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**THE
FAITHFUL
WITNESS**

May 15.

THE FAITHFUL WITNESS.



THE
Faithful Witness;
OR
BRIEF THOUGHTS
FOR
THE FOLLOWERS OF JESUS.

" The sacred truths His lips pronounce,
Shall firm as heaven endure ;
And if He speak a promise once,
The eternal grace is sure."

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—
MDCCLV.



INTRODUCTION.

THERE are three exercises the importance of which cannot be over-rated, namely, supplication, self-examination, and devout meditation. The entire disregard of these duties is a clear indication of an unregenerate state; and where the attention paid to them is not earnest and habitual, the soul cannot be in a healthy and prosperous condition.

To aid the Christian in the performance of these duties, especially the latter, is the design of this little work. The Psalmist could say, "Thy testimonies are my meditation;" and those who are anxious to imitate his example in this particular, by making the things of God's law the subjects of their

daily thoughts, may, perhaps, find something in the following pages that will contribute to their edification.

This humble production is devoutly commended to the blessing of that Divine Spirit, by whose inspiration the Scriptures were first given, and whose illuminating influence is indispensably requisite, in order to our being brought to behold the wondrous things which they contain. To both writer and reader, may He graciously grant that spiritual discernment whereby the truth as it is in Jesus may be rightly apprehended, and that spiritual relish for it, which will lead to the adoption of the prophet's declaration,—“Thy word was found, and I did eat it, and it was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart.”

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BRIEF THOUGHTS.

1ST DAY OF MONTH.

"And he shall send them a Saviour, and a great one, and he shall deliver them."

Isaiah xix. 20.

The Divine Redeemer. THAT good man, the late John Newton, used to complain in his advancing years that his memory was greatly failing him—a complaint that is frequently heard from those who are going down the hill of life. There were, however, two things, he remarked on one occasion, which he could not forget: one was, that he was a great sinner; the other, that Jesus Christ was a great Saviour! God grant that you, reader, whatever be your age, or from whatever cause you may have

B

to mourn over a failing memory, may keep these two things in constant, yea, in everlasting remembrance!

The consideration of our own exceeding sinfulness may well cover us with confusion. How many, under a sense of their heinous and aggravated transgressions, have been brought to the very verge of despair! But oh! how delightful, in such a case, to hear of "a Saviour, and a great One."

That such is His character the representations of the inspired writers show in the clearest and most decisive manner. A celebrated writer, when asked what was his opinion of the Socinian system, replied, that it was "a cold negation, the whole secret of which consisted in thinking meanly of Christ." Now in the evangelical system it is quite the reverse. The gospel scheme, far from being merely negative, is especially marked by the positive cha-

character of its disclosures ; and the whole secret of the apostles and their companions was, not to think meanly of Christ, but the intense desire by which they were actuated of exalting Him above all blessing and praise, and showing that in all things, and over all persons, whether human or angelic, He had a glorious and exclusive pre-eminence.

There is much that is worthy of our devout contemplation in those representations in which the greatness and dignity of Christ are indirectly set forth. The memorable words of the apostle Paul may be taken as a specimen : “ 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 ? ” “ The all things here mentioned,” it has been remarked, “ reach to an overwhelming amount. They include the possessions, advantages, privileges, and blessings of every kind, which can be the cause

or means of any real good to the faithful Christian. In another passage the apostle enumerates—the world, life, death, things present; things to come—clearly all that is useful, great, and excellent, in the present state, and to all eternity. Mighty total! Can imagination grasp it? Yet the unutterable donation is represented as small, and scarcely to be considered, in comparison with God's gift of His Son. The reasoning is from the greater to the less: and it is put, not as an argument at all precarious, but as a thing the most self-evident and certain. It plainly tells us that the bestowment of the universe would be a lower act of munificence, a less demonstration of the kindness of the Infinite Being, than His having given His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish, but have eternal life. What then must be the dignity of the Son of God? I implore the reader to press upon himself

the question: What must that person be of whom this superiority may be assumed? Let Paul's assertion and argument be taken upon the Socinian or Arian scheme, and how does it appear? Can any reflecting man say that it even approaches the height of this great argument, or yields a sense which reason can call tolerable?"

Blessed Jesus! let me ever have high thoughts of Thee, both in Thy person and in Thy work. A creature-saviour would be altogether inadequate to meet my case. But as in Thee dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, I feel encouraged to apply to Thee, in the face of all my guilt, and all my manifold necessities; and I would commit, unshrinkingly, the keeping of my soul into Thy Almighty hands, feeling assured that the precious deposit will then be in secure custody.

2ND DAY.

"I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." Isaiah xliii. 25.

Pardoning Mercy. THE forgiveness which God bestows is pre-eminently gracious, being in nowise deserved by the children of men. We are apt to pride ourselves upon our supposed excellencies, and think that we have something to recommend us to the Divine regard. But the great principle on which God acts is, "Not for your sakes do I this, be it known unto you, but for mine holy name's sake;" that name which we have so often slighted and profaned.

This strikingly appears in the words before us. In the preceding verses it is said, "But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel. Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt offerings; neither

hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices; but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities." Now, after such serious charges, who could wonder if some awful threatening were pronounced. Here are persons highly favoured of God, yet tired of his worship, and restraining prayer before Him. He complains that they had caused Him to serve with their sins, and that they had wearied Him with their multiplied offences. And yet to such are the words addressed,—“I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.” Thus it appears that where sin abounded, grace much more abounds.

And as this glorious blessing is granted to the undeserving, so it is bestowed, not grudgingly, but with infinite readiness, and unspeakable delight. God, being just as well as merciful, has threatenings to fulfil,

as well as promises; but how great is the contrast presented between the manner in which He does the one, and that in which He does the other. When He executes His vengeance, when He pours out the vials of His wrath, there is no forwardness ever shown. To execute the fierceness of His anger is evidently His strange work; He then moves with a slow pace; His hand seems to tremble, and His heart to beat. "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together." But when He dispenses His blessings, when He bestows pardon and peace, He seems almost ready to leap from His throne; full of holy impatience He cries out, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins!"

Such is the spirit in which God forgives. It is often in a very different style that man pardons. He, forsooth, in the largeness of his heart, in the boundless philanthropy, as he supposes, of his high and noble nature, thinks it a mighty thing to pardon at all. And hence the ungraciousness with which it is frequently done. With an air of frowning authority, he says to some poor wretch who has happened to incur his displeasure, "I shall forgive you this once, but at your peril let me not hear of such conduct again." But if such be the manner of man, with our God it is not so. "I, even I!"—here are no haughty airs, no coldness and half-heartedness, no forbidding tones, no threats and upbraidings. He delighteth in mercy; He will abundantly pardon.

"Blessed," then, "is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered; blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not ini-

quity, and in whose spirit there is no guile." That I may be thus blessed, let me not fear to draw nigh to the throne of the heavenly grace; and having obtained mercy to pardon, and grace to help, I may well go on my way rejoicing. O Thou prayer-answering, Thou sin-pardoning God, say to my guilty soul, "Go in peace; thy sins are forgiven." I will then take down my harp from the willows, and sing in a spirit of adoring gratitude, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits; who forgiveth all thine iniquities, and healeth all thy diseases."

3RD DAY.

“My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” 2 Cor. xii. 9.

Sustaining Grace. “THE grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,” may be viewed in various aspects. There is His pardoning grace: that grace which blots out our sins, though of mountain enormity, and of crimson dye. There is His renewing grace; by which our sinful nature is transformed, and a new bent and bias are given to all our feelings and affections. There is also His sustaining grace: and it is to this that reference is here made. The apostle needed grace to pardon his sins, and to purify his nature; but he needed it likewise to strengthen him in his work and warfare, and to help him in every time of need. And he is assured by the Faithful Promiser that that grace should be imparted to him; which led him to say, “Most gladly therefore will I

rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

"No prophecy of the scripture," says Peter, "is of any private interpretation." The same may be said of the promises; there is nothing private, nothing exclusively personal belonging to them. Though given at first to particular individuals, and on special occasions, yet they are the common property of the whole body of the faithful. Of this, a striking proof is given in the last chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews. "Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have; for he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Here a promise is quoted—something is referred to that God had said. But when, and to whom? The words were originally addressed to Joshua, some fifteen hundred years previously; and yet the assurance which God

gave to him is applied to the believing Hebrews, and that as confidently as if the voice from heaven had spoken to them alone. And so with the promise before us. Though first given to Paul, it is one that we may appropriate; and we need not fear that we are eating forbidden fruit, or drinking stolen waters in doing so. If I am a child of God, all those promises, which are exceeding great and precious, and this as one of them, belong to me as my heritage.

“My grace is sufficient for thee.” Sufficient for the performance of the most arduous duties; sufficient for resisting the strongest temptations; sufficient to console in sorrow, and sufficient to support in death. All must acknowledge that it is a solemn thing to die. The body sinking under the violence of disease; the powers of nature failing; the pulse fluttering and about ceasing to beat; the spirit going to take its everlasting

flight; mourning friends surrounding the dying sufferer, and observing, with breathless silence, the last struggles of mortality. All this is most solemn; it is that from which nature shrinks; and yet it is the inevitable doom that awaits us all.

But let not the believer be dismayed by such a prospect, for it is a scene which this promise embraces. For, crossing through death's cold flood, His grace is sufficient. Dying strength is reserved for a dying day; and in the enjoyment of that strength, death itself becomes joyful. And it is consoling to think that many who have passed a considerable portion of their lives in bondage through fear of the last enemy, were enabled, as the hour of dissolution approached, to banish every fear, and rejoice in hope of that heavenly glory which awaited them. In life they had viewed the king of terrors with no little dread, but his features at length were softened down, and,

with delightful surprise, they have been enabled to exclaim, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

For the fulfilment of this promise, let us earnestly plead. It was in answer to prayer that it was given to Paul. O Saviour! say to me what thou saidst to thy servant of old, and I will then go on my way rejoicing. Thou art full of grace; Thy treasures are inexhaustible; Thou art able to make all grace abound towards me. O, let thy grace, in life and death, be with my spirit. I am weak, but Thou art mighty; uphold me, direct me, animate and cheer me. And be it mine to know, by happy experience, that in approaching Thy footstool there is mercy to be obtained, and grace to help in every time of need.

4TH DAY.

“Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” 1 Cor. x. 12.

Godly Jealousy. It is said that those persons who are most afraid of any infectious disease, are the most likely to catch the disorder. How that is we know not; but it is the general opinion that such is the case. Be that, however, as it may, it is not so in reference to those spiritual maladies to which we are exposed. With them the contrary will be found to be the case. Those who are most afraid of sin, are the most likely to be preserved from its contaminations.

Such being the case, it may be said with truth, “Happy is the man that feareth alway.” As we are continually exposed to evil influences; as our spiritual adversaries are ever compassing our path, in order to gain advantage over us, it becomes us to cherish this holy fear

all the day long. The exhortation, "Be not high-minded, but fear," is thus never unseasonable; and our safety depends, in no small measure, upon keeping it daily and hourly in mind.

