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THE
CHRISTIANS
PATHWAY



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THE CHRISTIAN'S PATHWAY.

THE
Christian's Pathway;
OR,
UPWARD AND ONWARD.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"The Faithful Witness," "Footsteps of Jesus," etc.

"Hie thee on thy quiet way,
Patient watch the breaking dawn;
For the shadows flee away,
And the night will soon be gone."

London:
HAMILTON, ADAMS, & CO.
EDINBURGH: OLIVER & BOYD.
—
MDCCCLVIII.



INTRODUCTION.

EVERYTHING is important that has any tendency to contribute to the Christian's growth in grace. Afflictions are in themselves by no means desirable; "no chastening for the present time," the apostle states, "seemeth to be joyous, but grievous." As, however, in Sampson's riddle, "out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness," so from the most painful dispensations the happiest results have often issued. They have yielded "the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto those who have been exercised thereby."

The ordinances of God's house have been expressly appointed to promote the spiritual well-being of His people. They are for "the perfecting of the saints, and the edifying of the body of Christ." By waiting upon Him in the public means of grace,

their souls have often been quickened, and their strength renewed. They have thus found, in the language of the Psalmist, that "it has been good for them to draw near to God;" and with him they can also say, from happy experience,—“Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: he shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple ”

But those who are anxious to progress in the divine life, will not neglect the more private exercises of religion, without which those of the sanctuary will be in a great measure ineffectual. Prayer is the believer's vital breath; the scriptures are his spiritual food; and it is only as the study of their sacred truths is combined with fervent supplication for every promised grace, that his course will correspond with the beautiful representation, in which the path of the just is compared to the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

To aid the Christian in his secret devotions, is the object of this small volume. The writer humbly trusts that it will especially be of some service to him while engaged in the pleasing and important duty of meditating upon the divine testimonies. It is his sincere prayer that the perusal of these daily portions may be accompanied with a blessing from on high, so that, like the whole of the inspired volume from which they are taken, they might prove "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, and be thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

January, 1858.

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THE CHRISTIAN'S PATHWAY.

1ST DAY OF MONTH.

“Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward.”—Exodus xiv. 15.

The Important Command. To enter upon the way of life is one thing; to advance therein is quite another thing. It is to be feared that many are satisfied if they have some grounds for hoping that the good work has been commenced within them; but such need to be reminded that one of the most conclusive evidences of a change of heart, is an ardent desire after an increased measure of spiritual prosperity. No true Christian can be satisfied with his present attainments; his great concern will be to press onward toward the mark for the prize of his high calling in Christ Jesus.

If we would realize the true blessedness of a religious life, it is indispensable that we "go forward." The inhabitants of a certain country, we will suppose, are in a very woeful plight, suffering the greatest distress, and also exposed to the most imminent danger. They are told of another land in which, as soon as they stand upon its shores, they will be safe; and that if they only travel onward they will meet with the richest treasures, and an abundant supply of all that can minister to their happiness. They set out on their voyage thither, and at length they reach it in safety. But, after having just entered upon its borders, and feeling that they are now delivered from the dangers to which they had previously been exposed, they settle down, satisfied with their present lot, and feeling thankful for it. By remaining, however, where they are, instead of pushing their way into the heart of

the country, they continue to be strangers in a great measure to its teeming fertility.

So it is with many in reference to their spiritual interests. They have been brought to see the danger of the state of nature, and they have felt deeply concerned about being delivered from it. Another state, that of grace and salvation, has been set before them in the gospel, which they hope they have reached. But how many, having just reached it, remain towards its outskirts, almost entirely ignorant of what is to be found farther on. They do trust that they have passed the gulf of separation which divides the city of destruction from the haven of security and peace; but that is all: of the fatness of the land on which they have entered, little or nothing do they know.

How important then is the command, "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward." Such,

reader, is the word of exhortation we would now address to you. Go forward, and the prospect will brighten, the air will become more balmy, and the sky more clear and cloudless every step you take. Go forward, and the soil will become increasingly fertile ; instead of roaming amid sandy wastes and rocky passes, you will find green pastures in which you shall lie down, and still waters beside which you shall be led like the Psalmist of old. Go forward, and you will possess a land of wealth unknown, and you shall enjoy therein a goodly heritage indeed.

Whatever progress we have made in the divine life our duty is still to press onward. To the most advanced believer it can be said, "There remaineth very much land to be possessed." Let our motto, then, be, "Farther, farther yet," and may we only regard our past successes as incentives to renewed exertion.

2ND DAY.

"Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."

Is. xli. 10.

The Promised Presence. THE Divine presence is the believer's strength in weakness—his support in suffering—his consolation in the hour of death. The blessed assurance, "I am with thee," is sufficient to enliven every scene and sweeten every condition. Its realization opens springs of joy in the cheerless waste of this desert world; it dissipates the thickest darkness, soothes the anguish of the keenest affliction, and lightens the heaviest load of poverty and distress.

One of the last promises which the Saviour gave to His disciples was, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." He

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had just given them the great commission to go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature—an enterprise difficult and dangerous in the extreme. The whole world frowned upon them; they had to encounter the combined prejudices of the Jew and Greek, of the savage and civilized. But it soon became evident that greater was He that was with them, than all they that were against them. Through Him who had spoiled principalities and triumphed over them, they waxed valiant in fight, and went forth conquering and to conquer. O what a spirit did they manifest, and what wonders did they perform! All opposition they trampled under their feet. All secular power and policy they defeated. All the wit, and learning, and eloquence which stood in their way was baffled by them. In persecutions, and reproaches, and necessities, they took pleasure. To forsake and forfeit all

they had, they regarded as gain. To be in constant labour and travail was their ease. To incur disgrace was their highest glory. Prisons were converted by them into palaces in which they sang, even in the dead of night, the high praises of their God and Saviour. And whence this superiority to suffering? this moral elevation above all the ills of life? this triumphing in tribulation, and rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God? It was derived from the presence of their adorable Lord and Master. Having Him by their side they were strangers to fear, and they went forth, unarmed, unpatronized, to upset the kingdom of darkness, and subdue the world to the obedience of Christ.

And to all His people now, especially when they have any arduous duties to discharge, the same promise is given. When entering upon any responsible undertaking the believer, deeply conscious of his own incom-

petency, is often filled with trembling. But listen, Christian, to what the voice from the excellent glory proclaims—"Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." Should you not then "thank God, and take courage!"

3RD DAY.

"I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved."—Ps. xvi. 8.

Divine Recognition. IT is a very solemn and emphatic statement which is made by the apostle Paul, when he says in one of his epistles,—“Having no hope, and without God in the world.” This is the state not merely of those in Pagan lands, whose understanding is darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the blindness of their hearts, but of all the unregenerate without any exception of rank or character. There is an awful spirit of atheism pervading the minds of the great mass of mankind. Follow them wherever they go, and the conviction is forced upon every impartial observer that this is their true condition. Upon all their feelings and sentiments, all their purposes and pursuits, all their dealings in public,

and all their social intercourse in private, may be inscribed, "Without God in the world." They have no sense of the divine presence; no realizing impression of Him, in whom they live, and move, and have their being. They live as if they were indeed the inhabitants of a forsaken and fatherless world; as if it were the result of mere accident at first, and that whatever transpires, whether in the history of nations or individuals, had no other cause than that of blind, unaccountable chance. Were the wretched dogma of the atheist demonstrated to be true, they could hardly exclude all sense of Deity more completely from their minds than is done by them at present.

With the pious Psalmist it was quite the reverse. He realized the presence of God continually; he felt that He was ever near, encompassing his path and his lying down, and besetting him behind and before.

He endured, like Moses, as seeing Him who is invisible. If he looked up to the heavens, he saw Him there; if he surveyed the earth, he found Him there; if he retired into the secrecies of his own bosom, he felt Him there. God was emphatically in all his thoughts. And those thoughts were not a source of pain to him, but of the highest and purest pleasure. They were the congenial atmosphere of his spiritual being. They were the moral element which his soul inhaled, and by which he was invigorated, refreshed, and comforted.

Reader, dost thou know what it is to have an habitual sense of the presence of God? Is the desire of thy soul to His name, and to the remembrance of Him? Is it thy grief that thou art living so far from Him; that thou dost think so little of Him; and that thou hast no more to do with Him? O, be anxious to possess an abiding consciousness of the great

truth that the eye of God is ever upon thee. "Thou, God, seest me," was the solemn, yet sweet and supporting conviction of Hagar; and mayest thou realize the same devout feeling. Wherever thou art, and whatever thou art doing, set the Lord always before thee; and having Him at thy right hand, whatever difficulties and dangers may surround thy path, thou shalt not be moved.

4TH DAY.

"Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him.—Is. iij. 10.

The Voice from Heaven. THE human family is divided and sub-divided into a great variety of social and artificial distinctions. The various grades of which society is at present composed are, doubtless, necessary; it is evident that they are of divine appointment, and flow from the circumstances and relations in which mankind are now placed. But, in the sight of God, there are but two classes, into which the multifarious elements of universal humanity can be resolved. There are only the righteous and the wicked; those who serve God, and those who serve Him not. Concerning one of these classes the voice from heaven proclaims that it shall be well with them; while above the other it pronounces a solemn woe, and they are assured

that the reward of their hands shall be given them.

That it shall be well with the righteous appears from many considerations. He is reconciled to God, and has peace with Him, through our Lord Jesus Christ. In their natural state all men are God's enemies; the carnal mind is enmity against God; with such, therefore, it must be ill. What makes the condition of a wicked man to be so fearful is the solemn fact that God is against him; and what makes that of the righteous to be so blessed is that God is for him. "If God be for us, who can be against us." All the divine attributes are arrayed against the impenitent sinner, but when he becomes a saint, they all join to take his part. Such being the case, having the eternal Jehovah in all his boundless perfections on his side, it cannot be otherwise than well with him.

It shall be well with the righteous,

not merely in life, but in death. It is appointed, by the irrevocable decree of heaven, that all men must die. There is no discharge in that war, no release from that mortal struggle. Wealth has no bribe that death will receive; wisdom has no art by which it can be avoided; power has no defence, and even religion has no security from its stroke. Beauty has no charm to its eye; the voice of eloquence is lost to its ear. Here the mightiest conquerer is vanquished, and the proudest of monarchs finds himself a slave. From its ruthless grasp, no age, no condition can escape. Those who are in the bloom and freshness of youth cannot, for "man, at his best estate, is altogether vanity." The great and prosperous cannot, for "the rich man also died and was buried." The wicked cannot; he is driven, yea, dragged away in his wickedness; the most fearful of all deaths is his, that of dying in

his sins. Neither can the righteous escape; he must go the way of all the earth, and become a tenant of the silent grave.

