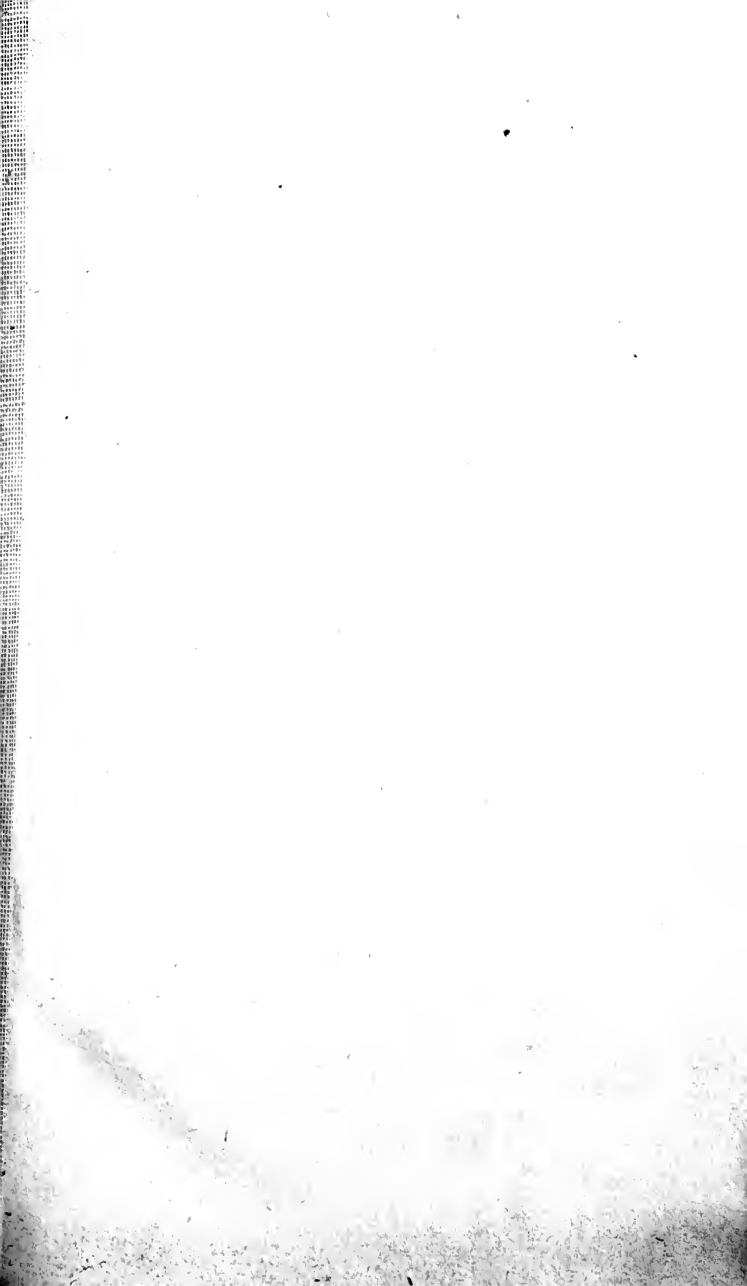


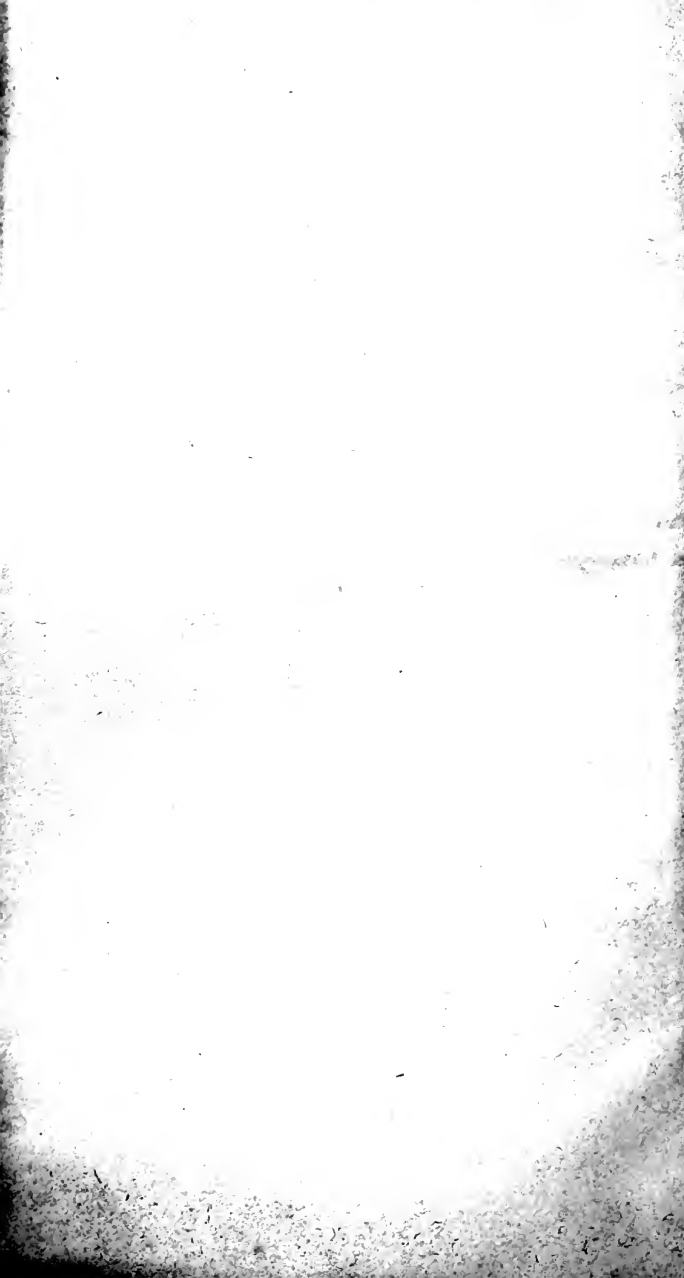


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Evening exercises for the
closet





✓ EVENING EXERCISES

FOR THE

JAN 15

CLOSET:

FOR

EVERY DAY IN THE YEAR.

BY WILLIAM JAY.

" Not to know at large of things remote
From use, obscure, and subtle, but to know
That which before us lies in daily life,
Is the prime wisdom. What is more is fume,
Emptiness, or fond impertinence ;
And renders us, in things that most concerns
Unpractis'd, unprepar'd, and still to seek."

MILTON.

" Thy word is everlasting truth,
How pure is every page !
That Holy Book shall guide our youth,
And well support our age. "

WATTS.

The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream ; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat ? saith the LORD. "

JEREMIAH.

VOL. I.

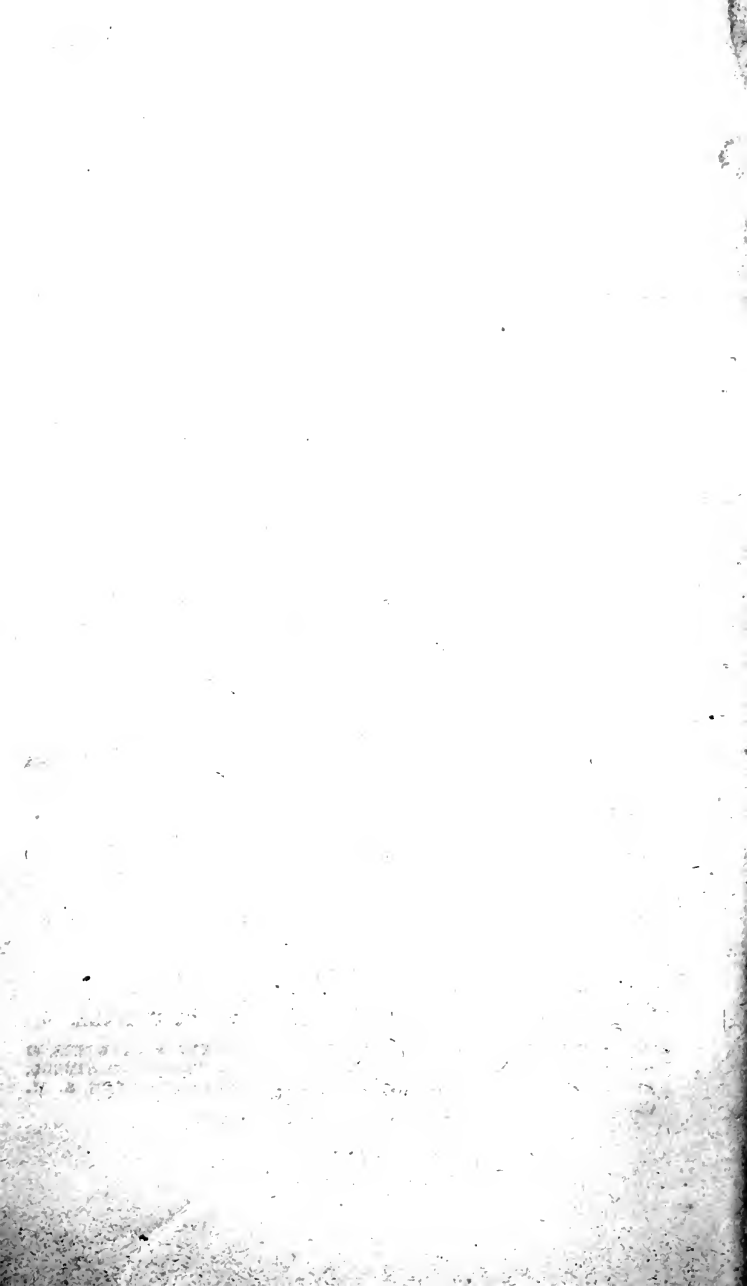
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1832.



TO

WILLIAM WILBERFORCE, Esq.

MY DEAR SIR,

I am not certain that my motive was quite pure, when I felt a very powerful desire that, in a way of some little publicity and continuance, I might appear associated with one so esteemed and illustrious as the man whose name dignifies this page, and at whose feet I presume to lay these volumes.

A writer of judgment and wit has somewhere said, that "there are good persons with whom it will be soon enough to be acquainted in heaven." But there are individuals with whom it is no common privilege to have been acquainted on earth.

It is now more than forty years since the writer of this address was indulged and honoured with your notice and friendship. During this period, (so long in the brevity of human life!) he has had many opportunities of deriving great pleasure and profit from your private conversation; and also of observing, in your public career, the proofs you have displayed of the orator, the statesman, the advocate of enlightened freedom, and the feeling, fearless, persevering, and successful opponent of a traffic "that is a reproach to any people." But he would be unworthy of the ministry he fills, and be ashamed of the age he has now reached, as a professed follower of your Lord and Saviour, if he could not increasingly say, with Young,

"A CHRISTIAN is the highest style of man."

All other greatness is, in the view of faith, seducing and dangerous; in actual enjoyment, unsatisfactory and vain; and in duration, fleeting and momentary. "The world passeth away, and the lusts thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." The expectation of the man who has his "portion in this life" is continually deteriorating; for every hour brings him nearer the loss of all his treasure; and "as he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of

his labour, which he may carry away in his hand." But the "good hope through grace," which animates the believer, is always approaching its realities; and therefore grows, with the lapse of time, more valuable and more lively. As it is spiritual in its quality, and heavenly in its object, it does not depend on outward things, and is not affected with the decays of nature. Like the Glastonbury thorn, fabulously planted by Joseph of Arimathæa, it blooms in the depth of winter. It "brings forth fruit in old age." "At evening-tide it is light"—"For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day."

And this, my dear sir, you are now happily experiencing, at the close of more than "threescore years and ten." And I hail you, not as descending towards the grave under the applause of nations, but as an heir of immortality, "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." Attended with the thanksgivings of the truly wise and good on your behalf, and in the comforts of the Holy Ghost, and with an unsullied religious reputation, you are finishing a course, which you have been enabled to pursue through evil report and through good report; undeviatingly, unabatingly; forgetful of none of the claims of personal or relative godliness, amidst all the cares and engagements of a popularity peculiarly varied and extensive; neglecting, in addition to the influence of example, no means to recommend the one thing needful to others; and, even from the press, defending the interests of practical Christianity, in a work so widely circulated, so justly admired, and so pre-eminently useful, especially among the higher classes in society.

Nor can I omit the opportunity of acknowledging, individually, the obligations I feel myself under to your zeal and wisdom, when, in the novitiate of my ministry, your correspondence furnished me with hints of admonition, instruction, and encouragement, to which I owe much of any degree of acceptance and usefulness with which I have been favoured. Nor can I forbear also to mention another benefactor, whose name I know is as dear to every feeling of your heart as it is to every feeling of my own—the Rev. JOHN NEWTON. With this incomparable man I was brought into an early intimacy, in consequence of his addressing me without solicitation, and when personally unknown to him, in counsels and advice the most seasonable, just as I had emerged into public life, peculiarly young, and inexperienced, and exposed. These opportune advantages, for which I would be daily thankful, recal the exclamation of Solomon, "A word fitly spoken, how good is it!" and lead me to lament that persons so seldom, in this way, seek or even seize opportunities of

usefulness. How often do they omit to avail themselves of the influence which God, by their rank, or wisdom, or piety, or age, has given them over others, for their good; though it is a talent for which they are responsible; and the use of which would often be as welcome in the exertion as important in the results.

The years which have passed over our acquaintance have been no ordinary ones. They have been signalized by some of the most important events that could affect other nations or our own. I am sufficiently aware of your sentiments, and fully accord with them in thinking, that while, as men and citizens, we cannot be indifferent to the state of public affairs, but ought to be alive to the welfare of a country that has such unexampled claims to our attachment and gratitude; yet that, as Christians, we should judge of things by a rule of our own; and esteem those the best days in which the best cause flourishes most. Now while we have suffered much, and have had much to deplore, yet "the walls of the temple" have been rising "in troublous times," and our political gloom has been relieved by more than gleams of religious glory. Let us not ask with some, "What is the cause that the former days were better than these?" The fact itself is, at least as to spiritual things, certainly inadmissible. Conceding that eighty or ninety years ago we had fewer taxes, and many of the articles of life were more cheaply purchasable, how much more than counterbalanced was this, by an unconverted ministry, a people perishing for lack of knowledge, a general carelessness with regard to the soul, and an entire unconcern for the enlargement of the Redeemer's kingdom!

At our first interview we could refer to none of the many glorious institutions which are now established. I have not space to enumerate them, nor must I yield myself to enlarge on their claims. But, reluctantly to pass by others, one of these has been surpassed by nothing since the days of the Apostles; and when I refer to the importance of its design, the simplicity and wisdom of its constitution, the rapidity of its growth, the vastness of its success, the number of languages into which it has translated the Scriptures, and the immensity of copies which it has distributed, I need not say I mean the British and Foreign Bible Society, which may God preserve uninjured, and continue to smile upon till all shall possess the unsearchable riches of Christ! Since then too, what an extension has there been of Evangelical doctrine in the establishment and among the Dissenters; and, I fearlessly add, of the genuine influences of Divine grace in the hearts and lives of thousands—Surely no unprejudiced individual can trace these things, compara-

tively with what preceded them, and not exclaim, "God hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad."

I rejoice, my dear Sir, that a person of your consideration is in the healthful number of those who, notwithstanding the contemptuous denial of some, and the gloomy forebodings of others, believe that real religion *has* been advancing, and *is* spreading, and *will* continue to spread, till, without any disruption of the present system, "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

You do not expect that a country called by his name, and in which he has such a growing multitude of followers, will be given up of God; and the fountain from which so many streams of health and life are issuing to bless the world, will be destroyed. You justly think that the way to gain more is not to despise or disown what the Spirit of God has graciously done for us already: and that the way to improvement is not to run down and condemn every present scheme, attainment, and exertion, because they are not free from those failings which some are too studious to discover, too delighted to expose, and too zealous to enlarge and magnify. If we are not to be weary in well-doing, we need not only exhortation, but hope, which is at once the most active as well as the most cheerful principle. Nothing so unnerves energy and slackens diligence as despondency. Nothing is equally contagious with fear. Those who feel alarm always love to transfuse it. Awful intimations of approaching evils are not only congenial with the melancholic, but the dissatisfied; and while they distress the timid, they charm those who are given to change. It is also easy to perceive that when men have committed themselves in woful announcements, they immediately feel a kind of prophetic credit at stake, and are under a considerable temptation to welcome disasters as prognostics: for though they may professedly pray against the judgments, they know, and this is a great drawback to their fervency, that their avowed creed requires the calamities as vouchers of the wisdom and truth of their interpretations. If, to preserve his reputation from suspicion, after he had cried, Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be destroyed, Jonah himself was sad and sullen, and thought he did well to be angry even unto death, because the city, with all the men, women, children, and cattle, was not demolished, according to his word! what may not be feared from human nature now, if exercised with similar *disappointments*?

As, owing to the mildness and justice of the laws of the paternal government under which we are privileged to live, there is now no

outward persecution ; and yet, as religion always requires to be tried, we must expect that "from among ourselves will men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them:" for "there must be heresies, that they which are of a contrary part may be made manifest." In such cases many are "tossed about by every wind of doctrine" till they make "shipwreck of faith and a good conscience." Others, who are not destroyed, suffer loss, especially in the simple, affectionate, devotional frame of their spirit. If *good* men are injured, they are commonly beguiled : *they* are drawn aside by something piously specious. Any proposal, directly erroneous or sinful, would excite their alarm as well as aversion. But if the enemy comes transformed into an angel of light, they think they ought not only to receive, but welcome a heavenly visitant : if he enters with the Bible only in his hand, and claims to fix their regards to any thing on that holy ground, they feel themselves not only safe, but even following the will of God :—not considering that if, even in the Scriptures, the speculative entices us away from the practical, and the mysterious from the plain ; and something, though true and good in itself, but subordinate, engrosses the time and attention which should be supremely absorbed by repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ—his aim may be answered, and "Satan get an advantage over us." Such persons, acting conscientiously, become as determined as martyrs ; and continually musing upon one chosen topic, they grow as passionate as lovers, and wonder that all others are not like-minded with them.

"The worst of madmen is a saint run mad."

There is not only a pride in dress, and beauty, and riches, and rank, and talent ; but of opinion also : a kind of mental vanity, that seeks distinction by peculiarity ; and would draw notice by separateness : as that which stands alone is more observable, especially when noise is added to position. In this case the female is easily betrayed beyond some of the decorums of her sex ; the younger will not submit to the elder ; the hearer sits in judgment on the preacher ; and he that is wise in his own conceit will be wiser than seven men that can render a reason. For

"Fools rush in where angels fear to tread."

Mushrooms, and less saleable funguses, are ordinarily found in a certain kind of rich and rank soil. When religion, from being neglected, becomes all at once the subject of general attention, many will not only be impressed, but surprised and perplexed. The light,

good in itself, may for the time be too strong for the weakness of the eye, and the suddenness of the glare may dazzle rather than enlighten. It is very possible for the Church, when roused from a state of lethargy, to be in danger from the opposite extreme. The frost of formality may be followed by the fever of enthusiasm. Whenever, indeed, there is a high degree of religious excitement, it cannot be wonderful, considering human ignorance, prejudice, and depravity, that there should be some visionary and strange ebullitions. We have witnessed some of these during the years that are past; but the day in which we now are is singular for the revival (with some perhaps perfectly new pretensions) of most of the notions that were fermented into being at the time of the Commonwealth, and which were then opposed by Owen, Baxter, and others, who had more divinity in their little finger than is to be found in the body, soul, and spirit, of many of the modern innovators and improvers, who imagine that *their* light is not only "the light of the sun, but the light of seven days!"

A review of history will show us that, at the return of less than half a century, some have commonly risen up eager and able to determine the times and the seasons, which the Father hath put into his own power, and which the *Apostles* were told it was not for *them* to know. And the same confidence has always been attended with the same success. No gain has ever followed the efforts worthy the time and attention expended upon them; no addition has ever been made to the understanding of the Scriptures; no fresh data have been established from which preachers could safely argue; no practical utility has been afforded to Christians in their private walk with God. And as their documents were not capable of demonstration; as for want of certainty they could not become principles of conduct; and as no great impression can be long maintained on the public mind that is not based on obvious truth; the noise of the warfare after a while has always died away, and left us with the conviction that "there is no prophet among us; nor any that telleth how long."

Some prove, in their spiritual genealogy, a descent from Reuben, of whom the dying father said, "unstable as water, thou shalt not excel." Yet they may strike, and produce a *temporary* impression in their favour, especially in a country like this; a country proverbial for its credulity, and its more than Athenian rage for something new, whatever be the *nature* of it. In England—

("England, with all thy faults I love thee still—
 —————and I can feel
 Thy follies too")—

in England, it has been said by a satirical yet just observer, that "any monster will make a man:" that is, be the means of rendering him renowned or rich. Who can question this for a moment, that has patience to mortify himself as a Briton by reflection and review? Take prodigies. Dwarfs, giants, unnatural births, deformities—the more hideous, the more repelling the spectacles, the more attractive and popular have they always been. Take empiricisms. Their name is Legion; from animal magnetism and the metallic tractors, down to the last infallible remedy for general or specific complaints; all attested and recommended by the most unexceptionable authorities, especially in high life! Take the feats which have been announced for exhibition. Whatever the promiser has engaged to perform, whether to walk upon the water, or draw himself into a bottle, what large crowds have been drawn together at the time appointed, and with no few of the better sort of people always among them! How has learning been trifled with and degraded! Two or three insulated facts, and a few doubtful or convertible appearances, have been wrought up into a SCIENCE; and some very clever men have advocated its claims to zealous belief, and contrived to puzzle the opponents they could not convince. In the article of preaching, what manœuvres of popularity have not been successfully tried, till there seems hardly any thing left for an experimenter—unless to vociferate with his heels in the air—This would certainly produce greater congregations than any which have been witnessed—and who could deny that there would be something in the case *preter-natural*?

But what exemplifications, had we leisure to pursue them, should we find in the article of religious absurdity and extravagance! Has any thing been ever broached with confidence that has not gained considerable attention? Did not the effusions of a Brothers, who died where only he should have lived, in confinement for madness, secure numerous believers and admirers? Had he not defenders from the press? Did he not obtain the notice of a very learned senator in the House of Commons? And as to the Exeter prophetess, without any one quality to recommend her but ignorance, impudence, and blasphemy; yet did she not make a multitude of converts, not only among the canaille, but among persons of some distinction? and had she not followers and defenders even among the clergy themselves?—Not to observe that when she reported that she should soon be the mother of the infant Messiah, a medical practitioner of some eminence, and the author of a useful work for families, came forward and staked his credit on her being enceinte!

All reasoning and all ridicule for the time only served to contribute to the force and obstinacy of the folly. But how just, here, is the remark of an eminent female writer—"Such preposterous pretensions being obviously out of the power of human nature to accomplish, the very extravagance is believed to be supernatural. It is the impossibility which makes the assumed certainty; as the epilepsy of Mahomet confirmed his claims to inspiration." And is there nothing now going forward far exceeding in credulous wonder, arrogant pretension, and miraculous boasting, all that has gone before it, in a country which, in a twofold sense, may well be called "a land of vision?"*

One way to become sceptical is, instead of remembering our Lord's words, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them," to become critical and curious in religion. A very fruitful source of error is to trample on the distinction of Moses; "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law." The sciences and the arts being human inventions, and therefore not only finite, but imperfect, will allow of new discoveries; and every innovation is commonly an improvement, or by experiment it is soon rejected: but we make no scruple to say, that novelty in religion is needless, dangerous, delusive. We are to receive the kingdom of God as a little child. The design of the Gospel is to "cast down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and to bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

The maxim, often quoted, of a very great and a very good man, who blesses and adorns our own age, and who furnishes another proof that first-rate minds are simple and free from eccentricities—"Though we are not to be wise above what is written, we should be wise up to what is written;" has been made to justify more than he intended. The Apostle considers it a reproach to be "always learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth:" and it is a matter of lamentation when persons, perhaps well disposed, are seized with the imagination that there is something of importance to be yet found out in religion, instead of walking in the light, and having the heart established with grace. And what is the subject of these possible or desirable developments? And what lack of

* If a person wishes to see this subject fully treated, he would do well to read a late publication, called, "Modern Fanaticism Unveiled." The work is anonymous, but the author not only writes with great ability and spirit, but is a determined advocate for Evangelical religion, and says nothing (which is always to be dreaded in such discussions) to the disparagement of *serious* or *fervent* piety.

motive or of consolation did *they* feel, who have gone before us in every kind of excellency? And what more perfect characters can we expect than the Leightons and Howes, who, it now seems, were denied illuminations conferred on individuals just entering into the kingdom of God, without a religious education, and from the midst of worldly dissipation or indifference? And where are the superior effects of discoveries, which we are assured not only possess truth, but are of the greatest efficiency? We need not be afraid to compare the converts, the benefactors, the sufferers, the martyrs of one school with those of another. "No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new, for he saith, the old is better."

Here again it is refreshing and delightful, to turn to one distinguished by consistency, and who has awakened and retained attention so long, not by strangeness, but excellence; not by crying, Lo, here; or, lo, there! but by walking stedfastly in the truth; and whose path has not been the glare of the meteor, or the "lawless sweep of the comet," but the shining light of the sun, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. Nothing would be more satisfactory to the dedicator, now in the evening of life, than to be able to think, that in this particular he had been in some measure the follower of his admired and honoured friend. And by the grace of God he can say, that it has been his *aim* and *prayer* to move straight on, never turning aside to the right hand or to the left, to avail himself of any temporary and adventitious aids of popular applause; constantly engaged in pressing only the plain and essential principles of the Gospel, and in matters of inferior importance, if not of disputable truth, having faith, to have it to himself before God.

There has been, perhaps, some little shade of difference in our doctrinal views; but as it has not been sufficient to impair your approbation of my preaching and writings, so I am persuaded you will find nothing in these volumes, should you ever look into them, to offend, even if an occasional reflection does not *perfectly* suit your own convictions. In one thing it is certain we differ. We are not unwilling respectively to own the Episcopalian and the Dissenter. But in this distinction, we feel conviction without censure, and avow preference without exclusion. And has Providence no concern in such results as these? Suppose, my dear Sir, you had been placed originally in my circumstances, and I had been placed in yours. Is it impossible or improbable that each of us might have been differently minded from what we now are? Yet who determines the bounds of our habitations? Who administers the events of our birth, and of the days of our earlier and most dura-

ble impressions? Who arranges the contacts into which we are brought with religious connexions and spiritual instructors? And does not bigotry, that quarrels with every thing else, arraign the agency of the Most High, and, indirectly at least, censure Him? We do not use this argument without qualification, or push it to every extent; but there are evidently some who not only "judge another man's servant," but another man's master.

We may in a degree value ourselves as being members of a particular church, but we shall be saved only as members of the church universal: and if we are in a right spirit, we shall prize the name of a Christian a thousand times more than any other name, however extensive or esteemed the religious body from which it is derived.

Uniformity of sentiment may be viewed much in the same way with equality of property. In each case the thing itself is perfectly impracticable; and if it could be attained it would be injurious, rather than useful. It would abrogate many divine injunctions, contract the sphere of relative virtue, and exclude various duties, which go far into the amiableness and perfection of Christian character. No; it is better to have the protection of the sovereign, and the obedience of the subject; the wages of the master, and the labour of the servant; the condescension of the rich, and the respect of the poor; the charity of the benefactor, and the gratitude of the receiver. "If all were the seeing where were the hearing?" The hands and the feet could not dispense with each other, or even exchange their place and office. If persons acted from hypocrisy, formality, and education only, they might present a kind of sameness; but if they think for themselves, as they are not only allowed, but required to do, it is easy to see, that with the differences there are in the structure of mind, and in outward opportunities and advantages, they cannot fall precisely into the same views. But let them exercise forbearance and candour, let them emulate each other, let the strong bear the infirmities of the weak, and not please themselves;—and we shall have a sum of moral excellence, far superior to what could be derived from a dull, still, stagnant conformity of opinions. And is it not for this state of things, among those "that hold the head, even Christ," that the Apostle provides? "Let every one be fully persuaded in his own mind." "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God

hath received him. One man esteemeth one day above another : another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord ; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord, he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks ; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks. For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord ; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord : whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living. But why dost thou judge thy brother ? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother ? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." The quotation is long, but I fear the principles of the reasoning and the enforcements are not as yet duly regarded by any religious party, though there are, in our respective communities, individuals who walk by the same rule, and mind the same thing. And I cannot forbear adding a few more of those fine texts, which do not exclude the *number*, but diminish the *importance* of the articles of difference, and press only those in which Christians agree. "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink ; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." "We are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." "In Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision ; but faith which worketh by love." Let us abide in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free. He has set our feet in a large place. There is room enough in the plain around Stonehenge, for persons to walk and commune together very commodiously—Why should they try to get on some old molehills, or barrows over the dead, or hedge banks, where they must press against each other, or jostle each other down ?

A cordial agreement in the essentials of the Gospel *should* induce us to put up with minor differences ; and a superior and constant engagement of the soul to the most important objects of religion *will* draw off, *comparatively*, the attention from inferior ones, leaving us neither leisure or relish for them.

When therefore, in reference to the latter day of glory, it is said,

“they shall see eye to eye,” we are persuaded, with Baxter, that there may not be a much more complete uniformity of opinion in many things than there now is. But there will be a more perfect accordance *in* great things, and a more perfect agreement *concerning* lesser ones. They will see eye to eye as to the propriety of one measure ;—That if we cannot be of one mind, we should, like the first converts at Jerusalem, be “of one heart and of one soul.”

“But does not the Scriptures speak much of unity among Christians?” It does—And what that oneness is may be inferred from fact as well as from reasoning. The Saviour prayed that “all” his followers might be “one:” and God had before promised that he would give his people “one heart and one way.” Now it can hardly be supposed that this prayer and this promise had not been accomplished. But if they *have* been fulfilled, it has not been in a sameness of sentiment with regard to a number of things pertaining to religion, but with regard to the substance of religion itself:—a oneness unaffected by minuter distinctions ; a oneness, which included as servants of the same Lord, and as guests at the same table, a Hopkins and a Bates, a Watts and a Newton, a Porteus and a Hall : a oneness that resembles the identity of human nature, notwithstanding all the varieties of man.

When will some persons believe or remember, that where there are no parts there can be no union ? That where there is no variety there can be no harmony ? That it does not follow because one thing is right that another is absolutely wrong ? That others differ no further from us than we differ from others ? That it is meanness and injustice to assume a freedom we refuse to yield ? That children, differing in age, and size, and dress, and schooling, and designation, belong to the same family ? And that the grain growing in various fields and distances is wheat still, sown by the same hand, and to be gathered into the same garner ?

And would it not be well for us often to reflect on the state of things in another world, where it is believed by all, that the differences which now too often keep the true disciples of Christ at a distance from each other, will be done away ? And to ask ourselves whether we are not likely to be the more complete, the more we resemble the spirits of just men made perfect ? And whether we *must* not have a meetness for glory before we *can* enjoy it ?—But what preparation in kind, what in degree, for such a communion above, have they who feel only aversion to all those who, however holy and heavenly, walk not with them in the outward order of religious administrations ? How special and circumscribed

is what some mean by the communion of saints! It only respects those within their own enclosures. They would inhibit their members from having much intercourse in company, and from all, even occasional intermixture in religious exercises, with those they hope to mingle with for ever. But not to observe that such intercourse and intermixture are perfectly consistent with general and avowed regularity of preference and practice; and the good influence it has to remove the haughty and offensive repulsion of exclusiveness;— Is there (as “we are taught of God to love one another;” and as “every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him,”) is there no danger of putting a force upon pious tendencies, and of chilling the warmth of holy emotions by the coldness and abstraction of system and rules? The remark of Paley on another subject may be well applied here. He is arguing the propriety of refusing every application of common beggars for relief. Some, he observes, have recommended the practice by strong reasonings, and he himself seems much inclined to the same side. But he is too frank not to ask, “Yet, after all, is it not to be feared, lest such invariable refusing should suffocate benevolent feeling?”

You, my dear Sir, are a proof that Christian liberality may abound, without laxity and without inconsistency. And other instances of the same lovely character are increasingly coming forward; in which we see how rigid contention for minor partialities can yield to the force of Christian charity, and disappear before the grandeur of “the common salvation,” and the grace of “one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all.” “Perhaps,” says Robert Hall, “there never was so much unanimity witnessed among the professors of serious piety as at the present. Systems of religion fundamentally erroneous are falling into decay, while the subordinate points of difference, which do not affect the principal verities of Christianity, nor the ground of hope, are either consigned to oblivion, or are the subjects of temperate and amicable controversy; and in consequence of their subsiding to their just level, the former appear in their great and natural magnitude. And if the religion of Christ ever assumes her ancient lustre, and we are assured by the highest authority she will, it must be by retracing our steps, by reverting to the original principles on which, as a social institution, it was founded; we must go back to the simplicity of the first ages; we must learn to quit a subtle and disputatious theology, for a religion of love, emanating from a few divinely energetic principles, which pervade every page of inspiration, and

demand nothing for their adoption and belief besides an humble and contrite heart."

Bunyan, in his Holy War, says, that Mr. Prejudice fell down and broke his leg: "I wish," adds the honest and (Mr. Southey himself does not refuse him the attribute) the matchless allegorist—"he had broken his neck." Cordially joining in this devout wish, and apologizing for the undesigned length and freedom of this desultory address, allow me, with every sentiment of regard and esteem, to subscribe myself,

My dear Sir,

Your much obliged and humble

Friend and Servant,

WM. JAY.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THIS Advertisement is not in the nature of an apology. If the Work be good it needs none, if bad it deserves none. But it is to intimate the reasons of the Author's engaging so soon again in a similar Publication with the former. They were, the peculiar acceptance "The Morning Exercises for the Closet" have met with; the many testimonies of their usefulness he has received; and the various applications addressed to him by Christians and Ministers, (the names of some of whom it would seem vain were he to mention,) exciting him to send forth a companion to them for the Evening. He is fully aware that "the importunity of friends," so frequently urged by writers for their appearing before the Public, is a justification perhaps never sufficient, and not always *very* true—Yet it is certain, that, but for this provocative, the following reflections had never seen the light.

The Author hopes, however, that this second series of three hundred and sixty-five Exercises to aid the retired Christian "at evening-tide to meditate," will be no less approved and useful than the preceding number. He has not paid less attention in the selection and execution of the subjects—but that attention has been paid amidst the numerous engagements of an extensive charge, and through the greatest period of the Work also, under the anguish and anxieties of the most trying domestic affliction. He has no doubt but in seven hundred and thirty Exercises of this kind, the same thought and illustration sometimes, and perhaps nearly in the same words, may occur. But they occur in new positions and connexions; and the prevention was almost impossible. Many of his readers will perceive marks of that haste which was also inevitable; and they who are accustomed to composition themselves,

will know how hard it is to write on any interesting and fertile topic, under the restraints of a great and prescribed brevity ; and how unfriendly to ornament is perpetual effort at condensation. " If I have done well, and as is fitting the story, it is that which I desired : but if slenderly and meanly, it is that which I could attain unto."

Percy Place, Bath, December 10th, 1831.

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EVENING EXERCISES

FOR THE CLOSET.

JANUARY 1.—"And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me."—Acts xx. 22, 23.

PAUL here speaks of himself as an Apostle. But the facts he expresses with regard to his official destination, will apply to our experience as men, and as Christians. And we may derive from them a reflection peculiarly seasonable, at the commencement of another annual period of our time—With regard to the future, he was both ignorant and informed; unacquainted with some things, but well apprized of others.

Though Paul sometimes prophesied, he could not command the attribute of foreknowledge when he pleased. The use of it was always a miracle, and limited to a particular subject. He was therefore left uninformed of the ordinary course of life; and had to learn the will of God by events. Hence he says to the Philippians, "I hope presently to send Timothy, as soon as I see how it will go with me." It is the same with us; and as he was now going up to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that would befall him there, so are we entering into another year, not knowing what a day may bring forth. But is this to be lamented? "Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight." The concealment is wise, and kind. We may judge of this by our past feelings. Had we been previously informed of the scenes through which we have passed, our hearts would have failed at the thought: yet when the dispensations came, we were able to bear them, and had been really though unconsciously prepared for them. And suppose we were now informed of some of the changes we may be called to endure in the months before us, we should be seized perhaps with an overpowering surprise and oppression, rendering us dead to all present enjoyments, and incapable of every present engagement. He therefore says, "I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight: these things will I do unto them, and not forsake them." Let us trust in Him. He claims the full confidence of the heart, not only by his goodness but by his wisdom. Although we go out not knowing whither we go, He knoweth the way that we take. Nothing can deceive or

perplex our guide. Especially let us check the workings of a vain curiosity. To this we are naturally prone. All pant to draw back the veil, and peep into futurity. But none are entrusted with its secrets. Even our Lord's own disciples were rebuked for wishing to know the times and the seasons which the Father reserved in his own power. This advice will be found to be not only our duty but our privilege—our “strength” here “is to sit still.” We may consider the year before us, as a desk containing three hundred and sixty-five letters, addressed to us, one for every day, announcing its trials, and prescribing its employments—with an order to open daily no letter but the letter for the day. Now we may be strongly tempted to unseal beforehand some of the remainder; but this would only serve to embarrass us, while we should violate thereby the rule our Owner and Master had laid down for us—“Take, therefore, no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”

But Paul's ignorance was not entire. Though he knew not *what* in particular would befall him at *Jerusalem*, yet the Holy Ghost testified that in every place bonds and afflictions awaited him; so that he was sure of one thing—sure of being always a sufferer, for the sake of the Lord Jesus. And thus it is with us. Though the future is not laid open to our view, yet it is not concealed from us in every respect and degree. Though we know not what is to come in the detail, we can apprehend much of it in the mass. Indeed, without some reliance on the general course of things, we could not properly carry on the system of life. Many of our present duties derive their existence and importance from some future relations. Instinct, in the brute creation, teaches them to look forward: and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; and the ant provideth her meat in the summer and gathereth her food in harvest. And is reason given us in vain? Or is there nothing for it to operate upon beyond the present hour? “The prudent man foreseeth the evil and hideth himself,” says the Scripture. And the same authority adds, “Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee.”

With regard then to the future, in every period, relation, and condition of life, some things may be reckoned upon. Thus, in the natural world, we know that the seasons will come round in their time and place with little variation. “While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease.”

We also know that the general state and usages of society will be what they ever have been. “The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun. Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? It hath been already of old time which was before us.”

We are sure no creature possessions and enjoyments will fully meet our hopes and wishes. They never have produced satisfaction. They were never designed to do it—They are incapable of doing it.

We may certainly expect that trials of one kind or another will be our lot. They grow out of our very state and nature. “Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward.”

We must be infatuated if we are not aware that all our connexions here are precarious. Some may abandon us from insincerity; some may leave us from infirmity; some may be removed to a distance by events; some may be laid in the grave. Need we be informed that the desire of our eyes is mortal? That childhood and youth are vanity?

Can we be ignorant that with growing years we are to look for growing privations and weaknesses? That our senses will decay, that desire will fail, that the grasshopper will be a burden? It is the tax of age. "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength, labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away."

For the living know that they shall die. It is the way of all the earth: and whatever may be doubtful when we look onward, there is not a human being but can say, "I know that Thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living." He knows also that the event cannot be far off—and may be very near.

And is this all that we are apprized of? No. We also know that God will be found the same he always has been—we know that he will always prove himself the hearer of prayer—we know that he will never leave us nor forsake us—we know that our shoes shall be iron and brass; and as our days so shall our strength be—we know that he will guide us with his counsel, and afterward receive us to glory.

JANUARY 2.—"Behold, now is the accepted time, behold, now is the day of salvation."—2 Cor. vi. 2.

THE importance of opportunity is readily acknowledged, and generally if not universally acted upon, with regard to temporal things. The seafaring man, with prudence and diligence, avails himself of the winds, and the tides. The husbandman, when the precious produce of the field is to be secured, is all anxiety and eagerness, lest he should lose a shining hour—and hence it early became a proverb, "He that gathereth in summer is a wise son, he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame." There are interesting conjunctures, and peculiar seasons, which never return; but, according as they are seized or neglected, decide the reputation and the condition of a man for life. But *here* we have an opportunity announced, as superior to every other opportunity, in its relations and consequences, as the soul is superior to the body, and eternity to time—an opportunity to gain acceptance with God, and salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ—"Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

This "now" takes in the whole period of the gospel dispensation, or the duration of the mediatorial reign of Christ. He is now exalted at the right hand of God to be a Prince and a Saviour; to give repentance unto Israel and remission of sins. He is the great High Priest over the house of God, to introduce our persons and services; and while we are reconciled by his death we are saved by his life. For he is now living a life of office as well as of glory.—But this will not continue always. It is commensurate only with

the continuance of the world. "Then cometh the end, when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father." This, in the whole of it, is a very extensive period. It has continued long, and will probably continue many ages longer. But this can only encourage us with regard to mankind successionaly. It is delightful to think that what those have found the Saviour to be who went before, those also will find him to be that shall come after us: for he is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." But as individuals, our season is far less lengthened—at death, the angel swears, with regard to us, that "time shall be no longer."

This "now" therefore is to be considered as the period of life. Patients have been recovered when they seemed incurable, and have been sent back from the very borders of the grave. Persons have been resuscitated when the functions of nature had ceased, and the principle of life seemed extinguished. So some have been saved at the eleventh hour, and they have adored the long suffering of God which proved their salvation—But the redemption of the soul is precious, and after our present state, ceaseth for ever. If there be hope to persons then, it is among the reserves of Divine goodness; He has not been pleased to reveal it. Origen, and his brethren of the same sentiment, were called the merciful doctors: but should their notion be a mistake, and those that rely on it to be confounded for ever, *they* ought to be called the merciful doctors who, knowing the terror of the Lord, persuade men to flee from the wrath to come. But in this view how precious and all-important is life—

"Life is the time to serve the Lord,
The time to ensure the great reward;
And while the lamp holds out to burn,
The vilest sinner may return."

And how instantly and zealously should we avail ourselves of the only season! Especially when we consider how short, and how uncertain the continuance of it is. Another of the threescore years and ten, or of the fifty, or forty, or twenty that measure the whole extent, is gone,—

"And every beating pulse we tell,
Leaves but the number less."

And, O my soul! how many strokes remain! There is but a step between me and death—

"Great God! on what a slender thread
Hang everlasting things!
The eternal state of all the dead
Upon life's feeble strings!"

But this "now" takes in, as distinguished from life at large, every period peculiarly favourable to religion. Youth is such a period. The young have fewer of the cares that perplex and engross us as we plunge deeper into the concerns of this life. Their hearts, though evil, are not yet hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Their consciences, though defiled, are not yet seared as with a hot iron. Their memories, though limited, are not yet choked up with the lumber of the world. Their affections are warm; their strength is firm; their connexions are as yet optional; life is fresh; nature is inviting—and amidst all these advantages, Grace says, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth: while the evil days

come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation."—Such a period is the Sabbath. The Sabbath was made for man. It befriends his civil comfort, his bodily health, and his mental improvement. But it chiefly regards his spiritual and eternal welfare. What a gracious appointment, to draw us once a week out of the world for a whole day—to afford us leisure to examine our character and condition before God—to remind us, in the midst of all other engagements, that one thing is needful—and to urge us, by a thousand motives, "to choose that good part which shall not be taken away from us." How many have found "the Holy of the Lord," an accepted time, and a day of salvation!—Affliction is also such a period. It matters not from whence our troubles arise; they are designed for our profit—"In their affliction they will seek me early." They also naturally tend to impress the mind and soften the heart. They show us the evil of sin, and the vanity of the world; and the need we have of a better home than earth, and a better arm than flesh. Many have been chosen in the furnace of affliction beside Manasseh. How foolish to wish to get our trials removed without their being sanctified! How lamentable to lose the benefit of such a season!—Such is a period of religious excitement. It is said in the Gospel, "The law and the prophets were until John; since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it." And when we see others seeking and finding; delivered from the stings of a guilty conscience, and the tyranny of their passions; becoming meek and patient, and peaceful and happy; does it not powerfully call upon us to "take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew;" and to pray to the God of all grace, "Bless me, even me, also, O my Father?"—Such is the period in which conscience has been awakened and impressed. Perhaps you have had, more than once, such views and feelings, that it has been said of you, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." It was thus with Felix when he trembled. He felt then as he had never felt before, and as he never felt afterwards. But instead of cherishing the conviction, he endeavoured to banish it—and succeeded. Go thy way, said he to the preacher, for this time; when I have a convenient season I will send for thee. That season never came. He saw Paul indeed several times afterwards, but not a word was said concerning the faith in Christ! Beware! your impressions may die away, and never revive. But can you complain? Did you not oppose or neglect them? Beware! All good is from God, but he will not be trifled with. "My Spirit will not always strive with man." "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

JANUARY 3.—"Which things the angels desire to look into."—1 Pet. i. 12.

HAD we only heard of such an order of beings as angels, with all the attributes the Scripture ascribes to them; and then have been told, that there were several subjects with which they were intensely anxious to be acquainted; how eagerly should we have inquired what these things were! And had we been left to conjecture, it is

probable we should have been led astray—yea, it is certain we should have been led astray, had we conjectured under the influence of the spirit of the world. For what do they study? What do merchants, princes, statesmen, study? What do the sons of science and learning study? What are the acquirements, by proficiency in which, men are distinguished among their fellow-creatures, and left on the pinnacle of fame?—But what do *angels* desire to look into? The arts of trade? the secrets of government? the researches of philosophy? the mysteries of nature? No. But the salvation of sinners; the grace of God; the sufferings and glory of Christ—“Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us, they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the Gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.”

Now this fact is announced, not for our amusement, but profit. It shows us what is the necessary condition of all creatures, however high in the scale of being. It is a state of dependence, deficiency, and progressive improvement. Some imagine, as soon as we enter heaven we shall reach an ultimatum beyond which there will be no additions to our knowledge or enjoyment. Such a stagnation of existence, devoid of prospect, energy, and excitement, would be far from desirable, if it were possible—but it is not possible. The future life is called “that which is perfect;” and it *is* perfect, compared with the present: but it is not absolutely so. There is only one Being who is absolutely perfect, whose duration is not lengthened by time, and whose knowledge is not increased by discovery. Nothing is past or future with Him. His understanding is infinite. But angels are creatures, and therefore finite in their faculties as well as we. He chargeth his angels with folly. There are many things of which they are ignorant. Our Lord assures us they know not the day of judgment. The book in the Revelations, whatever were the mysteries it contained, was closed to angels as well as men: for no one in *heaven* as well as in the earth was able to open the book and to look therein, till it was unsealed by the Lord of all. Angels know much now of which they were formerly unconscious, and fresh springs of knowledge and enjoyment are continually opening to them, and calling for a new song of wonder and of praise.

Does it not also show us the vastness of the Gospel? A very inferior master may teach the ignorant; but the honour is to be able to instruct the wise and learned. We should think very highly of one who could have improved Handel in music, and Milton in poetry, and Newton in philosophy. But angels are the flower of the creation; they are always spoken of in Scripture as proverbial for their knowledge; they are the first beings in the universe for intelligence; and are as much above men in their powers as the heavens are higher than the earth. If to these principalities and powers in heavenly places is made known by the church the manifold wisdom

of God; if the Gospel can teach *them*—if it can enlighten and enlarge *their* views—if it draws forth *their* wonder and astonishment; how well may it be called “the deep things of God;” “the wisdom of God in a mystery!” If after having been employed in the works of God, and the administrations of his providence, from the beginning; if after all the scenes which have passed under their review for so many ages; if after seeing dispensation succeeding dispensation, in the Patriarchal, the Jewish, and the Christian economies; if after seeing the fulness of time, and the divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost; if after all this they were still, as Peter asserts, diligently exploring the Gospel, how does it aggrandize the system! This is the system which some suppose may be readily reduced into a form of words drawn up by a fallible man! This is the system whose bounds some imagine they can easily reach, and whose depths they can perfectly fathom! But were they angels, they would exclaim, “O the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!”

We learn also the excellency as well as the vastness, the value as well as the immensity of the Gospel. Would such beings as these trifle? Does not their attention prove that the subject is worthy of all acceptance? Why do they study it, but because it is “the Gospel of our salvation;” but because it is “the glorious Gospel of the blessed God;” but because, in redeeming Jacob, he has glorified himself in Israel; but because they find displayed in this scheme more of all his perfections than is to be seen in all his other works? We cannot justly infer the worth of a thing from the attention paid to it by men. They may be compelled by authority, biassed by interest, governed by vanity, or led astray by novelty. Even great men have had their follies. Nothing has been brought forward so absurd as not to have attracted to it some names of distinction. And we have always proof enough that to be learned and knowing is not always to be wise. But no objection can lie against the inference we here draw—If angels desire to look into these things, the things deserve to be looked into.

And therefore let us learn what is our duty with regard to them. Is it not to be thankful that we are favoured with the dispensation of them? Blessed are our eyes for they see, and our ears for they hear.—Is it not to study them ourselves? We are deeply, we are infinitely concerned in them. The being to whom they relate is our Saviour. His history is the record of our eternal redemption. He became poor; he died for us. Let us therefore turn aside from the little, the vain, the vexing, the debasing, the defiling things of the world, and contemplate the great mystery of godliness. Let us never be weary in reading, in hearing of it. And let us not rest in a speculative acquaintance with it; but taste that the Lord is gracious; and walk in the truth.—Is it not to own them and confess them and glory in them before men? I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ—angels are my companions. Is it not to pray that the knowledge of them may be extended, and that all the ends of the earth may see the salvation of our God together?

JANUARY.—“Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away; all these things are against me.”—Gen. xlii. 36.

THIS was a very sorrowful conclusion; but no part of it was founded in truth. “Joseph is not”—yes he is—and not only alive—but riding in the second chariot of Egypt. “And Simeon is not”—yes he is—and only detained for a while as an hostage for the return of his brethren. “And ye will take Benjamin away,”—yes—but not to be destroyed—but to prove a deliverer—and to bring every thing to a favourable issue. Let the lad go—and no evil shall befall him—and supplies for thyself and family will soon be brought—and the wagons shall accompany them, sent by Joseph, to carry thee and thy household down into Goshen—where he will nourish thee—and after the storms of the morning and afternoon of life, thou shalt enjoy a calm and clear evening—and rejoice in the development of a series of dispensations beyond all that thou couldst ask or think. And what say you now, Jacob? “I have spoken once, but I will proceed no further. I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee: wherefore, I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes. So foolish was I, and ignorant. I was as a beast before thee. Nevertheless I am continually with thee; thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. Just and true are all thy ways, O thou King of saints!—He hath done all things well.”

The inference here so groundlessly drawn is not peculiar to Jacob. Nothing is more common than to hear the subjects of Divine grace exclaim, “All these things are against me,” when yet “all the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth;” and “we know that all things work together for good to them that love God.” Whence does it proceed? Sometimes they judge under a morbid physical influence. We are not only fearfully, but wonderfully made; and there are many things which would hardly appear credible were they not confirmed by frequent experience. How will a change of weather, or a redundancy or increase of some secretion, or fluid, affect not only our feelings, but our views! How tenderly are some to be pitied! How much they constantly suffer from corporeal causes! They see every thing through an injured medium; and there is no persuading them often but that the discolourations of the glass are the hues of the objects themselves.

They often err from a deficiency of knowledge with regard to the subject itself. It is not easy to determine what is against us or for us. “Who knoweth what is good for a man in this life?” Can we always distinguish between appearances and realities? between the beginning and the end of things? Do we perfectly know ourselves? Or what effects untried things will have upon our minds or our condition? We go forward into futurity with our present views and feelings, not reflecting that other events will produce other views and feelings, and that by circumstances we may become a kind of new creatures, which, could they be presented to us in prospect, would occasion more than our wonder. This was the case with Hazael: he abhorred in imagination what he became in reality, by a transition from a private to a public station. What miseries did Lot entail upon himself in choosing the vale of Sodom,

because it was well watered as the garden of the Lord! On the other hand, Ruth was early deprived of her husband, and reduced to the lowliness of a gleaner, but met with Boaz in the field, and became the ancestor of the Messiah. A man wished to sail in a particular ship, and to his extreme disappointment, found, when he reached the port, that the vessel had just sailed—the next day it was wrecked! and his anguish was turned into joy.

We draw the conclusion also, because we are carnal, and walk as men. We regard our ease and indulgence more than our spiritual advantage. If the hedging up of our way with thorns prevents us from going astray, if the sickness of the body secures the health of the soul, if the loss of a creature brings us to God, surely we cannot say these things are against us. They are greatly for us; and we should acknowledge this, if we were wise unto salvation, and had our conversation in heaven.

We also err by judging prematurely. "He that believeth maketh not haste." If a man engaged to accomplish a great work in ten years, would it be right to decide concerning it at the end of ten days, or ten weeks? God did not pronounce judgment upon his own Creation till it was done: "God saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good." The end will not only crown all, but explain all; and produce not only satisfaction, but praise. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come. And the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. And blessed are all they that wait for him. In the mean while, there is a substitute for the explanations of heaven. It is, in the absence of sight, to walk by faith. If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established. But by believing we enter into rest, and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keeps our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Under the influence of this faith, let us look at his promises; let us think of his perfections; let us review his wonders of old—above all, let us keep near the cross. All our discouragements and perplexities originate in our departure from this. God forbid we should glory in any thing else. It not only opens the kingdom of heaven to all believers, but it is the key to unlock the dispensations of providence. If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all; how shall he not with him also freely give us all things. God of love! Thou shalt have all the future confidence of our hearts—

"Our cares, we give ye to the wind,
And shake you off like dust;
Well may we trust our all with Him,
With whom our souls we trust."

JANUARY 5.—"Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is."—Mark xiii. 33.

It is the language of Jesus, to whom it behooves us always to say, with Samuel, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." The Christian welcomes his voice, not only in his promises, but in his commands; and not only when he encourages and comforts, but when he reproveth and admonishes.

Here he tells us to take heed. We may consider the caution, first,

as to the manner in which it is to be exercised—"Watch and pray." Watchfulness is wakefulness in opposition to sleep; attentiveness in opposition to neglect; and perceptiveness in opposition to stupidity. To watchfulness is added prayer. Vigilance will not do alone. We must not only be active, but humble. We must not only use means, but depend upon the influence that is necessary to render them effectual; and seek it of Him who never said to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me, in vain.

Secondly, as to the season for which it is to be a preparation, and by which it is to be enforced: "for ye know not when the time is." Watch and pray, for ye know not when the time of *duty* is. Who can tell, when he leaves his home for a journey, or only for a day, what opportunities, before he returns, may arise to relieve the distressed, to comfort the feeble-minded, to oppose error, or to rebuke vice: opportunities which may never return, and should never be neglected? David therefore said, "On Thee do I wait all the day;" for he knew not what the great Master had for him to do. Watch and pray, for ye know not when the time of *danger* is. If we consider the enemy of our souls, the world in which we live, and the sin that dwelleth in us, we may safely conclude that we are never far from temptation. Joseph, in the court of Pharaoh, learned to swear by the life of Pharaoh. Moses, the meekest man upon earth, under irritation, spake unadvisedly with his lips. Even in old age, Solomon's heart, by outlandish women, was drawn away from God. Peter, immediately after the most solemn warnings and professions, denied his Lord with oaths and curses. Barnabas was carried away with the dissimulation of the Jews. Paul was likely to be exalted above measure, by the abundance of his revelations. We are sure to be in danger, whenever we deem ourselves secure: for pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. Blessed is the man that feareth alway. Watch and pray, for ye know not when the time of *trouble* is. To this we are born and therefore we cannot think our trials strange things. Who can tell what a day may bring forth? An accident, a disease, a loss in our circumstances, a family bereavement may befall us, without warning—"For man also knoweth not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them." And what if it finds us unprepared? Watch and pray, for ye know not when the time of *death* is. The day of trouble may come, the day of death will come: and it is the most solemn and important of all days. For death is not the termination of our being, but only a change of the mode of it, or a transition from a mortal to an immortal state. Then the dust returns to the dust whence it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it; and is disposed of according to our character here; for after death the judgment. The time of our dissolution is not a secret with God; and we are sure that it cannot be far off; but each of us must say, with Isaac, "I know not the day of my death." It may be in the evening, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning. What then is the language of wisdom? Be ye therefore ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom!

JANUARY 6.—“Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.”—John xiv. 8.

How are we to understand this request? We can hardly suppose, with some, that he desired a kind of personal representation of the Deity. Surely he could not be so ignorant as to imagine that God was in his essence visible, or that he could be held forth under any corporeal form or shape; especially as the Jews—and Philip was a Jew—were forbidden every attempt to make any likeness of the Supreme Being. It is more probable, that he wished for some glorious display of God’s presence and perfections, as Moses had done, and which he called God’s face. If so, he knew not what he asked. The exhibition might have been fatal. “No man,” says God, who knows our frame, “can see my face and live.” Such a display of himself as he makes to the saints in light, would be insupportable in this weak state of flesh and blood. It certainly might have been useless. The Jews *had* such an exhibition of God, in the cloud of glory; but they corrupted themselves, and went after strange gods. Extraordinary and miraculous appearances would lose their impression, yea, by their repetition, they would be extraordinary and miraculous no longer. This is not the way in which God is to be known. Yet let us not revile Philip, concluding that we have never been liable to a like mistake. Have we never wanted a kind of immediate and sensible conviction that would exclude all possibility of doubt? Have we never been ready to exclaim, “Oh! if, with an audible voice, He would say, go in peace, thy sins are forgiven thee! Oh! if one who has passed the valley of the shadow of death would return; or some inhabitant of the world of spirits would assure me of a future state!” Ah! foolish wish. We have Moses and the prophets—Blessed are they who have not seen and yet have believed.

But some, and among these is Doddridge, are disposed to commend rather than censure Philip. They take his meaning to be, “Oh! bring us to the knowledge of the blessed God, and we resign every other wish as nothing compared with this!”—much in the spirit of David, who had said of him, “Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee.” Philip, therefore, only asks for a fuller manifestation and enjoyment of him—“Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.”

Yet can he be shown? or, in other words, can he be known? It is true, Zophar asks, “Who by searching can find out God?” But he adds, “who can find out the Almighty unto perfection?” He cannot be completely known; but he can be really known, savingly known; known as the strength of *our* heart, and *our* portion for ever. And this knowledge can yield satisfaction to the possessor. It will suffice for our happiness hereafter; and, therefore, the blessedness is expressed by our seeing God; and therefore David says, “I shall behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.” Yea, it suffices the Christian at present. He can now say, “My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise Thee with joyful lips: when I remember Thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches.”

“When I can say my God is mine,
 When I can feel thy glories shine,
 I tread the world beneath my feet,
 And all that earth calls good or great.”

It suffices—to teach him in whatsoever state he is therewith to be content—to embolden him in his work, in the face of all opposition and danger—to sustain him under every trial—and to raise him above the fear of death. Moses endured as seeing Him that is invisible. And Simeon was ready to depart in peace because his eyes had seen His salvation.

But this knowledge is to be derived from the Lord Jesus. “No one knoweth who the Father is but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal Him.” “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son which was in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” Some would rather look for God in the world of nature; but the Apostle tells us that “He who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” He shows us the Father by his person—He is the image of the invisible God. By his sacrifice—in which we see so fully and harmoniously displayed his wisdom, holiness, righteousness, truth, and love. By His word—the most illiterate Christian, with “the word of Christ” in his hand, knows more of God than all the philosophers of Greece and Rome. How much does He teach us concerning God as the God of grace by the parable of the prodigal son! And how much does He teach us concerning God as the God of providence by one saying; “a sparrow falleth not to the ground without your heavenly Father, and the very hairs of your head are all numbered.” By the Spirit—this Spirit leads us into all truth; and it is the Spirit of Christ. We have an unction from the Holy One, and know all things.

Therefore to Him we are to apply, as Philip here did, and pray, “Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.” He requires it from us; and He assures us our application shall not be in vain. Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find. He never has been, never will be, never can be wanting to the promise upon which he causes us to hope. “I am the light of the world; he that followeth me, shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” “Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: His going forth is prepared as the morning; and He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth.”

JANUARY 7.—“And the Apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.”—Luke xvii. 5.

IF we consider these words—In reference to *the Being* to whom they were addressed—“The *Lord*.” they teach us that He is the source of grace; and the object of worship.—If in reference to *the persons* who addressed Him—“The *Apostles*.” they teach us that even the Lord’s disciples themselves have their imperfections; but feel them; and are concerned to be freed from them.—If in reference to *the subject* they express—“our *faith*.” they teach us that faith is not finished at once; it admits of degrees; and higher measures

of it are attainable.—If in reference to *the occasion* which excited them—our *Saviour's preceding charge*: they teach us that an increase of faith is not only always desirable, but sometimes necessary. Observe what He had been enforcing. "Take heed to yourselves; if thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him"—"And the Apostles said unto the Lord, increase our faith"—and thus enable us to do it. But why faith in particular? Why not increase our humility? love? patience? Because faith is the root from which they grow, and as faith abounds, they will flourish. Because all things are possible to him that believeth. Forgiveness, so irksome to mere nature, will be practicable and easy as faith is in exercise, and we can believe not only the testimony that if we forgive not, we shall not be forgiven, but the assurance that God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us. Can we, who have had remitted ten thousand talents, seize a fellow servant by the throat, who owes us only a hundred pence?

But there are many other cases, the pressure of which will make us feel that we want more faith than we have at present; and should induce us to pray for an increase of it.

Has the Saviour said that He will deny those who are ashamed of Him and of His words? And does He require us to own and confess him before men? And will this give offence to our connexions? and draw upon ourselves persecution and reproach? This is the work of faith; and will only be practicable and easy as faith increases—"We ought," said Peter and John, "to obey God rather than men." "We cannot but speak the things which we see and hear." "They rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name." "By faith Moses feared not the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible."

Are you called to sacrifice an object, that nature will never let go, without violence? "By *faith* Abraham, when he was tried, offered up *Isaac*."

Are you called to confide in God in great straits and difficulties—when His providence seems to oppose His promise—when means fail—and there seems no way of escape—when He says, "Come, follow me through this dark dispensation. You are ignorant; but I know the way that you take. Here is my arm, feel this; lean on this. The sorrow shall turn to your salvation, the trial shall be your triumph. The end will show that I am very pitiful and of tender mercy, and constrain you to say, 'it is good for me that I have been afflicted.'" What is all this without faith? "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

How solemn was the order addressed to Moses, "Go up and die, and be gathered to thy people!" By years, infirmities, and disease, God is calling you to the same service—The living know that they shall die. And what is it to die? We know not, from our own experience, or the experience of others. But to bid farewell to every earthly scene—to be surrounded with weeping friends, whose presence we can neither dispense with, or endure—to bear sinking spirits and a body full of pain—to feel perhaps our unworthiness and sin more than we ever felt them before—to enter into an untried and

eternal state—to think of appearing before Purity itself—to be resigned and willing to go—to do well what can never be done again—to glorify God—to edify others—to be an example to the last, and above all at the last—“Lord—Lord! increase our faith.” “Count us worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of Thy goodness, and the WORK OF FAITH WITH POWER.”

JANUARY 8.—“He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye.”—Zech. ii. 8.

How admirably adapted to popular instruction and impression is the imagery of the Scripture! It is not taken from the learned sciences, or even from the mechanical arts—unless from their most simple and common operations with which all mankind are familiar: but from the aspects of nature, the seasons of the year, the occurrences of life, and the parts, attributes, and functions of the human frame so fearfully and wonderfully made. Who does not in a moment understand and feel the allusion before us? “He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye.”

It reminds us of union. Sin had separated between God and us, and we were once far off. But we are made nigh by the blood of Christ. In Him we are reconciled to God, re-united to God, and become one with God again. And so entire is the connexion, that every kind of intimate union is employed to express it. We are one, as the father and the child, as the husband and the wife, as the head and the members are one—yea, as the soul and the body are one—“He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit”—no wonder therefore that he that toucheth them toucheth the apple of His eye.

It shows valuation. Even a man's selfishness endears this member. The apple of his eye is a source of too much usefulness and pleasure not to be highly prized by him. He would part with a thousand things rather than lose this, or be injured in any part rather than be hurt in this. How precious to the Lord are his people! He calls them His portion, His jewels, His glory. They who attract and attach Him, are not the great but the gracious—“To that man,” says He, “will I look, who is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word.” He “taketh pleasure in them that fear Him, in them that hope in His mercy.” “He will rejoice over them with joy, He will rest in his love, He will joy over them with singing.”

It bespeaks attention. As a man values the apple of his eye, so will he assuredly take care of it, and endeavour to defend it. And it is worthy of our notice how the Creator has fenced and guarded this little, but inestimably precious member from evil by the fluids and the coats, the lashes and the lids; and with what involuntary quickness nature teaches us to cover and secure it when exposed. Yet all this falls short of the care which God exercises over His people. The apple of the eye is not half so liable to injury as they are; but how superior is their protection! Lest any hurt them, He will keep them night and day. In two places His vigilance is spoken of under the figure before us. In the one it is implored: “Keep me,” says David, “as the apple of the eye, hide me under

the shadow of Thy wings." In the other, it is acknowledged: "He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; He led him about, He instructed him, He kept him as the apple of His eye." How well kept are those whom God thus keeps! "Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places."

It expresses sympathy. The pupil of the eye is peculiarly delicate and sensible: and it is not necessary to run the point of a knife into it, in order to make the owner shrink. A mote, or, as it is here expressed, a touch, will offend, and instantly affect all his sensation. And is it not said, "In all their affliction He is afflicted?" A friend sympathizes in a friend's sorrow: a mother feels a more sensible interest in a child's suffering. Yet Job says, "My friends scorn me:" and Isaiah says, the mother "may forget" her sucking child, and "not have compassion on the son of her womb." But a man's feeling with an injured member of his body, especially the eye, and the apple of the eye, is not only exquisite, but absolutely unavoidable. And not less certain, as well as tender, is the Lord's sympathy with his people—"He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye." What a source of consolation is here! Especially when we remember that His sympathy is accompanied with boundless wisdom and almighty power. "He doeth great things and unsearchable; marvellous things without number—to set up on high those that be low; that those which mourn may be exalted to safety." "Nothing is too hard for the Lord."

Let the adversaries of His people learn their danger. They hate the godly, and endeavour to injure them; and though their malice is often restrained, the Lord looketh at the heart, and will deal with them according to their intentions, wishes, and endeavours. And He considers them as opposing *Himself*. "Why," said He to Saul, "why persecutest thou *Me*?" He did not persecute Him *personally*, but he was injuring His followers. The head was above his reach, but it felt the wounds he inflicted upon the foot. They who suffer for His sake, may well leave themselves to Him, whose they are, and whom they serve. He will surely plead their cause—"He that toucheth them toucheth the apple of His eye."

Let this encourage us to do any thing for the people of God—He feels it as done to Himself. He "is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward His name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister." "He," said the Saviour, "he that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth Him that sent me. He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward."

Let His people also learn their duty. They see how He regards them, and is concerned for their welfare—How should they regard Him, and be concerned for His glory? They should feel His cause to be dear to them. They should be sorrowful for the solemn

assembly. The reproaches of them that reproach Him should fall upon them.

Those that represent strict piety as needless precision, should remember that nothing less is required of us than to avoid the appearance of evil, to walk circumspectly, and to be always abounding in the work of the Lord—We are to regard His word as we keep the tenderest part of the tenderest member of our body. “Keep my commandments, and live; and MY LAW AS THE APPLE OF THINE EYE.”

JANUARY 9.—“Thou brakest the heads of leviathan in pieces, and gavest him to be meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness.”—Psalm lxxiv. 14.

WHAT creature in the animal world is intended by leviathan we cannot absolutely determine. We have a general description of him in the book of Job; but even this leaves the learned divided, some pleading for the crocodile and some for the whale. But it is not necessary to be a naturalist in order to be a Christian; and it is pleasing to think that though in the Scripture there are things hard to be understood, they do not affect the foundation of our faith and hope. The truths contained in the sacred volume are plain in proportion as they are profitable, and we are at no loss for an answer to the question, What must I do to be saved? Though we know not where heaven is, we are clearly informed how we may attain it. Though we are uncertain about leviathan, we are sure of the Consolation of Israel—“And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.”

Whatever be the animal intended, his name is here used to represent Pharaoh with all his policy and power, as we see from the verse immediately preceding: “Thou didst divide the sea by Thy strength: Thou brakest the heads of the dragons in the waters.” Then it is added: “Thou brakest the heads of leviathan in pieces, and gavest him to be meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness.” Who were the people inhabiting the wilderness? First, the birds and beasts of the desert. These found a fine feast in the destruction of the king and his army, whose carcasses, thrown on shore and remaining unburied, were greedily devoured by them. Secondly, the Jews themselves. They might very properly be said to inhabit the wilderness, because it was their present residence, and because they were, instead of speedily travelling through it, to sojourn there for forty years. Now Pharaoh and his host became meat for them, literally and morally. *Literally*, as they derived from the spoils of the foe a supply of means to sustain them, of attire to clothe them, of weapons to defend them, of silver, and gold, and jewels, to enrich them. *Morally*, as they derived from the event food for their gratitude, faith, hope, and joy, not only for the time being, when they sang His praise, but in all future perils and exigences. Hence in the days of Isaiah we find the Church pleading with God in allusion to it: “Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon? Art thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for

the ransomed to pass over? Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away."

There is a people now inhabiting the wilderness. They are Christians. Whatever the world may be to others, and who are called "men of the world," it is no better than a wilderness to those who are born from above, and bound to the land of promise. They feel and confess it to be such, not only from the privations and trials they meet with in it, but from the principles and dispositions of their new nature.

And is there no leviathan whose heads have been broken in pieces for them, and from which they have been furnished with meat? Are there no past deliverances, no former mercies, upon which their souls can feed? Let us think of the redemption of the cross. Here their Lord and Saviour seemed conquered, but he gained a complete victory. He bruised the serpent's head; and through death destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. Now, said He, is the judgment of this world, now is the Prince of this world cast out; and I if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. Angels are not concerned here, and yet the transaction seems food for their minds, and fills them with admiration, love, and praise; and therefore they desire to look into these things. What relief and satisfaction then must it yield to those who live thereby! To see the curse not only defeated, but turned into a blessing; to see where sin abounded grace much more abounding, and the fall made the occasion of improving their original condition—what wonder if they exclaim, God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ!

We may also notice their deliverance from their natural state. He hath delivered us, says the Apostle, from the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son. And we are to look to the rock whence we were hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence we are digged. The review will be every way useful. What can feed our *humility* more? or our *gratitude* more? or our *confidence* more? or our *rejoicing* more? or our *zeal* more?

There are also Providential interpositions. Who has not some of these to remember; in which God turned the shadow of death into the morning; and made a way the most strange and gracious for our escape? Whoso is wise, observes these things; and in looking back upon life, is able to see how many events, which perplexed and alarmed him at the time, afterward ministered to his faith and hope in God. David could say, it is good for me that I have been afflicted. Paul had a thorn in the flesh; but it preserved him from pride, drove him to prayer, and obtained for him the assurance of all-sufficient grace. What pleasure and profit must Joseph have derived from all the difficulties that tried him, yet issued not only in his release, but advancement and glory! He can break the heads of any leviathan; and out of the eater bring forth meat—

"Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace:
Behind a frowning providence,
He hides a smiling face."

JANUARY 10.—“He is not far from every one of us.”—Acts xvii. 27.

Is there a God? This is the first question in Religion. And the proofs of his Being are so numerous and convincing, that few are foolish and vile enough to deny it. The next question is, or at least ought to be, How does He stand related to us? Is He our friend or our foe? Is He inaccessible, or can we approach Him? Is He near, or is He far off? To this inquiry, we have here a full answer—“He is not far from every one of us.”

He is not far from every one of us, in His essence. “Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven Thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there.” Well might David say, “Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.” Yet Deism itself allows that He occupies universal space, and that it is impossible to confine Him. Here is a broad, an infinite distinction between creatures and God. No creature, not even an angel, can be ever in two places at once. But God is everywhere, at the same time. And what a thought is it, that wherever we are, He is a God at hand, and not a God afar off; about our path and our lying dying down, and acquainted with all the imaginations of our heart! Do we believe it? If we reduced our faith to practice, what manner of creatures should we be in all holy conversation and godliness! Could we ever sin with God standing by and looking on?

He is not far from every one of us, in His natural and providential agency—Therefore, adds the Apostle, “For in Him we live, and move, and have our being.” And therefore, says he again: “He never left himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave us rain from Heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.” And says David, “That His Name is near, His wondrous works declare.” Can we behold the appearances around us—can we observe the vegetable world with all its variety and beauty—can we think of the myriads possessing animal life, visible and invisible, in air and earth and sea—can we reflect upon the human race so fearfully and wonderfully made and endued—and know that not one of all these beings is self-produced, or self-sustained—that the eyes of all wait upon *Him*, and *He* giveth them their meat in due season—that *He* openeth his hand and satisfieth the desires of every living thing; and be senseless enough not to see, to hear, to feel—that God is not far from every one of us?

He is not far from every one of us, in religious dispensation. In this sense the Gentiles were said to be far off: but the Jews were a people near unto Him—For what nation is there, says Moses, that hath God so nigh unto them? He resided in the midst of them by His laws and ordinances. They could see his power and glory in His sanctuary. They could hear His voice in His Prophets. To them were committed the oracles of God. In every perplexity they could consult Him; and He communed with them from off the mercy-seat. Thus we are equally, yea, much more eminently privileged. Not that we have the same ceremonial splendour, or the same miraculous interpositions; but we have all their spiritual

advantages improved and completed. We have the day of their dawn. Their Prophets and righteous men desired to see the things that we see, and did not see them; and to hear the things that we hear, and did not hear them. But blessed are our eyes for they see, and our ears for they hear. The Seventy therefore were to say even to Jews, the possessors of revealed religion, "the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you." We have His word in our hands. We have His Sabbaths. We have His house. We have the assemblies of His people, and He is in the midst of them. We have His table spread with more than angel's food, and the King sitteth at His table. We have His servants, and the sound of their Master's feet is behind them. For they come in His name, and he that receiveth them receiveth Him.

He is not far from every one of us, in His gracious influences. O that you could be made sensible of your fallen condition, and of your need of pardon and renovation! O that you were convinced that your understandings must be enlightened, and your hearts changed—and that all this must come from Him who worketh all in all—and that you were disposed to apply to Him! You would soon find that He is able, that He is willing, that He is near. Your cries or groans would instantly reach Him. He is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. He is nigh unto them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth. But in this sense He will not be always near. Therefore seek Him *while* He may be found, and call upon Him *while* He is near. And learn here also the true cause of your condemnation if you perish. It is not because you are lost creatures and are unable to save yourselves; but because there is a Saviour within your reach, and you refuse to apply to him, and will not take hold of his strength. How came the man without the wedding garment to be speechless? Could he not have said that it was out of his power to weave one, or that he was too poor to purchase one? This alone would have been some excuse. But the fact was, that garments were provided in the wardrobe, and he might have had one, as he passed by, for asking. But he neglected the provision, and was punished, not for his indigence, but presumption.

He is not far from every one of us, as an approaching Judge. People imagine his advent is a great way off, and hence they are so little impressed by it. But "the coming of the Lord draws nigh." "The Lord is at hand." "The Judge standeth before the door." This was said almost two thousand years ago. What then is the fact now? Yet, say some, it cannot be even now very near, for much remains to be previously accomplished. But God does not act according to our conclusions. He can cut short his work in righteousness. But let us allow the truth contained in the objection. Yet his coming by death is the same to you in effect, as his coming at the last day. As soon as you are dead, as to *you*, the prophecies are all accomplished, and your state is fixed. There is no pardon, no prayer, after death—after death the judgment. And is death far off? The days of our years are threescore years and ten. Many never reach this general average. But allowing the term to be generally true. Take seventy years. Yet what right have many of you to think your Judge is far off? You are sixty-five, you are

sixty-nine; that is within five, that is within one year of his coming. But take persons at any age—take them in middle life; take them in youth—yet when you reflect upon the brittleness of your frame, and the countless accidents and diseases to which you are exposed every moment, you must acknowledge that there is but a step between you and death—between you and the Judge of all!

JANUARY 11.—“For which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.”
—Heb. ii. 11.

WHAT cause? Read the former part of the verse. “He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one.” There is a spiritual union or oneness between Christ and Christians—They are of one God and Father. They are of one spirit. They are of one taste; one aim; one pursuit. They have one destination; and will appear with him in glory—“Where I am,” says he, “there shall also my servants be.” But the meaning is here determined by the context—they are of one nature. “Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same.” “In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren.” “He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” This exception was not only necessary, but possible: and as Adam before his fall possessed truly the same nature with us yet sinless, so provision was made for the Saviour’s participation of it, in the same immaculate way; and from the manner of his conception by the Holy Ghost, his humanity was the “holy thing” born of the Virgin Mary; and he is called, the “holy child Jesus;” and it is said, not only that “he did no sin,” but “in him was no sin.” This becoming one with us in nature is without controversy a great mystery, but it is a mystery of godliness. It is the medium of our salvation. It is thus he speaks to us without making us afraid. It is thus he is capable of sympathizing with us, and gains our confidence. It is thus he becomes our example, and goes before us in the path of duty and suffering; and he can give his life a ransom for us, and put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. Men unconvinced of their state, may treat the doctrine with neglect or contempt; but, says Paul, “We have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He hath consecrated for us *through the veil, that is to say, His flesh.*”

For this cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren—And why should He be ashamed, seeing He is of one nature with them? It will not be difficult to find a reason. Though He is truly a man, He is more than human. The Word was with God, and the Word was God, and the Word was made flesh. And there is a great difference between Him and us, in the same nature. There are not only degrees among angels, but also among men; and these distinctions are sanctioned by Scripture, which requires us to render to all their due; honour to whom honour is due, and fear to whom fear—“I said, ye are gods.” A king is of the same nature with the lowliest of his subjects; is made of the same clay; and can no more dispense with food and sleep than they—yet does he call them brethren? Do we not deem it almost a miracle to see a prince condescend to men of low estate? A commander in chief will speak of his

brother officers; but he does not call the common soldiers brethren. The judge in court will call a counsellor brother; but not the prisoner at the bar. Though Christ has our nature, He is so exalted and glorious, that He may well disavow the nearness of our relationship, according to the feelings and usages of the world. Humanity in Him is worthy, but in us undeserving. In Him it is spotless, in us it is defiled. God is angry with us; in Him, He is well pleased—He always did the things that pleased Him. We are mortal, and crushed before the moth; but He dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over Him—He is at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty on high.

For we must consider not what He was, but what He now is. While all the members of a family are in obscurity, they all feel the same towards each other; but if one of them be elevated, as David was, to the highest condition in the state, *he* may be easily tempted to shame, in acknowledging the rest who are left so much below him. But though Jesus is passed into the heavens, and angels, principalities, and powers, are made subject unto Him, and every name that is named not only in this world but in that which is to come, He *is* touched with the feeling of our infirmities; He *is* not ashamed to call us brethren. It is indeed observable that it was after his resurrection He gave his disciples this name: "Go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee." "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend to my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." And when He comes in his glory, and before Him will be gathered all nations, even as the Judge of all, He will not be ashamed to say, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me."

Let this thought dignify us. The honour will not make us proud, since by the grace of God we are what we are; and the more we have, the more we owe.

Let it console and encourage us. If He calls Himself our brother, He will perform all that the relation implies and requires in its most perfect discharge. He will correspond with us. He will visit us. He will defend us. He will provide for us. Joseph supported all his father's house; and because He lives we shall live also.

And if He is not ashamed to own us—shall we ever be ashamed to acknowledge Him? "He that is ashamed of me, and of my words, in this sinful and adulterous generation, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when He cometh in the clouds of heaven with the holy angels." But surely terror is not necessary here—surely ingenuousness, affected with a sense of our dependence and obligations, will be enough to induce us to say,

"Ashamed of Jesus! of that Friend
On whom my heavenly hopes depend!
It must not be—be this my shame,
That I no more revere His name."

JANUARY 12.—"In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain."—Dan. v. 30.

OBSERVE the person—the event—and the season.

The person was Belshazzar. He is not easily identified in profane history, and little is said of him in the Scriptures of Truth.

He was the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar. Merodach Baladin was his father. His mother was Nitocris, a woman of a masculine understanding, and to whose counsel he was much indebted. He appears in the sacred story like a man by the way-side, hung in irons. The memory of the just is blessed; but the name of the wicked shall rot, or if preserved, it is perpetuated in disgrace. The noticing of some persons is renown, of others is infamy. Amyot, Bishop of Auxerre, and great almoner of France, not long before his death, was urged to write the history of his country; "I love my sovereigns too well," said he, "to write their lives." Let us so live, as, when dead, we may yet speak, or be spoken of, to our honour, and the improvement of others.

The event—he "was slain." Though a king, and even called "The king of kings," he yields to "the king of terrors." "I said, ye are gods; but ye shall die like men, and be as one of the princes. Man that is in honour and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish." The dwellers in dust, who had once trembled before him, are represented as insulting the king of Babylon. "Art thou also become weak as *we*? Art thou become like unto *us*? Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, and the noise of thy viols: the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee"—What a change!—But observe, not only his death, but the manner of it. He might have died in a good old age, and gradually, and in a peaceful bed—but he is cut off prematurely, suddenly, and violently—he was *slain*.

When? "That night." What night? The night of his festivity. He had made a great feast unto a thousand of his lords, and music, and dancing, and every kind of indulgence filled the palace. How little did he suspect the vicinage of danger; of death! Marriage rites have sometimes been prevented, or immediately followed by funeral solemnities. A man has built and embellished a mansion, and prepared an entertainment to crown his wishes; but instead of taking possession of it, he has entered the house appointed for all living. Another has planned a favourite journey, but at the very commencement of it, he has been turned into the way of all the earth. "Boast not thyself of to-morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." That night was the king of the Chaldeans slain. What night?

The night of his wickedness. Festivity, and intemperance, and profaneness, generally go together. Job therefore, though he did not oppose the feasting of his sons in each other's houses, yet feared for them; and prayed and offered sacrifices, lest they should have sinned, and cursed God in their heart. But what dreadful excess of riot was here! "Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem, that the king and his princes, his wives and his concubines, might drink therein. Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem; and the king and his princes, his wives and his concubines, drank in them. They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone." Sentence against an evil work is not always speedily executed; for God is long suffering, not willing that any should perish. But sin has frequently been

instantly punished; as we see in the case of Lot's wife, and Gehazi, and Herod, and Ananias and Sapphira. And are there no instances of this now? What transgressor can be sure that he shall not die in the very act of iniquity? His breath is in his nostrils; there is but a step between him and death. A liar has dropped down dead with a lie on his lips. A swearer has called for damnation upon his soul, and the prayer has no sooner been offered than answered. The drunkard, in the midst of his intoxication, has been brought to soberness in a place where a drop of water cannot be found to cool his tongue. Derangement also may be, in effect, the same as sudden death. "He, that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." What night?

The night of his visitation. "In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another." The effect at first seems remarkable, as the import of the inscription was unknown. Yet what can be more alarming than strangeness and uncertainty? But why does he not suppose that the prodigy is favourable, containing an encomium, or a promise? Conscience forebodes the meaning. But Daniel explains it clearly; and admonishes him—but unavailingly. He had been warned before. This was the last address, and not designed for his salvation. Of what use, as to his moral state and disposition, were a few moments of confusion, and terror, and attempted resistance, or flight? And what better, for the purpose of repentance, are the hours or moments upon which many are suspending an attention to the things that belong to their peace? Death-bed alarms and prayers, and the exercises which attend them, are most likely, if useful at all, to benefit the living rather than the dead.

Well! where is he now? Where he has been ever since that night in which he was slain. What a length of duration! And yet after two thousand five hundred years he is not yet brought to trial! Ah! not the extinction of being, but the intermediate state, and afterward the Judgment—this, this renders death so awful. O that we were wise, that we understood this, that we considered our latter end!

JANUARY 13.—"And Joseph called the name of the first-born Manasseh: for God, said he, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house. And the name of the second called he Ephraim: for God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction."—Gen. xli. 51, 52.

THERE was nothing extraordinary in his thus giving them significant names. It was usual in those early ages to attach names to things, places, and persons, in order to mark any particular occurrence, and to be a memento of it. Thus, after the victory between Mizpeh and Shen, Samuel took a stone and called it "Ebenezer," saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us. Thus, when God had appeared for him, Abraham call the mount "Jehovah Jireh;" the Lord will provide. Thus Pharaoh, upon the promotion of Joseph,

called his name "Zaphnath-paaneah," the revealer of secrets. We read also that Moses had two sons; "the name of the one was Gershom," that is, a stranger there; "for he said, I have been an alien in a strange land: and the name of the other was Eliezer," that is, my God is a help; "for the God of my father, said he, was mine help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh."

But what others do from custom, a good man does from principle. In a common observance, he has a motive peculiar to himself. And therefore we see Joseph not only thus naming his children, but doing it "after a godly sort."

We learn from his conduct, first, that it is desirable to secure the remembrance of his interesting events. "God requireth that which is past; and our improvement requires it. We can only be affected and influenced by things as they are present in the mind—they are absent from it in forgetfulness. Forgetfulness is temporary ignorance or unbelief. "By which," says the Apostle, "ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you." He therefore admonishes his hearers to give the more earnest heed to the things which they had heard, lest at any time they should let them slip. God calls upon His people "to remember what Balak consulted" against them: and to "remember all the way the Lord had led them in the wilderness." Let us therefore say, with Asaph, "I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High; surely, I will remember His wonders of old." Was He once powerful, and is He now weak? once wise, and is He now ignorant? once true, and now faithless? once gracious, and now unkind? He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. How many of our failures, especially in thankfulness and confidence, are to be traced back to a bad memory!

Secondly, what a marvellous change is sometimes produced in the condition of God's people! What does Manasseh signify? "Forgetting." Why did Joseph give him this name? "For God," said he, "hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house." That is, the hardships by which he had been exercised, the sufferings he had met with from his own brethren, and the anguish he had felt when torn so young from a home so endeared. Did he then banish all this from his memory? This would be perfectly inconsistent with his design in imposing the name. The meaning is, that his circumstances were so changed, that no trace of his former difficulties and distresses remained. We often say, in heaven we shall forget all our sorrows. Shall we then have no remembrance of the Hand that sustained us under them, and delivered us from them? Yes: but all sorrow and sighing will cease; and all tears will be wiped from our eyes. Few had ever been so tried as Joseph; and for a number of years the clouds returned after the rain, and fell heavier than before. At length he was not only delivered, but advanced. "And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, see, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck; and he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without thee

shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt." Thus every thing of his former degradation and misery was effaced as if it had never been—the change proclaiming that nothing is too hard for the Lord.

Thirdly, the afflictions of the saints do not hinder their fruitfulness. What means Manasseh? "Fruitful." Why does Joseph impose this name upon him? "For God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction." His dying father remarks this under a beautiful image: "Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall." This includes, no doubt, a reference to his outward condition. Egypt had been the land, how truly! the land of his affliction: but he had succeeded in life beyond all example and expectation, and was made to flourish in all his estate. Here is surely an allusion to godliness, as well as to wealth, and honour, and offspring. What indeed in the eye of a good man is growing in every thing else, without growing in grace? What is it to abound in business, unless our soul prospers? What is it to be blessed with "the blessings of heaven above, the blessings of the deep that lieth under, the blessings of the breasts, and of the womb," if we are not blessed "with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ?" Paul prays for the Philippians that they may "be filled with all the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God." Christian, what is this world to you but "the land of your affliction?" You have found it a vale of tears: but has it been a fruitful vale? Your trials need not prevent your fruitfulness; yea, they are designed to secure and promote it: and though they are not joyous but grievous, they yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby. What have they done for us? It is sad that we should need them; but sadder still that we should lose the benefit of them. Can we say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted?"

Lastly, The hand of God is to be acknowledged in all our concerns, especially our mercies. Whether they are temporal or spiritual, they have the same source—every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights. Joseph therefore says, *He* has done all things for me. If my condition has been changed, *He* changed it—"God hath made me to forget all my toil and my father's house." If I have been fruitful, in *Him* was my fruit found—"God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction." It is the office of faith to lead us to God, and to show us his agency where others only see instruments and second causes. It is the business of humility to teach and enable us to say, "Not unto us, O God, not unto us, but to Thy name be glory for the mercy and for the truth's sake."—Both furnish evidence that we are in a course of preparation for that world where "God is all in all."