There are several considerations which, if duly pondered, cannot fail to excite such a feeling in our breasts. What appalling victories, for example, has the enemy gained over many of the household of faith. We read in the Scriptures of some woeful falls; and they have been recorded for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. In those accounts, especially such as relate to the Old Testament saints, there are three peculiar and deeply affecting circumstances to be observed. In the first place, they were not ordinary believers; they were characters who stood high; they were not dwarfs, but spiritual giants. Like Saul, they were higher from their shoulders and upward

than any of the people around them. In the second place, it was not at the commencement of their religious career that they fell, but after they had made considerable advances in the divine life. Far from being mere novices, they had large experience of their own hearts; and were therefore less likely, it might be supposed, to fall into the condemnation of the devil. And in the third place, it was immediately after some signal blessing had been conferred upon them, or some special deliverance had been experienced by them. When did the temptation succeed with Noah? It was immediately after his deliverance from the flood. It was with Lot, in like manner, just after his escape from Sodom. And so with Hezekiah; it was after his miraculous deliverance from sickness, when his life was to be lengthened fifteen years. It was under these circumstances that the great adversary prevailed.

There is need then, verily, for godly jealousy. O my soul, be it thine to look continually to the Strong for strength. He is able,—encouraging truth!—to keep thee from falling, and to present thee at length faultless before the presence of His glory, with exceeding joy. “Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe ; and I will have respect unto Thy statutes continually.”

5TH DAY.

"Ye cannot do the things that ye would."

Gal. v. 17.

**The Desires
of the
Righteous.** How true is this! How fully does it accord with the experience of the believer! "As in water face answereth to face," so in God's word, we have the inmost feelings of his people clearly reflected.

O, what would the Christian do if he could! He would serve God perfectly. He would have his way directed to keep all His statutes. He would have all his faculties and feelings in complete subjection to the Divine Will. He would live, not to himself, but to Him that died for him and rose again. He would consecrate every moment to His service, and employ every breath in His praise. In a word, he would rise to the seraphic sanctity of the Paradise above, and present to God those offerings which would be unmingled

with any earthly dross ; which would be uncontaminated and untinctured by any of the frailties of his fallen nature. Could he do as he would, there is not a spirit before the throne that should excel or outstrip him. He would love as they do—serve as they do—admire and adore as they do. But here, alas ! his infirmities are a constant clog about him ; and hence his longings—when, at least, he is in any thing like a proper frame of mind—for that better world, where his desires and his doings will be one and the same.

Do we want a striking emblem of the child of God, as he is situated at present ? We have it in that majestic bird, the eagle ; not as it roams at large in the enjoyment of its native freedom, but when, as a poor captive, it is fastened down with a chain. It is an interesting object, under any circumstances, to gaze upon ; but especially so, when its former soarings are contrasted with

its present fettered state. The fire of its eye clearly indicates its longings for those lofty regions, far beyond the clouds, where it felt so much at home, and where its wings were often bathed in the burning splendours of the sun's meridian rays. But no sooner is the attempt made to mount aloft; no sooner does it begin to ruffle its plumes, and spread its wings, in order to prepare for the flight, than the touch of the chain is instantly felt. And so with the believer. At times how soaring are his aspirations! How would he rise, as on eagles' wings, above earth's turmoils on the one hand, and its manifold imperfections on the other! But, alas! how the chains of time and sense fetter his soul, and fasten it down to this lower sphere! Then his cry is, at one time, "My soul cleaveth unto the dust; quicken thou me according to thy word:" at another, "O that I had wings like a dove, for then

would I fly away and be at rest ; I would hasten my escape from the stormy wind and tempest."

A person is known, yea a child, as the wise man informs us, by his doings. But, in addition to this external and practical proof, a man's desires may be regarded as no mean index of his character. "As he thinketh in his heart, so is he." There is undoubtedly sin in the desire of sin, the actual commission of the outward act not being requisite to render us guilty in the sight of God ; and perhaps, we shall not go too far if we say, that there is grace even in the desire of grace.

What then are the desires of my soul ? Am I of the number of those who are walking according to the course of this world, and who are fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind ? Or are my desires God-ward and heaven-ward ? Let me remember, for my encouragement, that the Lord will fulfil the

desire of them that fear Him; that He will hear their cry, and save them. Let me seek Him then; let me trust in Him, and wait patiently for Him. "Delight thyself in the Lord, and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart."

6TH DAY.

“This is my beloved, and this is my friend,
O daughters of Jerusalem.” Cant. v. 16.

The best A FRIEND ! how endear-
friend. ing the title ! There is
 music in the very sound.

But if there is something so sweet and precious in having an earthly friend, what is it to have a heavenly one ! It is of such that the spouse is here speaking, even of Him who is the chiefest among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely. O my soul, let me think of the Lord Jesus as a friend—a true friend—a faithful friend—a powerful friend—a loving friend—a seasonable friend—an unchanging friend—a friend that loveth at all times, and on all occasions—a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

In the enjoyment of the Saviour's friendship there are many precious privileges involved. One is, freedom of access to Him at all seasons, and

under all circumstances. In our intercourse with strangers, it is proper that some degree of reserve should be maintained. But it is not so with a well-known and thoroughly tested friend ; for his reception, heart, and house and home are all open. All ceremony and restraint are laid aside, and to our most retired privacies he is welcome. Where there is distance and reserve, the form of friendship may exist, but the soul of friendship is most assuredly wanting.

Christian, the Lord Jesus is a friend whose door is always open. Knock when thou wilt, thou art sure to be welcome. He sits upon a throne, it is true, but it is the throne of grace ; and thou art called upon to approach it, not in a spirit of fear and trembling, but with filial confidence, that thou mayest receive from His fulness, and find grace to help in time of need.

We are taught that there is no access to God but through Jesus

Christ. "No man cometh unto the Father but by Him." But while it is a clearly revealed truth, that we need a mediator between God and us; it is a truth as clearly revealed, that we need no mediator between Christ and us. He is ready to receive us, in our own name—just as we are, guilty, polluted, and wretched—and that in order to bless us for ever.

Another privilege possessed by those who enjoy the Saviour's friendship, is that of having a favourable construction put upon all their doings, especially upon all their failings; and a spirit of sympathy in all their sorrows and distresses. In the conduct of Christ towards His disciples this appears with special prominence. What transpired on that ever-memorable night in which He was betrayed, affords a striking instance of this. It was the time of His agony and bloody sweat; when the sorrows of death compassed Him, and the pangs of

hell gat hold upon Him ; it was the hour of His mysterious conflict, the hour and power of darkness. His disciples were then ready, surely, to render Him every support in their power, to alleviate His sorrows, and to comfort His soul. But no ; forgetting His sorrows, and forgetting their own, they fell asleep. Well, He rebuked them, it will be said, for their seeming indifference. Yes, He did ; but Oh ! with what gentleness did He do so ! All He said was, "What, could ye not watch with me one hour ?" And afterwards when coming to them again, and finding them still in the same state, instead of rebuking them He tenderly apologised for them, saying, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." As if He had said, I know your hearts, I am fully convinced of your affection—I therefore compassionate your weakness, and accept the will for the deed. Blessed Jesus ! was ever sympathy, was

ever tenderness, was ever love like Thine!

O my soul, what a friend hast thou in Christ! Let me rejoice in Him. He can be touched with the feeling of my infirmities. "In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them: in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bore them, and carried them all the days of old."

7TH DAY.

“Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet
I will look again toward thy holy
temple.” Jonah ii. 4.

The Prophet's Prayer. “CALL upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.” The truth of this promise has been verified in thousands of instances; but in no case, perhaps, has it received a more striking confirmation than in the history of the prophet Jonah. It was truly a day of trouble with him; but by calling upon the name of the Lord, he experienced a deliverance as wonderful as his distress had been extreme.

What must his feelings have been when he found himself in that fearfully strange situation—the whale's belly. At first, it is probable that his thoughts were one mass of confusion; he did not know, we may suppose, where he was; whether he

was alive or dead ; in time or in eternity ; on earth or even in hell. After this, it may be imagined, that, regaining some measure of personal consciousness, a kind of awful, desperate horror must have seized him. Ascertaining where he really was, that it was in the belly of one of the great monsters of the deep, the most horrific feelings must have crept over him. By degrees, however, the fact that he was alive, that he could live and breathe in such a place, must have deeply impressed him with a sense of miraculous preservation. Every advancing moment must have added strength to such a conviction. How strange, he must have thought, that I can live, and move, and have a full consciousness of being, even here. Surely God's special power must be preserving me. And then, from his pondering thus, there was but a short step to what is here recorded of him, namely, that in such a place, "he gave himself unto

prayer." "Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple." Here I am, he might have said, in a situation of such awful distress, that mortal man was never in before. Banished am I from men; banished am I from God. But before I perish, there is one thing I will do; I will lift up my soul to Him whom I have offended by my disobedience, but whose goodness and grace I have often felt. From these awful depths which are closed about me, I will call upon Him in whom alone my help is found. With all my remaining strength I will cry, "O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul." Come what may, this is my resolution, "I will look"—guilty as I am, poor and perishing as I am—"yet I will look again toward thy holy temple." And He who listens to the groanings of the prisoners, and loosens those who are appointed to death, heard his cry, and in answer thereto granted him

deliverance. Well may we exclaim, "Who is a God like unto Thee, a God that doest wonders!"

There are two classes which are especially addressed by this history—the backslider, and the distressed believer. Reader, are you cast out of God's sight? Is the light of His gracious favour withdrawn? O, look again toward His holy temple. Let the character of God, let the promises of God, and let the former dealings of God, encourage you to do so. And then, though the sorrows of death may compass you, and the pains of hell get hold upon you, yet in calling on the name of the Lord you will find that He can deliver your soul from death, your eyes from tears, and your feet from falling; and thus enable you to walk before Him in the land of the living.

8TH DAY.

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."
Rom. viii. 28.

All for the Best. The scriptures contain many great and precious promises; and this is one of them. It is a promise that has wiped away the tear of sorrow from many an eye; it has proved a balm to many a bleeding and almost broken heart; it has given to many a mourner in Zion "beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness." Many have sucked at its breast, and have been consoled. Many have reposed upon its truth, and by so doing have found peace and joy. They have been enabled to glory in tribulations, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

The language of the apostle is particularly decisive. "We know"

—not we suppose, not we hope, not we trust—no, but *we know*. It was not to him a matter of any doubtful disputation; neither should it be to us. God has said it, and let God be true, though all men were liars. That all things shall work together for good to those who love Him, is one of the assurances of that sacred word, of which it is said, that heaven and earth shall pass away before one jot or tittle of it shall fail.

