also points **forward**. For when a man gets up to a certain mark and writes "hitherto," he is not yet at the end, there is still a distance to be traversed. More trials, more joys; more temptations, more triumphs; more prayers, more answers; more toils, more strength; more fights, more victories; and then come sickness, old age, disease, death. Is it over now? No! there is more yet— awakening in Jesus's likeness, thrones, harps, songs, psalms, white clothing, the face of Jesus, the society of saints, the glory of God, the fullness of eternity, the infinity of bliss!

O be of good courage, believer, and with grateful confidence raise your "Ebenezer," for—He who has helped you hitherto—will help you all your journey through. When read in heaven's light, how glorious and marvelous a prospect will your "hitherto" unfold to your grateful eye!

December 29 — Evening

"What do you think of Christ?" Matthew 22:42

The great test of your soul's health is, *What do you think of Christ?* Is He to you "fairer than the children of men" "the chief among ten thousand" the "altogether lovely"? Wherever Christ is thus esteemed, all the faculties of the spiritual man exercise themselves with energy. I will judge of your piety by this barometer—does Christ stand high or low with you? If you have thought little of Christ, if you have been content to live without His presence, if you have cared little for His honor, if you have been neglectful of His laws—then I know that your soul is sick—God grant that it may not be sick unto death! But if the first thought of your spirit has been, "How can I honor Jesus?" If the daily desire of your soul has been, "O that I knew where I might find Him!" I tell you that you may have a thousand infirmities, and even scarcely know whether you are a child of God at all, and yet I am persuaded, beyond a doubt, that you are safe, since Jesus is great in your esteem. I care not for your rags—what do you think of His royal apparel? I care not for your wounds, though they bleed in torrents—what do you think of His wounds? Are they like glittering rubies in your esteem?

I think none the less of you, though you lie like Lazarus on the dunghill, and the dogs lick your sores—I judge you not by your poverty—what do you think of the King in His beauty? Has He a glorious high throne in your heart? Would you set Him higher if you could? Would you be willing to die if you could but add another trumpet to the strain which proclaims His praise? Ah! then it is well with you.

Whatever you may think of *yourself*, if Christ is great to you—you shall be with Him before long!

December 30 — *Morning*

"The *end* of a matter—is better than its *beginning*." Ecclesiastes 7:8

Look at Christ's *beginning*. He was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Would you see the *end*? He sits at His Father's right hand, waiting until His enemies be made his footstool.

"As He is—so are we also in this world." You must bear the cross—or you shall never wear the crown! You must wade through the mire—or you shall never walk the golden pavement! Cheer up, then, poor Christian. "The *end* of a matter—is better than its *beginning*."

See that *creeping worm*, how contemptible its appearance! It is the beginning of a thing. Mark that *butterfly* with gorgeous wings, playing in the sunbeams, sipping at the flower bells, full of happiness and life; that is the end thereof. That *caterpillar* is yourself, until you are wrapped up in the chrysalis of death; but when Christ shall appear you shall be like Him, for you shall see Him as He is. Be content to be like Him—a despised worm—that like Him you may be satisfied when you wake up in His likeness.

That rough-looking diamond is put upon the wheel of the jeweler. He cuts it on all sides. It loses much—much that seemed costly to itself. The king is crowned; the diadem is put upon the monarch's head with trumpet's joyful sound. A glittering ray flashes from that coronet, and it beams from that very diamond which was just now so sorely vexed by the jeweler. You may venture to compare yourself to such a diamond, for you are one of God's people; and this is the time of the *cutting* process.

Let faith and patience have their perfect work, for in the day when the crown shall be set upon the head of the King, Eternal, Immortal, Invisible, one ray of glory shall stream from *you!* "They shall be Mine," says the Lord, "in the day when I make up *My jewels*." "The *end* of a matter—is better than its *beginning*."

December 30 — Evening

"Don't you realize that this will only end in bitterness?" 2 Samuel 2:26

If, O my reader! you are merely a *professor*, and not a *possessor* of saving faith in Christ Jesus, the following lines are a true ketch of your end. You are a respectable attendant at a place of worship; you go because others go, not because your heart is right with God. This is your beginning. I will suppose that for the next twenty or thirty years you will be spared to go on as you do now, professing religion by an outward attendance upon the means of grace—but having no heart in the matter.

Tread softly, for I must show you the *deathbed* of such a one as yourself. Let us gaze upon him gently. A clammy sweat is on his brow, and he wakes up crying, "O God, it is hard to die. Did you send for my minister?" "Yes, he is coming." The minister comes. "Sir, I fear that I am dying!" "Have you any hope?" "I cannot say that I have. I fear to stand before my God; oh! pray for me." The prayer is offered for him with sincere earnestness, and the way of salvation is for the ten-thousandth time put before him—but before he has grasped the rope, I see him sink into death. I may put my finger upon those cold eyelids, for they will never see anything here again.

But where is the man, and where are the man's true eyes? It is written, "In hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment." Ah! why did he not lift up his eyes before? Because he was so accustomed to hear the gospel that his soul slept under it. Alas! if you should lift up your eyes there, how bitter will be your wailings. Let the Savior's own words reveal the woe, "Father Abraham, send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue—for I am tormented in this flame!" There is a frightful meaning in those words. May you never have to spell it out by the red light of Jehovah's wrath!

December 31 — *Morning*

"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying—if any man thirsts—let him come unto Me and drink!" John 7:37

Patience had her perfect work in the Lord Jesus, and until the last day of the feast He pleaded with the Jews, even as on this last day of the year He pleads with us, and waits to be gracious to us. Admirable indeed is the longsuffering of the Savior—in bearing with some of us year after year, notwithstanding our provocations, rebellions, and resistance of His Holy Spirit. *Wonder of wonders* that we are still in the *land of mercy!*

Pity expressed herself most plainly, for Jesus *cried*, which implies not only the *loudness* of His voice—but the *tenderness* of His tones. He entreats us to be reconciled. "We beg you," says the Apostle, "as though God did beseech you by us." What earnest, pathetic terms are these! How deep must be the love which makes the Lord weep over sinners, and like a mother—woo His children to His bosom! Surely at the call of such a cry—our willing hearts will come.

Provision is made most plenteously; all is provided that man can need to quench his soul's thirst. To his *conscience* the atonement brings peace; to his *understanding* the gospel brings the richest instruction; to his *heart* the person of Jesus is the noblest object of affection; to the *whole man* the truth as it is in Jesus, supplies the purest nutriment. Thirst is terrible—but Jesus can remove it. Though the soul were utterly famished, Jesus could restore it.

Provision is made most *freely*, that every *thirsty* one is welcome. No other distinction is made but that of *thirst*. Whether it be the thirst of avarice, ambition, pleasure, knowledge, or rest—he who suffers from it is invited. The thirst may be bad in itself, and be no sign of grace—but rather a mark of inordinate sin longing to be gratified with deeper draughts of lust. But it is not goodness in the creature which brings him the invitation, the Lord Jesus sends it freely, and without respect of persons.

Provision is declared most *fully*. The sinner must come to Jesus, not to works, ordinances, or doctrines—but to a personal Redeemer, who His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree. The bleeding, dying, rising Savior—is the only *star of hope* to a sinner. Oh for grace to come now and drink, before the sun sets upon the year's last day! No waiting or preparation is so much as hinted at.

Drinking represents a reception for which *no fitness* is required. A fool, a thief, a harlot can drink; and so *sinfulness of character* is no bar to the invitation to believe in Jesus. We need no golden cup, no bejewelled chalice, in which to convey the water to the thirsty; the mouth of poverty is welcome to stoop down and quaff the flowing flood. Blistered, leprous, filthy lips—may touch the stream of divine love; they cannot pollute it—but shall themselves be purified by it. Jesus is the fount of hope. Dear reader, hear the dear Redeemer's loving voice as He cries to each of us, "If any man thirsts—let him come unto Me and drink!"

December 31 — Evening

"The harvest is past, the summer is ended—and we are not saved." Jeremiah 8:20

Not saved! Dear reader, is this your mournful plight? Warned of the judgment to come, bidden to escape for your life—and yet at this moment not saved! You know the way of salvation, you read it in the Bible, you hear it from the pulpit, it is explained to you by friends—and yet you neglect it, and therefore you are not saved! You will be without excuse when the Lord shall judge the living and the dead.

The Holy Spirit has given more or less of blessing upon the Word which has been preached in your hearing, and times of refreshing have come from the divine presence, and yet you are without Christ. All these hopeful seasons have come and gone—your *summer* and your *harvest* have past—and yet you are not saved. Years have followed one another into eternity, and your last year will soon be here—youth has gone, manhood is going—and yet you are not saved. Let me ask you—will you ever be saved? Is there any likelihood of it? Already the most propitious seasons have left you unsaved; will other occasions alter your condition? Means have failed with you—the best of means, used perseveringly and with the utmost affection—what more can be done for you? Affliction and prosperity have alike failed to impress you; tears and prayers and sermons have been wasted on your barren heart. Are not the probabilities dead against your ever being saved? Is it not more than likely that you will abide as you are—until death forever bars the door of hope?

Do you recoil from the supposition? Yet it is a most reasonable one—he who is not washed in so many waters—will in all probability go filthy to his end! The convenient time never has come, why should it ever come? It is logical to fear that it never will arrive, and that Felix-like, you will find no convenient season—until you are in hell. O think what that hell is—and of the dreadful probability that you will soon be cast into it!

Reader, suppose you should die unsaved—no words can picture your doom! Write out your dreadful estate in tears and blood, talk of it with groans and gnashing of teeth—you will be punished with everlasting destruction, away from the glory of the Lord, and from the glory of His power.

A brother's voice would sincerely startle you into earnestness. O be wise, be wise in time, and before another year begins—believe in Jesus, who is able to save to the uttermost. Consecrate these last hours to serious thought, and if deep repentance is bred in you, it will be well; and if it lead to a humble faith in Jesus, it will be best of all. O see to it that this year does not pass away—and you remain unforgiven. Let not the new year's midnight peals, sound upon an unforgiven spirit! Now, NOW, NOW believe, and live. "Flee for your lives! Don't look back, and don't stop anywhere in the plain! Flee to the mountains or you will be swept away!"

FAITH'S CHECKBOOK

A TREASURY OF DAILY DEVOTIONS BY

CHARLES SPURGEON

<http://www.spurgeon.org/fcb/fcb-bod.htm>

January 1: The Bible's First Promise

And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. (Genesis 3:15)

This is the first promise to fallen man. It contains the whole gospel and the essence of the covenant of grace. It has been in great measure fulfilled. The seed of the woman, even our Lord Jesus, was bruised in His heel, and a terrible bruising it was. How terrible will be the final bruising of the serpent's head! This was virtually done when Jesus took away sin, vanquished death, and broke the power of Satan; but it awaits a still fuller accomplishment at our Lord's second advent and in the Day of Judgment. To us the promise stands as a prophecy that we shall be afflicted by the powers of evil in our lower nature, and thus bruised in our heel; but we shall triumph in Christ, who sets His foot on the old serpent's head. Throughout this year we may have to learn the first part of this promise by experience, through the temptations of the devil and the unkindness of the ungodly, who are his seed. They may so bruise us that we may limp with our sore heel; but let us grasp the second part of the text, and we shall not be dismayed. By faith let us rejoice that we shall still reign in Christ Jesus, the woman's seed.

January 2: Conquest to Victory

And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. (Romans 16:20)

This promise follows well upon that of yesterday. We are evidently to be conformed to our covenant Head, not only in His being bruised in His heel but in His conquest of the evil one. Even under our feet is the old dragon to be bruised. The Roman believers were grieved with strife in the church; but their God was "the God of peace" and gave them rest of soul. The archenemy tripped up the feet of the unwary and deceived the hearts of the simple; but he was to get the worst of it and to be trodden down by those whom he had troubled. This victory would not come to the people of God through their own skill or power; but God Himself would bruise Satan. Though it would be under their feet, yet the bruising would be of the Lord alone.

Let us bravely tread upon the tempter! Not only inferior spirits but the prince of darkness himself must go down before us. In unquestioning confidence in God let us look for speedy victory. "Shortly." Happy word! Shortly we shall set our foot on the old serpent! What a joy to crush evil! What dishonor to Satan to have his head bruised by human feet! Let us by faith in Jesus tread the tempter down.

January 3: Rest on a Promise

The land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it. (Genesis 28:13)

No promise is of private interpretation: it belongs not to one saint but to all believers. If, my brother, thou canst in faith lie down upon a promise and take thy rest thereon, it is thine. Where Jacob "lighted" and tarried and rested, there he took possession. Stretching his weary length upon the ground, with the stones of that place for his pillows, he little fancied that he was thus entering into ownership of the land; yet so it was. He saw in his dream that wondrous ladder which for all true believers unites earth and heaven, and surely where the foot of the ladder stood he must have a right to the soil, for otherwise he could not reach the divine stairway. All the promises of God are "Yea" and "Amen" in Christ Jesus, and as He is ours, every promise is ours if we will but lie down upon it in restful faith.

Come, weary one, use thy Lord's words as thy pillows, Lie down in peace. Dream only of Him. Jesus is thy ladder of light. See the angels coming and going upon Him between thy soul and thy God, and be sure that the promise is thine own God-given portion and that it will not be robbery for thee to take it to thyself, as spoken specially to thee.

January 4: In Calm Repose

I will make them to lie down safely. (Hosea 2:18)

Yes, the saints are to have peace. The passage from which this gracious word is taken speaks of peace "with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground." This is peace with earthly enemies, with mysterious evils, and with little annoyances! Any of these might keep us from lying down, but none of them shall do so. The Lord will quite destroy those things which threaten His people: "I will break the bow and the sword, and the battle out of the earth." Peace will be profound indeed when all the instruments of disquiet are broken to pieces.

With this peace will come rest, "So he giveth his beloved sleep." Fully supplied and divinely quieted, believers lie down in calm repose. This rest will be a safe one. It is one thing to lie down but quite another "to lie down safely." We are brought to the land of promise, the house of the Father, the chamber of love, and the bosom of Christ: surely we may now "lie down safely." It is safer for a believer to lie down in peace than to sit up and worry.

"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures," We never rest till the Comforter makes us lie down.

January 5: A Wonderful Guarantee
I will strengthen thee. (Isaiah 41:10)

When called to serve or to suffer, we take stock of our strength, and we find it to be less than we thought and less than we need. But let not our heart sink within us while we have such a word as this to fall back upon, for it guarantees us all that we can possibly need. God has strength omnipotent; that strength He can communicate to us; and His promise is that He will do so. He will be the food of our souls and the health of our hearts; and thus He will give us strength. There is no telling how much power God can put into a man. When divine strength comes, human weakness is no more a hindrance.

Do we not remember seasons of labor and trial in which we received such special strength that we wondered at ourselves? In the midst of danger we were calm, under bereavement we were resigned, in slander we were self-contained, and in sickness we were patient. The fact is that God gives unexpected strength when unusual trials come upon us, We rise out of our feeble selves. Cowards play the man, foolish ones have wisdom given them, and the silent receive in the self-same hour what they shall speak, My own weakness makes me shrink, but God's promise makes me brave. Lord, strengthen me "according to thy word."

January 6: Help from Without
Yea, I will help thee. (Isaiah 41:10)

Yesterday's promise secured us strength for what we have to do, but this guarantees us aid in cases where we cannot act alone. The Lord says, "I will help thee." Strength within is supplemented by help without. God can raise us up allies in our warfare if so it seems good in His sight; and even if He does not send us human assistance, He Himself will be at our side, and this is better still. "Our August Ally" is better than legions of mortal helpers.

His help is timely: He is a very present help in time of trouble. His help is very wise: He knows how to give each man help meet and fit for him. His help is most effectual, though vain is the help of man. His help is more than help, for He bears all the burden and supplies all the need. "The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man can do unto me."

Because He has already been our help, we feel confidence in Him for the present and the future. Our prayer is, "Lord, be thou my helper"; our experience is, "The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities"; our expectation is, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, whence cometh my help"; and our song soon will be, "Thou, Lord, hast holden me."

January 7: Always Growing

Thou shalt see greater than these. (John 1:50)

This is spoken to a childlike believer, who was ready to accept Jesus as the Son of God, the King of Israel, upon one convincing piece of argument. Those who are willing to see shall see; it is because we shut our eyes that we become so sadly blind.

We have seen much already. Great things and unsearchable has the Lord showed unto us, for which we praise His name; but there are greater truths in His Word, greater depths of experience, greater heights of fellowship, greater works of usefulness, greater discoveries of power, and love, and wisdom. These we are yet to see if we are willing to believe our Lord. The faculty of inventing false doctrine is ruinous, but power to see the truth is a blessing. Heaven shall be opened to us, the way thither shall be made clear to us in the Son of Man, and the angelic commerce which goes on between the upper and the lower kingdoms shall be made more manifest to us. Let us keep our eyes open toward spiritual objects and expect to see more and more. Let us believe that our lives will not drivel down into nothing but that we shall be always on the growing hand, seeing greater and still greater things, till we behold the great God Himself and never again lose the sight of Him.

January 8: Purity of Heart and Life

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. (Matthew 5:8)

Purity, even purity of heart, is the main thing to be aimed at. We need to be made clean within through the Spirit and the Word, and then we shall be clean without by consecration and obedience. There is a close connection between the affections and the understanding: if we love evil we cannot understand that which is good. If the heart is foul, the eye will be dim. How can those men see a holy God who love unholy things?

What a privilege it is to see God here! A glimpse of Him is heaven below! In Christ Jesus the pure in heart behold the Father. We see Him, His truth, His love, His purpose, His sovereignty, His covenant character, yea, we see Himself in Christ. But this is only apprehended as sin is kept out of the heart. Only those who aim at godliness can cry, "Mine eyes are ever towards the Lord." The desire of Moses, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory," can only be fulfilled in us as we purify ourselves from all iniquity. We shall "see him as he is," and "every one that hath this hope in him purifieth himself." The enjoyment of present fellowship and the hope of the beatific vision are urgent motives for purity of heart and life. Lord, make us pure in heart that we may see Thee!

January 9: Gaining by Giving

The liberal soul shall be made fat. (Proverbs 11:25)

If I desire to flourish in soul, I must not hoard up my stores but must distribute to the poor. To be close and niggardly is the world's way to prosperity, but it is not God's way, for He saith, "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty." Faith's way of gaining is giving. I must try this again and again, and I may expect that as much of prosperity as will be good for me will come to me as a gracious reward for a liberal course of action.

Of course, I may not be sure of growing rich. I shall be fat but not too fat. Too great riches might make me as unwieldy as corpulent persons usually are and cause me the dyspepsia of worldliness, and perhaps bring on a fatty degeneration of the heart. No, if I am fat enough to be healthy, I may well be satisfied; and if the Lord grants me a competence, I may be thoroughly content.

But there is a mental and spiritual fatness which I would greatly covet, and this comes as the result of generous thoughts toward my God, His church, and my fellow men. Let me not stint, lest I starve my heart. Let me be bountiful and liberal, for so shall I be like my Lord. He gave Himself for me; shall I grudge Him anything?

January 10: Divine Recompense

He that watereth shall be watered also himself. (Proverbs 11:25)

If I carefully consider others, God will consider me, and in some way or other He will recompense me. Let me consider the poor, and the Lord will consider me. Let me look after little children, and the Lord will treat me as His child. Let me feed His flock, and He will feed me. Let me water His garden, and He will make a watered garden of my soul. This is the Lord's own promise; be it mine to fulfill the condition and then to expect its fulfillment.

I may care about myself till I grow morbid; I may watch over my own feelings till I feel nothing; and I may lament my own weakness till I grow almost too weak to lament. It will be far more profitable for me to become unselfish and out of love to my Lord Jesus begin to care for the souls of those around me. My tank is getting very low; no fresh rain comes to fill it; what shall I do? I will pull up the plug and let its contents run out to water the withering plants around me. What do I see? My cistern seems to fill as it flows. A secret spring is at work. While all was stagnant, the fresh spring was sealed; but as my stock flows out to water others the Lord thinketh upon me. Hallelujah!

January 11: Faith Sets the Bow

And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud. (Genesis 9:14)

Just now clouds are plentiful enough, but we are not afraid that the world will be destroyed by a deluge. We see the rainbow often enough to prevent our having any such fears. The covenant which the Lord made with Noah stands fast, and we have no doubts about it. Why, then, should we think that the clouds of trouble, which now darken our sky, will end in our destruction? Let us dismiss such groundless and dishonoring fears.

Faith always sees the bow of covenant promise whenever sense sees the cloud of affliction. God has a bow with which He might shoot out His arrows of destruction. But see, it is turned upward! It is a bow without an arrow or a string; it is a bow hung out for show, no longer used for war. It is a bow of many colors, expressing joy and delight, and not a bow blood-red with slaughter or black with anger. Let us be of good courage. Never does God so darken our sky as to leave His covenant without a witness, and even if He did, we would trust Him since He cannot change or lie or in any other way fail to keep His covenant of peace. Until the waters go over the earth again, we shall have no reason for doubting our God.

January 12: "Loved unto the End"

For the Lord will not cast off for ever. (Lamentations 3:31)

He may cast away for a season but not forever. A woman may leave off her ornaments for a few days, but she will not forget them or throw them upon the dunghill. It is not like the Lord to cast off those whom He loves, for "having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." Some talk of our being in grace and out of it, as if we were like rabbits that run in and out of their burrows; but, indeed, it is not so. The Lord's love is a far more serious and abiding matter than this.

He chose us from eternity, and He will love us throughout eternity. He loved us so as to die for us, and we may therefore be sure that His love will never die. His honor is so wrapped up in the salvation of the believer that He can no more cast him off than He can cast off His own robes of office as King of glory. No, no! The Lord Jesus, as a Head, never casts off His members; as a Husband, He never casts off His bride. Did you think you were cast off? Why did you think so evil of the Lord who has betrothed you to Himself? Cast off such thoughts, and never let them lodge in your soul again. "The Lord hath not cast away his people which he foreknew" (Romans 11:2). "He hateth putting away" (Malachi 2:16).

January 13: Never Cast Out

Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. (John 6:37)

Is there any instance of our Lord's casting out a coming one? If there be so, we would like to know of it; but there has been none, and there never will be. Among the lost souls in hell there is not one that can say, "I went to Jesus, and He refused me." It is not possible that you or I should be the first to whom Jesus shall break His word. Let us not entertain so dark a suspicion.

Suppose we go to Jesus now about the evils of today. Oh, this we may be sure—He will not refuse us audience or cast us out. Those of us who have often been and those who have never gone before—let us go together, and we shall see that He will not shut the door of His grace in the face of any one of us.

"This man receiveth sinners," but He repulses none. We come to Him in weakness and sin, with trembling faith, and small knowledge, and slender hope; but He does not cast us out. We come by prayer, and that prayer broken; with confession, and that confession faulty; with praise, and that praise far short of His merits; but yet He receives us. We come diseased, polluted, worn out, and worthless; but He doth in no wise cast us out. Let us come again today to Him who never casts us out.

January 14: Rest Is a Gift

*Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
(Matthew 11:28)*

We who are saved find rest in Jesus. Those who are not saved will receive rest if they come to Him, for here He promises to "give" it. Nothing can be freer than a gift; let us gladly accept what He gladly gives. You are not to buy it, nor to borrow it, but to receive it as a gift. You labor under the lash of ambition, covetousness, lust, or anxiety: He will set you free from this iron bondage and give you rest. You are "laden," yes, "heavy laden" with sin, fear, care, remorse, fear of death; but if you come to Him He will unload you. He carried the crushing mass of our sin that we might no longer carry it. He made Himself the great Burden-bearer, that every laden one might cease from bowing down under the enormous pressure.

Jesus gives rest. It is so. Will you believe it? Will you put it to the test? Will you do so at once? Come to Jesus by quitting every other hope, by thinking of Him, believing God's testimony about Him, and trusting everything with Him. If you thus come to Him the rest which He will give you will be deep, safe, holy, and everlasting. He gives a rest which develops into heaven, and He gives it this day to all who come to Him.

January 15: Made Rich by Faith

***For the needy shall not always be forgotten:
the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever. (Psalm 9:18)***

Poverty is a hard heritage; but those who trust in the Lord are made rich by faith. They know that they are not forgotten of God, and though it may seem that they are overlooked in His providential distribution of good things, they look for a time when all this shall be righted. Lazarus will not always lie among the dogs at the rich man's gate, but he will have his recompense in Abraham's bosom. Even now the Lord remembers His poor but precious sons, "I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me," said one of old, and it is even so. The godly poor have great expectations. They expect the Lord to provide them all things necessary for this life and godliness; they expect to see things working for their good; they expect to have all the closer fellowship with their Lord, who had not where to lay His head; they expect His second advent and to share its glory. This expectation cannot perish, for it is laid up in Christ Jesus, who liveth forever, and because He lives, it shall live also. The poor saint singeth many a song which the rich sinner cannot understand. Wherefore, let us, when we have short commons below, think of the royal table above.

January 16: Even the Faintest Call

And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shalt be delivered. (Joel 2:32)

Why do I not call on His name? Why do I run to this neighbor and that when God is so near and will hear my faintest call? Why do I sit down and devise schemes and invent plans! Why not at once roll my self and my burden upon the Lord? Straightforward is the best runner—why do I not run at once to the living God? In vain shall I look for deliverance anywhere else; but with God I shall find it; for here I have His royal "shall" to make it sure.

I need not ask whether I may call on Him or not, for that word whosoever is a very wide and comprehensive one. Whosoever means me, for it means anybody and everybody who calls upon God. I will therefore follow the leading of the text and at once call upon the glorious Lord who had made so large a promise.

My case is urgent, and I do not see how I am to be delivered; but this is no business of mine. He who makes the promise will find out ways and means of keeping it. It is mine to obey His commands; it is not mine to direct His counsels. I am His servant, not His solicitor. I call upon Him, and He will deliver me.

January 17: A Man Without Fear

And he said, Certainly I will be with thee. (Exodus 3:12)

Of course, if the Lord sent Moses on an errand, He would not let him go alone. The tremendous risk which it would involve and the great power it would require would render it ridiculous for God to send a poor lone Hebrew to confront the mightiest king in all the world and then leave him to himself. It could not be imagined that a wise God would match poor Moses with Pharaoh and the enormous forces of Egypt. Hence He says, "Certainly I will be with thee," as if it were out of the question that He would send him alone.

In my case, also, the same rule will hold good. If I go upon the Lord's errand with a simple reliance upon His power and a single eye to His glory, it is certain that He will be with me. His sending me binds Him to back me up. Is not this enough? What more can I want? If all the angels and arch-angels were with me. I might fail; but if He is with me, I must succeed. Only let me take care that I act worthily toward this promise. Let me not go timidly, halfheartedly, carelessly, presumptuously. What manner of person ought he to be who has God with him! In such company it behoveth me to play the man and, like Moses, go in unto Pharaoh without fear.

January 18: Christ and His Children

***When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin,
he shall see his seed. (Isaiah 53:10)***

Our Lord Jesus has not died in vain. His death was sacrificial: He died as our substitute, because death was the penalty of our sins. Because His substitution was accepted of God, He has saved those for whom He made His soul a sacrifice. By death He became like the corn of wheat which bringeth forth much fruit. There must be a succession of children unto Jesus; He is "the Father of the everlasting age." He shall say, "Behold, I and the children whom Thou hast given me."

A man is honored in his sons, and Jesus hath His quiver full of these arrows of the mighty. A man is represented in his children, and so is the Christ in Christians. In his seed a man's life seems to be prolonged and extended; and so is the life of Jesus continued in believers.

Jesus lives, for He sees His seed. He fixes His eye on us, He delights in us, He recognizes us as the fruit of His soul travail. Let us be glad that our Lord does not fail to enjoy the result of His dread sacrifice, and that He will never cease to feast His eyes upon the harvest of His death. Those eyes which once wept for us are now viewing us with pleasure. Yes, He looks upon those who are looking unto Him. Our eyes meet! What a joy is this!

January 19: Mouth Confession; Heart Belief

If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. (Romans 10:9)

There must be confession with the mouth. Have I made it? Have I openly avowed my faith in Jesus as the Savior whom God has raised from the dead, and have I done it in God's way! Let me honestly answer this question.

There must also be belief with the heart. Do I sincerely believe in the risen Lord Jesus? Do I trust in Him as my sole hope of salvation? Is this trust from my heart? Let me answer as before God.

If I can truly claim that I have both confessed Christ and believed in Him, then I am saved. The text does not say it may be so, but it is plain as a pikestaff and clear as the sun in the heavens: "Thou shalt be saved." As a believer and a confessor, I may lay my hand on this promise and plead it before the Lord God at this moment, and throughout life, and in the hour of death, and at the Day of Judgment.

I must be saved from the guilt of sin, the power of sin, the punishment of sin, and ultimately from the very being of sin. God hath said it—"Thou shalt be saved." I believe it. I shall be saved. I am saved. Glory be to God forever and ever!

January 20: The Overcomer

To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God. (Revelation 2:7)

No man may turn his back in the day of battle or refuse to go to the holy war. We must fight if we would reign, and we must carry on the warfare till we overcome every enemy, or else this promise is not for us, since it is only for "him that overcometh." We are to overcome the false prophets who have come into the world and all the evils which accompany their teaching. We are to overcome our own faintness of heart and tendency to decline from our first love. Read the whole of the Spirit's word to the church at Ephesus.

If by grace we win the day, as we shall if we truly follow our conquering Leader, then we shall be admitted to the very center of the paradise of God and shall be permitted to pass by the cherub and his flaming sword and come to that guarded tree, whereof if a man eat, he shall live forever. We shall thus escape that endless death which is the doom of sin and gain that everlasting life which is the seal of innocence, the outgrowth of immortal principles of Godlike holiness. Come, my heart, pluck up courage! To flee the conflict will be to lose the joys of the new and better Eden; to fight unto victory is to walk with God in paradise.

January 21: God's Enemies Shall Bow

The Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord. (Exodus 7:5)

The ungodly world is hard to teach. Egypt does not know Jehovah and therefore dares to set up its idols and even ventures to ask, "Who is the Lord?" Yet the Lord means to break proud hearts, whether they will or not. When His judgments thunder over their heads, darken their skies, destroy their harvests, and slay their sons, they begin to discern somewhat of Jehovah's power. There will yet be such things done in the earth as shall bring skeptics to their knees. Let us not be dismayed because of their blasphemies, for the Lord can take care of His own name, and He will do so in a very effectual manner.

The salvation of His own people was another potent means of making Egypt know that the God of Israel was Jehovah, the living and true God. No Israelite died by any one of the ten plagues. None of the chosen seed were drowned in the Red Sea. Even so, the salvation of the elect and the sure glorification of all true believers will make the most obstinate of God's enemies acknowledge that Jehovah, He is the God.

Oh, that His convincing power would go forth by His Holy Spirit in the preaching of the gospel, till all nations shall bow at the name of Jesus and call Him Lord!

January 22: Christian Liberty

***Blessed is he that considereth the poor:
the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. (Psalm 41:1)***

To think about the poor and let them lie on our hearts is a Christian man's duty; for Jesus put them with us and near us when He said, "The poor ye have always with you."

Many give their money to the poor in a hurry, without thought; and many more give nothing at all. This precious promise belongs to those who "consider" the poor, look into their case, devise plans for their benefit, and considerately carry them out. We can do more by care than by cash, and most with two together. To those who consider the poor, the Lord promises His own consideration in times of distress. He will bring us out of trouble if we help others when they are in trouble. We shall receive very singular providential help if the Lord sees that we try to provide for others. We shall have a time of trouble, however generous we may be; but if we are charitable, we may put in a claim for peculiar deliverance, and the Lord will not deny His own word and bond. Miserly curmudgeons may help themselves, but considerate and generous believers the Lord will help. As you have done unto others, so will the Lord do unto you. Empty your pockets.

January 23: A Completed Sacrifice

And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering: and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him. (Leviticus 1:4)

If by that laying on of his hand the bullock became the offerer's sacrifice, how much more shall Jesus become ours by the laying on of the hand of faith?

My faith doth lay her hand
On that dear head of Thine,
While like a penitent I
stand,
And there confess my sin.

If a bullock could be accepted for him to make atonement for him, how much more shall the Lord Jesus be our full and all-sufficient propitiation? Some quarrel with the great truth of substitution; but as for us, it is our hope, our joy, our boast, our all. Jesus is accepted for us to make atonement for us, and we are "accepted in the Beloved." Let the reader take care at once to lay his hand on the Lord's completed sacrifice, that by accepting it he may obtain the benefit of it. If he has done so once, let him do it again. If he has never done so, let him put out his hand without a moment's delay. Jesus is yours now if you will have Him. Lean on Him—lean hard on Him—and He is yours beyond all question; you are reconciled to God, your sins are blotted out, and you are the Lord's.

January 24: Care of Our Feet

He will keep the feet of his saints. (1 Samuel 2:9)

The way is slippery and our feet are feeble, but the Lord will keep our feet. If we give ourselves up by obedient faith to be His holy ones, He will Himself be our guardian. Not only will He charge His angels to keep us, but He Himself will preserve our goings.

He will keep our feet from falling so that we do not defile our garments, wound our souls, and cause the enemy to blaspheme.

He will keep our feet from wandering so that we do not go into paths of error, or ways of folly, or courses of the world's custom.

He will keep our feet from swelling through weariness, or blistering because of the roughness and length of the way.

He will keep our feet from wounding: our shoes shall be iron and brass so that even though we tread on the edge of the sword, or on deadly serpents, we shall not bleed or be poisoned.

He will also pluck our feet out of the net. We shall not be entangled by the deceit of our malicious and crafty foes.

With such a promise as this, let us run without weariness and walk without fear. He who keeps our feet will do it effectually.

January 25: He Acts on Honest Confession

He looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; he will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light. (Job 33:27-28)

This is a word of truth, gathered from the experience of a man of God, and it is tantamount to a promise. What the Lord has done, and is doing, He will continue to do while the world standeth. The Lord will receive into His bosom all who come to Him with a sincere confession of their sin; in fact, He is always on the lookout to discover any that are in trouble because of their faults.

Can we not endorse the language here used? Have we not sinned, sinned personally so as to say, "I have sinned"? Sinned willfully, having perverted that which is right? Sinned so as to discover that there is no profit in it but an eternal loss? Let us, then, go to God with this honest acknowledgment. He asks no more. We can do no less.

Let us plead His promise in the name of Jesus. He will deliver us from the pit of hell which yawns for us; He will grant us life and light. Why should we despair? Why should we even doubt? The Lord does not mock humble souls. He means what He says. The guilty can be forgiven. Those who deserve execution can receive free pardon. Lord, we confess, and we pray Thee to forgive!

January 26: God Routs Fear

***Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob,
neither is there any divination against Israel. (Numbers 23:23)***

How this should cut up root and branch all silly, superstitious fears! Even if there were any truth in witchcraft and omens, they could not affect the people of the Lord. Those whom God blessed, devils cannot curse.

Ungodly men, like Balaam, may cunningly plot the overthrow of the Lord's Israel; but with all their secrecy and policy they are doomed to fail. Their powder is damp; the edge of their sword is blunted. They gather together; but as the Lord is not with them, they gather together in vain. We may sit still and let them weave their nets, for we shall not be taken in them. Though they call in the aid of Beelzebub and employ all his serpentine craft, it will avail them nothing: the spells will not work, the divination will deceive them. What a blessing this is! How it quiets the heart! God's Jacobs wrestle with God, but none shall wrestle with them and prevail. God's Israels have to prevail against them. We need not fear the fiend himself, nor any of those secret enemies whose words are full of deceit and whose plans are deep and unfathomable. They cannot hurt those who trust in the living God. We defy the devil and all his legions.

January 27: Precious Repentance

And there shall ye remember your ways, and all your doings, wherein ye have been defiled; and ye shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for all your evils that ye have committed. (Ezekiel 20:43)

When we are accepted of the Lord and are standing in the place of favor, and peace, and safety, then we are led to repent of all our failures and miscarriages toward our gracious God. So precious is repentance that we may call it a diamond of the first water, and this is sweetly promised to the people of God as one most sanctifying result of salvation. He who accepts repentance also gives repentance; and He gives it not out of "the bitter box" but from among those "wafers made with honey" on which He feeds His people. A sense of blood-bought pardon and of undeserved mercy is the best means of dissolving a heart of stone. Are we feeling hard? Let us think of covenant love, and then we shall leave sin, lament sin, and loathe sin; yea, we shall loathe ourselves for sinning against such infinite love. Let us come to God with this promise of penitence and ask Him to help us to remember, and repent, and regret, and re-turn.

Oh, that we could enjoy the meltings of holy sorrow! What a relief would a flood of tears be! Lord, smite the rock, or speak to the rock, and cause the waters to flow!

January 28: Tears Shall Cease

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. (Revelation 21:4)

Yes, we shall come to this if we are believers. Sorrow shall cease, and tears shall be wiped away. This is the world of weeping, but it passes away. There shall be a new heaven and a new earth, so says the first verse of this chapter; and therefore there will be nothing to weep over concerning the Fall and its consequent miseries. Read the second verse and note how it speaks of the bride and her marriage. The Lamb's wedding is a time for boundless pleasure, and tears would be out of place. The third verse says that God Himself will dwell among men; and surely at His right hand there are pleasures forevermore, and tears can no longer flow.

What will our state be when there will be no more sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain? This will be more glorious than we can as yet imagine. O eyes that are red with weeping, cease your scalding flow, for in a little while ye shall know no more tears! None can wipe tears away like the God of love, but He is coming to do it. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." Come, Lord, and tarry not; for now both men and women must weep!

January 29: Obedience Brings Blessing

Observe and hear all these words, which I command thee, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee for ever, when thou doest that which is good and right in the sight of the Lord thy God. (Deuteronomy 12:28)

Though salvation is not by the works of the law, yet the blessings which are promised to obedience are not denied to the faithful servants of God. The curses our Lord took away when He was made a curse for us, but no clause of blessing has been abrogated.

We are to note and listen to the revealed will of the Lord, giving our attention not to portions of it but to "all these words." There must be no picking and choosing but an impartial respect to all that God has commanded. This is the road of blessedness for the Father and for His children. The Lord's blessing is upon His chosen to the third and fourth generation. If they walk uprightly before Him, He will make all men know that they are a seed which the Lord has blessed. No blessing can come to us or ours through dishonesty or double dealing. The ways of worldly conformity and unholiness cannot bring good to us or ours. It will go well with us when we go well before God. If integrity does not make us prosper, knavery will not. That which gives pleasure to God will bring pleasure to us.

January 30: A Heavenly Escort

*And, behold, I am with thee,
and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest. (Genesis 28:15)*

Do we need journeying mercies? Here are choice ones—God's presence and preservation, In all places we need both of these, and in all places we shall have them if we go at the call of duty, and not merely according to our own fancy. Why should we look upon removal to another country as a sorrowful necessity when it is laid upon us by the divine will? In all lands the believer is equally a pilgrim and a stranger; and yet in every region the Lord is His dwelling place, even as He has been to His saints in all generations. We may miss the protection of an earthly monarch, but when God says, "I will keep thee," we are in no real danger. This is a blessed passport for a traveler and a heavenly escort for an emigrant.

Jacob had never left his father's room before; he had been a mother's boy and not an adventurer like his brother. Yet he went abroad, and God went with him. He had little luggage and no attendants; yet no prince ever journeyed with a nobler bodyguard. Even while he slept in the open field, angels watched over him, and the Lord God spoke to him. If the Lord bids us go, let us say with our Lord Jesus, "Arise, let us go hence."

January 31: God Always Hears
My God will hear me. (Micah 7:7)

Friends may be unfaithful, but the Lord will not turn away from the gracious soul; on the contrary, He will hear all its desires. The prophet says, "Keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom. A man's enemies are the men of his own house." This is a wretched state of affairs; but even in such a case the Best Friend remains true, and we may tell Him all our grief.

Our wisdom is to look unto the Lord and not to quarrel with men or women. If our loving appeals are disregarded by our relatives, let us wait upon the God of our salvation, for He will hear us. He will hear us all the more because of the unkindness and oppression of others, and we shall soon have reason to cry, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy!"

Because God is the living God, He can hear; because He is a loving God, He will hear; because He is our covenant God, He has bound Him-self to hear us. If we can each one speak of Him as "My God," we may with absolute certainty say, "My God will hear me." Come, then, O bleeding heart, and let thy sorrows tell themselves out to the Lord thy God! I will bow the knee in secret and inwardly whisper, "My God will hear me."

February 1: Never Despair

But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings. (Malachi 4.2)

Fulfilled once in the first advent of our glorious Lord, and yet to have a fuller accomplishment in His second advent, this gracious word is also for daily use. Is it dark with the reader? Does the night deepen into a denser blackness? Still let us not despair: the sun will yet rise. When the night is darkest, dawn is nearest.

The sun which will arise is of no common sort. It is the Sun—the Sun of Righteousness, whose every ray is holiness. He who comes to cheer us, comes in the way of justice as well as of mercy, comes to violate no law even to save us. Jesus as much displays the holiness of God as His love. Our deliverance, when it comes, will be safe because righteous.

Our one point of inquiry should be—"Do we fear the name of the Lord? Do we reverence the living God and walk in His ways?" Then for us the night must be short; and when the morning cometh, all the sickness and sorrow of our soul will be over forever. Light, warmth, joy, and clearness of vision will come, and healing of every disease and distress will follow after.

Has Jesus risen upon us? Let us sit in the sun. Has He hidden His face? Let us wait for His rising. He will shine forth as surely as the sun.

February 2: Grow Up

And ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. (Malachi 4:2)

Yes, when the sun shines, the sick quit their chambers and walk abroad to breathe the fresh air. When the sun brings spring and summer, the cattle quit their stalls and seek pasture on the higher Alps. Even thus, when we have conscious fellowship with our Lord, we leave the stall of despondency and walk abroad in the fields of holy confidence. We ascend to the mountains of joy and feed on sweet pasturage which grows nearer heaven than the provender of carnal men.

To "go forth" and to "grow up" is a double promise. O my soul, be thou eager to enjoy both blessings! Why shouldst thou be a prisoner? Arise, and walk at liberty. Jesus saith that His sheep shall go in and out and find pasture; go forth, then, and feed in the rich meadows of boundless love.

Why remain a babe in grace? Grow up. Young calves grow fast, especially if they are stall fed; and thou hast the choice care of thy Redeemer. Grow, then, in grace and in knowledge of thy Lord and Savior, Be neither straitened nor stunted. The Sun of Righteousness has risen upon thee. Answer to His beams as the buds to the natural sun. Open thine heart; expand and grow up into Him in all things.

February 3: He Freely Gives

He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? (Romans 8:32)

If this is not a promise in form, it is in fact. Indeed, it is more than one promise, it is a conglomerate of promises. It is a mass of rubies, and emeralds, and diamonds, with a nugget of gold for their setting. It is a question which can never be answered so as to cause us any anxiety of heart. What can the Lord deny us after giving us Jesus? If we need all things in heaven and earth, He will grant them to us: for if there had been a limit anywhere, He would have kept back His own Son.

What do I want today? I have only to ask for it. I may seek earnestly, but not as if I had to use pressure and extort an unwilling gift from the Lord's hand; for He will give freely. Of His own He gave us His own Son. Certainly no one would have proposed such a gift to Him. No one would have ventured to ask for it. It would have been too presumptuous. He freely gave His Only-begotten, and, O my soul, canst thou not trust thy heavenly Father to give thee anything, to give thee everything? Thy poor prayer would have no force with Omnipotence if force were needed; but His love, like a spring, rises of itself and overflows for the supply of all thy needs.

February 4: He Will Return

I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. (John 14:18)

He left us, and yet we are not left orphans. He is our comfort, and He is gone; but we are not comfortless. Our comfort is that He will come to us, and this is consolation enough to sustain us through His prolonged absence. Jesus is already on His way: He says, "I come quickly": He rides posthaste toward us. He says, "I will come": and none can prevent His coming, or put it back for a quarter of an hour. He specially says, "I will come to you"; and so He will. His coming is specially to and for His own people. This is meant to be their present comfort while they mourn that the Bridegroom doth not yet appear.

When we lose the joyful sense of His presence we mourn, but we may not sorrow as if there were no hope. Our Lord in a little wrath has hid Himself from us for a moment, but He will return in full favor. He leaves us in a sense, but only in a sense. When He withdraws, He leaves a pledge behind that He will return. O Lord, come quickly! There is no life in this earthly existence if Thou be gone. We sigh for the return of Thy sweet smile. When wilt Thou come unto us? We are sure Thou wilt appear; but be Thou like a roe, or a young hart. Make no tarrying, O our God!

February 5: Justice Satisfied

When I see the blood, I will pass over you. (Exodus 12:13)

My own sight of the precious blood is for my comfort; but it is the Lord's sight of it which secures my safety. Even when I am unable to behold it, the Lord looks at it and passes over me because of it. If I am not so much at ease as I ought to be, because my faith is dim, yet I am equally safe because the Lord's eye is not dim, and He sees the blood of the great Sacrifice with steady gaze. What a joy is this!

The Lord sees the deep inner meaning, the infinite fullness of all that is meant by the death of His dear Son. He sees it with restful memory of justice satisfied and all His matchless attributes glorified. He beheld creation in its progress and said, "It is very good"; but what does He say of redemption in its completeness? What does He say of the obedience even unto death of His well-beloved Son? None can tell His delight in Jesus, His rest in the sweet savor which Jesus presented when He offered Himself without spot unto God.

Now rest we in calm security. We have God's sacrifice and God's Word to create in us a sense of perfect security. He will, He must, pass over us, because He spared not our glorious Substitute. Justice joins hands with love to provide everlasting salvation for all the blood-besprinkled

February 6: Blessing in the City

If thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, blessed shalt thou be in the city. (Deuteronomy 28:2-3)

The city is full of care, and he who has to go there from day to day finds it to be a place of great wear and tear. It is full of noise, and stir, and bustle, and sore travail; many are its temptations, losses, and worries. But to go there with the divine blessing takes off the edge of its difficulty; to remain there with that blessing is to find pleasure in its duties and strength equal to its demands.

A blessing in the city may not make us great, but it will keep us good; it may not make us rich, but it will preserve us honest. Whether we are porters, or clerks, or managers, or merchants, or magistrates, the city will afford us opportunities for usefulness. It is good fishing where there are shoals of fish, and it is hopeful to work for our Lord amid the thronging crowds. We might prefer the quiet of a country life; but if called to town, we may certainly prefer it because there is room for our energies.

Today let us expect good things because of this promise, and let our care be to have an open ear to the voice of the Lord and a ready hand to execute His bidding. Obedience brings the blessing. "In keeping his commandments there is great reward."

February 7: Return from Backsliding

If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up. (Job 22:23)

Eliphaz, in this utterance, spoke a great truth, which is the summary of many an inspired Scripture. Reader, has sin pulled you down? Have you become like a ruin? Has the hand of the Lord gone out against you so that in estate you are impoverished and in spirit you are broken down? Was it your own folly which brought upon you all this dilapidation? Then the first thing to be done is to return to the Lord. With deep repentance and sincere faith find your way back from your backsliding. It is your duty, for you have turned away from Him whom you professed to serve. It is your wisdom, for you cannot strive against Him and prosper. It is your immediate necessity, for what He has done is nothing compared to what He may do in the way of chastisement, since He is Almighty to punish.