JANUARY 14.—"This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes. The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain: but, when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me. The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the

Lord in that day: and in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, thou knowest very well."—2 Tim. i. 15—18.

ONE of the most painful trials to which we are exposed in this vale of tears, is the failure of those friends, on whose professions of attachment we had placed dependence. But it is not a rare exercise. Witness the complaints of Job, and David, and especially Paul. Paul was additionally distressed to think that those who had left *him*, had not only forsaken a man and a friend, but a minister, and an apostle of Christ. Hence *their* desertion was nothing less than an abandonment of the faith of the Gospel. Defections in religion were foretold from the beginning. They early took place in the first churches. They frequently occur still. Many promise fair, and run well for a time; but are hindered. The blossoms are pleasing, but they are not certain pledges of fruit. Ministers can only rejoice in the day of the Lord Jesus that they have not laboured in vain—unless they rejoice with trembling. The end proves and crowns all.

The defection here was awfully general! it included "all they which were in Asia." Two of them, Phygellus and Hermogenes, the Apostle mentions by name; doubtless because they were leaders, and had been very instrumental in the revolt. This is all we know of these men: it would have been better for them, had we known less. "The name of the wicked shall rot." Only some of these sinners rot, like malefactors in irons and gibbets: they rot above ground, while others rot under it; known only by infamy; and suspended for warning and terror.

But "the memory of the just is blessed." How honourably is Onesiphorus brought forward! What an exception to the general apostacy! He is one against two—against many—against all in Asia. We are not to follow a multitude to do evil. Numbers can never turn evil into good, or truth into error. Community in sin is no excuse, and will be no preservation: though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished. Fellowship in suffering is no alleviation: it may be a bitter enhancement. There will not only be weeping, but gnashing of teeth, among those who accuse and execrate each other. This will be the case at the meeting of the seducer and the seduced; Voltaire and his pupils; the faithless minister and his deluded hearers. But to advance without support, in the face of opposition; to brave the torrent of example, and the influence of the crowd, concerned only to approve ourselves unto God, shows a divine nobleness and purity of principle and motive: and "them that honour me," says God, "I will honour; but they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed."

He therefore is not unrighteous to forget the work and labour of love which Onesiphorus had showed to his name, in the relief and assistance he had afforded his servant. Paul records here in the book of life, the tenderness of his liberality; his courage in owning him though a prisoner; his zealousness in searching him out in Rome; and the many things wherein he had, before this, ministered to him at Ephesus.—Was he then a man of leisure and wealth? It is probable he was not. The servants of Christ have seldom been much indebted to the rich. In a general way, the disposition for beneficence diminishes as the capacity increases; and the greater

part of what is done for the Gospel and the poor, is done by people in common life. But he had a public spirit: his heart was in his work: he did what he *could*—and whoever does what he *can*, will do, not only comparatively, but really, much. And was he a loser? Was Obed-edom injured by accommodating the ark? The ark, says Henry, is a guest that always pays well for its entertainment. None ever repented that they had done too much for the cause of the Redeemer. And none ever will, while the promise remains, “The liberal deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things shall he stand.” “There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God’s sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come, life everlasting.”

Thus Onesiphorus obtained a name and a place among the worthies in the Scripture. Wheresoever the Gospel is preached, that which he did, will be told as a memorial of him. Thousands bless him at this hour, for the part he acted. He lived in the affections of Paul; and constantly shared in his prayers. And was this a light thing, to be remembered by a man who had such power with God? “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”

In this way the Apostle expressed his thankfulness. He had a very humble, and, therefore, a very grateful disposition: and the favours shown him in his straits and distresses always made a deep impression upon him. Hence he prays for “the house” of his benefactor; that is, for his wife, children, relatives, servants, and outward estate. He prays also for his benefactor himself—“The Lord grant that *he* may find mercy of the Lord in that day.” What! would such a man as *he*, with all his good works, need *mercy*? This would have seemed strange to some; but it would not be surprising to Onesiphorus himself. He knew that when he had done all, he was an unprofitable servant; and that if God entered into judgment with him, on the ground of his worthiness, he could not stand. It is the conviction of every man who is perfectly acquainted with the law, or the Gospel, or himself. He feels his need of mercy; mercy to the last; and, above all, mercy at the last. When he examines himself, he sees enough, not only in his sins, but even in his duties, to make him tremble and despair. But he looks for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

And he will find it. He will be spared; absolved; acknowledged; applauded; and glorified. What mercy! How free! How rich! And how will it be prized—in that day! If we find mercy then, we are made for ever. But wo to those who will be left to the justice of God, without a Mediator! If we have not fled for refuge, to lay hold on the *hope* set before us; and have not a *friend* in the Judge, we are undone for ever. If we find not mercy then, it can never be found afterwards.

JANUARY 15.—“The gentleness of Christ.—2 Cor. x. 1.

Does the Apostle mean, by the gentleness of Christ, the gentleness He requires, or the gentleness He displayed? In fact, they are the same; not indeed in degree, but in quality. As “the precious

ointment," poured upon the head of Aaron, ran down to the skirts of his garments, so Christians have an unction from the Holy One. The same mind which was in him, is in them; and so essential is this oneness, that "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." But let us attend to this gentleness as it was personally exemplified in Himself.

According to the prophecies going before, there was nothing by which He was to be more distinguished than by this attribute or character. To mention a few instances. It was said of Him—"Behold, thy king cometh unto thee—having salvation; lowly and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass—and he shall speak peace unto the heathen." "He shall not cry nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench: He shall bring forth judgment unto truth." "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd; He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy." And if we go forward from prophecy to history, and see Him as He goes about doing good, what so constantly and strikingly shows itself as this lovely distinction? What was His emblem? A Lamb. How did the Holy Ghost descend upon Him? In the form of a dove. What was the angelical report of His religion? "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men." How does He employ the supernatural energies with which He was invested? It is true, He once cursed a fig tree, and immediately it withered away. But it *was* a tree, and not a person; and a tree unowned; and growing by the way-side; and a barren one; and the malediction was intended to be an instructive emblem and warning. It is true also that He destroyed the herd of swine belonging to the Gadarenes. But this was only an animal sacrifice; and it was in love to their souls; and it was to bring their sin to remembrance; and to rebuke them for an unlawful traffic: and what was the loss of their swine, to the benefit He conferred upon them in the restoration of two of their neighbours and relations from the most wretched estate, to the possession of reason and the enjoyment and usefulness of life? All the other miracles He performed were entirely and directly acts of kindness and tenderness. Thus He made the hungry multitude to sit down on the grass, and fed them—opened the eyes of a blind beggar—raised to life the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. Where shall we end? Yea, He turned the water into wine at the marriage of Cana in Galilee, to perpetuate the innocent festivity of the scene, to save the new-married pair from mortification, and to crown them with honour.

It is true, He repeated again and again the exclamation, "Wo unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" But they *were* hypocrites of the vilest complexion. Under a reputation for the strictest godliness they were full of extortion and iniquity. They sinned against knowledge and conviction. They really belived His miracles, yet ascribed them to the devil: made their devotion pander to their depravity; and with their public and long prayers devoured

widows' houses. How could He avoid exposing and condemning these unprincipled wretches; and disabusing the common people of all confidence in such guides? What should we have thought of Him if He had not? What esteem could we have felt for Him? Does mercy require the absence of righteousness? Is meekness connivance at crime? Does gentleness renounce all the exalted feelings of wisdom, rectitude, and dignity?

But observe Him with regard to others. There was nothing censorious in his disposition; nothing distant and reserved in his manners. He was always easy of access, charitable in his constructions, mild in his rebukes, and tender in his invitations. How did He address the people at large? "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." What said He to the transgressor, exposed by a number of accusers all guilty of the same crime, and wishing to have their fellow sinner stoned? "Neither do I condemn thee. Go, and sin no more." How did He express Himself towards infants? "They brought young children to him, that he should touch them; and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put *his* hands upon them, and blessed them." See His conduct towards his friends. At the grave of Lazarus "Jesus wept." See his feelings in death towards his mother. "When Jesus, therefore, saw his mother, and the disciple standing by whom he loved, he said unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home." How gentle was He in all his dealings with his own disciples, bearing with their mistakes, apologizing for their infirmities, loving them unto the end, and blessing them in the very act of departure into heaven! And was He wanting in this temper towards his enemies? Did He not weep over the city whose inhabitants were going to embroil their hands in his blood? Did He not heal the ear of the servant of his bitterest foe? What did He to those who came to apprehend him? He could have annihilated them with a frown, but He only impressed them with his glory, and caused them to go backward, and fall to the ground, and readily consent to the escape of his followers. He veiled the sun, and shook the earth, and rent the rocks, as he suffered; but he punished no one. Yea, he prayed, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

He has the same heart now. Though He is passed into the heavens, He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. His gentleness is now displayed in four things. First—in relieving our wants. How harshly are many treated, when they apply to their fellow-creatures for succour! and if they succeed, how ungraciously is the relief afforded! What a difference is there between bounty, and kindness: between giving, and the feeling of benevolence!

Here females excel. There is a tenderness and a delicacy in their doings which men can rarely reach or exemplify. So would it be with angels if they were incarnate, and lived among us. How gentle would be the manner of their beneficence! They now bear us up in their hands, lest we dash our foot against a stone: but it is so softly, that we are not suffered to be conscious of it. But the Lord of all! how He bows down his ear, and hearkens to all our tales of distress, and gives to all liberally, and upbraideth not—

Secondly—in teaching us. We usually think only of ability in a teacher; but temper and patience are equally necessary. Without gentleness, the pupil, especially if sensible of his defects, will feel either confusion or despondency. But who could ever bear with a scholar as Christ the great Teacher bears with us? With what long-sufferings does He endure our dulnesses and mistakes! What various expedients does He employ! How often does He repeat the lesson; year after year; line upon line; precept upon precept! Thirdly—in chastising us. He corrects us in measure. He stayeth His rough wind in the day of the east wind. “He will not always chide; neither will He keep His anger for ever. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. For He knoweth our frame; He remembreth that we are dust.” Fourthly—in employing us!

“And will no heavy loads impose
Beyond the strength that He bestows.”

He “will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.”

Let us not abuse his gentleness—nothing would be more vile, and odious, and provoking. But let us improve it by losing every thing like dread and slavishness in dealing with Him; by confiding in Him: and admiring Him; and following Him—till we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.

JANUARY 16.—“My soul followeth hard after thee: thy right hand upholdeth me.”—Psalm lxxiii. 8.

HERE are two acknowledgments, dissimilar in their expression; but the second relieves the first—and the first is as evidential of godliness as the second. There are many that say, Who will show me any good? and follow hard after the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life. But who says, “Where is God my maker, that giveth songs in the night?” Who “stirreth up himself to take hold of God?” Yet there always have been such, and the number is now increasing, whose souls follow hard after *Him*. But it may seem strange that this should have been the case with David. Few ever succeeded in life like him. He rose from great obscurity into splendour, and affluence, and power; and was even seated upon a throne, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. What, some might be ready to say, what can the indulged mortal hope and wish for more? Yet he prays to be delivered from men of the world, who have their portion in this life; and exclaims, “As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied when I awake

with thy likeness." He was also a good man, and had enjoyed much of God. But this, instead of contenting him, makes him long for more; and therefore he says, "to see thy power and thy glory, so as I *have* seen Thee in the sanctuary." We cannot pursue an unknown good, and we shall not pursue an unvalued one. But the knowledge of divine things, which results from the teaching of the Spirit, is always influential in the affections: experience gives a relish which can never be forgotten; enjoyment increases hungering and thirsting after righteousness. When we have tasted the first-fruits, nothing will satisfy us but the whole vintage. When we have sipped of the streams, we *must* drink at the fountain-head. God, therefore, God in Christ, God in covenant, the God of *all* grace, is the object of the believer's attraction and pursuit simply and supremely; and though heaven and earth are very comprehensive, and contain a thousand endearments, he can say, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee; and there is none upon earth that I desire besides Thee." "It is good for me to draw near to God."

But the *soul's* following, and following *hard* after God—what means this? Surely it intends much more than a languid, inert inclination; or "the desire of the slothful which killeth him, because his hands refuse to labour." It evinces an intenseness of concern that quickens and rouses the man into life and earnestness—that draws his very "soul" along with it—that reconciles him to every needful exertion and sacrifice, however trying—and urges him to persevere, whatever difficulties or discouragements he meets with in his course. And sometimes the distance is long—and the progress up hill—and the road rough—and the weather unfriendly—and enemies would thrust us back—and sometimes we lose sight of Him, and ask those we meet, "Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?"—And when we spy him again, he seems to advance as we advance—and when we gain upon him and get nearer, he seems to look back and frown, and almost tells us to retire. The exercises and feelings of Christians in the divine life, will enable them to explain these allusions. Who among them all has not, like the Jews, been sometimes "discouraged because of the way?" Who has not resembled Barak's adherents, "Faint, yet pursuing?" Who has not frequently said, "My soul followeth hard after Thee?"

And who among them all has not had reason also to say,—"Thy right hand upholdeth me?" For if God is before his people in one respect, he is with them in another: while He tries them by apparent neglect, he secretly sustains them; while he seems to forsake them, he really supports them, and renders their strength equal to their day. His right hand means the influence of his gracious power, employed to preserve and animate them to go forward in their arduous course, cleaving to the Lord with purpose of heart, according to the promise, "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." Thus his right hand upholds them three ways. First—as to sin; lest they should fall by it. Secondly—as to suffering; lest they should sink under it. Thirdly—as to duty; lest they should decline from it.

Thus the believer's experience is now a kind of dawn, neither day

nor night—a mixed estate of pains and pleasures, fears and hopes, struggles and triumphs. He resembles the bush burning with fire, but not consumed; or the ship suffering from the winds and waves, but not sinking. He may be troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; cast down, but not destroyed: and in his lowest circumstances he can chide and encourage himself in the Lord his God—“Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance.”

JANUARY 17.—“And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation.”—Gen. vii. 1.

WE have here a striking representation of the character of Noah's piety. It was distinguished by singularity and sincerity. If considered in reference to his fellow creatures, it was singular; if in reference to the Supreme Being, it was sincere—“Righteous,” says God, “*in this generation* :” and “righteous,” says God, “*before me in this generation* .”

“Righteous,” says God, “*in this generation*”—a generation universally depraved: “for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.” Noah therefore had none to accompany him, none to countenance him; but all opposed him. Never was there before, and never has there been since, one so singular in his religion as he—for he not only differed from his neighbours, but from all his nation; and not only from all his nation, but from all the earth. Here was the danger, and here was the triumph of his piety. The force of opinion and example, when on the side of the multitude, is inexpressible. When a man is *alone*, conscience and reason will sometimes speak; and he will form many a good purpose, especially when trouble lays hold of him, or he is laid on a bed of sickness. But when he goes forth again, and again enters the crowd, he becomes another man. His resolutions fail him; his impressions wear off; the course of this world lays hold of him, and the stream carries him down. Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound. Herod, when he saw that it pleased the Jews, proceeded to take Peter also. Many of the Pharisees believed in Jesus, but feared to confess him lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. And who has not been influenced by the smiles or frowns of his fellow-creatures to act against his judgment and convictions? Who has not been holden back from the performance of many things, which he knew to be duties, by the inquiry, What will my friends think of me? what will the world say of me?

It would be well for us, seriously to reflect in private; to search the Scriptures without prejudice or partiality; to lay down certain rules of conduct, and go forth in the strength of the Most High, and follow them wherever they lead us, through evil report, or good report, saying,

Careless, myself a dying man,
Of dying men's esteem;
Happy, O God, if Thou approve,
Though all beside condemn.”

“But I shall be singular.” You will be singular; and while the world continues what it is, every Christian *must* be singular. Let any man, actuated by the spirit, and governed by the precepts of the Gospel, pass through the various walks of life, and whom will he resemble? What says the Divine command? “Follow not the multitude to do evil.” “Be not conformed to this world.” “Come out from among them, and be separate.” “But I shall be singular.” And suppose you are. In every thing else that is deemed excellent, persons wish to be singular. They would be singularly beautiful, singularly rich, singularly wise. But the righteous, in all these, is more excellent than his neighbour. Religion is always praiseworthy. To be religious among the religious is commendable; but it is far more so to be godly among the ungodly. What is innocence where there is no danger? or success where there is no contention? But to be surrounded with evil, and to be steadfast, unmovable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord—this is the heroism of piety. This shows a knowledge of its infinite importance; a real love to its nature; a purity of motive; a nobleness of mind asserting its own freedom, and daring to think and act for itself.

But his piety was as sincere as it was singular—“Righteous,” says God, “*before me* in this generation.” Much more is necessary to render us religious before God than before men: and frequently that which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God. Human legislation is satisfied with actions; but the law of God is spiritual, and regards our principles as well as our practice. The Lord looketh to the heart. Hence we read of “pure and undefiled religion *before God and the Father.*”

Bad goods require dark rooms; and as many articles of merchandise seem valuable till taken into the light, so there are many things which appear fair till they are set in the light of God’s countenance. Before him the friendships we often profess are nothing but instances of selfishness; and the prayers and praises we engage in are only the forms of godliness. We may come to his house as his people come, sit and hear his words, and commend the preacher, and with our mouth show much love, while He sees our hearts going after our covetousness. And how dreadful do I think that He will hereafter develop all, and divulge all respecting us; and that what we have always been *before Him*, we shall be made to appear before an assembled world! Could many now be seen by their fellow creatures as he sees them, they would blush to leave their dwelling—To what everlasting shame and contempt must they awake and arise at the last day!

It has been said, a man has four characters: one with his friends; another with his enemies; a third with himself; and a fourth with his God. The two last should agree; and they frequently do agree; and if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God. We often confound hypocrisy and self-delusion. But hypocrisy has nothing to do with deceiving ourselves; it is only a deceiving of others. It is wearing a mask, instead of showing our own face; it is acting a part which does not belong to our character. This, we fear, is too common. And what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul? But self-delusion is more rare, especially among those who live in the

midst of the light of the Gospel. The decisions of the Scripture are so explicit, and the marks and evidences of real religion are so plain and many, that it is not an easy thing for a man to be ignorant or uncertain whether he loves God, or does not; whether he walks by faith or by sight; whether he minds earthly things or sets his affection on things above. Yet a man may be deceived, as well as be a deceiver, as to his spiritual state, and think himself to be something when he is nothing. Yea, it would seem that it is possible for persons to carry the delusion in their favour to the very door at which they will knock with confidence, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and He will say, I know you not. Let it therefore be our solemn concern to inquire what character we sustain in the sight of God, on whose decision our destiny depends, and whose judgment is always according to truth. It was the honour of Zechariah and Elisabeth that they were both righteous before God—And of Noah God said, he is righteous *before me* in this generation. He was not perfect; but his piety bore the eye of God.

JANUARY 18.—“And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; FOR THEE HAVE I SEEN righteous before me in this generation.”—Gen. vii. 1.

WE have viewed the character of Noah's piety, let us now consider the *Divine observation* of it. “*Thee*,” says God, “*have I seen* righteous before me in this generation.” It means that He had discerned, noticed, remarked him. Men may suppose themselves unobserved; but they are not only God's creatures, but subjects. He is their moral governor; and inspects and examines them all. His eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good. His eyes are upon the ways of men, and He pondereth all their goings.

And what is his aim in the exploring of the human race? Is it to ascertain whether we are rich or poor, bond or free, learned or illiterate? These are distinctions of inferior importance; they will soon drop off from their possessors, and we shall enter eternity only under personal characters. The grand thing is, whether we are wise unto salvation; whether we are free indeed; whether we are rich towards God; whether we are men of the world, or heirs of the grace of life; whether we are wicked or righteous. And He is able to determine this, without the possibility of mistake. He is not far from any one of us. He needs not the aid of testimony to inform Him. All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. He understands our thought afar off. Yea, the darkness hideth not from Him, but the night shineth as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to Him. Hence He knoweth them that are His; and sees them, however intermixed with others; and in his eye, they are as separate now, as they will be hereafter.

Here was only one holy man in the world of the ungodly: but the Lord saw that single grain of corn in a heap of chaff; and that particle of gold in a mass of dross: it was too precious to be overlooked or disregarded. And Noah continued to engage his attention. Having seen him, the Lord never lost sight of him. A prince can-

not be acquainted with all the conditions of his subjects. A father cannot always have his children in view. But the Lord withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous: their walls are continually before Him. He sees all their external difficulties, and all their inward anxieties. Do they wander? He telleth all their wanderings. Do they weep? He puts their tears into his bottle. Their desire is before Him, and their groaning is not hid from Him.

He is not unrighteous to forget their work and labour of love. If they speak one to another, He hearkens and hears, and it is recorded in the book of his remembrance. Much of their religion is private. But He seeth in secret. Much is defective. But where there is a willing mind, He accepts according to what a man has. Where the means of execution are wanting, He takes the purpose of the generous heart for the deed. Their wishes lie open to his view, and He judges of their services by them, and thus renders double unto them.

But when He says, "Thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation," He means to express not only discernment and notice, but also approbation. "For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright. He taketh pleasure in them that fear Him, in them that hope in his mercy. They blush and weep over their duties; but He applauds them. The world often counts their life madness, and their end to be without honour; but the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous.

Noah, as a preacher of righteousness, had laboured in vain, and spent his strength for nought among the disobedient; but his work was with the Lord, and his judgment with his God. While the ark was preparing he met with nothing but ridicule and contempt. How often would they go in parties and insult him—"Well, old dotard, how come you on with your folly? So you are going to swim on dry land! Do you intend to make a sea as soon as you have done the ship? Where are your sails and rudder?"—Who knows not the force of cruel mockings?

But the work was the obedience of faith: and while men scorned, the Lord admired. How delicious is the approbation of God! His smile; His voice, saying, Well done, good and faithful servant, is enough to disarm reproach and persecution, to sweeten all the bitternesses of life, and to commence heaven on earth.

JANUARY 19.—"And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation."—Gen. vii. 1.

WE have seen the character, and the observation of Noah's piety; and here we see *the privilege of it*—"Come thou and all thy house into the ark." It is needless to inquire how the invitation was conveyed, whether in a vision, or a dream, or by an impulse on the mind, or a voice in the air—Noah knew that it came from God. But the manner of expressing it is observable. He does not say, "Go thou and all thy house into the ark;" but "come," as if God was there. And He was there, and would have his servants and his family with him to be safe in the day of evil."

To understand the greatness of the privilege, you must recall the danger in which he now was, and endeavour to realize the scene. The time was arrived to fulfil the threatening. "The end of all flesh is come before me. And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die." All nature seems aghast at the frown of its Maker. As Noah steps into his welcome refuge, he looks, and sees every thing foreboding a gathering storm. The winds hurtle, the sky is covered with blackness; the windows of heaven are opened, the clouds pour down torrents, and the fountains of the great deep are broken up. The rivers swelling over their banks, and the seas invading the land, soon drive the inhabitants from the valleys and the plains. For a while the hills and mountains afford them a retreat: and higher and higher they ascend up their sides. But no provision having been made, where will they find supplies of food? They look hungry at each other—and the weaker are slain and eaten with cannibal voracity. The devourers, according to their strength, survive one another. Their last hopes are the trees, to whose branches they cling with despair, till, weakened or benumbed, they loosen their hold, and plunge into the flood. Then the stillness of death reigns over the universal grave. Many, before they perished, saw and heard the misery of thousands, and in the doom of their fellow wretches realized their own. Many too perished in view of a place of safety they could not reach; and tortured with the thought that they had refused to enter while it was in their power, and so brought upon themselves destruction. Ah! how would they envy now the man they had derided!—And what were *his* feelings! His reflections! What were his apprehensions of the evil of sin, of the severity of God's justice, of the majesty of his power, of his goodness towards his people, of his caring for them, of his resources on their behalf! What pleasure would he feel, what thankfulness; what resolutions to love and serve Him!

The Apostle Peter teaches us the use we should make of this dispensation. If He "spared not the old world, but saved Noah, the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished." The present is not entirely a state of retribution; here we walk by faith, and not by sight. Another period is approaching, and "then shall ye return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God, and him that serveth Him not." Yet even now He puts a difference between the Egyptians and the Israelites; and sometimes at least induces the exclamation, even from unholy lips, "Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth." And this interposition on their behalf is often spoken of in the Scriptures. He ordered a mark to be impressed on the forehead of those who mourned for the abominations that were done in the land, that the executioner when he approached Jerusalem might pass them by. John heard the angel crying with a loud voice to them who had power to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, "Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants

of our God in their foreheads." And says the Saviour to the church of Philadelphia; "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." "Come, my people," says God, "enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain." If we distinguish ourselves for God, we shall be distinguished by him; or, as Henry expresses it, "If we keep ourselves pure in times of common iniquity, He will keep us secure in the times of common calamity." If we suffer with others, we shall not suffer like them. He can indemnify us with inward supports and consolations, and render it good for us to be afflicted. He can turn enemies into friends; and losses into gains. And if they suffer temporally, there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus—and soon all tears will be wiped from their eyes. The Lord's people should therefore not be afraid of evil tidings. Their hearts should be fixed, trusting in the Lord.

But the privilege here was not personal only, but relative. He was allowed to bring "his *house*, and *all* his house, into the ark." It is good to belong to the godly. We share in many outward and spiritual advantages owing to the relation. If God's servants are blessings to others; if they are called the repairers of the breach, the restorers of paths to dwell in; if they keep off judgments, and bring down blessings upon the country in which they live; no wonder they are profitable to their own connexions. Abraham obtained a portion even for Ishmael. Thou hast spoken, says David, also of thy servant's house for a great while to come. And when Solomon was threatened for his transgressions with the rending of ten tribes from the empire, he was assured it should not be done in his days, for the sake of his father. Parents should fear the Lord, for the good of their children. The best provision they can make for them is not a hoard of silver and gold, but entailing upon them the blessing of the Lord that maketh rich, and addeth no sorrow with it. It is true that real religion does not descend by inheritance. Yet the family of a good man has many spiritual advantages, derived from his instructions, example, and prayers. If they do not improve these, the sin is their own, and their punishment will be the greater. Ham was in the ark; but without repentance, though he experienced a deliverance from the flood, he perished for ever. "Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

We shall have reflected to little purpose upon all this unless this impression be left upon the mind, that we cannot serve God for nought. "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." He who inhabiteth eternity, and has other worlds to show himself in; and He who is the possessor and governor of this, can never be at a loss to

fulfil his own word, "Them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed."

JANUARY 20.—"The law is good if a man use it lawfully."—1 Tim. i. 8.

DOES the goodness of the law then depend upon our conduct? By no means. It is good *in itself*, notwithstanding our ignorance or our wickedness. Yea, it is good, though it even increases our wickedness by irritation. And as a dam thrown across the river augments it by resistance, causing it to rise higher, to spread wider, and rush more impetuously; so "the strength of sin is the law." This is the case admitted by the Apostle: "When we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death." What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid! "But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead." Yet he concludes, "the law is holy, and just, and good"—It is founded in the nature of God and of man; and in our relations to himself and to each other. It requires nothing but what is reasonable, and conducive to our happiness—God himself could not have given any other law—this law can never be abolished or changed.

The Apostle means to say, that it is good or evil to *us*, according to the use we make of it.

What then is the unlawful use of the law? It is when we go to it as a covenant of works, seeking from it acceptance before God, and peace of conscience. It is wholly unable to answer such a purpose with regard to the fallen and the guilty. A law fulfilled indeed justifies; but a law broken can only condemn. It was never given for such a design. And such a use of it is therefore not only vain, but sinful; it is striving against God; it is opposing the plainest revelation of his will; it is robbing Him of his peculiar glory; it is frustrating his grace, and making Jesus Christ to be dead in vain. Yet this use of it is too natural, and it is with difficulty men can be drawn away from it, and made to *submit* themselves to the righteousness which is of God.

It is also improper to repair to it for another purpose. It can no more sanctify than justify. We may go to Sinai for the rule and the requisition; but we must go to Calvary for encouragement, motive, and strength. A sinless being can love God by seeing Him in his law, but a guilty one never can—He must first know that there is forgiveness with Him. Terror and even authority cannot produce *love*. Love is the only source of love; and without love there is no obedience. The law therefore can do no more towards our renovation than our remission. Its threatenings and commands may induce an outward and constrained service, but will not bring us cordially to his feet asking, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? They may make a hypocrite, or a slave; but says Cowper,

"To see the law by Christ fulfilled,
And hear his pardoning voice,
Changes the slave into a child,
And duty into choice."

We use the law lawfully when,

First, It is made to convince us of sin. For sin is the transgression of the law ; and therefore we must judge of the one by the other. As we perceive the crookedness of the workmanship by applying the straitness of the rule, so by the law, says the Apostle, is the knowledge of sin. I had not known sin, says he, but by the law : for I had not known lust except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.

Secondly, when it urges us to the Saviour. Indeed nothing else can kill the self-righteous confidence which keeps man naturally alive to a vain hope, but an acquaintance with the spirituality of the law. This extends not only to the outward conduct, but the state of the heart, and our very motives. It demands nothing less than an obedience perfect in its principle, extent, and duration : for "cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." How then can any flesh living be justified ? Therefore says the Apostle, "I, *through* the law, am dead to the law." And how *through* the law ? But by the law's showing him his peril and danger ? by its stripping him of all pretension to goodness and righteousness in himself ? by its awakening his conscience with a sense of wrath, and driving him like the avenger of blood into the city of refuge ? "For I was alive without the law once ; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." While therefore we dislike legal preaching, there is a preaching of the law which is allowable and necessary ; namely, when it is preached, not as a substitute for the Gospel, but to show its absolute importance, and to induce us to believe on Him that justifieth the ungodly, and whose faith is counted to Him for righteousness.

Thirdly, we use it lawfully when we regard it as a rule of life. Many vain things have been said upon this part of our subject. But it is a fact that the Apostle—and surely *he* was not wanting in evangelism—did refer to the moral law as the rule of life to believers. He enforces love, as "the fulfilling of the law," by which he unquestionably means the moral law, which says, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." And he calls upon children to obey their parents in the Lord, because "it is the first commandment" of the second table "with promise." And if this be not the rule of life, what is ? Produce any other rule of sin or duty—If it be *less* perfect, it could not have come from Him who is the *same* yesterday, today, and for ever—If it be *more* perfect, then he gave a *defective* law before. But what rule can we conceive equal to this ? It binds man to God and to all his fellow creatures by love. And what can we think of those who view a deliverance from an obligation to love God with all our heart, and our neighbour as ourselves, as a *privilege* ? A real Christian would regard such a state of exemption as the vilest bondage. He does not complain of the law, but of himself. He does not wish to bring down the law to his depravity, but he longs to rise into full conformity to its requirements. The more God does for him, the more does he feel himself bound to serve God. He also finds it every way useful to apply to this perfect rule. It humbles him by showing him his deficiencies. It makes him prayerful to obtain grace to do the will of God. It makes him long for heaven, where he will be completely happy, because he will be completely holy, and that law which is now put into his mind, and

written in his heart, will have expelled every kind and degree of adverse principle, and filled him with all the fulness of God.

JANUARY 21.—“As his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff: they shall part alike.”—1 Sam. xxx. 24.

THE Amalekites had burnt Zikiag, the place of David's residence, to the ground, and carried the people away captives. Having inquired of the Lord, David was encouraged to pursue after the marauders, and was assured that he should recover all they had taken. And so it fell out. But in the pursuit two hundred men, being too faint to proceed, had been left at the brook Besor. These, when David returned re-possessed of his own property, and also laden with the riches of the enemy; these went forth to meet him; and David came near and saluted them. But the men of Belial, who were with him, said, “Because they went not with us, we will not give them aught of the spoil that we have recovered, save to every man his wife and children.” Then, said David, “Ye shall not do so, my brethren, with that which the Lord hath given us. For who will hearken unto you in this matter? *But as his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff; they shall part alike:* and from that day forward, he made it a statute in Israel.”

The equity of this statute is obvious. Let us pass to a higher order of things, and see how far David's conduct on this occasion is sanctioned by a greater than David.

All the Lord's followers are not alike circumstanced or employed. They differ in their conditions, offices, talents, opportunities, exertions, and trials. Some of them peculiarly require courage, others patience; some energy, others prudence. Some go down to the battle, others tarry with the stuff; some are called to act offensively, others defensively; some move in public, others in private life; the duty of some lies at a distance, others are keepers at home—

“— Thousands at his bidding speed,
And post o'er land and ocean, without rest—
They also serve, who only stand and wait.”

But this difference does not effect their acceptance and recompense. They shall part alike; that is, provided they are engaged in the Lord's service, and willing to do what is in their power. This was the case here. These men were as much disposed to go as their brethren; but they were unable; and when detained, they were not useless, but aided David in another department: they guarded the baggage while their comrades chased the foe. Why then should they have been forgotten or overlooked? Had it been otherwise; had these men refused to march or fight, and feigned excuses for their indolence, while their fellows toiled and bled; it would have been unrighteous for them to have fared alike in the spoil. In the battle of the Nile, one of the ships, in trying to take its ordered station, went aground, and could not be loosened in time to share in the heat of the action. This prevention, however, was purely accidental, and nothing could have been more trying to the feelings of the brave commander and his men: and who sees not, that their claims were equal

to those of their brethren, though their services were not? But reason could have urged nothing in their favour, had they, averse to the conflict, sailed away, or purposely have rendered their engagement impossible. And does not this apply to many professors of religion? The words of the Apostle, "where there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not;" are very encouraging to some, but they are often abused by others. God never accepts a good inclination in the room of a good action without inability; but the will is taken for the deed, where the deed cannot accompany the will. No excuse, therefore, is allowed for those who do not exert themselves according to their capacity and means. And He knows, unerringly, whether the impediments we plead are real or pretended. And how often does self-indulgence, or sloth, or cowardice, create difficulties and obstructions! "I cannot dig," says the unjust steward—why not? Had he no hands? or could he not procure a spade? Yes—but day labour was a harder kind of livelihood than a dash of the pen. Call upon a covetous hearer of the Gospel, with a case of distress; and he tells you, "I cannot give." What is the hinderance? A greedy desire to hoard whatever comes within his grasp. Others are crippled by profusion and excess in food, furniture, and dress. They live to the extent of their income, or beyond it, and so have nothing to spare for the poor, or for the cause of Christ.—But how are they disabled? Who requires them to live thus expensively? Surely not *He*, who says, "if any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself." "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." But, where the desire is to the Lord, He estimates the services of his people, not by what they do, but what they would do, were they not prevented. David wished to build a house for His name, but was forbidden; yet the Lord told him, it was well that it was in his heart, and promised to build *him* an house.

Is this a curious or a useless speculation? It is adapted to keep us from pride and disdain. Let us not undervalue others because they have not our distinctions or advantages while they are doing service in other ways. God smiles upon them, and we should respect them. Let not the eye say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Even those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary. Hence Paul's caution to every man "not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophesy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness."

It should also keep us from leaving our own stations, and intruding into places for which we are not designed. The temptation is

often usefulness; but if we are unprofitable, the fault is not in our condition, but in our principles and dispositions. We may serve our generation, and have the testimony that we please God, in whatever state his providence places us. Let every man, therefore, abide in the calling in which he is called of God.

And in the same way it should silence the discontent or discouragement that often arises from the obscurity and limitation of our circumstances. Why do we murmur or despond because we have not the situations and resources which others command? The Lord who withholds them, looketh at the heart. "If the foot shall say, because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?" What said He of Mary? "She hath done what she could." Many put into the treasury; and the rich gave largely; but the poor widow who gave only two mites, gave more than they all. The man who occupied with five talents, heard the same sentence as the man who had improved his ten—"Well done, thou good and faithful servant." And the man who was cast into outer darkness would have had the same commendation had he not been negligent: he was rejected, not because he had only one talent, but because he hid it in a napkin. It is well to see the rich generous, and humble, and thankful; but the same degree of grace may appear equally in the poor when they refuse to steal, and take not God's name in vain. The man who knows how to be abased is as divinely instructed as he who knows how to abound. Some go to the house of God with the multitude to keep holy day: others are detained by accident, sickness, or infirmity; but "in their hearts are the ways of them;" and therefore they shall see his power and glory alone, as others see him in the sanctuary. One has leisure to go forth on a week day evening to hear the preaching of the word; another abides by the stuff. That female edifies the public with her pen; this is engrossed in rearing her infant family, and performing the most important duties of life without notice—they are equally respectable and valuable in their places, and shall part alike. "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal."

Moral greatness does not consist in doing extraordinary things, but in doing ordinary things with a great mind; that is, with a desire to please and glorify God. It therefore lies open equally to all. The servant may be as great in the sight of the Lord as his master. In a word, the excellency of individuals depends not upon the eminence of their station, or the splendour of their calling, but in the fidelity and zeal with which they answer to their claims and duties; just as the perfection of an actor appears, not in the kind of character he represents, but in the manner in which he performs it.—

"Glory and shame from no conditions rise;
Act well your part,—there all the honour lies."

JANUARY 22.—“Deborah Rebekah’s nurse died, and she was buried beneath Beth-el under an oak: and the name of it was called Allon-bachuth.”—Gen. xxxv. 8.

SHE WAS one of his mother’s servants. When Rebekah married, she took Deborah along with her. She had therefore attended Jacob in his infancy; and after his mother’s death he seems to have sent for her, and she came and lived with him, and rendered herself useful to his own children. She must now have been very aged. In those earlier days domestics retained their relation to their masters and mistresses much longer than they now do; unless they married; and sometimes, even then, they commonly died in the families in which they lived. Now, the connexion is frequently but for the year or month. “Ah,” it is said, “servants are not now what they were formerly.” We believe it; but the principal reason perhaps is, because their masters and mistresses are not the same. Corruption, like every other stream, does not run upward, but downward. Fashions descend from the high to the low; and morals do the same. From the state of the hall, we may generally ascertain the previous state of the parlour.

Old domestics, who have been faithful and useful in their generation, should not be disregarded as hirelings who have filled their day, but be treated as humble relations—“Thine own friend and thy father’s friend forsake not.”

No mention is made of Rebekah’s dissolution or interment; but we are informed of the death and burial of her nurse. As all could not have a place in his word, the pleasure of God is seen in the distinguished notice taken of some individuals above others. Yet he has not acted arbitrarily in this case. He bestows his favours freely; but honour is dispensed according to rule, and that rule he has himself laid down—“Them that honour me, I will honour.” And this may be done in any station, or condition of life. And the Lord is no respecter of persons. He seeth not as man seeth; and often chooses things that are not, to bring to nought things that are, that no flesh may glory in his presence.

The weeping here was so great that it gave a name to the place. Nothing could more strongly show the worth of this old female, and the place she held in the esteem and affection of the whole family. Every tear that dropped from every eye said, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” There are some who draw forth no blessing while they live, or tears when they die—a dry funeral is a hateful sight.

She was buried upon the spot, under “the oak of weeping.” Burying-places are of natural, not of religious consideration. Where the tree falleth, it may lie. But let us not fail to observe how little we know of the circumstances in which we may be called to die—whether among careless strangers or sobbing friends, whether at home or abroad, whether in the chamber or on the road. Therefore, says Wisdom, “be ye *always* ready, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man may come. “We can ascertain where we began life, but there is only one Being who can tell where we shall end it. But we may well leave it to our Heavenly Father to choose the lap of earth on which we shall repose. Wherever it may be, it will be alike safe and comfortable, if we fall asleep in Jesus.

JANUARY 23.—“Clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.”—Rev. i. 13.

THE dress was sacerdotal; and our Lord's appearance in this attire was to remind John that He was the High Priest of our profession. This is one of the three grand offices He sustains and executes in the economy of our salvation—He who is the prophet that was to arise like unto Moses, and the King in Zion, is also an High Priest who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man. And we make no scruple to say, that the first and second of these offices derive their efficacy and even their existence from the third.

The High Priest under the law was a very remarkable and important character. He was the medium of all intercourse between God and the people. Thus he was a striking emblem of the Lord Jesus as the mediator of the new covenant. But in tracing the resemblance we shall pass by his personal qualities, the mode of his consecration, the oil that was poured upon his head, and his vesture to the skirt of which were attached the golden bell and pomegranate—in all of which truth may find some analogy and fancy more: and notice only the three actions he had to perform. These were,

First, expiation. He offered not only gifts but sacrifices: and we know the design; it was to atone for the sins of the people. The slaughter of the victims showed at once the penalty of sin, and the way of deliverance from it—life for life—for without shedding of blood there is no remission. Herein the High Priest typified the Saviour: but see how the former is surpassed by the latter! The one offered for his own sins as well as for those of the people: the other was harmless, holy, undefiled, separate from sinners. The one repeated his sacrifices often, because they could not make the comers thereunto perfect; the other, by the one offering up of Himself, perfected for ever them that are sanctified. The one made atonement only for the congregation of the children of Israel; the other taketh away the sin of the world.

Secondly, intercession. We know not whether the High Priest used any words; but what he did, spake loud enough. For after slaying the victim, he took the blood in a basin, and, wearing the names of the tribes of Israel on his breast, he entered into the holiest of all, and sprinkled the mercy-seat, and burnt incense; while He who sat between the cherubim smelled the sweet savour. And thus Jesus, after bearing our sins in his own body on the tree, and obtaining eternal redemption for us, entered into heaven itself, with his own blood, there to appear in the presence of God for us, presenting and pleading his sacrifice, and founding on his satisfaction his claims in favour of his people. “Wherefore He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.” “We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who is the propitiation for our sins.”

Thirdly, benediction. While he was burning incense within, the whole multitude of people were praying without, and did not depart till he came forth and pronounced the blessing. The very words he

used are recorded: "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: the Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." This language was more than a mere wish on the part of the High Priest; it was the blessing of Him whom they had offended, and was nothing less than an acknowledgment that God was pacified towards them, that they were in favour with Him, and might go away joyful and glad of heart. So his church had not long to wait, when they saw Him enter within the veil in his accession to glory, before He came forth in the effusion of his Holy Spirit, and commanded the blessing, even life for evermore, in the preaching of the Gospel, which assures us that we are reconciled unto God by the death of his Son, that we are accepted in the Beloved, and shall be satisfied early with his favour. "Happy art thou, O Israel." "Blessed are 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."

JANUARY 24.—"Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight."—Psalm xix. 14.

ALL human beings should have a governing aim to influence and regulate them. And all have such an aim: but all have not a proper one. All wish to please: but we may divide them into three classes. Some please *themselves*. Whoever is offended, they must be indulged. Whatever be the claims of others, they will have their own way, and humour. Some strive to please *men*. And this is not in all cases improper. A condescending and obliging behaviour is lovely; and, therefore, enjoined. "Let every one of us please his neighbour." But it must be "for his good to edification;" and in all things lawful; otherwise, "if I seek to please men, I shall not be the servant of Christ." Some endeavour to please *God*. These are, indeed, comparatively few; but we hope their number is increasing. Such were Paul and his companions: "We labour, that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him." And such was David: "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight."

By a figure of speech, all authors frequently use a part for the whole. David wishes to dedicate to God all his powers and actions; and to walk before Him in all his commandments and ordinances, blameless. But if we take the expression as it is, we see how he extends his pious solicitude. A natural man may regard his conduct, especially as it falls under the observation of his fellow creatures. But does he make conscience of his *speech*? Does he make conscience of his *thoughts*? David's care reaches to the words of his mouth, and the meditations of his heart; and he prays that both may be acceptable in God's sight.

The prayer shows his humility. When we have done all, we are unprofitable servants. A faithful examination of our holiest things will destroy all confidence in them, and prove that they need forgiveness, rather than deserve recompense. "My performances are so poor, so imperfect, so unworthy, that it must be an act of grace in Thee to regard them. Deign, O Lord, to smile upon them.

View them in the Son of thy love; and for His sake forgive the evil and accept the good—

“I cast them at Thy feet : my only plea
Is what it was, dependence upon Thee.”

The prayer shows his affection. All must acknowledge the importance of loving God. But what is the best evidence of it? “This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.” And the Christian delights in his law. It is enough for him to know what He forbids, or what He enjoins. This, says he, will please Him; therefore I will pursue it. This will offend Him; therefore I will forbear. David was anxious that not a word nor a thought should displease his God.

The prayer shows a consciousness of duty. We are all under an indispensable obligation to please God, both on the ground of gratitude and justice. Who called us into being? Who has fed us all our life long? Who sought us when lost, and ransomed us from death and hell? We are not our own. For we are bought with a price. He is our father, our master, our king. And without a concern to please Him, can we be good children, good servants, good subjects? There may be a time when an obligation to please an earthly superior may cease to be binding upon us. He may require of us what is unreasonable and unrighteous. But God’s perfect will demands nothing but what is wise, and holy, and just, and good.

The prayer shows a regard to self-interest. David was not mercenary; but he knew he could not serve God for nought. In serving God we more effectually serve our own welfare: and as God himself has placed the advantage before us in the Scripture not only as a truth, but as a motive, it cannot be improper to regard it. Many will entreat the favour of the prince, and every one is a friend to him that giveth gifts. But if we were sure of gaining his approbation—than which nothing is more uncertain—yet what is it when obtained? But if we study to please God, success is not only sure, but glorious. The friendship of the mightiest monarch can do very little for us; our greatest exigences lie far beyond the reach of human aid. But God can supply all our need. He is able to do for us exceeding abundantly above all we are able to ask or think.

It would be endless to specify all the benefits attached to pleasing God. Is preservation from sin a blessing? “Whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her.” There is nothing too vile for us to fall into if we provoke our Defender to withdraw from us. Is safety and concord a blessing? “When a man’s ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.” Is the answer to prayer a blessing? “And whatsoever we ask we receive of Him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.” Is a removal to heaven desirable? “By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him; for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.” He went indeed in a chariot of fire; but an apoplexy, an accident, a dropsy, a fever, will not be amiss, that takes us from a vale of tears into the joy of our Lord.

JANUARY 25.—“We are the Lord’s.”—Rom. xiv. 8.

By the Lord here we are to understand the Lord Jesus: witness the words immediately following: “For to this end *Christ* both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.”

Now it we examine, we shall find that He has every kind of claim and right to us.

He has a right, derived from his creating power. If “all things were made by Him,” He made us, and not we ourselves. In consequence of this, he has a propriety in us, not only such as no man can have in a fellow-creature, but such as even no father has in his own children. They are his in a subordinate and limited degree; but we are the Lord’s absolutely and entirely. He brought us out of nothing; framed our bodies; covered us with skin and flesh; fenced us with bones and sinews; and formed our spirits within us. Suppose we were to return to him all that we received from him—what would be left as our own?

He has a right, derived from his providential care. He has not only given us life and favour, but his visitation hath preserved our spirits. Why died we not from the womb? Who sustained us when we hung on our mother’s breast? Whose mercies have been new every morning? Who has given his beloved sleep? Who has inspired our connexions with all the tendernesses they ever expressed towards us? Whose are we but *His*, in whom we live, move, and have our being? How vile and mean to enjoy the light of his sun—to breathe his air—to eat constantly at his table—to be clothed from his wardrobe—and not own and acknowledge our obligations to Him!

He has a right, derived from his redeeming mercy. We are not our own, but bought with a price, and He paid it. To feel the force of this claim, it will be necessary for us to weigh three things. First, the mighty and dreadful evils from which He has delivered us; sin, the power of darkness, the present evil world, death, and the wrath to come. Secondly, the state to which He has advanced us; its blessedness, its glory, its safety, its duration, its immensity. Even the beginnings of it here, its earnestness and foretastes, are indescribable and inconceivable—even now the joy is unspeakable and full of glory; and the peace passeth all understanding. Thirdly, the way, the infinitely expensive way in which he has thus ransomed us. All comes free to us; but what did it cost Him! Owing to our slight views of the evil of sin and the holiness of God, we are very little struck with the greatness of redemption and the difficulties attending it. It was easy to destroy man; but to restore him, in a way that should magnify the law which had been broken, and display God as the just, as well as the justifier, was a work to which the Lord Jesus only was adequate—and what does it require even of Him? Not a mere volition—not a mere exertion, as when he delivered the Jews from Egypt, and spake the world into being. He must assume flesh and blood. He dwelt among us. For thirty-three years he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Let us go over his history; let us survey his sufferings; let us meditate on his agony in the garden; his shame on the cross; his abasement in

the lowest parts of the earth: and all this for enemies; and all not only without our desert, but without our desire—till we feel we are drawn, and bound with the cords of a man and the bands of love—a love that passeth knowledge. Hence

He has a right, derived not only from what he has done, but from what we have done; a right derived from our dedication. If Christians, we have ratified his claims, and have actually surrendered ourselves to him, renouncing every other owner, and saying, "Lord, I am thine, save me. Other lords beside Thee have had dominion over me; but henceforth by Thee only will I make mention of thy name." Thus the Corinthians "gave their own selves unto the Lord." In this surrender, the main thing is the heart; for if this be given, nothing will be withholden. This therefore is the Lord's demand: "My son, give me thine heart." And perhaps some can remember the particular time when this surrender was first effectually made. Perhaps they had been pressed by an affliction that had threatened their frame, or laid bare their earthly hopes. Perhaps a friend had urged—perhaps a sermon. But the surrender was made—"Here, Lord, I give myself to Thee, with all I have, and all I am. My understanding shall be Thine, to know Thee; my will, to choose Thee; my conscience, to fear Thee—

"If there be passions in my soul,
And passions, Lord, there be,
I yield them all to thy control,
My Jesus, all to thee—"

My tongue shall show forth thy praise. My time, my property, my influence, shall all be employed for Thee. And this dedication you have often renewed since—in the hour of retirement—in the field of meditation—in the house of prayer—at the table of the Lord—

And having opened your mouth unto the Lord, you cannot go back. Nor do you wish it. To whom could you go? He hath the words of eternal life—It is your highest privilege to belong to Him. If you are the Lord's, He will take care of you. He will provide for you. He will guide you with his counsel, and afterward receive you to glory—"If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

JANUARY 26.—"They have forsaken the right way."—2 Peter ii. 15.

WE shall leave the persons of whom the Apostle here speaks, and call upon you to think of yourselves. Religion is, very properly, held forth by the "right way;" and we have accordingly six admonitions to bring forward concerning it.

First—inquire what this right way is. If you err here, the labour of advancing will be in vain; your progress will only lead you astray, and terminate in disappointment, regret, and wo. And Solomon tells us "there is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." How surprising and terrible to fall from the expectation of heaven into the depths of hell! Yet this will be the case of some, yea many, who will carry their confidence to the very door, "saying, Lord, Lord, open to us;" "and He shall answer and say unto them, I know ye not whence

ye are." In a case of so much importance, where there is reflection, there can be no satisfaction of mind without certainty; and certainty is attainable. Go forth by the footsteps of the flock. Search the Scriptures, and search them for the purpose they were given to accomplish, "that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God; and that, believing, we might have life through his Name." If you are anxious to know how you may come before the Lord, and what you must do to be saved, you will find the Prophets and Apostles all ready to show unto you the way of salvation. Especially pray to the Father of lights, and plead the promise: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." Thus you will be taught of the Lord; his Spirit shall lead you into all truth; and as a wayfaring man, though a fool, you shall not err therein.

Secondly—enter it, and walk therein. There is a form of knowledge as well as of godliness; and it is lamentable to think how many there are who rest in it. They are familiar with every thing the preacher advances, and admit readily the truth of it into their judgment; but while they hear his words they do them not. They acknowledge themselves to be sinners, but never cry for mercy. They believe in the divinity, atonement, and righteousness of the Saviour, and that there is salvation in none other; but do not come to Him that they might have life. But "if ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." The knowledge of a remedy will never cure you without an application of it. Your knowledge of a way leading to a place will never bring you there, unless you set off, and hold on till you reach it. Yea, your acquaintance with divine truth, if it has no influence over you, will be worse than nothing: "for to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." "And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes." "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more." Therefore, saith the Lord, not only "stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way;" but "walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls."

Thirdly—when you are in it, turn not aside to the right hand or to the left. There are mistakes and miscarriages of an opposite description; and we must not suppose that in going from one side we are in no danger from the other. All extremes are dangerous; and truth and duty lie in the middle. So Bunyan taught: representing a lion on each side of the road, but restrained by their chain from approaching the middle—the only safe passage was between. And Inspiration long before had said, "I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment: that I may cause those that love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures." Courage lies between rashness and dread; and patience between despising the chastening of the Lord and fainting when we are rebuked of him. Parents are not foolishly to indulge their children, neither are they to provoke them to wrath, lest they should be discouraged. We may not know what manner of spirit we are of;

and be either too candid or too severe. Did not Doddridge err in the former, and Toplady in the latter? Some carry the tenderness of conscience into weakness; and some its allowances into licentiousness. Some are too exclusively for privilege; and others for duty: but faith and works have both their claims in the Gospel; and from the Saviour's side came there out blood and water.

Fourthly—get as many as you can to accompany you. How can you bear to see the destruction of your kindred? Begin therefore with your relations, as Moses addressed Hobah: “We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you: come thou with us, and we will do thee good: for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel.” But extend your concern, and, as you have opportunity, say to all, and let your temper and life enforce the invitation: “O taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in him.” Many in families and neighbourhoods have begun alone—for we are not to wait for others; but after awhile their prayers and endeavours have been crowned with success; and those who neglected or even opposed them before, have taken sweet counsel together, and walked to the house of God in company with them. And to be the instrument of winning one soul! “There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth!”

Fifthly—go on your way rejoicing. So did the eunuch after Philip had preached unto him Jesus. And what source of joy had he, which is not open to you? You may indeed reckon upon difficulties and trials; but the Lord of the way hath said, “Thy shoes shall be iron and brass, and as thy days so shall thy strength be.” “My grace is sufficient for thee.” “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”

Finally—think much of the end; “the end of your faith;” “the end, everlasting life.” Who can describe or conceive the blessedness and the glory that await you! And the attainment is sure and near! A few more paces, and your Father's house will appear in view—

“Soon shall you hear Him say,
Ye blessed children come:
Soon will He call you hence away,
And take his pilgrims home.”

JANUARY 27.—“Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world.”—1 John iv. 4.

How desirable was it to inform them of their relation to God—“Ye are of God, little children.” So in a sense are all: for he made us, and not we ourselves. As men, we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. He clothed us with skin and flesh, and fenced us with bones and sinews: and he not only framed our bodies, but formed our spirits within us. But there is something more peculiar in the relation here spoken of. Believers are of God, not only as they are creatures of his power and providence, but as they are the subjects of his grace. They are of him, not only by formation, but renovation also. This people, says he, have I formed for myself. They are his workmanship. They are new creatures: they have a new

being, a new heart, a new life; all things are become new—and in all this they are of God—“Born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

How encouraging was it to announce their victory—“and ye *have overcome* them.” They had not only resisted and withstood, but had vanquished. How was this? Were their foes all slain? Had they taken off the helmet and sheathed the sword? Had they left the field, and were they now returning home with songs of triumph? Do not Christians find the spiritual life a warfare to the last? And as long as they continue here, are they not armed? Are they not engaged? And yet John speaks as if the warfare were achieved. The reason is, because it *is* partially accomplished. They have fought and gained many a battle; and have said, “Hitherto hath the Lord helped me.” And the remainder of the conquest is *sure*. Now where there is certainty, the future is spoken of in Scripture as if it were past. Thus Isaiah, ages before the incarnation of the Messiah, said, “Unto us a Child *is* born; unto us a Son *is* given!” Well, therefore, may the believer say, “Thanks be unto God, who *giveth* us the victory:” “Yea, *in* all these things we *are* more than conquerors.”

How wise was it to remind them of the cause of their success—“Because *greater* is *He* that is in you, than *he* that is in the world.” It was not owing to themselves—they were not greater—yea, they were nothing to their enemies. But if they were nothing to their enemies, their enemies were nothing to their Friend and Keeper. The chief of them, the prince of this world, the god of this world, is nothing to the Lord of all, who is *for* them, and *nigh* unto them, and in them, in all that they call upon him for—If the one is mighty, the other is Almighty. He is therefore not only greater, but infinitely greater: and not only greater in himself, but greater in his agency—greater in his residence—greater in his subjects. He produces in them principles more powerful than any of the principles which their enemies would maintain, though *they* have the advantage of an earlier being, and derive aid from every thing around us. How else would they ever have *obtained* possession of the heart? “When a strong man, armed, keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.” And how else could they *retain* the possession, when every effort will be made by the mortified foe to recover his former sway? But truth is stronger than error: grace is above nature; and the Spirit of the living God, that dwelleth in his people, can easily subdue the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.

Let this regulate your gratitude. You have seen many fall, who once seemed much more likely to stand in the evil day than yourselves—but here you are: and though, from the time you commenced your religious course, you have been constantly opposed by all the powers of darkness, your heart has not turned back, neither have your steps declined from his ways. To whose name are you to give glory? You have often said, “I shall one day perish:” and you would have perished long ago, had you been left to yourself—But here is the secret—“Ye are of God, little children, and have over-

come them : because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world."

The same truth that accounts for your standing as to the past, will show what you have to rely upon as to the future. If the one demands your praise, the other justifies your confidence. When you look forward, you feel your need of strong consolation ; and there is enough to inspire it. Renounce self-dependence ; but be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Look to his grace for your all-sufficiency ; and you shall never be confounded. Every thing else may, yea, must give way—But " he that is born of God, overcometh the world." " Sin shall not have dominion over you ; for ye are not under the law, but under grace." " The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet, shortly."

JANUARY 28.—" And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer ; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand."—Rev. viii. 3, 4.

THE ablest expositors consider this angel as the Lord Jesus. There were two altars attached to the Jewish temple. But the altar here spoken of was not the altar of burnt-offering which stood in the inner court, but the altar which stood in the holy of holies, called the golden altar ; and at which, the high priest, after he had sacrificed the victim, and sprinkled the blood, burnt incense, while the people were praying without. The censer was a small chafing-dish, filled with burning coals, upon which the high priest threw the rich perfume, whose fragrance then ascended in a cloud of odour, of a sweet smell, to God, who sat above upon the mercy-seat, between the cherubim. This was typical of the High Priest of our profession, who, having put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, entered into the holy place, not with the blood of bulls and of goats, but with his own blood ; not to burn incense, but to make intercession for his people, while they are praying in this lower world. Four things are observable.

First, his people are saints. So they are called, not only here, but throughout the Scripture. The term is not confined to a few official and extraordinary characters. We affix the title to the immediate disciples of the Lord Jesus ; and say, Saint Matthew and Saint John : but the Apostle inscribes several of his Epistles " to the Saints that are in Christ Jesus"—that is, the whole body of the Church. The name is therefore applicable to all real Christians. They are called to be Saints ; called unto holiness ; and holiness is not only the design, but the tendency of all their principles and privileges when properly understood. They are not saints by nature, but are made so by grace. And how does grace accomplish this work ? It makes them saints, not by imputed holiness—there is no such phrase in the Bible, nor in the vocabulary of common sense. Nor by imputed by righteousness—this makes them *righteous*, and justifies them before God. But they are made *holy* by the operation of the Spirit of grace and truth. In consequence of which, there is a renovation of their nature, and a consecration of all they are, and all they have, to the service and glory of God.

Secondly, the saints are all men of prayer. "The prayer of *all* saints"—not of *some*, but of *all*. They are the generation of them that seek him. For this shall every one that is godly call upon him. The Spirit of grace is always the spirit of supplication; and praying is as essential to the divine life, as breathing to the natural. Vain therefore is every pretension to religion, without a devotional temper. The wicked restrain prayer before God. The hypocrite will not always call upon him. The formalist, who does not decline it, cries, What a weariness it is to serve him! How is it with us? Do we live without God? Do we only pray when urged by fear or affliction? Do we feel the duty a drudgery rather than a privilege? *All* saints pray, in the temple, in the family, alone, habitually, as long as they live: and find it good to draw near to God.

Thirdly, many imperfections attend their services. Hence we read of "much incense offered *with* the prayers of all saints." In this book mention is often made of the worship of angels, but we do not read of a mediator for them; nor of incense being presented with their devotion. Nor was this the case with the services of Adam and Eve in Paradise. But we are fallen creatures. We are vile, what shall we answer him? We pollute every thing we touch. Our Sabbaths would condemn us, as well as our week-days, were we to be tried by them. Our good works deserve rejection, rather than reward. Our repenting needs repentance; and our weeping, tears. When we have done all, we are unprofitable servants; and the innumerable sins of our holy things constrain us to cry, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord; for in thy sight shall no flesh living be justified." Can this be prayer? Is this worshipping him who is a Spirit, in spirit and in truth? What wandering of thought! What distraction of mind! What coldness of affection! What a want of fervency and faith!—How can I offer this to the only wise and Holy God? If I see so much that is defective and defiled in my services, and am so dissatisfied with them—how must they be viewed and regarded by him who charges his angels with folly? in whose sight the very heavens are not clean? who sees more depravity in our duties than we see in our sins!—But,

Fourthly, there is hope in Israel concerning this thing; and relief is to be found in the Mediator between God and man. "And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascending up before God out of the angel's hand." We inquire not whether his intercession be vocal—we are not informed whether the high priest said any thing when he officiated at the golden altar. But we know that his intercession is real; and founded on his suffering and death, which were an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet smelling savour. Hence, his blood speaketh better things than the blood of Abel. It cries not for revenge, but pardon. "Be merciful to their unrighteousness—I have borne their grief, and carried their sorrow. I have magnified the law; and redeemed them from the curse—Keep, through thine own Name, those whom thou hast given me. Sanctify them through thy truth. Let them be with me where I am, to behold my glory." These are *his* pleadings for us, who is infinitely worthy. And we are assured of the result—The Father heareth him always.

This same shall comfort us. He is the consolation of Israel. If

any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins. If we love him, we shall not, we cannot abuse this encouragement: but let it give us boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him. Let us unite hope with humility; and rejoicing in Christ Jesus, with having no confidence in the flesh. And when we think of passing through the valley of the shadow of death, to enter the immediate presence of the Eternal, let us say, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God; I will make mention of his righteousness only."

JANUARY 29.—"He suffered no man to do them wrong; yea, he reprov'd kings for their sakes; saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm."—Psalms cv. 14, 15.

HE did this to the patriarchs. He did it when they were but few in number, yea very few, and strangers in the land: and when they went from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another people: and so seemed to invite hostility and injury from the powerful and unprincipled. He did it sometimes in dreams and visions, and sometimes in words and deeds: as we see in the rebuke of Pharaoh with regard to Abraham when in Egypt; and of Abimelech with regard to Isaac in Gerar. Also when by the destruction of the Shechemites Jacob's sons had rendered him odious to all the surrounding clans: yet, when he journeyed, "the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after them." "He suffered no man to do them wrong: yea, he reprov'd kings for their sakes; saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm."

Here we see that God's servants are dearer to him than kings. The world knoweth them not. They are often poor and afflicted. And therefore those who judge after outward appearance make little account of them. "The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter?" Yet of such the world is not worthy. In their state and character they are more excellent than their neighbours, wherever they may be placed, or however they may be endowed. To them the Lord looks; in them he takes pleasure. "Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life."

We learn also that his servants are never without a divine Guardian. When first they flee to him for refuge, he encourages them as David did Ahimelech escaped from the fury of Saul: "Abide thou with me; fear not; for he that seeketh my life seeketh thy life: but with me thou shalt be in safeguard." They may sometimes lose dependances; they may feel helpless and friendless; they may be hated and opposed: but there is no enchantment against Jacob; no weapon that is formed against them shall prosper. Are they travellers? The Lord is their keeper, the Lord is their shade upon their right hand. He shall preserve them from all evil. Are they useful? They are immortal till their work is done. Have they reached the days of privation, and infirmity, and depression?

He will not cast them off in the time of old age; but will bear and carry them even to gray hairs. He will *never* leave them nor forsake them—

“Though I should walk through death’s dark shade,
My Shepherd’s with me *there!*”

Once more. All creatures are under the Lord’s control; and when he does not renew them, he can restrain. The noblest agency of God is his spiritual agency: and nothing can be more delightful than to contemplate his gracious dominion over the souls of men; opening their understandings, enthroning himself in their hearts, changing their views and feelings, and making them new creatures. Are we the subjects of *this* agency? But distinguishable from this, there is another agency of God, and which we may call providential. Solomon alludes to it when he says, “The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.” The husbandman can form a new channel for the water, and the stream shall flow as freely as before, and retain the same qualities. Esau left home armed, and resolved to kill Jacob; but the Lord softened, though he did not sanctify his heart, so that when he met him he fell upon his neck and kissed him: for when a man’s ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him. The spirit of Cyrus, though a heathen, was stirred up to favour Israel, and to let go the Lord’s captives, not only without ransom, but even enriched for their journey. At the three festivals of the Jews all the males were to appear before the Lord in Jerusalem. Thus the country seemed drained of its defence; and surrounded as the people were with enemies ready to seize every advantage against them, they might be tempted to say, “What will become, in our absence, of our fields, and vineyards, and houses, and wives, and children?” But says God, who has all hearts as well as all events at his disposal, “I will cast out the nations before thee, and enlarge thy borders; neither shall any man desire thy land, when thou shalt go up to appear before the Lord thy God thrice in the year.”

If I have any thing to do with my fellow creatures, let me commit my way unto the Lord. Let me follow my convictions wherever they lead me. If I am reviled, let me not revile again, but commit myself to Him that judgeth righteously. Who is he that will harm us if we are followers of that which is good? If God be for us, who can be against us?

JANUARY 30.—“Moreover He called for a famine upon the land: he brake the whole staff of bread. He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant: whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron: until the time that his word came: the word of the Lord tried him. The king sent and loosed him: even the ruler of the people, and let him go free. He made him lord of his house, and ruler of all his substance.”—Psalm cv. 16-21.

God promised the Patriarchs much more than he performed for them here. The relation into which he entered with them necessarily involved a future state; yet he was far from disregarding them in this life. The former words show us how he preserved them in danger: when they were very few, and strangers in the land of Canaan: “When they went from one nation to another,

from one kingdom to another people; he suffered no man to do them wrong: yea, he reprov'd kings for their sakes; saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm." And the words before us proves how he supplied them in distress.

They suffered from one of the sorest judgments that can ever befall humanity. The whole staff of bread was broken, and famine was sore in the land, and prevailed in all the neighbouring countries, and continued seven years. But *the Lord called for it.* The expression not only reminds us that evil cometh from the Lord as well as good, but shows us the sovereignty and ease with which he brings it. All calamities are at his disposal; and if He speaks, they must obey him. Practical infidelity is often connected with nominal faith. People talk nationally of inexhaustible resources, of invincible armies and navies; but there is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord. If He calls for an enemy, his way will be made prosperous: every thing will favour him. If He calls for continued rain, the precious grain perishes in the earth. It is the same with continual sunshine; as they knew by experience who procured themselves ceiled houses, while the house of God lay waste: "And I called for a drought upon the land and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labour of the hands.

But, before the famine commenced, God had arranged things for the relief of the sufferers. Joseph was the man sent before them to be the succourer and the saviour, and his mission was from God. *He* sent him. It seemed to be entirely the affair of his brethren, who hated and envied him; but the hand of the Lord was in the whole; and Joseph himself acknowledged it when he disclosed himself: "And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life. For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt." Thus, though they sold him, God sent him. They were the instruments, but he was the agent. They acted wickedly, but he was righteous.—Yet, what was the character under which he was sent to provide? Was he employed as an ambassador? A commissioner? A corn-factor? No. He was sold as a *servant*. His brethren sold him for a servant to the Ishmaelites—and little did the purchasers know with what a precious charge they were entrusted; little did they think that the lad they saw weeping as he walked, or rode on the camel, was to be the saviour of Egypt and Canaan. And the Ishmaelites sold him for a servant to Potiphar—and little did his master imagine that he was ever to bow the knee to one he had bought for money. There is nothing out of hell, and there is nothing in it, equal to the malice and rage of "an imperious whorish woman." His mistress, disappointed in her cruelty, accuses him, and he is imprisoned. And a circumstance

is here mentioned which the history omits: "Whose feet they hurt with fetters; he was laid in irons." Look at that slave in the dungeon, galled with his heavy chains. Will he ever stand before Pharaoh? And ride in the second chariot of the kingdom? And be lord of all the land of Egypt? There seemed to be no prospect of this. There he lies, day after day, month after month, year after year, with no probability of the fulfilment of his dreams, which he had been taught to regard as prophetic—"until the time that" Pharaoh's "word came," to deliver him, "the word of the Lord tried him," that is, the promise of God, by which he engaged to advance him. The accomplishment was delayed; things waxed worse and worse; and thus his confidence, patience, and resignation, were sorely exercised. Note, As we try God's word, so God's word tries us; and happy if, when we are tried, we come forth as gold; and the trial of our faith proves more precious than that of gold which perisheth, though it be tried with fire. This was the case with Joseph. His destination secured him, and the merciful mediation for which he was designed required not only his enlargement but his elevation. Therefore the king not only released him, but "made him lord of his house, and ruler of all his substance"—one of the most remarkable events recorded in all history.

We may consider this dispensation two ways. First, as an instance of the wonder-working providence of God on the behalf of his people. "Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear Him, upon them that hope in his mercy." Let those that live more immediately as dependants on his care remember that they have no reason to despond. The world is his and the fulness thereof. Who has seen the righteous forsaken, or their seed begging bread? Ravens fed Elijah. And the widow's oil and meal wasted not. We are not indeed to look for such miracles; but He who performed them is not far from any one of us, and He is as powerful as ever, and sooner all nature shall change than one of his promises fail.

Secondly, as a representation of the Saviour's grace with regard to our spiritual straits. In view of these, he was set up from everlasting. In the fulness of time he came to his own, but they received him not. They despised and rejected him, and sold him for thirty pieces of silver. But he was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. He made himself of no reputation, but took upon him the form of a servant, and actually died upon a cross. Wherefore also God highly exalted him. What was the elevation of Joseph? Jesus has all power in heaven and in earth. Many others were relieved by Joseph's advancement: but it was peculiarly designed for the salvation of his father's house. Jesus is the Saviour of all men, but especially of them that believe—He is the head over all things unto his body the church. It hath pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell. Therefore to Him let us go, and from his fulness receive, and grace for grace. For a time Joseph's brethren knew not that he was the governor, and had all the corn at his disposal; otherwise they would have gone down earlier, and have appealed to a brother's heart. Yet perhaps one thing might have checked them—a consciousness of their baseness towards him. How can we ever look him in the

face? But suppose they had known that he had more than forgiven them; and when he saw them would fall on their necks and kiss them: then they would have gone down, confident, yet feeling much more of their unworthiness than before. Thus should we apply to the Lord Jesus; with hope, rendering us more sensible of our vileness. But let us not keep away from Him. He invites us near. He assures us that while He has plenty we shall not want. Because He lives we shall live also. Let us remember the relation in which He stands to us; and see where and what He now is. In what distress will not this encourage us? "Fear not; I am the first and the last; I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."

JANUARY 31.—"In many things we offend all."—James iii. 2.

To exemplify this in our conviction, we must estimate our offences according to the mind of God, and not by a human judgment. When David says, "Who can understand his errors?" he means to intimate that no one can be fully acquainted with them. We are too full of self-love; and are too averse to dwell on the discovery of our faults. The heart is not only desperately wicked, but deceitful above all things; and has a thousand artifices to delude us into a more favourable opinion of ourselves than we deserve. Hence we excuse many evils; we question the guilt of others; and as to those we consider really sinful, we do not condemn them according to their aggravations. From various causes therefore, we see only a small part of our sins; and we must not suppose we appear in the eyes of God as innocent as we are in our own—In his sight the very heavens are not clean. And does *he* set our iniquities before *him*, our secret sins in the light of *his* countenance?

Neither must we judge of the number of our offences only by our remembrance of them. We are affected with recent transgressions; but we are not struck with those we were guilty of ten or twenty years ago. And wherefore? Though they are past as to us, they are not so as to God. Nothing is future, nothing is past, with Him—With Him every thing is present—and we are at this very moment committing those sins with Him, with whom one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years are as one day. Though we have forgotten a countless multitude of our offences, God has forgotten none of them. They are all recorded in the book of his remembrance—and could we consult this awful register of our lives from the beginning, with all the sins of youth and manhood, of secrecy and openness, of infirmity and wilfulness, of purpose and accomplishment; and could we peruse one chapter, or one verse only, we should exclaim—we cannot answer Thee for one of a thousand of our transgressions. "Innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up: they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me."

Have we not in many things offended all—First, in our disregard of the Lord Jesus? Secondly, in the neglect and formality of our devotion? Thirdly, in the coldness and contractedness of our cha-

urity? Fourthly, in the non-improvement and mis-spending of our time? Fifthly, in our behaviour under the discipline of the rod? Sixthly, in our "temper-flaws unsightly?" Seventhly, in the license of our tongues? It would be easy to multiply the counts in the indictment. Surely a little reflection upon each of these will convince us of the guilt here acknowledged.

But in what manner should we utter the confession? For the words are not always used as James and his brethren used them. Some use them as a kind of censure upon others, rather than as a reflection upon themselves: yea, their aim is to screen themselves as culprits in the commonness of the delinquency. Hence, when their conduct is accused, or a monitor reminds them of their misdoings, O, say they, none are exempt from failings; even the best err; in many things we offend all. Others use them without perhaps a bad design; yet they use them vaguely and unimpressively—it is mere lip-service—it comes from nothing—and leads to nothing. But if we properly feel the sentiment we utter, it will be accompanied with deep repentance and godly sorrow—It will make us sensible of our need of the Saviour, and endear to our souls the cross and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ—It will hide pride from us, and fill us with self-abasement—It will dispose us to receive and invite reproof—It will keep us from murmuring and repining under divine correction—It will make us tender towards the infirmities of others—It will elevate our views to heaven, and send forth our desires after a state in which we shall never, never sin—and—It will awaken us to caution, carefulness, and zeal: for though we cannot attain perfection here, we may much reduce our imperfections; and should be concerned to make all possible progression in the divine life. Here, as all our offence arise from the depravity of our nature, our business must be to seek for more grace to mortify the principle of sin—for how can we that are dead to sin live any longer therein? And as grace uses means, we must inquire where we have most frequently erred, and how we have been most easily overcome; and watch and pray lest we enter into temptation.

FEBRUARY.

FEBRUARY 1.—"At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge."—2 Tim. iv. 16.

THIS was a very trying case. He was a prisoner, and had appealed unto Cæsar. He had to appear before the tribunal of Nero, the greatest and the most cruel monarch of the earth, to defend himself against one charge, for which he had suffered as an evil doer even unto bonds. His friends should have rallied around him, encouraging him by their kindness, emboldening him by their presence, exculpating him by their testimony, or softening his judges by their tears and entreaties. It was the custom among the Romans for the connexions of the accused to appear in court in mourning, to show their regard for the prisoner, and to influence the tribunal by their depositions, or their importunity; and sometimes the train that attended them was very large and imposing. But Paul appeared on the day of trial like an outcast, entirely disowned—when he looked around, he saw no one in his favour—the abandonment was extreme

—no man stood by him—but *all* forsook him! Yet this gives the Apostle an opportunity to display the excellency of his principles and temper—"I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge." Hence we may observe,

First—It is no unusual thing for a man to be deserted in the hour of trial. The rich have many friends; but the poor useth entreaties, and often useth them in vain. Some seem to act as if they thought a brother was born for prosperity, instead of adversity. Thus the garden is not forsaken while it abounds with flowers and fruits, but in the dreariness of winter. Are you suffering under such desertion? Remember, your brethren have drunk of this bitter cup before you. In his deep distress, David heard that Ahithophel was among the conspirators with Absalom. And what was the complaint of Job? "My brethren have dealt deceitfully as a brook, and as the stream of brooks they pass away; which are blackish by reason of the ice, and wherein the snow is hid: what time they wax warm, they vanish: when it is hot, they are consumed out of their place." Is it the Scripture only that is continually saying to us, "Cease from man?"

Secondly—See the frailty of good men. For such the persons complained of were, notwithstanding their infirmity on this occasion: and therefore Paul distinguishes them from the hardened persecutor and blasphemer of whom, as an Apostle, he speaks in the verse preceding: "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works: of whom beware thou also; for he hath greatly withstood our words." Men may be backsliders and not apostates: they may act weakly and not wickedly, or so as to do despite to the Spirit of grace. Thus these persons were friends at heart; their defection was only temporary; and they would soon grieve over it. But the best of men are *but* men. The agency that makes them holy leaves them human. There is nature in them as well as grace. And what affecting and humiliating changes do they sometimes betray! Who could have thought that Elijah, after telling Ahab to his face of his abominations, and slaying all the false prophets, should flee at the threatening of Jezebel, and pray to be released from life? Who, that had seen Peter in the presence of the Roman soldiers draw his sword and cut off the ear of the High Priest's servant, could have believed that the very same man, a few hours after, would be so overcome with fear, at the question of the damsel in the judgment-hall, as to say, with oaths and curses, I know not the man? So these brethren, when they heard that Paul was coming to make his appeal, went down to meet him as far as Appii-Forum and the three taverns; and when Paul saw them he thanked God, and took courage: yet consulting with flesh and blood, and thinking how many had lately suffered, they yielded to apprehension, and not one of them justified the hope they had excited. Lord, what is man!

Thirdly—How becoming and lovely is a forgiving disposition! However leniently the conduct of these forsakers of Paul may be treated, they were very blameworthy. There was much in their defection to irritate his mind, especially considering what was their duty towards one who was suffering for the cause they professed, and the pretensions of friendship which they had made. Nothing is more felt, more resented, than injury in the hour of want and distress,

contrary to every kind and degree of just expectation—yet the bleeding heart here only says, “I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge.” Imbibe the same spirit, and follow his example. In provocations and complaints dwell not upon the enhancing, but upon the extenuating. Be not implacable, but tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ’s sake, hath forgiven you. It is the glory of a man to pass by a transgression. It is the noblest of all victories—Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. So the suffering Stephen, under a shower of stones, cried, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.” Thus Jesus, as they were nailing him to the cross, prayed, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

FEBRUARY 2.—“Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.”—2 Tim. iv. 17.

AT his first answer before Cæsar he had been deserted of all those whose duty it was to have appeared for him. But to the loss of his friends he opposes the grace of the Saviour—“notwithstanding the Lord stood by me.” He was not visible to the assembly; nor did Paul himself perceive him by the eye of sense. His presence was real, but spiritual; and he was with his servant not as a mere witness, but as a helper—He “strengthened me.” He confirmed his courage, and gave him self-possession, and freedom of thought and expression. This was no more than he had reason to expect, from his own promise: “Lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” “Ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.”

See how He differs from others! They forsake us when we are in distress: He is a present help in trouble. When human dependence fails, he is sure to hold forth his own arm, and to say, “Trust, and be not afraid.” Thus he was with Joseph when sold into Egypt, with Jeremiah in the dungeon, with the three Hebrew children in the fiery furnace, and with Paul when abandoned of all before Nero!

And what a substitute was he for Paul’s friends! They would have been nothing without him; but he was every thing without them. If we walked through the valley of the shadow of death with him, we need fear no evil. He is all in all.

What was the design of this interposition? “That by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear.” The preaching intends the Gospel; and the meaning is, that in this trial he had an opportunity to publish it most advantageously and extensively. What he delivered would spread through the palace and the city; and pervade much further. For at this time Rome was the metropolis of the world; so that what his auditors heard would be reported to others, and extended through all the provinces. How true is it, that though his servants may suffer as evil-doers even unto bonds, yet the word of God is not bound. It can no more be restrained than the flowing of the sea, or the rising of the sun. Yea, the very efforts designed to injure it, have been over-

ruled to aid its progress. Persecution has always turned out to the furtherance of the Gospel.

What was the issue? "And I was delivered from the mouth of the lion." Does he refer to the enemy of souls? He is called a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour: and he hoped to prevail with Paul to deny the Saviour's name. Or does he refer to Nero? The Scripture frequently compares wicked men, and especially tyrants, to beasts of prey: and it was impossible to disgrace such a monster as now filled the imperial throne—a wretch who killed his preceptor, had his mother ripped up before his eyes, and entertained himself at supper by the burnings of Christians at the corners of his pleasure-grounds. Yet this hardly agrees with Paul's manner of writing, and the respect he considered due *officially* to his sovereign. The expression therefore is to be considered rather as a phrase significant of a narrow escape from a very pressing jeopardy. Hence David had said, "Save me from the lion's mouth." Paul's case was looked upon not only as dangerous but desperate. He was considered a dead man. Yet the emperor and the senate did nothing against him; but after a hearing, he was sent back simply as a prisoner.

The sufferings of God's servants depend not on the fancies and passions of men, but the providence of God. Their enemies are chained; and wherein they think to deal proudly, he is above them. He restrains or diverts them by his power when he does not govern them by his grace. "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of waters: he turneth it whithersoever he will."

He often permits his people to fall into the greatest extremities, and *then* appears for them, to show his power and glory, and to teach them never to despair. Therefore, ye seed of Jacob, hope in him and wait for him. He whom you serve is continually able to deliver you. He can deliver you not only from the lion's paw, but from the lion's mouth.

FEBRUARY 3.—"And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."—2 Tim. iv. 18.

HERE he expresses his full assurance of hope, after the trial he had experienced from the desertion of his friends, and the succour he had received from the presence of his Saviour. What he expected, however, was not exemption from trials. He looked for suffering. He knew that bonds and afflictions awaited him. But he knew also that the Lord would *deliver* him from every evil work—and that, far from allowing him to apostatize or backslide, he would enable him to resist temptation, to hold on his way, to finish his course with joy—and *preserve* him unto his heavenly kingdom.

What a destination! Nothing less than a *kingdom*, a *heavenly* kingdom, *his* heavenly kingdom, procured by him, prepared by him, the same he himself enjoys, and which his followers are to possess with him, according to his promise: "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father has appointed unto me."

But what is the prospect of such a glorious estate, if we are de-

stroyed before we attain it! It is obvious the Apostle believed in his own perseverance and final salvation. The expressions he uses are not the language of a man in doubt, floating between hope and fear; but of a man fully convinced and assured. And it is delightful to find him expressing the same certainty of mind with regard to all the subjects of divine grace: "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." Yes, Christians; you may equally rejoice in hope of the glory of God. He has provided for all your wants. He will secure you in every danger. Sin shall not have dominion over you. The God of peace will bruise Satan under your feet shortly. You have overcome them, because greater is He that is in you, than they that are in the world. Yea, in all these things you are more than conquerors.

It is obvious the Apostle derived encouragement in his expectation from his former experience: the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, and I *was* delivered from the mouth of the lion; and the Lord *shall* deliver me from every evil work, and preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom. The proofs we have had of his mercy and grace should animate us in our dependance; for he is always the same; and one blessing is the pledge of another. The victories of an old soldier feed his courage. David was filled with confidence in his dreadful conflict, by such recollections and reasoning.

But his expectation was founded on the Lord Jesus, as his deliverer and his preserver: the *Lord* shall deliver me from every evil work, and preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom. He is engaged to do it. He is able to do it. He is able to save unto the uttermost. I can trust him for every period, and with every result. "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day."

What wonder therefore that he should exclaim, "To whom be glory for ever and ever, Amen?" And will you not, Christian, make this Amen your own? It becometh well the just to be thankful. Praise is comely for the upright. It is the most unselfish exercise of your religion; and it will be the most durable. It will be the work, the enjoyment of heaven.

You say, "I hope I am grateful." You hope you are! As if there was any difficulty in determining the thing. Would similar conduct towards an earthly benefactor be deemed grateful? What are the sentiments of your mind? The affections of your heart? The language of your lips? Above all—What is the language of your life? Actions speak louder than words.

Like Paul, he enlarged in your gratitude. Be concerned that his praise may be as lasting as his goodness—that his glory may be *for ever*. Do what you can to advance it, not only while living, but when dying, and even when dead. I mean, by the institutions you have established or supported—by the examples you leave behind you—by the children you have instructed—by the sinners you have converted from the errors of their ways to be a seed to serve him, and which shall be accounted for a generation, and who shall come and declare his righteousness to a nation that shall be born, that he hath done this.

FEBRUARY 4.—“Then came David to Nob.”—1 Sam. xxi. 1.

WHAT an extraordinary character was David! How large a portion of the sacred history do his memoirs occupy. And how profitable are they for “doctrine, and reproof, and correction, and instruction in righteousness.”

He was now informed by Jonathan of Saul’s determination to kill him. He is therefore compelled to flee for safety. The tabernacle being at Nob, he repairs thither, in his confusion and distress, both to take an affectionate leave of the house of God, which he despaired of seeing again for a long time; and also to obtain succour. He asks Ahimelech the priest whether he can give him any food for his hunger, or weapon for his defence. With regard to the former of these, Ahimelech told him he had nothing under his hand but the sacred loaves. These, however, he gave him; and our Saviour fully justifies the action: “Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungered, he, and they that were with him? How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the showbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him?” Teaching us—that the ceremonies of religion are to give place to the substance; that positive institutions are to yield to moral obligations; that God requireth mercy and not sacrifice. Upon the same principle, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath, though the Pharisees condemned our Saviour for healing on this day: and we have known some who have opposed Sunday schools as breaking in upon the command of God.”

With regard to the latter, Ahimelech told him that he had nothing but the sword of Goliath, which was wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod. What a curiosity was here! How highly it was prized we may learn from the preservation of it in such a place and with such care! Nothing could have been more welcome to David than this weapon—“Give it me,” says he; “there is none like it.” It had been drawn against himself, and had been taken by his own hand—no one therefore seemed to have a greater title to it than David. It would strengthen his faith more than his arm. It would call to remembrance his former victory, and encourage afresh his confidence in God, being able now to add, “The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear,” and—“from the uncircumcised Philistine,” will deliver me from every evil work. So he ought to have reasoned always, and so he sometimes did reason: but, alas! two things occurred here worthy of our remark.

First, the manner of application was blamable. For, to obtain these supplies, he dissembled, affirming that he was employed by the king in a business that required haste. Is this to be justified because it came from a good man? It is the more to be censured. He should have maintained the character of an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile, and who is always to choose suffering rather than sin. But we see how well afflictions are called *trials*, and how difficult it is to act consistently in some conditions. How becoming is candour in judging others! Who knows that he should have acted better under the same pressure of circumstances! How necessary the prayer, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

Secondly, the issue was tragical. For while the parties were having this intercourse, a man named Doeg happened to be there "detained before the Lord." This wretch, instead of minding his devotion, observed them, and resolved to ingratiate himself with his master Saul by an impeachment of Ahimelech. And so it fell out. "Then answered Doeg the Edomite, which was set over the servants of Saul, and said, I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob, to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub. And he inquired of the Lord for him, and gave him victuals, and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine." Behold, first, the deceitfulness of this villain. Like other slanderers, he does the business by a mixture of fact and falsehood. He ought to have told Saul that David had deceived Ahimelech, and made him believe that he was acting for the king; and therefore that what Ahimelech did was really in honour of the king. The whole truth would have entirely exculpated the high priest, but Doeg suppresses the most essential part of it. And behold, secondly, the cruelty as well as falseness of this informer. "And the king said, Thou shalt surely die, Ahimelech, thou, and all thy father's house." There was something venerable in the character and office of a priest, and as Ahimelech and his brethren stood dressed in their sacred robes, Saul's footmen shrunk back from slaying them. "And the king said to Doeg, Turn thou, and fall upon the priests. And Doeg the Edomite turned, and he fell upon the priests, and slew on that day fourscore and five persons that did wear a linen ephod. And Nob, the city of the priests, smote he with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children and sucklings, and oxen and asses, and sheep, with the edge of the sword."

But see upon what little occurrences surprising coincidences and great consequences often depend. The word of the Lord had denounced the house of Eli: but the threatening could not be fulfilled without the destruction of these priests: but these priests would not have been destroyed but for the malice of Saul: Saul's malice would not have been excited but for the infamy of Doeg; and Doeg would not have informed against Ahimelech had he not been detained at the tabernacle the day when David entered it. All this seemed accidental; but it was not. All parties acted freely, yet necessarily too. What was unjust in Doeg was righteous in God. He knew how to accomplish his word by human falsehood and cruelty, and yet he was of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Nothing was more certain as well as important than the death of Christ, and he was delivered according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God; yet by wicked hands the Jews crucified him. Ask me not for a solution, I only know the fact. I see the two ends of the chain, but the middle is under water: yet the connexion is as real as it is invisible. By-and-by it will be drawn up. In the mean while, we must walk by faith, and not by sight. Judge nothing before the time. We know that Messiah cometh which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things.