“We know that *all things*.” O, how comprehensive is this! Nothing whatever is excepted. All things,—temporal and spiritual, prosperous and adverse,—health and sickness, life and death. And they all work *together* in the most complete and beautiful harmony. The various wheels in the great machine of divine providence may appear to be opposed to each other; and yet every movement is directed by infinite wisdom, and tends to the accomplishment of the end proposed. And what is that

end? "For good!" Is the believer cast into the furnace of affliction? Are all his earthly prospects blasted? Is the desire of his eyes taken away with a stroke? Whatever be the visitation, it is for good. As it is the well-being of the patient that the physician has in view in the mixing up of his bitter draughts; so it is the well-being of His people that God has in view in all His dispensations towards them.

There may be much in the divine dealings that is above our comprehension; but what we know not now we shall know hereafter. Even should they be shrouded in mystery as long as we live, yet in heaven all will be clear. For every tear we have shed, for every pang we have borne, the *needs be* will then be apparent. We shall no longer wonder why our path was so rugged; why our sun was so often obscured; why one wave of trouble should have succeeded another in almost

constant succession: but we shall then bless God with our whole hearts for it all.

It is said in one of the gospel narratives, that after the Saviour had performed some of His miracles, that the people were beyond measure astonished, and that they cried out with one voice, saying, "He hath done all things well." Very similar to this will it be with us in heaven, if, through rich and reigning grace, we shall reach that blessed world. We shall be, doubtless, beyond measure astonished. At all we shall see, and all we shall hear, this will be our feeling. When we shall gaze upon the eternal throne, and Him that sitteth upon it, this will assuredly be our feeling. And when the books will be opened; and when all the mysteries of Providence will be solved; and when the whole of our own history will be explained; and when all the turnings of the wilderness will be accounted for; and

when all the dangers to which we have been exposed will be pointed out; oh, we shall then be *beyond measure astonished*: and if its greatness will allow us to give expression thereto, our adoring cry will be, "*He hath done all things well!*"

O believer, cherish high thoughts of God in all His dealings towards thee. Let thy trust be in Him. Let thy song be—

"Since all that I meet shall work for my good,
The bitter is sweet, the medicine is food;
Though painful at present, 'twill cease before long,
And then, oh! how pleasant the conqueror's song!"

9TH DAY.

"For ye serve the Lord Christ."—Col. iii. 24.

The Saviour's Service. THOSE who are engaged in the service of Christ serve a good master. Of this we ought to be fully assured, it being a truth to which all are ready to subscribe who have had any thing to do with Him. When certain Jews came to Him on one occasion, beseeching Him to show favour to the Centurion by healing his servant, they said, with the view of enforcing their plea, "That he was worthy for whom He should do this." So may we say in reference to any efforts put forth in connection with the Saviour's cause. He is most assuredly worthy of all that is done for Him.

Let us think of the noble army of martyrs. They loved not their lives unto the death. They thus gave the highest proof of the sincerity of their

love. They could say individually—

“ My friendship’s utmost zeal to try,
He asked if I for him would die ?
The flesh was weak, my blood ran chill,
But the free spirit cried, I will.”

And this was not the case in a few solitary instances. The martyr bands consisted of a great multitude,—far greater than is generally supposed. At the very lowest calculation no less than fifty millions have suffered cruel deaths in consequence of their attachment to Christ and His cause. But were that vast army now before us. we should feel no hesitation in borrowing the language of the Jewish elders, and say, “that He was worthy for whom they had done this.” Such was their own feeling at the time, and they have now a far deeper consciousness of it. “Thou art worthy,” is their language before the throne; worthy of all the grateful homage we can now render; worthy of all the pangs and privations which we once bore.

In the walks of modern benevolence, we meet with not a little that is truly refreshing to the mind. A gentleman in Birmingham, not many years ago, gave an estate worth £20,000 to found a college for the training of young men for the ministry; and his two sisters contributed a similar sum in money for the same object. The excellent John Thornton, of London, it is said, gave away during his life for charitable and religious purposes, no less than £150,000; and his brother Henry Thornton, previous to his marriage, made a point of giving away all the profits of his share in the bank, of which he was a partner, which were more than £5000 a year. And not to adduce any otherspecial instances, if we take a general view of the contributions of the Christian church, there is ground for thankfulness that so much has been done, although it might and should have been considerably more. The sum expended

for the spread of the gospel, and the circulation of the word of God, among foreign nations, from the year 1800 to 1850, has been about fourteen millions and a half. Thus great things, comparatively, have been done, of which we are glad. But to the large-hearted individuals to whom we have referred, and many others with them, who have laid their munificent gifts on the Christian altar; and to the general body of the faithful, who out of their more limited means have helped to swell the aggregate amount which we just mentioned; to each and all we can say, "that He is worthy for whom you have done this," and would have been worthy had the offerings been multiplied a thousand fold.

It was said of Mary, "She hath done what she could." Reader, be it your ambition to receive a similar encomium; and you will then in no-wise lose your reward.

10TH DAY.

"For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better." Phil. i. 23.

The Christian's Heaven. "To be with Christ," is a brief expression, but how emphatic and comprehensive! In it is summed up the full and final consummation of the believer's hopes and expectations. To set forth all that it involves is beyond the utmost powers of the most sanctified and soaring intellects; and yet some faint glimpses may be given of what the phrase contains.

One thing included in being with Christ is dwelling in the place in which He dwells. In the representation, a oneness of locality is evidently implied. To the question, "Where dwellest Thou?" we can only say, "that He ascended far above all heavens, that He might fill all things." Having gone to the

Father, He dwells in the high and holy place, a place where there is fulness of joy, and where rivers of pleasure are flowing for evermore. In what part of His wide domains it is situated, is not revealed ; we know not where the glorious high throne on which He sits is erected ; but wherever the place of the Redeemer's habitation may be, this we know, that it is thither his people are conveyed on their dismissal from the present state. " And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, *that where I am, there ye may be also.*"

It includes also, a clear and perfect view of Christ. This is a step in advance of the former particular. It is possible to dwell in the same place, the same kingdom, or even city, as another, and yet see but little of him. While, therefore, the expression implies a oneness of locality, as regards the abode of Christ and His people ; it further

implies that they are to dwell in the immediate presence of each other.

The believer knows something of what it is to behold the Saviour's glory on earth; but what will it be to behold Him in Heaven! We shall see Him "as He is;"—not as He was: a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, the object of human scorn, mocked, buffeted, and crowned with thorns; but as He is: in the matchless glories of His person, and in the dazzling splendour of His throne. And oh! what will that be? To "see the King in His beauty!" To "behold His face in righteousness, and be satisfied when we awake with His likeness!" But although transcending our present conceptions, it is a bliss which all his redeemed family are destined to enjoy. "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me."

To be with Christ includes, once

more, enjoying intercourse and fellowship with Him. Communion with Christ is the chief source of the happiness of His people on earth. This is the meat they have to eat, of which the world knows nothing. It is the joy they possess, with which a stranger cannot intermeddle. It is the honour they enjoy, which cometh from God only. They may be frowned upon by an ungodly world; they may be called visionaries and enthusiasts; but this makes amends for all—"They have fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." Ask the noble army of apostles, confessors, and martyrs, who had to seal their testimony with their blood, if such be not the case. Ask the Daniels who were cast into lions' dens; ask the Shadrachs, Meshacks, and Abed-negos, who were thrown into burning fiery furnaces, if the presence of Christ was not sufficient even there. Those exiles and outcasts, who had

to wander in deserts and caves of the earth, found in the promise, "Lo, I am with you," an ample compensation for all their privations and distresses.

But if such be the blessedness of communion with Christ here below, what will it be to hold uninterrupted and never-ending communion with Him above! Let those who have enjoyed something of the one, imagine if they can what it will be to realise the other. Let those who have found it so pleasant to sit at the Saviour's feet, try to imagine what it will be to bow with saints and angels before His throne. Let those who have found it good to surround His table, to take of the sacramental cup in commemoration of His dying love, endeavour to conceive what it will be to drink it new with Him in His kingdom. Let those, in a word, who have often been drawing water with joy from the rills of gospel ordinances, imagine if they can what

it will be to plunge themselves into the overflowing river, that river of life, clear as crystal, which flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb ! Well may the poet ask,

“ If such the views which grace unfolds,
Weak as it is below ;
What rapture must the church above
In Jesus’ presence know !

If such the sweetness of the stream,
What must the fountain be,
Where saints and angels draw their bliss,
Immediately from Thee ! ”

O my soul, let it be thy great concern to be found in Christ, to feed upon Him, and to live to Him on earth ; thou mayest then cherish a good hope through grace, that thou shalt dwell for ever with Him in heaven.

11TH DAY.

"Peter answered and said unto Him, Though all men shall be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended."

Matt. xxvi. 23.

The Fall of Peter. THERE were various circumstances connected with Peter's denial of Christ which rendered it peculiarly aggravated. In the first place, there was the warning that was previously given to him. And it was not once that he was warned, nor twice; he received no less than three plain and positive intimations of what was before him. And besides the repetition of the warnings, we are also to remember the recency of them. Had they been given some years, or months, or even weeks beforehand, they might, in the multitude of other thoughts, have been forgotten; but they were all given on the very night in which the offence was committed. Between the last warning

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and the first denial only a few hours could have intervened.

Now, when we bear in mind that Peter was warned of what was coming, and when we connect this fact with its repetition on the one hand, and its recency on the other, how greatly aggravated does his guilt appear! "To be fore-warned," says the proverb, "is to be fore-armed." And it might naturally be expected that, after having been thus fore-warned, he would have been filled with a spirit of double diligence, of double watchfulness, and, above all, of double prayerfulness, in consequence. But no; thinking that there was no need of such warnings for him, he rushed on headlong to what would have been, but for the Saviour's abounding compassion, his irrecoverable ruin.

We are also to think of his solemn vows and protestations. "Never," did he say, in effect, "never shall it be. Although all should turn traitors,

I will continue true. Thy fate shall be my fate, whatever it may be. If Thou art dragged to prison, I will be imprisoned with Thee ; if Thou art doomed to death, I will die with Thee. Whatever others may do—I cannot answer for them—but I will never leave Thee ; I will never, no never, forsake Thee.”

In all this Peter was doubtless sincere. His love to Christ was undoubted, and he shrunk with horror from the thought that he could ever deny Him. But, alas ! what will not circumstances effect ? Let an individual be placed in an altered position, and how often has it happened that he is an altered man ? “ Is thy servant a dog that he should do this great thing ? ” “ But,” as an old divine quaintly says, “ the dog did it.” No sooner was Hazael made king of Syria, than all the abominations were committed which the prophet had foretold. And so with Peter. However horrified he had been

at the thought of denying his Lord and Master, yet the thing was done; done three times over; yea, done with the most awful oaths, for "he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this Man of whom ye speak."

To our little ones the question is put in their catechism—"Who denied his Master?" And the answer they are taught to give is—"Peter." But is there no other answer to be given? Alas, have there not been seasons with all of us when conscience might act the part of Nathan, and say, "Thou art the man!" We are verily guilty, one and all, concerning this matter. And how solemn are the words, "Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." O, we need great decision—"great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus." O Lord, deliver me from a spirit of self-confidence on the one hand, and of shrinking cowardice on the other.

