

The White Robes

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*A collection of evangelistic tracts by one
of the clearest pastoral evangelists of the nineteenth century.*

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1. The White Robes

*What are these which are arrayed in white robes? And whence came they?
And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they
which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and
made them white in the blood of the Lamb. - Rev. 7:13-17*

My Dear Children, you have perhaps read the Pilgrim's Progress; and you remember that when the pilgrims came to certain mountains called the delectable or delightful mountains, they saw through a glass the glory of the heavenly city to which they were going. You remember also that before Moses died, God took him up to Mount Pisgah and showed him the land of Canaan lying before him in all its beauty. Now this book of the Revelation is just like these delectable mountains; it is just like Pisgah. it shows the glorious land that is afar off. When good Mr. Rutherford was dying he cried out, "Glory, glory dwelleth in Immanuel's land." Now this book and this passage show you not merely Immanuel's beauty and glory, but the glory of Immanuel's city, the glory of Immanuel's kingdom, the glory of Immanuel's land. Oh, if you but saw the glory of that country where he reigns, you would long to be there; you would weary of being here!

The people that John saw in heaven were the saints (v. 9); a great multitude that no man could number, out of all nations on the earth, and of all generations from the beginning. There would be righteous Abel, and Seth, and Enoch, and Noah, and Abraham, and Melchizedek, and Moses, and Joshua. All the prophets would be there, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Elijah, and all the rest. The apostles would be there, Paul, and Peter, and James, and others who were all gone to glory

before John was sent to Patmos and wrote this wonderful book. Oh, what a company! Holy, happy, glorious! Should you not like to be with them, safe in glory too, far away from the wicked company of a sinful world like this? But let us notice four things about these saints in glory.

1. How they are clothed. They have white robes, whiter than the snow, purer than the wool, more shining than the sun. It is said of the Levites, that “they were arrayed in white linen” (2 Chron. 5:12); but the raiment of the saints is whiter far than theirs. It is said of the angels who appeared at the resurrection of Christ, that their “raiment was white as snow” (Matt. 28:3). Such are the robes of the saints above! It is said of Christ himself on the Mount of Transfiguration, that “his raiment was white as the light” (Matt. 17:2). Such are his people’s robes, for he clothes them with his own raiment. Once they were as filthy as any, as black as any, but now they are white. In Zechariah (3:3-5), we read how God took off the filthy garments from Joshua the high priest, and put clean linen upon him. Such is the change that must take place in every soul. No tongue can tell how filthy a soul is by nature. It is as black as hell itself. When Mr. Whitefield was preaching to the Indians about their sinfulness, he told them that “their hearts were as black as their faces.” So it was with these saints in heaven at first. They were no better, no purer than others. But now how different! Once their souls were unholy, now they are holy. Once their robes were black, now they are white. Oh, how white, how pure, how perfectly beautiful! Ah, my dear children, it must be so with you! You must be changed too. You must be made clean and white. You must get Christ’s glorious dress; you must be made beautiful with Christ’s perfect beauty, before you can join that holy, happy band!

2. *What makes them so white.* It is said “they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” It is this that has taken out all the stains of sin, and made them so white and fair. Nothing can make a soul clean but the blood that cleanseth from all sin. It is in the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness that we must wash our sins away.

I was once conversing with a dying woman, and among other things she said this: “People say there is nothing whiter than snow, but I think there is one thing whiter, and that is, *a blood-washed soul.*” It was the blood that flowed from Calvary that made the robes of these saints so white; the blood of the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. Oh, my dear children, should you not like to be as white as they, as holy as they? Then you must go and be washed in the same fountain; you must go and be sprinkled with the same blood. Nothing else will make you clean. Oh, put up this prayer just now, “Lamb of God, wash me, and I shall be clean.”

3. *Where they are, and what they do.* (1) They are before the throne of God. What a glorious place to dwell in! More glorious by far than the palaces of kings. What an honor to stand before the throne of the King of kings! Some of them when on earth had not where to lay their head. Some of them were cast into dungeons; some of them lived in mountains, and dens, and caves of the earth. Now they are in the New Jerusalem; in their Father’s house with many mansions; in the palace of the King, and standing as kings themselves with crowns upon their heads, and palms in their hands before the throne of God! What a mighty, what a blessed change to them!

(2) They serve him day and night in his temple. They are not only kings, but priests too, like Melchizedek. They stand in his temple forever, and go no more out (Rev. 3:12), they praise him without ceasing. They serve him without growing weary, day and night; for, oh, eternity’s too short, to utter all his praise!

How different are they from most of you! You are soon weary of serving God. You are soon weary of praise, soon weary of prayer. You are weary of your Bibles, weary of the Sabbath, weary of hearing about God for a single hour. Oh, how unlike you are to those who serve him day and night, who rest not day nor night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. How unfit for heaven, if you are thus so soon weary of God! That holy man, David Brainerd, who was a missionary to the North American Indians about a hundred years ago, mentions in his account of himself, that often, when forced by the weariness of his

body to go to rest at night, he grieved to think that he could not want sleep, that he might pray the more. How unlike you are to him!

(3) God dwells among them. He who sitteth on the throne gathers them all round him as a father gathers his family at night round his knee. They are “forever with the Lord.” They were pilgrims here, now they have gone home to God. They behold his glory; they are full of his love; they live under his smiles; they see his face, and his name is in their foreheads (Rev. 22:4). Are you not all saying, Oh, that I were there!

4. How happy they are. “Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord.” They are the happy ones, their race is run? Former things have passed away. Their winter is past, the rain is all over and gone. All that they suffered upon earth is only remembered like a dream.

(1) It is said, “They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more.” They were often hungry here, often thirsty, often faint and weary; but all these sufferings are over now. They have reached the city of their God, “Jerusalem, their happy home.” There they have the tree of life to feed upon, which is in the midst of the paradise of God, and the hidden manna which is given to all who overcome (Rev. 2:7, 17). There they drink out of the fountain of life. What a change to them! They had come out of great tribulation, having nowhere to lay their head, no one to give them food to eat, or water to drink (2 Cor. 11:27). Now they know none of these things. These light afflictions were but for a moment. They are all over now. When good Mr. Baxter was dying, one of his friends asked him how he was, he answered, “Almost well.” And soon after he became like these saints, not only almost, but altogether well, for he slept in Jesus. Happy saints! No man could count your numbers, and no man can count your joys! Happy children, who are already safe folded in their Father’s arms above! Happy children, who are on their way to their Father’s house, traveling to Immanuel’s land! Oh, poor unhappy children, who are still like sheep going astray, wanderers on the way to hell! Oh, what a place must hell be, if earth be so full of sorrow! All the sufferings of earth are nothing to the torments of the damned. There they are hungry, but never feed; they are thirsty, but have no water to drink; they are weary, but never rest; they say, Oh, when shall my torments cease? Oh, when shall these flames grow cool? But the torments are forever, and the flames are never quenched!

(2) The sun never lights on them, nor any heat. They had often been scorched with the sun, many of them had been burned to death in the fire. But now the sun shall not smite them by day, nor the moon by night, neither shall the flame kindle upon them. The land in which they dwell is Immanuel’s land, and they have no need of the sun at all, for He himself is their sun, their everlasting light. They need no candle, neither light of the sun; and there is no night there, for the Lord God giveth them light (Rev. 21:23). I read some time ago, of the death of a little girl, a Sabbath scholar, who died in faith. It was evening when she lay dying. The setting sun streamed in upon her bed, and fell upon her dying eye. She looked calmly up and said, “I shall see that sun no more.” Nor did she see it, for ere it rose again, she had slept in Jesus. But she had gone to the city where they need no sun. Happy child!

She sleeps in Jesus, and is blest; How sweet her slumbers are.

But one thing you must remember, my dear children; though there is such a sun to scorch, and such flames to burn us on earth, these are nothing to the lake of fire and brimstone. Oh, who can dwell with the devouring fire? Who of you can dwell with the everlasting burnings? Oh, flee from the wrath to come!

(3) The Lamb feeds them, and leads them to living fountains of waters. Jesus, who loved them and washed them from their sins in his own blood, still watches over them. And the good Shepherd who took them for his sheep on earth, and gave his life for them, still cares for them as his sheep in heaven. The same shepherd that led them through this wilderness, leads them through the golden streets of the New Jerusalem. He makes them to lie down upon the green pastures, he

feedeth them among the lilies (Song of Sol. 2:16). It is out of Christ's loving hand they feed; it his gentle hand that leads them on. He goeth before them and they follow him, they follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, and they sing all the while the song of the Lamb. They drink out of the pure river of the water of life clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb (Rev. 22:1).

(4) God wipes away all tears from their eyes. They often wept on earth, they shall never weep again. They wept for their sins; they wept when death parted friend after friend from their side; they wept for the souls of others; they wept for the dishonor done to the name of Jesus; but all such weeping is done, all sorrow and sighing have fled away. Their eyes were dim with trouble. God brightens their eye and removes all dimness. Their foreheads were wrinkled with care, God smooths off every wrinkle from their brow. Their faces and cheeks were foul with weeping, God wipes all off with his own hand forever. As a mother takes her weeping child into her arms and dries up its falling tears, so does their God to them. "As one whom his mother comforteth, so does God comfort them." Ah, my dear children, how often have you wept on earth; how many tears have you shed since you were born! You have many things that make you weep, many things which make your young hearts sore till they are like to break. But if you are children of God, your tears will soon be done. There is no weeping in heaven. There are no tears ever fall from the eyes of angels; no tears ever fall from the eyes of the saints; no tears ever stain the golden pavements of the heavenly city. They sing there, but never weep. They praise, but never weep. They shout for joy, but shed no tears! Their deathbed tears were the last they shed, or shall shed forever! My little children, would you not like to be with them? But this brings to my mind another place very unlike this, and other souls very different from these; that place is hell, these souls the souls of the lost. There, it is said, all is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. There, nothing is heard but the loud and bitter weeping of lost souls. Oh, what burning tears are shed in hell! Bitter as are the tears of earth, they are nothing to the tears of hell. If this world be a vale of tears, oh, what must hell be! They fall in floods, yet they cannot cool the heat or quench the flames. And there is no hand to wipe them off. For who would do it there? Would Satan do it? No, he mocks their weeping. Would their lost companions do it? No, alas! They have too many of their own to wipe away. They must weep forever and forever! Oh, my dear children, is it possible that any of you who are now sitting so peacefully before me on these seats, should ever be weeping in hell, that any of your voices, that have been sweetly rising in praise, should ever be wailing there? And yet I fear it will be so. Yet it should not, it need not. Why should you not all be saved? Oh, my God, canst thou not save them all? Wilt thou not save them all? Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die. There is room in heaven for you all. There is bread enough in your Father's house and to spare. There is love enough in your Father's heart for all: room for little children, bread for little children, love for little children! Oh, will you not enter in? Is not heaven far better than earth? Is not the new Jerusalem far better than the cities of the earth? And, oh, is not heaven far better than hell?

Come in, come in Eternal glory thou shalt win!

I shall close this sermon with three remarks, which I do entreat you, my dear children, to remember. May the Holy Spirit write them on your memories, and seal them on your souls!

1. You cannot get to heaven without the white robes. You are not to suppose that you will get them after you get to heaven. No, you must get them here before you go to heaven. It is here that you must be washed, it is here that your robes must be made white in the blood of the Lamb. It must be done now! A little girl of whom I heard from a friend, was awakened and made anxious about her soul, by hearing her minister say at a prayer meeting, "A soul must be pure and without a spot before it enters heaven." Nothing that defileth shall enter there. You must have the white robes before you can go into the company of saints and angels. You must have the new heart before you can sing the new song. You are anxious to get fine clothes for the body, but though

you had the finest that man could give you, they would not fit you for heaven. You must have the blood-washed robes! And yet I fear there are few of you have them, very few among all the hundreds that are now before me. If you forget God, if you do not love Christ, if you lie, or cheat, or swear, or steal, or are passionate, or break the Sabbath day by being idle, or by walking, or by staying at home when you ought to be at church, then you may be quite sure that you have not yet had your robes washed white. You have still the old heart, the filthy soul. You are still the devil's children, and still wearing the devil's clothes. And if so, you cannot get to heaven as you are. Oh, how sad, how awful is the state of those children whose sins have never been forgiven, whose souls have never been washed clean in the blood of Jesus! The door of heaven is shut against them. Hell is ready to receive them forever.

2. None but Christ can give you these white robes. Nothing but the blood of Jesus can wash your soul white. It is vain for you to try to cleanse yourselves. Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? In the Pilgrim's Progress we are told of a place the pilgrims came to, where their guide showed them a man trying to wash an Ethiopian white, but the more he tried it the blacker he became. So it is with us when we try to make ourselves clean instead of going to Christ to be washed in his blood, and receive from his hand the white robe, the wedding garment, the fine linen clean and white, which is the righteousness of the saints. You cannot make these robes; nor can you buy them. Christ has made them for you. Christ has bought them for you. Christ offers to put them upon your poor naked souls!

3. Christ is willing to give you them just now. Though you cannot make them, and cannot buy them, still you need not want them for a single moment. You have just to go to Christ for them, and you are sure of getting them. He wants you to do this, for he says, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed" (Rev. 3:18). And he wants you to come just now! Oh, my dear children, come just now, or you may lose all! Come just now, for you may die tonight! Come just now, for you may die before this sermon is done! A minister was once preaching to a Sabbath school in England. When he was preaching, a thunderstorm came on. The lightning struck a tree outside the church, so that it fell through one of the windows and alarmed the people. But there was one little girl, whose heart God seemed to have touched, who stood at the foot of the pulpit, and continued to gaze upon him. He went to inquire for her next day. She had been wanting to go to a fair before she heard the sermon, but now she would not go. She said, "I don't want to go to the fair, I want to get one of the white robes you were speaking of yesterday." The minister spoke to her for a while, and then left her, intending to call next day. Next morning a message

came to tell him that the little girl was dead! But she was ready, for Christ had given her the white robes before he called her away. Ah, my dear children, are you like her? Are you ready to die tonight, and to lie down in the grave as calmly as you would do in your bed? Have you the bloodwashed robes? Are your sins all forgiven? Has the Holy Spirit taken old things away and made all things new? Oh, I beseech you, do not delay! Thousands are now weeping in hell because they put off these things for another night. Do not rise from these seats till you have gone to Jesus for the precious gift. The soul that lies down in a Christless bed, may next day be carried to a Christless grave. Christ said to the saints in the church of Sardis, "They shall walk with me in white." Oh, then come to him, and you too shall walk with him in white. You shall stand upon the sea of glass. You shall have palms in your hands, and crowns upon your heads, and shall enter in with Christ through the gates of pearl, unto the glorious city, to be kings and priests to God, and to reign with Him forever! Oh, then, pray ere we close; say, "Lord Jesus, give me this white raiment, give me it now." Amen, and Amen.