FEBRUARY 5.—"WHEN I AM WEAK, then am I strong."—2 Cor. xii. 10.

CHRISTIANITY is not only mysterious with regard to doctrine, but also experience. Christians are men wondered at. They are a
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peculiar people; and the world knoweth them not. Some of the effects and advantages of their religion indeed, may be palpable to others; but its principles and resources are among the deep things of God, which the natural man knoweth not, because they are spiritually discerned. How strange to many must the language of Paul appear—"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." "Most gladly will I glory in infirmity, that the power of Christ may rest upon me—I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: FOR WHEN I AM WEAK, THEN AM I STRONG."

As this expresses his experience not only or principally as he was an Apostle, but a Christian, let us in this exercise consider the weaknesses to which he refers; and in the next see how it becomes an accession of strength.

The weakness is spiritual. But we must distinguish between the reality of it, and the apprehension. The fall has deprived us not only of righteousness, but of strength; and by nature we are weak, as to all the purposes of the divine life. But all are not sensible of this. In general, men are far from believing it; and will sooner acknowledge their guilt than their inability. They will confess that they have not been what they ought to have been, or done what they ought to have done; but they always presume upon their competency for these things; and resolve by-and-by to accomplish them. But Paul speaks of the *apprehension* of our weakness. This is effected by the Holy Spirit; who convinces men of sin, and makes them acquainted with their true character and state before God. But the sense of their weakness is *increased* by observation and experience. They hear of many falling around them who once seemed much more likely to stand than themselves; and each of these declensions cries, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." And when they read the Scriptures, they see the falls of good men there, and men whose grace was very superior to their own: and can they help fearing for themselves, when they find Abraham betrayed into dissimulation by unbelief; Moses speaking unadvisedly with his lips; Job cursing the day of his birth; Solomon playing the fool; and Peter acting the coward? The events of life also enlarge their self-acquaintance. Who knows what he is till he is tried, and till he meets with his own trial? For every one is not discovered in the same way: and as Joab adhered to David in the rebellion of Absalom, yet turned aside after Adonijah; so we may be firm in one peril, and fail in another. Afflictions are frequently called temptations, because they try and prove us: and where is the Christian who, in consequence of these experiments, has not been led, if not to question the reality of his religion, to mourn over the deficiencies of it? Thus fresh and painful secrets are constantly coming to light; and the knowledge of their depravity, which they could not have borne at once, is produced by little and little. "And where," says the Christian, often appalled, "where will the mystery end? Who can understand his errors? Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?" Thus he often seems worse, because he is wiser. There is not more in him of unbelief, and impatience, and vain thought; but he sees and feels more of them.

And how far does this sense of the Christian's weakness extend? He feels that he is unable to do what he *ought*. His work is laid down in the Scripture. It requires him to run the race that is set before him; to fight the good fight of faith; and to perform a thousand duties with regard to God, his neighbour, and himself—the view of which forces him to exclaim, “Who is sufficient for these things?” He feels that he is unable to do what he *would*. To will *is* present, but how to perform that which is good, he finds not. He would gladly flee, but the wires of his cage tell him that he is a prisoner. He attempts to sing, but his voice is untuned; and his harp is hung on the willows, and sometimes too high for him to reach. He feels that he is unable to do what *he has done*. His former experience humbles him. “O that it was with me as in months past!” I fear I shall never pray again as I have prayed. Never trust in the promise as I have trusted. Never kneel before the cross again as I once did, and said—

“Here it is I find my heaven,
While upon the Lamb I gaze.”

He feels that he is unable to do *the least duty*. He always thought himself inadequate, were he called to die at the stake, or to offer up an Isaac: but he is beyond this now. He now feels that he cannot order his speech properly in company; nor endure, with Christian temper, the trifling vexations of the hour—yea, that without Christ he “can do nothing.” He feels unable to preserve himself from the *greatest* sins. He once thought that he was in no danger from these; and supposed that reputation, and common prudence, would secure him from *such* miscarriages. But he now prays with David, not only, cleanse thou me from secret faults, but keep back thy servant *also* from presumptuous sins.

And what is there to meet all this weakness? When he examines, he finds that nothing is sufficient. He cannot depend on *the grace he has received*—He can no more live without fresh supplies of the Spirit, than he can see with the light, and respire with the air, of yesterday. He cannot depend upon his *present frames*. These may be lively and delightful; but they are of the nature of cordials, not food—he cannot live by them. He knows too how variable they are; and how often rapture has ended in gloom. He cannot depend upon his *resolutions and vows*. He has seen their vanity in binding his depraved heart. Though they seemed invincible, they have yielded in the hour of temptation: and before the assaults of the enemy, they have been no more than a hedge of cobwebs, or a wall of vapour. He cannot depend upon *means and ordinances*. He values these, and will be found in the use of them; they are his privilege as well as duty. But unless the Lord give the increase, Paul plants and Apollos waters in vain. We are to wait *only* upon God. His influences and communications can alone relieve and elevate, refresh and strengthen the soul. This seems a discouraging state of mind to be in—but what follows?

FEBRUARY 6.—“When I am weak, THEN AM I STRONG.”—2 Cor. xii. 10.

THE consciousness of our spiritual weakness becomes the accession of strength three ways.

First, as it inspires us with diffidence and caution. It will keep us from *venturing* into the company of the infidel and the wicked, lest we learn of their ways, and get a snare to our souls. It will restrain us from scenes and places of dissipation where there is so much temptation, and we feel we have so little power of resistance. He who knows how much tinder he has about him will not invite sparks. The humble will always be self-diffident. He will not vainly think that he can withstand where others are overcome. Therefore he will not make haste to be rich, lest he should not be innocent, but fall into many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. He will perfectly tremble at the thought of the love of money, since God tells him it is the root of all evil. He will not exercise himself in great matters, or in things too high for him; he finds himself unequal to the difficulties and dangers of superior offices and employments. If God calls him into an arduous and perilous situation, the call insures his safety and assistance; but presumption has nothing to plead. He will therefore look for his commission; and follow God, instead of going before him. The Jews would go up the hill—but the ark remained behind. What was the consequence? The enemy easily discomfited them, and chased them like bees. The self-sufficient are never safe, because no one can warn them of danger without giving offence: but the man who knows himself, and is not high minded, welcomes admonition and even reproof; and says, Faithful are the wounds of a friend.

Secondly, as it makes us more prayerful. When a man, concerned for his safety and welfare, finds that he cannot rely upon himself, he will naturally look after another to rely upon. So did Jehoshaphat in the pressure of his straits: "We have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee." And thus, when the weak sees an adversary approaching, he will not go forth to meet him alone; but hasten and call upon the Captain of his salvation to come to his succour: and thus he succeeds. What is prayer but an application to the strong for strength? And as in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength, but we cannot hope for its aids without asking and seeking; it follows, that nothing can strengthen us like prayer. It is availing ourselves of Omnipotence. It is our being strong in the Lord and the power of his might. The babe cannot support himself: yet he is not abandoned. Provision is made for him in another: and what his little hands cannot accomplish for him, his cries and tears can effect. The mother hears him, and flies to relieve and indulge. She, even she, may indeed forget; or prove unkind or unable: but the God of all grace never said to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me, in vain. Therefore,

Thirdly, as it encourages and animates the soul by bringing us under the certainty of divine promise. There is something very winning and endearing in confidence. Who could take away the life of a bird that fled to his bosom from the pounce of the hawk? or who could take advantage of having him in his hand to deprive the little trembler even of his liberty? Nothing is ever lost by trusting in the ingenuous and noble-minded: they always feel a responsibility to repay the confidence reposed in them. What then may

we not expect from the God of all comfort? But not only does the honour of his goodness incline him to succour those who rely on him, but also the honour of his truth. For has he not said, "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble? He filleth the hungry with good things; but the rich he hath sent empty away?"

Therefore you need not be afraid to know the evil of your spiritual condition; since suitable relief of every kind is provided—And we see what is indeed the most enviable state and frame of mind you can be in. The best evidence of prosperity in the divine life is not great knowledge and ecstasy; but lowliness of mind. "He that abaseth himself shall be exalted." "A man's pride shall bring him low; but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit." "With the lowly is wisdom." "With him also is affluence and might"—"when I am weak then am I strong."

And let it comfort us that our resource is not future only, but immediate. We cannot doubt of our being strong in heaven. There our powers will be fully equal to every demand upon them. There we shall be able to serve him day and night in his temple, feeling no languor, and requiring no repose. But we are strong not only after weakness, but in it—"when I am weak, then am I strong." "As thy day so shall thy strength be." "I will water it every moment."

Thus, out of weakness I am made strong. "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me."

FEBRUARY 7.—"Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you."—1 Thess. iii. 11.

In order as it is said, in the foregoing verse, to "see their face, and perfect that which was lacking in their faith." But two remarks arise from the words.

The first is of a doctrinal character, and regards a leading article of the faith once delivered to the saints—"Our Lord Jesus" is here addressed in prayer, as well as "God himself and our Father," and even with him. This cannot be confounded with the practice of the Romish Church in praying to the Virgin Mary, and a multitude of patron saints. Such prayers have no authority from the Scriptures; and the persons to whom they are addressed, being mere creatures only, can have no knowledge of the wants and feelings of thousands that may address them at the same time. But the manner in which the Saviour speaks of himself, before he left the earth, shows the reasonableness of our addressing *him*: "Lo," said he, "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." "Where two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them." "He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father; and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." He therefore, though unseen, is accessible; omnipresent; knows all things; is able and engaged to manage all our concerns: and because he lives, we shall live also. Hence the first Christians are described, as "calling on the Name of the Lord Jesus." Hence Stephen, when dying, and full of the Holy Ghost, invoked him. And Paul, not only in the text, but in various other places, is chargeable with

the same idolatry, as it certainly must be deemed, without conceding his divinity. Indeed he begins all his Epistles with this salutation and benediction: "Grace be to you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ." In one instance, he has even reversed the order before us, and in his supplication, places the Saviour before the Father: "Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work." And if we pass from the Church below to the Church above, where, though their prayers are ended, they are still praising; how are their praises expressed? "I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." Is this adoration confined to the saints? "I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying, with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." Is there no exception? "And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever." Be not therefore faithless, but believing; in all your dependance and hope; and exclaim, with Thomas, "My Lord and my God!"

The second remark is of a practical nature: "Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, *direct our way unto you.*" Does not the example of Paul and his brethren in this case teach us, that we ought to consider our visits and journeys as under the influence of a special Providence? We are not to confine religion to extraordinary occasions; but to acknowledge God in all our ways; and in every thing, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, make our requests known unto him. We are to love the Sabbath, and remember to keep it holy: but we must serve God every day, and be in the fear of the Lord all the day long. We are to repair to the sanctuary, and to enter the closet: but we must abide with God in our calling; and whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, do all to the glory of God. Paul speaks of "a prosperous journey by the will of God;" and John enjoins his friends to bring "the brethren on their journey after a godly sort."

And what is the truth of the case? "The way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." "A man's heart deviseth his way; but the Lord directeth his steps." Have we a journey or a visit in prospect? We must ask the permission, and implore the blessing of Him in whom we live and move and have our being. He can stop our breath; or lay us on a bed of languishing. If we achieve our undertaking, he can subvert the design of it, or mar all our satisfaction in it. How much often depends upon a single excursion! It may terminate in a friendship

the most important, or a connexion for life. It may lead us into temptation; and we may be ensnared by error or vice. It may produce trials and losses the most painful; and we may return, compelled to say, "I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty." Perhaps when we leave home, we unconsciously take leave of our house, and field, and garden, to return no more; and the places that once know us will know us no more for ever!

Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help. Happy he who can rejoice in the promise: "Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest."

FEBRUARY 8.—"The body is dead because of sin."—Rom. viii. 10.

THE language is striking; for the Apostle does not say, the body *will* die, but the body "*is dead*." The reason is, because the sentence is passed, and when the judge has condemned the criminal, we say, he is a dead man. In the case before us too, the execution of the sentence is commenced. And when a man is old, or infirm, or diseased, we say, he is as good as dead; he has one foot in the grave. Owing to the casualties of our condition, and the frailties of our frame, there is but a step between us and death. We are not only mortal in destination, but in state. We decay while we receive support. Before we reach our journey's end, our strength is weakened in the way, our senses lose their efficiency, and desire fails. Before the tabernacle is completely taken down, some pin is taken out, some cord is loosened, some rents or wearings away in the canvass are visible. We talk of a dying hour; but we die daily. When a bottle is discharged of its contents, there is a last drop; but every preceding drop emptied it as well as the last. Young says, "our cradle rocks us to the tomb." And Watts tells us, "the moment we begin to live, we all begin to die." Who thinks of this?

But how profitable would the meditation be! Pamper not that dying body—"meats for the belly and the belly for meats, but God will destroy both it and them." Be not proud of thy beauty and charms. The coral is leaving thy lips; the tints are fading from thy cheeks; the grave, the worms are ready for thee. The body *is* dead—insult not the poor carcass by dressing it up in vanity and gayety of attire. The pilot goes to the very end of the vessel to steer it: and you must repair to the end of life to conduct it. Hence the exclamation, and the prayer of Moses: "O that they were wise! that they understood this! that they would consider their latter end!" "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

But the Apostle remarks the cause or the reason of the event. "The body is dead because of sin." Death is not therefore, as it is foolishly called, a debt due to nature, but to the justice of God. Sin is the introducer of death. We die not from any physical necessity, like plants and animals: God indeed could have rendered these everdying, but he did not make them to be so. Man only was made immortal, but he forfeited his immortality; and therefore, though all

creatures die as well as man, he only is called mortal, (for we never speak of a mortal bird or beast,) as if in reproach for his becoming so by disobeying the command of God, and voluntarily incurring the penalty threatened: "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." What a murderer is here! Survey all the myriads of the dead, and ask, "Who slew all these?" And hear the decision of Truth itself; "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death hath passed upon all men because all have sinned."

But in the case of a Christian, and of such Paul is speaking, there is another reason for the assertion, and the body is dead not only because of the desert of sin, but the removal of it. During life there is an internal war in believers: the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that they cannot do the things that they would. Death ends the strife, by killing one of the parties, and making the other more than a conqueror. The Apostle speaks of the sin that dwelt in him: and such is the inherency of this evil, that the body which is the residence of it, resembles the house of leprosy which was to be taken down to get rid of the infection. And this will serve to explain a difficulty. For it may be asked, if Christ has redeemed them, bearing their sin in his own body on the tree; and they are justified by his blood, and saved from wrath through him; why do they yet die? To which we answer, they die, as they suffer affliction. Affliction is not a judicial infliction, but is only corrective and medicinal; and though like all natural evil derived originally from sin, is, as God employs it, the effect and token of his love. So Christ has abolished death as far as it is a curse: and thus the Christian does not die: there is nothing penal in his death; yea, death is a privilege, a deliverer. It delivers him not only from a world lying in wickedness, but from the plague of his own heart, from his inbred corruptions, and even from the flesh and blood which cannot without change and renovation inherit the kingdom of God. Thus the enemy is converted into a friend. The sting is taken out of the bee, but the honey remains. The lion is not only slain, but out of the eater comes forth meat, and out of the strong sweetness.

Ahasuerus issued a decree, that all the Jews should be destroyed, and as no law of the Medes and Persians could be changed, the decree could not be revoked; but it could be superseded. The people were apprized of their danger, and called upon to defend themselves, and furnished with the means of safety and victory; and thus the day of their destruction was turned into a day of triumph and joy, and they made it a festival which they still observe. Thus it is appointed unto men once to die; and the sentence is irreversible. Believers themselves cannot escape the decree, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." But by the resources of the Gospel the curse is turned into a blessing, and to die is gain. And if there be a period on which the spirits of just men made perfect reflect with peculiar pleasure and praise, it is the time of their escape from earth to heaven. The approach of it had often alarmed them; but the consequences are inconceivably great; and *these* they always viewed with desire—

"O glorious hour, O blest abode!
I shall be near, and like my God;
And flesh and sin no more control
The sacred pleasures of the soul"

FEBRUARY 9.—"So fight I, not as one that beateth the air."—1 Cor. ix. 26.

BEHOLD the boxer in the Grecian games. First, he often practised in feigned combat, exercising and extending his arms and hands with his gloves on, to acquire greater agility and skill. This was comparatively easy: this required no fortitude, and produced little exhaustion. But see him afterwards when actually engaged with his antagonist—How he agonizes! How he stretches every muscle, and strains every nerve! Here was the trial. Who does not perceive what a difference there was between these? Between the feigned and the real combat? Between beating the air, and beating the adversary? But, says the Apostle, I resemble the combatant not in the former, but in the latter of these—"So fight I, not as one that beateth the air."

So it is with every Christian. He has to fight; and whatever erroneous or defective notions may obtain concerning it, he finds it to be, not an imaginary, but an actual conflict; the most serious and trying in which he can ever be engaged. The enemy he encounters has every quality that can render him formidable. The struggle is constant, and admits of no interval of repose or relaxation. The consequences are inexpressibly momentous and interesting. Salvation or damnation, hell or heaven, everlasting happiness or wo, depend on his success or failure.

It is no easy thing, therefore, to be a Christian indeed. Those who think otherwise, prove that they never made the trial in earnest; and are strangers to the language of the Scripture. There we read of striving to enter in at the strait gate; of pressing into the kingdom of God; of the violent who take it by force; of running the race that is set before us; of enduring hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. It is admitted that these are metaphorical expressions; but they must be founded in truth; and what is the truth intended by them? If it be taken from the lowest interpretation, it is enough to condemn many: for surely *they* must fall short of the requirement who have a name that they live, but are dead; who wear the form of godliness, but deny the power; whose religion allows them to be at ease in Zion, retaining every evil passion, every worldly indulgence; and is distinguished by nothing like exertion or sacrifice. "But then real Christians are few." And says not the Saviour the same? "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Men would be happy without being holy; without diligence; without contention. But no sluggard, no coward, ever entered heaven. "Win and wear it," says Latimer, "is the motto inscribed on the crown for which we strive." And says the Amen, the faithful Witness, "If *any* man will be my disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me."

And, therefore, a religious course should be entered upon with solemn thought and deliberation. We should sit down and consider the difficulties, dangers, and exertions that will attend it. For if we begin under a mistaken notion, and reckoning only upon what is

pleasing and peaceful, we shall peradventure repent when we see war, and return into Egypt. Hence many have taken up a profession of godliness, and soon lays it down again, to the disgrace of the cause of Christ, and the enhancement of their own condemnation; for the last state of such men is worse than the first.

But this should not discourage those that are heartily disposed for the warfare. There is enough to justify their choice, and to animate them to go forward, notwithstanding all they ought to look for in the divine life.

And if you are already engaged, and you are constrained to say, Whatever others find it, I feel it to be a conflict truly serious and trying: I *feel* daily and hourly the sentiment of Paul: "So fight I, not as one that beateth the air:" remember that it is the same with all your brethren in the world, and has been so with all the glorified now before the Throne—

"Once they were mourning here below,
And wet their couch with tears;
They wrestled hard, as we do now,
With sins, and doubts, and fears."

It would be awful if you were not acquainted with this conflict. But your experience is a token for good. The strong man armed keepeth his palace and his goods in peace. It is the delivered soul that is the subject of this contest. Say not, why am I thus? You are thus, because the Lord has chosen you to be a soldier; because his grace has produced in you principles alien to nature, and which have roused all the powers of darkness. And you shall be furnished with supplies and succours. And as your day, so shall your strength be. And armour is provided for you the most tried and complete. And it is a good fight in which you are engaged: it will bear examination; every review will afford you pleasure; every good being in the universe is on your side, and wishes you success. And your victory is sure and near. Earth is a tiresome place; but you are not to live here always. Now, if one temptation is overcome, another succeeds. But the warfare will soon be accomplished. Death will proclaim the triumph. How sweet will rest be after toil; and peace after such a fight!

FEBRUARY 10.—"For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely, in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him."—Psalm xxxii. 6.

DAVID knew there was a general sameness of views and feelings in the subjects of divine grace. Hence from his own experience he inferred the disposition and conduct of the godly in all future ages—they would do what he had done, and find the same relief. He refers, however, to the *result* of his case when he had been brought into a proper state of mind, and not to the commencement of it, which he himself censures. For we are here furnished with a fact which does not appear in the history of David. It is commonly supposed, that after his grievous fall, till Nathan reprov'd him, he had been careless and stupified; and this has often been adduced as a proof of the hardening nature of sin. But the thing was far otherwise. He was all the while tortured in his mind, yet unwill-

ting to humble himself before God, and condemn himself before men, as he ought to have done—He kept silence, and endeavoured to pass off the distress by time, palliation, and excuse. But the repression and concealment of his anguish preyed not only upon his peace, but his health, and endangered life itself. At length he was reduced to the deepest penitence, and threw himself, by an unqualified confession, on the compassion of God. This was a wise course, and we shall do well to follow his example. Under a sense of guilt we should not keep away from God, but enter his presence, and cry, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." This will melt the heart into "godly sorrow" better than all legal terrors; and we know who hath said, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Hence, says David, "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin."

He then adds: "For *this* shall every one that is godly pray unto thee." Here we see not only that all the godly pray, but every one of them prays for pardon. This is the very thing which our Saviour teaches his disciples: "When ye pray, say—forgive us our trespasses." And this praying does not only regard the manifestation of forgiving mercy, as some would have it, but the exercise of it. For in many things we offend all; yea, in every thing we come short of the glory of God. If He should mark what we do amiss, we could not stand before him, even for the sins of our holy things. A faithful examination of the most innocent hour of our lives, and the devoutest act of our worship, must bring us upon our knees, crying, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord, for in thy sight shall no flesh living be justified." From the beginning to the end our hope must be a "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

But here is a season of audience—"In a time when thou mayest be found." There is a time, therefore, when he will not be found. Hence the force of the admonition, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near." Life is the time not only to serve, but to seek the Lord,—

There are no acts of pardon passed
In the cold grave to which we haste."

At death, the bridge is drawn; the door is shut. Yet, during life, there are some periods more favoured than others. Paul sought the Lord thrice for deliverance before the promise of all-sufficient grace was given him. God heard Moses at one time, not another. How long did Abraham and Isaac pray before they received the answer! But the time of finding, when we pray for pardoning grace, is the hour in which David found it; which was the moment he entirely condemned himself and justified God—God is always more ready to pardon than we are to confess.

And blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven. He is free from all condemnation; and in whatever condition he is found, he

dwells safely, and may be in quiet from the fear of evil—"Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him." Floods of great waters mean numerous and pressing calamities, from which few are exempted in this vale of tears—But how is it said, they do not come nigh unto the godly? Are not the afflictions of the righteous many? Did they not come nigh Joseph when he was cast into the pit, and when in prison he was fettered with irons? "Not come nigh me," says many a living Christian; "they have washed away half my comforts already, and I fear my heart will be overwhelmed within me"—The language of the Scripture is bold, and often requires to be qualified; but it is always founded on truth. It is undeniable that God in public and general sufferings has frequently secured his servants; as we see in the case of Noah, and Lot, and the Jews in Egypt. And God is always *able* to do this for his people. And nothing *shall* befall them without his permission and appointment. Nothing shall injure them. Yea, every loss and trial shall conduce to their welfare. But hear David's own explanation subjoined: "Thou art my hiding-place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance." Thus the believer is like a man in a strong hold built upon a rock. In the flood, the water may surround him, but does not touch him. It will also roll off, and he will walk abroad again. Thus it is said, "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed." And in the final disaster that will carry away every thing, it shall not come nigh unto him, but only with his eyes shall he see the reward of the wicked—

"When desolation, like a flood,
On the proud sinner rolls;
Saints find a refuge in their God,
For he redeemed their souls."

FEBRUARY 11.—"The people which were left of the sword found grace in the wilderness."—Jer. xxxi. 2.

THE expression, "the people which were left of the sword," refers to the perils the Israelites escaped before their journey began. In Egypt they were in danger of being cut off by excess of toil, and the bloody decree which doomed all their male children to destruction. They were also likely to be cut off at once, when Pharaoh pursued them to the Red Sea. From all these jeopardies the Lord's hand saved them. "But," you say, "he brought them into a wilderness." He did—Yet they had no reason to complain of their condition: they "found grace in the wilderness." And such, Christians, has been your experience.

What the Jews did not derive *from* their condition, they yet received *in* it—They "found grace in the wilderness." This was essentially the presence of God with them, according to the prayer of Moses: "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence. For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? is it not in that thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth." Hence no nation was so great, because they had God so nigh unto them in all that they called upon him for.

They found in the wilderness, providing grace. And have not you? The cup of some of you has been running over. You have had all things richly to enjoy. Others have been more sensibly dependant. Yet he has not suffered you to want. In his feeding and clothing you, there has been less of miracle, but not less of reality, than in feeding and clothing the Jews. You have not had the widow's cruise of oil and barrel of meal; but your supplies have not failed you. Ravens have not sustained you; but you have had relief from the most unlikely characters. You have also had comfort in your temporal blessings; you have tasted the love of God in them. He has blessed your bread and your water; and hence the little you have had, has been better than the riches of many wicked.

They found in the wilderness, pardoning grace. And have not you? It was said of them, "How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness, and grieve him in the desert! But he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not: yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath. For he remembered that they were but flesh; a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again." And has not this been your case? In many things you have offended, and in every thing come short of the glory of God. How ungrateful, forgetful, distrustful, incorrigible, have you been! Reflect for a moment on the sins of your holy things; review your sabbaths, your communions, your omissions of duty, and the imperfections of your motives when your actions have been materially right—Has he dealt with you according to your desert? Has he not spared you according to the greatness of his mercy?

They found in the wilderness, conducting grace. And have not you? They had a fiery cloudy pillar to go before them, to determine all their journeyings, and which left them not, till it had guided them to the rest which the Lord their God gave them. And you know the way of man is not in himself. How ignorant, how short sighted, how easily imposed upon, have you been! How mistaken have you been, when most confident! How deceived have you been in your hopes and fears! How often have you wished to escape things which have proved a blessing; and to obtain things which would have proved your bane! Into what embarrassments would you have fallen, had you been left to lean to your own understanding! But he has fulfilled the promise, "I am the Lord thy God, that teacheth thee to profit, and that leadeth thee in the way that thou shouldest choose." And he will be your guide even unto death.

They found in the wilderness, preserving grace. As he led them about and instructed them, so he kept them as the apple of his eye. And have you not found the same grace? Why have not your enemies, so superior in every respect to yourselves, triumphed over you? The Lord has been on your side. You have been kept by the power of God.

They found in the wilderness, assisting grace. What was said of Asher applied to them all; "as thy days, so shall thy strength be." He made them equal to their travels and their trials. He gave them his Sabbaths. He sent Moses, Aaron, and Miriam before them. They had the services of the Priests; the messages of the

Prophets; the communings of the mercy-seat. And has he not sent *you* help from the sanctuary, and strengthened you out of Zion? You have had his ordinances. You have heard his word. You have known him in his palaces for a refuge. His Spirit has helped your infirmities. When you have said, "I am cast out of his sight," you have been enabled to look again towards his holy temple. You dreaded the day of trouble; but when it arrived, there arrived with it the grace to help in time of need—Where shall I end?

But remember—First, that *all* you have possessed and enjoyed, deserving the name of good, has been *grace*. Secondly, you would have seen much more of this grace in the wilderness, had you been more observant: for "whoso is wise, and will *observe* these things, even *he* shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord." Thirdly, how much more of this grace which you have found in the wilderness will you see hereafter, than you are aware of now! Then the divine dispensations concerning you will be finished; your capacity for reviewing them will be complete; and you will fully see the bearing of them all upon your welfare—then for the song—"O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever—TO HIM THAT LED HIS PEOPLE THROUGH THE WILDERNESS; for his MERCY ENDURETH FOR EVER!"

FEBRUARY 12.—"And Samuel lay until the morning, and opened the doors of the house of the Lord. And Samuel feared to show Eli the vision."—1 Sam. iii. 15.

EVERY thing in the history and character of Samuel is attractive and interesting. His birth was in answer to prayer. He was sanctified from the womb; and was dedicated to the service of the sanctuary as soon as he was weaned. Among the Jews there were three weanings. The first was at the end of three years; this was the weaning from the mother's breast. The second was at the end of seven years; this was the weaning from the dry nurse. The third was at the end of twelve years; this was the weaning from childish manners. At the latter period the Jewish children began to attend the public solemnities; and at this age therefore we find our Saviour in the midst of the doctors in the temple. This we presume was the season when Hannah left Samuel at Shilo, under the care of old Eli: for we see that he immediately "worshipped the Lord there;" and was capable of rendering himself useful in the services of the tabernacle.

Some length of time after this, the Lord addressed him in the night, and delivered to him an awful message concerning Eli. "And Samuel lay until the morning." He seems to have had none of those apprehensions which other children suffer from the dread of darkness, and apparitions, and sounds, deemed ominous. But did he sleep during the watches of the night? We presume not. The wonderfulness of the occurrence, the divinity of the Speaker, and the import of the message, would be likely to hold his eyes waking, and fully employ his thoughts and meditations.

But he "opened the doors of the house of the Lord." Though distinguished and dignified by such a vision, he does not feel him-

self raised above his humble office, but repairs to his usual employment with alacrity. He that is not faithful in little, will not be faithful in much: but principle, diligence, and cheerfulness, in a private and inferior condition, are the best preparatives for, and the surest pledges of, good behaviour in higher and more public situations. And why should any kind of labour be considered as low, or degrading? What were our hands made for but to be used? Every kind and degree of usefulness is respectable, is honourable. The most despised character in the community should be the man who does nothing, and has nothing to do.

We here see that the call of God does not draw us away from our stations, and make us indifferent to the ordinary functions of life; but should dispose us to act more wisely and piously in the discharge of them. "Let every man," says the Scripture, "abide in the calling in which he is called of God." The sun is as regular as he is beneficent: he daily rises and descends, and pursues his course always in the same way. The comet is eccentric; breaks forth for a while, and then disappears; yet it excites more notice for the time than the orb of day. Some we fear are tempted to step aside from their own proper sphere by the attention they attract; and they will endeavour to justify themselves by appeals to their usefulness. And they may do good; but God has not required this at their hands: and every man is not only most respectable, but most useful, when he keeps within his own circle, and fills it to advantage. Religion is the most orderly principle in the world. It teaches us to give every thing its place, time, and importance. The most zealous of its advocates was as wise as he was warm; and could say, "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness." We always suspect those who, looking after something new and extraordinary, are carried away from the plain path of revelation, reason, and common sense. "The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way." Let wives remember this, who gad about after favourite preachers, and forget their domestic arrangements, and unbelieving husbands. Let servants think of this, who by religious gossippings render themselves unpunctual in the claims of their places. Let those who are too devout to be moral; too fervent in spirit to be diligent in business: let the proud, the unruly, the roving, the idle, weigh well the language of the Apostle to the Thessalonians: "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread. But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing."

Some entrusted with such a secret could not have contained it without swelling and bursting. They would have risen, and rushed forth, and have proclaimed to their connexions the privilege by which they had been honoured. There was nothing of this in

Samuel. He was not elated or vain. He rises only at the usual hour, and performs his accustomed work; and is not eager to announce the transaction even to Eli. Empty vessels sound loudest; and shallow brooks babble most. A man of learning will not, like a smatterer, be always referring to the original, or quoting scraps of Latin and Greek. Modesty and diffidence always attend true greatness, in nature and in grace. Though Paul had a vision that rapt him into the third heaven, and he knew not whether he was in the body or out of the body, he concealed it for fourteen years, and then divulged it by compulsion. Luther said, "Though I am an old man, and have preached so long, I never think of preaching without trembling." How unlike the carelessness, the forwardness, the boldness of many a novice in the ministry! What a contrast between the reserve, the retiringness, the humility of the lovely Samuel; and the self-conceit, and assurance, and arrogance, and talkativeness of many of the young in our day! "Exhort young men to be sober-minded." "And let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak."

But why was he "afraid to show Eli the vision?" Had Eli treated him with distance and harshness, so that he dreaded to offend him by the communication? Far from it. Eli always erred on the side of softness and indulgence, not severity. And we may be assured that he loved Samuel, and treated the little Levite as a son that served with a father. His fear, therefore, arose from the tenderness of his disposition, from his regard to the High Priest, and his veneration for his age and office. Hence he was pained, and shrunk back from the annunciation of the judgment threatened. It is said, bad news never wants wings. But the reason is to be found in the tempers of men: it affords them gratification; and therefore out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. Evil would spread slowly if people were like-minded with Samuel. What some call faithfulness is the indulgence of their harsh feelings. They are at home, and in their element, when they censure and condemn. They often say, "I am very sorry to mention it;" when they are conscious of pleasure, and their very manner betrays it to others. Never reprove without cause; and then do it in the spirit of meekness, as a surgeon probes the wound of his child. When Paul tells the Philippians of some who were the enemies of the cross of Christ, and whose end was destruction, he does it "with weeping." And Jesus "wept" when he foretold the doom of Jerusalem, where he was going to be crucified. If ministers deal in the menaces of Scripture, let them show that they speak with concern—having compassion—and knowing the terror of the Lord, *persuade* men.

FEBRUARY 13.—"Fear ye not, therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows."—Matt. x. 31.

HERE is obviously an implication of something going before. Our Saviour is speaking of the doctrine of Providence, and he would establish not only the truth but the *extent* of it. Some conceive of God as presiding over whole systems, but regardless of individuals, and the minute concerns of his creatures. This philosophical or half infidel notion, if designed, so to speak, to relieve the Supreme Being, only dishonours him; as if an infinite understanding was

perplexed, or an almighty power wearied—"Is any thing too hard for the Lord?" Besides, a general providence involves a particular; as a whole is made up of the parts, and a universality is only the aggregate of the particulars. The truth of the case too is also proved by facts; for we actually find that nothing is overlooked, but every thing, however small and apparently insignificant, presents undeniable indications of divine power, contrivance, and care. And this is what our Saviour here teaches his disciples. And to impress them the more, he has two references. The one is taken from themselves—"the very hairs of your head are all numbered." What could express more strongly the minuteness of Providence? According to this assertion, God takes more care of us than we take of ourselves: for if we number our books, our cattle, or our houses, we never think of numbering our hairs; and if one of these falls off, we never observe or feel the trifling loss. And if he attends to the least, will he neglect the greatest of our interests? The other is derived from the inferior creatures. "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of *them* shall not fall on the ground without your Heavenly Father." How natural and unavoidable then the inference: "Fear *ye* not, therefore, *ye* are of more value than many sparrows." The estimation is comparative—"ye are of *more* value than many sparrows." Sparrows therefore have *their* value; and we are reminded that we are no more to despise than to abuse any of the animal tribes. They have all their place and uses. No angel in heaven could produce one of the meanest of them. They are the work of God's fingers: all praise him; and he deems none of them beneath his regard. But there is a gradation in his productions; and he himself ranks some of them above others. Thus he magnifies his word above all his Name; and tells us of his creating new heavens and a new earth, so superior to the old, that the former shall not be remembered nor come into mind. A plant is above a pebble; a bird above a plant; a man above a bird. The supremacy of man appears in his being made the lord of this lower world, and having had all creatures put under him, and given him not only for service but food. Hence he said to Noah, "The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered. Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb." Though man is now a fallen creature, and he cannot think too meanly of himself before God, yet he has physical endowments which place him only a little lower than the angels. He is capable of a thousand operations inconceivably above the reach of the beasts that perish. How superior is *his* reason to *their* instinct! *They* soon reach the extent of their ability, beyond which there is no advance or improvement; but what wonders have *his* faculties achieved! and what bounds can be fixed to their expansion and progress? He teaches us more than the beasts of the field, and makes us wiser than the fowls of the air; for there is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding. And this spirit in man is not only immaterial, but immortal. The body dies, but the spirit returns to God who gave it, and will behold the heavens and the earth pass away, survive the dissolution of all

things, and live for ever. He is therefore not only of more value than many sparrows, but of more value than the material universe; and would be an infinite loser were he to gain the whole world and lose his own soul.

But if the disciples, as *men*, were so valuable, how much more were they so as *Christians*, under which relation and character he viewed them! Thus they were not only superior to all other species of creatures, but to their own. Christians are the excellent of the earth, and whatever their outward circumstances may be, are more excellent than their neighbours. The world knoweth them not, but they are princes in disguise; they are ransomed with a price of infinite value; they are the temples of the living God; they are partakers of the divine nature: and of such importance are they, that they cannot be spared from any place without danger and detriment; they have power with God; they are the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof; they are the salt of the earth, and the light of the world—Their value is indescribable.

And they may without pride be conscious of this; and our Lord would have his disciples feel confidence as the result of it—"Fear ye not, *therefore*, ye are of more *value* than many sparrows." There were two fears which this consideration was designed and adapted to prevent. The first regarded their defence. In proportion as things are valuable, we are concerned to secure them. And will not God preserve those who are precious in his sight? They were going forth as lambs among wolves; and would be hated of all men for his Name's sake. Yet they were to be safe in all their dangers: their enemies could do nothing against them without divine permission; and if they suffered, they were to be more than indemnified. A sparrow cannot be destroyed or injured without his providence; and shall you? "Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows."

The second regarded their support. "Provide," said he, "neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves." Yet you need not dread want. He who employs you will supply you. Does he suffer any of his creatures to famish? It is pleasing to contemplate his care; to see how he sustains the various classes of animals, especially in the more dreary parts of the year. Some for months he lulls to sleep. He reduces the appetites of others, or changes their food. The more domestic and useful, he supports by the instrumentality of man. How, when viewing the foddering of cattle, have I said, "The eyes of all wait upon Thee, and Thou givest them their meat in due season!—And shall they that seek the Lord want any good thing? Their bread shall be given them, and their water shall be sure. Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your Heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?" Christians! Be not fearful, but believing. Your Lord and Saviour is concerned for your safety and welfare. He would have you careful for nothing, but casting all your care upon him that careth for you, go on your way rejoicing.

FEBRUARY 14.—“Felix trembled.”—Acts xxiv. 25.

“FELIX trembled”—not *Paul*. Yet Felix was the judge, and Paul the prisoner. But the prisoner was not guilty. Though he suffered as an evil-doer even unto bonds, he had a conscience void of offence; and knew that he was suffering in the best of all causes, and for the most excellent of all masters. Therefore none of these things moved him. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear. The audience might have intimidated him. It was a trying thing to speak before persons of such reputation, and rank, and influence, as Tertullian the orator, Felix the Roman governor, Drusilla his wife, and other individuals of quality, whom the occasion had drawn together. Yet he trembled not; for he endured as seeing him who is invisible. Creatures are all reduced to their proper level, when by faith we realize the presence and the eye of God. The fear of man would have brought a snare. It would have subdued or restrained his fidelity. And as Ahab’s four hundred chaplains, when called in before the king, addressed themselves to his vanity, and only flattered him, so Paul would have endeavoured to ingratiate himself with those who had power over him; or at least, have studiously avoided whatever would tend to make them feel unpleasantly. But what was the nature and manner of his address? He was acquainted with the characters of those before him. He knew Felix was cruel and oppressive. He knew that he was addicted to bribery and corruption in his office. He knew that he was living in adultery: for this Drusilla now united to him, had been seduced by him from her own husband Azigus. And what does he? He not only gives his views of the faith in Christ doctrinally, but he applies them practically. He reasons of righteousness; and shows that there is such a thing as justice between man and man. He reasons of temperance; and shows the evils of unbridled appetites and passions. He reasons of judgment to come; and shows the awfulness of that day when the great as well as the small will stand before an impartial tribunal, and whoremongers and adulterers God will judge. Yet *he* does not tremble. Wherefore? He has truth on his side. He has God on his side. He has nothing to do with consequences; but by manifestation of the truth commends himself to every man’s conscience in the sight of God. “Such a man,” said James the Sixth, “always preaches before me as if death stood at his elbow.” It does really stand at the elbow of every minister; and therefore he should be able to use the words of Baxter:

“I preach as if I ne’er should preach again;
And as a dying man, to dying man.”

“Felix trembled”—not *Drusilla*. He was a Pagan; she was a Jewess; and had even induced her former husband to submit to the rite of circumcision, as the condition of her marrying him. She therefore seemed more likely to be affected than Felix. How was it she escaped, and left all the emotion to him? Was her insensibility derived from the thought of her Jewish extraction and privileges? We should have deemed this impossible; but we know that the Jews when they were most wicked, emboldened and encouraged themselves by this consideration. You steal, says God by

Jeremiah, and murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and bear incense unto Baal; and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my Name, and say, we are delivered to do all these abominations; yet they trusted in lying words, and said, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord are we. Severely as John censured many of those who came to his baptism, he knew under all their iniquity they were saying in themselves, We have Abraham to our father. But Abraham calls the rich man in hell his son: and God says, I will punish the circumcised with the uncircumcised. The unconcern of Drusilla is rather to be traced to these two things. She had been accustomed to these subjects. Though they were novel to Felix, they were not new to her. The noise of the waterfall that almost deafens strangers, does not even prevent the sleep of those who reside near it. The sparks do not terrify the animal that lies hard by the anvil. Familiarity with divine things takes off from the power of their impression, and exceedingly tends to harden the heart they have not softened. Hence is it that many in our assemblies now hear, hardly awake, those awful truths which once alarmed themselves, and now make others tremble. She had also sinned under greater obligation, and against clearer light; and it is natural for such to wax worse and worse. Having known the way of righteousness, and turning from it, they became tenfold more the children of hell than before. Their peculiar guilt provokes the displeasure of God, and he judicially and generally gives them up to strong delusion, and to their own hearts' lusts; and withholding the influence that can alone render means alone effectual, and withdrawing his restraining grace, he says of them as he did of Ephraim, "they are joined to idols, let them alone."

How serious is the state of many of the children of the kingdom! We have more hope of those that come from the east and from the west. The first shall be last, and the last first.

FEBRUARY 15.—"Felix trembled."—Acts xxiv. 25.

"FELIX trembled"—See the vanity of worldly greatness. We can judge very little of persons by their outward circumstances. As "the mind is the standard of the man;" so it is the standard of his *state*, as to happiness or misery. Had we seen a prisoner in chains, and a governor on the bench, we should have been disposed to pity the one, and envy the other. Yet had we known all, our pity and our envy would have changed sides: for we should have found the prisoner possessed of the peace of God which passeth all understanding; while the governor was devoured by anxiety and fear, notwithstanding his office, his rank, his authority, wealth and luxury—Felix trembled.

"Felix trembled"—See the power of conscience. Conscience is a bosom friend, or a bosom fury. It is God's vicegerent on earth; his tribunal within; the quarter sessions before the grand assize. Paul speaks of "the conscience bearing witness, and the thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another." Is this principle ever entirely suppressed? Some have boasted of the attain-

ment. But there is a difference between pretensions and reality. What are men—not in company, but alone? Whence their dislike and dread of solitude? What are men—not in life, but in death? "Fools men may live, but fools they cannot die." Yet even in life, how hard is it to resist particular apprehensions! And apprehensions which cannot be ascribed to the danger of human detection, or punishment, because there is no fear of either. As the winter-frozen serpent seems lifeless, but is only benumbed, and when brought to the fire, again feels, and uncoils, and stings: so, when conscience is asleep, it is not dead. And it is easily awakened by a particular reflection: the sight of a funeral, or sudden death, or a threatening sickness. The wicked, though not always actually in it, are all their lifetime *subject* to bondage, through fear of death. Madame de Stael observes, that misfortune has the power to make the strongest minds superstitious. It would be better to say, it has a tendency to revive a belief of a moral Providence, and to remind us of the connexion there is between sin and suffering. We see this in Jacob's sons when in the ward: there seemed to be nothing to lead them to think of Joseph, yet "they said one to another, we are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us." So Belshazzar's knees smote one against another when he saw in the midst of his feast, the handwriting on the wall. The inscription was unintelligible: it might therefore have contained something favourable to him: but guilt was the interpreter. Herod, hearing of our Lord's fame, said, it is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead: and mighty works do show forth themselves in him. If, as Josephus says, he was a Sadducee, he denied the existence of spirits and the resurrection of the body—But his conscience was too strong for his creed.

"Felix trembled"—See the energy of divine truth. The word of God is called "a hammer," and "a fire;" and is said to be quick and powerful, "sharper than any two edged-sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." The noblest instance of its efficacy is when it is the power of God to salvation. But where it does not work effectually, as in them that believe, it often produces great effects for the time. Many were astonished at our Saviour's doctrine, and wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of his lips. The stony ground hearers heard the word with joy, and endured for a while. Herod revered John, heard him gladly, and did many things; performing various duties, and breaking off from some of his vices. We little imagine, when the Gospel is plainly and faithfully preached, what feelings are excited even in natural men, and which will serve to render them inexcusable. For they that preach the truth as it is in Jesus, have a witness even in the experience of the unconverted. When these come from curiosity, or to ridicule, and are made to tremble: when they have forced upon them a remembrance of their sins, as-if the preacher had been privy to all they have said or done; when the very secrets of their hearts are made manifest; when, notwithstanding their self-love, the doctrine makes them dissatisfied and uneasy with themselves; when they cannot but own secretly the necessity of the change they strive to

deny or ridicule; and when, though offended and determined to go no more, they cannot but be found again and again in the assembly—What is this but a voucher of the divinity of their mission? and a testimony which God gives to the word of his grace?

“Felix trembled”—See the deceitfulness of the human heart. If what Paul said was not true and important, why did he tremble? If it was, why did he tremble only? Why did he not follow out his conviction? Yea, why did he endeavour to get rid of it?—But what does he? He has recourse to *delay*—“Go thy way for *this time*.” This is the common device of Satan, and ruin of souls. It is not positive refusal, but putting off the thing for the present. Then he pleads another frequent delusion, *engagement*—“when I have a more *convenient* season I will send for thee.” A more free and leisure period to attend to the things of the soul is not likely to be found as we advance further in life and get more into the world. Yet suppose it *could* arrive—It *did* arrive to Felix. But the opportunity came without the disposition. He saw the preacher, but said nothing about the faith in Christ now. He saw him frequently, but no trembling, now—The good feeling was gone for ever! “He hoped that money should have been given him,” and disappointed in his avarice, and “willing to show the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound.” Behold another deception. If men reach what they have looked forward to as the most favoured period, they are not the same they once were. They are less disposed to that which is good and has been disregarded so long. Evil propensities have grown by continuance. The disease has gained strength by neglect; and the shrub by being left has become a tree, and is too radicated to be removed.

Bless God if you tremble at his word; but remember, conviction is not conversion. Depend not on excitement in religion, without principle. Pray that you may tremble to purpose. Let your fear induce you to flee for refuge, to lay hold of the hope set before you. Beware of losing your burden on the wrong side of the hill. Lay it down no where but at the feet of him who cries, “Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

FEBRUARY 16.—“Ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.”—Heb. x. 34.

THE righteous is more excellent than his neighbour. He is above them in character, in condition, and in prospect. He is more happy; more wise; more honourable; more free; more safe; more affluent. He has much in hand; but he has far more in hope. Hence says the Apostle to these Hebrews, “Ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.” But

How came Christians to be possessed of property? They were originally destitute; they were by nature poor even as others. For a time indeed they were proudly deluded, and said, “I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.” But when they

were brought to a knowledge of themselves, they confessed with Paul, "In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." And they also now acknowledge, that whatever they have gained has not been earned by their exertions, or procured by their worthiness; but was provided for them by another, even by him who said, "I will cause them that love me to inherit substance, and I will fill their treasure." And the way ye know. Yes, Christians, ye "know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." Here you see the liberality of his design—It was not only to relieve you, but to enrich; not only to clothe you, but to adorn; not only to draw you from the dust and the dunghill, but to set you among princes, even the princes of his people. And now all things are yours. You also see the expensiveness of the medium—It is through his poverty you are enriched. He was in the form of God: but in this form he could not be your redeemer, your sacrifice, your sympathising friend, your example in duty and suffering. He therefore "made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Thus he abased himself that we might be exalted, and emptied himself of his glory that we might be filled with all the fulness of God. And if such a medium was expedient and necessary, (and the fact itself is the proof,) what an idea must we attach to the greatness and difficulty of our salvation! and what ought we to think of the Saviour's "grace!"

" He sunk beneath our heavy woes,
To raise us to his throne;
There's not a gift his hand bestows,
But cost his heart a groan."

But let us examine the wealth of his people. It is substance characterized by three things.

By its residence. It is substance *in heaven*—The abode of the glorified, the habitation of angels, the dwelling-place of God himself. Whether this is either of the shining worlds over us, or any other invisible to the eye, we cannot determine. But said Jesus, "I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to myself, that where I am there ye may be also." Since he is there, our hope is said to be laid up for us in heaven; for we are blessed with all spiritual blessings "in heavenly places in Christ." And no wonder we have our conversation in heaven: for where our treasure is, there will our heart be also.

By its pre-eminence—It is *better* substance. Better than what? Better than the goods which the Hebrews had lost; and of which the Apostle speaks in the words immediately preceding: "ye took joyfully the spoiling of your goods." He allows that the things of which they had been deprived were *good* in themselves, though often abused. But he says, this substance is better. Better in its nature. It is spiritual; and so suited to the wants of the soul. Better in enjoyment. It yields satisfaction; while as to worldly wealth, a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things

which he possesses; and in the midst of his sufficiency he is in straits. Better in acquisition. Worldly riches are commonly the mammon of unrighteousness. Few acquire them without some moral injury or degradation. He that maketh haste to be rich, says Solomon, shall not be innocent; and Paul says, "they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." But in the pursuit of this substance there is no need of meanness and hypocrisy, of running down others, of hating rivals, of wishing people dead. The love of this wealth refines, enlarges, elevates, and ennobles the possessor, and does this in the same degree in which he is covetous after it.

By its permanency—It is *enduring* substance. This is an attribute that attaches to nothing here. Riches make to themselves wings and flee away. They are therefore called "uncertain riches." They are destructive in themselves, and they are liable to a thousand outward disasters; storms, floods, fires, war, wicked and unreasonable men, buyers who never mean to pay, and borrowers who never mean to restore. Hence the exhortation of our Saviour: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal." Here then are durable riches with righteousness. There is in them no principle of decay; and they are safe from external invasion and injury. A Christian therefore does not feel like men of the world, who have their portion in this life. *They* are alarmed and miserable at the changes which endanger "all the happiness they know." But the Christian is calm, and his soul dwells at ease, because whatever befalls him, he knows his treasure is secure; independent of the body and its diseases, the world and its revolutions, time and its vicissitudes. The heavens may pass away with a great noise, and the elements melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, may be burnt up—but he is no loser even then—"For, according to his promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness."

"All, all on earth is shadow; all beyond
Is substance—The reverse is folly's creed.
How solid all where change shall be no more!"

"So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

FEBRUARY 17.—"Now, there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul."—Acts xiii. 1.

THERE were no less than sixteen Antiochs in Western Asia, founded in honour of Antiochus, by Seleucus Nicator his son. The Scripture only mentions two of them. The first was the capital of Pisidia; the second, the capital of Syria. The text alludes to the

latter of these. Its situation, extent, honours, riches, trade, and the freedom and privileges the Jews enjoyed in it, may be easily ascertained from history. We have other things to notice. The most important fact ever connected with it was the arrival of the Gospel. This was occasioned by the persecution that arose about Stephen; for some of those who were scattered by that event reached so far, and there preached the Lord Jesus. "And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord. Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem; and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch: who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: and when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." There has been much dispute here; and it is not perhaps possible to determine, whether this name was imposed by way of reproach, or by a divine intimation. But the name was obviously derived from the Founder of Christianity; and we wish his followers had never been called by any other.

God has his set places, as well as times, in which to favour Zion. This church at Antioch, though of recent formation, flourished abundantly; and was remarkable for members and ministers. There were in it "certain prophets and teachers." Do these signify two classes of officers? or the same men exercising two functions? That is, not only preaching the word, but occasionally foretelling events?

Five of them are here mentioned by name. First, Barnabas. He was a Levite of Cyprus; a man of property: but who sold his estate, and threw the money into the common stock. He was first called Joses, but afterwards Barnabas; which signifies the son of consolation: because he refreshed the bowels of the poor, was tender in his disposition, and preached affectionately. He was a good man and full of the Holy Ghost; and the father of many converts.

The second was "Simeon, that was called Niger." This must regard his complexion. He was probably a negro. We trust he was; for we love every thing that sheds a ray of comfort, honour, or hope, over that sinfully degraded race of our brethren—if some will allow us to call them so. If not, he was a man of very dark and swarthy colour. Many a fair and beautiful form has enshrined a truly ugly mind. And on the other hand, a lovely soul has sometimes inhabited an ungracious body. Let us learn to value intellectual and moral qualities above corporeal—"As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman without discretion." "Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised."

The third is "Lucius of Cyrene." Of him we know nothing more, except his being mentioned by the Apostle among his saluted friends, in the close of the epistle to the Romans: "Timotheus my work-fellow, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, salute you." Some have thought whether he was not Luke the physician and Evangelist, and the writer of this book.

The fourth was "Manaen, who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch." This Herod was not Herod the Great, who massacred the infants in Bethlehem, but his son. To him Manaen was foster brother; that is, he was the son of his nurse; and therefore in his infancy, reared along with him. Let us not pass this slightly over. What different courses do men take who were once in the same condition! Here we see Herod and Manaen, brought up together in the same house: the one becoming a profligate, a persecutor, the actual murderer of James, and the intentional murderer of Peter, awfully ending his course, being smitten of an angel of the Lord, and eaten of worms; the other becoming a disciple of Jesus, and a preacher of the Gospel—So diverse were the characters of these two individuals, brought up together, playing in the same room, hearing the same voices, and surrounded with the same examples, during the most impressive period of life! Why did Herod reject Christianity? and why did Manaen embrace it? The one was perfectly inexcusable; the other had no reason to be proud, but much reason to be thankful. Men destroy themselves, and will feel guilty in their ruin. But by grace are we saved. The Lord makes us to differ from others; and we have nothing but what we have received.

Manaen therefore was a person of some distinction and quality; and had probably renounced considerable worldly advantage for the sake of religion. Had he joined with his young and royal companion in sin, he might it is likely have gained a place under government, as every kind and degree of relationship is provided for in such cases at the expense of the public; but he resembled Moses, who when he was come to years refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. And was he a loser? He *could* not be a loser. The lips of truth have said, "There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting."

God generally chooses the poor of this world to be rich in faith. Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. But there have been always a few; and we should be thankful when we meet with such instances: for though their souls are no more precious than the souls of the vulgar, they are so placed and circumstanced as to be able to be more serviceable in their generation. Thus, as Manaen was a man of education and address, these advantages were now sanctified; and he was therefore immediately and advantageously employed.

The fifth was "Saul;" a character endeared to us as the Apostle of the Gentiles; and one of the most extraordinary individuals recorded in history. We know much concerning him; much from his own writings; and much from the narratives of Luke. When we consider his pharisaism, his persecutions of the Church, his conversion, his zeal, his journeys, sufferings, and services, we readily join him in the acknowledgment: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ was exceeding abundant to me ward." And we glorify God in him. What an assortment! What an assemblage was here!

FEBRUARY 18.—“And Laban said unto him, I pray thee, if I have found favour in thine eyes, tarry: for I have learned by experience that the Lord hath blessed me for thy sake.”—Gen. xxx. 27.

LABAN knew and acknowledged the true God, yet had idols in his family. His character was a compound of selfishness, cunning, meanness, and cruelty. He even turned his daughters into articles of traffic; and inveigled his son-in-law into discord and wretchedness, polygamy and incest. All this is perfectly credible; for he was *covetous*; and “the love of money is the root of all evil.” He is here addressing Jacob, who after serving him with diligence and fidelity for many years, and meeting only with injury and insult, resolved to leave him. The resolution was not the effect of feeling only, but of divine command; for the Lord “had said unto him, return unto thy country and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee.” At the thought of losing such a prize, “Laban said unto him, I pray thee, if I have found favour in thine eyes, tarry: for I have learned by experience that the Lord hath blessed me for thy sake.” Whence we remark,—

That God is the author of all our successes and comforts. Even Laban owns this—“*The Lord* has blessed me.” No wonder therefore Solomon should say, “The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich.” Moses gives Israel the admonition, “Thou shalt remember the Lord thy God, for he it is that giveth thee power to get wealth.” Yet they soon forgot, and drew upon themselves the reflection, “the ox knoweth his owner and the ass his master’s crib; but Israel doth not know, my people do not consider.” “For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal.” Let us beware of this, and not sacrifice unto our net, and burn incense unto our drag, because *by* them our portion is fat, and our meat plenteous.

God may bless a bad man—The Lord hath blessed *me*, says Laban. He maketh his sun to rise upon the evil, as well as upon the good; and sendeth rain not only upon the just, but upon the unjust. If we look over their gardens and fields, we shall not be able to distinguish by their fertility or barrenness those which pertain to the friends or the enemies of God. “All things come alike to all; there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked.” “No man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before them.” “The sure mercies of David,” are peculiarly appropriated; but the good things of Providence are bestowed indiscriminately. God may heal the bodies of those whose souls are not saved: and he may elevate in life, those who have no inheritance among them that are sanctified. Yea, the wicked often prosper in the world beyond others, and have more than heart can wish. This will not perplex us when we understand their end, and see in what slippery places they are set. Who envies the ox that is fattening for the slaughter in the greenest pasture? Be not thou afraid when one is made rich, and the glory of his house is increased. Do not imagine that God approves of you because he bears with you, and even indulges your desires. Pray for the favour which he bears to his people; for the heritage of those that fear his Name.

God blesses some for the sake of others—“The Lord hath

blessed me for *thy* sake." See another instance of this in the case of Potiphar. "And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the Lord was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field." Upon this principle, Moses pleaded: "Remember thy servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and look not unto the stubbornness of this people, nor to their wickedness, nor to their sin." And when Jerusalem was besieged, God said, "For I will defend this city to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake." We are bound to religion, not only by personal, but also by relative considerations. We are in a sense responsible for others as well as for ourselves. We can injure or benefit those with whom we are connected. One sinner destroyeth much good, while the godly are blessings to all around them. How much should we value such benefactors! They are the light of the world; the salt of the earth; the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof. They stand in the gap, and hold back invading judgments. They are the repairers of the breach, the restorers of paths to dwell in. "Thus saith the Lord, as the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, destroy it not: for a blessing is in it: so will I do for my servants' sakes, that I may not destroy them all."

Persons may derive advantage from their inferiors. The stream of goodness and usefulness seems naturally to run downwards: but here the less is not blessed of the greater; but the elder of the younger; the master of the servant. None are independent of others. The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee; nor the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more, those parts of the body which seem to be most feeble are necessary. The king is served by the labour of the field. Parents have derived spiritual life from their children. Ministers may learn from those they are appointed to teach: and Christians superior in circumstances, may be improved by those who, though poor in this world, are rich in faith, and deeply versed in the things of God. A little captive girl was the instrument of making the God of Israel to be honoured in Syria, and of obtaining a miraculous cure for her master—Call nothing common or unclean.

Men, however irreligious, are sometimes constrained to bear testimony in favour of the godly. Laban, who disliked Jacob, and would have injured him had he not been divinely restrained, cannot avoid thus honouring and extolling him—"If I have found favour in thine eyes, tarry: for I have learned by experience that the Lord hath blessed me for thy sake." Balaam had no love for Israel, and died fighting against them; yet exclaimed, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." Such a difference is there between belief and practice; conviction and disposition. So men hold the truth in unrighteousness. So they own the reality of the conversion, and "gaze and admire and hate the change." When Saul was spared by David, he could not help lifting up his voice and weeping and crying, "Thou art more righteous than I." When Christians act consistently, they enthrone themselves in the minds of their observers, and though their enemies may outwardly reproach

them, they cannot but inwardly revere. They may dislike the nature of religion, but they can judge of its moral and relative advantages. The difference between the partakers of divine grace and others, in their conduct and their condition, is too great and obvious to elude notice. "Their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people: all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed."

FEBRUARY 19.—"I John am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ."—Rev. i. 9.

By calling himself their "brother," John shows how well he remembered the admonition of his Lord and Saviour: "Be not ye called masters; for one is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren." The first ministers of the Gospel never thought of "lording it over God's heritage, but were ensamples to the flock." "We have no dominion," said they to their hearers, "over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand." Every man is a brother: but the name is peculiarly applied to the subjects of divine grace. Whatever differences prevail among these, they are only the distinctions of children—they are all of the same family—the same household of faith—and to claim kindred with them, is the supreme desire of every one who is a child of light. John valued his relation as a Christian more than his office and endowments as an Apostle. He might have been an Apostle, and have perished. Judas was an Apostle; yet he hanged himself, and went to his own place. But "he that believeth hath everlasting life, and shall never come into condemnation." So much better is it to pray than to prophesy; and to have our names written in heaven, than have the spirits subject unto us.

When he speaks of his being their "companion," he does not mean what we might at first suppose—one who had free and familiar intercourse with them: from this he was now debarred, being banished to the Isle of Patmos. As we need and are formed for society, and as religion sanctifies the social principle, Christians love the presence and conversation of each other. "My goodness," says David, "extendeth not to thee; but to the saints that are in the earth, and the excellent in whom is all my delight. I am a companion of all them that fear thee." Their intercourse with each other is instructive, and relieving, and enlivening. Solomon compares it to the refreshment of ointment and perfume; and to the mutual sharpening of instruments. Yet some are entirely denied this privilege; and are placed in neighbourhoods and families where they can have no sweet counsel together, or go to the throne and the house of the Lord in company. Others lament the little access they have to those whom they most love and esteem. So it is—as if God would wean us from hence, and make us long for the general assembly, where in heaven, we shall enjoy the fellowship forbidden us on earth. In the mean time, as a substitute, we can be present in spirit, and now and then peruse the welcome epistle, and be thankful that we are joint-sharers in all their rights and blessings in "the communion of saints."—But John means, that he was a fellow-partaker with them—In what? "Your companion," says he,

“in tribulation; and in the kingdom; and patience of Jesus Christ.” A just and striking representation of the state of Christians while in this world.

They are called to *suffer*: and many are the afflictions of the righteous. But never imagine you are alone in your trials. The same things have happened to your brethren. See your companions — “Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.”

But if you suffer, you are also called to *reign*: and are receiving a kingdom that cannot be moved; the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour; a kingdom not of this world, but infinitely surpassing all the glories of time and sense.

Hence *patience* is indispensable. It is necessary to both the former; to the tribulation—to bear it: and to the kingdom—to wait for it. For though you are already entitled and anointed, you are not yet actually crowned; but resemble David, who, after much tribulation and years of hope, entered his kingdom.

FEBRUARY 20.—“Lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies.”—Psalm xxvii. 11.

DAVID had enemies. So has every Christian. And perhaps we should have more if we more fully resembled *Him*, who said to the Jews, “The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify that its deeds are evil.”

But the margin reads, “because of mine observers.” Let us see who these observers are, and how concerned we should be to walk properly, having so many watchers over us, and many of them regarding us with no friendly mind.

The world are observers, and they mark us with a keen and malignant eye. When David had slain Goliath, and drawn forth the gratitude of his countrymen, it is said, “Saul eyed David from that day and forward.” And it is also said, “And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and the Lord was with him. Wherefore when Saul saw that he behaved himself very wisely, he was afraid of him.” How well if it had been always so! At length he yielded to temptation, and one of the effects which he had to mourn over all his days, was the triumph he gave to his adversaries. Thou hast caused, said Nathan, the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. To blaspheme here means, to speak reproachfully against his God, his religion, and his experience. So Paul says, “Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed.” Wonder not that this is addressed to servants and even slaves; for, professing Christianity as they did, they were able to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, or disgrace it. Let us remember that we have many lookers on who watch, not to find something to admire, but for our halting. And they are not so ignorant as we sometimes imagine. They know generally what we profess, and they know what line of conduct becomes us: and if we act inconsistently with it, they will be sure to despise us. But if we are inflexible, and follow out our principles, and are always and every where the same,

we shall commend ourselves to their consciences, and they will be constrained to respect those to whom they cannot be attached. What a noble testimony was borne to Daniel, when his accusers said they could find nothing against him, unless in matters pertaining to the law of his God! Some do not mind what people say of them: but they ought to mind. "Ought ye not," said Nehemiah, "to walk in the fear of our God, because of the reproach of the heathen our enemies?" And says Peter, "So is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." "Avoid," says Paul, "the very appearance of evil."

Saints are our observers. They observe us from love; and a sense of duty. They are commanded not only to "admonish," and "exhort," but to "consider one another"—not curiously, but to warn; and rebuke; and restore; and to provoke to love and good works. Wo to those who shall offend one of God's little ones! It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he thrown into the depth of the sea. Let us be careful, even if they are ignorant and infirm, not to offend against the generation of the upright. Let us make strait paths for our feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Ministers are our observers. They are to take heed to the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made them overseers. When we act unworthy our calling, their minds are perplexed, their hearts are discouraged, and their hands are slackened. But they live when we stand fast in the Lord. They can refer to us, when our conversation becomes the Gospel, as arguments, proofs, and commendations; and we are their glory and joy.

Angels observe us. We are a spectacle to angels, as well as to the world and to men. And Paul charges Timothy, not only before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, but also the elect angels, to do nothing by partiality. They are therefore witnesses of our conduct and can see us, though we cannot see them. When persons are tried, witnesses are called in to depose. So will it be at the day of judgment. Parents will be called upon to testify against their children; and ministers against their hearers. Angels also will be employed. Some sins, and the temptations leading to them, are unknown to all human beings but the parties themselves. And these accuse each other. And who is to determine which is the seducer, and which only the seduced?

Above all, God observes us. He is the most perfect observer, for nothing eludes him; he seeth our thoughts afar off. He is also the most concerned observer: they are his laws which are violated or honoured by our temper and conduct; and he records all we speak and do; and will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil. Therefore said he to Abraham, "Walk before me, and be thou perfect." And what manner of persons should we be, if we believed and considered that he was always looking upon us!

Let us remember therefore that we are never in secret, but always acting on a stage. We are observed by foes, by friends, by men, by angels, and by God the judge of all. Surely we need wisdom, and strength, far above our own. Lord, be our guide and our guard, even unto death.

FEBRUARY 21.—“And all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.”—Acts vi. 15.

THERE was nothing unaccountable in their beholding him as they did. He was a remarkable character; and had excited much notice by his office, and the wonders and miracles which he did among the people, and the victory he had gained over a number of able opponents who had challenged him to the dispute. He also now appeared, upon his trial, under some heinous accusations. When a prisoner enters a court, every eye is naturally drawn towards him; and the judge and the jury frequently observe his countenance, as a kind of index of his conscious innocence or guilt. All that sat in the council looked *steadfastly* on Stephen, wishing and hoping, perhaps, to gaze him into confusion and tremor. But he could bear looking at—They saw his face as it had been the face of an angel. But filled with envy and malice and fury, grinning horribly, and gnashing upon him with their teeth; how did *their* faces appear? What a contrast between him and his persecutors! Here was a lamb among wolves, an angel before devils, and the High Priest the chief of the devils!

“They saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.” But how could they tell what an angel’s face was? They had never seen one. Angels had indeed formerly appeared to men: and many instances of it are recorded. But as the design of the Scripture is to edify, and not to amuse, it tells us little concerning these beings. Yet all it relates goes to establish one thing—their superiority to the human race. Thus we read that man was made a little lower than the angels. They are spoken of as flying very swiftly. They are said to excel in strength. To be exceedingly wise, is to be wise as an angel of God. The glory of their appearance was such as commonly to overpower the senses of those to whom they were sent. At the sight of Gabriel, Daniel’s comeliness was turned into corruption, and he retained no strength. The human voice is a wonderful instrument; and we find what it can achieve in singing and eloquence. Yet Paul speaks not only of the tongues of men, but of angels: and it would seem that one of these is to awaken the dead; the voice of the archangel is the trump of God. A human countenance is an astonishing display of perfection: yet it is intimated that the face of an angel is much more so. These celestial beings are the flower of the creation; and from our inferiority to them, we see more fully the excellency of God’s power, in putting the treasure into earthen vessels, and employing as ministers men, and not angels—The vastness of the Christian’s obligation, who is raised from his low estate, and placed above these angels in blessedness and glory—The humility and kindness of these angels, that though now so much higher than we, they are all our ministering spirits, and despise not even our little ones—And far more still, the grace and condescension of the Lord Jesus, who took not on him the nature of angels, but was made in the likeness of men; and because the children were partakers of flesh and blood, also took part of the same.

But what was the nature of this appearance in the face of Stephen? and how is it to be accounted for? The visage is sometimes very impressive and striking by natural beauty. There is

nothing in the world so admirable as "the human face divine." How greatly does it display the workmanship of the Creator, and how often has it been the instrument of his providence in effecting great designs! How much depended upon the life of Moses! But he was hid three months because he was a goodly child. Daniel and his three companions were preferred because they were well formed and there was no blemish in them. Esther was an orphan, supported by her uncle, with no dowry but her charms: yet she becomes the saviour of Israel, and the queen of one hundred and twenty-seven provinces.

The face is rendered powerful and striking by intellectual qualities. The former may be found without these; but the features, however fine and regular, will be tame and insipid, unless something of *mind* beams through; and the countenance will only captivate fools and sensualists. "Wisdom," says Solomon, "maketh the face to shine." What expression is there in the looks of some speakers when they are animated and lighted up! Much of the force of Lord Chatham's eloquence arose from the fire of his eye, and the majesty of his features.

The face is rendered interesting and striking by social and moral attributes. These constitute the chief grace, the principal charm. It is of these we think when we conceive of our Lord in the days of his flesh, and by which alone perhaps he was personally fairer than the children of men. We imagine his face beaming with peace, gentleness, compassion, kindness, readiness to pardon and relieve, the image of the invisible God who is love. How is a countenance injured by the want of humility, modesty, diffidence, tenderness! How lovely are infants while insensible of their cherub charms! How lovely is youth while they are unconscious of their attractions, and full of innocency and simplicity, and devoid of design and attempt—for the impression is gone when the wearer is perceived to be acting upon it; and study, art, and decoration, are employed and managed as substitutes and expedients. What a difference is there between two countenances, one of which is inherited by vice and bad humour, and the other by goodness and amiable temper! How angelic does one man look! How rude, tyrannical, insolent, unfeeling, and cruel another! How desirable is it that persons should be religious early, while the face is susceptible of impression and improvement, and the features may be modified by its benign and heavenly influences! When they are older, a change of character cannot change the countenance; and if envy, and malignity, and pride, and disdain, have ruled in it before, they will leave deep and dismal traces for life. Religion, we are persuaded, is not only "the health of the countenance," but the comeliness too!

But when Stephen's face was seen as it had been the face of an angel, was the aspect natural, or supernatural? He might have had a corporeal loveliness. We know he was at this time full of wisdom and faith. His countenance was not pallid with guilt, nor distracted by care, nor troubled with fear, but full of confidence, serenity, mildness and joy. Yet there was something supernatural here. And why should this be deemed incredible, or even wonderful? The occasion was worthy a divine interposition. It was an age of miracles. A few hours afterward, Stephen said, I see the

heaven opened, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. In the transfiguration, as he prayed, the fashion of his Saviour's countenance was changed, and his raiment was white and glistening. It is said of Moses too, as he came down from the mount, that his face shone so that the Israelites could not behold him for the glory of his countenance. And how remarkable was it, that at the very moment Stephen was accused of being an enemy to Moses, God should have honoured him in the very same way, shedding a radiance upon him that might serve to remind them, and perhaps did remind them, of the illustrious legislator himself!

FEBRUARY 22.—“And all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.”—Acts vi. 15.

THE design of the Lord in this appearance was to distinguish and dignify his servant. He saves and pardons sovereignly; but he administers honour according to a rule which he has himself laid down: “Them that honour me, I will honour.” Enoch was translated that he should not see death; for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. “Come thou and all thy house into the ark,” said God to Noah, “for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation.” Stephen was not ashamed of the Redeemer. He went forth to him without the camp, cheerfully bearing his reproach; and was determined that Christ should be magnified in his body whether by life or by death—and the Lord stood by him, confessing him before men, and putting a visible glory upon him. We are not to look for miracles, wonders, and signs: but the Lord has not forsaken the earth; and the promise is still true, “If any man serve me, him will my Father honour.” And he cannot be at a loss for means to do this, not only beyond the grave, but through life. There is a moral glory in their character and conversation, which shows that they have been with Jesus. It adorns the doctrine of God their Saviour; inspires beholders with reverence and awe; and more than puts to silence the ignorance of foolish men. He whom they serve has often brought their enemies to their feet; and put such a difference between his people and the Egyptians, as to constrain the most unthinking to say, “Verily, there is a reward for the righteous; verily, he is a God that judgeth in the earth.” When they have suffered, especially for his Name's sake, “the Spirit of glory and of God had rested upon them.” And how has he owned them in their last hours! A radiance has been thrown around them that has rendered the dying chamber the house of God and the gate of heaven; and induced the exclamation from all beholders, “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!”—What then is the glory that shall be revealed in them, when he shall change even the vile body of his people, and fashion it like unto his own glorious body; and they shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father!

We here see the truth and faithfulness of the Lord Jesus, and how worthy he is of our confidence. He had said to his disciples: “They will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues: but when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in

that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you." "For I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist." And did not Stephen find it so? Perhaps he had his fears previously to his appearance in the council. Nothing is more intimidating than to appear before lawyers, magistrates, and judges. Many well know how they felt when they had to enter a court only to give evidence, and when they had persons to introduce and support them. But Stephen was alone and unbefriended, and his judges were filled with hatred and fury. Yet he had a reasonable and an adequate relief to rely upon; and he found the assurance true; and was perhaps astonished at his own self-possession, and force of argument, and promptness of recollection, and fluency of words. Yea, more was done than was engaged for. The promise only regarded the tongue, not the face; only how they should *speak*, not how they should *look*—but behold an irradiation of countenance that draws and fixes every eye—"All that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face AS IT HAD BEEN THE FACE OF AN ANGEL." The Lord is never worse, but he is frequently better than his word. Though his promises are exceeding great as well as precious, they do not exhaust all the love of his heart, or power of his arm. He has yet reserves for extraordinary purposes; and indulges, and surprises. He loves to exceed expectation; and do for us exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think.

What was the effect of this scene? With regard to Stephen, it does not appear that he was aware of it himself. This too was the case with Moses in a similar distinction. He knew not that his face shone, till he saw the Israelites were dazzled, and he was obliged to take a veil and soften the lustre. Good men are not the first to discover their excellencies: nor are they forward to publish them. But from others they cannot be concealed: their profiting will appear unto all men. Though Stephen was unconscious of the honour, none of the council were ignorant of it; *all* looked steadfastly, and *saw* his face as it had been the face of an angel. And how were they all affected? They were enraged the more: and "*then* said the High Priest, are these things so?" What a proof was this, of the perverseness and impenitency of these men, that they could go on, and persecute to the death, a man whom God himself was honouring before their eyes! But it is a fact every way instructive. It shows the truth of the declaration, that the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. It shows that all belief is not, as some say, influential. It ought to be so, and would be so if we were in a right state: but we are fallen creatures; and the powers of the soul are thrown into disorder. Hence we see and approve better things, and follow worse; and the clearest convictions of the judgment are counteracted by our passions and appetites. We talk of the evils of ignorance: but while some are destroyed for lack of knowledge, others perish by the possession of it. To him that knoweth to do good, and doth it not, to him it is sin. Numbers, like these beholders of Stephen, derive from their opportunity and advantages only an increase of guilt and condemnation.

We talk of miracles. They were useful as evidences and proofs; but as moral means they failed as well as other means. We are

ready to think that those who were not properly influenced by them, could not believe them: but they did believe them. The Pharisees believed our Lord's miracles, but feared to confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue. And we find the council at Jerusalem admitting fully the notable miracle that had been done upon the cripple: we cannot say they deny it—yet they apprehend, and beat, and imprison the doers of it, and command them to speak no more in the name of Jesus! Men pretend inability, when only inclination is wanting. They are not strangers to the truth, but hold it in unrighteousness; and will not let it go free in their conduct. They think their irreligion is the creature of circumstances; and that if they had other situations and conditions, they should be godly. Vain supposition! They are ready to wish some overpowering dispensation or calamity may befall them, that what is not done by conviction, may be done by impression; and what is not done by the means of grace, may be done by events. If one came unto us from the dead, we should repent. Vain hope! If you hear not Moses and the prophets, neither would you be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

FEBRUARY 23.—“Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”—Matthew xxviii. 20.

It is needless to ask who is the speaker? Every believer will exclaim, as soon as he hears the words, “It is the voice of my Beloved.” *His* voice is always welcome to the ear of faith: welcome when it enjoins a duty; welcome when it demands a sacrifice—How welcome then when it announces that he will never leave us nor forsake us!

But we may ask, on what occasion he spoke? It was on the verge of glory, a few hours only before he entered the joy that was set before him. It was in the nature of a parting address. O, to have seen him! to have glanced at the features and emotions of his countenance just as he was ascending to his Father and our Father, to his God and our God! He could not go without something that should keep from despair even the minds of those who had crucified him. Preach, said he to his Apostles, repentance and remission of sins in my Name among all nations, *beginning at Jerusalem*. Let those that smote the Rock, have the first offer of the stream! Tell those that shed it, that there is redemption in my blood, even the forgiveness of their sins! If such was his concern for enemies, what says he to encourage those who had forsaken all to follow him? No wonder sorrow had filled their hearts. How *we* feel at the loss of a dear relation, or beloved friend, or useful minister! *They* were as lambs among wolves. They were left in a world that hated and persecuted them. What will they do for defence, counsel, and comfort, when their defender, and counsellor, and comforter is gone? Ye shall see me again, says he—I will not leave you comfortless—I will come to you—“Lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. When you were on the lake, and a storm arose, and you seemed ready to perish, I awoke and rebuked the sea, and there was a great calm. When at another time, the wind was contrary, and you rowed in vain, till your strength failed,

I came at the fourth watch of the night, and immediately the ship was at the land whither ye went. And when I sent you forth without purse, and scrip, and shoes, you had many anxieties and fears; but lacked ye any thing? In every want I will provide. The latest watch shall find me near. Every storm shall bring me in its bosom—Lo! I am with you alway, even to the end of the world.”

But how could this be? Did they live alway? Did they not all leave the world more than seventeen hundred years ago? He spake to them, not so much personally, as relatively and representatively. Had he intended themselves only, it would have been enough to say, I am with you alway, even to the end of life; but as he intended the Church whom he addressed in them, he says, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world. There is nothing unusual in such a mode of address. Speaking as Englishmen, we say, things have been so and so with *us*, ever since the Reformation or Revolution. No river has the selfsame particles of water it had a year or an hour ago; yet because it flows in the same banks, and from the same sources, we always call it by the same name. The Church of Christ is one community, and the unity is not affected by the variety of parts, or succession of time. We look backward to the days of his flesh, and say, “*We* beheld his glory:” we look forward to his coming again, and say, “*We* shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.”

There is a world, the Lord prepare us for it! that will never terminate: but “this present world” is not only seen, but temporal—It will have an “end;” and we know it. We know not indeed when it shall take place; but we know that “the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and all the works that are therein, shall be burnt up.” Then “time shall be no longer.” But O delightful assurance! we know that *till then*, Jesus will be—must be—with his people. Yet how is the assurance to be understood? How can he be with them alway, even to the end of the world? O, say they who only counsel to cast him down from his excellency; by his word, and ordinances, and ministers. But he speaks of his own presence: and he does not say, *I shall* be, but *I am* with you. Yet it could not be as to his bodily presence: for he said, “the poor ye have always with you; but me ye have not always.” “Now I am no more in the world:” and no more will he be corporeally in the world, till he shall appear a second time without sin unto salvation. It is impossible to explain these things consistently, without the admission of his divinity. It is absurd to suppose that a mere creature could be always with millions of persons at the same time. A man, an angel, cannot be in two places at the same moment. Yet, even allowing his divinity, some distinction is necessary. His omnipresence is an essential attribute by which he fills heaven and earth, and thus he is as near to the wicked as to the righteous. When his presence is spoken of in a way of privilege, it must be distinguished from a perfection of his nature, and refer to the agency of his grace, or the influence of his Spirit. So he had explained himself to his disciples: “I will give you another Comforter, that he may abide

with you for ever: even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."

Let us realize this promise, as the promise of One that cannot lie. And while it fills us with wonder and admiration, and induces us to exclaim, "Will God in very deed dwell with man upon the earth?" let it induce us to seek the blessedness of a union with his people, saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you. And if we have reason to hope that we are in the number of his followers, let the promise establish our hearts with regard to the security of his Church, and the permanency and success of his cause. Let it animate us in every duty. Let it be a source of consolation in every trial. Are we reduced in circumstances? deserted? bereaved? looking into the valley of the shadow of death? Let us hear him saying, "Fear not; for I am with thee." And may we be enabled to answer—

"If Thou, my Jesus, still art nigh,
Cheerful I live, and cheerful die:
Secure, when mortal comforts flee,
To find ten thousand worlds in Thee."

FEBRUARY 24.—"And he said, It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good."—1 Sam. iii. 18.

ELI had many failings; but his behaviour on this occasion does him honour. Samuel had feared to show him the vision. But though Eli foreboded that it was against him, he adjured the young Levite to "hide nothing" from him. This was well. But it was better still when having heard "every whit," he exclaimed, "It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good."

We need not push this resignation to every extent. Eli considers the message as a temporal judgment, designed to degrade his family from the priesthood, but not as necessarily consigning them all to endless perdition. Some of the mystics have carried the principle of submission so far as even to include their future destruction; and have said, "If thou send me to hell, I shall continue to praise and love thee." The thing is impossible. It is not in our power to love a being that without compensation would make us miserable. By the law of our nature we are bound to pursue our welfare and happiness: and our resignation to be lost for ever, if it were a possible feeling, would oppose the revealed pleasure of the Almighty, "who will have all men to be saved," and "commands us to believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ"—Neither should we suppose that the state of Eli's mind at this time excluded sensibility. A man of his tenderness must have felt—and he ought to have felt—and he could have exercised no resignation without feeling. Our Saviour himself said, "Now is my soul troubled;" and he prayed, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me;" and so may you, consistently with the most perfect submission, if you can add as he did: "Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done."

But Eli humbles himself under the mighty hand of God without murmuring and complaining. He does not accuse him of injustice or severity, but meekly accepts the dispensation—"It is the Lord:

let him do what seemeth him good." Two things contributed to this. First, a sense of his guilt. He had connived at the conduct of his sons, and thereby had dishonoured religion, and offended God. This he felt, and therefore said, "why should a living man complain; a man for the punishment of his sin?" "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him." Let the afflicted compare their sufferings with their guilt, and they will see that they have no right to repine: God has punished them less than their iniquities deserve. Secondly, a recognition of divine agency. Natural men live without God in the world. They do not perceive and acknowledge him in their successes and comforts, but sacrifice to their own net, and burn incense to their own drag. And so in their disappointments and trials they exclaim, "It was that unfortunate event; it was that unlucky servant; it was that malicious neighbour; it was that perfidious friend"—But Eli says, "It is the Lord," and therefore "let *him* do what seemeth him good." A man like-minded with Eli, does not stop at second causes; or think only of instruments. Instruments may inflict the injury, and we are not required to justify them in their conduct; but they could have no power against us unless it were given them from above. David did not excuse the malice and profaneness of Shimei, when he said, "Let him curse, for the Lord hath bidden him." But he saw the providence of God in the permission and concurrence of the event. And is there an evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it? Does not he make darkness as well as create light? Does not he wound as well as heal? And what can tend more to produce submission to his will than the sight of his hand? Therefore David said, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, *because thou didst it*"—"It is the Lord," whose power is almighty, and who cannot be resisted. "It is the Lord," who has a sovereign propriety in us, and may do what he will with his own. "It is the Lord," who is righteous in all his works—shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? "It is the Lord," whose understanding is infinite, and whose wisdom is unerring. "It is the Lord," whose mercy endureth for ever; who does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men; who loves while he chastens, and chastens because he loves; who will be with us in trouble, to sustain, deliver, and sanctify us; and make all things work together for our good—The cup which *my Father* giveth me, shall I not drink it?—"Let *Him* do what seemeth him good."

FEBRUARY 25.—"Now a certain man of the servants of Saul was there that day, detained before the Lord."—1 Sam. xxi. 7.

THIS fact is not without its usefulness. It shows us that in divine worship, we appear *before God*. We are indeed always in his view; and should continually impress our minds with Hagar's conviction, Thou God seest me. But he is in some places as he is not in others: and a peculiar presence of God belongs to the sanctuary. David believed this; and therefore, longing for the ordinances of his house, he exclaims, "When shall I come and appear before God?" And surely Christians have not less reason than Jews to expect the

special presence of God in their assemblies. Has he not said, "In all places where I record my Name, I will come unto thee; and I will bless thee?" "For where two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them?" The tokens of his presence are less sensible under the Christian, than under the Jewish dispensation; but they are no less real. They saw the cloud of glory, and heard the answers from the mercy-seat. And we see the beauty of the Lord, and inquire in his temple, and hear what he says concerning us. How often has he been found there, in his converting power, in his enlivening grace, and in the comforts of the Holy Ghost! How often has he been known in his palaces for a refuge!

Again. We see that persons may attend the means of grace, not from inclination, but constraint. What brought Doeg to the tabernacle at this time,—whether it was to justify himself from some uncleanness, to perform a vow, or for any other purpose, we cannot determine: but he would rather have been elsewhere. He was not doing his own business, nor finding his own pleasure there—he was not at home there—not at ease there—He "was *detained* before the Lord"—as a bird is detained in a cage from the liberty he loves; or as a man is detained by complaisance in a party he dislikes; or as a traveller is detained under a shed from the rain, but longing to be gone. There is no judging of men fairly, unless you observe them when they act freely. It is said of Peter and John, that "being let go, they went to their own company." Unless he goes out of the world, the Christian must mix with others: but they are not his companions: he is a companion of all them that fear God; in them is all his delight. He does business with others, but he takes hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew; saying, I will go with you, for I have heard that God is with you. On the other hand, many things short of disposition may detain persons in their attendance on the means of grace, and but for which we should see them no more in the house of God.

Some are detained by reputation. Though we are not a country of Christians, we are a Christian country; and though few feel the power, all comparatively respect the forms of godliness; and to abandon these, would excite remark and censure, even among the worldly and indifferent. Some also are influenced by their connexions: children by the authority of their parents; servants by the requisition of their masters; husbands by the importunity of their wives. Some, and this I fear is frequently the case in the upper ranks, are attendants for the sake of example; and to sanction the thing in the eyes of the common people, who *do* want religion, and cannot *well* be managed without it. Some are urged by the uneasinesses of their minds, arising from conviction and fear. They feel no concern to please God, and have no desire to hold communion with him; but they want an opiate to allay the wakefulness of conscience. Some are attracted by a kind of entertainment which they find in the psalmody of the place, or the eloquence of the preacher. This was the case with Ezekiel's hearers: "Thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not." If the Sabbath to some be not an irksome day, it is because

they divert it from its sacred purposes—otherwise they would exclaim, What a weariness it is to serve the Lord! when will the Sabbath be gone? Yea, so irksome are religious exercises to some, that they feel perhaps more of the carnal mind that is enmity against God in their devotions, than in any other engagements; because they are irritated by restraint.

Let us bring home this matter to ourselves. We attend, and perhaps have long attended the services of the sanctuary. But let us ask, from what principle or motive? Is it to obey God? Is it to seek his face? Is it to obtain the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ? A Christian can say, "It is good for me to draw near to God." "I have loved the habitation of thy house." "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand." We have no piety unless we regard religious duties as religious privileges; and are able to say, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me."

We are too prone to err in judging of persons by their presence in our holy assemblies. It is a positive proof against a man if he neglects them: but his attendance is not a decisive evidence in his favour. Solomon saw the wicked buried, who had come and gone from the place of the holy. And many a one, unless deprived of reason and reflection, will at a dying hour exclaim, "How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof; and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me! I was almost in all evil in the midst of the congregation and assembly." Thus Doeg, while remaining demurely in the divine presence, instead of minding his devotion, was observing the intercourse between David and Ahimelech, doing mischief, and determining by lies to achieve murder! Lord, what is man!

FEBRUARY 26.—"Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice."—Psalm lxiii. 7.