12TH DAY.

“And I said, this is my infirmity.”

Ps. lxxvii. 10.

Indwelling Sin. “THE best of men are but men at the best.” They are the subjects of many remaining corruptions; they are compassed, like the high priests of old, with infirmities. And what effect should the consideration of this humiliating but undoubted truth produce? Ought it not, among other results, to excite in us a spirit of constant watchfulness? We are frail creatures, ever liable to fall; and being exposed, in addition, to the wiles of our spiritual adversaries, our danger is considerably greater. It is on our indwelling corruptions that Satan works, and often, alas! with sad success. In various ways he attacked the Saviour in the days of His flesh, but He could say, “The Prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me”—nothing for any of his baits

to fasten on. Such was the purity of His nature, that there was no handle for the tempter to lay hold of. He was like crystal water in a glass, which, however much it may be shaken, continues pure as before. There was no defilement to be stirred up in Him. But with the holiest believer it is far otherwise. In his case there is always some settlement at the bottom, and it is with this that Satan makes foul work, if God, by his grace, does not prevent it.

In addition to our general infirmities, it is probable that there is some one, or more, to which we are particularly liable; in which case it becomes us to be doubly on our guard. "If ye return unto the Lord," said Samuel to the children of Israel, "with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve Him only." He exhorts them to put away the strange gods *and* Ashtaroth. But was

not Ashtaroth one of the strange gods—an idol like the rest? Would not one specification, therefore, do for all? It appears not. And why? It was because Ashtaroth was the favourite idol, after whom they were specially liable to go; so that while they were to put away all their strange gods, they were to put away this in particular. And so with us. We have our Ashtaroth, of whom, by reason of the temper of our minds, or the constitution of our bodies, or our circumstances in life, we are in especial danger. And while we are to be on our guard against every sin, our spiritual forces must be mustered against this with more than ordinary energy and decision. We are to “lay aside every weight, *and* the sin which doth most easily beset us, and run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.”

Compassed about, then, as we are, with infirmities, some of a more

special, and others of a more general nature, let us seek to be ever watchful. On our watch-tower we should be continually. Let us never dream that we are free from danger, for when we imagine that there is least danger, there may be the greatest. It can be said of many—

“ They stood the storm while waves were rough,
But in the sunny hour fell off,
Like vessels that go down at sea,
When heaven is all tranquility.”

Reader, remember therefore, and that continually, the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, “ Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.”

13TH DAY.

“For he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.” Lam. iii. 33.

Divine Chastisements. THIS is a consoling assurance, and is capable of the most abundant confirmation. The views which the scriptures give of the character of God may be adduced in proof of its truth. How often is He spoken of under the endearing appellation of a Father! To all His people He says, “I will be unto you a Father;” and they are enabled to say, “Doubtless thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: Thou, O Lord, art our Father; thy name is from everlasting.” Now God, in assuming such a title, binds himself to fulfil all the obligations that such a relationship involves. Those obligations are many, but one, which cannot be neglected with impunity, is that of administering correction.

But the point is, how does an earthly parent chastise his children? Has he any special delight in such an act? O no; his very heart is pained that any such necessity is laid upon him. The rod is taken down with reluctance, and used with the deepest regret. And why? It is because he loves his child. Well, so with God. He chastises, but it is unwillingly; and the cause of His unwillingness is the affection, boundless and inconceivable, which He feels for those who are His spiritual offspring by adoption and grace.

This truth is confirmed by the consideration that our afflictions are mixed with so many mercies. We have the bitter herbs, it is true; but we have the Pascal Lamb as well. We have the waters of Marah; but how many trees are there to sweeten them! Of no poor wretch can it be said, in the present world, that it is all suffering with him.

“ What might be worse has in't,
However small, some grains of happiness :
And man ne'er drank a cup of earthly sort
That might not hold another drop of gall ;
Or in his deepest sorrow, laid his head
Upon a pillow, set so close with thorns
That might not hold another prickle still.”

Now had God any pleasure in afflicting us, would His strokes have been so few, and would the alleviations afforded have been so many? What we deserve is darkness unmingled with light, sorrow unmingled with joy. But He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities—a clear proof that judgment is His strange work, and that it is in mercy He delights.

We might refer, again, to the design that God has in view in His afflictive dispensations. Reader, why did He bring that sickness upon you, which brought you down to the very border of the grave? His object was to bring you to a state of concern about your spiritual interests; He afflicted your body that you might

be led to seek the health of your soul. Why did He suffer that secular loss to befall you? It was to enforce the lesson, "Lay not up treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Why did He bring upon you that distressing bereavement, which wrung your heart with unutterable anguish? It was for the purpose of leading you to form connections with Heaven; connections which no time can impair, which no changes can affect, and which no calamity can ever destroy. It was not because He delighted to torment you, but with the view of spiritually blessing you.

O thou afflicted one, think of these things; and remember that the most trying dispensations of God towards His people, are only the severer aspects of His love.

14th DAY.

"But I give myself unto prayer."—Ps. cix. 4.

The Psalmist's Resolution. THREE questions may be proposed in reference to this resolution. The first is, How? the second, When? the third, Why? As regards the first, there is something to be learnt from the manner in which the Psalmist here expresses himself. In giving himself unto prayer, he shows that he made a real and thorough business of it. A similar expression is used by the apostle when exhorting Timothy to the performance of another important duty. "Meditate," he says, "upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear unto all." The words in both cases are very emphatic, and plainly imply that all the energies of the soul should be in active exercise.

"If the arrow of prayer," as an old writer observes, "is to enter

heaven, we must draw it from a soul full bent." It is not the prayer that is cold and lifeless, but—

“Prayer ardent opens heaven, and lets down
a stream

Of glory on the consecrated hour
Of man in audience with the Deity.”

We have a striking manifestation of this spirit in the case of the patriarch Jacob. “Let me go,” said the mighty and mysterious Personage with whom he was wrestling, “for the day breaketh.” “No,” said Jacob, “that I cannot do. Let the day break—I have the strongest reasons for keeping fast hold of Thee; and the day breaking is one of them, for there is a most eventful day before me, and in entering upon it I need Thy special blessing.” “I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me.” He was blessed, for as a prince he had power with God, and prevailed.

As regards the second question, the apostle tells us that we are to pray always, and everywhere. At

the same time, there are special seasons when we are particularly called upon to adopt the resolution before us. It was the day of trouble with Jacob on the occasion to which we have referred; and also with David when he uttered these words. The Scriptures are full of instances in which the people of God, in their distress, have given themselves unto prayer. When they could do nothing else, they have called upon the name of the Lord, and they never did so in vain. We have a memorable proof of this in what transpired at the Red Sea. The haughty monarch of Egypt resolved to pursue the children of Israel, although he had given them permission to depart. In his pride and arrogance, he exclaimed, "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil." His legions make their appearance while the tribes lay encamped upon the margin of the sea. A more fearful and critical situation than that in

which they were now placed can hardly be conceived. Before them was the sea ; on the right hand and on the left, they were hemmed in by lofty mountains ; while a hostile army was at their heels. If they advanced, it would only be to find a grave in the caves of the ocean ; if they turned back, it would only be to fall on the swords of their pursuers. In such a crisis, what were they to do ? Moses, as their leader, resolved to do what the Psalmist did—he gave himself unto prayer ; and it was fervent, wrestling prayer, such as the urgency of the occasion demanded. “ Wherefore criest thou unto me,” was the language of God to him, showing that they were cries, strong and ardent, which he uttered. His cries availed. An answer instantly came. God himself appeared as their deliverer. The bosom of the pathless sea is cleft by His mighty power. The stricken waters recoil upon themselves on

either side. The Israelites pass over in safety, while the legions of Pharaoh are destroyed. Blown upon by the blast of Jehovah's nostrils, they perished; they sank as lead in the mighty waters. "So shall all Thine enemies perish, O Lord; while those who love Thy name shall be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might."

The reasons why we should give ourselves unto prayer are many; especially two: God commands it, and our own safety and well-being depend upon it. Be not backward then, O my soul, in the performance of this blessed exercise. In all things, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let thy requests be made known to God. The throne of grace is ever accessible; let me therefore draw nigh with humble boldness, that I may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

15TH DAY.

"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." John xiv. 3.

Dying Thoughts. DEATH, in many of its aspects, is a painful subject of contemplation. It is so when we consider its effects upon the bodily frame. How mournful is the sight which the house of clay presents, after the indwelling spirit has fled. While life continued, the eye retained its lustre, the ear received the sounds addressed to it, the tongue gave utterance to thought and sympathy, and the pulsation, and warmth, and movement of the whole frame, rendered it an agreeable and interesting object. But oh, how changed when death comes! All is cold, insensible, and still. And then the grave has its loneliness and darkness to bring, and the worm has its work to do. This is the fate of all the



children of men, and what a lesson of humility and self-abasement should the consideration teach us !

It is also painful to think of death as dissolving the tenderest ties. There are many who are prepared to say, Take from me riches and honour, but leave me the friends that are dear to my soul ; for their presence and affection will compensate every other loss. But when these are gone, when we are compelled to say, " Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness ; " we then feel that we are disconsolate indeed.

But while these views of death, and others that might be mentioned, are painful and forbidding ; yet there are aspects in which it may be regarded of a very different nature. How often is it set forth under the similitude of *sleep* ! " Our friend Lazarus sleepeth." " Them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." It is a figure which shows

that death, to the true believer, is divested of its gloom ; that the grave is nothing but his bed ; that the interval between death and the resurrection is only as it were a single night ; and that in the morning he shall rise, with new strength and vigour, to enjoy the highest and purest pleasures throughout an eternal day.

Again, the scriptures often speak of the coming of Christ in connection with the death of His people. "Therefore be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not *the Son of Man* cometh." And so with the passage before us. In order to ascertain the special coming referred to, we would ask, When is the believer received to dwell with Christ in glory ? Plainly at death. So Paul at least thought when he said, "I have a desire to depart, and be with Christ, which is far better."

What is death then to the believer ? It is not the king of terrors, rushing

in his fierceness and fury to destroy him ; but it is his best friend coming forth to meet him, to take him to Himself, in order to dwell for ever with Him, in those many mansions which are in His Father's house on high. O, the thought is full of consolation ; and were it duly realised, much of the Christian's distress in looking forward to the closing scene would be removed. Be anxious, O my soul, to realize it. Death is the coming of the Son of Man ; and shall I dread meeting Him whom my soul loveth, and who is all my salvation and all my desire ? When He says, " Surely I come quickly," may my willing response be, " Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

We have an account of the disciples on one occasion in a terrific storm. Their situation was truly distressing. It was in the dead of night, and they were alone—their Great Master having gone to a distant mountain to spend the night in prayer. In the

midst of their distress, when their little bark was tossed to and fro, they perceived some object at a distance, which added greatly to their fears. What it was they knew not, but they soon concluded that it was an apparition. We read that "being greatly troubled, they said it was a spirit, and they cried out for fear." But in a short time they heard a voice which said, "It is I, be not afraid." It was a voice they instantly recognised; its gentle inflexions, its soft and tender tones, proclaimed it to be the voice of their Beloved. It was enough. Their fears vanished; and the storm, without and within, was at once calmed. Now, this scene may be regarded as emblematic of the believer's dissolution. Many are the storms through which he has to pass in life, but what are they when compared with the storm of death! He can then say with David, "The floods compass me about; all thy waves and billows

go over me." But as those waves dash, and those billows roar, there appears a superhuman form; and amid the Christian's rising fears, the voice is heard, "It is I, be not afraid!" I will hush the tempest, and safely guide thee into the desired haven. And the departing saint is enabled to say, I will fear no evil, since thou, the Great Pilot, art with me.