See what a promise invites you! You shall be "built up." None but the Almighty can set up the fallen pillars and restore the tottering walls of your condition; but He can and He will do it if you return to Him. Do not delay. Your crushed mind may quite fail you if you go on to rebel; but hearty confession will ease you, and humble faith will console you. Do this, and all will be well.

February 8: Joyful Security

I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. (Isaiah 41:10)

Fear of falling is wholesome. To be venturesome is no sign of wisdom. Times come to us when we feel that we must go down unless we have a very special support. Here we have it. God's right hand is a grand thing to lean upon. Mind, it is not only His hand, though it keepeth heaven and earth in their places, but His right hand: His power united with skill, His power where it is most dexterous. Nay, this is not all; it is written, "I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." That hand which He uses to maintain His holiness and to execute His royal sentences—this shall be stretched out to hold up His trusting ones. Fearful is our danger, but joyful is our security. The man whom God upholds, devils cannot throw down.

Weak may be our feet, but almighty is God's right hand. Rough may be the road, but Omnipotence is our upholding. We may boldly go forward. We shall not fall. Let us lean continually where all things lean. God will not withdraw His strength, for His righteousness is there as well. He will be faithful to His promise, and faithful to His Son, and therefore faithful to us. How happy we ought to be! Are we not so?

February 9: The Dross Purged

And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried; they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God. (Zech. 13:9)

Grace transmutes us into precious metal, and then the fire and the furnace follows as a necessary consequence. Do we start at this? Would we sooner be accounted worthless, that we might enjoy repose, like the stones of the field! This would be to choose the viler part—like Esau, to take the pottage and give up the covenant portion. No, Lord; we will gladly be cast into the furnace rather than be cast out from Thy presence!

The fire only refines; it does not destroy. We are to be brought through the fire, not left in it. The Lord values His people as silver, and therefore He is at pains to purge away their dross. If we are wise, we shall rather welcome the refining process than decline it. Our prayer will be that our alloy may be taken from us rather than that we should be withdrawn from the crucible.

O Lord, Thou triest us indeed! We are ready to melt under the fierceness of the flame. Still, this is Thy way, and Thy way is the best. Sustain us under the trial and complete the process of our purifying, and we will be Thine forever and ever.

February 10: A Constant Witness

*For thou shalt be his witness unto all men
of what thou hast seen and heard. (Acts 22:15)*

Paul was chosen to see and hear the Lord speaking to him out of heaven. This divine election was a high privilege for himself; but it was not intended to end with him; it was meant to have an influence upon others, yea, upon all men. It is to Paul that Europe owes the gospel at this hour.

It is ours in our measure to be witnesses of that which the Lord has revealed to us, and it is at our peril that we hide the precious revelation. First, we must see and hear, or we shall have nothing to tell; but when we have done so, we must be eager to bear our testimony. It must be personal: "Thou shalt be." It must be for Christ: "Thou shalt be his witness." It must be constant and all absorbing; we are to be this above all other things and to the exclusion of many other matters. Our witness must not be to a select few who will cheerfully receive us but to "all men"—to all whom we can reach, young or old, rich or poor, good or bad. We must never be silent like those who are possessed by a dumb spirit; for the text before us is a command, and a promise, and we must not miss it—"Thou shalt be his witness." "Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord."

February 11: Are the Children In?

***I will pour my spirit upon thy seed,
and my blessing upon thine offspring. (Isaiah 44:3)***

Our dear children have not the Spirit of God by nature, as we plainly see. We see much in them which makes us fear as to their future, and this drives us to agonizing prayer. When a son becomes specially perverse, we cry with Abraham, "Oh, that Ishmael might live before thee!" We would sooner see our daughters Hannahs than empresses. This verse should greatly encourage us. It follows upon the words, "Fear not, O Jacob, my servant," and it may well banish our fears.

The Lord will give His Spirit; will give it plentifully, pouring it out; will give it effectually, so that it shall be a real and eternal blessing. Under this divine outpouring our children shall come forward, and "one shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob."

This is one of those promises concerning which the Lord will be inquired of. Should we not, at set times, in a distinct manner, pray for our offspring? We cannot give them new hearts, but the Holy Spirit can; and He is easily to be entreated of. The great Father takes pleasure in the prayers of fathers and mothers. Have we any dear ones outside of the ark? Let us not rest till they are shut in with us by the Lord's own hand.

February 12: God Delights to Give

And the Lord said unto Abraham, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward, for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. (Genesis 13:14-15)

A special blessing for a memorable occasion. Abram had settled a family dispute. He had said, "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between thee and me, for we be brethren"; and hence he received the blessing which belongs to peacemakers. The Lord and giver of peace delights to manifest His grace to those who seek peace and pursue it. If we desire closer communion with God, we must keep closer to the ways of peace.

Abram had behaved very generously to his kinsman, giving him his choice of the land. If we deny ourselves for peace's sake, the Lord will more than make it up to us. As far as the patriarch can see, he can claim, and we may do the like by faith. Abram had to wait for the actual possession, but the Lord entailed the land upon him and his posterity. Boundless blessings belong to us by covenant gift. All things are ours. When we please the Lord, He makes us to look everywhere and see all things our own, whether things present or things to come, all are ours, and we are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

February 13: Blessed in the Field

Blessed shalt thou be in the field. (Deuteronomy 28:3)

So was Isaac blessed when he walked therein at eventide to meditate. How often has the Lord met us when we have been alone! The hedges and the trees can bear witness to our joy. We look for such blessedness again.

So was Boaz blessed when he reaped his harvest, and his workmen met him with benedictions. May the Lord prosper all who drive the plow! Every farmer may urge this promise with God, if indeed he obeys the voice of the Lord God.

We go to the field to labor as father Adam did; and since the curse fell on the soil through the sin of Adam the first, it is a great comfort to find a blessing through Adam the second,

We go to the field for exercise, and we are happy in the belief that the Lord will bless that exercise and give us health, which we will use to His glory.

We go to the field to study nature, and there is nothing in a knowledge of the visible creation which may not be sanctified to the highest uses by the divine benediction.

We have at last to go to the field to bury our dead; yea, others will in their turn take us to God's acre in the field. But we are blessed, whether weeping at the tomb or sleeping in it.

February 14: Mercy to the Undeserving

He that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about. (Psalm 32:10)

O fair reward of trust! My Lord, grant it me to the full! The truster above all men feels himself to be a sinner; and lo, mercy is prepared for him: he knows himself to have no deservings, but mercy comes in and keeps house for him on a liberal scale. O Lord, give me this mercy, even as I trust in Thee!

Observe, my soul, what a bodyguard thou hast! As a prince is compassed about with soldiery, so art thou compassed about with mercy. Before and behind, and on all sides, ride these mounted guards of grace. We dwell in the center of the system of mercy, for we dwell in Christ Jesus.

O my soul, what an atmosphere dost thou breathe! As the air surrounds thee, even so does the mercy of thy Lord. To the wicked there are many sorrows, but to thee there are so many mercies that thy sorrows are not worth mentioning. David says, "Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous; and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart." In obedience to this precept my heart shall triumph in God, and I will tell out my gladness. As Thou hast compassed me with mercy, I will also compass Thine altars, O my God, with songs of thanksgiving!

February 15: Ever Mindful

The Lord hath been mindful of us: he will bless us. (Psalm 115:12)

I can set my seal to that first sentence. Cannot you? Yes, Jehovah has thought of us, provided for us, comforted us, delivered us, and guided us. In all the movements of His providence He has been mindful of us, never overlooking our mean affairs. His mind has been full of us—that is the other form of the word *mindful*. This has been the case all along and without a single break. At special times, however, we have more distinctly seen this mindfulness, and we would recall them at this hour with overflowing gratitude. Yes, yes, "the Lord hath been mindful of us."

The next sentence is a logical inference from the former one. Since God is unchangeable, He will continue to be mindful of us in the future as He has been in the past; and His mindfulness is tantamount to blessing us. But we have here not only the conclusion of reason but the declaration of inspiration; we have it on the Holy Ghost's authority—"He will bless us." This means great things and unsearchable. The very indistinctness of the promise indicates its infinite reach. He will bless us after His own divine manner, and that forever and ever, Therefore, let us each say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul!"

February 16: You Deal with God

I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man. (Hosea 11:9)

The Lord thus makes known His sparing mercies. It may be that the reader is now under heavy displeasure, and everything threatens his speedy doom. Let the text hold him up from despair. The Lord now invites you to consider your ways and confess your sins. If He had been man, He would long ago have cut you off. If He were now to act after the manner of men, it would be a word and a blow and then there would be an end of you: but it is not so, for "as high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are his ways above your ways."

You rightly judge that He is angry, but He keepeth not His anger forever: if you turn from sin to Jesus, God will turn from wrath. Because God is God, and not man, there is still forgiveness for you, even though you may be steeped up to your throat in iniquity. You have a God to deal with and not a hard man, or even a merely just man. No human being could have patience with you. You would have wearied out an angel, as you have wearied your sorrowing father; but God is longsuffering. Come and try Him at once. Confess, believe, and turn from your evil way, and you shall be saved.

February 17: God Can Make You Strong

***Be ye strong therefore, and let not your hands be weak:
for your work shall be rewarded. (2 Chronicles 15:7)***

God had done great things for King Asa and Judah, but yet they were a feeble folk. Their feet were very tottering in the ways of the Lord, and their hearts very hesitating, so that they had to be warned that the Lord would be with them while they were with Him, but that if they forsook Him He would leave them. They were also reminded of the sister kingdom, how ill it fared in its rebellion and how the Lord was gracious to it when repentance was shown. The Lord's design was to confirm them in His way and make them strong in righteousness. So ought it to be with us. God deserves to be served with all the energy of which we are capable.

If the service of God is worth anything, it is worth everything. We shall find our best reward in the Lord's work if we do it with determined diligence. Our labor is not in vain in the Lord, and we know it. Halfhearted work will bring no reward; but when we throw our whole soul into the cause, we shall see prosperity. This text was sent to the author of these notes in a day of terrible storm, and it suggested to him to put on all steam, with the assurance of reaching port in safety with a glorious freight.

February 18: God Will Answer

***He will fulfill the desire of them that fear him:
he also will hear their cry, and will save them. (Psalm 145:19)***

His own Spirit has wrought this desire in us, and therefore He will answer it. It is His own life within which prompts the cry, and therefore He will hear it. Those who fear Him are men under the holiest influence, and, therefore, their desire is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. Like Daniel, they are men of desires, and the Lord will cause them to realize their aspirations.

Holy desires are grace in the blade, and the heavenly Husbandman will cultivate them till they come to the full corn in the ear. God-fearing men desire to be holy, to be useful, to be a blessing to others, and so to honor their Lord. They desire supplies for their need, help under burdens, guidance in perplexity, deliverance in distress; and sometimes this desire is so strong and their case so pressing that they cry out in agony like little children in pain, and then the Lord works most comprehensively and does all that is needful according to this Word—"and will save them."

Yes, if we fear God, we have nothing else to fear; if we cry to the Lord, our salvation is certain.

Let the reader lay this text on his tongue and keep it in his mouth all the day, and it will be to him as "a wafer made with honey."

February 19: Better Farther On
Though I have afflicted thee,
I will afflict thee no more. (Nahum 1:12)

There is a limit to affliction. God sends it, and God removes it. Do you sigh and say, "When will the end be?" Remember that our griefs will surely and finally end when this poor earthly life is over, Let us quietly wait and patiently endure the will of the Lord till He cometh.

Meanwhile, our Father in heaven takes away the rod when His design in using it is fully served. When He has whipped away our folly, there will be no more strokes. Or, if the affliction is sent for testing us, that our graces may glorify God, it will end when the Lord has made us bear witness to His praise. We would not wish the affliction to depart till God has gotten out of us all the honor which we can possibly yield Him.

There may today be "a great calm." Who knows how soon those raging billows will give place to a sea of glass, and the sea birds sit on the gentle waves? After long tribulation the Rail is hung up, and the wheat rests in the garner. We may, before many hours are past, be just as happy as now we are sorrowful. It is not hard for the Lord to turn night into day. He that sends the clouds can as easily clear the skies. Let us be of good cheer. It is better on before. Let us sing hallelujah by anticipation.

February 20: Continual Guidance

The Lord shall guide thee continually. (Isaiah 58:11)

What aileth thee? Hast thou lost thy way? Art thou entangled in a dark wood and canst thou not find thy paths? Stand still, and see the salvation of God. He knows the way, and He will direct thee in it if thou cry unto Him.

Every day brings its own perplexity. How sweet to feel that the guidance of the Lord is continual! If we choose our own way or consult with flesh and blood we cast off the Lord's guidance; but if we abstain from self-will, then He will direct every step of our road, every hour of the day, and every day of the year, and every year of our life. If we will but be guided, we shall be guided. If we will commit our way unto the Lord, He will direct our course so that we shall not lose ourselves.

But note to whom this promise is made. Read the previous verse: "If thou draw out thy soul to the hungry." We must feel for others and give them, not a few dry crusts, but such things as we ourselves would wish to receive. If we show a tender care for our fellow-creatures in the hour of their need, then will the Lord attend to our necessities and make Himself our continual Guide. Jesus is the Leader, not of misers, nor of those who oppress the poor, but of the kind and tenderhearted. Such persons are pilgrims who shall never miss their way.

February 21: Blessing on Littleness

He will bless them that fear the Lord, both small and great. (Psalm 115:13)

This is a word of cheer to those who are of humble station and mean estate. Our God has a very gracious consideration for those of small property, small talent, small influence, small weight. God careth for the small things in creation and even regards sparrows in their lighting upon the ground. Nothing is small to God, for He makes use of insignificant agents for the accomplishment of His purposes. Let the least among men seek of God a blessing upon his littleness, and he shall find his contracted sphere to be a happy one.

Among those who fear the Lord there are little and great. Some are babes, and others are giants. But these are all blessed. Little faith is blessed faith. Trembling hope is blessed hope. Every grace of the Holy Spirit, even though it be only in the bud, bears a blessing within it. Moreover, the Lord Jesus bought both the small and the great with the same precious blood, and He has engaged to preserve the lambs as well as the full-grown sheep. No mother overlooks her child because it is little; nay, the smaller it is, the more tenderly does she nurse it. If there be any preference with the Lord, He does not arrange them as "great and small" but as "small and great."

February 22: Past Deliverance Begets Faith

*David said moreover, The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion,
and out of the paw of the bear,
he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. (1 Samuel 17:37)*

This is not a promise if we consider only the words, but it is truly so as to its sense; for David spoke a word which the Lord endorsed by making it true. He argued from past deliverances that he should receive help in a new danger. In Jesus all the promises are "Yea" and "Amen" to the glory of God by us, and so the Lord's former dealings with His believing people will be repeated.

Come, then, let us recall the Lord's former lovingkindness. We could not have hoped to be delivered aforetime by our own strength; yet the Lord delivered us. Will He not again save us? We are sure He will. As David ran to meet his foe, so will we. The Lord has been with us, He is with us, and He has said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," Why do we tremble? Was the past a dream? Think of the dead bear and lion. Who is this Philistine? True, he is not quite the same, and is neither bear nor lion; but then God is the same, and His honor is as much concerned in the one case as in the other. He did not save us from the beasts of the forest to let a giant kill us. Let us be of good courage.

February 23: Unbroken Fellowship Essential

***If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you,
ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. (John 15:7)***

Of necessity we must be in Christ to live unto Him, and we must abide in Him to be able to claim the largesse of this promise from Him. To abide in Jesus is never to quit Him for another love or another object, but to remain in living, loving, conscious, willing union with Him. The branch is not only ever near the stem but ever receiving life and fruitfulness from it. All true believers abide in Christ in a sense; but there is a higher meaning, and this we must know before we can gain unlimited power at the throne. "Ask what ye will" is for Enochs who walk with God, for Johns who lie in the Lord's bosom, for those whose union with Christ leads to constant communion.

The heart must remain in love, the mind must be rooted in faith, the hope must be cemented to the Word, the whole man must be joined unto the Lord, or else it would be dangerous to trust us with power in prayer. The carte blanche can only be given to one whose very life is, "Not I, but Christ liveth in me." O you who break your fellowship, what power you lose! If you would be mighty in your pleadings, the Lord Himself must abide in you, and you in Him.

February 24: Hear So as to Be Heard

If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. (John 15:7)

Note well that we must hear Jesus speak if we expect Him to hear us speak. If we have no ear for Christ, He will have no ear for us. In proportion as we hear we shall be heard.

Moreover, what is heard must remain, must live in us, and must abide in our character as a force and a power. We must receive the truths which Jesus taught, the precepts which He issued, and the movements of His Spirit within us; or we shall have no power at the Mercy Seat.

Suppose our Lord's words to be received and to abide in us, what a boundless field of privilege is opened up to us! We are to have our will in prayer, because we have already surrendered our will to the Lord's command. Thus are Elijahs trained to handle the keys of heaven and lock or loose the clouds. One such man is worth a thousand common Christians. Do we humbly desire to be intercessors for the church and the world, and like Luther to be able to have what we will of the Lord? Then we must bow our ear to the voice of the Well-beloved, treasure up His words, and carefully obey them. He has need to "hearken diligently" who would pray effectually.

February 25: Set Apart

Ye shall be named the priests of the Lord. (Isaiah 61:6)

This literal promise to Israel belongs spiritually to the seed after the Spirit, namely, to all believers. If we live up to our privileges, we shall live unto God so clearly and distinctly that men shall see that we are set apart for holy service and shall name us the priests of the Lord. We may work or trade as others do, and yet we may be solely and wholly the ministering servants of God. Our one occupation shall be to present the perpetual sacrifice of prayer, and praise, and testimony, and self-consecration to the living God by Jesus Christ.

This being our one aim, we may leave distracting concerns to those who have no higher calling. "Let the dead bury their dead." It is written, "Strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your plowmen and your vine-dressers," They may manage politics, puzzle out financial problems, discuss science, and settle the last new quibbles of criticism; but we will give ourselves unto such service as becomes those who, like the Lord Jesus, are ordained to a perpetual priesthood.

Accepting this honorable promise as involving a sacred duty, let us put on the vestments of holiness and minister before the Lord all day long.

February 26: Truth Established

*The lip of truth shall be established for ever;
but a lying tongue is but for a moment. (Proverbs 12:19)*

Truth wears well. Time tests it, but it right well endures the trial. R; then, I have spoken the truth and have for the present to suffer for it, I must be content to wait. If also I believe the truth of God and endeavor to declare it, I may meet with much opposition, but I need not fear, for ultimately the truth must prevail.

What a poor thing is the temporary triumph of falsehood! "A lying lip is but for a moment!" It is a mere gourd which comes up in a night and perishes in a night; and the greater its development the more manifest its decay. On the other hand, how worthy of an immortal being is the avowal and defense of that truth which can never change; the everlasting gospel, which is established in the immutable truth of an unchanging God! An old proverb saith, "He that speaks truth shames the devil." Assuredly he that speaks the truth of God will put to shame all the devils in hell and confound all the seed of the serpent which now hiss out their falsehoods.

O my heart, take care that thou be in all things on the side of truth, both in small things and great; but specially, on the side of Him by whom grace and truth have come among men!

February 27: Unstaggering Trustfulness

***He shall not be afraid of evil tidings;
his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. (Psalm 112:7)***

Suspense is dreadful. When we have no news from home, we are apt to grow anxious, and we cannot be persuaded that "no news is good news." Faith is the cure for this condition of sadness; the Lord by His Spirit settles the mind in holy serenity, and all fear is gone as to the future as well as the present.

The fixedness of heart spoken of by the psalmist is to be diligently sought after. It is not believing this or that promise of the Lord, but the general condition of unstaggering trustfulness in our God, the confidence which we have in Him that He will neither do us ill Himself nor suffer anyone else to harm us. This constant confidence meets the unknown as well as the known of life. Let the morrow be what it may, our God is the God of tomorrow. Whatever events may have happened, which to us are unknown, our Jehovah is God of the unknown as well as of the known. We are determined to trust the Lord, come what may. If the very worst should happen, our God is still the greatest and best. Therefore will we not fear though the postman's knock should startle us or a telegram wake us at midnight. The Lord liveth, and what can His children fear?

February 28: Real Estate in Heaven

***Knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven
a better and an enduring substance. (Hebrews 10:34)***

This is well. Our substance here is very unsubstantial; there is no substance in it. But God has given us a promise of real estate in the gloryland, and that promise comes to our hearts with such full assurance of its certainty that we know in ourselves that we have an enduring substance there. Yes, "we have" it even now. They say, "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush," but we have our bird in the bush and in the hand, too. Heaven is even now our own. We have the title deed of it, we have the earnest of it, we have the firstfruits of it. We have heaven in price, in promise, and in principle; this we know not only by the hearing of the ear but "in ourselves."

Should not the thought of the better substance on the other side of Jordan reconcile us to present losses? Our spending money we may lose, but our treasure is safe. We have lost the shadows, but the substance remains, for our Savior lives, and the place which He has prepared for us abides. There is a better land, a better substance, a better promise; and all this comes to us by a better covenant; wherefore, let us be in better spirits, and say unto the Lord, "Every day will I bless thee; and praise thy name for ever and ever."

February 29: What Follows Us

***Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life. (Psalm 23:6)***

*A devout poet sings
Lord, when thou
Puttest in my time a day,
as thou dost now,
Unknown in other years, grant, I entreat,
Such grace illumine it, that whate'er its phase
It add to holiness, and lengthen praise!*

This day comes but once in four years.... Up till now goodness and mercy, like two guards, have followed us from day to day, bringing up the rear even as grace leads the van; and as this out-of-the-way day is one of the days of our life, the two guardian angels will be with us today also. Goodness to supply our needs and mercy to blot out our sins—these twain shall attend our every step this day and every day till days shall be no more. Wherefore, let us serve the Lord on this peculiar day with special consecration of heart and sing His praises with more zest and sweetness than ever.

Could we not today make an unusual offering to the cause of God or to the poor? By inventiveness of love let us make this twenty-ninth of February a day to be remembered forever.

March 1: Joy for the Cast-Out

Hear the Word of the Lord, ye that tremble at his guard; Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the Lord be glorified: but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed. (Isaiah 66:5)

Possibly this text may not apply to one in a thousand of the readers of this little book of promises; but the Lord cheers that one in such words as these. Let us pray for all such as are cast out wrongfully from the society which they love. May the Lord appear to their joy!

The text applies to truly gracious men who tremble at the word of the Lord. These were hated of their brethren and at length cast out because of their fidelity and their holiness. This must have been very bitter to them; and all the more so because their casting out was done in the name of religion, and professedly with the view of glorifying God. How much is done for the devil in the name of God! The use of the name of Jehovah to add venom to the bite of the old serpent is an instance of his subtlety.

The appearing of the Lord for them is the hope of His persecuted people. He appears as the advocate and defender of His elect; and when He does so it means a clear deliverance for the God-fearing and shame for their oppressors. O Lord, fulfill this word to those whom men are deriding!

March 2: Giving Without a Whisper

But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: that thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in, secret himself shall regard thee openly. (Matthew 6:3-4)

No promise is made to those who give to the poor to be seen of men. They have their reward at once and cannot expect to be paid twice.

Let us hide away our charity—yes, hide it even from ourselves. Give so often and so much as a matter of course that you no more take note that you have helped the poor than that you have eaten your regular meals. Do your alms without even whispering to yourself, How generous I am! Do not thus attempt to reward yourself. Leave the matter with God, who never fails to see, to record, and to reward. Blessed is the man who is busy in secret with his kindness: he finds a special joy in his unknown benevolences. This is the bread, which eaten by stealth, is sweeter than the banquets of kings. How can I indulge myself today with this delightful luxury? Let me have a real feast of tenderness and Row of soul.

Here and hereafter the Lord Himself will personally see to the rewarding of the secret giver of alms. This will be in His own way and time; and He will choose the very best. How much this promise means it will need eternity to reveal.

March 3: Not Left to Perish

***For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell;
neither will thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. (Psalm 16:10)***

This word has its proper fulfillment in the Lord Jesus; but it applies also, with a variation, to all who are in Him. Our soul shall not be left in the separate state, and our body, though it see corruption, shall rise again. The general meaning, rather than the specific application, is that to which we would call our readers' thoughts at this particular time.

We may descend in spirit very low till we seem to be plunged in the abyss of hell; but we shall not be left there. We may appear to be at death's door in heart, and soul, and consciousness; but we cannot remain there. Our inward death as to joy and hope may proceed very far; but it cannot run on to its full consequences, so as to reach the utter corruption of black despair. We may go very low, but not lower than the Lord permits; we may stay in the lowest dungeon of doubt for a while, but we shall not perish there. The star of hope is still in the sky when the night is blackest. The Lord will not forget us and hand us over to the enemy. Let us rest in hope, We have to deal with One whose mercy endureth forever. Surely, out of death, and darkness, and despair we shall yet arise to life, light, and liberty.

March 4: Honor God

Them that honor me I will honor. (1 Samuel 2:30)

Do I make the honor of God the great object of my life and the rule of my conduct? If so, He will honor me. I may for a while receive no honor from man, but God will Himself put honor upon me in the most effectual manner. In the end it will be found the surest way to honor to be willing to be put to shame for conscience' sake.

Eli had not honored the Lord by ruling his household well, and his sons had not honored the Lord by behavior worthy of their sacred office, and therefore the Lord did not honor them but took the high priesthood out of their family and made young Samuel to be ruler in the land instead of any of their line. If I would have my family ennobled, I must honor the Lord in all things. God may allow the wicked to win worldly honors; but the dignity which He Himself gives, even glory, honor, and immortality, He reserves for those who by holy obedience take care to honor Him.

What can I do this day to honor the Lord? I will promote His glory by my spoken testimony and by my practical obedience, I will also honor Him with my substance and by offering to Him some special service. Let me sit down and think how I can honor Him, since He will honor me.

March 5: Home Blessings

He blesseth the habitation of the just. (Proverbs 3:33)

He fears the Lord, and therefore he comes under the divine protection even as to the roof which covers himself and his family. His home is an abode of love, a school of holy training, and a place of heavenly light. In it there is a family altar where the name of the Lord is daily had in reverence. Therefore the Lord blesses his habitation. It may be a humble cottage or a lordly mansion; but the Lord's blessing comes because of the character of the inhabitant and not because of the size of the dwelling.

That house is most blest in which the master and mistress are Godfearing people; but a son or daughter or even a servant may bring a blessing on a whole household. The Lord often preserves, prospers, and provides for a family for the sake of one or two in it, who are "just" persons in His esteem, because His grace has made them so. Beloved, let us have Jesus for our constant guest even as the sisters of Bethany had, and then we shall be blessed indeed.

Let us look to it that in all things we are just—in our trade, in our judgment of others, in our treatment of neighbors, and in our own personal character. A just God cannot bless unjust transactions.

March 6: Guardian of the Fatherless

In thee the fatherless findeth mercy. (Hosea 14:3)

This is an excellent reason for casting away all other confidences and relying upon the Lord alone. When a child is left without its natural protector, our God steps in and becomes his guardian: so also when a man has lost every object of dependence, he may cast himself upon the living God and find in Him all that he needs. Orphans are cast upon the fatherhood of God, and He provides for them. The writer of these pages knows what it is to hang on the bare arm of God, and he bears his willing witness that no trust is so well warranted by facts, or so sure to be rewarded by results, as trust in the invisible but ever-living God.

Some children who have fathers are not much the better off because of them, but the fatherless with God are rich. Better have God and no other friend than all the patrons on the earth and no God. To be bereaved of the creature is painful, but so long as the Lord remains the fountain of mercy to us, we are not truly orphaned. Let fatherless children plead the gracious word for this morning, and let all who have been bereaved of visible support do the same, Lord, let me find mercy in Thee! The more needy and helpless I am, the more confidently do I appeal to Thy loving heart.

March 7: From Fetters Free

The Lord looseth the prisoner. (Psalm 146:7)

He has done it. Remember Joseph, Israel in Egypt, Manasseh, Jeremiah, Peter, and many others. He can do it still. He breaks the bars of brass with a word and snaps the fetters of iron with a look. He is doing it. In a thousand places troubled ones are coming forth to light and enlargement. Jesus still proclaims the opening of the prison to them that are bound. At this moment doors are flying back and fetters are dropping to the ground.

He will delight to set you free, dear friend, if at this time you are mourning because of sorrow, doubt, and fear. It will be joy to Jesus to give you liberty. It will give Him as great a pleasure to loose you as it will be a pleasure to you to be loosed. No, you have not to snap the iron hand: the Lord Himself will do it. Only trust Him, and He will be your Emancipator. Believe in Him in spite of the stone walls or the manacles of iron. Satan cannot hold you, sin cannot enchain you, even despair cannot bind you if you will now believe in the Lord Jesus, in the freeness of His grace, and the fullness of His power to save.

Defy the enemy, and let the word now before you be your song of deliverance; "Jehovah looseth the prisoners."

March 8: Our Substance Blessed

Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store. (Deuteronomy 28:5)

Obedience brings a blessing on all the provisions which our industry earns for us. That which comes in and goes out at once, like fruit in the basket which is for immediate use, shall be blest; and that which is laid by with us for a longer season shall equally receive a blessing. Perhaps ours is a hand-basket portion. We have a little for breakfast and a scanty bite for dinner in a basket when we go out to do our work in the morning. This is well, for the blessing of God is promised to the basket. If we live from hand to mouth, getting each day's supply in the day, we are as well off as Israel; for when the Lord entertained His favored people He only gave them a day's manna at a time. What more did they need? What more do we need?

But if we have a store, how much we need the Lord to bless it! For there is the care of getting, the care of keeping, the care of managing, the care of using; and, unless the Lord bless it, these cares will eat into our hearts till our goods become our gods and our cares prove cankers.

O Lord, bless our substance. Enable us to use it for Thy glory, Help us to keep worldly things in their proper places, and never may our savings endanger the saving of our souls.

March 9: Prayer for Peace

And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pay unto the Lord for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace. (Jer. 29:7)

The principle involved in this text would suggest to all of us who are the Lord's strangers and foreigners that we should be desirous to promote the peace and prosperity of the people among whom we dwell. Specially should our nation and our city be blest by our constant intercession. An earnest prayer for your country and other countries is well becoming in the mouth of every believer. Eagerly let us pray for the great boon of peace, both at home and abroad. If strife should cause bloodshed in our streets, or if foreign battle should slay our brave soldiers, we should all bewail the calamity; let us therefore pray for peace and diligently promote those principles by which the classes at home and the races abroad may be bound together in bonds of amity.

March 10: Walk in Light

I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness. (John 12:46)

This world is dark as midnight; Jesus has come that by faith we may have light and may no longer sit in the gloom which covers all the rest of mankind.

Whosoever is a very wide term: it means you and me. If we trust in Jesus we shall no more sit in the dark shadow of death but shall enter into the warm light of a day which shall never end. Why do we not come out into the light at once?

A cloud may sometimes hover over us, but we shall not abide in darkness if we believe in Jesus. He has come to give us broad daylight. Shall He come in vain.' If we have faith we have the privilege of sunlight: let us enjoy it. From the night of natural depravity, of ignorance, of doubt, of despair, of sin, of dread, Jesus has come to set us free; and all believers shall know that He no more comes in vain than the sun rises and fails to scatter his heat and light.

Shake off thy depression, dear brother. Abide not in the dark, but abide in the light. In Jesus is thy hope, thy joy, thy heaven, Look to Him, to Him only, and thou shalt rejoice as the birds rejoice at sunrise and as the angels rejoice before the throne.

March 11: Whose Battle?

And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saith not with sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hands. (1 Samuel 17:47)

Let this point be settled, that the battle is the Lord's, and we may be quite sure of the victory, and of the victory in such a way as will best of all display the power of God. The Lord is too much forgotten by all men, yea, even by the assemblies of Israel; and when there is an opportunity to make men see that the great First Cause can achieve His purposes without the power of man, it is a priceless occasion which should be well employed. Even Israel looks too much to sword and spear. It is a grand thing to have no sword in the hand of David, and yet for David to know that his God will overthrow a whole army of aliens.

If we are indeed contending for truth and righteousness, let us not tarry till we have talent, or wealth, or any other form of visible power at our disposal; but with such stones as we find in the brook, and with our own usual sling, let us run to meet the enemy. If it were our own battle we might not be confident; but if we are standing up for Jesus and warring in His strength alone, who can withstand us? Without a trace of hesitancy let us face the Philistines; for the Lord of hosts is with us, and who can be against us?

March 12: Going Out with Joy

And of Zebulun he said, Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out. (Deuteronomy 33:18)

The blessings of the tribes are ours; for we are the true Israel who worship God in the spirit and have no confidence in the flesh. Zebulun is to rejoice because Jehovah will bless his "going out"; we also see a promise for ourselves lying latent in this benediction. When we go out we will look out for occasions of joy.

We go out to travel, and the providence of God is our convoy. We go out to emigrate, and the Lord is with us both on land and sea. We go out as missionaries, and Jesus saith, "Lo, I am with you unto the end of the world." We go out day by day to labor, and we may do so with pleasure, for God will be with us from morn till eve.

A fear sometimes creeps over us when starting, for we know not what we may meet with; but this blessing may serve us right well as a word of good cheer. As we pack up for moving, let us put this verse into our traveling trunk; let us drop it into our hearts and keep it there; yea, let us lay it on our tongue to make us sing. Let us weigh anchor with a song, or jump into the carriage with a psalm. Let us belong to the rejoicing tribe and in our every movement praise the Lord with joyful hearts.

March 13: Despise Not Thy Youth

Then said I, Ah, Lord God! behold I cannot speak; for I am a child. But the Lord said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. (Jeremiah 1:6-7)

Jeremiah was young and felt a natural shrinking when sent upon a great errand by the Lord; but He who sent him would not have him say, "I am a child." What he was in himself must not be mentioned but lost in the consideration that he was chosen to speak for God. He had not to think out and invent a message nor to choose an audience: he was to speak what God commanded and speak where God sent him, and this he would be enabled to do in strength not his own. Is it not so with some young preacher or teacher who may read these lines? God knows how young you are and how slender are your knowledge and experience; but if He chooses to send you, it is not for you to shrink from the heavenly call. God will magnify Himself in our feebleness. If you were as old as Methuselah, how much would your years help you? If you were as wise as Solomon, you might be equally as willful as he. Keep you to your message, and it will be your wisdom; follow your marching orders, and they will be your discretion.

March 14: Tender Comfort

As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you. (Isaiah 66:13)

A mother's comfort! Ah, this is tenderness itself. How she enters into her child's grief! How she presses him to her bosom and tries to take all his sorrow into her own heart! He can tell her all, and she will sympathize as nobody else can. Of all comforters the child loves best his mother, and even full-grown men have found it so.

Does Jehovah condescend to act the mother's part? This is goodness indeed. We readily perceive how He is a father; but will He be as a mother also? Does not this invite us to holy familiarity, to unreserved confidence, to sacred rest? When God Himself becomes "the Comforter," no anguish can long abide. Let us tell out our trouble, even though sobs and sighs should become our readiest utterance. He will not despise us for our tears; our mother did not. He will consider our weakness as she did, and He will put away our faults, only in a surer, safer way than our mother could do. We will not try to bear our grief alone; that would be unkind to one so gentle and so kind. Let us begin the day with our loving God, and wherefore should we not finish it in the same company, since mothers weary not of their children?

March 15: God is a Sanctuary

Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord God; Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come. (Ezekiel 11:16)

Banished from the public means of grace, we are not removed from the grace of the means. The Lord who places His people where they feel as exiles will Himself be with them and be to them all that they could have had at home, in the place of their solemn assemblies. Take this to yourselves, O ye who are called to wander!

God is to His people a place of refuge. They find sanctuary with Him from every adversary, He is their place of worship, too. He is with them as with Jacob when he slept in the open field, and rising, said, "Surely God was in this place," To them also He will be a sanctuary of quiet, like the Holy of Holies, which was the noiseless abode of the Eternal. They shall be quiet from fear of evil.

God Himself, in Christ Jesus, is the sanctuary of mercy. The Ark of the Covenant is the Lord Jesus, and Aaron's rod, the pot of manna, the tables of the law, all are in Christ our sanctuary. In God we find the shrine of holiness and of communion. What more do we need? O Lord, fulfill this promise and be ever to us as a little sanctuary!

March 16: To Others an "Ensample"

Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you. (Philippians 4:9)

It is well when a man can with advantage be so minutely copied as Paul might have been. Oh, for grace to imitate him this day and every day!

Should we, through divine grace, carry into practice the Pauline teaching, we may claim the promise which is now open before us; and what a promise it is! God, who loves peace, makes peace, and breathes peace, will be with us. "Peace be with you" is a sweet benediction; but for the God of peace to be with us is far more. Thus we have the fountain as well as the streams, the sun as well as his beams. If the God of peace be with us, we shall enjoy the peace of God which passeth all understanding, even though outward circumstances should threaten to disturb. If men quarrel, we shall be sure to be peacemakers, if the Maker of peace be with us.

It is in the way of truth that real peace is found. If we quit the faith or leave the path of righteousness under the notion of promoting peace, we shall be greatly mistaken. First pure, then peaceable, is the order of wisdom and of fact. Let us keep to Paul's line, and we shall have the God of peace with us as He was with the apostle.

March 17: Fear to Fear

Be not afraid of their faces:

for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord. (Jeremiah 1:8)

Whenever fear comes in and makes us falter, we are in danger of falling into sin. Conceit is to be dreaded, but so is cowardice. "Dare to be a Daniel." Our great Captain should be served by brave soldiers.

What a reason for bravery is here! God is with those who are with Him. God will never be away when the hour of struggle comes. Do they threaten you? Who are you that you should be afraid of a man that shall die? Will you lose your situation? Your God whom you serve will find bread and water for His servants. Can you not trust Him? Do they pour ridicule upon you? Will this break your bones or your heart? Bear it for Christ's sake, and even rejoice because of it.

God is with the true, the just, the holy, to deliver them; and He will deliver you. Remember how Daniel came out of the lions' den and the three holy children out of the furnace. Yours is not so desperate a case as theirs; but if it were, the Lord would bear you through and make you more than a conqueror. Fear to fear. Be afraid to be afraid. Your worst enemy is within your own bosom. Get to your knees and cry for help, and then rise up saying, "I will trust, and not be afraid."

March 18: Continue Upright

The prayer of the upright is his delight. (Proverbs 15:8)

This is as good as a promise, for it declares a present fact, which will be the same throughout all ages. God takes great pleasure in the prayers of upright men; He even calls them His delight. Our first concern is to be upright. Neither bending this way nor that, continue upright; not crooked with policy, nor prostrate by yielding to evil, be you upright in strict integrity and straightforwardness. If we begin to shuffle and shift, we shall be left to shift for ourselves. If we try crooked ways, we shall find that we cannot pray, and if we pretend to do so, we shall find our prayers shut out of heaven.

Are we acting in a straight line and thus following out the Lord's revealed will? Then let us pray much and pray in faith. If our prayer is God's delight, let us not stint Him in that which gives Him pleasure. He does not consider the grammar of it, nor the metaphysics of it, nor the rhetoric of it; in all these men might despise it. He, as a Father, takes pleasure in the lispings of His own babes, the stammerings of His newborn sons and daughters. Should we not delight in prayer since the Lord delights in it? Let us make errands to the throne. The Lord finds us enough reasons for prayer, and we ought to thank Him that it is so.

March 19: Becoming Fit for Glory

The Lord will give grace and glory. (Psalm 84:11)

Grace is what we need just now, and it is to be had freely. What can be freer than a gift? Today we shall receive sustaining, strengthening, sanctifying, satisfying grace. He has given daily grace until now, and as for the future, that grace is still sufficient. If we have but little grace the fault must lie in ourselves; for the Lord is not straitened, neither is He slow to bestow it in abundance. We may ask for as much as we will and never fear a refusal. He giveth liberally and upbraideth not.

The Lord may not give gold, but He will give grace: He may not give gain, but He will give grace. He will certainly send us trial, but He will give grace in proportion thereto. We may be called to labor and to suffer, but with the call there will come all the grace required;

What an "end" is that in the text—"and glory!" We do not need glory yet, and we are not yet fit for it; but we shall have it in due order. After we have eaten the bread of grace, we shall drink the wine of glory. We must go through the holy, which is grace, to the holiest of all, which is glory. These words and glory are enough to make a man dance for joy. A little while—a little while, and then glory forever!

March 20: Divine Provision

Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? (Matthew 6:30)

Clothes are expensive, and poor believers may be led into anxiety as to where their next suit will come from. The soles are thin; how shall we get new shoes? See how our thoughtful Lord has provided against this care. Our heavenly Father clothes the grass of the field with a splendor such as Solomon could not equal: will He not clothe His own children? We are sure He will. There may be many a patch and a darn, but raiment we shall have.

A poor minister found his clothes nearly threadbare, and so far gone that they would hardly hold together; but as a servant of the Lord he expected his Master to find him his livery. It so happened that the writer on a visit to a friend had the loan of the good man's pulpit, and it came into his mind to make a collection for him, and there was his suit. Many other cases we have seen in which those who had served the Lord have found Him considerate of their wardrobe. He who made man so that when he had sinned he needed garments, also in mercy supplied him with them; and those which the Lord gave to our first parents were far better than those they made for themselves.

March 21: Avoid That Slip

***Then shalt thou walk in thy way of safety,
and thy foot shall not stumble. (Proverbs 3:23)***

That is to say, if we follow the ways of wisdom and holiness we shall be preserved in them. He who travels by daylight along the highway is under some protection. There is a way for every man, namely, his own proper calling in life, and if we devoutly walk therein in the fear of God He will preserve us from evil. We may not travel luxuriously, but we shall walk safely. We may not be able to run like young men, but we shall be able to walk like good men.

Our greatest danger lies in ourselves: our feeble foot is so sadly apt to stumble. Let us ask for more moral strength that our tendency to slip may be overcome. Some stumble because they do not see the stone in the way: divine grace enables us to perceive sin and so to avoid it. Let us plead this promise and trust in Him who upholds His chosen.

Alas! Our worst peril is our own carelessness, but against this the Lord Jesus has put us on our guard, saying, "Watch and pray."

Oh, for grace to walk this day without a single stumble! It is not enough that we do not actually fall; our cry should be that we may not make the smallest slip with out feet but may at the last adore Him "who is able to keep us from stumbling."

March 22: Grace for the Humble

He giveth grace unto the humble. (James 4:6)

Humble hearts seek grace, and therefore they get it. Humble hearts yield to the sweet influences of grace, and so it is bestowed on them more and more largely. Humble hearts lie in the valleys where streams of grace are flowing, and hence they drink of them. Humble hearts are grateful for grace and give the Lord the glory of it, and hence it is consistent with His honor to give it to them.

Come, dear reader, take a lowly place. Be little in thine own esteem, that the Lord may make much of thee. Perhaps the sigh breaks out, "I fear I am not humble." It may be that this is the language of true humility. Some are proud of being humble, and this is one of the very worst sorts of pride. We are needy, helpless, undeserving, hell-deserving creatures, and if we are not humble we ought to be. Let us humble ourselves because of our sins against humility, and then the Lord will give us to taste of His favor. It is grace which makes us humble, and grace which finds in this humility an opportunity for pouring in more grace. Let us go down that we may rise. Let us be poor in spirit that God may make us rich. Let us be humble that we may not need to be humbled but may be exalted by the grace of God

March 23: A Sure Guide

I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not. (Isaiah 42:16)

Think of the infinitely glorious Jehovah acting as a Guide to the blind! What boundless condescension does this imply! A blind man cannot find a way which he does not know. Even when he knows the road, it is hard for him to traverse it; but a road which he has not known is quite out of the question for his unguided feet. Now, we are by nature blind as to the way of salvation, and yet the Lord leads us into it and brings us to Himself, and then opens our eyes. As to the future, we are all of us blind and cannot see an hour before us; but the Lord Jesus will lead us even to our journey's end. Blessed be His name!

We cannot guess in which way deliverance can possibly come to us, but the Lord knows, and He will lead us till we shall have escaped every danger. Happy are those who place their hand in that of the great Guide and leave their way and themselves entirely with Him. He will bring them all the way; and when He has brought them home to glory and has opened their eyes to see the way by which He has led them, what a song of gratitude will they sing unto their great Benefactor! Lord, lead Thy poor blind child this day, for I know not my way!

March 24: Established and Kept

***But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you,
and keep you from evil. (2 Thessalonians 3:3)***

Men are often as devoid of reason as of faith. There are with us still "unreasonable and wicked men." There is no use in arguing with them or trying to be at peace with them: they are false at heart and deceitful in speech. Well, what of this? Shall we worry ourselves with them? No; let us turn to the Lord, for He is faithful. No promise from His Word will ever be broken. He is neither unreasonable in His demands upon us nor unfaithful to our claims upon Him. We have a faithful God. Be this our joy.

He will stablish us so that wicked men shall not cause our downfall, and He will keep us so that none of the evils which now assail us shall really do us damage. What a blessing for us that we need not contend with men but are allowed to shelter ourselves in the Lord Jesus, who is in truest sympathy with us. There is one true heart, one faithful mind, one never changing love; there let us repose. The Lord will fulfill the purpose of His grace to us, His servants, and we need not allow a shadow of a fear to fall upon our spirits. Not all that men or devils can do can hinder us of the divine protection and provision. This day let us pray the Lord to stablish and keep us.

March 25: Refreshing Sleep

***When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid:
yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet. (Proverbs 3:24)***

Is the reader likely to be confined for a while to the bed by sickness! Let him go upstairs without distress with this promise upon his heart "When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid."

When we go to bed at night, let this word smooth our pillow. We cannot guard ourselves in sleep, but the Lord will keep us through the night. Those who lie down under the protection of the Lord are as secure as kings and queens in their palaces, and a great deal more so. If with our lying down there is a laying down of all cares and ambitions, we shall get refreshment out of our beds such as the anxious and covetous never find in theirs. Ill dreams shall be banished, or even if they come, we shall wipe out the impression of them, knowing that they are only dreams.

If we sleep thus we shall do well. How sweetly Peter slept when even the angel's light did not wake him, and he needed a hard jog in the side to wake him up. And yet he was sentenced to die on the morrow. Thus have martyrs slept before their burning. "So he giveth his beloved sleep." To have sweet sleep we must have sweet lives, sweet tempers, sweet meditations, and sweet love.

March 26: The Care of the Poor

The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing. (Psalm 41:3)

Remember that this is a promise to the man who considers the poor. Are you one of these? Then take home the text.