The above is the substance of a sermon preached to Sabbath school children on September 13, 1840.

2. Salvation to the Uttermost

Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them. - Heb. 7:25

It is of Jesus, the great High Priest after the order of Melchisedek, that these words are spoken. It is He who is the “Surety of the better covenant” (Heb. 7:22). It is He who hath the “unchangeable priesthood” (v. 24). It is He who having “offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down on the right hand of God” (10:12). He therefore is a Savior to the uttermost; and this not only because of what he did on earth for the putting away of sin, but because of what he is now doing in heaven as an ever-living intercessor, carrying into effect that glorious work which he completed on the cross. It is in the knowledge of this Savior that we have eternal life. Let us then inquire what God has taught us in these words concerning him. And may the Holy Spirit testify of him to us, enlightening the eyes of our understanding, that we may know the things that are freely given to us of God!

I. Christ is a Savior.

“He is able to save.” It was on this account that he is described by the prophet Isaiah, as “mighty to save” (63:1); and for this he was named JESUS, because “he saves his people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21). This was the purpose for which he was sent; “the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world” (1 John 4:14). This was the errand which he fulfilled, “the Son of man is come to save that which was lost” (Matt. 18:11). It was for this that he spoke to the people when on earth, “these things I say that ye might be saved” (John 5:34). For this he was born, for this he lived, for this he died, for this he rose again, for this he ascended up on high, “Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Savior” (Acts 5:31). And from what does he save? He saves from sin, from guilt, from wrath, from the curse, from a present evil world, from hell, from Satan himself. From all these he is a Savior, a complete Savior, the only Savior, a Savior not for those who deserve salvation, but for those who need it.

But how is he thus “able to save”?

(1) Because he is GOD-the Lord God Almighty, of whom, and through whom, and to whom are all things. All authority and dominion are his; all power either to save or to destroy.

(2) He is “able to save,” because he is the GOD-MAN, God manifest in the flesh, Immanuel, God with us; and thus he has all power, created and uncreated, human and divine, finite and infinite, centered in himself. Who could be more able to be a Savior than he who is God? And who could be more suitable to be our Savior than he who is bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh, our kinsman, our brother? (Heb. 2:16-18).

(3) He is “able to save,” because of the WORK which he has done, by coming into our place, taking upon him our responsibilities, and bearing our sins. It was not mere power, though infinite, that could save us. It must be power put forth in a righteous way. And until there was a righteous way opened up for its exercise, it could do nothing for our salvation. Therefore it is in his work that his great power and strength as the Savior may be said to lie; for had there been no sacrifice or atonement, not even an infinite arm could have saved us. As long as infinite righteousness was against us, it was in vain though infinite power were for us. But Christ’s atoning work has brought infinite power, and righteousness, and holiness, as well as infinite love and grace, all over to the same side. None of these are against us now. Our salvation is in full accordance with them all. Through the “blood of his cross” he has made reconciliation for iniquity, and on that cross provided a place where God and the sinner may meet in peace. He has taken out of the way that which hindered God from having any dealings with us; and thus it is now as righteous and glorifying a thing in God to pardon, as before it was to punish transgressors. He has magnified the

law and made it honorable (Isa. 42:21), so that the dishonor we had done to that law by our disobedience, is far more than made up for by the glory which he has put upon it through his perfect and Divine obedience. Christ's work is thus a full treasure-house of everything the sinner can need or desire. In it there is full provision for pardon, for cleansing, for renewing, for eternal life, for holiness, for complete restoration to the image, the character, the kingdom of God, and to every blessing included in the term salvation, that is, to the complete reversal of and deliverance from every thing which made us lost, and the full bestowal of every blessing from the hand of God, which a saved condition can possibly imply, from the lowest degree of mere deliverance from hell, up to the highest glories of which a created being can be heir.

(4) He is "able to save," because of the offices he sustains. As a priest he saves from sin; as a mediator he brings us to God; as an intercessor he pleads our cause; as the shepherd and bishop of souls he seeks and saves the lost, as well as watches over them when found; as Messiah he anoints us with the Holy Spirit, bestowing gifts on men, even on the rebellious, that the Lord God may dwell among them; as a prophet he teaches the ignorant, and makes the foolish wise unto salvation; as the captain of our salvation he fights our battles and leads the array against our enemies; as a king he rules in us and over us, making us more than conquerors over earth and hell, over the power of this ensnaring flesh, with all its deadly lusts, which war against the soul, over this gay seducing world, with all its pomp, and pride, and bravery, over principalities and powers, and all the banded legions of the prince of darkness.

II. Christ is a Savior to the uttermost.

He is not only able to save, but infinitely able. It is the ability of omnipotence. It is the ability of one who has all power in heaven, in earth, in hell. It is the ability of one who has shed infinitely precious blood, who has paid an infinitely precious ransom, who has laid down an infinitely precious life, in order that there might be salvation to the uttermost. It is the ability of one who has accomplished an infinitely glorious work, and thereby made infinite provision for every thing that sinners could require. It is the ability of one who has not only mercy and grace upon his side, but righteousness, holiness, and truth. Every infinite perfection is now upon the side of salvation. A Savior's death did this. Before that, they were against it. Nothing therefore can be beyond the reach of a Savior such as this. No sinner upon earth, no sinner on this side of hell, can be beyond his power to save. His salvation goes to the very uttermost extremity of human ruin, to "the very ends of the earth," up to the very gate of hell.

1. This salvation is "to the uttermost" with respect to a sinner's state and character.

It goes to the very extremity of ruin and death. There is no degree of guilt for which it has not provided a full pardon. There are no sins too many, there is no burden too heavy for a salvation like this. Though our sins be truly infinite in number; though they be more than the hairs of our head, or the sands on the seashore, or the drops of the ocean, or the leaves of the forest, or the stars of heaven, or all of these multiplied together, yet still this salvation goes infinitely above and beyond them all. Though they be awfully heinous and aggravated, like scarlet or crimson, unspeakably abominable and loathsome, nay, black as hell, yet still this salvation goes far beyond them. Nor can any sinner be too vile and polluted to be saved. He may be sunk deepest of all in the horrible pit and the miry clay; his soul may be a cage of unclean birds, hateful and filthy beyond human conception, yet still there is salvation for him here. Here is blood even to cleanse such a soul, nay, to make it whiter than the snow. No soul is too vile for Jesus to cleanse (Isa. 1:18; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; 1 John 1:7). Nor can any soul be too dead for Jesus to quicken. They may be lying in the deepest grave of trespasses and sins, yet the arm of Jesus can reach down to them and pluck them from it. The power of Jesus can awaken the soul that is sunk in the deepest slumbers of spiritual death (John 5:25; Eph. 2:1). Let no one then say, My soul is so dead, that I despair of its ever being quickened. Here is life for the deadest; life to the uttermost. No degree of death is

beyond the power of Him who is the resurrection and the life. To speak thus despondingly of your deadness is not humility, but presumption. It is limiting the power and grace of Jesus. It is saying that he is not able to save to the uttermost, that there are some states of death beyond his reach! Neither is there any heart too hard for Jesus to soften. It matters not how hard it be. It may be like iron, that nothing will break; it will be like adamant, that nothing will melt. It may be both of these together, or far more so than any figure can give you the least idea of. But still it is not too hard for Him. Neither is there any soul too needy, too poor, too full of wants for Him. It matters not how manifold be the wants, how deep the poverty, how great the need. Still he is able to save to the uttermost; and that surely is enough to assure the very neediest that there is abundant supply for them. His fullness is the fullness of God, and that is infinite. "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell." And he himself thus graciously addresses the needy soul, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich." None are too empty for Jesus to fill; and that in no scanty measure, but even to overflowing; "he that believeth on me, out of him shall flow rivers of living water." Neither is there any soul too miserable for Him to make perfectly blessed. "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He has peace for the most troubled, rest for the weariest, light for the darkest, joy for the most sorrowful, calm for the most tempest-tost, perfect blessedness for the most wretched of all! He gives beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Truly he is a Savior to the uttermost!

Take your station on the highest eminence of earth, which commands the widest prospect that man's eye can reach. Look around on this fallen earth. Look backward on the condition of sin and wretchedness in which its millions have been involved for these six thousand years; look forward and conceive the guilt in which it is yet to be more fearfully sunk ere the day of its glory come. Look on every side of you in this present generation. See the pollution, the guilt, the abominations, the enormities with which it is flooded. Take a wider circle, and conceive what lie beyond these, the crimes, the atrocities, perpetrated in secret, unseen by the eye of man, deeds done in darkness, and fit only to be named in darkness, everything conceivable on this side of hell. Take a yet wider circle, and imagine, if that be possible, how much more than all that, God's eye discerns, and God's soul abhors in what has been done and is yet doing on the surface of this fallen earth. Take the very widest possible circle of human guilt, the deepest mire of mortal sin; and imagine, in addition to these, all possible difficulties and hindrances; still beyond that widest circle, yea, infinitely beyond the farthest that man's guilt has compassed, is the power of Jesus to save! For his is salvation to the uttermost; his is the salvation of God. The sinner may indeed have gone to the very extremity of guilt, to the very ends of the earth in his wanderings from God. Yea, he may have gone to the very gates of hell, and be knocking for admittance there. He may be a brand already set on fire of hell; yet even from thence the arm and power of Jesus can pluck him; even from the gates of hell can the outstretched hand of

Jesus saves! (2 Chron. 33:1-13; Zech. 3:2; 1 Tim. 1:13-16).

2. This salvation is to the uttermost in respect to the completeness of the salvation.

It is a complete deliverance that Jesus brings to the soul. The first thing he does is to justify the sinner; and this he does at once and entirely, so soon as we believe in his name. Our acceptance with the Father, through his beloved Son, is a perfect and immediate acceptance, without any reserve. It is not partially or by halves, that he forgives. He forgives fully, and without limitation; so that not so much as one sin remains unpardoned. He forgives not merely until seven times, or until seventy times seven, or even until ten thousand times ten thousand, but without number or bound. Whether our sins be known or unknown, felt or unfelt, remembered or forgotten, he freely forgives all to the uttermost. And as he forgives entirely, so he sanctifies wholly. Whatever be the hindrances or the enemies in our way, he will perfect that which he begins. Whatever have been our past lives, the sins or crimes of manhood, still he saves "to the

uttermost," so as entirely to undo the evil of our former ways, and wash away the pollution of our former sins. Hence the salvation of one sinner is as complete as that of another, though the former may have lived much longer, and gone far deeper into sin than the latter. The salvation of Rahab the harlot was as complete as that of Joshua, her deliverer; nor would her long life of sin make her peace less perfect or secure than his, though perhaps he had known the Lord from his youth. The salvation of Manasseh, whose sins, both in their own enormity, and by their aggravations, seem absolutely without a parallel, was as complete as that of his godly father Hezekiah, or his inspired teacher Isaiah. The salvation of Paul, the blasphemer and persecutor, was not less complete than that of Timothy, who from his youth had sought after God. Nothing but an infinite salvation could have reached the case of such vile transgressors; but when it did reach them, it left nothing imperfect. It purged their consciences and cleansed their souls from guilt, even such as theirs. It brought them a perfect, not a partial or doubtful peace. It gave them as complete an assurance of God's love, and as sure a consciousness of reconciliation with him, as it could give to those whose past life had been stained with no such outward abominations. It preserved unruffled the steadfast calm of the soul, even in the full remembrance of all the enormities of other days. Oh, what a salvation must this be, that could accomplish all this so perfectly, even for the chief of sinners!

And then, all this is eternal. It is not a temporary salvation; neither is it one that can change or give way hereafter. No. It is eternally secure; for he who commenced it, ever liveth to maintain and perpetuate it. He preserves each saved soul, by his mighty power, unto his coming, that then he may present them faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. Nay, their very dust is dear to him. Their body as well as their soul he saves, raising it up and making it like unto his own glorious body, that he may place them altogether perfect, completely saved, upon his throne in the day when he returns to reign (Eph. 5:27; Col. 1:22; Jude 24). And throughout eternity these saved ones remain as trophies of a Savior's grace and power; an undecaying memorial of the redeeming love of him who "is able to save to the uttermost." No stain of former sin can reappear upon their spotless raiment; nor can all the infinite abomination of their former ways prevent them from shining in their perfect brightness as the sons of light-it may be, the most resplendent of all! No returning mists of earth can ever again overcast their everlasting sunshine, or cloud the pure azure of their sky. No remembrance of guilt can ever draw one darkening shadow over their brow of light. No consciousness that they are the very sinners who were once in the horrible pit and in the miry clay, can check their notes of joy, or do aught but add to the gladness as well as the loudness of the new song they sing. How truly is all this "salvation to the uttermost-salvation that knows no bound-no end!"

3. They that come unto Christ are saved.

He saves those who come unto God by him, or who come unto himself, for both statements are common in Scripture. Those whom he saves are those who come unto the Father through him as the way, who consent to take him as the way to God; to recognize him as "the way, the truth, and the life"-the new and living way into the presence of God. He saves none else. Not but that he has the power to save millions more, even of those who refuse to come; yet still he saves none who remain away. Their remaining away, their refusing to come unto the Father through him, seals their condemnation. To save such would be to proclaim his own work unnecessary, to declare that he had died in vain. Therefore he saves none who reject him as their Savior; he leaves them to die in their sins. He saves none who persist in coming to God by ways of their own, who seek life by methods of their own, who try to obtain pardon by doings of their own. He saves none who stand afar off, and turn away from God. None of these he saves, so long as they remain such. It is the coming ones that he saves; those who consent to take him and him only as the access into the holiest-the way unto the Father. Whosoever then persists in taking his own way of coming to God, cannot be saved. Whosoever comes without this Mediator or chooses another,

cannot be saved. It is our taking him as the appointed way to God, and drawing near by that way, that saves us! (John 10:9; 14:6; Eph. 2:18; Heb. 10:19-20).