"Let me but feel him near,
Death's gloomy pass in view,
I'll walk without a fear
The shadowy valley through :
With rod and staff, my Shepherd's care
Will guide my steps, and guard me there."

16th DAY.

**"And he marvelled because of their unbelief."
Mark vi. 6.**

The Great Transgression. THE word of God places a special stigma upon the sin of unbelief. Of all sins, it is there set forth as the greatest. When enumerating the various graces of the gospel, the apostle speaks of charity as the chiefest of all; and this sin may be similarly designated in connection with the diversified evils which abound. If charity be the Gabriel among the graces—a seraph brighter and loftier than all the seraph train—then unbelief is the Beelzebub, the great prince, of all the depraved principles and passions which prevail in the world.

There is an intimate connection between unbelief and almost every other sin. When they are closely examined, this will be found to form a component part of them. Take,

for example, the first sin—that which brought death into the world and all our woe. What were the elements which composed it? In the first place, there was selfishness in it. In the next place, there was sensuality: something gratifying to the senses was presented; the fruit appeared pleasant to the eyes, and agreeable to the palate. It also contained pride and ambition; the bait held out was, that they should be as gods, knowing good and evil. But, above all, there was unbelief in it. The tempter assured our first parents that they had nothing to fear; that there was not the least danger that the threatening denounced would ever be fulfilled; and the consequence was, that he who is a liar from the beginning was credited, while the testimony of the God of truth was doubted and despised.

Among the many aspects under which this sin is set before us, one is its unreasonableness. It is a thing,

when rightly regarded, that cannot but excite feelings of amazement in every reflective mind.

It is said of the angels, that there is joy among them when a sinner is brought to repentance. And does not the fact of such a feeling being enkindled in such breasts show the importance of repentance? Nothing trifling, we may be well assured, would move and melt those lofty principalities and powers in such a manner. But if angels, owing to their exalted natures, and their clear and comprehensive views, cannot rejoice but when there is something that calls for such emotions; this must be the case in a far higher degree in reference to Him by whom all the angels were made, and to whose will they are ever obedient, even the everlasting Son of God, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person. When any feelings are excited in His blessed breast, there must be some-

thing that truly demands and justifies them.

There are some persons who wonder at almost every thing; but such are generally ignorant and inexperienced. As knowledge increases men cease to marvel at all they meet with. But when it is said "And *He* marvelled because of their unbelief," we are to remember, that the words refer to One who was acquainted with all beings, and all worlds; and yet He could not think of the unbelief of men without wonder. He never rejoiced but when there was something to rejoice at, and never mourned but when there was something to mourn at; and it is as true, that He never marvelled but at something passing strange, or peculiarly unreasonable.

Who can think of the unbelief of the Jews, without marvelling at it! And so with the professed disciples of infidelity, and also the great mass of practical unbelievers. In the unbelief of each of these classes there is

much to excite our astonishment. But of all unbelief, that of the people of God themselves is the most unaccountable.

“Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.” Such was the language of the distressed father who came to Jesus on behalf of his afflicted child. Reader, adopt the words as your own; and in so doing, be anxious to possess the spirit in which they were first uttered; a spirit, not of cold indifference, but of deep emotion and intense concern. “Jesus said to him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief.” Were we brought to feel as he felt, and to pray as he prayed, we might expect similar results to follow; and we should hear Jesus saying in reference to this foul spirit, “I charge thee come out of them, and enter into them no more.”

17TH DAY.

"Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him." Psalms ii. 12.

The Believer's Confidence. TRUST and faith are not, strictly speaking, identical acts. We are rather to regard the former as the result of the latter. A familiar illustration will help us to understand the distinction between them. A traveller arrives at a certain town, where he is an entire stranger. He is taken ill there. Of the physicians of the place he knows nothing, but he makes inquiry as to whom he had better apply. He receives a most favourable account of the skill and experience of one of them. Those by whom this testimony is given could have, he concludes, no object in deceiving him, and they appeared to be well acquainted with the character of the person they recommended. He believes their testimony; and what follows? He

sends for him; and not merely so, but he entrusts himself to him. Here is confidence in the physician, as the result of believing what he had heard concerning him. And so with the Great Physician. It is as we credit the record which God gives of Him in His word, that there will be, as the result of that credence, the soul's application to Him, and its unhesitating confidence in Him.

The importance of this spirit appears from the frequency with which we are exhorted to exercise it. Again and again are we called upon to trust in the Lord. We are to trust in Him with our whole heart, and are not to lean to our own understanding. And we are to trust in Him at all times, especially in the day of trouble. To do so when all is prosperous, when the sky above our heads is clear and cloudless, and when everything wears a sunny aspect, is comparatively an easy matter. But when all is dark and lowering; when

the chill blast of adversity blows; when the soul's fondest endearments are snapped asunder; when we become, from being fair and flourishing, like the tree of the desert, over which the tempest sweeps, leaving it leafless and branchless, the mere skeleton of what it once was, all bare and blasted—then to trust Him—then to praise and adore Him! O that is confidence indeed; the confidence of him who said, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."

But alas! how little of this spirit is to be found! How often have we dishonoured God by distrusting Him! It is common in many places to have printed upon the turnpike gates, "No trust here." On some roads, every gate has it that we pass through; the formidable sentence, "No trust here," catches the eye almost continually. Ah! there is another place besides the turnpike gate on which the words might be inscribed. How many hearts are

there on which might be written, "No trust here." In reference to all that concerns God, that concerns his promises and declarations, this feeling is absent. With the ungodly, it is altogether so; and even with many who have some grounds for hoping that the great change has taken place, it is so in far too large a measure. O yes, upon your heart, who profess to be one of the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty, may it be put, "No trust here;" that is, no such trust here, as ought to be here.

O Lord, increase my faith, and thereby increase that confidence which is one of the first of its fruits. Let me not be so much a stranger to that spirit of simple trust, of implicit reliance, of child-like confidence, upon which so much stress is laid in Thy word. By cherishing such feelings, may I be anxious to honour Thee more and more; and I may then expect to be honoured by Thee in return.

18TH DAY.

"Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper, and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." 3 John iii.

Spiritual Prosperity. A prosperous soul is not one that is stationary—being month after month, and year after year, in the same condition—but one in which there is growth and progression. This is the main feature of soul-prosperity, as it is of prosperity of every other kind. When a nation prospers, its various interests are extended. The prosperous tradesman is he who rises from one step to another, until he attains a state of competency and independence.

There are various means whereby spiritual prosperity is attained. One is, the afflictive dispensations with which God visits His people. This is the great end for which they are sent. And how many, in connection with this end, have had reason to bless Him for His afflicting hand!

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Not a few have found by happy experience that a sick-bed has been frequently a kind of hot-bed, where their graces have grown far more rapidly than when they were exposed to the colder climate of a busy and bustling world.

It is a pleasing sight to see a plant or tree thriving. No lover of nature can gaze on such an object, covered with the richest foliage, and laden with fruit, without pleasurable emotions. Now this is an emblem of the prosperous believer. The people of God are often set forth under such a figure. They are "trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified." But in both cases there is a process, apparently injurious, that has frequently to be undergone, before fruit is brought forth to perfection. The husbandman well knows the value of the pruning knife; and it is often with no sparing hand that he has to use it. Some one who was ignorant of

the design of the process might say, What a pity to cut off those beautiful sprigs and branches, which grow so luxuriantly! But it is no pity at all. Those sprouts consume that vegetable moisture, which the other parts require, and it is only by lopping them off that a proper tone is restored, and a due healthfulness is given to the entire circulation. And so with the trees of righteousness. By afflictions, by various crosses and disappointments, God has to prune them. Often, as the heavenly Husbandman, does He resort to such an operation—an operation, severe it may be in itself, but salutary in its influence, by which he diverts the flow of their inclinations and affections from running sideward and downward, and leading them upward to Himself. Such are afflictions—such their nature and design. And hence the Saviour's language: "I am the vine, ye are the branches: every branch in me that beareth not

fruit he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, (or, more correctly, he *pruneth* it) that it might bring forth more fruit." Such is the connection between pruning and fruit-bearing; or, in other words, between God's afflictive dispensations and a prosperous soul.

And so with the means of grace, both in public and private. The word of God is the nutriment of the renewed spirit. "As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." It is the instrument not merely of begetting the divine life, but of advancing and perfecting it.

Be this then my chief concern, that my soul may prosper. In searching the word of grace, and in all my approaches to the throne of grace, let this be my great object. And should God lay affliction upon my loins, let me bless Him for that affliction, if He thereby cause my soul to be in health, and eminently to prosper.

19th DAY.

"And Abraham said unto Lot, let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren.

Gen. xiii. 8.

**Contentions
among
Christian
Brethren.**

AMONG the various objections which are brought against religion, one is, that it is the fruitful source of strifes and contentions. "This gospel, of which we hear so much," is the language of its enemies, "never fails to produce quarrels and divisions." And hence they endeavour to persuade themselves and others, that they are justified in objecting to, and keeping aloof from, a system which leads to such gross and glaring evils. But it would be well for such objectors to learn to distinguish between a thing as a direct cause, and as an incidental occasion. The difference is very considerable between the one and

the other. The sun, for example, is the cause of light and heat, of fertility and beauty to the world at large. It has, however, proved the occasion of certain evils; by shining on putrid substances it may have been the indirect means of generating pestilence, and of producing death. But who would object to the sun, or desire its removal from our system on that account? The gospel, like the sun, is the cause of unnumbered blessings; but it may be the indirect occasion of some evils, of which the contentions referred to are among the most prominent.

As it is, however, most desirable that we leave no semblance of excuse to our adversaries, let us carefully guard against the evils under consideration. And for that end let us, in the first place, increasingly cultivate a spirit of Christian love. "Little children," said the loving disciple, "love one another." A short and simple lesson, it might

have been thought ; and yet Christians have been learning it for eighteen hundred years, and are far from being any thing like proficient in it after all. O, let us mourn over the feebleness of our love, and earnestly pray that it may become daily stronger and stronger.

In the second place, let us be above noticing every trifle. We shall thus show not merely the Christian temper of our minds, but their real greatness also.

“ For every trifle scorn to take offence ;
It either shows great pride, or little sense.”

