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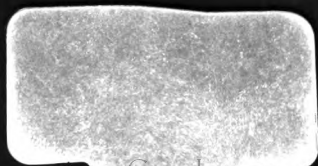
HEAVENLY ASPIRATIONS



OR
STREAMS FROM THE FOUNTAIN
OF LIFE



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HEAVENLY ASPIRATIONS

OR

STREAMS FROM THE FOUNTAIN OF LIFE

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"THE FAITHFUL WITNESS," "FOOTSTEPS OF JESUS"

ETC.

"A bleeding Saviour seen by faith,
A sense of pardoning love,
A hope that triumphs over death,
Give joys like those above."

GRIFFITH, FARRAN, OKEDEN & WELSH

SUCCESSORS TO NEWBERRY & HARRIS

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INTRODUCTION.

It is at once the Christian's duty and privilege to "draw water with joy out of the wells of salvation." Of those wells the chief is the word of God—all the truths and doctrines, all the promises and even precepts of which, are intended and adapted to minister the richest consolation. Those, therefore, who neglect, whether in a larger or lesser degree, that sacred treasure, are acting not merely in violation of the divine will, but in direct opposition to their own spiritual well-being. The soul cannot possibly be in a prosperous state when the inspired oracles are lightly esteemed; for the connection is of the closest kind between the two parts of the Psalmist's description of the godly, which embraces the character by which he is distinguished on the one hand, and the blessedness realized by him on the other. "But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

Neglected, however, in a great measure, these heavenly streams will be, unless a spiritual thirst is felt for them. In the case of the eminent saint above referred to, nothing appears with greater prominence than his ardent aspirations after the

INTRODUCTION.

living God, and the covenant blessings of his grace. He could say, "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee; my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is." And such feelings cannot be cherished in vain, nothing being more certain than that the desires of the righteous shall be granted. Hence it is said, "Let the heart of them rejoice that *seek* God;" the fact of their seeking being in itself conclusive proof that they shall find him, according to his own unfailing promise.

In the following pages the attention of the reader is directed from the broken cisterns of earthly comfort to the fountain of living waters: It is hoped that these meditations, however brief, embody truths which will be for the support and invigoration of those who are hungering and thirsting after righteousness; and thus prove to them as refreshing rills from that river which maketh glad the city of God. May their perusal be attended with the blessing of Him, without whom nothing is strong or holy, and who has often made use of the feeblest means for the accomplishment of his own mighty purposes, that no flesh should glory in his presence!

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HEAVENLY ASPIRATIONS.

1ST DAY OF MONTH

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit.”—Rom. viii. 1.

No Con- THE Christian is not
demnation. exempt from trouble, any
more than the children of
men at large. God had one Son without sin, but he never had one without suffering. He who loves his people with an everlasting love, and whose dealings towards them are dictated by infinite wisdom, has ordained that they must, through much tribulation, enter into the kingdom of heaven. But if they are not free from tribulation, they have the sweet assurance that there is

B

no condemnation ; an assurance which, if properly realized, will enable them not merely to submit without murmuring to the divine will, but lead them to triumph in afflictions and distresses, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

This blessed privilege is at present enjoyed by every true believer. "There is therefore *now* no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." They are honourably acquitted from every charge, on the ground of their interest in the great Surety, who died in their stead, and who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. Hence the exulting strains in which the apostle gives expression to his feelings, not merely on his own behalf, but in reference to the whole household of faith : "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect ? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth ? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

And as there is no condemnation to them now, neither will there be on the great day of final reckoning. That union, in virtue of which their acceptance with God was secured, is an indissoluble union. Whatever ties are severed by death, this will continue, notwithstanding all the power of the grim foe, undisturbed ; for the voice from heaven proclaims, "Blessed are the dead which die *in* the Lord ;" and the same voice assures us, that after the reign of death is over, "the dead *in* Christ will rise first " Thus, being in Him then as they are in Him now, they will at that solemn season be equally secure from the infliction of that dread penalty, which will be the portion of the impenitent and unbelieving.

It is a subject of debate whether the sins of believers will be made known on the day of judgment. We incline to the opinion that they will, as the word of God seems to be very decisive on the point. "For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every

one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, *whether it be good or bad.*" "For God shall bring every work into judgment, *with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.*" It is true that their offences are represented as being blotted out, as buried in the depths of the sea, and remembered no more for ever. But such expressions refer more especially to the guilt of sin, and to its deserved consequences. It is not to be supposed that God can literally forget the sins of his people, nor can we suppose that they will ever forget them. The songs of the redeemed, in which they join with such fervent gratitude and rapturous adoration, are founded upon, and inspired by, the remembrance of those numberless transgressions from which they were washed in the blood of the Lamb. "With respect," says John Newton, "to our sins being made known on the day of judgment, I acknowledge I could not now bear to have any of my fellow creatures made acquainted with

what passes in my heart for a single day; but I apprehend that this is a part and a proof of my depravity. But I believe that hereafter, when self will be entirely rooted out, and when my will shall be altogether swallowed up in the divine will, that I shall then feel no reluctance, supposing it for the manifestation of his glorious grace, that men, angels, and devils, should know the very worst of me."

If, however, the sins of God's people are to be then brought forward; if all the hidden depravities in which they indulged, and all the filthy pollutions in which they wallowed, in the days of their unregeneracy, are to be disclosed; together with all the iniquities they have committed since they have known the grace of God in truth—so that, as the result of such a display, "men, angels, and devils, are to know the very worst of them;" yet, whatever be the purpose for which they will be produced, it will not be to accuse or to condemn them. The assurance, "they shall not

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come into condemnation," embraces the transactions of that day when God will judge the secrets of men, and fix their irreversible destiny.

O my soul ! what is thy present state and character ? Art thou in Christ, savingly united to him, and placing all thy hopes upon him ? Is he, in his person and work, in the perfect obedience that he rendered, in the sacrificial death that he died, and in his ceaseless intercession within the veil, all thy salvation and all thy desire ? If so, thou canst anticipate with joy and confidence the great day of his appearing.

THE TRIUMPHANT CHALLENGE. 15

2ND DAY.

"If God be for us, who can be against us?"—Rom. viii. 31.

The Triumphant Challenge. MANY are the representations which are given of the awful state of the ungodly; but none are more truly appalling than the solemn statement that God is against him. Of one thing we may be fully assured, that while God is against us, it matters but little who may be for us. If you, reader, had all the powers and potencies of the world on your side: were you so highly favoured and so warmly beloved, that you had ten thousand admirers who were ready any instant to lay down their lives for your sake: were you the great idol of the whole intelligent universe, every creature from the meanest to the loftiest being prepared to take your part, little would it avail, after all, if God were against you.

What would their favour be when weighed against his frown ?

But let all true believers rejoice in the cheering thought, that God is not against them, but for them. He is so as their reconciled Father and Friend in Christ Jesus. Their carnal minds were enmity against God; the life which they led in the flesh was one of opposition to his blessed will, and of disregard for his high authority. While in such a state they were exposed to that fiery indignation which is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. But a change took place. Laying down the arms of rebellion, they became reconciled to Him by the death of his Son; and thus, instead of being a God against them, he became at once a God for them.

He is for His people as their unchanging and inexhaustible portion. "All that I have is thine," is the language in which he addresses the meanest believer. Viewing Him in all his adorable perfections—his omnipotent

power, his inscrutable wisdom, his immutable faithfulness, his matchless love; and viewing Him also in his boundless treasures, his unsearchable riches, his universal dominions—the righteous are enabled, with appropriating faith, with wondering awe, with melting gratitude, with adoring praise, to exclaim, “This God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death.” And in the hour of the last conflict, the departing saint, bereft of all earthly possessions, is still enabled with unfaltering tones to say, “The Lord is my portion, and therefore will I hope in him.” Or, if the tongue be no longer faithful to its office, the beaming eye and placid countenance will give expression to the same sentiment, declaring, in a manner the most impressive, “My heart and my flesh faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.”

This blessed Being is also for us, if we are his children, as our security and defence. “And how many,” said a

great General to his troops on one occasion, when they were dismayed by the number of their foes—"how many do you reckon me for?" The question inspired them at once with renewed confidence, and they marched forth to conflict and to victory. We have, in like manner, a battle to fight, yea, a crown of unfading glory to gain; and the powers with which we have to contend are truly formidable, both as regards number and might. But this is our consolation, that greater is He that is for us, than all they that are against us. "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge."

Thou fearful saint take, then, fresh courage. The high and lofty One says to thee, what David said to Abiathar when he fled to him in his distress, "Abide with me, for he that seeketh thy life seeketh my life; but with me thou shalt be in safe guard." Such being the case, lift up thy head, and lift up also thy voice; and let these be thy joyful strains:—

THE TRIUMPHANT CHALLENGE. 19

"He that hath made his refuge God,
Shall find a most secure abode :
Shall walk all day beneath his shade,
And there, at night, shall rest his head.

Then will I say, my God, thy power
Shall be my fortress and my tower ;
I, that am form'd of feeble dust,
Make thine almighty arm my trust.

Thrice happy man ! thy Maker's care
Shall keep thee from the fowler's snare ;
Satan, the fowler, who betrays
Unguarded souls a thousand ways.

If vapours, with malignant breath,
Rise thick, and scatter midnight death,
Israel is safe ; the poison'd air
Grows pure, if Israel's God be there."

3RD DAY.

"Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation;
and uphold me with thy free spirit."—
Ps. li. 12.

The Joys of Salvation. AMONG the many evidences of the perversity of our nature, one is that we do not duly prize our blessings until they are lost. Truly does the poet say—

"For so it falls out,
That what we have we prize not to the worth
While we enjoy'd it; but, being lack'd and lost,
Why then we rack the value; then we find
The virtue that possession would not shew us
While it was ours."

Of all earthly benefits the most inestimable is health; it is the salt that seasons, and the honey that sweetens, every other enjoyment. But when is its value properly appreciated? Not while the pulse is strong, the cheeks glowing with a ruddy hue, and the limbs full of vigour; but, when racked with pain, we are stretched upon beds

of languishing, and wearisome days and restless nights are appointed to us. When is the worth of a tender mother felt? Alas! not in general while she is spared to us. But let the cold clouds cover her, and her yearning heart cease to beat for our welfare, and we are brought to feel how much we owed to her constant care. It is then we appreciate her love as we never did before—a love which could be chilled by no ingratitude, weakened by no worthlessness, and daunted by no danger.

The Jews had at all times a strong attachment to Jerusalem; but it was when, as poor exiles in a strange land, far from the city of their fathers' sepulchres, that it assumed a glow of such intense fervour, which was never felt when the various tribes were permitted to go up unto the testimony of Israel, and to stand within her sacred gates. It was in their banishment that they preferred Jerusalem above their chief joy; it was then they took pleasure even in her stones, and favoured the

dust thereof. And so with the Christian in reference to the ordinances of God's house. When prevented by sickness, or situated where he cannot, as heretofore, join in the worship of the sanctuary, it is then he finds, by being deprived of his former privileges, how inadequately they were appreciated at the time they were possessed.

We have this truth still more emphatically confirmed in the spiritual experience of the believer. The light of God's reconciled countenance, the conscious enjoyment of his favour, is of all privileges the most precious. But when did the Psalmist fully estimate its blessedness? It was when his heavenly Father hid his face from him, and when the joy of his salvation was only remembered as something he had once felt, but to which he was now a stranger. He could say in the language of another afflicted saint, "Oh, that I knew where I might find him; that I might come even to his seat! I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth

with arguments. Behold, I go forward, but he is not there ; and backward, but I cannot perceive him : on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him ; he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him." And when, after days and nights of bitter weeping, after many sore conflicts, and many agonizing prayers, the thick clouds were dispersed, and the shadow of death was turned into a gladsome and serene morning ; he could not fail, as the result of such a transition, to rejoice in the treasure once lost, but now found, with a joy proportioned to the sadness with which he had before been oppressed. No language can describe the feelings of the soul which has long walked in darkness, when it is enabled to sing that blessed song—"O Lord ! I will praise thee : though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me."