But, at that solemn season, it shall be well with him. When the last sands of the numbered hour will be running out; when his earthly friends will be compelled to leave him; when the cold dews of death will be standing in large drops upon his pallid brow; when every nerve and vein may be racked and wrenched in fearful agonies by the irresistible power of the grim tyrant; even then it shall be well with him. The dying strife will soon be over, and through death's gloomy portals he will enter upon that blessed state where all is peace and assurance for ever.

O, my soul, seriously ask thyself the question, what is my spiritual state and character? Am I one of the righteous, who are reconciled to God by the death of His Son, and

who seek to walk before him in all well-pleasing? Do I know of the blessedness of the man whose transgressions are forgiven, and whose sins are covered?

“ If sin be pardoned, I'm secure,
 Death hath no sting beside ;
 The law gives sin its damning power,
 But Christ, my ransom, died.”

Very soon will the solemn summons be issued ; even now the Judge standeth at the door ; and when the midnight cry is heard, “ Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him,” shall I be found among those who are ready to enter into the marriage supper of the Lamb? Of one thing let us be well assured, that it is only as we are clothed in that righteousness which is unto all and upon all them that believe ; that it is only as we are covered with the wedding garment, that spotless, stainless, seamless robe, which alone can hide our spiritual deformity, that we shall be acknowledged as those.

who are worthy to have an inheritance among them that are sanctified.

Blessed Jesus! this is my petition and this is my request, that I may be found in Thee, not having mine own righteousness, which at best is only filthy rags. Make me righteous through Thy righteousness, and comely through Thy comeliness. Being found of Thee in peace, without spot and blameless, I shall be able to lift up my head amid the groans of dissolving nature, and, leaving a weltering world on fire, I shall mount aloft, shouting with all thy saints, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation."

5TH DAY.

“Which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”
Col. i. 27.

The Mystical Union. THE believer's present and everlasting well-being is secured in virtue of his union with the Lord Jesus. If Christ be in him, no evil can befall him; he can welcome the greatest sorrows and sufferings; he can triumph in tribulations, and rejoice in anticipation of the glory to be revealed. If Christ be in him, he can say to Satan, Do thy utmost; exert all thy hellish rage; I fear thee not. If Christ be in him, he can say to death, Come, thou messenger of my Father's love; thy stroke I cannot escape, but thy sting being extracted, why should I feel dismayed? If Christ be in him, all will be well, in sickness and in health, in prosperity and in adversity, in time and throughout eternity.

“My beloved is mine, and I am

his," is the language of the church in the book of Canticles. How great the blessedness involved in such an assurance! My beloved is mine—mine in the dignity of His person—in the suitability of His offices—in the immensity of His love—in the efficacy of His atonement—in the riches of His abounding grace. His righteousness is mine to justify me, His Spirit is mine to sanctify me, His power is mine to defend me, His wisdom is mine to guide me, and His heaven is mine to receive me.

And what does Christ say to the believer in return? In the language of the king of Israel to the king of Syria, he says, "I am thine, and all that I have." I have riches boundless and unsearchable, and those riches are for thee. I have happiness to bestow, such as the mind in its largest grasp has never been able to conceive, and that happiness is for thee. I have crowns and sceptres at my disposal, and all those dig-

nities are for thee. Yea, "to him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on *my* throne, even as I also overcame, and am sat down with my Father in his throne."

The Christian's exaltation and bliss is a matter of no doubtful disputation. And what makes it so certain? It is the blessed truth that the union which subsists between him and the Great Head is an indissoluble union. All other connections, however close and endearing, can be broken. That of husband and wife, and soul and body, has no power to resist the assault of the great destroyer. But hear what the voice from heaven proclaims: "Blessed are the dead which die *in* the Lord;" not merely did they live in Him, but they die in Him; the union remains undisturbed.

When writing to a friend it is a common custom to close with the words "Yours till death," for all earthly ties must then be severed.

But death, which breaks every other bond, only strengthens the one of which we are speaking. Death, which quenches every other love, kindles that of the believer into a purer and intenser flame. Death, which snatches every other object from our grasp, brings us to the full enjoyment of Him, who is the fountain of life, the great centre and source of all being and of all blessedness.

Christian, rejoice in this union. The changes of time cannot touch it; the storms of life cannot injure it; the sword of persecution cannot sever it; the damps of death cannot affect it; the malice of hell cannot move it. It is an union, that will last for ever. It follows, therefore, that thou, if a partaker of it, wilt be rich for ever, safe for ever, dignified for ever, and blessed for ever.

6TH DAY,

“ Lord, what wilt thou have me to do ? ”

Acts ix. 6.

Serving the Lord. To prove the sincerity of our love to the Lord Jesus is something vitally important. Such as we are as regards our feelings towards Him, that we are as to our acceptance at the high court of heaven. Without love to Christ we cannot be the friends of Christ ; and if we are not His friends we are enemies to Him by wicked works, and the day is coming when it will be said in a voice louder than ten thousand thunders, “ Those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither, and slay them before me.”

It is by obedience to His commands, and a spirit of consecration to His service, that we are to shew that we are His true friends and followers. “ If ye love me, keep my commandments.” In reference to all He commands, we should seek to

possess a spirit of cheerful, unreserved, and universal compliance. When He calls, our language should be, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." Should He bid us depart, even to earth's remotest bounds, this should be our instant reply, "Here am I; send me." Were He even to demand our lives as an offering; if He required our heart's blood to be poured as a libation at His feet; we should strive to say, with His servant of old, "Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all." Such, doubtless, will true love to Christ ever be in its tendency; and, sustained by all-sufficient grace, such it will be, if necessary, in actual operation. It will make us to be martyrs in spirit, if we are not called upon to be martyrs in real fact.

"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."

In general, however, the Saviour's requirements are not difficult to be complied with; and without being either missionaries or martyrs, we may promote His cause, and glorify His adorable name. We can serve the Lord Christ without moving in an extensive sphere, or occupying any prominent and public position. What we need is a spirit that will lead us to devote ourselves to His service, according to the opportunities we enjoy. All can do something, even the poorest and youngest. It often happens that the power and influence of many are very great, when they appear to have little, or none at all. "That child," said Pericles, pointing to his boy at play, "rules the world; and," he added, "I will tell you how: he rules his mother; his mother rules me; I rule the Athenians; the Athenians rule Greece; and Greece rules the world." Such was the power, for good or for evil, which that little one possessed.

Yes, the feeblest and most insignificant can do something, more in general—far more than they themselves imagine.

But, whatever be the measure of our ability, it is certain that the Saviour deserves the utmost of our services. When we think of what He has done for us, and what we have done for Him, shame and confusion of face should be felt even by the most active and devoted. How appropriate is the enquiry, and how worthy of being seriously pondered,

“And is this all that ye can do,
For him that did so much for you?”

Who can think of the sacrifices He made, of the sufferings He endured, and of the cruel death which He died, without consecrating talents, opportunities, wealth, influence, all the faculties of our souls, and all the members of our bodies, to the service of Him who displayed love so amazing, so divine; love which originated the whole interposition

of mercy on our behalf ; love which still glows in His breast, uncooled by distance, and undiminished by the matchless splendours which now surround Him ; love, concerning which, when imagination is wearied, and all language is utterly exhausted, we can only say that it is, ancient as eternity, boundless as eternity, endless as eternity.

“ Eternity, too short to speak his praise,
Or fathom this profound of love to man ! ”

7TH DAY.

"And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him."—Gen. v. 24.

The Patriarch's Piety. THE general strain of the chapter in which these words are found, is calculated to fill the mind with mournful reflections. It contains a record of the antediluvian patriarchs; and although the period of their earthly existence was greatly protracted, we are here shown that they were a mortal race after all. The concluding statement in reference to each is, "And he died." They were, doubtless, men of note in their respective generations; but whatever the sphere in which they moved, and the stirring scenes through which they passed, yet all that is said of them is, that they lived so many years, begat sons and daughters, and then died. Their

biography is closed in succession with the same brief epitaph, "And he died." All their love and hatred, all their doings and sufferings, terminated there.

But while the mind is oppressed with emotions of sadness in perusing these annals of the early inhabitants of the world, we feel no little relief when we reach Enoch, of whom something truly refreshing is recorded. All is melancholy and monotonous in the previous accounts; but when the inspired historian comes down to him, for the first time, the dry uniformity of the narrative is broken, and a flood of glory is poured upon his memory, which has made it precious to the church of God in all ages.

"And Enoch walked with God!" What a beautiful representation! Seldom have words so brief embodied anything so important and comprehensive. The sacred writer might have enlarged upon the diversified particu-

lars of the patriarch's conduct. As a devoted biographer he might have told us of his various excellencies, whereby he shone so brilliantly in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. He might have told us of his abhorrence of all that was evil, and how his righteous soul was vexed from day to day with the filthy conversation of the ungodly. He might have told us how he soared above the world with all its vanities and pomps, and how he carried into all the engagements of life a spirit which seemed to breathe only of heaven. He might have told us how his own will was swallowed up in the divine will, and how entire was his consecration to the divine glory. In accurate detail, and in imposing array, he might thus have delineated the various features which characterised his memorable career. But, at whatever length he might have enlarged, could he in reality have said more than is contained in

the simple record before us. All the other particulars are clearly embraced in this one, comprehensive, emphatic, and most instructive saying.

By the course which this eminent saint pursued, he honoured God; and, according to his wonted method, God, in return, honoured him. He took him to Himself, not through the ordinary course of dissolution, but by a supernatural and glorious translation. And thou, reader, if thy present course is that of walking humbly with thy God, shalt not go unrewarded. He will receive thee to his own bosom, although not in the same manner; and thou shalt be numbered with Enoch and all the saints in glory everlasting. Let then the daily breathing of thy soul be,—

“O, for a closer walk with God,
A calm and heavenly frame;
A light to shine upon the road,
That leads me to the Lamb.”

8TH DAY.

Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."—Rom. v. 5.

*The
Comfort of
Love.*

THE various graces which dignify and adorn the Christian's character, are only so many modifications of his love to God. What is repentance, but love giving vent to its emotions in tears of godly sorrow. What is faith, but love receiving the testimony that God has given concerning His Son, and resting implicitly upon it for life and salvation. What is zeal, but the fire of love, the Christian being led, under the influence of redeeming love, to live no longer to himself, but to Him that died for him, and rose again. What is holiness, but love assimilating the whole character to the likeness of Him who is its great object. What is resignation, but love receiving the cup of sorrow from a Father's hand,

and saying in gentle accents, "Thy will be done." And so with all the other fruits of the Spirit; we behold in them a living embodiment of this crowning grace, and a practical manifestation of its diversified operations.