What are the leading features of that charity which the apostle so highly extols ? “ It suffereth long, and is kind ; it envieth not ; is not easily provoked ; it beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.”

Let us guard, thirdly, against the earliest indications of bad feeling. “ The beginning of strife,” we are assured, “ is as when one letteth out

water." And what says the proverb? It tells us "that little chips may set large logs on fire."

And think, once more, of the influence which a spirit of strife has upon the ungodly. Divisions and contentions in the church, breed atheism and infidelity in the world. Christians must be one in heart if not in mind, before the world will be brought to acknowledge the Saviour, and believe in the divinity of His mission.

How pleasing is the thought that there will be no contention in heaven! Not a single note of discord will be there; the spirits of old who sought to strike such a note were instantly banished from the place. No resentment, no shadow of reserve, no coldness or shyness, will be there. No refusing to go into each other's company; no disposition to pass by on the other side there. All will be love and peace; all will be perfect harmony and undisturbed repose. That

brotherly affection which, in this cold ungenial clime, has generally appeared so stunted a plant, so withering a flower, will attain its full maturity, and bloom in perfect and undecaying splendour in the Paradise of God. There countenance will sparkle to countenance, bosom will expand to bosom, and heart will bound to heart, for ever and ever.

20th DAY.

“This honour have all his saints.” Ps. cxlix. 9.

The Saint's Dignity. THE honour which God confers upon His people may be regarded in a threefold aspect. He honours them, first, by employing them in His service. “James, a servant of God, and of the Lord Jesus Christ.” The apostle evidently regarded this as a high privilege; he gloried in the thought that he had been called to serve such a Master. It was so with the Psalmist. To be engaged in the meanest department of His service was a greater thing in his estimation than the most exalted of earthly joys and honours. “I had rather,” he tells us, “be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than dwell in the tents of wickedness.” And the same feeling is possessed by the most exalted intelligences; it is shared by the loftiest principalities and powers in heavenly places. “Gabriel, a servant of God!”

Although one of the brightest of the sons of the morning, yet, to have such an appendage to his name would be regarded by him as a dignity inconceivably great and glorious.

But God, in honouring His people, not merely employs them in His service, but He permits them to enjoy His friendship. It is a great thing to be a servant of some highly distinguished individual, but it is a far greater thing to be his friend. And what said the Saviour? "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." The master, however kind, is not in the habit of disclosing his secrets to his servants; they are reserved for his friend, with whom he is on terms of greater familiarity, and in whom he can repose more implicit confidence. It is so with the friendship that exists

between God and His people. This is strikingly shown in the case of the father of the faithful. "Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God." And the title was far from being merely nominal. All the obligations it imposed were fulfilled, and especially in reference to the matter just mentioned. "Shall I hide from Abraham this thing which I do?" He is my friend, and I cannot think of destroying those guilty cities, until I have first opened my mind to him. Not to do so would be a flagrant violation of the laws of friendship and love.

But this honour hath not Abraham alone, but all the saints. Am I a true believer? Then this honour is mine. O my soul, be lost in wonder, love, and praise. The friend of God! The friend of Him who is the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity! The friend of Him who is King of kings and Lord of lords!

There is, however, a higher title, and a more endearing connection still. In addition to being employed in His service, and favoured with His friendship, the believer is adopted into His family. "Ye are all the children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus." "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called"—not the servants, not the friends, but—"the sons of God." "Thou art no more a servant, but a son ; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ."

If such then be the believer's honour, shall I not aspire after it? May I, with Moses, choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than enjoy all the treasures and dignities of the world. Let me never forget that it is a greater thing to be one of Zion's pilgrims, than to be one of England's peers. Having God as my reconciled Friend and Father, I need not envy nobles their honours, nor kings their crowns.

21st DAY.

“ **Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith.** 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

Self Deception. It is a solemn thought that we are in danger of deceiving ourselves as to our spiritual condition. That this is possible appears from several considerations. One is, the frequent warnings which the scriptures give on the subject. Again and again we find the apostles harping on this string in their several epistles. “Let no man deceive himself.” “If any man thinketh himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.” “Be not deceived; God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.” Now whence the need of such repeated appeals, were we not in great danger of self-deception? O, should not such exhortations lead

us to examine ourselves, and that with all honesty and impartiality?

This further appears from the great lengths to which many have gone, who have, after all, been destitute of saving grace. It is possible for our outward conduct to be regular and blameless; for us to be strict in the observance of all the forms of religion; for us to bear the lamp of a flaming profession, and make much noise and show therewith; and yet be strangers to real religion. Our understandings may be enlightened; our minds may be deeply affected; our affections may be roused, and warmed, and elevated; and yet know nothing of the root of the matter. Our characters may be decent; our behaviour may be serious; our creed may be sound; our talents may be brilliant; our zeal may be active; our usefulness may be great; and be, after all, of the number of those who have a name to live, but are dead in trespasses and sins. "Many will say

to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity." O, how far is it possible for us to go, and yet deceive ourselves and others! Should there not then be great searchings of heart? Should we not prove and know our own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in us, except we be reprobates?

The truth under consideration is again confirmed by those feelings of holy jealousy with which the most eminent believers have regarded themselves. There was Paul—hear what he says in reference to himself: "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away." O, what language to be

used by such an individual ! Think of his labours and sufferings ; think of all the graces by which he was distinguished,—the zeal that never tired, the patience that never wearied, the love and compassion which never cooled. And think especially of the high privileges with which he was honoured. He had been caught up into the third heaven. He had gazed upon the glories of the celestial spheres. He had mingled with the spirits of the perfected just, walked with them on high, listened to their accents, and joined, it may be, in their songs. And yet this is he who uttered the above words. O, if such a man, so holy, so devoted, so distinguished, the chiefest of the apostles, the most eminent of all the saints ; if he found it necessary to exercise such caution, and to cherish, occasionally at least, such fears, how much more necessary must it be for us to do so, who are at best so immeasurably far behind him.

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Reader, what sayest thou to these things, and what effect should their consideration have upon thee? They should lead thee, as we have already observed, to look much inward, in order to ascertain how matters stand there. And after having looked inward, forget not frequently to look upward, and in doing so present the prayer, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

22nd DAY.

“Unto you therefore which believe, he is precious.—1 Peter, ii. 7.

Christ precious to his People. THERE are many points on which the people of God differ, but in that on which the apostle here insists, they are all agreed. To the whole family of the faithful, Christ is precious. His name is as ointment poured forth to each and to all. He is in their estimation, without any exceptions whatever, the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. There is here an unity of sentiment, a holy harmony of feeling, by which all the children of God, however scattered abroad, are one. There is with them, “neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all and in all.”

There are many things which render the Saviour precious to His people. There is, first, what He has

done for them. And what has He done? This is a question that fills angels with amazement, and it will fill all eternity with praise. He died that they might live—died the just for the unjust, that He might bring them to God. “He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was laid upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.” He gave Himself for us—His own blessed, glorious, ineffable, eternal Self—that He might redeem us from sin here, and from all its terrific consequences hereafter. What, O what could He have done more!

Let us think again of the suitability of Christ to his people, in the face of their various circumstances and conditions. Are they in danger? He plucks them as brands from the burning. Are they dead in trespasses and sins? He quickens them by His almighty power, and makes them new creatures in himself. Are they

guilty before God? He proclaims redemption to them through His own blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace. Are they unclean? He sanctifies them by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. Are they naked? He clothes them in the robe of His own stainless righteousness; and being thus clothed, the shame of their nakedness will never appear. Are they poor? He enriches them with unsearchable riches, and assures them that all things are theirs. Are they blind? He opens the eyes of their understanding, and pours the light of spiritual day upon the sightless eyeballs of their souls. Are they weak? He strengthens them with all might, according to His glorious power, and makes them more than conquerors over all their enemies. Do they grieve on account of their abounding transgressions? Behold them on their bended knees, fearful of lifting

up their eyes unto heaven, crying out, "against Thee, Thee only have we sinned." But the Saviour draws nigh—He who is the Consolation of Israel approaches. He wipes away their tears; gives them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; He imparts to them everlasting consolation, and a good hope through grace. Such is the blessed adaptation which there is in Christ to meet all the exigencies of His people. Is it any wonder then that He is precious to them? Ah! the great wonder is that He is not much more so. The marvel is that their whole souls are not constantly burning, like the fire on the Jewish altar of old, with an intense, all-consuming flame of love to His adorable name.

If Christ is precious to those who believe, let me test my faith in Him by the feelings with which I regard Him. To believe in Him as the Son

of God is the great turning point of salvation; and one of the unfailing fruits, and consequently one of the most conclusive evidences, of believing in Him, is sincere and ardent attachment to Him

23rd DAY.

"And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

Phil. iv. 7.

Joy and Peace in Believing. THERE are two aspects in which the blessing here spoken of may be viewed. The peace of God often signifies reconciliation with God. It is a solemn truth that all the unrenewed are enemies to Him. And oh, how fearful a state must that be! Enemies to God! to that God with whom is terrible majesty, and who will by no means clear the guilty. Such is His greatness, that He measures the waters in the hollow of His hand; He comprehends the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighs the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance. The power of his anger is such, that the mountains quake at His rebuke; and at His reproof the pillars of heaven tremble.

His smile diffuses light and gladness through all the countless myriads of saints and seraphs in glory, while His frown shakes the dark caverns of hell to their very centre. To be enemies to such a God, how unspeakably fearful a thing must it be!

Now to possess the peace of God is just the opposite of this. And if to the one state there pertains an awfulness that passes all understanding; there belongs, of necessity, to the other, a blessedness surpassing our highest conceptions. What is true of the one, is also true of the other.

But in addition to this great blessing, there is the peace of mind which springs from a personal consciousness of it. We believe that it is possible to possess the one, without possessing, at least for a time, the other. Many a poor sinner has, doubtless, been justified in the sight of God, and therefore in a state of actual friendship with Him, without

being certain in his own mind that such was the case; and a considerable period may transpire before all his doubts are removed. Let us think of two countries in a state of warfare. They are far distant from each other. Mighty oceans and continents separate them. We will suppose that the warfare ceases, and that conditions of peace are agreed upon. Now, owing to the distance between them, it may be a considerable time before the inhabitants of one of these countries come to know this. Peace may have existed between them for months, but the joyful intelligence has not yet reached them, and consequently they are still under the influence of the most painful apprehensions. And so it may be between man and his Maker. It is possible that God has ceased from all His purposes of vengeance towards the sinner, and he not be aware of it; so that actual peace may exist between him and God, while he con-

tinues to regard Him as an angry Judge and a consuming Avenger.

Let there be, however, not the mere fact of reconciliation, but the undoubting assurance of it, and then the individual will be not only safe, for safe he was before, but he will be happy. And if the blessing he is now brought for the first time to enjoy be important above all comprehension, then the peace and joy which spring from the consciousness of its possession will be undescribable also.