See how in the hour of sickness the God of the poor will bless the man who cares for the poor! The everlasting arms shall stay up his soul as friendly hands and downy pillows stay up the body of the sick. How tender and sympathizing is this image; how near it brings our God to our infirmities and sicknesses! Whoever heard this of the old heathen Jove, or of the gods of India or China! This is language peculiar to the God of Israel; He it is who deigns to become nurse and attendant upon good men. If He smites with one hand, He sustains with the other. Oh, it is blessed fainting when one falls upon the Lord's own bosom and is born thereon! Grace is the best of restoratives; divine love is the safest stimulant for the languishing patient; it makes the soul strong as a giant, even when the bones are breaking through the skin. No physician like the Lord, no tonic like His promise, no wine like His love.

If the reader has failed in his duty to the poor, let him see what he is losing and at once become their friend and helper.

March 27: Drawing Near to God

Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. (James 4:8)

The nearer we come to God, the more graciously will He reveal Himself to us. When the prodigal comes to his father, his father runs to meet him. When the wandering dove returns to the ark, Noah puts out his hand to pull her in unto him, When the tender wife seeks her husband's society, he comes to her on wings of love. Come then, dear friend, let us draw nigh to God who so graciously awaits us, yea, comes to meet us.

Did you ever notice that passage in Isaiah 58:9? There the Lord seems to put Himself at the disposal of His people, saying to them, "Here I am." As much as to say—"What have you to say to me? What can I do for you? I am waiting to bless you." How can we hesitate to draw near? God is nigh to forgive, to bless, to comfort, to help, to quicken, to deliver. Let it be the main point with us to get near to God. This done, all is done. If we draw near to others, they may before long grow weary of us and leave us; but if we seek the Lord alone, no change will come over His mind, but He will continue to come nearer and yet nearer to us by fuller and more joyful fellowship.

March 28: Lead the Way

The Lord shall make thee the head, and not the tail. (Deuteronomy 28:13)

If we obey the Lord, He will compel our adversaries to see that His blessing rests upon us. Though this be a promise of the law, yet it stands good to the people of God; for Jesus has removed the curse, but He has established the blessing.

It is for saints to lead the way among men by holy influence: they are not to be the tail, to be dragged hither and thither by others. We must not yield to the spirit of the age, but compel the age to do homage to Christ. If the Lord be with us, we shalt not crave toleration for religion, but we shall seek to seat it on the throne of society. Has not the Lord Jesus made His people priests" Surely they are to teach and must not be learners from the philosophies of unbelievers. Are we not in Christ made kings to reign upon the earth? How, then can we be the servants of custom, the slaves of human opinion?

Have you, dear friend, taken up your true position for Jesus? Too many are silent because diffident, if not cowardly. Should we allow the name of the Lord Jesus to be kept in the background? Should our religion drag along as a tail? Should it not rather lead the way and be the ruling force with ourselves and others?

March 29: Dauntless Faith

I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee. (Acts 18:10)

So long as the Lord had work for Paul to do in Corinth, the fury of the mob was restrained. The Jews opposed themselves and blasphemed; but they could neither stop the preaching of the gospel nor the conversion of the hearers. God has power over the most violent minds. He makes the wrath of man to praise Him when it breaks forth, but He still more displays His goodness when He restrains it; and He can restrain it. "By the greatness of thine arm they shall be as still as a stone, till thy people pass over, O Lord."

Do not, therefore, feel any fear of man when you know that you are doing your duty. Go straight on, as Jesus would have done, and those who oppose shall be as a bruised reed and as smoking flax. Many a time men have had cause to fear because they were themselves afraid; but a dauntless faith in God brushes fear aside like the cobwebs in a giant's path. No man can harm us unless the Lord permits. He who makes the devil himself to flee at a word can certainly control the devil's agents. Maybe they are already more afraid of you than you are of them. Therefore, go forward, and where you looked to meet with foes you will find friends.

March 30: Prayer, Thanksgiving, Praise

Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7)

No care but all prayer. No anxiety but much joyful communion with God. Carry your desires to the Lord of your life, the guardian of your soul. Go to Him with two portions of prayer and one of fragrant praise. Do not pray doubtfully but thankfully. Consider that you have your petitions, and therefore thank God for His grace. He is giving you grace; give Him thanks, Hide nothing. Allow no want to lie rankling in your bosom; "make known your requests." Run not to man. Go only to your God, the Father of Jesus, who loves you in Him.

This shall bring you God's own peace. You shall not be able to understand the peace which you shall enjoy. It will enfold you in its infinite embrace. Heart and mind through Christ Jesus shall be steeped in a sea of rest. Come life or death, poverty, pain, slander, you shall dwell in Jesus above every rolling wind or darkening cloud. Will you not obey this dear command?

Yes, Lord, I do believe thee; but, I beseech thee, help mine unbelief.

March 31: Presence of Mind

***Be not afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation of the wicked, when it cometh.
For the Lord shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken.
(Proverbs 3:25-26)***

When God is abroad in judgments, He would not have His people alarmed. He has not come forth to harm but to defend the righteous.

He would have them manifest courage. We who enjoy the presence of God ought to display presence of mind. Since the Lord Himself may suddenly come, we ought not to be surprised at anything sudden. Serenity under the rush and roar of unexpected evils is a precious gift of divine love.

The Lord would have His chosen display discrimination so that they may see that the desolation of the wicked is not a real calamity to the universe. Sin alone is evil; the punishment which follows thereupon is as a preserving salt to keep society from putrefying. We should be far more shocked at the sin which deserves hell than at the hell which comes out of sin.

So, too, should the Lord's people exhibit great quietness of spirit. Satan and his serpent seed are full of all subtlety; but those who walk with God shall not be taken in their deceitful snares. Go on, believer in Jesus, and let the Lord be thy confidence.

April 1: The King's Highway

The wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. (Isaiah 35:8)

The way of holiness is so straight and plain that the simplest minds cannot go astray if they constantly follow it. The worldly wise have many twists and turns, and yet they make terrible blunders and generally miss their end. Worldly policy is a poor, shortsighted thing, and when men choose it as their road, it leads them over dark mountains. Gracious minds know no better than to do as the Lord bids them; but this keeps them in the King's highway and under royal protection.

Let the reader never for a moment attempt to help himself out of a difficulty by a falsehood or by a questionable act; but let him keep in the middle of the high road of truth and integrity, and he will be following the best possible course. In our lives we must never practice circular sailing nor dream of shuffling. Be just and fear not, Follow Jesus and heed no evil consequences. If the worst of ills could be avoided by wrongdoing, we should, in the very attempt, have fallen into an evil worse than any other ill could be. God's way must be the very best way. Follow it though men think you a fool, and you will be truly wise.

Lord, lead Thy servants in a plain path because of their enemies.

April 2: True Heart-Energy

Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all. (1 Timothy 4:15)

This is, practically, a promise that, by diligent meditation and the giving up of our whole mind to our work for the Lord we shall make a progress which all can see. Not by hasty reading but by deep meditation we profit by the Word of God. Not by doing a great deal of work in a slovenly manner, but by giving our best thought to what we attempt, we shall get real profit. "In all labor there is profit" but not in fuss and hurry without true heart-energy.

If we divide ourselves between God and mammon, or Christ and self, we shall make no progress. We must give ourselves wholly to holy things, or else we shall be poor traders in heavenly business, and at our stocktaking no profit will be shown.

Am I a minister? Let me be a minister wholly and not spend my energies upon secondary concerns. What have I to do with party politics or vain amusements? Am I a Christian? Let me make my service of Jesus my occupation, my lifework, my one pursuit. We must be in-and-in with Jesus, and then out-and-out for Jesus, or else we shall make neither progress nor profit, and neither the church nor the world will feel the forceful influence which the Lord would have us exercise.

April 3: Sensitive to Warning

Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me; I also have heard thee, saith the Lord. (2 Kings 22:19)

Many despise warning and perish. Happy is he who trembles at the Word of God. Josiah did so, and he was spared the sight of the evil which the Lord determined to send upon Judah because of her great sins. Have you this tenderness? Do you practice this self-humiliation? Then you also shall be spared in the evil day. God sets a mark upon the men that sigh and cry because of the sin of the times. The destroying angel is commanded to keep his sword in its sheath till the elect of God are sheltered: these are best known by their godly fear and their trembling at the Word of the Lord. Are the times threatening? Does infidelity advance with great strides, and do you dread national chastisement upon this polluted nation? Well you may. Yet rest in this promise: "Thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace: and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place." Better still, the Lord Himself may come, and then the days of our mourning shall be ended.

April 4: God's Hornets

And I will send hornets before thee, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, from before thee. (Exodus 23:28)

What the hornets were we need not consider. They were God's own army which He sent before His people to sting their enemies and render Israel's conquest easy. Our God by His own chosen means will fight for His people and gall their foes before they come into the actual battle. Often He confounds the adversaries of truth by methods in which reformers themselves have no hand. The air is full of mysterious influences which harass Israel's foes. We read in the Apocalypse that "the earth helped the woman."

Let us never fear. The stars in their courses fight against the enemies of our souls. Oftentimes when we march to the conflict we find no host to contend with. "The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace." God's hornets can do more than our weapons. We could never dream of the victory being won by such means as Jehovah will use. We must obey our marching orders and go forth to the conquest of the nations for Jesus, and we shall find that the Lord has gone before us and prepared the way; so that in the end we will joyfully confess, "His own right hand and his holy arm, have gotten him the victory."

April 5: Not Forgotten

***Thou art my servant: O Israel,
thou shalt not be forgotten of me. (Isaiah 44:21)***

Our Jehovah cannot so forget His servants as to cease to love them. He chose them not for a time but forever. He knew what they would be when He called them into the divine family. He blots out their sins like a cloud; and we may be sure that He will not turn them out of doors for iniquities which He has blotted out. It would be blasphemy to imagine such a thing.

He will not forget them so as to cease to think of them. One forgetful moment on the part of our God would be our ruin. Therefore He says, "Thou shalt not be forgotten of me," Men forget us; those whom we have benefited turn against us. We have no abiding place in the fickle hearts of men; but God will never forget one of His true servants. He binds Himself to us not by what we do for Him but by what He has done for us. We have been loved too long and bought at too great a price to be now forgotten. Jesus sees in us His soul's travail, and that He never can forget. The Father sees in us the spouse of His Son, and the Spirit sees in us His own effectual work. The Lord thinketh upon us. This day we shall be succored and sustained. Oh, that the Lord may never be forgotten of us!

April 6: One King, One Lord

And the Lord shall be king over all the earth:

in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one. (Zechariah 14:9)

Blessed prospect! This is no dream of an enthusiast but the declaration of the infallible Word. Jehovah shall be known among all people, and His gracious sway shall be acknowledged by every tribe of man. Today, it is far from being so. Where do any bow before the great King? How much there is of rebellion! What lords many and gods many there are on the earth! Even among professed Christians what diversities of ideas there are about Him and His gospel! One day there shall be one King, one Jehovah, and one name for the living God. O Lord, hasten it! We daily cry, "Thy kingdom come."

We will not discuss the question as to when this shall be lest we lose the comfort of the certainty that it shall be. So surely as the Holy Ghost spake by His prophets, so surely shall the whole earth be filled with the glory of the Lord. Jesus did not die in vain. The Spirit of God worketh not in vain. The Father's eternal purposes shall not be frustrated, Here, where Satan triumphed, Jesus shall be crowned, and the Lord God Omnipotent shall reign. Let us go our way to our daily work and warfare made strong in faith.

April 7: Without Fear of Man

And all people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the Lord; and they shall be afraid of thee. (Deuteronomy 28:10)

Then we can have no reason to be afraid of them. This would show a mean spirit and be a token of unbelief rather than of faith. God can make us so like Himself that men shall be forced to see that we rightly bear His name and truly belong to the holy Jehovah. Oh, that we may obtain this grace which the Lord waits to bestow!

Be assured that ungodly men have a fear of true saints. They hate them, but they also fear them. Haman trembled because of Mordecai, even when he sought the good man's destruction. In fact, their hate often arises out of a dread which they are too proud to confess. Let us pursue the path of truth and uprightness without the slightest tremor. Fear is not for us but for those who do ill and fight against the Lord of hosts. If indeed the name of the eternal God is named upon us, we are secure; for, as of old, a Roman had but to say Romanus sum, I am a Roman, and he could claim the protection of all the legions of the vast empire; so every one who is a man of God has omnipotence as his guardian, and God will sooner empty heaven of angels than leave a saint without defense. Be braver than lions for the right, for God is with you.

April 8: Preserved to Work's End

The Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome. (Acts 23:11)

Are you a witness for the Lord, and are you just now in danger? Then remember that you are immortal till your work is done. If the Lord has more witness for you to bear, you will live to bear it. Who is he that can break the vessel which the Lord intends again to use?

If there is no more work for you to do for your Master, it cannot distress you that He is about to take you home and put you where you will be beyond the reach of adversaries. Your witness-bearing for Jesus is your chief concern, and you cannot be stopped in it till it is finished: therefore, be at peace. Cruel slander, wicked misrepresentation, desertion of friends, betrayal by the most trusted one, and whatever else may come cannot hinder the Lord's purpose concerning you. The Lord stands by you in the night of your sorrow, and He says, "Thou must yet bear witness for me." Be calm; be filled with joy in the Lord.

If you do not need this promise just now, you may very soon. Treasure it up. Remember also to pray for missionaries and all persecuted ones, that the Lord would preserve them even to the completion of their lifework.

April 9: The Bible's Supreme Place

***Great peace have they which love thy law:
and nothing shall offend them. (Psalm 119:165)***

Yes, a true love for the great Book will bring us great peace from the great God and be a great protection to us. Let us live constantly in the society of the law of the Lord, and it will breed in our hearts a restfulness such as nothing else can. The Holy Spirit acts as a Comforter through the Word and sheds abroad those benign influences which calm the tempests of the soul.

Nothing is a stumbling block to the man who has the Word of God dwelling in him richly. He takes up his daily cross, and it becomes a delight. For the fiery trial he is prepared and counts it not strange, so as to be utterly cast down by it. He is neither stumbled by prosperity—as so many are—nor crushed by adversity—as others have been—for he lives beyond the changing circumstances of external life. When his Lord puts before him some great mystery of the faith which makes others cry, "This is an hard saying; who can hear it?" the believer accepts it without question; for his intellectual difficulties are overcome by his reverent awe of the law of the Lord, which is to him the supreme authority to which he joyfully bows. Lord, work in us this love, this peace, this rest, this day.

April 10: Look and Live

And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shalt come to pass, that everyone that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. (Numbers 21:8)

This is a glorious gospel type. Jesus, numbered with the transgressors, hangs before us on the cross. A look to Him will heal us of the serpent-bite of sin; will heal us at once—"When he looketh upon it, he shall live." Let the reader who is mourning his sinfulness note the words—"Everyone that looketh upon it shall live." Every looker will find this true. I have found it so. I looked to Jesus and lived at once, I know I did. Reader, if you look to Jesus you will live, too. True, you are swelling with the venom, and you see no hope, True, also there is no hope but this one. But this is no doubtful cure—"Everyone that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live."

The brazen serpent was not lifted up as a curiosity to be gazed upon by the healthy; but its special purpose was for those who were "bitten." Jesus died as a real Savior for real sinners. Whether the bite has made you a drunkard, or a thief, or an unchaste or a profane person, a look at the great Savior will heal you of these diseases and make you live in holiness and communion with God. Look and live.

April 11: Close Fellowship

And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord. (Jeremiah 31:34)

Truly, whatever else we do not know, we know the Lord. This day is this promise true in our experience, and it is not a little one. The least believer among us knows God in Christ Jesus. Not as fully as we desire; but yet truly and really we know the Lord. We not only know doctrines about Him, but we know Him. He is our Father and our Friend. We are acquainted with Him personally. We can say, "My Lord, and my God." We are on terms of close fellowship with God, and many a happy season do we spend in His holy company. We are no more strangers to our God, but the secret of the Lord is with us.

This is more than nature could have taught us. Flesh and blood has not revealed God to us. Christ Jesus had made known the Father to our hearts. If, then, the Lord has made us know Himself, is not this the fountain of all saving knowledge? To know God is eternal life. So soon as we come to acquaintance with God we have the evidence of being quickened into newness of life. O my soul, rejoice in this knowledge, and bless thy God all this day!

April 12: He Remembers No More

***For I will forgive their iniquity,
and I will remember their sin no more. (Jeremiah 31:34)***

When we know the Lord, we receive the forgiveness of sins. We know Him as the God of grace, passing by our transgressions. What a joyful discovery is this!

But how divinely is this promise worded: the Lord promises no more to remember our sins! Can God forget? He says He will, and He means what He says. He will regard us as though we had never sinned. The great atonement so effectually removed all sin that it is to the mind of God no more in existence. The believer is now in Christ Jesus, as accepted as Adam in his innocence; yea, more so, for he wears a divine righteousness, and that of Adam was but human.

The great Lord will not remember our sins so as to punish them, or so as to love us one atom the less because of them. As a debt when paid ceases to be a debt, even so doth the Lord make a complete obliteration of the iniquity of His people.

When we are mourning over our transgressions and shortcomings, and this is our duty as long as we live, let us at the same time rejoice that they will never be mentioned against us. This makes us hate sin. God's free pardon makes us anxious never again to grieve Him by disobedience.

April 13: This Body Fashioned Anew

***Who shall change our vile body,
that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body. (Philippians 3:21)***

Often when we are racked with pain and unable to think or worship, we feel that this indeed is "the body of our humiliation," and when we are tempted by the passions which rise from the flesh we do not think the word vile at all too vigorous a translation. Our bodies humble us; and that is about the best thing they do for us. Oh, that we were duly lowly, because our bodies ally us with animals and even link us with the dust!

But our Savior, the Lord Jesus, shall change all this. We shall be fashioned like His own body of glory. This will take place in all who believe in Jesus. By faith their souls have been transformed, and their bodies will undergo such a renewal as shall fit them for their regenerated spirits. How soon this grand transformation will happen we cannot tell; but the thought of it should help us to bear the trials of today and all the woes of the flesh. In a little while we shall be as Jesus now is. No more aching brows, no more swollen limbs, no more dim eyes, no more fainting hearts. The old man shall be no more a bundle of infirmities, nor the sick man a mass of agony. "Like unto his glorious body." What an expression! Even our flesh shall rest in hope of such a resurrection!

April 14: My Choice Is His Choice

He shall choose our inheritance for us. (Psalm 47:4)

Our enemies would allot us a very dreary portion, but we are not left in their hands. The Lord will cause us to stand in our lot, and our place is appointed by His infinite wisdom. A wiser mind than our own arranges our destiny, The ordaining of all things is with God, and we are glad to have it so; we choose that God should choose for us. If we might have our own way we would wish to let all things go in God's way.

Being conscious of our own folly, we would not desire to rule our own destinies. We feel safer and more at ease when the Lord steers our vessel than we could possibly be if we could direct it according to our own judgment. Joyfully we leave the painful present and the unknown future with our Father, our Savior, our Comforter.

O my soul, this day lay down thy wishes at Jesus' feet! If thou hast of late been somewhat wayward and willful, eager to be and to do after thine own mind, now dismiss thy foolish self, and place the reins in the Lord's hands. Say, "He shall choose." If others dispute the sovereignty of the Lord and glory in the free will of man, do thou answer them, "He shall choose for me." It is my freest choice to let Him choose. As a free agent, I elect that He should have absolute sway.

April 15: Desires of Righteous Granted

The desires of the righteous shall be granted. (Proverbs 10:24)

Because it is a righteous desire it is safe for God to grant it. It would be neither good for the man himself, nor for society at large, that such a promise should be made to the unrighteous. Let us keep the Lord's commands, and He will rightfully have respect to our desires.

When righteous men are left to desire unrighteous desires, they will not be granted to them. But then these are not their real desires; they are their wanderings or blunders, and it is well that they should be refused. Their gracious desires shall come before the Lord, and He will not say them nay.

Does the Lord deny us our requests for a time? Let the promise for today encourage us to ask again. Has He denied us altogether? We will thank Him still, for it always was our desire that He should deny us if He judged a denial to be best.

As to some things, we ask very boldly. Our chief desires are for holiness, usefulness, likeness to Christ, preparedness for heaven. These are the desires of grace rather than of nature—the desires of the righteous man rather than of the mere man. God will not stint us in these things but will do for us exceeding abundantly. "Delight thy self also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart." This day, my soul, ask largely!

April 16: All Turned to Holiness

***In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses,
holiness unto the Lord, (Zechariah 14:20)***

Happy day when all things shall be consecrated, and the horses' bells shall ring out holiness to the Lord! That day has come to me. Do I not make all things holy to God? These garments, when I put them on or take them off, shall they not remind me of the righteousness of Christ Jesus my Lord? Shall not my work be done as unto the Lord? Oh, that today my clothes may be vestments, my meals sacraments, my house a temple, my table an altar, my speech incense, and myself a priest! Lord, fulfill Thy promise, and let nothing be to me common or unclean.

Let me in faith expect this. Believing it to be so, I shall be helped to make it so. As I myself am the property of Jesus, my Lord may take an inventory of all I have, for it is altogether His own; and I resolve to prove it to be so by the use to which I put it this day. From morning till evening I would order all things by a happy and holy rule. My bells shall ring—why should they not? Even my horses shall have bells—who has such a right to music as the saints have? But all my bells, my music, my mirth, shall be turned to holiness and shall ring out the name of "the happy God."

April 17: Enemies at Peace

***When a man's ways please the Lord,
he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him. (Proverbs 16:7)***

I must see that my ways please the Lord. Even then I shall have enemies; and, perhaps, all the more certainly because I endeavor to do that which is right. But what a promise this is! The Lord will make the wrath of man to praise Him and abate it so that it shall not distress me.

He can constrain an enemy to desist from harming me, even though he has a mind to do so. This He did with Laban, who pursued Jacob but did not dare to touch him. Or He can subdue the wrath of the enemy and make him friendly, as He did with Esau, who met Jacob in a brotherly manner, though Jacob had dreaded that he would smite him and his family with the sword. The Lord can also convert a furious adversary into a brother in Christ and a fellow worker, as He did with Saul of Tarsus. Oh, that He would do this in every case where a persecuting spirit appears!

Happy is the man whose enemies are made to be to him what the lions were to Daniel in the den, quiet and companionable! When I meet death, who is called the last enemy, I pray that I may be at peace. Only let my great care be to please the Lord in all things. Oh, for faith and holiness; for these are a pleasure unto the Most High!

April 18: He Never Fails

I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. (Joshua 1:5)

This word to Joshua is often quoted; it is the basis of that New Testament word "He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

Beloved, a life of warfare is before us, but the Lord of Hosts is with us. Are we called to lead a great but fickle people? This promise guarantees us all the wisdom and prudence that we shall need. Have we to contend with cunning and powerful enemies? Here is strength and valor, prowess and victory. Have we a vast heritage to win? By this sign we shall achieve our purpose; the Lord Himself is with us.

It would be woe to us indeed if Jehovah could fail us; but, as this can never be, the winds of disquietude are laid to sleep in the caverns of divine faithfulness. On no one occasion will the Lord desert us. Happen what may, He will be at our side. Friends drop from us, their help is but an April shower; but God is faithful, Jesus is the same forever, and the Holy Spirit abideth in us.

Come, my heart, be calm and hopeful today. Clouds may gather, but the Lord can blow them away. Since God will not fail me, my faith shall not fail; and as He will not forsake me, neither will I forsake Him. Oh, for a restful faith!

April 19: An Expert Searcher

For thus saith the Lord God;

Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. (Ezekiel 34:11)

This He does at the first when His elect are like wandering sheep that know not the Shepherd or the fold. How wonderfully doth the Lord find out His chosen! Jesus is great as a seeking Shepherd as well as a saving Shepherd. Though many of those His Father gave Him have gone as near to hell-gate as they well can, yet the Lord by searching and seeking discovers them and draws nigh to them in grace. He has sought out us: let us have good hope for those who are laid upon our hearts in prayer, for He will find them out also.

The Lord repeats this process when any of His flock stray from the pastures of truth and holiness. They may fall into gross error, sad sin, and grievous hardness; but yet the Lord, who has become a surety for them to His Father, will not suffer one of them to go so far as to perish. He will by providence and grace pursue them into foreign lands, into abodes of poverty, into dens of obscurity, into depths of despair; He will not lose one of all that the Father has given Him. It is a point of honor with Jesus to seek and to save all the flock, without a single exception. What a promise to plead, if at this hour I am compelled to cry, "I have gone astray like a lost sheep!"

April 20: By Faith Not Feeling

The just shall live by faith. (Romans 1:17)

I shall not die, I can, I do, believe in the Lord my God, and this faith will keep me alive. I would be numbered among those who in their lives are just; but even if I were perfect I would not try to live by my righteousness; I would cling to the work of the Lord Jesus and still live by faith in Him and by nothing else. If I were able to give my body to be burned for my Lord Jesus, yet I would not trust in my own courage and constancy, but still would live by faith.

*Were I a martyr at the stake
I'd plead my Saviour's name;
Intreat a pardon for His sake,
And urge no other claim.*

To live by faith is a far surer and happier thing than to live by feelings or by works, The branch, by living in the vine, lives a better life than it would live by itself, even if it were possible for it to live at all apart from the stem. To live by clinging to Jesus, by deriving all from Him, is a sweet and sacred thing. If even the most just must live in this fashion, how much more must I who am a poor sinner! Lord, I believe. I must trust Thee wholly. What else can I do? Trusting Thee is my life....

April 21: God Repays

***He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord;
and that which he hath given will he pay him again. (Proverbs 19:17)***

We are to give to the poor out of pity. Not to be seen and applauded, much less to get influence over them; but out of pure sympathy and compassion we must give them help.

We must not expect to get anything back from the poor, not even gratitude; but we should regard what we have done as a loan to the Lord. He undertakes the obligation, and, if we look to Him in the matter, we must not look to the second party. What an honor the Lord bestows upon us when He condescends to borrow of us! That merchant is greatly favored who has the Lord on his books. It would seem a pity to have such a name down for a paltry pittance; let us make it a heavy amount. The next needy man that comes this way, let us help him.

As for repayment, we can hardly think of it, and yet here is the Lord's note of hand. Blessed be His name, His promise to pay is better than gold and silver. Are we running a little short through the depression of the times? We may venture humbly to present this bill at the bank of faith, Has any one of our readers [oppressed] the poor? Poor soul. May the Lord forgive him.

April 22: Power to Raise

***The Lord openeth the eyes of the blind:
the Lord raiseth them that are bowed down. (Psalm 146:8)***

Am I bowed down? Then let me urge this word of grace before the Lord. It is His way, His custom, His promise, His delight, to raise up them that are bowed down. Is it a sense of sin and a consequent depression of spirit which distresses me? Then the work of Jesus is, in this case, made and provided to raise me up into rest. O Lord, raise me, for Thy mercy's sake!

Is it a sad bereavement or a great fall in circumstances? Here again the Comforter has undertaken to console. What a mercy for us that one Person of the sacred Trinity should become the Comforter! This work will be well done since such a glorious One has made it His peculiar care.

Some are so bowed down that only Jesus can loose them from their infirmity, but He can, and He will, do it. He can raise us up to health, to hope, to happiness. He has often done so under former trials, and He is the same Savior and will repeat His deeds of lovingkindness. We who are today bowed down and sorrowful shalt yet be set on high, and those who now mock at us shall be greatly ashamed. What an honor to be raised up by the Lord! It is worthwhile to be bowed down that we may experience His upraising power.

April 23: No Fear of Death

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; he that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death. (Revelation 2:11)

The first death we must endure unless the Lord should suddenly come to His temple. For this let us abide in readiness, awaiting it without fear, since Jesus has transformed death from a dreary cavern into a passage leading to glory.

The thing to be feared is not the first but the second death, not the parting of the soul from the body but the final separation of the entire man from God. This is death indeed. This death kills all peace, joy, happiness, hope. When God is gone, all is gone. Such a death is far worse than ceasing to be: it is existence without the life which makes existence worth the having.

Now, if by God's grace we fight on to the end and conquer in the glorious war, no second death can lay its chill finger upon us, We shall have no fear of death and hell, for we shall receive a crown of life which fadeth not away. How this nerves us for the fight! Eternal life is worth a life's battle. To escape the hurt of the second death is a thing worth struggling for throughout a lifetime.

Lord, give us faith so that we may overcome, and then grant us grace to remain unharmed though sin and Satan dog our heels!

April 24: Condition of Blessing

Bring ye all of the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. (Malachi 3:10)

Many read and plead this promise without noticing the condition upon which the blessing is promised. We cannot expect heaven to be opened or blessing poured out unless we pay our dues unto the Lord our God and to His cause. There would be no lack of funds for holy purposes if all professing Christians paid their fair share.

Many are poor because they rob God. Many churches, also, miss the visitation of the Spirit because they starve their ministries. If there is no temporal meat for God's servants, we need not wonder if their ministry has been little food in it for our souls. When missions pine for means and the work of the Lord is hindered by an empty treasury, how can we look for a large amount of soul-prosperity?

Come, come! What have I given of late? Have I been mean to my God? Have I stinted my Savior? This will never do. Let me give my Lord Jesus His tithe by helping the poor and aiding His work, and then I shall prove His power to bless me on a large scale.

April 25: What to Leave Children

***The just man walketh in his integrity:
his children are blessed after him. (Proverbs 20:7)***

Anxiety about our family is natural, but we shall be wise if we turn it into care about our own character. If we walk before the Lord in integrity, we shall do more to bless our descendants than if we bequeathed them large estates. A father's holy life is a rich legacy for his sons.

The upright man leaves his heirs his example, and this in itself will be a mine of true wealth, How many men may trace their success in life to the example of their parents!

He leaves them also his repute. Men think better of us as the sons of a man who could be trusted, the successors of a tradesman of excellent repute, Oh, that all young men were anxious to keep up the family name!

Above all, he leaves his children his prayers and the blessing of a prayer-hearing God, and these make our offspring to be favored among the sons of men. God will save them even after we are dead. Oh, that they might be saved at once!

Our integrity may be God's means of saving our sons and daughters. If they see the truth of our religion proved by our lives, it may be that they will believe in Jesus for themselves. Lord, fulfill this word to my household!

April 26: Gracious Dealing

And the Lord thy God

shall bless thee in all that thou doest. (Deuteronomy 15:18)

An Israelitish master was to give his bondservant liberty in due time, and when he left his service he was to start him in life with a liberal portion, This was to be done heartily and cheerfully, and then the Lord promised to bless the generous act. The spirit of this precept, and, indeed, the whole law of Christ, binds us to treat people well. We ought to remember how the Lord has dealt with us, and that this renders it absolutely needful that we should deal graciously with others, It becomes those to be generous who are the children of a gracious God. How can we expect our great Master to bless us in our business if we oppress those who serve us?

What a benediction is here set before the liberal mind! To be blessed in all that we do is to be blessed indeed. The Lord will send us this partly in prosperity, partly in content of mind, and partly in a sense of His favor, which is the best of all blessings. He can make us feel that we are under His special care and are surrounded by His peculiar love. This makes this earthly life a joyous prelude to the life to come. God's blessing is more than a fortune. It maketh rich and addeth no sorrow therewith.

April 27: God Finished His Work

The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me. (Psalm 138:8)

He who has begun will carry on the work which is being wrought within my soul. The Lord is concerned about everything that concerns me. All that is now good, but not perfect, the Lord will watch over, preserve, and carry out to completion. This is a great comfort. I could not perfect the work of grace myself. Of that I am quite sure, for I fail every day and have only held on so long as I have because the Lord has helped me. If the Lord were to leave me, all my past experience would go for nothing, and I should perish from the way. But the Lord will continue to bless me. He will perfect my faith, my love, my character, my lifework. He will do this because He has begun a work in me. He gave me the concern I feel, and, in a measure, He has fulfilled my gracious aspirations, He never leaves a work unfinished; this would not be for His glory, nor would it be like Him. He knows how to accomplish His gracious design, and though my own evil nature and the world and the devil all conspire to hinder Him, I do not doubt His promise. He will perfect that which concerneth me, and I will praise Him forever. Lord, let Thy gracious work make some advance this day!

April 28: It Becomes Mutual

I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. (2 Corinthians 6:16)

Here is a mutual interest. Each belongs to each. God is the portion of His people, and the chosen people are the portion of their God. The saints find in God their chief possession, and He reckons them to be His peculiar treasure. What a mine of comfort lies in this fact for each believer!

This happy condition of mutual interest leads to mutual consideration. God will always think of His own people, and they will always think of Him. This day my God will perform all things for me; what can I do for Him? My thoughts ought to run toward Him, for He thinketh upon me. Let me make sure that it is so and not be content with merely admitting that so it ought to be.

This, again, leads to mutual fellowship. God dwells in us, and we dwell in Him; He walks with us, and we walk with God....

Oh, for grace to treat the Lord as my God: to trust Him and to serve Him, as His Godhead deserves! Oh, that I could love, worship, adore, and obey Jehovah in spirit and in truth! This is my heart's desire. When I shall attain to it, I shall have found my heaven. Lord, help me! Be my God in helping me to know Thee as my God, for Jesus' sake.

April 29: Forget and Forgive

***Say not thou, I will recompense evil;
but wait on the Lord, and he shall save thee. (Proverbs 20:22)***

Be not in haste. Let anger cool down. Say nothing and do nothing to avenge yourself. You will be sure to act unwisely if you take up the cudgels and fight your own battles; and, certainly, you will not show the spirit of the Lord Jesus. It is nobler to forgive and let the offense pass. To let an injury rankle in your bosom and to meditate revenge is to keep old wounds open and to make new ones. Better forget and forgive.

Peradventure, you say that you must do something or be a great loser; then do what this morning's promise advises: "Wait on the Lord, and he shall save thee." This advice will not cost you money but is worth far more, Be calm and quiet. Wait upon the Lord; tell Him your grievance; spread Rabshakeh's letter before the Lord, and this of itself will be an ease to your burdened mind. Besides, there is the promise "He shall save thee." God will find a way of deliverance for you. How He will do it neither you nor I can guess, but do it He will, If the Lord saves you, this will be a deal better than getting into petty quarrels and covering yourself with filth by wrestling with the unclean, Be no more angry. Leave your suit with the Judge of all.

April 30: The Overcomer's Reward

To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it. (Revelation 2:17)

My heart, be thou stirred up to persevere in the holy war, for the reward of victory is great. Today we eat of heavenly food which falls about our camps; the food of the wilderness, the food which comes from heaven, the food which never fails the pilgrims to Canaan. But there is reserved for us in Christ Jesus a still higher degree of spiritual life and a food for it which, as yet, is hidden from our experience. In the golden pot which was laid up in the ark there was a portion of manna hidden away, which though kept for ages never grew stale. No one ever saw it; it was hid with the Ark of the Covenant, in the Holy of Holies. Even so, the highest life of the believer is hid with Christ, in God. We shall come to it soon, Being made victorious through the grace of our Lord Jesus, we shall eat of the King's meat and feed upon royal dainties. We shall feed upon Jesus. He is our "hidden manna," as well as the manna of the wilderness. He is all in all to us in our highest, as well as in our lowest, estate. He helps us to fight, gives us the victory, and then is Himself our reward. Lord, help me to overcome.

May 1: Full of Song

***The mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing,
and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. (Isaiah 55:12)***

When sin is pardoned, our greatest sorrow is ended, and our truest pleasure begins. Such is the joy which the Lord bestows upon His reconciled ones, that it overflows and fills all nature with delight. The material world has latent music in it, and a renewed heart knows how to bring it out and make it vocal. Creation is the organ, and a gracious man finds out its keys, lays his hand thereon, and wakes the whole system of the universe to the harmony of praise. Mountains and hills, and other great objects, are, as it were, the bass of the chorus; while the trees of the wood, and all things that have life, take up the air of the melodious song.

When God's Word is made to prosper among us and souls are saved, then everything seems full of song. When we hear the confessions of young believers and the testimonies of well-instructed saints, we are made so happy that we must praise the Lord, and then it seems as if rocks and hills and woods and fields echo our joy-notes and turn the world into an orchestra. Lord, on this happy May Day, lead me out into thy tuneful world as rich in praise as a lark in full song.

May 2: Spiritual Sowing

He that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. (Galatians 6:8)

Sowing looks like a losing business, for we put good corn into the ground never to see it anymore. Sowing to the Spirit seems a very fanciful, dreamy business; for we deny ourselves and apparently get nothing for it. Yet if we sow to the Spirit by studying to live unto God, seeking to obey the will of God, and laying ourselves out to promote His honor, we shall not sow in vain. Life shall be our reward, even everlasting life. This we enjoy here as we enter into the knowledge of God, communion with God, and enjoyment of God. This life flows on like an ever-deepening, ever-widening river till it bears us to the ocean of infinite felicity, where the life of God is ours forever and ever.

Let us not this day sow to our flesh, for the harvest will be corruption, since flesh always tends that way; but with holy self-conquest let us live for the highest, purest, and most spiritual ends, seeking to honor our most holy Lord by obeying His most gracious Spirit. What a harvest will that be when we reap life everlasting! What sheaves of endless bliss will be reaped! What a festival will that harvest be! Lord, make us such reapers, for thy Son's sake.

May 3: Listen for the Signal

And let it be, when thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then thou shalt bestir thyself: for then shall the Lord go out before thee, to smite the host of the Philistines. (2 Samuel 5:24)

There are signs of the Lord's moving which should move us. The Spirit of God blows where He listeth, and we hear the sound thereof. Then is the time for us to be more than ever astir. We must seize the golden opportunity and make the most we can of it. It is ours to fight the Philistines at all times; but when the Lord Himself goes out before us, then we should be specially valiant in the war.

The breeze stirred the tops of the trees, and David and his men took this for the signal for an onslaught, and at their advance the Lord Himself smote the Philistines. Oh, that this day the Lord may give us an opening to speak for Him with many of our friends! Let us be on the watch to avail ourselves of the hopeful opening when it comes. Who knows but this may be a day of good tidings; a season of soul-winning. Let us keep our ear open to hear the rustle of the wind and our minds ready to obey the signal. Is not this promise, "Then shall the Lord go out before thee," a sufficient encouragement to play the man? Since the Lord goes before us, we dare not hold back.

May 4: Victory in Reverses

Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me. (Micah 7:8)

This may express the feelings of a man or woman downtrodden and oppressed. Our enemy may put out our light for a season. There is sure hope for us in the Lord; and if we are trusting in Him and holding fast our integrity, our season of downcasting and darkness will soon be over. The insults of the foe are only for a moment. The Lord will soon turn their laughter into lamentation and our sighing into singing.

What if the great enemy of souls should for a while triumph over us, as he has triumphed over better men than we are; yet let us take heart, for we shall overcome him before long. We shall rise from our fall, for our God has not fallen, and He will lift us up. We shall not abide in darkness, although for the moment we sit in it; for our Lord is the fountain of light, and He will soon bring us a joyful day. Let us not despair or even doubt. One turn of the wheel, and the lowest will be at the top. Woe unto those who laugh now, for they shall mourn and weep when their boasting is turned into everlasting contempt. But blessed are all holy mourners, for they shall be divinely comforted.

May 5: Why Remain Captive

The Lord thy God will turn thy captivity. (Deuteronomy 30:3)

God's own people may sell themselves into captivity by sin. A very bitter fruit is this, of an exceeding bitter root. What a bondage it is when the child of God is sold under sin, held in chains by Satan, deprived of his liberty, robbed of his power in prayer and his delight in the Lord! Let us watch that we come not into such bondage; but if this has already happened to us, let us by no means despair.

But we cannot be held in slavery forever. The Lord Jesus has paid too high a price for our redemption to leave us in the enemy's hand. The way to freedom is, "Return unto the Lord thy God." Where we first found salvation we shall find it again. At the foot of Christ's cross, confessing sin, we shall find pardon and deliverance. Moreover, the Lord will have us obey His voice according to all that He has commanded us, and we must do this with all our heart and all our soul, and then our captivity shall end.

Often depression of spirit and great misery of soul are removed as soon as we quit our idols and bow ourselves in obedience before the living God. We need not be captives. We may return to Zion's citizenship, and that speedily. Lord, turn our captivity!

May 6: Cure for Envy

***Let not thine heart envy sinners: but be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long.
For surely there is an end; and thine expectation shall not be cast off.
(Proverbs 23:17-18)***

When we see the wicked prosper we are apt to envy them. When we hear the noise of their mirth and our own spirit is heavy, we half think that they have the best of it. This is foolish and sinful. If we knew them better, and specially if we remembered their end, we should pity them.

The cure for envy lies in living under a constant sense of the divine presence, worshiping God and communing with Him all the day long, however long the day may seem. True religion lifts the soul into a higher region, where the judgment becomes more clear and the desires are more elevated. The more of heaven there is in our lives, the less of earth we shall covet. The fear of God casts out envy of men.

The deathblow of envy is a calm consideration of the future. The wealth and glory of the ungodly are a vain show. This pompous appearance flashes out for an hour and then is extinguished. What is the prosperous sinner the better for his prosperity when judgment overtakes him? As for the godly man, his end is peace and blessedness, and none can rob him of his joy; wherefore, let him forgo envy and be filled with sweet content.

May 7: Let No Evil Remain

And there shall cleave nought of the cursed thing to thine hand: that the Lord may turn from the fierceness of his anger, and show thee mercy, and have compassion upon thee, and multiply thee, as he hath sworn unto thy fathers. (Deut. 13:17)

Israel must conquer idolatrous cities and destroy all the spoil, regarding all that had been polluted by idolatry as an accursed thing to be burned with fire. Now, sin of all sorts must be treated by Christians in the same manner. We must not allow a single evil habit to remain. It is now war to the knife with sins of all sorts and sizes, whether of the body, the mind, or the spirit. We do not look upon this giving up of evil as deserving mercy, but we regard it as a fruit of the grace of God, which we would on no account miss.

When God causes us to have no mercy on our sins, then He has great mercy on us. When we are angry with evil, God is no more angry with us. When we multiply our efforts against iniquity, the Lord multiplies our blessings. The way of peace, of growth, of safety, of joy in Christ Jesus will be found by following out these words: "There shall nought of the cursed thing cleave to thine hand." Lord, purify me this day. Compassion, prosperity, increase, and joy will surely be given to those who put away sin with solemn resolution.

May 8: Help Wanted

***Go ye also into the vineyard;
and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive. (Matthew 20:7)***

Yes, there is work in Christ's vineyard for old bodies. It is the eleventh hour, and yet He will let us work. What grace is this! Surely every old man ought to jump at this invitation! After men are advanced in years nobody wants them as servants; they go from shop to shop, and employers look at their gray hairs and shake their heads. But Jesus will engage old people and give them good wages, too! This is mercy indeed. Lord, help the aged to enlist in Thy service without an hour's delay.

But will the Lord pay wages to worn-out old men? Do not doubt it. He says He will give you what is right if you will work in His field. He will surely give you grace here and glory hereafter. He will grant present comfort and future rest; strength equal to your day and a vision of glory when the night of death comes on. All these the Lord Jesus will as freely give to the aged convert as to one who enters His service in his youth.

Let me tell this to some unsaved old man or old woman and pray the Lord to bless it for Jesus' sake, Where can I find such persons? I will be on the lookout for them and kindly tell them the news.

May 9: Trust Means Joy

***For our heart shall rejoice in him,
because we have trusted in his holy name. (Psalm 33:21)***

The root of faith produces the flower of heart-joy. We may not at the first rejoice, but it comes in due time. We trust the Lord when we are sad, and in due season He so answers our confidence that our faith turns to fruition, and we rejoice in the Lord. Doubt breeds distress, but trust means joy in the long run.

The assurance expressed by the psalmist in this verse is really a promise held out in the hands of holy confidence. Oh, for grace to appropriate it. If we do not rejoice at this moment, yet we shall do so, as surely as David's God is our God.

Let us meditate upon the Lord's holy name that we may trust Him the better and rejoice the more readily. He is in character holy, just, true, gracious, faithful, and unchanging. Is not such a God to be trusted? He is all wise, almighty, and everywhere present; can we not cheerfully rely upon Him? Yes, we will do so at once and do so without reserve. Jehovah-Jireh will provide; Jehovah-Shalom will send peace; Jehovah-Tsidkenu will justify; Jehovah-Shammah will be forever near; and in Jehovah-Nissi we will conquer every foe. They that know Thy name will trust Thee; and they that trust Thee will rejoice in Thee, O Lord.

May 10: Fear Only God

***So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper,
and I will not fear what man shall do unto me. (Hebrews 13:6)***

Because God will never leave nor forsake us, we may well be content with such things as we have. Since the Lord is ours, we cannot be left without a friend, a treasure, and a dwelling place. This assurance may make us feel quite independent of men. Under such high patronage we do not feel tempted to cringe before our fellowmen and ask of them permission to call our lives our own; but what we say we boldly say and defy contradiction.

He who fears God has nothing else to fear. We should stand in such awe of the living Lord that all the threats that can be used by the proudest persecutor should have no more effect upon us than the whistling of the wind. Man in these days cannot do so much against us as he could when the apostle wrote the verse at the head of this page. Racks and stakes are out of fashion. Giant Pope cannot burn the pilgrims now. If the followers of false teachers try cruel mockery and scorn, we do not wonder at it, for the men of this world cannot love the heavenly seed. What then? We must bear the world's scorn. It breaks no bones. God helping us, let us be bold; and when the world rages, let it rage, but let us not fear it.

May 11: Wait for the Finals

***Gad, a troop shall overcome him:
but he shall overcome at the last. (Genesis 49:19)***

Some of us have been like the tribe of Gad. Our adversaries for a while were too many for us; they came upon us like a troop. Yes, and for the moment they overcame us; and they exulted greatly because of their temporary victory. Thus they only proved the first part of the family heritage to be really ours, for Christ's people, like Dan, shall have a troop overcoming them. This being overcome is very painful, and we should have despaired if we had not by faith believed the second line of our father's benediction, "He shall overcome at the last." "All's well that ends well," said the world's poet; and he spoke the truth. A war is to be judged, not by first success or defeats, but by that which happens "at the last." The Lord will give to truth and righteousness victory "at the last"; and, as Mr. Bunyan says, that means forever, for nothing can come after the last.

What we need is patient perseverance in well-doing, calm confidence in our glorious Captain. Christ, our Lord Jesus, would teach us His holy art of setting the face like a flint to go through with work or suffering till we can say, "It is finished." Hallelujah. Victory! Victory! We believe the promise. "He shall overcome at the last."

May 12: Servants Honored

***Whoso keepeth the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof;
so he that waiteth on his master shall be honored. (Proverbs 27:18)***

He who tends the fig tree has figs for his pains, and he who waits on a good master has honor as his reward. Truly the Lord Jesus is the very best of masters, and it is an honor to be allowed to do the least act for His sake. To serve some lords is to watch over a crab tree and eat the crabs as one's wages; but to serve the Lord Jesus is to keep a fig tree of the sweetest figs. His service is in itself delight, continuance in it is promotion, success in it is blessedness below, and the reward for it is glory above.

Our greatest honors will be gathered in that season when the figs will be ripe, even in the next world. Angels who are now our servitors will bear us home when our day's work is done. Heaven, where Jesus is, will be our honorable mansion, eternal bliss our honorable portion, and the Lord Himself our honorable companion. Who can imagine the full meaning of this promise: "He that waiteth on his master shall be honored"?