This love exists in very different degrees in the hearts of true Christians. In some it is full of life and vigour, while it is in a low and languishing condition in others. As regards the latter, how important is it that their love should be kindled afresh; for, if the preceding representations be correct, where love decays, it will affect the spiritual life in all its branches.

It is true that an apparent weakening of the mere feeling, or sensible enjoyment of love, is no decisive evidence of its actual decline. There is a distinction to be observed between the passion of love and the principle of love; and it is quite possible for the one to be strong and deep, while the other seems to be

somewhat faint and feeble. In proof of this a familiar illustration may be employed. Let us think of an affectionate father, who has to labour hard to gain a livelihood for his family. After he has finished his daily duties he returns home to his humble dwelling; his children gather around him, and their innocent prattle, and the many winning ways in which they court his smiles, call forth his tenderest affection. On the following morning he goes forth to his work, and bears cheerfully the heat and burden of the day; and why? It is that he might have wherewith to supply the wants of his wife and little ones. Now it is very probable that he did not feel his love operate during the labours of the day in so sensible a manner as he did the evening before. Having had many things to do, he may have passed several hours without once thinking of them: but this is no proof that he does not then love them; the

fact that for their sakes he willingly undergoes so much toil, evinces quite the contrary. And were he, even in the midst of his exertions, to hear of any injury being done to them, he would instantly feel emotions as strong, if not stronger, than ever.

Now so it may be with the child of God. There are times when he does not feel his love operating in so lively a manner as formerly; he has not that glow and fervour which he experienced at other seasons; but even then his love may have suffered no diminution. The passion may be less excited, but the principle may continue in all its vitality.

These remarks are not designed for the cold and carnal professor of religion, but for the encouragement of the feeble-minded, who are apt to suspect the genuineness of their piety, simply because their feelings are not always as animated as they would desire.

At the same time there is such a

thing as real declension in the Christian's love, and in all his other graces. The charge brought against the Ephesian believers is one, it is to be feared, that can be brought against many who bear the name of Christ in the present day,—“Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.” They had not openly turned their backs upon God and His cause; they had not, it may be, neglected His ordinances, or prophaned His courts by any outward improprieties; but His love in their hearts had greatly cooled, and they were now very different to what they once were.

Reader, has the love of God been shed abroad in thy heart? And if thou hast some grounds for concluding that such has been the case, it is most important for thee to ascertain whether it is now in a flourishing or decaying state. Be this thy frequent, fervent prayer,

Lord, increase my love ; may I be more firmly rooted and grounded therein from day to day ; and thus prepare me for that blessed world where all Thy people not merely see Thee as Thou art, but where they love Thee as they ought.

9TH DAY.

"God is our refuge and strength, a very
present help in trouble."

Ps. xlv. 1.

The WHILE God has promised
Present never to forsake His people,
Help. He has especially manifested
Himself to them in seasons
of distress. The sacred volume is full
of instances confirmatory of this en-
couraging truth. Take the case of
Paul, when he was summoned to
stand before Nero. That emperor,
it is well known, was a cruel, bloody
monster, and his palace was looked
upon by the people just as they
would have looked upon a leopard's
den. Before him, however, the
apostle was ordered to appear, and
he had to appear alone. He must
have had many friends in the im-
perial city ; but, if "a friend in need
is a friend indeed," their friendship,
when brought to the test, was found
sadly wanting. They probably ga-
thered around him when there was

no special danger to be apprehended; but now they thought it prudent not to identify themselves publicly with him and his cause. They were friends, unfortunately, of the swallow brood, who retire in the winter and return in the spring—a race which is yet by no means extinct. They were of that class whose appropriate emblem is the shadow on the sundial. When the sky is clear the shadow is there; but in the cloudy and dark day it disappears. But, if they proved faithless, there was One who continued true. He did not desert His faithful servant in the trying hour; and enjoying His presence, neither the ravening wolf on the throne, nor the thirsty bloodhounds around him, made the apostle for a single instant to falter or fear. “At my first answer no man stood with me, but all forsook me: I pray God it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me,

and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom."

In the experience also of the Old Testament saints we have innumerable examples of an equally striking nature. From such we may select the case of David on the occasion of the unnatural rebellion of Absalom. It was with him, then, in all respects, a most trying time. His own son had risen up against him; his chief counselor betrayed him; the hearts of thousands of his people were seduced from him. See him, not as when in the freshness and vigour of his early days, he encountered the lion and the bear; not as when he stood undismayed, although single and alone, before the uncircumcised Philistine, who had defied the armies of the living God: but behold him, old and grey-headed, the fire of his youth damped by the infirmities of ad-

vanced years. Under such circumstances, after being driven from his own palace, view him ascending the steeps of Olivet, with his head uncovered and his feet bare, weeping bitterly as he goes along. There he is, an exile in his own kingdom, wandering from place to place in imminent peril of his life. But, although troubled on every side, and deeply perplexed, yet he was not in despair. His enemies spoke against him, saying, "God hath forsaken him; persecute and take him, for there is none to deliver." But it was not so; he had an Almighty helper at hand, and hence he could say, "I am as a wonder unto many; but thou art my strong refuge." In his distress he called upon the name the Lord, who heard the voice of his supplication, and thus proved Himself to be a present help in time of need.

Reader, make Him thine only trust;
in all thy troubles repair to Him;

cast thine every burden, whether light or heavy, upon Him. His name is a strong tower; the righteous runneth there and is safe. And if thou wilt make the Most High thy habitation, and take shelter beneath the shadow of His wings, thou wilt be safe—safe now, and safe for ever.

10TH DAY.

"Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die; for I have not found thy works perfect before God."

Rev. iii. 2.

Spiritual Declension. THE personal religion of many, there is great reason to fear, is in a very feeble and languishing condition. It has lost much of its hold upon their hearts and consciences, as an elevating, purifying, and satisfying reality. How few there are who know what it is to delight in God, to rejoice in the dying love of Christ, and to exult in a clear and unclouded prospect of heaven. How little is there of spirituality of mind, of mortification of sin, of habitual watchfulness, and of wrestling prayer. There may be no gross or glaring immorality, but in the absence of what would be deemed publicly disgraceful in religious professors, there is, in instances not a few, a manifest

decline in vital and experimental godliness.

There is something exceedingly insidious pertaining to a state of spiritual declension; and hence it is no uncommon thing for those who are under its influence to be in a great measure unconscious of the fact. It is said of Ephraim, "Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not; yea, grey hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth it not." So it is, alas! with many a professor in the present day. Instead of his soul being in a vigorous and thriving state, there has been a woeful decline, yet he knoweth it not. Others know it; they cannot fail to observe what an altered man he is now when compared with what he was a few years ago. They clearly perceive that the world has been gaining the ascendancy over him; that the conversation and company of the people of God are now but little relished; and that he is far

less attentive to his religious duties than he was formerly. But while this is so palpable to others, it is, if not altogether, yet to a considerable extent, unknown to himself.

This may be accounted for by the fact, that declension generally comes on in a gradual manner. Had the person passed all at once into such a state, the transition would have been so great, that he could not fail to perceive it. But it stole over him imperceptibly, and thus he knew it not.

Another cause of this ignorance is the neglect of self-examination. There are very few who rigidly scrutinize their own hearts, and it is, therefore, no wonder that their piety should decline without their knowing it. It is with many in spiritual things, as it is with some in reference to their temporal affairs; they take it for granted that all is going on well. Many a tradesman, had he examined his books in time, might have been

preserved from bankruptcy; and many a spiritual bankruptcy might have been avoided had the secrecies of the inner man been thoroughly scrutinized, with a full determination to know how matters really were.

Reader, seek to know thyself, for all wisdom centres there. Be honest with thyself, and do not suffer plausible appearances to impose upon thee. Be continually jealous over thyself, and that with a godly jealousy. The fruits of self-confidence have been truly disastrous; while a becoming dread of self-deception has produced the happiest results. With the Royal Psalmist, then, let thy daily prayer be, "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."

11TH DAY.

“Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.”

2 Cor. v. 9.

The Great Concern. BEFORE we shall ardently desire, and strenuously seek any object, we must be brought to see its worth, and feel its importance; and what object can be compared with that after which the apostle aspires in these words? To be “accepted of Him,” was the one thing about which he was concerned, being fully convinced that without it all else would be in vain.

Reader, it will matter but little what you may possess, if you live and die destitute of this great blessing. Were you to attain everything that mankind regard as enviable; were all the treasures of the globe to be heaped upon you; were you endowed with all knowledge, so that the wisest sages should think it an honour to sit at your feet; were the most magnificent

titles to be conferred upon you, and your fame to ring to earth's remotest bounds; were you raised to the heights of universal empire, having all the nations of the world as your willing subjects; in a word, had you all that the most unbounded ambition in her loftiest flights and most extravagant wishes ever panted after, what would the whole be if, instead of being accepted of God, you were disowned and rejected by Him, and exposed to His everlasting displeasure!

But, enjoying His favour which is life, and His loving-kindness which is better than life, it matters but little whether we are rich or poor; whether the sun of prosperity shines, or the clouds of adversity lower; whether we are revelling in health, or stretched upon beds of languishing; whether we are toiling as slaves, or wearing crowns and diadems. After a few more rising and setting suns, it will not matter a

single straw what our earthly lot may have been. The only matter of importance will then be whether we have or have not been accepted of God.

This high privilege is now attainable. To be accepted of Him is not an impossibility. Every barrier which stood in the way has been removed. The ever-blessed Son of God assumed our nature, and was made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. He is the only medium of access to the Father, and all who are reconciled to Him are accepted in the Beloved, to the praise of the glory of His grace.

For the rebel angels no such way has been provided. No messenger of mercy has been commissioned to wing his way with an offered reconciliation to them. No multitude of the heavenly host ever burst in the brightness of their glory upon their dark and desolate abodes, chanting the glad anthem of peace and good-

will. That song was sung for us ; the peace was to be on earth, and the good-will unto the children of men. It was for us that Jesus suffered ; for us He languished, groaned, and died. "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."

Reader, we would have you to be intensely solicitous about securing the precious treasure of which we have been speaking. Let its importance on the one hand, and its attainableness on the other, stimulate and encourage you in its pursuit. It is placed within your reach ; it lies at your very door. O neglect, despise, refuse it not, lest you should be guilty of the infatuation of those who judge themselves unworthy of everlasting life ; an infatuation which will require eternity to comprehend, and eternity to deplore.