MAN is called a rational creature; but he deserves the character for the possession of reason, rather than the exercise of it. He has powers; but his depravity leads to the neglect or perversion of them. Thus he is able to reflect, and to anticipate; but governed by things only present to his senses, he never regards the past and the future, unless in connexion with the body and the life that now is. *There* indeed he often displays a prudence that forms a lamentable contrast with his indifference and inattention in the concerns of the soul and eternity. *There* he rises early, sits up late, compasses sea and land, and recalls all his former miscarriages or successes for his after use and improvement. But how foolish is he, and ignorant, and like a beast before God, in things that accompany salvation! It is otherwise with the follower of Jesus. He is renewed in the spirit of his mind. He regards religion as the one thing needful, and never imagines himself prospering unless his soul prospers. His reason is enlarged and directed by faith. He thinks for moral and spiritual purposes of the past and the future—he looks backward with humiliation and gratitude, and—forward with prayer and hope. Therefore David said, "Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice." Let us make his words our own.

Let us make his acknowledgment our own.—“Thou hast been my help.” In what have we not required his succour, and in what have we not experienced it? Has he not helped us in our temporal exigences, and yet more in our spiritual concerns? Has he not seasonably and constantly helped us in our *duties*? We have had much to do; our work has been the most serious, important, and difficult; and we have had no sufficiency of ourselves. But the Lord we serve is not an Egyptian task-master, enjoining us to make brick without straw. His grace has been sufficient for us. His Spirit has helped our infirmities; and he has worked in us to will and to do of his good pleasure. Has he not helped us in our *sufferings*? We have not only had much to do, but also to bear. Our personal and relative trials have been many and various; and the bitterness of some of them, the heart only has known. But how true are the words of the sweet Psalmist of Israel!

“Our sorrows and our griefs we pour
 Into the bosom of our God:
 He hears us in the mournful hour,
 And helps us bear the heavy load.”

We have found him a very present help in trouble. He has afforded us support, so that we have not sunk in the day of adversity, and been swallowed up of overmuch sorrow. He has commanded for us deliverances, and sometimes in cases in which we were troubled on every side, and could see no way of escape. He has also saved us from the sins of the condition; enabled us to glorify the Lord in the fires; taught us to learn obedience by the things we suffer, and to gather from our chastenings the peaceable fruits of righteousness.

Let us make his resolution our own—“Under the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice,” God has no wings: but he has perfections. He has wisdom, power, goodness, and truth. He has made with us an everlasting covenant. He has given us exceeding great and precious promises. His providence performeth all things for us. The allusion is to a bird. The hen has wings, and gathers her chickens under them from harm when the hawk hovers near, and the storm approaches, and the night comes on. The image seems low when applied; but every figure falls infinitely short of his glory. Yet they have their use, and aid the understanding, the impression, and remembrance of divine truth. And the wings afford not only concealment and defence, but a warm, soft, pleasing, and delightful retreat; and the feathered mother loves to cover her infant brood, and feel them at her side. So God saves his people, and rejoices over them with joy, and rests in his love: so they rejoice under the shadow of his wings. A situation is nothing unless we make use of it. The security results from our application of the advantage; and David was aware of this, and therefore cries, “I flee unto thee to hide me.” Hence says Solomon, “the name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it and is safe.” And by rejoicing under the shadow of God’s wings, he can intend nothing less than his having recourse to it; but he includes much more—That he would repair to it from choice, and realize it with thankfulness, and enjoy it with complacency and exultation. It is what he enjoins upon others when he says, “Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.” It is

what the Church resolves to do when she exclaims, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridgroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels."

Let us make his reasoning our own; and derive, as he did, confidence from experience—"Because thou hast been my help, therefore under the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice." It is needless to observe how frequently this mode of arguing and acting is exemplified in the Scriptures. And what can more naturally tend to encourage us in the Lord our God than the proofs we have had of his power, faithfulness, mercy, and grace? The fisherman is the more inclined to repair to the place where he has been successful. The beggar feels no excitement to revisit the door where he was insulted or repulsed; but he hastens to the house where he has always met with kindness and relief. He may indeed feel some hesitation arising from the thought that he has frequently been there before. But the oftener we come, the more welcome we are. The beggar too, when after an absence he applies again, may find a change in the benefactor as to his disposition, or even his ability. But the Lord changeth not. What he has been, he is, and will be for ever. His hand is not shortened that it cannot save, nor his ear heavy that it cannot hear. And one of the designs of God in his kindness towards us is, not only by his benefits to relieve our present wants, but to excite our future applications and embolden our future hope.

If we have *never* addressed God, we are authorized to do it; but our encouragement in our first approach must be derived only from faith. But some have believed, and have now the witness in themselves. They have made the trial. They go to a known God—And they that know his Name will put their trust in him. Nothing is more becoming a Christian than a lively cheerful confidence. And in order to maintain and increase it, we shall do well to consider not only God's word, but his works; and to remember the years of the right hand of the Most High. "For thou hast delivered my soul from death: wilt not thou deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living?"

FEBRUARY 27.—"Behold, we count them happy which endure."—James v. 11.

THIS seems a strange judgment; and we may ask, Who are they that draw such a conclusion?

There is a sense in which men in general make this estimate. They commonly admire those that suffer well; and are struck with instances of prudence in difficulties, and magnanimity in dangers; calmness in a storm, and firmness under an operation. There is a tameness in the character of one who has always sat in the lap of ease and indulgence. The most striking and interesting materials for biography are derived from those sudden changes and painful occurrences which tried, discovered, and improved the sufferers who had to encounter them.

Yea, men, even natural men, have often admired those who have endured for the sake of religion. For it has been the strange lot of

many of God's people to be hated and persecuted while living, and to be praised and extolled when dead. Thus the Scribes and Pharisees painted and garnished the tombs of the prophets their forefathers had slain, at the very time they wished to crucify the only begotten Son of God. And thus many now talk highly of the noble army of martyrs, who revile some of their fellow-creatures for displaying a little of the same spirit by which they were actuated. Deceased saints are beyond our envy. They are no longer seen or heard. They no longer reproach us by their conversation and temper; no longer incommode us by disturbing us when we wish to sleep, or by flashing upon us truths of which we are willingly ignorant.

We should therefore inquire, not what we think of dead saints, but how we feel towards living ones. These are scoffed at by many: are they with us more excellent than their neighbours? Is all our delight in them? Are they our brethren and companions? "Every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him."

The Apostle however attests here, not the judgment of men, but of believers. These differ widely from each other in their sentiments with regard to a thousand subjects—especially misery and happiness. Men call the proud happy; but God resisteth the proud. Men bless the covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth. Men are afraid when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased; but God tells us a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesseth. And faith confers not with flesh and blood: it does not estimate things by time but eternity; it does not view them through the reports of sense, but through the decisions of unerring wisdom; and echoes back the testimony of God: "Blessed are the poor in spirit—Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness—Blessed are they that mourn—If ye suffer for the sake of Christ, happy are ye."

When we believe the principle from which their afflictions are sent; the designs they are to accomplish; the evils they prevent; the peaceable fruits of righteousness they yield; the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory they work out; and even the supports and consolations enjoyed under them: we shall feel little difficulty in the decision—"Happy is the man," not who escapes the rod, but "whom the Lord correcteth." Therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Lord. Nor faint when thou art rebuked of him.

FEBRUARY 28.—"Ye have heard of the patience of Job."—James v. 11.

THERE was therefore really such a man to be heard of; and the book that bears his name is therefore not a parabolical representation, but a true history. Ezekiel mentions him more than once, with Noah and Daniel. They were real characters; and would Job have been specified with them had he been a fictitious one? Noah and Daniel, and a metaphor! James also associates him as an example with the prophets, who were not imaginary, but real beings.

But how came we to hear of this man at all, seeing he lived more than two thousand miles off, and more than four thousand years ago?

"He was the greatest man in the east." But his estate would never have been noticed, had he possessed nothing else: a man is nothing the more to God for the number of his sheep, oxen, and asses. "The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear him, in them that hope in his mercy." But he was as good as he was great; and his accuser was told that he was "a perfect and an upright man." Yet we should have known nothing of his moral and spiritual worth but for his afflictions. His calamities were his trial, and his triumph: these have filled the earth with his renown. Many names in the book of martyrs would have perished in oblivion but for the sufferings that raised and immortalized them. The servants of God are never so remarked, so impressive, so useful, as when they are called forth by trouble to be his witnesses, and to glorify him in the fires: and little do they frequently imagine what personal and relative, what public and remote consequences may result from their enduring. What would Joseph have been, what would he have done, but for the persecutions and hardships through which he rose to eminence, influence, and fame? And thus you have heard of the patience of Job—

—Not his *insensibility*. Patience is not stoicism. There is no patience in a stone: there is no virtue in bearing what we do not feel. Job is never senseless under his woes. When he said, "My friends scorn me," he adds, "but mine eye poureth out tears unto God." With what earnestness does he call for commiseration! "Pity me, pity me, O ye my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me." And when he heard of all the evil that had come upon him, "he rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell upon the ground, and worshipped." You have heard of the patience of Job—

—Not his *impatience*. And yet he cursed the day of his birth, and prayed for death, and said, I loathe it, I would not live always. O that Thou wouldst hide me in the grave! There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary are at rest. But not a word of this is here mentioned. No. He had repented of it, and it had been forgiven him: and the sins and iniquities of his people God remembers no more. No. It was not the display of his habitual disposition; but a partial and temporary emotion, issuing not from his principles, but against them. And does not this omission of his fault by an Apostle teach us—That a man is to be judged of by his general character and conduct?—That we should be peculiarly lenient towards a person in great sufferings; when by the violence of the storm, reason and religion for a moment may be upset; and in the anarchy, nature involuntarily utters things which grace will afterwards be sure to condemn?—Yea, that we should *always* speak of our brethren with candour and kindness. The wicked watch only for their halting; they would make them offenders for a word; they overlook a thousand good things, and greedily seize upon a single failing, and magnify this into a crime—But charity covereth a multitude of sins. It will allow and require us indeed to be severe towards ourselves; but it will induce us to make the best of things in others, not only because from our infirmities we may need the same tenderness, but that we may be followers of the God of all grace. Yes,

You *have* heard of his *patience*; and you have been accustomed from your infancy to consider him as the most patient of all men. And this is just if his patience is to be estimated as it ought to be by his sufferings. Miseries of *every* kind fell upon him—and they fell upon *all* his comforts. They fell upon his estate—and deprived him of all his substance; upon his family—and his servants were slain; and all his children were crushed to death; and his wife urged him to curse God and die; and his friends mistook his case and reproached him with hypocrisy and wickedness; upon his body—and he had no ease from pain; was covered with sore boils from head to foot, so that he said, “I am made to possess months of vanity, and wearisome nights are appointed to me. When I lie down, I say, When shall I arise, and the night be gone? and I am full of tossings to and fro unto the dawns of the day. My flesh is clothed with worms and clods of dust; my skin is broken and become loathsome.” All this came upon him at once—and it was all enhanced by his previous condition: for he had seen better days: he had been indulged by every kind and degree of prosperity; and he presumed he should “die in his nest”—vain hope! How well could he say, “My complaint is bitter: my stroke is heavier than my groaning.” “I was not in safety—neither had I rest—neither was I quiet—yet trouble came.” And

Yet “in all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.” Yet he said, “the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord.” Yet he said, “what! shall we receive good at the Lord’s hand, and shall we not receive evil?” Yet he said, “though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.”

But by nature he could not have thus endured. And we here see what the grace of God can effect. Let us remember that he is called “the God of patience”—and not only because he requires it—but because he produces it, sustains it, perfects it. With him is the residue of the Spirit. Look to him; repair to him, ye sufferers. Honour him not only by your application, but by your confidence. Despair! **YOU HAVE HEARD OF THE PATIENCE OF JOB.**

MARCH.

MARCH 1.—“Ephraim shall say, what have I to do any more with idols? I have heard him, and observed him: I am like a green fir-tree. From me is thy fruit found.”—Hosea xiv. 8.

THE announcement represents Ephraim in his return to God: and God in his reception of Ephraim.

In his return to God, Ephraim should say, “What have I any more to do with idols?” The language owns his former attachment, while it expresses his present aversion and rejection—“I have had too much to do with them. O how degrading and painful to look back on years of folly and of guilt! Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes. O Lord, other lords beside thee have had dominion over me: henceforth by thee only will I make mention of thy name.”

This was very proper for *him*; but what is that to *us*? Are persons *here* chargeable with idolatry even before conversion? Not indeed as to the grossness of the offence. When we consider idola-

try literally, it would seem impossible that a rational being should bow down, not only to the sun, moon, and stars, but to his fellow creatures, to animals, to reptiles, to wood, and stone, to the work of his own hands. Yet what says all history?—And not only were the heathens thus besotted, but the Jews also. Ephraim worshipped the calves. And if we advert to the refinement of these abominations, and pass from literal to spiritual idolatry, every man by nature is an idolater. What was the fall, but a defection from God? What is sin, but the transfer to the creature of the regard due to the Creator? And it matters not whether the rival and engrosser be a worm, or an angel. Whatever we fear or value more than God, is to us an idol. Thus we read of “lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God;” and of some “who make gold their hope, and fine gold their confidence;” and of others “who make flesh their arm.” God alone can heal us; and yet we seek to the physician, and not to God. His blessing alone maketh rich; and yet we form our plans without him, and ascribe our successes to our own skill and care. He is the God of our salvation; and yet we depend on our own worthiness and strength, instead of saying, In the Lord I have righteousness and strength. “Little children,” says John, “keep yourselves from idols.” We may make idols of our relations, idols of our opinions, idols of our religious parties, idols of our ministers, idols of the means of grace—What is heaven? A state in which God is all in all. What is the effect of growing sanctification? Our waiting on God all the day. What is conversion? A turning away from the world to God, saying, “Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee.”—“It is good for me to draw near to God”—“What have I any more to do with idols?”

And observe the disposition of God towards the repenting Ephraim.

He observes the *workings of his heart*—“I have heard and observed him.” This is to be restrained to the nature of the case. It is an awful reflection, that God is in every place: he hears and observes all his creatures. But much more is here intended than mere observation; it is observation accompanied with approbation and delight. Such a penitent is either disregarded or despised by the world. At best he is considered as the subject of a weak mind or a disordered imagination. But truth assures us that he is now coming to himself; that the angels rejoice over him; while God himself says, “to that man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word.” “I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus: Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God. Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord.”

He *presents himself as his shelter and refreshment*—“I am like a green fir-tree.” Is not this image below God? So is every comparison. Figures taken from the sublimest objects in nature come infinitely short of his glory. Yet such allusions are useful and necessary. In the east too, a fir-tree is far more than we see it here; beautiful in its appearance, growing to a great height, yielding a

fragrant scent, spreading very widely, and affording a desirable retreat to the traveller. But a metaphor must not be pressed. The import of it is often purely relative to some one thing rendered valuable by the present circumstances of the individual. Such is cold water to a thirsty soul. Such is a cloud in harvest. The simple idea here is shade and perpetual verdure: the fir-tree being an ever-green, the same in summer and winter—Thus God is the same to the soul that trusts in him at all times and in all conditions: and if we would be raised above the influence of fear and trouble, we must sit beneath the shadow of the Almighty, and realize his perfections, presence, promises, and providence, as unchangeably concerned for our welfare. Creatures may all fail us; but He is the same. “My salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished.”

He engages to furnish *fertility*—“From me is thy fruit found.” This supplies a deficiency in the former image. A fir-tree, though always green and affording shade, yet yields no fruit; but the Lord affords repast as well as repose. These are united in the acknowledgment of the Church: “I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.” This fruit is to be taken two ways. First, for the fruit they enjoy. What is this but all spiritual blessings, pardon, peace, the comforts of the Holy Ghost, the foretastes of heaven? This is the believer’s fruit, because he is the possessor of it: but in me, says the Lord, it is found as the source and giver. Let us seek it alone in him. Paradise had nothing like it. Secondly, for the fruit they bear. This includes their graces, duties, and good works. To these our Saviour refers when he says, “Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit.” This is ours because we are the subjects of it; but he is the author. We receive the influences, but he imparts them. We exercise the principles, but he produces them. We render the obedience, but he inclines and enables us. We repent and believe, but the repentance and the faith are his gifts. We work out our salvation, but he works in us to will and to do of his good pleasure. They are therefore called “the fruit of the Spirit:” and “the fruits of righteousness, which are of Jesus Christ, to the *glory and praise of God*”—“FROM ME IS THY FRUIT FOUND.”

MARCH 2.—“All the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen, unto the glory of God by us.”—2 Cor. i. 20.

THERE is some difference between God’s purposes and promises. Both of them so to speak are gold: but the one, gold in the mint; the other, gold in the mint impressed and prepared for currency and use. God could have blessed his people without previously announcing it, and bringing himself under an engagement; but in this case his design could not have been known, believed, expected, pleaded. But the promises give rise to a life of faith, and hope, and patience, and prayer.

Let me contemplate these promises in their relation to *Christ*—They “are *in him*.” All their contents are found in him: indeed he himself is the substance of the whole. In the Covenant of Grace he is the Covenantee; and the promises of it are made, not imme-

diately with us but with him, as our head representative and surety. He performed the awful condition on which they were all founded; and has ratified them by his own blood. He is also the pledge of their existence and accomplishment. They might seem too great to be believed were it not for *himself*, who is greater than any thing God has promised. But he *has* been given; and "he that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" If the promises are in him, the way to possess and enjoy them all is to receive him—"He that hath the Son hath life."

Let me also view them in their *certainty*—"All the promises of God in him are *yea*, and in him *amen*." All the promises of Satan are falsehood. Human promises are not always truth. David indeed erred when he said in his haste—all men are liars; yet too commonly "men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie." But even Balaam could say, "The Lord is not a man that *he* should lie; neither the son of man that he should repent: hath *he* said, and shall he not do it; or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" Men fail in their promises through forgetfulness, or changeableness of mind, or inability of performance. But can *he* forget whose understanding is infinite? Can *he* change his purpose who is in one mind, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever? Can any thing be too hard for the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth? Let us therefore honour God by our confidence. If we have a word from him, let it satisfy us, whatever difficulties oppose the accomplishment—these are for *him* to consider who has promised. Abraham, therefore, having received the divine assurance, though there were improbabilities, and even natural impossibilities in the way, "staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God." Hence

Let me observe them in their *design*—"To the glory of God." God is glorified in them as they are all *yea* and *amen*: for nothing can be more honourable to God than the impossibility of impeaching his veracity. He is therefore called "the faithful God." "His faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds;" and far beyond them—his "faithfulness is established in the very heavens;" and the fame of it there draws forth the acclamation, "Just and true are all thy ways, O thou King of saints!" But his wisdom and power also are glorified in the time and manner of their accomplishment. Above all, how does not only the fulfilment but the donation of these promises display the exceeding riches of his grace! For what but the most undeserved favour and boundless mercy could have led him to remember us in our low estate, and instead of threatening us with destruction, promise us eternal life and all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ!

Finally, let me remark the *instrumentality* of this design—"To the glory of God by us." By us as *ministers*—publishing, explaining, applying them. A promise is often like a box of ointment very precious; but the fragrance does not fill the room till the preacher breaks it. Or it is like the water that was near Hagar which she saw not, till the angel of the Lord opens our eyes and shows us the well. By us *believers*—realizing the excellency and efficacy of them in our character and conduct. It is when these promises are reduced

to experience; when they are seen cleansing us from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, making us partakers of the divine nature, leading us to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called, filling us with kindness and benevolence, supporting us cheerfully under all our trials; it is then they glorify God *by us*.

How responsibly should they feel, and how carefully should they walk, who are entrusted with the honour of God in his word—which he magnifies above all his Name!

MARCH 3.—“Sirs, what must I do to be saved!”—Acts xvi. 30.

WE may imagine the manner in which the jailor had addressed Paul and Silas before, from the manner in which he treated them; for having received them in charge, he thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks, while their backs were bruised and bleeding from the scourge; for their wounds were not dressed till some hours after. Doubtless bad words and reproachful names were added to the cruelty. But however he had insulted them before, he now reveres them more than kings; and calling for a light, he springs in, and comes trembling, and falls down before them in the inner prison, and brings them out, and cries, “What must I do to be saved?”

This was obviously the language of apprehension. He saw he was in danger of being lost. But how lost? Some have supposed that he refers to his temporal danger. The Roman jailor was made answerable for his prisoner; and if the prisoner escaped, the jailor bore the punishment the prisoner was doomed to endure. At first therefore the keeper *was* thus alarmed; for upon the earthquake, which shook the foundations of the prison, so that the doors were opened, and every man's bands were loosed, he awaked out of his sleep, and drew his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had fled. But his alarm on *this* account must have been removed, as soon as ever Paul cried with a loud voice, “Do thyself no harm, for we are all here.” And the answer given to his inquiry, shows that he did not refer to temporal death; for though faith in Christ saved him from hell, it would not have saved him from the penalty of the Roman law had he incurred it.

His anxiety, therefore, regards his spiritual and eternal state. It is in vain to argue against this, and say, how could this be, as it supposes a knowledge which this Pagan could not possess? For the heathen generally had some sense of a future state; and were all their life-time, subject to bondage through fear of death. Often their uneasinesses were such, that to obtain something like peace of mind, they would endure the greatest privations and self-inflicted tortures, and give the fruit of their body for the sin of their soul. God indeed has a witness in every bosom. Every man is a sinner; his conscience condemns him; he feels his need of pardon. Were he guiltless, he would be fearless. The innocent do not tremble when they hear the trumpet announcing the entrance of the Judge; but only those who are to be tried. The earthquake had roused the jailor's dread of the power and the anger of God. Perhaps he had heard Paul and Silas singing in the stocks. Perhaps they had dropped some-

thing while he was misusing them that had impressed his mind. Perhaps he had been informed of their preaching; and doubtless he had been told of the language of the Pythoness, who for many days had cried, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, which show unto men the way of salvation." To which we may well add, how soon the Spirit of God can reach the heart, and enter the conscience like a conqueror at the head of an army. No wonder his apprehension made him cry, "What must I do to be saved?" It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. If a man were any way exposed to it, we should think it impossible that he could enjoy a moment's ease; or be capable of feeling a lighter sorrow, in hazard of such a tremendous doom. When I was awakened, says Bunyan, nothing so astonished me as to see how my fellow-creatures were affected with their outward troubles—I had many of these; but I could only cry, How shall I escape the damnation of hell?

His language contains a desire of information. In such a state as this, ignorance is dreadful, and perplexity intolerable. And in vain you address the man concerning any other subject. Tell me, says he, how I can flee from the wrath to come. How I can obtain acceptance with God. How I can be renewed in the spirit of my mind. Is there balm in Gilead, and a physician there? And *what* is that balm? *Who* is that physician? He also dreads imposition. Tell me the true state of my soul. If there be hope, announce it; but do not flatter me. Nothing will now satisfy the mind but certainty. And the man has it not in his power to be his own instructor or comforter. He distrusts himself, and suspects every thing like comfort that comes from his own heart, which has so often deceived him. Now therefore he prizes the means and the source of information. He reads the Scripture—and for the purpose for which it was written. He hears the word—and for the purpose for which it is preached. How beautiful now are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings! How endeared the throne of grace where the prayer is heard, "Thy Spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness."

Here was also a readiness to submit to the method prescribed for his deliverance. Some, when they are alarmed, think of building a shelter rather than of fleeing for refuge. They indulge in a legal bias, and human reasonings; and going about to establish their own righteousness, do not submit themselves to the righteousness of God. The simplicity of the scheme of gospel grace, pays no homage to the idol self; and the spiritual Naaman is ready to turn away in a rage, because the mode of relief is not such as he "thought." The scheme is additionally offensive, because it demands the destruction of every sin; and men love independence, and to walk according to the way of their own hearts. But bring a man into the state of the jailor, and he will be willing to yield—willing to be led. Tell him the way, and he will walk in it. Tell him the remedy, and he will submit to it, however it may require him to stoop, or whatever it may require him to sacrifice. Dr. Cheyne was an eminent as well as a pious physician. But he was supposed to be severe in his regimen. When he had prescribed, and the patient began to object to the treatment, he would say, "I see you are not bad enough for me

yet." Some are not bad enough for Christ yet—we mean in their own apprehension. But when they find and feel that they are entirely lost, and have no other help or hope, they will cordially acquiesce in his recommendation, however mysterious, however humbling, however trying. "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead."

Let me not think this inquiry was proper for the jailor only. All have sinned. And the soul that sinneth it shall die. It should therefore be the inquiry of every man. O my soul, let it be thine!

What is the answer?—

MARCH 4.—"And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."—Acts xvi. 31.

THEY overlook his injurious treatment of them. They do not take advantage of his present distress to insult him, as the council did Judas, who, when he cast down the pieces of silver, confessing he had sinned and betrayed innocent blood, said, "What is that to us? See thou to that." Yea, they hear with delight his exclamation, "What must I do to be saved?" Such cries as this are music in the ears of those who long to save souls from death—"Your case is bad, but it is not hopeless. You are guilty and condemned, and there is only one way of deliverance—But there *is* one. We have tried it ourselves, and have found it effectual, and recommend it to you. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Here is the advantage of knowledge and of experience in those who have to deal with souls in spiritual distress. They can speak readily and clearly; and with confidence and earnestness—"Lo this, we have searched it; so it is; hear it, and know thou it for thy good." What could the heathen philosophers have done with this question? Or what the Scribes and Pharisees who sat in Moses' chair? What would a modern infidel make of it? How many called divines, would answer: "Be not too much distressed. You are not worse than others. All are frail. God knows our frame. He will not be severe to mark what we do amiss. Guard against these gloomy notions which drive people to distraction or despondency. Take exercise. Go into company. Moderately indulge in the amusements of life." Or if any thing more religious be said, it would be, "Reform whatever may have been vicious: and in proper time prepare yourself for a worthy reception of the Lord's Supper." How different was the language of Paul and Silas! "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

This teaches us that awakened souls are to be led immediately to Christ. There are some who are slow to bring forward the glad tidings of salvation, fearing that such persons are not yet distressed and humbled enough. But it is obvious that a long process to prepare for an application to the Lord Jesus was not deemed necessary by the Apostles. They presented him at once: through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified. He did the same himself: "Come unto me"—"Look unto me." No other recommendation can be available. Every other direction will turn the sinner aside from safety and relief. All the peace obtained by any other means is only a temporary

delusion. "Why should I wait? I want a mediator between me and God, but I do not want a mediator between me and Christ. I *must* come to him as I am. And I *may* come—'all the fitness he requireth is to feel my need of him.'"

The answer shows that there is salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that he came into the world to save sinners: and that he is now exalted at God's own right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour. With him is plenteous redemption; free deliverance from the guilt, the pollution, and the consequences of sin; and for ever—

The way to realize this is believing. "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted to him for righteousness." Unless we begin here, we commence at the wrong end. Good works do not produce faith, but faith produces good works. If we see a fellow creature wrecked and ready to sink, the first thing is to get out the life-boat. It would be absurd to go to the dying bed of a man, and begin to admonish him how he ought to walk and to work—The man is dying. Send for the physician—Bring a remedy. When recovered, admonition will be reasonable and needful. God gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish: and however salvation is represented in the Scripture, we see faith is essential to it. Whatever Christ may be in himself, he can be nothing to us without it. He is indeed the refuge, but a refuge cannot secure us unless it be entered; and it can only be entered by faith. He is indeed the bread of life, but food cannot nourish us unless it be eaten; and it can only be eaten by faith. The grand thing therefore is to believe the record concerning him; and to trust in his name; to rely upon his grace; to apply to him for all the purposes he is revealed to accomplish; and to receive him as he is held forth to us in the gospel.

This course will not fail. Salvation is insured to believing. As without faith we cannot be saved, so with it we cannot perish. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."

If therefore you feel your need of salvation, repair to him, and say, "Let this ruin be under thy hand." He is mighty to save. He is able to save to the uttermost. And while his power enables him to save, his goodness inclines him to save. His soul is the dwelling-place of pity. His heart is made of tenderness; his bowels melt with love. And while his goodness inclines him to save, his promise binds him to save—He cannot deny himself. He has said, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out."

"My soul obeys the Almighty call,
And runs to this relief;
I would believe thy promise, Lord,
O help mine unbelief."

MARCH 5.—"And Ekron as a Jebusite."—Zech. ix. 7.

THE prophecy in which these words are found shows, that God in judgment remembers mercy; and can punish her enemies without injuring the Church; and can even increase her welfare by means

of it. Desolations were coming upon the Syrians, and Tyrians, and Philistines; but a remnant should be saved and *converted*, so as to become the worshippers and people of the God of Israel! This is exemplified in the latter of these powers: "I will cut off the pride of the Philistines: and I will take away the blood out of his mouth, and his abominations from between his teeth: but he that remaineth, even he, shall be for our God, and he shall be as a governor in Judah, and Ekron as a Jebusite." The Philistines were the most constant and implacable of all the adversaries of the Jews. Ekron was one of their greatest capitals. It was the residence of Beelzebub the chief of the devils; and is put by the poets for hell itself. Jebus is the old name for Jerusalem. Hence we read that "David and all Israel went to Jerusalem, which is Jebus; where the Jebusites were, the inhabitants of the land." The meaning of the words therefore is, that the inhabitant of Ekron should become as the denizen of Jerusalem; no longer an enemy, or a stranger and foreigner, but a fellow-citizen with the saints, and of the household of God. Two remarks arise from this promise.

First,—It is a great thing to be a Jebusite. The Apostle speaks of it as the highest of all privileges, that we "are come to Mount Zion, the city of the living God, and to the heavenly Jerusalem;" and that "Jerusalem, which is above, and which is free, is the mother of us all." Of this city of our God, glorious things are spoken, and they are not vain words. What a governor have these citizens! He is fairer than the children of men; he is the king of glory. What a charter have they! What can equal their defence and safety? What can equal their liberty? What their commerce and wealth? What their happiness? Their peace passeth all understanding—Their joy is unspeakable and full of glory—"as well the singers, as the players on instruments, shall be there: all my springs are in thee."

Secondly—Jebusites may be derived from Ekronites. Here we have the evidence of fact. The thing has been done; and the most unlikely characters have furnished pious converts. We can make an appeal to Manasseh, who had sinned away all the effects of a godly education, and had become the most daring idolater; and such a murderer, that he made the streets of Jerusalem to run down with innocent blood—yet he, even he, sought and found the Lord God of his fathers. We could appeal to the dying thief, blaspheming with his companion one moment, and praying the next, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." We could appeal to the murderers of Jesus, so soon washed in the blood which they themselves had shed. What could surpass the guilt and depravity of the Corinthians? Yet they were washed, they were justified, they were sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. And what says Paul of himself? "I was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy"—and "for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ should show forth all long-suffering, as a pattern to them that should hereafter believe on him, to life everlasting."

Here from what he has done, we see what he *can* do. We see also what he *must* do; for he has bound himself by his word. And who are the heirs of promise? From whence are they to be brought;

and from what materials are the subjects of his grace to be formed? "Princes shall come out of Egypt." "Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God." "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle-tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off." "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid." "The beasts of the field shall honour me, the dragons and the owls."

Much of these announcements is indeed highly figurative, but the meaning cannot be mistaken, and the truth of it is perpetually accomplishing. For, blessed be God, these changes are not imaginary representations. The pictures are from real life; and the originals are to be found. We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen. We have seen the profligate becoming not only moral but holy—the proud clothed with humility—the niggard and the churl learning to be bountiful and kind—the earthly-minded seeking the things that are above—the curses of the neighbourhood going about doing good. Well may the Author of all good say, "This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise"—What displays, what triumphs are they, of the freeness, the riches, and the power of his grace!

Let none despair. However desperate their case is with regard to their own resources, there is hope in Israel concerning this thing. Nothing is too hard for the Lord.

Neither let us despond with regard to any of our fellow-creatures. We may be tempted to think some of them beyond the possibility of reclaim. But God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. Let us not abandon them, but persevere in the use of means—animated by prayer—and strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.

MARCH 6.—"Do not all go to one place?"—Eccles. vi. 6.

WHAT place? There are four places; and a universality of passengers is approaching each of them. An absolute universality with regard to the two first; and a specific universality with regard to the two second.

There is *the grave*. Do not all go to *this* place? Yes. "All go to one place—all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again." No one denies this; and yet no one seems to believe it, at least with regard to himself! Who would suppose that thousands around us ever said, "I know that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living." What a proof is this, that convictions however clear, and belief however firm, may be paralyzed and rendered uninfluential!

There is *the judgment-seat*. Do not all go to *this* place? Yes: "We must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ." The high will not be excused; the low will not be overlooked. "I saw the dead," says John, "small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened." And the Judge himself tells us, that "before him shall be gathered all nations, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and

he shall set the sheep on his right hand, and the goats on the left—and these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.”

Now therefore a separation takes place, and what before applied to all with regard to *nature*, will now apply to all only with regard to *character*.

There is *hell*. Do not all go to *this* place? Yes, all the wicked: “The wicked shall be turned into hell, with all the nations that forget God.” Their sin is very diversified; and though all go astray like sheep, they turn every one to his own way. The covetous and the cruel, the hypocrite and the profligate, the scoffer and the formalist, the swearer and the slanderer, are all in various directions going the downward road, and will meet in the same place of torment. There is something inexpressibly dreadful in the thought of mixing with such society. And when we consider the number of the damned, their malignity, their mutual accusations, their hatred of each other, their freedom from all the restraints which check the bad and vile while here, their power to curse and tear each other, under the empire too of the devil and his angels—who would not cry, “Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men.”

There is *heaven*. Do not all go to *this* place? Yes, all the *righteous*—all who are justified by faith, and renewed in the spirit of their mind. We need not ask where this place is; it is enough to know that Jesus has said, “I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you I will come again, and receive you to myself, that where I am there ye may be also.” There, out of every period of time, and out of every kindred, and nation, and people, and tongue, he will gather together in one, the children of God which were scattered abroad. Here they differed in their outward condition, in their religious opinions and usages, and in the degree of their grace; but they were all one *in* Christ Jesus, and now they are all one *with* him. Is this candour and comprehensiveness in heaven an excellency? Let us approach it as much as possible; and as we are all going to one place, let us not fall out by the way. Let us pray, “Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity;” and let us show by our freedom from bigotry, that our prayer is not hypocrisy or formality. Many a persecuting and many a censorious spirit has had liberality enough upon his oily lips, especially at public meetings, who has only scowled hate or dislike towards his differing brethren at all other times. But the Master says, “Out of thine own mouth will I condemn thee, thou wicked servant.”

MARCH 7.—“Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me.”—Luke xxii. 28, 29.

THE dying Patriarch said of Reuben, “unstable as water, thou shalt not excel.” Stability is essential to excellency. Without it no reputation can be acquired, no confidence can be supported, no usefulness can be insured. Even obstinacy, which is ignorant resolution, is more allied to excellency than versatility. You may build

upon a rock; but what can be done on shifting and sliding sand? If a man be one thing to-day and another to-morrow; if he yields to every fresh impression like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed; and is governed by circumstances instead of principles; he can never display *character*, for character is the effect and fame of habit.

Nothing recommends a man more than steadfastness in friendship, especially when the adherence has to struggle with difficulties. This is what our Lord here commends in his disciples—They had “continued with him in his temptations.”

If the enemy ever left Christ, it was only for “a season;” he soon returned again to the assault; and urged him even to infidelity, presumption, suicide, and idolatry—How well is it said—

“He knows what sore temptations mean,
For he has felt the same.”—

But our Lord does not here refer to *such* temptations, and especially those he endured in the *wilderness*. In these his disciples were not present—he was alone—of the people there was none with him. In the Scripture temptations do not always, nor most commonly, signify enticements to sin; but any events that morally try us in the way of duty. In such trial his disciples continued with him; they found him poor and despised; bearing the contradiction of sinners against himself; slandered; menaced; and in danger of death. And they were willing to share in the same treatment. They denied themselves, and took up *their* cross and followed *him*. They deemed it enough for the servant to be as the master, and the disciple as his Lord.

There are trials now to which they who are with him are exposed. They are called, “the sufferings of Christ;” “his reproach;” and here *his* “temptations;” as they accompany his cause, and are endured for his sake. They are not all of a painful nature, or consisting in various degrees of persecution. His followers are often tried in other ways. There are the dangers of prosperity as well as of adversity. The world has its allurements as well as frowns, and is more perilous in its friendship than its enmity. There must be heresies, that they who are of a contrary part may be made manifest. There will always be many who will turn again to folly from the holy commandment delivered them, and will endeavour to draw away others. Happy they, who while the Saviour says, “Will ye also go away?” can answer, “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.” For, “blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive a crown of life which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.”

Observe, O my soul, how he insures and amplifies the privilege: “I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me.” The grant is not an estate, a province, a principality, but a kingdom! And observe two things with regard to it. First. See the Saviour’s authority and dominion: “I appoint unto you a kingdom.” The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: and he has given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as the Father had given him. The fulness from which he should dispense to the myriads of the saved all the blessings of grace and glory, was the joy set before him,

for which he endured the cross. It is the fruit of the travail of his soul, and it satisfies him; it yields infinite delight to his benevolent heart. And how must the gift be endeared to the receiver when it is conferred by his own dear hand—

“The righteous Judge, at that great day,
Shall place it on my head.”

Secondly—he is not only the appointer, but the model of the appointment—“my Father hath appointed me.” The *ground* of the Father’s appointment of *him* was indeed peculiar—*He* deserved it and could claim it. He fulfilled the high and awful condition on which it was suspended, his suffering and death. The cause of the Saviour’s appointment of *us* is nothing meritorious; it is mercy and grace, though founded in his own claims. But the one is as real as the other; and as certain in the accomplishment; and terminates in the same state: and as far as our nature will allow, we shall partake of the same blessedness and honour with himself, though conscious that we have not reached the elevation in the same way. The Scripture cannot be more decisive than it is—“we are quickened together with Christ, and raised up and made to sit with him in the heavenly places.” “When he who is our life shall appear, we shall also appear with him in glory.” “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me upon my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father upon his throne.” And herein again we rejoice—as all our happiness and dignity will be received *from* him, so it will be enjoyed *with* him—“*Where* I am there shall also my servants be”—“We shall live together with him.”

MARCH 8.—“And when Rachel saw that she bare Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister; and said unto Jacob, Give me children, or else I die.”—Gen. xxx. 1.

HERE we see a little of the evils of polygamy. How hard is it to maintain an equality of satisfaction where there are different claimants feeling alike in their pretensions! Yet if there be a partiality of regard, either real or supposed, what can be expected but discord and wretchedness? How much more agreeably did Isaac and Rebecca live together, according to God’s original appointment, than poor Jacob with his two wives! What could ever justify a practice at war with morality and the happiness of domestic life, the fountain head of society?

Observe Rachel’s ill-humour. Bodily charms with the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit would be irresistible; but a pretty face and a gentle temper are seldom found together. Rachel was beautiful; but because she bore Jacob no children, like her sister, “she envied her.” There is nothing against which we should more guard ourselves than envy. It is a quality the most unlovely and diabolical. Envy is grief, not at another’s wo but another’s welfare. It is the rottenness of the bones; it is the bane of self-enjoyment; it is quarreling with God for making another to differ from us. It is awful to think how naturally prone we are to this vice—“The spirit that is in us lusteth to envy.”

See her intemperate desire. “And she said unto Jacob, Give me

children, or else I die." There was no harm in the wish for offspring. They are the natural privilege of marriage. And many have supposed that the Jewish wives wished so much to be mothers, as the promise of God entailed the richest blessings on the posterity of Abraham, and because from his seed according to the flesh, the desire of all nations was to descend. This probably had some influence; but the principal thing was the respect attached to fruitfulness. In a more refined and improved state of society, intellectual and moral qualities are sufficient to obtain distinction; but in the earlier and ruder ages outward and corporeal attributes are chiefly regarded. In *their* modes of living too, children were an advantage and a defence. Hence the language of Scripture: "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them; they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate." Hence the conception after barrenness in the cases of Sarah and Manoah's wife, and Hannah and Elisabeth, drew forth such joy and praise—But what could be so censurable as the inordinate language of Rachel—"If my wish be not gratified, I shall offer violence to my life, or fret myself into the grave. In some way or other it will prove my death."

But ah! what ignorance of the future, and of her real welfare, does she here betray! "Who knoweth what is good for a man in this life, all the days of his vain life which he spendeth as a shadow?" How little was Lot aware of the fearful consequences arising from the indulgence of his wish in the choice of the vale of Sodom, well-watered, and looking like the garden of the Lord! The Jews obtained quails in answer to their pettish request; but he gave them their heart's desire, and sent leanness into their souls: while the flesh was between their teeth, the wrath of God came upon them, and they died of their intemperance. They would have a king; and he showed his resentment not in denying but gratifying them. "He gave them a king in his anger, and took him away in his wrath." So here; Rachel says, "Give me children or else I die"—and she died not in the failure of her desire but in the accomplishment of it, falling a victim to her second pregnancy: "And they journeyed from Bethel; and there was but a little way to come to Ephrath: and Rachel travailed, and she had hard labour. And it came to pass, when she was in hard labour, that the midwife said unto her, Fear not; thou shalt have this son also. And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she died) that she called his name Ben-oni: but his father called him Benjamin. And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem. And Jacob set a pillar upon her grave: that is the pillar of Rachel's grave unto this day." And among other things engraven upon it is this—Let your desires be under the government of reason and religion. Extort nothing from God. As to spiritual blessings indeed we cannot be too importunate; but with regard to temporal we cannot be too resigned. We are allowed to ask for any comfort pertaining to this life, but we must ask submissively and conditionally. We must implore it only if it be good for us; and we must leave the determination of this to him that knoweth all things.

This too is the surest way to succeed. God sees that while we are in a high fever of desire he cannot safely indulge us; but he is never unwilling to gratify us when he can do it without injury—For he “hath pleasure in the prosperity of his people.”

MARCH 9.—“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”—Rev. xxi. 4.

UNLESS we knew something of the world of glory, we could not desire it or prepare for it. Yet what we know is comparatively little: and it is rather negative than positive. In our present state, our liveliest feeling of good is the absence of evil; and of pleasure is the cessation of pain. And therefore, conformably to an experience well understood by every child of Adam, the happiness of heaven is held forth to our hopes as an exemption from every kind and degree of sorrow—and “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”

Tears and sorrows do not always go together. Some people have a plenitude of tears, whose emotions are by no means deep and durable. Others can seldom weep; yet they feel, and feel the more, because their grief wants utterance. Persons in great anguish are commonly beyond weeping. This is seen in criminals preceding their execution.

When it is said, “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes,” it is taken for granted, that the eyes of his people are no strangers to them now. Grace does not exclude the sensibilities of our nature, but increases as well as refines them. We read of “them that mourn in Zion.” And it is said, “they shall come with weeping.” Religion costs a Christian a thousand tears in addition to those which he inherits as a man—for “man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upwards.”

Of the tears they so frequently shed, we may remark in particular, five sources. Those which arise from secular afflictions—such as difficulties, perplexities, and failures in business; and changes, reductions, and privations in outward circumstances. Those which arise from social trials—whether sympathy in sorrow, defections in friendship, or relative bereavements. Those which arise from bodily pains, indispositions, and decays. Those which flow from moral imperfections, and which are the most distressing to a pious mind. And those which spring from the sins of others; for rivers of tears run down their eyes, because men keep not God’s law.

But of whatever kind their tears may be, the promise insures the removal of them. The removal has three characters. It is divine—“God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” He alone can do it. But he is all-sufficient, and the God of all comfort. Even here, “when he giveth quietness, then who can make trouble?” It is *complete*—“God shall wipe away *all* tears from their eyes”—Who can tell what will be the last drop of the briny flood. But it *will* be shed. “And there shall be *no* more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”

It is *future*—“God *shall* wipe away all tears from their eyes.” He wipes away many even now: but the days of their mourning

are not yet ended. Whatever be their indulgences, earth will always be distinguished from heaven. They are now in the warfare; the triumph is to come. This is their seed-time, and they sow in tears; but they shall reap in joy.

Let us learn our obligation to the Redeemer of sinners. Our tears would never have been wiped away, but a miserable life would have been followed by a more miserable eternity, had not he interposed on our behalf, and bore our sins in his own body on the tree. "These are they that came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; therefore are they before the Throne—"

Christians! in the multitude of your thoughts within you, let this comfort delight your souls. Life is the date of *all* your griefs. If the one be short, the other cannot be long. Not a single tear beyond the grave! Bear up faith, hope, and patience a little longer, and the "eye shall see evil no more."

What folly and madness to resign this prospect, and when the blessedness is within our reach, to sacrifice it for a thing of nought! Yet are *we* in the number of those whose tears will be thus wiped away? It is certain that many are not heirs of this promise; and therefore whatever be their present distresses, they only feel the beginning of sorrows. Poor as their pleasures now are, they are the best—they are *all* the happiness—they will know. And the vanity and vexation of spirit here will issue in outer darkness hereafter, where there will be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth—

"But as yet there is a hope,
You may his mercy know;
Though his arm be lifted up,
He still forbears the blow"—

MARCH 10.—"When the people of the land shall come before the Lord in the solemn feasts, he that entereth in by the way of the north gate to worship shall go out by the way of the south gate; and he that entereth by the way of the south gate shall go forth by the way of the north gate: he shall not return by the way of the gate whereby he came in, but shall go forth over against it."—Ezekiel xlvi. 9.

To preserve the remembrance of his mighty works; to attach the people to the true religion by the frequent use of public and instructive services and ceremonies; to allow them seasons of rest and pleasure; to promote their acquaintance with their brethren; and to prefigure good things to come under the dispensation of the Gospel; God appointed various "solemn feasts" among the Jews. There were more especially three; the feast of the Passover or of unleavened bread, the feast of Pentecost or of weeks, and the feast of Tabernacles. Each of these was annual, and all the males were required to attend upon them in Jerusalem, where alone they could be celebrated.

In doing this, they "came before the Lord." For his dwelling-place was in Zion. There he sat between the cherubim, and communed with the worshippers from off the mercy-seat. Of his presence there, he gave not only real but miraculous proof, in the cloud of glory, and in the answers from the holy oracle. Though his

manifestations are less sensible, he is as truly present in the Christian as in the Jewish sanctuary. It is insured by his promise, and confirmed by the holy and happy experience of all his people. Hence they feel this to be the principal attraction when they assemble together in his name. They love the habitation of his house, because it is the place where his honour dwelleth.

But what means this law of the temple to regulate the attendants in their ingress and egress? "He that entereth in by the north gate to worship shall go out by the way of the south gate; and he that entereth by the way of the south gate shall go forth by the way of the north gate; he shall not return by the way of the gate whereby he came in, but shall go forth over against it."

First, it was to prevent confusion, and to keep order in their comings and goings. God is not the God of confusion, but of peace. He has not deemed it beneath him to enjoin, "Let every thing be done decently and in order." He is the example of what he requires—order pervades all his works. The heavenly bodies are called "the army of heaven," to signify not only power but discipline; not only multitude but arrangement—"He brings out their host by number, he calleth them all by names." When Peter went into the sepulchre, he saw "the linen clothes lie, and the napkin that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself." This proved how unlikely it was that the body could have been stolen away in haste and fear, either by foes or friends; and shows the presence of mind and calmness with which our Saviour left the tomb—but does it not also show that he did nothing negligently and disorderly? All greatness, in proportion to its degree, demands order. Surely not only holiness but decorum becomes God's house for ever. How far this is often displayed in our assemblies, especially in entering and departing, we leave observers to judge.

Secondly, to express respect and reverence. It is deemed only polite and becoming for persons in leaving a room not to turn their back on the company. Courtiers always leave the presence of the king with their faces towards him—The very thing God here requires for himself. He "will be sanctified in all that come nigh him." "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him." The prohibition here by an outward and visible sign, shows the inward and spiritual obeisance and homage his infinite majesty demands and deserves. He complains of the want of it: "They have turned unto me the back, and not the face: though I taught them, rising up early and teaching them, yet they have not hearkened to receive instruction." Therefore, says he, to express their punishment, under the same image with their sin: "I will scatter them as with an east wind before the enemy; I will show them the back, and not the face, in the day of their calamity."

Thirdly—That you are not to turn back in serving God, but to go forward. "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." "But," says the Apostle, "we are not of them that draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul"—that is, who "continue in the faith," "to life everlasting." We are not even to look back; but to say, with Paul, "For-

getting the things that are behind, and reaching forth to those that are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of my high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Fourthly—That we never go out of God's house as we go in. This was true of the Jews locally, it is morally true of us. As the departure of these worshippers was remote from the place of their entrance, so we withdraw from his ordinances further from heaven or hell than we entered in; less meet for the former, or more prepared for the latter. Ministers are a sweet savour of Christ, both in them that are saved, and in them that perish. To the one they are the savour of life unto life; but to the other they are the savour of death unto death.

Who believes this? Who trembles at the thought? Who earnestly, constantly prays, that our coming together "may be for the better and not for the worse?"

MARCH 11.—"The rich and the poor meet together."—Prov. xxii. 2.

WHEN we think of the universe, we are immediately struck not only with the number of creatures in it, but the variety. If we enter heaven, instead of sameness we find "thrones and dominions, principalities and powers," angels and archangels. "There are also celestial bodies and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory." "All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds." What an amazing diversity is there in the human species! No two persons are so perfectly alike in voice, form, and feature, as to be undistinguishable by close and accurate comparison. And yet all these constitute one and the same kind of beings; and the accordances among them are far superior in number and importance to their inequalities. Solomon remarks this, and says, "The rich and the poor meet together."

He mentions, "the rich and the poor," not exclusively, for there are many other human distinctions; but specifically. He specifies these for two reasons. First, because "the rich and the poor" are the most common and general division of mankind. They are every where to be found; and comprehend many more than any other discrimination. Secondly, because they are also the most influential division. What is there the multitude dread so much as penury, or desire so much as affluence? How many are there who would rather be wicked than poor, or rich than pious! How much cleverer, and handsomer, and even younger, is a woman with a fortune than without one! How much more is a man listened to, whatever folly drivels from his lips, if he has a large income! How do the revolted tribes of Israel worship the golden calves! But "the rich and the poor meet together;" and if it be asked how? and where? we answer,

In their original. Hence Solomon adds, "the Lord is the maker of them all." We are the clay and he is the potter, and we are all

the work of his hands. When Job speaks of his man servant, he therefore asks, "Did not he that made me in the womb make him? and did not one fashion us in the womb?" We have not only "one father," as God is the sole creator, but as Adam is the only founder of our race. Some have talked of Preadamites: but the Apostle speaks of "the first man Adam:" and says, "God has made of one blood all the nations of men." This is not a mere truth but a useful one. It renders us all intimately related to each other. It is the cure of envy, pride, unkindness. Wherever I see a human being, I see a brother.

In their dependence upon God. In him all live, and move, and have their being. This is as true of the rich as of the poor. Yea, the more we possess, the more dependent are we.

In their mutual need of each other. If the poor need the wages of the rich, the rich need the service of the poor. The king is served by the labour of the field. "And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary."

In their fallen condition. They have turned every one to his own way; but all have gone astray. All have sinned. There is none righteous, no not one. All therefore are guilty before God: all are unfit for his kingdom without being made new creatures; and all are equally incapable of recovering themselves from their lapsed estate.

In the work of their salvation. There is only one name given under heaven among men whereby they must be saved. All are washed in the same fountain. All are healed by the same remedy. All are justified by the same blood. All are renewed by the same Spirit.

In the means and ordinances of divine grace. The rich and the poor meet together in reading the same Bible; in kneeling before the same Throne of Grace; in hearing the same servants of the most high God: in surrounding the same table of the Lord, and partaking of the same emblems of the body and blood of Christ. In the holy communion, the rich receive no better bread and wine than the poor; and as there is no preference in the sign, so there is none in the thing signified—"It is the common salvation."

In liableness to the same calamities of life. Family bereavements, bodily pains, eclipses of reason—how numerous the ills that flesh is heir to!—befall the high as well as the low. Yea, if there be any difference, there is on the side of the former, more exposure to assault and more acuteness in enduring.

In the sentence of mortality. In this war there is no discharge. Death is the way of all the earth. The grave is the house appointed for all living. "There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest. There the prisoners rest together; they hear not the voice of the oppressor. The small and great are there; and the servant is free from his master." "All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again."

In the proceedings of the last day. None are so little as to be overlooked; none are so great as to be excused. I saw, says John, the dead, small and great, stand before God. We must all, says the

Apostle, appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. Thus the rich and the poor meet together. What inference should we draw from this fact? Read the next article.

MARCH 12.—“The rich and poor meet together.”—Prov. xxii. 2.

WHAT is the inference to be drawn from this fact? The subject is capable of abuse, and fertile of improvement.

It would be foolish to conclude from it that all conditions are alike in themselves, or with regard to us. As if a man was no more favoured who resided in a comfortable dwelling, than one who had not where to lay his head. Our Saviour himself said, “it is more blessed to give than to receive;” and surely this shows at least one advantage the possessor has over the destitute. We teach our children to say,

“Not more than others I deserve,
Yet God hath given me more”—

And are we not to be thankful for the exemptions and indulgences by which we are distinguished? On the other hand, if we are deprived of certain outward comforts, we are required to submit to the will of God; but the submission does not imply indifference of mind; yea, the submission would not be a virtue, unless we were allowed to value what we are called to resign. The religion of the Bible is never enthusiastical; it never demands the sacrifice, but the sanctification of humanity and common sense.

But there is the inference of faction as well as of fanaticism—“The rich and poor meet together”—“Therefore give up the ranks of life, and let us have an equality.” A certain equality if you please; that is, an equality of right to unequal things. Let the cottage have as full a right to protection as the mansion; and the peasant’s cart be as sacred as the nobleman’s carriage. This is reasonable and righteous; and this privilege we enjoy under the laws of our wise, just, and happy constitution. But it is far different with an equality of condition and possession. Indeed the advocates for this doctrine do not plead for it in all cases. You never find them zealous to level up, but only to level down. They would reduce those above them, but leave unraised those that are below them—Their servants must remain servants still. The absurdity of this principle is so great and obvious, that it seems unworthy of being reasoned with: otherwise we might observe—That such an equality is impossible: if men were made equal to-day, they would be unequal to-morrow, owing to the difference in their understandings, their diligence, and their self-denial—That it is clearly the will of God that distinctions of rank and circumstances should prevail: hence in his word he has described the duties of superiors and of inferiors; and commanded us to render to all their due—And that it is better there should be such distinctions, as they call upon men for many virtues, the exercise of which would be impossible in a state of equality.

Yet it is desirable that these distinctions should not be excessive, or carried to their extremes. The welfare of the community consists much in the various gradations between the very rich and the

very poor. And surely it is not favouring the levelling scheme, to oppose a state of things in which some have every thing and others nothing. Let there be poor as well as rich, but let them not only exist but live; let there be poor, but let them have employment, and food, and clothing. Where this is not the case, a country has retrograded, something wrong has entered, and till it be rectified there can be no solid and lasting peace or safety.

The truth should also lower the impression of these distinctions upon our minds. This should be felt, First, in judging others. Let us not only or principally regard them by outward and adventitious claims, but by their moral and religious worth. Character is independent of circumstances. In our eyes let a vile person be contemned, however rich; and let us honour them that fear the Lord, however poor. Yet, says Solomon, the poor is despised of his neighbour, but the rich hath many friends. Secondly, in judging ourselves. Let us not suppose that we are nothing if we are poor. A proper self-respect is as far from pride as it is from meanness, and is even a source of duty. If we are poor, let us remember we are not overlooked; that we are not excluded from any thing essential to our happiness; that we are not prevented even from acquiring greatness and dignity. We can be great in the sight of the Lord. We can gain the unsearchable riches of Christ. We can be greater conquerors than Alexander. We can appear in a glory that will eclipse the splendour of the universe. The poor have the Gospel preached unto them.—Let us not imagine we are every thing if we are rich. There are many foolish as well as hurtful lusts which attend wealth. Let us beware of them, and not think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think. A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesses. We may be rich, and yet weak and mean and wicked and miserable. Let us not be proud of our condition. Who made us to differ from others? He who can easily bring us down; he who will soon call us to give account of our stewardship. Shall we disdain others? He that despiseth the poor reproacheth his Maker; but he that hath pity on the poor, happy is he. Our wealth is not designed for hoarding or extravagance; but that we may give to him that needeth in all good things. If the clouds be full, they empty themselves upon the earth.

MARCH 13.—“I withheld thee from sinning against me.”—Gen. xx. 6.

So said God to Abimelech the king of Gerar, when he sent to take Sarah, Abraham's wife. But it will truly apply to every individual of the human race, though not in the same circumstances.

All sin is against God—There is a propensity in man to the commission of it—and God's agency is necessary to restrain us from it. Some of our fellow-creatures have gone great lengths in iniquity; and have acted more like incarnate demons than human beings. These show us what our depraved nature is capable of, when placed in conditions favourable to temptation, and affording both opportunity and power. And yet even these have *some* restraints. The worst characters that ever lived never committed a thousandth part of the wickedness they would have committed had they not been checked and hindered. If God did not interpose there would be no

living in a state of society. And the interposition of God is to be seen even in the laws and provisions of civil government. A magistrate is a terror to evil-doers. The gallows, the prison, the pillory, the stocks, are not only instruments of justice, but means of grace; and while we lament the necessity, we are thankful for the use of them.

Various are the ways in which God withholds us from sin. He has numberless providential precautions. Sickness has interrupted a course of iniquity which health would have continued. Worldly losses have led to the abandonment of schemes which vanity and pride had been devising. What Christian has not in some instances gone astray, and whose experience has not enabled him to explain the threatening or rather the promise: "Behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall that she shall not find her paths. And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them: then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now?" A thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet him, saved Paul from being exalted above measure through the abundance of his revelations. David had been insulted by Nabal, who was such a son of Belial that no one could speak with him. He deeply felt the provocation, and was upon the road resolved to avenge himself. But Nabal had a wife who was as kind and prudent as she was beautiful; and upon the report of the approaching danger she hastened to meet David with a present, and a soft answer, which turneth away wrath. And what was the happy result? "And David said to Abigail, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me: and blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand." How much evil has often been prevented by a wise and seasonable reproof! Faithful are the wounds of a friend. How many have had reason to bless God for a pious education! How much do they owe, in their preservation from sinful courses or actions, to the impressions of early sentiment, the influence of a father's example, the recollection of a mother's tears, and the Scriptures which had been lodged in the memory! There are restraints from domestic discipline and devotion. Can a man who says, with Joshua, "As for me, and my house, we will serve the Lord," and who performs family worship every morning and evening, act like others? Does a man make a profession of religion? He is bound to avoid things which others may think themselves at liberty to indulge in. Is he a minister or an office-bearer in the Church? What a safeguard becomes the reputation, the consistency that he *must* maintain! Some persons are averse to things which gender an increase of moral obligation; but we ought to value a state or a station in proportion as it tends to rescue us from sin. How often have men been checked on the brink of evil by a passage in some book, or by the address of the preacher in a sermon! How does God withhold men from sinning by the power of conscience! The advantage of this principle which it is so difficult to subdue or to silence is unspeakable. It operates in a thousand instances where human legislation has no effect. Tyrants who have found them-

selves above law, and secret transgressors who have trusted in their concealment, have yet trembled before this monitor of God within. But the chief and the best way in which God restrains us from sin is by the operation of his grace. If a man has a thievish inclination, it is well to put him out of the way of temptation; but this does not make him honest in design, though it keeps him innocent in conduct. The great thing is to have the disposition to sin mortified; and this is the experience of those who are renewed in the spirit of their minds. They are made to abhor that which is evil, and to cleave to that which is good. Some who avoid sin would be glad to indulge in it if their safety or advantage would allow of it. But how shall we who are dead to sin live any longer therein? "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God."

We know not how much we owe to God for his preventing and restraining grace; nor can we know while we are in this world. But we surely know enough for two purposes: to make us candid, and to make us thankful. Who can tell how far we should have resembled those we now condemn, had we been placed in the same circumstances, and been exposed to the same excitements; or had God left us to ourselves? "There goes John Bradford but for the grace of God." "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy name give glory for thy mercy and for thy truth's sake."

MARCH 14—"I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe."—John xi. 15.

HERE we see, not only that our Saviour is alive to the welfare of his disciples, but that there is nothing he is so much concerned to promote in them as their faith. Some undervalue faith; yea, they seem to be afraid of it, as if it were injurious to holiness and good works! But we here see our Lord's estimation of it. He knows that it is the source from which flow all the streams of consolation and obedience; the tree which bears all the fruits of righteousness. Every thing in religion flourishes only as this prospers. We are also reminded—that we are slow of heart to believe—and that faith is no easy thing. They who think otherwise evince that they have never yet seriously made the trial. There is not a Christian upon earth, but in the attempt has often cried out with tears, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." Even the Apostles, who had been so long with him and had seen his glory, said unto the Lord, Increase our faith. These disciples had already believed, or they would not have left all to follow him: but it seems they did not believe sufficiently. Faith therefore admits of degrees. Accordingly we read of "little faith," and of "great faith;" of those that are "weak in the faith," and of those that are "strong in the faith." We should be anxious that our faith, like that of the Thessalonians, should grow exceedingly, becoming more and more clear in its views, and firm in its reliance, and bold in its professions, and active in its agency, and heroic in its sacrifices—unto the perfect day.

The Saviour can accomplish his purposes in a manner peculiarly his own. "I am glad for your sakes I was not there," to the intent ye may believe. They would have said, he ought to have been

there and succoured so dear an object. All the friends of Lazarus would have supposed that as soon as ever he was informed of his affliction he should have hastened to the scene of distress, and at least have expressed his sympathy. How eagerly did the sisters long for him! How did their hearts bleed over his delay! How often, wringing their hands, did they look out of the window; and send a servant to look down the Galilean way—"Where is he? If he comes not soon it will be too late"—And now he has breathed his last—and the house is filled with wonder, perplexity, and grief. Even when he arrives they can hardly forbear reflection—"Lord," said Martha, "if thou hadst been *here*, my brother had not died"—Mary also complained in the same way. But hear him. "All has been proper and necessary. I know what I have done and why I have done it. I know it now; and you will know it soon. Then *you* will be glad with me. Then you will see that it was far better that Lazarus should be raised from the dead after he had lain in the grave four days, than have been only recovered from a bed of sickness."

Thus he brings the blind by a way that they know not. His thoughts are as much above our thoughts as the heavens are higher than the earth. Joseph's case at first seems very hard; and many would have expected that the Lord's love to him would have kept him from being thrown into the pit and sold into Egypt. But I am glad it did not, for his own sake, and the sake of his father's house, and the surrounding countries, and the Church of God in all ages. What would have been lost by the prevention of his calamity? The God they served continually was able to save the three Hebrews from the fiery furnace. But I am glad he did not—and they are glad now—and were glad after their escape—and were glad even while they were walking loose in the midst of the fire with the Son of God. The same may be said of Job. We have seen the Lord, to use his own language, taking him by the neck and shaking him to pieces: but we have also seen the end of the Lord, how that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercies. And with regard to ourselves—Is it not well for us that things were not always according to our mind? Has he not often advanced our welfare by events which seemed perfectly adverse to it? We were tempted to charge him foolishly and unkindly; yet after a while we perceived how in the dispensation his wisdom and kindness were peculiarly at work for our good. And what we know not now we shall know hereafter. Let us therefore, when our notions and his schemes disagree, distrust our own judgment, and confide in the rectitude of his conduct. Let us not think of regulating his sun by our dial, but our dial by his sun. Let us not judge of his word by his providence, but of his providence by his word. Let us not judge of his heart by his hand, but of his hand by his heart. Where can we find his heart to judge by? In the promises—in the cross—he loved us and gave himself for us. Before we undertake to amend, let us be assured that there is some thing wrong; and before we censure let us at least understand. Who knows what is good for a man in this life? How liable we are to err, from pride, from worldly-mindedness, from impatience, from unbelief! Let us judge nothing before the time. He will give a good account of himself at last; and bring us over to his own mind. But till we walk by sight, let us walk by faith,

and believe now, what we shall know then—that “his work is perfect, his ways are judgment.” “He hath done all things well.”

MARCH 15.—“I have set the Lord always before me.”—Psalm xvi. 8.

DAVID could only set the Lord before him mentally, or as an object of contemplation; for “no man hath seen God at any time.” And when he says he had *always* done this, the meaning is, not that he was always actually thinking of him. This would have been impossible. Our powers are limited. We have bodies, we have connexions, we have callings; and these demand a share and a large share of our attention. And we are not to be slothful in business. And we are not to abandon society, and retire into cells to be always praying in sight of a skull and a crucifix—This is not to fight the good fight of faith, but to flee from the field: this is not serving our own generation, but deserting it: this is not letting our light shine before men, but putting it under a bushel. Yet it implies the prevalence of a fixed belief of the being and nearness of God—a frequent excitement of ourselves to take hold of God—and the regular use of the means which bring God to remembrance, such as prayer, reading the Scripture, hearing the word, and meditation. By these, under the Divine influence, a state of mind is produced, in which the spirit of devotion actuates us even in the absence of its forms, and we habitually and easily recur to God in our thoughts wherever we are, and however we are engaged—Thus we can set the Lord always before us. And there are four ways in which you should do this.

First, set the Lord always before you as your protector. This is the peculiar though not the only reference of David, and therefore he adds, “He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.” The word virtue, which at first signified bravery, valour, is now used for all moral excellence: and the reason is, because it is necessary to it. You have no hold of a man who is destitute of it, either in avoiding evil or doing good. Bunyan therefore, with as much truth as genius, places all his pilgrims for the shining city under the conduct of Greatheart. Courage is not only necessary for a martyr: every Christian is called to suffer and do the will of God in a thousand cases where cowardice would fail. Perhaps there is not a simpler maxim, or one more readily and universally admitted than this, “we ought to obey God rather than men;” and yet who could fully act upon it for a day together in a world like this without moral heroism? Our religious course is a constant warfare; and when we think of our weakness, and the number and qualities of our enemies, we should tremble: but trembling unfits for action: a soldier must have courage. How is firmness and confidence to be obtained? Set the Lord in his presence and perfections and covenant-engagements always before you: and hear him saying, Fear not, for I am with thee—and out of weakness you will be made strong—and like Moses, you will endure as seeing him who is invisible.

Secondly, Set the Lord always before you as your leader. Your way is not only dangerous but perplexing: and you are not only

weak but ignorant—How much you need a guide! How earnestly did David pray for divine direction; “Lead me in thy Truth and guide me.” How did he rejoice in the prospect of it: “This God is our God, for ever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death.” The Jews left to themselves could not have found their way in a large pathless desert; but “the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them in the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day or night.” Thus his goodness met their necessity, and relieved them from all anxiety. This guide determined the direction, and the continuance of all their journeyings; nor ever disappeared till by a strange and varying but always a right way, it brought them to a city of habitation. Events are not this pillar to us, but the written word. This is “the lamp unto our feet, and the light unto our paths;” to which we do well to take heed. How much depends upon a wrong step! How liable are we to err! How often have we gone astray! How much have we suffered from our perverseness or rashness! How much more should we have suffered had he dealt with us according to our desert in not asking counsel of him! Let us not lean to our own understanding. Here is the commandment with promise; “In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”

Thirdly, Set the Lord always before you as your example. The advantages of example are great; and God himself comes down and condescends to go before us, calling upon us to be holy as he is holy; to forgive as he forgives; to be merciful as he is merciful. We were made in his likeness, and our renovation in Christ is our being renewed after his own image. Our happiness results from the perfection of our nature; and the perfection of our nature consists in its resemblance to the divine—“Therefore be ye followers of God as dear children.”

Fourthly, Set the Lord always before you as your observer. Nothing escapes his notice. All he sees he records; and all he records he will bring into judgment. Do we believe this? It is true, whether we own it or deny it, that he is about our path and our bed, and understands our thought afar off—But do we believe it? Surely faith in such a truth must have some influence. And how useful must that influence be! A heathen philosopher admonished his disciples to imagine that the eye of some illustrious personage was always upon them. What was the eye of Plato, or Cato, to the eye of God? If while you were careless in company some prominent individual should enter, whose approbation it would be important for you to acquire, how would his presence regulate your behaviour, and correct your speech! What a stimulus would it be to zeal; what a check to sin; what a motive to sincerity; what a relief under reproach; what a solace in affliction; what a duty: what a privilege—to realize Hagar’s conviction, “Thou God seest me!”

MARCH 16.—“Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.”—1 Pet. ii. 6.

“BEHOLD,” is a note of attention and wonder. It shows that the subject introduced is worthy of our regard. The subject here is a

representation of the importance of the Saviour, and the advantage his people derive from him. He is laid in Sion for a foundation—

“A chief corner-stone.” Such a stone is designed to sustain, and on him depends the salvation of the whole Church. It also unites as well as supports. And in him are united deity and humanity, the Old and New Testament, Jew and Gentile; we are all one in Christ Jesus—

“Elect”—Chosen for the place and the purpose. Nothing is casual in the common affairs of life, much less in the restoration of sinners. All here, especially as to the accomplisher, is transacted according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. God knew what the immensity of the undertaking required, and found it only in the Son of his love—“All things are of God, who hath reconciled us unto himself by Jesus Christ”—

“Precious”—Deserving of the destination and the honour. Here is the difference between him and us. He chooses us, not because we are precious, but to make us precious; not because we are holy, but that we may be holy: and if ever we enter heaven, it will be upon terms of mercy. But his appointment resulted from his fitness. He entered heaven upon terms of merit, pure and absolute merit: and therefore the angels proclaim with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.” But if the word “precious” is significant of excellency, it also imports endearment. Hence it is said, “Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth.” “The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hands.” And as he is dear to God, so he is dear to all his people. “To them that believe he is precious.” They have their imperfections and mourn over them. But if he asked them individually, “Lovest thou me?” They could all answer—

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

“All my capacious powers can boast,
In thee most richly meet;
Nor to mine eyes is light so dear,
Or friendship half so sweet.”

Such is the foundation. Observe the builder: “He that believeth on him.” We might have supposed that the metaphor would have been continued, and that Peter would have said, he that buildeth on him. But he conveys the same meaning without the figure. For as stones as long as they continue in the quarry or remain loose upon the ground, are not actually parts of the edifice, neither indeed can be till they are placed on the foundation; so faith, and faith alone, connects us with Christ, and enables us to derive benefit from him. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Observe the blessedness he claims: he that believeth on him “shall not be confounded.” He shall not be like the foolish man, “who built his house upon the sand; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and

it fell." An emblem of those who hear the Saviour's sayings, and do them not; that is, of Antinomians: and an emblem of those who rely upon their own worthiness and works; that is, of self-righteous Pharisees. How confounded will these be, when their hopes fail them, and they are rejected at the very door of heaven—But when they "begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us;" he shall answer, "I say I know you not whence ye are." It is the emblem also of those who seek happiness in the world. They are sure of disappointment, if not in obtaining their desires which is frequently the case, yet in possessing them, and in the loss of them. Not so the believer. He is sure of gaining what he seeks after; the prize when enjoyed will exceed all his hope; and the good part which he has chosen shall never be taken away from him.

In the original passage from which the words before us are a quotation, Isaiah says, "He that believeth on him shall not make haste"—That is, he shall not be like a person overtaken and surprised by calamity, and in perplexed and tormenting eagerness to escape. Thus it was with the world of the ungodly at the deluge. They despised the warnings of Noah while he was preparing the means of safety; but when the torrents began to fall, and the waters to overflow, in what hurry and confusion did they run to knock at the ark! How did they rush to the hills and mountains for safety! How climb the trees, and cling to them in despair, till they could retain their weakened hold no longer, and dropped into the abyss! Into what haste and confusion are the men of the world thrown when those losses befall them which threaten their only portion. But the believer though he feels affliction does not faint under it, and his mind is kept in perfect peace, being stayed upon God. Into what haste and confusion are the wicked thrown when they apprehend a messenger of death has laid hold upon them—But Simeon says, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." Into what confusion and horror will the tribes of the earth be thrown when the Judge of all shall appear in the clouds of heaven. But the Christian shall have "confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming." Filled with self-condemnation and self-reproach at the consequences of their vile and infatuated conduct, in having sacrificed their eternal all for what was worse than nothing, "many will rise to everlasting shame and contempt"—But "Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation; *they* shall not be ashamed or confounded world without end." O "visit me with" this "salvation!"

MARCH 17.—"Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him." Gen. v. 24.

—Took him from time to eternity, from earth to heaven, from the world of the ungodly to the innumerable company of angels, from a vale of tears to fulness of joy: took him immediately to himself without dissolution—"By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God."

But what was this privileged being who was saved from the way of all the earth and the house appointed for all living? who, excused suffering "the pains, the groans, the dying strife," was changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye? who, instead of being unclothed, was clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life? When an event so surprisingly and entirely singular takes place, it is natural and useful to inquire after the cause. And the Holy Ghost meets our wishes, and places before us the quality of a life that terminates so differently from that of all other men—**ENOCH WALKED WITH GOD.**

And here we see that the best characters are the most easily recorded, and often furnish the fewest materials for history. There are not many particulars in the life of any individual very worthy of publicity and perpetuation; and generally if it be faithful, the larger the account of the actor, the greater the display of weakness, or sin, or suffering. Hence the folly of the voluminousness of modern biography. Hence the wisdom of the sacred writers in not dragging us after them through a thousand minute and uninteresting occurrences, but fixing the mind upon a few and important articles. The history of an Alexander, a Cæsar, a Napoleon, would fill many a page, and curse many a volume; while the simple, noble life of a man honoured above all humanity, is comprised in one sentence—**ENOCH WALKED WITH GOD.**

And do we not here see wherein lies the true dignity of man, and what it is that supremely attracts the divine approbation? It is not worldly grandeur, riches, or power—Enoch was not famed for these. It is not even gifts—Enoch was indeed a prophet, and announced the Lord's coming to judgment. But his greatness in the sight of God arose not from his inspiration, but from his moral excellency, holiness, and grace. The low estimation in which God holds great talents and endowments may be inferred from his imparting them so sparingly. Were they so necessary as some imagine in the affairs of the world and the Church, he could easily furnish them—and he *would* do it; for in his economies—things are common in proportion as they are indispensable. It also appears from the character of those on whom they are frequently conferred. They are not dear to God, nor can he take pleasure in them though he employs them. What was Balaam with his sublime predictions? or Judas with his miracles and signs? "Though," says Paul, "I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing." Here we are always erring—we covet earnestly those gifts which are confined to a few, and are seldom sanctified to the possessor, while we are careless of those graces which are accessible to all, and which always accompany salvation. That life which was so distinguished by the judge of all; that life which was only one remove from glory; that life which opened at once a passage for soul and body into the heaven of heavens, was not placed in circumstances above our reach, nor did it consist in any thine unattainable by the poorest and meanest among us—It was **WALKING WITH GOD.** Real greatness does not depend upon the

things we do, but upon the mind with which we do them; and the Lord looketh to the heart. The career therefore of true glory lies open to all; to the servant as well as to the master; to the subject as well as to the monarch. All cannot be learned; but all may be taught of the Lord. All cannot enjoy civil freedom; but all may possess the glorious liberty of the sons of God. And the poor of this world may be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom of heaven.

Yet the life of Enoch by no means passed in abstraction from society and business, or favoured that superstitious sanctity which refuses the allowed enjoyments of nature and providence. A proper use of our creature comforts is compatible, not only with the sincerest, but the strictest godliness; and falls in with the design of him who giveth us richly all things to enjoy. Enoch, who sustains such an exalted character, was not an ascetic, or recluse—he married earlier than any of his patriarchal brethren, and had sons and daughters. It is not the religion of the Bible that drives men into caves and dens of the earth, or that teaches them to counteract the destinations of Providence, or to oppose the nature that God hath given them—It is the religion of anti-christ that represents as impure what God has declared to be pure; it is a seducing spirit that decries what God not only permits but enjoins as honourable in all; it is a doctrine of devils that forbids to marry, and commands to abstain from meats which God hath created to be received with thankfulness of them which believe and know the truth—Is a wretched dronish monk in his cell, with his horse-hair, skull, and hour-glass, a more amiable, a more useful, a more *holy* being than Enoch at the head of an early family, filling up his station, and serving his generation by the will of God?

If however some entertain ideas of his life too rigid, others may have views of it too lax, limited, and low. His religion was not confined to morality. Morality is not to be undervalued. There is no piety without morality, but there may be morality without piety. We commend a discharge of the duties we owe to our fellow-creatures: but this is only our walking with *men*. Our greatest relations connect us with another Being; with him we have principally to do—Godliness consists in our walking with *God*. Some are not vicious, but they never reverence the Sabbath, or attend public or private devotion. They owe no man any thing; but they rob God. They are good neighbours, but God is not in all their thoughts. They have no confidence in him, no communion with him. They are not renewed after his image. They are not followers of him as dear children, nor walk in love as Christ also loved us.

Such was the religion of Enoch. And blessed are they who, like him, walk with God. They must not indeed expect to be translated as he was. Yet as to its sting and its curse, Jesus has abolished death. He tells his followers, "If a man keep my sayings he shall never see *death*." With regard to him death is so changed in its nature, and so blessed in its effects, that it does not deserve the name—No, he shall not die, but only go home; only fall asleep in Jesus; only depart to be with Christ, which is far better. His body also will be changed and fashioned like the Saviour's own glorious body; and so will he be for ever with the Lord. The issue therefore is the same—And this is the grand thing. And if I am not to reach

the blessedness by a miraculous transformation, but by an accident, or a disease—it is enough. “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.”

MARCH 18.—“Our soul waiteth for the Lord: he is our help and our shield.”
Psalm xxxiii. 20.

THERE may be the form of godliness without the power. But the religion of the Bible has to do with the “soul.” The true worshippers worship the Father in spirit and in truth—And

“In vain to heaven we lift our cries,
And leave our souls behind.”

In noticing the subject of the exercise here encouraged, it may be observed that it is said—not our souls—but “our soul”—as if they all had only one. And what is the language of God by the prophet: “I will give them one heart and one way.” And thus the two disciples going to Emmaus exclaimed, upon their discovery and surprise, “Did not our heart burn within us?” And thus in the beginning of the Gospel it was said: “The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul.” We have seen several drops of water on the table by being brought to touch running into one. If Christians were better acquainted with each other they would easily unite. What wonder that those should be one-minded who, under the same influence, are feeling the same wants, pursuing the same good, employing the same means, looking for the same destination? And how suitable and wisely enforced is the admonition—“Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”

But the exercise itself is “waiting for the Lord.” An exercise frequently mentioned in the Scriptures, and well understood by all believers. Their character as the heirs of promise, is derived from it; “blessed are all they that wait for him.” It includes conviction—a persuasion that the Lord is the supreme good, the fountain of life, our exceeding joy; all in all. It includes desire—it is expressed by hungering and thirsting after righteousness, by panting after God, by fainting for his salvation. It includes hope—the degrees of this may vary, but some measure of it is necessary to the commencement and continuance of the exercise; and the exercise will be always influenced and enlivened accordingly as our hope is possibility, or probability, or confidence. It also includes patience—God is never slack concerning his promise. He never tarries beyond his own time; but he is often beyond ours: and in a state of expectation hours seem days, and days seem weeks, especially if we are pressed with difficulties, and our eagerness for enjoyment is great—Then hope deferred maketh the heart sick. Here is the trial; and here is the need of patience. But patience will restrain us from the hasty use of improper means of relief; and preserve us from charging God foolishly, censoriously, or unfaithfully; and from sinking in the day of adversity; and from abandoning the throne of grace; and saying,

why should I wait for the Lord any longer? Hence "it is a good thing that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord: for the Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him"—

And thus the church is here encouraged: "He is our help; and our shield." He is

Their *help*. They need aid; and they feel their need; and they increasingly feel it as they advance in their religious course. They do not complain of their duties, or murmur at their trials; but with the knowledge they have of themselves, they often fear whether they shall ever discharge the one, and endure the other, as becomes their profession. And they would not if left to themselves. But they are not left to themselves. They have a *divine* helper whose resources are infinite. Through his strengthening of them they can do all things; and as it is with their work, so it is with their sufferings—

"He hears them in the mournful hour,
And helps them bear the heavy load."

And he is "a very present help in trouble"—easily found—always near them—always within sight—or within call—and while they call he will answer—and say, "Here I am!"

He is also their *shield*. They are not only weak, but exposed. They are in an enemy's country. Their adversary the devil like a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour. He is yet more dangerous as the serpent; and we read of his depths, wiles, and devices. They are surrounded with the errors and vices, frowns and allurements of a world lying in wickedness: while owing to the remaining corruption of their nature, all their passions, appetites, and senses, may prove inlets to evil. But their defence is of God, who saveth the upright in heart. The Lord is their keeper, and he is able to keep them from falling—Faith can realize this, and preserve the mind in perfect peace, being stayed upon God. "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?"—Thus he is their benefactor as to good, and their preserver as to evil. What can they want more?

And can such an experience be kept to themselves? Impossible—"If these should hold their peace, the stones would cry out." "O Israel, trust thou in the Lord: he is their help and their shield. O house of Aaron, trust in the Lord: he is their help and their shield. Ye that fear the Lord, trust in the Lord: he is their help and their shield."

MARCH 19.—"And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."—REV. xix. 16.

THE name is expressive of dignity, greatness, and dominion. A more elevated idea of him could not be given comparatively, than to say he was higher than the highest, and governed those who governed the earth. The title has been worn by princes and popes; but the assumption was always founded in ignorance, pride, and impiety. To Jesus it truly and perfectly belongs. It may be considered two ways. First, as importing the *extensiveness* of his empire: his kingdom ruleth over all; and there are no beings in the universe

but are either his subjects or slaves. Secondly, as referring to his connexion with the personages here mentioned: he is, "the King of *kings*, and the Lord of *lords*." They are all amenable to his authority, and will be judged at his bar. They are all raised up by his power. They are all controlled by his providence. They all subserve his designs.

But where is the name worn? "Upon his vesture and upon his thigh:" that is, upon the part of the vesture which covered the thigh. His ways are not our ways. This is not the place where we should have looked for his *name*—the thigh is the place where hangs the *sword*. It is—and this is the very reason why his name is found *there*. It reminds us that his kingdom is not of this world: then would his servants fight: but now is his kingdom not from thence. And therefore, says the apostle, the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but spiritual. He had a sword; and John saw the sword; but it was a sword "going out of his mouth." This intended his word, and showed—not that he does not make war, but by what kind of instrumentality his victories are to be achieved. He meets with opposition both in gaining and maintaining his dominion; and he rules in the midst of his enemies. But how? By the rod of his strength—the gospel of Christ, which is the power of God to salvation to every one that believeth. "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

And how was it impressed? It was "written." As the vesture seemed dipped in blood, and appeared as of a deep crimson colour, the letters of the name it is probable were white and glistening. We know not in what language the name was inscribed. It was legible to John. Might it not be like his title on the cross, written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin? However this may be, it was written in order to be read and known. Many individuals pass us of whom we are ignorant. A nobleman may be ascertained by his livery or his arms. But he who has his name written even upon his vesture and upon his thigh must assuredly wish to be read and known of all men. Paul earnestly desired to know him; and esteemed all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord. The reason results from two things—He is of unspeakable importance to the case of fallen man: no one can supply his place in any thing pertaining to our recovery: there is salvation in no other—And we can derive no advantage from him without knowing him. Without knowing him how can we love him? How can we put our trust in him? How can we repair to him for refuge or help? Therefore says God, "by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many." It is true that we are justified only by faith. But "how can they call upon him in whom they have not believed; and how can they believe in him of whom they have not heard?"

Hence the expediency, the necessity of making him known. Hence it is said, "I will cause thy name to be remembered in all generations;" and "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the seas." Hence the Scriptures so clearly reveal him; and ministers so constantly cry, "Behold the Lamb of

God." Hence his people pray, "Send out thy light and thy truth;" "that thy way be known on earth, thy saving health among all nations." Hence parents are required to teach him to their children; and every partaker of divine grace to say to his neighbour, "O taste and see that the Lord is good, blessed is the man that trusteth in him."

Let then this name written upon his vesture and upon his thigh be known and read of all men. Let the proud read it and admire his condescension. He who stoops to our mean affairs, allows us to walk with him, tells all our wanderings, puts our tears into his bottle, makes all our bed in our sickness, is "the King of glory," and "the Lord of all."—Let

His enemies read it, and tremble. Who ever hardened themselves against him and prospered? "These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, for he is King of kings and Lord of lords."—Let

His friends read it, and dismiss all their fears. He is for them and with them. Their Redeemer is mighty; and will plead their cause. "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day"—And what is there else that he is not able to keep? my reputation? my business? my health? my family? Is there a loss but he can turn into a gain? He can make all things work together for good to them that love him.—Let

Those who are tempted to deny him read it, and go forth to him without the camp bearing his reproach. Let them remember not only their danger in being ashamed of him and of his words; but of their folly and weakness. Who is he they blush to own? and whose cause, and whose followers, they deem it disgraceful to espouse? The King of kings and Lord of lords!

Let us all read it, and invite him to go on conquering and to conquer, till his title is as fully acknowledged as it is justly deserved, and he shall reign for ever and ever. "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most Mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty. And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things."

"Great King of grace, my heart subdue,
I would be led in triumph too:
A willing captive to my Lord,
And sing the victories of thy word."

MARCH 20.—"Gather yourselves together, and hear, ye sons of Jacob; and hearken unto Israel your father."—Gen. xlix. 2.

PRECIOUS in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints; and the scene is peculiarly worthy of our contemplation. It shows us the power of divine grace, and the value of the religion of Jesus in sustaining the possessor when every other support gives way, in comforting him when every other source of consolation dries up, and in irradiating him when every other sun of glory sets. Therefore says David, "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace." And even Balaam exclaims, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."

Jacob is here dying. He feels perfectly composed and satisfied as to the issue. We see him between two worlds, weary of time, and welcoming eternity; rejoicing in hope of the glory of God, and saying, "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord." It seems to have been common in the patriarchal age for men when dying, to pronounce a benediction on their offspring; and which, in many cases, not only admonished them of their duty, but foretold their destination—Thus "Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days. Gather yourselves together, and hear, ye sons of Jacob; and hearken unto Israel your father." The words of dying men, especially of dying parents, are impressive, and ought to be remembered. We have met with instances in which they have proved the power of God to salvation.

—Jacob begins with Reuben. Reuben signifies, "see a son." It was the exclamation of the joyful mother at his birth. So children are an heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is his reward. But how little does a parent know in what disappointments his wishes and prognostics are to terminate! Reuben was his first-born, but he had forfeited the prerogatives of birth; and Jacob mentions them only to degrade his son from them. He shall have the privilege of a son, but not the rights of primogeniture—"Reuben, thou art my first-born, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power: unstable as water, thou shalt not excel; because thou wentest up to thy father's bed, then defiledst thou it: he went up to my couch." It may seem strange and unkind in Jacob to revive this scandal now, when Reuben was weeping at the side of a father's dying bed; but he spake as he was moved by the Holy Ghost. The sin had indeed been committed more than forty years before; but as nothing is future, so nothing is past with God. We should hope he had long before repented of the deed; but there are crimes, the consequences of which are irreparable in this world. It was well if the guilt of his conduct was removed from his conscience—and with the Lord there is mercy; but the stain was indelible on his person and family. We are under a moral economy, and the wisdom of God has established connexions which even his goodness does not destroy. "Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burnt? So he that goeth in to his neighbour's wife; whosoever toucheth her shall not be innocent. Whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul. A wound and dishonour shall he get; and his reproach shall not be wiped away." It is useless to murmur at the divine dispensations. Forgiveness is attainable upon repentance; but they who trifle with character, must not expect to retain esteem and honour. They will be sure to hear of it again; and by providential corrections, the rebukes of friends, the upbraidings of enemies, and galling reflections of their own minds, they will often have reason to say, "My sin is ever before me."