The special object of the apostle in making this statement seems to be to show that Christ is so infinitely able to save, that none can possibly bring to him a case too desperate—a case beyond his skill and power to cure. Such is his power, that if sinners will only bring the case to him, however helpless it may seem, still it must yield to his touch. All who will only put their case into his hands will find in him an infinitely sufficient Savior. And yet how many are seeking to save themselves, before they come to him to be saved! How many refuse to come as they are, and try to do something, however little, in the way of saving themselves, before they count themselves entitled to come to him for the rest. How many think they must begin the work, and then come to him to end it. They think it would be presumption to bring a soul so diseased as theirs, a heart so hard and dead as theirs. They count it humility to stay away, or at least to come doubting and fearing. They do not see that it is not humility but presumption to stay away, or to come doubting, as if he to whom they were coming were either unable or unwilling to receive and save them.

Whosoever thou art then, only COME, and thou shalt be saved. Come unto God by him! Whatever be your sin, only come! Whatever be your unworthiness, only come! Whatever be your hardness of heart, only come! Whatever be the peculiarity of your case, only come! Bring your oppressed soul to him! Bring your hard heart to him! Bring your troubled conscience to him! Do not stand afar off. Do not try to be your own physician. Do not try to make yourself better before you come. In the very state in which this message finds you, come! There is infinite fullness in him. There is infinite provision for you in that fullness. There is infinite love in him. There is infinite willingness to save you. He sends you this message; he stretches out his arm; he beckons with his hand; he lifts up his gracious voice to you, saying, I am the way, and the truth, and the life—him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.

4. Christ's intercession is the pledge of his infinite ability to save.

He ever liveth to make intercession for us. It is for this that he liveth. It is for this that he is exalted to the throne of the majesty in the heavens. And this is the assurance to us of his being able to save unto the uttermost; for it is by this intercession that he carries on our salvation. His work on earth, as the sacrifice, wrought out the atonement from which salvation flows; and his work in heaven, as the advocate with the Father, carries on and applies that work. On earth he finished his work as the bearer of sin, thereby taking it out of the way, and opening the access to God. In heaven he is now seated to effect the reconciliation for which he had prepared the way, to introduce to the Father those that approach in his name. Let us briefly consider what this intercession implies.

(1) He intercedes by presenting his sacrifice before the throne. He appears in heaven as “the Lamb that was slain” (Rev. 5:6, 12). As such the Father beholds him, and is well pleased. And thus, by his presenting himself and his completed work before the Father, intercession is made by him, silent yet resistless. His appearance pleads—his attitude pleads—his blood pleads—his obedience pleads—his sacrifice pleads. Just as the altar might be said to plead for every one who laid his hands upon its horns, so the sacrifice of Jesus pleads for every one who lays his hand on him. Just as the lamb, though silent, pleaded effectually for him who brought it as an offering, so the Lamb of God pleads for every one who will take him as their offering, and lay their sins on him.

(2) He intercedes by presenting HIMSELF in our name. “He appears in the presence of God for us” (Heb. 9:24). He was our substitute on earth, and he is our representative in heaven. Hence God sees us in him, hears us in him, deals with us in him. By presenting his blood, he obtains forgiveness for us; but by presenting himself, his infinitely glorious self, he does far more, he obtains for us everything that belongs to him. Everything that we say is heard of God as if he had said it; everything that we ask for is bestowed by the Father as if he had asked it; our petitions are

counted as his petitions; our voice ascends acceptable in the Father's ears, as if it were the voice of his beloved Son. Thus entirely does he represent us, and by so doing plead for us irresistibly. He appears in the presence of God for us; and by so appearing carries on his mighty intercession. He invites us to come and be represented by him. He sees sinners coming to God upon their own footing, and he invites them to come on his. He sees men vainly presenting their prayers before God on the ground of some personal title of their own, and he asks them no longer to attempt such folly, but to consent to take him as their representative, assuring them that if they will but do so, all his infinite merit and acceptableness with the Father shall plead for them! O sinners, self-righteous ones, self-trusting ones, come and be thus represented and interceded for by him! His holiness will plead infinitely more for you, than all your unholiness can plead against you. His glorious righteousness will plead infinitely more for you than all your miserable unrighteousness can plead against you. The excellent beauty of his person will be a far stronger plea in your favor, than all the loathsome deformity of your own persons can be against you!

(3) He intercedes by pleading for us. When he was on earth, he thus pleaded, and doubtless he has not ceased to do the same gracious office in heaven. He pleaded for Peter, "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat, but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not" (Luke 22:31-32). Thus he took up Peter's case; thus he prayed that his faith might be upheld. And as he did to Peter on earth, so doubtless he does in heaven for those who come unto God by him. He takes notice of their case. His eye is always upon them. He sees their fainting faith. He marks their struggles with unbelief, struggles to which no human eye is witness, struggles maintained in the solitude of their closet, and expressed only by the tear, the groan, the sigh. He sees when they would fain come to him, and Satan keeps them back or casts them down, or whispers malignant doubts; and seeing all these, he takes their case into his hand and pleads for them with God. How comforting to believers to remember this! How encouraging to those who are but seeking the way to God, perhaps in fear and darkness, to see how ready this Divine Intercessor is to take up their case and plead in their behalf! Again, in the seventeenth chapter of John we have a specimen of Christ's intercession on earth, which is well fitted to give us a right idea of what it must be in heaven. Take such passages as these—"Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth." Again, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory" (John 17:17, 24). These are some of Christ's pleadings on earth; and oh!, how consoling, how animating to think that these are still his pleadings in heaven! With such an advocate above (1 John 2:1), what can we fear? Whatever be the feebleness, the imperfection of our pleadings here, either for ourselves or others, his intercession is always perfect and prevailing. And it is his intercession, that is our confidence and hope. If he plead for us, who can plead against us? O sinners, come to him! Come and be pleaded for by this Divine Intercessor. Come put your case into the hands of this Divine Advocate! Allow him to plead for you. Do not continue to manage your own cause. Entrust it to him, and all shall be well.

(4) He intercedes by presenting our prayers. It is he and he only that presents our prayers to the Father; and being presented by him they are accepted and answered. As our High Priest, he both "bears the iniquity of our holy things," and procures acceptance for them (Exod. 28:38). Our prayers must pass through his hands ere they can reach the Father. As they leave our lips they are impure and earthly, being breathed from polluted hearts; but forthwith he takes hold of them, strips them of their impurities, purges away their imperfections, and presents them as a perfect offering to God. The hearts they come from are corrupt and vile; the desires they contain are cold, lifeless, wandering; the words in which they are expressed are poor and feeble; each petition seems to plead against us; yet still, being presented by him, they are wellpleasing even in the eyes of Him who cannot look upon iniquity. Hence prayer is likened to sweet incense, and in heaven the four and twenty elders have in their hands "golden vials full of odors which are the prayers of saints" (Rev. 5:8). Thus also Jesus as our High Priest stands with his golden censer full of

incense, to “offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which is before the throne” (Rev. 8:3). Into that censer he calls on us to put our prayers. He stretches out his hand; he lets down that censer to earth; he brings it to our very side; he asks us to put in our prayers! Then he will draw up that censer; and, fragrant with rich incense, he will present them before the throne. How much we overlook this! How prone either to present our prayers without any censer at all, or in censers of our own fashioning! How apt to look aside from Jesus, even when looking up to God! How apt to undervalue the efficacy of this Divine censer, and to cherish doubts whether our petitions may find their way safely to the throne! How apt to make censers of our own, and to attempt with these to approach the Father! How apt, for instance, are we to make our acceptance depend upon our earnestness, and say, “Alas! We are so cold in prayer, how can we expect an answer?” or, on the other hand, to congratulate ourselves, and take courage from an opposite state of feeling, saying, “Ah! We have been earnest, we have had much enlargement, surely we shall be accepted.” What is all this but just making a censer of our earnestness? Forgetting that it is not our frame in prayer, but the censer into which it is put, that secures its acceptance! The most fervent petition that ever rose from earth needs this censer with its incense, to prevent its being an abomination to God; and the feeblest cry that ever left a sinner’s trembling lips needs no more! O sinners! Put in your prayers into this censer. The High Priest reaches it towards you, he presents it at your side; put in your prayers, and they shall be heard! Ye who have never prayed before, bring your first petition here, and even you are sure of acceptance. Ye who have been praying in doubt, lodge your petitions here, and cease to doubt. That golden censer is enough to remove your fears, and give you the full assurance of faith in drawing near to the mercy seat!

Such then is the great High Priest of our profession! Such is Jesus! Able to save to the uttermost! Ever living to intercede! Mighty in saving-all-prevalent in interceding! How secure, how blessed is the state of those who have come unto God through him! How great the encouragement for sinners to come unto God through him! He is infinitely able and willing to save you! Do not stay away from him; but come at once, come now, come boldly, come without doubting, come as you are, and he will save you; he will undertake your cause, and all shall be well.

SALVATION TO THE UTTERMOST! This is the message we bring. Salvation for the vilest, the guiltiest, the most wretched of all. Salvation for every sinner on this side of hell. None can say their case is too bad, for it is salvation to the uttermost; and where is the sinner that is beyond the uttermost-beyond that which God calls the uttermost? Lost ones, come and be saved! Chief of sinners, come! Prodigals, rebels, wanderers, come! Whosoever will, let him come and be saved.

3. The City of Refuge

*Appoint for you cities of refuge, whereof I spake unto you by the hand of Moses;
and they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood. - Josh. 20:2-3*

*That we might have a strong consolation who have fed for
refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us. - Heb. 6:18*

God is a refuge for us. - Ps. 62:8

*Escape for thy life; look not behind thee; neither stay thou in all the plain ...
haste thee, escape thither. - Gen. 19:17, 22*

There were six cities of refuge in the land of Israel. These were so situated that any manslayer, when pursued, might find his flight directed and his escape assisted by the very nature of the ground where they stood. (1) Three of them stood on one side of Jordan and three on the other. No river rolled between him and his place of safety. (2) All of them stood in plains; Kedesh in the plains of Zaanaim, Sychem in the plain of Moreh, Hebron in a level wilderness, Golan and Ramoth-Gilead at the foot of their adjoining hills. The manslayer had no up-hill race to run in seeking deliverance; there was nothing in his way which might hinder his flight. (3) Near each city (except Bezer, which required no further mark, being seen afar on the long spacious heath) stood a hill, that served the purpose of an ensign to guide the guilty man, and to invite him to the refuge. Kedesh had the hill of Naphtali close by. Sychem had Mount Gerizzim. Hebron had those vine-terraced heights, on which Abraham once stood and saw the smoke of Sodom. Golan had the heights of Bashan; and Ramoth-Gilead stood under the lofty hills of Gilead. He who appointed these cities took care that they should be marked afar off, that the steps of one seeking refuge might without difficulty be guided towards them. For it was intended by all these peculiarities, to show the sinner's road to the Redeemer. No river rolls between him and Christ! No hills raise their barrier between him and the Savior. The way is plain and open; it is broad and level; and while yet afar off his eye catches a glimpse of that ensign which waves on Calvary, over the city of refuge, "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die" (Ezek. 33:11). This, even while he is yet a great way off, kindles hope and keeps it alive.

One of these cities of refuge was Hebron—well known as being the place where Abraham long abode. Let us linger for a little at this city, and call to mind some of those sights often seen in other days from its walls and within its gates. The inhabitants there dwelt safely as in a "peaceable habitation, in a sure dwelling, and in a quiet resting place." The vines clothed the surrounding hills, and rich crops waved over the plains of Mature. Not far off was the spot, where, under a spreading oak, Abraham, "the friend of God" (Gen. 35:27), had held communion with his Redeemer. Oftentimes in the cool of the day, when the breeze of evening had begun to awake, the people might be seen on the flat roofs of their houses, or the top of their city walls, enjoying the scene and remembering former days. Many a song of praise ascended, many a holy meditation was enjoyed, many a thankful emotion kindled.

But occasionally the peace of this happy hour was suddenly disturbed by a piercing cry of alarm that resounded from the valley, a cry of fear and a cry of rage and wrath. The citizens stopped their song and saw a trembling murderer, with horror on his brow, in full speed making for the gate, and behind him, with bare sword, the avenger of blood pressing on with relentless fury. Sometimes, it is likely, if for a moment the pursuer slackened his speed, they saw the weary manslayer incautiously sit down to rest, thinking that now he was so near his refuge, he might abate his anxiety; and then the avenger would seize the favorable opportunity, spring on him, and plunge the sword into his soul. Oh! The agonizing look the wretched man gave in death toward the city! And his awful cry of despair, as he yielded up his breath with guilt on his conscience, and remorse gnawing his soul! Sometimes too they saw one in his flight come close up to the gate; but he hesitated to enter, stood doubting, afraid to go in, though trembling for the approach of the avenger, until, ere ever he was aware, the avenger smote him to the dust, and he breathed his last with his dying head bent down on the very threshold of the gate! But oftener still they saw the pursued flying murderer come with full speed down the valley, reach the open gate, bound over the threshold, and stand in safety within! The elders of the city met him, and asked how he had ventured in so boldly. "You are stained with blood, and your trembling frame testifies that you are a guilty man?" "Yes, I own it is true, but on that very account I fled for refuge." "But why have you come hither? No native of the city is like you; they are all children of Abraham." "True, but though no native be like me, yet many like me have got in, for God himself has called it a city of refuge." "But you bring no recommendation?" "God never spoke of any recommendation

being needed.” “Still, you have given no reason why you in particular should expect to be received?” “Yes, for the warrant is, that any and every manslayer may come.” The elders smiled well-pleased; the manslayer was secured in the place of refuge; and there was praise in all the city because another was saved. The delivered man soon joined in their hymns to the God of his life; but oftener still sang in their hearing some peculiar songs of praise, which none could sing but a manslayer that had fled for refuge (Rev. 14:3). Frequently, too, the whole company of delivered men would meet together, talk over their dangers, tell of their escape, and unite their voice and heart in these songs of deliverance (Acts 2:42).