Reader, let it be your first concern to have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Compared with His friendship, what are all earthly favours! In the blessing pronounced by Moses above the tribe of Joseph, various matters are referred to—such as the precious fruits of the earth; the dew and the deep that coucheth beneath; the chief things of the ancient mountains, and of the everlasting hills: but *the good will of Him*

that dwelt in the bush, was the crowning blessing of all. O, let His favour which is life, and His loving-kindness which is better than life, be ever the first thing in our estimation.

And let us not remain in doubt in reference to it. Let us endeavour to say with the apostle, "For I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." Then a holy calm will pervade the mind, and the import of that sweet promise will be realized, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee."

24th DAY.

"Thy vows are upon me, O God."—Ps. lvi. 12.

Vows Remembered. THE remembrance of the fact here stated would be likely, under the divine blessing, to lead to important practical results. In the first place, it would act as a preservative from sin. When we take the vows of God upon us, we bind ourselves to submit to Him as our great Ruler. Now this we cannot do unless we take His statutes for our guide in all things, and on all occasions. Sin is the transgression of the law; and hence the importance of the truth to which the Psalmist alludes, whenever we are tempted to commit any evil. Every enticement to sin should be met by the declaration, "Thy vows are upon me, O God;" and whenever Thy law is broken by me, my own solemn vows are broken also.

In specifying some of the sins to

which we are especially liable, we may first mention that of backsliding, whether in heart or in life. "O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, thou art my Lord." Here is a solemn vow, or the entering into a direct covenant with God, in virtue of which He has graciously declared, "Thou becamest mine." What is it then to turn our backs upon Him, but to trample our vows in the dust, and scatter them to the four winds!

Reader, art thou tempted to depart from the living God? Whenever such a temptation is presented, shouldest thou not instantly say, How dare I? Have I not vowed to be for ever His? Have I not joined myself to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten? Be this thine answer then, to every temptation from without, and to every backsliding tendency from within, "Thy vows are upon me, O, God."

Another sin that may be specified is idolatry. The Jews, in departing

from God, did so to follow after idols; and by such conduct they transgressed the covenant which they had made with Him. And so it is now. The great idol of the present day is the world, in its wealth and honours, its pleasures and pomps; an idol at whose shrine myriads daily worship. Now God and the world cannot be honoured and loved together. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." In transferring my affections from Him who is alone worthy of them, to the perishable objects of time, I am guilty of treachery, yea, of sacrilege, and that of the worst kind. Let me seriously think of this. Let me never forget whose I am, and whom I ought to serve. And whenever the world, in any of its forms or fashions, shall seek to draw me astray, let me instantly look upward, and say, "Thy vows are upon me, O God."

Again to remember that the vows of God are upon us, would be likely

to act as an incentive to activity and devotedness. The believer, when he first entered into covenant with God, engaged to serve Him. He then felt that the boundless mercy and grace which had been manifested towards him, in snatching him as a brand from the burning, called, in return, for the undivided consecration of all his powers. And to call to mind the resolutions he then made, must have a direct tendency to stimulate his slumbering energies, and enkindle afresh the flames of his love and zeal. Hannibal, in his youthful days, was required by his father to make a solemn vow. He had to swear before all the gods that he would maintain irreconcilable enmity against the Romans. The effect of this must have been great during the whole of his future days. Was he ever tempted to relax in his efforts? The thought of his vow would at once forbid him. And so should it be with us. We are called upon

to fight the battles of the Lord: and if we would be faithful soldiers of the cross, let us often think of the time when we subscribed with our hands unto the Lord, and vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob. Faint we may be occasionally; but if we feel the full influence of this consideration, we shall be still pursuing.

O God, help me to pay unto Thee my vows; those vows which my lips have uttered, and my tongue hath spoken when I was in trouble. With thy servant of old, enable me to say, "I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people."

25TH DAY.

Thy kingdom come. Mat. vi. 10.

**Prayer
for the
Prosperity
of Zion.**

AMONG the many feelings by which every true follower of Christ is animated, one, of no mean prominence, is that of concern for the interests of His kingdom. Loving Him, he cannot but love His cause. The language of the captive Jews of old, who were mingling their tears with the streams of Babel, finds an echo in every sanctified breast: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning; if I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy."

Am I one of the children of Zion, and do her interests lie near to my heart? If so, let me fervently pray for her peace and prosperity. An

intimate connection is shown to exist between the prayers of God's Israel, and the success of God's cause. What glorious visions, for example, are given of the spread of divine truth in the book of Revelation. A mighty angel is seen flying in the midst of Heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people. Babylon the great, the mother of harlots, and the abomination of the earth, is to be cast like a mighty mill-stone into the depths of the sea. The old serpent is to be bound for a thousand years, that he may deceive the nations no more. The holy city, the new Jerusalem, is to come down from God out of heaven; the tabernacle of God is to be with men, and he will dwell among them. Innumerable voices will be heard proclaiming, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his

Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever." These are the glorious triumphs which await the gospel, the distant prospect of which may well cause us to rejoice with exceeding joy. But these scenes are connected by the beloved disciple with another; a scene which he represents as preceding them all, and as introducing them all. It is given in the early part of the eighth chapter. "And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given to him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints, upon the golden altar which was before the throne: and the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand." Thus are we taught that before those blest visions to which we have referred shall be realized, the prayers of the saints must rise in one vast cloud before

the eternal throne; and when that is done those mighty revolutions will transpire, which will issue in the universal subjection of the world to Christ.

Let it be then my ardent, cordial, constant prayer, "Thy kingdom come." "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty; and in thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth, and meekness, and righteousness, and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things."

"Come then, and added to thy many crowns,
Receive yet one, the crown of all the earth,
Thou who alone art worthy!"

26th DAY.

“Then said I, Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart.”

Ps. xl. 7, 8.

The
Will of
God.

WHEN the Saviour lived on earth He was actively engaged—He was constantly doing something. And we are left in no doubt as to what He was doing. He came not to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him. “In the meanwhile” we read, “His disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat. But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of. Therefore said they one to another, Hath any man brought him ought to eat? Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.”

And it was not with reluctance or constraint that He did the will of His heavenly Father. “I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy

law is within my heart." Such was the Saviour's language; and there is an important sense in which every believer should adopt His words, and make them his own. Can I do so? Paul could. He found much in himself that vexed his righteous soul; but, in the midst of all, there was one thing he was able to say, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man." David could. In the 119th Psalm we find but one leading idea; its language from the commencement to the close is, "I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart." And as it was with them, so it doubtless is with all God's people in every nation and every age.

But, in considering these words in their connection with the Lord Jesus, we must not forget the circumstances under which they were uttered. It was the will of God concerning Him that He should be the subject of sufferings unparalleled; and yet He

shrunk not back, but marched onward to do His will, although conscious of all it would cost Him. "He set his face stedfastly to go to Jerusalem." But did He know what was before him? Yes, He did. It was with the fullest knowledge of all that should befall Him in the Jewish capital, that He set His face stedfastly to go thither. "The cup which My Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" And as He thus spake, every bitter ingredient — all the wormwood and gall which composed that awful mixture—was completely known to Him, even to their deepest dregs. A bloody baptism awaited Him; and when He asked the disciples whether they were able to bear it, some of them replied, "We are able;" but they replied in ignorance—they knew not what they said. But He, knowing all the terrors with which that awful cloud of wrath was charged, which was so soon to burst upon His devoted head; knowing all

its overwhelming fierceness and fury, He exclaimed, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" He foresaw the whole that awaited Him from the beginning. Yea, before the foundations of the hills were laid; before the ocean rolled upon its watery bed; before a single star shot its light across the firmament above; before the sons of God sang together, to celebrate the creation of those countless worlds which are scattered through the immensity of space; it was countless, dateless ages before these occurrences that he undertook our cause: and after counting the cost; after computing the mighty sum of guilt that was to be cancelled; after measuring the awful treasures of wrath which were to be endured; it was then, while all the heavenly powers stood mute, that he proclaimed, "Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my

God; yea, thy law is within my heart."

Blessed Saviour! give us of Thy spirit, that whatever the will of God may be concerning us, we may do it, even as Thou didst, not merely with submission, but with delight. Help us to glory in tribulations, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. For this end, let thine own power rest upon us, that power which Thou hast promised to perfect in our weakness. We shall then be Thy true followers, and men will take knowledge of us that we are Thine.

27TH DAY.

“ Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” Heb. xiii. 8.

The Immutability of Christ. THIS Scripture is “ profitable for doctrine;” and the doctrine it teaches is one of the most important and precious of all the doctrines of the Christian system. It is that of the essential divinity of the Great Redeemer. Man is a changeable being, and if Jesus Christ be nothing but man, that mutability which belongs to man, must of necessity belong to Him. We may assign to Him as a man whatever excellencies we please; we may invest his manhood with all that is pure and dignified, with all that is graceful and benevolent; we may work up our estimate of the sanctity of His life, of the truth of His sayings, and of the wonders of His works, until language, and even thought is exhausted; but so long as we confine Him within the trammels of

a created being, and regard Him as a mere finite subsistence, we cannot say of Him, as it is here declared, that He is "the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." Immutability is one of the incommunicable attributes of Deity. Man in paradise was holy and happy, and yet he was changeable; else how came it to pass that he kept not his first estate? Angels in glory—the rapt seraphs which adore and burn, and who move in majesty around the everlasting throne—their natures are changeable; for countless legions of those who were once their bright companions are now hateful demons, writhing under the wrath of God, in those dark and desolate abodes where hope never enters. It is clear then that human nature is changeable, and that the angelic nature is changeable; and it is equally clear that the Divine nature only is unchangeable. And if this high quality belongs to Christ, we may, without any fear of

the idolater's doom, fall down in prostrate adoration at His feet, and cry with him of old, "My Lord and my God!"

This truth is full of consolation to the believer. Whoever may alter, Jesus Christ continues the same. He is thy friend, O Christian, and He is an unchanging friend. We hear much of earthly friendship, and it is one of the fairest flowers which grow in this cold ungenial clime. But oh, how precarious is it at best! Has it not often happened that friendship, which had sustained and survived many a shock; which had lived through many a tempest, and passed through many a storm; which sorrow and calamity had but more firmly grounded, and more closely cemented—has, after all, without any adequate, and often without any conceivable cause whatever, been broken off, and come to nought! A mere look has often blasted it. A single word spoken, it may be hastily or

harshly, has completely destroyed it. A frail, a brittle thing it is verily. But Oh ! the friendship of Christ ! it will never be withdrawn from those on whom it has once been bestowed. Amid all the changes of time, all the vicissitudes of human friendship, it will remain unchanged ; the lapse of ages, far from diminishing its ardour, will only render it more intimate and endearing. He is a friend that loveth at all times ; a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

“ A friend more tender, true,
Than brother e'er can be ;
Who, when all others bid adieu,
Remains the last to flee ;
Who, be their pathway bright or dim,
Deserts not those who turn to Him.”

May this unchanging Friend be mine ; and then happy, though surrounded by the false and treacherous, shall I be !

28TH DAY.

"Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." Jude 21.