12TH DAY.

**"And truly our fellowship is with the Father,
and with his Son Jesus Christ."**

1 John i. 3.

Communion with God. It is said of Moses that "the Lord spake to him face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend." Now there is an important sense in which the words may be applied to every true believer. He is favoured with intimate and endearing intercourse with his Heavenly Father. View him on his bended knees, in the secrecy of his closet, having shut out the world for a while, with its manifold anxieties. How sweet the privilege he enjoys,—that of making all his requests known by prayer and supplication unto God. Is he conscious of his own weakness, of the temptations which surround him, and the many foes which beset him? His earnest cry is, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe." Well, God is there, being ever near to those who

call upon Him in truth, and says to him in return, "Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee, with the right hand of my righteousness." Does he feel sorely perplexed as to the course he should pursue, when conflicting claims are pressing upon him? He looks upward, and says in the language of the Psalmist, "Teach me thy way, O Lord; and lead me in a plain path because of mine enemies." And what saith the answer of God unto him? "I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go; I will guide thee with mine eye." "I will lead thee in paths that thou hast not known; I will make darkness light before thee, and crooked things straight; these things will I do unto thee, and not forsake thee." Is he oppressed under a deep sense of his exceeding sinfulness, his iniquities being set in fearful

array against him, staring him in the face, and covering him with shame and confusion? He knows, however, what it is to look to Him whom he has so often found to be gracious; he therefore prays, "Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities." And God remembers him with the favour which he bears to His people, and in the plenitude of His compassion He proclaims, "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." "I will be merciful to thine unrighteousness, and thy sins and thine iniquities will I remember no more." Sometimes the child of God is in great trouble concerning his temporal wants, his earthly prospects being dark and gloomy. But knowing that He who is the God of grace, is also the God of providence, he draws nigh to the divine footstool for himself and family, and he there cries, "Remember us, O God, for good;

oh! leave us not destitute." And He who hears the young ravens, hears him, and says to him, "Fear not, my poor child; no evil shall befall thee, and no plague shall come nigh thy dwelling: the young lions do lack, and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." Sometimes, looking forward to the future, he says, "Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth." And the voice from heaven proclaims, "Even to old age, I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made you, and will bear you, and will deliver you." And so with all his wants, and all his wishes. He draws nigh to God, and God draws nigh to him, and thus sweet intercourse is enjoyed between them.

There are some who are disposed to sneer at the idea of spiritual communion with God. But let them sneer as they may; let them regard

it, if they are so disposed, as a dream of enthusiasm; the believer, however, is not to be laughed out of his enjoyments. Fellowship with God is a privilege with which he would not part for ten thousand worlds. Of all precious things, it is to him the most precious. He regards it as the dawn of eternal day, and feels it to be glory begun below. It is to him like the grapes of Eschol which were brought down to the wilderness; it is a draught from those crystal streams which make glad the city of the Most High; it is a flower plucked from the amaranthine bowers of the Paradise above. It is, in a word, the prelude and pledge of the fulness of joy which is at God's right hand, and in which consists the very essence of that transporting bliss which will be realized by saints and angels for ever and ever. And while he gazes upon the toilsome pursuits of men with the things which perish in their using, his language is—

“ Let others stretch their arms like seas,
And grasp in all the shore;
Grant me the visits of thy grace,
And I desire no more.”

Christian, is there any ambition in thy breast? Here is a noble field for its display. O how unspeakable the honour of holding familiar intercourse with the King of kings! And this honour hath, not the more favoured servants of God, but all the saints. This is the meat they have to eat, of which the world knows nothing. This is the joy they possess, with which a stranger cannot intermeddle. This is the honour they realize which cometh from God only. They may be poor and afflicted; they may be frowned upon by an ungrateful and ungodly world; but this makes amends for all,—“they have fellowship with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ.”

13TH DAY.

“But godliness with contentment is great gain.”—1 Tim. vi. 6.

The
Contented
Spirit.

REFERENCE is made in one of the epistles to “whatsoever things are lovely and of good report;” and among the several virtues which deserve to be thus characterized, that of Christian contentment can be particularly specified. The believer is frequently exhorted to cultivate such a feeling, and there are many considerations by which the duty may be enforced.

One thing is very evident, that there is no condition in the present world that is free from trouble. Let us pitch our tent wherever we may, we shall be sure to find something to annoy us. And if there is no situation without some inconvenience, had we not better make up our minds to be satisfied with that in which we are now placed?

We are too much in the habit of judging by outward appearances. Things are often very different in reality to what they appear to be. The sun appears to rise and set, but we know that it does neither the one nor the other. The earth appears as if it were a vast extended plain; and when we used to hear in our childhood that there were people who lived on the under-side of it, we were greatly amazed; but since then we have learnt that above and below are only relative terms, and the mystery concerning the persons at the antipodes, walking, as we imagined, with their feet upwards, does not puzzle us any longer. In winter, again, all the plants and flowers appear to be dead; experience, however, has taught us to think otherwise. Notwithstanding the dreariness which reigns on every hand, we look forward with confidence to the coming spring, and we expect to see animation where all

before was torpor, and life where every thing had borne the aspect of death. So wide is the difference between objects in their outward appearance, and what they are in reality.

As it is with things so it is also with persons. If we judge according to this rule, we shall be led to regard the most prosperous as the happiest individuals. But we are assured by universal experience that to be great is one thing, and that to be truly happy is altogether another thing. Under the glittering robes of the proudest aristocracies there are spirits pierced with anguish and wrung with grief. In splendid palaces there are not a few broken hearts to be found. To sit upon thrones may seem to be something very fascinating; but, as the poet remarks, "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown"—a truth which receives from every passing year fresh confirmation. Let us not then re-

gard those who occupy the high places of the earth with feelings of envy. Instead of envying them, it becomes us rather to pity them and pray for them.

Reader, learn to distinguish between things that differ; and be well assured that things as they appear outwardly, and as they are really, do often differ, and that very materially. Such knowledge will tend, under the divine blessing, to make you more contented with your present lot, notwithstanding its trials and privations. In being exposed to things that are grievous and hard to be borne, there is nothing singular; no strange thing is happening to us, but what is constantly realized by our brethren that are in the world. Let us lay aside, therefore, all murmurings and complainings, and ever remember that God's arrangements are the wisest and the best.

14TH DAY.

"She hath done what she could." Mark xiv. 8.

The Saviour's Commendation. THE female character is set forth in the word of God in a very pleasing light. Among those who were devoted to the Saviour during His sojourn upon earth, a prominent place is assigned to certain pious women. Who was it that ministered to Him of their substance? Who was it that sat at His feet, and received with eagerness the gracious words which fell from His lips? Who was it that washed His blessed feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of their head? Who was it that followed Him whithersoever he went, through evil and good report? Who was it that attended Him in His dying moments, when His disciples had forsaken Him and fled? Who was it that showed such anxious concern about His precious remains after He had bowed His

head and given up the ghost? These questions, to which only one reply can be given, reflect no little credit upon the softer sex, and the respect they paid to the Saviour should lead us to give due honour to them. Of woman it is said,—

“She ne’er with trait’rous kiss her Saviour stung,
Nor thrice denied him with a lying tongue :
She, when apostles shrank, could danger brave,
Last at his cross, and earliest at his grave.”

Of the many striking testimonies contained in the gospel narratives concerning females, that which is given of Mary in the words before us, is not the least interesting or instructive. It was not much that she could do, but she did what she could. She could not stem the prejudices of the people ; she could not silence the clamours of the priests ; she could not prevent the base treachery of Judas ; she could not rescue her Lord from the custody of the guards ; she could not protect Him from the cruelty of Herod ; she could not

save Him from the ignominy of the cross; she could not pull out one thorn from the crown which pierced His sacred brow; she could not remove nor lighten the load which sunk Him down to death. But what she could she did; she anointed His head with her costly ointment, and thus paid Him the highest tribute of her reverence and love.

We are to remember that it is not the absolute amount of what we do that God looks at, but rather its proportionate or relative amount. Solomon, for example, built a house for Him, which was the wonder of the world. Such was his offering to that great and glorious Being, whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain; an offering which casts that of Mary, when viewed in its intrinsic value, completely into the shade. She, again, with her precious odour, very costly as it is called, far outdid the poor widow, with her two mites, which made a farthing. But in God's

great register the three are set down at the same valuation. Solomon did what he could; Mary did what she could; the widow did what she could. To Him they were alike fragrant, and were equally accepted by Him. O let us aspire after the honour of doing in connection with the Saviour's cause what we can. The poorest among us can do that; the highest archangel that stands before the everlasting throne can do no more.

“If there be first a willing mind,” says the apostle, “it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.” O Lord, grant me that willing mind—a mind prepared to serve Thee to the utmost extent of my ability, limited though it be. Thou dost not despise the day of small things, but hast often employed the feeblest means and the most insignificant instruments for the accomplishment of Thy vast designs, that no flesh

should glory in Thy presence. Keep me from being an unprofitable servant; and, remembering that Thou art not a hard master, may I be stimulated and encouraged by the hope of hearing from Thy lips those gracious words, "Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of Thy Lord."

15TH DAY.

“For he is faithful that promised.”

Heb. x. 23.

The Faithful Promiser. THE faithfulness of God is a favourite theme with the inspired writers. No attribute of the divine character is more prominently set forth or more devoutly celebrated. Of this the glowing strains of the Royal Psalmist may be adduced as a specimen. “I will sing,” he says, “of the mercies of the Lord for ever; with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations.” “And the heavens shall praise thy wonders, O Lord: thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints.” “O Lord God of Hosts, who is a strong Lord like unto thee? or to thy faithfulness round about thee?” It was thus he ascribed faithfulness unto God; and by harping again and again upon the same string, he shews what sacred joy he realized in its contemplation.

Not merely are we furnished with general representations of this interesting subject, but we have innumerable instances set before us, which clearly confirm the above statements. In the history of the church from the earliest ages, what striking monuments of the divine faithfulness appear. There was Abraham, to whom God promised a child in his old age. His faith was severely tested by the mighty obstacles which stood in the way, and his patience also by the lengthened period which intervened between the prediction and its fulfilment; but at length the child of promise appeared. Think of the Israelites in Egypt. They were long there in a state of cruel bondage, but their deliverance at the appointed time took place. And so with their possession of the good land, of which God had said that He would give it to them. That there was a performance of all He had declared, the dying appeal of

Joshua to the assembled tribes most convincingly shews:—"And, behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof." Above all, there was the great crowning promise,—that of the coming of Christ. Prediction had been given after prediction, and prophets, and kings, and righteous men looked and longed from age to age for His appearing. But, although the promise tarried, yet it did not fail. In the fulness of time God sent forth His Son for the rescue of our lost and ruined race.