Reader ! art thou walking in darkness, and having no light ? Art thou saying, in the bitterness of thy spirit, "O

that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me ; when his candle shined upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness?" Be persuaded to return to Him, who, though he cannot but shew his holy displeasure against sin, has nevertheless not forgotten to be gracious, nor shut up in anger his tender mercies. Approach his footstool ; besiege, with wrestling importunity, that throne to which the unworthiest are welcome, and there present the petitions of his mourning people of old, when they cried, "Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause thine anger towards us to cease. Wilt thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee ? Shew us thy mercy, O Lord, and grant us thy salvation. I will hear what God the Lord will speak : for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints ; but let them not turn again to folly."

4TH DAY.

"As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby."—
1 Peter ii. 2.

Spiritual Nourishment. THE word of God is the nutriment of the renewed soul. Whatever be the literal reference of the passage with which the Saviour confronted the great adversary, that "man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth from the mouth of God," it declares, in its accommodated signification, an important and most blessed truth. Not merely is the Lord Jesus the bread of life, typified by the manna of old, but the gracious words which he spake are words of life. They are the appointed means, in the hand of the Eternal Spirit, for begetting the divine life at first, and for its subsequent growth and invigoration. The word of God is profitable unto all things, embracing instruction, reproof,

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and consolation ; but in the whole of its functions it has constant reference to one object—that the man of God may be perfect, and be thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

But how much is this precious, life-giving word neglected ; not merely by the profane and careless multitude, but even by those who make a profession of the gospel ! The charge which God brought against his ancient people may, it is to be feared, be brought against many who are regarded as his people in the present day : “ Behold, the word of the Lord is unto them a reproach ; they have no delight in it.” Reader, how is it with thee ? If thy conscience testifies, and if thy conduct, by neglecting the perusal of its sacred pages, evinces that thou hast no delight in it, or at best but very little, then thou canst not fail to be barren and unfruitful, and realize a sad lack of spiritual health and of soul prosperity.

As it is with the written, so it is also with the preached word, and the whole

of the public means of grace. That his people might grow thereby, is one special end for which God appointed gospel ordinances. To the assembly of his saints He has always given the most distinguishing proofs of his favour. He loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob ; and it is there that he hath commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.

Many reasons may be assigned why, in general, so little benefit is derived through the services of the sanctuary. One is, doubtless, not being properly prepared for them beforehand. How important is it, more especially in reference to the Sabbath, that the mind, after being occupied with the perplexing cares of the week, should be purged from its earthly dross, ere it appears before God in Zion ! And in order to this, how necessary and desirable, when it can be done, that part of the preceding day should be specifically devoted to that object ! Such is the nature and constitution of the mind,

that it cannot enter in an instant from one diverse element to another. A certain space must of necessity intervene. We have seen the ocean in a storm, when, lashed by the howling tempest, the waters have been all agitation and commotion. After having spent its fury, we have seen the storm ceasing; but there is nothing like a perfect calm immediately after it ceases. It is not instantaneously that the billows settle down, and become smooth and placid as before. There is an interval between the one and the other which nature imperatively requires, whose transitions are seldom violent, but easy and gradual. And so with the mind. Pass at once from the noisy commotions of earth into the still, holy, peaceful, joyous calm of Sabbath solemnities, it cannot. Hence the importance of a brief season of rest before they are entered upon, a season to be employed in those exercises which will prepare the soul for the work before it. Were this more frequently done, we

should not hear so many complaints about ministers being as stars without light; the truths and doctrines they proclaim as breasts without milk; and all the ordinances as wells without water. On the contrary, the soul would lie down in green pastures, and the happy consequence would be advancement in the divine life, abounding joy, and eminent fruitfulness.

Be it thy great concern, O my soul! to realize these blessed results in thy own experience. Let thy delight be in the law of the Lord, that law which rejoices the heart, and in keeping of which there is great reward. While those who reject the counsel of God "shall be like the chaff which the wind driveth away;" he who receives it with meekness, and esteems it more than his necessary food, "shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

5TH DAY

"The salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory."—2 Tim. ii. 10.

The Divine Plan. AMONG the various designations given to the gospel, one is, "the word salvation," a designation than which none could be more appropriate. To reveal salvation is its great object; and were it not for its disclosures we should never have known that any provision was made for our spiritual necessities. Destitute of its light, truly wretched would have been our lot; enveloped in worse than Egyptian darkness, we should have to grope our way, even as the blind gropeth, and be compelled to wander, helpless and hopeless, all our days. There are things, it is true, which nature declares to us. "Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge." But in reference to the great question, "How can man be justified with God?" no-

thing does that speech enunciate, or that knowledge disclose. The volume of creation, when consulted on the subject of a remedy for sin, and a way of deliverance for the guilty, can only say, "It is not in me." But while the oracle of nature is dumb, or merely acknowledges its ignorance and inability, the gospel, like an angel of light, comes forward, and announces that He against whom we have rebelled is not only a just God, but also a Saviour; that while he is glorious in holiness, he is at the same time no less glorious in mercy and grace.

The gospel way of salvation is altogether peculiar, such as would never have entered into the thoughts of man or angel to conceive. Had any created intelligences—if we may be allowed such a supposition—been admitted into the secret councils of the Most High, and if liberty were given them to offer their suggestions as to the course to be pursued with our race, after our first parents fell, whatever plan they

might have recommended, we may be certain it would not have been that which is revealed in the volume of inspiration. Among the schemes which possessed some plausible features, the following might, perhaps, have been brought forward. First, that God by his mighty power should annihilate mankind, by reducing its progenitors into that nothingness whence they originally sprang, and thus prevent the further spread of that awful contamination, which was likely to extend from generation to generation, as long as the world endured. The next might be, that the divine law should be lowered in some of its claims, in order to make it more adapted to the imperfect condition in which such fallen creatures were now placed. In their state of primitive integrity, so lofty a standard might become them; but for the precepts of a perfect law to be rigidly enforced upon frail and fallible beings, could lead, it might be argued, not only to an occasional act of disobe-

dience, but to a course of constant, multiplied, and ever-abounding transgressions. Again—as involved in, and necessary to the carrying out of the former—it might be proposed that God should for once overlook the offence, and, in the exercise of his sovereign clemency, grant a free pardon to the guilty pair. Or, if that could not be, nothing might be supposed to remain but the dread alternative of allowing the threatened penalty to take its course, and for the whole human family to be consigned to endless perdition.

But let created wisdom stand aside, that the manifold and matchless wisdom of God may appear. He set his heart, not upon annihilating nor upon eternally punishing men, but upon saving them, even a great multitude which no arithmetic can number. And he found out a way for effecting that object, without lowering his law on the one hand, and without conniving at the dishonour it had received on the other. Had the loftiest principalities and powers been

asked how it was to be done, there would, doubtless, have been silence among them, a silence not like that of which we read in the book of Revelation, which was "for the space of half an hour," but to all eternity. It is well, however, that it was not left with them to solve the mighty problem, for the great Jehovah himself, having taken the matter into his own hands, first devised and then announced the wondrous plan. The substance of it is, that the everlasting Son was to become the sinner's substitute; that his sacred bosom was to be pierced by the sword of avenging justice; that he was to be bound, in order that the rebel might go free; that he should drink the cup of wrath to its deepest dregs, that myriads of hell-deserving wretches might drink of those rivers of pleasure which flow from the divine presence for evermore. Well may men and angels join in saying, "Who is like unto thee, O Lord! excellent in counsel, and wonderful in all thy works!"

To hear, however, of the gospel scheme is one thing; to be personal partakers of its blessings is another thing. If thou, reader, art one of those who are "saved of the Lord," thou mayest well rejoice. To all besides such a feeling is a forbidden, an unnatural, an outrageous thing. The joy of a maniac dancing in his chains; the joy of a criminal on his way to execution, is reasonable compared with that of the individual who has no part or lot in "the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory."

6TH DAY.

"Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."—1. Pet. i. 8.

Rejoicing in Christ. To have seen the Saviour in the days of his flesh must have been a great and precious privilege; and we cannot but envy the happy lot of those who beheld Him, as "the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." "It may often," says Foster, "have occurred to most persons to imagine what a signal advantage that must have been; especially in the point of feeling the affections irresistibly drawn and devoted to Him. To have been personally in the presence, the society of a being believed to be the Saviour of the world! To have reflected—Here, in this visible form, are embodied the mercy, the sanctity, the wisdom, and the power of heaven! To have looked

on his countenance to descry some mystic characters, intimating the indwelling glory! To have met the rays of divine benignity in his look, and have felt as if they shed light and life into the very soul! To have heard him pronounce revelations of truth which the reason of mortals could never reach, intermingled with every sign of gentleness, compassion, and yet authority! To have been present at many of his mighty operations of power and mercy; and especially to have witnessed the last affecting and amazing scenes of his presence on earth! The persuasion is that there must have been irresistible captivation; that every source of affection in the soul would have been opened, and the heart devoted to such an object for ever."

There can be no doubt that it is far easier to love a person whom we have frequently seen, and with whom we have been familiarly acquainted, than one of whom we have merely heard by the report of others. It is on this prin-

ciple that the apostle John declares, "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar ; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen ?" Visible objects invariably produce the liveliest impressions, and the actual sight of a friend cannot fail to affect the mind far more powerfully than the fullest intelligence that may be received concerning him. Now, the scattered tribes whom Peter addressed, laboured under this disadvantage. 'They had never gazed upon that blessed countenance which, although marred with grief, must have been pre-eminently fair ; they had never listened to those gracious accents which had been so often as oil upon the troubled waters ; they had never been permitted, like Thomas, to touch those lacerated wounds which the hands of cruel men had inflicted upon his sacred body. But, notwithstanding this, he was the object of their warmest affection, their hearts being attracted towards him as the chiefest

among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely.

The strength of their attachment is a clear indication of the power of their faith. It was not "seeing is believing" in their case; but they were under the predominating influence of that mighty principle, which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen. "Because thou hast seen me," was the language addressed to the doubting disciple, "thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." And this blessedness they enjoyed in their own happy experience. Manifold were their trials and temptations; they knew what it was to wander as exiles and outcasts, often doubtless the subjects of sore privations; they were regarded as the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things. But though poor, they were rich, though sorrowful they were always rejoicing. And as their faith and love were not of an ordinary kind, so their joy was no common joy: they rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

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Be it thine, O my soul, to aspire after their strong and lively faith, and after their deep and fervent love; then thou canst not fail to realize their unutterable consolation. True faith never fails to work by love; and in proportion to the growth of both these graces, will thy rejoicing be more abundant in Christ Jesus the Lord.

7TH DAY.

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not
all his benefits."—Psalms ciii. 2.

The Grateful Heart. A celebrated General, when some one offered to teach him the Art or Memory, said in reply, that he would much prefer being instructed in the art of forgetfulness. That the latter is, in some respects, a necessary and important attainment, there can be no doubt; and it is only as we are proficient therein, that we shall be able to exemplify the spirit of the gospel in reference to those who have injured us. God not merely forgives, but forgets; and we must do both if we would be followers of Him, as his spiritual offspring.

But while there are many things which we ought to bury in the depths of oblivion, there is much, on the other hand, that we ought to keep in perpetual remembrance. As far as the divine

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favours are concerned, the art of memory is one in which we cannot be too perfect; and whatever has any tendency to quicken the dormant energies of that faculty, has special claims upon our devout regards.

Reader! whatever thou forgettest, forget not God's innumerable benefits. His goodness and mercy have followed thee, like a constant stream, from the drawing of thy earliest breath until the present hour. By day and night, at home and abroad, in health and sickness, has He been mindful of thee. He has been better to thee than all thy fears, and far exceeded thine utmost expectations. And shall his ceaseless care, his precious gifts, his repeated interpositions, so seasonable and so marvellous, on thy behalf, be never called to mind? God forbid!