Reuben had fits of good feeling, and was naturally tender-hearted. When therefore his brethren were going to slay Joseph, he urged them to cast him into a pit, hoping to deliver him. And when they had left the place, and he to accomplish his purpose went secretly

round to it and found him not, "he rent his clothes; and returned unto his brethren, and said, The child is not; and I, whither shall I go?" And when they were all put in ward, and conscience led them to say one to another, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother;" Reuben made this appeal: "Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? therefore, behold also his blood is required." When too they were in danger of perishing for want through Jacob's unwillingness to let Benjamin go, "Reuben spake unto his father, saying, Slay my two sons if I bring him not to thee: deliver him into my hand, and I will bring him to thee again." And had we a fuller history of his life, we should doubtless meet with many instances of a similar nature. But his goodness was as the morning cloud and early dew that soon passeth away. He had no self-government. He was the slave of his appetites and vile passions—"unstable as water, thou shalt not excel." No; without stability there cannot be excellency. Without stability there can be no character; for character is the effect and force of habit; and habit is produced only by constancy and consistency in acting. The proverb says, a rolling stone gathers no moss. A tree that is every year transplanted will not rise high, and grow strong, and bring forth much fruit. Even obstinacy is preferable to versatility: the one may perchance be well guided, and then it will firmly go on; in the other there is nothing to guide. You may build upon a rock, but what can you do with a mound of sand?

In the next exercise, we will inquire wherein we should seek to excel; and in the following, wherein we should guard against instability.

MARCH 21.—"Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel."—Gen. xlix. 4.

—WHEREIN *should we seek after excellence?*

Let us seek to excel in *knowledge*. For the soul to be without knowledge it is not good. It is like a vessel without rudder or compass; or a body without an eye. Bacon is admired for saying, knowledge is power. But Solomon had said ages before: "Wisdom is a defence, and money is a defence: but the excellency of knowledge is, that wisdom giveth life to them that have it." We are to have the innocency of the dove, but our Saviour himself requires us to combine with it the wisdom of the serpent. And while the apostle tells us in malice to be children, he adds, but in understanding be ye men. And "henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive." It is lamentable to think how little judgment many professors of religion exercise, and how little information they have acquired after enjoying so many advantages and for so long a season: so that when for the time they ought to be teachers, they have need that one teach them again which be the first principles of the oracles of God. How cloudy and confused and inconsistent are the views of some even with regard to the leading articles of the truth as it is in Jesus; by which if their safety is not affected, their comfort and welfare are injured.

Let us seek to excel in *sanctity*. Without obedience vain is our knowledge—"If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." What is it to understand all mysteries, and not bridle the tongue or govern the temper? To be orthodox and not moral? To be taught by the gospel every thing except to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present world? Holiness is the beauty, the dignity of the soul. It is the radiance of the divine image. The design of God in all his commands, promises, dispensations, and influences is to make us "partakers of his holiness."

Let us seek to excel in *charity*. "Covet earnestly the best gifts," says the apostle, "and yet I show unto you a more excellent way:" and this he immediately explains to be our acquiring and exercising the best graces, and principally charity; for the greatest of these is charity—love to God, and to our fellow creatures, and especially to them that are of the household of faith. By this all men are to know that we are the disciples of Jesus; and by this we ourselves are to know that we have passed from death unto life. This is that which the apostle so commends in the Thessalonians: "As touching brotherly love, ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia." Yet he adds; "But we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more." And after many admonitions to the Colossians, he says, "and above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness."

Let us seek to excel in *usefulness*. If the unprofitable servant be a wicked one; and if every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit be hewn down and cast into the fire, what becomes of the religion and the hope of many? What good of any kind or of any degree do they perform—or even endeavour to perform? The endeavour indeed is execution with him who looketh to the heart, and says, where there is a first willing mind it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not. It would be well if they deserved the commendation pronounced upon Mary; "She hath done what she could." But is this their case? Is there one of their powers or resources which they fully tax? What good work at the end of a day or a week have they ever to review; we do not mean with self-exultation, but with thankfulness to God that they do not eat, and drink, and sleep, and live in vain? In a world like ours, if we are disposed, we can never be at a loss for opportunities or means of doing good. And if we have no profession or business, we are the more bound to be useful, because we are the more free from care. Has not God promised that he will not only save his people, but make them a blessing? Is it not most delightful and honourable to resemble him who went about doing good? Be teachers of babes in our Sunday schools. Be eyes to the blind. Let the blessing of him that is ready to perish, come upon you. Cause the widow's heart to sing for joy. Serve your generation according to the will of God; and "seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the Church."

Seek to excel in *reputation*. A bishop must have a good report of them that are without; and Christians are to be blameless, as well as harmless. They are not to be unconcerned about what people say of them, but to take heed that their good be not evil spoken of.

A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches. It is valuable as an instrument of usefulness. It gains a man esteem. It procures for him confidence. It gives force to his advice, authority to his reproof, and influence to his example. If the world does not love some men, it cannot despise them. If it speaks against them, it is only in matters pertaining to the law of their God—which is their glory; or by magnifying infirmities from which no one professes to be free, or by misrepresenting their actions or motives—and against this it may be impossible to guard. But commonly after a while a consistent Christian puts to silence the ignorance of foolish men, and constrains those around him to bear their testimony in his favour. Demetrius had a good report of all men, as well as of the truth itself. And where the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost—he that in these things serveth Christ, is acceptable to God, and approved of men.

Much has been said upon the subject of emulation; and it has been often disputed whether it should be encouraged or repressed. It is certain that a disposition to excel others in beauty, dress, learning, riches, power, and honour, may prove very corrupting, and gender envy, hatred, falsehood, and strife. But there is a principle of this kind in our nature; and there is a course in which you may seek to surpass, without danger to yourselves or injury to others. We have placed it before you—Pursue it. Be ambitious to be great in the sight of the Lord. Be not satisfied with the reality of religion, but go from strength to strength: and be changed from glory to glory. Increase with all the increase of God. Do not compare yourselves with low models, but with the highest examples. Pray that you may do the will of God on earth, as it is done in heaven—And be ye perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

MARCH 22.—“Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel.”—Gen. xlix. 4.

—WHEREIN *should we guard against instability?*

We should guard against it in our *governing aim*. If a vessel at sea is steering for no port, who is to determine whether the direction of the wind be favourable or unfavourable? If we are travelling at random, we move, but we do not journey; and it is a matter of indifference whether we turn aside or draw back; we make no progress unless we advance towards some end which we wish to reach. When a man has fixed his aim, his aim will simplify his conduct, arrange his actions, and give every thing a relation. Paul says, “This one thing I do.” He does not speak of a oneness of exertion, for he did a thousand things; but a oneness of purpose, which combined them all, and gave them the same direction. Now our determinate aim should be to please and serve God according to the injunction, “whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” If here our eye be single, our whole body will be full of light. But if other aims also sway us, we shall be perplexed, distracted, and often at a stand. “Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty.” “A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.” “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold

to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

Let us guard against instability in our *views of divine truth*. Some have no fixed sentiments in religion; they are struck with every novel opinion; and are led after every "Lo! here; or lo! there." But, says Paul, "Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines, for it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace." By grace he means the Gospel. We would not plead for bigotry or prejudice. We should be open to conviction, and judge according to evidence: but it is absurd to suppose we must remain all our days in uncertainty and doubt. If the poor have the Gospel preached unto them, it cannot be, if they are to receive it, very difficult as to its leading principles. And we are told that the wayfaring man though a fool, shall not err therein. Surely it is a reproach and not a commendation, that some are ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. It is desirable and necessary that we should be early able to decide what is truth, that we may make use of it, and live upon it, and enjoy it. Who has ever seen a sound experience and a consistent practice in connexion with a loose creed? We should distinguish between what is circumstantial in religion and what is essential. With regard to the former we cannot be too candid and liberal. But with regard to the latter let us be inflexible—Here "take hold of instruction; let it not go: keep her, for she is thy life."

Let us guard against instability in *church fellowship and attendance*. Some belong to no religious community. They are mere birds of passage, fleeing from one congregation to another. They enter no school, and therefore are subject to no rules of instruction. They are attached to no corps in the army of heaven; and therefore they have no discipline or drilling. They are not fellow-citizens with the saints, but spiritual vagrants. If all were like-minded, there would be no such thing as a church state in which the members give up themselves to each other as well as to the Lord, communing together in privilege, co-operating together in exertions, and walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless. They are also inconstant in their attendance on the means of grace in the same sanctuary. We would not have the house of God turned into a prison, and have people fettered to their own walls. Yet it is desirable, and for the promotion of godliness, for persons to have a spiritual home of their own. Some on the Sabbath-day morning have to determine where they shall go, and whom they shall hear. They are actuated by novelty and curiosity, rather than a simple desire to profit: and unwilling to endure any course of tuition which would do some justice to the word of God at large, they "heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears." Unstable as water, *they* never excel.

We should guard against instability even in our *temporal concerns*. This is inferior in some respects to the former articles, but it has a considerable degree of importance. People will judge of you in other things, by what comes under their observation: and you will be sure to lose respect in proportion as you appear to be versatile. Yet in some what variableness is there! What instability with regard to friendship—every month or year yields a new

favourite, at whose shrine some old connexion is sacrificed. What instability with regard to domestics—what changes of servants! What instability with regard to residence—what changes of abode! What instability with regard to business—what changes of employment! What instability in the management of their affairs—what violations of engagement and punctuality—what confusion, what delays, what excuses—nothing is done decently and in order—“Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel.”

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.” And “the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”

MARCH 23.—“And the prince in the midst of them, when they go in, shall go in; and when they go forth, shall go forth.”—Ezekiel xlvi. 10.

THIS refers immediately to the temple worship. Read the verse preceding: “When the people of the land shall come before the Lord in solemn feasts, he that entereth in by the way of the north gate to worship, shall go out by the way of the south gate; and he that entereth by the way of the south gate, shall go forth by the way of the north gate: he shall not return by the way of the gate whereby he came in, but shall go forth over against it.” This regulates the attendance of the *people*. Then follows an order for the *prince*. He was to appear in the house of God as well as others; and regardless of his civil prerogatives, feel himself in sacred things on a level with his people, observing the same ordinances, entering the sanctuary at the same time, and continuing as long in as they. “And the prince in the midst of them, when they go in, shall go in; and when they go forth, shall go forth.”

Various are the gradations of life, and it is not for the benefit of society that they should be abolished. But religion is not as some imagine, for the lower classes, or only a proper and necessary expedient to keep *them* orderly and obedient. Its institutions and exercises are binding upon the rich as well as the poor; upon the noble as well as the vulgar; upon masters as well as servants; and upon sovereigns as well as subjects. It is very *pleasing* and *becoming* in persons of quality to be seen going to the temple of God with their domestics, tenants, and poor neighbours about them. And superiors *ought* to be constant and devout in their attendance on public worship: yea, they are under *peculiar* obligations to do it. They are under an obligation arising from *gratitude*: for duty grows with benefits: and if they are more distinguished and indulged than others, they owe the more to their benefactor, and should be the more concerned to please and serve him; and not resemble vapours exhaled from the earth that only darken and hide the sun that raised them. They are under an obligation arising from *influence*. They are more seen observed and followed than persons in lower life. If they are irreligious and vicious, they take away shame and fear from others; and by their example they sanction,

excite and encourage imitation. Morals as well as fashions are sure to work downwards. They are under an obligation arising from *self-interest*. Did they consider things aright they would be sensible that none need the means of grace more than themselves. Their duty is great: and here they would find instruction, encouragement, consolation, and support, amidst all that is difficult and trying in their stations. And their danger is great. They are set in slippery places, and the prosperity of fools destroys them. They are in jeopardy from self-indulgence, and flattery, and vanity, and pride, and forgetfulness of God and eternity: and here they would be admonished and armed; here they would be reminded amidst their temptations of their original, their dependance, their mortality, their end, and of the account they will have to render at the judgment-seat of Christ—But this page is not likely to reach many of the great—Otherwise we would thunder in their ear: “Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.”

But some suppose a reference here to another prince, even he who was to be ruler in Israel. The allusion is possible and pleasing. We say *possible*; for God’s aim in his word is so comprehensive as to include all the lawful purposes to which any part of it is applied; and it is lawful to avail ourselves of every thing that will teach and preach Jesus Christ. And we say *pleasing* as well as possible; for so must the assurance be felt, *if* significant of him. And there is a conformity between him and his people; and in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren. Yet in all things too he has the pre-eminence: and is anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows. He could say, In the midst of the Church will I sing praise unto thee: but he is more than their fellow-worshipper, more than their companion, more than their example, more than a man—He is lord of all.

—Observe his *title*—“The Prince.” He is the only King in Zion: but he is “Messiah the Prince;” “the Prince of peace;” “the Prince of life;” “the Prince of the kings of the earth;” “a Prince and a Saviour”—

Observe his *residence*—“In the midst of them.” This situation agrees with all the representations we have of him, and the state of his people requires it. He was in the midst of the burning bush; and hence it was not consumed. He was in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. I will, says he, be not only a wall of fire round about them, but the glory in the midst of them. Sometimes kings reign over a country in which they do not reside, and which they seldom or never visit: and no earthly prince can be in the midst of his people so as to be heard and seen and approached at the same time by all. But the Lord Jesus is nigh unto all of them that call upon him; and has said, Lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. And

Observe therefore his *agency*—Wherever they go he attends them graciously, and the angel of his presence saves them. “When they shall go in, he shall go in; and when they shall go forth, he shall go forth.” It is so as to their devotions. Do they enter the temple?

When they go in, he shall go in—and they shall see his beauty, and behold his goings: for where two or three are gathered together in his name, there is he in the midst of them. Or do they enter the closet? When they go in he shall go in—and manifest himself unto them. And how often can they say,

“While such a scene of sacred joys
Our raptured eyes and souls employs;
Here we could sit, and gaze away
A long, an everlasting day!”—

But they cannot be always in devotional engagements. They have many other duties to discharge; and must go forth to meet the claims of civil and relative life—But when they go forth he shall go forth; and be with them in the farm, the shop, the road, as well as in the church and the closet. It is true therefore as to the common concerns of life. If in the evening they retire to rest, or in the morning go forth to their work and their labour; if they enter their calling or withdraw; if they begin or finish an enterprise; he is still with them. Hence they are in the fear of the Lord all the day long, and acknowledge him in all their ways, and are safe, sanctified, and happy. “The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil; he shall preserve thy soul.” “Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out.”

It is also true with regard to their sufferings. When they enter these, they often fear they shall sink; but they do not enter alone—“I will,” says he, “be with him in trouble.” And he comes forth with them, or they would not come forth as gold, or be able to retain the lessons and impressions they received, and to say, “It is good for me that I have been afflicted.” Wise Christians feel more need of his presence and grace when they are coming out of a trial, than when they are going into it; though in both they are indispensable.

And is there before them the valley of the shadow of death? It often dismays them. But they need fear no evil, for he is with them. Their friends indeed can attend them only to the entrance of it. But he will go with them into it, accompany them through it, and bring them out into a wealthy place. “When they go in, he shall go in; and when they go forth, he shall go forth”—He hath said, “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.” One place seems an exception. They shall enter Immanuel’s land, the rest that remains for his people: but when he goes in with them *there*, he will *not* go out. But the reason is because *they* shall go no more out: but they shall be for ever with the Lord.

MARCH 24.—“But as for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy: and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple.”—Psalm v. 7.

LET us make this noble resolution our own; and in order to this let us endeavour to understand it. Observe the *singularity* of the resolution. “Let others take their course, I have chosen mine. It is good for me to draw near to God. Him will I seek and serve. And though it is desirable to have company in religion, and I wish to bring all my fellow-creatures to walk with me in the way ever-

lasting, their determination will not influence mine—As for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy : and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple.” Let us not be peculiar in little and lawful things ; nor affect singularity for its own sake. This is always the mark of a vain but weak mind : the man wishes for distinction but cannot attain it by excellence, and so has recourse to eccentricity ; he cannot excite notice by the goodness of his pace, and so tumbles in the road, or leaps through the hedge. But where truth and duty and conscience are concerned, singularity is a noble virtue ; and no one shows such dignity of principle, and pureness of motive, and simple regard to the authority of God, as the man who goes forward according to his conviction, without the company and commendation of others, and especially when reproached and opposed by them. And them that honour me, says God, I will honour.

Mark the *object* of the resolution. It regards the service of God in the sanctuary. I will come into thine *house* in the multitude of thy mercy, and in thy fear will I *worship* toward thy *holy temple*. David was fond of retirement, and was much alone in meditation and prayer. Yet he knew the closet was not to exclude the sanctuary, but to prepare for it ; and therefore he could say, I have loved the place where thine honour dwelleth ; a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. Though a king, he did not think it beneath his greatness to sanctify the Sabbath, and attend the gates of Zion ; yea, he knew he was the more bound to do it, from the eminence of his station, and the influence of his example. Though a man full of employment, who had to give audience to ambassadors, orders to officers, and instructions to ministers ; and had to manage the affairs of a large and distracted empire ; yet he had time for God’s ordinances—for he rose early—and loved order, and such beings have leisure for every thing. Though a genius, a very wise man, a prophet, he did not neglect the institutions of religion, and say, I cannot learn more than I know already. Humility attends profound knowledge. Teach a wise man, and he will yet be wiser. He was a godly man ; but under a notion of superior piety, he did not despise the means of grace ; like some who say they never had so much communion with God in their lives as they now have ; every day now being a Sabbath, every place a temple, every creature a preacher—Believe them not. God knows what is in man, and what is needful to him, and has appointed his ordinances for our welfare : and though a painted man does not want food, a living one cannot dispense with it. A real Christian feels his necessities and deficiencies ; and knows by experience where his heart has been enlarged, and his strength renewed. He has found God for a refuge in his palaces. Strength and beauty are in the sanctuary.

The *manner* in which he would accomplish the resolution is worthy our notice. It includes two things. He would do it impressed with a sense of divine goodness. I will come into thy house in the *multitude of thy mercy*. How can we reflect and not feel this ? The worship itself is a privilege. It is a mercy that we have a sanctuary—It is a mercy that we have liberty to assemble together—It is a mercy that we have health and strength and leisure for divine worship—It is a mercy that we have a disposition to avail

ourselves of the privilege—It is a mercy that we repair to the service, knowing that it is not a vain thing to seek the Lord, and able to plead the promise, I will make the place of my feet glorious. But we need not confine the subject. To creatures so unworthy and guilty as we are, every thing is mercy: the air we breathe; the water we drink; our food; our sleep. Let us think in what a multitude of mercies we come together; public and private; personal and relative; temporal and spiritual: redeeming mercies, justifying mercies, renewing mercies—Let us dwell on the plentitude of his undeserved favours, that we may not murmur or even complain of a few trials, but come before his presence with singing and praise.

He would also do it filled with holy veneration. And in *thy fear* will I worship toward thy holy temple. This fear is not dread, and therefore comports with the cheerfulness of which we have been speaking. The first believers walked in the fear of the Lord, and in the comforts of the Holy Ghost: and we are commanded to serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling. We are to be in the fear of the Lord all the day long—but God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of them that are about him. Nothing more becomes his majesty and purity, his omniscience and omnipresence. Nothing more becomes our meanness and vileness; and the importance of the work in which we are engaged; and the consequences depending. We sing and pray and hear for eternity. We are responsible for all our opportunities. We never leave the house of God as we enter it—How dreadful is the place! It is none other but the house of God, and the gate of heaven—and of hell! To some the word preached will be the savour of life unto life; to others it will be the savour of death unto death. Nothing is so likely to secure our edification by the means of grace, as a solemnity of mind in our attendance. And where it prevails, the eyes will not rove all over the place. Sleep and drowsiness will be excluded. We shall not leave the sanctuary with levity, and fall into vain and idle discourse. Nor shall we ever come to it without reflection and prayer.

MARCH 25.—“I am in a strait betwixt two.”—Phil. i. 23.

NOTHING is more trying and distressing than a state of uncertainty, indecision, and perplexity—or being in a strait between opposing claims, one of which only can be chosen. What a strait was David in when he had to choose between pestilence, and war, and famine! And what a strait was Jacob in between his wish for relief and the fear of sending Benjamin!

Paul is here in a strait, but it is between two things, each of which is agreeable and inviting. We might have been sure that whatever weighed with *him* would be something pertaining to Christ. Accordingly *his* drawing was, on the one side, the enjoyment of his Lord's presence in heaven; and on the other, the serving of his people on earth. Let us notice the former of these—“Having a desire to depart to be with Christ, which is far better.”

The Apostle means death; but he avoids the name, and calls it a *departure*. We are much more influenced by *words* than we may imagine; and as there is so much to render death formidable, we

should, as far as possible, soften it even in the representation. And the Scripture does this. It tells us that if a man keeps the sayings of Christ, "he shall never see death." Is he then exempted from the law of mortality? No: but death is so changed with regard to him, that it does not deserve the name. It is therefore a gathering to his people, a falling asleep, a putting off this tabernacle, a departure—"I long to depart." Does the Apostle refer to a mariner loosing anchor from a foreign shore to depart for his own country? or to a traveller departing from an inn to which he has turned aside for a night to go on his way? or to a prisoner departing from his dungeon and chains to enjoy his freedom? or to a soldier departing for his peaceful home after his warfare is ended? The death of a Christian furnishes all these images and fulfils them. But how surely does the representation remind us of the complex nature of man! If nothing survived at death, death would be a cessation, not a departure. We do not say an animal departed this life. If we buried a beast we should not inscribe on a stone, "Here lies his body"—Here lies the whole of *him*. But over the grave of a man we say, "Here lies the body"—or, "Here repose the remains"—For "there is a spirit in man:" and when "the dust returns to the dust whence it came, the spirit returns to God who gave it."

The *effect* of this death is "to be with Christ." It is obvious the Apostle supposed that a separate state immediately followed the dissolution of the body, as he says in another place expressly, "Absent from the body, and present with the Lord." Had he expected that he should not be with Christ till the resurrection, his dying would have been of no advantage to him. It might have freed him indeed from his sufferings: but he is not speaking of what he should leave, but of what he should reach. In a blessed sense Christ was with him here; and this, with all his trials, was better than annihilation till the last day. It is useless to say the period would seem only as a moment to the individual—for this is not the question—the difficulty lies here—that let the term be long or short, such inaction and insensibility *could* not be better than the presence of Christ with Paul even in this life.

I love the very words the Holy Ghost useth. Paul does not say I long to depart to be in heaven. This is his meaning—but he speaks in a way that while it expresses the blessedness, characterizes it also at the same time. To be in heaven is to be with Christ. Our Lord affirms this himself in his promise to the thief—"This day thou shalt be with me in paradise." And in his prayer for the disciples—"That they may be with me where I am to behold my glory." Is this our heaven? Could such happiness make us happy? Whatever that state be, we must be prepared for it by a conformity to it in our views and feelings here. What a delightful prospect is the social intercourse of that world! If Socrates could comfort himself that he was going to Musæus and other worthies that had lived before him, what is the attraction of a Christian, that he is going to join his own beloved connexions, and the martyrs, and the apostles, and the prophets, and the patriarchs, and the innumerable company of angels—and above all, "the Lord of all," the most wonderful of all characters, the most endeared of all benefactors, the most precious of all friends!

We have not only the nature and effect of this death, but the pre-eminency of the blessedness to which it leads. It is strongly expressed. It is "better"—"far better." Far better than what! It would be saying little to say that it was far better than his trials, far better than to be stoned at Philippi, than to fight with beasts at Ephesus, than to be a night and a day in the deep, than to be in perils among false brethren. It would also be little to say that it was far better than all his temporal comforts. These a Christian does not undervalue; yea he is grateful for them, and enjoys them with a relish peculiar to himself. But he has something even now superior to all outward good—The means of grace and the comforts of the Holy Ghost. But to be with Christ is far better than these: as the day is far better than the dawn, and the inheritance and the vintage are far better than the earnest and the first fruits only. Our communion with him here is distant and often intercepted—there it will be perpetual and immediate. We love the streams—but what is the fountain! We love the house of prayer—but what is the temple in which they serve him day and night!

"Thine earthly Sabbaths, Lord, we love;
But there 's a nobler rest above:
To that our labouring loves aspire,
With ardent pangs of strong desire.

"No more fatigue, no more distress,
Nor sin, nor hell, shall reach the place;
No groans to mingle with the songs,
Which warble from immortal tongues."

MARCH 26.—"Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith."—Phil. i. 24, 25.

VOLTAIRE, in his letters to one of his confidential friends and admirers, more than once says, I hate life, and I dread death. How different were the views and feelings of Paul! He did not dread death, but could say, "I long to depart to be with Christ, which is far better." And so far was he from hating life, that he valued it as affording him opportunity to glorify his Saviour, and to serve his people according to his will. We have seen one part of his strait—Let us look at the other.

Whether he derived his persuasion from a knowledge that his bonds were manifest in all the palace, and that efforts were making in his favour by the saints in Cæsar's household, or from an inspired intimation, we cannot determine: but he was confident that he should not only escape death, but be released from imprisonment. Thus he would be debarred from a state which, as to personal enjoyment, he deemed far better than every thing else, and intensely longed after, and yet he speaks of it with more than acquiescence. What an instance of self-denial was here! How backward are some to make any sacrifice in order to do good. They cannot forego a luxurious meal to furnish a poor family with a plain one. They cannot give up a little variety in dress to clothe a naked child. But Paul is willing to resign heaven itself, though he was sure it was his own and every kind of suffering rendered it desirable—in order to be useful. Self-denial is the first lesson Christianity requires; and every part of it tends to inspire us with a disposition to look, not

on our own things but also on the things of others. This was the mind of Christ. When he was rich, for our sakes he became poor. And the glorified who are now with him, and have drunk fully into his spirit, would be all ready were it the will of God, to leave their ecstasies, and come down again and live in this vale of tears year after year, to serve the cause of the Redeemer, and to promote the salvation of mankind.

We see also that Paul was conscious of his usefulness. Ignorance is not necessary to humility; much less affectation. A man need not deny his abilities, or acceptance, or success, though he ought to acknowledge from whom they come, and on whom they depend. A mother may have a lowly mind, and yet feel that her life is of importance to her rising charge, and the feeling is even a duty. A minister may be willing to enter into his rest, yet be more than reconciled to life, when he sees that many hang upon his lips who may be saved or comforted by him; and it would be folly in him not to be aware that he is a blessing. Paul said, "I am nothing"—and so he was absolutely—but not comparatively and relatively. Am not I, says he, an Apostle? "Have I not seen Christ?" "By the grace of God I am what I am; not I, but the grace of God which was with me;" but, adds he, "I laboured more abundantly than they all." And he here makes no scruple to say, that the welfare of the Philippians and others depended upon his abiding in the flesh.

But wherein did he reckon upon being serviceable? Not only in the conversion of sinners, but in helping them much who had believed through grace—"For your furtherance and joy of faith." This is worthy of notice. It shows the importance of faith. Paul considered this every thing—not to the exclusion of holiness, morality, and good works; but as to the production of them, and their support and their increase. He knew that as faith prevailed, every thing in the divine life would prosper.

Some say there is no growth in grace. But the Apostles prayed, "Lord, increase our faith." The faith of the Thessalonians "grew exceedingly." And Paul was concerned for "the *furtherance*" of the faith of his beloved Philippians—that is, that it might be more clear in its views, more firm in its principles, more powerful in its influence, more appropriating in its confidence. He also wished not only for their furtherance, but "joy of faith." This joy they would constantly need; and it would be their strength. Jesus is the source of it, but faith is the medium. He is the well of salvation, but faith draws the water—"In whom, *believing*, we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory"—We are "filled with all joy and peace *in believing*."

Such was Paul! He was once a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious, and abhorred the worthy Name by which we are called: but he obtained mercy: and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ was exceeding abundant to him-ward in faith and love, which are in Christ Jesus. So that he could now say, "for me to live is Christ, and to die is gain"—"Christ is all and in all." Is any thing too hard for the Lord?

What an example is here! What zeal and yet what knowledge! What preparation for both worlds! What readiness to go! What

willingness to stay if there was any thing more for him to do or suffer !

“ Behold the awful portrait, and admire.
Nor stop at wonder. Imitate and live.”

MARCH 27.—“ Am I in God’s stead ?”—Gen. xxx. 2.

WHAT Jacob here says to Rachel, every creature to which we address ourselves will sooner or later say to us: “ Am I in God’s stead ?” The doctrine we may derive from the words is this, NO CREATURE CAN BE IN THE STEAD OF GOD. But let us explain the doctrine by some distinctions and concessions.

Though no creature can be in the stead of God, God can be in the stead of any creature. David therefore at Ziklag, when deprived of all his substance and his relations, “ encouraged himself in the Lord his God.” And the Church exclaims, “ Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.”

The sun may enable a man to dispense with a lamp, but the lamp cannot supersede the sun. The fountain is necessary to the stream, but not the stream to the fountain.

Though no creature can be in the stead of God to us, one creature may be in the stead of another creature. A minister may more than fill the void made by the removal of his predecessor, and may possess a double portion of his spirit. A child may be deprived of a father, and some kind patron may take him up, and educate him, and place him abroad in life, and fully repair his loss. A husband may seem inconsolable when deprived of the desire of his eyes; but soon after, another soft hand may wipe away his tears. One relation seems much more irreparable; it is that of a mother. Yet we ought not to indulge in general and indiscriminate reflections. There are mothers-in-law who are mothers in kindness; and step-mothers—that is—those who step into the place of real mothers, who fulfil the duties of the office, and are mothers indeed—and such can never be too much commended and praised.

Though no creature can be in God’s stead, a creature may be in God’s hand. He may be God’s instrument, but cannot be his substitute. The instrumentality that God employs differs much from the instrumentality which men employ. Men employ instruments from necessity, God employs them from choice. Men employ them from weakness, God employs them from wisdom. Men depend upon their instruments, God’s instruments depend upon him. They are no more than he is pleased to make them. How then can they fill his place? They are nothing without his agency. “ Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.”

The truth of this doctrine it would be easy to exemplify. Can any be in God’s stead as a creator? This is Jacob’s immediate aim in his reply—am I in God’s stead, who hath withholden from thee

the fruit of the womb? He is the sole author of existence; the former of our bodies; the father of our spirits; and by this he has an infinite distinction from all creatures—they are made, and he is the maker. Who can be in God's stead as a preserver? It is in him alone we live and move, as well as have our being. If preservation be not a continued creation, it is a continued agency. Were he to suspend his upholding influence for a moment, we should relapse into nothing. Can any be in God's stead as a redeemer? Who but he could say, deliver from going down into the pit, I have found a ransom. He alone who required the sacrifice, could provide the lamb for a burnt-offering. He made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. "Beside me there is no Saviour." Who can be in God's stead as a teacher? "Who teaches like him?" We are not only in darkness but blind—Who but he can give us eyes as well as light? We are not only ignorant but weak—Who but he can give us capacity as well as lessons? Who but he can bear with our infirmities? Who but he can make us wise unto salvation? Who can be in his stead as a sanctifier? Who but he can create in us a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within us? "This people," says he, "have I formed for myself; they shall show forth *my* praise." Who can be in his stead as a comforter? Who can be a substitute for him in healing the broken in heart, and binding up all their wounds? Who can revive those who walk in the midst of trouble? Who can fill the valley of the shadow of death with joy unspeakable and full of glory?

Let us think of this fact, and be thankful that this only, this all-sufficient Being is accessible; and allows and commands us to "take hold of his strength." Let us think of it in reference to creatures—Let us think of it in *asking* for them. They may appear desirable; they may be useful; but let us never suppose that we *must* obtain them in order to happiness. One thing only is needful; it is an interest in God. Let us think of it in *possessing* them, and say with Watts,

"To thee we owe our health and friends,
Our wealth and safe abode;
Thanks to thy name for meaner things,
But they are not my God."

Let us think of it in *losing* them. We are allowed to feel but not to despair. Yet what idolaters are we! and it appears when our gods are taken away. Oh! if I should lose such a preacher! Oh! if that beloved connexion was removed—mine eye would no more see good. But the storm that carries away the stubble, does not destroy the estate. It was not a bad question the child addressed to her bereaved and weeping mother when she said, "Is God dead?" How strange would some of our feelings appear if they were expressed in words! The meaning of many a murmur, and many a groan is, I have nothing—but God himself left! Yet what did David think of this? "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever."

MARCH 28.—“Gentleness.”—Gal. v. 22.

PAUL here speaks of gentleness, not as a natural temper, but as “the fruit of the Spirit.” James also considers it as an attribute and character of inspired religion: “The wisdom that is from above is gentle.” This is surely recommendation enough to induce us to make it the object of devout attention. Gentleness is very distinguishable from weakness of mind, and the fawning of flattery. It requires us to give up no truth, to abandon no duty. Principle and consistency are not only compatible with it, but necessary to it. Lead is too soft as well as too worthless to be stamped into coin and currency. You cannot polish a sponge, or a fungus; solid bodies only can admit the process; and the firmer *they* are, the better will they shine. But gentleness must exclude arrogance, insolence, violence, harshness, rudeness, and every thing offensive and painful that can be avoided with integrity and rectitude. There is an artificial mildness, and a studied softness of manners learned in the school of the world, that often covers baseness and ill-nature, and envy and hatred. But a Christian is to be an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile. He is to be in reality what others are in appearance and pretence: he is from inward disposition naturally to exemplify what others from education or custom put on. And how lovely and engaging is that unaffected civility, that courtesy which springs freely from the state of the mind and heart under the renewing influence of divine grace! He that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God and approved of men. It recommends his religion by adorning it, and gives him a thousand beneficial influences in dealing with his fellow-creatures. A man may wait even years before he has an opportunity for acts of high beneficence and extensive usefulness; but he can exercise gentleness every day and every hour; and contribute to the advantage and happiness of all that are about him. And does he not thereby equally befriend himself? Does it not preserve calmness and sunshine within? And are not all the mild and kind affections conducive even to the health of the body?

Let us therefore cultivate this gentleness. Let it enter our habits, and spread through our whole behaviour. Let it constantly actuate our temper, and regulate our speech. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from us with all malice, and let us be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us. Let us in all our religious concerns remember that the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be patient towards all men; in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves. The way to convince another is not to affront, and insult, and provoke him, and drive him to resistance; but to show him that you love him, and are only concerned to do him good. Some have no sooner expressed their belief that a man can receive nothing unless it be given him from above, than they condemn and reproach him for a destitution, which, according to *them*, is not his guilt but his misfortune! Is a brother overtaken in a fault? Let us restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering ourselves lest we also be tempted. Have we occa-

sion to reprove? Let us remember what was said of Leighton—He rebuked faults with such kindness and mildness that they were never repeated, not because the reprovèd were afraid, but ashamed to repeat them. As much as lieth in us let us live peaceably with all men; and resolve to act upon the lesson we teach our infants—

“I'll not easily offend,
Nor be easily offended;
What's amiss I'll strive to mend,
And endure what can't be mended.”

And ye fathers provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. And ye masters, forbear threatening, knowing that your master also is in heaven, and that there is no respect of persons with him. Gentleness indeed must peculiarly appear in our treatment of those who are placed under us. It is one of Lavater's aphorisms on man, and will, we are persuaded, be found without exception true—“If without living with him, or studying him, you would know a man at once, observe how he acts and speaks towards his inferiors.” Towards his superiors and his equals he is guarded, but with his inferiors he is open and free—and if with *them* he assumes airs, and commands harshly, and answers roughly; if he swaggers, scolds, and threatens; if he tries to inspire fear rather than to gain love—he has a tyrannical and a villanous heart. A common observer would say—he is no gentleman; every thing in the Gospel says—he is no Christian.

MARCH 29.—“Behold, thy servants are ready to do whatsoever my lord the king shall appoint.”—2 Sam. xv. 15.

THIS was said on the trying emergency when he was about to leave Jerusalem, to escape from the vile rebellion of Absalom. And it was well said. And it shows us what little reason David had to complain, all men are liars. With a few exceptions, no one ever had more attached and devoted adherents than he.

There is no spiritual meaning in the words. They intend no more than they express. But who can help thinking with what propriety they may be adopted by Christians, and addressed to Christ? He is their Lord and King. They profess to be his servants. He has the appointment of their work. And they should be ready to do his will without partiality as well as without hypocrisy—“Behold, thy servants are ready to do whatsoever my Lord the King shall appoint.”

This is our reasonable service: and four things should excite, sustain, and increase this readiness.

First, the consciousness of our obligations to him. How much do we owe him! What has he not done for us? and in a way the most expensive to himself? He was rich, and for our sakes he became poor—

“He sunk beneath our heavy woes,
To raise us to his throne:
There's not gift his hand bestows,
But cost his heart a groan.”

We can never discharge our obligations to a love that passeth knowledge. But we should be deeply sensible of them; and hold

ourselves entirely at his disposal; and delight to do his will; and constantly ask, "What shall I render unto the Lord, for all his benefits towards me?"

Secondly, a persuasion of his right to appoint every thing pertaining to us. Not a right derived and limited like that of a master or a father to dispose of his servant or his child: but an original inalienable right—the right of an absolute proprietor—the right of a creator over a creature whom he called out of nothing, and who lives, and moves, and has his being in him.

Thirdly, a conviction not only that he has a right to appoint, but that his appointments are right—always wise, and just, and good. They may be sovereign, but they are not arbitrary. The reasons of them may be for a time concealed, but they are worthy of his character. They are now satisfactory to his own mind, and when explained, they will draw forth our approbation and praise. We know not what is best or even good for us. We have made mistakes and suffered embarrassments enough when we have attempted to judge for ourselves, to convince us that the way of man is not in himself. But he cannot err. His understanding is infinite: and our wisdom and welfare require us to say, "The Lord shall choose our inheritance for us."

Lastly, a persuasion that our acceptance with him does not depend upon the place he assigns us, or the nature of the work he ordains us, but our submission to it. We are not answerable for our stations and offices; but for our conduct in them. We can serve the Lord in adversity as well as in prosperity; in a private as well as in a public capacity. A good actor on the stage may be seen in the character of a peasant as well as in that of a prince—it is not the part allotted him that calls forth the applause of the audience, but the manner in which he represents it. To be great in the world depends upon things over which we have frequently no control: but all may be great in the sight of the Lord: the hearer as well as the preacher; the servant as well as the master. He looketh to the heart; and if we are ready to do whatsoever he appoints, we shall have the testimony that we please God; and shall soon hear him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

Such was the submission of Saul of Tarsus—"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Such was the temper of Samuel—"Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." Such was the practice of David—"On thee do I wait all the day." And such is the readiness of angels—Though they excel in strength, they do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. What pleases them is not the kind of work in which they are employed, but their having an opportunity of showing their regard to the pleasure of the employer. May his will be done on earth as it is done in heaven!

MARCH 30.—"Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints, and of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven."—Col. i. 4, 5.

THESE were the grounds of Paul and Timothy's praise to God on behalf of the Colossians. And they are all spiritual motives. Tem-

poral blessings are not to be overlooked—But gratitude is to be wise, and to proportion its fervours to the value of the benefits conferred. And what are the good things pertaining to the life that now is, compared with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places? Much depends upon the nature of our gratitude. There is no man who does not sometimes thank God. But for what? A safe voyage; a good harvest; a recovery from sickness. All that awakens *his* heart is confined within the circle of time and sense. Christians are peculiar in every thing; and their gratitude shows that they are heavenly-minded. They therefore thank God not so much for the meat that perisheth, as for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life; not so much for civil freedom, as for the glorious liberty of the sons of God; not so much for health of body as for soul prosperity. They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.

The blessings here specified are three.

First, their faith in Christ. Faith regards all the Scripture; but this is the record, that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Faith therefore has principally to do with the Saviour. It receives as true the testimony concerning him; and leads us to depend upon him, and to apply to him for all that he is revealed to accomplish and bestow. Under the influence of it therefore we are represented as looking to him; coming to him; building on him as our foundation; entering him as our refuge; and glorying in him as the Lord our righteousness and strength—For the Scriptures always describe rather than define faith; and show us what it is by what it *does*.

Secondly, Their love to all the saints. I need not observe how often love is connected with faith: but the same order is always maintained between them—Faith precedes love. Love is the fruit and not the root; the effect and not the cause. Faith is the origin of every thing in the Christian life; and it is vain unless it be operative—it works by love. Love to whom? To “the Saints”—not exclusively, but peculiarly. The Thessalonians loved all their fellow-creatures, but not with the same degree or even kind of love. They loved their enemies, but not as they loved their friends. They loved sinners; but it was with a love of pity and benevolence, not of esteem and complacency. But the saints were regarded by them as the excellent of the earth, and in them was all their delight. Love to whom? To “all the saints”—regardless of outward distinctions, or the minor matters of religion. Indeed our love to the brethren is not a proof that we have passed from death unto life, unless it regards them as saints. We love them under the influence of some other character or quality unless we can pray, “Grace be with *all* them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity:” and follow the example of him who said, “*Whosoever* shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.”

Thirdly, Their “hope.” Hope is a grace as well as faith and love; but as a grace hope is in *us*; whereas here hope is said to be “laid up for them in *heaven*”—This shows that the *object* of hope is here intended; or all that which God has promised to his people beyond the grave. The laying it up in heaven reminds us of its

security. Hence the admonition of the Saviour: "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal." In a world like this, where nothing is safe or certain, how anxious, fearful, miserable, must those be, who have their portion in this life! But Christians can dwell at ease. None of these changes and dangers affect their essential welfare. They know in themselves that they have in heaven a better and an enduring substance. They have chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from them.—It shows us that it is principally future. At present they are not at home, but strangers and pilgrims on earth. They have remittances and supplies, but it is from God's riches in glory. The inheritance is reserved in heaven for them; and they cannot possess it till they are of age. Should they think of building their tabernacles here, something would soon tell them to arise and depart hence for this is not their rest. Seed is sown for the righteous; but the reaping-time is to come. Now is the conflict, but the crown of glory that fadeth not away is reserved for the hour of triumph.—Also by being laid up in heaven it is much concealed. O how great is the goodness, says David, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee! and says the Apostle, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. After all the developments of the Scripture, and the illuminations of the Holy Spirit in the experience of Christians, we read of a glory that *shall be* revealed. We could not in this weak state of flesh and blood bear the full disclosure. But the veil will soon be drawn aside; and the voice will cry, Come and see. And the sight will infinitely surpass the expectation.

MARCH 31.—"The ingrafted word."—James i. 21.

HISTORY is silent as to the time when grafting was first introduced. But it has been long practised; and the process is now generally familiar.

The image essentially includes union, vital union, between parts not connected before. The man receives the word into his heart, as the tree receives into its stock the scion, which by incorporation becomes thenceforward one with itself. The surprise seems here—We should imagine when the insertion is made, that the sap of the tree entering the scion which is so much smaller, would immediately convert the scion into its own quality: but instead of this the scion converts the sap; and the changed juice maintains, enlarges, fructifies the scion; and causes it in due time to produce—not according to the kind of the old stock—but of the adopted graft.

A metaphor is not to be pressed: but we cannot avoid remarking, That as the body of the tree continues the same after the ingrafting, so in conversion we remain physically the same as before: retaining the same relations, conditions, callings; the same corporeal powers and mental faculties—only the efficiency of them is changed, hal- lowed, and applied to other uses and purposes—and all through the medium of the word.

Grafting is one of the most pleasing exercises to those who feel delight in horticulture: and how eagerly and anxiously after the

operation has been performed, does the gardener go and examine whether it has succeeded! And this will be soon known. If the scion has *taken*, it proves the vitality by the appearance and growth of the graft. There are first the shoots; then the branches; at length the blossoms and the fruit appear; and the whole increases every year, till it becomes a great tree, and abundantly rewards the owner.

Thus earnestly and carefully does a minister look after the effect of his labour; and the success of his preaching is known and hailed in the same way; only with higher exultation and praise. Happy those servants of the Lord Jesus whose hearers have received "the grace of God in truth; and to whom they say, "our gospel came to you not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance."

—It is from hence the gospel has its character; and is called the ingrafted word. It is so called, however, not because this is always the effect—for there are many who receive it in vain; but it is designed to be so received; and it is actually thus received when "it is able to save the soul." Thus it is called the word of faith—not because it is always believed; but because it is credible; and it is made known for the obedience of faith; and it cannot profit us unless faith be mixed with it. Thus it is called the word of life—not because it quickens all those among whom it comes—for there are many who remain dead in trespasses and sins: but it calls us to walk in newness of life; and the man who receives it, not only has "life, but life more abundantly."

How does this apply to us? "My word," said Jesus to the Jews, "has no place in you"—Has it a place in us?—And what place? In the head only? or the heart? Is it in us a notion? or a principle? And does it work powerfully in us as it does in them that believe? And does it fill us with all the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ to the praise and glory of God? Such is the promise: "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them."

APRIL.

APRIL 1.—"And these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves."—John xvii. 13.

"IN the world." For as yet he *was* in it, but was just going to leave it and go unto the Father. His last words, considering their conduct, might have been reproachful, or at least reproving: but the things he now spoke were adapted to encourage, and *designed* to comfort them—"These things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves."

Observe the *nature* of this joy—"my joy." There is a joy he himself feels in contemplating the welfare of his people. In saving them "he rejoices over them with singing." As the good shepherd he lays the sheep he has found on his shoulder, "rejoicing." He sees of the travail of his soul, and is "satisfied." But his joy here is not the joy of which he is the subject, but the joy of which he is the medium, author, source and only source. Jesus the Saviour! All that is good and blessed is thine. The blood that redeems us is

thine. The righteousness which justifies us is thine. The grace that sanctifies us is thine. The power that supports us is thine. It is thy peace that composes us. It is thy joy that must be in us, or we must lie down in sorrow. Thou art "the consolation of Israel;" and there is not a drop of real comfort but flows from thee. But in thee there is every thing that can excite, every thing that can justify joy—even though it should be joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Observe the *means* of this joy—"These things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves." This may be extended to all that he had delivered during his whole ministry: but it principally refers to his present speech, and the prayer he had offered in their hearing. These were to animate and console them. In these they could see his heart, his desires, views and purposes on their behalf. Here they heard him say that he had finished the work that was given him to do; and that he had power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as the Father had given him. Here they heard him interceding for their preservation, their holiness, their union, their glorification—What could they desire more? And what can we desire more? For having fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us, *we* are authorized to receive this strong consolation, and claim an interest in this intercession, according to his own words: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." Yea, we have the advantage of them since we are more fully acquainted than they were at this time with the dignity of his person, his dearness to God, and the grounds on which he pleads for us, in his obedience unto death, and in his sacrifice on the cross. We know that the Father heareth him always. It was David's privilege to have an advocate at court, and he was the king's own son. But we have a much greater advantage in having an advocate with the Father. What was Jonathan to Jesus? Jonathan too had to plead with a father that hated his friend—But says Jesus, "I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: for the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God."

Let us observe one thing here—The joy of the believer is not a visionary thing. It is not the produce of delusion or ignorance. It flows from conviction; it appeals to the word of the Saviour. They who put their trust in him know his name, and are able to give a reason of the hope that is in them.

Observe the *measure* of this joy—"That they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves." They possessed it already but defectively. In conversion a good work is begun; but it is carried on until the day of Christ. The rising sun, the growing corn, and every other image employed in the Scriptures, import the imperfections and progressions there are in the experience of Christians. Hence there are degrees in faith; and we read of weak and of strong faith; of little and of great faith. Some have a competency of faith; others are affluent, they are rich in faith. Some have hope; others the full assurance of hope. Some from various preventions have little of the pleasures of religion; others walk in the comforts of the Holy Ghost. Some have many distressing doubts and fears;

others are filled with all joy and peace in believing—And this is peculiarly desirable. For

Observe, Lastly, the *importance* of this joy—This undeniably results from the concern our Saviour here expresses. Men often err; and we cannot conclude that a thing is eminently, or even really excellent and valuable, because they prize and pursue it: for what trifles, what follies, attract and influence many! But as the Lord Jesus thinketh so it is; his judgment is always according to truth—And therefore, says he, *These things speak I in the world, that my joy might be fulfilled in themselves.* He knew the importance of this possession—to the honour of our religion, and the recommendation of the ways of godliness to others—to our activity and zeal in the divine life—to our weanedness from the world—to our support in trouble—and our comfort in the valley of the shadow of death. In all these the joy of the Lord is our strength.

Let the Saviour's concern regulate the concern of ministers. Let them be helpers of our joy, and seek the tongue of the learned, that they may know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary.

Let the Saviour's concern regulate the concern of Christians. They should distrust themselves; but they should be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. They should watch and be sober; yet they should be scripturally confident. Are the consolations of God small with them? They are not small in themselves, and they were not small in the experience of the first believers. If therefore they are small with us, is there not a cause? Is there not some secret thing with us? Let us search and try our ways, and turn again unto the Lord. Let us resolve to sacrifice whatever has caused him to hide his face from us. Let us pray, Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit. Let us ask and receive that our joy may be full.

APRIL 2.—“Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name.”—John xii. 27, 28.

HERE we see the Saviour's anguish in realizing the approach of the closing scene of his life. Yet the trouble of his soul could not have been produced by the certainty of his suffering and death only; it must have principally regarded the nature of them. Unless we allow this, he loses his pre-eminence. Some of the sages of antiquity met their end with firmness. Socrates and Seneca died with composure. Stephen did not say, “Now is my soul troubled” when they were leading him to be stoned. Paul did not tremble when he said, “I am ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.” We have read of martyrs who issued from their prisons with singing, and embraced the stake. And though crucifixion was ignominious and painful, many of the Lord's followers had to bear a death much more torturing and lingering; yet they were not troubled or afraid. But his sufferings and death were to redeem us from the curse of the law; and therefore he was made a curse for us. The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all. He bore our sins in his own body on the tree. And here it is that we

see what a dreadful evil sin is. Many deem it a light thing: but hear him saying, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." See him "sore amazed and very heavy." Behold "his sweat, as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground." A Christian can never deem sin a trifle, or be reconciled to it, after he has seen the agonies of him who was pierced by it—And as the citizens of Rome, upon the uncovering of the wounded and gory body of Cæsar, rushed forth to find and avenge his murderers, so every Christian flees to arms at the sight of the death of Jesus.

"Furnish me, Lord, with heavenly arms,
From grace's magazine;
And I'll proclaim eternal war
With every darling sin."

—He here speaks as one in a strait; as if struggling between inclination and conviction, his feeling and his work—"And what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour?—But for this cause came I unto this hour." There is no real difficulty here. He was human as well as divine; and the Godhead did not absorb the humanity, or change its attributes. The word was made flesh, and had all the passions and infirmities of our nature, sin only excepted. But suffering in itself can never be agreeable to our nature—for then it would be no longer suffering. If therefore we submit to it, it is not from pleasure, but for some reason or purpose. This reluctance instead of being inconsistent with submission, serves to enhance it, and is even necessary to it. There is no resignation in giving up what we do not value. If we had no inclination to food, there would be no self-denial in fasting. There is no virtue in a stone; and there is no patience in bearing what we do not feel—Patience is injured by feeling too little, as well as by feeling too much; by despising the chastening of the Lord, as well as by fainting when we are rebuked of him.

Our Saviour therefore acquiesces in the event. But in his mode of expressing it, he leads us to observe two things concerning his death. First, that it was not casual: "For *this cause* came I unto this hour." It was written in the volume of the book—It was a covenant transaction. He assumed a body and entered our world for the very design—"The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many"—He became incarnate to die. Secondly, it was voluntary—"For *this cause came I unto this hour.*" He was not compelled or deceived into the business; but as it was fore-appointed, so he foreknew and foresaw it; and acted from independence and choice. He loved us and gave himself for us. He had his eye upon this scene from the beginning, and in all his travels of wo held it in view till he reached it, saying, "Lo! I come to do thy will, O God. I delight to do thy will: yea, thy law is within my heart."

Hence his pious prayer—"Father, glorify thy name." As if he had said, "If my sufferings will be for thine honour, let them fall upon me, regardless of my feelings. Did he then question this? By no means. His language is rather the expression of confidence. "I know that my death will infallibly and infinitely advance thy praise; and therefore I cheerfully bow to thy pleasure"—Just as he said, after instituting his own supper, and when about to enter Geth-

semene: "But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence."

But what is it to glorify his name? Glory is the display of excellence. God's excellence cannot be increased, but it may be made known; and this is the design of God in all his operations. The heavens declare his glory. All his works praise him. "And every labour of his hands shows something worthy of a God"—

"But in the grace that rescued man,
His brightest form of glory shines;
Here on the cross 'tis fairest drawn,
In precious blood, and crimson lines."

If God had punished sinners in their own persons according to their desert, his law would have been magnified, and his righteousness and truth confirmed; and *thus* he would have been glorified. And this glory of God is secured *here*: but observe the additional advantage. Had the wicked been punished, though his law would have been magnified, and his truth and righteousness confirmed, we could have seen nothing else—nothing of his mercy and love: but here mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other. We see the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us by Christ Jesus. And we draw the consolatory conclusion: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

Herein also he hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence. At present, indeed, we see comparatively but little of this glory: yet even now the sight is enough to fix and fill the mind of believers. And not only are they relieved and refreshed by the contemplation, but they are sometimes carried away, and catch glimpses of those irradiations reserved for another life, which will draw forth the wonder and praise of the heavenly world for ever—and angels desire to look into these things.

We love not to consider Christ only or chiefly as our model. But after holding him forth in his higher characters as our sacrifice, and righteousness, and strength, it is more than allowable to bring him forward as our example. And *then* nothing will be more acceptable to Christians. The love shed abroad in their hearts by his cross, will make them long to resemble him, and pray that they may be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord. And this conformity is not only desirable but necessary. "If any man," says he, "will be my disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." Remember therefore that "he suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should tread in his steps." We may feel our sorrows, and even desire the removal of them; but we must do it as he did: "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." Like him also we must, as sufferers, regard the honour of God, and be concerned that his Name may be glorified by our trials. "Wherefore glorify ye the Lord in the fires." You cannot do this in the same way with him. His sufferings were mediatorial, atoning, and meritorious. But yours may be instructive, encouraging, and useful. They may recommend your religion,

and prove that God never forsakes his people, but is with them in trouble, and comforts them in all their tribulation, and enables them to acknowledge "he hath done all things well." "It is good for me that I have been afflicted."

APRIL 3.—"They sung an hymn."—Matt. xxvi. 30.

THIS is a circumstance not mentioned by the other evangelists. But it is very instructive.

We should like to have known the very hymn they sung. The psalms the Jews used at the end of the passover began with the one hundred and thirteenth, and ended with the one hundred and eighteenth. Was the hymn here used one of *these*? Or was it any one else of the compositions of David, "the sweet Psalmist of Israel?" Or was it the words of any other pious poet? We cannot determine. We have every reason to believe the subject of it was suited to the occasion; and never had language been so honoured before. We might also have wished to know the manner in which they performed it—Was it recitative or choral? Symphonious or responsive? But how did *he* join? Oh! to have seen the emotions of *his* countenance, to have heard the strains of *his* voice!—But the Scripture is not designed to indulge our curiosity. It therefore only says, "They sung an hymn." But the fact itself teaches us that singing is a Christian ordinance. It is sanctioned by our Lord's own example. And the authority for the usage was not overlooked by the Apostles; as we see both in their practice and precepts. Thus at Philippi we find Paul and Silas at midnight not only prayed, but "sung praises unto God; and the prisoners heard them." And thus Paul says to the Colossians, "Teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." And James enjoins those who are merry to "sing psalms."

But observe by what this singing was immediately *preceded*, and by what it was immediately *followed*.

It was immediately *preceded* by the administration of his own supper. Hence we learn that singing should accompany this sacred ordinance. "Joy becomes a feast"—And this is a feast—a feast of love and friendship—a feast of reconciliation between God and us—a feast upon the sacrifice—a feast in which we are reminded that "his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed." And we ought not only to be thankful for such a death, but for such a memento and emblem of it. For here we have signs so lively and sensible that before our eyes he is evidently set forth crucified among us. And what an honour that we, who are not worthy of the children's crumbs, are allowed to sit down with the King at his table, as a proof that "we are fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of faith!"

"While all our hearts, and all our songs,
Join to admire the feast:—
Each of us cries with thankful tongues,
Lord, why was I a guest?"

It was immediately *followed* by his entrance into Gethsemane—When they had sung a hymn "they went out into the mount of

Olives." Now this garden may be viewed as a place of suffering, and of retirement; and so two things may be observed. First, That the prospect of suffering should not prevent our joy and praise. Though our Saviour had announced the treason of Judas; foresaw the denial of Peter, and the desertion of all the disciples; and knew that he was now going into Gethsemane to agonize there, and there to be apprehended and led away to crucifixion—yet this does not hinder his previously singing a hymn! Does not this say to his followers, rejoice evermore? In every thing give thanks? A Christian should say with David, "I will bless the Lord at all times, his praise shall continually be in my mouth. I look for changing scenes and trying dispensations, but I shall always have to sing of mercy as well as judgment—and of mercy in judgment." "Come," would Luther say to Melancthon, a wise man, but more timorous than himself, when prospects looked dark and distressing at the beginning of the Reformation: "Come, let us sing the forty-sixth psalm: and let earth and hell do their worst." Should it not reprove and humble us, that we have so little of the mind that was in Christ Jesus, especially when we consider the greatness of his sufferings, and the comparative lightness of our own? If we are not filled with murmurings and complainings, we are often silent in his praise, as if we had nothing to be grateful for, though encompassed with his goodness. The impression of one trial will make us insensible to the claims of a thousand blessings. But Christ might well sing. He knew God would be with him in the trying scene. And will he not be with you? Has he not said, "I will be with thee in trouble?"—And he had a joy set before him at the end of his conflict, the prospect of which might well induce him more than to submit. And have not you? Could you see the issue of all your trials, you also would—you must—rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Secondly, That religious ordinances and engagement should not lead us to dispense with retirement. When therefore they had ended the communion by singing a hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives, whither he had often resorted for prayer and meditation. It is alone, after you have left the worship, and especially the table of the Lord, it is *there* that you can revive the remembrance; that you can bring home to yourselves what you have heard and seen; that you can call your consciences to an account; that you can yield yourselves afresh unto the Lord; that you can implore that divine influence which alone giveth the increase.

The neglect of this practice will explain the reason why many who attend the services of the sanctuary derive so little advantage from them—"Through desire a man having separated himself seeketh and intermeddeth with all wisdom.

APRIL 4.—"And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus."—Luke xxiii. 26.

IN the course of a few hours he had taken many a weary and painful step. From the communion chamber he had walked to the garden of Gethsemane—From Gethsemane he was hurried away, bound as a prisoner, to Annas—From Annas to Caiaphas—From

Caiaphas to Herod—From Herod back again to Pilate—so that he had already traversed a great part of Jerusalem. But he must take one melancholy walk more—It is from the judgment-hall to Golgotha.

With us not only hours but days, and frequently even weeks, elapse between the sentence of death and the execution: and Tiberias, the present emperor, had issued an order some years before, that no criminal should be executed till ten days after his condemnation. But the benefit of this edict did not extend to murderers and rebels, as it was judged necessary for the public safety and tranquillity, that such malefactors should be immediately put to death. Jesus was arraigned as a mover of sedition as well as a blasphemer; and therefore as soon as ever the sentence was pronounced upon him, he was led away to be crucified. But he was not taken by surprise. He knew that his hour was come; and was ready to welcome its approach.

He was not conveyed to the place of execution, but walked. Nor was this all. Among the Romans the criminal carried his cross. The design of the custom was good. It was to intimate that he was the author of his own punishment; and seemed to say to him, "Hast thou not procured this unto thyself?" The outstretched arms of the criminal were fastened to the transverse beam, while the upright part of the cross rested between his shoulders, and extending down his back dragged on the ground. In this manner was Jesus to go forward. And in his case the imposition was not only humiliating but painful, owing to the bruises and soreness produced by the scourge. Yet thus was he pressed with the heavy load, and had to exert all his strength to draw along the instrument of his death. And considering his agony in the garden, his fatiguing night, his want of sleep and refreshment, and his loss of blood; no wonder he was found unequal to the continuance of the task, at least in the manner his executioners wished. Hence the relief afforded him. This relief was not from tenderness to him, but to hasten the execution. They saw that he grew weak, and frequently paused; and were fearful lest he should fail before he reached the top of the hill. This would have occasioned delay; and their wish was to get the crucifixion over, and the bodies taken down, before the Sabbath began. And such was their haste, that by nine o'clock he was lifted up from the earth! He had drawn the burden through the streets, and was now between the city gate and the foot of Calvary, in the ascending of which his difficulty would be increased. Here the procession met Simeon. Simeon was of Cyrene, a city of Libya, a thousand miles distant from Jerusalem. He was an African and a black—never the worse for this—yea, we hope it was a token for good with regard to a race chargeable with so guilty a skin. He seems to have been a man of some note: at least he was the father of Rufus and Alexander, who were afterwards distinguished in the church. Simeon was coming up from the country, either to do business or to attend the Passover. Nothing therefore could be more accidental than this meeting—But how much in his history depended upon it! We cannot help thinking he was a secret disciple of Jesus; and seeing him thus suffering, and ready to sink, he betrayed his sympathy and regard by his looks and words. This was enough for the soldiers

and the rude rabble, who setting up a laugh, exclaimed, "Well, since the negro pities him, he shall help him." And so "on him they laid the cross, that he should bear it after Jesus." In another place it is said they "compelled" him; but this regards their enforcement of the thing; for it is obvious he made no resistance. Had he been an unrelenting Jew, an enemy to Jesus and his doctrine, he would have railed and cursed; and the Priests and Scribes would have interposed for him, and desired the soldiers not to make a laughing-stock of one of their fellow-citizens. Or if for a moment he discovered a little reluctance, he soon felt enough not only to make him willing to yield, but to enable him to rejoice that he was counted worthy to suffer shame for his Name.

And is not the same thing required of us? Has not Jesus said, "Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple?" We too at first may be ready to shrink back; but further information and experience induce us cheerfully to deny ourselves, and to go forth to him without the camp bearing his reproach. We see him before us—dignified and holy—enduring the curse for us—and leaving us only "this light affliction, which is but for a moment, and which worketh out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory"—

"We tread the path our Master trod,
We bear the cross he bore;
And every thorn that wounds our feet,
His temples pierced before.

"O patient, spotless Lamb!
My heart in patience keep;
To bear the cross so easy made,
By wounding thee so deep."

APRIL 5.—"And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning unto them, said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?"—Luke xxiii. 27—31.

ONLY six days before he had descended into Jerusalem from Bethany, by the Mount of Olives, when the multitude spread their garments in the way, and cried, Hosannah! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord! Many of the same people are now following him as he goes to Calvary to be crucified. As it was now a festival, there was an immense concourse of people; this would readily increase the number of spectators. But a public execution always collects a crowd. There must be something exceedingly attractive and interesting in such a sight, or so many would not repair to it; for they go voluntarily; and there have been instances in which a reprieve has disappointed their expectation, and led them to murmur that they had taken so much trouble in vain. Yet a public execution might be rendered morally impressive and useful. "The way of transgressors is hard." See there what an evil and bitter thing sin is. See the degradation of our common nature. *That criminal may be less guilty than myself.* He may have had

few of my advantages. If left in the same circumstances he was, what might I have been?—

Our regard for the sex makes us lament that so many females always attend such scenes as these. They have certainly more compassionateness than men; but they have also in their nature a principle of curiosity, and a love of excitement, which sometimes carry them away. Here were many women lining the sides of the road by which Jesus was to pass, some leading their children, and some carrying their babes. But they did themselves honour; for while others insulted, they “lamented him.” Perhaps some of them had been healed by him. Perhaps some of them had heard him preach. Were any of the mothers here whose infants he had taken in his arms and blessed? Was the widow here whose son he had raised from the dead? Was the woman here who had washed his feet with her tears? *Could* Martha and Mary be here? Or Mary Magdalene and the other Mary?—These seeing him as he came opposite to them—in this piteous plight—bleeding—exhausted—pausing and panting—the executioners savagely goading him on—and the populace mocking at his grief; could refrain no longer, but strongly, as the word implies, expressed their sorrow, by cryings and tears, by wringing of their hands and striking their breasts. This required courage as well as tenderness. It showed an interest in the supposed culprit: it seemed a censure of his suffering as unjust and cruel. And persons were severely forbidden to indulge in public condolence with offenders the Sanhedrim had condemned—But “love is strong as death; many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it.”

Our Saviour’s kindness and presence of mind are here seen. The nearness of his execution, and his present anguish, do not absorb him in selfish feeling, but he *turns* to these daughters of Jerusalem, and says, “Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and your children.” Some suppose that he blamed these tears, because he knew they sprang from ignorance of the cause and design of his death. Others suppose he blamed them because he did not deserve these tears, as he was a guilty sufferer, the Lord having laid upon him the iniquity of us all. The former surmise is ill founded, the latter absurd. The fact is he did not *blame* them at all, but would intimate, That if they knew what was ready to befall them, their sorrow would be more required for themselves than for him. It was an expression of his pity, excited by a view of the dreadful calamities which would desolate their city and their country, when even Jewish mothers, who so valued offspring would hail the childless; and others envy the happiness of those who would be buried alive! “For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us.”

Of these judgments he intimates the cause, in a question drawn from a proverb: “For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?” The green tree refers to himself, the dry to the people of the Jews. Surely wood full of sap is less inflammable than wood withered and dead. If I suffer who am innocent—how will the guilty escape—and who are adding my death to all

their other crimes? It shows us that sin is danger, and prepares us for the wrath of God: "Fury is not in me. Who would set the briars and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together." And there are degrees of peril and of punishment. If the ignorant are destroyed for lack of knowledge, what will become of those who possess and abuse it? If they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, how much more shall not we escape if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven? If the children of ungodly parents perish, what will be the doom of those who have been trained up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord? If Moses and Aaron were so severely chastised for a single offence, to which they were greatly provoked at the waters of strife; what have they to expect who sin constantly and without excuse? If he deal thus with friends, how will he treat enemies? "Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth, how much more the sinner and the ungodly?" "The time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

APRIL 6.—"But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came thereout blood and water."—John xix. 34.

THIS incident is recorded by none of the other evangelists. But John more than sufficiently attests it. The fact is very striking and improvable; and perhaps we are not instructed in it as we ought to be.

The ancients enlarge much on this wound, and some of the moderns are not far behind them. One makes it an allusion to the manner in which Adam obtained his wife, and by which he was a figure of him that was to come. While the Lord from heaven was sleeping the sleep of death, his side was opened, and from thence his Church was taken, to whom he has espoused himself. Another makes it the cleft of the rock into which God puts us, as he did Moses, when he passes by and proclaims his goodness. A third represents it as a window made in his body, by which we can look into his heart and see his love. Herbert in his Temple calls it a letter-bag, into which we may put any of our requests, and which shall be thereby safely conveyed to God.

It is painful to think what freedoms have been taken with the Scriptures; and what silly and profane conceits have been indulged on subjects at once the most sacred and awful. And yet many affect to wonder at the impression made by such improprieties upon the minds of the young, and the educated, and the sceptic, and the scoffer! We are not answerable for the dislike men feel to the truth itself; but we should distinguish between the offence of faith, and the offence of folly.

The occasion of the event was this. The Jews, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath-day, for that Sabbath was a high day, besought Pilate that their legs might be broken; and that they might be taken away.

The worst of men are often anxious about the external and ceremonial parts of religion. Conscience as well as decency requires something; and forms and rites are not difficult, and they leave the state of the heart untouched. What a mixture was here! What superstition and wickedness! What regard to the Sabbath and the pass-over, and what swiftness to shed blood! The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel. Why do they not dispatch the sufferers at once, instead of only hastening their death by addition to their anguish? The violence and the pain probably produced the most dreadful outcries. In this barbarous manner the soldiers came and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. One of these was the penitent thief. He had prayed to be remembered when Jesus came into his kingdom, and had received the assurance that he should that very day be with him in paradise; and the promise would now be fulfilled. Yet this does not exempt him from the same usage endured by his impenitent companion. All things come alike to all. But though outwardly treated alike, what a difference was there between them in their feelings and in their end—one passing from torture into torment—the other rejoicing that all his suffering was for ever ended, and he should instantly enter into the joy of his Lord!

Jesus had now breathed his last. Was it owing to the greater sensibility of his mind, and delicacy of his body, that he expired sooner than his fellow-sufferers? Rather we see here the voluntariness of his death. He had said, No man taketh my life from me: I lay it down of myself. As he was the sacrifice, so he was the priest, and through the eternal Spirit he offered himself without spot to God. He did not die therefore from a mere exhaustion of nature. He cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost: and Pilate, as a thing perfectly unusual, when informed of it, marvelled that he was already dead. When therefore they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: but "one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came thereout blood and water." From hence we see that our Saviour had not been long dead; for had the flesh been cold, and the fluids coagulated, the effusions would not have taken place. Those who understand anatomy, and are aware of the membranous bag which contains the heart, can easily account for the flowing of water as well as blood.

But we have something of more importance here than any physical reflections. Let me, O my soul, consider the fact as—an instance of the indignity to which the Saviour submitted for my sake—as a confirmation of the reality and certainty of his death—as a symbol of the manner of my recovery by him—and as a display of Providence in fulfilling the Scriptures. Take your own thoughts first upon these remarks, and then read the illustrations in the following exercise.

"O the sweet wonders of that cross
Where God my Saviour groaned and died!
Her noblest life my spirit draws
From his dear wounds and bleeding side."

APRIL 7.—“One of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came thereout blood and water.”—John xix. 34.

LET us view this fact as *an instance of the indignity and insult to which the Saviour submitted*. When we consider not only the pre-existence, but the original greatness of the Lord Jesus; and read all the magnificent things the sacred writers have said of him; how surprising do his grace and condescension appear! He took not on him the nature of angels—then they could not have pierced him; but because the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he likewise himself took part of the same. Yet he did not assume our nature in any of its higher forms or conditions. Some are rich; but he had not where to lay his head. Some are admired and caressed; he was despised and rejected of men. Some are nobles and princes; he made himself of no reputation, but took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. The death was not only a scene of pain but of shame: and to render it the more ignominious, he was numbered with the transgressors, and crucified between two thieves. He was also insulted when dying—and mangled when dead. O my soul, was all this humiliation for me? And shall I deem any thing too dear to resign, or too trying to endure for him? How was that precious body prepared for him by the Holy Ghost treated! How was his whole frame agonized, when his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground! How was his flesh ravaged by the scourge when the ploughers ploughed upon his back, and made long their furrows! How were his temples lacerated with the crown of thorns! How was his face marred when they plucked off the hair! How were his hands and feet pierced with the nails—while the soldier’s spear pierced his side! And how should I regard all this! The wounds of a general who bleeds in the defence of his country are deemed not disgraceful, but scars of honour; and viewed with emotions of tenderness, admiration, and praise. Jesus displayed much more than such memorials. He retained them after his resurrection. When he appeared to the Apostles, “he showed them his hands and his feet.” Thomas was not then present, and continued incredulous, notwithstanding the testimony of ten witnesses—To him he also appeared; and said, “Reach hither thy finger and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless but believing.” He wears them now. John saw him as a lamb that had been slain. He will wear them for ever, and the view of them will serve to excite the renewed praises of his people—

Let us view it as *a confirmation of the reality and certainty of his death*. It could not be said he was only in a swoon; or half dead; or that his resurrection was nothing more than a recovery of suspended animation. His enemies were concerned to know that he had expired; and they fully ascertained it. The very act of wantonness in the ruffian soldier demonstrated it. He could not have survived the wound, had it been given him in perfect health. It penetrated the pericardium, and transfixed his vitals. But what is this to us! Every thing. Without his death the whole gospel is a cipher, and all our hopes are a delusion. He died for us. And he died for us not only or principally to confirm his doctrine, or to be

our example ; but to bear our sins in his own body on the tree ; and by the one offering up of himself to perfect for ever them that are sanctified. He made peace by the blood of his cross. He died too, as a testator : he made a new will, the legacies of which were invaluable ; but it could never have become valid without his death : " For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead : otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth." What therefore establishes my faith in his death is beyond expression important. If it be false, I am left to all the effects of the fall. If it be true, my triumph is complete—It is all my salvation and all my desire.

Let us view it also as *a symbol of the manner of our recovery by him*. Hear what the reporter of the fact has said concerning it in his epistle : " This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ ; not by water only, but by water and blood." It would be far short of the Apostle's meaning to consider the allusion as sacramental, looking only at Baptism and the Lord's Supper. The reference regards the double efficiency of the Lord's death—to satisfy and—to sanctify. Blood to redeem, and water to cleanse. The one to remove the curse of sin, the other the love of it. Neither of these blessings is to be found unless in the cross. But they are both to be derived from a dying Jesus : and therefore iniquity need not be our ruin if we apply to him. He is a Prince and a Saviour. He gives repentance and remission of sins.

Let us be convinced of our need of both ; and combine both in our creed and our experience. It is a defective view of the death of Christ, to look to it for comfort only : he died not only to atone, but to purify : " he loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might cleanse it by the washing of water by the word." The water and the blood were not severed in their effusion ; neither can they be divided in their application. Happy they who value both ; and can say, " In the Lord have I righteousness and strength."

Lastly, we may view it as *a display of Providence in the fulfilment of the Scripture*. Hence John immediately adds, " And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true : and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe." Believe what ? That Jesus was the Messiah, by the correspondence between him and the prophecies going before. Observe those he mentions : First, says he, " For these things were done, that the Scripture should be fulfilled, a bone of him shall not be broken." Referring to the language of David, " He keepeth all his bones : not one of them is broken." This was not only foretold of him in words ; but also prefigured in type. He was our Passover. Now of the Paschal Lamb it was said, " Neither shall ye break a bone thereof"—This could not have been verified had the soldier fractured his legs. Nor would another have been accomplished had he not pierced his side. " Again another Scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced : " referring to the language of Zechariah, " They shall look upon me whom they have pierced." Thus the eye of prophecy, ages before the accomplishment, saw this soldier piercing him personally and literally ; and the Jews by means of him : and therefore he adds, " and they shall mourn for him." And some of them after they had crucified him, were brought to re-

penitance, and sorrowed after a godly sort. And others of them, yea all Israel will do this, when the veil is taken from their heart. It is also now realized in every penitent who mourns for his sins as the cause, whoever were the instruments, of the sufferings and death of the Saviour.

But how true is it that "the Scripture cannot be broken." And how wonderfully does God accomplish it—by friends—by foes—by the righteous—by the wicked—by what is casual—by what is criminal—Nothing was further from the thoughts of this unfeeling soldier than the end answered by his brutality—but he was God's instrument, and acted an important and indispensable part in proving his omniscience and veracity.

APRIL 8.—"They shall look on him whom they pierced."—John xix. 37.

IT is added in the prophecy from which these words are taken—"And they shall mourn for him." And who is not ready to say, "Nothing could have been more becoming in those who were chargeable with the deed, when they reflected that they had crucified an innocent being, a being who only went about doing good, a being made higher than the heavens—surely they ought to have mourned for him 'as one mourneth for his only son, and to be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born.'" But suppose *we* should have been consenting unto his death? Suppose *we* should have been the cause of it? Suppose his persecutors and murderers were only the instruments we employed? Then our resentment will operate nearer home, and our grief will rend our own souls. And this is the case with a real penitent. By faith he perceives and realizes his own blood-guiltiness in this awful scene; and says,

"And now the scales have left mine eyes,
Now I begin to see;
Oh! the cursed deeds my sins have done,
What murderous things they be!

"—'T were you that pulled the vengeance down
Upon his guiltless head;
Break, break, my heart! oh! burst, mine eyes,
And let my sorrows bleed!"—

And there is no true repentance but what flows from the sight of the cross.

Yet they are not only to look upon him with godly sorrow, but also with enlivening hope. For he was not only pierced by them but for them; and by his stripes they are healed. Strong consolation is necessary to meet true conviction of sin. And here it is to be found, and here only. Every other refuge will be found a refuge of lies; every other comforter a miserable comforter. But that which satisfies the righteousness of God may well satisfy the alarmed and afflicted conscience of the sinner. We have redemption through his blood; and this blood cleanseth us from all sin. We oppose to the number and heinousness of our offences the infinite value of the sacrifice. We are reconciled unto God by the death of his Son. This death we plead, and are accepted in the Beloved; and we joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.

We look on him also, and derive submission from the sight. The Apostle tells us to "consider him" as a sufferer, lest we "be weary and faint in our minds." His cross is the tree by which the bitter waters in the wilderness are healed. His death has redeemed us from the curse of the law; and nothing penal is left in any of our trials. The most painful of them are only the medicines of our heavenly Physician; the corrections of a loving Father. They are blessings in disguise. Are we tempted to despond or complain at our afflictions? What are our endurings compared with his?—

We look on him also to excite and inflame our zeal. Many motives to obedience are mentioned in the Scriptures, and therefore it cannot be improper to be influenced by them. Yet the purest and the most powerful motive is drawn from the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. And the first Christians owned and felt it. The love of Christ, says Paul, constraineth us to live not to ourselves but him that died for us and rose again. The divinity is equal to the poetry, when the bard of night sings—

"—O bleeding Calvary,
The true morality is love of thee."

Hear Hervey—In a letter dated Weston-Favell, May 6th, 1748, he writes thus to a person he had befriended. "With regard to the little assistance which I have contributed, and which Mrs. ——— thinks worthy of her acknowledgments; I beg of her to observe, that it is owing, wholly owing, to her adored Redeemer. To him, to him alone, she is obliged—if there be an obligation in the case, for this friendly donation. He has been pleased to command this instance of my gratitude for his unspeakably tender mercies to my soul. He has been pleased to declare that he will look upon such a piece of kindness as done to his own blessed self. This makes me, this makes all believers, glad to embrace every such occasion of showing our thankfulness to our infinitely condescending, gracious Lord. The action which Mrs. ——— calls generous, does not arise, as she expresses it, from any innate nobleness of mind. I remember the time when this heart was as hard as the flint, and these hands tenacious even to avarice. But it is Jesus, the quickening Spirit, and the lover of souls, who has made your friend to differ from his natural self. If the flinty heart is melted into compassion, it is melted by a believing consideration of his most precious blood. If the avaricious hands are opened and made ready to distribute, willing to communicate, they are made so by the free grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore not unto me, not unto me, but unto the great and good Redeemer, are all the returns of gratitude due."

APRIL 9.—"Joseph of Arimathea, (being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews,) besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus." John xix. 38.

—WE may consider this man in connexion with prophecy. Though all the prophets gave him witness, no one so specially testified of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow, as Isaiah. Observe the whole of the fifty-third chapter—But it is the ninth verse that bears upon our subject. Bishop Lowth's rendering

has been universally deemed an improvement—"And his grave was appointed with the wicked, but with the rich man was his tomb." Here it is clearly intimated that there would be an instance of overruling providence. Had the common and natural course of things taken place, he would have been buried with other malefactors in Golgotha, the place of a skull. *There* were thrown the bodies of the two thieves—but had his been thrown there, the prediction could not have been verified. But the word was gone out of God's mouth, and was firmer than heaven and earth. And if we turn from the prophecy to the history, we shall see how, though his grave was likely to have been with the wicked, yet with the rich man *was* his tomb. "When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple: he went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered. And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed." Let this induce and enable us to confide in the word of God more fully and more firmly. It is a tried word. For near six thousand years it has been continually put to the test; and it has always been found faithful—"The Scripture cannot be broken."

We may consider Joseph of Arimathea in reference to his rank in life. He was "a rich man." How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! Yet we here see the camel drawn through the eye of the needle: for what is impossible with men is possible with God. He was "an honourable counsellor." Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. Have any of the rulers believed on him? Suppose they have not? Is all goodness or sense confined to them? The common people gave much better proof even of their wisdom and taste than those who despised them; "the common people heard him gladly"—But we answer, yes; some of the rulers have believed on him: witness Joseph of Arimathea; and Nicodemus. The wife of Herod's steward followed Jesus; we read in the Acts, of honourable women not a few; and in the Epistles, of saints in Cæsar's household. We find Abraham rich and powerful enough to furnish from his own family four hundred armed men. Godliness once rode in the second chariot of Egypt: and led Daniel, the prime minister of one hundred and twenty-seven provinces, to retire three times a day for praise and prayer: and in all ages there have been some instances of piety in the higher walks of life. There have indeed been few enough to show that the cause of Christ has not depended on them, while they have been numerous enough to confute the prejudice that religion is only suited to the ignorant and vulgar.

We may also view this man in connexion with his infirmity and imperfection. The Jews had passed a decree that if any man confessed Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue. Hence many who believed on him, yet feared to confess him. This was for some time the case with Joseph. He was "a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews." "The fear of man bringeth a snare." It is this that leads many to ask, not whether such a thing be right; but what will people think and say of me if I adopt it?

It is this that keeps many from following their convictions, and acknowledging what they *know* to be the truth. But we ought faithfully to adhere to the dictates of conscience; and not only *be* Christians, but appear such, confessing with the mouth, as well as believing with the heart; and remembering that if we are ashamed of Christ, he will be also ashamed of us. We do not therefore justify Joseph in this part of his conduct. Yet let us remember—That some individuals, owing to their stations and connexions, have difficulties in religion to contend with which others know nothing of, or they would feel and pray for those they are now perhaps only disposed to censure and condemn—That grace operates in various degrees—and that between the beginning and the progress of its work in the soul there may be as great a difference as between the mustard seed and the mustard tree. And—That we may hope the Lord has more disciples than we are aware of, only they are kept back from our observation by things blamable in themselves, yet compatible with sincerity. Little did Elijah think, when he said, I am left alone, that there were seven thousand men who had not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. Little did the Apostles imagine their Lord had a secret yet real disciple in Joseph of Arimathea.

Therefore again observe this man in the increase and development of his Christian principle. For he now shows himself openly, and acts a noble and distinguished part. The effect was owing to the death of Jesus—This did more than his miracles and preaching—This does every thing to purpose in the divine life—Hence our strength as well as comfort—"I, if I be lifted up from the cross, will draw all men unto me."—Prudence would have said forbear. You will involve yourself in trouble and expense. You will draw upon yourself suspicion. You will excite prejudice. You will injure your usefulness—Besides, he is now dead, and what good can you do his remains? But Joseph confers not with flesh and blood. It required no little zeal and courage to own a regard for one that had been judicially executed under the charge of blasphemy and sedition—to come forward and publicly ask for his body—to give it an honourable interment in his own garden and his own tomb, which had never yet been used. This was more than identifying himself with the malefactor; it was doing him honour to the utmost. It was far surpassing his Apostles: they had all forsaken him, and disowned their master dying and dead. But this man goes forth to him without the camp, bearing his reproach, and braving every danger; for he now feels that perfect love that casteth out fear.

Let us not decide upon the character of persons too soon. Let us not give them up because of some present weaknesses, much influenced perhaps by peculiar circumstances. Let us not despise the day of small things. We have often seen, in the experience of the bruised reed and the smoking flax, judgment brought forth to victory: and we are confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. How delightful to see persons proving better than our fears, and far surpassing all our hopes! What changes in our views and feelings sometimes render us a wonder to

others, and perhaps also to ourselves! How unlike may the present be to the future! In the days of Queen Mary, when so many were put to death for denying the doctrine of transubstantiation—that Moloch at whose shrine so many victims have been immolated, a poor man was convicted and sentenced to be burnt alive. In his way to the place of execution, he was very pensive and depressed. But when he came in sight of the stake, overpowered for the time with fear, he involuntarily exclaimed, “Oh! I cannot burn! I cannot burn!” Some of the priests, supposing he wished to recant, immediately approached and addressed him. This however was not his design; but he wanted more of that confidence and consolation which would enable him to endure becomingly the fiery trial. He was left some minutes to himself, during which in great earnestness and agony of spirit, he prayed that God would manifest himself more clearly to his mind—When God so shone in upon his soul, that raising and clapping his hands, he cried with a loud voice—“*Now I can burn!—Now I can burn!*”

APRIL 10.—“Because I live, ye shall live also.”—John xiv. 19.

WE are seldom sufficiently struck with individual importance. We are all in a state of connexion with, and dependance upon each other, like the members of the human frame, in which one part cannot say to another, I have no need of thee; and where even those members which seem to be more feeble are necessary to the welfare of the whole body. But there are persons who seem to be the very life of the cause or the community to which they belong. Place them in a state of danger, and you awaken a thousand sympathies and anxieties. Remove that monarch, and the extensive empire founded by his valour and skill is crushed at once, or crumbled by degrees to nothing. Remove that minister, and the congregation he has by his talents attracted and formed, is divided, diminished, and dispersed. Remove the head of that family, and two tender relations are immediately produced, the widow and the fatherless, and both reduced to perplexity and distress; it may be to want and oppression. Yet in all these instances the dependance is not absolute, and the consequences admit of much exception and limitation. Empires have flourished when monarchs have fallen. Congregations have continued when ministers have finished their course. Families have been provided for when the husband and the father have been taken away—But here is a Being upon whom hangs all the glory of his Father’s house. He is indispensably and infinitely necessary to a multitude which no man can number. *Is he alive or dead? If he be dead we are for ever undone. If he be alive we are safe, we are happy, we are made for eternity! And what is his own language? “Because I live, ye shall live also.”*

By his life here, though spoken of as present, because of its nearness and certainty, he means his life after his resurrection; and to this the Apostle refers when he says, “If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.” Of this life we think comparatively too little, not considering—that it was expe-

dient for us that he went away—that he not only died for us, but rose again—that he is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour—that he is carrying on in heaven the same cause that brought him down to earth. There will be indeed a close to this at the end of the economy, when he will deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, and God shall be all in all: but at present he is leading not only a life of glory but of office, and will continue applying on the throne, the redemption he procured on the cross, till he shall appear the second time without sin unto the complete salvation of his people. It would be easy to show how the life of his people in their justification, sanctification, and glorification, depends on the living Saviour; but we see also that their life is insured and secured by his—“*Because I live, ye shall live also.*”

The certainty of the result is founded in three principles. First, the union subsisting between him and them. Secondly, the claim he has to urge on their behalf, having suffered and died for them. And thirdly, the all-sufficiency he possesses to meet all their exigences. We cannot infer the safety and welfare of a person merely from the regard of his friend; for however intensely his friend may love him, he may be unable to succour and defend him. But the ability of the Saviour is equal to his readiness to help us. His love passeth knowledge, and has the command of unbounded resources—he is mighty to save—able to save to the uttermost those that come unto God by him. Jacob supposed Joseph was dead; but he was alive, and the prime minister of Egypt, and all the stores of the realm were at his disposal; and because he lived his family lived also. And we have an intercessor for us, an advocate with the Father, a relation who loved us so as to bleed and die for us, who has power over all flesh, who has all power in heaven and in earth, and is head over all things unto the Church, which is his body. How can we perish for want while in him all fulness dwells? In what perils can his defence fail us? “Fear not,” says he, “I am the first and the last; I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.”

“How can I die while Jesus lives,
Who rose and left the dead?
Pardon and grace my soul receives
From mine exalted Head.”

APRIL 11.—“God maketh my heart soft.”—Job xxiii. 16.

WE may consider God’s softening the heart three ways. There is a soft heart derived from constitution—Thus he makes the heart soft as the God of nature. There is a soft heart derived from affliction—Thus he makes the heart soft as the God of Providence. There is a soft heart derived from renovation—Thus he makes the heart soft as the God of grace.

Let us now attend to the first of these. We are fearfully and wonderfully made; and while there is a general sameness, there is also a remarkable variety in the human race naturally. It seems strange that any should deny this, and endeavour to account for every variation and inequality from the operation of causes subsequently to birth. Events and circumstances have unquestionably a

mighty influence in forming the character; and in elevating or depressing, in rousing or checking, the powers of the individual: but surely there is some difference previously to the existence or want of excitement and development. We cannot suppose that any similar mode of training would have made Johnson Shakspeare, or Shakspeare Johnson. Some are naturally bold, forward, and loquacious. Others are timid, retreating, and slow of speech. The meal out of which some are kneaded seems leavened with laudanum; while mercury seems infused into the very frame of others, and they are all vigour and motion. How unimpressible are some! It matters not where they are, all places and all scenes are nearly the same to them; they are insensible to every thing that can strike the senses, imagination, and passions. But—and you may see it in children—take others, and you find their curiosity is awakened, their fear excited, their hope inflamed, according to the quality of what comes in contact with them; and their feelings respond to every pleasing or painful occurrence.

We are not able to determine physically the cause of this constitutional sensibility; it requires far more knowledge than we possess or can probably acquire. Neither is it necessary to attempt absolutely to decide whether this softness of heart be upon the whole desirable or advantageous. We must not in this case arraign the sovereign pleasure of God, any more than in our form or our stature by saying, Why hast thou made me thus? Nor should we forget that religion adapts itself to every peculiarity of natural formation and complexion. It has scenery for the imaginative, secrets for the inquisitive, depths for the profound, argument for the reasoning, and facts for the busy and simple; it has active engagements for the daring and zealous; and retirement and gentleness for the meek; it allures some, and some it saves with fear. There is nothing also in the world purely natural, but the Maker of all things has, so to speak, balanced or qualified; levying some tax upon what is admired and envied, and connecting some redeeming quality, or some power of compensation, with every disadvantage. Certain states or qualities therefore abstractedly considered, cannot prove how much the subjects of them actually suffer or enjoy.