These events in Israel were intended as a type of what takes place in the kingdom of God on earth. The manslayer, wet with the blood of his fellow, is the type of a sinner. And in choosing no other than a manslayer to be the type of a sinner, God points out the murderous nature of sin. Sin brings death on the man himself, and thrusts the sting of the second death into his soul. The sinning soul crucifies Christ afresh; it quenches, or, in other words, tries to extinguish the life of the Holy Spirit; it wishes that there were no God, or, in other words, aims at the very being of God the Father. O sinner, how deep is the crimson-dye of your soul! How can you escape the damnation of hell? On the other hand, the avenger of blood represents or personifies the stern but most righteous demands for vengeance, made by the holy law, pursuing the unforgiven sinner, in order to execute the sentence, “Thou shalt surely die” (Gen. 2:17). And the city of refuge is the salvation provided for the sinner in Christ Jesus, bestowed without money, and without price, without preparation and without delay, on every soul of man that flees to him as the refuge from the wrath to come.

From the walls and battlements of heaven, angels have seen many such sights as the men of Hebron used to see. Let us lead you to some of them.

1. They have seen many a manslayer. They have seen many a soul-and you among the rest, stained with crimson guilt, yet sitting at ease. Have they not seen you destroy your soul? Then you are a manslayer. Have they not seen you by your words, and influence of your example, prevent others from being saved? Have they not seen you wishing in your heart that God were away, or that there was no God? And is not this really wishing for and attempting to compass the death of God? You have wished there were no Christ, and no Holy Spirit! O blood-stained, murderous soul, you stand charged with murder, accomplished in regard to yourself, and your neighbors, and with designs against the life of the Holy God! Perhaps the devil keeps you at rest, and persuades you not to be alarmed. Eat, drink, and be merry! But, nevertheless, you are a manslayer. You ruin your own soul, and your example ruins your friends; and you are an enemy that entertains murderous designs against God. The avenger has not forgotten you.

2. They have seen many a manslayer awakened. Few sinners in our land remain unvisited by some convictions; yet few of them flee from the wrath to come. Some are left miserable by a sense of guilt, that hangs over them, like a black cloud, night and day, “all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Heb. 2:15). They have many forebodings of danger, yet companions, and pleasures, and their dislike of a change, and the secret hope that perhaps all is not true that is threatened, stifle their feelings, and hinder them from fleeing. Is this your state? Are you a sinner aware of your danger? If so, surely you must flee? You dare not sit still. What though you repent, and are sorry, and shed tears, and reproach yourself for your folly?-all that is vain. The avenger of blood never ceases on that account. Indeed, you are more likely to be cut off suddenly than many others; for your convictions will make Satan afraid of losing you, and your delaying to flee will provoke God, so that he will wait no more. Up, up and flee for your life! You dare not sit still. Oh, if you would flee, there would be deep, deep interest in you, felt by the people on the walls of Hebron--the angels in heaven. To see you running to the city of refuge--that would be a blessed sight! Up, and run speedily! Many have run along that road to the city; the way to Christ has been traversed by thousands, some more, and some less guilty than you, who knew that he was their

only refuge. "The kingdom of heaven is preached, and every man presseth into it."

3. They have seen many fleeing towards the city. This is more than being awakened by a sense of danger and need. They have begun to seek deliverance; they flee! Are you a fleeing sinner? If you are, there are some marks that men will not fail to see in you. For example, you will be affected by a sense of your own personal guilt and danger; you will not be fleeing just because others are doing so. You will have a feeling of immediate need; you cannot put off the matter to a distant day. You will also feel engrossed to a great degree with concern to escape; a fleeing manslayer would not be hindered with the trifles on the road, or the people whom he met. You will forsake the company of friends that hinder you. Above all, your eye will be ever looking toward the mountain-height that marks the place of refuge, and along the plain that leads to it; your thoughts will be occupied with the open door; and your delight will be to hear of those who fled and got in safely. You will be ever looking for Jesus, and rejoicing in whatever leads to a view of him, whether a sermon, or the Bible, or prayer. You will be meditating on his completed work, which opens the fountain for sin and uncleanness. You will delight to read and hear of such as Paul, and Manasseh, and those Jerusalem-sinners who, in every view, were even more than manslaughterers, for they crucified the "Son of Man," "the fellow of the Almighty." But remember there can be no safety for you short of the city; none, none, till you are within it. It is not being "almost persuaded to be a Christian"; it is not being "not far from the kingdom of God," that will save your soul.

It is not setting out and running toward the gate, nor even touching the threshold-but it is getting over the threshold, and getting in, that will be your safety. If the manslayer stopped short of this, he might as well have never tried to flee. No sinner can be pardoned until a sufficient testimony is left against his sin, and this can be done only by his actual coming to Christ Jesus. No manslayer could be forgiven until he got to the city, the very appointment of which was God's testimony against the man's guilt and deserved punishment. No sinner can be forgiven in a righteous way, except by being hid in Christ. Hopes, desires, wishes, convictions, fears, sorrows, in such a case, are no more than shrubs or flowers, that line the road to the city.

4. They have seen the joyful entrance of many into the city of refuge. Fearful, weary, faint, they came up to the open gate; and ventured in, because it was open for such as they. They believed Christ to be the sinner's way to the Father. They came to view his finished and perfect work in behalf of sinners; they examined it, and perceived both its fitness and its fullness; they saw that the Father considered it a wide enough entrance for any sinner; and so they ventured in. Jehovah had declared it to be sufficient, and that was enough for them. Let us ask them, and see their grounds of faith. "You are stained with blood," it might be said to them; "you have been guilty of trampling under foot the Son of God, and aiming many a blow at the life and heart of God; and your conscience tells you that you deserve vengeance; and nothing but filth appears on your person. How dare you come hither?" They reply, "For the very reason that we are blood-stained sinners we have fled to Jesus." Ask again, "How could you ever hope to see the King in his beauty; his people are a holy people?" They reply, "True, but blood-stained souls have become white in his blood, his precious blood was shed for this very end." "But you bring no recommendation? You say nothing of your previous efforts, prayers, tears, good deeds, sincere obedience?" "No, we say nothing of these, for they are not required to our being accepted in the Beloved." "Well, then, at least, show why you in particular venture to come?" "Our warrant is his own sure word, Whosoever cometh I will in no wise cast out."

And now the gate closes them in. They shall go no more out. Angels welcome them with songs; and Father, Son, and Spirit rest over them in love. There is joy in heaven over them!

These redeemed, however, are nevertheless not yet perfect. Their iniquities are forgiven, and every sin blotted out; but their hearts retain much corruption. But to promote holiness they keep much in each other's company and help each other's joy. They often sing such songs as that of

Romans 8:31-34: "If God be for us, who can be against us? 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? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us!" Oh, what peace and joy! No frown of a displeased God, for his anger is turned away, and he comforts them! With joy they draw water out of the wells of salvation. And as they survey and examine their city of refuge, they find new reasons for joy and enduring gratitude. Now that they are in Christ, they inquire freely as to the past; and they find that all along, from the first hour they began to flee, it was the Holy Spirit, sent by the Father in the name of Christ, who was drawing them (John 6:44). At the time that they felt alarmed, and yet lingered in their sins, it was a secret drawing of the Divine hand that enabled them at length to get away from others, and really to flee for refuge. At the time when they had nearly stopped short, attracted by the golden apples which Satan scattered in their path, it was the Spirit that drew them on. At that moment, when, faint and weary, they had well-nigh sat down in despair, it was the drawing of the Father through the Holy Spirit that brought them onward still. And when at length they saw so clearly where to rest, and felt themselves able to rest satisfied in Christ alone, it was the Holy Spirit who caused the scales to drop from their eyes, and who effectually persuaded their souls. Oh, how full now is their gratitude to Father, Son, and Spirit, "Thou hast loved us with an everlasting love, and with everlasting kindness hast thou drawn us!" They are never heard to boast of any thing but of him; not even of their own faith, their eager running to the city. No; for that too was owing to the Spirit he sent into them (Eph. 2:8), and it was not that, but the city, that saved them.

They reach farther still in their discoveries of God's wondrous ways towards them. They are taken into a chamber in the council-house of the city of refuge, and allowed to read its records. The Book of Life is shown to them, and they find now that they were elected from all eternity! And that it was in consequence of the purpose of God, that they were called and drawn by the Spirit of Jesus. Amazing grace! How deeply fixed is the foundation of their safety! They feel humbled at the same time; for they were chosen for no good in themselves at all, but wholly to the praise and glory of Him who called them. It was mere grace that made the difference between them and other manslaughterers. Every new discovery yields matter for praise and adoration. They go down to the gates to praise the Lord among the assembled people. They forsake not the assembling of themselves together, but go to their own company (Acts 4:23) whenever opportunity occurs. Their life is a life of happy, cheerful faith in Him whose finished work redeemed them, and of unceasing love and devotion to Him who called them out of darkness into marvelous light. Often are they heard singing, "We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks. Open ye the gate, that the righteous nation that keepeth the truth may enter in. Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the Lord forever; for in the Lord Jehovah is the rock of ages" (Isa. 26:1-4).

But like the saved manslaughterer who dared not be found beyond the gate of the city until the High Priest had gone to glory (Num. 35:25), they dare not for an hour go out of their place of safety. They abide in Christ. However holy they become, whatever reputation they have gained, however honored and distinguished for spiritual attainments, they abide in Christ alone. Their first security was found in him, and it is their security to the last. Though laden with the fruits of righteousness, and filled with all the graces of the Spirit, they depend for safety on the enclosing wall of their city of refuge, as much as does the sinner that only yesterday came in. And so they will remain till their High Priest enter upon "his glorious rest" (Isa. 11:10); and then they shall share with him in that joy, each one receiving his inheritance and possessing an unchanging love. For this they are always longing. Oftentimes they ascend the battlements and towers of their strong city to look out for any signs of the coming glory; or sitting at their windows, they turn their eye to the east to see if there be any streaks of the dawn. For when from the New Jerusalem

the tidings shall arrive that Jesus our High Priest has entered into his rest, then shall his redeemed return to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

*“FEAR GOD AND GIVE GLORY TO HIM, FOR THE HOUR OF HIS JUDGMENT IS COME!”
(Rev. 14:7).*

4. The Power of the Gospel

*I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ,. for it is the power of
God unto salvation to everyone that believeth. - Rom. 1:16*

We have had frequent occasion to state the Gospel itself. We have showed that it is glad tidings of great joy concerning Jesus Christ, “the only begotten Son of God, who, though He was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we by His poverty might be rich.” We have showed that he who believeth is justified from all from which law could never justify him, that “to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” We have showed that this forgiveness is a sure thing, sure to him that believeth, so that there is no need for doubt or uncertainty, sure to him that believeth, not because better than others, but simply because he believeth. Our object at present is to bring before our readers some instances of the power of the Gospel, to show its blessed results, so that men may see that it is a real thing, and that its blessings are present realities.

We have had frequent occasion to observe cases in which the effects of a believed Gospel were slowly and gradually brought out, perhaps one after the other successively in the course of years, so that we could only gather its results from the summary of a whole lifetime, and this, perhaps, after all only imperfectly in fragments, so that the true nature and effects of the Gospel were not fully seen. In such cases, it might be supposed naturally enough that it was not simply the believed Gospel that wrought the happy consequences, but the gradual inward process going on in the soul, which, in the course of years, produced joy and peace. By this means, the real nature of the Gospel is often misunderstood, and a series of self-righteous doings and feelings substituted in its place. Thus, people are kept in darkness and bondage from supposing it necessary that it should be so, and that a long period must elapse ere the Gospel can take effect, and till they can hope to experience its joys or taste the blessedness of knowing assuredly that they are forgiven.

It might be enough to point to all the believers mentioned in the New Testament. The Acts of the Apostles contain the records of thousands of cases in which the Gospel took immediate effect, and not one in which its blessings were indefinitely postponed, and they who believed it left in darkness and disquietude. What better instances can we have than those, of the immediate and most blessed results of a believed Gospel. No man can gainsay these. They are so plain and so explicit. And then they are instances recorded by an unerring pen. From all these we learn beyond a doubt that the Gospel, as soon as received, brings along with it into the soul joy and peace, light and gladness, the very sunshine of Heaven. Now, if the Gospel wrought such blessed effects in those days, then why not now? What should hinder the same joy and peace from taking immediate possession of the soul that believeth? It is the same Gospel still. It contains the same free message of peace. It presents the same glad welcome to the sinner. There is the same Savior still; the same precious blood-the same justifying death-the same peace-speaking cross-the same perfect righteousness. There is the same Holy Spirit working as of old, with an arm that has not been shortened, and with a power as able to quicken and save as of old. Surely, then, there must

be something widely wrong if they who profess to receive the glad tidings are still left in sorrow, nay, think it right to remain in that state, or even count it presumption to rejoice.

We know not a better way of settling this point than by adducing some modern instances, from which it is plain that to some at least among us the Gospel has lost none of its former power and gladness; and that some in our own day have found it as glad and glorious a Gospel as did those who heard it warm from the lips of the Apostles. This will show that the blessed effects immediately following upon its belief are still manifested among us, and that to them who receive the Word of God concerning his Son simply and as little children, it is still, as of old, a record of gladness, dispelling all darkness, and filling the soul with light. Take, first of all, the following instance. It is from a small work, called *St. Helena Memoirs*. It is an instance very much to our present purpose, and a most interesting case indeed. The narrator was conversing with an officer who was a Deist. In the room, and hard by, there was a young man, listening to all that was said. The conversation passed on from a discussion on Deism to a simple statement of Gospel truths. But the narrator himself must tell us what these were: "I began, as I usually did, at the universal depravity of man, his need of regeneration and a Savior, the nature of conversion, instancing the jailer, Lydia, the thief, etc., and proving that when convinced of sin nothing prevented our instantaneous pardon and acceptance to eternal life in Christ Jesus but our own willful unbelief. I showed the madness of looking to any works, either of repentance or any thing else, as a condition to perform before we can venture to believe or hope to be pardoned; and then dwelt upon the Scripture way of justifying the ungodly through faith alone, and instantaneously on believing. Then I dwelt on the richness, freeness, and sovereignty of grace." Such were the truths stated, and in conversation merely—conversation not directly pointed at the individual affected. They were just the common Gospel truths—nothing more: man's lost estate, the free salvation through the cross.