It is not, however, a mere formal remembrance that is required. In recounting "all His benefits," it should be done with suitable emotions. A deaf and dumb boy, being asked to de-

fine gratitude, wrote upon his slate, "It is the remembrance of the heart." Reader! may such a remembrance be thine; a remembrance, warm, deep, realizing; a remembrance enshrined in thy most hallowed feelings and affections. Be assured that the memory of the head is one thing, and that the memory of the heart is quite another thing; and that the former has no value, no glory, in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth.

Nothing less than this will influence our daily course and conduct. Having our hearts duly affected, we shall shew forth His praise, "who is of every gift the giver," and that not merely with our lips, but also in our lives. For, although, as one observes, "*thanksgiving* is good, yet *thanks-living* is far better."

O Lord! give me the eye which can see Thee in all; give me the hand which can serve Thee with all; and give me the heart which can bless Thee for all. Living daily upon Thee, make

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me increasingly anxious to live daily to Thee. It is my reasonable service in all things to give Thee thanks. For mercies temporal and spiritual, mercies ordinary and extraordinary, mercies personal and relative, I would laud and magnify thy sacred name. Thou hast declared, "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me; and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God." O receive now the feeble tribute which I lay upon thine altar; let it redound to the honour of thine infinite majesty; and accept the resolve that one day the sacrifice shall be less disproportioned to thy matchless claims. In the present state, compassed about with infirmity, what are my most ardent breathings, my highest and holiest desires!

"Weak is the effort of my heart,
And cold my warmest thought;
But when I see Thee as thou art,
I'll praise Thee as I ought."

8TH DAY.

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."—
Matt. xi. 28.

The Cheering Invitation. THE convinced sinner is the special character that is here addressed. Such an one feels his iniquities to be an intolerable load. He well knows what Bunyan meant when he represents Christian as bearing a heavy burden upon his back, a burden which he would have given the world to get removed. Now, a person in such a state of mind must suffer the most agonizing distress; no enjoyment, no satisfaction, no peace, can he find; in solitude and in society, at home and from home, it is all the same. What then can such a miserable creature do? Only one thing, to any real and saving purpose, even to apply to Him who uttered these tender and touching words—"Come unto me, all ye that

labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

On this assurance the fullest confidence may be placed. Of its graciousness there can be no doubt, and we need not hesitate in stating that it is as true as it is gracious. It is a faithful saying, and therefore worthy of the most cordial and unfaltering acceptance.

What is the title borne by Him who uttered the words? It is "the faithful and true witness." What is the character he sustains? It is that of absolute immutability. He is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever; and being thus always of one mind, being infinitely removed from all the frailty of men on the one hand, and all the fickleness of men on the other, there is abundant ground for reposing in him the most entire and unhesitating trust. "He is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent; hath he said, and shall he not do it? hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?"

Can Jesus give rest to the weary and heavy laden ? Let all who have experienced his love and grace, answer the question. Let her who washed his precious feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Let Saul of Tarsus, and the jailer of Philippi, and the thief on the cross, and the converts of Pentecost, and the scattered tribes from the regions of Pontus and Cappadocia, who, though they had never seen him, yet believing they rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Yea, let the ransomed myriads before the throne, who were once mourning here below, but who are now completely and eternally free from every sin and sorrow. They all found in Him what they failed to find elsewhere, even rest for their souls.

But thou, reader, in order to share in their blessedness, must make a personal application to this faithful and loving Saviour. To hear of an able physician, or simply to believe what is said concerning his skill, is not sufficient ; we

must apply to him in order to test his ability in curing our disease. To hear of a kind benefactor is not enough ; we must repair to his dwelling, and supplicate his bounties for ourselves. And so here. The Lord Jesus has rest to bestow ; the guilt which oppresses the conscience he can remove ; for our inward griefs and bitter moanings, he can give the joys of pardon and the garments of praise. But one thing is indispensable, we must obey his call ; and, falling on our bended knees at his footstool, we are earnestly to seek his promised blessing.

Go, then to Jesus, thou mourning penitent ! He calls upon thee, and gives thee every encouragement to do so. "Come unto me," was his language to every humbled and broken-hearted sinner he met with during his earthly sojourn ; and from yonder radiant throne on which he is now seated, surrounded by flaming seraphs, he still with ineffable tenderness, cries, "Come !" God grant that this may be thy response,

THE CHEERING INVITATION. 49

“Just as I am, without one plea
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidd’st me come to thee,
O Lamb of God, I come !

Just as I am, and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To Thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come !

Just as I am, though toss’d about
With many a conflict, many a doubt,
Fightings within and fears without,
O Lamb of God, I come !

Just as I am, thy love unknown
Has broken every barrier down ;
Now to be thine, yea, thine alone,
O Lamb of God, I come ! ”

9TH DAY.

O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days."—
Psalms xc. 14.

Satisfying To the people of God it has
ever been a congenial em-
Mercy. ployment to celebrate the
divine mercy. Of this glorious attribute they delight to sing; in it they place their hope, and for its full realization they look forward. All they have in hand, and all they have in hope, do they trace to this source. Are they saved? It is according to his mercy. Are they quickened? It is by Him who is rich in mercy. Their calling, their acceptance, their perseverance, all are not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.

When the exhortation is given, "Let Israel hope in the Lord," this is the encouragement adduced, "for with the Lord there is mercy." Precious assu-

rance! especially to those who are deeply conscious of their own exceeding unworthiness. And never was there a truth more abundantly established. It is confirmed by the gracious titles he bears, by the sweet promises he has given, and especially by the whole of his wondrous dealings with his people in every age. All the prayers he has answered, all the blessings he has bestowed, all the sins he has forgiven, how emphatically do they proclaim that with him there is mercy! And so with his forbearance towards the ungodly, that forbearance which they so ungratefully despise, it speaks the same language. But, above all, there is the unspeakable gift of his co-equal and co-eternal Son, who lived a life of constant reproach, and died a death of unparalleled agony, that an honourable channel might be opened through which the streams of mercy may flow to its guilty and miserable objects.

It is only when this mercy is enjoyed, and when His favour, which is life, is

realized, that the cravings of the soul will be satisfied. The constant cry of the children of men is, "O satisfy us!" but the appeal is addressed to objects which never have, and which never can bestow, such a favour. From one quarter after another, where the search has been made, a voice is heard, saying, "It is not in me." Wealth, power, learning, ambition, friendship, solitude, revelry, the language of each and all is; "It is not in me." The blessing sought for is not found; satisfaction, genuine and abiding, is as far off as ever. With whatever diligence the pursuit may be prosecuted, the result is always the same.

"And still they dream that they shall still succeed,
And still are disappointed."

Those then, and those only, are truly wise who, turning from the broken cisterns of earth, lift up their souls to Him who is the fountain of living waters, and present to him this appropriate prayer, "O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad

all our days." If thou, reader, hast obtained mercy ; if thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven ; if thou art delivered from the condemning sentence of a broken law ; and if the guilty person is accepted in the Beloved, thou mayest well rejoice, even with exceeding joy.

And, by the contemplation of the prospects which await thee, should the same effect be produced. In the abodes above, those sinless and sorrowless regions, there is reserved for thee what eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor mind ever imagined. Thus what thou hast in reversion, as well as in present possession, shews how loudly thou art called upon, as a partaker of saving, pardoning, satisfying mercy, to rejoice and be glad all thy days.

10TH DAY.

"O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"—Matt. xiv. 31.

Doubts SPIRITUAL joy, if possessed
Removed. at all, can only be realized
 in scanty measure by those
 who are the subjects of doubts and fears
 in reference to their own salvation.
 Various are the causes of those gloomy
 apprehensions by which many are op-
 pressed, and kept for a considerable
 time in bondage—a bondage not merely
 through the dread of death, but of some-
 thing far more fearful. Had they only
 a sweet consciousness that they possess-
 ed His favour which is life, and His
 loving-kindness which is better than
 life, even "the pains, and groans, and
 dying strife," would be deprived of all
 their terrors. Fully do they assent to
 the truth expressed by our British
 Psalmist—

"If sin be pardon'd, I'm secure;
 Death hath no sting beside:
 The law gives sin its damning power
 But Christ my ransom died."

There are not a few who doubt their state of acceptance with God, on account of their not having passed through what others endured in their religious experience. There are some who, when first awakened to a sense of their danger, have been seized with the most awful agonies. The thunders of Sinai have roared above their heads, and the lightnings have flashed in their eyes. The terrors of God have been set in array against them ; the arrows of the Almighty have stuck fast in them. They have been afraid of retiring to rest at night, lest they should lift up their eyes in hell before morning. The most trifling things have filled them with alarm ; the shaking of a leaf has startled them ; the shadow of their own thoughts has made them tremble ; and they have fancied that every sound they heard was a summons to call them to judgment.

It may, however, be confidently stated that such terrors are not essential prerequisites to a state of grace. A con-

siderable number of God's people have known nothing of them, at least nothing as to the degree adverted to. Such a path to glory should not be coveted by any, and we have no need to fear that we have mistaken the right road, merely because we have not witnessed these dreadful scenes on the way.

The same rule, in this as in many other matters, must not be laid down for all. We are not to measure the sorrow of one penitent, and make it a standard for the sorrow of another. It is not to be supposed that Samuel, whose very conception was an answer to prayer, and who was called to serve in the temple from his earliest years, should be the subject of such alarming convictions as Manasseh, who had been guilty of the most enormous crimes. It is not to be supposed that Lydia should be so overwhelmed with anguish, when "the Lord opened her heart to attend unto the things which were spoken of Paul," as the Philippian jailer, who came trembling, and fell

down before the servants of Christ, saying, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

Concerning the subject of conviction, such points as the following are really essential, and therefore to them should our attention be mainly directed. Has it been such as to bring us to feel our absolute need of an interest in the Saviour? Have we felt that we are sinners, guilty, polluted, hell-deserving? Have we been bought to regard sin as the abominable thing that God hates, and to abhor ourselves on account of it? Have we been led to cast away all excuses and palliations, and take the whole blame of our evil doings upon ourselves? Have we resolved in the strength of divine grace, and do we still resolve, to turn our backs upon the vain pleasures and frivolous pursuits of this present evil world? And is the desire of our souls identical with that of the royal Psalmist, who said, "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes! Then shall I not be ashamed

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when I have respect unto all thy commandments ? ” If so, there is nothing in the circumstance that our spiritual history has not been marked by the terrible pangs which some have suffered, that should cause us to doubt.

Yield not then, ye fearful ones, to gloomy apprehensions. Cease to write bitter things against yourselves ; but, on the contrary, “ thank God, and take courage.”

11TH DAY.

"And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."—Phil. ii. 8.

The Mystery of Godliness. THE incarnation of Christ is represented as "the great mystery of godliness," and cannot fail to call forth, if regarded with devout attention, our wonder, love, and praise. When our first parents took the fruit of the forbidden tree, the language of the triune Jehovah was, "Behold, the man is become as one of us;" but we can reverse the words, and say, Behold, God is become as one of us, having partaken of our nature, with all its wants and woes, sin only excepted. O mighty mystery! that He who was the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person; that He to whom all the powers and principalities of heaven owe their being and their blessedness; that He who had kindled every seraph's fire,

and arrayed with immortal youth and beauty every angel's form; that He should become as one of us—feeble and helpless, poor and oppressed, as one of us; in body and in mind, in appearance and in reality, as one of us.

Great would have been the condescension of Gabriel, or any of those bright sons of the morning who stand in the divine presence, were they to lay aside their glory, in order to assume the form of a fluttering insect or a creeping worm. Such a stoop would have been truly marvellous; but for God to become man is transcendentally more so. Between the meanest worm that crawls beneath our feet, and the loftiest archangel before the eternal throne, there is some proportion. Both are creatures, and both are finite, dependant creatures. But between God and man there is no proportion; a distance absolutely infinite is there, and ever must be, between them.