Lord, help me to wait upon my Master. Let me leave all idea of honor to the hour when Thou Thyself shalt honor me. May the Holy Spirit make me a lowly, patient worker and waiter!

May 13: Day Is at Hand

And I will give him the morning star. (Revelation 2:28)

Until the day break and the shadows flee away, what a blessing it is to see in Jesus "the morning star"! I remember when we read in the newspapers the idle tale that the star of Bethlehem had again appeared. On inquiry we found that it was only "the morning star"; but no great mistake had been made after all.

It is best to see Jesus as the sun; but when we cannot do so, the next best thing is to see Him as that star which prophesies the day and shows that the eternal light is near at hand. If I am not today all that I hope to be, yet I see Jesus, and that assures me that I shall one day be like Him. A sight of Jesus by faith is the pledge of beholding Him in His glory and being transformed into His image. If I have not at this hour all the light and joy I could desire, yet I shall have it; for as surely as I see the morning star I shall see the day. The morning star is never far from the sun.

Come, my soul, has the Lord given thee the morning star? Dost thou hold fast that truth, grace, hope, and love which the Lord has given thee? Then in this thou hast the dawn of coming glory. He that makes thee overcome evil, and persevere in righteousness, has therein given thee the morning star.

May 14: Surgery for Healing

Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. (Hosea 6:1)

It is the Lord's way to tear before He heals. This is the honest love of His heart and the sure surgery of His hand. He also bruises before He binds up, or else it would be uncertain work. The law comes before the gospel, the sense of need before the supply of it. Is the reader now under the convincing, crushing hand of the Spirit? Has he received the spirit of bondage again to fear? This is a salutary preliminary to real gospel healing and binding up.

Do not despair, dear heart, but come to the Lord with all thy jagged wounds, black bruises, and running sores. He alone can heal, and He delights to do it. It is our Lord's office to bind up the brokenhearted, and He is gloriously at home at it. Let us not linger but at once return unto the Lord from whom we have gone astray. Let us show Him our gaping wounds and beseech him to know His own work and complete it. Will a surgeon make an incision and then leave his patient to bleed to death? Will the Lord pull down our old house and then refuse to build us a better one? Dost Thou ever wantonly increase the misery of poor anxious souls? That be far from Thee, O Lord.

May 15: God's High Places

*I will set him on high,
because he hath known my name. (Psalm 91:14)*

Does the Lord say this to me? Yes, if I have known His name. Blessed be the Lord, I am no stranger to Him. I have tried Him, proved Him, and known Him, and therefore do I trust Him. I know His name as a sin-hating God, for by His Spirit's convincing power I have been taught that He will never wink at evil. But I also know Him as the sin-pardoning God in Christ Jesus, for He has forgiven me all trespasses. His name is faithfulness, and I know it, for He has never forsaken me though my troubles have multiplied upon me.

This knowledge is a gift of grace, and the Lord makes it to be the reason why He grants another grace-gift, namely, setting on high. This is grace upon grace. Observe that if we climb on high, the position may be dangerous; but if the Lord sets us there it is safe. He may raise us to great usefulness, to eminent experience, to success in service, to leadership among workers, to a father's place among the little ones. If He does not do this, He may set us on high by near fellowship, clear insight, holy triumph, and gracious anticipation of eternal glory. When God sets us on high, Satan himself cannot pull us down. Oh, that this may be our case all through this day!

May 16: We Receive as We Give
Blessed are the merciful
for they shall obtain mercy. (Matthew 5:7)

It is not meet that the man who will not forgive should be forgiven, nor shall he who will not give to the poor have his own wants relieved. God will measure to us with our own bushels, and those who have been hard masters and hard creditors will find that the Lord will deal hardly with them. "He shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy."

This day let us try to give and to forgive. Let us mind the two bears-bear and forbear. Let us be kind, gentle, and tender. Let us not put harsh constructions upon men's conduct, nor drive hard bargains, nor pick foolish quarrels, nor be difficult to please. Surely we wish to be blessed, and we also want to obtain mercy: let us be merciful, that we may have mercy. Let us fulfill the condition, that we may earn the beatitude. Is it not a pleasant duty to be kind? Is there not much more sweetness in it than in being angry and ungenerous? Why, there is a blessedness in the thing itself! Moreover, the obtaining of mercy is a rich reward. What but sovereign grace could suggest such a promise as this'. We are merciful to our fellow mortal in pence, and the Lord forgives us "all the debt."

May 17: No Need to Stint

The upright shall have good things in possession. (Proverbs 28:10)

The book of Proverbs is also a book of promises. Promises ought to be proverbs among the people of God. This is a very remarkable one. We are accustomed to think of our good things as in reversion, but here we are told that we shall have them in possession. Not all the malice and cunning of our enemies can work our destruction: they shall fall into the pit which they have digged. Our inheritance is so entailed upon us that we shall not be kept out of it, nor so turned out of the way as to miss it. But what have we now? We have a quiet conscience through the precious blood of Jesus. We have the love of God set upon us beyond all change. We have power with God in prayer in all time of need. We have the providence of God to watch over us, the angels of God to minister to us, and, above all, the Spirit of God to dwell in us. In fact, all things are ours. "Whether things present or things to come: all are yours." Jesus is ours. Yea, the divine Trinity in unity is ours. Hallelujah. Let us not pine and whine and stint and slave, since we have good things in possession. Let us live on our God and rejoice in Him all the day. Help us, O Holy Ghost!

May 18: Losses Overcome

And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten. (Joel 2:25)

Yes, those wasted years over which we sigh shall be restored to us. God can give us such plentiful grace that we shall crowd into the remainder of our days as much of service as will be some recompense for those years of unregeneracy over which we mourn in humble penitence. The locusts of backsliding, worldliness, lukewarmness, are now viewed by us as a terrible plague. Oh, that they had never come near us! The Lord in mercy has now taken them away, and we are full of zeal to serve Him. Blessed be His name, we can raise such harvests of spiritual graces as shall make our former barrenness to disappear. Through rich grace we can turn to account our bitter experience and use it to warn others. We can become the more rooted in humility, childlike dependence, and penitent spirituality by reason of our former shortcomings. If we are the more watchful, zealous, and tender, we shall gain by our lamentable losses. The wasted years, by a miracle of love, can be restored. Does it seem too great a boon? Let us believe for it and live for it, and we may yet realize it, even as Peter became all the more useful a man after his presumption was cured by his discovered weakness. Lord, aid us by Thy grace.

May 19: We May Speak for God

Therefore thus saith the Lord, If thou return, then will I bring thee again, and thou shalt stand before me: and if thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth. (Jeremiah 15:19)

Poor Jeremiah! Yet why do we say so? The weeping prophet was one of the choicest servants of God and honored by Him above many. He was hated for speaking the truth. The word which was so sweet to him was bitter to his hearers, yet he was accepted of his Lord. He was commanded to abide in his faithfulness, and then the Lord would continue to speak through him. He was to deal boldly and truthfully with men and perform the Lord's winnowing work upon the professors of his day, and then the Lord gave him this word: "Thou shalt be as my mouth."

What an honor! Should not every preacher, yea, every believer, covet it? For God to speak by us, what a marvel! We shall speak sure, pure truth; and we shall speak it with power. Our word shall not return void; it shall be a blessing to those who receive it, and those who refuse it shall do so at their peril. Our lips shall feed many. We shall arouse the sleeping and call the dead to life.

O dear reader, pray that it may be so with all the sent servants of our Lord.

May 20: We Dare Not Doubt

***I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight:
I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron.
(Isaiah 45:2)***

This was for Cyrus; but it is evermore the heritage of all the Lord's own spiritual servants. Only let us go forward by faith, and our way will be cleared for us. Crooks and turns of human craft and satanic subtlety shall be straightened for us; we shall not need to track their devious windings. The gates of brass shall be broken, and the iron bars which fastened them shall be cut asunder. We shall not need the battering ram nor the crowbar: the Lord Himself will do the impossible for us, and the unexpected shall be a fact.

Let us not sit down in coward fear. Let us press onward in the path of duty, for the Lord hath said it: "I will go before thee." Ours not to reason why; ours but to dare and dash forward. It is the Lord's work, and He will enable us to do it: all impediments must yield before Him. Hath He not said, "I will break in pieces the gates of brass"! What can hinder His purpose or balk His decrees? Those who serve God have infinite resources. The way is clear to faith though barred to human strength. When Jehovah says, "I will," as He does twice in this promise, we dare not doubt.

May 21: Rain Without Clouds? Never!

***If the clouds be full of rain,
they empty themselves upon the earth. (Ecclesiastes 11:3)***

Why, then, do we dread the clouds which now darken our sky? True, for a while they hide the sun, but the sun is not quenched; He will shine out again before long. Meanwhile those black clouds are filled with rain; and the blacker they are, the more likely they are to yield plentiful showers. How can we have rain without clouds?

Our troubles have always brought us blessings, and they always will. They are the black chariots of bright grace. These clouds will empty themselves before long, and every tender herb will be the gladder for the shower. Our God may drench us with grief, but He will not drown us with wrath; nay, He will refresh us with mercy. Our Lord's love letters often come to us in black-edged envelopes. His wagons rumble, but they are loaded with benefits. His rod blossoms with sweet flowers and nourishing fruits. Let us not worry about the clouds but sing because May flowers are brought to us through the April clouds and showers.

O Lord, the clouds are the dust of Thy feet! How near Thou art in the cloudy and dark day! Love beholds Thee and is glad. Faith sees the clouds emptying themselves and making the little hills rejoice on every side.

May 22: Song of Confidence

***Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me: thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me.
(Psalm 138:7)***

Wretched walking in the midst of trouble. Nay, blessed walking, since there is a special promise for it. Give me a promise, and what is the trouble? What doth my Lord teach me here to say? Why this—"Thou wilt revive me." I shall have more life, more energy, more faith. Is it not often so, that trouble revives us, like a breath of cold air when one is ready to faint?

How angry are my enemies and especially the archenemy! Shall I stretch forth my hand and fight my foes! No, my hand is better employed in doing service for my Lord. Besides, there is no need, for my God will use His far-reaching arm, and He will deal with them far better than I could if I were to try. "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." He will with His own right hand of power and wisdom save me, and what more can I desire?

Come, my heart, talk this promise over to thyself till thou canst use it as the song of thy confidence, the solace of thy holiness. Pray to be revived thyself and leave the rest with the Lord, who performeth all things for thee.

May 23: Full Reliance on God

***For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth;
the poor also, and him that hath no helper. (Psalm 72:12)***

The needy cries; what else can he do? His cry is heard of God; what else need he do? Let the needy reader take to crying at once, for this will be his wisdom. Do not cry in the ears of friends, for even if they can help you it is only because the Lord enables them. The nearest way is to go straight to God and let your cry come up before Him. Straightforward makes the best runner: run to the Lord and not to secondary causes.

"Alas!" you cry, "I have no friend or helper." So much the better; you can rely upon God in both capacities-as without supplies and without helpers. Make your double need your double plea. Even for temporal mercies you may wait upon God, for He careth for His children in these temporary concerns. As for spiritual necessities, which are the heaviest of all, the Lord will hear your cry and will deliver you and supply you.

O poor friend, try your rich God. O helpless one, lean on His help. He has never failed me, and I am sure He will never fail you. Come as a beggar, and God will not refuse you help. Come with no plea but His grace. Jesus is King; will He let you perish of want? What! Did you forget this?

May 24: One a Majority!

***One man of you shall chase a thousand:
for the Lord your God, he it is that fighteth for you,
as he hath promised you. (Joshua 23:10)***

Why count heads? One man with God is a majority though there be a thousand on the other side. Sometimes our helpers may be too many for God to work with them, as was the case with Gideon, who could do nothing till he had increased his forces by thinning out their numbers. But the Lord's hosts are never too few. When God would found a nation, He called Abram alone and blessed him. When He would vanquish proud Pharaoh, He used no armies, but only Moses and Aaron. The "one-man ministry," as certain wise men call it, has been far more used of the Lord than trained bands with their officers. Did all the Israelites together slay so many as Samson alone? Saul and his hosts slew their thousands but David his ten thousands.

The Lord can give the enemy long odds and yet vanquish him. If we have faith, we have God with us, and what are multitudes of men? One shepherd's dog can drive before him a flock of sheep. If the Lord sent thee, O my brother, His strength will accomplish His divine purpose. Wherefore, rely on the promise, and be very courageous.

May 25: God's Treasury

The Lord shall open unto thee his good treasure.

(Deuteronomy 28:12)

This refers first to the rain. The Lord will give this in its season. Rain is the emblem of all those celestial refreshings which the Lord is ready to bestow upon His people. Oh, for a copious shower to refresh the Lord's heritage!

We seem to think that God's treasury can only be opened by a great prophet like Elijah, but it is not so, for this promise is to all the faithful in Israel, and, indeed, to each one of them. O believing friend, "the Lord shall open unto thee his good treasure." Thou, too, mayest see heaven opened and thrust in thy hand and take out thy portion, yea, and a portion for all thy brethren round about thee. Ask what thou wilt, and thou shalt not be denied if thou abidest in Christ and His words abide in thee.

As yet thou has not known all thy Lord's treasures, but He shall open them up to thine understanding. Certainly thou hast not yet enjoyed the fullness of His covenant riches, but He will direct thine heart into His love and reveal Jesus in thee. Only the Lord Himself can do this for thee; but here is His promise, and if thou wilt hearken diligently unto His voice and obey His will, His riches in glory by Christ Jesus shall be thine.

May 26: Commonest Things Blessed

***Ye shall serve the Lord your God,
and he shall bless thy bread, and thy water. (Exodus 23:25)***

What a promise is this! To serve God is in itself a high delight. But what an added privilege to have the blessing of the Lord resting upon us in all things! Our commonest things become blessed when we ourselves are consecrated to the Lord. Our Lord Jesus took bread and blessed it; behold, we also eat of blessed bread. Jesus blessed water and made it wine: the water which we drink is far better to us than any of the wine with which men make merry; every drop has a benediction in it. The divine blessing is on the man of God in everything, and it shall abide with him at every time.

What if we have only bread and water! Yet it is blessed bread and water. Bread and water we shall have. That is implied, for it must be there for God to bless it. "Thy bread shall be given thee, and thy waters shall be sure." With God at our table, we not only ask a blessing, but we have one. It is not only at the altar but at the table that He blesses us. He serves those well who serve Him well. This table blessing is not of debt but of grace. Indeed, there is a trebled grace; He grants us grace to serve Him, by His grace feeds us with bread, and then in His grace blesses it.

May 27: As the Life—So the Fruit

For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:8)

If we desire to glorify our Lord by fruitfulness, we must have certain things within us; for nothing can come out of us which is not first of all within us. We must begin with faith, which is the groundwork of all the virtues; and then diligently add to it virtue, knowledge, temperance, and patience. With these we must have godliness and brotherly love. All these put together will most assuredly cause us to produce, as our life fruit, the clusters of usefulness, and we shall not be mere idle knowers but real doers of the Word. These holy things must not only be in us, but abound, or we shall be barren. Fruit is the overflow of life, and we must be full before we can flow over.

We have noticed men of considerable parts and opportunities who have never succeeded in doing real good in the conversion of souls; and after close observation we have concluded that they lacked certain graces which are absolutely essential to fruit bearing. For real usefulness, graces are better than gifts. As the man is, so is his work. If we would do better, we must be better. Let the text be a gentle hint to unfruitful professors and to myself also.

May 28: Remind God of His Promise

And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good. (Genesis 32:12)

This is the sure way of prevailing with the Lord in prayer. We may humbly remind Him of what He has said. Our faithful God will never run back from His word, nor will He leave it unfulfilled; yet He loves to be enquired of by His people and put in mind of His promise. This is refreshing to their memories, reviving to their faith, and renewing to their hope. God's Word is given, not for His sake, but for ours. His purposes are settled, and He needs nothing to bind Him to His design of doing His people good; but He gives the promise for our strengthening and comfort. Hence He wishes us to plead it and say to Him, "Thou saidst."

"I will surely do thee good" is just the essence of all the Lord's gracious sayings, Lay a special stress on the word surely. He will do us good, real good, tasting good, only good, every good. He will make us good, and this is to do us good in the very highest degree. He will treat us as He does his saints while we are here, and that is good. He will soon take us to be with Jesus and all His chosen, and that is supremely good. With this promise in our hearts we need not fear angry Esau or anyone else. If the Lord will do us good, who can do us hurt?

May 29: Fishers Follow Him

***And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me,
and I will make you to become fishers of men. (Mark 1:17)***

Only by coming after Jesus can we obtain our heart's desire and be really useful to our fellow men. Oh, how we long to be successful fishers for Jesus! We would sacrifice our lives to win souls. But we are tempted to try methods which Jesus would never have tried. Shall we yield to this suggestion of the enemy? If so, we may splash the water, but we shall never take the fish. We must follow after Jesus if we would succeed. Sensational methods, entertainment, and so forth—are these coming after Jesus? Can we imagine the Lord Jesus drawing a congregation by such means as are now commonly used? What is the result of such expedients? The result is nothing which Jesus will count up at the last great day.

We must keep to our preaching as our Master did, for by this means souls are saved. We must preach our Lord's doctrine and proclaim a full and free gospel, for this is the net in which souls are taken, We must preach with His gentleness, boldness, and love, for this is the secret of success with human hearts. We must work under divine anointing, depending upon the sacred Spirit. Thus, coming after Jesus, and not running before Him, not aside from Him, we shall be fishers of men.

May 30: Holy Foresight

Nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of Heaven. (Matthew 26:64)

Ah, Lord, Thou wast in Thy lowest state when before Thy persecutors Thou wast made to stand like a criminal! Yet the eyes of Thy faith could see beyond Thy present humiliation into Thy future glory. What words are these, "Nevertheless-hereafter!" I would imitate Thy holy foresight, and in the midst of poverty, or sickness, or slander, I also would say, "Nevertheless-hereafter." Instead of weakness, Thou hast all power; instead of shame, all glory; instead of derision, all worship, Thy cross has not dimmed the splendor of Thy crown, neither has the spittle marred the beauty of Thy face. Say, rather, Thou art the more exalted and honored because of Thy sufferings.

So, Lord, I also would take courage from the "hereafter." I would forget the present tribulation in the future triumph. Help thou me by directing me into Thy Father's love and into Thine own patience, so that when I am derided for Thy name I may not be staggered but think more and more of the hereafter, and, therefore, all the less of today. I shall be with Thee soon and behold Thy glory. Wherefore, I am not ashamed but say in my inmost soul, "Nevertheless-hereafter."

May 31: "Be of Good Cheer"

***In the world ye shall have tribulation:
but be of good cheer;
I have overcome the world. (John 16:33)***

My Lord's words are true as to the tribulation. I have my share of it beyond all doubt. The flail is not hung up out of the way, nor can I hope that it will be laid aside so long as I lie upon the threshing floor, How can I look to be at home in the enemy's country, joyful while in exile, or comfortable in a wilderness? This is not my rest. This is the place of the furnace, and the forge, and the hammer. My experience tallies with my Lord's words.

I note how He bids me "be of good cheer." Alas! I am far too apt to be downcast. My spirit soon sinks when I am sorely tried. But I must not give way to this feeling. When my Lord bids me cheer up I must not dare to be cast down.

What is the argument which He uses to encourage me? Why, it is His own victory. He says, "I have overcome the world." His battle was much more severe than mine. I have not yet resisted unto blood. Why do I despair of overcoming? See, my soul, the enemy has been once overcome. I fight with a beaten foe. O world, Jesus has already vanquished thee; and in me, by His grace, He will overcome thee again. Therefore am I of good cheer and sing unto my conquering Lord.

June 1: God's Promise Keeps

***Cast thy bread upon the waters:
for thou shalt find it after many days.
(Ecclesiastes 11:1)***

We must not expect to see an immediate reward for all the good we do; nor must we always confine our efforts to places and persons which seem likely to yield us a recompense for our labors. The Egyptian casts his seed upon the waters of the Nile, where it might seem a sheer waste of corn. But in due time the flood subsides, the rice or other grain sinks into the fertile mud, and rapidly a harvest is produced. Let us today do good to the unthankful and the evil. Let us teach the careless and the obstinate. Unlikely waters may cover hopeful soil. Nowhere shall our labor be in vain in the Lord.

It is ours to cast our bread upon the waters; it remains with God to fulfill the promise "Thou shalt find it." He will not let His promise fail. His good word which we have spoken shall live, shall be found, shall be found by us, Perhaps not just yet, but some day we shall reap what we have sown. We must exercise our patience, or perhaps the Lord may exercise it. "After many days," says the Scripture, and in many instances those days run into months and years, and yet the Word stands true. God's promise will keep; let us mind that we keep the precept and keep it this day.

June 2: Immediate Freedom

*For now will I break his yoke from off thee,
and will burst thy bonds in sunder. (Nahum 1:13)*

The Assyrian was allowed for a season to oppress the Lord's people, but there came a time for his power to be broken. So, many a heart is held in bondage by Satan and frets sorely under the yoke. Oh, that to such prisoners of hope the word of the Lord may come at once, according to the text, "Now will I break his yoke from off thee, and will burst thy bonds in sunder!"

See! The Lord promises a present deliverance. "Now will I break his yoke from off thee." Believe for immediate freedom, and according to thy faith so shall it be unto thee at this very hour. When God saith "now," let no man say "tomorrow."

See how complete the rescue is to be; for the yoke is not to be removed but broken; and the bonds are not to be untied but burst asunder. Here is a display of divine force which guarantees that the oppressor shall not return. His yoke is broken, we cannot again be bowed down by its weight. His bonds, are burst asunder, they can no longer hold us. Oh, to believe in Jesus for complete and everlasting emancipation! "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." Come, Lord, and set free Thy captives, according to Thy Word.

June 3: Surefootedness

The Lord God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hind's feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places. (Habakkuk 3:19)

This confidence of the man of God is tantamount to a promise, for that which faith is persuaded of is the purpose of God. The prophet had to traverse the deep places of poverty and famine, but he went down hill without slipping, for the Lord gave him standing. By and by he was called to the high places of the hills of conflict; and he was no more afraid to go up than to go down.

See! The Lord lent him strength. Nay, Jehovah Himself was his strength. Think of that: the almighty God Himself becomes our strength!

Note that the Lord also gave him surefootedness. The hinds leap over rock and crag, never missing their footholds. Our Lord will give us grace to follow the most difficult paths of duty without a stumble. He can fit our foot for the crags so that we shall be at home where apart from God we should perish.

One of these days we shall be called to higher places still. Up yonder we shall climb, even to the mount of God, the high places where the shining ones are gathered. Oh, what feet are the feet of faith, by which, following the hind of the morning, we shall ascend into the hill of the Lord!

June 4: Exceedingly Precious

*They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts
in that day when I make up my jewels. (Malachi 3:17)*

A day is coming in which the crown jewels of our great King shall be counted, that it may be seen whether they answer to the inventory which His Father gave Him. My soul, wilt thou be among the precious things of Jesus? Thou art precious to Him if He is precious to thee, and thou shalt be His "in that day," if He is thine in this day.

In the days of Malachi, the chosen of the Lord were accustomed so to converse with each other that their God Himself listened to their talk. He liked it so well that He took notes of it; yes, and made a book of it, which He lodged in His record office. Pleased with their conversation, He was also pleased with them. Pause, my soul, and ask thyself: If Jesus were to listen to thy talk would He be pleased with it? Is it to His glory and to the edification of the brotherhood? Say, my soul, and be sure thou sayest the truth.

But what will the honor be for us poor creatures to be reckoned by the Lord to be His crown jewels! This honor have all the saints. Jesus not only says, "They are mine," but, "They shall be mine." He bought us, sought us, brought us in, and has so far wrought us to His image that we shall be fought for by Him with all His might.

June 5: Is There a Difference?

But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast: that ye may know how that the Lord doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel. (Exodus 11:7)

What! Has God power over the tongues of dogs! Can he keep ours from barking? Yes, it is even so. He can prevent an Egyptian dog from worrying one of the lambs of Israel's flock. Doth God silence dogs, and doggish ones among men, and the great dog at hell's gate? Then let us move on our way without fear.

If He lets dogs move their tongues, yet He can stop their teeth. They may make a dreadful noise and still do us no real harm. Yet, how sweet is quiet! How delightful to move about among enemies and perceive that God maketh them to be at peace with us! Like Daniel in the den of lions we are unhurt amid destroyers.

Oh, that today this word of the Lord to Israel might be true to me! Does the dog worry me? I will tell my Lord about him. Lord, he does not care for my pleadings; do Thou speak the word of power, and he must lie down. Give me peace, O my God, and let me see Thy hand so distinctly in it that I may most clearly perceive the difference which Thy grace has made between me and the ungodly!

June 6: He Always Listens

*The Lord hath heard my supplication;
the Lord will receive my prayer. (Psalm 6:9)*

The experience here recorded is mine. I can set to my seal that God is true. In very wonderful ways He has answered the prayers of His servant many and many a time. Yes, and He is hearing my present supplication, and He is not turning away His ear from me. Blessed be His holy name!

What then? Why, for certain the promise which lies sleeping in the psalmist's believing confidence is also mine. Let me grasp it by the hand of faith: "The Lord will receive my prayer." He will accept it, think of it, and grant it in the way and time which His loving wisdom judges to be best. I bring my poor prayer in my hand to the great King, and He gives me audience and graciously receives my petition. My enemies will not listen to me, but my Lord will. They ridicule my tearful prayers, but my Lord does not; He receives my prayer into His ear and His heart.

What a reception this is for a poor sinner! We receive Jesus, and then the Lord receives us and our prayers for His Son's sake. Blessed be that dear name which franks our prayers so that they freely pass even within the golden gates. Lord, teach me to pray, since Thou hearest my prayers.

June 7: The Safest Place

And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. (John 10:28)

We believe in the eternal security of the saints. First, because they are Christ's, and He will never lose the sheep which He has bought with His blood and received of His Father.

Next, because He gives them eternal life, and if it be eternal, well then, it is eternal, and there can be no end to hell, and heaven, and God. If spiritual life can die out, it is manifestly not eternal life, and that effectually shuts out the possibility of an end.

Observe, further, that the Lord expressly says, "They shall never perish." As long as words have a meaning, this secures believers from perishing. The most obstinate unbelief cannot force this meaning out of this sentence.

Then, to make the matter complete, He declares that His people are in His hand, and He defies all their enemies to pluck them out of it. Surely it is a thing impossible even for the fiend of hell. We must be safe in the grasp of an almighty Savior. Be it ours to dismiss carnal fear as well as carnal confidence and rest peacefully in the hollow of the Redeemer's hand.

June 8: Wisdom for the Asking

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. (James 1:5)

If any of you lack wisdom. There is no "if" in the matter, for I am sure I lack it. What do I know? How can I guide my own way? How can I direct others? Lord, I am a mass of folly, and wisdom I have none.

Thou sayest, "Let him ask of God." Lord, I now ask. Here at Thy footstool I ask to be furnished with heavenly wisdom for this day's perplexities, ay, and for this day's simplicities; for I know I may do very stupid things, even in plain matters, unless Thou dost keep me out of mischief.

I thank Thee that all I have to do is to ask. What grace is this on Thy part, that I have only to pray in faith and Thou wilt give me wisdom'. Thou dost here promise me a liberal education, and that, too, without an angry tutor or a scolding usher. This, too, Thou wilt bestow without a fee—bestow it on a fool who lacks wisdom. O Lord, I thank Thee for that positive and expressive word "It shall be given him." I believe it. Thou wilt this day make Thy babe to know the hidden wisdom which the carnally prudent never learn. Thou wilt guide me with Thy counsel and afterwards receive me to glory.

June 9: A Trustworthy Name

I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord. (Zephaniah 3:12)

When true religion is ready to die out among the wealthy it finds a home among the poor of this world, rich in faith. The Lord has even now His faithful remnant. Am I one of them?

Perhaps it is because men are afflicted and poor that they learn to trust in the name of the Lord. He that hath no money must try what he can do on trust. He whose own name is good for nothing in his own esteem, acts wisely to rest in another name, even that best of names, the name of Jehovah. God will always have a trusting people, and these will be an afflicted and poor people. Little as the world thinks of them, their being left in the midst of a nation is the channel of untold blessings to it. Here we have the conserving salt which keeps in check the corruption which is in the world through lust.

Again the question comes home to each one of us. Am I one of them? Am I afflicted by the sin within me and around me? Am I poor in spirit, poor spiritually in my own judgment? Do I trust in the Lord? This is the main business. Jesus reveals the name, the character, the person of God; am I trusting in Him? If so, I am left in this world for a purpose. Lord, help me to fulfill it.

June 10: A Shepherd Secures Them

***They shall feed and lie down,
and none shall make them afraid. (Zephaniah 3:13)***

Yesterday we thought of the afflicted and poor people whom the Lord left to be a living seed in a dead world. The prophet says of such that they shall not work iniquity nor speak lies. So that while they had neither rank nor riches to guard them, they were also quite unable to use those weapons in which the wicked place so much reliance: they could neither defend themselves by sin nor by subtlety.

What then? Would they be destroyed? By no means! They should both feed and rest and be not merely free from danger but even quiet from fear of evil. Sheep are very feeble creatures, and wolves are terrible enemies; yet at this hour sheep are more numerous than wolves, and the cause of the sheep is always winning, while the cause of the wolves is always declining. One day flocks of sheep will cover the plains, and not a wolf will be left. The fact is that sheep have a Shepherd, and this gives them provender, protection, and peace. "None"—which means not one, whether in human or diabolical form—"shall make them afraid." Who shall terrify the Lord's flock when He is near? We lie down in green pastures, for Jesus Himself is food and rest to our souls.

June 11: No Cause to Blush

Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed.

(Isaiah 54.4)

We shall not be ashamed of our faith. Carping critics may assail the Scriptures upon which we ground our belief, but every year the Lord will make it more and more clear that in His Book there is no error, no excess, and no omission. It is no discredit to be a simple believer; the faith which looks alone to Jesus is a crown of honor on any man's head and better than a star on his breast.

We shall not be ashamed of our hope. It shall be even as the Lord has said. We shall be fed, led, blest, and rested. Our Lord will come, and then the days of our mourning shall be ended. How we shall glory in the Lord who first gave us lively hope and then gave us that which we hoped for!

We shall not be ashamed of our love. Jesus is to us the altogether lovely, and never, never, shall we have to blush because we have yielded our hearts to Him. The sight of our glorious Well-beloved will justify the most enthusiastic attachment to Him. None will blame the martyrs for dying for Him. When the enemies of Christ are clothed with everlasting contempt, the lovers of Jesus shall find themselves honored by all holy beings, because they chose the reproach of Christ rather than the treasures of Egypt.

June 12: Dwelling Safely Apart

Israel then shall dwell in safety alone: the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew, (Deuteronomy 33:28)

The more we dwell alone, the more safe shall we be. God would have His people separate from sinners, His call to them is, "Come ye out from among them." A Christian world is such a monstrosity as the Scriptures never contemplate. A worldly Christian is spiritually diseased. Those who compromise with Christ's enemies may be reckoned with them.

Our safety lies, not in making terms with the enemy, but in dwelling alone with our Best Friend. If we do this, we shall dwell in safety despite the sarcasms, the slanders, and the sneers of the world. We shall be safe from the baleful influence of its unbelief, its pride, its vanity, its filthiness.

God also will make us dwell in safety alone in that day when sin shall be visited on the nations by wars and famines. The Lord brought Abram from Ur of the Chaldees, but Abram stopped halfway. He had no blessing till, having set out to go to the land of Canaan, to the land of Canaan he came, He was safe alone even in the midst of foes. Lot was not safe in Sodom though in a circle of friends. Our safety is in dwelling apart with God.

June 13: Divine Cultivation

***I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment:
Lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day. (Isaiah 27:3)***

When the Lord Himself speaks in His own proper person rather than through a prophet, the word has a peculiar weight to believing minds. It is Jehovah Himself who is the keeper of His own vineyard; He does not trust it to any other, but He makes it His own personal care. Are they not well kept whom God Himself keeps?

We are to receive gracious watering, not only every day and every hour "but every moment." How we ought to grow! How fresh and fruitful every plant should be! What rich clusters the vines should bear!

But disturbers come; little foxes and the boar. Therefore, the Lord Himself is our Guardian, and that at all hours, both "night and day." What, then, can harm us? Why are we afraid! He tends, He waters, He guards; what more do we need?

Twice in this verse the Lord says, "I will." What truth, what power, what love, what immutability we find in the great "I will" of Jehovah! Who can resist His will? If He says "I will," what room is there for doubt? With an "I will" of God we can face all the hosts of sin, death, and hell. O Lord, since Thou sayest, "I will keep thee," I reply, "I will praise Thee!"

June 14: He Constantly Abides

***For the Lord will not forsake his people for his great name's sake;
because it hath pleased the Lord to make you his people.***

(1 Samuel 12:22)

God's choice of His people is the reason for His abiding by them and not forsaking them. He chose them for His love, and He loves them for His choice. His own good pleasure is the source of their election, and His election is the reason for the continuance of His pleasure in them. It would dishonor His great name for Him to forsake them, since it would either show that He made an error in His choice or that He was fickle in His love. God's love has this glory, that it never changes, and this glory He will never tarnish.

By all the memories of the Lord's former lovingkindnesses let us rest assured that He will not forsake us. He who has gone so far as to make us His people will not undo the creation of His grace. He has not wrought such wonders for us that He might leave us after all. His Son Jesus has died for us, and we may be sure that He has not died in vain. Can He forsake those for whom He shed His blood? Because He has hitherto taken pleasure in choosing and in saving us, it will be His pleasure still to bless us. Our Lord Jesus is no changeable lover. Having loved His own, He loves them to the end.

June 15: Home Blessings Extended

***The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion:
and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life.
(Psalm 128:5)***

This is a promise to the God-fearing man who walks in the ways of holiness with earnest heed. He shall have domestic blessedness; his wife and children shall be a source of great home happiness. But then as a member of the church he desires to see the cause prosper, for he is as much concerned for the Lord's house as for his own. When the Lord builds our house, it is but fitting that we should desire to see the Lord's house builded. Our goods are not truly good unless we promote by them the good of the Lord's chosen church.

Yes, you shall get a blessing when you go up to the assemblies of Zion; you shall be instructed, enlivened, and comforted, where prayer and praise ascend and testimony is borne to the great Sacrifice. "The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion."

Nor shall you alone be profited; the church itself shall prosper; believers shall be multiplied, and their holy work shall be crowned with success. Certain gracious men have this promise fulfilled to them as long as they live. Alas! when they die the cause often flags. Let us be among those who bring good things to Jerusalem all their days. Lord, of Thy mercy make us such! Amen.

June 16: Possess, Not Only Profess

***For whosoever hath, to him shall be given,
and he shall have more abundance.***

(Matthew 13:12)

When the Lord has given to a man much grace, He will give him more. A little faith is a nest egg; more faith will come to it. But then it must not be seeming faith, but real and true. What a necessity is laid upon us to make sure work in religion and not to profess much, and possess nothing! For one of these days the very profession will be taken from us, if that be all we have. The threatening is as true as the promise.

Blessed be the Lord, it is His way when He has once made a beginning to go on bestowing the graces of His Spirit, till He who had but little, and yet truly had that little, is made to have abundance. Oh, for that abundance! Abundance of grace is a thing to be coveted, It would be well to know much but better to love much. It would be delightful to have abundance of skill to serve God but better still to have abundance of faith to trust in the Lord for skill and everything.

Lord, since Thou hast given me a sense of sin, deepen my hatred of evil. Since Thou hast caused me to trust Jesus, raise my faith to full assurance. Since Thou hast made me to love Thee, cause me to be carried away with vehement affection for Thee!

June 17: Our Field of Battle

*For the Lord your God is he that goeth with you,
to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.*

(Deuteronomy 20:4)

We have no enemies but the enemies of God. Our fights are not against men but against spiritual wickednesses. We war with the devil and the blasphemy and error and despair which he brings into the field of battle. We fight with all the armies of sin—impurity, drunkenness, oppression, infidelity, and ungodliness. With these we contend earnestly, but not with sword or spear; the weapons of our warfare are not carnal.

Jehovah, our God, abhors everything which is evil, and, therefore, He goeth with us to fight for us in this crusade. He will save us, and He will give us grace to war a good warfare and win the victory. We may depend upon it that if we are on God's side God is on our side. With such an august ally the conflict is never in the least degree doubtful. It is not that truth is mighty and must prevail but that might lies with the Father who is almighty, with Jesus who has all power in heaven and in earth, and with the Holy Spirit who worketh His will among men.

Soldiers of Christ, gird on your armor. Strike home in the name of the God of holiness, and by faith grasp His salvation. Let not this day pass without striking a blow for Jesus and holiness.

June 18: God Himself Shall Work

***Now will I rise, saith the Lord; now will I be exalted;
now will I lift up myself. (Isaiah 33:10)***

When the spoilers had made the land as waste as if devoured by locusts, and the warriors who had defended the country sat down and wept like women, then the Lord came to the rescue. When travelers ceased from the roads to Zion, and Bashan and Carmel were as vineyards from which the fruit has failed, then the Lord arose. God is exalted in the midst of an afflicted people, for they seek His face and trust Him. He is still more exalted when in answer to their cries He lifts up Himself to deliver them and overthrow their enemies.

Is it a day of sorrow with us? Let us expect to see the Lord glorified in our deliverance. Are we drawn out in fervent prayer? Do we cry day and night unto Him? Then the set time for His grace is near. God will lift up Himself at the right season. He will arise when it will be most for the display of His glory. We wish for His glory more than we long for our own deliverance. Let the Lord be exalted, and our chief desire is obtained.

Lord, help us in such a way that we may see that Thou Thyself art working. May we magnify Thee in our inmost souls. Make all around us to see how good and great a God Thou art.

June 19: A Sound Heart

***Let my heart be sound in thy statutes:
that I be not ashamed.
(Psalm 119:80)***

We may regard this inspired prayer as containing within itself the assurance that those who keep close to the Word of God shall never have cause to be ashamed of doing so.

See, the prayer is for soundness of heart. A sound creed is good, a sound judgment concerning it is better, but a sound heart toward the truth is best of all. We must love the truth, feel the truth, and obey the truth, otherwise we are not truly sound in God's statutes. Are there many in these evil days who are sound? Oh, that the writer and the reader may be two of this sort!

Many will be ashamed in the last great day, when all disputes will be decided. Then they will see the folly of their inventions and be filled with remorse because of their proud infidelity and willful defiance of the Lord; but he who believed what the Lord taught and did what the Lord commanded will stand forth justified in what he did. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun. Men much slandered and abused shall find their shame turned into glory in that day.

Let us pray the prayer of our text, and we may be sure that its promise will be fulfilled to us. If the Lord makes us sound, He will keep us safe.

June 20: The Lord Our Companion

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. (Psalm 23:4)

Sweet are these words in describing a deathbed assurance. How many have repeated them in their last hours with intense delight!

But the verse is equally applicable to agonies of spirit in the midst of life. Some of us, like Paul, die daily through a tendency to gloom of soul. Bunyan puts the Valley of the Shadow of Death far earlier in the pilgrimage than the river which rolls at the foot of the celestial hills. We have some of us traversed the dark and dreadful defile of "the shadow of death" several times, and we can bear witness that the Lord alone enabled us to bear up amid its wild thought, its mysterious horrors, its terrible depressions. The Lord has sustained us and kept us above all real fear of evil, even when our spirit has been overwhelmed. We have been pressed and oppressed, but yet we have lived, for we have felt the presence of the Great Shepherd and have been confident that His crook would prevent the foe from giving us any deadly wound.

Should the present time be one darkened by the raven wings of a great sorrow, let us glorify God by a peaceful trust in Him.

June 21: A Woman's War

The Lord shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman.

(Judges 4:9)

Rather an unusual text, but there may be souls in the world that may have faith enough to grasp it. Barak, the man, though called to the war, had little stomach for the fight unless Deborah would go with him, and so the Lord determined to make it a woman's war. By this means He rebuked the slackness of the man, gained for Himself the more renown, and cast the more shame upon the enemies of His people.

The Lord can still use feeble instrumentalities. Why not me? He may use persons who are not commonly called to great public engagements. Why not you? The woman who slew the enemy of Israel was no Amazon but a wife who tarried in her tent. She was no orator but a woman who milked the cows and made butter. May not the Lord use any one of us to accomplish His purpose? Somebody may come to the house today, even as Sisera came to Jael's tent. Be it ours not to slay him, but to save him. Let us receive him with great kindness and then bring forth the blessed truth of salvation by the Lord Jesus, our great Substitute, and press home the command "Believe and live." Who knoweth but some stout-hearted sinner may be slain by the gospel today!

June 22: He with Us; We with Him

***The fear of the Lord prolongeth days:
but the years of the wicked shall be shortened.
(Proverbs 10:27)***

There is no doubt about it. The fear of the Lord leads to virtuous habits, and these prevent that waste of life which comes of sin and vice. The holy rest which springs out of faith in the Lord Jesus also greatly helps a man when he is ill. Every physician rejoices to have a patient whose mind is fully at ease. Worry kills, but confidence in God is like healing medicine.

We have therefore all the arrangements for long life, and if it be really for our good, we shall see a good old age and come to our graves as shocks of corn in their season. Let us not be overcome with sudden expectation of death the moment we have a finger-ache, but let us rather expect that we may have to work on through a considerable length of days.

And what if we should soon be called to the higher sphere? Certainly there would be nothing to deplore in such a summons but everything to rejoice in. Living or dying we are the Lord's. If we live, Jesus will be with us; if we die, we shall be with Jesus.

The truest lengthening of life is to live while we live, wasting no time but using every hour for the highest ends. So be it this day.

June 23: The Enemy Frustrated

***Therefore thus saith the Lord concerning the king of Assyria,
He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there,
nor come before it with shield, nor cast a bank against it. (2 Kings 19:32)***

Neither did Sennacherib molest the city. He had boasted loudly, but he could not carry out his threats. The Lord is able to stop the enemies of His people in the very act. When the lion has the lamb between his jaws, the great Shepherd of the sheep can rob him of his prey. Our extremity only provides an opportunity for a grander display of divine power and wisdom.

In the case before us, the terrible foe did not put in an appearance before the city which he thirsted to destroy. No annoying arrow could he shoot over the walls, and no besieging engines could he put to work to batter down the castles, and no banks could he cast up to shut in the inhabitants. Perhaps in our case also the Lord will prevent our adversaries from doing us the least harm. Certainly He can alter their intentions or render their designs so abortive that they will gladly forego them. Let us trust in the Lord and keep His way, and He will take care of us. Yea, He will fill us with wondering praise as we see the perfection of His deliverance.

Let us not fear the enemy till he actually comes, and then let us trust in the Lord.

June 24: The Lord's "Much More"

And Amaziah said to the man of God, But what shall we do for the hundred talents which I have given to the army of Israel? And the man of God answered, The Lord is able to give thee much more than this. (2 Chronicles 25:9)

If you have made a mistake, bear the loss of it; but do not act contrary to the will of the Lord. The Lord can give you much more than you are likely to lose; and if He does not, will you begin bargaining and chaffering with God. The king of Judah had hired an army from idolatrous Israel, and he was commanded to send home the fighting men because the Lord was not with them. He was willing to send away the host, only he grudged paying the hundred talents for nothing. Oh, for shame! If the Lord will give the victory without the hirelings, surely it was a good bargain to pay their wages and to be rid of them.

Be willing to lose money for conscience' sake, for peace's sake, for Christ's sake. Rest assured that losses for the Lord are not losses. Even in this life they are more than recompensed: in some cases the Lord prevents any loss from happening. As to our immortal life, what we lose for Jesus is invested in heaven. Fret not at apparent disaster but listen to the whisper, "The Lord is able to give thee much more than this."

June 25: A Staircase to Heaven

***And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you,
Hereafter ye shall see heaven open,***

and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man. (John 1:51)

Yes, to our faith this sight is plain even at this day. We do see heaven opened. Jesus Himself has opened that kingdom to all believers. We gaze into the place of mystery and glory, for He has revealed it to us. We shall enter it soon, for He is the way.

Now we see the explanation of Jacob's ladder. Between earth and heaven there is a holy commerce; prayer ascends, and answers come down by the way of Jesus, the Mediator. We see this ladder when we see our Lord. In Him a stairway of light now furnishes a clear passage to the throne of the Most High. Let us use it and send up by it the messengers of our prayers. We shall live the angelic life ourselves if we run up to heaven in intercession, lay hold upon the blessings of the covenant, and then descend again to scatter those gifts among the sons of men.

This choice sight which Jacob only saw in a dream will turn into a bright reality. This very day we will be up and down the ladder each hour: climbing in communion and coming down in labor to save our fellowmen. This is Thy promise, O Lord Jesus; let us joyfully see it fulfilled.

June 26: It Will Not Be Long

*Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts:
for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. (James 5:8)*

The last word in the Canticle of love is, "Make haste, my beloved," and among the last words of the Apocalypse we read, "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come"; to which the heavenly Bridegroom answers, "Surely I come quickly." Love longs for the glorious appearing of the Lord and enjoys this sweet promise—"The coming of the Lord draweth nigh." This stays our minds as to the future. We look out with hope through this window.

This sacred "window of agate" lets in a flood of light upon the present and puts us into fine condition for immediate work or suffering. Are we tired? Then the nearness of our joy whispers patience. Are we growing weary because we do not see the harvest of our seed-sowing? Again this glorious truth cries to us, "Be patient." Do our multiplied temptations cause us in the least to waver? Then the assurance that before long the Lord will be here preaches to us from this text, "Stablish your hearts." Be firm, be stable, be constant, "stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." Soon will you hear the silver trumpet which announces the coming of your King. Be not in the least afraid. Hold the fort, for He is coming; yea, He may appear this very day.

June 27: Thank Him; Dwell Acceptably

***Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto thy name:
the upright shall dwell in thy presence. (Psalm 140:13)***

Oh, that my heart may be upright, that I may always be able to bless the name of the Lord! He is so good to those that be good, that I would fain be among them and feel myself full of thankfulness every day. Perhaps, for a moment, the righteous are staggered when their integrity results in severe trial; but assuredly the day shall come when they shall bless their God that they did not yield to evil suggestions and adopt a shifty policy. In the long run true men will thank the God of the right for leading them by a right way. Oh, that I may be among them!

What a promise is implied in this second clause, "The upright shall dwell in thy presence!" They shall stand accepted where others appear only to be condemned. They shall be the courtiers of the great King, indulged with audience whensoever they desire it. They shall be favored ones upon whom Jehovah smiles and with whom He graciously communes. Lord, I covet this high honor, this precious privilege. It will be heaven on earth to me to enjoy it. Make me in all things upright, that I may today and tomorrow and every day stand in Thy heavenly presence. Then will I give thanks unto Thy name evermore. Amen.

June 28: One Look from the Lord!