Now, mark the results, and see what a simply-spoken Gospel can do. In a short time he began to observe that though the Deist was unmoved, the young man was in tears. He sat weeping, as if utterly absorbed in what he was hearing, and unconscious that others saw him. He seemed most affected by what was said about the salvation being immediate, and that nothing prevented him being pardoned that moment but his own unbelief. Soon after, the conversation ended. The narrator and the young man were left alone for the night. As soon as they were left there alone, he took the young man by the hand, and again spoke to him in the fullness of his heart. He was utterly overpowered. He seemed overwhelmed with the deep conviction, and drowned in tears, till it seemed as if he were becoming ill. The free grace of God was then dwelt upon, and the Gospel again set before him. Suddenly his tears ceased to flow. All sorrow fled, and joy unspeakable took possession of his soul. But we must here give the very words of the narrator: "We had committed ourselves in prayer to God, and lain down to rest; and now I remember a scene occurred which I shall never forget. It was this. His agony of sorrow had ceased, and now an agony of joy so possessed his soul that several times I thought he would have expired. I tried to allay it, but in vain. He would go on crying out in the most soul-piercing expressions, addressed to Jesus Christ. He wished to die, then, that moment, and be with Christ, crying out, 'O blessed Jesus, thou hast saved me-me, a great sinner, a child of wrath; thou hast saved me this night, thou hast given me eternal life and glory; I shall never perish; oh, never, never; thou hast made me thy child forever and ever; Jesus is my Savior, God is my God. O blessed, blessed boundless love; boundless grace and mercy. O love, love, what boundless love to me; an heir of Heaven, justified, glorified! Oh, it is too much to bear. O blessed Jesus, help me, help me to bear this agony, or I shall die. Oh, support me, or take my spirit to thyself, that I may bear it. Oh, take me now, take me this night, that I may be delivered from this great agony of joy, and be with thee forever and ever?' In this strain he continued for nearly an hour. I saw I could do nothing. Finding him much exhausted, I got up and tried to stop him from speaking any more, but he burst out again, and then I thought that his soul had fled, and that that Savior to whom he cried in his transport had taken

his spirit to himself. After this, he became more composed, and sank to sleep. I watched over him. He seemed an angel slumbering in bliss. In the morning he was quite composed, and in a heavenly frame of soul; and really his countenance and manner seemed as if his spirit had been absent from the body and present with the Lord in paradise, where he had heard unutterable things, and had just returned again to this lower world of sin and sorrow. The great tide of rapture had now subsided, and peace, joy, and love seemed to breathe forth from him on all around."

Such are the immediate effects of a believed Gospel! And what it did for one it would do for all. It is as full of joy to each of us. But we put the full cup of gladness from our lips, and think it humility to taste it drop by drop! It is unbelief that mars our joy, and so misrepresents the glad tidings as to strip them of all their joy. They would gladden were they but believed. But who hath believed our report?

But take another instance of the power of the believed Gospel. It is from the same volume. The individual referred to had been visited with sickness, and, until that, had not only not known the Gospel, but nothing of the Bible at all. God blessed the words of a dear friend to him on his sickbed, and the change was most wonderful. His weakness prevented his being taught by man. But he was taught from above, and grew rapidly in grace, manifesting the most childlike simplicity and faith in God. It is said of him, "His faith appeared to have no mixture of imperfection in it, for he simply and sincerely took for granted all that God had said in his Word, and was astonished to hear any of us express our want of assurance of faith or conscious sense of our interest in Christ. This to him was a mystery which we could never explain, and which, happily for himself, he died in entire ignorance of."

Take another case, that of Colonel Gardiner. He had been arrested in his ungodliness by the voice of God, and thrown into deep anguish. His deliverance came thus:

"Within about two months after his first memorable change he began to perceive some secret dawnings of more cheerful hope—that, vile as he then saw himself to be, he might nevertheless obtain mercy through a Redeemer; and at length, about the end of October, 1719, he found all the burden of his mind taken off at once by the powerful impression of that memorable Scripture upon his mind: 'Whom God hath set forth for a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins—that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus'" (Rom. 3:25-26).

"He had used to imagine, that the justice of God required the damnation of so enormous a sinner as he saw himself to be; but now he was made deeply sensible, that the divine justice might be not only vindicated but glorified, in saving him by the blood of Jesus, even that blood which cleanseth from all sin. He was led to see the riches of redeeming love and grace, in such a manner as not only engaged him, with the utmost pleasure and confidence, to venture his soul upon them; but even swallowed up (as it were) his whole heart in the returns of love, which, from that blessed time, became the genuine and delightful principle of obedience, and animated him, with an enlarged heart, to run the ways of God's commandments. Thus God was pleased (as he himself used to speak) in an hour to turn his captivity. All the terrors of his former state were turned into unutterable joy. And though the first ecstasies of it afterwards subsided into a more calm and composed delight, yet were the impressions so deep and so permanent, that he declared, on the word of a Christian and a friend, wonderful as it might seem, that, for about seven years after this, he enjoyed nearly a heaven upon earth. His soul was almost continually filled with a sense of the love of God in Christ; so that from the time of his waking in the morning, his heart was rising to God, and triumphing in him."

Or take another less known. A naval officer was disputing with a pious lady about the necessity of the Spirit's teaching. He denied such a thing. She simply replied, "It is so." "And while," says he, "the feeling was still contemptuously curling my lip, in an instant it gave way to a joy of heart, which I cannot describe in any other way than by what would have been the state

of my mind, if she could have persuaded me that I had received the Holy Spirit, and also that her assertions alluded to, were really true. It was a clear and sensible perception of the love of God in the work of Jesus Christ, without, however, being able at the time of giving any definite reason for the conviction. But that was not called for at the time, as eye saw not the effect, neither did ear hear it.

“We went in the afternoon to a chapel, where it pleased the Lord that the clergyman should read and expound the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. Every sentence that he uttered was as a river of living water poured into my soul. It was then, for the first time in my life, that I saw with the spiritual eye that blessed being who ‘was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities.’ It was in that hour that I saw a reconciled God in the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, it was a joy unspeakable and full of glory! From that day a treasure in the book of the living God has been unfolded to me, and on that day the seal was broken.”

Or take again a remarkable instance recorded in the life of Lady Huntingdon, that of Dr. Conyers, minister at Helmsley, in the last century. He was almost a Socinian when he began his ministry. His conversion was very remarkable:

“While reading the lesson for the day in the public service at the church, the expression of St. Paul—‘The unsearchable riches of Christ’ (Eph. 3:8)—made a deep impression upon his mind. On this Scripture he was involuntarily led to reflect—‘The unsearchable riches of Christ!’ ‘I never found, I never knew that there were unsearchable riches in Him!’ Accustomed to consider the Gospel as extremely simple and intelligible, he was surprised that the Apostle should assert that the riches of Christ were unsearchable. Immediately he concluded that his sentiments and experience must be entirely dissimilar to that of the Apostle. Deep convictions accompanied these reflections, and his trouble was not a little increased by considering that if he himself was wrong in the fundamental articles of religion, he must also, by his mode of preaching, have misguided his flock, to the great prejudice of their souls. At length the sorrowful sighing of the prisoner is attended with success, and on December 25, 1758, while walking in his room, in a pensive frame, he was led to contemplate those two passages of Scripture. ‘Without shedding of blood there is no remission’ (Heb. 9:22), and ‘The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin’ (1 John 1:7). The mists of ignorance were instantaneously dissipated, and finding that he could center his hopes in the atoning blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, he became the immediate partaker of real and ineffable joy.

“I went up stairs and down again (said he), backwards and forwards in my room, clapping my hands for joy, and crying out, I have found him—I have found him—I have found him, whom my soul loveth, and for a little time, as the Apostle said, whether in the body or out of it, I could hardly tell.”

Or take another striking narrative from the same work, the account of Lady Huntingdon’s own conversion. She was conversing one day with a relative, Lady Margaret Hastings, who had been lately brought to Christ. This lady told Lady Huntingdon that “since she had known and believed in the Lord Jesus Christ she had been as happy as an angel.” This went like an arrow to her soul. Deep conviction of sin followed. A dangerous illness deepened the conviction, and her misery was great. At length she was brought to rest on Christ, and found peace in believing

“Now the day began to dawn. Jesus the Sun of Righteousness arose, and burst in meridian splendor on her benighted soul. The scales fell from her eyes, and opened a passage for the light of life which sprang in, and death and darkness fled before it. Viewing herself as a brand plucked from the burning, she could not but stand astonished at the mighty power of that grace which saved her from eternal destruction, just when she stood upon its very brink, and raised her from the gates of hell to the confines of heaven; and the depths from which she was raised, made the heights which she had reached only the more amazing; she felt the rock beneath her, and from that secure position looked with astonishment, downward, to that horrible pit from which she was

so mercifully delivered-and upwards, in ecstasy, to that glory to which she should be raised. The 'sorrow of the world, which worketh death,' was now exchanged for that godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto life; and 'joy unspeakable, and full of glory,' succeeded that bitterness that comes of the conviction of sin; she enjoyed, already, a delightful foretaste of heaven."

Or take the following brief account of the conversion of Mr. Mills, one of the great promoters of Missions to America:

"The spiritual career of this devoted servant of Christ and the church commenced in the following manner: When about fifteen years of age, his attention was specially directed to the great concerns of the soul. For two full years he continued in a state of anxiety, quarreling with the sovereignty of God, and often wishing that he had never been born. One morning, as he was about to leave home, to return to school in a neighboring town, his pious mother took an opportunity of inquiring into the state of his mind, and begged him to make an ingenuous disclosure of his feelings.

"For a moment he was silent, and wept; but his heart was too full to suppress the emotions produced by so affecting a request. He raised his head, and, with eyes streaming with tears, exclaimed, 'Oh, that I had never been born! Oh, that

I had never been born! For two years I have been sorry God ever made me.' What reply could such a mother make to such a disclosure? It was given her in that same hour what she should speak: 'My son,' said she, 'you are born, and you can never throw off your existence, nor your everlasting accountability for all your conduct.' This heavy thought was like a dagger to his soul. His mother expressed her fears that he had never thoroughly seen the evil of his own heart, and that he had much to learn before he was acquainted with himself: to which he ventured to say, 'I have seen-to the very bottom of hell!' With this frame of mind, he took a melancholy leave of his parents for the winter.

"The farewell to his mother drove her to her knees. There is such a thing as special faith in prayer. It was such to this dear saint, when she went to plead for her poor son. She did not leave her closet, till she found the full relief she sought, and till her mind was confidently assured that God would remember mercy for her child! On that very morning, it pleased the Holy Ghost, as she afterwards ascertained, to knock off the chains from this unhappy prisoner, and introduce him into the liberty of the sons of God! He had not gone far, before he had such a view of the perfections of God, that he wondered he had never seen their beauty and glory before. There was nothing in God now which distressed him. He had lost all his opposition to the Divine sovereignty; and such were his views of this adorable perfection, that he could not refrain from exclaiming, 'O glorious sovereignty! O glorious sovereignty!' He retired a small distance into the woods, that he might be the more at liberty to contemplate the character of God, and adore and extol his holy and amiable sovereignty: but he here saw so much of God, that his mind was almost lost in the overwhelming manifestation. The scene was altogether new. There was a wonderful change either in God or in him. Everything was gilded with light and glory; and now and then, as he gazed at the splendor and majesty of the Divine character, he would still exclaim, 'O glorious sovereignty!' It does not appear that in all this he was bribed into acquiescence. His mind was so constantly occupied in viewing the perfections of God, and in meditating on his word and works, and so continued for several weeks, that he did not think of himself with any degree of concern."

Or, lastly, take the following sketch of the conversion of the famous Mr. Fuller:

"One morning," says he, "I think in November, 1769, I walked out by myself with an unusual load of guilt upon my conscience. The remembrance of my sin, not only on the past evening, but for a long time back, the breach of my vows, and the shocking termination of my former hopes and affections, all uniting together, formed a burden which I knew not how to bear. The reproaches of a guilty conscience seemed like the gnawing worm of hell. I do not write in the

language of exaggeration. I now know that the sense which I then had of the evil of sin and the wrath of God, was very far short of the truth; but yet it seemed more than I was able to sustain. In reflecting upon my broken vows, I saw that there was no truth in me. I saw that God would be perfectly just in sending me to hell, and that to hell I must go unless I were saved of mere grace, and as it were in spite of myself. I felt that if God were to forgive me all my past sins, I should again destroy my soul, and that in less than a day's time. I never before knew what it was to feel myself an odious, lost sinner, standing in need of both pardon and purification. I knew not what to do! In this state of mind, as I was moving slowly on, I thought of the resolution of Job, 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.' I paused, and repeated the words over and over. Each repetition seemed to kindle a ray of hope, mixed with a determination, if I might, to cast my perishing soul upon the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, to be both pardoned and purified; for I felt that I needed the one as much as the other. In this way I continued above an hour, weeping and supplicating mercy for the Savior's sake (my soul hath it still in remembrance, and is humbled in me!): and as the eye of the mind was more and more fixed upon him, my guilt and fears were gradually and insensibly removed. I now found rest for my troubled soul.

"When I thought of my past life, I abhorred myself, and repented as in dust and ashes; and when I thought of the gospel way of salvation, I drank it in as cold water is imbibed by a thirsty soul. My heart felt one with Christ, and dead to every other object around me.