This, however, though truly overwhelming, was not all. To be “found in

fashion as a man," was only preliminary to a course, the contemplation of which fills heaven with amazement, and which will fill all eternity with praise. In describing his subsequent humiliation, the apostle traces it from one step to another; he divides it into separate sections, and follows the Redeemer downward from point to point until he reaches the bottom of the scale. Having first directed our thoughts to that state of ineffable glory in which he dwelt before time began, we are shown how that glory was laid aside for our sakes, and then the eye is detained in a prolonged gaze on his descending career; how he condescended to be born; how he submitted to all the conditions of our nature; how he took it upon him in its meanest form; how he yet further humbled himself, still passing from one depth of ignominy to a lower still, until at length he became obedient unto death, and that the most shameful and excruciating, even the death of the cross.

Blessed Jesus! let thy unparalleled

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condescension, thy matchless love, impress these cold hearts of ours. Thou humblest thyself that we might be exalted ; becamest poor that we might be made rich ; and didst die that we might live. For what thou hast done for us men and for our salvation, we would render to Thee, thou once crucified, but now enthroned Redeemer, all might and majesty, all glory and praise, for ever and ever !

12TH DAY.

"I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins."—
Isaiah xlv. 22.

The Striking Emblem. NOTHING can be more comforting than the assurance, that the God with whom we have to do is "merciful and gracious, long-suffering, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin." To Him belong mercies and forgivenesses, but to us shame and confusion of face, because we have rebelled against him. While our trespasses are multiplied, his acts of pardon are multiplied also.

As all the works of God are perfect, so, in the exercise of this high prerogative, he forgives fully and for ever. This is strikingly shewn by the various figures employed to represent his pardoning mercy. "I, even I, am he that *blotteth out* thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." Reference is here made to the custom of keeping accounts; for when

the debt is discharged it is crossed out of the book in which it was recorded. Now, speaking after the manner of men, God has his book in which our debts are all put down. Hence we read concerning the proceedings of the great day, not merely that the throne was set, but that the books were opened, and that the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. All our evil doings, from our earliest to our latest years, are registered in the book of God's remembrance; so that we can join in the language of our little ones,

"There's not a sin that we commit,
Nor wicked word we say,
But in thy dreadful book 'tis writ,
Against the judgment-day."

How cheering is it, then, to know that God has a way whereby the heavy score can be cancelled, and that in consequence no payment will be demanded on the one hand, nor punishment inflicted on the other!

But what we are specially adverting

to, is the completeness of God's pardon. The single act of crossing out a debt, crosses it out entirely. Whether it be large or small, whether a hundred pence, or ten thousand talents, does not matter ; one stroke of the pen secures a full discharge.

Still more striking is the comparison, "I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins." Nothing can more appropriately set forth the nature and effects of sin than a dark, lowering cloud, spreading itself over the heavens, obscuring the great orb of day, and covering nature with a mantle of gloom and mourning. So nothing can more beautifully represent the nature and effects of pardoning mercy, than the removal of such a cloud, leaving the sky all clear, and restoring cheerfulness over the fair face of creation. Thus does the displeasure of God pass away ; and the soul which had been full of darkness, it may be on the brink of despair, is enabled to rejoice in the light of his re-

conciled countenance, saying, "O Lord, I will praise thee ; though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me." But as the former figure shews how entirely the process is effected, so likewise does this. When the cloud passes by, not the slightest trace of it appears ; it has vanished as completely as if it had never been.

And while God fully forgives, we should also rejoice that he forgives freely. It is not his strange work, like that of judgment, but altogether congenial to his nature as a Being of unbounded compassion. Every obstacle having been removed by the obedience and sacrifice of the great Redeemer, He can now restore the vilest offenders to his favour, and bless them with the richest blessings of his love.

13TH DAY.

"I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save."—Is. lxiii. 1.

The Almighty Redeemer. THE power of Christ is a boundless and almighty power. He can do whatever he pleases; his own language being, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." If some persons could do as they pleased, how terrible would the consequences be! The earth would soon become one vast field of blood, and nothing but cruelty and oppression would prevail. There are those, it is to be feared, even in our own land, who, if they could carry out their wishes uncontrolled, would ere long deprive us of all the privileges, both civil and religious, that cost our forefathers such arduous struggles, and for which so many of them shed their blood. But the power of these enemies of truth and righteousness is happily restrained. "Hitherto shalt thou go, but no fur-

ther," is a mandate which embraces, not merely the raging of the sea, but the tumult and tyranny of the people. It is, however, a pleasing thought, that there is One whose might is unlimited, and that he is our loving Saviour and gracious Friend.

Reader ! think much of the ability he possesses: He is "mighty to save." None are placed beyond the reach of his omnipotent arm. None are dyed with such crimson hues of iniquity that his blood cannot cleanse. None are plunged into such awful depths that he cannot raise them up. "He is able to save to the uttermost." O what a source of joy, what a ground for confidence, what an antidote to despondency and despair have we in this blessed assurance ! To the uttermost—the uttermost degree of depravity ; the uttermost abyss of misery ; the uttermost limits of mortality, even as long as life's taper shall continue its feeblest glimmerings. It also includes the uttermost ages of time, for—

“Dear dying Lamb ! thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power.”

And the farthest verge of earth's remotest bounds is within the sphere of his saving energies. Precious words ! to the uttermost, yea, the very uttermost—and “who but a God can tell, how far the uttermost of a God can go !”

Some anxious and fearful one may, however, be ready to say, It is not the Saviour's power that I am disposed to question ; it is, rather, whether he is willing or not, that makes me doubt. But why, poor soul, should you feel any misgivings on that point ? When did he show any backwardness in bestowing his favours ? Not to the leper who applied to him, for no sooner did he cry, “Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean,” than he put forth his hand and touched him, saying, “I will ; be thou clean :” and immediately his leprosy was cleansed. Not to blind Bartimeus ; for did not his petition that he might receive his sight meet with the instant response, “Receive thy sight ; thy faith

hath saved thee." Not to the centurion, who besought him concerning his servant; for the cheering words which greeted his ears were, "I will come and heal him." Not to the woman of Canaan, although she was severely tested; for the trial ended with the assurance, "O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt." Not a single applicant did he ever send empty away. And if he was always so ready to cure the diseases of the body, can he be unwilling to heal the maladies of the soul!

Thou awakened and trembling sinner, doubt then no more. Doubt every thing; doubt all the established principles by which the universe is sustained and governed; doubt whether the darkness of night will be chased away by the rising of to-morrow's sun; doubt whether the dreariness of winter will be followed by the animation and fertility of spring; but doubt not for a single moment, either the power or the willingness of Christ to save.

14TH DAY.

"According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust."—1 Tim. i. 11.

Everlasting Consolation. WHEN describing the king's daughter, the royal bard states that "she is all glorious within." Upon the gospel a similar eulogium may with the strictest truth be pronounced. The old dispensation had its glory, as the apostle shews; but so pre-eminent are the attractions of the gospel, that the former had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory which excelleth.

The truths it proclaims are glorious truths; the blessings it confers are glorious blessings; and, especially, the consolations it grants, are glorious consolations. To administer substantial and abiding enjoyment, earthly objects are altogether impotent. It is not in their power to satisfy the boundless cravings of our nature; something higher, nobler, purer must be possessed,

before we can ever say, "It is enough." Not in wealth or honour, not in scenes of gaiety, not in the charms of music, not in the groves of science, not in the delights of friendship, not in the silent shades of retirement, can true happiness be found. But what the world cannot give to its most attached and faithful votaries, the gospel imparts to all its true disciples. It is her peculiar and exclusive privilege to bestow everlasting consolation, and a good hope through grace.

What has been said of death can be said of the religion of Christ, that it is "a friend to the wretch whom every friend forsakes." It is the only system which can truly bless us in the present life ; the only one which can fill us with confidence in reference to that which is to come. What comfort can the heart derive from the penances of superstition ; or what hope worthy of the name can be inspired by its vain dreams? Heathenism is a land of deserts and of pits, a land of drought and of the shadow of

death ; no cheering voice is there heard from on high, and man is left to groan without relief, and die in darkness and despair. But the gospel comes to us as the ministration of joy and peace, of life and immortality. It has calmed the sorrow which threatened the subversion of reason, and removed the anguish which was crushing the heart. It has hushed into a calm the tempest raised in the bosom by conscious guilt ; it has produced and maintained a serenity under evils which would drive the worldling mad ; it has brought the tear of gladness into eyes swollen with grief, and drawn songs of praise from lips quivering with agony. It has shed a cheering light over the gloom of age, diffused a glow of heavenly rapture over the pallid countenance, lightened the dark and winding passage from this world to the next ; and while it has safely conducted the departed saint to the abodes of endless bliss, it has also cast a bright gleam upon his grave,

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animating to the hearts of survivors,
and soothing to their sorrows.

Glorious gospel! how many a sick chamber hast thou filled with comfort; how many a house of mourning hast thou brightened with hope; and how many are the beds of death over which thou hast shed that peace which passeth all understanding! Truly can it be said, "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: 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." May it be thy happy lot, O my soul, to be of their number!

15TH DAY.

"We will remember thy love."—Cant. 1. 4.

**The Matchless
Theme.**

EVERY thing connected with the Lord Jesus is worthy of our grateful and adoring remembrance. We should remember his words of profound wisdom and matchless grace ; his power, as displayed in those mighty signs and wonders, which were the credentials of heaven to the authority and truth of his claims ; his holiness, so stainless, so perfectly untainted by the contaminating influences to which he was exposed, that the bitterest of his foes could be challenged to convict him of a single sin ; but, especially, should we remember his love, a love which passeth knowledge, whose length and breadth, whose depth and height, are unmeasurable, and which will be to saints and angels for ever, the great theme of their contemplations, and the chief burden of their songs.

Of the manifestations which have been given of the Saviour's love, there are three which we should particularly call to mind. The first was in the solitudes of eternity, when, of his own accord, he undertook our cause. Foreseeing all that he would have to endure, he came forward, and, addressing the Father, declared, "Here am I; send me." He thus assumed the office of Surety when as yet there was no debt to be discharged; he stood as our Mediator countless ages before the offence was committed, and the awful breach was made, which required his interposition. The second was in his incarnation, when he appeared, in the fulness of time, as the babe of Bethlehem. That He whom the heaven of heavens could not contain should be laid in a manger; that the invisible Creator should be clothed in human form; that the Ancient of eternal days should be cradled as an helpless infant! O wondrous humiliation, and unspeakable love! But the third was in his becoming obedient

unto death, even the death of the cross. If we are for beholding the climax of Christ's love, we must go to Calvary. It was there that He, who upholdeth all things by the word of his power, sank under the weight of inconceivable sufferings; the glorious Sun of righteousness then became immersed in the shadow of death; the Lord of life and glory expired on the bloody tree.

And all this, we are to remember, was endured on our behalf. Did he come down from heaven to earth? It was that we might be raised from earth to heaven. Did he drink the cup of wrath to its lowest dregs? It was that we might drink for ever of those crystal streams which gladden the saints on high. Did he endure his Father's frowns? It was that we might feast unceasingly upon his smiles. Was he numbered with transgressors? It was that we might be numbered with holy and happy spirits in glory everlasting. Did he wear a crown of thorns? It was to purchase for us a

crown of righteousness which fadeth not away. Was he lifted up on the cross? It was that we might be exalted to a throne, and be made kings and priests unto God and his Father. In a word, did he die? It was that we might live: "for whosoever believeth in him shall never die; believest thou this?" Those who do believe it, not with the cold assent of the understanding, but with the feelings and affections of the heart, will surely express, and practically manifest, their gratitude, for love so amazing, so divine. Be it thy constant, supreme, all-absorbing solicitude, O my soul! to be under its constraining influence from day to day; thou wilt then no longer live to thyself, but to Him who died for thee, and rose again.

16TH DAY.

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee."—Isaiah xxvi. 4.

Perfect Peace. THE ungodly, we are told, are "like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt:" and the emphatic declaration is added, "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." But with those who are reconciled to God, and who enjoy a sweet consciousness of his friendship and favour, what a striking contrast is presented! They are not like the sea in a storm, when its angry waves are foaming and dashing in the fierceness of their fury; but they resemble it as it appears on a fine summer's evening, when all is calm and serene.