And the Lord looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee? (Judges 6:14)

What a look was that which the Lord gave to Gideon! He looked him out of his discouragement into a holy bravery. If our look to the Lord saves us, what will not His look at us do? Lord, look on me this day and nerve me for its duties and conflicts.

What a word was this which Jehovah spoke to Gideon! "Go." He must not hesitate. He might have answered, "What, go in all this weakness?" But the Lord put that word out of court by saying, "Go in this thy might." The Lord had looked might into him, and he had now nothing to do but to use it and save Israel by smiting the Midianites. It may be that the Lord has more to do by me than I ever dreamed of. If He has looked upon me, He has made me strong. Let me by faith exercise the power with which He has entrusted me. He never bids me "idle away my time in this my might." Far from it. I must "go" because He strengthens me. What a question is that which the Lord puts to me even as He put it to Gideon! "Have not I sent thee!" Yes, Lord, Thou hast sent me, and I will go in Thy strength. At Thy command I go, and, going, I am assured that Thou wilt conquer by me.

June 29: Invitation to Pray

***Call unto me, and I will answer thee,
and shew thee great and mighty things,
which thou knowest not. (Jeremiah 33:3)***

God encourages us to pray. They tell us that prayer is a pious exercise which has no influence except upon the mind engaged in it. We know better. Our experience gives the lie a thousand times over to this infidel assertion. Here Jehovah, the living God, distinctly promises to answer the prayer of His servant. Let us call upon Him again and admit no doubt upon the question of His hearing us and answering us. He that made the ear, shall He not hear? He that gave parents a love to their children, will He not listen to the cries of His own sons and daughters!

God will answer His pleading people in their anguish. He has wonders in store for them. What they have never seen, heard of, or dreamed of, He will do for them. He will invent new blessings if needful. He will ransack sea and land to feed them: He will send every angel out of heaven to succor them if their distress requires it. He will astound us with His grace and make us feel that it was never before done in this fashion. All He asks of us is that we will call upon Him. He cannot ask less of us. Let us cheerfully render Him our prayers at once.

June 30: Back, Then Forward

Nevertheless I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant. (Ezekiel 16:60)

Notwithstanding our sins, the Lord is still faithful in His love to us. He looks back. See how He remembers those early days of ours when He took us into covenant with Himself, and we gave ourselves over to Him. Happy days those! The Lord does not twit us with them and charge us with being insincere. No, He looks rather to His covenant with us than to our covenant with Him. There was no hypocrisy in that sacred compact, on His part, at any rate. How gracious is the Lord thus to look back in love!

He looks forward also. He is resolved that the covenant shall not fail. If we do not stand to it, He does. He solemnly declares, "I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant." He has no mind to draw back from His promises. Blessed be His name, He sees the sacred seal, "the blood of the everlasting covenant," and He remembers our Surety, in whom He ratified that covenant, even His own dear Son; and therefore He rests in His covenant engagements. "He abideth faithful; he cannot deny himself."

O Lord, lay this precious word upon my heart and help me to feed upon it all this day!

July 1: God with Us
God shall be with ye.
(Genesis 48:21)

Good old Jacob could no more be with Joseph, for his hour had come to die: but he left his son without anxiety, for he said with confidence, "God shall be with you." When our dearest relations or our most helpful friends are called home by death, we must console ourselves with the reflection that the Lord is not departed from us but lives for us and abides with us forever.

If God be with us, we are in ennobling company, even though we are poor and despised. If God be with us, we have all-sufficient strength, for nothing can be too hard for the Lord. If God be with us, we are always safe, for none can harm those who walk under His shadow. Oh, what a joy we have here! Not only is God with us, but He will be with us. With us as individuals; with us as families; with us as churches. Is not the very name of Jesus, Immanuel—God with us? Is not this the best of all, that God is with us? Let us be bravely diligent and joyously hopeful. Our cause must prosper, the truth must win, for the Lord is with those who are with Him. All this day may this sweet word be enjoyed by every believer who turns to "faith's checkbook." No greater happiness is possible.

July 2: Refreshing Sleep

So he giveth his beloved sleep. (Psalm 127:2)

Ours is not a life of anxious care but of happy faith. Our heavenly Father will supply the wants of His own children, and He knoweth what we have need of before we ask Him. We may therefore go to our beds at the proper hour and not wear ourselves out by sitting up late to plot, and plan, and contrive. If we have learned to rely upon our God, we shall not lie awake with fear gnawing at our hearts; but we shall leave our care with the Lord, our meditation of Him shall be sweet, and He will give us refreshing sleep.

To be the Lord's beloved is the highest possible honor, and he who has it may feel that ambition itself could desire no more, and therefore every selfish wish may go to sleep. What more is there even in heaven than the love of God? Rest, then, O soul, for thou hast all things. Yet we toss to and fro unless the Lord Himself gives us not only the reasons for rest but rest itself. Yea, He doth this. Jesus Himself is our peace, our rest, our all, On His bosom we sleep in perfect security, both in life and in death.

Sprinkled afresh with pardoning blood,

I lay me down to rest

As in the embraces of my God,

Or on my Saviour's breast.

July 3: A Guide All the Way

He will be my guide even unto death. (Psalm 48:14)

We need a guide. Sometimes we would give all that we have to be told exactly what to do and where to turn. We are willing to do right, but we do not know which one of two roads we are to follow. Oh, for a guide!

The Lord our God condescends to serve us as guide. He knows the way and will pilot us along it till we reach our journey's end in peace. Surely we do not desire more infallible direction. Let us place ourselves absolutely under His guidance, and we shall never miss our way. Let us make Him our God, and we shall find Him our guide. If we follow His law we shall not miss the right road of life, provided we first learn to lean upon Him in every step that we take.

Our comfort is that as He is our God forever and ever, He will never cease to be with us as our guide. "Even unto death" will He lead us, and then we shall dwell with Him eternally and go no more out forever. This promise of divine guidance involves lifelong security: salvation at once, guidance unto our last hour, and then endless blessedness. Should not each one seek this in youth, rejoice in it in middle life, and repose in it in old age? This day let us look up for guidance before we trust ourselves out-of-doors.

July 4: The Word, Necessary Food
***Man shall not live by bread alone,
but by every word that proceedeth
out of the mouth of God. (Matthew 4:4)***

If God so willed it we could live without bread, even as Jesus did for forty days; but we could not live without His Word. By that Word we were created, and by it alone can we be kept in being, for he sustaineth all things by the Word of His power. Bread is a second cause; the Lord Himself is the first source of our sustenance. He can work without the second cause as well as with it; and we must not tie Him down to one mode of operation. Let us not be too eager after the visible, but let us look to the invisible God. We have heard believers say that in deep poverty, when bread ran short, their appetites became short, too; and to others, when common supplies failed, the Lord has sent in unexpected help.

But we must have the Word of the Lord. With this alone we can withstand the devil. Take this from us, and our enemy will have us in his power, for we shall soon faint. Our souls need food, and there is none for them outside of the Word of the Lord. All the books and all the preachers in the world cannot furnish us a single meal: it is only the Word from the mouth of God that can fill the mouth of a believer. Lord, evermore give us this bread. We prize it above royal dainties.

July 5: Complete Deliverance

*But I will deliver thee in that day, saith the Lord;
and thou shalt not be given into the hand of the men of whom thou art afraid.
(Jeremiah 39:17)*

When the Lord's faithful ones are suffering for Him, they shall have sweet messages of love from Himself, and sometimes they shall have glad tidings for those who sympathize with them and help them. Ebed-melech was only a despised Ethiopian, but he was kind to Jeremiah, and so the Lord sent him this special promise by the mouth of His prophet. Let us be ever mindful of God's persecuted servants, and He will reward us.

Ebed-melech was to be delivered from the men whose vengeance he feared. He was a humble... man, but Jehovah would take care of him. Thousands were slain by the Chaldeans, but [he] could not be hurt. We, too, may be fearful of some great ones who are bitter against us; but if we have been faithful to the Lord's cause in the hour of persecution, He will be faithful to us. After all, what can a man do without the Lord's permission? He puts a bit into the mouth of rage and a bridle upon the head of power. Let us fear the Lord, and we shall have no one else to fear. No cup of cold water given to a despised prophet of God shall be without its reward; and if we stand up for Jesus, Jesus will stand up for us.

July 6: His Love; His Gift; His Son

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)

Of all the stars in the sky, the polestar is the most useful to the mariner. This text is a polestar, for it has guided more souls to salvation than any other Scripture. It is among promises what the Great Bear is among constellations.

Several words in it shine with peculiar brilliance. Here we have God's love with a "so" to it, which marks its measureless greatness. Then we have God's gift in all its freeness and greatness. This also is God's Son, that unique and priceless gift of a love which could never fully show itself till heaven's Only-begotten had been sent to live and die for men. These three points are full of light.

Then there is the simple requirement of believing, which graciously points to a way of salvation suitable for guilty men. This is backed by a wide description—"whosoever believeth in him." Many have found room in "whosoever" who would have felt themselves shut out by a narrower word. Then comes the great promise, that believers in Jesus shall not perish but have everlasting life. This is cheering to every man who feels that he is ready to perish and that he cannot save himself. We believe in the Lord Jesus, and we have eternal life.

July 7: A Mountain Choir

Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the Lord hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted. (Isaiah 49:13)

So sweet are the comforts of the Lord, that not only the saints themselves may sing of them, but even the heavens and the earth may take up the song. It takes something to make a mountain sing; and yet the prophet summons quite a choir of them. Lebanon, and Sirion, and the high hills of Bashan and Moab, He would set them all singing because of Jehovah's grace to His own Zion. May we not also make mountains of difficulty, and trial, and mystery, and labor become occasions for praise unto our God? "Break forth into singing, O mountains!"

This word of promise, that our God will have mercy upon His afflicted, has a whole peal of bells connected with it. Hear their music—"Sing!" "Be joyful!" "Break forth into singing." The Lord would have His people happy because of His unfailing love. He would not have us sad and doubtful; He claims from us the worship of believing hearts. He cannot fail us: why should we sigh or sulk as if He would do so? Oh, for a well-tuned harp! Oh, for voices like those of the cherubim before the throne!

July 8: An Angel Encampment

***The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him,
and delivereth them. (Psalm 34:7)***

We cannot see the angels, but it is enough that they can see us. There is one great Angel of the Covenant, whom not having seen we love, and His eye is always upon us both day and night. He has a host of holy ones under Him, and He causes these to be watchers over His saints and to guard them from all ill. If devils do us mischief, shining ones do us service.

Note that the Lord of angels does not come and go and pay us transient visits, but He and His armies encamp around us. The headquarters of the army of salvation is where those live whose trust is in the living God. This camp surrounds the faithful so that they cannot be attacked from any quarter unless the adversary can break through the entrenchments of the Lord of angels. We have a fixed protection, a permanent watch. Sentineled by the messengers of God, we shall not be surprised by sudden assaults nor swallowed up by overwhelming forces. Deliverance is promised in this verse—deliverance by the great Captain of our salvation, and that deliverance we shall obtain again and again until our warfare is accomplished and we exchange the field of conflict for the home of rest.

July 9: Faithful and Useful

Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me. (Psalm 101:6)

If David spoke thus, we may be sure that the Son of David will be of the same mind. Jesus looks out for faithful men, and He fixes His eyes upon them, to observe them, to bring them forward, to encourage them, and to reward them. Let no true-hearted man think that he is overlooked; the King Himself has His eye upon him.

There are two results of this royal notice. First we read, "That they may dwell with me." Jesus brings the faithful into His house, He sets them in His palace, He makes them His companions, He delights in their society. We must be true to our Lord, and He will then manifest Himself to us. When our faithfulness costs us most, it will be best rewarded; the more furiously men reject, the more joyfully will our Lord receive us.

Next, he says of the sincere man, "He shall serve me." Jesus will use for His own glory those who scorn the tricks of policy and are faithful to Himself, His Word, and His cross. These shall be in His royal retinue, the honored servants of His Majesty. Communion and usefulness are the wages of faithfulness. Lord make me faithful that I may dwell with Thee and serve Thee.

July 10: Love the Church

Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favor her, yea, the set time, is come. For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favor the dust thereof. (Psalm 102:13-14)

Yes, our prayers for the church will be heard. The set time is come. We love the prayer meetings, and the Sunday school, and all the services of the Lord's house. We are bound in heart to all the people of God and can truly say,

There's not a lamb in all thy flock

I would disdain to feed

There's not a foe before whose face

I'd fear thy cause to plead.

If this is the general feeling, we shall soon enjoy times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. Our assemblies will be filled, saints will be revived, and sinners will be converted. This can only come of the Lord's mercy; but it will come, and we are called upon to expect it. The time, the set time, is come. Let us bestir ourselves. Let us love every stone of our Zion, even though it may be fallen down. Let us treasure up the least truth, the least ordinance, the least believer, even though some may despise them as only so much dust. When we favor Zion, God is about to favor her. When we take pleasure in the Lord's work, the Lord Himself will take pleasure in it.

July 11: Never Separated from God

And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.

Believeth thou this? (John 11:26)

Yes, Lord, we believe it; we shall never die. Our soul may be separated from our body, and this is death of a kind; but our soul shall never be separated from God, which is the true death—the death which was threatened to sin—the death penalty which is the worst that can happen. We believe this most assuredly, for who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord? We are members of the Body of Christ; will Christ lose parts of His Body? We are married to Jesus; will He be bereaved and widowed? It is not possible. There is a life within us which is not capable of being divided from God: yea, and the Holy Spirit dwells within us, and how then can we die? Jesus, Himself, is our life, and therefore there is no dying for us, for He cannot die again, In Him we died unto sin once, and the capital sentence cannot a second time be executed. Now we live, and live forever. The reward of righteousness is life everlasting, and we have nothing less than the righteousness of God, and therefore can claim the very highest reward.

Living and believing, we believe that we shall live and enjoy. Wherefore we press forward with full assurance that our life is secure in our living Head.

July 12: Whom, When, How to Deliver

The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished. (2 Peter 2:9)

The godly are tempted and tried. That is not true faith which is never put to the test. But the godly are delivered out of their trials, and that not by chance, nor by secondary agencies, but by the Lord Himself. He personally undertakes the office of delivering those who trust Him. God loves the godly or godlike, and He makes a point of knowing where they are and how they fare.

Sometimes their way seems to be a labyrinth, and they cannot imagine how they are to escape from threatening danger. What they do not know, their Lord knows. He knows whom to deliver, and when to deliver, and how to deliver. He delivers in the way which is most beneficial to the godly, most crushing to the tempter, and most glorifying to Himself. We may leave the "how" with the Lord and be content to rejoice in the fact that He will, in some way or other, bring His own people through all the dangers, trials, and temptations for this mortal life to His own right hand in glory. This day it is not for me to pry into my Lord's secrets but patiently to wait His time, knowing this, that though I know nothing, my heavenly Father knows.

July 13: Implicit Trust

***For I will surely deliver thee, and thou shalt not fall by the sword,
but thy life shall be for a prey unto thee:
because thou hast put thy trust in me, saith the Lord. (Jeremiah 39:18)***

Behold the protecting power of trust in God. The great men of Jerusalem fell by the sword, but poor Ebed-melech was secure, for his confidence was in Jehovah. Where else should a man trust but in his Maker? We are foolish when we prefer the creature to the Creator. Oh, that we could in all things live by faith, then should we be delivered in all time of danger! No one ever did trust in the Lord in vain, and no one ever shall.

The Lord saith, "I will surely deliver thee," Mark the divine "surely." Whatever else may be uncertain, God's care of believers is sure. God Himself is the guardian of the gracious, Under His sacred wing there is safety even when every danger is abroad. Can we accept this promise as sure? Then in our present emergency we shall find that it stands fast. We hope to be delivered because we have friends, or because we are prudent, or because we can see hopeful signs; but none of these things are one-half so good as God's simple "because thou hast put thy trust in me." Dear reader, try this way, and, trying it, you will keep to it all your life. It is as sweet as it is sure.

July 14: Burdens Cast on Him

***Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee;
he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved. (Psalm 55:22)***

It is a heavy burden; roll it on Omnipotence. It is thy burden now, and it crushes thee; but when the Lord takes it, He will make nothing of it. If thou art called still to bear, "he will sustain thee." It will be on Him and not on thee. Thou wilt be so upheld under it that the burden will be a blessing. Bring the Lord into the matter, and thou wilt stand upright under that which in itself would bow thee down.

Our worst fear is lest our trial should drive us from the path of duty; but this the Lord will never suffer. If we are righteous before Him, He will not endure that our affliction should move us from our standing. In Jesus He accepts us as righteous, and in Jesus He will keep us so.

What about the present moment? Art thou going forth to this day's trial alone? Are thy poor shoulders again to be galled with the oppressive load? Be not so foolish. Tell the Lord all about thy grief and leave it with Him. Don't cast your burden down and then take it up again; but roll it on the Lord and leave it there. Then shalt thou walk at large, a joyful and unburdened believer, singing the praises of thy great Burden-bearer.

July 15: The Mourner Comforted

***Blessed are they that mourn:
for they shall be comforted.***

(Matthew 5:4)

By the valley of weeping we come to Zion. One would have thought mourning and being blessed were in opposition, but the infinitely wise Savior puts them together in this Beatitude. What He has joined together let no man put asunder. Mourning for sin—our own sins, and the sins of others—is the Lord's seal set upon His faithful ones. When the Spirit of grace is poured upon the house of David, or any other house, they shall mourn. By holy mourning we receive the best of our blessings, even as the rarest commodities come to us by water. Not only shall the mourner be blessed at some future day, but Christ pronounces him blessed even now.

The Holy Spirit will surely comfort those hearts which mourn for sin. They shall be comforted by the application of the blood of Jesus and by the cleansing power of the Holy Ghost. They shall be comforted as to the abounding sin of their city and of their age by the assurance that God will glorify Himself, however much men may rebel against Him. They shall be comforted with the expectation that they shall be wholly freed from sin before long and shall soon be taken up to dwell forever in the glorious presence of their Lord.

July 16: Word to Him Who Halts

I will save her that halteth.

(Zephaniah 3:19)

There are plenty of these lame ones, both male and female. You may meet "her that halteth" twenty times in an hour. They are in the right road and exceedingly anxious to run in it with diligence, but they are lame and make a sorry walk of it. On the heavenly road there are many cripples. It may be that they say in their hearts—What will become of us? Sin will overtake us; Satan will throw us down. Ready-to-halt is our name and our nature; the Lord can never make good soldiers of us, nor even nimble messengers to go on His errands. Well, well! He will save us, and that is no small thing. He says, "I will save her that halteth." In saving us He will greatly glorify Himself. Everybody will ask—How came this lame woman to run the race and win the crown? And then the praise will all be given to almighty grace.

Lord, though I halt in faith, in prayer, in praise, in service, and in patience, save me, I beseech Thee! Only Thou canst save such a cripple as I am. Lord, let me not perish because I am among the hindmost, but gather up by Thy grace the slowest of Thy pilgrims—even me. Behold He hath said it shall be so, and therefore, like Jacob, prevailing in prayer, I go forward though my sinew be shrunk.

July 17: Valiant for Truth

***The people that do know their God shall be strong,
and do exploits. (Daniel 11:32)***

"The Lord is a man of war, Jehovah is his name." Those who enlist under His banner shall have a Commander who will train them for the conflict and give them both vigor and valor. The times of which Daniel wrote were of the very worst kind, and then it was promised that the people of God would come out in their best colors: they would be strong and stout to confront the powerful adversary.

Oh, that we may know our God: His power, His faithfulness, His immutable love, and so may be ready to risk everything in His behalf. He is One whose character excites our enthusiasm and makes us willing to live and to die for Him. Oh, that we may know our God by familiar fellowship with Him; for then we shall become like Him and shall be prepared to stand up for truth and righteousness. He who comes forth fresh from beholding the face of God will never fear the face of man. If we dwell with Him, we shall catch the heroic spirit, and to us a world of enemies will be but as the drop of a bucket. A countless array of men, or even of devils, will seem as little to us as the nations are to God, and He counts them only as grasshoppers. Oh, to be valiant for truth in this day of falsehood.

July 18: Wilderness Communion

***I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness,
and speak comfortably unto her. (Hosea 2:14)***

The goodness of God sees us allured by sin, and it resolves to try upon us the more powerful allurements of love. Do we not remember when the Lover of our souls first cast a spell upon us and charmed us away from the fascinations of the world! He will do this again and again whenever He sees us likely to be ensnared by evil.

He promises to draw us apart, for there He can best deal with us, and this separated place is not to be a paradise, but a wilderness, since in such a place there will be nothing to take of our attention from our God. In the deserts of affliction the presence of the Lord becomes everything to us, and we prize His company beyond any value which we set upon it when we sat under our own vine and fig tree in the society of our fellows. Solitude and affliction bring more to themselves and to their heavenly Father than any other means.

When thus allured and secluded the Lord has choice things to say to us for our comfort. He "speaks to our heart," as the original has it. Oh, that at this we may have this promise explained in our experience! Allured by love, separated by trial, and comforted by the Spirit of truth, may we know the Lord and sing for joy!

July 19: Heavy-Duty Shoes

*Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days,
so shall thy strength be.
(Deuteronomy 33:25)*

Here are two things provided for the pilgrim: shoes and strength.

As for the shoes: they are very needful for traveling along rough ways and for trampling upon deadly foes. We shall not go barefoot—this would not be suitable for princes of the blood royal. Our shoes shall not be at all of the common sort, for they shall have soles of durable metal, which will not wear out even if the journey be long and difficult. We shall have protection proportionate to the necessities of the road and the battle. Wherefore let us march boldly on, fearing no harm even though we tread on serpents or set our foot upon the dragon himself.

As for the strength: it shall be continued as long as our days shall continue, and it shall be proportioned to the stress and burden of those days. The words are few, "as thy days thy strength," but the meaning is full. This day we may look for trial, and for work which will require energy, but we may just as confidently look for equal strength. This word given to Asher is given to us also who have faith wherewith to appropriate it. Let us rise to the holy boldness which it is calculated to create within the believing heart.

July 20: Looking for Him

Unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation. (Hebrews 9:28)

This is our hope. He to whom we have already looked as coming once to bear the sins of many will have another manifestation to the sons of men; this is a happy prospect in itself. But that second appearing has certain peculiar marks which glorify it exceedingly.

Our Lord will have ended the business of sin. He has so taken it away from His people and so effectually borne its penalty that He will have nothing to do with it at His second coming. He will present no sin offering, for He will have utterly put sin away.

Our Lord will then complete the salvation of His people. They will be finally and perfectly saved and will in every respect enjoy the fullness of that salvation. He comes not to bear the result of our transgressions but to bring the result of His obedience; not to remove our condemnation but to perfect our salvation.

Our Lord thus appears only to those who look for Him. He will not be seen in this character by men whose eyes are blinded with self and sin. To them He will be a terrible Judge and nothing more. We must first look to Him and then look for Him; and in both cases our look shall be life.

July 21: Shine as Many Stars

And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever. (Daniel 12:3)

Here is something to wake me up. This is worth living for. To be wise is a noble thing in itself: in this place it refers to a divine wisdom which only the Lord Himself can bestow. Oh, to know myself, my God, my Savior! May I be so divinely taught that I may carry into practice heavenly truth and live in the light of it! Is my life a wise one? Am I seeking that which I ought to seek? Am I living as I shall wish I had lived when I come to die? Only such wisdom can secure for me eternal brightness as of yonder sunlit skies.

To be a winner of souls is a glorious attainment. I had need to be wise if I am to turn even one to righteousness; much more if I am to turn many, Oh, for the knowledge of God, of men, of the Word, and of Christ, which will enable me to convert my fellowmen and to convert large numbers of them! I would give myself to this, and never rest till I accomplish it. This will be better than winning stars at court. This will make me a star, a shining star, a star shining forever and ever; yea, more, it will make me shine as many stars. My soul, arouse thyself. Lord, quicken me!

July 22: An Eternal Pledge

And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness; and thou shalt know the Lord. (Hosea 2:19-20)

Betrothment unto the Lord! What an honor and a joy! My soul, is Jesus indeed thine by His own condescending betrothal? Then, mark it is forever. He will never break His engagement, much less sue out a divorce against a soul joined to Himself in marriage bonds.

Three times the Lord says, "I will betroth thee." What words He heaps together to set forth the betrothal! Righteousness comes in to make the covenant legal; none can forbid these lawful bans. Judgment sanctions the alliance with its decree: none can see folly or error in the match. Lovingkindness warrants that this is a love union, for without love betrothal is bondage and not blessedness. Meanwhile, mercy smiles and even sings; yea, she multiplies herself into "mercies" because of the abounding grace of this holy union.

Faithfulness is the registrar and records the marriage, and the Holy Spirit says "Amen" to it as He promises to teach the betrothal heart all the sacred knowledge needful for its high destiny, What a promise!

July 23: Absolutely No Remembrance

And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.

(Hebrews 10:17)

According to this gracious covenant the Lord treats His people as if they had never sinned. Practically, He forgets all their trespasses. Sins of all kinds He treats as if they had never been, as if they were quite erased from His memory. O miracle of grace! God here doth that which in certain aspects is impossible to Him. His mercy worketh miracles which far transcend all other miracles.

Our God ignores our sin now that the sacrifice of Jesus has ratified the covenant. We may rejoice in Him without fear that He will be provoked to anger against us because of our iniquities. See! He puts us among the children; He accepts us as righteous; He takes delight in us as if we were perfectly holy. He even puts us into places of trust; makes us guardians of His honor, trustees of the crown jewels, stewards of the gospel. He counts us worthy and gives us a ministry; this is the highest and most special proof that He does not remember our sins. Even when we forgive an enemy, we are very slow to trust him; we judge it to be imprudent so to do. But the Lord forgets our sins and treats us as if we had never erred. O my soul, what a promise is this! Believe it and be happy.

July 24: Perfect Purity

He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment.

(Revelation 3:5)

Warrior of the cross, fight on! Never rest till thy victory is complete, for thine eternal reward will prove worthy of a life of warfare.

See, here is perfect purity for thee! A few in Sardis kept their garments undefiled, and their recompense is to be spotless. Perfect holiness is the prize of our high calling; let us not miss it.

See, here is joy! Thou shalt wear holiday robes, such as men put on at wedding feasts; thou shalt be clothed with gladness and be made bright with rejoicing. Painful struggles shall end in peace of conscience and joy in the Lord.

See, here is victory! Thou shalt have thy triumph. Palm, and crown, and white robe shall be thy guerdon; thou shalt be treated as a conqueror and owned as such by the Lord Himself.

See, here is priestly array! Thou shalt stand before the Lord in such raiment as the sons of Aaron wore; thou shalt offer the sacrifices of thanksgiving and draw near unto the Lord with the incense of praise.

Who would not fight for a Lord who gives such large honors to the very least of His faithful servants? Who would not be clothed in a fool's coat for Christ's sake, seeing He will robe us with glory?

July 25: Nothing to Alarm Us

*But go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest,
and stand in thy lot at the end of the days. (Daniel 12:13)*

We cannot understand all the prophecies, but yet we regard them with pleasure and not with dismay. There can be nothing in the Father's decree which should justly alarm His child. Though the abomination of desolation be set up, yet the true believer shall not be defiled; rather shall he be purified, and made white, and tried. Though the earth be burned up, no smell of fire shall come upon the chosen. Amid the crash of matter and the wreck of worlds, the Lord Jehovah will preserve His own.

Calmly resolute in duty, brave in conflict, patient in suffering, let us go our way, keeping to our road, and neither swerving from it nor loitering in it. The end will come; let us go our way till it does.

Rest will be ours, All other things swing to and fro, but our foundation standeth sure. God rests in His love, and, therefore, we rest in it. Our peace is, and ever shall be, like a river. A lot in the heavenly Canaan is ours, and we shall stand in it, come what may. The God of Daniel will give a worthy portion to all who dare to be decided for truth and holiness as Daniel was. No den of lions shall deprive us of our sure inheritance.

July 26: A Change of Name

And it shall be at that day, saith the Lord, that thou shalt call me Ishi; and shalt call me no more Baali; for I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name. (Hosea 2:16-17)

That day has come. We view our God no more as Baal, our tyrant lord and mighty master, for we are not under law but under grace. We now think of Jehovah, our God, as our Ishi, our beloved husband, our lord in love, our next-of-kin in bonds of sacred relationship. We do not serve Him less obediently, but we serve Him for a higher and more endearing reason. We no longer tremble under His lash but rejoice in His love. The slave is changed into a child and the task into a pleasure.

Is it so with thee, dear reader? Has grace cast out slavish fear and implanted filial love? How happy are we in such an experience! Now we call the Lord's day a delight, and worship is never a weariness. Prayer is now a privilege, and praise is a holiday. To obey is heaven; to give to the cause of God is a banquet. Thus have all things become new. Our mouth is filled with singing and our heart with music. Blessed be our heavenly Ishi forever and ever.

July 27: More than Mere Words

I will give you the sure mercies of David. (Acts 13:34)

Nothing of man is sure; but everything of God is so. Especially are covenant mercies sure mercies, even as David said "an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure."

We are sure that the Lord meant His mercy. He did not speak mere words: there is substance and truth in every one of His promises. His mercies are mercies indeed. Even if a promise seems as if it must drop through by reason of death, yet it never shall, for the good Lord will make good His word.

We are sure that the Lord will bestow promised mercies on all His covenanted ones. They shall come in due course to all the chosen of the Lord. They are sure to all the seed, from the least of them unto the greatest of them. We are sure that the Lord will continue His mercies to His own people. He does not give and take. What He has granted us is the token of much more. That which we have not yet received is as sure as that which has already come; therefore, let us wait before the Lord and be still. There is no justifiable reason for the least doubt. God's love, and word, and faithfulness are sure. Many things are questionable, but of the Lord we sing—

For his mercies shall endure

Ever faithful, ever sure.

July 28: Bow Down; Be Lifted Up

***Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God,
that he may exalt you in due time. (1 Peter 5:6)***

This is tantamount to a promise: if we will bow down, the Lord will lift us up. Humility leads to honor; submission is the way to exaltation. That same hand of God which presses us down is waiting to raise us up when we are prepared to bear the blessing. We stoop to conquer. Many cringe before men and yet miss the patronage they crave; but he that humbles himself under the hand of God shall not fail to be enriched, uplifted, sustained, and comforted by the ever-gracious One. It is a habit of Jehovah to cast down the proud and lift up the lowly.

Yet there is a time for the Lord's working. We ought now to humble ourselves, even at this present moment; and we are bound to keep on doing so whether the Lord lays His afflicting hand upon us or not. When the Lord smites, it is our special duty to accept the chastisement with profound submission. But as for the Lord's exaltation of us, that can only come "in due time," and God is the best judge of that day and hour. Do we cry out impatiently for the blessing? Would we wish for untimely honor? What are we at? Surely we are not truly humbled, or we should wait with quiet submission. So let us do.

July 29: He Routs Our Enemy
He hath cast out thine enemy.
(Zephaniah 3:15)

What a casting out was that! Satan has lost his throne in our nature even as he lost his seat in heaven. Our Lord Jesus has destroyed the enemy's reigning power over us. He may worry us, but he cannot claim us as his own. His bonds are no longer upon our spirits: the Son has made us free, and we are free indeed.

Still is the archenemy the accuser of the brethren; but even from this position our Lord has driven him. Our Advocate silences our accuser. The Lord rebukes our enemies and pleads the causes of our soul, so that no harm comes of all the devil's revilings.

As a tempter, the evil spirit still assails us and insinuates himself into our minds; but thence also is he cast out as to his former preeminence. He wriggles about like a serpent, but he cannot rule like a sovereign. He hurls in blasphemous thoughts when he has opportunity; but what a relief it is when he is told to be quiet and is made to slink off like a whipped cur! Lord, do this for any who are at this time worried and wearied by his barkings. Cast out their enemy, and be Thou glorious in their eyes. Thou hast cast him down; Lord, cast him out. Oh, that Thou wouldst banish him from the world!

July 30: Promise of Future Meeting

I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice.

(John 16:22)

Surely He will come a second time, and then, when He sees us and we see Him, there will be rejoicings indeed. Oh, for that joyous return! But this promise is being daily fulfilled in another sense. Our gracious Lord has many "again" in His dealings with us. He gave us pardon, and He sees us again and repeats the absolving word as fresh sins cause us grief. He has revealed to us our acceptance before God, and when our faith in that blessing grows a little dim, He comes to us again and again and says, "Peace be unto you," and our hearts are glad.

Beloved, all our past mercies are tokens of future mercies. If Jesus has been with us, He will see us again. Look upon no former favor as a dead and buried thing, to be mourned over; but regard it as a seed sown, which will grow, and push its head up from the dust, and cry, "I will see you again." Are the times dark because Jesus is not with us as He used to be? Let us pluck up courage; for He will not be long away. His feet are as those of a roe or young hart, and they will soon bring Him to us. Wherefore let us begin to be joyous, since He saith to us even now, "I will see you again."

July 31: An Appeal; Deliverance

*And call upon me in the day of trouble:
I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.
(Psalm 50:15)*

This is a promise indeed!

Here is an urgent occasion—"the day of trouble." It is dark at noon on such a day, and every hour seems blacker than the one which came before it. Then is this promise in season: it is written for the cloudy day.

Here is condescending advice, "Call upon me." We ought not to need the exhortation: it should be our constant habit all the day and every day. What a mercy to have liberty to call upon God! What wisdom to make good use of it! How foolish to go running about to men! The Lord invites us to lay our case before Him, and surely we will not hesitate to do so.

Here is reassuring encouragement: "I will deliver thee." Whatever the trouble may be, the Lord makes no exceptions but promises full, sure, happy deliverance. He will Himself work out our deliverance by His own hand. We believe it, and the Lord honors faith.

Here is an ultimate result: "Thou shalt glorify me." Ah, that we will do most abundantly. When He has delivered us we will loudly praise Him; and as He is sure to do it, let us begin to glorify Him at once.

August 1: Covenant Reaches Children

And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. (Genesis 17:7)

O Lord, Thou hast made a covenant with me, Thy servant, in Christ Jesus my Lord; and now, I beseech Thee, let my children be included in its gracious provisions. Permit me to believe this promise as made to me as well as to Abraham. I know that my children are born in sin and shapen in iniquity, even as those of other men; therefore, I ask nothing on the ground of their birth, for well I know that "that which is born of the flesh is flesh" and nothing more. Lord, make them to be born under Thy covenant of grace by Thy Holy Spirit!

I pray for my descendants throughout all generations. Be Thou their God as Thou art mine. My highest honor is that Thou hast permitted me to serve Thee; may my offspring serve Thee in all years to come. O God of Abraham, be the God of his Isaac! O God of Hannah, accept her Samuel!

If, Lord, Thou hast favored me in my family, I pray Thee remember other households of Thy people which remain unblest. Be the God of all the families of Israel. Let not one of those who fear Thy name be tried with a godless and wicked household, for Thy Son Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

August 2: Speak What He Teaches

***Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth,
and teach thee what thou shalt say.***

(Exodus 4:12)

Many a true servant of the Lord is slow of speech, and when called upon to plead for his Lord, he is in great confusion lest he should spoil a good cause by his bad advocacy. In such a case it is well to remember that the Lord made the tongue which is so slow, and we must take care that we do not blame our maker. It may be that a slow tongue is not so great an evil as a fast one, and fewness of words may be more of a blessing than floods of verbiage. It is also quite certain that real saving power does not lie in human rhetoric, with its tropes, and pretty phrases, and grand displays. Lack of fluency is not so great a lack as it looks.

If God be with our mouth, and with our mind, we shall have something better than the sounding brass of eloquence or the tinkling cymbal of persuasion. God's teaching is wisdom; His presence is power. Pharaoh had more reason to be afraid of stammering Moses than of the most fluent talker in Egypt; for what he said had power in it; he spoke plagues and deaths. If the Lord be with us in our natural weakness we shall be girt with supernatural power. Therefore, let us speak for Jesus boldly, as we ought to speak.

August 3: The Right to Holy Things

But if the priest buy any soul with his money, he shall eat of it, and he that is born in his house: they shall eat of his meat. (Leviticus 22:11)

Strangers, sojourners, and servants upon hire were not to eat of holy things. It is so in spiritual matters still. But two classes were free at the sacred table, those who were bought with the priest's money and those who were born into the priest's house.

Bought and born, these were the two indisputable proofs of a right to holy things.

Bought. Our great High Priest has bought with a price all those who put their trust in Him. They are His absolute property—altogether the Lord's. Not for what they are in themselves, but for their owner's sake they are admitted into the same privileges which He Himself enjoys, and "they shall eat of his meat." He has meat to eat which worldlings know not of. "Because ye belong to Christ," therefore shall ye share with your Lord.

Born. This is an equally sure way to privilege. If born in the Priest's house we take our place with the rest of the family. Regeneration makes us fellow-heirs and of the same body, and, therefore, the peace, the joy, the glory, which the Father has given to Christ, Christ has given to us. Redemption and regeneration have given us a double claim to the divine permit of this promise.

August 4: He Blesses and Keeps

The Lord bless thee, and keep thee. (Numbers 6:24)

This first clause of the high priest's benediction is substantially a promise. That blessing which our great High Priest pronounces upon us is sure to come, for He speaks the mind of God.

What a joy to abide under the divine blessing! This puts a gracious flavor into all things. If we are blessed, then all our possessions and enjoyments are blessed; yea, our losses and crosses and even our disappointments are blessed. God's blessing is deep, emphatic, effectual. A man's blessing may begin and end in words, but the blessing of the Lord makes rich and sanctifies. The best wish we can have for our dearest friend is not "may prosperity attend thee," but "the Lord bless thee."

It is equally a delightful thing to be kept of God; kept by Him, kept near Him, kept in Him. They are kept indeed whom God keeps; they are preserved from evil; they are reserved unto boundless happiness. God's keeping goes with His blessing, to establish it and cause it to endure.

The author of this little book desires that the rich blessing and sure keeping here pronounced may come upon every reader who may at this moment be looking at these lines. Please breathe the text to God as a prayer for His servants.

August 5: Law in the Heart

***The law of his God is in his heart;
none of his steps shall slide. (Psalm 37:31)***

Put the law into the heart, and the whole man is right. This is where the law should be; for then it lies, like the tables of stone in the ark, in the place appointed for it. In the head it puzzles, on the back it burdens, in the heart it upholds.

What a choice word is here used, "the law of his God"! When we know the Lord as our own God His law becomes liberty to us. God with us in covenant makes us eager to obey His will and walk in His commands. Is the precept my Father's precept? Then I delight in it.

We are here guaranteed that obedient-hearted man shall be sustained in every step that he takes. He will do that which is right, and he shall therefore do that which is wise. Holy action is always the most prudent, though it may not at the time seem to be so. We are moving along the great high road of God's providence and grace when we keep to the way of His law. The Word of God has never misled a single soul yet; its plain directions to walk humbly, justly, lovingly, and in the fear of the Lord are as much words of wisdom to make our way prosperous as rules of holiness to keep our garments clean. He walks surely who walks righteously.

August 6: Go; Take Your Property

Behold, the Lord thy God hath set the land before thee: go up and possess it, as the Lord God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; fear not, neither be discouraged. (Deuteronomy 1:21)

There is a heritage of grace which we ought to be bold enough to win for our possession. All that one believer has gained is free to another. We may be strong in faith, fervent in love, and abundant in labor; there is nothing to prevent it; let us go up and take possession. The sweetest experience and the brightest grace are as much for us as for any of our brethren; Jehovah has set it before us; no one can deny our right; let us go up and possess it in His name.

The world also lies before us to be conquered for the Lord Jesus. We are not to leave any country or corner of it unsubdued. That slum near our house is before us, not to baffle our endeavors, but to yield to them. We have only to summon courage enough to go forward, and we shall win dark homes and hard hearts for Jesus. Let us never leave the people in a lane or alley to die because we have not enough faith in Jesus and His gospel to go up and possess the land. No spot is too benighted, no person so profane as to be beyond the power of grace. Cowardice, begone! Faith marches to the conquest.

August 7: Rules for Prosperity

Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. (Joshua 1:7)

Yes, the Lord will be with us in our holy war, but He demands of us that we strictly follow His rules. Our victories will very much depend upon our obeying Him with all our heart, throwing strength and courage into the actions of our faith. If we are halfhearted we cannot expect more than half a blessing.

We must obey the Lord with care and thoughtfulness. "Observe to do" is the phrase used, and it is full of meaning. This is referred to every part of the divine will; we must obey with universal readiness. Our rule of conduct is "according to all the law." We may not pick and choose, but we must take the Lord's commands as they come, one and all. In all this we must go on with exactness and constancy. Ours is to be a straightforward course which bends neither to the right nor to the left. We are not to err by being more rigid than the law, nor turn out of levity to a more See and easy way. With such obedience there will come spiritual prosperity. O Lord, help us to see if it be not even so! We shall not test Thy promise in vain.

August 8: Confidence Not Misplaced

The Lord God will help me.

(Isaiah 50:7)

These are in prophecy the words of Messiah in the day of His obedience unto death, when He gave His back to the smiters and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. He was confident in divine support and trusted in Jehovah.

O my soul, thy sorrows are as the small dust of the balance compared with thy Lord's! Canst thou not believe that the Lord God will help thee? Thy Lord was in a peculiar position; for as the representative of sinful men—their substitute and sacrifice—it was needful that the Father should leave Him and cause Him to come under desertion of soul. No such necessity is laid upon thee: thou art not bound to cry, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" Did thy Savior even in such a case still rely upon God, and canst not thou? He died for thee and thus made it impossible that thou shouldst be left alone; wherefore, be of good cheer.

In this day's labors or trials say, "The Lord God will help me." Go forth boldly. Set your face like a flint and resolve that no faintness or shamefacedness shall come near you. If God helps, who can hinder? If you are sure of omnipotent aid, what can be too heavy for you? Begin the day joyously, and let no shade of doubt come between thee and the eternal sunshine.

August 9: Pruning for Fruit-Bearing

Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. (John 15:2)

This is a precious promise to one who lives for fruitfulness. At first it seems to wear a sharp aspect. Must the fruitful bough be pruned? Must the knife cut even the best and most useful? No doubt it is so, for very much of our Lord's purging work is done by means of afflictions of one kind or another. It is not the evil but the good who have the promise of tribulation in this life. But, then, the end makes more than full amends for the painful nature of the means. If we may bring forth more fruit for our Lord, we will not mind the pruning and the loss of leafage.

Still, purging is sometimes wrought by the Word apart from trial, and this takes away whatever appeared rough in the flavor of the promise. We shall by the Word be made more gracious and more useful. The Lord who has made us, in a measure, fruit-bearing, will operate upon us till we reach a far higher degree of fertility. Is not this a great joy? Truly there is more comfort in a promise of fruitfulness than if we had been warranted riches, or health, or honor.

Lord Jesus, speedily fulfill Thy gracious word to me and cause me to abound in fruit to Thy praise!

August 10: He Lowers to Raise

*The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up.
(1 Samuel 2:7)*

All my changes come from Him who never changes. If I had grown rich, I should have seen His hand in it, and I should have praised Him; let me equally see His hand if I am made poor, and let me as heartily praise Him. When we go down in the world, it is of the Lord, and so we may take it patiently: when we rise in the world, it is of the Lord, and we may accept it thankfully. In any case, the Lord hath done it, and it is well.

It seems that Jehovah's way is to lower those whom He means to raise and to strip those whom He intends to clothe. If it is His way, it is the wisest and best way. If I am now enduring the bringing low, I may well rejoice, because I see in it the preface to the lifting up. The more we are humbled by grace, the more we shall be exalted in glory. That impoverishment which will be overruled for our enrichment is to be welcomed.

O Lord, Thou has taken me down of late and made me feel my insignificance and sin. It is not a pleasant experience, but I pray Thee make it a profitable one to me. Oh, that Thou wouldst thus fit me to bear a greater weight of delight and of usefulness; and when I am ready for it, then grant it to me, for Christ's sake! Amen.

August 11: Waiting, Not Running

***Truly my soul waiteth upon God:
from him cometh my salvation.***

(Psalm 62:1)

Blessed posture! Waiting truly and only upon the Lord. Be this our condition all this day and every day. Waiting His leisure, waiting in His service, waiting in joyful expectation, waiting in prayer, and content. When the very soul thus waits, it is in the best and truest condition of a creature before his Creator, a servant before his Master, a child before his Father. We allow no dictation to God, nor complaining of Him; we will permit no petulance and no distrust. At the same time, we practice no running before the cloud and no seeking to others for aid: neither of these would be waiting upon God. God, and God alone, is the expectation of our hearts.

Blessed assurance! From Him salvation is coming; it is on the road. It will come from Him and from no one else. He shall have all the glory of it, for He alone can and will perform it. And He will perform it most surely in His own time and manner. He will save from doubt, and suffering, and slander, and distress. Though we see no sign of it as yet, we are satisfied to bide the Lord's will, for we have no suspicion of His love and faithfulness. He will make sure work of it before long, and we will praise Him at once for the coming mercy.

August 12: Light in Darkness

***For thou art my lamp, O Lord:
and the Lord will lighten my darkness.
(2 Samuel 22:29)***

Am I in the light? Then Thou, O Lord, art my lamp. Take Thee away and my joy would be gone; but as long as Thou art with me, I can do without the torches of time and the candles of created comfort. What a light the presence of God casts on all things! We heard of a lighthouse which could be seen for twenty miles, but our Jehovah is not only a God at hand, but far off is He seen, even in the enemy's country. O Lord, I am as happy as an angel when Thy love fills my heart. Thou art all my desire.

Am I in the dark? Then thou, O Lord, wilt lighten my darkness. Before long things will change. Affairs may grow more and more dreary and cloud may be piled upon cloud; but if it grow so dark that I cannot see my own hand, still I shall see the hand of the Lord. When I cannot find a light within me, or among my friends, or in the whole world, the Lord, who said, "Let there be light," and there was light, can say the same again. He will speak me into the sunshine yet. I shall not die but live. The day is already breaking. This sweet text shines like a morning star. I shall clap my hands for joy ere many hours are passed.

August 13: Before and During the Call

***It shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer;
and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.
(Isaiah 65:24)***

Quick work this! The Lord hears us before we call and often answers us in the same speedy manner. Foreseeing our needs and our prayers, He so arranges providence that before the need actually arises He has supplied it, before the trial assails us He has armed us against it. This is the promptitude of omniscience, and we have often seen it exercised. Before we dreamed of the affliction which was coming, the strong consolation which was to sustain us under it had arrived. What a prayer-answering God we have!

The second clause suggests the telephone. Though God be in heaven and we upon earth, yet He makes our word, like His own word, to travel very swiftly, When we pray aright we speak into the ear of God. Our gracious Mediator presents our petitions at once, and the great Father hears them and smiles upon them. Grand praying this! Who would not be much in prayer when he knows that he has the ear of the King of kings? This day I will pray in faith, not only believing that I shall be heard, but that I am heard; not only that I shall be answered, but that I have the answer already. Holy Spirit, help me in this!