The tenderness of which we are speaking certainly gives a quickness to the sensations of the individual, so that he admits more misery than another; but he feels also more happiness. Such a man incurs indeed many a pang by his sensibility, but then he is capable of a thousand pleasures which others know not of. He has indeed less peace, but more enjoyment; and his exquisite indulgences, with the altercations of sadness—in which too *he* often feels a strange kind of satisfaction and luxury, are far better than the stagnant pool, or the dull unvarying level of dulness and unfeeling sameness. I would rather be a sensitive plant than a fungus. Who would as a traveller, be cased from head to foot in leather, to escape the inconvenience of a few gnats and briers, and lose the liberty and gratifications of the journey?

All must allow that this sensibility renders the possessor amiable. Men are commonly ashamed of being seen in tears. But true greatness is always tender and sympathetic. Homer that just observer of nature, makes no scruple to represent Ulysses—his best of

men; and Achilles—his bravest of men, frequently weeping. Jonathan and David were the most heroical young men of the age; yet they wept on each other's neck, till each exceeded. Yea, we read that the Lord of all wept at the grave of Lazarus. What can equal beauty in tears? The moment a female appears devoid of tenderness, she wants an excellence so essential that nothing can atone for in her; and though she may possess talent, and retain the dress of the sex, she forfeits the honourable and endeared name of woman.

It will also be acknowledged that this sensibility prepares persons for usefulness. In numberless cases where the relief and comfort of our fellow-creatures are concerned, many are not excited and constrained to act, because they do not feel.

APRIL 12.—“God maketh my heart soft.”—Job xxiii. 14.

THERE is a soft heart derived from affliction—Thus God maketh the heart soft as the God of Providence.

To this Job immediately refers. “For God maketh my heart soft, and the Almighty troubleth me, because I was not cut off before the darkness, neither hath he covered the darkness from my face.”

Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward. But we shall not enlarge upon the multitude and variety; the sources, kinds, and degrees of human sufferings in this vale of tears. And we shall turn away as soon as possible from those who seem insensible under their trials, and despise the chastening of the Lord. When God strikes them, they strike again; and repair in their calamity to places of sin or dissipation, to drown all sense of sorrow. Of this temper were those of whom Jeremiah complained: “Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return.” The judgments of God which befall some men are like blows inflicted upon wild beasts, which instead of taming, enrage them the more. Isaiah describes some incorrigible rebels as saying, in their pride and stoutness of heart, “the bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stones; the sycamores are cut down, but we will change them into cedars.” And we read that Hiel, the daring re-builder of Jericho, not only disregarded the threatening of Joshua, but even when one half of it was fulfilled, he went on still in his trespasses, and having “laid the foundation thereof in Abiram his first-born, set up the gates thereof in his youngest son Segub.” Thus many if not verbally yet practically express a determination to proceed in an evil course, notwithstanding obvious and repeated discouragements and checks thrown in their way. Ahab was reduced very low, “yet in the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the Lord.” And God brands him with infamy, that all future ages may know that this was the desperate wretch who, when the Edomites, and the Philistines, and the Assyrians, were upon him even then he provoked a greater adversary than all, and would fight against God—“This is that king Ahab.” And is even this a peculiar case? Can nothing

of this kind deservedly stigmatize you?—"This is the man who when desolated in his circumstances, bereaved of his connexions, and more than once the subject of disease, instead of humbling himself under the mighty hand of God, waxed worse and worse, and proceeded from evil to evil."

But in a general way, when people come into trouble, they feel, feel seriously and softened. But what is the result? It is three-fold. First—It often wears off, and the effect produced is like the morning cloud and early dew that passeth away. Oh what a difference has there frequently been between the same persons in sickness and health! They "howled upon their beds." "They poured out a prayer when his chastening hand was upon them." O "let my soul live and it shall praise thee." And "spare me a little longer." "I will not offend any more." And they added to their prayer confessions, resolves, and vows. But no sooner were they raised up and set free, than they returned again to folly, and endeavour to drive from their minds the remembrance of what could only charge them with inconsistency, and clothe them with shame. Pharaoh after every plague cried, I have sinned; entreat the Lord for me; but when there was respite he hardened his heart.

Secondly—As this softening is frequently transient, so it is sometimes fatal. It seems indeed wonderful that those who know nothing of the grace of God, should often bear their troubles as they do; and that they are not always driven by the heavy pressure of anguish to distraction or despair. And so it is with not a few. They droop and sink in the day of adversity; and are swallowed up of over much sorrow. They verify the words of the Apostle; "The sorrow of the world worketh death"—It deprives them of reputation, subjects them to contempt, deprives them of support, preys upon their health, breaks down their spirits: and the sufferer gradually drops into the grave, or by self destruction is hurried from the evils of time into those of eternity—for whatever he endured here was only the beginning of sorrows. Oh how desirable is it when the heart is wounded to apply to it the balm of Gilead! and when it is softened to give it the impression of heaven! And;

Thirdly—This is sometimes the case, and the heart by suffering is softened to purpose, and the man can say with David, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." As therefore when I see the smith putting a bar of iron into the fire, I conclude he is going to work upon it, and form it for some useful purpose, which could not be done while it was cold and hard; so I always look prayerfully and hopefully towards a man when the Lord brings him into trouble. Manasseh in his distress sought the God of his father, and found him. The famine made the Prodigal think of home, and he was starved back into a return. The Grecian said, I should have been lost had I not been lost. And there are those now living who can say, I should have been poor had I not been impoverished. The darkening of my earthly prospects made me long after a better country, that is an heavenly. Ah! Happy unkindnesses and treacheries that said, "Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide"—it was you that induced me to say, "Therefore will I look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation, my God will hear me." Ah! vain world—

"Your streams were floating me along,
Down to the gulf of black despair ;
And while I listened to your song,
Your streams had e'en conveyed me there.

"Lord, I adore thy matchless grace,
That warned me of that dark abyas ;
That drew me from these treacherous seas,
And bid me seek superior bliss.

"Now, from the shining realms above,
I stretch my hands, and glance mine eyes
O for the pinions of a dove,
To bear me to the upper skies.

"There, from the bosom of my God,
Oceans of endless pleasures roll—
*There would I fix my last abode,
And drown the sorrows of my soul."*

APRIL 13.—"The Lord maketh my heart soft."—Job xxiii. 16.

THERE is a soft heart derived from renovation. Thus he makes the heart soft as the God of grace.

Of this the Lord speaks in the new covenant. "I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." There cannot be a greater contrast than between these substances as to feeling—but the heart before conversion is stone. And after conversion flesh. Sin hardens the heart; and whatever tenderness there may be in it with regard to other things, it has none towards the things of the Spirit, till the renewing of the Holy Ghost. But when grace makes the heart soft it will appear in the following effects.

It will melt with sorrow for sin. Many are afraid of hell; but they are not affected with the sin that leads to it. Sin is the last thing some people think of; but it is the first thing with the penitent—"My sin is ever before me." And this is the case even in affliction; even then sin oppresses more than trouble. This is the burden too heavy for him to bear. After the loss of an only son, a good woman once said, "Under this loss I have shed many tears for my son, but many more for my sin." Thus Ephraim was heard bemoaning himself; and what was the subject of his complaint? Not his suffering—but his incorrigibleness under it: "Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke—I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth—turn thou me and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God." And what is the divine promise? "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born." And repentance never flows so freely, and we never so much sorrow after a godly sort as when we are led to the cross and view the Saviour dying not only by us but for us.

When the heart is made soft it will be pliant to the word of truth. An instance of this is mentioned in the experience of Josiah. "Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and

against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me; I also have heard thee, saith the Lord." It is the general character of the subjects of divine grace that they "tremble at his word." The sinner sits before among the threatenings of God, as Solomon sat between his twelve lions unalarmed because they were dead. But faith enlivens them and makes them roar; and he now cries, "What must I do to be saved?" Yet we are not to imagine that he feels the divine menaces only; the promises so exceeding great and precious equally awaken his apprehensions. Oh! says he, if I miss them, and come short at last! How many feelings will the reading of one chapter, or the hearing of one sermon, excite in the soul of such a man! The Bible is his only rule, and his only judge. He dares not trifle with its contents; nor question its declarations. He yields himself to its authority without asking how can these things be; and receives with meekness the engrafted word which is able to save the soul.

If the heart be made soft we shall be compassionate towards others. Are our fellow-creatures in penury? We shall have bowels and mercies; and not say, Go in peace; be ye warmed, and be ye filled, while we give them not such things as are needful for the body. Are their souls desolate within them? We shall weep with them that weep. Are they in ignorance? In meekness we shall instruct them. Have they fallen? In meekness we shall endeavour to restore them; hating the sin, but pitying the sinner. Have they offended and injured us? We shall not be revengeful or implacable; but tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us.

Such a heart is also very sensible of the divine goodness. The man, instead of complaining of what he wants, wonders at what he possesses and enjoys. He feels that he is unworthy of the least of all his mercies. What claims have I upon him? I was a poor, blind creature, but he has opened mine eyes. I was naked, and he clothed me. I was a child of wrath, and he has made me an heir of glory. What shall I render? Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.

A man whose heart God has made tender will be alive to his glory. He will mourn to hear his name blasphemed, and to see his gospel despised. He will be sorrowful for the solemn assembly, and the reproach of it will be his burden. He will be holily fearful lest he should grieve his Holy Spirit, or cause the way of truth to be evil spoken of. His glory will touch every spring of action in his soul; and he will be daily asking the Lord what wilt thou have me to do?

O what a blessing is such a heart as this! It is better than thousands of gold and silver. It prepares for all the manifestations of divine love; and it insures them.

Who feels a hard heart? The very feeling shows some sensibility. Who longs for a soft one? Let him ask of God, who is more ready to hear than we are to pray, and who "despiseth not the prayer of the destitute."

APRIL 14.—“The God of all comfort.”—2 Cor. i. 3.

How much, both as to duty and privilege, depends upon the views we entertain of “Him with whom we have to do!” And while born to trouble as the sparks fly upward, and passing through a vale of tears, and feeling even in our best estate some heart’s bitterness—for “full bliss is bliss divine;” what can be more encouraging and delightful than to regard him as “THE GOD OF ALL COMFORT?”

And how well does he deserve this beneficent title! Every comfort we have in the creature is from him. If sleep comforts us when we are weary, or food comforts us when we are hungry, it is from his goodness. If when he sendeth abroad his ice like morsels and none can stand before his cold, we have houses to defend us, raiment to cover us, fuel to warm us, it is from him. When the spring returns, whose sun calls us to go forth into the fields and gardens? Who regales all our senses? Who charms the ear with these melodies? the eye with these colours? the smell with these perfumes? and the appetite with these tastes? Who gives us those benign and joyous and grateful sensations which we feel when the lambs sport themselves? and the apple-tree is dressed among the trees of the wood? and the hay appeareth? and the full corn waves in the ear? and the reaper fills his hand, and he that bindeth sheaves his bosom? and the little hills rejoice on every side? and the year is crowned with his goodness?

Who has not by accident or disease been confined to the chamber of weariness and pain; and who by the sympathies, attentions, and soothing of the tenderest friendship, has comforted you upon the bed of languishing, and made all your bed in your sickness? And who when the graves were ready for you, and you said, I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world, Who comforted you by the return of ease, the re-glowing of health, the renewal of your strength, the resumption of your liberty—so that all your bones said, “Who is a God like unto Thee?”

Has a friend like ointment and perfume rejoiced your heart by the sweetness of his counsel? or has a minister been the helper of your faith and joy? The Lord gave him the tongue of the learned, that he should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary. God comforted you by the coming of Titus.

The heathens made idols of every thing that afforded them relief and comfort; and thus they loved and served the creature more than the Creator. Let us not resemble them; but remember that whatever may be the medium of our comfort, God is the only source of it. Thus the instrument instead of seducing us from God, will be a conductor to him; and the stream will lead us to the “fountain of life.” God will not give his glory to another; and we cannot affront him more than by substituting any thing in the place of him. This will provoke him to strike the idol that robs him of his praise out of the way; or cause him by disappointing us in the moment of application to say, “Am I in God’s stead? If the Lord help thee not, whence should I help thee?” If we will not make him our trust, he will make that whereon we lean to smite us. He can take comfort out of all our possessions and enjoyments, so that in the midst of our sufficiency we shall be in straits, and with cheerfulness

on every side walk in silence and sadness, like a ghost among the tombs. What Job calls his friends, "physicians of no value," "miserable comforters," will apply to all our dependencies and expectations separate from God. Even in laughter the heart will be sorrowful. Our successes, like the quails of the Jews, will poison us while they gratify: our prosperity will destroy us: and at the end of our days the fool and the wretch will acknowledge the truth of Jonah's confession, "they that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercies; salvation is of the Lord."

True comfort is to be found in God only; in the hope of his mercy; in the evidence of his friendship; in the freedom of his service; in the comforts of the Holy Ghost. But they who seek it in him shall not be confounded. He has insured to those who flee for refuge to this hope, strong consolation, by a promise confirmed by an oath; and what he promises he is able to perform. Nothing is too hard for the Lord. No depth of distress is below his reach. He can create comfort when there is nothing to derive it from. He can extract it out of the most unlikely materials. He can bring order out of confusion, strength out of weakness, light out of darkness.

Sufferer! think of *Him*! It is his prerogative and delight to "comfort them that are cast down." Why should you faint or despond? Are the consolations of God small with thee? Does not *He* say, "*I, even I, am he that comforteth thee?*"

Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief. "Thou, which hast showed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth. Thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side."

APRIL 15.—"Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy Spirit from me."—Psalm li. 11.

WE may see what David prized by what he deprecates. There were many calamities at the thought of which his heart might have trembled. He could remember how God for his disobedience had punished his predecessor Saul, and had rent the kingdom from him. He knew how God by Nathan had threatened himself; and he could not help feeling the announcement, that the child should die, and the sword never depart from his house. Yet he does not say, O let me escape the rod—do not deprive me of my throne—or involve my family in trouble and disgrace. This is what many would have implored. But David prays, "Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy Spirit from me." They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; and thus it is with men of the world; they are satisfied as long as their friends and health, their corn and wine, abound. Tell them of the hiding of God's countenance, and the loss of the comforts of the Holy Ghost, and they know not your meaning, and are ready to treat you with scorn or pity. They judge of every thing by a fallacious standard. "Evil men understand not judgment: but they that seek the Lord understand all things." *They* weigh every claim in the balance of the sanctuary. They walk by faith and not by sight. No evils therefore appear to them like those which regard the welfare of the soul and eternity.

And their judgment is founded in truth. The most awful evils are spiritual evils. And these are more peculiar to the dispensation under which we live. Temporal judgments were common under the law, when offenders were often punished immediately, sensibly, visibly. We see this in the case of Lot's wife, Miriam, Uzzah, and many others recorded in the Old Testament. But under the Gospel inflictions are more spiritual. Here men are given up to a hard heart, a reprobate mind, a seared conscience; to vile affections; to strong delusion; to believe a lie. The spirit of slumber falls upon them. The word and ordinances of religion become barren and unprofitable. By the fascinations of error they are so bewitched that they cannot obey the truth. Yet they are easy. For these are judgments that do not alarm; it is the very nature of them to stupefy. Oh! it would be a thousand times better to lose all your substance and beg your bread from door to door; a thousand times better to be robbed of health, and never enjoy another hour of ease, than for God thus to punish you. And though you will not and ought not to pray for sufferings absolutely, if you are like-minded with David you will be willing that God should deal with you in any way rather than say, "He is joined to idols, let him alone"—And this will be your most earnest prayer: "Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy Spirit from me."

But was David in danger of this? We do not like to get rid of an apparent difficulty by denying a revealed truth. And such appears to us the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints. We are therefore confident of this very thing, that he who has begun a good work in them will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. Yet first, the effect deprecated may take place in a measure and degree. God was provoked to leave Hezekiah in the business of the ambassadors of Babylon, and it showed what was in his heart. And God may be so grieved as to suspend the comforts of the Holy Ghost, and all joy and peace in believing. And secondly, by yielding to temptation, a partaker of divine grace may be reduced to such a state of darkness and horror and anguish, as to apprehend God's entire abandonment of him for ever. This was David's case. His fall had broken his bones, closed his lips, deprived him of the joy of God's salvation, and made him fear that he was cut off from before his eyes.

Such an evil and bitter thing is it to sin against God. So surely will our backslidings reprove us. If his children walk not in my judgments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod. Nevertheless, my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. The way to walk comfortably is to walk consistently. I am always sorry to see some professors so calm and happy as they are. With their levity of temper, and vain conversation, and worldly conformities, and neglect of the means of grace—were they the Lord's people, surely he would show that they are not walking so as to please him. Them that honour me, I will honour. Blessed is the man that feareth always.

APRIL 16.—“Ye were as sheep going astray.”—1 Pet. ii. 25.

THE words seem to be, if not a quotation from, yet an allusion to the language of Isaiah—“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way.” If there be truth in this supposition, two things are asserted by the prophet which are not repeated by the Apostle. The one is, the *universality* of the charge—All we like sheep have gone astray. There is no difference between Jew and Greek. The Scripture has proved all under sin. The other is, the *diversification* of the depravity—We have turned every one to his *own way*. Though all are guilty, each has some particular iniquity to which he is attached, by his constitutional complexion or his outward circumstances. And here it is that many are deluded. They flatter themselves by comparison, and are satisfied because they are free from some crimes chargeable upon others; not considering that they also are wanderers, only in another road. A straight line is always the same; but there are millions of crooked ones. There was only one ark by which any could be saved; but there were numberless abysses in which they could be drowned. Nothing, says a good writer, is more lamentable, than to hear people who are all wrong disputing among themselves which is right. Yet this is common. But the lover of pleasure and the lover of gold; the profligate and the pharisaical; the open offender and the close hypocrite; the superstitious Papist and the formal Protestant, are all in the same condition with regard to their safety. Let us remember that the Scripture is our only rule of judgment, and that it matters not what we think of ourselves, or others think of us—if we are destitute of faith in Christ and true holiness. “He that believeth not the Son hath not life:” and “without holiness no man shall see the Lord.”

The words are a metaphor; a metaphor often used by the sacred writers, and therefore just and pertinent. Indeed nothing can be more significant of the danger and misery of a sinner than a strayed sheep. The welfare of the sheep depends on the care of the shepherd. If they wander beyond his protecting arm, they are liable to be destroyed by beasts of prey; or if they leave his pasturage they are likely to perish for want of food: for though they can go astray of themselves they cannot defend themselves, nor provide for themselves, or of themselves find their way back. They are therefore lost unless sought after. The metaphors of the Scripture, however, though strong in their allusion, are often only partial. But they are more forcible by being limited; for by stretching a comparison to reach every thing, we weaken it as well as render it ridiculous. Sheep in going astray are not guilty, but they would be criminal and deserving all they suffered, if they were possessed of reason, and after having been under the superintendence of the kindest shepherd, and allowed to want no good thing, they should knowingly abandon him, and wilfully incur every kind of peril and wretchedness. And is not this the emblem of our conduct? Did not God make man upright? Did not the inspiration of the Almighty give him understanding? Was he not placed in a condition of safety, peace, and happiness? Was he not fenced in by divine commands? Ap-

prized of the consequences of going astray? And warned against them?—Yet astray he went!

And thus we reach the fact which the words were intended to express—the natural state of men as alienated from the life of God—They are as sheep going astray. They go astray from their duty to God. Thus they forsake him as their Lord and owner. As he made them, and gave them all their powers, possessions, and enjoyments, they are bound to serve and obey him: but they prefer their own will to his authority, and live in the violation of his laws which are all holy and just and good. They go astray from their happiness in God. Thus they forsake him as their portion, following after rest and satisfaction apart from the supreme good. All wish for happiness; but where do they naturally seek it? In the pleasures of sin, in the dissipations of the world, in science, fame, riches, power, friendship. They do not seek it in the favour, the image, the presence, the service of God. They wish to be happy without God. They ask, "Who will show us any good?" but do not pray, "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us." If ever they go to God, it is when fear or affliction urges them. Do they delight themselves in the Almighty? Do they always call upon God? They go astray from their recovery by God. Thus they forsake him as their Saviour; who, instead of abandoning them when they departed from him, remembered them in their low estate, and provided means the most suitable and adequate for their restoration. He spared not his own Son, but gave him up as a propitiation for their sins. He sends them the gospel; beseeches them by his ministers; and urges the message by a thousand motives—But they make light of it: they turn away from him that speaketh, and neglect so great salvation. Yea, they oppose it; and if ever they think of returning to God, it is by a way of their own devising in preference to his. They go about to establish their own righteousness, instead of submitting themselves to the righteousness which is of God; and act in their own strength, instead of being strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus; thus frustrating him in his greatest delight, and robbing him of his highest glory.

Reflect upon each of these: and remember, Christian, this was once your own state. Look back; and acknowledge that ye yourselves also were once foolish and disobedient. But *after* this the loving-kindness of God our Saviour, towards you, appeared. If you are justified, you were once condemned: if alive, you were once dead: if found, you were once lost. How happy that you can be addressed as those who were once going astray, but are *now* returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls!

APRIL 17.—"He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified."—Heb. ii. 11.

THE Apostle here speaks of Christ and of Christians as concerned in the same work, but differently concerned. He is the agent, they are the subjects—He sanctifieth, and they are sanctified. We are not however to suppose that in this work they are passive; or that he acts upon them as a mechanic operates upon stone and wood, which are insensible and unconscious of the process. He does not sanctify them without their knowledge, and consent, and choice, and

exertion. According to his good pleasure he works in them to *will* and to *do*. He makes them the instruments, as well as the subjects; and so engages them, that the work is represented as their work as well as his. Hence it is enjoined, as well as promised, and we are called upon to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit; and are assured that he who has the hope of Christ in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

But there is no inconsistency here. We believe, but he enables us to believe. We exercise repentance, but he gives us repentance unto life. We bear the fruit, but it is the fruit of the Spirit, and in him is all our fruit found—and therefore we are called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord that *he* may be glorified.

To sanctify admits of two imports. The first is separation or setting apart from common to sacred use. Thus the tabernacle and all the vessels of the sanctuary under the law, were sanctified. No change took place in their qualities, but only in their appropriation and use—They were sanctified by *consecration*. And there are some who contend that in this sense only are we sanctified by the purpose of God. To plead for a real change of nature, for a growth in grace, or for any thing in ourselves, though not derived from ourselves, is legal, genders to bondage, and obscures the glory of the Gospel. So it was always. Jude tells us of ungodly men who turn the grace of our God into lasciviousness: and James mentions those who relied on a faith without works, and which was dead, being alone. This sense of sanctification indeed applies to the people of God, but it involves another. “The Lord hath set apart him that is *godly* for himself.” “God hath from the beginning chosen them to salvation, *through* sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth.”

The second meaning therefore is *renovation*—Hence we read of being renewed in the spirit of our minds; of being made partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the pollutions of the world through lust. There is a real operation in all the subjects of divine grace, which delivers them from the power of darkness; and destroys the love of sin; and renders true holiness their delight and pursuit. Paul therefore says, “Be ye transformed by the renewing of the mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God”—The latter depends upon the former. We cannot be consecrated to God till we are renovated. The reason is that by nature we are depraved, and have no love to God or concern to please him. But when this divine change takes place, then what God purposed is actually exemplified, and we dedicate ourselves to him, considering ourselves as no longer our own, and using all we are, and all we have, to his service and in his praise.

Hence sanctification is more than natural amiableness, outward reformation, and mere morality. Morality does not include holiness, but holiness includes morality, and makes provision for it in the surest and noblest way.

Sanctification too is not confined to any particular faculty, but extends to the whole nature of man. We read of being sanctified wholly, body, soul, and spirit. The work is not finished in any part, but it is begun in every part. There is a difference between the operations of art and of life. The progress of the former is succes-

sional, the latter simultaneous. The painter or the sculptor, while advancing one part of the picture or the statue, leaves for the time the rest: but in a flower and a tree the whole goes on at once towards maturity. The child is not a man, but he has all the lineaments and faculties, and though they are imperfect, they grow together to manhood in due time—So it is with the Christian.

How defective are they in their religious views and concerns who do not look to the Lord Jesus as the Sanctifier as well as the Redeemer! If I wash thee not, says he, thou hast no part in me. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.

APRIL 18.—“Casting all your care upon him.”—1 Pet. v. 7.

To understand this injunction two remarks will be necessary.

First, The Apostle refers to cares pertaining to the life that now is. As to the affairs of the life to come, we are not only permitted but required to be careful. Yea, we are commanded to “seek first,” that is, before all other things, “the kingdom of God and his righteousness.” And it is to enable us to pursue these objects in a manner becoming their importance, that other cares are forbidden. Yet,

Secondly, The Apostle does not design, even in temporal interests, to dispense with a wise use of means and a strict attention to duty. For these are encouraged in other parts of Scripture, and every word of God is pure. “The hand of the diligent maketh fat.” “The prudent man foreseeth evil and hideth himself; but the simple pass on and is punished.” “Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.” Hence also the general caution. “Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established.” If professors of religion, therefore, under a notion of casting all their care upon the Lord, neglect exertion, refuse opportunities of improving their condition, and in their expenses exceed their income, they are tempting God, but not trusting in him. And Paul, a very compassionate man, made no scruple to enjoin, “If any will not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy-bodies. Now them that are such, we command and exhort, by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread. But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing.” Jacob had to meet his brother Esau, who was coming towards him in the fury of revenge. But what does he? He does all that his means would admit, or his prudence could dictate. He divides his company, sends forward a present, studies a soft answer which turneth away wrath; and *then* retires and casts all his care on him who cared for him, and made even his enemy to be at peace with him. Why did not his father and mother throw Moses into the river at once? God could have easily preserved him, and the deliverance would have been the more remarkable. But as if every thing depended upon their diligence and precaution, they hide him as long as possible, and then build a little ark, and pitch it within and without, and when the vehicle is

left in the hands, the sister is stationed to watch any favourable issues; and in *doing this* they cast all their care upon him who cared for them, and turned the shadow of death into the morning. Miracles were never mere displays of power; nor ever were they needlessly performed, or excessive in their degree and extent. Thus our Lord prepared a fish to furnish money for the temple-tax; yet he did not supernaturally transport it through the air and lay it upon the table; but ordered Peter to go to the sea and cast in his hook. And when the angel had done what was really out of Peter's power, opened the iron gates and loosened his fetters, he yet told him to put on his sandals and mantle, and follow him: for *this* he *could* do; and why should the angel carry him forth in his arms or on his shoulder?

But though you are not to cast your *work* upon the Lord, you are to cast your *care*. For though duty is yours, events are his. But when you have diligently and properly used the means, you are not to be of a doubtful mind, or to yield to fretfulness and impatience; but to commit your way unto the Lord, and leave the concern with him. If we go forward into the world of imagination, and busy ourselves about contingencies, we invade the Lord's province, and weary ourselves for very vanity. Who by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? But he can take away one. He can injure himself though he cannot benefit. The sin brings its own punishment along with it. Our anxiousness hurts our health, our temper, our peace of mind, our fitness for duty and devotion. What a wretched burden it is! Well whatever makes up the depression, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee." But how is this to be done? We are to cast all our care upon him two ways. First, by prayer. "Be careful for nothing, but in every thing, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your request be made known unto God." "Is any afflicted? Let him pray." Oh what a relief!

Secondly, by faith—A firm and influential belief of his providential agency in all our concerns; a persuasion that all his ways towards us are mercy and truth; an assurance that all things work together for good to them that love God. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee." But who has faith enough for this? Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief.

APRIL 19.—"For he careth for you."—1 Pet. v. 7.

WHATEVER the world may think, religion is wisdom; and requires nothing of its followers but a "reasonable service." The privileges of a Christian are not baseless fancies; his repentance is not an ignorant sorrow; his trust in God is not a blind presumption. He is able to give a reason of the hope that is in him; and he can justify his practice as well as his expectation. How simple and satisfactory is the motive or argument here adduced to enforce the duty enjoined: "Casting all your care upon him—for he careth for you." Our affairs cannot be left to negligence and uncertainty—Some one must manage them; and care for us. Now opposed to our own care is the care of God! And how much better is the one than the other! Our care is unavailing and unprofitable. And how

little can we add to it from any relative resource! A friend is indeed born for adversity; and such a benefactor, by counselling us in our doubts, comforting us in our sorrows, and relieving us in our necessities, is one of the greatest blessings heaven can bestow. Yet how limited as well as uncertain is human friendship! All reliance on creature help is leaning on a broken reed, or hewing out broken cisterns that can hold no water. But "blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh; but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit." Here is a divine friend and helper. *He careth for us*—Here is the case of a God engaged for us—That is of a Being possessed of infinite perfections. Here is a care attended by unerring knowledge; by almighty power; by a goodness, a kindness, a tenderness, a patience, a fidelity that knows no bounds. Surely all these advantages combined in him who careth for us, must render his care all-sufficient for every purpose, and discharge our minds from every solicitude.

But what evidence have we that he *does* care for us? The fact is certainly astonishing; and when we reflect upon God's majesty and holiness, and our meanness and unworthiness, we may well exclaim with David, "Lord, what is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him!" Or with Job, "What is man that thou shouldest magnify him; that thou shouldest set thy heart upon him; that thou shouldest visit him every morning, and try him every moment!" Yet nothing is more true. It is involved in the first essential principle of religion, and upon which all its duties are founded: for "he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." We are commanded to pray to God; but for what purpose if he takes no interest in our concerns? We are required to bless and praise him; but for what reason, if he dispenses our blessings by accident, and not from disposition and design? He also takes care for oxen. He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens that cry. He openeth his hand and satisfieth the desire of every living thing. Now we may reason from the less to the greater—And hence the Saviour says to his disciples, "Ye are of more value than many sparrows." "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?" "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" The relations in which he stands prove the same. If he professes himself to be the Shepherd, the King, the Husband, the Father of his people, will he not care for his sheep, his subjects, his bride, his offspring? His promises are exceeding great and precious, and adapted to all our wants and fears. "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry." "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through

the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Is not this the language of one that careth for us? Review his doings for proof of this; for as we have heard so have we seen in the city of our God. What says the history of his people in all generations? Who cared for Noah when the deluge was coming on, and said, Come thou and all thy house into the ark? Who cared for David, and appeared for him in all his dangers and tribulation? Who restrained the lions and the flames that they should not touch Daniel and his companions? Whose angel stood by Paul in the storm, and said, Fear not, Paul, when all hope that they should be saved was taken away? And what says your own experience? Has he not cared for you from the womb? In childhood? In youth? In manhood? In every period of life? In every condition? In every difficulty? In every distress? And having cared for you so long, will he abandon you now? Having sought you when enemies, will he forsake you now he has made you friends? Having not spared his own son, but delivered him up for you; will he withhold any good thing from you?

"But if he cared for us, why are we so afflicted?" This instead of being an objection furnishes a proof. Your trials evince his care. You are children under discipline—And if you endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not. "If ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons." The husbandman prunes the vine *because* he cares for it, and wishes it to bring forth more fruit. The artificer puts the gold into the furnace because he values and wishes to improve it.

How enviable is the portion and experience of Christians! The world indeed knoweth them not. They can only see their outward condition; and because this is often poor and afflicted, they are ready to think that they are miserable and melancholy. But how differently would they think if they could see their inward security and composure—If they could see how they rise above those changes which ruffle and terrify others—If they could see how, while the men of the earth fret and turmoil and are devoured by the sorrow of the world that worketh death, they have, even in this vale of tears, an asylum where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest, and the peace of God which passeth all understanding, keeps their hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

But alas! we often hold forth Christians as they ought to be, rather than as they are. It is lamentable that they do not more fully improve their resources, and live up to their privileges. Hence, that care which they are allowed and commanded to resign, and which their Heavenly Father and Friend is more than willing to take upon himself, they retain and even cherish, to the spoiling of their comfort: and instead of their dwelling at ease, and being in quiet from the fear of evil, they are ingenious at self-vexation, and suffer in imagination more than in reality! Lord, humble us—and forgive—and teach us to profit—and lead us in the way that we should choose.

APRIL 20.—“Consider the lilies.”—Matt. vi. 20.

SOME persons seem to have no relish for the works of nature, and therefore, “seeing many things, they observe not.” Others have a taste for every thing that is fair, and inviting, and enchanting, in the seasons of the year, and the scenery of the earth, and are never weary of walking in the forest, the meadow, and the garden. For they believe and feel that “God made the country, and man made the town.” And all applaud the judgment and sensibility they discover in distinction from those mechanical beings who are only struck with what is factitious and artificial.

Yet even here one thing more is desirable and necessary. It is that while we are pleased we should be instructed; it is that while our senses are charmed our graces should be exercised; it is that wonders should be followed with adoration, and the Christian be added to the man.

It is thus the sacred writers perpetually send us to the animal and vegetable creation for impression and improvement. And thus our Saviour addressed his hearers and said, “Consider the lilies.” There were many other flowers equally worthy of notice with the lilies: but he selected these as specimens, and probably because they were near him and in sight, for he was sitting on the side of a hill, and he mentions not the cultured lilies, but lilies “of the field.”

Consider the lilies as productions of God’s creating skill. All his works praise him; and what distinguishes *his* works so much from the operations of men is that they will bear examination, and that the more they are examined, the more they will display the wisdom of the author. Nothing can be added to them, nothing can be taken from them—“His work is perfect.” Take an artificial flower; it shows ingenuity and deceives the eye at a distance. But bring it near; observe it; compare it—and where are the life, the growth, the opening bud and blossom, the freshness, the colours, the fragrance, of the living one? We sometimes admire articles of dress. The rich man was clothed “in purple and fine linen.” They that are in king’s houses “wear soft raiment.” How exquisitely wrought are some kinds of human manufacture; and yet when you survey them through the microscope they appear in the rudeness and roughness of sackcloth. But the green and the white of the lily challenge the inspection not only of the eye, but of the glass, and compel you to exclaim, “This is the finger of God.” If those versed in mathematical science remark that they cannot go far without meeting with something infinite, how much more must this be the case with every reflecting mind, at every step he takes among the wonders of creation!

Again. Consider the lilies as objects of his providential care. This was the peculiar aim of our Lord in the admonition. He would free the minds of his disciples from all undue solicitude respecting their temporal subsistence. Therefore, says he, “Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body more than raiment?” He then refers, in his own inimitable way, to each of the necessaries of life, food, and clothing—“Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth

them. Are ye not much better than they? And why take ye thought for raiment? consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" How simple yet convincing is the inference! God does not love the birds and the flowers as he loves you. He has not bought them with an infinite price. He has not put his Spirit within them. They are not partakers of the divine nature. They are not to endure for ever. Will he take care of the less, and overlook the infinitely greater?

Consider also the lilies as emblems. First, as emblems of Christ. The image indeed comes very far short of his glory, but it will help our conceptions, and serve to remind us a little of his purity, his meekness, his loveliness, and "the savour of his knowledge:" therefore, says he, "I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys." Secondly, as emblems of Christians. In all things he must have the pre-eminence, but his people are held forth in the Scripture by the same resemblances: for there is not only a union but a conformity between them. They have the same mind which was in him. They have the image of the heavenly. And therefore to express their residence in the world, and how he values them above others, he adds, "as the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters."

Let us conclude with the words of the Church: "My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies." Thus he comes into our congregations and families, and takes to himself our dear ornaments and delights. We miss them, and sigh over the loss of pious connexions. The friend who was as my own soul, the child of my bosom, the desire of mine eyes, the guide of my youth, is taken away—and the place that once knew them, knows them no more—But *He* taketh away, and who can hinder him? The whole garden is his; and he has a right to do what he will with his own. He saw them meet for the change; and they are unspeakable gainers by the removal. Other lilies, when gathered, fade and die; but these shall bloom for ever and ever.

APRIL 21.—"That we may be fellow-helpers to the truth."—3 John i. 8.

CO-OPERATION supposes others engaged already in the same cause. Who these were we learn from the preceding words. They are called "brethren and strangers." Yet they were not private Christians, but preachers, evangelists, missionaries who travelled to spread the savour of the Redeemer's knowledge in every place—"Because for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles." The labourer is worthy of his hire; and God has ordained that they who preach the Gospel shall live of the Gospel: but these men waived their right, as Paul had done while in Corinth, that they might not seem mercenary or prove burdensome. These Gentiles too might have been indisposed to afford them reception and support. Such a readiness to come forward can hardly be expected

from persons *before* they have heard the word, so as to understand the importance of it. People do not make sacrifices for a thing they do not value; and they are not likely to value what they do not feel they need. We have seen infants at the funeral of a mother, instead of being affected with the scene, amusing themselves with the emblems of mortality; but nothing can be more affecting than this; and we have been ready to exclaim, Ah! ye dear babes, you little know the loss you have sustained, but as you grow up you will learn from experience. Does the maniac ask our pity and help? He scorns them. He sings in his confinement—it is his palace—he deems himself a king. But is he not the more entitled to our compassion on this very account? So here; none are so worthy of our merciful regard as those who are perishing for lack of knowledge, but are unaffected with their condition: and it must be our concern to make them sensible of their want. In the first instance they will not come to us—we must go to them—and we must seek, if we would save, that which is lost. They will not be at the charge of our messengers; others therefore must support them. And on whom are we to call for assistance but on those who have tasted the good work of life, and know by experience that the Gospel is the power of God to salvation. “We ought, therefore,” says John, “to receive such, that we might be fellow-helpers to the truth.”

And such was Gaius. He was not one of those that went forth to labour among those who could not or would not entertain and supply them: but when these teachers travelled that way he accommodated them in his house; he forwarded them on their journey after a godly sort; he furnished them with what was needful in their work; and encouraged them to apply to him in their exigences. In this, some may resemble him expressly by attentions and kindness to our evangelists at home: and as to our missionaries at a distance, and to whom we can have no immediate access, all can countenance and aid them by helping those societies which engage them and are responsible for their support. To do this is a duty. When persons are drawn in the militia, if they go not themselves, they must procure substitutes. All cannot go forth among the Gentiles, but we should all contribute to those who do. We should consider them as *our* agents labouring for us—for the work is *ours*—and the command is binding upon *us*, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” Nothing is to be done even in the cause of God without pecuniary aid. What an honour is conferred on property that it should be employed in the salvation of souls! Who would waste any of his resources? Who would not deny himself, to be able to become a fellow-helper to the truth that has so helped him, and can so help others? Mordecai told Esther that if she refused to exert herself for the deliverance of her people, enlargement should come from another quarter; but then she would lose the honour and blessedness of the instrumentality; and not only so, but be destroyed herself. God allows us to act in his cause; but let us not mistake the principle: he employs us for our sake, not his own. His resources are infinite: and if we decline the work, the work will not be abandoned: but we shall lose the glory and the happiness of the achievement. And who could endure the thought that in this divine undertaking he had never had any concern?

But this is not all. There is danger as well as loss. Our inaction is guilt. We neglect the use of the finest opportunity for usefulness. We hide our talent in the earth. Our indifference is rebellion to the call of God. "Who will rise up for me against the evil doers? Who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity?" "Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, Curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof, because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty."

APRIL 22.—"If God were your Father ye would love me."—John viii. 43.

SOME are so full of self-conceit and self-sufficiency, that they seem to consider themselves the standard of all worth and excellency; and are disposed to judge of others principally if not only, by their regard to *them*. If you dislike *them*, you are worthless; but just in proportion as you esteem and admire *them*, you rise in value. And such is the injustice of our fallen nature, that we are pleased with commendations which we know we do not deserve; and court praise for abilities and qualities which we are sure we do not possess.

It was not so with Christ. He was meek and lowly in heart; and if he spoke highly of himself it was not from pride and vain-glory, but from the necessity of the case. He knew himself; he knew his importance to us; and he knew that we ought to be acquainted with it. Therefore he said, "Come unto me"—"I am the light of the world"—"I am the bread of life"—"I am the way, the truth, and the life"—"This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." He knew that God's relation to us could only be determined by our regard to himself, and therefore he was authorized and required to say, "If God was your Father you would love me." There can be no doubt of this; for he that belongs to God will resemble him; he will love peculiarly what God loves peculiarly; and he will love supremely what God loves supremely: and "this," says he, "is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." "Mine elect in whom my soul delighteth." "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand."

It is a great thing to have God for our father—not by creation, in which sense all mankind are his offspring; but by adoption and regeneration. What an honour! What a blessedness! To be the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty! To have free and invited access to him! To share in all the love and pity of his heart! To be authorized to depend upon him for instruction, and correction, and defence, and support! To be heirs of God, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us!

But how are we to ascertain this privilege? By our regard to Christ—if God is our Father we love him. Now this love, though not a passion, is a real, powerful, influential principle; and it is the mainspring of action in the Christian life. There are two modes of determining our love to him. The First is to consider him relatively, and observe how we are affected towards those parts of him, so to speak, with which we are constantly coming more imme-

diately into contact. There is "the Lord's day"—Do I love this; and can I call the Sabbath a delight? There is "the word of Christ"—Can I say, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and the rejoicing of my heart?" He has a house for his name—Can I say, "I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth?" He has a seed to serve him—Do I pray, "Remember me with the favour thou bearest unto thy people." They are "the excellent of the earth"—Is all my delight in them? If I love him, I shall love every thing that is his.

The Second is to consider how our attachment to any other object affects us. If I love an object, I naturally, unavoidably, frequently, pleasantly, *think* of it. Can I love Christ and not have him much in my thoughts? If I love an object, I am led to *speaking* of it: I cannot help referring to it, and recommending it: out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. What reason have I to conclude that I love Christ, unless he often enters my discourse; and I feel myself at home while talking of his glory? If I love a friend I shall desire nearness to him, and communion with him. And how can I love Christ, unless I mourn his absence, and long after intercourse with him, especially in his ordinances—"Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon?" If I love a benefactor, I shall inquire how I can make suitable returns for his kindness; I shall be afraid to grieve him; I shall be anxious to please him; I shall be willing to make sacrifices for his sake. Do I discover the same disposition towards Christ?

This yields a dreadful reflection with regard to some. They are those who do not love Christ—God is not their father. They are the children of the devil. And the lusts of their father they will do, and with him and his angels, and all who "cannot love," they will have their portion for ever—"If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha."

APRIL 23.—"Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting."—1 Tim. i. 16.

THE Lord Jesus never acts without design; and his purposes are worthy of himself. When we consider its capacity and duration, the evils from which it is rescued, and the blessings to which it is advanced, the salvation of *one soul* is a work infinitely greater than the deliverance of a whole country from civil bondage; and therefore there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over *one sinner* that repenteth. Yet in the conversion of Saul of Tarsus his aim did not terminate in *his* salvation, all-important as it was. He looked far beyond, and intended that it should bear influentially on the recovery of others to the end of time.

And thus we see the greatness of his beneficence. Men wish to have their goodness known; but it is from self-love, and not from kindness. It is to gain applause, and not to excite and bring others to their door. And therefore they sometimes enjoin those they re-

lieve to say nothing of their bounty, not from humility but economy, lest applications should be too numerous. But the Lord Jesus knows his resources; and is not afraid of multiplied importunity. He wishes his favours to be known, that others may come and be relieved; for he delighteth in mercy.

How many principles are involved in the design here expressed.—The subjects of divine grace believe on him to life everlasting.—A succession of these believers will arise from age to age.—They will find it no easy thing to believe on him, and will feel their need of strong consolation.—Encouragement is necessary; for nothing can be done without hope and confidence.—The Saviour is concerned to furnish the relief.—And in doing this he produces actual examples of the freeness and fulness of his grace. Facts strike; they furnish us with sensible evidence. A debtor frankly forgiven an immense sum when going to prison, and having nothing to pay, shows forth most impressively the clemency of the creditor. The goodness of a prince appears in pardoning the greatest crimes against him. This indeed is rarely done among men. In all acts of grace some exceptions are made. The ring-leaders are excluded. Their impunity would seem a connivance at rebellion, and would endanger the safety and welfare of the state. But he saves sinners, says the Apostle, of whom I am chief. Here the ring-leader of the persecutors, who gave unity to their counsels, and stimulus to their zeal, is laid hold of, not to be punished but pardoned—laid hold of too for this purpose in the very act of rebellion and treason—and made a pattern of mercy to encourage others to trust in him.

We know what effect this kindness had upon himself. It changed his mind. It melted his heart. It softened the lion into a lamb. Behold, he prayeth—prayeth to him whom a moment before he had abhorred—“Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” And from that moment the love of Christ constrained him to live to him that died for him and rose again.

What effect has it upon us? Do we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. “No man can quicken his own soul.” We cannot change our own heart. The Bible is a sealed book till we are enlightened. It is useless for us to pray without the Spirit. If we belong to his people he will call us in due time”—This is the devil’s reasoning; and it is not the better for employing the language of Scripture, or of perverted orthodoxy. And what a proof is it that we are not yet sensible of our lost condition—If we were we could not sit still, and thus argue or cavil. We should resemble a man who found himself in a house on fire—he *must* move—he *could* not avoid striving to escape, though at first perhaps not by the right passage. What a proof is it that we are not really desirous of salvation; else we should say, “I have read Paul’s case. It meets my condition. I am unworthy; so was he. But he obtained mercy; and why should I be refused?”

This is the proper use of it—I see in this model his power and his compassion—I will go to his footstool, and cry, “Lord, save, I perish;” “God be merciful to me, a sinner.”

It should equally encourage us with regard to others. Despondency chills our zeal, and prevents our efforts to save others. But why should we cease to pray, and use all the means within our

power? Duty is ours; and none of our fellow-creatures are beyond his reach who called by his grace a Saul of Tarsus.

Blessed Jesus! Thou art fairer than the children of men! But while we admire thee we would also resemble. May thy mind be in us! Art thou so long-suffering towards us, and shall we bear with nothing in our brethren? Art thou so ready to forgive, and shall we be revengeful? Didst thou when rich for our sakes become poor, and shall we be masses of pure selfishness, and never deny ourselves to promote the welfare of others?

APRIL 24.—“And Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the South. And he went on his journeys from the South even to Beth-el, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Beth-el and Hai; unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the Lord.”—Gen. xiii. 1, 3, 4.

In this movement of Abram two things are noticed—whence he came—and whither he went.

“He went up out of Egypt.” But how came he there? He was driven by famine. Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. Abram therefore was justified in going thither. We are not to starve if we can obtain subsistence lawfully. We tempt God if we do not avail ourselves of the means and opportunities of relief and assistance which he affords us in the course of his providence. For though we are to cast our care, we are not to cast our duty upon the Lord; and it is only in the way of duty that we can trust in him. But we may be found in places and conditions at the call of duty or necessity in which we are not to abide. Naomi and the Shunamite, who had fled to Moab in the dearth, returned like true Israelites when they heard that the Lord had visited his people with bread. And Abram did not settle in Egypt, but only sojourned there. He had succeeded while there, so as to increase in wealth, and Egypt was at this time the most famous country on earth: but it had been to him a place of temptation; it was irreligious; and Canaan was the land which the Lord had shown him—the land of promise. And what is this world to us if we are the children of Abram by faith, but a temporary residence. It is not our home—it is not our rest. And we must arise and depart hence now, in thought, affection, and pursuit; and by a readiness to leave it actually whenever our change comes. If we are the heirs of promise, Canaan will draw us out of Egypt.

“And he went on, even to Beth-el.” There he had dwelt before. It is affecting to return to a place where we formerly resided. Who can help reflecting upon his sins there? (for wherever we have lived we have proved ourselves to be sinners,) and the blessings he enjoyed there; and his trials; and the changes which have taken place, and the progress of his time since! But Abram had not only dwelt at Beth-el, but dwelt there as a man of faith, piety, and prayer. What a difference is there between returning to a place where we lived without God in the world; and to one where we loved and served God, and walked with him, and said of many a spot, “This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!”

Observe how pleasingly and significantly this is expressed with regard to Abram—He came “unto the place where *his tent* had been *from the beginning*, between Beth-el and Hai; unto the place of *the altar* which he had made there *at the first*—and *there* Abram called on the name of the Lord.” Thus we see his devotion here was not a *novelty*—it had been a constant usage. As soon as he pitched a *tent* for himself, he reared an *altar* for God. Where he resided, he sacrificed and worshipped with his household. And they who would be the children of Abraham must walk in his steps, and be concerned to keep up the service of God with their families. Family worship is no recent thing. It is the good old way, in which even the Patriarchs walked. I pity as well as condemn the man who has a “tent,” but no “altar.” God threatens to pour out his fury upon the families that call not upon his name. Therefore, says Solomon, “The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked; but he blesseth the habitation of the just.”

—Abram thus called upon the name of the Lord, notwithstanding the character of his neighbours; for the chapter tells us, “The Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land.” And they were idolaters, and vicious to a proverb. They would therefore oppose, and laugh, and ridicule—But Abraham was not ashamed of his glory—Yea, as he was the more bound, so he was the more disposed and determined to confess him before men. And “them that honour me,” says God, “I will honour; and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.”

APRIL 25.—“Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach’s sake, and thine often infirmities.”—1 Tim. v. 23.

It may at first seem strange that Paul should only have recourse to ordinary means, such as any other person would have used on the same occasion—that he should advise and *prescribe* as a friend, instead of employing the powers he possessed as an Apostle. But as the working of miracles was a delegated prerogative, so it was limited. It was confined to particular moments and subjects. Otherwise John, instead of wishing above all things that his beloved Gaius was in health, would have healed him: and Paul would not have left his companion, Trophimus, at Miletum sick. Simon Magus wished to obtain the gift of working miracles, for the purposes of vanity and gain. It is easy to see, from the disposition of the people to worship Paul and Barnabas when they had healed the cripple at Lystra, what a source of honour and emolument the ability would have become, had it been at the option of possessors. Even good men, being imperfect while here, might have been tempted to pervert it, or have sometimes used it with respect of persons, influenced by natural or partial affection. The effect therefore depended entirely upon the pleasure of the Almighty. How useful was Timothy. How highly did the Apostle think of him—how strongly was he attached to him—how peculiarly was he concerned for his welfare! yet though he had performed so many wonders and signs, he can only, with regard even to *him*, sympathise, and pray, and admonish—“Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach’s sake, and thine often infirmities.”

But here we see the importance of health. Of all natural blessings it is the most personal, and the most prized. It is not so much an ingredient in human happiness as the foundation of it. With the Grecians it was a goddess. The Lycaonians worshipped the image of health, and the women offered to it their hair, which is their glory—That is, they sacrificed ornament to health—Some females have sacrificed health to ornament. Have we ever looked into the wards of an hospital or an infirmary? Have we ever visited the sick chamber of a friend or neighbour?—what confinement! what restlessness! what disrelishes! what loathings! what days of languishing! what wearisome nights! Health is never so valued as when it brings a letter of recommendation from sickness. Have we been the subject of it? What were *then* a well-spread table, an elegantly furnished room, the aspects of the garden and field, the charms of the favourite author! Cowper and Milton with their heavenly harps sing their songs to a heavy heart. But health is important, not only as to enjoyment, but usefulness. The discharge of almost all the duties of life depends upon it. How much is suspended upon the indisposition of a minister whose lips feed many—How much upon the illness of a wife, a mother, the mistress of the family, the centre, the eye, the hand, the soul of the domestic system—It is only at such a time, and in such circumstances, her utility can be fully felt. Health, too, has its spiritual bearings. In all the works of religion the body is the companion of the soul, but in many it is the instrument. We cannot read, or hear, or sing, or go to the house of God without it. Many of what good people call their temptations, and doubts, and fears, are only physical effects. The frame is disordered through which they see and feel. Hence they are affected even in their intercourse with God; and when they consider, are afraid of him. How many privileges too, in the means of grace, are they deprived of while they are the prisoners of sickness, the remembrance of which draws forth their tears.

Here we see that very good men, and very useful men, may be the subjects of bodily affliction. Timothy had a weakly, sickly constitution, and Paul speaks of his "frequent infirmities," or indispositions. Many other excellent individuals mentioned in the Scripture were exercised in the same way. And so it has been in every age of the Church. We are acquainted with the biography of many eminent servants of God in modern times, who prosecuted the duties of their callings under weaknesses and pains, a hundredth part of which would keep many professors of religion from the sanctuary of God, by the month or the year.—But let not the weak and sickly suppose that what has befallen them is not common to men—The same afflictions have happened to their brethren who were before them in the world. And if we knew all, we should cease to wonder at such dispensations. The Lord's love to his people is great, but it is wise; and he regulates his measures not by their wishes, but their welfare. There is a "needs-be" for every ailment, and every pain. While he chastens, he teaches us out of his law. The tender mother overlooks none of her offspring: but the breathless tread, the pillowed couch, the knee, the bosom, the indulgence, are for the little invalid endeared by the pain he suffers, and even by the care he

creates—And what says God? “As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you.”—

We learn also that we may err on the side of excess as well as deficiency. There are always two extremes: yet in going from the one, we rarely consider that we are in any danger from the other. But wisdom leads in the way of righteousness; in the midst of the paths of judgment: and it becomes us, with regard to all our concerns and movements, to hear the word behind us saying, “This is the way, walk ye in it when we turn to the right hand, or when we turn to the left.” We may fail as to the spirit we are of, not only on the side of a bold and firm temper, but on the side of a tender and candid one. A man is required to be diligent in business, but he must not entangle himself in the affairs of this life. He ought to be economical and frugal, but he may run into closeness and meanness. Even temperance, so useful and commendable, may become a snare; and there have been instances of persons under a religious motive, injuring themselves by self-denial and abstinence. Timothy was in danger of this. He had to this time used water only, but he was following this abstemiousness too exclusively and too long: his system now required something more generous, and restorative, and strengthening: and therefore, says his friend, “Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach’s sake, and thine often infirmities.”

As there was nothing in Paul enthusiastical, or leading him to the neglect of means and rational means, so there was nothing in him favouring of superstition. He withholds a Christian from no creature-comfort. He knew of none of those prohibitions, “Touch not, taste not, handle not,” which have produced such results in the church of Rome, unless to foretell and condemn them: “in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.” David observes, that God bringeth forth out of the earth, “*wine* that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine,” as well as “bread that strengtheneth man’s heart.” And his son makes no scruple to say to a good man, “Eat thy bread with cheerfulness, and drink thy wine with a merry heart, for God hath accepted thy works.”

But we have here laid down the rules we are to observe in the use of natural refreshments. They are two; and they contain all that is necessary upon the subject. The first is moderation—“Drink a little wine.” We should fear danger, especially in an article of indulgence. The evil steals upon us by degrees, and therefore insensibly. Who ever became intemperate at once? or without resolutions to the contrary? “Nature,” says Hall, “is content with little; grace with less.” The second regards our design—“for thy *stomach’s* sake, and thine *often infirmities*.” That is, we are to use these good things, not for the mere gratification of appetite, but to fit us for our stations, and to enable us to serve God. The former,

within proper bounds, is a lawful use; the latter is a pious one. In the first, the creature only appears; in the second, the Christian is seen. Some live to eat and drink; some eat and drink to live. The former are the disgrace; the latter are the glory of human kind. Even in common things the partakers of divine grace are a peculiar people—Their motive distinguishes them. This turns a natural action into a spiritual duty. This also enlarges the province of their religion to the extent of all their concerns; keeps them waiting upon God all the day long; and enables them, whether they eat, or drink, or whatever they do, to do all to the glory of God.

APRIL 26.—“Willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.”—2 Cor. v. 8.

IT seems impossible to read these words, and not admit that Paul and his companions believed three things—That they were complex beings, and had spirits which *could* be present with the Lord when absent from the body—That there was an intermediate state between death and the resurrection, so that as soon as they were absent from the body they *were* present with the Lord—And that their being present with the Lord was the completion of their happiness and their hope.

Hence their wish. It was not an absolute desire, but a preference. Their state here under the influence of divine grace admitted of comfort, and demanded gratitude. But to depart to be with Christ was far better. They were therefore “willing *rather* to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord.”

This seems to have been very much in the beginning of the Gospel a common experience. Hence we read of looking for that blessed hope; waiting for his Son from heaven; loving his appearing; hasting unto the coming of the day of God; and crying, Amen; even so, come Lord Jesus. Those also who were called by divine grace at the reformation in Germany, and at the revival of evangelical religion, in our own country, seemed familiar with death; were not shocked to be reminded of their age and infirmities; and loved to talk with each other of going home.

Yet all, yea, many cannot receive this saying. Even the subjects of redemption are said to be, through fear of death, all their lifetime not actually in bondage, but subject to it. The desire of death cannot be natural; nature must abhor its own dissolution. Yet what is impossible to nature is possible to grace. We commonly find more of this willingness to leave the world among the poor and afflicted of the Saviour's followers: they have much to wean as well as to draw: their consolations correspond with their sufferings; and the Lord is found a *very* present help in trouble. When the love of life can subserve no important purpose, it declines; and the fear of death commonly diminishes as the event approaches. Thousands who often trembled before, have at last been joyful in glory, and shouted aloud upon their beds. Clouds and darkness have obscured their day, but at even-tide it has been light.

All believers have *cause* enough, if they knew it, to make them long for their removal. For to die is gain, unspeakable and ever-

lasting gain. They then exchange faith for sight; and hope for possession; and that which is in part for that which is perfect.

And the apprehension of many of the Lord's people regards the manner of their departure rather than the effect. The parting scene; the pains, the groans, the dying strife; the separation of soul and body, and the consignment of the flesh to corruption and worms; all this leads them to say, with good Dr. Conyers, I am not afraid of death, but of dying.

And indeed all real Christians must long for the consequences; in being fully like their Saviour; and able to serve him; and to enjoy him completely. But they resemble the man whose beloved family is abroad. He would rather therefore be there than here—But while he feels the attraction, he shudders at the sea and the sickness. Watts represents the believer as loving the Canaan beyond, but dreading the Jordan between.

Well, if you really *love* the heaven of the Christian, that is, a heaven derived from being present with the Lord; fear not, but thank God and take courage. Either will you have, like the Israelites, a dry-shod march across the river; or if, like Bunyan's pilgrims, you wade through, your feet shall feel the bottom, and your eyes shall see the shining ones ready to receive you on shore. Your passage will be safe and short; and the issue an abundant entrance into the joy of your Lord.

" 'Tis pleasant to believe his grace,
But we would rather see;
We would be absent from the flesh,
And present, Lord, with thee."

APRIL 27.—"The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine."—1 Sam. xvii. 37.

THESE are the words of David when he would justify himself from presumption in fighting with Goliath, who was defying the armies of the living God. It is observable that he acknowledges the *Lord* to be his deliverer. *He* delivered me; *he* will deliver me. "Salvation belongeth unto the Lord." To him it belongeth supremely, and in a sense only. For though we have many deliverers, they only deliver us instrumentally. The means he employs often conceal his agency, but they should lead us to it: for instrumentality implies and requires agency. Adaptation is not efficiency. However suited a pen is to write, it is nothing without a hand to use it—Hence the question, "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?" In a state of nature men are a kind of atheists: whatever be their speculative belief, they are practically without God in the world; God is not in all their thoughts. In conversion they are awakened from this dreadful insensibility and indifference; and are led to inquire after God; And they not only seek him, but find him; and not only find him, but hold communion with him; and hold communion with him, not only in his word but in his works, not only in his ordinances, but in his dispensations. They connect him with the events of life, and this gives them a sacred importance. They connect him with their trials, and this softens them.

They connect him with their comforts, and this sweetens them. And thus life becomes a continued walking with him towards that world in which "God is all in all."

David reviews his former agency—The Lord *delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear*. This happened when he kept his father's sheep. Each of these fierce and dreadful creatures took a lamb out of the flock. And he went after them. The peril was most imminent. When he forced them to drop the prey they *rose against him*; but he caught them by the beard and smote them and slew them. He well therefore speaks of their *paw*, for it was actually upon him! This it will be allowed was a deliverance little less than miraculous. We have nothing perhaps so extraordinary to review, yet we have had our deliverances, and some of them remarkable, at least to ourselves, if not to others. We have had our bears and lions; but we have not been given over a prey to their teeth. We have had spiritual deliverances. We have been saved from the curse of the law; from the power of Satan; from the tyranny of the world; from the dominion of sin. We have had temporal deliverances. Some of these have been visible, but many more have been invisible; and it is owing to our having obtained help of God, that our lives, and families, and substance, and all our outward estate, have been preserved. And if at any time our comforts have been invaded and injured, it has been for a moral benefit; and he has enabled us to say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted."

David hopes for his future agency—"He *will* deliver me from this Philistine." For after the beasts of prey, here is another, and more formidable foe. We must always rejoice with trembling; and never boast ourselves of to-morrow, for we know not what a day may bring forth. Because some storms have expended themselves, we must not reckon upon perpetual sunshine; the clouds return after the rain. When we have slain the lion and the bear, we may be called to encounter Goliath—Well—and we may meet him undismayed if the Lord be with us. He who has delivered will deliver. And like David—

We should draw confidence from reflection. We have not only his promise to encourage us, but our experience; and because he has been our help, therefore under the shadow of his wing should we rejoice. We cannot certainly infer what men will be from what they have been, or what they will do from what they have done. They are variable; but the Lord changeth not. They may become unable, if their intentions are the same; but in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength. Neither should a sense of our unworthiness weaken our expectation from him: we were unworthy when he first took knowledge of us; and he deals with us not according to our desert, but his own mercy and grace.

Wherefore let us observe the loving-kindnesses of the Lord, and treasure them up in our minds. We know not what occasions we may have for the use of them. But in every tendency to depression, let us not yield to our infirmity; but remember the years of the right hand of the Most High.

APRIL 28.—“So that I might finish my course with joy.”—Acts xx. 24.

DOES this imply any apprehension as to the event? It is no more than he enjoins upon others: “Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.” It certainly expresses great desire and great anxiousness. He deemed nothing too much to do or to suffer for such a privilege.

But how is it to be understood? We may take two views of it. We may consider the Christian as finishing his course with joy to others, and with joy to himself. The latter is principally intended. But did you ever stand by the side of a dying bed, and when your connexion was suffering severely, and all hope of recovery was taken away, have you not been glad when the struggle was over? Yes. You rose above selfishness; and could say, “Our loss is his gain. Shall we weep at his deliverance from sorrow, temptation, and sin? and his entering into the joy of his Lord? If we loved him we should rejoice, because he said, I go unto the Father.”

And when he finished well, have you not hailed him on another account? “Well, thy sun is gone down without a cloud. I feared for thee, but the danger is now over. Thou hast had to go through a defiling world, but thou hast kept thy garments clean. Thou hast had fears within and fightings without, but thy heart has not turned back, neither have thy steps declined from his way. We crown thee now. Servant of God, well done.”

But when the Christian finishes his course with joy, it mainly refers to himself, and regards his dying experience. There is a great difference in the departure of believers. Some reach heaven, so to speak, in a kind of wrecked state; they get safe to land, but on planks and broken pieces of the ship. Others, in full sail, enter the desired haven; and have, as the Apostle Peter calls it, “an abundant entrance into the kingdom of their Lord and Saviour.” Some die perplexed with doubts and depressed with fears; others have the full assurance of hope: they are joyful in glory, and shout aloud upon their beds; and their dying chamber is none other than the house of God, and the gate of heaven. “With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the King’s palace.” This joy does not depend upon outward things; for in common God’s poor and afflicted people have the greatest degrees of it. Neither is it according to previous confidence, for many who have been all their lifetime *subject* to bondage through fear of death, have been filled at last with all joy and peace in believing. Now we lay no stress upon the want of this dying confidence and comfort, as an evidence against the safety of a man, when his life has been godly and consistent; for we know not how far it may be the effect of temperament or disease. Yet it is very desirable to enjoy it. We shall need all the comfort we can get when heart and flesh fail us, and friends can afford us no assistance, and the enemy of souls may be peculiarly busy, knowing that his time is short. It is also very useful. It has often impressed the careless, confirmed the doubting, and encouraged the timid. And how has it glorified God by showing the power of his grace, and recommending his service! Except for this, a Christian would desire a sud-

den death, and escape "the pains, and groans, and dying strife;" but he is more than reconciled to bear them, if Christ is thus magnified in his body by death, as well as by life.

But this finishing his course with joy takes in the issue as well as the conclusion. If it ends with heaven, it ends well, whatever be the experience immediately preceding. If the Christian were to leave this world in darkness and uncertainty, that darkness would be instantly dispelled, and all would be quietness and assurance for ever. Thus even Cowper finished his course with joy, for the gloom vanished in glory—and how ecstatic must have been the surprise of his blessed spirit, to feel itself in the possession of a boon it had long despaired to find!

All who have gone before us at death finished their course; but many finished it with joy. How will you finish yours? The Lord has appointed us bounds which we cannot pass. We have an allotted course of service and suffering; and the end is sure—and the end is nigh. Mark the perfect man and behold the upright, for the end of *that* man is peace. *He* shall enter into rest; and be forever with the Lord. But how will *you* end? will you be defeated or crowned? will you be clothed with shame, or shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of our Father? O let it be your prayer and care to realize this final blessedness: and endeavour to judge of every thing now as it will affect you at last.

Even a Balaam could admire the tents of Jacob and the tabernacles of Israel; and was compelled to exclaim, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." Yet he died fighting against the people he had blessed and envied. Such a difference is there between conviction and practice; and so absurd is it to look for the end without the way.

Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord. But if you die out of him, unpardoned and unrenewed, you must finish your course with grief.—Grief to others; to ministers, to Christians, to godly friends and relations.—Grief to yourselves. The sorrows of life may be diverted by company, by amusements, by the hurry of business. A man may drink and forget his sorrow, and remember his misery no more. But your drinking days will be then over, and you will be near a state where you will call in vain for a drop of water to cool your tongue. Your associates will then forsake you or be found miserable comforters. If they are cruel enough to jest about religion then, you will not be able to relish it, while fearing that all may be true which you have treated as false. Nature will have then closed the doors against every worldly diversion. You can no more attend the play-house and the race-ground. All that before was vanity will now be vexation of spirit. Riches profit not in the day of wrath. What is a man profited if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? But should you have no time for reflection; or be incapable of exercising reason; or conscience be unawakened: should you through the power of delusion have no bands in your death and your strength be firm: should you fall asleep like a lamb, you will awake with the devil and his angels. There is no peace, saith my God, unto the wicked.

APRIL 29.—“Who comforteth us in all our tribulation.”—2 Cor. i. 4.

THIS reminds us of the nature of the Christian life. It is “neither clear nor dark.” It partakes both of tribulation and comfort. The tribulation endears the comfort; and the comfort relieves and gilds the tribulation.

Paul does not say he comforts us by keeping us out of all tribulation. He could do this; but it accords not with the wisdom of his mercy. Therefore many are the afflictions of the righteous, and through much tribulation they must enter the kingdom. But *while* in the world they have tribulation, in him they have peace—and he comforts them IN ALL THEIR TRIBULATION. And he does this four ways. First, by deliverance. This is perhaps the most pleasing way to our natural feelings; and these feelings are in a measure allowable. For tribulation is not to be preferred for its own sake; neither are we to consider ourselves unsubmitive, though we are led to say, “Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me;” provided we can add, “nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done.” And the Lord knoweth how to deliver. If he does not find a way, he can make a way for our escape. Of old he appeared for his servants; and often constrained even their enemies to acknowledge the finger of God. Observe Joseph in Egypt, Jonah in the whale’s belly, Daniel in the lions’ den, and Peter in prison. “But these were miracles.” They were. “And miracles are not to be expected now.” They are not. But he who performed them is not far from any one of us—He is a very present help in trouble—and able to make good the word upon which he has caused us to hope; or miracles would be seen again. Nothing is too hard for the Lord; all hearts are in his hand; all events are at his control; and even now “he turneth the shadow of death into the morning.” He does not always deliver us according to our wishes and expectation; and hope deferred maketh the heart sick; and the eagerness and despondency of impatience may lead us to complain, “O when wilt thou comfort me?” But the vision is only for an appointed time; at the end it shall speak; neither will it tarry a moment beyond the season our welfare requires—“For the Lord is a God of judgment; blessed are all they that wait for him.”

Secondly, by compensation. Philosophers have remarked how all through the natural world there are indications of a system of counter-balancings; so that a deficiency in one thing is remedied by some advantage in another. We see this also in human life; so that persons in their trouble are, so to say, recompensed by something which lessens the impression of their trials, and after which if they are wise they will look, for the purpose of submission and thankfulness. Hannah was barren, and reproached by her fruitful rival; but she was consoled by the greater love of her husband, and who “was better to her than ten sons.” Mephibosheth while an infant was lamed on both his feet; but owing to this accident his life was preserved when the other princes of the house were destroyed. Thus bodily deformity is sometimes relieved by superior endowments of mind. Thus a man is compelled to labour: but this gives soundness to his sleep, and appetite to his food, and vigour to his health,

to which the easy and *indulged* are strangers. Paul suffered unto bonds, but the word of God, which was dearer to him than life, was not bound; and his confinement turned out rather to the furtherance of the gospel. The thorn in the flesh was continued; but instead of the removal he had the assurance of all-sufficient grace under it; and he was more than satisfied with the compensation—yea, he gloried in it; and said, “When I am weak then I am strong.” Ah! I dreaded, says the Christian, as I entered the affliction, and was laid on a bed of languishing: but prayer was made for me; a force and a tenderness of friendship were displayed of which I was not aware before—and O! how kind was that “Friend who sticketh closer than a brother”—“*Thou drewest near in the day that I called upon thee; thou saidst unto me, fear not.*”

Thirdly, by sanctification. A man may be saved in his affliction when he is not saved out of it. Affliction is a scene of great moral danger, and the enemy of souls will endeavour to turn to account what it yields in a way of temptation. It is mentioned with wonder that in all the evil that had come upon him, “Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.” A Christian is sometimes “afraid of all his sorrows”—afraid lest he should *sink*—afraid lest he should *sin* in the day of adversity—afraid lest he should not suffer well, and glorify the Lord in the fires; but dishonour his religion by unbelief, and discontent, and murmuring. This leads him to pray; and the Lord hears him, and *keeps* him in the evil day. He affords him also the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, which confirms his faith, and strengthens his patience, and enables him to bear the rod. Some in their distresses have cursed God and died. Others have spoken unadvisedly with their lips; or they have been vengeful towards the instruments of their sufferings, or they have employed unlawful means to obtain relief, or they have attempted self-destruction. Have you been preserved? Has the furnace only severed the dross from the gold? Has the pruning-knife only lopped off the suckers that robbed the vine? Can you say with David, “It is good for me that I have been afflicted; before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy word”—Has the Lord forgotten to be gracious to you?

Fourthly, he does it by discovery. “The word of the Lord came unto Jeremiah the second time, while he was yet shut up in the court of the prison, saying: Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not.” This is no more than he does to other sufferers; it is in the hour of trouble he peculiarly fulfils the promise, “I will manifest myself unto him.” “I will allure her,” says he, “and bring her into the wilderness, and *there* will I speak comfortably unto her”—or as it is in the margin, speak to her heart—so speak to her as to “give her her vineyards from *thence*, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope, and she shall sing *there* as in the days of her youth, and in the days when she came up out of the land of Egypt.” Oh! if he says to the soul, “I am thy salvation;” if he “shows you his covenant;” if he convinces you that none of your trials are casual or penal; if he assures your consciences that you are redeemed from the curse, and that you only feel the rod of a father who uses it in kindness and tender mercy; if heaven be opened to the eye of the mind, and

like Stephen you see Jesus ready to receive you, and wipe away all your tears; if you are assured that your afflictions will work out for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory—then, though you will not be deprived of feeling, you will be raised above despondency and depression—Then, though troubled on every side, you will not be distressed—Then, though sorrowful, you will be always rejoicing—And not only so, but you “will glory in tribulation also.”

APRIL 30.—“The desire of all nations.”—Haggai i. 7.

THAT this refers to the Messiah is unquestionable. Yet there seems some necessity for explaining the title given him, as it apparently disagrees with the language of other parts of Scripture, and with fact. Is he not despised and rejected of men? He was in the world, and the world was made by him; and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. How then can he be called the desire of all nations? The character is justified five ways.

First, by the general expectation that prevailed in the world previously to his advent. It is well known that there was such a looking out for some great deliverer and benefactor as nigh at hand. Divines have collected many testimonies from heathen authors, and have peculiarly remarked a little poem of Virgil's, written a few years only before the birth of Jesus, and which contains a kind of prophecy, foreshowing that some extraordinary personage would shortly come, and restore the peace and plenty and blessings of the fancied golden reign. The sentiment had been conveyed down by tradition, but it was originally derived from a divine source, the early and repeated promise of “him that should come.”

Secondly, by the need all mankind had of such a Saviour as he was to be. The whole world was lying in wickedness. Darkness covered the earth. They knew not the supreme good. They found only vanity and vexation of spirit in their pursuits and attainments. They had no support under the troubles of life. Their uneasiness arising from guilt, death, and futurity, made them often willing not only to offer thousands of rams, and rivers of oil, but to give the first-born for their transgression, the fruit of their body for the sin of their soul. But no remedy could they find to remove the doubts and fears of their consciences—The Lord Jesus meets the condition they were in; and therefore though they had no revelation of him, yet they were groping ignorantly after what alone he could impart; and therefore he deserves to be called the desire of all nations, just as a physician, able and willing to cure all diseases, is the desire of all patients.

Thirdly, by being entirely attractive in himself, so that all would actually long after him if they knew him. He has every excellency in his person, every perfection in his character. There is nothing in creation that will afford a proper image of his glory. All the loveliness of men and angels shrink from a comparison with his charms—“How great is his beauty!”—“Yea, he is altogether lovely.” Do we esteem riches? His riches are unsearchable. Do we admire friendship? He is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. Do we applaud benevolence? His love passeth know-

ledge. He comes down like rain on the mown grass, as showers that water the earth. A bruised reed will he not break, and smoking flax will he not quench. He delivers the needy when he crieth, the poor also, and him that hath no helper—

“His worth if all the nations knew,
Sure the whole earth would love him too.”

Fourthly, by his having had admirers in every country. Wherever believers have been found, they have been all distinguished by the same convictions and dispositions with regard to him. Abraham in Canaan rejoiced to see his day, saw it, and was glad. Job, in the land of Uz, said, I know that my Redeemer liveth. Moses in Egypt, esteemed his reproach. Wise men came from Persia and paid him homage. Devout men from every nation under heaven came to the temple at Jerusalem, and joined in the ceremonies and sacrifices of which he was the substance and the end. And John heard his praise from a multitude which no man could number, out of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues. For,

Lastly, he is so named, because in due time he will be prized and gloried in by all the ends of the earth. To him, said the dying Patriarch, shall the gathering of the people be. He is the salvation, says Simeon, prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel. All kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him; all nations shall call him blessed.

But let me not lose myself in general reflections. How does this desire of all nations appear to me? Has he been revealed in me the hope of glory? Is he all my salvation and all my desire? Can I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord? Do I love the people who resemble him? Do I value the ordinances in which I can enjoy communion with him? Will it complete my happiness to be like him and see him as he is?

MAY.

MAY 1.—“Judas saith unto him, (not Iscariot,) Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?”—John xiv. 22.

JUDAS ISCARIOT had already sold his master, and was now busy in betraying him into the hands of his enemies. We are sometimes ready to wonder by what potency of diabolical agency he could be carried to such a degree of wickedness. But when we are informed that he was covetous, the mystery is explained. Then we have a cause fully adequate to any effect: “for the love of money is the root of all evil.”

But there was another Judas among the Apostles. He was the brother of James; the author of the last inspired epistle of the New Testament; and a faithful follower of Jesus—*He* was the present inquirer. We may be good and happy under any name. Yet there are names that seem ominous and odious. It must have been painful for this excellent man to be called by the name of the infamous wretch who had sold his Lord for thirty pieces of silver. John therefore distinguishes him. We should learn from his example to

be careful, in relating facts, not to confound persons. For want of an attention to this, what is only true of one individual is applied to another; and not only mistake but mischief frequently ensues. You can never talk safely after some people: they are sure to *suppress*, or *omit*, or *perplex*. How little is *circumstantial* truth attended to!

It is not always easy to determine the principle of an action. We commonly look for a single cause, when perhaps several excitements have operated, though not equally. A late popular senator, Mr. Whitbread, often said, no man ever acted from a single motive. Whence sprang the question of Judas?

Was it the language of grateful surprise? "How is it that we should be selected? and thus honoured and indulged?" This is the disposition of the subjects of divine grace. They do not think more highly of themselves, because they are made to differ from others. Not unto us, O Lord; not unto us. Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my father's house?

Or was it the language of doubt? He *seems* to question whether the Lord *could* come and manifest himself to them without others seeing and knowing it. If he really thought so, it was very weak and foolish; but he spake in haste, and without reflection. He might easily have known the possibility, in a thousand cases, of communicating ourselves to a friend, while every one else remains ignorant of the transaction. And if others could not do it, was it becoming in Judas to measure the Saviour by their capacity? What is marvellous in their eyes is not marvellous in his. It was enough that he had said it. He never promises what he is not able to perform—And never should we ask, after any of his declarations, "How can these things be?"

Or was it the language of curiosity? He might have admitted the reality of the thing, but wished to know the circumstances, and the mode of the manifestation. There is too much of this tendency of mind in all of us, so that we leave what is plain and useful, to pry into what is dark and unprofitable; and wish to explore the secret things which belong unto God, instead of being satisfied with those which are revealed, and which are for us and for our children. Thus time is wasted, the attention is drawn off from the main concern, the temper is injured by dispute, and the words of the Apostle verified, "Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth." Jesus therefore would not gratify the inquirer after the number of the saved: and when Peter asked him after the destiny of John, he reprov'd him, saying, "What is that to thee? follow thou me:" and when his Apostles would dive into prophecy, he said, "It is not for you to know the times and the seasons which the Father hath put into his own power."

But let us always take things in their most charitable construction. Perhaps it was the language of allowable desire. He felt the condescension and kindness of Jesus; he considered the privilege as an inestimable favour: but having little acquaintance with it, he wished to know more of it, to regulate himself accordingly, so as not to lose, but secure and improve the privilege. This is the more probable, as our Saviour does not blame him, but gives him an answer. This he would not have done had Judas spoken superciliously or impertinently; and not in the spirit of a learner. He

did not answer Pilate; nor indulge Herod; nor suffer those to remain in the room who laughed him to scorn when he raised the ruler's daughter. But he favours and satisfies Judas: "Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

Hence, while we oppose a doubtful, curious, and speculative turn of mind, we should not repulse humble and useful inquiries. There are difficulties of an *experimental* and a *practical* nature with regard to duties and privileges which it is possible and desirable to remove. And there is no one to whom we can carry them so proper as he to whom this inquirer addressed himself—and not in vain.

MAY 2.—"Ye were a curse."—Zech. viii. 13.

WHEN Elihu asked Job, with regard to the Supreme Being, "If thou sinnest, what doest thou against him?" he adds, "Thy wickedness may hurt a man as thou art." The injury one man is capable of doing to another is incalculable; and it will never be known in this world what a curse the sinner has been. The corrupt always become, as Isaiah calls them, "children that are *corrupters*." They are concerned to bring others into the same course and condition with themselves; and as, owing to the depravity of our nature, we are much more accessible to evil than to good, they are rarely successful in their endeavours. In addition to their invitations and enticings, and, if they have power, their frowns and menaces; how impressive is the force of example! and how does the presence of vice familiarize it to the mind, and weaken the restraints of fear and shame! "One sinner destroyeth much good."

It seems hard that the wife and children of Achan should have been stoned and burnt with himself. And nothing could have been more affecting than the sight and cries of these victims of his guilt, especially if he had any feeling, to the man himself. And the Deist here rages against the Bible. But the Bible only records the fact; and the Deist is perpetually meeting with similar things in his own book of nature. He sees what his Omnipotent Goodness does not interfere to prevent,—one suffering from the vileness of another. He sees the wife and children reduced to want, beggary, infamy, disease, death; by an idle, drunken, stealing, licentious husband and father.—This should be one of the greatest preventions of sin, that it always injures, not only ourselves, but others: and it would be so, if we had any ingenuous, noble, relative feeling. But what filial affection has that youth who can break a mother's heart, and bring down the gray hairs of a father with sorrow to the grave? Whatever be his politics, what real patriotism has he who endeavours to arm Providence against his country, and promotes "that sin which is a reproach to any people?" "I cannot exercise a better charity towards others," says Adam of Wintonringham, "than by avoiding all sin myself."

As the wicked are "a curse" by injuriousness, so they are also by execration. How many suddenly curse their habitation! How are they cursed often by those who are ruined by their pride, luxury, and

speculations! How will children, when they meet their ungodly parents, rise up against them in the judgment, and cause them to be put to death! How in the world of torment will the seduced execrate the seducer! the murdered the murderer! and the pupil of infidelity the wretch that led him into the paths of the destroyer! How dreadfully did the writer of this article once hear a fine young man, while dying, exclaim, again and again, "O curse you, Voltaire!"—Angels curse them: "Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof"—The Judge of all will curse them—*He* "will say unto them on his left hand, Depart, ye cursed"—

And, Christians, were you ever in danger of this? Were you ever once a curse yourselves? How humbling is the review! What godly sorrow does it call for! It seems enough to make you weep, if possible, tears of blood, to think that there are some in hell, and others going thither, whom you have led astray and encouraged! You, surely you, can never forgive yourselves! But if God has forgiven you, you ought to love much; and be concerned, as you have been a curse, to become a blessing.

MAY 3.—"Ye shall be a blessing."—Zech. viii. 13.

WHAT a difference is there between the state of nature and grace! The transition from the one to the other verifies and explains the words of the prophet: "Instead of the thorn, shall come up the fir tree; and instead of the brier, shall come up the myrtle tree." Hence says God—"As ye were a curse"—"Ye shall be a blessing."

For the change affects them not only personally, but relatively. It begins with themselves, but it extends to others; and a zealous concern for the salvation of their own souls is always accompanied with a benevolent anxiety for the salvation of their fellow-creatures. Their exertions for this purpose are indeed often ungratefully received; and they are reproachfully desired to keep their religion to themselves. But this is enjoining upon them an impossibility. They cannot but speak the things which they have seen and heard—If these should hold their peace, the stones would cry out—The fire must burn—The spring must rise up. Others are not only excused, but commended—even if they err in the manner, who strive to heal the sick, to clothe the naked, and to feed the hungry: but Christians are called intermeddlers when *they* would exercise the noblest charity of all, which is *spiritual mercy*. Not that they neglect the body—Jesus himself did not. But he that converteth a sinner from the error of his ways shall save a *soul* from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.

David therefore said, "I will teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee." What a blessing was Andrew to his brother Peter! and Philip to his friend Nathaniel! and the woman of Samaria to her fellow-citizens!—"Many believed on him for the saying of the woman." In this way God carries on his cause. He makes us the subjects of his grace, and then the mediums and the instruments. He could call fifty at once in a village. But what is commonly the case? One is called first. He soon pities the condition of others; and he goes to the minister by whom

he was awakened, and informs him of the ignorance of his poor neighbours, and says, "Come over and help us." He goes: and a number believe and turn unto the Lord. A single grain of corn will produce several ears; these ears will produce many ears more; and the increase in time will be sufficient for the semination of a field, a province, a country—So says God of his people, "I will sow them in the earth." Thus churches are raised. Thus kingdoms are evangelized.

Why are good men called "the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof?" "The salt of the earth?" "The light of the world?" "A dew from the Lord?" But to express the advantages others derive from them. And who can tell the extent of the benefits produced by their prayers, example, and influence? We are persuaded that none of them are useless: and he who has been the means of the salvation of one soul, has done more than the hero who has delivered a whole empire from civil bondage—for "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over *one* sinner that repenteth"—But what blessings have some individuals proved! Think of Howard in his journeys of compassion—of Thornton and Reynolds in the diffusions of their bounty—of Luther in the work of the reformation—of Watts in his psalms and hymns—of Whitfield in his preaching—of a father and mother who bring up a family of children in the fear of the Lord—of the two or three individuals that brought Christianity to this favoured country—of the few missionaries who landed in the South Sea Islands, and induced whole communities to turn from dumb idols to serve the true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven!!

But they are made a blessing not only as they bless others, but as they are blessed by them. With regard to Joseph's offspring, the dying patriarch "blessed them that day, saying, God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh." What did Balaam but bless them, though he was employed to curse, when he said, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel"—"The Lord his God is with them, and the shout of a King is among them"—"Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." And thus their very enemies are inwardly constrained to admire and extol those whom they pretend to despise, and in words even revile. But how cordially are they blessed by those to whom they have been useful! With what satisfaction does Job speak of this—"When the ear heard me it blessed me"—"The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me." "Blessed be my mistress," says a servant: "I was ignorant as a heathen when I entered her family; but she has led me into the way everlasting." "Blessed for ever be my precious mother," says many a child, "whose easy and gentle endeavours brought me up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Their fellow-Christians bless them as their brethren, companions, and helpers. Ministers say, "The blessing of the Lord be upon you: we bless you in the name of the Lord." "And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among all people: all that see them shall acknowledge them that they are the seed which the *Lord* hath blessed"—For, "Come," will the Judge say, "Come, ye blessed of *my Father*, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

MAY 4.—“And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.”—Luke xxiv. 52, 53.

THIS was the consequence of the affecting transaction recorded in the preceding verses. “He led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven”—Upon this four things are recorded of these *blessed* disciples.

First, their adoration of him—“They worshipped him.” Full of astonishment, and straining their eyes to follow him in his traceless flight, they were *standing* when he had ascended: and hence the angelic messengers said, “Why *stand* ye gazing up into heaven?” They then kneeled, and prostrated themselves upon the ground—and “worshipped him.” And what was this worship? It was nothing less than *Divine*. It was addressed to a being now absent, and whose senses therefore could not advertize him of the homage: for they not only worshipped, but worshipped *him*. The enemies of the present truth are embarrassed with the case of Stephen. They cannot deny that *he* prayed to Christ, when he said, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit;” and “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.” But they reply, that he *saw* Christ “standing on the right hand of God:” and *therefore* addressed him: conceding that to have addressed him in this manner, had he been absent and invisible, would have been no less than idolatry. Yet not to observe that the petitions themselves were very strange ones, to offer to a creature, even if present and in sight, we find prayer addressed to him when he was undeniably invisible and absent. Paul speaks of “all who called upon the name of the Lord Jesus.” In his own prayer for the Thessalonians he mentions him, even before the Father. “Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.” And the disciples here worshipped him after “he was carried up into heaven.”

Secondly. Their obedience—“And they returned to Jerusalem.” We call this obedience, because he had expressly enjoined it. “Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high.” “Being assembled together with them, he *commanded* them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father.” It was all along foretold that the Christian dispensation was to commence from the metropolis of Judea. “The Lord shall send the rod of his strength out of Zion.” “Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.” There Jesus died and rose again. There the Apostles were to open their commission; and the Holy Spirit was to be poured down to qualify them to preach the Gospel to every creature. At this time Judea was the centre of the known world; for America was not yet discovered, and probably not inhabited. It was the most surrounded and the most accessible situation; and therefore when the Lord made the feast unto all people, he spread it upon this mountain; the table was in the middle of the room. It would be an evi-

dence in favour of Christianity, that it was published immediately, on the spot where the facts were alleged to have occurred. And it would show the compassionate disposition of the Founder, that he would have repentance and remission of sin in his name to be published first at Jerusalem. Hence he required their return thither. And they, instead of fleeing or concealing themselves, repaired back to a place full of danger—a place where lately they had killed their master, and would be still more likely to hate and persecute themselves. This would be a great trial of their obedience. They were going like lambs into a lair of wolves. But they had nothing to do with events. They knew his order for their conduct; and the path of duty is the path of safety. Yea, we see,

Thirdly, their gladness; for they not only returned, but “with great joy.” This seems surprising. He is a bad relation, we say, that is not missed. How we feel the removal of a friend or a minister who has been useful to us! and not to feel, would be a criminal insensibility. What a loss then did the disciples sustain when deprived of their Lord and Saviour, who had always guided, preserved, and comforted them! Accordingly, when the intimation was first given, sorrow filled their hearts. But we here see the advantage of knowledge. For he had opened their understandings, and explained to them the Scriptures: and they now saw—That though he was going to leave them as to his bodily presence, he would be with them spiritually—That his departure would result in his own exaltation and glory—That it was also expedient for themselves that he went away—That he would appear in the presence of God for them, and be their advocate with the Father—That he would be able to make all things work together for their good—That he would prepare a place for them, and come again and receive them unto himself, that where he was they might be also. And what could they want more, to induce them to rejoice? But,

Fourthly, they were as grateful as they were joyful—“And were continually in the temple praising and blessing God.” That is, they constantly repaired thither at the seasons of devotion. For we read that “when” upon their return to Jerusalem “they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James, the son of Alphæus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas, the brother of James. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.” But their private engagements did not keep them from the public services of the sanctuary, as often as they returned. We are not to forsake the house of our God: and we are to “enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise.” It is easy to see what was the cause of their excitement, and which led them to magnify the Lord, and to exalt his name together. They blessed and praised him for all his mercies, but above all, for his unspeakable Gift—That he was delivered for their offences, and raised again for their justification—That he ever lived to make intercession for them—That he had taken possession of heaven on their behalf—and that in him they were blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. Let us cherish the same disposition, and follow their example. And let our gratitude be real

and practical. Let us show forth his praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives. "God is the Lord, which hath showed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar."