The possession of every earthly blessing will be but a miserable compensation for that perfect peace which God has promised to his people. Let us think of an individual who has been raised

to the very highest pinnacle of worldly glory. Let him have all that earth calls good or great—lordly domains, splendid mansions, sumptuous fare, costly apparel, pompous titles, noble pedigrees, gorgeous retinues. Let all the wealth of the Indies be poured into his lap, and all the fame of Alexander encircle his brow. But, after all, what is he? A person with his desires all satisfied, his wants and wishes all met? Not so. He will be still the subject of those inward cravings which will render the whole of his possessions, as far as solid enjoyment is concerned, altogether unavailing. On the other hand, shew us a man bereft of all such attractions; let him, on the contrary, be called to endure the heaviest trials, and be exposed to the sorest privations of life; let him be regarded by an ungodly world with feelings of unmingled scorn, and have to contend with its fiercest opposition; let him be one whom the rising sun wakens only to suffer, and on whom it sets without bringing

him but little hope of rest. Yet, blessed is he, and that beyond all the powers of language to set forth, if he has peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. His troubles may be great, but true religion pours her oil and wine into his wounds from day to day. While toiling through this weary wilderness, he has the presence of One who is the strength of his heart and the consoler of his sorrows; and, looking forward to the land of rest on the other side of Jordan's swelling flood, he knows that his present afflictions, which are only for a little while, work out for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Now what must be the value of that blessing which can compensate for the loss of all earthly good, and which can make its possessor happy under the pressure of all earthly evil? If man, with all the stores of worldly abundance, be miserable without it; and if, under the burden of multiplied sufferings, aggravated to the last degree, he is

unspeakably happy in its enjoyment; what, then, must this heavenly peace really be? Can its worth be told? Did the apostle use words of unwarranted exaggeration, or those of strict truth and soberness, when describing it as something "which passeth all understanding?"

Seeing, therefore, O my soul! the transcendent blessedness of those whose hearts and minds are kept in perfect peace, be it thy chief concern to realize the same blessed privilege. Pleasant will it be to be under its influence in the time of prosperity, but especially so in the day of adversity. As it is with the rainbow, that striking emblem of God's covenant faithfulness and love, it shines with greater brilliancy the darker the cloud is on which its colours are cast. So with the peace of God, at all times precious, but pre-eminently so in seasons of calamity and distress.

17TH DAY.

"I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely."—
Rev. xxi. 8.

The Voice from the Throne. THE blessings of the gospel are frequently compared to water; and, among the various particulars which the similitude involves, one is the unspeakable importance of those blessings. We are not in a position to estimate the value of that element, it being with us so common and abundant; but had we to pass through those regions where it is so rare, with very different feelings should we regard it. Such as have to cross over sandy deserts are well acquainted with its worth; and the accounts given by travellers of what is often endured when it cannot be obtained, are affecting to the last degree. The scorching heat of those latitudes materially increases the demands of nature for drink; while the uncertainty of a fresh supply makes it

necessary to exercise the greatest economy. But when the water, which is carried in skins, is spent, the merchant, whose camels are laden with the richest treasures of the East, becomes at once a beggar. In that agony of suffering which extreme thirst excites, he would cheerfully part with all his wealth for the scanty supply which may have been preserved by some poor creature, who is now the only object of his envy. The latter, however, scorns the bribe, well knowing that those few precious drops contain his only hold upon existence. When no relief is found, the eyes become red, the tongue and lips are greatly swollen, the ears are deafened by a hollow sound, and the brain ere long becomes inflamed. With the increase of these symptoms all hopes of life are given up, and the wretched beings seek shelter under the rocks or bushes, where they would fain lie down and die. Such is the value of water to them; it is truly their life. Thus our British Psalmist sings—

"So pilgrims on the scorching sand,
Beneath a burning sky,
Long for a cooling stream at hand,
And they must drink or die."

Now, from the value of the sign employed, we see the importance of the thing signified. If natural water is essential to the life of the body, spiritual water is equally essential to the life of the soul. In the one we have only a faint and feeble emblem of the unspeakable worth and indispensable necessity of the other.

The blessings of the gospel, notwithstanding their exceeding importance, are freely bestowed. We are informed, it is true, that they are to be bought; but not according to the principles of earthly commerce. Many think it requisite to bring something in their hands in exchange for the salvation which they are anxious to secure. The uprightness of their conduct, the charities in which they have abounded, the tears of penitence they have shed, the religious rites they have observed,

the good resolutions they have formed—with such things they hope to procure God's favour, and purchase the blessings of his grace. But it is not by any such bartering that they are to be obtained. If we are for trading with Him, we must do it on his own terms ; and what those terms are his word clearly declares : " Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters ; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat ; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price."

Instead of objecting to such conditions, we ought surely to rejoice in them. Do we need pardon for our innumerable offences ? It is to be had freely. Do we need acceptance for our guilty persons ? Do we need peace for our troubled consciences ? Do we need wisdom, strength, sanctification, adoption ? They are all to be obtained without money and without price. Those, therefore, who have nothing to pay, who are deeply conscious that they have no worthiness of their own to

adduce, may draw nigh with humble confidence. Since they are offered gratuitously, nothing is needful but that they be cordially and gratefully received.

O blessed Lord ! exalted Prince and Saviour ! in whom all spiritual blessings are treasured, and in whom inconceivable fulness dwells ; may we in our destitution be supplied, and in our wretchedness be gladdened, out of thy boundless stores. When on earth, in a state of lowliest humiliation, thy language was, " If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." And now, from thy throne on high, thy voice is still heard saying, " Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

18TH Day.

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God."—1 John iii. 1.

Adoption For persons to adopt the children of others, is a custom which has prevailed in all ages, although more prevalent in ancient times than in the present day. Between this civil adoption, however, and that of which believers are the subject, there are many points of difference. In the former case it was only resorted to by those who had no children of their own; but the blessed God had a Son, who was the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person, the object of his divine complacency and everlasting love. He had also countless myriads of angels, the morning stars which, at the birth of time, sang together, and the sons of God which shouted for joy. Besides, by the word of his mouth, he could have called into existence new orders of beings had he

pleased ; beings as much surpassing the loftiest seraph, as that seraph surpasses the meanest worm that crawls. Again, when men adopt, it is in general on account of some attraction in those on whom they have set their regard, as was the case with Pharaoh's daughter in reference to Moses. But here it is not so. We have nothing to recommend us to the divine favour ; we are altogether as an unclean thing, and even our righteousness is as filthy rags. It may be also observed that in civil adoption it was the name, and not the spirit of a son, that was given ; but in the heavenly adoption we are made partakers, not merely of a new name, but of a new nature ; we are transformed by the renewing of our minds, after the image of Him who hath created us, in righteousness and true holiness.

It is esteemed a great thing among men to descend from some ancient family, whose founder signalized himself in the history of his country. But what are all such distinctions when

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compared with the lofty dignity of being the children of God? Let the sons of the mighty boast of their high birth and noble pedigree, of their pompous titles and large estates; yet the poorest peasant that believes in Christ is infinitely superior to them all. Their honours will fade; their wealth become the portion of others; soon must they lie on a level with the meanest, for the worms shall devour them, and their memory shall rot. But the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance; his name, though not found in the register of heralds, will be recorded in the Lamb's book of life for ever. Born from above, the royal blood of heaven runs through his veins. He may be poor in temporal things, but he possesses unsearchable riches. For the happiness he realizes, the wealth of worlds would be an inadequate compensation. All the pomp of nobles, all the grandeur of the proudest kings, are only obscure and fleeting shadows of the spiritual dignity which belongs to

the meanest saint, to the poorest and most despised Lazarus, that ever trod the earth.

Am I one of the sons of God ? If I am, I have no need to envy the lot of the most prosperous of earth's favourites. What if I am "to fortune and to fame unknown ;" what if the world knoweth me not, it knew Him not whom I rejoice to acknowledge as my supreme and glorious Lord. Being a joint-heir with him who is heir of all things, I will be content to pass my days in obscurity until the time of final manifestation: for "when Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory."

"Let others boast their ancient line,
In long succession great ;
In the proud list let heroes shine,
And monarchs swell the state :
Descended from the King of kings,
Each saint a nobler title brings.

"Pronounce me, gracious God ! thy son ;
Own me an heir divine ;
I'll pity princes on the throne,
When I can call thee mine :
Sceptres and crowns unenvied rise,
And lose their lustre in mine eyes."

19TH DAY.

"Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."—Acts xxvi. 28.

The Christian's Blessedness. HE who is a Christian, not merely by outward profession, but in deed and in truth, may well rejoice in the distinguished favour conferred upon him. As the poet observes, "a Christian is the highest style of man." Although lightly esteemed by the children of men, yet there is no character to be compared with him for a single moment. Do we speak of pleasure? There is more true enjoyment in his tears of sorrow, than in the boisterous mirth of the giddy and the gay. Do we speak of honour? All the pompous dignities of earth, when compared with the lofty position which he occupies, are only as the feeble light of a taper before the splendours of the noontide sun. Do we speak of possessions? "All things are his, whether the world, or life, or death, or things present

or things to come ; all are his, for he is Christ's, and Christ is God's."

"What advantage hath the Jew?" the apostle asks, when referring to the outward privileges enjoyed by God's ancient people. "Much every way," is the decided and comprehensive reply that is given. But as regards the inquiry, What advantage hath the Christian? it is altogether impossible to answer it fully. Whether we think of his present state or his future prospects, we at once feel the inadequacy of language to set forth his blessedness.

Reader, is it not a blessed thing for a man to have all his sins forgiven, and thus to be delivered from the curse of a broken law, and have nothing to dread from that condemning sentence which is passed upon all the workers of iniquity? Is it not a blessed thing for a sinful creature to be restored to the friendship of Him against whom he has rebelled ; to be enabled, in the spirit of adoption, to look up to him as his Father and Friend ; and to walk in the

light of his smiling countenance from day to day? Is it not a blessed thing, amid the various difficulties and distresses with which humanity has to struggle in this vale of tears, to be upheld by divine power, to be guided by infinite wisdom, and to be cheered with heavenly consolations? Is it not a blessed thing to be able to look forward to the king of terrors without dismay; to anticipate the grave, that dreamless bed, as a secure resting-place from sin and sorrow; and to lie down in its peaceful bosom with a well-grounded hope of a joyful resurrection? Is it not a blessed thing, when looking forward to the day of judgment, that solemn day which awaits us all, to realize in Him who is to pronounce our unchanging doom, that gracious Saviour to whom we have committed the keeping of our souls; in whose precious blood we have been washed, and in whose spotless righteousness we have been clothed; and to cherish the sweet assurance that we shall meet him with

joy, and not with grief? And oh! will it not, as the crown and consummation of all, be a blessed thing to enter the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world; to drink of the rivers of pleasure which are flowing there for evermore; to join in the transporting hallelujahs of the redeemed, to bask in the unclouded sunshine of everlasting love, and to be filled with all the ineffable fulness of God?

Now if the fact of a person being a Christian secures such immunities, and inspires the soul with such divine and glorious hopes; how anxiously, then, should I desire to be one—one not almost, but altogether. The great leader of Israel preferred to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; he esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. O God! enable me, by thy constraining grace, to emulate his spirit and follow his noble example.

20TH DAY.

"But God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."—Rom. v. 8.

Unparalleled WHEN the apostle declares that "scarcely for
One. a righteous man will one die," the chief element in the character referred to seems to be strict integrity. It is that of a person who had abhorred the most distant approach to any thing that savoured of injustice or oppression, and whose fidelity and rectitude had rendered him an object of universal admiration. Now were such an individual, by the sentence of some unjust judge, to be doomed to an ignominious death, scarcely would any one be ready to step forward to ward off his fate, and save the life of that righteous man by the sacrifice of his own ; scarcely would one be found who was prepared to say, "Let me die, that such an honourable character might live." Yet, "peradventure," it is added, "for a good man

some would even dare to die." By the latter is meant a man of enlarged benevolence and philanthropy; who was indefatigable in relieving misery wherever he found it; who, with a liberal hand, scattered blessings in rich profusion to all around; in whom the poor and ignorant, the fatherless and widow, the sorrowful and outcast, found a sure refuge from all their troubles; a man, in a word, distinguished by all that was melting in tenderness, all that was winning in compassion, all that was godlike in deeds of love and mercy. For such it is possible that another would dare to die, as appears from certain instances recorded in ancient history. But, as the apostle states, it is only some, not many, who would thus die even for a good man; for the act would require such a heroism, such a nobleness of spirit, such an oblivion of selfish interests, which the human mind but very seldom possesses. And, after all, it is something that has to be qualified by a "peradventure," as if it were

still doubtful, and hardly to be reckoned among the capabilities of our nature.