"From this time, my former wicked courses were forsaken. I had no manner of desire after them. They lost their influence upon me. To those evils, a glance at which before would have set my passions in a flame, I now felt no inclination. 'My soul' (said I, with joy and triumph) 'is as a weaned child!' I now knew, experimentally, what it was to be dead to the world by the cross of Christ, and to feel an habitual determination to devote my future life to God my Savior."

Such are a few instances of the power of the Gospel. They tend very strikingly to show both its real nature and its effects upon the soul when believed. From them let us gather a few things.

1. The Gospel is just good news about God and his Son Jesus Christ. It is not good news about myself, but simply and solely about God and Christ. It tells me of the exceeding riches of the grace of God. It tells me that there is salvation for me, salvation to the uttermost through the cross and blood of God's beloved Son.

2. We see that the believing of these good news brings peace to the soul. It is not the believing, coupled with something else in us; it is simply this believing that gladdens. That which brings joy to the sinner is what the Holy Spirit shows him in Christ. There he sees fullness, infinite fullness, fullness most suitable for a sinner, fullness free to all, fullness pressed upon him. And it is this that gladdens him.

3. We see that it is IN believing that there is joy and peace. There is not merely joy as the fruit of believing, but joy in believing. It is not joy as the result of examining my faith and summing up my evidences; but it is joy in believing. For in these instances there was no time for evidences to manifest themselves, there was no time for self-examination at all.

4. We see that there is no long period nor laborious process required to be undergone before peace is obtained. In some of these cases, indeed, there was a protracted time of conviction; but it is evident that the length of time had nothing to do with the subsequent peace. It is clear from these that the Gospel is fitted and designed to bring us immediate peace, and if it does not do this the reason is because it is not believed!

5. It is of the utmost moment to press an immediate salvation upon the sinner. He is bent upon delay, and he tries to make himself believe that forgiveness is something far off, something which he can only attain after a long struggle of fears and doubts. Hence the necessity for insisting upon the present peace which the Gospel is intended to bring, and to press upon the sinner's conscience the urgent and imperative command of God, to believe without one moment's

delay. It is this urgency which the Holy Spirit owns and blesses for the conversion of sinners, and the comfort of the doubting. In nothing that God commands does he admit of one moment's delay or hesitation in obeying it, and woe be to us if we lead any sinner to suppose that he is at liberty to wait one single moment before believing the Gospel.

It has been always Satan's object to cloud the Gospel, so as to make it appear not to be the blessed gladdening thing which it was in the days of the Apostles. And hence there is a necessity for jealousy in regard to this. And it is very useful to point back to some such instances of its peace-giving power and say to all gainsayers "such is the Gospel." See its nature; see its freeness; see its fruits; see the peace it brings.

"Now the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing that we may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost."

5. Grace and Glory

The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ. - Titus 2:11

The Apostle first speaks of grace in connection with present holiness, and then he speaks of it in connection with future glory. He first speaks of it in reference to the first coming of the Lord, and then in reference to the second.

The condition into which grace brings us is that of a pardoned, reconciled sinner; the character into which grace fashions us is that of holiness; the attitude in which grace places us is that of expectation for Christ's second coming. The last of these three results is just as natural and necessary a fruit of grace as either of the former two. The same grace that teaches us to look back to the first coming of the Savior, teaches us also to look forward to his second; as the Apostle elsewhere declares, "Ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and the true God, and TO WAIT FOR HIS SON FROM HEAVEN" (1 Thess. 1:9-10); and in the passage which we have placed at the commencement of this tract, he states most strongly the connection between "salvation by grace" and "looking for the blessed hope." The moment a sinner has found this pardoning grace that flows out to him from the cross of Christ, he longs to fling himself into the arms of that Savior who has opened for him this precious stream.

The great truth which the Apostle announces to us in the above passage is, that grace received necessarily leads us to expect and desire Christ's second coming. Such is the effect of grace-the certain result of a believed gospel-a gospel which brings to us the certainty of forgiveness and the conscious possession of eternal life. The Apostle does not say that this grace may lead us to long for the coming of Christ, but must lead us, as its designed and inevitable consequence. We do not merely say it leads us to believe in Christ's coming, but to expect it, to desire it, to look for it, to love it. Nor do we say that grace leads us to long for death. Scripture does not teach us that; it is that "blessed hope," even the "glorious appearing" of the Lord, that it sets before our eye. Nor do we say that grace leads us to desire the spiritual presence of Christ. No; his spiritual presence is not a matter of hope or expectation, but of present and certain possession, as he himself has said-"Lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." This spiritual presence is the believer's present inheritance and joy, but his visible and glorious presence is as yet but the object of hope. That hope, no doubt, is a certain one, which "maketh not ashamed," but still it refers to things unseen as yet.

Our inference, then, from the passage at the head of this tract is, as we have already stated, that grace truly received necessarily leads us to look for and desire Christ's second and "glorious appearing" as a "blessed hope." And that this is really the Apostle's meaning is manifest from many similar passages of Scripture. There is 1 Thess. 1:10, already quoted; there is, also, I Cor. 1:7, "So that ye come behind in no gift, waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ"; Phil. 3:20, "Our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Savior the Lord Jesus Christ"; Heb. 9:28, "To them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin unto salvation," etc. Such passages sufficiently confirm our inference. But now we ask, perhaps, "Why is it so?" Why does grace thus lead us forward necessarily to the second coming of the Lord? To this we answer:

1. Because this grace unites us to Christ, and this union, once begun, necessarily leads us to press forward to its full consummation. This consummation can only be when we see him as he is-eye to eye, and face to face. When the soul is set in motion toward Christ, it cannot rest till it has fully beheld him--till, like aged Simeon, it has grasped within its arms the object of its fond desire. Faith can do much, but still it is not sight. Nay, the stronger that faith becomes, the more intensely does it quicken within us the desire for sight. To feel that we are His, and that He is ours, and yet not to feel the weariness and bitterness of absence, would be strange indeed. To say, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine," and yet not to desire to behold him, nor to long for his personal vision and embrace, would be an inconsistency which, in human friendships, would be reckoned a confession of insincerity and estrangement. Love draws us to the beloved object; with nothing short of that will it be content. If it can be content with less, it is not love at all.

But it may be said, have we not Christ's spiritual presence, and is not that all we need? We answer, Christ's spiritual presence is much indeed, but still it is not all that God has promised to his Church, and therefore we cannot be content with it alone. It was never designed to supersede his visible presence, nor to interfere with the blessed hope of his visible return. Nay, the more his spiritual presence is realized, the greater will be the longings for his actual appearance. It is the experience of his spiritual presence that whets the appetite for his personal return. For thus the soul reasons, "this spiritual fellowship with Christ is declared to be but the earnest of the future reality; and if the mere earnest be so glorious, what must be the personal communion and full-eyed vision?" The closer, then, the present union, the more ardent will be the desire for the perfection of that union at the coming of the Lord.

2. Because even this grace itself is only begun, and is not to be fully opened up till the day of the Lord. This I gather from such passages as these, "Gird up the loins of your mind; be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:13), and "That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:7). This is emphatically the dispensation of grace, and yet it is only the commencement of that grace, now manifesting itself. Here we have grace in large and overflowing measure--yet the full reserve of grace is yet to come. It awaits us at the Coming of the Lord, for not only is there in store for us against that great day, the exceeding eternal weight of glory--but the full manifestation of grace itself is reserved till then. Is this grace then that bringeth salvation, so precious, so desirable now? How very precious, how very desirable then ought to be its full development and brightness unobscured? How much to be desired and longed for, the day of its grand revelation! it is grace itself then that teaches us to look for the blessed hope of the Savior's glorious appearing.

But some will say, "What does this future manifestation of grace concern us, if we can only secure that which is present; if I get grace to save me, what need I care for aught beyond this?" Now mark the meaning of such a sentiment. (1) It is saying, that provided you are saved you take no interest in the glory of your God. You care for his grace only because it saves you, not because it glorifies him. You care only to know as much of God and his purposes as will save you. That

accomplished, everything else is to you a matter of minor interest. Such a sentiment from one who is “not his own, but bought with a price!” (2) It is saying that, provided your salvation is secured, your sanctification is a less material thing. If the other is only secured, that can stand over! You know not how much-how very much your sanctification depends on the assured hope of these future realities. You are as much bound to believe all that will sanctify as all that will save! Besides, is a man really in a state of salvation who is not eagerly seizing hold of everything that will advance his holiness? The probabilities are that he is not. (3) It is saying that you are never to leave the principles of the doctrine of Christ, and to go on unto perfection, that you are to be always laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, etc., which the Apostle so strongly condemns (Heb. 6:1).

3. Because the knowledge of Christ which this grace gives us makes us long to see him face to face. “Whom having not seen ye love, and in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing,” etc., says the Apostle Peter. This love to a Savior unseen makes us long for the nearer, closer fellowship of a Savior seen. His being unseen does not prevent us loving him, but our loving him unseen does not lessen our desire to see him “as he is.” It is the believing perception of an absent invisible Savior that quickens our desire to see him “face to face.” He is said to be “fairer than the children of men,” “altogether lovely.” This is the report we have heard regarding him, and this report of his surpassing comeliness only makes us long the more to see him. “They shall see his face,” is the crowning blessedness of the new Jerusalem (Rev. 22:4). Do you really believe the report, and do you not desire to see the king in his beauty? As good old Samuel Rutherford said, “I often challenge time which holdeth us asunder; I half call his absence cruel, and the veil upon his face a cruel covering that hideth a fair, fair face from a sick soul....I dare not challenge himself, but his absence is like a mountain of iron upon my heavy heart.” Does this saint’s experience accord with yours? Do his expressions of desire to meet his returning Lord call forth the sympathies of your longing hearts?

Some may say, “What does it matter to me when I see Christ, if I know that I am his, and receive assurances of his love.” Ah!, but would you say so of an absent friend or brother. Would that friend believe you really loved him if he heard you speaking in this manner? Is not this way of speaking an ill-concealed disguise, an awkward apology for the coldness of a heart whose love beats with low and languid pulse? What would you think of a wife saying of her absent husband, “What does it matter when I see my husband, if I know that I am his, and receive daily letters from him signed with his own hand”?

Would you think her love to be “strong as death”? Would you not think she took the matter with a cool complacency which argued either wonderful composure or wonderful indifference? In the case of a faithful loving wife, would not every communication of her husband’s love only make her long more anxiously to meet him, to weary more impatiently for his return? Or take the case of the disciples when Christ was parting from them. According to some, this parting would be a matter of perfect indifference. They had already his spiritual presence and the promise of its continuance, and what cause had they to mourn his personal absence? Yet they were loath to part with their beloved Master. Not to hear the sound of his familiar voice; not to be cheered by the smile of his gracious countenance, was matter of no common sorrow-and “their hearts were troubled.” This parting was a trying event; his absence was a sore privation, and accordingly his concluding hours were spent in administering to their comfort. Was that comfort useless? According to some it must have been so, if his absence was no trial. But if it was necessary to them, is it not as necessary to us? And yet many of us seem to require no such comfort at all; for his absence never seems to cost us one sorrowful thought, nor his return one longing desire. Our feelings ought surely to be the same with his weeping disciples. We cannot be wrong in mourning his absence, and wearying for his return, when not only we read that his disciples thus mourned and longed, but, when we remember that the inspired prayer of that disciple who knew him best, and loved him most, who had leaned on his bosom and had most of his spiritual presence, was

still the prayer of one who wanted something more, who could not be satisfied with anything but his return. Even so Lord Jesus come quickly!

4. Our fourth reason for saying that this grace necessarily leads us to desire the coming of the Lord is, because it opens up to us all the corruptions of our inner man, and makes us groan by reason of this body of sin and death. Many of our corruptions and temptations are from the external world, and a spiritual coming will not remove these, however much it fortify us against them. And it is their existence that makes us groan, not merely their prevalence. Others of our corruptions are from Satan, the prince of this world, and a spiritual coming to us will not bind him. Others are from a body of mortality, and a spiritual coming will not redeem the body, for, says the apostle, "We ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body" (Rom. 8:23). This "vile body" will still continue vile, till it be changed at the coming of the Lord, and fashioned like unto his own glorious body (Phil. 3:20-21). Then, and not till then, will it cease to tempt us. Then, and not till then, will it cease to be to us the source of manifold corruptions, the prison house of earthly bondage. Till then we "groan, being burdened, not for that we would be unclothed (that is, not that we long for the disembodied state, the separation of soul from body), but clothed upon (with the house not made with hands, the glorious body), that mortality may be swallowed up of life" (2 Cor. 5:4). And this groaning creation will continue still to groan-still to tempt, still to weary us-till He who hath subjected the same in hope, shall come to lift off the curse, and deliver it from the "bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Rom. 8:21). And Satan, too, will continue to be the god of this world, the prince of the power of the air, until cast out and bound by Him who is to put all his enemies under both his feet and ours. If, then, we do not long for the coming of the Lord, which alone can deliver us from these enemies without and within, we surely do not feel the power of corruption, the burden of this "vile body"-we surely are not alive to the seducing influence of a sin-accursed earth-we surely have no realizing experience of the tyranny and craft of the Evil One?

5. Grace leads us to look for "this blessed hope,"—because by grace we are brought into a state of suffering and tribulation, from which Christ's coming is to redeem us. Grace brings along with it many trials to which we were strangers before. It brings the hatred of the world. It brings the alienation of friends. It brings ridicule, contempt, and persecution. "I am not come to send peace on earth, but a sword." To receive this grace is to take up the cross; and he who has not taken up his cross has not received grace. It is to enter upon the path of tribulation—for "through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom of heaven." Such trials are manifold—they are innumerable, and they are hard to bear. It is a thorny path, even though a Savior's footprints are discerned at every step before us, and a Savior's arm is held out for us to lean upon?

How earnestly, then, should we desire that day which is to end our tribulation, and introduce us to endless rest? How truly should that event be to us "a blessed hope," which is the signal of commencing triumph to the poor afflicted saints—which is to unbind the crown of thorns from the bleeding forehead of the widowed church, and place upon her brow the glorious "diadem."