MAY 5.—"Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die."—1 Cor. xv. 32.

WHEN Isaiah had foretold the invasion of Judea by the Chaldeans; "And in that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth: behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine—let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we shall die." If we quote the Wisdom of Solomon, it is not because we consider it inspired Scripture, but as evidence to support the common prevalence of this wretched sentiment at the period it was written: "For our time is a very shadow that passeth away: and after our end there is no returning: for it is fast sealed, so that no man cometh again. Come on, therefore, let us enjoy the good things that are present: and let us speedily use the creatures like as in youth. Let us fill ourselves as with costly wine and ointments: and let no flower of the spring pass by us. Let us crown ourselves with rose-buds before they be withered. Let none of us go without his part of our voluptuousness: let us leave tokens of our joyfulness in every place: for this is our portion, and our lot is this." This indeed in all ages and countries has been the manual of devotion for those worshippers whose god is their belly, who glory in their shame, and mind earthly things.

It admits a fact too clear to be questioned. The living know that they shall die. The very men before us confess it; yea, they acknowledge that the event is not only certain, but near—"To-morrow we die." And this was true; for death is always near in possibility; and is never far off in reality. Yet, instead of saying, as we must die shortly, and may die soon, therefore we ought to be prepared for the event, they make it a motive to encourage licentiousness—"Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." What a proof have we here of the truth of the fall: "The heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live." We could as soon believe that God made fiends, as that he made the human race what they now are. "God made man upright, but they sought out many inventions."

But how stands the truth of the charge with regard to us? Let none imagine that they are innocent because they have never uttered the sentiment in so many words. Your temper and actions speak louder than words—And what is *their* language? Does it not say unto God, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways?" Does it not seem to avow that nothing shall disturb your carnality and carelessness? and that if life be short, you are resolved it shall not be sad?

But is the reasoning or excitement such a monstrous perversion of every thing right as it appears? Let us place it on two grounds. Are you believers in Revelation? Do you admit that there is really an eternal world, and that you are always on the brink of it? You are *then* worse than infidels, not as to your creed—this is truth, but as to your practice, which is inconsistent, and senseless, beyond all

the power of language to express. But if you are unbelievers, if you deny a future state, and think that we are mere masses of matter, that we perish like the beasts, and nothing survives death; you are but acting consistently with your belief, and you may then well say, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." The present is all the happiness you know, and you would be fools not to make the most of it—Therefore we would say to you, Go on—only remarking two things. First, be sure, perfectly sure, of your premises. But you cannot demonstrate that there is no world to come, no judgment after death. The utmost you can reach is probability. If a doubt remains in a case of such tremendous import, it must be enough to break all your repose whenever it recurs, and to stamp your conduct with insanity. Probability would be sufficient to justify a man on the other side, the safe side, the side on which if we are mistaken as to our main expectation, we must be gainers upon the whole, and present gainers; but nothing less than absolute certainty can justify *you*. When Thistlewood, the traitor, was ascending the drop, he said to his companions, referring to the doubtfulness of an existence after death, "We shall soon know the great secret." And so they would. Yet what madness and wretchedness to leave it undetermined till the discovery could be of no advantage, and the truth of the condemnation was proved by the execution of the sentence, and hell was seen and suffered at once! "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment."

Secondly, even admitting the truth of your premises, your conduct is not rational unless intemperance and luxury were the truest and highest enjoyment of life. But it would be easy to prove that they are not. It is worthy of observation, that Epicurus himself, though he contemned religion in every form, and excluded a future state, and contended that pleasure was the great end of life, yet recommended the practice of universal virtue, and thought the virtues were to be cherished, not on their own account, but *for the sake of pleasure*. He was himself the most plain and temperate of men, lived sparingly, and on the plainest food, always attesting that this was best not only for health, but pleasure; and employed it as a maxim, "That he lived most pleasurably who lived most temperately." We have better authority than this; and we are sure that good men have not only a thousand enjoyments of a nature which others know nothing of; but as to those kinds of pleasure which the men of the world value, (unless the pleasures of sin,) the pleasures of time and sense, they have by far the pre-eminence. Godliness is profitable unto all things: it has the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come. Others may possess more, but we know who hath said, "the meek shall inherit the earth." "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works. Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment."

MAY 6.—“And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves: for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.”—Luke xi. 5—10.

NEVER man spake like this man. He taught as one having authority, but not as the Scribes. This applies to the manner as well as the subject of his preaching. He had nothing of official parade and unfeeling severity; but was gentle and affectionate, and came down as the rain on the mown grass. One thing cannot be overlooked—it was the easy and familiar mode in which he delivered the most important doctrine. Here were no dry definitions, no logical subtleties, no abstract reasonings, no lengthened argumentations, no abstruse allusions, parading the erudition of the speaker, but darkening counsel with words without knowledge to the multitude—In his ministry the poor had the gospel; the common people heard him gladly. He commended himself to every man’s conscience, by a simple manifestation of the truth; and always reached the heart by appeals the most touching and tender, and by images the most natural, conclusive, and interesting. I have read treatises on repentance, but I never derived half the instruction and impression from them all that I have found in the parable of the Prodigal Son. We have had lectures on humility. But when his disciples were disputing for pre-eminence in his empire, “He called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” Here he is teaching them to pray—but while he informs he excites and encourages. He argues from the less to the greater, and makes the contrast conduce to his aim as well as the comparison. A man indisposed to the thing itself, and even complaining of the application, may grant a request to importunity—How much more may we hope to succeed with God, whose goodness like his power is infinite!

But O the execution that is done in the filling up of the representation! It intimates, first, that in prayer we may go to God in the character of “a friend.” And how pleasing and inviting is it to view the Supreme Being as standing in such a relation to us, and to know that we have not only a real but a perfect, yea, a divine friend, who is nigh unto us in all that we call upon him for. Secondly, that we may come to him at any season, even though it be “at midnight.” *He* never slumbers or sleeps; never complains of surprise or interruption. We are allowed, we are commanded to pray without ceasing. David says, “Morning, and evening, and at noon, will I pray and cry aloud:” and “at midnight I will rise and give thanks unto thee, because of thy righteous judgments.” Never wait for a more convenient or favourable period—go to him immediately—in the

midnight gloom of thy experience or condition—He can turn the shadow of death into the morning. Thirdly, that we are allowed to ask of him largely—“Send me, not a loaf, but *three loaves.*” Fourthly, that we need not be ashamed to tell him our destitute and straitened condition—“I have nothing to set before him.” Fifthly, that we must be earnest and persevering in our addresses. “Asking,” “seeking,” “knocking,” are not a mere repetition, but an emphatical gradation. Importunity is not necessary to move God; but it is necessary to evince our sincerity, and to prepare us to enjoy his undeserved favours with improvement and praise. Lastly, that none who ask, and seek, and knock, shall be refused—“For *whoso* asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.” We often talk of holding a man by his word; and if he be an honest man, we have nothing by which we can hold him more firmly. Here we have the assurance of truth itself. He cannot deny himself. Let us therefore take *Him* at his word, and, relying on his engagement, *whoever* we are, *whatever* be our character and condition, draw near in full assurance of faith, and be filled with all joy and peace in believing, that we may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost.

MAY 7.—“I am pacified toward thee.”—Ezekiel xvi. 63.

THERE can be no pacifying without previous offence and provocation. Sin rouses the displeasure of God. Therefore he says, “O do not that abominable thing which I hate!” He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. The wicked shall not stand in his sight. It is no trifling thing to provoke a fellow-creature. Every one is able to injure us: but some possess larger influence and power. It is spoken of as a great disadvantage in contention, to “be as one that striveth with the priest:” and it is said, “the wrath of a king is as the roaring of a lion.” But to fall into the hands of the living God! Man is mortal, and soon dies. And as the injury he inflicts is temporary, so it is limited. At most he can only kill the body—there is no more that *he can* do—But there is One “who, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell.” Do we provoke the *Lord* to jealousy? Are we stronger than *he*? Hast thou an arm like *God*, or canst thou thunder with a voice like *his*? As sinners, therefore, we lay entirely at his mercy, and he could easily and righteously have destroyed us, “and that without remedy.” But he was not revengeful or implacable. He was not only willing to be pacified, but even devised means for the purpose—for by grace are we saved.

This pacification is to be viewed three ways: in the cross: in the gospel: and in the conscience. In the cross it is accomplished. Though God is good and merciful, he must maintain the honour of his law, defend his truth, and display the rectitude of his government. Hence he set forth his Son, “to be a propitiation—to declare his righteousness—that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” Hence also we are told that Christ “made reconciliation for the sins of the people.” His death was infinitely valuable, not only from his innocency, but his divinity; and was “an offering and a sacrifice to God of a sweet-smelling

savour." Thus while sin is condemned it is pardoned; and God is glorified while we are redeemed. There is now no hinderance to a sinner's return on the part of God; and "we have boldness to enter into the holiest of all by the blood of Jesus." What do people mean when they talk of making their peace with God? If such peace can be made, it was made by the blood of the cross. If our tears, and confessions, and performances, could have accomplished the work, God would have spared his own Son an immensity of needless suffering. If without shedding of blood there is no remission, Christ has been sacrificed for us, or we are yet in our sins.

In the gospel it is revealed. In vain the work had been effected unless it had been made known. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets: and whatever obscurity attaches to any other subject in the Scriptures, the light of life shines on this subject with peculiar lustre. The Peacemaker himself came and preached peace: and sent forth also his servants to publish it everywhere, and upon the house-tops. The gospel ministry is called the ministry of reconciliation; that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them: upon which ground, says the Apostle, "we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." How blind must that guide be, who does not show unto men this way of salvation! What a physician of no value is he who does not employ this balm of Gilead in the cure of souls!—By his stripes we are healed.

In the conscience it is realized. In vain is it not only procured but published, if it be rejected or disregarded. It must be applied by faith. Then we receive the atonement: rely upon it; plead it; and have access with confidence. By believing we enter into rest; and being justified by faith we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; not only peace above, but peace within. And it is a peace which passeth all understanding. For he is pacified perfectly, and for ever. Who can describe the blessedness of the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin? and who is able to say, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us?" God's frown darkens the universe: but when he smiles every thing rejoices. Eternity has no dread. Death has no sting. Affliction has no curse. "In that day," therefore, says the Church, "O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me."

Nor is this experience unfriendly to holiness, and good works. Yea, it is necessary to them: and believers are witnesses of these things. The people of the world may think that their liberty is licentious; but they run in the way of his commandments when God hath enlarged their heart. The joy of the Lord, instead of weakening their motives to duty, is their strength. The comforts of the Holy Ghost, instead of being opiates, prove cordials, and give them life more abundantly. The promises cleanse them. Hope purifies them. What says the Apostle? "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to

serve the living God?" What says God in the words before us? "That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done." The apprehension of wrath not only terrifies, but repels. We hate those we dread. We cannot love a Being while we view him as an enemy to our happiness.

Till I knew God as the God of peace, my heart could no more bleed than a stone. But when I saw his glory in the face of Jesus Christ, when I saw his abundant mercy, and the exceeding riches of his grace, not only in sparing me so long, but in being willing to receive me after all my offences; and especially in having, not only without my desert, but even desire, provided a Saviour in whom I have righteousness, and strength, and all spiritual blessings in heavenly places; and was enabled to realize the whole by faith—then the stone became flesh—then I cried, God be merciful to me a sinner—then I sorrowed after a godly sort. The prodigal could view the evil of his conduct in the misery to which it had reduced him; and he had some sense of his shame when he resolved to return and say, "I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy Son; make me as one of thy hired servants"—But he felt it a thousand times more when his father fell upon his neck and kissed him. O how did he repent and condemn himself for having grieved such a parent! O how did he weep when they put on the best robe; and ushered him into the room of festivity prepared for the occasion—"Yes, tears of joy!"—Nay, but tears of ingenuous sorrow too!

MAY 8.—"Even he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory."—Zech. vi. 13.

WE need not ask, of whom speaketh the prophet, when the words immediately preceding tell us that he is "the man whose name is the BRANCH," who should "grow up out of his place"—"He," says Zechariah, "shall build the temple of the Lord"—And to fix our attention to it the more, he repeats the sentiment with a striking addition—"Even he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory." Let us observe the TEMPLE; the BUILDER; and the GLORY.

The TEMPLE means the church of God. The Scripture often holds it forth under this image. The allusion was peculiarly natural in a Jewish writer, considering the importance attached to the house of God in Jerusalem. The name is founded on three reasons.

First, consecration. A temple is a place appropriated to sacred uses: and the people of God are separated from the world, and dedicated to his service—"The Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself." This is done by his eternal purpose, and by effectual calling. The former is realized and discovered in the latter, when they who were his by choice, become his by surrender, each of them saying, "Lord, I am thine, save me. Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" And they should remember that all they have, and all they are, is now the Lord's; and that to take any thing pertaining to a temple is not only robbery but sacrilege. Let them think of this when they would use their time, their substance, or any of their

talents, as their own, regardless of the will of God. Holiness becomes God's house for ever; and therefore it becomes them. Our Saviour was offended because they made his Father's house a house of merchandize, and drove out the buyers and sellers, and hallowed it for holy purposes. And says Paul, "If any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." How vile and dreadful was it in Manasseh to take the image of Baal and place it in the temple opposite the mercy-seat, the very throne of the God of Israel! Beware of profane mixtures, "What agreement hath the temple of God with idols?" Christians, maintain your sacredness. Keep yourselves pure from all filthiness of flesh as well as spirit. "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore, glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

Secondly, residence. A mansion is a dwelling for a nobleman, a palace for a king, a temple for a God—and the church is called the temple of the Lord, because he occupies it: "Ye are the temple of the living God;" as God hath said, "I dwell in them, and walk in them." He is everywhere essentially, and it would be well for us always to remember that God seeth us: but he is in his Church by a special presence; and in a way of grace, and influence, and operation. This at once secures and dignifies it: "I will be a wall of fire round about her, and the glory in the midst of her." "This," says he, "is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it." What are numbers, or fine buildings, or imposing ceremonies, to communion with the living God?

Thirdly, devotion. He is served and worshipped in them as a temple. And he receives homage and adoration nowhere else according to his own requisition; "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." His worship, therefore, is a reasonable service. The offerings presented to him are not gross, but spiritual sacrifices. They are prayers, and praise, and alms, and a broken heart, and a contrite spirit—and though all these are imperfect and defiled, they result from principle; they aim at the glory of God; and being offered through the Mediator, and with his much incense, they are accepted in the Beloved, and the worshipper has the testimony that he pleases God.

"Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people."

MAY 9.—"Even he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory."—Zech. vi. 13.

WE have seen the building, let us turn to the BUILDER, "Even *he* shall *build* the temple of the Lord." In another view he is the foundation; and the only foundation laid in Zion. No image can do him justice. The sacred writers, therefore, are reduced to three things—They strip images of all their imperfections, and apply them to him in their complete state—They ascribe to these images properties which they do not naturally possess: thus they speak of him as "a *living* stone;" for

"Nature, to make his beauties known,
Must mingle colours not her own."

And—They join several of these images together: thus he is not only the way, but the leader in it; not only the physician, but the remedy itself: not only the master of the feast, but the provision too—not only the foundation, but the builder also

But how is he the builder? He is the only one—"Neither is there salvation in any other." Yet are not Christians required to build? Does not Jude say, "Build up yourselves in your most holy faith?" But this is to remind us that we are not only subjects but instruments in this work. *He* does not believe and repent—*We* are the believers and the penitents. But he *makes* us such: he works in us to will and to do; and though we are the boughs that bear "the fruits of righteousness," "in me," says the Lord, "is thy fruit found;" and therefore it is called "the fruit of the Spirit." Are not Christians required to build up others? Yes, says the Apostle, "edify one another;" and "seek to excel to the edifying of the Church." And of himself he says, "As a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon." But even ministers only build instrumentally. He employs them, and all their success is from him. Paul and Apollos are only ministers by whom we believe, even as the Lord gives to every man. They often begin too insensible of this, and are like Melancthon, who supposed, in his fervour, he should convert all who heard him: but they must learn—and cannot learn too soon, that it is not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord. *He* builds this temple three ways.

First, He purchases all the materials. These consist of believers. Other temples are built of lifeless substances, but this of living stones: and he procures them, and with no less a price than his own blood: "He gave his life a ransom for many."

Secondly, He prepares them. The materials for building a common temple are not found fit, but made so: and Solomon, probably in allusion to his own great undertaking, says, "prepare thy work without, and make it fit for thyself in the field; and afterwards build thine house." The wood must be felled, and come under the operation of the axe, the saw, and the plane. The stones must be dug out of the quarry, and hewn and polished: and we are commanded to "look to the rock whence we were hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence we were digged"—that is, to remember our condition by nature. But he does not leave us where he finds us or what he finds us. He renews us in the spirit of our minds, and forms us a people for himself, to show forth his praise.

Thirdly, He unites them. He assigns them their proper places; gives them one heart and one way; and by "faith and love, which are in Christ Jesus," they are bound more firmly together than any human ties could attach them—The union is for ever—And the Saviour addressing his Father, says, "They are one, even as we are one."

The parts of a temple are different, but they are all necessary. The door cannot say to the window, or the wall to the roof, I have no need of thee. Some parts are more near, and some more remote, some more conspicuous, and some more concealed; but they all subserve their appointment; they have all a relation to each other; and

by their junction form one whole—"We are all one in Christ Jesus"—"in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord."

Art thou found, O my soul, among those to whom the application can be made? "In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

MAY 10.—"Even he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory."—Zech. vi. 13.

IT is supposed that a GLORY will result from the building; and to whom can this glory belong but to the builder? A man's works praise him in the gates. Some have immortalized themselves by military achievements; some by voyages of discovery; some by scientific improvements; some by the composition of a book; and some by the structure of an edifice—But what building ever redounded so much to the glory of the builder as this temple of the Lord? It would be easy to prove, or rather to exemplify this.

Observe the badness of the materials. The worse and the more unsuitable these are, the more praise is due to the workman that bends them completely to his purpose. But there never were such materials as this builder had to work upon: so that it was necessary to change, not their form only, but their very nature; and from earthly, sensual, and devilish, to make them heavenly and divine.

Then see the excellency of the workmanship—"His work is perfect." The more we examine an instance of human agency, the less admiration we feel. We can generally, by examination, soon perceive some superfluity or deficiency; some possibility of alteration for the better; or at least we find the whole is within our grasp, and the extent of the art can be comprehended. But when we turn to the Lord's doing, this is marvellous in our eyes, in proportion as we explore it. By every research we seem to detect fresh indications of design; we feel ourselves always on the verge of infinite; we exclaim, "This is the finger of God." So it is with all his works—He doth *all* things well: but he hath magnified his word above all his name; and in the salvation of his people he excelleth in glory.

Look at the magnitude of the work. A work is sometimes estimated by the length of time employed in the execution of it. Forty and six years, said the Jews, was this temple in building: but here the structure has been going on for near six thousand years, and is far from being accomplished yet. A work is estimated by the number of workmen engaged, and the abundance of scaffolding required. Here millions of hands have been cordially employed, and countless multitudes also, who will derive no advantage from it. Scholars, merchants, kings, heroes, tyrants, have laboured for this cause, without knowing it: and the world itself, as soon as the work is finished, will be removed and burnt up. The estimate is also taken from the duration. Man's work, like himself, is perishing. Solomon's temple was burnt by the Chaldeans, and Zerubbabel's temple by the Romans; and not a fragment remained a few ages only after their erection. But, says the Saviour, "Upon this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The defections of heretics and the apostacies of professors do not affect it.

“the foundation of God standeth sure.” The most remarkable structures for permanence are the pyramids of Egypt; but though it is probable they may reach the last day, they must then fall in the wreck of all things. But from the ruins of sin he has made his people an eternal excellency, the joy of many generations.

And how glorious to himself is the manner in which he carries it forward to its completion! Difficulties insuperable to man attend every part of the work. It is opposed by all the powers of darkness. But their attempts only serve to display the Saviour’s wisdom and power. Nothing is too hard for him. He is not driven from his post, he is not compelled to pause. He will accomplish the plan precisely according to the design, and to a moment of the time appointed. The angels will not pass by the partially erected edifice and say, He began to build, but was not able to finish—“The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of the house; his hands shall also finish it. Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the head stone thereof with shouting—Grace, grace unto it!”

Such is the determination of God—“even he shall build the temple of the Lord, and—he shall bear the glory.” Every thing in the economy of salvation therefore is so arranged, that he who glories must glory in the Lord. Therefore every sentiment incompatible with this, is an erroneous sentiment; and every disposition adverse to this, is an unrighteous disposition. And in the minds of his people, the proud looks *are* humbled, and the lofty looks laid low; and the Lord alone *is* exalted. They now readily exclaim, “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy Name give glory, for thy mercy and thy truth’s sake.” How much more will this be the case, when he will come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe!—when they will cast their crowns before the Throne; and it will be their business and their delight to exclaim, “To him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”

“O may I bear some humble part
In that immortal song;
Wonder and joy shall tune my heart,
And love command my tongue.”

MAY 11.—“I have learned by experience.”—Gen. xxx. 27.

THERE is no spiritual meaning in these words. They are only the language of Laban acknowledging the benefit he had derived under God—for even *he* could talk piously, from his son-in-law Jacob; “The Lord hath blessed me for thy sake.” But the way in which he says he had learned this—“I have learned by experience,” will apply to a Christian in speaking of his acquaintance with divine things; and afford us an occasion to notice a very interesting subject. Experiments are processes of trial to determine some thing not sufficiently known or admitted. Experience is the knowledge derived from the trial; and this knowledge is very distinguishable from mere report or opinion. A medicine is announced as a specific for some malady; but when I have taken it, and have been cured by

it, I have learned the excellency and efficacy of it by experience. Much of the philosophy of former times was little better than learned affectation. The vouchers of it were not willing to own their ignorance, and place themselves upon a level with the vulgar, and so they conjectured and theorized; but their hypotheses could not abide the test. Of late years, a wiser course, recommended by Bacon, has been pursued, and people have been taught to found science on fact, to reason from inductions, and to take nothing for truth without trial.

Now this is what we wish with regard to the noblest of all subjects. Why cannot religion be tried? Why cannot prophecy be compared with events? Why cannot miracles be examined by any given standard of evidence? Why cannot we take what the Scripture says of the state of human nature, and go into the world and see whether it is borne out by history and observation? Yes, says the Christian, the wickedness and deceitfulness of the heart is not a notion with me—I have learned it by experience in my unthankfulness under mercies, incorrigibleness under corrections, unprofitableness under ordinances, and failures and treachery under vows and professions. I know that there is such a Saviour as the gospel proclaims, for I have made application to him, and I have proof of his ability, suitableness, and willingness to save, in my own salvation—"He that believeth hath the witness in himself." The Word says, "He that walketh uprightly walketh surely," and I have learned this by experience. I have always suffered when I have turned aside to crooked and selfish policy; but I never had reason to repent when I have acted in simplicity and godly sincerity, and been willing to deny myself for the Lord's sake. In the same way I can attest the influence and usefulness of prayer—It has calmed my fears—it has revived me in the midst of trouble—I have learned by experience that it is good for me to draw near to God.

And verily this is the best way in which we can become acquainted with divine truth. Our knowledge of it without this will be mere speculation. We read of "a form of knowledge" as well as "a form of godliness," and what is the value of the one more than of the other, without "the power thereof?" The knowledge of some things is injurious rather than useful without it. When persons take up the sovereignty of God from a mere doctrinal system, we commonly find them heady, and contentious, and censorious: but when they learn it from experience, and are constrained to own that by his grace they are what they are, he having begun with them, instead of their beginning with him; it makes them humble, and grateful, and candid, and tender.

It is "a good thing for the heart to be established with grace;" and this mode of learning confirms the judgment, and renders a man safe against error. He is not to be ridiculed or reasoned out of his conviction. In vain would any one tell you, if you have tasted them, that gall is not bitter, or honey sweet.

The heart also, as Solomon remarks, teacheth the lips, and we derive a great advantage from experience in dealing with others. We shall be able to speak with more confidence, and more earnestness, and more feeling; because we do not deal in untried advantages, but declare that which we have seen, and heard, and handled

of the Word of life. "Lo this, we have searched it, so it is; hear it, and know thou it for thy good." It is thus we gain the tongue of the learned, and know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: it is thus we can comfort others with those comforts wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

Christians therefore should study their experience. It is one of their best books; and as to some of them it has become now no inconsiderable volume. They should remember how differently things have frequently appeared in prospect, and in review. They should observe how differently they have felt and acted in various periods and conditions of life; especially they should examine what were the workings of their hearts under those afflictive dispensations which are called trials, because intended to be moral probations.

It is natural that Christians should communicate of their experience; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. But here wisdom is profitable to direct. We are not to give that which is holy to the dogs; neither should we cast our pearls before swine. In a general way it will be proper to follow the example of David, who said; "Come unto me, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul"—They alone can understand and relish the communication. And with regard to them, we are not to speak without distinction. We are not to bring forward the deep things of God to those who cannot bear them now. Neither should we dismay the timid and doubting, by displaying before them our confidence and ecstasies. We may talk with some out of the eighth of the Romans, but with others we must quote out of the seventh. It will *often* be better to talk of divine things at large without referring to our *own* experience. And we must *always* remember that we had better never speak of our experience at all, unless it be accompanied with suitable practice: for it is always of the nature of personal evidence, and therefore will only affect the hearers in proportion as they confide in us.

MAY 12.—"Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not."—Psalm xvii. 5.

RELIGION is principally an intercourse maintained between God and us. And in the thought of it there is something very wonderful and striking. When we consider his greatness and glory, and our vanity and vileness, we are led to exclaim, "Lord, what is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him?" But so it is—And as he visits us, so he allows us to visit him—and while he addresses us we address him. He addresses us in his Word, and we address him in prayer.

How much they lose who are strangers to this duty, this privilege. It is our light in darkness; our solace in affliction; our sanctification in prosperity. We cannot be wise, or happy, or even safe without. Let me observe David's *course*, and his *concern* respecting it; and learn to pray as he prayed, "Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not."

First, his *course*. He speaks of his "goings." Religion does not allow a man to sit still. Under the influence of it he believes, knows, feels, speaks: but all these are vain unless they result in

practice—unless he is, so to speak, set a going—unless he says, with David, “I will walk in thy truth.” To walk is to be active and advancing. It stands for the whole of our conduct: and upon this it is that the Scripture lays such stress, requiring us as we have received Christ Jesus the Lord so to walk in him; and to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called.

He speaks of his goings “in God’s paths.” These are three-fold.—The path of his *commands*. “O let me not wander from thy commandments.” “Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight.” His commands are to be found in his word; and faith in Christ is one of them, and necessary to our obeying all the rest; for “this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ.”—The path of his *ordinances*. Pious minds alive to the authority of God who has appointed them, and believing the promise that they who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, and feeling their need of spiritual supplies and succour, can never neglect the means of grace. They will value retirement for reading the Scriptures, and meditation, and prayer. They will love the conversation of the godly. As they have opportunity they will repair to the sanctuary, and join in the solemn assemblies in public devotion, and in hearing the word preached, and in surrounding the table of the Lord. Others may indeed occasionally or even frequently attend upon religious institutions, but not as spiritual worshippers who use them as mediums of communion with God, and channels of communication from him.—The path of his *dispensations*. Nothing in our condition happens by chance. Events are the movements of his providence: and where others disregard them or view them only in connexion with creatures—for God is not in all their thoughts, believers acknowledge him in their connexions, their losses, their gains, their comforts, and their trials. Thus Job said, “The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” And David says, “I will sing of mercy and of judgment; unto thee, O Lord, will I sing.” Such was his course. Observe,

Secondly, his concern respecting it—“Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not.” It is the language of conviction. He knew the injury that would result from a fall or even a slip in religion—How it would dishonour God, cause the way of truth to be evil spoken of, harden the wicked, scandalize the weak, distress the strong, injure his own usefulness and peace, and bring upon himself those trials by which his wickedness should correct him, and his backslidings reprove him. It is the language of apprehension. He knew his footsteps were prone to slide. How can a man be ignorant of this, who reflects on the malice and power of his adversary the devil, and the allurements of the world, and the corruption of his nature; and has seen the errors and falls of others far superior to himself? It is well to be sensible of our danger; and it is only grace that can enable us to say—

“Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
Prone to leave the God I love—”

It is the language of weakness. He knew not only his exposure, but his inability to help himself. This a Christian learns not only

from faith in the testimony of the word, which every where assures us that we are without strength in ourselves, but from experience also. He sees how little he can depend upon his persuasions however clear, and his resolutions however firm—How often have they given way, and filled him not only with grief but astonishment. Year after year has told him that he who trusts in his own heart is a fool; and that he is not wise who trusts in his own grace—It is not thy grace, says the Saviour, but *my* grace that is sufficient for thee. It is the language of confidence. He hopes in God while he renounces all self-dependence. The one is as necessary as the other. And it is as well founded. O that we could keep them equally balanced in the mind—That while we avoid presumption, we may also avoid despondency—That while we are humble we may also be cheerful—That while we are cautious we may also be courageous; knowing that while we cannot stand of ourselves, he is able to keep us from falling, and has said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee; so that we may boldly say, The Lord is my keeper, I will not fear—Hold THOU me up, and I SHALL BE SAFE.

MAY 13.—“Behold my hands and my feet.”—Luke xxiv. 39.

His sufferings and death were not only wonderful, but all-important: and “he showed them his hands and his feet;” because these contained the effects and proofs of them. The wounds were indeed now closed, and this was as miraculous as his resurrection itself; for the parts had been so lacerated and torn by the large nails that fastened him to the cross, and sustained the whole weight of his body, that many weeks would have been required to heal them naturally. But the marks remained, and fully ascertained him to be the sufferer who died on the cross. All the disciples now present saw them; and Thomas who was absent saw them a few days after, and was no longer faithless, but believing. And these signs of his passion our Lord retained, not only after his resurrection, but also after his ascension. John, in his visions, saw an image of him, “as a lamb that had been slain;” that is, the lamb appeared with the wool gored and the neck gashed. He ever liveth to make intercession for us, and is our advocate with the Father, by presenting his humanity, and pleading the sacrifice he offered on earth: for he entered into the holy place, there to appear in the presence of God for us, not with the blood of bulls and of goats, but with his own blood, the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than that of Abel. The Father beholds his hands and his feet, and is well pleased for his righteousness’ sake, and says, “Ask of me now, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.” The angels behold them, and though he has not saved them, they know that he has saved us, and their benevolence leads them to exclaim, with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.” The saints behold them, and sing “a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.”

Christians, to this same sight you are hastening; for yet a little while, and you will be like him, for you shall see him as he is. But you have no reason to look for such a real and sensible sight of him here. Some indeed seem persuaded that they have actually seen him; but their mistake obviously appears from the manner of the sight. He could render himself corporeally visible; but if he did this, he would give us a true representation of himself. These good people have always seen him upon the cross: but he is now in his glory. If he showed himself at this moment, we should not see his hands and feet bleeding; but his body would be a glorious body, as Saul of Tarsus saw it, and shining above the brightness of the sun. The case seems to be this. These persons, of lively apprehensions and feeling, in the depths of their anguish and terror, obtained relief from a dying Saviour by believing, which is mental sight, and took the impression of faith for a sensible reality.

But there is still a spiritual exhibition of himself, in which he says, "Behold my hands and my feet." They are to be seen, First, in the Scripture of Truth; in its types, prophecies, history, doctrine. Secondly, in the ministry of the Gospel, which is called "the preaching of the cross." Thirdly, in the teachings of the Holy Ghost, who takes of the things of Christ, and shows them to us; so that we see the Son and believe on him. And, Fourthly, in the ordinance of the Lord's supper, where, by emblems and memorials the most simple and significant before our eyes, Jesus Christ is evidently set forth crucified among us.

And what should the sight remind us of? Beholding his hands and his feet, we should think of the evil of sin, that required his suffering and death to put it away—And of the justice of God, that spared not his own Son when he became a surety for us—And the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, in his kindness towards us. We hear of benefactors: but how rarely do they exercise self-denial, or make personal and painful sacrifices! We talk of love; and greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. But while we were enemies, Christ died for us—

MAY 14.—"And the Lord showed me four carpenters."—Zech. i. 20.

"THE heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's: but the earth hath he given to the children of men." And it is given them not only to possess and enjoy, but to cultivate. Carelessness, and ignorance, and sloth, stalk over many rude and barren spots, which skill and diligence could render beautiful and productive. It is the same with the Scripture. Many passages as they are now read seem to have no meaning, and yield no information, yet they really contain much of the wisdom that is from above. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness;" but they are addressed to us as rational creatures, and we are commanded to search them. We must therefore not only read them, but remark, and examine, and compare, and apply them. And if we do this with seriousness and prayer, we shall be amply rewarded for our endeavours, and the good ground will yield "some an hundred fold, some sixty, and some thirty."

Zechariah had seen four horns, and had said to the angel that talked with him, "What be these?" And he answered him, "These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem." Then THE LORD SHOWED HIM FOUR CARPENTERS. And upon his inquiring, "What come these to do?" he received for answer, "These are come to fray them, to cast out the horns of the Gentiles, which lifted up their horn over the land of Judah to scatter it."

It is not perhaps possible to determine who those "four horns" were, or whether they are to be viewed as so many individuals or nations—they were evidently hostile powers. The same may be said of these "four carpenters." Some have supposed they were Zerubbabel, and Joshua, and Nehemiah, and Ezra. In each case a definite number seems to be used for an indefinite.

But we see from it—that the friends of Zion are as numerous as her foes; that her defence is equal to her danger; and that as the state of his people requires it, the Lord will seasonably raise up means and instruments for their succour and deliverance—This is the doctrine of the text. And the assurance may be derived from four principles—The love of God—The power of God—The faithfulness of God—The conduct of God. In the first, we see that he must be inclined to appear for them, as they are infinitely dear to him. In the second, we see that he is able to do it. In the third, that he is engaged to do it, and his promise cannot be broken. In the fourth, that he always has done it, Scripture, history, and experience being witness—

"Then let the world forbear their rage,
The Church renounce her fear;
Israel must live through every age,
And be the Almighty's care."

MAY 15.—"And she said, O my lord, as thy soul liveth, my lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the Lord. For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him."—1 Samuel, i. 26—27.

HERE we see the meekness of wisdom, and the wisdom of meekness. Hannah does not bring the former scene to the remembrance of Eli by his improper carriage towards her—"O my lord, I am the woman you called a drunkard, and treated as a daughter of Belial. What do you think of her now? And what do you think of yourself and your false, vile, and cruel censure?" Little minds always retain a sense of an injury received: but it is the glory of a man to pass by a transgression; and we are not to be overcome of evil, but to overcome evil with good. We question the sincerity of a man who says, I forgive but I do not forget. We are sure he does not resemble the Father of mercies, who says, Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. Good men are not to be upbraided with their miscarriages and mistakes. They have long ago mourned over them; and have condemned them more than others have done—Let them be buried in oblivion for ever.

Here we behold one of those transitions which often take place in human life. We may compare it with another affecting change of

a very different quality, and which also befel a pious woman. When Naomi returned with her daughter-in-law Ruth from the country of Moab, to which she had been driven by famine, and had reached her native village, the people of Bethlehem came around her, saying, "Is this Naomi?" And she said, "Call me not Naomi—Call me Mara, for the Lord hath dealt very bitterly with me. I had substance—I am now poor. I had a husband—I am now a widow. I was a mother—I am now childless. I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty. Why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the Lord hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?" But what a difference is there between Hannah's former and present circumstances and experience. Then she was a petitioner—now she is filled with thanksgiving, and has the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Then she presented herself at the temple in the bitterness of her soul; then she sowed in tears—now she reaps in joy; then she went forth weeping, bearing precious seed—now she returns again with rejoicing, bringing her sheaf with her. "Oh my lord, you may have forgotten the case, but *I* have not. I who am now so favoured and honoured, am the very woman who was here at such a time, drunk indeed with grief; but he has made darkness light before me: he has turned the shadow of death into the morning—Oh my lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here praying unto the Lord."

Here we learn the importance of prayer. Whoever undervalues it, says Hannah, I can extol and recommend it. I have found it good to draw near to God—For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him. Time employed in prayer is not spent in vain. Prayer is the richest traffic in the world; the merchandize of it is better than the merchandize of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. By intercourse with God we are impressed, and made to resemble him, as the face of Moses shone when he came down from the communion of Horeb. How are we refreshed by the exercise when our spirits are weary and ready to faint! How it enables us to leave our fears and cares at the footstool of divine grace; and go away as Hannah did, with our countenance no more sad, and our heart feeling the peace of God which passeth all understanding! Trouble is the dreary path which in this vale of tears all will sooner or later tread: and to enter without a guide; to go on without a comforter; to meet death at the end without support or hope—if any man be reduced to this, "I say, an untimely birth is better than he." But let us not limit the subject, or suppose with some that the worth or usefulness of prayer arises wholly and merely from the influence of the performance. The labour of the husbandman in the field is beneficial to him by the exercise, and conduces to health and strength: but he looks also for a crop; and goes forth and sees first the blade, then the ear, and after that the full corn in the ear. So it is with us. The very action of prayer benefits and improves us: but if there be any meaning in the Scripture, we may rely upon answers of prayer. This woman obtained her request; and the time would fail us to tell of all those recorded in the word of God, who could acknowledge that he had given them the blessings which they asked of him.

Hannah observes the answer to her petition. Prayer is some-

times answered immediately, and sometimes it is delayed. It is sometimes answered in the very thing desired, and sometimes in a way of exchange—while sometimes by strange, and even terrible things, in righteousness the Lord answers his people. Wisdom therefore is here necessary in discerning, and caution in judging. We should not indeed subtilize too much; nor be distressed if we cannot ascertain what *is* in answer to prayer. We have always enough to encourage us to continue in the exercise, and should impress our minds with the conviction that our seeking cannot be in vain in the Lord. Yet as prayer *is* answered, it is proper and important to attend to it; and whoso is wise and will observe these things, even he shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord. It is more than trifling with the Supreme Being, it is even insulting him to awaken his attention when we never mean to regard his benefits. Yet thousands never think more of their prayers when they have once offered them. They knock, but never stay to see whether the door of mercy is opened. They send an address, but never wait for the reply, or read it when it comes. And will God remember prayers which we ourselves forget, or regard prayers, which we ourselves despise? On the other hand, how desirable is it to know that he has not forgotten to be gracious, or turned away our prayer from him! How confirming is it to our confidence to be able to say, with Moses, “The Lord heard me at that time also.” What excitement to praise and prayer does David derive from this persuasion; “I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications.”

Hannah not only observes the regard of God to her case, but acknowledges it. So should we. We should not hide his righteousness within our heart; but declare his faithfulness and his salvation. Many stand in need of encouragement, and under a sense of their unworthiness and guilt are ready to conclude that the Lord will not hear them. Be his witnesses. Testify to them from your own experience. I have tried the freeness and fulness of his grace. I never trusted in him and was confounded, never sought him and was disappointed. Tell it to his own people. It will not excite their envy; the humble shall hear thereof and be glad. They have prayed for you: call upon them to aid your praise: O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together. I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul. Yea, like Hannah, tell it to Eli—Ministers personally need such communications; and they can also improve them for the good of others both in their private intercourse and in their public services.

What a place will heaven be when we ascend to that Shiloh! What developments shall we have to make from our history and experience! What answers of prayer, what deliverances, what blessings to acknowledge! What mutual congratulations shall we have to receive! What praises shall we have to offer!

MAY 16.—“Therefore I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord.”—1 Sam. i. 28.

THIS must have been an exercise of great self-denial in Hannah, to resign so dear a child for ever. But it was only an act of fidelity to religious engagement: it was the condition of her prayer: “She vowed a vow, and said, O Lord of Hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head.” Distress will often gender purposes and resolutions, because we then feel our weakness and dependence; but when the danger is removed, or the blessing obtained, and the hour of performance is arrived, we resemble the lepers who, when healed, returned not to give glory to God. How many have howled upon their beds, and poured out a prayer when God’s chastening hand was upon them! But the vows of sickness have been violated by renewed health, and their iniquities, like the wind, have taken them away. Even Hezekiah, affected as he was by the divine goodness, so that he composed a writing to fix and perpetuate the sentiment, and said, “The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day: the father to the children shall make known thy truth: The Lord was ready to save me: therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments, all the days of our life, in the house of the Lord:” yet after all this he rendered not according to the benefit done him. So it was with Jacob. When, going from home a forlorn youth, he was indulged with the vision at Beth-el, and alluding to the divine intimation so suited to his circumstances of distress, he “vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father’s house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God: and this stone which I have set for a pillar, shall be God’s house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.” Yet when he returned, multiplied and enriched, he passed year after year, comparatively in the neighbourhood, forgetful of his engagements, till God said to him, “Arise, go up to Beth-el, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau, thy brother.” Then, and not till then, “Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments: and let us arise, and go up to Beth-el; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went.”

We do not much recommend vowing; we would rather urge praying: but if vows are to be made, let them be made in the strength of divine grace; and let them not be trifled with, but fulfilled. “When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay.” How noble was the conduct of David upon his deliverance! “I will go into thy house with burnt-offerings; I will pay thee my vows, which my lips have uttered, and my

mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble." In the same manner Hannah acts when she brings her little Samuel to Shiloh, and dedicates him to the Lord—"As long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord"—

And was she a loser by this surrender? Did he cease to be her's because he was the Lord's? She would feel a new and a peculiar interest in him, in consequence of his relation to the sanctuary. There she knew the little Levite would be safe, and happy, and dignified. There he would grow up to be the light of Israel, the prophet, the ruler, the judge of his country. And she would make him a little coat, and bring it to him year by year, when she came up with her husband, to offer the yearly sacrifice. And while her fingers were employed in the needle-work her spirit would hold communion with him; and she would look forward to a state in which she would possess him for ever—

Was she a loser by this resignation? Immediately her tongue was loosed, and became as the pen of a ready writer: "My heart rejoiceth in the Lord; mine horn is exalted in the Lord; my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation." There is nothing meritorious in our performances; but with such sacrifices God is well pleased. Them that honour me, says God, I will honour. When we follow our convictions, and show that we hold nothing too dear to part with at his call, he gives us the testimony of his approbation, and fills the mind with peace and joy. When the Eunuch was baptized, he went on his way rejoicing. What is the reason that some are strangers to the liberty and comfort of the Gospel? Is it not, some known duty neglected? or some idol adored? Are the consolations of God small with thee? Is there no secret thing with thee? Throw the head of the traitor to the Lord our King over the wall; and Joab retires, and peace is restored—O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea.

Was she a loser by this sacrifice? "And the Lord visited Hannah, so that she conceived, and bare three sons and two daughters." For one child given, behold five added! "And Amaziah said to the man of God, But what shall we do for the hundred talents which I have given to the army of Israel? And the man of God answered, The Lord is able to give thee much more than this." "Then Peter said, Lo, we have left all, and followed thee. And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting."

MAY 17.—"The son of consolation."—Acts iv. 36.

THIS is spoken of a man who was a Levite. His ancestors had retired from Judea to the country of Cyprus. We know not for what purpose; but there he was born. His first name was Joses. But after his conversion to Christianity he was surnamed by the Apostles, Barnabas, which is, being interpreted, the son of consolation. Two reasons have been assigned for this denomination; both very consistent with each other; and both very probable in them—

selves. First, because by his property—for he had substance, he succoured and solaced the poor and miserable. And, Secondly, because by his preaching he comforted the people of God, and encouraged sinners to come to the Saviour for deliverance. Ministers may differ considerably from each other. Some may be called Boanerges, or sons of thunder, not only as they are bold in their manner, but as the severe seems to be their element, and they deal much in the alarming. Others are Barnabases; and have given them, the tongue of the learned, that they may know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary. Let us not oppose the servants of Christ to each other, thereby inflating one, and running down another, because of their diversities. Let us view them all in their commission, and their suitability to their appointments. Their stations, their natural dispositions, their gifts, their graces, are not the same: but we need them all; and they are all useful. Let one plant, and another water; let one lay the foundation, and another build thereon; let one be set for the defence of the Gospel, and another abound in the application of it: each is alike respectable; and each shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. Beware, says the Apostle, in his address to the Corinthians, that you fall not into spiritual babyism; or walk as men. “While one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?” To him let us look, and say, not formally, but sincerely, “Lord, send by whom thou wilt send.” If we attempt to make the favourite a substitute “in God’s stead,” we shall provoke the Most High to remove him, or to withhold his blessing from him; thereby to reprove our idolatry; and to convince us that he will not give his glory to another. Happy they whose strength is in Him! They are most likely to succeed, both in hearing and in preaching, who are most imbued with the conviction; “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord.”

MAY 18.—“Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”—1 Cor. i. 30.

HERE are four articles. The first is wisdom—He is made of God unto us wisdom. He is the true excellency of the understanding. In knowing him, we know all that is necessary to be known. Especially we know God—No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son who was in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. He is the author of our spiritual illumination: he is the prophet of his church, and leads us into all truth by his word and Spirit. As the sun can only be seen by his own rays, so he is only known by his own revealing. He therefore says, “I will manifest myself unto him.” The second is righteousness—He is made of God unto us righteousness. That is, he delivers us from guilt and condemnation, and makes us just before God. The Apostle tells us how it is accomplished: he hath made him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. This righteousness, derived entirely from himself, regardless of our worthiness or works, is called the righteousness

which is of faith, because it is only apprehended, and made ours, and pleaded, by faith. The third is sanctification—He is made of God unto us sanctification. This is as much from him as righteousness, only not in the same way. He is the one to us by imputation, he is the other by communication. By the one he changes our state, by the other our nature. By the one he entitles us to life, by the other he makes us meet for it. But though the blessings are distinguishable, they are not separable. He came by water, and by blood. Whom he justifies he renews. And this sanctification is more than a reformation of manners, or mere morality. A man may be moral without being sanctified, but he cannot be sanctified without being moral. When he sanctifies us he puts a new spirit within us, delivers us from the dominion and the love of every sin, and enables us not only to obey God, but to delight to do his will, and to dedicate all we have to his service and glory. The fourth is redemption—He is made of God unto us redemption. To ascertain the meaning of which, we must observe that it is distinguished from the foregoing benefits. But if it were taken for redemption from the curse of the law, it would coincide with his being our righteousness, and if for emancipation from the servitude of sin, it would be comprised in his being our sanctification. It is also mentioned *after* wisdom, righteousness, and sanctification. To which we may add an appeal to other passages of Scripture where the same term is used. Thus Paul says to the Ephesians, Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God whereby ye are sealed unto the *day of redemption*. And to the Romans, We groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, *the redemption of the body*. Here the import of the term must mean the resurrection to eternal life. And there is a peculiar propriety in applying the word to this conclusion of the Christian's recovery from the effects of the fall, not only because any great deliverance, regardless of price, is called redemption in the Scripture, but also because it is the effect of the purchase of the cross. Christ has ransomed the bodies as well as the souls of his people, and therefore God's covenant also is with their dust. Their bodies will not only be raised, but infinitely improved, and will bear not the image of the earthly but of the heavenly Adam. The sacred writers, therefore, in speaking of the happiness of believers, go forward at once to the glory of the last day—not to the denying or undervaluing of an intermediate state, but because their salvation will then, and not till then, be perfectly achieved. This consummation is all his own work and honour—“To them that look for him will he appear a second time without sin unto *salvation*.” “We look for *the Saviour*, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.”

And is he made of God unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption?—Then we learn what is our condition by nature: we are destitute of all these, and can never derive them from ourselves.—Then we see the importance and value of the Lord Jesus. He is not something only, but every thing to them that are lost. In him we are blessed with *all* spiritual blessings.—Then we need not wonder that he is the substance of revelation, and that the Scriptures every where should testify of him.—Then he

should be the theme, the only theme of preaching; and every minister, faithful to his commission or usefulness, like Paul, should determine not to know any thing, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.—Then we may judge of the happiness of Christians who can realize him in all these glorious blessings as their own; and infer, how resigned, and glad of heart, and thankful, they should always live.—And what says the subject to those who despise or neglect him? What do they lose! What will be their doom! How intolerable! How unavoidable! And yet how righteous!

Let me therefore be wise enough to choose this good part, and seek after an interest in him. If ever I am saved, he must be all my salvation—May he be all my desire. May a union with him be not only my supreme, but immediate concern—knowing that the gracious opportunity afforded me is short and uncertain, and—that I cannot be happy too soon. He who has the Son has life; and is prepared for—every thing!

MAY 19.—“Noah walked with God.”—Gen. vi. 9.

THE same thing is testified of Enoch; and will be exemplified in every partaker of divine grace. Two questions may be asked concerning it: the one regards the nature; and the other the excellency, of this walk.

Now as to the former of these, walking with God includes the following things. It supposes that we are on terms of *concord and friendship*—“How can two walk together, except they be agreed?” Here we see the necessity of a mediator. By the fall we had revolted from God, and our access to him was cut off. But Christ once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God. He made peace by the blood of his cross; and we are accepted in the Beloved. But it is not enough that God is thus reconciled to us; we must also be reconciled to God; reconciled to his nature, to his law, to his gospel, to his government. As sinners we have no sentiments of affection, gratitude, or obedience, towards God, but feel a spirit of enmity against him—How then can we walk with him, till this alienation and aversion be subdued? This change is effected by the Holy Spirit. The love of God is shed abroad in the heart, and then our desire is to his name. What we dreaded to part with before, we then resign with ease: and what was once irksome in the performance, becomes delightful. His commands are not grievous; his yoke is easy, and his ways pleasantness and ease.—It also implies *nearness*. If you walk with any one, he must be with you. God is not far from any one of us: he is about our path and our bed, and is acquainted with all our ways. And as God is present with us, so we are present with him—“I am continually with thee.” By faith and reflection we bring ourselves consciously under his eye; feel, wherever we are, Hagar’s impression, “Thou God seest me;” and upon every temptation to sin, however secret, say with Job, “Doth not he know my ways, and count all my steps?”—It also takes in *communion*. We do not walk with God as a madman with his keeper, or a servant behind his master, or as a stranger in the distance of reserve. God is

our father and our friend; and when we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another. Many a conference passes between us. Sometimes he begins. He addresses the soul, and the soul replies—"When thou saidst, Seek ye my face, my heart answered, Thy face, Lord, will I seek." At other times we begin. We have much to divulge and much to implore. And we are allowed to deal freely and familiarly with him; yea, we are required in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, to make known our requests unto God.—It also expresses *mutual* progress in *the same direction*. When we walk with another we recede, and advance together; we move towards the same place or object. When therefore we walk with God, we pursue the same end with himself. And what is this end, but his own glory? This is his aim in all his works, and in all his dispensations. And the Christian has the same bias and the same movement; and whether he eats or drinks, or whatever he does, he does all to the glory of God. Hence one moral maxim serves as a short and sufficient rule to govern his conduct—He will follow wherever the Lord goes, for he cannot lead him astray: but he will not be found where the Lord refuses to accompany him, or he cannot consistently invite his presence to go with him. Let us pass from the nature to the excellency of this course.

In walking with God there is honour. It is the dignity of man, that he alone, of all creatures in this world, is capable of it: but the Christian only actually enjoys it. In consequence of this, the righteous is more excellent than his neighbour. He is raised up from the dust and the dunghill, and placed, not only among princes, but in company with God himself. How would the poor deem themselves honoured if permitted to walk at liberty with their Sovereign! But such honour have all the saints—They walk with the blessed and only potentate, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords.

In walking with God there is safety. Wo unto us if our adversaries find us away from him, for without him we can do nothing. But what confidence and courage should not his presence inspire? He is not only for me, but with me; he is at my right hand, therefore I shall not be moved. If the enemy assails me, it is in sight of my almighty helper. Yea, if I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for he is with me. When I first fled to him breathless, from a thousand dangers at my heels, he said to me, as David to Ahimelech: "abide with me, for he that seeketh thy life seeketh my life; but with me thou shalt be in safeguard."

There is pleasure in walking with God. For with him is the fountain of life, and in his light we shall see light. If the journey would prove discouraging, our intercourse with him relieves the tediousness of the road, prevents weariness, revives our droopings, and renews our strength. With him we can dispense with things, the loss of which would otherwise destroy all our peace and comfort. When the fig-tree does not blossom, and there is no fruit in the vine, we can rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of our salvation. In all our personal and relative trials, his presence opens a retreat; and we enter where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest.

There is profit in walking with God. Where is the believer

who cannot acknowledge, "It is good for me to draw nigh to God?" The mind is powerfully affected by the objects with which we are very familiar. He who is much engaged in ignoble pursuits will soon be debased: but we are elevated in the presence and contemplation of greatness and sublimity. The things of earth tend to sensualize us; but when we are with God, the inroads of the world are checked; we stand on holy ground; impure desires and vain thoughts fall off. Our attention is fixed upon the perfections and blessedness of Jehovah, and we admire, and adore, and love, and resemble him. We feel the transforming views of his character, and are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord. People take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus; and our profiting appears unto all men. And as the nearer the fountain, the purer the stream, the nearer the centre the more powerful the attraction; so, the nearer we are to God the more will all our religious principles be influenced, the more we shall grow in grace, the more will our conversation be in heaven.

Let us not then sacrifice our highest welfare in disregarding this attainment. The vessels of mercy are afore prepared unto glory. We *must* be made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. What would many find heaven, if they were admitted into it, but a melancholy and miserable state? Could *they* enjoy the perpetual presence of God who cannot endure even the occasional thought of him? How wise as well as merciful is the scheme of God in the Gospel! He never advances us without making us capable of the promotion! A king may elevate a slave to a superior station, but he cannot give him the suitableness and sufficiency for it. But God, when he changes our condition, changes our nature too. Before he brings us to heaven, he makes us heavenly: he draws forth our desires after it, and enables us to delight in the elements and beginnings of it—We walk with him in a way of grace, in token of, and in preparation for, our walking with him in glory; according to the promise, "THEY SHALL WALK WITH ME IN WHITE, FOR THEY ARE WORTHY."

MAY 20.—"There standeth one among you, whom ye know not."—John i. 26.

THIS was the language of John at Bethabara beyond Jordan, where he was baptizing. It was addressed to many of the Jews who were assembled before him, among whom were Priests and Levites from Jerusalem, sent to inquire who he was. After disclaiming that *he* was any thing more than "the voice of one crying in the wilderness," he intimates the arrival of a personage on the spot, very superior to himself, and for whom he was unworthy to perform an office the most menial—"There standeth one among you, whom ye know not."

It is needless to mention who this wonderful Being was—But we see that our Lord had nothing in his outward appearance to distinguish him from others. As to his character, he was fairer than the children of men, and altogether lovely: but he was "clothed in a body like our own;" and "in all things" was "made like unto his brethren." Had we passed him upon the road, we should have taken him for a common man. No rays of glory encircled his head. No

surprising beauty marked his features—"His face was marred more than any man's, and his form more than the sons of men." Least of all would he have been distinguished by a particular garb. His coat was indeed seamless, woven from the top throughout; but this was no observable thing. Wisdom is an enemy to affectation and eccentricity; and real greatness is never anxious for a show, being satisfied with the consciousness of its own claims without the acknowledgments of others.

There is much excellency in the world that is unknown. In nature there is many a rich vein of ore concealed beneath a rude surface; and many a flower that blooms unseen in the woods, and sheds its fragrance "on the desert air." Learning and genius are often buried in obscurity. The same may be said of moral and religious qualities. We are not to measure or number the instances of godliness by our personal observation. God has his hidden ones. Who has not been surprised as well as delighted in travelling to discover frequently individuals walking in the truth in situations the most unlikely and unpromising? Abraham said of Gerar, "Surely the fear of God is not in this place;" but he found it there. Elias said, "I am left alone;" but there were "seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to the image of Baal." "Who," says the Church, "has begotten me these?" "These, where have they been?"

From hence Christians need not wonder at the little notice frequently taken of them. They are princes, but in disguise. The day of their manifestation is coming; and then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. But now they are seen poor, and afflicted, and despised; and little do the multitude imagine that they are heirs of God; the charge of angels; the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof; the salt of the earth, and the light of the world. And herein the members are only conformable to the head. "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not"—"Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not."

There are many, we have reason to fear, who are in the same condition with John's attendants. Jesus is "among" them. And he is "standing" among them—a posture of attention—and a posture of readiness to depart. But they "know" him "not." They read of him, and hear of him; but they do not "see the Son, and believe on him." They are not spiritually and savingly acquainted with him. If they were, they would put their trust in him; they would love him; they would obey him; they would count all things but loss for the excellency of his knowledge; and be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord. Now this ignorance is very deplorable; and the reason is because of the unspeakable importance of the object. We may be ignorant of many things, and yet be safe and happy: but to be ignorant of Christ is as if the pursued manslayer of old had been ignorant of the city of refuge; or as if a dying patient was ignorant of the only remedy that could cure him—People *perish* for lack of *this* knowledge. It is also criminal. Hence Paul says to those who are destitute of this knowledge, "I speak this to your shame." Their ignorance could only be their shame, as it was their sin; and it could not have been their sin unless it had been avoidable. The knowledge therefore is

attainable. Happy they who possess it, and can say, "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ; this is the true God, and eternal life." But why should any despair? The blind man could not open his own eyes: but the Saviour was passing by; and he cried, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me;" and "straightway he received sight, and followed him in the way." You must be taught of God; and it is the Spirit alone that can guide you into all truth. But "if any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."

MAY 21.—"And from thence we came to Philippi."—Acts xvi. 12.

"I SAY unto you, that there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Nothing can more powerfully imply, or express the importance of conversion, than this declaration of the Saviour, the faithful and true witness. However lightly or contemptuously conversion may be thought of among men, celestial beings, proverbial for their wisdom, and incapable of mistake, always behold it with wonder and delight. With them, the improvements of art, the discoveries of philosophy, the exploits of heroes, the revolutions of empires, are comparatively nothing to the salvation of a soul. In their view, the release of Israel from the land of Egypt and the house of bondage, and their march through the wilderness to the land of Canaan, was a sight far less glorious and impressive, than the deliverance of a sinner from the power of darkness, and his translation into the kingdom of God's dear Son. At the first creation, the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy: but they sing a new song, and with peculiar rapture, at the second, when old things pass away, and all things become morally and spiritually new.

Luke the historian was like-minded. He here speaks of his coming with Paul and Silas to Philippi. Philippi was built by Philip, the father of Alexander. From the beginning it had been noted: but within comparatively a recent period it had been rendered exceedingly remarkable, by the two great battles which the Romans fought in its plains. In the one Julius Cæsar vanquished Pompey. In the other Octavius Augustus defeated Brutus and Cassius. Though every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood, and produces so much misery, it is painful to think what a power it has always had to excite and interest the attention. What traveller that has passed through Waterloo has been able to forbear speaking of the 18th of June! But Luke says nothing of the work of Philip, of the prowess of Cæsar, of the fortune of Augustus!—But he mentions what would immortalize the place in the annals of the soul and eternity—The conversions of two individuals—Lydia and the jailor. Lydia was amiable and moral; a proselyte to the Jewish religion; and a worshipper of the true God. The jailor was a heathen; an idolater; vicious in his disposition; as rude and savage in his soul as in his office. The conversion of the one was in answer to prayer, gentle, gradual, imperceptible in the progress, but obvious in its result. The conversion of the other was sudden,

extraordinary in the circumstances, and accompanied with terror and anguish. She was overcome by the smiles of mercy, and drawn by the cords of love. He, with the arrows of the Almighty sticking fast in him, and with a wounded spirit which he could not bear, was dragged to the judgment-seat, looking only for the sentence of condemnation. Her heart the Lord opened, as the sun opens a flower in spring. His heart was stormed like a citadel, where the strong man armed kept his palace and his goods in peace.

Hence we see by what various methods divine grace operates upon different persons, and learn how improper it is to lay down any one of them as a rule from which there is no exception. Let us not judge of the reality of the religion of others by an invariable standard; or draw a conclusion against ourselves, that we are strangers to a work of grace, because we have not been led in the same way with others. The Saviour may come in the bosom of the storm: but his presence and agency are no less real, in the still small voice. Samuel was called by grace as well as Manasseh: and Watts was saved by grace as well as Bunyan. "There are differences of administration, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations: but it is the same God which worketh all in all."

The surest and best way to judge, is not by the manner in which the change has been accomplished, but by the effects produced and remaining. And happy they who are able, whatever that is curious or minute may perplex them, to say, one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, I now see; whereas I was once dead, I am now alive.

MAY 22.—"He shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God."—Micah v. 4.

If it be asked, of whom speaketh the prophet this? the words immediately preceding will furnish an answer; for they announce the birth of our Saviour in Bethlehem, and call him the ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old from everlasting. Micah refers to him under the implied character of the Shepherd of his people, and expresses his work—

He shall "*feed*." The term is not to be confined to his furnishing his flock with food: but to be taken as including the discharge of the pastoral office in all its parts—his causing them to rest—his leading them—his restoring them when they go astray—his healing them when wounded or sick—his defending and securing them. But observe the *manner* in which he is to perform his work.

He is to do it diligently and attentively—He shall *stand* and feed. We read of shepherds who lie down, loving to slumber. And even the most dutiful and sedulous shepherd sometimes unbends; he must have his moments and hours of relaxation and repose, during which his vigilance is suspended. But Jesus is always in a posture of observance and care; his sheep graze or repose beneath his look; he withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous. He that keepeth Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps.

He is to do it ably and powerfully—He shall feed in the *strength* of the Lord. On earth he had power to forgive sins, and heal all manner of diseases, and call by his word whom he would, and they came unto him. He said to Zaccheus in the tree, make haste and

come down; and to Matthew at the receipt of custom, follow me; and immediately they obeyed him. Has he less power now he is in heaven? He has power given him over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as the Father hath given him. It is their happiness to know that they are under the charge of one who is mighty to save; able to save unto the uttermost. Their weakness requires this; their condition requires it. They are surrounded with enemies. Many of them are visible; but if our eyes were opened to see the invisible, we should be convinced that we could not be for an instant safe but as we are kept by the power of God. David reminded of his inequality to the foe he was willing to fight, said unto Saul; "Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: and I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him." And what said the Saviour? "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." His people do not always apprehend this; their fears are often great because their faith is small; and they draw the conclusion that they shall one day perish. At other times they can realize it; and then they feel secure, though in the midst of danger, and can say with Paul—"I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day."

He is to do it with grace and dignity—He shall feed in the *majesty* of the name of the Lord his God. It does not refer to a temporal and worldly majesty. This he did not possess. He was born in a stable and laid in a manger. He was a man of sorrows. He was crucified as a slave and a malefactor. Thus he had no form nor comeliness, nor any beauty, that they should desire him. Yet even then there were those who beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. One of these could say, "We were eye-witnesses of his majesty"—He refers peculiarly to his transfiguration, when his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment became white and glistening, and Moses and Elias appeared in glory talking with him, and a voice from heaven cried, This is my beloved Son, hear ye him. Compared with this, how poor, how mean is the pomp of a king on the most splendid of his court days! *His kingdom* was not of this world.

Action is graceful when art is concealed, and ease and nature seem only to appear. Longinus admires as an example of the sublime, the sentence, "Let there be light, and there was light:" and nothing can be more striking than the immensity of the effect joined to the simplicity of the cause. How far was Jesus from parade and effort in all his miracles! With what facility did he accomplish his mighty works—yet with what amazing gentleness and tenderness too!

Majesty is here connected with strength. Power is not always dignified in the possession or the display. Some conscious of their force, are concerned for nothing else. They only think of coercion: they delight to intimidate: they would rather be feared than loved. These are vulgar and base spirits. Paul speaks of the excellency of

the power which is of God. And had not Jesus this very power? How mildly, how kindly he exerted himself. He came down like rain upon the mown grass. He broke not the bruised reed; nor quenched the smoking flax. He paused to hear the cry of the beggar by the way-side, and commanded him to be brought to him. He raised the widow's son, and presented him to his mother. Grace was poured into his lips. O! to have heard the tone with which he said, "Woman, thy sins are forgiven thee"—"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Yes, the world might have seen that Deity was come down in the likeness of men. What *could* be before them but the image of the invisible God?

But "with God is terrible majesty." This always Jesus displayed. His day is called the day of vengeance of our God: the great and terrible day of the Lord. Who, asks Malachi, shall abide the day of his coming, and who shall stand when he appeareth! He detected hypocrisy. He separated between the righteous and the wicked. He denounced Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, because they repented not. He doomed Jerusalem to war and desolation, because she knew not the day of her visitation. And never will he fail to show that he is not to be insulted, or even neglected with impunity. He is holy as well as patient; just as well as merciful. Nothing is represented so dreadful as the wrath of the Lamb: "For the great day of *his* wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?"

MAY 23.—"Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near."—Isaiah lvii. 19.

HERE is the proclamation of the Gospel—Peace, peace. From this lovely word the Gospel derives its name and its character: it is called "the Gospel of Peace." Peace is sometimes used in the Scripture for well-being, or happiness at large: but here it is to be taken in its most appropriate signification, as holding forth the idea of reconciliation. Reconciliation with whom? With God, through the mediation of him who loved us, and gave himself for us—"God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." We had offended and provoked him, and he could righteously have destroyed us: we had no claims upon his pity; and had we been told that he was forming a purpose concerning us, and was about to send a special messenger, yea, even his own Son, into the revolted province, what would have been the forebodings of our guilty consciences! "But God sent not his own Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him should be saved." And it is not the language of vengeance we hear from his messengers, War, war!—but "Peace, peace!" He does not wait for our repentance and submission, but of his own will he forms and accomplishes the plan. There were difficulties in the way of our restoration to his favour; these he removes: a sacrifice was necessary; this he provides—He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all. He made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. And thus having opened a new and living

way into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, he arrays himself as the God of love, and comes and invites us to return. We were hid among the trees of the garden, whither fear had urged us, and the voice of thunder would have driven us further in; but the small still voice of pardon, assuring us that with the Lord there is mercy, and with him plenteous redemption, draws us forth to his feet, and we are accepted in the Beloved.

Too well we know, from observation and experience, the evils of war. Who has not felt the wretchedness of discord? Who has not tasted the bitterness of alienation? And who has not relished the luxury of restored sentiments of kindness, tenderness, and friendship?—Let *him* judge of the joy and peace of believing! Yet what is peace with a brother, a friend, a father, a king, compared with peace with God! In his favour is life. Who can describe or imagine the calm after such a storm! It is a peace which passeth all understanding. It is angels' food—It is more. They never felt a certain fearful looking-for of judgment, and fiery indignation. They never knew a wounded spirit and the anguish of despair, upon which descended, with healing under its wings, a hope full of immortality. But the Christian, throwing the arm of faith around the cross, can say, "We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." "O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me."

But to whom is it addressed? "Peace, peace to *him that is far off, and to him that is near.*" This immediately regards the Gentiles and the Jews, as we are assured by the Apostle, who, speaking expressly of these parties, says, "He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh." The Jews were a people nigh unto him, not as to his essential presence, but his special and gracious. He resided among them; they had his oracles, his house, his ordinances, his servants. The Gentiles were far off, because they were strangers to all these privileges, and without God in the world. But Christianity knows no outward distinctions; it regards men as creatures in the same fallen condition, and brings them health and cure. "The Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him."

By a parity of reasoning, this distinction will include other classes. They who are afar off, and they that are nigh, represent persons possessing certain privileges, or destitute of them. Some are nigh—That is, they were born of godly parents; they were piously educated: from children they have known the Holy Scriptures. Others are far off—That is, they are the children of irreligious parents, who teach them to swear but not to pray; and lead them into sin, but never go one step before them in the way everlasting.

Some are nigh—They are moral in their lives, amiable in their tempers, teachable in their disposition; they seem as free from prejudice as from vice, and only require information and decision. Of

such a one, our Saviour said, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." Others are far off—They are grossly wicked and abandoned, despisers of those that are good, profaners of the Sabbath, swearers, drunkards, and seem beyond the reach of reformation.

Some are nigh—They are the young, whose lives are free from care and trouble, whose understandings are not yet filled with error, whose consciences are not yet seared as with a hot iron, whose hearts are not yet hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, whose memories are retentive, and whose affections are tender and lively. Others are far off—They are the old, whose indispositions are inveterate, whose vices are deep-rooted, whose habits of evil have become a second nature—"Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" "With man it is impossible; but with God all things are possible."

We could enlarge the number of cases. There are many who have advantages which others are denied. Some are rich and others are poor—But the unsearchable riches of Christ are accessible to all. Some are learned, and others illiterate—But none can know divine things without a Divine teacher: and under his teaching, the way-faring man, though a fool, shall not err therein.

The proclamation of the Gospel is therefore addressed to all, without exception. And there is the greatest propriety in this: for if its language was not universal; if there were any exclusions or omissions, awakened souls, sensible of their desert, would be sure to appropriate them, and conclude that *they* had no part nor lot in the matter. But they cannot question whether they are sinners; and Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. They cannot question whether they have been spending their money for that which is not bread, and their labour for that which satisfieth not; but these are invited to hear, that their souls may live. The Gospel affords a complete warrant for every man to believe on the Son of God. We are surely nigh or afar off: but the command is, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth."

MAY 24.—"Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."—2 Cor. iii. 17.

THIS is mentioned for two purposes. First, to characterize the Gospel. It is therefore called in the preceding verse, "the ministration of the Spirit." Secondly, to describe the Christian. Natural men have not the Spirit, and if they make a profession of religion, it is only the form of godliness without the power—But Christians possess the Spirit. The Apostle takes this for granted in the Epistle to the Galatians, and therefore inquires not *whether* they had received the Spirit, but *how* they had received it: "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?"

But how is it to be ascertained whether we are made partakers of the Holy Ghost? Observe the reasoning of David; "That thy Name is near, thy wondrous works declare." He proves the presence of God from the agency of God. We are to do the same here. The residence of the Spirit is to be determined by the influences and operations of the Spirit. The Spirit makes those in whom he dwells "spiritual"—They "live in the Spirit"—and "walk in the

Spirit"—and "worship God in the Spirit." "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is the fruit of the Spirit;" and the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is—there is liberty."

Christians rejoice "in hope;" and there is a blessedness reserved for them in heaven called "the glorious liberty of the sons of God." But this is future; and the Apostle says, where the Spirit of the Lord is—not there *shall* be—but there *is*, liberty. What liberty? A freedom from sin. A freedom in duty.

A FREEDOM FROM SIN. There is something in the very sound of slavery that offends the ear and revolts the heart. Hence when our Lord spoke of making them free, the Jews answered, "We were never in bondage to any man; and how sayest thou then ye shall be made free?" Yet their whole history showed that they had been in vassalage to all the nearer, and to many of the remoter powers; and were even then a province of the Roman empire, paying tribute unto Cæsar. And thus men are unwilling to own that they are naturally enslaved. There is nothing they so glory in as their freedom. They despise or pity the godly as captives under the most melancholy and mortifying restraints; and therefore say, "Let us break *their* bonds asunder, and cast away their cords from *us*"—"With our lips will we prevail, our tongues are our own, who is Lord over us?" But while they use great swelling words of vanity, they themselves also are the servants of corruption: for of whom a "man is overcome, of the same is he brought into bondage." He that committeth sin is the servant of sin; and of all wretches in the world he serves the worst tyrant, and is employed in the vilest drudgery. Sometimes, like a madman, he dances and sings in his chains. But this is not always the case. The hypocrite may boast of pleasure which he never feels: but there is no peace unto the wicked. The way of transgressors is hard, as well as the end of these things death. Many effects, the natural produce of his iniquity, often make him groan inwardly. Stung with remorse and shame, he sometimes says, I will be such a slave no more—I will be free. And he resolves, but it is in his own strength. He is therefore overcome, and bound faster than before: and frequently the result of these short-lived reformations, put off as long as possible, resorted to with reluctance, and hated in the performance, is, that the latter end is worse than the beginning. At best, he only exchanges one sin for another; and while he gives up grosser transgressions, he comes under the power of more "spiritual wickedness," pride, self-righteousness, and unbelief. But if the Son makes him free, he is free indeed—For where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. Thus the Apostle says to the Romans; "Ye were the servants of sin, but have obeyed from the heart the form of doctrine which was delivered you." And "now being made free from sin, ye became servants unto God." "For he that is dead is freed from sin." He does not mean, freed from the very being of it—This would contradict the language of the Scripture at large, and make those sad whom God has commanded us to make merry. For what is the painful experience of every believer? He finds a law, that when he would do good evil is present with him: he feels the sin that dwelleth in him: he groans, "O wretched man that I am!

who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But he is freed from the rule of it. It reigns in others, in their mortal bodies; and they obey it in the lusts thereof: but from this Christians are delivered, and against the return of it they are secured: "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace."

They are also freed from the love of it. Persons may avoid that which is evil, and not abhor it. While inclination urges, authority may restrain, or the fear of consequences may deter. Many wish they could indulge themselves freely and safely in their criminal passions and pursuits; and therefore hate the law that forbids and threatens them. But Christians are not held back from sin against their wills; they are mortified to it. They are dead to sin. They have seen the evil of it in the cross. Is it possible that a mother could ever love the murderer of her child? But there is no love like that which the saved sinner bears to the Saviour. Can I ever be reconciled to that which made him bleed and die? Can I ever cherish that which grieves and dishonours him who loved me and gave himself for me?

"Furnish me, Lord, with heavenly arms,
From grace's magazine;
And I'll proclaim eternal war
With every darling sin."

MAY 25.—"Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."—2 Cor. iii. 17.

A FREEDOM IN DUTY. There are some who dislike the word duty, though it is a word by no means unevangelical; for it entirely excludes the idea of merit; as that which is *due* cannot be meritorious. And are persons, in proportion as they are favoured, without obligations? Do not benefits gender claims to service? "Know ye not," says the Apostle, "that ye are not your own? for ye are bought with a price; wherefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." David acknowledges this; "O Lord, truly I am thy servant: thou hast loosed my bonds;" this is, thou hast loosened me to bind me—loosened me from disease and destruction, to bind me to love and serve my deliverer and benefactor. Those who dislike the word duty, it is to be feared, dislike the thing itself; and resemble Ephraim, who loved to tread out the corn, yet not to break the clods. But "the spiritual" can say, "his commandments are not grievous." They consider religious duties as privileges, and feel them such when the Lord is with them; for "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." To this David refers when he says, "Then shall I run in the way of thy commandments when thou shalt enlarge my heart." The heart is enlarged for obedience when it is exempted from the influence of carnal considerations. When Paul received his trying commission, immediately, says he, I conferred not with flesh and blood. Flesh and blood are sad counsellors in the work of God; and it is easy to imagine what advice they would have given him. Some persons are not at liberty to pursue the way that they should choose. They feel restraints arising from their reputation, or connexions, or worldly advantage. They could easily decide whether the thing was true or

right in itself; and this should be the only question; but before they act, they must know what people will think and say of them. Whether they shall not be charged with hypocrisy? or enthusiasm? or provoke an enemy? or lose a friend? or suffer in trade? Thus they are checked by the fear of man, which bringeth a snare. What snare? The danger of drawing back, or turning aside, instead of going forward and abounding in the work of the Lord; the danger of concealing or denying their principles, and conforming to the place and company they are in, instead of confessing the Saviour before men, and declaring themselves on the Lord's side. Now the grace of God delivers us from these preventions: it sets us free to follow the calls of duty; it induces us only to ask, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" And what a blessed liberty does a man then feel! Thus the bird that rises high and flies along is free from obstruction; and can move straight and quick: while the bird that keeps near the ground must make many a zigzag in his course, to avoid trees, and houses, and towers, and hills. A timid animal starts or creeps aside continually; but "the lion" keeps on in his march, "and turneth not away for any." And "the path of life is above to the wise." And "the righteous is bold as a lion." Conviction is a great source of courage, but affection is a greater. There is no fear in love. Perfect love casteth out fear. Love is strong as death: many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it. What then will be the effect of the love of God shed abroad in the heart? "We cannot," said Peter and John, "but speak the things which we have seen and heard." Bunyan very wisely makes Mr. Greatheart the conductor of the pilgrims. How would they have been let and injured without him! But where he was, there was liberty.

The Christian is also enlarged for obedience by deliverance from formality. We may well talk of the dulness and deadness of formality. The effect of it in duty is to make our souls like Pharaoh's chariots with the wheels off: we drag on heavily. But holy fervour makes us "like the chariots of Amminadab." Sails are useful, but what are they if there be no breeze? Nothing contracts and obstructs like the want of spirituality in religion. We sometimes complain of darkness; and darkness confines; but the rising sun releases the prisoners of night, and they go forth to their work and to their labour till the evening. We feel coldness; and coldness confines. The frost binds up the stream; but the melting causes it to flow. The winter holds back the powers of nature, and keeps barren the fields and the garden; but the warmth of spring sets free the principles of vegetation, and all is life and fertility. Such a difference is there in our devotional exercises, whether retired or public; between our frames, when we are left to ourselves, and when the Spirit helps our infirmities: and the preparation of the heart, and the answer of the tongue are from the Lord.

We may add, that nothing more prepares for and aids us in the work of obedience, than a discharge from the dread of condemnation. "The blood of Christ purges the conscience from dead works to serve the living God." By dead works the Apostle means sins, which produce spiritual and deserve eternal death. The purging of the conscience from these does not here refer to sanctification, but to

the effect of justification, in freeing us from a sense of guilt, and giving us peace and joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the atonement. And this grace wherein we stand is not only the most delightful privilege, but according to the Apostle it is necessary to our serving God. For how can we pursue our work to advantage while we are pressed down with a burden too heavy for us to bear? How must we be labouring in the fire, and wearying ourselves for very vanity, while we are thinking of atoning for our lives, or going about to establish our own righteousness? Believers have nothing to do here—Their sins are expiated; the righteousness in which they appear before God is provided. They therefore cease from their legal and tormenting drudgery, and enter into rest, and are made free indeed—and free to attend entirely to their grateful and pleasant work of pleasing and serving God in the Spirit of his Son—There is nothing servile in their obedience, and therefore it is not partial and constrained; but full, and of a ready mind—They are upholden by his “free Spirit.” They are sons that serve him: for they have not received the spirit of bondage to fear, but the Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, Abba, Father. Not that they indulge in a careless, presumptuous manner in dealing with God; but they feel their relation to him, and knowing that God is not only pacified towards them, but that they are accepted in the Beloved, and are now not only reconciled but infinitely dear to him, they have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Jesus; and can draw near in full assurance of faith. They feel their unworthiness, but they know they are welcome—welcome to approach his gates—welcome to enter his house—welcome to sit down at his table—welcome to hang upon his arm—welcome to lean on his bosom—welcome at all times and in all circumstances to spread their wants and cares before him with a certainty of relief—For where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty!

While we believe the importance of the possession, and know that if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his; let us rejoice that our heavenly Father will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him; and that he giveth more grace. Let us, therefore, be enlarged in our desires; and not only have the Spirit, but be filled with the Spirit.

MAY 26.—“Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God.”—Heb. xii. 15.

WE are here admonished not to “fail of the grace of God.” There is a difference between failing *of* the grace of God, and failing *from* it. We are persuaded the Scripture gives no real countenance to the doctrine of falling from grace. The certainty of the end includes the necessity of the means; and therefore we can, with consistency, make use of every warning and motive against declension and apostacy, while yet we believe that the righteous shall hold on his way, and are confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in us will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. When the angel had announced the safety of all on board, and the apostle believed God that it should be as it had been told him; yet he made no scruple to say to the Centurion and the soldiers, when

the mariners were meanly leaving the vessel, "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved." Dr. Owen, no mean critic, contends that the word here rendered to fail, signifies always to *want*, to *come short*; and never, to fall from actual possession. We say, the trees this year will fail of a crop: we say to a racer, see that you fail not of the prize, and to a warrior, see that you fail not of the victory: and in all these instances we intend not the loss of a thing when obtained, but the not obtaining it. The meaning therefore is, take heed that you miss not the grace of God; or, as it is expressed in an earlier part of the Epistle, "Therefore fear, lest, a promise being left you of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to *come short of it*."

The caution implies importance, acquirableness, and danger.

It implies *importance*—It is as much as to say, your supreme concern should be to secure the grace of God—This is the principal thing—

"Sufficient in itself alone,
And needful were the world our own."

Even the devil is good authority here; he knows the worth of what we neglect and despise; and all his aims and devices are to keep us from seeking after it. The grace of God is—The only source of relief under conviction of sin—The only principle of true obedience—The only safeguard of prosperity—The only support under trouble—The only deliverance from death—The only meetness for heaven—The evidence, the earnest, the foretastes, the beginning of eternal life.

It implies *acquirableness*. The admonition would be futile unless the grace of God were within our reach. It is impossible to read the Scripture, and not perceive that the inestimable blessing is not only revealed to our view, but proposed to our hope, and pressed upon our acceptation. We are commanded to be "renewed in the spirit of our minds;" and to be "filled with the Spirit:" but the command, or it would be absurd, involves the possibility of the thing. Grace is laid up in the Mediator for this very purpose. It pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell for our use. "He received gifts for men, and even for the *rebellious* also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." We have also the promise; "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find." The invitation also is universal: "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." We can appeal to actual instances. How many in heaven, how many also on earth, who by nature were all children of wrath, even as others, and in whom was no good thing, are now the partakers of the grace of God in truth. We are encompassed with a great cloud of witnesses; and each of them testifies that he is good and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy unto *all* that call upon him.

But it implies *danger*. Unless it was possible, and *very* possible, that we should come short of it, the Apostle would not have expressed himself with such peculiar earnestness—"Looking"—"diligently;" nor have extended the caution to all, whatever advantages they have in their favour—"Lest *any* man fail of the grace of God." You may fail of the grace of God—Though you were born

in a Christian country, and were baptized in your infancy—Though you were born of religious parents, and had a pious education—Though you attend the means of grace, and hear the truth as it is in Jesus—Though you have a clear knowledge of the doctrines of the Gospel—Though you receive into your conviction and belief the faith once delivered to the saints—Though you have spiritual gifts, and can talk well and pray wisely—Though your passions are sometimes pleasingly and awfully excited—Though you have undergone a great change and reformation in your character and conduct—Though many think you have the grace of God, and you are admitted into the church, and admired while you live, and extolled when you die, and the funeral sermon and the magazine may speak of you as having entered into the joy of your Lord—Though you are persuaded yourselves that you are possessed of it, and carry the confidence to the very door of heaven, saying, “Lord, Lord, open unto us: we have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets—But he shall answer, I know you not whence ye are—”

Of the numbers that came out of Egypt only two entered Canaan; though they did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink.

Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed, lest he fall.

“Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

MAY 27.—“And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.”—Acts xxvi. 29.

“SUCH as I am.” And what *was* Paul? He was an Apostle. But he does not refer to this, or wish that his audience, like himself, were called to an extraordinary mission, or could speak with new tongues, and discern spirits, and heal diseases, and foretell things to come. He knew official character and miraculous endowments were not things that accompany salvation. Balaam was a prophet, and Judas was an apostle. But Paul was *a Christian*; and to *this* his desire alludes. For his exclamation is in reply to the king’s confession—“Then Agrippa said unto Paul, almost thou persuadedst me to be *a Christian*”—And Paul said, Would to God this was completely the case with thyself and this whole assembly—“Would to God that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were not only almost, but altogether such as I am, except these bonds.”

Thus, therefore, he not only shows a consciousness of his Christianity, but the estimation in which he held the privilege of his state as a Christian. There was nothing he could wish for others, by an infinite degree so important and so valuable. For if they were Christians, he knew—They would be safe: for there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. He knew—They would be honourable: the excellent of the earth, kings, and priests unto God, the sons and daughters of the Almighty, the charge of angels, who were all sent forth to minister unto them that are the

heirs of salvation. He knew—They would be happy: attaining what all others seek in vain: happy in hope, happy in fruition, happy in their comforts, happy in their duties, happy in their trials. He knew—They would be useful: not only being blessed in themselves, but proving blessings to others; the best benefactors of the human race, the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof, the salt of the earth, the light of the world—

But see his benevolence as well as wisdom. The spirit that is in us lusteth to envy. We love things to be exclusively our own. The child is pleased when no one has a bauble but himself. The female is afraid that her fashion should be known; her mode would lose half its value should the dress of another be as new, and pretty, and fine as her own—So it is with all ranks in life. But grace had de-throned this spirit in Paul. See the benevolence of his disposition in three things. First—The extent of his wish. It reaches to *all*. Yet some of his audience were not only heathens and Jews, but his bitterest enemies. Secondly, the degree of it—were not only *almost* but *altogether* such as I am. It is well to see people like the young man in the Gospel, not far from the kingdom of God. It is well to see them hearing the word, convinced, reformed. But they may be hearers of the word and not doers; convinced and not converted; reformed and not renewed. It is sad to go far, and come short at last. To be almost justified is to be condemned; almost saved is to be lost. Thirdly, the exception—The chain he then wore, and which confined him to the soldier as a sufferer or a criminal, would be deemed painful or reproachful, and tend to scandalize Agrippa: he therefore says, except these *bonds*. This was a fine turn, and showed Paul to be a man of education and address. But it shows something more than his eloquence. He would not wish others to be tried, especially at first, as he was. *I* would bear willingly all my afflictions, till he for whom I suffer is pleased to release me: but I do not wish others to endure them. Let them have my privileges without my persecutions. Surely the righteous is more excellent than his neighbour! What a noble soul was here! Little and mean spirits can never rise to this. If they wish others to be *equal* to themselves, they cannot wish others *above* themselves. The elder brother could not bear the *degree* of the Prodigal's reception—Thou never gavest *me* a kid, that I might make merry with my friends—Yet for him thou hast killed the *fatted calf*. But angels rejoice when a sinner, by repentance, is brought into a condition superior to their own. And we know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, when he was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich.

But when Paul says, "*would to God*" that this was the case, it is to be considered as a real prayer, and shows not only his benevolence in wishing their conversion, but his belief and acknowledgment of Divine agency as necessary to accomplish it. He owned this with regard to himself. It pleased God to reveal his Son in me. He called me by his grace. By the grace of God I am what I am—not I, but the grace of God which was with me. He owned it always with regard to others. Read what he says of the Ephesians: "God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ,

(by grace ye are saved;) for by grace are ye saved through faith: and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them?" How can it be otherwise? If in him we live, and move, and have our being naturally, has the spiritual life, called the life of God, any thing less than a divine source for its origin and support? Hence the promise, "I will sprinkle clean water upon them—I will put my Spirit within them, and cause them to walk in my statutes."

To him, therefore, for this influence, let us pray, not only for ourselves, but for others—for our families, friends, neighbours, all mankind. He is the God of all grace, and he answers relative as well as personal prayer. But let one thing be remembered: if our prayers are sincere, it will appear in our exertions; for God uses means, and makes us the instruments of his agency. And he that converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.

MAY 28.—"I have sinned; what shall I do unto thee, O thou preserver of men?"—Job vii. 20.

HERE is a confession, and an inquiry.