August 14: Child Chastisement Not Forever

***And I will for this afflict the seed of David,
but not for ever.***

(1 Kings 11:39)

In the family of grace there is discipline, and that discipline is severe enough to make it an evil and a bitter thing to sin. Solomon, turned aside by his foreign wives, had set up other gods and grievously provoked the God of his father; therefore, ten parts out of twelve of the kingdom were rent away and set up as a rival state. This was a sore affliction to the house of David, and it came upon that dynasty distinctly from the hand of God, as the result of unholy conduct. The Lord will chasten His best beloved servants if they cease from full obedience to His laws: perhaps at this very hour such chastening is upon us. Let us humbly cry, "O Lord, show me wherefore thou contendest with me."

What a sweet saving clause is that—"but not for ever"! The punishment of sin is everlasting, but the fatherly chastisement of it in a child of God is but for a season. The sickness, the poverty, the depression of spirit, will pass away when they have had their intended effect. Remember, we are not under law but under grace. The rod may make us smart, but the sword shall not make us die. Our present grief is meant to bring us to repentance that we may not be destroyed with the wicked.

August 15: A Name Guarantee

And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son, (John 14:13)

It is not every believer who has yet learned to pray in Christ's name. To ask not only for His sake, but in His name, as authorized by Him, is a high order of prayer. We would not dare to ask for some things in that blessed name, for it would be a wretched profanation of it; but when the petition is so clearly right that we dare set the name of Jesus to it, then it must be granted.

Prayer is all the more sure to succeed because it is for the Father's glory through the Son. It glorifies His truth, His faithfulness, His power, His grace, The granting of prayer, when offered in the name of Jesus, reveals the Father's love to Him, and the honor which He has put upon Him. The glory of Jesus and of the Father are so wrapped up together that the grace which magnifies the one magnifies the other. The channel is made famous through the fullness of the fountain, and the fountain is honored through the channel by which it flows. If the answering of our prayers would dishonor our Lord, we would not pray; but since in this thing He is glorified, we will pray without ceasing in that dear name in which God and His people have a fellowship of delight.

August 16: Uncover and Confess Sin

***He that covereth his sins shall not prosper:
but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.
(Proverbs 28:13)***

Here is the way of mercy for a guilty and repenting sinner. He must cease from the habit of covering sin. This is attempted by falsehood, which denies sin; by hypocrisy, which conceals it; by boasting, which justifies it; and by loud profession, which tries to make amends for it.

The sinner's business is to confess and forsake. The two must go together. Confession must be honestly made to the Lord Himself, and it must include within itself acknowledgment of the wrong, sense of its evil, and abhorrence of it. We must not throw the fault upon others, nor blame circumstances, nor plead natural weakness. We must make a clean breast of it and plead guilty to the indictment. There can be no mercy till this is done.

Furthermore, we must forsake the evil; having owned our fault, we must disown all present and future intent to abide in it. We cannot remain in rebellion and yet dwell with the King's majesty. The habit of evil must be quitted, together with all places, companions, pursuits, and books which might lead us astray. Not for confession, nor for reformation, but in connection with them we find pardon by faith in the blood of Jesus.

August 17: Who Has the Majority?

And he answered, Fear not:

for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.

(2 Kings 6:16)

Horses and chariots and a great host shut up the prophet in Dothan. His young servant was alarmed. How could they escape from such a body of armed men? But the prophet had eyes which his servant had not, and he could see a greater host with far superior weapons guarding him from all harm. Horses of fire are mightier than horses of flesh, and chariots of fire are far preferable to chariots of iron.

Even so is it at this hour. The adversaries of truth are many, influential, learned, and crafty; and truth fares ill at their hands; and yet the man of God has no cause for trepidation. Agencies, seen and unseen, of the most potent kind, are on the side of righteousness. God has armies in ambush which will reveal themselves in the hour of need. The forces which are on the side of the good and the true far outweigh the powers of evil. Therefore, let us keep our spirits up, and walk with the gait of men who possess a cheering secret, which has lifted them above all fear. We are on the winning side. The battle may be sharp, but we know how it will end. Faith, having God with her, is in a clear majority: "They that be with us are more than they that be with them."

August 18: Seekers, Finders

If thou seek him, he will be found of thee.

(1 Chronicles 28:9)

We need our God; He is to be had for the seeking, and He will not deny Himself to any one of us if we personally seek His face. It is not if thou deserve Him, or purchase His favor, but merely if thou "seek" Him. Those who already know the Lord must go on seeking His face by prayer, by diligent service, and by holy gratitude: to such He will not refuse His favor and fellowship. Those who, as yet, have not known Him to their souls' rest should at once commence seeking and never cease till they find Him as their Savior, their Friend, their Father, and their God.

What strong assurance this promise gives to the seeker! "He that seeketh findeth." You, yes you, if you seek your God shall find Him. When you find Him you have found life, pardon, sanctification, preservation, and glory. Will you not seek, and seek on, since you shall not seek in vain? Dear friend, seek the Lord at once. Here is the place, and now is the time. Bend that stiff knee; yes, bend that stiffer neck, and cry out for God, for the living God. In the name of Jesus, seek cleansing and justification. You shall not be refused. Here is David's testimony to his son Solomon, and it is the writer's personal witness to the reader. Believe it and act upon it, for Christ's sake.

August 19: Reward for the Righteous

So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth. (Psalm 58:11)

God's judgments in this life are not always clearly to be seen, for in many cases one event happeneth alike to all. This is the state of probation, not of punishment or reward. Yet at times God works terrible things in righteousness, and even the careless are compelled to own His hand.

Even in this life righteousness has that kind of reward which it prefers above all others, namely, the smile of God, which creates a quiet conscience. Sometimes other recompenses follow, for God will be in no man's debt. But, at the same time, the chief reward of the righteous lies in the hereafter.

Meanwhile, on a large scale, we mark the presence of the great Ruler among the nations. He breaks in pieces oppressive thrones and punishes guilty peoples. No one can study the history of the rise and fall of empires without perceiving that there is a power which makes for righteousness and, in the end, brings iniquity before its bar and condemns it with unsparing justice. Sin shall not go unpunished, and goodness shall not remain unrewarded. The Judge of all the earth must do right. Therefore, let us fear before Him and no more dread the power of the wicked.

August 20: Deliverance Not Limited
***He shall deliver thee in six troubles:
yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee.***
(Job 5:19)

Eliphaz in this spoke the truth of God. We may have as many troubles as the workdays of the week, but the God who worked on those six days will work for us till our deliverance is complete. We shall rest with Him and in Him on our Sabbath. The rapid succession of trials is one of the sorest tests of faith. Before we have recovered from one blow it is followed by another and another till we are staggered. Still, the equally quick succession of deliverances is exceedingly cheering. New songs are rung out upon the anvil by the hammer of affliction, till we see in the spiritual world the antitype of "the Harmonious Blacksmith." Our confidence is that when the Lord makes our trials six, six they will be and no more.

It may be that we have no rest day, for seamen troubles come upon us. What then? "In seven there shall be no evil touch thee." Evil may roar at us, but it shall be kept at more than arm's length and shall not even touch us. Its hot breath may distress us, but its little finger cannot be laid upon us.

With our loins girt about us, we will meet the six or the seven troubles and leave fear to those who have no Father, no Savior, and no Sanctifier.

August 21: Night of Weeping; Joyous Day

***For his anger endureth but a moment;
in his favor is life: weeping may endure for a night,
but joy cometh in the morning. (Psalm 30:5)***

A moment under our Father's anger seems very long, and yet it is but a moment after all. If we grieve His Spirit, we cannot look for His smile; but He is a God ready to pardon, and He soon puts aside all remembrance of our faults. When we faint and are ready to die because of His frown, His favor puts new life into us.

This verse has another note of the semi-quaver kind. Our weeping night soon turns into joyous day. Brevity is the mark of mercy in the hour of the chastisement of believers. The Lord loves not to use the rod on His chosen; He gives a blow or two, and all is over; yea, and the life and the joy, which follow the anger and the weeping, more than make amends for the salutary sorrow.

Come, my heart, begin thy hallelujahs! Weep not all through the night, but wipe thine eyes in anticipation of the morning. These tears are dews which mean us as much good as the sunbeams of the morrow. Tears clear the eyes for the sight of God in His grace and make the vision of His favor more precious. A night of sorrow supplies those shades of the pictures by which the highlights are brought out with distinctness. All is well.

August 22: Wrath to God's Glory

***Surely the wrath of man shall raise thee:
the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.
(Psalm 76:10)***

Wicked men will be wrathful. Their anger we must endure as the badge of our calling, the token of our separation from them: if we were of the world, the world would love its own. Our comfort is that the wrath of man shall be made to redound to the glory of God. When in their wrath the wicked crucified the Son of God they were unwittingly fulfilling the divine purpose, and in a thousand cases the willfulness of the ungodly is doing the same. They think themselves free, but like convicts in chains they are unconsciously working out the decrees of the Almighty.

The devices of the wicked are overruled for their defeat. They act in a suicidal way and baffle their own plottings. Nothing will come of their wrath which can do us real harm. When they burned the martyrs, the smoke which blew from the stake sickened men of popery more than anything else.

Meanwhile, the Lord has a muzzle and a chain for bears. He restrains the more furious wrath of the enemy. He is like a miller who holds back the mass of the water in the stream, and what He does allow to flow He uses for the turning of His wheel. Let us not sigh, but sing. All is well, however hard the wind blows.

August 23: Love and Seek True Wisdom

***I love them that love me;
and those that seek me early shall find me.
(Proverbs 8:17)***

Wisdom loves her lovers and seeks her seekers. He is already wise who seeks to be wise, and he has almost found wisdom who diligently seeks her. What is true of wisdom in general is specially true of wisdom embodied in our Lord Jesus. Him we are to love and to seek, and in return we shall enjoy His love and find Himself.

Our business is to seek Jesus early in life. Happy are the young whose morning is spent with Jesus! It is never too soon to seek the Lord Jesus. Early seekers make certain finders. We should seek Him early by diligence. Thriving tradesmen are early risers, and thriving saints seek Jesus eagerly. Those who find Jesus to their enrichment give their hearts to seeking Him. We must seek Him first, and thus earliest. Above all things Jesus. Jesus first and nothing else even as a bad second.

The blessing is that He will be found. He reveals Himself more and more clearly to our search.... Happy men who seek One who, when He is found, remains with them forever, a treasure growingly precious to their hearts and understandings.

Lord Jesus, I have found Thee; be found of me to an unutterable degree of joyous satisfaction.

August 24: God Above Human Philosophy

***For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.
(1 Corinthians 1:19)***

This verse is a threatening so far as the worldly wise are concerned, but to the simple believer it is a promise. The professedly learned are forever trying to bring to nothing the faith of the humble believer, but they fail in their attempts. Their arguments break down, their theories fall under their own weight, their deep-laid plots discover themselves before their purpose is accomplished. The old gospel is not extinct yet, nor will it be while the Lord liveth. If it could have been exterminated, it would have perished from off the earth long ago.

We cannot destroy the wisdom of the wise, nor need we attempt it, for the work is in far better hands. The Lord Himself says, "I will," and He never resolves in vain. Twice does He in this verse declare His purpose, and we may rest assured that He will not turn aside from it.

What clean work the Lord makes of philosophy and "modern thought" when He puts His hand to it! He brings the fine appearance down to nothing; He utterly destroys the wood, hay, and stubble. It is written that so it shall be, and so shall it be. Lord, make short work of it. Amen, and amen.

August 25: Food and Rest

***I will feed my flock,
and I will cause them to lie down,
saith the Lord God. (Ezekiel 34:15)***

Under the divine shepherdry saints are fed to the full. Theirs is not a windy, unsatisfying mess of mere human "thought," but the Lord feeds them upon the solid, substantial truth of divine revelation. There is real nutriment for the soul in Scripture brought home to the heart by the Holy Spirit. Jesus Himself is the true life-sustaining Food of believers. Here our Great Shepherd promises that such sacred nourishment shall be given us by His own self. If, on the Lord's Day, our earthly shepherd is empty-handed, the Lord is not.

When filled with holy truth the mind rests. Those whom Jehovah feeds are at peace. No dog shall worry them, no wolf shall devour them, no restless propensities shall disturb them. They shall lie down and digest the food which they have enjoyed. The doctrines of grace are not only sustaining but consoling: in them we have the means for building up and lying down. If preachers do not give us rest, let us look to the Lord for it.

This day may the Lord cause us to feed in the pastures of the Word and make us to lie down in them. May no folly and no worry but meditation and peace mark this day.

August 26: He of Tender Conscience
I will judge between cattle and cattle.
(Ezekiel 34:22)

Some are fat and flourishing, and therefore they are unkind to the feeble. This is a grievous sin and causes much sorrow. Those thrustings with side and with shoulder, those pushings of the diseased with the horn, are a sad means of offense in the assemblies of professing believers. The Lord takes note of these proud and unkind deeds, and He is greatly angered by them, for He loves the weak.

Is the reader one of the despised? Is he a mourner in Zion and a marked man because of his tender conscience? Do his brethren judge him harshly? Let him not resent their conduct; above all let him not push and thrust in return. Let him leave the matter in the Lord's hands. He is the Judge. Why should we wish to intrude upon His office? He will decide much more righteously than we can. His time for judgment is the best, and we need not be in a hurry to hasten it on. Let the hard-hearted oppressor tremble. Even though he may ride roughshod over others with impunity for the present, all his proud speeches are noted, and for every one of them account must be given before the bar of the great Judge.

Patience, my soul! Patience! The Lord knoweth thy grief. Thy Jesus hath pity upon thee!

August 27: Choice Men

I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.

(Isaiah 48:10)

This has long been the motto fixed before our eye upon the wall of our bedroom, and in many ways it has also been written on our heart. It is no mean thing to be chosen of God. God's choice makes chosen men choice men. Better to be the elect of God than the elect of a whole nation. So eminent is this privilege, that whatever drawback may be joined to it we very joyfully accept it, even as the Jew ate the bitter herbs for the sake of the Paschal Lamb. We choose the furnace, since God chooses us in it.

We are chosen as an afflicted people and not as a prosperous people, chosen not in the palace but in the furnace. In the furnace beauty is marred, fashion is destroyed, strength is melted, glory is consumed, and yet here eternal love reveals its secrets and declares its choice. So has it been in our case. In times of severest trial God has made to us our calling and election plain, and we have made it sure: then have we chosen the Lord to be our God, and He has shown that we are assuredly His chosen.

Therefore, if today the furnace be heated seven times hotter, we will not dread it, for the glorious Son of God will walk with us amid the glowing coals.

August 28: Out of Any Circumstance

As for me, I will call upon God;

and the Lord shall save me.

(Psalm 55:16)

Yes, I must and will pray. What else can I do! What better can I do? Betrayed, forsaken, grieved, baffled, O my Lord, I will call upon Thee. My Ziklag is in ashes, and men speak of stoning me; but I encourage my heart in the Lord, who will bear me through this trial as He has borne me through so many others. Jehovah shall save me; I am sure He will, and I declare my faith.

The Lord and no one else shall save me. I desire no other helper and would not trust in an arm of flesh even if I could. I will cry to Him evening, and morning, and noon, and I will cry to no one else, for He is all sufficient.

How He will save me I cannot guess; but He will do it, I know. He will do it in the best and surest way, and He will do it in the largest, truest, and fullest sense. Out of this trouble and all future troubles the great I AM will bring me as surely as He lives; and when death comes and all the mysteries of eternity follow thereon, still will this be true: "the Lord shall save me." This shall be my song all through this autumn day. Is it not as a ripe apple from the tree of life? I will feed upon it. How sweet it is to my taste!

August 29: Plentiful Refreshment

Their soul shall be as a watered garden.

(Jeremiah 31:12)

Oh, to have one's soul under heavenly cultivation; no longer a wilderness but a garden of the Lord! Enclosed from the waste, walled around by grace, planted by instruction, visited by love, weeded by heavenly discipline, and guarded by divine power, one's favored soul is prepared to yield fruit unto the Lord.

But a garden may become parched for want of water, and then all its herbs decline and are ready to die. O my soul, how soon would this be the case were the Lord to leave thee! In the East, a garden without water soon ceases to be a garden at all: nothing can come to perfection, grow, or even live. When irrigation is kept up, the result is charming. Oh, to have one's soul watered by the Holy Spirit uniformly—every part of the garden having its own stream; plentifully—a sufficient refreshment coming to every tree and herb, however thirsty by nature it may be; continually—each hour bringing not only its heat, but its refreshment; wisely—each plant receiving just what it needs. In a garden you can see by the verdure where the water flows, and you can soon perceive when the Spirit of God comes.

O Lord, water me this day and cause me to yield Thee a full reward for Jesus' sake. Amen.

August 30: Solace, Security, Satisfaction

Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow. (2 Samuel 23:5)

This is not so much one promise as an aggregate of promises—a box of pearls. The covenant is the ark which contains all things.

These are the last words of David, but they may be mine today. Here is a sigh: things are not with me and mine as I could wish; there are trials, cares, and sins. These make the pillow hard.

Here is a solace—"He hath made with me an everlasting covenant." Jehovah has pledged Himself to me, and sealed the compact with the blood of Jesus. I am bound to my God and my God to me.

This brings into prominence a security, since this covenant is everlasting, well ordered, and sure. There is nothing to fear from the lapse of time, the failure of some forgotten point, or the natural uncertainty of things. The covenant is a rocky foundation to build on for life or for death.

David feels satisfaction: he wants no more for salvation or delectation. He is delivered, and he is delighted. The covenant is all a man can desire.

O my soul, turn thou this day to thy Lord Jesus, whom the great Lord has given to be a covenant to the people. Take Him to be thine all in all.

August 31: Divine, Ever-Living, Unchanging

But the word of the Lord endureth for ever.

And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

(1 Peter 1:25)

All human teaching and, indeed, all human beings shall pass away as the grass of the meadow; but we are here assured that the Word of the Lord is of a very different character, for it shall endure forever.

We have here a divine gospel; for what word can endure forever but that which is spoken by the eternal God?

We have here an ever-living gospel, as full of vitality as when it first came from the lips of God; as strong to convince and convert, to regenerate and console, to sustain and sanctify as ever it was in its first days of wonder-working.

We have an unchanging gospel which is not today green grass and tomorrow dry hay but always the abiding truth of the immutable Jehovah. Opinions alter, but truth certified by God can no more change than the God who uttered it.

Here, then, we have a gospel to rejoice in, a word of the Lord upon which we may lean all our weight. "For ever" includes life, death, judgment, and eternity. Glory be to God in Christ Jesus for everlasting consolation. Feed on the word today and all the days of thy life.

September 1: Abiding in Obedience, in Love

If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love. (John 15:10)

These things cannot be parted—abiding in obedience and abiding in the love of Jesus. A life under the rule of Christ can alone prove that we are the objects of our Lord's delight. We must keep our Lord's command if we would bask in His love. If we live in sin we cannot live in the love of Christ. Without the holiness which pleases God we cannot please Jesus. He who cares nothing for holiness knows nothing of the love of Jesus.

Conscious enjoyment of our Lord's love is a delicate thing. It is far more sensitive to sin and holiness than mercury is to cold and heat. When we are tender of heart and careful in thought, lip, and life to honor our Lord Jesus, then we receive tokens of His love without number. If we desire to perpetuate such bliss we must perpetuate holiness. The Lord Jesus will not hide His face from us unless we hide our face from Him. Sin makes the cloud which darkens our Sun: if we will be watchfully obedient and completely consecrated we may walk in the light, as God is in the light, and have as sure an abiding in the love of Jesus as Jesus has in the love of the Father. Here is a sweet promise with a solemn "if," Lord, let me have this "if" in my hand; for as a key it opens this casket.

September 2: Follow to Know

Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord.

(Hosea 6:3)

Not all at once, but by degrees shall we attain to holy knowledge, and our business is to persevere and learn by little and little. We need not despair, though our progress may be slow, for we shall yet know. The Lord, who has become our Teacher, will not give us up, however slow of understanding we may be; for it is not for His honor that any degree of human folly should baffle His skill. The Lord delights to make the simple wise.

Our duty is to keep to our main topic and follow on to know, not this peculiar doctrine nor that, but Jehovah Himself. To know Father, Son, and Spirit, the Triune God, this is life eternal. let us keep to this, for in this way we shall gain complete instruction. By following on to know the Lord, we learn healing after being torn, binding up after smiting, and life after death. Experience has its perfect work when the heart follows the trackway of the almighty Lord.

My soul, keep thou close to Jesus, follow on to know God in Jesus, and so shalt thou come to the knowledge of Christ, which is the most excellent of all the sciences. The Holy Ghost will lead thee into all truth. Is not this His gracious oR'ice? Rely upon Him to fulfill it.

September 3: Out of Spiritual Death

And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves. (Ezekiel 37:13)

Indeed it must be so: those who receive life from the dead are sure to recognize the hand of the Lord in such a resurrection. This is the greatest and most remarkable of all changes that a man can undergo—to be brought out of the grave of spiritual death and made to rejoice in the light and liberty of spiritual life. None could work this but the living God, the Lord and giver of life.

Ah, me! How well do I remember when I was lying in the valley full of dry bones, as dry as any of them! Blessed was the day when free and sovereign grace sent the man of God to prophesy upon me! Glory be to God for the stirring which that word of faith caused among the dry bones. More blessed still was that heavenly breath from the four winds which made me live! Now know I the quickening Spirit of the ever-living Jehovah, Truly Jehovah is the living God, for He made me live. My new life even in its pinings and sorrowings is clear proof to me that the Lord can kill and make alive. He is the only God. He is all that is great, gracious, and glorious, and my quickened soul adores Him as the great I AM. All glory be unto His sacred name! As long as I live I will praise Him.

September 4: Victory Without Battle

***But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah,
and will save them by the Lord their God, and will not save them by bow,
nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen. (Hosea 1:7)***

Precious word. Jehovah Himself will deliver His people in the greatness of His mercy, but He will not do it by the ordinary means, Men are slow to render to God the glory due unto His name. If they go to battle with sword and bow and win the victory, they ought to praise their God; yet they do not, but begin to magnify their own right arm and glory in their horses and horsemen. For this reason our Jehovah often determines to save His people without second means, that all the honor may be to Himself alone.

Look, then, my heart, to the Lord alone and not to man. Expect to see God all the more clearly when there is no one else to look to. If I have no friend, no adviser, no one at my back, let me be none the less confident if I can feel that the Lord Himself is on my side; yea, let me be glad if He gives victory without battle, as the text seems to imply. Why do I ask for horses and horsemen if Jehovah Himself has mercy upon me and lifts up His arm for my defense! Why need I bow or sword if God will save? Let me trust and not be afraid from this day forth and for evermore. Amen.

September 5: With Me Wherever I Am

The Lord will be with you.

(2 Chronicles 20:17)

This was a great mercy for Jehoshaphat, for a great multitude had come out against him; and it will be a great mercy for me, for I have great need, and I have no might or wisdom. If the Lord be with me, it matters little who may desert me. If the Lord be with me, I shall conquer in the battle of life, and the greater my trials the more glorious will be my victory. How can I be sure that the Lord is with me?

For certain He is with me if I am with Him. If I trust in His faithfulness, believe His words, and obey His commands, He is assuredly with me. If I am on Satan's side, God is against me and cannot be otherwise; but if I live to honor God, I may be sure that He will honor me.

I am quite sure that God is with me if Jesus is my sole and only Savior. If I have placed my soul in the hands of God's only-begotten Son, then I may be sure that the Father will put forth all His power to preserve me, that His Son may not be dishonored.

Oh, for faith to take hold upon the short but sweet text for today! O Lord, fulfill this word to Thy servant! Be with me in the house, in the street, in the field, in the shop, in company, and alone. Be Thou also with all Thy people.

September 6; A Strong Heart

***Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart:
wait, I say, on the Lord. (Psalm 27:14)***

Wait! Wait! Let your waiting be on the Lord! He is worth waiting for. He never disappoints the waiting soul.

While waiting keep up your spirits, Expect a great deliverance, and be ready to praise God for it.

The promise which should cheer you is in the middle of the verse—"He shall strengthen thine heart." This goes at once to the place where you need help. If the heart be sound, all the rest of the system will work well. The heart wants calming and cheering, and both of these will come if it be strengthened. A forceful heart rests and rejoices and throbs force into the whole man.

No one else can get at that secret urn of life, the heart, so as to pour strength into it. He alone who made it can make it strong. God is full of strength, and, therefore, He can impart it to those who need it. Oh, be brave; for the Lord will impart His strength to you, and you shall be calm in tempest and glad in sorrow.

He who penned these lines can write as David did—"Wait, I say, on the Lord." I do, indeed, say it. I know by long and deep experience that it is good for me to wait upon the Lord.

September 7: The Reach of Almighty Grace

***It shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them,
Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them,
Ye are the sons of the living God. (Hosea 1:10)***

Sovereign grace can make strangers into sons, and the Lord here declares His purpose to deal thus with rebels and make them know what He has done. Beloved reader, the Lord has done this in my case; has He done the like for you? Then let us join hands and hearts in praising His adorable name.

Some of us were so decidedly ungodly that the Lord's Word most truly said to our conscience and heart, "Ye are not my people." In the house of God and in our own homes, when we read the Bible, this was the voice of God's Spirit in our soul, "Ye are not my people." Truly a sad, condemning voice it was. But now, in the same places, from the same ministry and Scripture, we hear a voice, which saith, "Ye are the sons of the living God." Can we be grateful enough for this? Is it not wonderful? Does it not give us hope for others? Who is beyond the reach of almighty grace? How can we despair of any, since the Lord has wrought so marvelous a change in us?

He who has kept this one great promise will keep every other; wherefore, let us go forward with songs of adoration and confidence.

September 8: Broken and Smoking

***A bruised reed shall he not break,
and the smoking flax shall he not quench.
(Isaiah 42:3)***

Then I may reckon upon tender treatment from my Lord. Indeed, I feel myself to be at best as weak, as pliant, as worthless as a reed. Someone said, "I don't care a rush for you"; and the speech, though unkind, was not untrue. Alas! I am worse than a reed when it grows by the river, for that at least can hold up its head. I am bruised— sorely, sadly bruised. There is no music in me now; there is a rift which lets out all the melody. Ah, me! Yet Jesus will not break me; and if He will not, then I mind little what others try to do. O sweet and compassionate Lord, I nestle down beneath Thy protection and forget my bruises!

Truly I am also fit to be likened to "the smoking flax," whose light is gone, and only its smoke remains. I fear I am rather a nuisance than a benefit. My fears tell me that the devil has blown out my light and left me an obnoxious smoke, and that my Lord will soon put an extinguisher upon one. Yet I perceive that though there were snuffers under the law, there were no extinguishers, and Jesus will not quench me; therefore, I am hopeful. Lord, kindle me anew and cause me to shine forth to Thy glory and to the extolling of Thy tenderness.

September 9: Fear Has Its Place

Happy is the man that feareth always.

(Proverbs 28:14)

The fear of the Lord is the beginning and the foundation of all true religion. Without a solemn awe and reverence of God there is no foothold for the more brilliant virtues. He whose soul does not worship will never live in holiness.

He is happy who feels a jealous fear of doing wrong. Holy fear looks not only before it leaps, but even before it moves. It is afraid of error, afraid of neglecting duty, afraid of committing sin. It fears ill company, loose talk, and questionable policy, This does not make a man wretched, but it brings him happiness. The watchful sentinel is happier than the soldier who sleeps at his post. He who foreseeth evil and escapes it is happier than he who walks carelessly on and is destroyed.

Fear of God is a quiet grace which leads a man along a choice road, of which it is written, "No lion shall be there, neither shall any ravenous beast go up thereon." Fear of the very appearance of evil is a purifying principle, which enables a man, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to keep his garments unspotted from the world. Solomon had tried both worldliness and holy fear: in the one he found vanity, in the other happiness. Let us not repeat his trial but abide by his verdict.

September 10: Coming In; Going Out

***Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in,
and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out.***

(Deuteronomy 28:6)

The blessings of the law are not canceled. Jesus confirmed the promise when He bore the penalty. If I keep the commands of my Lord, I may appropriate this promise without question.

This day I will come in to my house without fear of evil tidings, and I will come in to my closet expecting to hear good news from my Lord. I will not be afraid to come in unto myself by self-examination, nor to come in to my affairs by a diligent inspection of my business. I have a good deal of work to do indoors, within my own soul; oh, for a blessing upon it all, the blessing of the Lord Jesus, who has promised to abide with me.

I must also go out. Timidity makes me wish that I could stay within doors and never go into the sinful world again. But I must go out in my calling, and I must go out that I may be helpful to my brethren and useful to the ungodly. I must be a defender of the faith and an assailant of evil. Oh, for a blessing upon my going out this day! Lord, let me go where Thou leadest, on Thy errands, under Thy command, and in the power of Thy Spirit.

Lord Jesus, turn in with me and be my guest; and then walk out with me and cause my heart to burn while You speak with me by the way.

September 11: Sufferers Make Strong Believers

It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.

(Lamentations 3:27)

This is as good as a promise. It has been good, it is good, and it will be good for me to bear the yoke.

Early in life I had to feel the weight of conviction, and ever since it has proved a soul-enriching burden. Should I have loved the gospel so well had I not learned by deep experience the need of salvation by grace? Jabez was more honorable than his brethren because his mother bare him with sorrow, and those who suffer much in being born unto God make strong believers in sovereign grace.

The yoke of censure is an irksome one, but it prepares a man for future honor. He is not fit to be a leader who has not run the gauntlet of contempt. Praise intoxicates if it be not preceded by abuse. Men who rise to eminence without struggle usually fall into dishonor.

The yoke of affliction, disappointment, and excessive labor is by no means to be sought for; but when the Lord lays it on us in our youth, it frequently develops a character which glorifies God and blesses the church.

Come, my soul, bow thy neck; take up they cross. It was good for thee when young; it will not harm thee now. For Jesus' sake, shoulder it carefully.

September 12: What of My House?

***Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,
and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.
(Acts 16:31)***

This gospel for a man with a sword at his throat is the gospel for me. This would suit me if I were dying, and it is all that I need while I am living. I look away from self, and sin, and all idea of personal merit, and I trust the Lord Jesus as the Savior whom God has given. I believe in Him, I rest on Him, I accept Him to be my all in all. Lord, I am saved, and I shall be saved to all eternity, for I believe in Jesus. Blessed be Thy name for this. May I daily prove by my life that I am saved from selfishness, and worldliness, and every form of evil.

But those last words about my "house": Lord, I would not run away with half a promise when Thou dost give a whole one. I beseech Thee, save all my family. Save the nearest and dearest. Convert the children and the grandchildren, if I have any. Be gracious to my servants and all who dwell under my roof or work for me. Thou makest this promise to me personally if I believe in the Lord Jesus; I beseech Thee to do as Thou hast said.

I would go over in my prayer every day the names of all my brothers and sisters, parents, children, friends, relatives, servants, and give Thee no rest till that word is fulfilled, "and thy house."

September 13: The Dew of Heaven

His heavens shall drop down dew.

(Deuteronomy 33:28)

What the dew in the East is to the world of nature, that is the influence of the Spirit in the realm of grace. How greatly do I need it! Without the Spirit of God I am a dry and withered thing. I droop, I fade, I die. How sweetly does this dew refresh me! When once favored with it I feel happy, lively, vigorous, elevated. I want nothing more. The Holy Spirit brings me life and all that life requires. All else without the dew of the Spirit is less than nothing to me: I hear, I read, I pray, I sing, I go to the table of Communion, and I find no blessing there until the Holy Ghost visits me. But when He bedews me, every means of grace is sweet and profitable.

What a promise is this for me! "His heavens shall drop down dew." I shall be visited with grace. I shall not be left to my natural drought, or to the world's burning heat, or to the sirocco of satanic temptation. Oh, that I may at this very hour feel the gentle, silent, saturating dew of the Lord! Why should I not! He who has made me to live as the grass lives in the meadow will treat me as He treats the grass; He will refresh me from above. Grass cannot call for dew as I do. Surely, the Lord who visits the unpraying plant will answer to His pleading child.

September 14: Mark of Divine Approval

Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. (James 1:12)

Yes, he is blessed while he is enduring the trial. No eye can see this till he has been anointed with heavenly eye salve. But he must endure it and neither rebel against God nor turn aside from his integrity. He is blessed who has gone through the fire and has not been consumed as a counterfeit.

When the test is over, then comes the hallmark of divine approval—"the crown of life." As if the Lord said, "Let him live; he has been weighed in the balances, and he is not found wanting." Life is the reward: not mere being, but holy, happy, true existence, the realization of the divine purpose concerning us. Already a higher form of spiritual life and enjoyment crowns those who have safely passed through fiercest trials of faith and love.

The Lord hath promised the crown of life to those who love Him. Only lovers of the Lord will hold out in the hour of trial; the rest will either sink or sulk, or slink back to the world. Come, my heart, dost thou love thy Lord? Truly? Deeply? Wholly? Then that love will be tried; but many waters will not quench it, neither will the floods drown it, Lord, let Thy love nourish mine to the end.

September 15: The Safest Shelter

***And a man shall be as an hiding-place
from the wind and a covert from the tempest.
(Isaiah 32:2)***

Who this Man is we all know. Who could He be but the Second Man, the Lord from heaven, the man of sorrows, the Son of Man? What a hiding place He has been to His people! He bears the full force of the wind Himself, and so He shelters those who hide themselves in Him. We have thus escaped the wrath of God, and we shall thus escape the anger of men, the cares of this life, and the dread of death. Why do we stand in the wind when we may so readily and so surely get out of it by hiding behind our Lord? Let us this day run to Him and be at peace.

Often the common wind of trouble rises in its force and becomes a tempest, sweeping everything before it. Things which looked firm and stable rock in the blast, and many and great are the falls among our carnal confidences. Our Lord Jesus, the glorious man, is a covert which is never blown down. In Him we mark the tempest sweeping by, but we ourselves rest in delightful serenity.

This day let us just stow ourselves away in our hiding place and sit and sing under the protection of our Covert. Blessed Jesus! Blessed Jesus! How we love Thee! Well we may, for Thou art to us a shelter in the time of storm.

September 16: Reward Is Certain

And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward. (Matthew 10:42)

Well, I can do as much as that. I can do a kind act toward the Lord's servant. The Lord knows I love them all and would count it an honor to wash their feet. For the sake of their Master, I love the disciples.

How gracious of the Lord to mention so insignificant an action—"to give to drink a cup of cold water only"! This I can do, however poor: this I may do, however lowly: this I will do right cheerfully. This, which seems so little, the Lord notices— notices when done to the least of His followers. Evidently it is not the cost, nor the skill, nor the quantity, that He looks at, but the motive: that which we do to a disciple, because he is a disciple, his Lord observes and recompenses. He does not reward us for the merit of what we do but according to His riches of His grace.

I give a cup of cold water, and He makes me to drink of living water. I give to one of His little ones, and He treats me as one of them. Jesus finds an apology for His liberality in that which His grace has led me to do, and He says, "He shall in no wise lose his reward."

September 17: Like Palm and Cedar

***The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree:
he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. (Psalm 92:12)***

These trees are not trained and pruned by man: palms and cedars are "trees of the Lord," and it is by His care that they flourish. Even so it is with the saints of the Lord: they are His own care. These trees are evergreen and are beautiful objects at all seasons of the year. Believers are not sometimes holy and sometimes ungodly: they stand in the beauty of the Lord under all weathers. Everywhere these trees are noteworthy: no one can gaze upon a landscape in which there are either palms or cedars without his attention being fixed upon these royal growths. The followers of Jesus are the observed of all observers: like a city set on a hill, they cannot be hid.

The child of God flourishes like a palm tree, which pushes all its strength upward in one erect column without a single branch. It is a pillar with a glorious capital. It has no growth to the right or to the left but sends all its force heavenward and bears its fruit as near the sky as possible. Lord, fulfill this type in me.

The cedar braves all storms and grows near the eternal snows, the Lord Himself filling it with a sap which keeps its heart warm and its bough strong. Lord, so let it be with me, I pray Thee. Amen.

September 18: Complete Safety

*And of Benjamin he said, The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him; and the Lord shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between his shoulders.
(Deuteronomy 33:12)*

Yes, there is no safety like that which comes of dwelling near to God. For His best beloved the Lord can find no surer or safer place. O Lord, let me always abide under Thy shadow, close to Thy wounded side. Nearer and nearer would I come to Thee, my Lord; and when once specially near Thee, I would abide there forever.

What a covering is that which the Lord gives to His chosen! Not a fair roof shall cover him, nor a bomb-proof casement, nor even an angel's wing, but Jehovah Himself. Nothing can come at us when we are thus covered. This covering the Lord will grant us all the day long, however long the day. Lord, let me abide this day consciously beneath this canopy of love, this pavilion of sovereign power.

Does the third clause mean that the Lord in His temple would dwell among the mountains of Benjamin or that the Lord would be where Benjamin's burden should be placed, or does it mean that we are borne upon the shoulders of the Eternal? In any case, the Lord is the support and strength of His saints. Lord, let me ever enjoy Thy help, and then my arms will be sufficient for me.

September 19: The Reason for Singing

The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing. (Zephaniah 3:17)

What a word is this! Jehovah God in the center of His people in all the majesty of His power! This presence alone suffices to inspire us with peace and hope. Treasures of boundless might are stored in our Jehovah, and He dwells in His church; therefore may His people shout for joy.

We not only have His presence, but He is engaged upon His choice work of salvation. "He will save." He is always saving: He takes His name of Jesus from it. Let us not fear any danger, for He is mighty to save.

Nor is this all. He abides evermore the same, He saves, He finds rest in loving, He will not cease to love. His love gives Him joy. He even finds a theme for song in His beloved. This is exceedingly wonderful. When God wrought creation He did not sing but simply said, "It is very good"; but when He came to redemption, then the sacred Trinity felt a joy to be expressed in song, Think of it, and be astonished! Jehovah Jesus sings a marriage song over His chosen bride. She is to Him His love, His joy, His rest, His song. O Lord Jesus, by Thine immeasurable love to us teach us to love Thee, to rejoice in Thee, and to sing unto Thee our life-psalm.

September 20: Perfect Willingness

Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power. (Psalm 110:3)

Blessed be the God of grace that it is so! He has a people whom He has chosen from of old to be His peculiar portion. These by nature have wills as stubborn as the rest of the froward sons of Adam; but when the day of His power comes and grace displays its omnipotence, they become willing to repent and to believe in Jesus. None are saved unwillingly, but the will is made sweetly to yield itself. What a wondrous power is this, which never violates the will and yet rules it! God does not break the lock, but He opens it by a master key which He alone can handle.

Now are we willing to be, to do, or to suffer as the Lord wills. If at any time we grow rebellious, He has but to come to us with power, and straightway we run in the way of His commands with all our hearts. May this be a day of power with me as to some noble effort for the glory of God and the good of my fellowmen! Lord, I am willing; may I not hope that this is a day of Thy power? I am wholly at Thy disposal; willing, yea, eager, to be used of Thee for Thy holy purposes. O Lord, let me not have to cry, "Thy will is present with me, but how to perform that which I would, I find not"; but give me power as Thou givest me will.

September 21: Let Trials Bless

Knowing that tribulation worketh patience. (Romans 5:3)

This is a promise in essence if not in form. We have need of patience, and here we see the way of getting it. It is only by enduring that we learn to endure, even as by swimming men learn to swim. You could not learn that art on dry land, nor learn patience without trouble. Is it not worth while to suffer tribulation for the sake of gaining that beautiful equanimity of mind which quietly acquiesces in all the will of God?

Yet our text sets forth a singular fact, which is not according to nature but is supernatural. Tribulation in and of itself worketh petulance, unbelief, and rebellion. It is only by the sacred alchemy of grace that it is made to work in us patience. We do not thresh the wheat to lay the dust: yet the Rail of tribulation does this upon God's floor. We do not toss a man about in order to give him rest, and yet so the Lord dealeth with His children. Truly this is not the manner of man but greatly redounds to the glory of our all-wise God.

Oh, for grace to let my trials bless me! Why should I wish to stay their gracious operation? Lord, I ask Thee to remove my affliction, but I beseech Thee ten times more to remove my impatience. Precious Lord Jesus, with Thy cross engrave the image of Thy patience on my heart.

September 22: Broad Rivers Without Galleys

***But there the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams;
wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby.
(Isaiah 33:21)***

The Lord will be to us the greatest good without any of the drawbacks which seem necessarily to attend the best earthly things. If a city is favored with broad rivers, it is liable to be attacked by galleys with oars and other ships of war. But when the Lord represents the abundance of His bounty under this figure, He takes care expressly to shut out the fear which the metaphor might suggest. Blessed be His perfect love!

Lord, if Thou send me wealth like broad rivers, do not let the galley with oars come up in the shape of worldliness or pride. If Thou grant me abundant health and happy spirits, do not let "the gallant ship" of carnal ease come sailing up the flowing flood. If I have success in holy service, broad as the German Rhine, yet let me never find the galley of self-conceit and self-confidence floating on the waves of my usefulness. Should I be so supremely happy as to enjoy the light of Thy countenance year after year, yet let me never despise Thy feeble saints, nor allow the vain notion of my own perfection to sail up the broad rivers of my full assurance. Lord, give me that blessing which maketh rich and neither addeth sorrow nor aideth sin.

September 23: Deliverance from Dust and Chaff

For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all sections, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth. (Amos 9:9)

The sifting process is going on still. Wherever we go, we are still being winnowed and sifted. In all countries God's people are being tried "like as corn is sifted in a sieve." Sometimes the devil holds the sieve and tosses us up and down at a great rate, with the earnest desire to get rid of us forever. Unbelief is not slow to agitate our heart and mind with its restless fears. The world lends a willing hand at the same process and shakes us to the right and to the left with great vigor. Worst of all, the church, so largely apostate as it is, comes in to give a more furious force to the sifting process.

Well, well! Let it go on. Thus is the chaff severed from the wheat. Thus is the wheat delivered from dust and chaff. And how great is the mercy which comes to us in the text, "Yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth"! All shall be preserved that is good, true, gracious. Not one of the least of believers lose anything worth calling a loss. We shall be so kept in the sifting that it shall be a real gain to us through Christ Jesus.

September 24: The Life-Giving Stream

And it shall come to pass, that every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live. (Ezekiel 47:9)

The living waters, in the prophet's vision, flowed into the Dead Sea and carried life with them, even into that stagnant lake. Where grace goes, spiritual life is the immediate and the everlasting consequence. Grace proceeds sovereignly according to the will of God, even as a river in all its windings follows its own sweet will; and wherever it comes it does not wait for life to come to it, but it creates life by its own quickening flow. Oh, that it would pour along our streets and flood our slums! Oh, that it would now come into my house and rise till every chamber were made to swim with it! Lord, let the living water flow to my family and my friends, and let it not pass me by. I hope I have drunk of it already; but I desire to bathe in it, yea, to swim in it. O my Savior, I need life more abundantly. Come to me, I pray Thee, till every part of my nature is vividly energetic and intensely active. Living God, I pray Thee, fill me with Thine own life.

I am a poor, dry stick; come and make me so to live that, like Aaron's rod, I may bud and blossom and bring forth fruit unto Thy glory. Quicken me, for the sake of my Lord Jesus. Amen.

September 25: The Sacrifice Has Been Accepted

If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands, neither would he have showed us all these thing. (Judges 13:23)

This is a sort of promise deduced by logic. It is an inference fairly drawn from ascertained facts. It was not likely that the Lord had revealed to Manoah and his wife that a son would be born to them and yet had it in His heart to destroy them. The wife reasoned well, and we shall do well if we follow her line of argument.

The Father has accepted the great sacrifice of Calvary and has declared Himself well pleased therewith; how can He now be pleased to kill us! Why a substitute if the sinner must still perish? The accepted sacrifice of Jesus puts an end to fear.

The Lord has shown us our election, our adoption, our union to Christ, our marriage to the Well-beloved: how can He now destroy us? The promises are loaded with blessings, which necessitate our being preserved unto eternal life. It is not possible for the Lord to cast us away and yet fulfill His covenant. The past assures us, and the future reassures us. We shall not die but live, for we have seen Jesus, and in Him we have seen the Father by the illumination of the Holy Ghost. Because of this life-giving sight we must live forever.

September 26: Among the Redeemed

***Lo, the people shall dwell alone,
and shall not be redeemed among the nations.
(Numbers 23:9)***

Who would wish to dwell among the nations and to be numbered with them? Why, even the professing church is such that to follow the Lord fully within its bounds is very difficult. There is such a mingling and mixing that one often sighs for "a lodge in some vast wilderness."

Certain it is that the Lord would have His people follow a separated path as to the world and come out decidedly and distinctly from it. We are set apart by the divine decree, purchase, and calling, and our inward experience has made us greatly to differ from men of the world; and therefore our place is not in their Vanity Fair, nor in their City of Destruction, but in the narrow way where all true pilgrims must follow their Lord.

This may not only reconcile us to the world's cold shoulder and sneers but even cause us to accept them with pleasure as being a part of our covenant portion. Our names are not in the same book, we are not of the same seed, we are not bound for the same place, neither are we trusting to the same guide; therefore it is well that we are not of their number. Only let us be found in the number of the redeemed, and we are content to be off and solitary to the end of the chapter.

September 27: The Divine Light in Darkness

For thou wilt light my candle.

(Psalm 18:28)

It may be that my soul sits in darkness; and if this be of a spiritual kind, no human power can bring me light. Blessed be God! He can enlighten my darkness and at once light my candle. Even though I may be surrounded by a "darkness which might be felt," yet He can break the gloom and immediately make it bright around me.

The mercy is that if He lights the candle none can blow it out, neither will it go out for lack of substance, nor burn out of itself through the lapse of hours. The lights which the Lord kindled in the beginning are shining still. The Lord's lamps may need trimming, but He does not put them out.

Let me, then, like the nightingale sing in the dark. Expectation shall furnish me with music, and hope shall pitch the tune. Soon I shall rejoice in a candle of God's lighting. I am dull and dreary just now. Perhaps it is the weather, or bodily weakness, or the surprise of a sudden trouble; but whatever has made the darkness, it is God alone who will bring the light. My eyes are unto Him alone. I shall soon have the candles of the Lord shining about me; and, further on in His own good time, I shall be where they need no candle, neither light of the sun. Hallelujah!

September 28: Work is Done; Rest in Him

There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.

(Hebrews 4:9)

God has provided a Sabbath, and some must enter into it. Those to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief; therefore, that Sabbath remains for the people of God. David sang of it; but he had to touch the minor key, for Israel refused the rest of God. Joshua could not give it, nor Canaan yield it: it remains for believers.

Come, then, let us labor to enter into this rest. Let us quit the weary toil of sin and self. Let us cease from all confidence, even in those works of which it might be said, "They are very good." Have we any such? Still, let us cease from our own works, as God did from His. Now let us find solace in the finished work of our Lord Jesus. Everything is fully done: justice demands no more. Great peace is our portion in Christ Jesus.