In the above instances regard is supposed to be shewn to these individuals on account of their virtues; that of integrity in the one case, and benevolence in the other. But suppose a person entirely destitute of such claims; suppose him guilty of conduct the most vile and detestable, committed against one who had always treated him with all the tenderness of a parent and all the affection of a friend; suppose that for his crimes he had been justly condemned to die; and suppose also, that after the sentence of condemnation had been passed, he had cherished as bitter an enmity, and expressed as determined a vengeance against his kind benefactor, as he had ever done before. Is it likely that that friend would, in such a case, die in the stead of so abandoned and ungrateful a wretch? Or is it likely that any one else would do so? Such a stretch of benevolence, such a climax of compassion, humanity has never

reached ; it is an act of which it is altogether incapable ; the elements of such love are not to be found in man's nature ; it is what he never did and never will display. " Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." It is the utmost limit to which human affection can possibly go.

But that which man never felt has been realized, in a manner the most signal and impressive, in the conduct of Jesus Christ. He died, not for the good and righteous, but for the ungodly ; the just for the unjust, the sinless for the sinful, that he might bring them to God. Here is the great mystery, that which casts all earthly love at once and for ever into the shade—"while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

What if the Redeemer's love had been like our love ? If it had, he would never have appeared as a helpless babe in Bethlehem ; never have wandered as an exile and outcast in the world which his own hands had made ;

never have agonized in the garden, nor expired on the accursed tree. Feeble is our love at best, very sparing in its sacrifices, and exceedingly changeable in its nature. But thy love, Thou adorable Saviour! the greatest hindrances could not overcome it; the fickleness and cowardice of thy friends could not cool it; the malignant hatred of thy foes could not destroy it; the waters of death could not damp it; the ignominy of the cross could not turn it; the storms of hell could not quench it; the frowns of heaven could not move it!

“ O let thy love our souls constrain,
Jesus the crucified!
What hast thou done our hearts to gain?
Languish'd, and groan'd, and died!”

21ST DAY.

“And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.”—1 John ii. 28.

The Joyful Greeting. THE coming that is here referred to is our Lord's second coming; not that in which he assumed the form of a servant, but the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ. That he will come again is taken for granted, as a truth surely believed by those whom the apostle addressed. The testimony of the angels on the mount of ascension, when, addressing the gazing disciples, they said, “This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven,” is a testimony that is echoed and re-echoed by innumerable voices. It is so by all the dispensations of grace on the one hand, and of providence on the other. The various

distresses and disorders of the present state; the graces of the saint now incomplete, and the guilt of the sinner unvisited and unavenged; the cries of the souls under the altar, saying, "How long, Lord, holy and true?" the sleeping dust of countless myriads, waiting to be re-united to the deathless spirit which for a season has taken its flight—all assure us that he will again appear. Heaven, and earth, and hell, God and men, angels and devils, unite in proclaiming, "Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him."

A most solemn event will be his second appearing, for he will then call the nations to his bar—he will come to judge the world in righteousness. And yet on that momentous day, when the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; when the battlements of the firmament will be blazing, and nature will be groaning in her last convulsions; when the air will be crowded with dazzling cherubim above, and the

startled dead will be swarming out of their shattered sepulchres from below : even then, amid all these terrors, there will be those who, unalarmed, will lift up their heads with joy. The trumpet blast of the archangel will be only the appointed signal that the day of their full redemption has at length arrived ; and instead of fearing and trembling, there will, with them, be nothing but shouting and rejoicing.

Happy those who will have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming ! Happy those who, when they shall see the heavens opening, and the judge with the streaming myriads of his attendants descending, will be enabled triumphantly to exclaim, " 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 ! "

If we only have a good hope through grace, we may well be looking for, and hasting unto the coming, not of that dread, but of that unspeakably blissful

day. To be acknowledged by him before assembled worlds as his own—to hear him say, in tones of ineffable love and grace, and with his countenance beaming with divine benignity, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!” O wondrous welcome! O the rapturous joy of the favoured throngs who will be thus addressed! O ample compensation for all the trials and sufferings encountered here below! Had we ten thousand lives, and were they all sacrificed for his sake, is it likely that even such a costly offering will be regretted in that day!

Reader, let it be thy first concern “to win Christ, and be found in him; not having thine own righteousness, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.” None but those who are one with him here, will have confidence before him hereafter. Being savingly united to him, his worthiness, by a

transfer at once gracious and mysterious, will become thine ; though guilty, polluted, worthless in thyself, thou wilt be made "the righteousness of God in him." And while to be in him is the first requirement, the second is, to cleave closely to him ; "for we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end."

22ND DAY.

"The desire of our souls is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee."—Isaiah xxvi. 8.

The Sacred Name. By the name of God we are to understand his glorious character, as it is revealed to us in his word. Every thing is there in his name that we require in order to our present well-being and everlasting bliss. Do we need pardon? It is to be had here; for in proclaiming his name to Moses he made himself known as the "Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin." Do we need righteousness? "This is the name wherewith he shall be called, The Lord our righteousness." Do we need peace? He is "the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep." Do we need strength? The "Almighty God," was one of the earliest titles by which he revealed himself to

his ancient people ; he is the Rock of ages, in whom is everlasting strength. Do we need protection ? "The name of the Lord is a strong tower ; the righteous runneth there, and is safe." It thus embraces all our exigencies ; like an inexhaustible storehouse it contains supplies adapted to our multifarious necessities.

Reader ! is it the desire of thy soul to know this blessed name ? It could not fail to be so, if thou had'st a proper view of the fearful doom of those "who have not the knowledge of God," and of the unspeakable blessedness, both here and hereafter, of those by whom it is possessed. Who are the characters upon whom vengeance will be taken, when the great Redeemer will be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, with his mighty angels ? They "that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." But we are assured that "this is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."

Such being the consequences, inexpressibly blissful on the one hand, and tremendously terrific on the other, how reasonable is it that our most ardent wishes should be directed towards this one object, compared with which all others are merely as the small dust of the balance.

“They that know thy name,” says the Psalmist, “will put their trust in thee.” And it is in proportion to the extent of our knowledge, or the measure in which we are found “increasing in the knowledge of God,” that our trust will be strong and unwavering. In reference to our fellow-creatures it is often far otherwise. “The best of men are but men at the best;” and this we are brought to feel when a more general acquaintance is followed by closer intimacy. He that increaseth knowledge in this respect, increaseth sorrow; the unwelcome conviction being forced on the mind that it is not safe to place implicit confidence in any of the children of men. Certain it is that those

who have had opportunities for knowing them best, have been disposed to trust them least. As the celebrated Lord Chatham once observed, who, during his eventful life, had seen human nature in all its phases: "Youth is the season of credulity; confidence is a plant of slow growth in an aged bosom." What man is in his best estate, the Bible tells us; and what we are to expect if we trust in man and make flesh our arm, it tells us also. But those who trust in the Lord will never be disappointed; they shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever.

Blessed God! deliver us from being of the number of those who have no desire to know and trust, to love and glorify, thy sacred name; but, by thy constraining grace, let our hearts be so drawn after thee, that we may choose thee as our only portion and delight in thee as our exceeding joy.

23RD DAY.

"Come, see the place where the Lord lay."—
Matt. xxviii. 6.

Death EVERY spot connected
Vanquished. with the Saviour's history is invested with peculiar interest to the minds of his people; but the one which is possessed of the highest attraction is, doubtless, "the place which is called Calvary." It was there he died, and it was there also he was buried. "Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid." Reader! let us go to that garden, and surround that grave; and if we do so with suitable feelings, the visit will not be in vain.

Never, amid its countless victims, did the yawning tomb contain such a tenant before. Who is it that lies in that rocky cavern? It is the Rock of our Salvation—the great Rock of ages

Himself. He who was enthroned in glory everlasting, and who had diffused joy and rapture among the celestial hosts and hierarchies, is now a bruised and mangled corpse. He who was clothed with light as with a garment, and walked upon the wings of the wind, is now clad in the vestments of the grave. There lie, cold and unnerved, those hands which had controlled all the powers of nature: those blessed lips are now sealed in silence upon which such ineffable grace was poured; and closed are those eyes which had beamed with divine benignity, and which had so often wept for human woe. He was the hope of Israel, the light and life of men; but now his pulse no longer beats, his heart has ceased to throb. The shadows of death have covered him, and silence reigns through his dark and desolate abode.

But while he became a prisoner of the grave, he was not its prisoner long. On the morning of the third day he rose again, according to the

scriptures. Although the gloomy mansion was made secure, to detain him beyond the appointed hour was impossible. Vain was every precaution—the stone, the watch, the seal; vain the triumph of his foes, and vain the fears of his friends. The bands which bound him he burst in sunder; the ponderous stone was rolled away; and the mighty Victor came forth, having conquered death in its own dominions.

Come, then, and see the place where the Lord lay. And as we view the deserted sepulchre, with “the linen clothes laid by themselves,” let us not merely wonder, but rejoice. “Joseph is yet alive,” was the joyful tidings conveyed to the mourning patriarch; and should not our hearts thrill with rapture at the words, “I am the first and the last; I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell and of death.”

Is Jesus yet alive? The blessed truth affords the strongest assurance that his

people shall live also. To him, as their Surety and Head, they are savingly united. They died with him, were buried with him, and, rose again with him. "Even when we were dead in sins," says the apostle, "hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Such being the case, the true believer has nothing to fear. We might as well speak of the insecurity of Christ as of the insecurity of his people. If he is safe, they are safe ; if he is happy, they will be happy ; if he is exalted and enthroned, they will be exalted and enthroned likewise. The same security, the same allotments, the same dignities, are the property of both. "Because I live"—it is a declaration fraught with the richest consolation—"ye shall live also."

But did the Saviour lie in the silent chambers of the tomb ? His people must lie there in like manner. This, however, should not fill them with dis-

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may. What is it for the Christian to go to the grave? It is to go to a bed in which his Redeemer has lain before him. By his temporary occupation of it, he scattered its gloom, and left an inviting odour behind him; so that the joyful strains may now be adopted, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

And as Jesus died and rose again, even so they also that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. Their vile bodies will be fashioned like unto his own glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself. They will thus not merely be raised, but with renovated vigour, and inconceivable beauty. Rejoice, O Christian, in this blessed hope. Like the rod of Aaron, after thou hast reposed in the sanctuary of the grave, thou shalt, in vernal loveliness, bud and blossom afresh. Like Job, after thou hast passed through the desolation and captivity of death, thy latter end will be inconceivably better than thy begin-

ning. Like the temple of old, the glory of thy latter house will far transcend the glory of the former one ; and in that building will the Lord of hosts give peace for ever and ever.

24TH DAY.

“Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”—Phil. i. 6.

The Comforting **READER!** has the good
Assurance. work been commenced
 in thee? A question
 more important in itself, or more momentous in its consequences, cannot possibly be proposed. All that appertains to thy present well-being, and all that concerns thy future destiny, hangs upon it. If thou hast satisfactory grounds for concluding that thou hast been renewed in the spirit of thy mind, thou mayest then cherish an assured confidence that—

“Grace will complete what grace begins,
 To save from sorrow or from sins:
 The work that wisdom undertakes,
 Eternal mercy ne’er forsakes.”