The works of God speak the same language in reference to this particular as His revealed word. Day and night in their orderly succession; the revolutions of the firmament, all

the stars and planets moving with undeviating uniformity in their appointed courses ; the seasons as they come and go, following each other as they have done even from the beginning of the creation—all bear testimony to God's faithfulness. Spring with its life and loveliness, the buds appearing on the leafless branches, the peeping plants and the blooming flowers ; and summer and autumn with their teeming abundance, the valleys covered with corn, the pastures with flocks, and the little hills rejoicing on every side—in most impressive language do they proclaim this blessed truth.

Rejoice, then, in the Lord, ye righteous, and give thanks at the remembrance of His faithfulness. Abundant grounds have you for placing unbounded confidence in Him. What He hath promised He is able to perform, and He will do for you exceeding abundantly above all you can ask or think. He may

lay affliction upon your loins; as a wise as well as a gracious Father, He may have to chastise you for your evil doings, visiting your transgressions with the rod, and your iniquities with stripes; but this is the sweet assurance he gives,—“Nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from them, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.”



16TH DAY.

“Can two walk together, except they be agreed.”—Amos iii, 3.

Harmony Restored. THERE are three expressions employed by the inspired writers concerning the Christian's walk in reference to God. Sometimes we read of walking *after* God, as in the prophecies of Hosea. “They shall walk,” it is said, “after the Lord.” This supposes God to be the leader of His people, and they follow Him, even as the sheep follow their shepherd. It also implies that He is their pattern, and that it is their duty to be imitators of Him, according to the injunction of the apostle,—“Be ye, therefore, followers of God, as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us.” Again, we read of walking *before* God. He is behind us to observe all our movements and watch all our ways. The command given to Abraham was,—

“I am the Almighty God, walk before me, and be thou perfect.” And the Psalmist, after acknowledging the obligations he was under to his great Benefactor for having delivered his soul from death, his eyes from tears, and his feet from falling, made this resolution,—“I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living.” But we also read of walking *with* God; it being said of one of the most eminent of the antediluvian saints,—“And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.” And Micah says,—“He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.”

It is evident that walking together pre-supposes a state of friendship. Where enmity exists between individuals there is an invincible barrier to everything like true fellowship. If persons under the influence of

hostile feelings are compelled to meet, it will be with reluctance; the hour that brings them into contact will be dreaded when distant, and hated when it comes, and the moment that terminates their intercourse will be hailed as the harbinger of delight. In such a case there cannot of necessity be that warm and welcome salutation which attends the meeting of those whose minds are cemented by affection and esteem; there will be the entire absence of that cordiality and confidence which a habit of free and friendly communion implies.

Now this state of feeling between man and man is a true parallel to that which exists between man and God. All men in their unregenerate condition are enemies to Him. There is in the human heart a natural repugnance to God—a repugnance which justifies to the very letter the strong language of the apostle,—“For the carnal mind is enmity

against God ; it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Now to have communion with God while such enmity lasts is altogether impossible. It must be not merely lessened, but abolished and destroyed. Not partially subdued, but uprooted and slain, before spiritual fellowship can be realized.

It is a blessed truth, that we, how sad soever our state is by nature, can be brought to enjoy the divine friendship and favour. The adorable Redeemer has been set forth as a propitiation, and through faith in His blood, God and man can once more become friends. There is no other way of reconciliation, nor has there been any other since the period when the fruit of the forbidden tree was plucked, which brought death and innumerable woes into our world. It is by the exercise of simple faith in the one Saviour, and the one sacrifice which He offered, that our guilty persons can be accepted and

our wicked hearts be renewed. Justified through His atoning merits and washed in His precious blood, we shall have peace with God, and be enabled to look up to Him as our Father and Friend.

O my soul, has thine enmity been slain? Canst thou be addressed as one with those to whom the apostle said,—“And you that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled?” O Lord, give me to feel that the quarrel has been made up; that the old dispute has been for ever settled; and may I walk henceforth in the light of Thy countenance. and rejoice in Thy name all my days.

17TH DAY.

"For he hath said I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."—Heb. xiii. 5.

The Cheering Assurance. ALL the promises of God are faithful and true, and have never been forfeited yet. They are called precious promises, and while there are many particulars which render them such, their absolute certainty is one of the chief.

For *He* hath said—He who is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent; He with whom saying and doing, promising and performing, as far as sureness is concerned, are one and the same. Man, weak, fickle, faithless man, may deceive us; but if we make the Great Unchangeable our trust, disappointment is a thing altogether impossible.

But what hath He said? "I will never leave Thee, nor forsake Thee." The believer is thus assured that God

will be with him at all times, and under all circumstances, and that he will especially be with him in every time of need. His presence shall go with him when he is called to the performance of any arduous duties; it shall go with him when he has to pass through the furnace of affliction; and, above all, it shall go with him when he has to enter the dark valley, and bid a final adieu to all things here below.

We might confidently conclude that God will be then with the Christian, even had no express intimation been given us on the subject. It is not likely that He who was with him during the whole of his voyage, to preserve him from the winds and waves, the rocks and quicksands, will forsake him when the vessel is entering the port. It is not likely that He who shielded him during the heat of the battle, will desert him when the victory is about to be won. It is not likely that He who was with

him through his wanderings in the desert, supplying all his wants, delivering him from all his enemies, and directing him during the entire course of his pilgrimage, will abandon him when he treads the verge of Jordan, and beholds beyond its foaming billows the brightness and the beauty of the promised land. The thing is not for a single moment to be supposed. His love and compassion, as well as His faithfulness and truth, forbid the entertainment of such a thought.

Reader, will you accompany us to the chamber where the Christian meets his fate. It is a favoured spot, being privileged beyond the common walks of life. Draw aside that curtain, and you see a countenance which, notwithstanding its paleness, is lighted up with joy and peace in believing. His friends are weeping around him, but he is calm and composed. And from whence does this arise? Is it from the softness of the

couch on which he languishes? Is it from the attentions and sympathies of surrounding friends? Is it from a retrospective survey of his past life? Is it from indulging a fond hope that health and strength may yet return? Not so. It arises from the presence of Him

“Who can make a dying bed
Feel soft as downy pillows are.”

This is the secret of his happy frame of mind—“For Thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.”

Vouchsafe, O, Lord, Thy gracious presence to me. May I feel that Thou art near, in health and in sickness, in affluence and in poverty, in life and in death. Having Thee, no one can pass my humble door and say—There dwells a friendless person. Having Thee, I have all—a sure defence, a constant guide, a never-failing portion. I shall then be able to take down my harp from the willows, and sing in joyful strains,—

**"In thy presence I am happy,
In thy presence I'm secure ;
In thy presence all afflictions
I can easily endure :
In thy presence I can conquer,
I can suffer, I can die ;
Far from thee, I faint and languish
O my Saviour, keep me nigh."**

18TH DAY.

“Call upon me in the day of trouble : I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.”—Ps. l. 15.

The Day of Trouble. WE are told that the word of the Lord is tried; and what is true of it as a whole, is especially true of this portion of it. It has been tested in thousands of instances, and in all cases the result has been alike satisfactory.

In the 107th Psalm we are furnished with several representations, which strikingly show how this promise has been fulfilled. We have, first, an account of a company of travellers in the desert, surrounded by a boundless expanse of burning sand. In the course of their wanderings they lose their way, and they roam to and fro in search of a place where they can encamp in safety. Their situation is most deplorable; they are on the point of perishing, and on the verge of

despair. But there is one alternative left them, and of that they wisely availed themselves; it is that of calling upon Him who has promised to be a very present help in time of need; and they did not call in vain. "They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses. And He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation." The second instance is that of a number of poor captives, who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and are bound with fetters of iron. In a condition so helpless what can they do? Even they can lift up their cries to Him, who hears the groanings of the prisoners, and who executeth judgment for the oppressed. This they did; they looked to heaven for help, and that help was not with-

held. "Therefore, he brought down their heart with labour; they fell down and there was none to help. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses. He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and brake their bands in sunder." We have a third instance in the case of certain afflicted ones, who were brought so low that they abhorred all manner of meat, and were nigh to the gates of death. They also do what the others did, and the result is still the same. "Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saveth them out of their distresses. He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions." And, finally, we have the poor mariners, when overtaken by a terrific storm. "They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in the great waters; these see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the

deep. For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. They mount up to the heaven; they go down again to the depths; their soul is melted, because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses. He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad, because they be quiet; so He bringeth them unto their desired haven. O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!"

We have thus, successive witnesses adduced for the purpose of shewing that the saying before us is "a faithful saying." "Call upon me in the day of trouble," is the command; "I will deliver thee," is the subjoined promise. But has it been

according to His word? Yes—is the instant and unfaltering reply of these various classes. He delivered us, when we called upon Him, is the language of the wanderers in the waste desert. He delivered us also, say the poor captives, liberated from their dismal dungeons. And the afflicted ones, raised from the borders of the grave, and the hardy sons of the ocean, rescued from the yawning billows, add likewise that He heard their cry, and came to their timely succour.

And with Him whom they sought, there is no variableness, nor shadow of turning. He is still the same, with His ear as ready to hear, and His arm as powerful to deliver. Not merely was He formerly, but He is still near to all who call upon Him in truth. Reader, invoke His aid; cry unto Him, even from the lowest depths in which thou mayest be plunged; and be fully assured that “He never said to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain.”

19TH DAY

"All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth, unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies."—Ps. xxv. 10.

Light out of Darkness. To many of the Lord's dispensations much that is deeply mysterious appertains. His way is often in the sea and His path in the great waters, and His footsteps are not known. But, although clouds and darkness are round about Him, righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne. He doeth all things well—a consideration which should make us fully satisfied with His arrangements, however intricate and untoward they may now appear; and if we only wait patiently for Him, He will, in His own good time, bring us to see that they all work together for the present and everlasting well-being of His people.