As to providential matters, the work of grace in the soul and the work of the Lord in the souls of others, let us cast these burdens upon the Lord and rest in Him. When the Lord gives us a yoke to bear, He does so that by taking it up we may find rest. By faith we labor to enter into the rest of God, and we renounce all rest in self-satisfaction or indolence. Jesus Himself is perfect rest, and we are filled to the brim in Him.

September 29: To Glorify Christ Jesus

***He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine,
and shall shew it unto you. (John 16:14)***

The Holy Ghost Himself cannot better glorify the Lord Jesus than by showing to us Christ's own things. Jesus is His own best commendation. There is no adorning Him except with his own gold.

The Comforter shows us that which He has received of our Lord Jesus. We never see anything aright till He reveals it. He has a way of opening our minds and of opening the Scriptures, and by this double process He sets forth our Lord to us. There is much art in setting forth a matter, and that art belongs in the highest degree to the Spirit of truth. He shows us the things themselves. This is a great privilege, as those know who have enjoyed the hallowed vision.

Let us seek the illumination of the Spirit; not to gratify our curiosity, nor even to bring us personal comfort, so much as to glorify the Lord Jesus. Oh, to have worthy ideas of Him! Groveling notions dishonor our precious Lord. Oh, to have such vivid impressions of His person, and work, and glory that we may with heart and soul cry out to His praise! Where there is a heart enriched by the Holy Ghost's teaching there will be a Savior glorified beyond expression. Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly light, and show us Jesus our Lord!

September 30: Needs to Open Our Mouths

Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.

(Psalm 81:10)

What an encouragement to pray! Our human notions would lead us to ask small things because our deservings are so small; but the Lord would have us request great blessings. Prayer should be as simple a matter as the opening of the mouth; it should be a natural, unconstrained utterance. When a man is earnest he opens his mouth wide, and our text urges us to be fervent in our supplications.

Yet it also means that we may make bold with God and ask many and large blessings at His hands, Read the whole verse, and see the argument: "I am Jehovah, thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." Because the Lord has given us so much He invites us to ask for more, yea, to expect more.

See how the little birds in their nests seem to be all mouth when the mother comes to feed them. Let it be the same with us. Let us take in grace at every door. Let us drink it in as a sponge sucks up the water in which it lies. God is ready to fill us if we are only ready to be filled. Let our needs make us open our mouths; let our faintness cause us to open our mouths and pant; yea, let our alarm make us open our mouths with a child's cry. The opened mouth shall be filled by the Lord Himself. So be it unto us, O Lord, this day.

October 1: A Covenant He Remembers

He hath given meat unto them that fear him:

he will ever be mindful of his covenant.

(Psalm 111:5)

Those who fear God need not fear want. Through all these long years the Lord has always found meat for His own children, whether they have been in the wilderness, or by the brook Cherith, or in captivity, or in the midst of famine. Hitherto the Lord has given us day by day our daily bread, and we doubt not that He will continue to feed us till we want no more.

As to the higher and greater blessings of the covenant of grace, He will never cease to supply them as our case demands. He is mindful that He made the covenant and never acts as if He regretted it. He is mindful of it when we provoke Him to destroy us. He is mindful to love us, keep us, and comfort us, even as He engaged to do. He is mindful of every jot and tittle of His engagements, never suffering one of His words to fall to the ground.

We are sadly unmindful of our God, but He is graciously mindful of us. He cannot forget His Son who is the surety of the covenant, nor His Holy Spirit who actively carries out the covenant, nor His own honor, which is bound up with the covenant. Hence the foundation of God standeth sure, and no believer shall lose his divine inheritance, which is his by a covenant of salt.

October 2: Comfort En Route Home

***And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.
(Genesis 50:24)***

Joseph had been an incarnate providence to his brethren. All our Josephs die, and a thousand comforts die with them. Egypt was never the same to Israel after Joseph was dead, nor can the world again be to some of us what it was when our beloved ones were alive.

But see how the pain of that sad death was alleviated! They had a promise that the living God would visit them. A visit from Jehovah! What a favor! What a consolation! What a heaven below! O Lord, visit us this day; though indeed we are not worthy that Thou shouldst come under our roof.

But more was promised: the Lord would bring them out. They would find in Egypt a cold welcome when Joseph was dead; nay, it would become to them a house of bondage. But it was not to be so forever; they would come out of it by a divine deliverance and march to the land of promise. We shall not weep here forever. We shall be called home to the gloryland to join our dear ones. Wherefore, "comfort one another with these words."

October 3: Reflections of the Lord's Beauty

***As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness;
I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness. (Psalm 17:15)***

The portion of other men fills their bodies and enriches their children, but the portion of the believer is of another sort. Men of the world have their treasure in this world, but men of the world to come look higher and further.

Our possession is twofold. We have God's presence here and His like-ness hereafter. Here we behold the face of the Lord in righteousness, for we are justified in Christ Jesus. Oh, the joy of beholding the face of a reconciled God! The glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ yields us heaven below, and it will be to us the heaven of heaven above.

But seeing does not end it: we are to be changed into that which we gaze upon. We shall sleep a while and then wake up to find ourselves as mirrors which reflect the beauties of our Lord. Faith sees God with a transforming look. The heart receives the image of Jesus into its own depths, till the character of Jesus is imprinted on the soul. This is satisfaction. To see God and to be like Him-what more can I desire? David's assured confidence is here by the Holy Ghost made to be the Lord's promise. I believe it. I expect it. Lord, vouchsafe it. Amen.

October 4: The Mighty Magnet

***And I, if I be lifted up from the earth,
will draw all men unto me.***

(John 12:32)

Come, ye workers, be encouraged. You fear that you cannot draw a congregation. Try the preaching of a crucified, risen, and ascended Savior; for this is the greatest "draw" that was ever yet manifested among men. What drew you to Christ but Christ? What draws you to Him now but His own blessed self? If you have been drawn to religion by anything else, you will soon be drawn away from it; but Jesus has held you and will hold you even to the end. Why, then, doubt His power to draw other? Go with the name of Jesus to those who have hitherto been stubborn and see if it does not draw them.

No sort of man is beyond this drawing power. Old and young, rich and poor, ignorant and learned, depraved or amiable—all men shall feel the attractive force. Jesus is the one magnet. Let us not think of any other. Music will not draw to Jesus, neither will eloquence, logic, ceremonial, or noise. Jesus Himself must draw men to Himself; and Jesus is quite equal to the work in every case. Be not tempted by the quackeries of the day; but as workers for the Lord work in His own way, and draw with the Lord's own cords. Draw to Christ, and draw by Christ, for then Christ will draw by you.

October 5: At God's Bidding

***And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people
as a dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass,
that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men. (Micah 5:7)***

If this be true of the literal Israel, much more is it true of the spiritual Israel, the believing people of God. When saints are what they should be, they are an incalculable blessing to those among whom they are scattered.

They are as the dew; for in a quiet, unobtrusive manner they refresh those around them. Silently but effectually they minister to the life, growth, and joy of those who dwell with them. Coming fresh from heaven, glistening like diamonds in the sun, gracious men and women attend to the feeble and insignificant till each blade of grass has its own drop of dew. Little as individuals, they are, when united, all-sufficient for the purposes of love which the Lord fulfills through them. Dew drops accomplish the refreshing of broad acres. Lord, make us like the dew!

Godly people are as showers which come at God's bidding without man's leave and license. They work for God whether men desire it or not; they no more ask human permission than the rain does. Lord, make us thus boldly prompt and free in Thy service wherever our lot is cast.

October 6: The Leadership of Our Guide

***Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come,
he will guide you into all truth.***

(John 16:13)

Truth is like a vast cavern into which we desire to enter, but we are not able to traverse it alone. At the entrance it is clear and bright; but if we would go further and explore its innermost recesses, we must have a guide, or we shall lose ourselves. The Holy Spirit, who knows all truth perfectly, is the appointed guide of all true believers, and He conducts them as they are able to bear it, from one inner chamber to another, so that they behold the deep things of God, and His secret is made plain to them.

What a promise is this for the humbly inquiring mind! We desire to know the truth and to enter into it. We are conscious of our own aptness to err, and we feel the urgent need of a guide. We rejoice that the Holy Spirit is come and abides among us. He condescends to act as a guide to us, and we gladly accept His leadership. "All truth" we wish to learn, that we may not be one-sided and out of balance. We would not be willingly ignorant of any part of revelation lest thereby we should miss blessing or incur sin. The Spirit of God has come that He may guide us into all truth: let us with obedient hearts hearken to His words and follow His lead.

October 7: Always First in Fellowship

***He goeth before you into Gailee;
there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.
(Mark 16:7)***

Where He appointed to meet His disciples, there He would be in due time. Jesus keeps His trust. If He promises to meet us at the mercy seat, or in public worship, or in the ordinances, we may depend upon it that He will be there. We may wickedly stay away from the appointed meeting place, but He never does. He says, "Where two or three are met together in my name, there am I"; He says not, "There will I be," but, "I am there already."

Jesus is always first in fellowship: "He goeth before you." His heart is with His people, His delight is in them, He is never slow to meet them. In all fellowship He goeth before us.

But He reveals Himself to those who come after Him: "There shall ye see him." Joyful sight! We care not to see the greatest of mere men, but to see Him is to be filled with joy and peace. And we shall see Him, for He promises Himself to them. Rest assured that it will be so, for He does everything according to His word of promise: "As he said unto you. Catch at those last words, and be assured that to the end He will do for you "as he said unto you."

October 8: Never Alone

Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken.

(Isaiah 62:4)

"Forsaken" is a dreary word. It sounds like a knell. It is the record of sharpest sorrows and the prophecy of direst ills. An abyss of misery yawns in that word forsaken. Forsaken by one who pledges his honor! Forsaken by a friend so long tried and trusted! Forsaken by a dear relative! Forsaken by father and mother! Forsaken by all! This is woe indeed, and yet it may be patiently born if the Lord will take us up.

But what must it be to feel forsaken of God? Think of that bitterest of cries, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Have we ever in any degree tasted the wormwood and the gall of "forsaken" in that sense? If so, let us beseech our Lord to save us from any repetition of so unspeakable a sorrow. Oh, that such darkness may never return! Men in malice said of a saint, "God hath forsaken him; persecute and take him." But it was always false. The Lord's loving favor shall compel our cruel foes to eat their own words or, at least, to hold their tongues.

The reverse of all this is that superlative word Hephzibah "the Lord delighteth in thee." This turns weeping into dancing. Let those who dreamed that they were forsaken hear the Lord say, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

October 9: What Sanctifies Our Offerings?

And the priest shall put some of the blood upon the horns of the altar of sweet incense before the Lord. (Leviticus 4:7)

The altar of incense is the place where saints present their prayers and praises; and it is delightful to think of it as sprinkled with the blood of the great sacrifice. This it is which makes all our worship acceptable with Jehovah: He sees the blood of His own Son and therefore accepts our homage.

It is well for us to fix our eyes upon the blood of the one offering for sin. Sin mingles even with our holy things, and our best repentance, faith, prayer, and thanksgiving could not be received of God were it not for the merit of the atoning sacrifice. Many sneer at "the blood"; but to us it is the foundation of comfort and hope. That which is on the horns of the altar is meant to be prominently before our eyes when we draw near to God. The blood gives strength to prayer, and hence it is on the altar's horns. It is "before the Lord," and therefore it ought to be before us. It is on the altar before we bring the incense; it is there to sanctify our offerings and gifts.

Come, let us pray with confidence, since the Victim is offered, the merit has been pleaded, the blood is within the veil, and the prayers of believers must be sweet unto the Lord.

October 10: Open Door of Communion

*I have set before thee an open door,
and no man can shut it.*

(Revelation 3:8)

Saints who remain faithful to the truth of God have an open door before them. My soul, thou hast resolved to live and die by that which the Lord has revealed in His Word, and therefore before thee stands this open door.

I will enter in by the open door of communion with God. Who shall say me nay? Jesus has removed my sin and given me His righteousness; therefore I may freely enter. Lord, I do so by Thy grace.

I have also before me an open door into the mysteries of the Word. I may enter into the deep things of God. Election, union to Christ, the Second advent—all these are before me, and I may enjoy them. No promise and no doctrine are now locked up against me.

An open door of access is before me in private and an open door of usefulness in public. God will hear me; God will use me. A door is opened for my onward march to the church above, and for my daily fellowship with saints below. Some may try to shut me up or shut me out, but all in vain.

Soon shall I see an open door into heaven: the pearl gate will be my way of entrance, and then I shall go in unto my Lord and King and be with God eternally shut in.

October 11: Free to Travel

***And I will strengthen them in the Lord:
and they shall walk up and down in his name, saith the Lord.
(Zechariah 10:12)***

A solace for sick saints. They have grown faint, and they fear that they shall never rise from the bed of doubt and fear; but the Great Physician can both remove the disease and take away the weakness which has come of it. He will strengthen the feeble. This He will do in the best possible way, for it shall be "in Jehovah. " Our strength is far better in God than in self. In the Lord it causes fellowship, in ourselves it would create pride. In ourselves it would be sadly limited, but in God it knows no bound.

When strength is given, the believer uses it. He walks up and down in the name of the Lord. What an enjoyment it is to walk abroad after illness, and what a delight to be strong in the Lord after a season of prostration! The Lord gives His people liberty to walk up and down and an inward leisure to exercise that liberty. He makes gentlemen of us: we are not slaves who know no rest and see no sights, but we are free to travel at our ease throughout Immanuel's land.

Come, my heart, be thou no more sick and sorry; Jesus bids thee be strong and walk with God in holy contemplation. Obey His word of love.

October 12: Mark of Covenant Grace

***And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul that thou mayest live.
(Deuteronomy 30:6)***

Here we read of the true circumcision. Note the author of it: "The Lord thy God." He alone can deal effectually with our heart and take away its carnality and pollution. To make us love God with all our heart and soul is a miracle of grace which only the Holy Ghost can work. We must look to the Lord alone for this and never be satisfied with anything short of it.

Note where this circumcision is wrought. It is not of the flesh but of the Spirit. It is the essential mark of the covenant of grace. Love to God is the indelible token of the chosen seed; by this secret seal the election of grace is certified to the believer. We must see to it that we trust in no outward ritual but are sealed in heart by the operation of the Holy Ghost.

Note what the result is-"that thou mayest live." To be carnally minded is death. In the overcoming of the flesh, we find life and peace. If we mind the things of the Spirit, we shall live. Oh, that Jehovah, our God, may complete His gracious work upon our inner natures, that in the fullest and highest sense we may live unto the Lord.

October 13: If, and a Triple Promise

If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. (2 Chronicles 7:14)

Called by the name of the Lord, we are nevertheless erring men and women. What a mercy it is that our God is ready to forgive! Whenever we sin let us hasten to the mercy seat of our God, seeking pardon.

We are to humble ourselves. Should we not be humbled by the fact that after receiving so much love we yet transgress? O Lord, we bow before Thee in the dust and own our grievous ingratitude. Oh, the infamy of sin! Oh, the sevenfold infamy of it in persons so favored as we have been!

Next, we are to pray for mercy, for cleansing, for deliverance from the power of sin. O Lord, hear us even now, and shut not out our cry.

In this prayer we are to seek the Lord's face. He has left us because of our faults, and we must entreat Him to return. O Lord, look on us in Thy Son Jesus, and smile upon Thy servants.

With this must go our own turning from evil; God cannot turn to us unless we turn from sin.

Then comes the triple promise of hearing, pardon, and healing. Our Father, grant us these at once, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake.

October 14: Never Ashamed

***Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men,
him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.
(Matthew 10:32)***

Gracious promise! It is a great joy to me to confess my Lord. Whatever my faults may be, I am not ashamed of Jesus, nor do I fear to declare the doctrines of His cross. O Lord, I have not hid Thy righteousness within my heart.

Sweet is the prospect which the text sets before me! Friends forsake and enemies exult, but the Lord does not disown His servant. Doubtless my Lord will own me even here and give me new tokens of His favorable regard. But there comes a day when I must stand before the great Father. What bliss to think that Jesus will confess me then! He will say, "This man truly trusted Me and was willing to be reproached for My name's sake; and therefore I acknowledge him as Mine." The other day a great man was made a knight, and the Queen handed him a jeweled garter; but what of that? It will be an honor beyond all honors for the Lord Jesus to confess us in the presence of the divine Majesty in the heavens. Never let me be ashamed to own my Lord. Never let me indulge a cowardly silence or allow a fainthearted compromise. Shall I blush to own Him who promises to own me?

October 15: Sustained by Feeding

***As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father:
so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.***

(John 6:57)

We live by virtue of our union with the Son of God. As God-man Mediator, the Lord Jesus lives by the self-existent Father who has sent Him, and in the same manner we live by the Savior who has quickened us. He who is the source of our life is also the sustenance of it. Living is sustained by feeding. We must support the spiritual life by spiritual food, and that spiritual food is the Lord Jesus. Not His life, or death, or offices, or work, or word alone, but Himself, as including all these. On Jesus Himself we feed.

This is set forth to us in the Lord's Supper, but it is actually enjoyed by us when we meditate upon our Lord, believe in Him with appropriating faith, take Him into ourselves by love, and assimilate Him by the power of the inner life. We know what it is to feed on Jesus, but we cannot speak it or write it. Our wisest course is to practice it and to do so more and more. We are entreated to eat abundantly, and it will be to our infinite profit to do so when Jesus is our meat and our drink.

Lord, I thank Thee that this, which is a necessity of my new life, is also its greatest delight. So, I do at this hour feed on Thee.

October 16: One with Christ Jesus

Because I live, ye shall live also.

(John 14:19)

Jesus has made the life of believers in Him as certain as His own. As sure as the Head lives the members live also. If Jesus has not risen from the dead, then are we dead in our sins; but since He has risen, all believers are risen in Him. His death has put away our transgressions and loosed the bonds which held us under the death sentence. His resurrection proves our justification: we are absolved, and mercy saith, "The Lord hath put away thy sin, thou shalt not die."

Jesus has made the life of His people as eternal as His own. How can they die as long as He lives, seeing they are one with Him? Because He dieth no more, and death hath no more dominion over Him, so they shall no more return to the graves of their old sins but shall live unto the Lord in newness of life. O believer, when, under great temptation, thou fearest that thou shalt one day fall by the hand of the enemy, let this reassure thee. Thou shalt never lose thy spiritual life, for it is hid with Christ in God. Thou dost not doubt the immortality of thy Lord; therefore, do not think that He will let thee die, since thou art one with Him. The argument for thy life is His life, and of that thou canst have no fear; wherefore rest in thy living Lord.

October 17: Holy Fear

He that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded.

(Proverbs 13:13)

Holy awe of God's Word is at a great discount. Men think themselves wiser than the Word of the Lord and sit in judgment upon it. "So did not I, because of the fear of God." We accept the inspired Book as infallible and prove our esteem by our obedience. We have no terror of the Word, but we have a filial awe of it. We are not in fear of its penalties because we have a fear of its commands.

This holy fear of the commandment produces the restfulness of humility, which is far sweeter than the recklessness of pride. It becomes a guide to us in our movements: a drag when we are going downhill and a stimulus when we are climbing it. Preserved from evil and led into righteousness by our reverence of the command, we gain a quiet conscience, which is a well of wine; a sense of freedom from responsibility, which is as life from the dead; and a confidence of pleasing God, which is heaven below. The ungodly may ridicule our deep reverence for the Word of the Lord; but what of that?. The prize of our high calling is a sufficient consolation for us. The rewards of obedience make us scorn the scorning of the scorners.

October 18: Tears, Then Joyful Harvest
They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.
(Psalm 126:5)

Weeping times are suitable for sowing: we do not want the ground to be too dry. Seed steeped in the tears of earnest anxiety will come up all the sooner. The salt of prayerful tears will give the good seed a flavor which will preserve it from the worm: truth spoken in awful earnestness has a double life about it. Instead of stopping our sowing because of our weeping, let us redouble our efforts because the season is so propitious.

Our heavenly seed could not fitly be sown laughing. Deep sorrow and concern for the souls of others are a far more fit accompaniment of godly teaching than anything like levity. We have heard of men who went to war with a light heart, but they were beaten; and it is mostly so with those who sow in the same style.

Come, then, my heart, sow on in thy weeping, for thou has the promise of a joyful harvest. Thou shalt reap. Thou, thyself, shalt see some results of thy labor. This shall come to thee in so large a measure as to give thee joy, which a poor, withered, and scanty harvest would not do. When thine eyes are dim with silver tears, think of the golden corn. Bear cheerfully the present toil and disappointment; for the harvest day will fully recompense thee.

October 19: Regulated Chastisement

I will correct thee in measure.

(Jeremiah 30:11)

To be left uncorrected would be a fatal sign: it would prove that the Lord had said, "He is given unto idols, let him alone." God grant that such may never be our portion! Uninterrupted prosperity is a thing to cause fear and trembling. As many as God tenderly loves He rebukes and chastens: those for whom He has no esteem He allows to fatten themselves without fear, like bullocks for the slaughter. It is in love that our heavenly Father uses the rod upon His children.

Yet see, the correction is in measure": He gives us love without measure but chastisement "in measure." As under the old law no Israelite could receive more than the "forty stripes save one," which ensured careful counting and limited suffering; so is it with each afflicted member of the household of faith-every stroke is counted. It is the measure of wisdom, the measure of sympathy, the measure of love, by which our chastisement is regulated. Far be it from us to rebel against appointments so divine. Lord, if Thou standest by to measure the bitter drops into my cup, it is for me cheerfully to take that cup from Thy hand and drink according to Thy directions, saying, "Thy will be done."

October 20: From Every Sin

He shall save his people from their sins.

(Matthew 1:21)

Lord, save me from my sins. By the name of Jesus I am encouraged thus to pray. Save me from my past sins, that the habit of them may not hold me captive. Save me from my constitutional sins, that I may not be the slave of my own weaknesses. Save me from the sins which are continually under my eye that I may not lose my horror of them. Save me from secret sins; sins unperceived by me from my want of light. Save me from sudden and surprising sins: let me not be carried off my feet by a rush of temptation. Save me, Lord, from every sin. Let not any iniquity have dominion over me.

Thou alone canst do this. I cannot snap my own chains or slay my own enemies. Thou knowest temptation, for Thou wast tempted. Thou knowest sin, for Thou didst bear the weight of it. Thou knowest how to succor me in my hour of conflict; Thou canst save me from sinning and save me when I have sinned. It is promised in Thy very name that Thou wilt do this, and I pray Thee let me this day verify the prophecy. Let me not give way to temper, or pride, or despondency, or any form of evil; but do Thou save me unto holiness of life, that the name of Jesus may be glorified in me abundantly.

October 21: God's Multiplication Table

***A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation:
I the Lord will hasten it in his time. (Isaiah 60:22)***

Works for the Lord often begin on a small scale, and they are none the worse for this. Feebleness educates faith, brings God near, and wins glory for His name. Prize promises of increase! Mustard seed is the smallest among seeds, and yet it becomes a treelike plant, with branches which lodge the birds of heaven. We may begin with one, and that "a little one," and yet it will "become a thousand." The Lord is great at the multiplication table. How often did He say to His lone servant, "I will multiply thee!" Trust in the Lord, ye ones and twos; for He will be in the midst of you if you are gathered in His name.

"A small one." What can be more despicable in the eyes of those who count heads and weigh forces! Yet this is the nucleus of a great nation. Only one star shines out at first in the evening, but soon the sky is crowded with countless lights.

Nor need we think the prospect of increase to be remote, for the promise is, "I Jehovah will hasten it in his time." There will be no premature haste, like that which we see at excited meetings; it will be all in due time, but yet there will be no delay. When the Lord hastens, His speed is glorious.

October 22: Plead His Own Promise

*Thou, O Lord God, hast spoken it:
and with thy blessing let the house of thy servant be blessed for ever.
(2 Samuel 7:29)*

This is a promise pleaded, and so it yields double instruction to us. Anything which the Lord God has spoken we should receive as surely true and then plead it at the throne.

Oh, how sweet to quote what our own God has spoken! How precious to use a "therefore," which the promise suggests, as David does in this verse!

We do not pray because we doubt but because we believe. To pray unbelievably is unbecoming in the Lord's children. No, Lord, we cannot doubt Thee: we are persuaded that every word of Thine is a sure foundation for the boldest expectation. We come to Thee and say, "Do as Thou hast said." Bless Thy servant's house. Heal our sick; save our hesitating ones; restore those who wander; confirm those who live in Thy fear. Lord, give us food and raiment according to Thy Word. Prosper our undertakings; especially succeed our endeavors to make known Thy gospel in our neighborhood. Make our servants Thy servants, our children Thy children. Let the blessing flow on to future generations, and as long as any of our race remains on earth may they remain true to Thee. O Lord God, "let the house of thy servant be blessed."

October 23: Harvest of Light, Gladness

***Light is sown for the righteous,
and gladness for the upright in heart.***

(Psalm 97:11)

Righteousness is often costly to the man who keeps to it at all hazards, but in the end it will bear its own expenses and return an infinite profit. A holy life is like sowing seed: much is going out, and apparently it is buried in the soil, never to be gathered up again. We are mistaken when we look for an immediate harvest; but the error is very natural, for it seems impossible to bury light. Yet light is "sown," says the text. It lies latent: none can see it; it is sown. We are quite sure that it must one day manifest itself.

Full sure are we that the Lord has set a harvest for the sower of light, and they shall reap it, each man for himself. Then shall come their gladness. Sheaves of joy for seeds of light. Their heart was upright before the Lord, though men gave them no credit for it, but even censured them: they were righteous, though those about them denounced them as censorious. They had to wait, as husbandmen wait for the precious fruits of the earth: but the light was sown for them, and gladness was being prepared on their behalf by the Lord of the harvest.

Courage, brothers! We need not be in a hurry. Let us in patience possess our souls, for soon shall our souls possess light and gladness.

October 24: Godly Stability

And I will make thee unto this people a fenced brazen wall: and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee to save thee and to deliver thee, saith the Lord. (Jeremiah 15:20)

Stability in the fear and faith of God will make a man like a wall of brass, which no one can batter down or break. Only the Lord can make such; but we need such men in the church, and in the world, but specially in the pulpit.

Against uncompromising men of truth this age of shams will fight tooth and nail. Nothing seems to offend Satan and his seed like decision. They attack holy firmness even as the Assyrians besieged fenced cities. The joy is that they cannot prevail against those whom God has made strong in His strength. Carried about with every wind of doctrine, others only need to be blown upon and away they go; but those who love the doctrines of grace, because they possess the grace of the doctrines, stand like rocks in the midst of raging seas.

Whence this stability? "I am with thee, saith the Lord": that is the true answer. Jehovah will save and deliver faithful souls from all the assaults of the adversary. Hosts are against us, but the Lord of hosts is with us. We dare not budge an inch; for the Lord Himself holds us in our place, and there we will abide forever.

October 25: God First, Then Extras

***But seek ye first the kingdom of God,
and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.
(Matthew 6:33)***

See how the Bible opens: "In the beginning God." Let your life open in the same way. Seek with your whole soul, first and foremost, the kingdom of God, as the place of your citizenship, and His righteousness as the character of your life. As for the rest, it will come from the Lord Himself without your being anxious concerning it. All that is needful for this life and godliness "shall be added unto you."

What a promise this is! Food, raiment, home, and so forth, God undertakes to add to you while you seek Him. You mind His business, and He will mind yours. If you want paper and string, you get them given in when you buy more important goods; and just so all that we need of earthly things we shall have thrown in with the kingdom. He who is an heir of salvation shall not die of starvation; and he who clothes his soul with the righteousness of God cannot be left of the Lord with a naked body. Away with carking care. Set all your mind upon seeking the Lord. Covetousness is poverty, and anxiety is misery: trust in God is an estate, and likeness of God is a heavenly inheritance. Lord, I seek Thee; be found of me.

October 26: Because of Us

For the elect's sake those days be shortened.

(Matthew 24:22)

For the sake of His elect the Lord withholds many judgments and shortens others. In great tribulations the fire would devour all were it not that out of regard to His elect the Lord damps the flame. Thus, while He saves His elect for the sake of Jesus, He also preserves the race for the sake of His chosen.

What an honor is thus put upon saints! How diligently they ought to use their influence with their Lord! He will hear their prayers for sinners and bless their efforts for their salvation. He blesses believers that they may be a blessing to those who are in unbelief. Many a sinner lives because of the prayers of a mother, or wife, or daughter to whom the Lord has respect.

Have we used aright the singular power with which the Lord entrusts us? Do we pray for our country, for other lands, and for the age? Do we, in times of war, famine, pestilence, stand out as intercessors, pleading that the days may be shortened? Do we lament before God the outbursts of infidelity, error, and licentiousness? Do we beseech our Lord Jesus to shorten the reign of sin by hastening His own glorious appearing? Let us get to our knees and never rest till Christ appeareth.

October 27: His Service, Face, Name

***His servants shall serve him: and they shall see his face;
and his name shall be in their forehead.***

(Revelation 22:3-4)

Three choice blessings will be ours in the gloryland.

"His servants shall serve him." No other lords shall oppress us, no other service shall distress us. We shall serve Jesus always, perfectly, without weariness, and without error. This is heaven to a saint: in all things to serve the Lord Christ and to be owned by Him as His servant is our soul's high ambition for eternity.

"And they shall see his face." This makes the service delightful: indeed, it is the present reward of service. We shall know our Lord, for we shall see Him as He is. To see the face of Jesus is the utmost favor that the most faithful servant of the Lord can ask. What more could Moses ask than-"Let me see thy face?"

"And his name shall be in their foreheads." They gaze upon their Lord till His name is photographed upon their brows. They are acknowledged by Him, and they acknowledge Him. The secret mark of inward grace develops into the public sign-manual of confessed relationship.

O Lord, give us these three things in their beginnings here that we may possess them in their fullness in Thine own abode of bliss!

October 28: Sins of Ignorance

And it shall be forgiven them; for it is ignorance.

(Numbers 15:25)

Because of our ignorance we are not fully aware of our sins of ignorance. Yet we may be sure they are many, in the form both of commission and omission. We may be doing in all sincerity, as a service to God, that which He has never commanded and can never accept.

The Lord knows these sins of ignorance every one. This may well alarm us, since in justice He will require these trespasses at our hand; but on the other hand, faith spies comfort in this fact, for the Lord will see to it that stains unseen by us shall yet be washed away. He sees the sin that He may cease to see it by casting it behind His back.

Our great comfort is that Jesus, the true priest, has made atonement for all the congregation of the children of Israel. That atonement secures the pardon of unknown sins. His precious blood cleanses us from all sin. Whether our eyes have seen it and wept over it or not, God has seen it, Christ has atoned for it, the Spirit bears witness to the pardon of it, and so we have a threefold peace.

O my Father, I praise Thy divine knowledge, which not only perceives my iniquities but provides an atonement which delivers me from the guilt of them, even before I know that I am guilty.

October 29: Maintain the Difference

***And I will put a division between my people and thy people:
tomorrow shall this sign be.***

(Exodus 8:23)

Pharaoh has a people, and the Lord has a people. These may dwell together and seem to fare alike, but there is a division between them, and the Lord will make it apparent. Not forever shall one event happen alike to all, but there shall be great difference between the men of the world and the people of Jehovah's choice.

This may happen in the time of judgments, when the Lord becomes the sanctuary of His saints. It is very conspicuous in the conversion of believers when their sin is put away, while unbelievers remain under condemnation. From that moment they become a distinct race, come under a new discipline, and enjoy new blessings. Their homes, henceforth, are free from the grievous swarms of evils which defile and torment the Egyptians. They are kept from the pollution of lust, the bite of care, the corruption of falsehood, and the cruel torment of hatred, which devour many families.

Rest assured, tried believer, that though you have your troubles you are saved from swarms of worse ones, which infest the homes and hearts of the servants of the world's prince. The Lord has put a division; see to it that you keep up the division in Spirit, aim, character, and company.

October 30: Thorough Cleansing

*Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean:
from all your filthiness, and from all your idols,
will I cleanse you. (Ezekiel 36:25)*

What an exceeding joy is this! He who has purified us with the blood of Jesus will also cleanse us by the water of the Holy Spirit. God hath said it, and so it must be, "Ye shall be clean." Lord, we feel and mourn our uncleanness, and it is cheering to be assured by Thine own mouth that we shall be clean. Oh, that Thou wouldst make a speedy work of it!

He will deliver us from our worst sins. The uprisings of unbelief and the deceitful lusts which war against the soul, the vile thoughts of pride, and the suggestions of Satan to blaspheme the sacred name—all these shall be so purged away as never to return.

He will also cleanse us from all our idols, whether of gold or of clay: our impure loves and our excessive love of that which in itself is pure. That which we have idolized shall either be broken from us or we shall be broken off from it.

It is God who speaks of what He Himself will do. Therefore is this word established and sure, and we may boldly look for that which it guarantees to us. Cleansing is a covenant blessing, and the covenant is ordered in all things and sure.

October 31: Immortal Till Work Done

I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord.

(Psalm 118:17)

A fair assurance this! It was no doubt based upon a promise, inwardly whispered in the psalmist's heart, which he seized upon and enjoyed. Is my case like that of David? Am I depressed because the enemy affronts me? Are there multitudes against me and few on my side? Does unbelief bid me lie down and die in despair—a defeated, dishonored man? Do my enemies begin to dig my grave?

What then? Shall I yield to the whisper of fear, and give up the battle, and with it give up all hope? Far from it. There is life in me yet: "I shall not die." Vigor will return and remove my weakness: "I shall live." The Lord lives, and I shall live also. My mouth shall again be opened: "I shall declare the works of Jehovah." Yes, and I shall speak of the present trouble as another instance of the wonder-working faithfulness and love of the Lord my God. Those who would gladly measure me for my coffin had better wait a bit, for "the Lord hath chastened me sore, but he hath not given me over unto death." Glory be to His name forever! I am immortal till my work is done. Till the Lord wills it, no vault can close upon me.

November 1: Perfection and Preservation

Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.

(1 Thessalonians 5:24)

What will He do? He will sanctify us wholly. See the previous verse. He will carry on the work of purification till we are perfect in every part. He will preserve our "whole spirit, and soul, and body, blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." He will not allow us to fall from grace, nor come under the dominion of sin. What great favors are these! Well may we adore the giver of such unspeakable gifts.

Who will do this? The Lord who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light, out of death in sin into eternal life in Christ Jesus. Only He can do this: such perfection and preservation can only come from the God of all grace.

Why will He do it? Because He is "faithful"—faithful to His own promise which is pledged to save the believer; faithful to His Son, whose reward it is that His people shall be presented to Him faultless, faithful to the work which He has commenced in us by our effectual calling. It is not their own faithfulness but the Lord's own faithfulness on which the saints rely.

Come, my soul, here is a grand feast to begin a dull month with. There may be fogs without, but there should be sunshine within.

November 2: Heavenly Wealth

***No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.
(Psalm 84:11)***

Many pleasing things the Lord may withhold but "no good thing." He is the best judge of what is good for us. Some things are assuredly good, and these we may have for the asking through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Holiness is a good thing, and this He will work in us freely. Victory over evil tendencies, strong tempers, and evil habits He will gladly grant, and we ought not to remain without it.

Full assurance He will bestow, and near communion with Himself, and access into all truth, and boldness with prevalence at the mercy seat. If we have not these, it is from want of faith to receive and not from any unwillingness of God to give. A calm, a heavenly frame, great patience, and fervent love—all these will He give to holy diligence.

But note well that we must "walk uprightly." There must be no cross purposes and crooked dealings; no hypocrisy nor deceit. If we walk foully God cannot give us favors, for that would be a premium upon sin. The way of uprightness is the way of heavenly wealth-wealth so large as to include every good thing.

What a promise to plead in prayer! Let us get to our knees.

November 3: In God's Time

*For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak,
and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it;
because it will surely come, it will not tarry. (Habakkuk 2:3)*

Mercy may seem slow, but it is sure. The Lord in unfailing wisdom has appointed a time for the outgoings of His gracious power, and God's time is the best time. We are in a hurry; the vision of the blessings excites our desire and hastens our longings; but the Lord will keep His appointments. He never is before His time; He never is behind.

God's word is here spoken of as a living thing which will speak and will come. It is never a dead letter, as we are tempted to fear when we have long watched for its fulfillment. The living word is on the way from the living God, and though it may seem to linger, it is not in reality doing so. God's train is not behind time. It is only a matter of patience, and we shall soon see for ourselves the faithfulness of the Lord. No promise of His shall fail; "it will not lie." No promise of His will be lost in silence; "it shall speak." What comfort it will speak to the believing ear! No promise of His shall need to be renewed like a bill which could not be paid on the day in which it fell due—"it will not tarry."

Come, my soul, canst thou not wait for thy God? Rest in Him and be still in unutterable peacefulness.

November 4: You Make the Trenches

And he said, Thus saith the Lord, Make this valley full of ditches. For thus saith the Lord, Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, that ye may drink both ye, and your cattle, and your beasts. (2 Kings 3:16-17)

Three armies were perishing of thirst, and the Lord interposed. Although He sent neither cloud nor rain, yet He supplied an abundance of water. He is not dependent upon ordinary methods but can surprise His people with novelties of wisdom and power. Thus are we made to see more of God than ordinary processes could have revealed. Although the Lord may not appear for us in the way we expect, or desire, or suppose, yet He will in some way or other provide for us. It is a great blessing for us to be raised above looking to secondary causes so that we may gaze into the face of the great First Cause.

Have we this day grace enough to make trenches into which the divine blessing may flow? Alas! We too often fail in the exhibition of true and practical faith. Let us this day be on the outlook for answers to prayer. As the child who went to a meeting to pray for rain took an umbrella with her, so let us truly and practically expect the Lord to bless us. Let us make the valley full of ditches and expect to see them all filled.

November 5: What Is Painful Will End

I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls; which I have made. (Isaiah 57:16)

Our heavenly Father seeks our instruction, not our destruction. His contention with us has a kind intention toward us. He will not be always in arms against us. We think the Lord is long in His chastisements, but that is because we are short in our patience. His compassion endureth forever, but not His contention. The night may drag its weary length along, but it must in the end give place to cheerful day. As contention is only for a season, so the wrath which leads to it is only for a small moment. The Lord loves His chosen too well to be always angry with them.

If He were to deal with us always as He does sometimes, we should faint outright and go down hopelessly to the gates of death. Courage, dear heart! The Lord will soon end His chiding. Bear up, for the Lord will bear you up and bear you through. He who made you knows how frail you are and how little you can bear. He will handle tenderly that which He has fashioned so delicately. Therefore, be not afraid because of the painful present, for it hastens to a happy future. He that smote you will heal you; His little wrath shall be followed by great mercies.

November 6: Delight and Desires

***Delight thyself also in the Lord;
and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.
(Psalm 37:4)***

Delight in God has a transforming power and lifts a man above the gross desire of our fallen nature. Delight in Jehovah is not only sweet in itself, but it sweetens the whole soul, till the longings of the heart become such that the Lord can safely promise to fulfill them. Is not that a grand delight which molds our desires till they are like the desires of God?

Our foolish way is to desire and then set to work to compass what we desire. We do not go to work in God's way, which is to seek Him first and then expect all things to be added unto us. If we will let our heart be filled with God till it runs over with delight, then the Lord Himself will take care that we shall not want any good thing. Instead of going abroad for joys let us stay at home with God and drink waters out of our own fountain. He can do for us far more than all our friends. It is better to be content with God alone than to go about fretting and pining for the paltry trifles of time and sense. For a while we may have disappointments; but if these bring us nearer to the Lord, they are things to be prized exceedingly, for they will in the end secure to us the fulfillment of all our right desires.

November 7: True Humility Rewarded
He that humbleth himself shall be exalted.
(Luke 18:14)

It ought not to be difficult for us to humble ourselves, for what have we to be proud of? We ought to take the lowest place without being told to do so. If we are sensible and honest, we shall be little in our own eyes. Especially before the Lord in prayer we shall shrink to nothing. There we cannot speak of merit, for we have none; our one and only appeal must be to mercy: "God be merciful to me a sinner."

Here is a cheering word from the throne. We shall be exalted by the Lord if we humble ourselves. For us the way upward is downhill. When we are stripped of self we are clothed with humility, and this is the best of wear. The Lord will exalt us in peace and happiness of mind; He will exalt us into knowledge of His Word and fellowship with Himself; He will exalt us in the enjoyment of sure pardon and justification. The Lord puts His honors upon those who can wear them to the honor of the Giver. He gives usefulness, acceptance, and influence to those who will not be puffed up by them but will be abased by a sense of greater responsibility. Neither God nor man will care to lift up a man who lifts up himself; but both God and good men unite to honor modest worth.

O Lord, sink me in self that I may rise in Thee.

November 8: The Magnitude of Grace

***My grace is sufficient for thee;
for my strength is made perfect in weakness.***

(2 Corinthians 12:9)

Our weakness should be prized as making room for divine strength. We might never have known the power of grace if we had not felt the weakness of nature. Blessed be the Lord for the thorn in the flesh, and the messenger of Satan, when they drive us to the strength of God.

This is a precious word from our Lord's own lip. It has made the writer laugh for joy. God's grace enough for me! I should think it is. Is not the sky enough for the bird and the ocean enough for the fish? The All-Sufficient is sufficient for my largest want. He who is sufficient for earth and heaven is certainly able to meet the case of one poor worm like me.

Let us, then, fall back upon our God and His grace. If He does not remove our grief, He will enable us to bear it. His strength shall be poured into us till the worm shall thresh the mountains, and a nothing shall be victor over all the high and mighty ones. It is better for us to have God's strength than our own; for if we were a thousand times as strong as we are, it would amount to nothing in the face of the enemy; and if we could be weaker than we are, which is scarcely possible, yet we could do all things through Christ.

November 9: Necessary Knowledge

***Thus shall they know that I the Lord their God am with them,
and that they, even the house of Israel, are my people, saith the Lord God.
(Ezekiel 34:30)***

To be the Lord's own people is a choice blessing, but to know that we are such is a comfortable blessing. It is one thing to hope that God is with us and another thing to know that He is so. Faith saves us, but assurance satisfies us. We take God to be our God when we believe in Him; but we get the joy of Him when we know that He is ours and that we are His. No believer should be content with hoping and trusting; he should ask the Lord to lead him on to full assurance, so that matters of hope may become matters of certainty.

It is when we enjoy covenant blessings and see our Lord Jesus raised up for us as a plant of renown that we come to a clear knowledge of the favor of God toward us. Not by law, but by grace do we learn that we are the Lord's people. Let us always turn our eyes in the direction of free grace. Assurance of faith can never come by the works of the law. It is an evangelical virtue and can only reach us in a gospel way. Let us not look within. Let us look to the Lord alone. As we see Jesus we shall see our salvation.

Lord, send us such a flood-tide of Thy love that we shall be washed beyond the mire of doubt and fear.

November 10: Walk Without Stumbling

He will not suffer thy foot to be moved.

(Psalm 121:3)

If the Lord will not suffer it, neither men nor devils can do it. How greatly would they rejoice if they could give us a disgraceful fall, drive us from our position, and bury us out of memory! They could do this to their heart's content were it not for one hindrance, and only one: the Lord will not suffer it; and if He does not suffer it, we shall not suffer it.

The way of life is like traveling among the Alps. Along the mountain path one is constantly exposed to the slipping of the foot. Where the way is high the head is apt to swim, and then the feet soon slide; there are spots which are smooth as glass and others that are rough with loose stones, and in either of these a fall is hard to avoid. He who throughout life is enabled to keep himself upright and to walk without stumbling has the best of reasons for gratitude. What with pitfalls and snares, weak knees, weary feet, and subtle enemies, no child of God would stand fast for an hour were it not for the faithful love which will not suffer his foot to be moved.

*Amidst a thousand snares I stand
Upheld and guarded by thy hand;
That hand unseen shall hold me still,
And lead me to thy holy hill.*

November 11: The Lord's Free Men

***For sin shall not have dominion over you:
for ye are not under the law, but under grace.
(Romans 6:14)***

Sin will reign if it can: it cannot be satisfied with any place below the throne of the heart. We sometimes fear that it will conquer us, and then we cry unto the Lord, "Let not any iniquity have dominion over me. This is His comforting answer: "Sin shall not have dominion over you. " It may assail you and even wound you, but it shall never establish sovereignty over you.

If we were under the law, our sin would gather strength and hold us under its power; for it is the punishment of sin that a man comes under the power of sin. As we are under the covenant of grace, we are secured against departing from the living God by the sure declaration of the covenant. Grace is promised to us by which we are restored from our wanderings, cleansed from our impurities, and set free from the chains of habit.

We must lie down in despair and be "content to serve the Egyptians" if we were still as slaves working for eternal life; but since we are the Lord's free men, we take courage to fight with our corruptions and temptations, being assured that sin shall never bring us under its sway again. God Himself giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

November 12: Sanctified Souls Are Satisfied

***My people shall be satisfied with my goodness, saith the Lord.
(Jeremiah 31:14)***

Note the "my" which comes twice: "My people shall be satisfied with my goodness."

The kind of people who are satisfied with God are marked out as God's own. He is pleased with them, for they are pleased with Him. They call Him their God, and He calls them His people; He is satisfied to take them for a portion, and they are satisfied with Him for their portion. There is a mutual communion of delight between God's Israel and Israel's God.

These people are satisfied. This is a grand thing. Very few of the sons of men are ever satisfied, let their lot be what it may; they have swallowed the horse-leech, and it continually cries, "Give! give!" Only sanctified souls are satisfied souls. God Himself must both convert us and content us.

It is no wonder that the Lord's people should be satisfied with the goodness of their Lord. Here is goodness without mixture, bounty without stint, mercy without chiding, love without change, favor without reserve. If God's goodness does not satisfy us, what will? What! are we still groaning? Surely there is a wrong desire within if it be one which God's goodness does not satisfy.

Lord, I am satisfied. Blessed be Thy name.

November 13: The Unfailing Watch

Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.

(Psalm 121:4)

Jehovah is "the Keeper of Israel." No form of unconsciousness ever steals over Him, neither the deeper slumber nor the slightest sleep. He never fails to watch the house and the heart of His people. This is a sufficient reason for our resting in perfect peace. Alexander said that he slept because his friend Parmenio watched; much more may we sleep because our God is our guard.

"Behold" is here set up to call our attention to the cheering truth. Israel, when he had a stone for his pillow, fell asleep; but His God was awake and came in vision to His servant. When we lie defenseless, Jehovah Himself will cover our head.

The Lord keeps His people as a rich man keeps his treasure, as a captain keeps a city with a garrison, as a sentry keeps watch over his sovereign. None can harm those who are in such keeping. Let me put my soul into His dear hands. He never forgets us, never ceases actively to care for us, never finds Himself unable to preserve us.

O my Lord, keep me, lest I wander and fall and perish. Keep me, that I may keep Thy commandments. By Thine unslumbering care prevent my sleeping like the sluggard and perishing like those who sleep the sleep of death.

November 14: The Name to Use

If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it.

(John 14:14)

What a wide promise! Anything! Whether large or small, all my needs are covered by that word anything. Come, my soul, be free at the mercy seat, and hear thy Lord saying to thee, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it."