It is true that all the people of God are not able to specify the particular means, or the special period when the

work of grace was begun in their souls. With some the great change has been attended with circumstances so marked and peculiar, that no difficulty is felt in pointing to the time and place when they were made new creatures in Christ Jesus. They can give, to quote the language of a popular writer, "the day and date, the hour, the providence, the place, the text, the preacher, and all the memorable and interesting circumstances associated with their conversion. They can shew the arrow which, shot from some bow drawn at a venture, pierced the joints of their armour, and quivered in their heart. They can shew the pebble from the brook that, slung it may be by a youthful hand, but directed of God, was buried in the forehead of their giant sin. Able to trace the steps and whole process of their conversion, its most minute and interesting details, they can say with David, without the least hesitation, 'Come and hear all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul.'"

But there are others by whom this cannot be done. It has been by gradual and almost imperceptible stages that they have been brought to the knowledge of the truth ; and all they can say is in the language of him of old, "One thing I know that, whereas I was blind, now I see." Reader! canst thou say even thus much? If thou canst, on good grounds, blessed art thou indeed.

It is possible that injurious consequences may follow from laying undue stress upon the time when one becomes a Christian. It is far more important to ascertain whether those practical results, which are the evidence of a saving change, appear in us. Is the life now in accordance with the requirements of the gospel? Is the heart now affected with humility, and penitence and gratitude? Is the resolution now strong to live, not to ourselves, but to Him that died and rose again? If the sun is now shining warmly upon us, it is but of little consequence at what moment it arose.

THE COMFORTING ASSURANCE. 119

To the timid believer we would say,
Be encouraged. The confidence in
which many indulge as to their spiritual
state, thou art unable to cherish. But
remember that one rose upon a bush,
though only a small one, and as yet not
full blown, proves that which bears it to
be a true rose-tree. Remember that
there are many coins, the impression
upon which is much defaced, but which
are as current as those which are more
fresh and legible. There is One who
will not break the bruised reed, nor
quench the smoking flax, but will
bring forth judgment unto truth. He
can make the feeble to be as David, and
David as the angel of God. It is re-
corded of him that he giveth more grace;
and in applying to him thou shalt receive
fresh supplies out of his inexhaustible
fulness.

25TH DAY.

"And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."—John i. 14.

The God-man WHEN Jesus is the object set before us, we
Mediator. may well say, "Let us turn aside, and see this great sight." In reference to John the Baptist, the Saviour himself asked the people, "What went ye out for to see?" That distinguished individual was worth going far to behold, for he was great in the sight of the Lord, and possessed qualities the contemplation of which cannot fail to excite our warmest admiration. It is truly refreshing in this trimming and truckling world, to view a real, noble, decided character. "There have been men on this earth," it has been strikingly observed, "of whom it was simply true that it was easier to turn the sun from its course, than to turn them from the paths of honour. There have been men, like John the

Baptist, who could speak the truth, which had made their own spirits free, with the axe above their neck. There have been men on whom tyrants and mobs have done their worst ; but when, like Stephen, the stones crashed in upon their brain, or when their flesh hissed and crackled in the flames, were calmly superior to it all." Such though only appearing at rare intervals, contribute to redeem the character of our fallen humanity from the hollowness and selfishness which so extensively prevail.

But while John, and men like minded with him, are well worthy of our regard, yet in seeing Jesus, we behold One who has infinitely higher claims upon our attention. He had qualities peculiarly his own, and which impart to his history a dignity and glory altogether matchless and divine.

Where but in him can spotless purity be found ? Search all the generations of men, from the day on which our first father fell, and can a single indi-

vidual be met with, of whom it may be said, "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." If we examine even the best acts of the best men, we cannot find one without some admixture of imperfection. We have only to appeal to their own experience, to their own consciousness of what their purest performances have been in the sight of God, and they will at once acknowledge that they have need to be purged from the iniquity of their holiest things. The language of the excellent Bishop Beveridge was—"I cannot pray, but I sin ; I cannot preach, but I sin ; I cannot approach the Lord's table, but I sin : my very repentance needs to be repented of, and the tears I shed want washing in the blood of Christ."

But here is One who was entirely what the holy law of God required ; all his thoughts and actions ran in parallel lines with its sacred precepts. Here is a Lamb without any blemish ; a person in whom no spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, was ever found. Here is an

High Priest who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners; who was tried and tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin.

We have, however, in the Lord Jesus, not merely a nature free from every taint of moral impurity, but all the attributes of divinity combined, in mysterious union, with his perfect humanity. Reader! contemplate with fixed attention this Being of incomprehensible glory. Gaze upon the wonders of his person until thy heart is duly affected thereby. Oh what strange extremes meet together in Him! He is weak and fainting, but he has all power in heaven and on earth, and without the least effort can bend all things to his pleasure. He is oppressed and afflicted, but all the blessedness that men and angels enjoy flow from him; though a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, he is yet God over all, happy for ever. He is friendless, or nearly so, but in his single person he forms the centre of all love, uniting earth and heaven in

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eternal harmony. He is mortal, and yet he only hath immortality. He groans, he dies, and yet he is the life of men, and lives for evermore. O the wonders of thy person, Thou great Immanuel! Give us the eye of faith to behold thy glory, and then how little will every thing earthly appear.

26TH DAY.

“Is any thing too hard for the Lord?”—
Gen. xviii. 14.

Unfailing THE saints of old seem to
Strongly. have had great delight in
contemplating the divine
power. To it their faith had special
respect, particularly in seasons of diffi-
culty and danger. How was it with
Abraham when commanded to slay his
beloved son? The apostle tells us:—
“Accounting that God was *able* to raise
him up, even from the dead; from
whence also he received him in a figure.”
So it was with the three Hebrew youths.
How were they enabled to maintain
their steadfastness in the face of the
threats of an enraged monarch, and in a
spirit of calm confidence to say to him,
“We are not careful to answer thee in
this matter;” although the devouring
flames were crackling before them, and
the attendants ready to thrust them in,
as soon as the order was given? Here

is the secret:—"If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king."

How emphatically does the apostle shew, in one of those devout ascriptions which he so frequently employs to pour forth the ardent breathings of his soul, that power belongeth unto God! "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us: unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end." No name is mentioned—of that there was no need, as there is only One to whom such strains could be addressed. The sublimity of the passage is thereby enhanced, and it indicates a mind awed by the majesty of that glorious Being whose character is so strikingly extolled. Great and marvellous things have been asked of God by his people; but compared with his ability to bless, how limited have been their largest petitions! Not

merely is he able to do beyond all that we ask, but above all we can think—all that our minds in their loftiest flights can possibly imagine. He is able to do abundantly above all this, yea, exceeding abundantly. Never was language more emphatic, and yet even such terms are totally inadequate to do justice to the grandeur of the theme.

A frequent contemplation of “the exceeding greatness of his power,” would be a death-blow to our unbelief; it would prove an unfailing antidote to those harassing doubts by which our minds are so often oppressed. If we were only strong in faith in this almighty, all-sufficient Being, no dangers would alarm us, no opposition dishearten us, no trials oppress us. Trusting in the Lord Jehovah, in whom is everlasting strength, we should be raised above all fear, be enabled to smile in every storm, and bid defiance to ten thousand foes.

Of the power of God we cannot, then, think too often, or raise our thoughts

too high. He has only to speak, and it is done; to command, and it stands fast. Every element yields to his control; every creature, from an angel to an insect, is subject to his authority. The distinction between what is easy and what is difficult to accomplish, is altogether unknown to Him.

“All acts with Him are equal; for no more
It costs Omnipotence to build a world,
And set a sun amidst the firmament,
Than mould a dew-drop, and light up its gem.”

Wait therefore, O my soul, upon the Lord; lean upon his almighty arm; then his boundless strength will be perfected in the extremity of thy weakness. Wherefore should'st thou yield to gloomy apprehensions? “Hast thou not known; hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon

the Lord shall renew their strength ;
they shall mount up with wings as
eagles ; they shall run, and not be
weary ; and they shall walk, and not
faint."

27TH DAY.

"And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter."—Luke xxii. 61.

The Memorable OVER the fall of Peter
Look, that charity which
 covereth a multitude
 of sins, would gladly cast the ample
 folds of her mantle, in order to conceal
 it from the unhallowed gaze of a scoff-
 ing world. Her language, if consulted
 on the subject, would doubtless have
 been, Let no mention be made of it;
 let no record be given of it; let the
 whole affair be hushed in silence, and
 be for ever forgotten. But whatever
 an indulgent charity might dictate, yet
 truth, stern, impartial, and uncom-
 promising, demanded its insertion in
 the gospel history; and since a place
 is there assigned to it, it becomes us to
 attend to the instructions it conveys.

"I know not the man," was the un-
 hesitating language which he employed,
 as he sat by the fire in the palace of

the high priest. O Peter, can it possibly be? Not know him! Whom was it, then, that thou didst leave all to follow after, in common with thine other companions? Of whom didst thou make that memorable confession before many witnesses, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God?" To whom didst thou cry for help when sinking beneath the mighty billows, saying, "Lord, save me, or I perish?" With whom wast thou on mount Tabor, and whose countenance beamed with unearthly refulgence there? Can it be, with the recollection of such scenes, that thou wert heard to say, "I know not this man of whom ye speak?" But, alas! for our poor frail humanity, so it was. The mere language of a servant maid, saying, "This fellow was with him," led him to reply, not—Yes, I have been with him; and, blessed be his name for ever, for granting me such a privilege, having often experienced in his company what I would not part with if the wealth of worlds were placed

at my feet ; but, instead of this, he denied him, and that openly, unblushingly, and repeatedly.

While, however, it is sad to think of his fall, it is most pleasing to reflect upon his recovery. The means whereby he was brought to repentance was the look of that gracious Saviour against whom he had acted so perfidiously. He uttered, it seems, no word, nor made any sign or motion ; he simply turned, and looked upon him. But what pen or pencil can ever do justice to that memorable look ? How full of meaning was it ? It was not reproof alone, nor sorrow, nor pity, nor love ; it was the expression, doubtless, not of one, but of several mingled emotions. It chided, it lamented, it awakened, it convinced, it encouraged, it subdued. A deep sense of injury it must have conveyed. It could not but say, And is this thy kindness to thy friend ? Is this the grateful return for all the favours thou hast received ? Is this thy unswerving, undying attachment,

whatever my fate might be? Is this what was meant by going with me to prison and to death, and laying down thy life for my sake? But with the upbraiding, what tender compassion was combined! It said, With all thy faults, and this the most heinous of the whole, I love thee still. Disown thee I will not, though thou hast disowned me. I might take thee at thy word and say, No; he is not one of my disciples, and let it be publicly known that he is not; for they do not lie and swear—they do not deny their master to his very face, and in the hour of his greatest need take an open part with his most malignant foes. But notwithstanding all thou hast done, there is room still left for thee in my heart, and a name and place shall be yet given thee among my followers.

Now Peter saw this, and it was by the conviction of it that he was completely overcome. His frowns he might have braved; but to withstand that divine compassion which beamed in his languid eye, was impossible. The

thought that Jesus could still love him ; that his was an affection that no ingratitude could quench it, that no unworthiness could destroy it, that no vileness, no treachery, not even such as he had been guilty of, could alienate it—the thought of this was altogether too much for him.

From this narrative let us learn a twofold lesson. The first is one of encouragement. He with whom we have to do is a tender, loving Saviour. St Peter found him to be ; and he is still “the same Jesus.” If our backslidings are many ; if our consciences tell us that we have often basely denied him ; yet in returning to the footstool of his mercy with contrition and self-abasement, he will receive us graciously and love us freely.

The other is one of reproof and caution. He that confides in his own strength displays the most egregious folly. Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. Oh ! then—

“Beware of Peter’s word,
Nor confidently say,
I never will deny thee, Lord;
But grant I never may.
Man’s wisdom is to seek
His strength in God alone;
And even an angel would be weak
Who trusted in his own.”

28TH DAY.

"To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious."—1 Peter ii. 4.

The Soul's Delight. IN many striking passages is the Lord Jesus set forth as the special object of his Father's affection. He is his beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased. In reference to his mediatorial office, he declares of him, "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth."

Now there is an important sense in which the believer can adopt these words. He can testify that his soul delighteth in him, and that he is ineffably well pleased with him. While he is chosen of God, and precious, he is also chosen by, and dear to, all the people of God.