How wonderful were the divine

dealings as they are set forth in the history of Joseph. He was hated by his brethren; he was sold to mercenary men; he was taken to a distant and friendless land; he was calumniated by a shameless and chasteless woman; and at length he was incarcerated in a gloomy dungeon. What must his feelings have been during his long confinement in prison? How often would he be likely to ask, Why were my brothers permitted to sell me to strangers, and thereby pierce with anguish a father's heart, and expel me from a fondly cherished home? Why was that vile woman permitted by her slanderous accusations to rob me of my character? Why was the butler, whose dream I so readily solved, unmindful to redeem his pledge? Many questions of this kind, we can easily suppose, would be likely to start up in his mind. How strange, how dark, would the ways of God appear to be! We have every

reason to believe that he submitted without murmuring to all that he had to endure ; but, undoubtedly, he knew not what to make of it, nor should we have known had we been in his situation. Let, however, a few years revolve, and the clouds are dispersed and the mystery is made known. Look at him as the second person in the whole land—as the monarch's distinguished favourite—as the appointed almoner of God's bounty to perishing thousands—and, especially, as the preserver and support of his aged and revered parent, who had received him as life from the dead : when he is thus viewed all the divine purposes are unfolded and made plain.

The language of Jacob was,—“ Me have ye bereaved of my children ; Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away : all these things are against me.” O mistaken saint ! instead of being against thee they are all, from first

to last, for thee ; and, old as thou art, thou shalt live to see that such is the case. See him settled in the land of Goshen, living in the enjoyment of peace and plenty, his last days being by far the happiest of his whole life. And if there was anything to mar his enjoyment it would be the recollection, not of the troubles through which he had passed, but the hard thoughts he may have entertained of that gracious Being who had overruled them all for bringing about so blissful a consummation.

And what effect, thou timid and troubled Christian, should the consideration of these things produce upon thee ? Should not fear be banished from thy mind ? Should not patience and submission be exercised ? Should not a feeling of simple, child-like confidence be cherished ? Should not a lively hope be indulged ? O never yield to despondency, even under the most

gloomy circumstances; but continue to trust in Him who can bring light out of darkness, and who has declared that what we know not now we shall know hereafter.

20TH DAY.

“So run, that ye may obtain.” 1 Cor. ix. 24.

The Heavenly Race. IN running the race that is set before us, it is not sufficient for us to make a good start; unless we hold on, in spite of every hindrance, all will be in vain. Who are they that will be saved? None but such as endure unto the end. Who are to receive the crown of life? None but those who are faithful unto death. Who will attain the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus? Only those who are pressing onward toward the mark, forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth, with quenchless ardour, unto the things which are before.

It is, alas! no uncommon thing for persons to run well for a time, and then to turn back to the beggarly elements of this world. Such there were formerly, and such there are

that the reward of their hands shall be given them.

That it shall be well with the righteous appears from many considerations. He is reconciled to God, and has peace with Him, through our Lord Jesus Christ. In their natural state all men are God's enemies; the carnal mind is enmity against God; with such, therefore, it must be ill. What makes the condition of a wicked man to be so fearful is the solemn fact that God is against him; and what makes that of the righteous to be so blessed is that God is for him. "If God be for us, who can be against us." All the divine attributes are arrayed against the impenitent sinner, but when he becomes a saint, they all join to take his part. Such being the case, having the eternal Jehovah in all his boundless perfections on his side, it cannot be otherwise than well with him.

It shall be well with the righteous,

not merely in life, but in death is appointed, by the irrevocable decree of heaven, that all must die. There is no discharge from war, no release from that struggle. Wealth has no triumph death will receive; wisdom no art by which it can be saved; power has no defence, and religion has no security from stroke. Beauty has no charm to the eye; the voice of eloquence to its ear. Here the conqueror is vanquished, the proudest of monarchs finds a slave. From its ruthless grasp no age, no condition can save. Those who are in the bloom of freshness of youth cannot, but at his best estate, is a vanity." The great and powerful cannot, for "the rich man and was buried." The weak cannot; he is driven, yea, drawn in his wickedness; the nature of all deaths is his, that of

still. "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." "All they that are in Asia," says the apostle, "be turned away from me." It appears that he had a high opinion of Demas at one period, for in the close of his epistle to the Colossians, he is ranked among the saints, and we find him sending his salutations to the distant brethren in the Lord. But before long, Paul had occasion to change his note, and with deep emotion, he says, "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved the present world."

The resolution of Peter, was, in itself, an admirable one,—“Though all should forsake thee, yet will not I.” Reader, make the same resolve, but not in the same spirit. Let it be thy firm determination, in reliance upon Him who giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might increaseth strength, to cleave to Christ with full purpose of heart.

Every encouragement hast thou to do so. That grace, which is all-sufficient, is promised; and having thy heart established therewith, thou hast nothing to fear. Looking unto Jesus, trusting in Him, and strengthened by Him, thou shalt reach the goal in safety.

Where are now the mighty cloud of witnesses? Where are the patriarchs, and prophets, and apostles? Where are those heroic spirits, "who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, waxed valiant in fight, and turned to flight the armies of the aliens?" Where are those faithful martyrs, "who had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonments, who were stoned, who were sawn asunder, who wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented?" Where are they now?

They are before the Throne, with crowns upon their heads, and waving palms in their hands, ascribing salvation to God and the Lamb. O think of that blessed band; and let the thought that they were sustained in the midst of all their struggles, and that their faith and patience have issued in so large a reward, impart both encouragement and stimulus to thee, to hold fast the beginning of thy confidence steadfast unto the end.

21ST DAY.

“For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace.”—Heb. xiii. 9.

The Heart Established. THE benefits which flow from the possession of this blessing are numerous and exceedingly important. It is only as our hearts are established with grace that we shall be preserved from departing from the living God; that we shall successfully resist the temptations of our spiritual adversaries; and, especially, that we shall be able to exercise a spirit of un murmuring submission under the afflictive dispensations of divine providence.

The inquiry of the prophet is,—“Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?” To complain, however, under what is trying and painful is what nature ever did, and is, doubtless, what it ever will do. How is it with nature under crosses? It is

like a goaded and wounded animal,—it skulks, and groans, and growls; but how is it with grace? She kisses the hand that is uplifted; the stroke she meekly and uncomplainingly receives, and says with him of old,—“It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good.” The language of nature is,—“This evil is from the Lord; why should I wait for him any longer?” But what is the language of grace? It is,—“Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?”—the evil referred to being not moral, but penal evil. The language of nature is that of Job's wife,—“Curse God, and die;” but what is the language of grace? It is that of the afflicted patriarch himself, when, with uplifted hands and eyes, he exclaimed, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.” It is quite certain that there can be no murmuring when grace is in lively operation. If it cannot do as Job

did, saying, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord:" it will do as Aaron did, of whom it is said, that "he held his peace." It will silently submit, if it cannot bless and adore.

But we cannot do better than point to the Great Head as an example of patience and suffering affliction. Never were there sorrows like unto His. But if His sufferings were great, He was full of grace, and it was not by measure that the Spirit, in His diversified gifts and graces, was given to Him. And how did that great grace operate under the extremity of grief which He bore in our stead? It was in a spirit of entire resignation to the divine will. Had He to endure the opposition of His enemies, and the fickleness of His friends? Had He to endure the malice of hell, and, especially, the dread indignation of heaven? But, in the midst of all, there was no murmuring. "When

he was reviled, he reviled not again : when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously."

Christian, are you for bearing your sufferings, as the Saviour bore His? If you are, seek that grace which, not only was strikingly exemplified by Him, but which also dwells in unbounded plenitude in Him. It hath pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell ; and happy are those who can say, "Of his fulness have we received, and grace for grace."

At an examination of the deaf and dumb, in one of those excellent institutions, where such of our afflicted fellow-creatures are taught, the following incident is recorded as having taken place. To one of the children, a gentleman present put the question, Who created the world? The little creature wrote in reply on his slate, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Who redeemed mankind? was the next

question ; and no sooner was it put than the answer was given,—“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” And who was it, was the third question, that made you deaf and dumb ? At this unexpected inquiry, the little one was deeply affected, and burst into a flood of tears ; but, after having in a measure recovered himself, he wrote with a trembling hand, “Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.” Dear boy ! he had learnt an important lesson,—and well would it be for you, reader, to learn the same ; so that under every affliction and distress, whether in mind, body, or estate, your language might be, “Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.” Possessing such a spirit, you will derive from the most painful dispensations those peaceable fruits which they were intended to produce, and God will be glorified thereby.

" They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance; in thy name shall they rejoice all the day; and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted." Ps. lxxxix. 15, 16.

Rejoicing in God. THE happiness of the believer consists in the enjoyment of God's approbation. In His favour is life, and in His frown is death. The one is realized in full perfection by the saints in heaven; the other in, perhaps, equal perfection by the lost in hell. The one are rejoicing under His smiles, and the other are withering under His frowns; and it is in this that their respective happiness and misery emphatically consist. But God is now angry with the wicked every day, and He is also pleased with His people, over whom He rejoices with joy, even as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride. Thus, while the smiles of God constitute the happiness of heaven, the believer, while walking in the light of His

countenance, has his heaven begun below. His joy is of the same nature, and emanates from the same source, as that of the perfected spirits above. Should we not be anxious, therefore, to partake of the Christian's joy? "There be many that say, Who will shew us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased."

Glad, indeed, may be he who is blessed with such a blessing. How reasonable is it that he should rejoice in the divine name, who possesses the divine favour. His outward circumstances may be any thing but prosperous; he may meet with numerous reverses, and be exposed to the greatest distress. But what says the prophet? "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall

yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

It is a common prejudice against religion that it is associated with gloom and sadness, and that its requirements are incompatible with happiness. Those who entertain such a view allow that it leads to heaven hereafter, but they regard it as being little better than penance here. They admit that it conducts its possessors to the realms of bliss, but it is by a way, they imagine, gloomy as the shadow of death. Some pious persons, by their austere spirit and mournful aspect, have, doubtless, helped to foster such an impression; but it is evident that the tendency of true religion is to make its subjects at once holy and happy. "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."

And what a ground for rejoicing is

furnished by the statement—"In thy righteousness shall they be exalted." This is the best robe in which returning prodigals are clad; it is the wedding garment which qualifies the believer for sitting down at the marriage supper of the Lamb; it is the fine linen, clean and white, which is the righteousness of saints. Clothed in this pure and spotless dress we shall be highly exalted—exalted from a state of alienation to be friends, yea, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ—exalted from the tribulations and frailties of time to the thrones and palaces of eternity. Such is the blessedness realized by, and such the glorious destiny in reserve for, all who know the joyful sound. O my soul, dost thou know it? Has the gospel come to thee, not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance? If so, thou mayest well rejoice, even with exceeding joy.

23RD DAY.