The Posture of God's People. "THE Christian ever feels," it has been well observed, "his need of divine mercy — mercy to the last, and above all, mercy at the last." And what he needs, he is encouraged to hope for; his expectations will not be cut off, but all his desires will be granted.

The mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ includes all those rich and unmerited blessings which flow from Him to the believing sinner. Of many of those blessings the child of God is already the subject. He has obtained pardoning mercy, adopting mercy, renewing mercy. But that of which the apostle here speaks, is something for which the believer is looking forward. It is not in hand but in hope; not in possession but in reversion.

And what does that mercy include? It includes every future supply; it is the completion of the good work which has been already begun; it is, in a word, the end of his faith, even the full and final salvation of his soul.

The ultimate blessing that the believer expects is eternal life; but there are several streams which he looks for before reaching that boundless ocean. Each of them flows from the Saviour's mercy; his infinite compassion is the source whence they all emanate. It may not be unprofitable for us to glance at a few of those streams, which have ever gladdened the city of our God. We shall pass by the mercy which the believer looks for, during the coming years of his earthly pilgrimage. Whether those years be few or many he well knows that he will need mercy every passing day, yea, every passing moment. But not to enlarge upon this, we observe that he is looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus

Christ when that pilgrimage will be closing, and when the hour of the last conflict will have arrived. And what a solemn hour will that be! The hour of exchanging worlds; of quitting a world of sense, and entering a world of spirits—of leaving this state of probation, and entering upon one of unending retribution and reward. But, “say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him,” even in that solemn hour. And why will it be well with him? Because the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ will be then extended to him; and, realising its blessed supports and consolations, he will fear no evil.

The apostle speaks of a time of need, when exhorting us to approach the throne of grace. Now there is an important sense in which every moment is such to the believer. There are, however, some seasons which may, in a special manner, be thus designated. A time of affliction, of temptation, of persecution—a time

when we are called to the performance of any arduous duty—a time of spiritual desertion, when we are walking in darkness and having no light—these are especially times of need. But, over and above them all, this is the case with the hour of death. A time of most urgent need it must truly be. But, Christian, though a time of greatest need, yet if the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ be enjoyed, all will be well. His mercy will illumine the dark vale, and gild it with celestial splendour. His mercy will divest the last enemy of all that is gloomy in his aspect, and fearful in his form. His mercy will bear thee safely up, and conduct thee safely through.

29th DAY.

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Acts xvi. 31.

Saving Faith. OF all questions which it is possible for a fallen creature to propose, the most important is, "What must I do to be saved?" Other subjects call for our attention; and while kept within proper bounds there is nothing improper in asking, "What shall I eat? what shall I drink? and wherewithal shall I be clothed?" But how many are there who give all their thoughts to these meaner things, and live entirely regardless of the concerns of their immortal souls! Such will be brought, most assuredly, to see their folly, and bitterly to deplore it, either here or hereafter. God grant that it may be in this world, for repentance will be unavailing in the next.

Reader, art thou concerned about thine eternal interests? Art thou asking, How may I be made a par-

taker of the salvation that is proclaimed in the gospel? This is the answer, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." It is by faith in Him, as dying for our sins, and rising again for our justification, that pardon, and reconciliation, and eternal life, become ours.

But what is this faith, about which so much is said, and on which such great stress is laid? To believe in a person is to credit what he says. It is to receive his testimony as true. There can be no faith without a testimony—without something declared or promised. It is so in reference to men, and also in reference to God; in both cases it is a receiving of their respective testimonies. "And if we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He hath testified of His Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: He that believeth not God, hath made Him a liar; because

he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son."

There is but little said in the scriptures concerning the nature of faith. There is much said concerning the grounds of faith, and much concerning the object of faith, and much concerning the fruits of faith; but very little concerning its nature. And what are we to infer from this circumstance? We may naturally conclude that the inspired writers used the word in its common acceptance; and that all they wanted was to bring men to receive the testimony of God, and to rest upon it for life and salvation.

At the same time we are to remember that something more than a mere nominal assent is required. True faith in Christ is always accompanied with application to Him. Believing His promise, taking Him at His word, being fully persuaded that He will not, and cannot deceive us, that it would be beneath His

greatness and goodness alike to do so ; we shall then fall on our bended knees before Him, and with those feelings of intense emotion, which the urgency of the case demands, our cry will be, "Lord, save us, or we perish."

O my soul, seek to possess this spirit of faith. Let me be assured that on the question, "Dost thou believe in the Son of God?" the mightiest issues are hanging. My salvation or damnation depends upon it. My acceptance on the great day of final audit, or my banishment from the presence of the Lord and the glory of His power ; the companionship of saints and angels, or the fellowship of accursed fiends ; the everlasting songs of victory, or the agonizing groans and wailings of despair ; all, all depend upon this question. Is it not worthy then of my deepest attention, and should I rest until I am able to give a satisfactory answer to it?

How important then is the prayer, "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief." Reader, adopt this prayer as your own. In the spirit of it let your language be, I would believe Thy promise, I would trust Thy word: oh help me so to do! I would fall in with Thy terms, and submit to all Thy requirements; I would embrace Thee as my only hope, and devote myself unreservedly to Thy service, living no longer to myself, but to Thee. These are my desires; O help me, by Thy promised grace, to fulfil them!

30TH DAY.

"Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" Num. xxiii. 10.

The Death of the Righteous. THE desires of men, as well as their opinions, are exceedingly diversified. How few are there whose tastes and temperaments are alike! What one man ardently aspires after, another cares nothing about. It is not in his way. He has his favourite pleasures and pursuits, but they are diametrically opposite to those of others. But here is a matter in which all are agreed; a desire in which all are disposed to join; a prayer which none refuse to present. The most pious and the most profane, find their hearts responding to the sentiment, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!"

This shews the secret homage which the world pays to religion. It is similar to that which infidelity

has often rendered to Christianity. The following incident will explain our meaning. An individual who had imbibed infidel sentiments received the intelligence that his daughter was at the point of death. She had been carefully instructed in the principles of the gospel by a pious mother. When the father appeared at the bed-side of his child, she thus addressed him: "Father, I am about to die; tell me, as you love me, which I know you do, shall I now believe in the principles which you have taught me, or in what my mother has taught me?" The question greatly confused him, as well it might. What father, though an infidel, could resist the impulses of natural affection, of conscience, and of truth, at such a moment. After waiting in silence for a short time, he burst into tears, and said, "Believe in what your mother has taught you." Such was the involuntary homage which infidelity ren-

dered to the glorious gospel of the Blessed God.

Now, it is much the same in reference to the desire expressed in the words before us. Men may hate religion, or they may be altogether unconcerned about it; yet the universal response which this wish meets with, shows what their inward feeling is after all. "It is vain to serve God," may be the language of their lips; but there is something within them, at the same time, which testifies that religion is of importance, if not while they live, at least when they come to die.

But what is there in the death of the righteous, that it should be thus coveted? In replying to this question, we cannot do better than conduct the reader to the chamber where the believer meets his fate. There is the death-bed of good old Jacob. Let us transport ourselves to the land of Egypt; let us go to that part of the country called

Goshen ; and, enquiring after Jacob's dwelling, let us enter in, and place ourselves beside his dying couch. Chequered had been the course of his pilgrimage. Not a few were the trials which had fallen to his lot. But if a considerable portion of his life had been stormy, at its close all was calm. There he is sitting upon his bed, leaning on his staff ; and giving vent to the emotions which filled his soul, he exclaims, " I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord." Death had no terrors to him. It was the angel of the covenant for which he had been longing, having arrived at length to convey him home. And having said this, he gathered up his feet into his bed, and expired.

There was David again. Having served his generation according to the will of God, the time is come for him to fall asleep, and be gathered to his fathers. But in his case also we have to say, " Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright ; for

the end of that man is peace." His once ruddy countenance is now covered with mortal paleness; but while the outward man is perishing, the inward man is renewed day by day. And though, in casting a wistful glance around his dwelling, he is reminded of many a mournful occurrence in the history of his family; yet, notwithstanding all, he could say, and it was the saying that closed his life and labours—with it the prayers of David the son of Jesse were ended, "Although my house be not so with God, yet hath He made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure, for this is all my salvation and all my desire." In life he had been enabled to say, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me;" and now, in his own happy experience, his own words were verified.

Is it any wonder then that even the ungodly should become apparently

devout, for a moment at least, while contemplating such scenes as these, and exclaim, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" O reader, be anxious to live his life ; a life of faith on the Son of God ; a life of devotedness to His glory ; and then thou mayest cherish the cheering hope that thou shalt die his death.

31st DAY.

“And lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” Mat. xxviii. 20.

Last Sayings of the Saviour. THESE are some of the Saviour uttered before He ascended to His last words which the glory. To all His sayings there belongs a special interest; but this is particularly the case with His last sayings. There are several aspects in which those sayings may be regarded, each of which is worthy of our attentive consideration. In the first place, there were the last words of His public ministry. He went about preaching the gospel of the kingdom, His doctrine dropping as the rain, and distilling as the early dew. But His ministry was only continued for a short period; the time came for Him to address the people for the last time; and it is probable that the following were the words in which He did so: “O

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee ; how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not ! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate : and verily I say unto you, ye shall not see me henceforth (implying that this was their last opportunity,) until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

But He frequently addressed His disciples after this. He had now more time to devote to them, in order to prepare their minds for His departure, and to console them under the loss they were about to sustain. Many sweet seasons were thus spent, especially that in the upper chamber, where He freely disclosed His thoughts and feelings, and instructed them in strains of melting tenderness and love. But the hour of His departure being at hand, these

hallowed exercises had to come to a close, and His concluding exhortation was, "These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace: in the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." An occasional remark was made, it is true, on the way to Gethsemane, and even in the garden a few sentences were uttered; but what may be termed His more formal and connected addresses terminated with these sweet and soothing words.

And whither are we now led? It is to "the place which is called Calvary." The tragedy is about to close, and the curtain to fall. But ere He dies, those lips into which such matchless grace was poured, are again opened. Let us stand by His cross, in order to catch His dying accents. He spoke while suspended on the accursed tree no less than seven times, but His last words were, "Father,

into Thy hands I commend My spirit:" and having said this, He gave up the ghost.

Here, under ordinary circumstances, we should have to take our final leave, and bid our last adieu. But His name is called Wonderful; and as His name is, so is He. Death has triumphed, but the triumph is only temporary. Jesus revives again, and is declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. But though He has again appeared on earth, it is but for a little while. He is to be taken up to heaven, where He is to sit in royal state, in supreme power and glory, on the right hand of the Majesty on high. At length the appointed hour arrives. But before He steps into His chariot, He has something still to say; and this was one of His final utterances, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

Of the disciples it is stated, "And they remembered His words." O, how worthy of being remembered are they! His words of promise and of gracious invitation, of faithful counsel and solemn warning, how worthy are they of being kept in everlasting remembrance! May I be frequently engaged in recalling His words to mind, and pondering them, like Mary, in my heart. And while I meditate upon all He said, let me not forget His last sayings.

THE END.

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