In order to our being brought to feel towards the Saviour as we ought, it is indispensable that we realize our need of him. When the soul is bowed down under a consciousness of guilt, how pre-

cious will he then be, both in his person and work. The feelings of the sinner, when first awakened to a sense of his danger as a rebel against God, are such that no language can fully describe. In the bitterness of his soul he asks, How can I escape from that dread curse to which, by my manifold transgressions, I have exposed myself? Can I call back the idle words I have uttered, the sinful desires I have cherished, the wicked actions I have performed? Can I, by any effort, remove the burden which presses upon my troubled conscience, or blot out from the book of God's remembrance the black catalogue of my crimes? Can I do any thing to appease his anger, or satisfy his just demands? Even should I be perfectly holy in future, that would not cancel my former sins. Besides, I find that my guilt, instead of diminishing, continues to increase; that day after day I am adding, by fresh transgressions, to the already heavy load.

Now where, in such a state of mind

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can he look, and to whom can he apply? Every perfection of God's character seems to frown upon him, and to stand in terrible array against him. He looks at his holiness, and says, I am vile, and that holiness must hate me. He looks at his justice, and says, that justice I have provoked, and it must condemn me. He looks at his truth, and says, that truth, by the fulfilment of its righteous denunciations, must destroy me. Thus all the attributes of the divine nature become to him so many sources of terror and dismay.

But while in this woeful condition, let him hear of Jesus, the Saviour of sinners, the Redeemer of lost men. Let him be told that the blood which flowed from his pierced brow and wounded side, cleanseth from all sin; that he was bruised for our iniquities, and endured their dread penalty in his own body on the tree. Let him listen to the gracious call, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else:"

or to the blessed invitation, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Ah!" will be his language, "this is what I want." Let me only win Christ, and be found in him, and I shall be enabled to lift up my head with joy, the condemnation will be removed, my guilty person will be accepted, and my many sins will be forgiven.

Now to such an one, feeling his need of Christ, seeing the suitability of Christ, and, by applying to him, made a partaker of the pardoning love of Christ; in such a case can he be otherwise than precious? He will be filled with joy in him, and it will be a joy unspeakable and full of glory. Not with feigned lips, but with heartfelt emotion, will he now be enabled to say:—

"Yes, thou art precious to my soul,
My transport and my trust;
Jewels to thee are gaudy toys,
And gold is sordid dust.

Thy grace shall dwell upon my heart,
And shed its fragrance there;

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**The noblest balm of all its wounds,
The cordial of its care.**

**I'll speak the honours of thy name
With my last labouring breath ;
Then speechless clasp thee in mine arms,
The antidote of death."**

29TH DAY.

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord."—Is. lv. 8.

Jehovah's Thoughts. INFINITE is the disparity between God and us. While we are but of yesterday and know nothing, he knows all things, past, present, and future. With a single glance does he penetrate through all the boundless regions of immensity; the entire circle of existence is embraced by him at one view. How vast, then, must be the plans and purposes of such a Being! To judge of them we are altogether incompetent, for how small a portion can we comprehend. It is recorded of a certain individual who had a house he wished to dispose of, that he took to the market one of the bricks with which it was built, as a specimen of the building. We may smile at his folly in supposing that a purchaser could form any judgment of a house which he never saw, by having a

single brick set before him. But we are often guilty of far greater folly in pronouncing judgment upon God's ways from the little which we are able to discover. The mighty fabric of his dispensations, like a stately and majestic temple, stretches far above the stars ; while we, mere insignificant moles of the earth, are groping our way in our blindness at the bottom.

But it is not merely in the vastness of their range, that God's thoughts are above ours ; they are so likewise in their contrariety to all our expectations and conclusions. We have a striking instance of this in the way of salvation which He has provided. We should never have supposed, that in saving the sinful sons of men, he would have fixed upon the method which is set forth in the gospel. Could we have conceived it possible that his own co-equal and co-eternal Son should become our Saviour, and especially that he would take our nature into mysterious union with his own for that object ? Or, if we had

been informed that this was necessary, in what manner should we have expected him to appear? He would have been born, according to our conceptions, of parents the most illustrious and exalted, and have proceeded in his subsequent career with the utmost pomp and splendour, overcoming all opposition, if any existed, by manifestations of irresistible authority, and ride through the world in his triumphal chariot, conquering and to conquer. Such were in fact the thoughts of the Jews, and similar, doubtless, would have been our anticipations. Never should we have dreamt of his appearing as he did; that, Ancient of eternal days as he was, he should be born in a stable and cradled in a manger; that he should live for many years as a humble mechanic, working as a carpenter with his reputed father; that after he commenced his public career he should be despised and rejected, and be a poor homeless and almost friendless outcast; and that, finally, he should be arraigned, tried condemned and cruci-

fied as a malefactor. Had we received any pre-intimations that this would take place, and that in such a manner our redemption from sin and death and hell was to be effected, how utterly incredible would it have seemed. To the carnal mind it has been thus regarded in all ages. The preaching of Christ crucified was not merely to the Jews a stumbling-block, but to the Greeks foolishness. That one who was put to death as an impostor should be the Son of God and the Saviour of men, and that peace and pardon here, and everlasting glory hereafter, can be secured through him alone—with what proud disdain, by the wise of this world, has the strange doctrine been rejected !

Many other examples might be adduced to shew the contrariety which exists between God's thoughts and our thoughts, between his ways and our ways. But of this let us be fully assured that the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and that the weakness of God is stronger than men. His

proceedings, both of grace and of providence, may be often unsearchable, and past finding out; his path may be in the great waters, and his footsteps not known: yet, notwithstanding, he is wise in heart as well as mighty in strength; excellent in counsel as well as wonderful in working. Let us then ascribe greatness and glory unto our God. "He is the rock, his work is perfect; for all his ways are judgment; a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he."

30TH DAY.

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord,
and in the power of his might."—
Eph. vi. 10.

Restraining THE chief source of the
believer's weakness is self-
Grace. confidence, while the se-
cret of his strength is to be "strong in
the grace which is in Christ Jesus."
The strength of Samson was in his hair,
for when his locks were shaven he
became weak as other men; but our
strength lies out of ourselves, even in
him who is our great and glorious
Head.

What the most valiant are when
unsustained by power from on high,
appears from many mournful examples.
If ever there was an individual who
might be regarded as a spiritual Samson,
we should be disposed to look upon
Peter as entitled to such an honour;
his original name being changed for
that of Cephas, which is, by interpreta-
tion, a stone; and to whom a still more

emphatic designation was subsequently applied, as emblematic of whatever was firm and enduring. And yet even this mighty one, who belonged to the class which was called "great in the kingdom of heaven," fell so low that the most fickle and faithless could apply to him the ancient taunt, "Art thou also become weak as we? art thou become like unto us? How art thou fallen, thou son of the morning!"

In meditating upon some flagrant manifestations of human frailty, our feeling has probably been that we could not have acted in so outrageous a manner. While reading the history of the Jews, such a thought is not unlikely to have suggested itself. When we call to mind how they provoked God in the wilderness, we have supposed, had we been there, that our conduct would have been very different. The things which he did for them were truly marvellous; dividing the Red Sea before them; sinking their enemies like lead in the mighty waters, while they were

conducted to the opposite shore in safety. There, to celebrate this amazing interposition, they united with glowing ardour in singing, "Who is like unto thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders !" But for these very persons, before many months had passed over, to set up a golden calf, to bow down before it, and ascribe their deliverance to it ! Our feeling doubtless is that we could not possibly have done such a thing : however frail our nature and deceitful our hearts, yet that nothing could have induced us to be guilty of an act so monstrously gross and revolting.

It is not, however, for us to palm ourselves thus, or imagine that we are any better than they. Far more becoming will be the spirit which dictated the well-known language of a good man, who, on beholding the condemned criminals passing by his house to the place of execution, was accustomed to exclaim, "There goes John Bradford, but for the grace of God !" In the

murmurings and idolatries of the ancient tribes; in Peter when, with awful oaths, he thrice denied his master; in David when he went to such fearful lengths in sin as caused the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme—in their case, and that of many others, we see the horrible pits into which we might have sunk, the mire of pollution in which we might have been wallowing, were it not for the restraining and preserving influences of divine grace.

The strongest believer has been compared to a wine-glass, of which the leg or bottom part has been broken. It will only stand as it is held up. And what says the Saviour? "My sheep are in my hand;" as much as to say, were I to leave them for a single instant, down they would go. How suitable, then, is the prayer, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe; and I will have respect unto thy statutes continually." And how encouraging the truth set forth in that lofty ascription, in which the apostle says on behalf of

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his Christian brethren: "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy: to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and for ever. Amen."


31st DAY.

"Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace."—
Isaiah xxxvii. 37.

The Happy Departure. It often happens that a gloomy day is followed by a bright and pleasant evening. The heavens had been overcast, as with a funeral pall; the fogs had condensed themselves into thick vapours, and after obscuring the sun, seemed bent upon altogether extinguishing his beams. For several hours the gloom continues, but at length the clouds begin to disperse, the sun begins to shine, and nature smiles once more with gladness and beauty. So it has been in the experience of many an afflicted believer. In their case the words have been verified, "And it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light." Even in the temporal arrangements of divine providence, this has often occurred, as the history of

such men as Jacob and Job testify. In clouds and darkness the greater part of their lives was past ; but the Lord turned again the captivity of the one, and disappointed the unbelieving fears and forebodings of the other.

It is, however, at the final close of life's day that the heavenly light generally shines most brightly. How many a dying Christian, who had spent years upon years in awful bondage through fear of the last struggle, have been filled with peace and joy when the time of their long dreaded departure has arrived. They often wept upon the mountains of Zion, but when passing through the valley of the shadow of death they have rejoiced. Their harps which had been so frequently hung upon the willows, have been taken down to sing the Lord's song, not merely in a strange land, but in the strangest and most unfrequented part of it. Unaccountable as it may appear, their confidence often waxes stronger and stronger in proportion as nature decays and death approaches.



Hence the prophet states that "their peace shall be as a river," which flows broader and deeper as it reaches the ocean.

A believer, although he has to feel the *stroke*, has nothing to dread from the *sting* of death. To him, as to others, it is an enemy; but in his case it is a conquered enemy. Through Him who spoiled the grim tyrant of his power, saying, "O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction;" the feeblest saint can bid him defiance, and trample him beneath his feet.

It is recorded of a soldier on the field of battle, who had fought on the side which had been successful, but who was himself mortally wounded, that while left among the heaps of the slain, he dipped his finger in the warm stream of his blood which was copiously flowing, and with it he wrote upon his shield the word "Victory!" and having done so, he slept his last long sleep with his comrades around him. In this dying soldier we have a striking emblem of the

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dying saint. He dies, and dies with his shield beside him ; that shield which had been his companion in many a conflict, and which had often caused the fiery darts of sin and Satan to bound back, leaving him unscathed and uninjured. On it he too can write "Victory," and write it with blood, though not his own—blood far more precious, even that of the great Captain of his salvation. In his happy experience is brought to pass the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory."

Reader ! hast thou a saving interest in Him who abolished death ? If so, thou hast nothing to fear. Even should it seem probable that the period is not far distant when thou wilt have "to arise and depart," that should not cause thy spirit to be cast down ; for it will only be a speedier exchange of the pilgrim's staff for the conqueror's palm, the discomforts of a stormy and perilous voyage for the haven of perfect rest, the night of weeping for the cloudless splendours of an eternal day. But the

time, whether sooner or later, is of no great moment. It is sufficient to know that we are in His hands, who has the keys of the invisible world, and is Lord both of the dead and living. The great point is to be in a state of habitual readiness, having our loins girt, and our lamps burning; so that whenever the signal is given, we may have nothing to do but close our eyes, and yield our breath.

“It matters little at what hour the righteous falls asleep:

Death cannot come to him untimely who is prepared to die:

The less of this cold world, the more of heaven;
The briefer life, the earlier immortality.”

THE END.

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