“And hath given us everlasting consolation
and good hope through grace.”

2 Thess. ii. 16.

The Sure Hope. THE Christian's hope well deserves the appellation given to it here. It rests upon a good foundation, being built, not on the shifting sand, but on the rock of ages. Oblest hope! a hope that is sure and steadfast. It cannot be overthrown by all the malice of men, or all the rage of devils. The tempests of time cannot destroy it, neither can the waters of death quench it. It defies the war of elements, triumphs amid the wreck of matter, and smiles at the crash of worlds. Its most glorious anticipations will be realized on that great day, when the hope of the wicked will be extinguished in the blackness of darkness for ever.

“And hope,” says the apostle, “maketh not ashamed;” but it is

only to this good hope that the words will apply. Those who possess it will not be ashamed nor confounded world without end. Men may raise expectations which will never be accomplished; but "God is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent." How decisive are the declarations of His word as to the absolute certainty of those things which He has promised to His people. "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began." "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." Having such assurances, our language may well be, It is enough. How clearly do they shew that the expectation of

the righteous shall not be cut off, and that his hope will never be as the giving up of the ghost.

Reader, it becomes thee to look well to the nature and grounds of thy hope. For it to disappoint thee at last will be sad indeed. We ask then,—

“What is thy hope? Will it stand the test

Of nature's expiring hour?

Like armour of proof, will it shield thy breast,

Against the grim tyrant's power?

Will it gladden thy soul, and dispel the gloom,

The horrors of darkness that veil the tomb,

When the damps of death to thy brow shall start,

And the life-blood ebbs from thy freezing heart?

Away with it else!—it is worse than vain

To cherish a hope that will fail thee then.

But hope thou in Christ! to a dying hour

This hope sweet assurance brings,

When worldly preferments, and wealth, and
power,

Shall all be forgotten things.

Yes, hope thou in Christ, though a feeble worm,

And thy soul shall be safe, and thy confidence
firm;

Thou shalt traverse in triumph the gloomy abyss,

Which divides the eternal world from this;

And consigning in hope thy frail flesh to the sod,

Thy soul shall ascend to thy Saviour and God.”

24TH DAY.

"That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ."

Eph. i. 12.

Trusting in Christ. TRUSTING in Christ is, in the most emphatic sense, one of "the things which accompany salvation." All who are strangers to it have no part or lot in those spiritual blessings which are in Him. How important is it, then, that we should have proper views of its nature; for to err in reference to such a subject cannot fail to affect our eternal safety.

Our trust in Christ, in order to be availing, must be *exclusive*. Of this many appear to be ignorant, or unmindful, for they think it necessary to mix up some supposed worthiness of their own with His finished work. But this will never do. Like the feet in Nebuchadnezzar's image, partly of iron and partly of clay—such diverse ingredients, possessing no property of

coherence, cannot possibly stand. No, the word has gone forth and shall not return; the counsels of eternity have settled it, and every page of the inspired volume in the most explicit manner declares it—that “other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”

Let us see to it, then, as we value our soul's salvation, that Christ is our only trust. Merits of our own we have none. Of this the true believer is fully conscious, and hence his language is,—

“Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling;
Naked, come to thee for dress;
Helpless, look to thee for grace;
Guilty, to the fountain fly;
Wash me, Saviour, or I die.
Not the labour of my hands
Can fulfil thy law's demands;
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears for ever flow,
All for sin could not atone;
Thou must save, and thou alone.”

In the next place, our trust in

Christ must be *implicit*. This feature may be illustrated by a familiar comparison. A physician is sent for to visit a sick person, and after examining the case, he writes out a prescription. The patient, however, tells him that he will not take a single spoonful of the medicine unless he is informed of what it is composed, how the various ingredients are likely to act, and what effects they are intended to produce. If the explanations are satisfactory, and the course to be pursued meets his approbation, he promises to follow the advice given. The physician informs him that he is not accustomed to do anything of the kind, and that no reasonable man would expect it from him. I always take it for granted, he says, that I know what to prescribe for my patients better than they do themselves; and if you have no confidence in me, the sooner my visits are discontinued the better. Now

such language commends itself at once as just and appropriate ; for every person possessed of the least grain of common sense must acknowledge that to place implicit trust in his medical adviser, is one of the first duties which a patient owes to him. And what earthly physician's claim is demanded by Christ, the great Physician of souls. He requires of us to trust Him—to trust His skill, His wisdom, His power, His tenderness, His fidelity, and that with a full and unquestioning acquiescence. And what ample grounds have we for doing so !

We would further observe that our trust in Him should be *continuous*. An unspeakable importance belongs to what the apostle calls, "the beginning of our confidence ;" but such an act must be again and again repeated. The Christian's life is throughout a life of faith ; by whatever his pathway may be distinguished, this is one of its most

prominent features. And as trust is either an essential element of faith, or its inseparable adjunct, it follows that it is to be exercised during the believer's whole career. Through life and in death his language should be, "Into thy hands I commit my spirit, for thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth."

Happy is the man who thus trusts in Him ; he will not be ashamed nor confounded, world without end. Reader may His happiness be thine ; and rest not until thou canst say, "I know whom I have trusted, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

25TH DAY.

"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves."

2 Cor. xiii. 5.

The WE are frequently
Needful Duty. called upon to look
 backward—to look to
 the rock whence we were hewn, and
 the whole of the pit whence we
 were digged; and such a retrospect
 will be likely to fill us with deep
 humility on the one hand, and with
 fervent gratitude on the other. At
 other times we are exhorted to look
 forward; and in proportion as we
 are under the influence of that faith
 which is the substance of things
 hoped for, and the evidence of things
 not seen, we shall undoubtedly do
 so; it being the special province of
 that divine principle, not merely to
 make hidden objects visible, but to
 bring distant objects near. We are
 likewise often directed to look up-
 ward. Owing to our proneness to
 cleave to the dust, and to mind

earthly things, the voice from heaven proclaims in our ears, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above." But in the words before us we are commanded to look inward; it is an exhortation which calls upon us to turn our attention from all outward objects, in order to cultivate a closer acquaintance with ourselves.

In enforcing this duty two expressions are employed. The first is, "Examine yourselves;" let a diligent and impartial search be made into your spiritual state and character. But it is added, "Prove your own selves;" in allusion, probably, to the manner in which metals are tried for the purpose of ascertaining whether they are pure or alloyed. We, in like manner, should bring our motives, principles, tempers, language, actions to the test, that we may find out whether they are false or true, counterfeit or genuine.

The test by which we are to prove

ourselves is the word of God. This is one of the special purposes to which the scriptures should be applied. They have many other uses, all of which are of the most important kind. An excellent, but somewhat eccentric minister observed on one occasion in the application of his discourse, that his subject might be improved in four different ways. First, as a whetstone ; secondly, as a loadstone ; thirdly, as a milestone ; and fourthly, as a touchstone. And what he thus quaintly said of the special topic on which he had been insisting, can be applied to divine truth at large. It is a whetstone, sharpening our dulness, and giving a keener edge to all our feelings and exercises. It is a loadstone, drawing us from our distance from God, and attracting our desires and affections from the objects of time and sense to heaven and heavenly things. It is a milestone, not merely pointing out the way of life, but telling us of

the progress we have made in our journey ; whether we are advancing towards the shining city, or whether we are going backward, or standing still. And it is especially a touch-stone, evincing what we really are ; whether our coin is of celestial currency, or whether it can be said of us, "Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them."

Reader, dread above all things the thought of self-deception. For you to imagine that you are justified before God, and yet to remain under the condemning sentence of His righteous law ! To take it for granted that you are renewed by the washing of regeneration, and yet to have no part or lot in the matter, being still in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity ! To suppose that you are travelling to heaven, and yet to be approaching, day after day, nearer and nearer to hell ! May God, in His infinite mercy, preserve you from such a state !

26TH DAY.

"Without were fightings, within were fears."—2 Cor. vii. 5.

The Arduous Struggle. "If the righteous," says Peter, "scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" The words clearly shew that the Christian's pathway is beset with difficulties; and that it is not that easy work, which many seem to imagine, to get to heaven. How startling is the announcement—"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Christian, all the armed legions of hell are against thee; and if, with all their combined energies, they can keep thee out of heaven, out of heaven thou wilt assuredly be. No diligence will be wanting on their part to draw thee

astray, and prevent thee from ever reaching that blest abode. And wert thou properly to realize the solemn fact that such mighty and malicious foes surround thee, and that their sleepless aim and object is to effect thy destruction, it would be impossible for thee to be lukewarm or unconcerned.

And then there is the flesh, with its deceitful lusts, which war against the soul. There is the world also, with its pomps and pleasures, its smiles and frowns; a world which in various ways endeavours to win our affections, or by its cares to engross our thoughts. And saved we cannot be, unless we overcome the world, unless we crucify the flesh, and unless we resist and defeat the devil.

It is said in the book of Revelation, "And there appeared a great wonder in heaven." There will, doubtless, be innumerable wonders there. "I believe," says one, "that heaven will

be a place of eternal surprise." We may be quite certain that it contains countless objects which cannot fail to excite such a feeling. But, whatever its wonders may be, to see a sinner there will be, perhaps, the greatest of all. If we only think of the many storms he has to weather, the determined enemies he has to subdue, the many formidable oppositions and difficulties which he has to encounter; and he, in himself, weaker than the bruised reed, which the feeblest breath might destroy: it will verily be a marvellous thing to see such an one,—

"Safe landed on that peaceful shore,
Where pilgrims meet to part no more."

When the spirit of righteous Abel was admitted through the everlasting gates, it might with truth have been said, "There appeared a great wonder in heaven." And in reference to all who followed him—followed him in the conflict here, and in the triumphant entrance there—

the same words could be repeated. God grant that you, reader, may appear as an object of eternal wonder in that blessed world! But that cannot be unless you are made a monument of His wondrous grace on earth, being brought out of darkness into the marvellous light of the gospel. You will then be even now, as was the Psalmist, "a wonder unto many;" and especially will you be a wonder unto yourself. If you have any grounds to believe that such is the case, it is your reasonable service to magnify His adorable name, who is "glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders." All His works, which are great and marvellous, praise Him; but His saints, with all their powers of heart and tongue, should bless Him. Then,

"Give to our God immortal praise;
 Mercy and truth are all his ways:
 Wonders of grace to God belong,
 Repeat his mercies in your song."

27TH DAY.

"I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me."—Ps. cxix. 75.