Say not "Death will end this tribulation to me personally, therefore I need not look beyond that"; for how, let me ask, do you know that Christ may not come before that? How do you know that your death is to be before his coming? Besides, such a feeling as this is selfish in the extreme. You are a member of the body of Christ, and you ought to feel for the whole body, and to regard the tribulation as yours whether you be in the midst of it or not. You ought to long for the day of final deliverance for the Church's sake as much as for your own. You sympathize with the past sorrows of the Church—with the sufferings of the suffering band of martyrs: you feel as if you were one of them—as if their sufferings were yours. You wish that "those days" had been shortened, and would gladly have shortened them if you could. Ought not, then, the very same feelings to actuate you with reference to that portion of Christ's Church which has yet to

encounter days of tribulation? Ought you not to desire that, “for the elect’s sake, these days may be shortened”? Ought not the consciousness of trouble and suffering in your own case to lead you to desire the coming of the Lord, that the days of the Church’s tribulation may be ended forever?

If you do not desire the coming, there is reason to suspect that you are not bearing the cross. The cross not being felt, the crown loses half its value, and the coming is little realized, little longed for. It is the burden of the cross that makes the day of deliverance so desirable in our eyes—that makes us enter into the meaning of such promises as these: “If we suffer we shall also reign with him”—“If we suffer with him we shall be also glorified together” (2 Tim. 2:12; Rom. 8:17; 1 Pet. 4:13).

6. Grace leads us to desire the glorious appearing of our Lord, because it opens our eyes to see this world’s universal wretchedness, and makes our hearts tender to mourn for it. Men speak of this world as a happy world. They praise it as if it were all but Paradise. And once we, too, might be disposed to join in their praises, and echo back their joyous sentiments. Once it seemed to us a peaceful, pleasant scene, a world of smiles and sunshine, with here and there only the passing shadow of a cloud to intercept the tranquil radiance, or tinge with momentary sadness the hour of mirth. Even disappointment could not dissipate the gay delusion, nor disenchant the bewildering spell. Cares and vexations thickened around us; coldness, desolation, and disease frowned upon us; broken friendships, severed relationships, blighted prospects, darkened our path, and overshadowed our skies; but even all this could scarcely make us believe what a wild waste wilderness we lived in, what a world of wretchedness and crime.

But grace opened our eyes. We saw first that we ourselves were sinners, and then looking round us we saw with what a world of sinners we were surrounded. We felt that we were in wretchedness, and we began to see what a wilderness of misery encompassed us on every side. The dazzling veil was lifted up, and beneath it we saw scenes that made our hearts bleed at every vein, and heard sounds of lamentation, mourning, and woe ascending from myriads of dying sinners who were living without peace, and perishing without hope, and passing into eternity without a pardon and without a Savior. It was as if there stood before us some goodly fabric, built with costly magnificence, and decorated with most inviting architecture. We went round and round it, admiring it on every side. It seemed so fair and goodly—so peaceful a sunshine rested on it, we thought we should like to dwell within sight of it forever. And though now and then a shriek was heard within, or a funeral passed out, yet we heeded not these interruptions. But at last we were taken in, and the whole dismal interior lay before us and around us—a vast hospital of the dying and the dead—a mighty “lazar-house of many woes.” Then when we saw how the whole creation groaned and travailed, then we felt how infinitely desirable was the day of its deliverance from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God, how “blessed” was the “hope” of the coming of the Lord.

Such, then, are the proofs of the statement with which we set out, that grace, rightly received, makes us long for the glorious appearing of our Lord. We think they are sufficient to show that that event ought to be to us a blessed hope, and that the attitude in which we are called upon to stand in reference to it, is that of men who are looking and longing for that which is the uppermost desire of their hearts.

Such, believer, let the coming of thy Lord be to thee. Is he not thy friend? Does his absence not make a dreary blank? And art thou not, then, longing for His appearing, for the day when He and thou shall meet to be parted no more forever!

But if these things be true, then what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness? This hope is not only a blessed one, but a holy one. It not only gladdens, but it sanctifies. He who has this hope in him is called upon to purify himself, even as Christ is pure. It brings us more vividly into contact with the Lord, and this elevates and purifies. It makes us overleap the dreary interval which lies between us and his coming, making us feel as

if he were already with us, and this tends to conform us to his image.

This grace believed, and glory hoped for, is no barren over-curious speculation of man. It is the very truth of God. Were it nothing but man's device, it might be dismissed as unprofitable. But it is not so. The grace brings salvation, and the hope leads us ever onward and upward. It is like some well-known star in the firmament, not merely to be gazed at and admired, but serving the storm-vexed seaman as a guide over the trackless waste of ocean. And may not the low condition of the Church of Christ in these last days be, in no small measure, traced to her having so sadly lost sight of that blessed hope, which was esteemed so precious, by the primitive church, in apostolic days? May the Lord not charge us with the indifference of the unfaithful servant, who said, "My Lord delayeth his coming," and who began forthwith to live in pleasure, as if his master would never return? May he not address us in these last days, as he did Ephesus, "Remember from whence thou art fallen and repent, and do the first works, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent."

How awful, sinner, must that day appear to thee! Thou hast no hope in it. It is all darkness and sorrow to thee, the beginning of thy endless woe! For he comes to execute the Father's righteous purpose of wrath upon the ungodly, to take vengeance upon them that know not God, and that obey not his gospel.

And wilt thou live on unmindful of that coming day of tribulation and anguish? It is a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains! Wilt thou live on in thy sins, as if there were no sin-avenging judge, no sin-avenging day appointed by him, when thou shalt give in thy account for the deeds done in the body. What will the end be of all those pleasures in which thou art now swallowing up every care about the day of wrath? The beginning may be pleasant, but what will their end be? The coming of the Lord draweth nigh, and thou art yet in thy sins! Still reckless of the judge and of his sentence! The end of all things is at hand, and thou art living as if there were to be no end at all, as if thou wert to live forever! The world's Mighty King will soon be here, and thou art still a rebel, whose doom shall be the crushing stroke of the iron rod! And dost thou feel no terror? Is there no sadness on thy brow as that awful day approaches, and the signs of its nearness are becoming visible around thee? Do you still say, let us eat and drink and be merry? Not one sigh for a participation in the coming glory? Not one shudder at the thought of plunging into endless woe? Not one cry for mercy, not one tear for all your ungodliness and worldly lusts? Darkness is coming, wrath is coming, judgment is coming, the second death is coming, the eternal night is coming, and wilt thou slumber on, as if thou wert on thy way to heaven, or as if hell were all a fable, and the threatened sorrows of eternity a lie?

Here is the message of God to thee, "How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? And the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit upon you, I will make known my words unto you. Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you" (Prov. 1:22-27).

Yet there is GRACE for thee! The free love of God is still in the Savior's hands, and he is dispensing it freely to all who come! Why, then, reject that free love which would save even thee? Why madly thrust away the love, and choose the wrath? Why prefer the curse to the blessing of the God that made thee? Yet, behold, this free love is still held out to thee! The cup of free grace is once more pressed to thy lips! Oh, drink and live forever. "Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness" (Jer. 13:16).

“Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Rev. 22:20).

6. Tribulation

*As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous, therefore, and repent.
- Rev. 3:19*

The washing of a vessel supposes that there is some soil or stain upon it which requires to be removed. There would be no need for washing were it not for this. It would be labor lost to him who washes, and, perchance, also serious injury to the vessel.

The casting of gold or silver into the furnace implies that there is dross upon them to be thus purged out by fire. There would be no need for fire, or furnace, or refiner's labor, were there no dross. It is the dross that makes the necessity for these. They are but means for getting quit of it.

So with chastisement. It supposes SIN. Were it not for sin, chastisement would be unknown. In heaven there is no chastisement, for there is no sin. Angels know nothing of it, for they know no sin. And in the coming Kingdom, when all things are made new, there shall be no chastisement, for there shall be no sin. It is only where there is sin that there is chastisement. There being such a thing as chastisement on earth, is just God saying, “I have found iniquity there.” And God, in sending chastisement to an individual, is just his saying, “I have seen sin in thee.”

But more than this. Chastisement implies a determination to get quit of sin. It is not merely God's saying there is sin on thee, but also his adding, “I must purge it away; I cannot allow it to remain on thee.” It is God's expression of his deep interest in us and his paternal anxiety for our welfare. To make us clean is what he seeks; and this he is resolved to accomplish at any cost. It must be done, for he is holy. It must be done, for he loveth us. Sin must be got quit of whatever pain or sorrow it may require to effect it. What is pain if it expels sin? What is sorrow if it purges away the evil of our nature, or a lifetime's gathered dross?

But chastisement is something more peculiar still. In one sense, it may be said that all the woes and wretchedness of earth are intended to drive men from their sins.

God is thus speaking to all. He is thus warning all. He is pleading with men to turn from iniquity and seek his face. He embitters all sin—he embitters all pleasure—he fastens sorrow upon everything beneath the sun, that he may lead men to repentance and salvation. In this general way he is addressing all. To every sinner upon the broad earth he is speaking and saying “Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die.” Every pang that shoots through the frame, and makes the flesh to quiver, is a message from God. Every sorrow that shades the brow and saddens the eye is a message from God to a sinning, suffering world. They speak to sinners not only of the holiness of God, but of the exceeding riches of his grace and of his deep and affectionate interest in their welfare.

But, strictly speaking, this is not chastisement. Chastisement is something more special and peculiar in its nature and design than this. It is the strictly paternal dealing of God with the members of his own redeemed family. It takes for granted the family relationship. It is a family word—a household name. For thus the Apostle teaches us—“Ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him; for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth; but if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons” (Heb. 12:5-8).

There is then a necessity for chastisement. It is part of the children's portion here. It is the family discipline, and no member of the redeemed family from the beginning has ever been without it in some measure or form. It is one of the family badges, and as such has been worn from generation to generation by all the children. Not that they are a sad and wretched company. No: they "greatly rejoice, even though now if need be, they are in heaviness through manifold temptation." There is no joy like theirs, no peace like theirs. Yet they have sorrow too. There is the tear in the eye, even when the calm smile is playing round the lip, and peace is shedding the serenity of its sunshine over the countenance. Their life is, as to most outward things, a sorrowful one; but as to what is inward, it is full of peace. They are forgiven; and that is peace. They are accepted in the beloved; and that is peace. They are delivered from a present evil world; and that is peace. They have a rich inheritance in reversion; and that is peace. Yet have they fightings without and fears within: they are "sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

Yes, chastisement is their lot on earth. It is through much tribulation that they must enter the kingdom of heaven. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous."

Now, why is this? We are sure it is not in vain. God sends no needless sorrow to any of his children; he afflicteth not willingly. It pains him to do it, if we may thus speak after the manner of men. Why, then, does he afflict? Let us inquire into this. It much concerns us to understand this aright. For affliction misunderstood by the sufferer becomes doubly bitter and piercing. It then becomes not only unalleviated, but unprofitable sorrow.

Chastisement springs from love-the deep love of God. Let us never forget this. It is love that fills and presents to us the cup of sorrow. Whether it is of mingled or unmingled bitterness, still it is love that pours it out-the bitter as much as the sweet. The love that lets the child alone to do as he pleases is foolish love, if, indeed, it can be called love at all. But the love that restrains and chastises is deep, wise, tender love. It is from the very bottom of the loving heart that chastisement comes. Chastening love is, in truth, the deepest and most self-denying of all. Hence it shows us how much God is in earnest with us. It shows us what pains he is taking to bless us. It is in affliction that we see the strength and the earnestness of the love of God. This of itself may be enough to lead us to acquiesce in his dealings as all right and wise-to say "it is well"; "it is the Lord, let him do what seemeth to him good"; shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil? But still it is well to inquire more particularly into God's reasons for afflicting-the ends he has in view in bringing us under the rod. For thus we shall not only be more fully satisfied that "all is well," but also learn particularly the lessons which God is seeking to teach us.

1. Tribulation proves us.

We really do not know ourselves till trial comes. Of many a sin and many a weakness we are utterly ignorant till affliction brings them out and exposes them to view. It was for this end that God led Israel into the wilderness to try them and to know what was in their hearts. Their desert-trials proved them, that is, put them to the proof. And when thus proved, what iniquity was found in them that had lain hidden and unknown before! The trial did not create the evil; it did not make their hearts worse than before. It merely brought out what was there already, but had been lying unseen and unfelt, like a sleeping serpent. When Israel was thus tried, what worldliness came out; what unbelief; what rebellious murmuring against God; what atheism and idolatry; what self-will, self-confidence, and self-pleasing! They could not have believed that such wickedness could be found in them, or that if their hearts did contain such evil, it could have lain concealed so long. Yet it never came out till then.

So with the saints still. God chastises them that he may prove them and bring out the evil that is within. And when the trial comes what a difference it makes! The flesh, the old man, is cut to

the quick, and forthwith arouses itself. When it was asleep, we did not know its strength and vitality; but now that it has been wakened up, how fearful its still-remaining might! The wind rises, the storm drives over us, the billows heave, and soon we know that we are but a troubled sea, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. When all was calm, there seemed nought but purity, and ripple folded over ripple in the brightness of their transparent green. But the tempest stirs the depths, and all is changed. So with the soul even of the saints in its hours of tribulation and storm. The hidden evils come forth. Sins scarcely known before display themselves. The heart pours out its wickedness. Hard thoughts of God arise. Atheistical murmurings break out. Questionings both of his wisdom and his love are muttered. Distrust and unbelief assume the mastery. And what a scene the wretched soul presents! All this was in us before, but we knew it not. It was needful that we should know it, and hence God sent the trial to bring it out. And thus are we led, on the one hand, into deeper views of our own exceeding sinfulness, and into fuller discoveries of the abounding grace of God. We learn to prize more than ever the open fountain; and to shelter ourselves with more confident security under the righteousness of the righteous one.

Thus the Lord proved job. He let loose the tempter. He sent tribulation. And straightway the hidden evils of his heart come forth—impatience, unbelief, self-righteousness. Then when the Lord has showed him these things, and led him to deeper views of sin, when he has searched him through and through, and made him to abhor himself; then he leads him to the blood of sprinkling, and sheds down anew the brightness of his gracious countenance, filling him with the joys of his salvation, and lifting up his head forever.