What a wise promise! We are always to ask in the name of Jesus. While this encourages us, it also honors Him. This is a constant plea. Occasionally every other plea is darkened, especially such as we could draw from our own relation to God or our experience of His grace; but at such times the name of Jesus is as mighty at the throne as ever, and we may plead it with full assurance.

What an instructive prayer! I may not ask for anything to which I cannot put Christ's hand and seal. I dare not use my Lord's name to a selfish or willful petition. I may only use my Lord's name to prayers which He would Himself pray if He were in my case. It is a high privilege to be authorized to ask in the name of Jesus as if Jesus Himself asked; but our love to Him will never allow us to set that name where He would not have set it.

Am I asking for that which Jesus approves? Dare I put His seal to my prayer? Then I have that which I seek of the Father.

November 15: Limitless Riches

***My God shall supply all your need
according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.
(Philippians 4:19)***

Paul's God is our God and will supply all our need. Paul felt sure of this in reference to the Philippians, and we feel sure of it as to ourselves. God will do it, for it is like Him: He loves us, He delights to bless us, and it will glorify Him to do so. His pity, His power, His love, His faithfulness, all work together that we be not famished.

What a measure doth the Lord go by: "According to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." The riches of His grace are large, but what shall we say of the riches of His glory? His "riches of glory by Christ Jesus"-who shall form an estimate of this? According to this immeasurable measure will God fill up the immense abyss of our necessities. He makes the Lord Jesus the receptacle and the channel of His fullness, and then He imparts to us His wealth of love in its highest form. Hallelujah!

The writer knows what it is to be tried in the work of the Lord. Fidelity has been recompensed with anger, and liberal givers have stopped their subscriptions; but he whom they sought to oppress has not been one penny the poorer, nay, rather he has been the richer; for this promise has been true, "My God shall supply all your need." God's supplies are surer than any bank.

November 16: Weapons Doomed to Fail

***No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper;
and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn.
(Isaiah 54:17)***

There is great clatter in the forges and smithies of the enemy. They are making weapons wherewith to smite the saints. They could not even do as much as this if the Lord of saints did not allow them; for He has created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire. But see how busily they labor! How many swords and spears they fashion! It matters nothing, for on the blade of every weapon you may read this inscription: It shall not Prosper.

But now listen to another noise: it is the strife of tongues. Tongues are more terrible instruments than can be made with hammers and anvils, and the evil which they inflict cuts deeper and spreads wider. What will become of us now? Slander, falsehood, insinuation, ridicule-these are poisoned arrows; how can we meet them? The Lord God promises us that, if we cannot silence them, we shall, at least, escape from being ruined by them. They condemn us for the moment, but we shall condemn them at last and forever. The mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped, and their falsehoods shall be turned to the honor of those good men who suffered by them.

November 17: God Never Forsakes

***For the Lord will not cast off his people,
neither will he forsake his inheritance.***

(Psalm 94:14)

No, nor will He cast even so much as one of them. Man has his castoffs, but God has none; for His choice is unchangeable, and His love is everlasting. None can find out a single person whom God has forsaken after having revealed Himself savingly to him.

This grand truth is mentioned in the psalm to cheer the heart of the afflicted. The Lord chastens His own; but He never forsakes them. The result of the double work of the law and the rod is our instruction, and the fruit of that instruction is a quieting of spirit, a sobriety of mind, out of which comes rest. The ungodly are let alone till the pit is digged into which they will fall and be taken; but the godly are sent to school to be prepared for their glorious destiny hereafter. Judgment will return and finish its work upon the rebels, but it will equally return to vindicate the sincere and godly. Hence we may bear the rod of chastisement with calm submission; it means not anger, but love.

*God may chasten and correct,
But He never can neglect;
May in faithfulness reprove,
But He ne'er can cease to love.*

November 18: Clearly Supernatural

In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem: and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them. (Zechariah 12:8)

One of the best methods of the Lord's defending His people is to make them strong in inward might. Men are better than walls, and faith is stronger than castles.

The Lord can take the feeblest among us and make him like David, the champion of Israel. Lord, do this with me! Infuse Thy power into me, and fill me with sacred courage that I may face the giant with sling and stone, confident in God.

The Lord can make His greatest champions far mightier than they are: David can be as God, as the angel of Jehovah. This would be a marvelous development, but it is possible, or it would not be spoken of. O Lord, work with the best of our leaders! Show us what Thou art able to do—namely, to raise Thy faithful servants to a height of grace and holiness which shall be clearly supernatural!

Lord, dwell in Thy saints, and they shall be as God; put Thy might into them, and they shall be as the living creatures who dwell in the presence of Jehovah. Fulfill this promise to Thine entire church in this our day, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

November 19: From Obedience to Blessing

From this day will I bless you.

(Haggai 2:19)

Future things are hidden from us. Yet here is a glass in which we may see the unborn years. The Lord says, "From this day will I bless you."

It is worthwhile to note the day which is referred to in this promise. There had been failure of crops, blasting, and mildew, and all because of the people's sin. Now, the Lord saw these chastened ones commencing to obey His word and build His temple, and therefore He says, "From the day that the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid, consider. From this day will I bless you." If we have lived in any sin, and the Spirit leads us to purge ourselves of it, we may reckon upon the blessing of the Lord. His smile, His Spirit, His grace, His fuller revelation of His truth will all prove to us an enlarged blessing. We may fall into greater opposition from man because of our faithfulness, but we shall rise to closer dealings with the Lord our God and a clearer sight of our acceptance in Him.

Lord, I am resolved to be more true to Thee and more exact in my following of Thy doctrine and Thy precept; and I pray Thee, therefore, by Christ Jesus, to increase the blessedness of my daily life henceforth and forever.

November 20: Hunger Satisfied

***For he satisfieth the longing soul,
and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.
(Psalm 107:9)***

It is well to have longings, and the more intense they are the better. The Lord will satisfy soul-longings, however great and all-absorbing they may be. Let us greatly long, for God will greatly give. We are never in a right state of mind when we are contented with ourselves and are free from longings. Desires for more grace and groanings which cannot be uttered are growing pains, and we should wish to feel them more and more. Blessed Spirit, make us sigh and cry after better things and for more of the best things!

Hunger is by no means a pleasant sensation. Yet blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness. Such persons shall not only have their hunger relieved with a little food, but they shall be filled. They shall not be filled with any sort of rough stuff, but their diet shall be worthy of their good Lord, for they shall be filled with goodness by Jehovah Himself.

Come, let us not fret because we long and hunger, but let us hear the voice of the psalmist as he also longs and hungers to see God magnified. "Oh, that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men."

November 21: The Outward, Upward Look

***Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth;
for I am God, and there is none else.
(Isaiah 45:22)***

This is a promise of promises. It lies at the foundation of our spiritual life. Salvation comes through a look at Him who is "a just God and a Saviour." How simple is the direction! "Look unto me." How reasonable is the requirement! Surely the creature should look to the Creator. We have looked elsewhere long enough; it is time that we look alone to Him who invites our expectation and promises to give us His salvation.

Only a look! Will we not look at once? We are to bring nothing in ourselves but to look outward and upward to our Lord on His throne, whither He has gone up from the cross. A look requires no preparation, no violent effort: it needs neither wit nor wisdom, wealth nor strength. All that we need is in the Lord our God, and if we look to Him for everything, that everything shall be ours, and we shall be saved.

Come, far-off ones, look hither! Ye ends of the earth, turn your eyes this way! As from the furthest regions men may see the sun and enjoy his light, so you who lie in death's borders at the very gates of hell may by a look receive the light of God, the life of heaven, the salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is God and therefore able to save.

November 22: No Condemnation

In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve. (Jeremiah 50:20)

A glorious word indeed! What a perfect pardon is here promised to the sinful nations of Israel and Judah! Sin is to be so removed that it shall not be found, so blotted out that there shall be none. Glory be unto the God of pardons!

Satan seeks out sins wherewith to accuse us, our enemies seek them that they may lay them to our charge, and our own conscience seeks them even with a morbid eagerness. But when the Lord applies the precious blood of Jesus, we fear no form of search, for "there shall be none"; "they shall not be found." The Lord hath caused the sins of His people to cease to be: He hath finished transgression and made an end of sin. The sacrifice of Jesus has cast our sins into the depths of the sea. This makes us dance for joy.

The reason for the obliteration of sin lies in the fact that Jehovah Himself pardons His chosen ones. His word of grace is not only royal but divine. He speaks absolution, and we are absolved. He applies the atonement, and from that hour His people are beyond all fear of condemnation. Blessed be the name of the sin-annihilating God!

November 23: Acquiring Perseverance

***The Lord thy God will put out those nations before thee by little and little.
(Deuteronomy 7:22)***

We are not to expect to win victories for the Lord Jesus by a single blow. Evil principles and practices die hard. In some places it takes years of labor to drive out even one of the many vices which defile the inhabitants. We must carry on the war with all our might, even when favored with little manifest success.

Our business in this world is to conquer it for Jesus. We are not to make compromises but to exterminate evils. We are not to seek popularity but to wage unceasing war with iniquity. Infidelity, popery, drink, impurity, oppression, worldliness, error; these are all to be "put out."

The Lord our God can alone accomplish this. He works by His faithful servants, and blessed be His name. He promises that He will so work. "Jehovah thy God will put out those nations before thee." This He will do by degrees that we may learn perseverance, may increase in faith, may earnestly watch, and may avoid carnal security. Let us thank God for a little success and pray for more. Let us never sheathe the sword till the whole land is won for Jesus.

Courage, my heart! Go on little by little, for many littles will make a great whole.

November 24: Pardon and Forgiveness

He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever.

(Psalm 103:9)

He will chide sometimes, or He would not be a wise Father for such poor, erring children as we are. His chiding is very painful to those who are true, because they feel how sadly they deserve it and how wrong it is on their part to grieve Him. We know what this chiding means, and we bow before the Lord, mourning that we should cause Him to be angry with us.

But what a comfort we find in these lines! "Not always" will He chide. If we repent and turn to Him with hearts broken for sin and broken from sin, He will smile upon us at once. It is no pleasure to Him to turn a frowning face toward those whom He loves with all His heart: it is His joy that our joy should be full.

Come, let us seek His face. There is no reason for despair, nor even for despondency. Let us love a chiding God, and before long we shall sing, "Thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me." Be gone, ye dark forebodings, ye ravens of the soul! Come in, ye humble hopes and grateful memories, ye doves of the heart! He who pardoned us long ago as a judge will again forgive us as a father, and we shall rejoice in His sweet, unchanging love.

November 25: Mountains Turned to Plains

Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain; and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it. (Zechariah 4:7)

At this hour a mountain of difficulty, distress, or necessity may be in our way, and natural reason sees no path over it, or through it, or round it. Let faith come in, and straightway the mountain disappears and becomes a plain. But faith must first hear the word of the Lord—"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." This grand truth is a prime necessity for meeting the insurmountable trials of life.

I see that I can do nothing and that all reliance on man is vanity. "Not by might." I see that no visible means can be relied on, but the force is in the invisible Spirit. God alone must work, and men and means must be nothing accounted of. If it be so that the Almighty God takes up the concerns of His people, then great mountains are nothing. He can remove worlds as boys toss balls about or drive them with their foot. This power He can lend to me. If the Lord bids me move an Alp I can do it through His name. It may be a great mountain, but even before my feebleness it shall become a plain; for the Lord hath said it. What can I be afraid of with God on my side?

November 26: Heavenly Alchemy

Your sorrow shall be turned into joy.

(John 16:20)

Their particular sorrow was the death and absence of their Lord, and it was turned into joy when He rose from the dead and showed Himself in their midst. All the sorrows of saints shall be thus transmuted, even the worst of them, which look as if they must forever remain fountains of bitterness.

Then the more sorrow, the more joy. If we have loads of sorrow, then the Lord's power will turn them into tons of joy. Then the bitterer the trouble the sweeter the pleasure: the swinging of the pendulum far to the left will cause it to go all the farther to the right. The remembrance of the grief shall heighten the flavor of the delight: we shall set the one in contrast with the other, and the brilliance of the diamond shall be the more clearly seen because of the black foil behind it.

Come, my heart, cheer up! In a little while I shall be as glad as I am now gloomy. Jesus tells me that by a heavenly alchemy my sorrow shall be turned into joy. I do not see how it is to be, but I believe it, and I begin to sing by way of anticipation. This depression of spirit is not for long; I shall soon be up among the happy ones who praise the Lord day and night, and there I shall sing of the mercy which delivered me out of great afflictions.

November 27: Rest in All Thy Goings

***And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.
(Exodus 33:14)***

Precious promise! Lord, enable me to appropriate it as all my own.

We must go at certain times from our abode, for here we have no continuing city. It often happens that when we feel most at home in a place, we are suddenly called away from it. Here is the antidote for this ill. The Lord Himself will keep us company. His presence, which includes His favor, His fellowship, His care, and His power, shall be ever with us in every one of our marchings. This means far more than it says; for, in fact, it means all things. If we have God present with us, we have possession of heaven and earth. Go with me, Lord, and then command me where Thou wilt!

But we hope to find a place of rest. The text promises it. We are to have rest of God's own giving, making, and preserving. His presence will cause us to rest even when we are on the march, yea, even in the midst of battle. Rest! Thrice blessed word. Can it ever be enjoyed by mortals? Yes, there is the promise, and by faith we plead it. Rest comes from the Comforter, from the Prince of Peace, and from the glorious Father who rested on the seventh day from all His works. To be with God is to rest in the most emphatic sense.

November 28: Doing what God Can Bless

***The Lord shall command the blessing upon thee in thy storehouses,
and in all that thou settest thine hand unto.***

(Deuteronomy 28:8)

If we obey the Lord our God He will bless that which He gives us. Riches are no curse when blessed of the Lord. When men have more than they require for their immediate need and begin to lay up in storehouses, the dry rot of covetousness or the blight of hard-heartedness is apt to follow the accumulation; but with God's blessing it is not so. Prudence arranges the saving, liberality directs the spending, gratitude maintains consecration, and praise sweetens enjoyment. It is a great mercy to have God's blessing in one's iron safe and on one's banking account.

What a favor is made ours by the last clause! "The Lord shall bless thee in all that thou settest thine hand unto." We would not put our hand to anything upon which we dare not ask God's blessing, neither would we go about it without prayer and faith. But what a privilege to be able to look for the Lord's help in every enterprise! Some talk of a lucky man: the blessing of the Lord is better than luck. The patronage of the great is nothing to the favor of God. Self-reliance is all very well; but the Lord's blessing is infinitely more than all the fruit of talent, genius, or tact.

November 29: Know How to Wait

He that believeth shall not make haste.

(Isaiah 28:16)

He shall make haste to keep the Lord's commandments; but he shall not make haste in any impatient or improper sense.

He shall not haste to run away, for he shall not be overcome with the fear which causes panic. When others are flying hither and thither as if their wits had failed them, the believer shall be quiet, calm, and deliberate, and so shall be able to act wisely in the hour of trial.

He shall not haste in his expectations, craving his good things at once and on the spot, but he will wait God's time. Some are in a desperate hurry to have the bird in the hand, for they regard the Lord's promise as a bird in the bush, not likely to be theirs. Believers know how to wait..

He shall not haste by plunging into wrong or questionable action. Unbelief must be doing something, and thus it works its own undoing; but faith makes no more haste than good speed, and thus it is not forced to go back sorrowfully by the way which it followed heedlessly.

How is it with me? Am I believing, and am I therefore keeping to the believer's pace, which is walking with God? Peace, fluttering spirit! Oh, rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him! Heart, see that thou do this at once!

November 30: God Is in the Front Line

***The Lord, he it is that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed.
(Deuteronomy 31:8)***

In the presence of a great work or a great warfare, here is a text which should help us to buckle on our harness. If Jehovah Himself goes before us, it must be safe to follow. Who can obstruct our progress if the Lord Himself is in the van? Come, brother soldiers, let us make a prompt advance! Why do we hesitate to pass on to victory?

Nor is the Lord before us only; He is with us. Above, beneath, around, within is the omnipotent, omnipresent One. In all time, even to eternity, He will be with us even as He has been. How this should nerve our arm! Dash at it boldly, ye soldiers of the cross, for the Lord of hosts is with us!

Being before us and with us, He will never withdraw His help. He cannot fail in Himself, and He will not fail toward us. He will continue to help us according to our need, even to the end. As He cannot fail us, so He will not forsake us. He will always be both able and willing to grant us strength and succor till fighting days are gone.

Let us not fear nor be dismayed; for the Lord of hosts will go down to the battle with us, will bear the brunt of the fight, and give us the victory.

December 1: True Walking Posture
He that walketh uprightly walketh surely.
(Proverbs 10:9)

His walk may be slow, but it is sure. He that hasteth to be rich shall not be innocent nor sure; but steady perseverance in integrity, if it does not bring riches, will certainly bring peace. In doing that which is just and right, we are like one walking upon a rock, for we have confidence that every step we take is upon solid and safe ground. On the other hand, the utmost success through questionable transactions must always be hollow and treacherous, and the man who has gained it must always be afraid that a day of reckoning will come, and then his gains will condemn him.

Let us stick to truth and righteousness. By God's grace let us imitate our Lord and Master, in whose mouth no deceit was ever found. Let us not be afraid of being poor, nor of being treated with contempt. Never, on any account whatever, let us do that which our conscience cannot justify. If we lose inward peace, we lose more than a fortune can buy. If we keep in the Lord's own way and never sin against our conscience, our way is sure against all comers. Who is he that can harm us if we be followers of that which is good? We may be thought fools by fools if we are firm in our integrity; but in the place where judgment is infallible we shall be approved.

December 2: Our Holiest Example

***I have set the Lord always before me:
because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.
(Psalm 16:8)***

This is the way to live. With God always before us, we shall have the noblest companionship, the holiest example, the sweetest consolation, and the mightiest influence. This must be a resolute act of the mind. "I have set," and it must be maintained as a set and settled thing. Always to have an eye to the Lord's eye and an ear for the Lord's voice—this is the right state for the godly man. His God is near him, filling the horizon of his vision, leading the way of his life, and furnishing the theme of his meditation. What vanities we should avoid, what sins we should overcome, what virtues we should exhibit, what joys we should experience if we did indeed set the Lord always before us! Why not?

This is the way to be safe. The Lord being ever in our minds, we come to feel safety and certainty because of His being so near. He is at our right hand to guide and aid us; and hence we are not moved by fear, nor force, nor fraud, nor fickleness. When God stands at a man's right hand, that man is himself sure to stand. Come on, then, ye foemen of the truth! Rush against me like a furious tempest, if ye will. God upholds me. God abides with me. Whom shall I fear?

December 3: Peace Whatever Exposure

***I will make them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods.
(Ezekiel 34:25)***

It is the height of grace that Jehovah should be in covenant with man, a feeble, sinful, and dying creature. Yet the Lord has solemnly entered into a faithful compact with us, and from that covenant He will never turn aside. In virtue of this covenant we are safe. As lions and wolves are driven off by shepherds, so shall all noxious influences be chased away. The Lord will give us rest from disturbers and destroyers; the evil beasts shall cease out of the land. O Lord, make this Thy promise good even now!

The Lord's people are to enjoy security in places of the greatest exposure: wilderness and woods are to be as pastures and folds to the flock of Christ. If the Lord does not change the place for the better, He will make us the better in the place. The wilderness is not a place to dwell in, but the Lord can make it so; in the woods one feels hound to watch rather than to sleep, and yet the Lord giveth His beloved sleep even there. Nothing without or within should cause any fear to the child of God. By faith the wilderness can become the suburbs of heaven and the woods the vestibule of glory.

December 4: Covered and Protected

***He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust:
his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.
(Psalm 91:4)***

A condescending simile indeed! Just as a hen protects her brood and allows them to nestle under her wings, so will the Lord defend His people and permit them to hide away in Him. Have we not seen the little chicks peeping out from under the mother's feathers? Have we not heard their little cry of contented joy? In this way let us shelter ourselves in our God and feel overflowing peace in knowing that He is guarding us.

While the Lord covers us, we trust. It would be strange if we did not. How can we distrust when Jehovah Himself becomes house and home, refuge and rest to us?

This done, we go out to war in His name and enjoy the same guardian care. We need shield and buckler, and when we implicitly trust God, even as the chick trusts the hen, we find His truth arming us from head to foot. The Lord cannot lie; He must be faithful to His people; His promise must stand. This sure truth is all the shield we need. Behind it we defy the fiery darts of the enemy.

Come, my soul, hide under those great wings, lose thyself among those soft feathers! How happy thou art!

December 5: High Places of Defense

***He shall dwell on high: his place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks:
bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure.***

(Isaiah 33:16)

The man to whom God has given grace to be of blameless life dwells in perfect security.

He dwells on high, above the world, out of gunshot of the enemy, and near to heaven. He has high aims and motives, and he finds high comforts and company. He rejoices in the mountains of eternal love, wherein he has his abode.

He is defended by munitions of stupendous rock. The firmest things in the universe are the promises and purposes of the unchanging God, and these are the safeguard of the obedient believer.

He is provided for by this great promise: "Bread shall be given him." As the enemy cannot climb the fort, nor break down the rampart, so the fortress cannot be captured by siege and famine. The Lord, who rained manna in the wilderness, will keep His people in good store even when they are surrounded by those who would starve them.

But what if water should fail? That cannot be. "His waters shall be sure." There is a never-failing well within the impregnable fortress. The Lord sees that nothing is wanting. None can touch the citizen of the true Zion. However fierce the enemy, the Lord will preserve His chosen.

December 6: "Through," Not Engulfed

When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. (Isaiah 43:2)

Bridge there is none: we must go through the waters and feel the rush of the rivers. The presence of God in the flood is better than a ferryboat. Tried we must be, but triumphant we shall be; for Jehovah Himself, who is mightier than many waters, shall be with us. Whenever else He may be away from His people, the Lord will surely be with them in difficulties and dangers. The sorrows of life may rise to an extraordinary height, but the Lord is equal to every occasion.

The enemies of God can put in our way dangers of their own making, namely, persecutions and cruel mockings, which are like a burning, fiery furnace. What then? We shall walk through the fires. God being with us, we shall not be burned; nay, not even the smell of fire shall remain upon us.

Oh, the wonderful security of the heaven-born and heaven-bound pilgrim! Floods cannot drown him, nor fires burn him. Thy presence, O Lord, is the protection of Thy saints from the varied perils of the road. Behold, in faith I commit myself unto Thee, and my spirit enters into rest.

December 7: Gift of Strength; Peace to Bless

***The Lord will give strength unto his people;
the Lord will bless his people with peace.***

(Psalm 29:11)

David had just heard the voice of the Lord in a thunderstorm and had seen His power in the hurricane whose path he had described; and now, in the cool calm after the storm, that overwhelming power by which heaven and earth are shaken is promised to be the strength of the chosen. He who wings the unerring bolt will give to His redeemed the wings of eagles; He who shakes the earth with His voice will terrify the enemies of His saints and give His children peace. Why are we weak when we have divine strength to flee to? Why are we troubled when the Lord's own peace is ours? Jesus, the mighty God, is our strength; let us put Him on and go forth to our service. Jesus, our blessed Lord, is also our peace; let us repose in Him this day and end our fears. What a blessing to have Him for our strength and peace both now and forever!

That same God who rides upon the storm in days of tempest will also rule the hurricane of our tribulation and send us, before long, days of peace. We shall have strength for storms and songs for fair weather. Let us begin to sing at once unto God, our strength and our peace. Away, dark thoughts! Up, faith and hope!

December 8: Following Leads to Honor

***If any man serve me, let him follow me;
and where I am, there shall also my servant be:
if any man serve me, him will my Father honor. (John 12:26)***

The highest service is imitation. If I would be Christ's servant I must be His follower. To do as Jesus did is the surest way of bringing honor to His name. Let me mind this every day.

If I imitate Jesus I shall have His company: if I am like Him I shall be with Him. In due time He will take me up to dwell with Him above, if, meanwhile, I have striven to follow Him here below. After His suffering our Lord came to His throne, and even so, after we have suffered a while with Him here below, we also shall arrive in glory. The issue of our Lord's life shall be the issue of ours: if we are with Him in His humiliation we shall be with Him in His glory. Come, my soul, pluck up courage and put down thy feet in the blood-marked footprints which thy Lord has left thee.

Let me not fail to note that the Father will honor those who follow His Son. If He sees me true to Jesus, He will put marks of favor and honor upon me for His Son's sake. No honor can be like this. Princes and emperors bestow the mere shadows of honor; the substance of glory comes from the Father. Wherefore, my soul, cling thou to thy Lord Jesus more closely than ever.

December 9: The "All" of Belief

***Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe,
all things are possible to him that believeth.
(Mark 9:23)***

Our unbelief is the greatest hindrance in our way; in fact, there is no other real difficulty as to our spiritual progress and prosperity. The Lord can do everything; but when He makes a rule that according to our faith so shall it be unto us, our unbelief ties the hands of His omnipotence.

Yes, the confederacies of evil shall be scattered if we can but believe. Despised truth shall lift its head if we will but have confidence in the God of truth. We can bear our load of trouble or pass uninjured through the waves of distress if we can gird our loins with the girdle of peace, that girdle which is buckled on by the hands of trust.

What can we not believe? Is everything possible except believing in God? Yet He is always true; why do we not believe in Him? He is always faithful to His word; why can we not trust Him? When we are in a right state of heart, faith costs no effort: it is then as natural for us to rely upon God as for a child to trust his father.

The worst of it is that we can believe God about everything except the present pressing trial. This is folly. Come, my soul, shake off such sinfulness, and trust thy God with the load, the labor, the longing of this present. This done, all is done.

December 10: God Is Our Ally

***But if thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak;
then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies,
and an adversary unto thine adversaries. (Exodus 23:22)***

The Lord Christ in the midst of His people is to be acknowledged and obeyed. He is the vice-regent of God and speaks in the Father's name, and it is ours implicitly and immediately to do as He commands. We shall lose the promise if we disregard the precept.

To full obedience how large the blessing! The Lord enters into a league with His people, offensive and defensive. He will bless those who bless us and curse those who curse us. God will go heart and soul with His people and enter in deepest sympathy into their position. What a protection this affords us! We need not concern ourselves about our adversaries when we are assured that they have become the adversaries of God. If Jehovah has taken up our quarrel, we may leave the foemen in His hands.

So far as our own interest is concerned we have no enemies; but for the cause of truth and righteousness we take up arms and go forth to conflict. In this sacred war we are allied with the eternal God, and if we carefully obey the law of our Lord Jesus, He is engaged to put forth all His power on our behalf. Wherefore we fear no man.

December 11: Trust and Do; Do and Trust

***Trust in the Lord, and do good;
so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.
(Psalm 37:3)***

Trust and do are words which go well together, in the order in which the Holy Spirit has placed them. We should have faith, and that faith should work. Trust in God sets us upon holy doing: we trust God for good, and then we do good. We do not sit still because we trust, but we arouse ourselves and expect the Lord to work through us and by us. It is not ours to worry and do evil but to trust and do good. We neither trust without doing nor do without trusting.

Adversaries would root us out if they could; but by trusting and doing we dwell in the land. We will not go into Egypt, but we will remain in Immanuel's land-the providence of God, the Canaan of covenant love. We are not so easily to be got rid of as the Lord's enemies suppose. They cannot thrust us Out nor stamp us out: where God has given us a name and a place, there we abide.

But what about the supply of our necessities? The Lord has put a "verily" into this promise. As sure as God is true, His people shall be fed. It is theirs to trust and to do, and it is the Lord's to do according to their trust. If not fed by ravens, or fed by an Obadiah, or fed by a widow, yet they shall be fed somehow. Away, ye fears!

December 12: A Quiet Heart

In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength.

(Isaiah 30:15)

It is always weakness to be fretting and worrying, questioning and mistrusting. What can we do if we wear ourselves to skin and bone? Can we gain anything by fearing and fuming? Do we not unfit ourselves for action and unhinge our minds for wise decision? We are sinking by our struggles when we might float by faith.

Oh, for grace to be quiet! Why run from house to house to repeat the weary story which makes us more and more heart-sick as we tell it? Why even stay at home to cry out in agony because of wretched forebodings which may never be fulfilled? It would be well to keep a quiet tongue, but it would be far better if we had a quiet heart. Oh, to be still and know that Jehovah is God!

Oh, for grace to be confident in God! The holy One of Israel must defend and deliver His own. He cannot run back from His solemn declarations. We may make sure that every word of His will stand though the mountains should depart. He deserves to be confided in; and if we would display confidence and consequent quietness, we might be as happy as the spirits before the throne.

Come, my soul, return unto thy rest, and lean thy head upon the bosom of the Lord Jesus.

December 13: Evening Brightens into Day

It shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light.

(Zechariah 14:7)

It is a surprise that it should be so; for all things threaten that at evening time it shall be dark. God is wont to work in a way so much above our fears and beyond our hopes that we are greatly amazed and are led to praise His sovereign grace. No, it shall not be with us as our hearts are prophesying: the dark will not deepen into midnight, but it will on a sudden brighten into day. Never let us despair. In the worst times let us trust in the Lord who turneth the darkness of the shadow of death into the morning. When the tale of bricks is doubled Moses appears, and when tribulation abounds it is nearest its end.

This promise should assist our patience. The light may not fully come till our hopes are quite spent by waiting all day to no purpose. To the wicked the sun goes down while it is yet day: to the righteous the sun rises when it is almost night. May we not with patience wait for that heavenly light, which may be long in coming but is sure to prove itself well worth waiting for?

Come, my soul, take up thy parable and sing unto Him who will bless thee in life and in death, in a manner surpassing all that nature has ever seen when at its best.

December 14: Nothing Old

***And he that sat upon the throne said,
Behold, I make all things new.
(Revelation 21:5)***

Glory be to His name! All things need making new, for they are sadly battered and worn by sin. It is time that the old vesture was rolled up and laid aside, and that creation put on her Sunday suit. But no one else can make all things new except the Lord who made them at the first; for it needs as much power to make out of evil as to make out of nothing. Our Lord Jesus has undertaken the task, and He is fully competent for the performance of it. Already he has commenced His labor, and for centuries He has persevered in making new the hearts of men and the order of society. By and by He will make new the whole constitution of human government, and human nature shall be changed by His grace; and there shall come a day when the body shall be made new and raised like unto His glorious body.

What a joy to belong to a kingdom in which everything is being made new by the power of its King! We are not dying out: we are hastening on to a more glorious life. Despite the opposition of the powers of evil, our glorious Lord Jesus is accomplishing His purpose and making us, and all things about us, "new" and as full of beauty as when they first came from the hand of the Lord.

December 15: World Concord

***And they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more. (Isaiah 2:4)***

Oh, that these happy times were come! At present the nations are heavily armed and are inventing weapons more and more terrible, as if the chief end of man could only be answered by destroying myriads of his fellows. Yet peace will prevail one day; yes, and so prevail that the instruments of destruction shall be beaten into other shapes and used for better purposes.

How will this come about? By trade? By civilization? By arbitration? We do not believe it. Past experience forbids our trusting to means so feeble. Peace will be established only by the reign of the Prince of Peace. He must teach the people by His Spirit, renew their hearts by His grace, and reign over them by His supreme power, and then will they cease to wound and kill. Man is a monster when once his blood is up, and only the Lord Jesus can turn this lion into a lamb. By changing man's heart, his bloodthirsty passions are removed. Let every reader of this book of promises offer special prayer today to the Lord and Giver of Peace that He would speedily put an end to war and establish concord over the whole world.

December 16: Divine Expulsion

***Thou shalt drive out the Canaanites,
though they have iron chariots, and though they be strong.
(Joshua 17:18)***

It is a great encouragement to valor to be assured of victory, for then a man goes forth to war in confidence and ventures where else he had been afraid to go. Our warfare is with evil within us and around us, and we ought to be persuaded that we are able to get the victory and that we shall do so in the name of the Lord Jesus. We are not riding for a fall, but to win; and win we shall. The grace of God in its omnipotence is put forth for the overflow of evil in every form: hence the certainty of triumph.

Certain of our sins find chariots of iron in our constitution, our former habits, our associations, and our occupations. Nevertheless we must overcome them. They are very strong, and in reference to them we are very weak; yet in the name of God we must master them, and we will. If one sin has dominion of us we are not the Lord's free men. A man who is held by only one chain is still a captive. There is no going to heaven with one sin ruling within us, for of the saints it is said, "Sin shall not have dominion over you." Up, then, and slay every Canaanite, and break to shivers every chariot of iron! The Lord of hosts is with us, and who shall resist His sin-destroying power?

December 17: Nearest and Dearest Fellowship

So shall we ever be with the Lord.

(1 Thessalonians 4:17)

While we are here the Lord is with us, and when we are called away we are with Him. There is no dividing the saint from His Savior. They are one, and they always must be one: Jesus cannot be without His own people, for He would be a Head without a body. Whether caught up into the air, or resting in paradise, or sojourning here, we are with Jesus; and who shall separate us from Him?

What a joy is this! Our supreme honor, rest, comfort, delight, is to be with the Lord. We cannot conceive of anything which can surpass or even equal this divine society. By holy fellowship we must be with Him in His humiliation, rejection, and travail, and then we shall be with Him in His glory. Before long we shall be with Him in His rest and in His royalty, in His expectation and in His manifestation. We shall fare as He fares and triumph as He triumphs.

O my Lord, if I am to be forever with Thee, I have a destiny incomparable. I will not envy an archangel. To be forever with the Lord is my idea of heaven at its best. Not the harps of gold, nor the crowns unfading, nor the light unclouded is glory to me; but Jesus, Jesus Himself, and myself forever with Him in nearest and dearest fellowship.

December 18: Defended and Covered

As birds flying, so will the Lord of hosts defend Jerusalem.

(Isaiah 31:5)

With hurrying wing the mother bird hastens up to the protection of her young. She wastes no time upon the road when coming to supply them with food or guard them from danger. Thus as on eagle's wings will the Lord come for the defense of His chosen; yea, He will ride upon the wings of the wind.

With outspread wing the mother covers her little ones in the nest. She hides them away by interposing her own body. The hen yields her own warmth to her chicks and makes her wings a house, in which they dwell at home. Thus doth Jehovah Himself become the protection of His elect. He Himself is their refuge, their abode, their all.

As birds flying and birds covering (for the word means both), so will the Lord be unto us: and this He will be repeatedly and successfully. We shall be defended and preserved from all evil: the Lord who likens Himself to birds will not be like them in their feebleness, for He is Jehovah of hosts. Let this be our comfort, that almighty love will be swift to succor and sure to cover. The wing of God is more quick and more tender than the wing of a bird, and we will put our trust under its shadow henceforth and forever.

December 19: Afflictions, But No Broken Bones

He keepeth all his bones; not one of them is broken. (Psalm 34:20)

This promise by the context is referred to the much afflicted righteous man: "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all." He may suffer skin wounds and flesh wounds, but no great harm shall be done; "not a bone of him shall be broken."

This is great comfort to a tried child of God, and comfort which I dare accept; for up to this hour I have suffered no real damage from my many afflictions. I have neither lost faith, nor hope, nor love. Nay so far from losing these bones of character, they have gained in strength and energy. I have more knowledge, more experience, more patience, more stability than I had before the trials came. Not even my joy has been destroyed. Many a bruise have I had by sickness, bereavement, depression, slander, and opposition; but the bruise has healed, and there has been no compound fracture of a bone, not even a simple one. The reason is not far to seek. If we trust in the Lord, He keeps all our bones; and if He keeps them, we may be sure that not one of them is broken.

Come, my heart, do not sorrow. Thou art smarting, but there are no bones broken. Endure hardness and bid defiance to fear.

December 20: Men as Men; God as God

I, even I, am he that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; and forgettest the Lord thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? and where is the fury of the oppressor? (Isaiah 51:12-13)

Let the text itself be taken as the portion for today. There is no need to enlarge upon it. Trembling one, read it, believe it, feed on it, and plead it before the Lord. He whom you fear is only a man after all; while He who promises to comfort you is God, your Maker, and the creator of heaven and earth. Infinite comfort more than covers a very limited danger.

"Where is the fury of the oppressor?" It is in the Lord's hand. It is only the fury of a dying creature; fury which will end as soon as the breath is gone from the nostril. Why, then, should we stand in awe of one who is as frail as ourselves? Let us not dishonor our God by making a god of puny man. We can make an idol of a man by rendering to him excessive fear as well as by paying him inordinate love. Let us treat men as men, and God as God; and then we shall go calmly on in the path of duty, fearing the Lord and fearing nobody else.

December 21: From Anger to Love

He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. (Micah 7:19)

God never turns from His love, but He soon turns from His wrath. His love to His chosen is according to His nature; His anger is only according to His office. He loves because He is love; He frowns because it is necessary for our good. He will come back to the place in which His heart rests, namely, His love to His own, and then He will take pity upon our griefs and end them.

What a choice promise is this—"He will subdue our iniquities"! He will conquer them. They cry to enslave us, but the Lord will give us victory over them by His own right hand. Like the Canaanites, they shall be beaten, put under the yoke, and ultimately slain.

As for the guilt of our sins, how gloriously is that removed! "All their sins"—yes, the whole host of them; "thou wilt cast"—only an almighty arm could perform such a wonder; "into the depths of the sea"—where Pharaoh and his chariots went down. Not into the shallows out of which they might be washed up by the tide, but into the "depths" shall our sins be hurled. They are all gone. They sank into the bottom like a stone. Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

December 22: Immediately Present

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

(Psalm 46:1)

A help that is not present when we need it is of small value. The anchor which is left at home is of no use to the seaman in the hour of storm; the money which he used to have is of no worth to the debtor when a writ is out against him. Very few earthly helps could be called "very present": they are usually far in the seeking, far in the using, and farther still when once used. But as for the Lord our God, He is present when we seek Him, present when we need Him, and present when we have already enjoyed His aid.

He is more than "present," He is very present. More present than the nearest friend can be, for He is in us in our trouble; more present than we are to ourselves, for sometimes we lack presence of mind. He is always present, effectually present, sympathetically present, altogether present. He is present now if this is a gloomy season. Let us rest ourselves upon Him. He is our refuge, let us hide in Him; He is our strength, let us array ourselves with Him; He is our help, let us lean upon Him; He is our very present help, let us repose in Him now. We need not have a moment's care or an instant's fear. "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge."

December 23: Precious Things

And of Joseph he said, Blessed of the Lord be his land, for the precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the deep that coucheth beneath. (Deuteronomy 33:13)

We may be rich in such things as Joseph obtained, and we may have them in a higher sense. Oh, for "the precious things of heaven"!

Power with God and the manifestation of power from God are most precious. We would enjoy the peace of God, the joy of the Lord, the glory of our God. The benediction of the three divine Persons in love, and grace, and fellowship we prize beyond the most fine gold. The things of earth are as nothing in preciousness compared with the things in heaven.

"The dew." How precious is this! How we pray and praise when we have the dew! What refreshing, what growth, what perfume, what life there is in us when the dew is about. Above all things else, as plants of the Lord's own right hand planting, we need the dew of His Holy Spirit.

"The deep that coucheth beneath." Surely this refers to that unseen ocean underground which supplies all the fresh springs which make glad the earth. Oh, to tap the eternal fountains! This is an unspeakable boon; let no believer rest till he possesses it. The all-sufficiency of Jehovah is ours forever. Let us resort to it now.

December 24: Over Jordan with Singing
Thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee.
(Deuteronomy 33:29)

That archenemy, the devil, is a liar from the beginning; but he is so very plausible that, like mother Eve, we are led to believe him. Yet in our experience we shall prove him a liar.

He says that we shall fall from grace, dishonor our profession, and perish with the doom of apostates; but, trusting in the Lord Jesus, we shall hold on our way and prove that Jesus loses none whom His Father gave Him. He tells us that our bread will fail, and we shall starve with our children; yet the Feeder of the ravens has not forgotten us yet, and He will never do so, but will prepare us a table in the presence of our enemies.

He whispers that the Lord will not deliver us Out of the trial which is looming in the distance, and he threatens that the last ounce will break the camel's back. What a liar he is! For the Lord will never leave us or forsake us. "Let him deliver him now!" cries the false fiend: but the Lord will silence him by coming to our rescue.

He takes great delight in telling us that death will prove too much for us. "How wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?" But there also he shall prove a liar unto us, and we shall pass through the river singing psalms of glory.

December 25: He Came; He Is Coming

***This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven,
shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.***

(Acts 1:11)

Many are celebrating our Lord's first coming this day; let us turn our thoughts to the promise of His second coming. This is as sure as the first advent and derives a great measure of its certainty from it. He who came as a lowly man to serve will assuredly come to take the reward of His service. He who came to suffer will not be slow in coming to reign.

This is our glorious hope, for we shall share His joy. Today we are in our concealment and humiliation, even as He was while here below; but when He cometh it will be our manifestation, even as it will be His revelation. Dead saints shall live at His appearing. The slandered and despised shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Then shall the saints appear as kings and priests, and the days of their mourning shall be ended. The long rest and inconceivable splendor of the millennial reign will be an abundant recompense for the ages of witnessing and warring.

Oh, that the Lord would come! He is coming! He is on the road and traveling quickly. The sound of His approach should be as music to our hearts! Ring out, ye bells of hope!

December 26: God Only, You Can Trust

***Peter answered and said unto him,
Though all men shall be offended because of thee,
yet will I never be offended. (Matthew 26:33)***

"Why," cries one, "this is no promise of God." Just so, but it was a promise of man, and therefore it came to nothing. Peter thought that he was saying what he should assuredly carry out; but a promise which has no better foundation than a human resolve will fall to the ground. No sooner did temptations arise than Peter denied his Master and used oaths to confirm his denial.

What is man's word? An earthen pot broken with a stroke. What is your own resolve? A blossom, which, with God's care, may come to fruit, but which, left to itself, will fall to the ground with the first wind that moves the bough.

On man's word hang only what it will bear.

On thine own resolve depend not at all.

On the promise of thy God hang time and eternity, this world and the next, thine all and the all of all thy beloved ones.

This volume is a checkbook for believers, and this page is meant as a warning as to what bank they draw upon and whose signature they accept. Rely upon Jesus without limit. Trust not thyself nor any born of woman, beyond due bounds; but trust thou only and wholly in the Lord.

December 27: His Kindness and Covenant

***For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed;
but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace
be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee. (Isaiah 54:10)***

One of the most delightful qualities of divine love is its abiding character. The pillars of the earth may be moved out of their places, but the kindness and the covenant of our merciful Jehovah never depart from His people. How happy my soul feels in a firm belief of this inspired declaration! The year is almost over, and the years of my life are growing few, but time does not change my Lord. New lamps are taking the place of the old; perpetual change is on all things, but our Lord is the same. Force overturns the hills, but no conceivable power can affect the eternal God. Nothing in the past, the present, or the future can cause Jehovah to be unkind to me.

My soul, rest in the eternal kindness of the Lord, who treats thee as one near of kin. Remember also the everlasting covenant. God is ever mindful of it—see that thou art mindful of it too. In Christ Jesus the glorious God has pledged Himself to thee to be thy God and to hold thee as one of His people. Kindness and covenant—dwell on these words as sure and lasting things which eternity itself shall not take from thee.

December 28: Absolute Assurance

He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

(Hebrews 13:5)

Several times in the Scriptures the Lord hath said this. He has often repeated it to make our assurance doubly sure. Let us never harbor a doubt about it. In itself the promise is specially emphatic. In the Greek it has five negatives, each one definitely shutting out the possibility of the Lord's ever leaving one of His people so that he can justly feel forsaken of his God. This priceless Scripture does not promise us exemption from trouble, but it does secure us against desertion. We may be called to traverse strange ways, but we shall always have our Lord's company, assistance, and provision. We need not covet money, for we shall always have our God, and God is better than gold; His favor is better than fortune.

We ought surely to be content with such things as we have, for he who has God has more than all the world besides. What can we have beyond the Infinite? What more can we desire than almighty Goodness.

Come, my heart; if God says He will never leave thee nor forsake thee, be thou much in prayer for grace that thou mayest never leave thy Lord, nor even for a moment forsake His ways.

December 29: He Will Carry Us Home

***And even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you.
(Isaiah 46:4)***

The year is very old, and here is a promise for our aged friends; yes, and for us all, as age creeps over us. Let us live long enough, and we shall all have hoar hairs; therefore we may as well enjoy this promise by the foresight of faith.

When we grow old our God will still be the I AM, abiding evermore the same. Hoar hairs tell of our decay, but He decayeth not. When we cannot carry a burden and can hardly carry ourselves, the Lord will carry us. Even as in our young days He carried us like lambs in His bosom, so will He in our years of infirmity.

He made us, and He will care for us. When we become a burden to our friends and a burden to ourselves, the Lord will not shake us off, but the rather He will take us up and carry and deliver us more fully than ever. In many cases the Lord give His servants a long and calm evening. They worked hard all day and wore themselves out in their Master's service, and so He said to them, "Now rest in anticipation of that eternal Sabbath which I have prepared for you." Let us not dread old age. Let us grow old graciously since the Lord Himself is with us in fullness of grace.

December 30: Loved to Perfection

***Having loved his own which were in the world,
he loved them unto the end.***

(John 13:1)

This fact is essentially a promise; for what our Lord was He is, and what He was to those with whom He lived on earth, He will be to all His beloved so long as the moon endureth.

"Having loved": here was the wonder! That He should ever have loved men at all is the marvel. What was there in His poor disciples that He should love them? What is there in me?

But when He has once begun to love, it is His nature to continue to do so. Love made the saints "his own"—what a choice title! He purchased them with blood, and they became His treasure. Being His own, He will not lose them. Being His beloved, He will not cease to love them. My soul, He will not cease to love thee!

The text is well as it stands: "to the end." Even till His death the ruling passion of love to His own reigned in His sacred bosom. It means also to the uttermost. He could not love them more: He gave Himself for them. Some read it, to perfection. Truly He lavished upon them a perfect love, in which there was no flaw nor failure, no unwisdom, no unfaithfulness.

Such is the love of Jesus to each one of His people. Let us sing to our Well-beloved a song.

December 31: No Stranger in Heaven

***Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel,
and afterward receive me to glory. (Psalm 73:24)***

From day to day and from year to year my faith believes in the wisdom and love of God, and I know that I shall not believe in vain. No good word of His has ever failed, and I am sure that none shall ever fall to the ground.

I put myself into His hand for guidance. I know not the way that I should choose: the Lord shall choose mine inheritance for me. I need counsel and advice; for my duties are intricate, and my condition is involved... The counsel of the infallible God I seek in preference to my own judgment or the advice of friends...

Soon the end will come: a few more years and I must depart out of this world unto the Father. My Lord will be near my bed. He will meet me at heaven's gate: He will welcome me to the gloryland. I shall not be a stranger in heaven: my own God and Father will receive me to its endless bliss.

*Glory be to Him who
Will guide me here,
And receive me hereafter. Amen.*

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JESUS LOVES YOU!!!!

***Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel,
and afterward receive me to glory.
(Psalm 73:24)***