Gracious Dealings. THE character of the Divine Being as "excellent in counsel, and wonderful in working," has been strikingly exemplified in His dealings with many of His suffering saints. Of this we have a memorable instance in the case of the patriarch Job. Great indeed were his reverses, and the previous state of prosperity which he enjoyed rendered them exceedingly difficult to be borne. And they all came upon him suddenly ; he was cast down in a single day from the summit of prosperity to the lowest depths of poverty and distress. His property was destroyed ; his children perished in the hour of carnal festivity ; his body was covered with a loathsome disease, which led his own friends to loathe and despise him. Some of his former companions went

to comfort him ; but, misunderstanding his case, they became his tormentors. His wife also, who, it might be supposed, as the only one left of his family, would afford him some comfort ; but she advised him to curse God and die. The favour of all around him he had once enjoyed ; nobles and princes maintained the most respectful silence in his presence ; when he passed along the streets the old and young stood up to testify their esteem ; when the ear heard and the eye saw him, they blessed him. But now contempt is poured upon him from every quarter ; the vilest persons scorn him ; they make him their song and by-word, and even spit upon him as he passes by. His friends and kinsfolk forget him, and his very servants no longer answer to his call. But, above all, the hand of God was upon him ; His power was crushing him, and His ears seemed closed to all his cries. Such was the state to which he was

reduced, notwithstanding his pre-eminent piety; for he is called perfect and upright, one that feared God and eschewed evil.

“Ye have heard,” says James, “of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.” In the season of his calamity he might have asked, and not without apparent reason, “Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more?” But to whatever doubts he may have given way, “the end of the Lord” showed that he was not forsaken, however sorely he was chastised. All that he passed through worked together for his good, and issued in a state of prosperity greater than that with which he was at first favoured; for “the Lord turned the captivity of Job, and his latter end was more than his beginning.”

Christian, cherish high thoughts of God in all His dealings towards

thee. Should thy trials be great, still hold fast thy confidence, and yield not to a complaining or desponding spirit. Remember that it is for the profit of His people that God afflicts them; and, however hard to be borne at the time, they have been brought to see at length that they had cause to reckon their severest sorrows as the chiefest of their mercies. They were thereby weaned from the world; their affections were more ardently fixed upon heavenly things; their souls were purified, even as gold in the fire; the preciousness of Christ was realized as it had never been before; and they were led to live, not merely nearer to him, but more entirely upon Him, and also much more *for* Him. May our afflictions produce such happy results; we shall then have abundant reason to bless God for His chastising hand.

28TH DAY.

"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly."—1 Thess. v. 23.

Growth in Grace. SANCTIFICATION differs from justification in many respects, especially in its progressive character. We are as fully justified the first moment we believe in Christ as we shall ever be; such is the perfection of the act that it will not receive any addition even in heaven. But with sanctification it is far otherwise. It has, it is true, a completeness of parts, for in all its subjects every fruit of the Spirit is found, and a principle of resistance to every evil is implanted. Still the work, even in the holiest saint in the present life, is defective; he has to mourn continually over the remains of indwelling corruption, and at times he exclaims in bitter anguish, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

It is, therefore, a blessed thing for

this sanctifying process to be carried on, and for all the powers of the mind to be brought more and more under its influence. Hence our daily prayer should be that the Lord would increase our faith, our love, our humility, our patience, and make us abound in all those fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ to the divine praise and glory.

Strange to say, some have denied the progressiveness of this important work. "We are told by certain persons," says Mr. Jay, "that there is no such thing as growth in grace. As if Christians could not be more wise, more humble, more patient, more zealous than they are. As if Paul's commendation of the Thesalonians was a falsehood, when he told them that their faith grew exceedingly, and the charity of every one of them towards each other abounded. As if Peter enjoined an absurdity, when he admonished believers to grow in grace, and in the

knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. As if God himself mocked or trifled, when he said, 'The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger.' " Let us, however, not merely believe the doctrine of progressive sanctification, but be anxious to realize it in our own experience. We shall thus be enabled practically to refute such an unscriptural notion.

O Lord, if the good work is commenced in my soul, carry it on by the effectual working of Thy blessed Spirit. Deliver me from the power and practice of every sin, and incline my heart more and more unto Thy testimonies. Enlighten my understanding; rectify my motives; elevate my desires; spiritualize my affections; and thus prepare me for that holy state where nothing that defileth can enter, and where all the pure in heart dwell for ever in Thy immediate presence.

29TH DAY.

"Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ."—Phil. i. 27.

Christian "By their fruits," says
Consistency. the Saviour, "ye shall know them." It is not by our profession, however blazing, nor by our zeal, however ardent, that we can evidence whose we are and whom we serve; but rather by abounding in whatsoever things are lovely and of good report. It is by an exhibition of the practical fruits of righteousness that we are to cause our light to shine before men, and glorify our Father which is in heaven.

There are many things connected with the Christian's pathway which the men of the world cannot comprehend. Of the high and hidden walks of spiritual experience they know nothing. What is said of the workings of the divine life in the soul is regarded by them as the vagaries of fanaticism. Its internal

principles, its constraining motives and impulses, its heavenly aspirations, its rapturous bliss and agonizing struggles, are things with which these strangers cannot intermeddle. But still there is much that they are able to understand. Whatever is consistent in character; whatever is honest and straightforward between man and man; whatever is kind and brotherly in behaviour; whatever is forbearing and forgiving under insults and injuries; not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise, blessing; such features, when unostentatiously exhibited, excite their attention, and, generally, call forth their praise. The manner in which the ordinary duties of life are discharged is something so tangible that it lies within the province of their own observation. These things they can understand; and it is of the highest importance that all who make a profession of religion should

be distinguished by such practical qualities as these.

What if a small band of men were placed in some locality, by whom the principles of the gospel were fully carried out; what a powerful effect, we may suppose, would their simple presence produce? Let them be connected with those around them by the ordinary engagements of life, but without employing any direct means to promulgate their views. There they are, pure, harmless, undefiled, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a sinful and perverse generation. Their hearts are filled, not merely with love to God, but with sincere and ardent affection for all by whom they are surrounded, whose welfare they seek to promote in every possible way. All the evil propensities of their nature are subdued; selfishness, pride, resentment, censoriousness, have no place among them; and their entire spirit and deport-

ment are influenced and controlled by those noble, and generous, and god-like sentiments and feelings which Christianity inculcates and inspires. The holy religion they profess would appear in its true character and beneficent tendency, and men would be constrained by the good works which they beheld, to glorify God in the day of visitation.

It was a favourite prayer of the excellent Mr. Berridge, that he might be conducted "safely and honourably through the world." Reader, let such be thy daily petition and request. Be willing to endure any privations rather than dishonour that blessed name by which thou art called, and thus give occasion to the enemy to blaspheme. And may the Lord strengthen thee with all might, according to His glorious power, that thou mayest walk worthy of Him unto all pleasing, and be fruitful in every good word and work.

30TH DAY.

“For our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.”—Phil. iii. 20.

The Glorious Appearing. THE people of God are frequently represented as looking for the Saviour's appearance. And when we think of the joys and honours which they will then realize, the wonder is that they do not long for that blessed hope with a far more intense and ardent longing. How transporting will be their bliss when, at the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, they shall meet their Lord in the air, to welcome Him as He descends with the streaming myriads of the angelic hosts, who swell the triumph of His train ! While all the tribes of the earth shall mourn, and smite their breasts, they will be enabled to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

It is true that the Redeemer has promised to appear to His people on

earth, and often have they gone forth to meet Him in the chambers of His ordinances. They have met Him in His house; and while feasting there upon His grace, their griefs have been forgotten, and their strength has been renewed. They have met Him at His table, while, at the breaking of the bread, He has manifested Himself to them as He does not unto the world. They have met Him at His footstool, and He has sweetly communed with them from the mercy seat. But in the great day it will be said, in another and far higher sense, "Behold the Bridegroom cometh; go ye forth to meet him." It will be to meet Him, not in the means of grace, but on the throne of His glory; to meet Him, not for a transient visit, but to dwell for ever in His immediate presence, to gaze upon His matchless beauties, and to join with saints and angels in chanting His praise.

Christian, will thy love to Christ

stand this test? Art thou looking and longing for His return. Art thou often asking, "Why is his chariot so long in coming?" O should such an event, so glorious in its nature, so blissful in its results, be unlonged for? Shall He be an unwelcome intruder when He comes? Such He will be to the world of the ungodly, the language of whose hearts is now, Delay Thy progress; roll back Thy chariot wheels; we need not Thee, for other matters occupy our thoughts, and engross our affections. But if such will not bid Him welcome when He comes, far otherwise ought it to be with us, who profess to be His followers and friends. Should not our whole lives be spent in anticipation of that great event? Should not our daily, hourly cry be, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

31st DAY.

"Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."—1 Peter i. 9.

The Blissful Consummation. MANY blessings are now possessed by the Christian; but salvation, in its full realization, is yet future. It embraces the whole of what God has in reserve for His people through eternity. Does heaven include the enjoyment of those pleasures, which no sin can pollute, which no sorrow can becloud, which no time can ever impair, which no change can affect, which no calamity can destroy? Does it include whatever the infinite love of God can prompt, whatever the infinite wisdom of God can devise, and whatever the infinite power of God can secure? Whatever it includes, is embodied in this expression. If only the salvation of our souls be secured, all the blessings of grace are ours here, and all the ineffable treasures of glory will be our heritage hereafter.

An aged saint was once asked by a Christian friend, "What are you now doing?" "Waiting, sir," was his reply. "And for what are you waiting?" "For the appearing of my Lord." "And what makes you long for His appearing?" "O, sir," did he say, his languid eyes brightening as he uttered the words, "I expect great things then!" Well might he have said so, and well may every true believer adopt the same language. He does expect, and he has ample grounds for expecting "great things then." But in the full and final salvation of our souls all those great things are embraced. It is nothing less than complete deliverance from the bondage of corruption; entire emancipation from the power of every foe; the body of sin and death for ever left behind; the good work, begun in the day of conviction, fully finished; every grace, however defective at present, grown to perfect maturity; all this, and unspeak-

ably more, is involved in that end of his faith, for which the child of God is encouraged to look forward.

“Better,” says the wise man, “is the end of a thing than the beginning.” To the commencement and subsequent progress of the Christian’s faith, no small importance appertains; but the end of his faith will be the best of all. Welcome shame and sorrow, if such an end shall at length be ours. The ungodly world may despise us; even our nearest friends may forsake us; yet we can well afford to bear their opposition without a single murmur, if we are only permitted to cherish the hope that our course will eventually terminate in so blissful a consummation.

THE END.