2. Tribulation purges us.

To be proved is one thing, to be purged is another. It is good to have the evil brought out, but it is better to have it taken away. The heat of the furnace burns out the dross, and leaves the gold behind. Now this is God's wish and aim. As he says to Israel so he speaks to us, "I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin" (Isa. 1:25). And, again, "when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning" (Isa. 4:4).

Now there is not only much in us that requires to be taken away, but much that will yield to nothing, save chastisement. Other processes of discipline may remove a great deal, yet still there remains behind very much which nothing but trial and suffering will purge away. Some parts of the stone to be polished are so hard and rough, that heavy strokes are needed to smooth them down. They resist every milder kind of treatment.

In some, worldliness is so strong that chastisement is needed. In others it is simply love of the creature. In others it is pride that needs to be abased. In others it is selfishness that needs to be eradicated. In others it is stubbornness and stoutness of heart. In others it is the desire of the honor that cometh from men—man's love, man's approbation, man's smile. In others some idol needs to be broken in pieces. In others some creature comfort needs to be taken away lest we should settle down and be at ease. In others strong passions need to be broken down, or a froward will needs to be bent and subdued. These are some of the evils that need to be purged out of us. For the accomplishment of this, sometimes the trial is short, but sharp and pointed, going into the very vitals like a sword. Sometimes it is long, protracted, heavy, bruising and crushing us with its weary ever-pressing weight. Different processes are required, some longer and some shorter; some a sudden stroke of the rod, others a continual thorn in the flesh—some a quick cutting off of the diseased member, others a long-running issue to carry off the deep-seated malady. Yet all is wise and all is gracious. Love is the prompter in all, and perfect skill is the director of each operation or each blow. To deliver us from sin, and to make us partakers of his holiness, is God's one object throughout. Oh! Deep, deep must be the love which takes such pains with us. It is love of which

we are altogether unworthy. Who are we that God should so deal with us? Surely if we are not worthy of comfort and prosperity, much less are we worthy of affliction.

3. Tribulation rebukes us.

“As many as I love I rebuke and chasten.” It is God’s way of pointing out what he sees amiss in us, calling our attention to it and condemning it. It is his way of saying, “I have somewhat against thee,” or “I have not found thy works perfect before God.” The rebuke of God is a solemn thing. It cannot be called anger, or a frown, or punishment; all these have passed away; from all these we are delivered forever. Yet still there is something in the rebuke of God that should make us stand in awe. He rebukes the world, and it trembles and flees away in terror. But when he rebukes his saints, it is that they may draw near, though with reverence and godly fear. A parent’s rebuke is much to a loving child, how much more is the rebuke of our God!

He administers many rebukes, some lighter, some severer. To the former especially we often give but little heed. The touch of transient pain; a few days’ illness; a slight indisposition; a passing weakness; some common domestic care or vexation; the severance of friendship; some short parting from one we love; some unkindness where least we looked for it; some disappointment on which we were not calculating; these are his fatherly rebukes. I do not here speak of the sharper and sorer ones, for we are not so apt to overlook them. They force themselves upon our notice. We cannot mistake them. But these briefer, commoner, slighter ones need to be pointed out; for they are so little recognized, so much undervalued or unheeded, as if the hand of God was not in each one of them; as if, because they were so slight, so mild, so gentle, they were not to be owned as the laying on of a father’s hand, but casual things, coming and going, we know not how or why.

I feel that this is a much-needed admonition to the saints of God, for the point adverted to is a much neglected one. Our continual tendency is to overlook any slight ailment or trouble as not worth noticing, and as not coming from God. We are thrown into a raging fever, till our life is despaired of; and in this we do not hesitate to own the finger of God. We take a slight cold or sustain some slight injury; and here the finger of God is oftentimes not perceived at all. The gentleness of the rebuke makes us forget that it comes from God! Strange! Should not its gentleness call forth immediate thanksgiving. Should not its gentleness be accepted as a new token of paternal love and care?

Ah, it is thus that we provoke God to inflict heavier blows. We compel him to send the heavier chastisement by our inattention to the lighter. We make bitter trial absolutely necessary. We bring it upon ourselves. How gently God rebukes for a while! If we may speak after the manner of men, he just hints or whispers his reproof. He is most unwilling to chastise with severity. He tarries long. He tries other means. He sends milder trials, that we may be led to self-searching and repentance, and thus he will be spared the necessity of inflicting a heavier blow. But we trifle with his gentle rebukes, till he is constrained to lift up his voice and speak in a tone which can neither be mistaken nor overlooked. Oh, how sad that we should thus, by our heedlessness and perversity, draw down upon us sorrows which God would fain have spared us! Let us learn the meaning and the use of small trials; of slight rebukes. Let us count none too small or slight for our most serious thought. It will save us much. It will teach us many a blessed lesson in an easy, pleasant, gentle way.

4. Tribulation arouses us.

We often fall asleep. We dwell on the world’s enchanted ground, and often, ere we are aware, we are soothed to sleep, forgetful of the quick passing time. And while we sleep, all goes wrong. Our faith waxes feeble; our love is chilled; our zeal cools down. We lose our earnestness, our boldness, our energy, our freshness, our simplicity. All our movements are those of a man but

half-awake. Our schemes are carelessly formed and drowsily carried into effect. With how many in our day is it thus?

But God will not have it so. He cannot allow such indolence and listlessness in his work. Such sloth makes but poor work either in a man's own soul or in his efforts for the souls of others. We must be awakened at whatever cost. He does it gently first. He causes us to hear some distant noise; it may be the tumults of the nations, or it may be the tidings of some terrible disaster afar off. He means by this to awaken us out of our sleep. Perhaps this fails. Then he comes nearer and makes his voice to be heard in our own neighborhood or within the circle of our kindred. This surely will arouse us! Perhaps not. Then he comes nearer still, for he cannot allow us to slumber away our precious hours. He speaks into our very ears. He smites us upon some tender part, till every fiber of our frame quivers, and every pulse beats quicker. Then we start up and wonder how we slept so long. But oh! How difficult it is sometimes to awake us! It takes many a stroke before we are thoroughly aroused.

Ah! Let us beware of the world's enchanted ground. Many a saint has fallen asleep on it, and only been awakened by severest chastisement. Let us beware of sloth and ease, lest, being led on from step to step, we be overtaken by sleep which may yet cost us a bleeding-it may be, almost a broken heart. .

5. Tribulation solemnizes us.

It is a gay world in which we live, and we are prone to fall into its levity. Around us are the sights and sounds of mirth by which a vain world is seeking to cheat away its ever-fretting uneasiness, or drown its deeper sorrows. Oftentimes the saints seem to catch the tone of levity and frivolity, making mirth with the most mirthful, jesting with the most foolish, singing the world's songs of vanity, and joining in its idle words, as if its friendships and its pleasures were not forbidden things. Apart, however, from the contagion of the world's influence, our tone is apt to fall-low, and our deportment to lose that solidity, and seriousness which becometh' saints: We get light and airy; we give way to the current of vain thoughts; We do not set a guard upon our lips; foolish talking and jesting is too much indulged in, even among the children of God. Our words are not "with grace seasoned with salt." We forget the admonition "let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers." And this levity, this frivolous habit, grows upon us. Seriousness becomes a thing reserved entirely for the closet or the sanctuary. We grieve the Holy Spirit, who cannot dwell amid levity and mirth any more than amid profanity and crime. He retires from us, driven from his abode by the laughter and jesting with which we were making it resound. He can no longer dwell in a temple which, from being the house of God, we have turned into a hall of revelry, a haunt of mirth and song.

I do not mean that the saint is ever, even for a moment, to be gloomy. Gloom and melancholy are not the inmates of a soul that has tasted the joy of pardon, and is walking with a reconciled God in blessed light and love. No. He rejoices "with joy unspeakable and full of glory." But still, as has been well said, "True joy is a serious thing." True joy is deep. It is the waking up of the heart's deep springs. Mirth and levity are not joy. They are too shallow and empty to deserve the name. All is hollow. In coming to him who is the fountain of all gladness, the saint of God bids farewell to gloom. Tribulation he may have, but not gloom. That has left him forever, since first he knew the Savior and opened his ears to the joyful sound. Peace is now his heritage. It is not so much as if joy were abiding in him as if he were abiding in joy. It is not so much as if joy were poured into him as if his heart were ever pouring itself out into a vessel of joy; so deep, so calm, and so abiding is the gladness of the redeemed of the Lord.

But still it is not levity that is their portion; it is joy. And this joy is not only far superior to this vain mirth, but it is utterly inconsistent with it. This levity is as much an enemy to real joy as

it is to holiness and spirituality. Hence it must be rooted out of them. God cannot suffer it in his children. His desire is that they should be holy. This element of earthliness must be purged out. They must be made solemn and thoughtful. For this end he sends affliction. In a moment, perhaps, he smites him to the earth; or by some more slow but withering crushing calamity, he purges out the foolishness that had wrought itself into their inmost being. His purpose is to make them thoughtful, serious and solemn. And what he sends to them is fitted to make them think, and that in a way in which they have never done before. The blow he inflicts lays them down in the dust. It in a moment puts to flight all levity. It withdraws them from an airy shadowy world, and sends them into the very inmost recesses of their spiritual being, or forward to the infinite eternity whose vastness and reality they had been little heeding. It brings them into contact with solid certainties, and that makes them thoughtful. It brings them acquainted with sorrow, and sorrow drives off all levity. Sorrow and levity keep no companionship. Affliction awakens them to a sense of their selfishness. They look around them and see, as for the first time, the world they live in, with all its sins and sufferings. They had seen these before, but now they seem quite new and clothed with a reality which had hitherto been unfelt. It is through sorrow that we see truth best. It is when seen through this sad medium that all objects assume their right proportions. Shadows then evaporate; realities compass it about. And realities make us solemn. It is shadows that make us light and vain.

Thus God solemnizes his saints, and brings them, in this respect, into closer sympathy with the mind of Christ. All was solemnity with him. And the nearer we are brought to resemble him, the more will this calm, this blessed, this happy solemnity possess us. We shall live solemn lives and do solemn deeds. Our looks and tones will be all solemn. We shall be earnest men; men who have no relish for levity, because it is so incompatible with the deep peace which is their portion, and who have no time for it, because eternity is so near.

6. Tribulation quickens prayer.

It sends us to our knees. In the day of prosperity a man has many refuges; in the day of trial but one, and that is God. To this refuge he betakes himself. Prayer, perhaps, was something to him before, now it is all. Man's arm has failed, and there is none to lean upon but God. Prayer becomes now a far more real thing than ever. Its value and its importance are seen in a new light. It is prized now as it never was prized before.

We cannot do without it. Of necessity we must now pray, and send up our cries from the depths. It is real asking, a real pleading now. As a mere form it has passed away. What new life, new energy, new earnestness are poured into each petition! It is the heart now that is speaking, and the lips cannot find words wherewith to give utterance to its desires. The groanings that cannot be uttered are all that burst forth and ascend up into the ear of God.

There is new nearness to God now. It is close dealing with him now. New arguments suggest themselves wherewith to plead; new desires spring up; new wants disclose themselves. God's fullness and our own emptiness are brought before us so vividly that our soul's longings are kindled, and our heart crieth out for God, for the living God, as the hart panteth for the water-brooks, so we are made to pant after God. It was David's sorrows that quickened prayer in him. It was in the belly of the whale that Jonah was taught to cry aloud. And it was among the thorns and in the fetters of Babylon that Manasseh learned to pray.

Such are a few of the blessings that flow from chastisement. Only a few have been mentioned, yet there are many. And this the saint knows. Each sorrow brings with it its own train of blessings; and thus, though not joyous but grievous, it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness.

But in all this we must see a father's love. We shall lose much of the benefit of trial, perhaps all of it, if this is overlooked. It is out of the deep love of Him who gave for us his only begotten

Son that sorrow flows down to us. Let us ever rest on this. He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? And surely the blessings of chastisement are among these "all things." All things work together for our good. Love can do us no wrong. That is a blessed impossibility. In all that it sends of suffering it is only opening new channels in which to pour itself into us, as well as deepening and enlarging the vessel that it may contain the more. Every sorrow not only is the proof of love, but draws after it larger streams of love. It is love making way for itself because the place is too narrow. The inflicting of the wound is love; much more the healing of it. Surely all is love. There is no unkindness, no harshness, no inattention to our feelings, no needless causing of grief.

Beloved, "it is well." We could not do without affliction. We should neither know ourselves nor God. The depths of his varied love would be as a sealed spring. He wants to teach us all his love. He is seeking for occasions to show it; and if he cannot find them, he must make them, rather than that we should not taste the riches of his immeasurable love. And shall we call him unkind for this? Shall we have hard and rebellious thoughts of him for this? Shall we count it a wrong done to us to have new streams of love flowing in upon us which sorrow has opened? Shall we shrink from that which opens up to us more of the Father's heart?

Who can tell or measure the deep love which chastisement implies? We may, perhaps, be able to measure the love which sends us days of gladness but the love which draws the cloud of sorrow over our skies is too deep to be measured or weighed. God's interest in our welfare is to be seen in everything that he bestows; but most of all in his chastisements. How deep must his interest be, how affectionate, how tender, when, in order to secure our welfare, to make us holier, and to add to the weight of our crown hereafter, he can consent to send suffering upon those whom he loves so well. This is love-paternal love, in its truest kindest form.

Beloved, "it is well." Let us learn, then, to "glory in tribulation." The world, perhaps, submits to it, but it is ours to glory in it. The world tries to bear up under it; but it is ours to give thanks for it. The world may try to get over it as an evil that cannot be helped; let us know how good it is to be afflicted. He who is infinitely wise and loving calls it good, and shall not we?

Beloved, "it is well." We are not worthy of affliction. We are not worthy that God should take such pains with us to prepare us for his kingdom. Yet he does so. And he will continue to do so to his chosen ones; for it is through much tribulation that they must pass to the Kingdom. And in this let us "greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, we are in heaviness through manifold temptations, that the trial of our faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

These articles were taken from the book Kelso Tracts.