The confession seems to have nothing very discriminating in it. The manner in which it is used, and the sentiments from which it proceeds, can alone, therefore, evince the state of mind in him who employs it. In true penitence the confession will always be strictly personal. We may often hear the expression, "God knows we are all sinners," but the meaning of the exclamers is to bring in others for a share, rather than to condemn themselves; and the universality of transgression is owned, to extenuate the individuality. But, says the real penitent, "Behold, *I* am vile, what shall *I* answer?" "*My* sin is ever before me." And he confesses not only the fact of his sin, but the fault, the guilt, the desert—"I am not worthy to be called thy son." "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest." And while he is candid towards others, because he knows not the extenuations which attach to their offences, he will be severe towards himself, for he is conscious of the aggravations of his own iniquities. And as sin is the transgression of the law, and the law is spiritual, extending to the state of his heart, and requiring his principles and motives to be good as well as his actions, and condemning omissions of duty, as well as positive crimes, with his growing knowledge, his sins enormously multiply in number, and he only speaks the words of truth and soberness when he says, "Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me." True confession is also always accompanied with a broken heart and a contrite spirit. Some speak of their sins, if not with pleasure, yet with a kind of indifference. But Ephraim bemoaned himself. The publican smote upon his breast. When Peter thought on his fall he wept bitterly. Of

course there is also a disposition to sacrifice the evil deplored. Pharaoh and Saul more than once said, "I have sinned," yet went on still in their trespass. But he that confesseth and forsaketh his sin, shall find mercy. He therefore will say, with Ephraim, "What have I any more to do with idols?" He will even pluck out a right eye, and cut off a right hand, and cast it from him. Thus it was with the Ephesian converts. "Many that believed, came, and confessed, and showed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver." What a sum to lose! Many would have sold these books; but these persons said, Though they have poisoned us, they shall not infect others, and threw into the flames what might have yielded them near two thousand pounds. This was bringing forth fruit meet for repentance. A man, too, when divinely wrought upon, will in his confession acknowledge evils of which natural conscience never accuses us, such as spiritual pride, self-righteousness, and the neglect and contempt of the provision made for the recovery of sinners, by which we frustrate the grace of God, and make Jesus Christ to be dead in vain. When, therefore, the Saviour says, the Spirit shall convince of sin, he adds, because they believe not on me. And no guilt will affect such a soul like this. And till we are led to the evil heart of unbelief, we overlook the root and the spring of our ruin, and stop only at the branches and the streams.

But here is also an inquiry—I have sinned; what shall I do unto thee, O thou preserver of men? It seems not at first view very intelligible. It may be taken two ways, requiring very different answers. First, What shall I do unto thee in a way of satisfaction or reparation for the wrong I have committed; so as to prevent the consequences of my guilt, and stop thy proceedings against me? This will be the immediate concern of the awakened sinner, and he will be able to give no sleep to his eyes, or slumber to his eye-lids, till he finds a solution in his favour. Hence Micah represents such a man as asking, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" In reply to this, it must be said, we can do nothing, offer nothing. The very attempt would be adding insult to injury. But cannot we repair the evil by future good works and obedience? In the first place, we can only obey in the strength of God, and not in our own. Secondly, all the obedience we can render is always due to God, and therefore can never be meritorious in expiation of our offences: the payment of things present will not wipe off the old score. To which also we may add, that our obedience will be incomplete, and therefore instead of recompensing God any thing, will fall short of his glory, and require pardon for its defects. The man soon sees this, and feels that he can make no atonement himself, and that the redemption of his soul must cease for ever if it depends on any ransom he can furnish. And thus he would lie down in absolute despair, but for the light of the Gospel,

which breaks in and shows him what in this case he *can* do. It is not to go about to establish his own righteousness, but to submit himself to the righteousness which is of God. It is not to toil, but believe—"To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." His only course therefore is to appeal; to take with him in the hand of faith the Surety of the new covenant, and to say, "Look upon the face of thine Anointed." "Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself. So will not we go back from thee: quicken us, and we will call upon thy name." Nothing else will avail; nothing else is necessary; but coming in his name, pleading his sacrifice, you will be accepted in the Beloved as if you had never sinned, and God will rejoice over you with joy.

Then, secondly, you will ask, what shall I do unto thee in a way of duty and thankfulness? And the inquiry thus made is not only allowable but commendable, and as to the feelings of the pardoned sinner unavoidable. Though he has nothing to do unto God in putting away sin, or bringing in a justifying righteousness, he is infinitely indebted to his goodness. He cannot discharge his obligations; but he feels them, and therefore must ask, "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits towards me?" What service shall I present him, not as a peace-offering but as a thank-offering? How shall I obey him, not as a slave but a son? not as a mercenary, but as one who is blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ? To him none of God's commandments are grievous. What he has to do all the days of his life is to love his benefactor, to fear to offend him, to pray that the words of his mouth and the meditation of his heart may be acceptable in his sight; it is, by the mercies of God to present his body a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable; and by him only to make mention of his name.

MAY 29.—"Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts."—Gal. iv. 6.

WE have heard of benefactors; and we have seen a happy few who seem to value their wealth only as the resource of kindness and mercy; and who make it the business of their lives to do good. But God is love; and all benevolence vanishes from a comparison with the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us. None ever relieved such numbers, succoured so freely, or gave so richly. What are the greatest favours conferred by human generosity? Survey the gifts of God. Consider only two of them—The Son of his love, and the Spirit of his Son—The one given for us; the other to us—The one peculiarly the promise of the Old Testament; the other of the New. Each of these is equally necessary in the process of our recovery. The Christian alike values both: and of both the Apostle here speaks: "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And "because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts." Let us attend to the latter of these.

Who are the recipients? "*Sons*"—a name often given to the people of God in the Scriptures. They are subjects, and he is their Sovereign, and they owe him obedience; they are servants, and he is their master, and they owe him attendance—But these relations do not go far enough: they are not sufficiently affectionate, and near, and privileged, to express the state of Christians. Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon them—They are called the sons of God. And *now* are they the sons of God. And they are so, not only or principally because they are the creatures of his power, but the partakers of his grace. And two ways the title is applied to them exclusively: adoption; and regeneration. For they are not only taken into the household of faith, but they are new born, born again, born of God. Among men these sources of filiation are never united. A man does not adopt those who are begotten of him. And when he admits the offspring of others into family relation, and gives them his name, he cannot convey to them his qualities. He may be generous, and they may be selfish; he may be meek, and they may be severe. He may indeed instruct and admonish them, and exemplify his requisitions in his own life: but this is all. But God not only changes our state, but our nature. He works in us to will and to do of his good pleasure—He speaks; he acts like himself—"Behold, I create all things new."

What is the blessing? "*The Spirit of his Son.*"—There are several other places in which the Spirit is held forth by this relation to Christ. But wherefore? Peter, speaking of the prophets, says, "the Spirit of Christ which was in them, testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow"—It was employed in bearing witness to him from the beginning. Our Saviour also said, "He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." He also personally possessed this Spirit, and was always actuated by it. "And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord." But the principal reason of the name is, that he procured this Spirit for us by his sufferings and death; the whole dispensation of it was lodged in his hands; and from *his* fulness all we receive, and grace for grace. Therefore he said to his disciples, "If I depart, I will send him unto you." "I will send you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever." And Peter reports the accomplishment in a most signal instance: "Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear." It is therefore derived from him to us—"We have an unction from the Holy One."

Where does it reside? "Because we are sons, he hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son *into our hearts.*" Here God begins; "he shines in our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ." Here he places the riches of his grace, and "a good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. The Lord looketh at the heart. If this be for him, every thing else will follow; but all is nothing without this. What is practice without principle, but a tree without a root, or a

stream without a spring! But when the divine laws are put into our minds, and written in our hearts, our obedience is not only rendered certain, but natural and delightful. God of all grace! fulfil thy covenant engagement in my happy experience—"And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." And may I "be filled with the Spirit."

We see from the whole the oneness there is between Christ and his people. They are predestined to be conformed to his image, that he might be the first born among many brethren. In all things indeed he has the pre-eminence. He is the Son of God in an unrivalled sense; but they also are sons. He had indeed the Spirit without measure; but they have it in degree; for if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his—and it is the *same* Spirit that resides in both—"Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts." This conformity extends to their future condition as well as their present character. "When he who is their life shall appear, they also shall appear with him in glory." As they now "bear the image of the heavenly," in having in them the mind that was in him, so they will hereafter corporeally resemble him; for "he shall change their vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his own glorious body"—"It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but this we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

MAY 30.—"Crying, Abba, Father."—Gal. iv. 6.

SUCH is the effect of the divine communication here spoken of—"Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, *crying, Abba, Father.*" Every thing depends upon our possessing this Spirit; for "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his;" But "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God, and if children then heirs." Hence it is also called "the earnest of our inheritance."

We should therefore be anxious to ascertain whether we have received the all-important benefit. And it is possible to determine this. For whenever the Spirit of Christ takes possession of the heart, its residence will be evinced—It will operate there. It finds us indeed in darkness, but it opens the eyes of our understanding, and makes us light in the Lord. It finds us earthly-minded and cleaving to the dust, but it induces us to seek those things that are above. The pretensions of a man therefore are vain unless he be made to differ from what he once was. The influence of the Spirit is compared to leaven in the meal, and leaven will work; to fire, and fire will burn; to water, and the spring will flow out in streams—If, says the Apostle, "God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts," it is not inactive or silent there, but—*crying, Abba, Father.* Let us observe the exercise, and the influence that produces it.

The exercise intended is prayer; but the representation is peculiar. It is not said *what* they will pray for; indeed it would be

endless to specify their wants and desires; and "for all these things," says God, "will I be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." But we are told *how* they pray—*Crying, Abba, Father*. Does this intimate the *simplicity* of their prayer? "Because," says Solomon, "God is in heaven, and thou upon the earth, therefore let thy words be few:" and how brief and free from every thing studied and artificial are the prayers recorded in the Scriptures, and which were offered by persons under the most powerful and favourable impressions! "Heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee." "Lord, save, I perish." "God be merciful to me a sinner." "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"—Such is the language of feeling—So it is when the heart speaks.

Does it not intimate the *confidence* with which they pray? Among the Persians there was a law that whosoever presented himself before the king, unless he was first called to go in, should be put to death. We have no such prohibition. The golden sceptre to us is always stretched forth. We have a general, a universal invitation to draw near at all times, and in all circumstances, in every thing by prayer and supplication to make known our requests unto God: and are authorized to address him not as the Infinite, the Eternal, the Almighty, the first cause and the last end of all things; but as our Father, though he is in heaven. It is not the spirit of bondage to fear, but the Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, Abba, Father. It is not the address of a criminal to a judge; nor of a slave to a master: but of a child to a Father, to whom he is most intimately related, and who feels in him the claims of nature and affection. "I write unto you, little children," says John, "because ye have known the Father." Who is a child so likely to know as his father? What is the first name he utters but "my father, or my mother?" To whom is he so likely to flee in every danger? On whom in every distress will he call so freely for relief? He relies upon his care; he expects that he will teach him, and defend him, and provide for him—And will not God who stands in this endearing relation exemplify it? And fulfil it *perfectly* and *divinely*? Let this therefore encourage and embolden us in our approaches to him.

Does it not also imply *earnestness*? The word "crying" would express this alone, but here is added to it the reduplication, "Father, Father!" This surely marks eagerness and fervency. The importance of such importunity our Saviour illustrates in the manner of him who spake as never man spake—"Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity, he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." He himself also was an example of this. "In the days of his flesh, with strong cryings and tears, he made supplications to

him who is able to save him from death:" and the true condition, exigences, and dangers of his followers, when realized and felt, will urge them to pray in the same manner.

But does not this indicate *the accordance* of their prayers? Whatever distinctions prevail among them, the Lord gives them one heart and one way. They all kneel before the same mercy-seat; and address the same God, the God of all grace. "Abba," signifies father; but the word is Syriac; and this was, when Paul wrote, the common language of the Jews. The word rendered father, is Greek in the original. And thus we see that the same Spirit would actuate the inhabitants of every country; Jews and Gentiles would appropriate the same relation. "Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also." "For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him." What father is, in China, in Tartary, or among the Esquimaux, we know not: but he who made them, and gave his Son to die for them, understands all their dialects; and the hour is coming when "the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one."

But we here see the source of all this—It is the Spirit of God's Son in our heart that cries, "Abba, Father." It is therefore called "the Spirit of grace and of supplication." And we are said to "pray in the Holy Ghost." It is he that shows us our state, and causes us to hunger and thirst after righteousness. "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." He enables us to believe on the Mediator, and thus gives us boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him. He makes us spiritually-minded, and renders prayer our privilege; and we feel that it is good for us to draw near to God. Hence we are constant in the performance of it; for if we delight ourselves in the Almighty, we shall always call upon God.

A weighty inference is derivable from hence. We cannot say too much in recommendation of prayer with regard to our trials, duties, and improvements. Prayer is the life of religion—But what is the life of prayer? "The Spirit of life in Christ Jesus." Wherefore, first, let us not grieve the Holy Spirit, and cause him to withdraw or suspend his influences. And, secondly, let us pray for the Spirit, that we may pray with it. If there be any inconsistency in this, our Saviour has sanctioned it: "If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"

MAY 31.—"That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us."—Heb. vi. 18.

ONE of these two things was his promise, the other was his oath. The Apostle acknowledges that *both* of them were immutable. Why then was the latter added to the former? Not to *constitute*,

but to *show* the immutability of his counsel. It was not to bind himself; but it was for our sakes, that in the condescension of his kindness he might remove from our minds all suspicion of his veracity, by adopting the last mode of appeal among men; "For verily men swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife"—God therefore swears, and because he could swear by no greater, he swears by himself—"As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth"—"Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more"—"I will never leave thee nor forsake thee—as sure as I am God." Four things result from hence.

We First see how hard it is to comfort the conscience, and to inspire us with "a strong consolation," not only while we are fleeing for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us, but even after we *have fled*. We have a controversy with God, and we know that he has much ground against us; and a consciousness of guilt makes us timid and suspicious. Under a sense of our unworthiness, the very greatness of the blessing will astonish us into incredulity: "It is too good to be true, at least with regard to such a wretch as I am." Men are frail and false, and we ourselves are weak and changeable; and in judging of him we insensibly transfer something of this to God, if we do not think him altogether such an one as ourselves. How natural and justifiable it seems to give up persons after numberless provocations of ingratitude and vileness. Dark providences apparently oppose the promises: deep and lengthened afflictions depress and weaken the mind, and betray us to think that God has forgotten to be gracious. The blessing we so much desire seems to recede as we advance after it; and hope deferred maketh the heart sick. We look at our work and our danger; and yet feel more of our ignorance, and weakness. Experience cannot only attest all this, but also add much to the representation. But here is enough to depress and intimidate—and we may be assured that God does nothing in vain—but he who knows what is in man judged it necessary, not only to speak, but to swear: "that by two immutable things" he might comfort and establish our hearts.

We see Secondly, How concerned he is for the consolation of his people. He takes pleasure in the prosperity of his servants; and they never appear to such advantage as when they walk in the light of his countenance, rejoice in his name all the day, and in his righteousness are exalted. It is then they do honour to their religion, and commend the ways of godliness to others—"Here are people who are happy in this vale of tears. What we seek after constantly, and never come in sight of, they have found. Their hearts are at rest. How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel. Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." The joy of the Lord is not only their ornament, but their strength. It enlivens them in duty: they never run in the way of his commandments so freely as when God has enlarged their hearts. It emboldens them in their profession—It raises them above the fear of man—It weans them from the world—It bears them up under the trials of life—It raises them above the fear of death. He therefore that is infinitely concerned for their welfare, and knows perfectly wherein it consists, would have them not only

safe, but tranquil; not only holy, but joyful; not only walking in the fear of the Lord, but in the comforts of the Holy Ghost; not only possessing real, but "strong consolation."

We Thirdly perceive, What a foundation is laid for the effectual solace of the subjects of divine grace. What more could God have done than he has done to meet their infirmities, and disperse all their discouragements?—We have not only his word but his oath. Surely he has not only given them "a good hope through grace," but provided amply for "the full assurance of hope unto the end." Surely confidence becomes them as well as self-abasement. Surely they ought to attain a certainty of mind, and to be filled with all joy and peace in believing. And why are they not decided? Why do they yet walk mournfully before the Lord?

"Whence then should doubts and fears arise?
Why trickling sorrows drown our eyes?
Slowly, alas! our mind receives
The comforts that our Maker gives."

Lastly, we learn the perverseness and vileness of unbelief. There is nothing of which men are more tenacious than their reputation for truth. The least imputation thrown upon their veracity, rouses them to demand satisfaction for the unpardonable offence—though it has only regarded their mere word, and not the added solemnity and sanction of an oath. What has God, who is conscious that he is faithfulness itself,—what has he to bear with from us! Unbelief not only contradicts him; not only gives him the lie, but accuses him of perjury—"I no more depend upon thy oath than upon thy word"—And yet the thunder stays!

What do we in our retirement? To how little purpose do we humble ourselves, before God, unless we principally grieve over our slowness of heart to believe? Every thing else will be hacking at the boughs with a feather—We must "lay the axe to the root of the tree"—an "evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God." "Lord, I believe—help thou mine unbelief."

JUNE.

JUNE 1.—"Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort." Psalm lxxi. 3.

ON what particular occasion this psalm was composed, it would not be easy to determine. Neither is it necessary; or perhaps even desirable. It is sufficient to see that David was in much affliction, but well knew that God was his refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore to him he turns, with this pathetic language; "Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort."

It is well to take advantage of our present feelings and circumstances to aid us in our communion with God. Many have supposed that David was now suffering from the rebellion of his son Absalom. If there be truth in the notion, it is not difficult to imagine the scene. Behold him gray-headed; the fire of youth that had heroically encountered the lion, and the bear, and the Philistine, damped by the chillness of age; his chief counsellor betraying him; the hearts of the people stolen from him; his army inadequate to his

defence ; himself forced from his palace ; fleeing from place to place, an exile in his own country ; and full of uncertainty as to the issue—at such a time how natural, and suitable, and satisfying must it have, been to realize God as his hiding-place, resting-place, dwelling-place—the *strength* and the *home* of his heart !

What so pitiable as a homeless wretch ? A Christian can never be in this condition. There is nothing for which we should be more thankful than domestic peace and comfort : and there are some whose abode abounds with every attraction and delight. But how different is the state of others. They have been stripped of “lover and friend :” those with whom they “took sweet counsel together and walked to the house of God in company, are no more :” their means of hospitality and enjoyment are reduced to straits and privation ; or they feel some heart’s bitterness, known only to themselves, and which they are not at liberty to divulge—Thus “thorns are in their tabernacle,” and they are ready to cry, “O that I had wings like a dove, for then would I flee away and be at rest.” But you need not flee *from* your condition ; rest may be found *in* it—in the bosom of your God and Saviour. And the less happiness you have in the creature, the more you should repair to his all-sufficiency. Your distresses are designed to urge you to him ; and if they have this effect, it will be good for you that you have been afflicted. Thus fine weather leads us abroad, and we sometimes take long walks : but clouds and storms hasten us homeward.

David would find and enjoy God, not only as his habitation, but as his “strong” habitation—such an habitation as would not fall by decay, nor be thrown down by violence, nor be entered by any enemy ; in which the inhabitant would not only be free from danger, but feel himself secure. But every earthly strong-hold, however befriended by nature, or indebted to art, is only a shadow of the safety the believer finds in the perfections and covenant-engagements of God. No force, no stratagem of men or devils can prevail to destroy or injure him who has made the Lord his trust. He is kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation : and when he can realize it by faith, his soul dwells at ease ; and he is in quiet from the fear of evil.

He would also make use of him under the character of his strong habitation—“Whereunto I may continually resort.” Would he then want to repair to him always ? Our necessities, our work, our danger, require it constantly. We are commanded to pray without ceasing. And if while we acknowledge and feel the obligation, we are renewed in the spirit of our mind, we shall not lament it. Loving him as well as depending upon him, we shall find it good to draw near to God, and delight ourselves in the Almighty. And we shall never find him, when we want him, inaccessible. There is a way to our strong habitation, and we know the way. There is a door, and we have the key. No sentinel keeps us back : the dwelling is our *own* ; and who dares to forbid us all its accommodations and contents ?

Kings, however disposed, cannot be always approachable. Owing to the multitude of their claims, and the limitation of their powers, and the keeping up a sense of their dignity, they are only accessible at certain times, and with stately formalities. But the King of kings allows us to come boldly to the Throne of grace ; and enjoins

us in every thing, by prayer and supplication, to make known our requests unto him. We cannot be too importunate, or by our continual coming, weary him.

Who is like unto thee among the gods? Teach and enable me to improve my privilege. Thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day.

JUNE 2.—“They went to Baal-peor, and separated themselves unto that shame.”—Hosea ix. 10.

THAT is, to that shameful idol. Many seem disposed to consider idolatry rather as a foolish and harmless thing, than as a serious evil. But the Scriptures speak of abominable idolatries, and always connect such worships with the most infamous passions and vices. History attest the same fact; and the more fully and faithfully the subject is examined, the more will idolatry appear to be nothing better than evil personified, the devil deified, and hell formed into a religious establishment. What a force must revenge, cruelty, drunkenness, and sensuality acquire, when not only exempted from punishment, but turned into acts of devotion, and considered as services which would render them acceptable to the divinity adored! We cannot enter into exemplifications—It were a shame to speak of those things which were done of them in secret. Who would not encourage missionary exertions! Who would not cry, day and night, Let thy ways be known on earth, thy saving health among all nations!

But what is said of Baal-peor will apply to any kind of transgression. When you addict yourselves to sin, you separate yourselves to shame. Hence, says God, “Thou shalt remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth more, because of thy *shame* ;” that is, thy sin. Sin is very properly called shame, for it is the most scandalous business in the world, and sooner or later will cover a man with ignominy. It degrades every thing pertaining to him, and makes him viler than the earth. Indeed nothing else is truly shameful. It is not shameful that you are obliged to labour; though it is shameful if you do nothing, or have nothing to do—I would rather, says Seneca, be sick than idle. It is not shameful that you are poor; unless your indigence is the offspring of vice. It is not shameful to suffer, unless you are the martyrs of Satan—But it is shameful to be a sinner. Is it not shameful to go uncovered and naked? To possess reason, and play the part of an idiot? To be a coward, and flee when no man pursueth? To have liberty at command, and submit to be a slave? To be a thief, and a robber of churches? To be a traitor to the best of sovereigns; a betrayer of the kindest of friends? To be admitted by a benefactor to his table, and enjoy every supply and indulgence; and then oppose him, and endeavour to stab him to the heart? They who are familiar with the word of truth, know that these and many other images are employed by the sacred writers to express the disgracefulness of the sinners conduct.

We may consider the shamefulness of sin three ways. First, as a penal effect—This is principally future. Of Israel we read, “They

shall never be ashamed or confounded, world without end." And John tells us that Christians will "have confidence, and not be ashamed before him, at his coming." But the reverse is true of the wicked, and we are assured that they will "rise to everlasting shame and contempt." And no wonder—when they find *what* they have sacrificed, and *for* what they have parted with it; when they find what they have incurred, and how they were warned of it, and admonished against it, and might have escaped it; when they find how they are laid open from every disguise and concealment, and their secret sins published in the hearing of men and angels, as well as of the Judge—Then will they call upon the rocks and mountains, not so much to crush as to hide them from the scorn of the universe. But the penalty begins here; even here a wicked man is loathsome, and cometh to shame; and when secured from legal inflictions, he draws upon himself disgrace, and has "many a curse."

Secondly, as a natural emotion. Thus, when Adam and Eve had transgressed, they hid themselves among the trees of the garden; so closely did shame tread on the heels of sin. This class of feelings may in a great measure be subdued by continuance in sin, which is of a hardening nature. We read of some who "hide not their sin as Sodom." Jeremiah says, "Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? Yea, they were not ashamed, neither could they blush." But though shame is not a universal, it is a very general sentiment; and it is not easy, or perhaps possible, to get rid of it entirely. Before their fellows, men may profess what is very inconsistent with their convictions alone: they may pretend to laugh, and enjoy self-approbation, while their understandings reproach them as much as their consciences condemn. Why do the wicked repair to corners and elude observation, if they were not doing what tended to their disparagement, for in many of these cases they run no risk unless with regard to their reputation. If not ashamed of their practices, why attempt to deny or palliate? why frame excuses and apologies? why plead ignorance, mistake, surprise, temptation? why ascribe their sins to necessity, or weakness, rather than inclination and choice, unless they deemed them reproachful?—Hence too the sinner cannot endure to be alone; and though naturally full of self-love and admiration, he slips away from his own presence, and shuns intercourse with his greatest favourite, himself, because he cannot bear reflecting upon his conduct. Hence, too, after a while he renounces the moral world, and mingles only with those of his own quality, where mutual wickedness prevents mutual accusation, and censure, and scorn.

Thirdly, as a penitential experience. This is the result of divine grace. It regards not so much the opinion of our fellow-creatures as the judgment of God; not so much our character as our guilt; not so much the punishment as the pollution of sin; not so much its consequences as its odiousness and desert. And this extends to every thing sinful. For some sins are generally if not universally offensive; but all sin is the abominable thing which the soul of a true penitent hates. When a man is enlightened to see sin in the glass of the law, and in connexion with the glory and goodness of God, and in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, what self-condemnation and reproach does he feel! The publican "would not lift up his

eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast." David cries, "Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me that I cannot look up." Ezra said, "O my God, I am ashamed to lift up my face to thee, for our iniquities are over our head, and our trespass is grown up into the very heavens." Blessed experience! If painful, it is salutary. It attracts the divine regard: it is a time of love in which he says unto us, "Live." "He looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; he will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light." "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus: Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth. Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord."

JUNE 3.—"Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad." ACTS xi. 23.

GRACE means divine influence; and is so called because it is derived from the free and undeserved communication of God. But is not this grace an internal principle? How then could Barnabas see it? He could see it only in the effects. We cannot see life in itself; but we can see the sparkling eye, and the ruddy countenance, and the outstretched arm, and the moving foot! We need not cut down a tree, and lay open the body, to see by the grain of the wood of what sort it is. There is another and a better way—it is to judge by the bark, the leaves, the blossoms, the fruit! "For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. For every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes." God says, "I will put my spirit within you"—But how can this be seen? "And cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them"—This is discernible enough. James says, "I will show thee my faith by my works;" that is, I will evince my creed in my conduct, and my principles in my practice—And this is the most satisfactory mode of showing them.

God determines to get himself glory by his people in this world; and therefore it is said, "all that see them shall acknowledge that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed." But if his grace is to be thus seen and owned in them, there must be something in them more than experience. We are far from undervaluing experience. There is no real religion without it; and it is from your inward dispositions you must chiefly assure your own minds before God: but as to others, they cannot read your hearts—but they can read your lives; and therefore in your lives your godliness must appear. Therefore it is said "to the prisoners, go forth; to them that are in darkness, show yourselves: they shall feed in the ways, and their pasture shall be on all high places." And again: "Let your light

so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

Much of the minds of persons may be discovered, by the objects which awaken their attention and desires when they first enter a place. Some look after natural scenery. Some after curiosities. Some after kinds and modes of trades. Some after machinery, and buildings, and libraries. They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the Spirit. Barnabas, as soon as he came to Antioch, looked about for displays and instances of divine agency; and when he saw the grace of God "he was glad." The sight would not have been pleasing to all. The enemy of souls would have been enraged at the prospect. The elder brother would not go in to share the joy of the father and the family: and was offended at the Prodigal's return and reception. So are Pharisees now—

"While the wide world esteems it strange,
Gaze and admire, and hate the change."

But salvation is "the pleasure of the Lord." Angels, in the presence of God, rejoice over one sinner that repenteth. And every convert may say with the Royal Penitent, "They that fear thee will rejoice when they see me, because I have hoped in thy truth"—

Love to God made Barnabas rejoice. What is every sinner called by grace, but an accession to his subjects; an enemy turned into a friend; who shall show forth his praise by living to his glory, and by being a monument of his mercy and power? "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."

Benevolence made him glad. And Barnabas was a good man, as well as full of the Holy Ghost and of faith. What generous mind can see without feelings of pleasure, the hungry fed, the destitute clothed, the sick recovered, the captive loosened from his chains? But what is every other deliverance, compared with salvation from the evil of sin? What is every other acquisition, to the gain of that godliness which is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come? He prospers whose soul prospers and is in health. He is free indeed whom the Son makes free. He is rich who has the gold tried in the fire. And every subject of divine grace is not only blessed in himself, but is made a blessing to others. He is now become one of those who, by their prayers, example, and endeavours, are the greatest benefactors of the human race. They are a dew from the Lord; as showers upon the grass. "For them the wilderness and solitary place shall be made glad, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose." When we see a sinner turned into the way of life, who can imagine what he may become? That persecutor now asking, Lord what wilt thou have me to do? may preach the faith that once he destroyed. That profane tinker now beginning to weep and pray, may become a writer, and, by his Pilgrim's Progress and Holy War, may charm and edify the Church to the end of time.

Barnabas rejoiced as a minister. Some enter the sacred calling, only looking after support, emolument, or fame. The salvation of souls is nothing to them. But with "a man of God" it is the end

of his office, the answer of his prayers, the reward of his labours, his best hire. Such a man has the spirit of his function; and among all his tribulations nothing comforts him like success in the conversion and edification of his hearers—he lives if they stand fast in the Lord.

But Barnabas, though a minister, had not been the means of producing the grace of God which he saw; yet he was glad when he saw it. Some cannot rejoice in the good done by others, especially by those who are not of their own community. They would confine the work of the Lord to the pale of their own denomination; and are grieved rather than pleased when they see another casting out devils in his name, because he walketh not with them. But a Barnabas can say, not only, "Let him alone," but, "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." Let God employ and bless what instruments *he* pleases—Therein I rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

JUNE 4.—"O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee."—Psalm xlii. 6.

AFFLICTIONS are often in the Scriptures called temptations and trials. The reason is, because they serve to prove and evince our principles, dispositions, and resources. It is natural, and almost unavoidable for men in difficulties and distresses, to repair to something that promises to afford deliverance, or at least to temper the bitterness of sorrow. And as every creature is insufficient to succour them, their applications are various and numerous, and none of them are available. Therefore, at last disappointed and confounded, they class the comforts with the crosses, and the good with the evil, and acknowledge, "*all* is vanity and vexation of spirit."

The believer has only one resource; but this is an adequate, and an infinite relief. And therefore instead of running up and down the earth, asking, "Who will show me any good?" he says, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." It is not improper, as a brother is born for adversity, to go to a dear and valued connexion, and pouring our tears into his bosom, say, O my friend, my soul is cast down within me—But it is better for the eye to pour out tears unto God! Far better to look upward and say, with David, "*O my God, my soul is cast down within me*"—

David claims God as *his* God. And how desirable is it when we address him, especially in trouble, to be able to deal with him on the ground of assured interest in him. It is therefore promised: "I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God."

Yet his claim does not hinder his complaint. Many are perplexed by what, if properly viewed, might rather encourage them. They exclaim, "If I am his, why am I thus?" Not considering that they are thus because they are his. They are pruned because they are vines; they are put into the furnace because they are gold; they are chastened because they are sons—for what son is he whom the

father chasteneth not? They think their depressions are peculiar—But David was a man after God's own heart, and had more experimental religion than any individual before the coming of Christ; yet he was not only afflicted, but his distress broke through to his mind, and pressed it down to the ground—"My soul is cast down within me." While all is calm and vigour within, the pressure of outward calamity is easily borne. The spirit of a man may sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?—and who can cure? Only the God of all grace, and the God of all comfort. Let us, therefore, go to him. He alone can alter the state and frame of our minds who has access to them, and dominion over them. When a watch is disordered, to have it examined and rectified we naturally take it to the maker, who knows all its powers and movements: so God is the former of our spirits, and he can set them right again—"Therefore," says David, "I will remember thee."

Such a resolution is not natural to us. God deserves indeed our remembrance, and is perpetually demanding it. He addresses us by his word; he speaks to us by conscience—but in vain. He endeavours to awaken our attention and regard by a profusion of benefits—but though the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, we do not know, or consider. He therefore tries a different expediency—"I will go and return to my place till they acknowledge their offence and seek my face; in their affliction they will seek me early." What we refused to see and hear we are made to feel. His captivity led Manasseh to pray to the God of his father. The famine made the prodigal think of his father's house. What brought so many to our Saviour in the days of his flesh but personal and relative trouble? It is the same now. He breaks up our earthly schemes, and then presents a better country to our pursuit. He removes the human arm on which we leaned, and then offering his own, says, "There—take hold of my strength." He hedges up our way with thorns, and makes a wall, that we cannot find our paths while following after our lovers; so that we have only one passage open—and this is to go back—and back we must return—if we would find him whom we had forsaken—for *he* remains where he was—and instead of rejecting us, cries, "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings."

And thus the same method which brings God to our remembrance at first is useful in our after religious life for the same purpose. For we are not already perfect. Our affections are sometimes chilled, and our minds are often turned away from our portion by other things. And there is peculiar danger of this in easy and prosperous circumstances. It is when our gourd flourishes, and we sit under its shadow with delight, that we are ready to say, "It is good for us to be here:" and so "to forget our resting-place." But God loves us too well to suffer us to take up with any thing short of himself. He does not stand in need of us; but he knows that without him we are miserable. He therefore brings us into conditions which show us the weakness and wretchedness of the creature; and induce us to inquire, "Where is God my maker that giveth songs in the night?" Then we think of him—And whom can we think of so properly and efficiently in the hour of distress? When therefore our souls are cast down within us, let us remember him. Let us remember his power. Is any

thing too hard for the Lord? Let us remember his wisdom. He knows how to afflict; and he knows how to deliver. Let us remember his goodness. Our welfare is his aim in every dispensation however trying. He spared not his own Son. Let us remember his providence. He is always near us. He numbers the hairs of our head. Let us remember his holy covenant. What promises does it contain! It insures every thing we need. This was all David's salvation, and all his desire—This is my comfort in my affliction; thy word hath quickened me—And how many can say after him—

“Had not thy word been my delight,
When earthly joys were fled;
My soul, oppressed with sorrow's weight,
Had sunk amongst the dead.”

JUNE 5.—“Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day.”—Deut. xxxii. 46.

“ALL these words” were the language which he had just ended, the histories which he had recapitulated, and the positive ordinances and moral injunctions which he had again laid before them. Now if Moses enjoined the Jews to attend cordially to a portion of Revelation comparatively small, how much more does God require us to pay this regard to the whole? See then that ye refuse not him that speaketh; for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven—And who is *now* saying, “Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day.”

Set your hearts to **HEAR** all these words. When you are forbidden to be hearers only, it supposes that you are hearers really: and when you are admonished to take heed *what* you hear, and *how* you hear, the practice itself is enjoined in the very regulation of the mode. Hearing is not only a duty, but a privilege. And when we consider not only the adaptation there is in preaching to produce the effect, but the blessing of God that attends his own institution, we need not wonder that “faith cometh by hearing.”

Set your hearts to **READ** all these words. We cannot be hearing always; and there are times when we cannot hear at all. In such cases, reading is a substitute for hearing; and in all others reading must accompany and follow hearing. We cannot dispense with it at the family altar, or in our private retirement, without injury and sin. Hale could say, in one of his letters to his children, “If I omit reading a portion of the Scriptures in the morning, nothing goes well with me through the day.”

Set your hearts to **UNDERSTAND** all these words. “Let him that readeth understand”—Without this the perusal will be little more than a mere mechanical exercise. We should endeavour to obtain clear and consistent views of the subject that comes under our notice; we should pause, and reflect; we should consider the design of the writer in the paragraph; observe the strain of his language; compare one part of the contents with another; and pray for the Spirit that leads into all truth.

Set your hearts to **REMEMBER** all these words. “By which,” says the Apostle, “ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I have

written unto you." Our memory should be like the ark in which were kept the golden pot of manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the law. Nothing can affect us morally when it is out of the mind. Some, to excuse their recollecting so little of what they read and hear, complain of their memory. Yet they recollect a multitude of things without number—This shows the natural faculty is not wanting. "But we can remember some things so much easier than others." This adds to our censure. For what things are they which you *do* remember most easily? Are they not those with which you are most familiar? to which you are most attentive and attached? and which are most suitable to your taste? And should not this be the case with the things of God? Can a woman forget her sucking child? Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire?

Set your hearts to the PRACTICE of all these words. It cannot be imagined that they are written only to amuse curiosity, or inform the mind, or furnish materials for conversation and controversy—What are its warnings unless we are cautioned by them? or its promises unless we embrace them? In vain it shows unto us the way of salvation, unless we walk in it. It cannot profit us unless it be mixed with faith: and it works effectually in them that believe. "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." "Blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it."

Set your hearts to RECOMMEND and DIFFUSE them. Begin at home. "Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates." Hold forth the word of life wisely in your discourse, accompanied with every holy and lovely temper. Furnish with a copy those who are destitute. Feel an anxiety that every human being may have a Bible. For this purpose, encourage and aid that glorious institution whose godlike and only aim is to spread the Scriptures at home and abroad, till the earth is filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the seas. Thus set your hearts unto all the words of this testimony. It is the command of God; and he who lives in the neglect of it is a rebel as much as a thief or a murderer. It is the command of the great God who is able to enforce it. It is the command of the good God, who has conferred so many benefits, and has so many claims upon you. It is the command of the only wise God, who knows what is good for you, and only demands what is a reasonable service.

—All these words too are divine—All Scripture is given by inspiration of God. The very name of some authors would be enough to induce you to purchase and devour a publication. On the back of my Bible is inscribed, THE WORKS OF GOD.

They are also all important. They are not a vain thing, but our life. They are our standard. Our rule. Our medicine. Our shield. Our sword. Our bread. Our water. Our sun. The charter of our everlasting privilege—Who can tell what it has done for numberless individuals? For communities? For nations?—Who can tell what it will do in the ages to come?

JUNE 6.—“And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.”—Gen. xxxii. 24.

JACOB WAS NOW returning with a large family and much abundance from Haran, and the house of his infamous uncle Laban. Thither he had fled from the face of his brother Esau, till his fury should be abated. But his resentment seems not to have yielded to time; for Jacob is informed of his approach, and four hundred men with him, and no doubt with murderous design. Here was an embarrassment! But God had said to him, “Return;” and he had also said, “I will surely do thee good”—This was his encouragement. But what was his conduct? It equally expressed prudence and piety. He sends forward a present, with a soft answer, that turneth away wrath; and then he has recourse to prayer. For except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it; except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. When we have arranged our plans, and secured our means, and done all that we can do, we must cast our care upon him that careth for us, and say, “O Lord, I beseech thee, send now prosperity.” Jacob found prayer not only his duty, but his privilege. How pitiable are those in trouble who cannot say from experience, “It is good for me to draw near to God.” In the perplexities, dangers, distresses of life; in the loss of relations, the failure of friends, the insufficiency of creature-helpers; how relieving to the burdened spirit is it to say, “Therefore will I look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation, my God will hear me.”

—Imagine Jacob’s situation. He was left alone. His family had been sent forward. It was now past midnight. No noise was heard. Perhaps no star was seen. He was kneeling on the ground in prayer, with his eyes closed, or raised towards heaven—when he felt the fingers of some one, seizing and grappling him—and he started up and closed with his antagonist—and endeavoured to maintain his standing against him—There wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. Wrestling is a trying and close combat, in which we can only engage personally, hand to hand; it allows not of seconds and helpers; and the aim of each is to throw the other upon the ground. Jacob’s opponent came as his friend; but how could Jacob think so at first, when instead of being lulled to sleep, he was grasped and pulled to and fro with violence? Though mercy brings him, the Lord’s coming to his people is often alarming in appearance and apprehension. He works by unlikely means, and in a way the most strange. He impoverishes in order to enrich; wounds us in order to heal; by legal despair he brings us into the hope of the gospel; and by death leads us to life eternal. Let us welcome him in whatever manner he may appear. Job could say, “He hath taken me by my neck, and shaken me to pieces”—But he could say, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.”

The affair was not a vision, but a real transaction. We may however make two inquiries. First; who was this mysterious personage that strove with Jacob? Hosea calls him “the angel;” he is here called “a man”—yet the prophet says, Jacob “had power with God:” and Jacob himself says, “I have seen God face to face.”

What can we do here, but have recourse to "the angel of the covenant?" to him of whom Paul speaks, when he says, "Being in the form of God, he thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:" to him of whom John says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God; and the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." "His goings forth were of old, from everlasting." "He rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth, and his delights were with the sons of men." Thus he often assumed a human shape, as an emblem and earnest of his real incarnation in the fulness of time. Secondly; what was the nature of this wrestling? It was partly corporeal, as is undeniable from the injury he received in his thigh; and partly spiritual, as an inspired expositor tells us that "he wept and made supplication unto the angel." These are the severest trials in which God at once exercises both the body and the mind. Yet it is no unusual thing for sickness and straits in circumstances to blend with internal conflicts—"Without," says Paul, "are fightings, and within are fears:" and, says David, "Heal me, for my bones are vexed; my soul is also sore vexed: but thou, O Lord, how long."

It is from this exercise of Jacob's, that prayer has been so frequently called wrestling with God. Formalists know nothing of the force of the image: but *they* know the meaning of it, who feel their guilt, and are pressed down by a sense of their unworthiness and imperfections; who are in earnest as to their object; and whose cry is nothing less than "Lord, save, I perish."

We cannot determine how long the contest had lasted, but it seems to have been several hours. During all this time, though Jacob stood his ground he got no advantage until the breaking of the day—Then the scene changed, and relief was obtained. The Lord often tries the patience of his people; he delays their desires, and under the suspension, they sometimes are ready to say, Why should I wait for him any longer? Hope deferred maketh the heart sick, but when it cometh it is a tree of life; and come it will in God's own time, and will not tarry a moment beyond it. "Weeping may endure for a night; but joy cometh in the morning." What applies to any particular dispensation will apply to life itself—What is it but wrestling until the breaking of the day? But the night is far spent, and the day is at hand.

JUNE 7.—"And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh."—Gen. xxxii. 25, 26.

It is wonderful that Jacob was able to maintain the contest as he did. Never was there such an unequal match. The wrestling was between a poor worm and the Lord of all. What would have been the consequence, if things had taken their natural course, but Jacob's overthrow? How then did he stand? Not from his own sufficiency, but from the condescension and kindness of his opponent, who instead of striving against him with his great power, put strength in him, and sustained him in the encounter.

Yet the Lord would remind him of his weakness. He therefore touched and disjointed the hollow of his thigh. This was to intimate that if he should gain the victory, he was not, as he otherwise might have done, to ascribe it to himself. Good men in their attainments and successes are in danger of self-elation; and it is necessary to keep them from their purpose, and to hide pride from them. Paul after his revelations had a thorn in the flesh, lest he should be exalted above measure. All our honours and comforts must have some alloy. In sailing the ballast is as necessary as the sails, and the one must be in proportion to the other.

But does not Jacob yield now? No; he keeps on wrestling, though in pain, and even lamed, and therefore obliged to grasp the closer and firmer to keep him from falling. So we are to cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart, and to pray and not faint. Whatever discouragements we meet with, we are not in our wrestling to give up; and when we cannot pray as we would, we must pray as we can, and not discontinue the exercise because of infirmity and imperfections.

"Let me go," says the angel. Yet could not he who by a touch only had disjointed Jacob's thigh, have easily disengaged himself from his hold? And does he ask for permission to withdraw? He gives intimation of his departure, to excite the more earnest supplication for his continuance. When he was with the two disciples at Emmaus, he made as though he would have gone further: he designed to enter with them—but not without pressing; and they constrained him, saying, abide with us—and he went in to tarry with them. So much do they love him, and so necessary is he to his people, that a hint of going is enough to throw them into alarm, and induce them to cry, "Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy holy Spirit from me." But the motion is designed to show the power of prayer. "The king is held in the galleries." "I held him, and would not let him go." "The violent take it by force." The might of earth and hell cannot restrain God, but prayer can. Two blind men, begging by the way-side, hearing that he was passing by, cried, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on us." The multitude deemed them offensive interrupters, and ordered them to hold their peace. But Jesus stood still, and commanded them to be brought—The sun in nature once stood still, to enable Joshua to finish his victory: and now a much nobler Being cannot take another step till he has paused, and heard, and relieved the tale of distress. When God, provoked by the idolatry of the Jews at Horeb, threatened to destroy them, Moses interposed, and held back his arm; and Omnipotence itself said, "Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation." Who would not value prayer! What an efficiency does it exert! With God all things are possible—and prayer has power with God!

But the reason seems as strange as the request—Let me go, "for the day breaketh." What are the distinctions of time to him? Is it not the same to the Lord whether he is with his people by night or by day? "Darkness and light are both alike to him." First, the reason may respect the angel's unwillingness that any should be spectators of the scene. And so it tells us to avoid religious notice;

and not, like the Pharisees, pray to be seen of men—"The kingdom of God cometh not with observation." When we enter our closet we are not to leave it open, but shut to the door. But, secondly, the reason rather refers to Jacob and his circumstances—"The morning comes, and we must separate for thy sake—Thou must pursue thy journey; thy cattle, servants, and family, will require thy presence and aid." Religion is not to call us off from our relative duties, or even secular business. Every thing is beautiful in its season. We must sometimes exercise even spiritual self-denial. The privileges of the Sabbath must give place to the trials of the week. It would be more pleasing to continue an hour longer in retirement, reading the Scripture, with meditation and prayer; but the calls of the household, and the claims of our callings, bid us break off—And we must "stand perfect and complete in all the will of God."

JUNE 8.—"And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob."—Gen. xxxii. 26, 27.

JACOB now, if not before, began to know who his antagonist was; and is therefore unwilling to separate without a blessing. He looks for a blessing from one that had opposed him, struggled with him, and disjointed his thigh. So must we "turn to him that smiteth" us, and from the very hand that wounds, seek all our relief and deliverance. "Come," says the Church, "and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us, he hath smitten, and he will bind us up." The blessing of the Lord maketh rich. It can do all things for us. Creatures can only wish us a blessing, but he commands and imparts it: and when he blesses none can reverse it.

Jacob uses no ceremony, but in reply to the demand, "Let me go," abruptly says, "I will not—except thou bless me." Was this a fit answer for a servant to his Lord and Master? When we have a promise which gives us a hold of him, we are to put him in remembrance, to plead with him, and to refuse to take any denial. There is nothing more pleasing to him than this holy violence: he loves to see us while trusting in his faithful Word, disregarding the discouragements of his Providence. The woman of Canaan was sorely tried, first by his silence, then by his seeming exclusion and contempt of her—but she persevered in her application, and was more than successful. "O woman, great is thy faith, be it unto thee even as thou wilt." And when God had threatened not to go with the people, was he offended with Moses, who said, I will not stir a step further without thy presence? No; but he yielded, and said, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." Prayer is nothing without earnestness and resolution. We ask and have not, because we ask amiss; we pour forth words, but leave the heart behind. How can we expect that God should regard supplications with which we are unaffected ourselves? "If," says Bishop Hopkins, "the arrow of prayer is to enter heaven, we must draw it from a soul full bent." This is what Paul means by "praying with all prayer." He, the very same Being, who here taught Jacob importunity in prayer, teaches us also, at this moment, the value and necessity of it. "Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go

unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine, in his journey, is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." "And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: and there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man: yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?"—"Never man spake like this man."

Jacob specifies nothing in particular, but only insists upon a blessing. His present condition however would serve to explain his immediate wish. And therefore, with a view to this, the Lord said unto him, "What is thy name?" He could not ask to gain information; but upon the same principle that we are required to confess our sins, and to spread our wants before him in prayer; and which is not to inform a Being who is perfectly wise, but that we may be affected with our condition, and be prepared for the display of his mercy. It is we who are changed by prayer, not he: the land is not drawn to the boat, but the boat to the land—the result of the contact is the same. The Lord well knew Jacob's name, but he would know it from himself; and therefore he said, "Jacob"—"The same to whom thou saidst at Beth-el, when fleeing from the face of my brother, I will keep thee in all places whither thou goest: the same to whom thou saidst, when leaving my uncle Laban, Return to thy kindred, and I will surely do thee good." We have the same advantage in the question when we go to his mercy's door, and he asks who we are. "Lord, thou canst not be ignorant of me. I am that swearer, that Sabbath-breaker, that despiser of all that was good, whose feet thy goodness turned into the path of peace, and whose lips it taught to show forth thy praise. I am that backslider thy mercy reclaimed. I am that sufferer who called upon thee in the day of trouble, and was delivered—I have tried thee too much; and thou hast befriended me too often, not to be acquainted with all I am"—

"Dost thou ask me, who I am?
Ah, my Lord, thou know'st my name!
Yet the question gives a plea,
And supports my suit with Thee.

"Thou did'st once a wretch behold,
In rebellion blindly bold,
Scorn thy grace, thy power defy;
That poor rebel, Lord, was I.

"Once a sinner, near despair,
Sought thy mercy-seat by prayer;

Mercy heard and set him free,
Lord, that mercy came to me.

“Many years have passed since then,
Many changes I have seen,
Yet have been upheld till now;
Who could hold me up but thou?”

Thou hast helped in ev'ry need,
This emboldens me to plead;
After so much mercy past,
Canst thou let me sink at last?”

JUNE 9.—“And he saith, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel; for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there.” Gen. xxxii. 28, 29.

THUS he was knighted on the field. He had two names, and both of them were gained by wrestling: the one by wrestling with his brother in the womb; the other by wrestling with the angel at Peniel. Jacob signifies a supplanter: Israel means a prince with God—And the reason of the new name was, that he had “power with God and with men, and had prevailed.” That is, he had prevailed with God, and this was an assurance that he would prevail with man—his brother Esau, and every other foe. These go together. If God refuses to hear us, creatures will help in vain; and if God be for us, who can be against us? “When a man’s ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.” How much is it our interest, to secure *his* favour, who has all events at his disposal, and every heart under his control? Yet some, to engage the friendship of mortals, will offend and provoke him who can turn the wisdom of the wisest into foolishness, and the strength of the strongest into weakness.

We can hardly wonder that Jacob asked and said, “Tell me, I pay thee, thy name.” Yet it appears to have been more curious than wise. There is much of this tendency in us all; and it is a proof of our depravity, that we are equally disposed to neglect what is plain and useful, and to pry into things which we have not seen, and which, if discovered, could be of little avail to us. This is a world of action rather than of science. The humblest Christian will know more in a moment after death than the most laborious research can acquire now in months and years. The Scripture therefore never indulges a vain curiosity that would draw us off from the one thing needful. Instead of gratifying Peter when he inquired after the destiny of John, our Savior rebuked him: “What is that to thee? follow thou me.” And when the Apostles would become students of prophecy; and asked, “Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” he said unto them, “It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.” He therefore here said unto Jacob, “Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there.” This furnishes us with an opportunity to remark two things. The first regards our infirmities in prayer. We often know not what we ask. The second, God’s method in answering us. He grants us while he denies. If he refuses us, he gives us something

better in exchange, something better in itself, and better also for us. It is better to prepare us for his coming at any time, or in any way, than to inform us of it. It is better to make us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, than to make us acquainted with the nature of it. With regard to the thorn in the flesh, the Apostle was more than satisfied with the manner in which his prayer for the removal of it was answered, when, though it continued, he had the assurance of all-sufficient grace under it, and that the Saviour's strength, should be made perfect in his weakness—"Most gladly, therefore," says he, "will I glory in my infirmity, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." He withholds abundance, but he teaches and enables us to be content with such things as we have. Let us leave ourselves to his wisdom and goodness; a wisdom that is infinite, a goodness that spared not his own Son. He would not tell Jacob his name—but he blessed him there.

JUNE 10.—"And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved. And as he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh. Therefore the children of Israel eat not of the sinew which shrank, which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day; because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew that shrank."—Gen. xxxii. 30—32.

HERE we have some of the immediate consequences of this singular event. It is obvious that Jacob apprehended the personage to be Divine. Hence he wonders at his preservation. Human nature is weak, and can only bear a degree of impression. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God: and "no man," said God himself to Moses, "can see my face and live." Jacob therefore could not have seen him face to face, unless in the human form which he had assumed. Thus in the gospel God is manifest in the flesh. And thus through the veil, that is to say his flesh, we are not only saved, but shall have communion with him for ever. Jacob's humility also filled him with surprise, that he should have been not only so supported, but so signalized and dignified above all mankind. When we are in a proper frame of mind, divine favours abase as well as encourage.

That the event might not be forgotten, he calls the place by a new name, significant of the manifestation. For the same reason after a deliverance, Samuel had set up a stone, and called it Ebenezer. And Joseph and Moses had given their children names that would serve to recall their trials and their mercies. Nothing can affect us any longer than it is in our thoughts; we should therefore be careful that we forget not all his benefits. Our gratitude and our confidence depend on remembrance.

Jacob knew that the best way to glorify God is to serve him in the condition and circumstances wherein we are placed. He therefore is not idle; but as soon as the divine visitant had left him, he went forward, hastening to join his household, and to perform the duties of the husband, the father, the master, and to prepare for the expected interview. But as he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh. He could not have travelled at all unless he who had lamed him had re-joined him. Yet if

not some pain, some weakness was left; and he limped for life. There was doubtless a contraction of the muscle or tendon, for it is said, "therefore the children of Israel eat not of the sinew that shrank, which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day; because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the *sinew that shrank*." Was this refusal founded in a superstitious conceit? It was rather the consequence of a divine appointment, analogous to a ceremonial and sensible dispensation of religion; or the disuse resulted from the veneration his posterity entertained for the patriarch, and their concern to memorialize this astonishing occurrence. It would be saying, Our father trusted in thee, and thou didst deliver him—Say not to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain.

But what a night was here! What a morning was here! With what confidence and peace would he now go forward, assured of a safe and pleasant meeting with his brother, and that goodness and mercy would follow him all the days of his life! And oh! what a relation would he have to communicate to his company as soon as he had overtaken them! They would wonder to see him halting as he approached; but they would marvel far more when he had told them of all that had happened unto him—of his wrestling! and of his success!

And how much shall we have to announce to our company who have crossed the river before us, and are waiting to receive us into everlasting habitations, when we have reached them, not in a yet unfinished and trying journey, but at home, in the rest that remains for the people of God.

"There, on a green and flowery mount,
Our weary souls shall sit;
And with transporting joys recount
The labours of our feet."

JUNE 11.—"And it shall come to pass, that when any shall yet prophesy, then his father and his mother that begat him shall say unto him, Thou shalt not live; for thou speakest lies in the name of the Lord: and his father and his mother that begat him shall thrust him through when he prophesieth."—Zech. xiii. 3.

As in money transactions the sterling coin gives rise to the counterfeit, so in religious concerns, reality is followed by hypocrisy. From the beginning there were in Israel true prophets. Hence also there were false ones, wearing the attire, and assuming the manners of God's own servants; pretending to communications which they had never received; exercising and encouraging idolatry; and crying, Peace, peace, when there was no peace. When therefore God intended mercy to the country, he engages to sweep away from the earth these emissaries of the devil, and plagues and curses of the human race. "In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and I will cause the prophets, and the unclean spirits to pass out of the land." And so affected would the people be, and even their relations and their nearest relations, that rising above the feelings of nature, they would themselves execute the judgment threatened: "And it shall come to pass, that when any shall yet prophesy, then his father and his mother that begat him, shall say

unto him, Thou shalt not live ; for thou speakest lies in the name of the Lord : and his father and his mother that begat him shall thrust him through when he prophesieth." This would be very trying to flesh and blood ; but we are to love God supremely, and creatures only in subordination to him. And this is no more than Moses required : " If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which thou hast not known, thou, nor thy fathers ; thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him ; neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him : but thou shalt surely kill him ; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people." It is no more than Levi performed in the slaughter of the idolaters in the camp at Horeb : " He said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him ; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor know his own children." How unlike this was the conduct of Eli, who, when his sons made themselves vile, restrained them not, but only gave them a gentle rebuke. And what can we think of those parents who connive at the delinquencies of their children ; and instead of opposing them with the authority and influence they possess, can rather cherish their inclinations, and accompany their steps ? " He that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me."

As the words from the immediately preceding and following context are allowed to refer to the evangelical dispensation, some have derived an argument from them in favour of compulsion and persecution in religion. But the Gospel sanctions nothing of this. When James and John would have called for fire from heaven to consume the Samaritans, the greatest schismatics of the age, and who had refused him a night's lodging, our Lord rebuked them, saying, " Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." Some therefore have solved the difficulty by applying the prophecy exclusively to the conversion of the Jews ; and supposing that when they become Christians they will at first act according to their former usages, just as at the beginning of the Gospel they for a while strove to bring in with Christ, circumcision, and the observance of meats and seasons. But the conjecture is improbable ; and the confinement of the words to this people is groundless. The meaning is—that effects are here put for principles—Christians should not indeed act in the same manner, but have the same zeal the pious Jews had, when of old they showed themselves on the Lord's side, and obeyed his commands, however expensive or painful the service—they should display the most determined firmness and fidelity in opposing error, and in spreading divine truth—holding nothing dear but the glory of God their Saviour—and forsaking all they have to be his disciples. It is therefore another of the many instances in the Old Testament, in which things Christian are expressed by Jewish allusions. The Prophets could only use their own language, and employ their own ideas and terms, even when speaking of another and a future dispensation. Nothing, therefore, can be more unwise, than to build opinions and expectations upon so weak a foundation as the

names they often give to persons, places, and objects taken from their own economy. Surely if a Jewish prophecy or promise be allowed to refer to Christian times, influences, and blessings, the phraseologies in which it is announced should be taken, not in a Jewish, but in a Christian interpretation. Admit the reverse, and we should kill people, and think we did God service from the words before us; and fetch a thousand absurdities from other passages also.

JUNE 12.—“That we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.”—2 Cor. i. 4.

THE Apostle mentions this as the purpose for which God had comforted him and his companions in all *their* tribulation. This is very instructive and edifying. We see the *aim* of God in the favours he confers upon us. He means them not to terminate in ourselves, but to extend to others, like the streams which flow on and turn mill after mill, and refresh and fertilize meadow after meadow. We are not the proprietors, but only the stewards of the manifold grace of God: and we are to consider ourselves debtors, not only to him but to our fellow-creatures. If we are rich in this world's good, we are to be ready to distribute. If we are enlightened, we are to arise and shine. If we are converted, we are to strengthen our brethren—and if we are comforted, we are to be comforters.

We also see how the Lord employs human instrumentality. He is the God of all comfort; but though he is the source, we are the mediums. He could dispense with our services, but he wisely employs them; as he thereby secures our own improvement; promotes brotherly love; unites the giver to the receiver by pity, and the receiver to the giver by gratitude; shows us that there is a connexion between all ranks and degrees in society; that there is no such thing as independence; that every man has something to receive to teach him humility, and that every man has something to impart to keep him from discouragement. “If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.”

We therefore learn also, how free our minds should be from that selfishness which is satisfied with personal advantage and enjoyment. “Look not,” says the Apostle, “every man to his own things, but every man also on the things of others.” And how well does he exemplify his own admonition! He delights in the thought that the crown of righteousness was secured for others as well as himself. He wishes that all his hearers had all his blessedness without his bonds. And we here see how he prized the consolations he had enjoyed, not because he had been comforted by them in his suffering, but because they would render him useful to others who are in any trouble.

Such as are “in any trouble” have peculiar claims upon us; and we are “able to comfort them with those comforts wherewith we ourselves have been comforted of God,” three ways. First, by excitement—They dispose and stir us up to exertion and communica-

tion. Fear unnerves: despondence makes us sluggish: and the mourner sitteth alone and keeps silence, like the stricken deer that leaves the herd. But divine consolation enlivens, actuates, and discovers itself; and the language of the happy receiver is; "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul. I cried unto him with my mouth, and he was extolled by my tongue." Silence would be enjoined in vain—"If these should hold their peace, the stones would cry out." "We cannot but speak the things that we have seen and heard." Secondly, by qualification. The heart teacheth the lips. They can speak, in dealing with others, more surely, more earnestly, more suitably, more wisely. Having laboured and been heavily laden themselves, they can speak a word in season to him that is weary. Having found relief themselves, they can lead others to the same place of succour. Thirdly, by example. If nothing were said in words, the fact itself would address others; and evince what can be done, in showing what has been done. Here is actual experience. Here are proofs that the Lord does not leave his people comfortless; that he is a very present help in trouble; that his grace is equally free and powerful, that none who seek it shall be disappointed, and none confounded that trust in it. When the Lord's people sustain losses in their endearments, and yet say, The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; and blessed be the name of the Lord: when they receive the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost: when, though walking in the valley of the shadow of death, they fear no evil, but rejoice in hope of the glory of God; how many thank God and take courage!

JUNE 13.—"Do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly?"—Micah ii. 7.

THEY do evil and injury to many. Thousands will curse for ever the hour they became acquainted with the Scriptures; for they derive from them only an increase of guilt and of condemnation. But this is not the effect of design or of natural tendency in them; for the Bible is intended and adapted to do us good only; but is the accidental result of depravity: and therefore it is confined to those who pervert it, abuse it, neglect it; and thus turn the blessing into a curse. But his words do good to him that walketh uprightly. They do good indeed to others, and are the means of the conversion of sinners. But the prophet is not speaking of what the Scriptures do in bringing us into a religious state, but of the benefit they render us when we are in it. Our Saviour, in the parable of the sower, does not explain *how* the ground is *made* good—this he has done in other places; but of the effect of the seed in bringing forth thirty, sixty, or one hundred fold, when falling where it is *already* good—in distinction from its unprofitableness when uniting with the way-side, and the stony and thorny soil. The author of the origin of the rain is another question; but the Apostle is speaking only of its influence according to the subject imbibing it, when he says, that coming upon the garden it bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, and receives a blessing from God: but in other places it calls forth weeds, and thorns, and briars, which are nigh

unto cursing, and whose end is to be burned. The Word of God must operate according to the principles and dispositions it finds in us. If it be food, it is nothing to the dead but to the living: it is milk for babes, and strong meat for men. If it be a rule, the benefit is only to them that walk by it. And we are never in so suitable a state to be benefited by it as when conscience is awake, and we are sincerely desirous of knowing the will of God, and are resolved to follow it, whatever difficulties may lie in the way. Hence says James, "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save your souls." And thus Peter also. "Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speakings, as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious."

For are we not to expect that his words will do us good mechanically, that is, without our consciousness or activity; or that they will act in us as physical causes operate in the body, where the concoction of the food, and the circulation of the fluids go on, when we are asleep, as well as when we are awake, being independent of our volitions and thoughts. The Scriptures can only affect us morally, in way of motive, in the exercises of the mind, and in the use of the means which God has appointed. This does not supersede divine influence, but is the way in which it works, and in which alone we are *authorized* to look for it. If God's words are to do us good, we must read them—we must hear them—we must believe them—we must understand them—we must reflect upon them—we must speak of them—we must pray over them. But what is the benefit they will then do us? It would be endless to describe it. They are profitable unto all things.

They will do us good in a way of information. And for the soul to be without knowledge it is not good. But there is no knowledge like that which is derived from the Scriptures. It is so clear, so full, so important, so blessed—it giveth life to them that have it—

"When once it enters to the mind,
It spreads such light abroad,
The meanest souls instruction find,
And raise their thoughts to God."

What an advantage, in every duty, in every perplexity, to be able to go to these lively oracles, to learn what God the Lord has to say concerning us; and to hear a voice saying, This is the way, walk ye in it.

They will do us good in a way of excitement. We often grow dull and formal in religion. We have a name that we live, but are dead; or the things that remain are ready to die. But when our souls cleave unto the dust, he quickens us according to his word; and the effect endears it and enables us to remember it: "I will never forget thy precepts; for with them thou hast quickened me."

They will do us good in a way of rebuke. If they deal truly with us—and they will never flatter; they will—they must frequently reprove us. And if we are concerned for our real welfare, we shall not esteem them our enemy, because they tell us the truth. We shall cordially say, "Faithful are the wounds of a

friend;" and falling in with their wholesome severity, we shall fall upon our knees and pray, Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. How improper is it to limit the benefit of the word to encouragement; and to suppose that we have never a *good* opportunity, as the phrase is, when we attend upon it unless it comforts us! What a blessing it is to be humbled, to be emptied of self, to see more of our own weakness and vileness, and to cry mightily at the foot of the cross, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

Not that we undervalue comfort. The joy of the Lord is our strength; and these words he has spoken unto us, that his joy may be in us, and that our joy may be full. They therefore do us good, by inspiring us with everlasting consolation and good hope through grace. They relieve the wearied, oppressed with a sense of grief and unworthiness, by leading them to the Lamb of God, and giving them access with confidence, by the faith of him. They tell us what we are to do with trouble; and they tell us what trouble is to do for us. Ah! says the bereaved and desolate, unless thy law had been my delight, I should have perished in mine affliction. Ah! says the dying, I will fear no evil; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

We talk of benefactors! of a Howard; of a Thornton! What good has the Bible done? What millions has it blessed? And in what countless instances has it blessed each of them? How much do I owe it? Bless the Lord, O my soul. Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift; and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen, and Amen.

JUNE 14.—"Adam, where art thou?"—Gen. iii. 9.

THE question regards not so much the place as the state in which Adam now was. And it is not to be considered as indicating any proof of ignorance; for who can hide himself from the view of Omniscience? But it implies several things, the result of knowledge.

It is the expression of surprise—"Adam, where art thou?" As if he had said, "Before, when I came thou wert ready to meet me; and my presence was thy delight. What in so short a space of time has produced this change? What have I done to cause this alienation and flight from me?" If this seems an unbecoming representation of God, let it be remembered that he has himself furnished it—"Be astonished, hearers, at this." "What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" He cannot indeed be imposed upon, but he has a *right* to complain; and speaks according to the equity of the case. "Adam, where art thou?"

It is the language of upbraiding. "Is this the return thou hast made for all the favours with which I have indulged thee? Is this the use thou hast made of the noble faculties with which I have endowed and ennobled thee? Is this thy kindness to thy friend? Is

this acting the part of a faithful steward towards his proprietor ? of a dutiful child towards a good father ? of an obedient servant towards the best of masters ? Did I envy thy welfare, or wish to abridge thy happiness ? I only forbid thee one tree in all the garden ; and even this was forbidden for thy trial, and with a view to thy honour and reward."

It is the lamentation of pity. He is not only the just God but the Saviour: he is not only righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works, but full of compassion and slow to anger. As, when our Lord, condemned by the Pharisees for healing the withered arm on the Sabbath day, looked round about upon his audience "with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts;" and as, when he looked upon the backsliding Peter, and dissolved him into godly sorrow, there was not only surprise and upbraiding in the glance, but mercy and readiness to forgive: so here, in the voice that addressed Adam, there was not only alarm, but tenderness; not only abhorrence of the crime, but pity for the criminal—"Poor Adam, what hast thou done? What misery hast thou brought upon thyself? I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth. How shall I give thee up? Adam, *where art thou?*"

But the question admits of a universal application; and we should bring it home to ourselves; and for three reasons. First, because of the relation there is between Adam and ourselves. There is no other creature with whom we are so intimately and influentially connected. He was the father and the natural head, and he was the representative and the federal head of the whole human race. "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners." "By one man's offence death reigned by one." "In Adam all die." Secondly, because, by personal transgression we bring ourselves into the same state. All sin is the same in its nature and tendency. We sin and expose ourselves to danger—Fear treads on the heels of guilt—Dread produces aversion—And we try to secure ourselves, instead of repairing to his feet, and imploring mercy. In one respect we are worse than Adam. He, after the first act of iniquity, could not look God in the face; while we go on still in our trespasses; often daringly enter his presence, and stand before him in his worship; and seem to defy, rather than endeavour to elude him—So men are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin!—Thirdly, because the inquiry may lead us to examine our state, and apprehend our doom. And what a blessing is it to be apprised of our danger while it is in our power to escape! Would not a man have reason to be thankful, if a person should break his slumber, however pleasing, while sleeping in a house just ready to bury him in the ruins? Conviction of sin may be painful, but it is salutary, it is necessary. Without a consciousness of the disease, a remedy will neither be valued or applied—"They that be whole need not the physician, but they that are sick." It was a blessed cry in the jailer, when he exclaimed, "What must I do to be saved?" It secured the direction and the promise; "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."

Nothing hinders our full relief as sinners by the Gospel, but our ignorant pride in refusing to submit ourselves to the righteousness which is of God. "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word."

JUNE 15.—“Ye are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.”—1 Peter ii. 25.

FOR they *were* as sheep going astray—This was their state by nature. But *now* they are in a state of grace. And two things are observed with regard to it. First, they enter it by a return—Ye are *returned*. Grace never leaves us as it finds us. It makes us the subjects of a change—not a change from one class of opinions to another, or from one denomination to another—not a change from mere gross vices to moral duties; but a change of mind, of heart, and of life; and which embodies the various representations given of it in the Scriptures. It is a turning from darkness to light, and the power of Satan unto God. It is the renewing of the Holy Ghost. It is a new birth, a new creation. The work, though always essentially the same, differs in various individuals. The means also by which it is produced are not the same in all instances. In general, it is accomplished by the preaching of the word: but sometimes it is effected by reading the Scriptures, by a good book, by pious conversation, by affliction—“Lo! all these things worketh God oftentimes with man, to bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living.”

But let us never suppose that the return is owing to himself. It is supposed the Apostle designed to express this by the form of his expression. It is in the passive voice—not ye—returned, but ye *are* returned—that is, as if he had said, ye have been caused to return. We would not however found a doctrine of such importance on a mere grammaticism. The truth is expressly asserted. “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.” “For by grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”

Secondly, this return brings them to Christ—“Ye are returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.” He is the personage spoken of; and how well does he deserve the titles—But observe, the grand thing in religion is our being brought to *Christ*. Therefore, he himself said, “Come unto *me*.” “Every man therefore that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto *me*.” As it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell, “to him,” it is said, “shall men come.” “To him shall the gathering of the people be.” It is with him we have to do immediately in the concerns of the soul. We want a mediator between God and us; but we want no mediator between Christ and us—To him we must come as we are. “In the Lord have I righteousness and strength.”

Christians! what gratitude becomes you! Ye were darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord. Ye were in bondage, but are now in the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Ye were destitute of all spiritual good, but are now blessed with all spiritual blessings. How should your obligation to such infinite goodness be discharged? By a few languid emotions? or formal acknowledgments? A soul redeemed demands a life of praise.

Christians! what confidence, what joy becomes you! All hail, ye highly favoured of the Lord—“Ye *were* as sheep going astray,

but are *now* returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of souls"—You are returned unto One who loved you from eternity, and always bore you in his heart—You are returned to one who saved you from a thousand dangers, and preserved you by his Providence till he called you by his grace—You are returned to one whose power is Almighty, whose heart is made of tenderness, who never leaves you, never slumbers nor sleeps—You are returned to one who, lest any hurt you, keeps you night and day, and has said, My sheep shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand—You are returned to one who will feed his flock *like* a shepherd; who will gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young—who will make you to lie down in green pastures, and feed you beside the still waters, and restore your souls, and lead you in the paths of righteousness for his Name's sake. Yea, though you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, you need fear no evil, for he will be with you, his rod and his staff will comfort you. And not only so, but he will bring you into Immanuel's land, and the heavenly places, where the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed you, and lead you to living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from your eyes.

JUNE 16.—“I was wounded in the house of my friends.”—Zech. xiii. 6.

THIS seems literally the complaint of a false prophet, who had been punished and removed from his office. We cannot easily perceive the relation between the treatment of such a man and the suffering of the Saviour. And yet the words both immediately preceding and following, can scarcely leave a doubt of a reference to him. And of him the complaint is true in every respect. True with regard to the treatment he met with from the Jews. He came to his own, and his own received him not; but vilified and scourged him; crowned him with thorns, and nailed him to the tree. True with regard to his treatment from his own Apostles. One of them betrayed him with a kiss; another denied him with oaths and cursing; and all forsook him and fled—He looked for some to take pity, and there was none, and for comforter, but he found none. True with regard to the professors of his religion in all ages. The world is the house of his enemies. There his day is profaned, his laws transgressed, his name blasphemed, his truth denied, and his followers contemned—There we look for nothing else; and though we censure and condemn, we feel no surprise. But the Church is the house of his friends: so he calls them; and it is their honour and privilege to be such—yet here, even here, where he only reckons upon behaviour becoming the relation, he is often dishonoured and injured—“This *is* a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation.”

But what is the conduct by which he is aggrieved? It is negligent conduct—when they disregard the means of grace, and the institutions of religion. These he has established. He has commanded us not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together. He has promised to come unto us and bless us in all places where his name is recorded. What then can be more trying than to show how little we regard his authority, or value his presence? and to

suffer trifles to keep us from our engagements with him, that would not detain us from an appointment with any of our fellow-creatures? It is selfish conduct—when we cannot deny ourselves, or make any sacrifices for the relief of his members, and the support and spread of his cause; though we are often praying that his kingdom may come; and that his word may have free course and be glorified. It is distrustful conduct—nothing hurts us more than a want of confidence, especially after long intimacy and tried fidelity. He is truth itself, and loves to see us taking him at his word, and depending upon his promises, as firmer than heaven and earth. Nothing in a friend atones for distance and concealment, and our learning things, not by communication, but by event. The Lord loves to be consulted: and when we venture to act without taking counsel of him, and bring ourselves into difficulties and embarrassments, he may well chide us—“You should have committed your way unto me.” Hast thou not procured this unto thyself? It is timid conduct—when, instead of going forth to him without the camp, we are ashamed of him and of his words; when, instead of being bold as a lion, we shrink back or turn aside in the path of duty, at every intimation of danger. The fear of man bringeth a snare. But perfect love casteth out fear. It is gloomy conduct—when we walk mournfully before the Lord, and hang down our heads like a bulrush, and sink in the day of adversity. We then depreciate and misrepresent his religion, and lead people to think it is a course of cheerlessness and melancholy. Whereas, by learning in whatsoever state we are, therewith to be content; and in every thing giving thanks; and rejoicing evermore; we speak well of his name, we recommend his service, we invite others to seek him with us. It is unholy conduct—when instead of putting to silence the ignorance of foolish men, and adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour, and constraining others to glorify God by our good works, which they behold: we cause, by our miscarriages and falls, the way of truth to be evil spoken of, and the adversaries of the Lord to blaspheme. Wo to the world because of offences. They harden the wicked; scandalize the weak; distress the strong; weaken the hands of his servants; and vex and grieve his Holy Spirit. And though he will not cast away his people whom he foreknew, their backslidings shall reprove them, and he will make them know that it is not only an evil but a bitter thing to forsake him. This is the law of the house: “If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.” Thus, because Moses and Aaron did not sanctify him at the rock, he would not suffer them to go over Jordan. And though he put away David’s sin in the guilt of it, yet the effects of it attended him through life. And if we turn from his history to his experience, in the fifty-first Psalm, we shall see, that in addition to distressing events without, he had anguish enough within to induce him ever after to pray, Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe.

But while fear makes us prayerful, let ingenuousness make us

penitent. Let us bewail the ingratitude and vileness of our conduct towards such a benefactor. Let us hear him say—Did not I suffer enough while on earth? Must I now not only be crucified afresh and put to an open shame among others; but be wounded in the house of my friends? Who when rich for thy sake became poor? By whose blood wast thou redeemed? In whose righteousness art thou accepted? What have I not done for thee? And what have I not engaged to do? Have I not promised to guide thee in all thy ways? To keep thee in all thy dangers? To supply all thy wants? To make all things work together for thy good? And to receive thee at death to myself, that where I am thou mayest be also?—
IS THIS THY KINDNESS TO THY FRIEND?"

"Forgive my guilt, O Prince of peace,
 I'll wound my God no more;
 Hence from my heart, my sins, begone,
 For Jesus I adore."

JUNE 17.—"And Jacob went out from Beer-sheba, and went toward Haran." Gen. xxviii. 10.

ESAU'S anger was fierce against Jacob for having deprived him of his father's blessing. His mother therefore advised him to flee to her brother Laban, and tarry with him a few days; "until," said she, "thy brother's fury turn away, and he forget that which thou hast done to him;" clearly intimating that his concern would be of short duration, and that levity would soon extinguish resentment. Whence we may learn that carnal men, for such this profane person strikingly represents, can easily resign what a believer would not part with for a thousand worlds—The blessing of his heavenly Father.

Dismissed by Isaac with admonition and prayer, "Jacob went out from Beer-sheba, and went toward Haran." Though the simplicity and manners of the age rendered travelling less formidable than it appears to persons unaccustomed to it now, yet the journey must have been very trying to Jacob—The distance—was great—he was parting with his parents—he was young—he had been tenderly brought up, having been the favourite of Rebecca—he had no beast to carry him—he had no servant to attend him—no guide to direct him—no guard to protect him—no companion to cheer him by communion. Thus he goes forward, solitary and pensive, ruminating upon his sad condition, and conflicting with those apprehensions which always attend untried and uncertain events. And "he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set." The road he travelled, if it might be called a road, was in many places savage and dreary; uninhabited of men, and infested with wild beasts, which would now be roving abroad: "Thou makest darkness, and it is night: wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth. The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God. The sun ariseth, they gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens." Jacob's safety therefore prevents his going onward till the morning. Here, therefore, he must repose. But what will he do for lodgings? There is no habitation near him. And for want of materials he cannot pitch a tent. He is therefore obliged to expose his body to the moist air of the night: the sky is his tester; the darkness his curtains; the earth

his bed: "and he took the stones of that place, and put them for his pillow, and lay down in that place to sleep." And *could* he sleep in such a condition? The sleep of a labouring man is sweet; and he does not require delicate accommodations—But this was not all. He hereby showed his inward serenity and confidence. The wicked flee when no man pursueth; but the righteous is bold as a lion. The Lord keeps in perfect peace the mind that is stayed upon him. David, when the rebellion of his son raged around him, said, "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety." And Peter, the night before his intended execution, was sleeping so soundly between the soldiers, that the angel, to awake him, was compelled to strike him. How happy in trouble, and how safe in jeopardy, are those who have an all-sufficient Jehovah to watch over them, and keep them by day and by night!

There cannot be a better evidence of our belonging to God than the resignation of ourselves to him in a way of providence. "How may I know I do so?" We answer, by acquiescing in his dispensations, and accommodating yourselves to events. We find no murmuring in Jacob, notwithstanding the trying circumstances he was in. The hope of an agreeable scene for the future reconciled him to his hard condition for the present. So should it be with us while we are travelling, not to Haran, but to heaven; not to the house of a cruel Laban, but to the dwelling of a gracious Saviour. He will give us every thing necessary for our journey, and a welcome and blessed reception at the end of it. It becomes us, therefore, in patience to possess our souls, and to go on our way rejoicing.

Jacob sleeps, but his heart waketh. It would be unwarrantable to conclude that Jacob had held no intercourse with God during his journey. We have every reason to suppose that what he had been reflecting upon during the day continued to occupy and impress his thoughts at night; and therefore that God took advantage of it in dealing with him. And though there was something extraordinary in the affair before us, yet we are persuaded that if we were more with God when we are awake, we should be more with God when we are asleep—for "a dream cometh through the multitude of business."

Jacob dreamed. The generality of dreams are frivolous and vain; and it is strange that many good people should lay such stress upon them as they often do. But the circumstances of Jacob's dream are worthy our attention; because they have the signature of God upon them. Observe what was

Seen. "Behold a ladder set upon the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven." Was this designed to intimate the providence of God as observing all things, and keeping up a perpetual correspondence between heaven and earth? Rather read the language of our Saviour to Nathanael: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." Here is the true meaning of the ladder. And why should this be deemed unlikely? Was not he always the consolation of Israel? Here were his divinity and humanity; his humiliation, and his exaltation; the one extending to earth, the other to heaven. He was a figure of the medium of communications between the upper and the lower world. He is the me-

diator between God and man. Every blessing comes to us through his interposition; and therefore the ministry of angels. Hence, "Behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it." For through him these celestial beings "are all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister unto them who shall be heirs of salvation." They rejoice when they are converted; they encamp round about them in their dangers, and deliver them; they attend their worshipping assemblies; and at last convoy their departing spirits into Abraham's bosom. These angels did not go up and down the ladder after the manner of persons amusing themselves: they ascended to receive their orders, and descended to execute them. Though they excel in strength, they do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. He says to one, Go, and he goeth; to another, Come, and he cometh: and it is his pleasure they regard, and not the nature of the employment; and if two of them were summoned into his presence, and ordered, the one to govern an empire, and the other to show some Hagar a well, they would repair to their posts with equal readiness and delight—May his will be done on earth as it is done in heaven! What do we read further? "And, behold, the Lord stood above it." Standing was a posture of attention—He was looking down to observe his weary-worn pilgrim sleeping at the foot of the ladder, and every way ready to appear for him. Observe therefore what was

Heard. God repeats the covenant made with his father, and ratifies it to himself, assuring him that the country in which he was now reposing should be given to him and his posterity for a possession; that his offspring should be numerous and illustrious; and that one of his descendants should prove a benefactor to all mankind: "I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." But God is a very present help in trouble; he therefore accommodates his promise to his present situation and circumstances: "And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." He was alone, and God engages to be with him—He was exposed, and God engages to keep him—He was an exile, and God engages to bring him home again—And all this issuing from faithfulness itself, and more to be relied on than the continuance of heaven and earth! What could Jacob desire more?

And what was the impression the whole made upon him? "Then Jacob awoke"—Perhaps it was a short sleep, but it was long enough. By the sweet dream attending it he learned what he was ignorant of before he slumbered; namely, that God was there—And he said, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not." How strikingly does this ignorance represent, first, the ignorance of mankind in general. God is everywhere. He is about their path and their lying down—But they do not know, they do not consider, they do not realize it. If they did, how differently would they speak, and act, and live! Secondly, the ignorance of the peo-

ple of God themselves. How prone are they to forget their privileges and principles; and to imagine they are left of God in particular situations and difficulties. But they cannot be left, especially in their afflictions; for he has not only said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee—but “I will be with thee in trouble”—“When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.” Yet after all this, divine manifestations often surprise us; and we wonder, where we should only praise.

JUNE 18.—“And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.”—Gen. xxviii. 17.

SUCH was the exclamation of Jacob after his pleasing dream; when he awoke from sleep and said, Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not.

It shows us that intercourse with God, instead of favouring levity of mind, produces the most serious impressions. The man that felt no apprehension in the evening at lying down in the open air, enveloped in darkness and surrounded with danger, is afraid in the morning—at what? The thought of a present Deity. This was not indeed a slavish, terrifying dread, like that of Belshazzar, when he saw the handwriting upon the wall, when the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another: but it was reverence and godly fear; such as Peter and Isaiah and Job felt, at the manifestations of the divine glory; and such as the angels feel when they veil their faces before him. Let this rectify the mistake of those who imagine that the doctrines of grace and the work of the Spirit lead people to a kind of careless and presumptuous freedom with God. The experience of every believer gives the lie to this. The nearer he draws to God’s seat, and the more intimately he deals with him, the more he sees of his perfections, and the more he feels his own vanity and vileness. And the Scripture assures us that God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him.

Wherever God meets with his people, that place deserves to be considered as his house. This is conformable to his own language: “The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.” Observe also our Saviour’s conversation with the woman of Samaria. Her countrymen supposed that God must be preferably, if not exclusively, worshipped on Gerizim; while the Jews thought the same of Jerusalem: but he reminded her that the worship of God did not derive its excellency or acceptableness from locality: “Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”

God seldom receives any thing but formality from those worship-

pers, whose bigoted attachment to any particular mode or building leads them to say, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are *we*." Nothing makes a people dear to God but their resemblance of him; and nothing makes any place sacred but the divine presence—There can be no sanctity in wood and stone—"This," says Jacob, of the bare ground on which he had been lying, having seen and heard God there; "*this* is none other than the *house of God*." Our Lord prayed and preached in private dwellings; in the open air; on the side of a mountain; by the way side; and from a fishing-boat, as well as in the synagogue and temple. So did his Apostles. It was not till the end of the third century that Christians had edifices expressly reared for their public worship. In three cases this remark may encourage us. First, when by accident, disease, relative affliction, or civil engagement, we are detained from the courts of the Lord. If the heart be there, and we are unavoidably prevented, the Lord will make up the loss, and we shall see his power and glory *as* we have seen him in the sanctuary. Secondly, if Providence should fix our station where we have little or no advantage from the privileges of God's house. John was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, though in exile, and far from the usual appendages of the Sabbath. "I will be," says God, "a little sanctuary to them in the midst of the heathen." Thirdly, in the intervals of public worship. We cannot be always, or very frequently, in the temple; but we may render every object and every event a preacher; and—

"Where'er we seek him he is found,
And every place is holy ground."

Again. The experience of good men even here sometimes approximates them to the world of glory. Jacob saw that he was not in heaven, but in such communion and with such manifestations, he thought it could not be far off—"This," says he, "is none other than the *gate of heaven*." Carnal men think of heaven (if ever they think of it at all) as a place far off, and to be reached by ascending up thousands of miles through the skies. But, says our Saviour, "the kingdom of God is nigh you. The kingdom of heaven is within you." And the believer's present acquaintance with it and participations of it convince him that heaven is a state rather than a place—He is the first-fruits of the Spirit, the earnest of inheritance—He has come to the heavenly Jerusalem, and has everlasting life. And we confine not this to some extraordinary enjoyments in his private and public devotional engagements—in tribulation we have seen him "joyful in glory;" and have heard him "shout aloud upon his bed" of painful sickness, and dying anguish.

Finally, the house of God and the gate of heaven are related to each other; and therefore they are well mentioned together. Not that the connexion between them is inseparable; or that all those who attend the one will enter the other—Far from it. To some the house of God will be the gate of hell, and open to them a passage into greater misery; and the preaching of the Word will prove the savour of death unto death. But this is the effect of perversion or misimprovement. The means of grace are designed and adapted to awaken and secure our attention to the things which belong to our peace. In the house of God many of his people are converted; and

all are comforted, improved, and established. To them the Sabbath is an emblem of, and a preparation for, the rest that remains, when the busy week of life is over. They are here learning and loving the song they will sing for ever. The temple below only precedes and introduces the temple above—Thus the pious Philip Henry would often end his “pleasant things” on the evening of the Lord’s day, by saying—“Well, if this be not heaven, it must be the way to it.”

JUNE 19.—“I am Alpha and Omega.”—Rev. i. 8.

ALPHA and Omega are the first and last letters in the Greek alphabet; and therefore stand for the commencement and termination of any concern in question—Therefore it is here added by way of explanation, “The beginning and the ending.”

It is proper to observe that this is the way in which God characterizes himself: “Thus saith the Lord the King of Israel, and his redeemer the Lord of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God”—This is very decisive. And yet the Lord Jesus applies this title to himself. “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty”—We are not ignorant of the pretence of some, that God the Father is here intended; but nothing like evidence supports it; while the attempt itself betrays a concession that *if* the words were the words of our Saviour, his divinity would be established. But read again: “I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia. And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.” And again: “It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.” “And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.” Here *he* is undeniably the speaker; and equally is he so in our text. Now if he had been thus called only in one place, it would have been sufficient for our purpose: but the frequency of the appropriation of the title shows how necessary it is that we always entertain proper apprehensions of his greatness.

But what is the import of the title itself? First, it regards his nature, and shows the duration of it. It never began, and will never end. Hence in another place he is said to be “the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” And Paul holds forth this truth by comparing, or rather contrasting him with the creation—He was before the world appeared; and he will be when it is no more: “Thou, Lord,

in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: they shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail." It is true that angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, and even their glorified bodies, will be immortal. But they will not continue *like* him. They are only streams, he is the fountain of life. They are branches, he is the vine that sustains them. In him they will live, and move, and have their being for ever. If he should suspend his influence for a moment, they would return to their original nothingness—"He only," therefore, "hath immortality."

It also regards his agency—The continuance and exclusiveness of it—That he is the commencer and completer—That he is all in all—In what?

Let us look at creation. Modern science has surprisingly enlarged our conceptions of the magnitude and extent of the universe; but glorious and immense as it is—we use only the language of Scripture: "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." "By him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him." Thus he is the first cause, and the last end of the whole.

Let us look at providence. Preservation, if it be not a continued creation, requires a continual agency—"And he is before all things, and by him all things consist." "He upholdeth all things by the word of his power." How many creatures are there visible, and what myriads of myriads more, that are invisible, in the air, the water, and the earth! And the eyes of all wait upon him. He openeth his hand and satisfieth every living thing. He is the King of kings, and the Lord of lords. He raises them up, and brings them down, as he pleases: they fulfil his purposes, and will appear at his tribunal. Empires are formed or destroyed at his nod. All their revolutions are connected with his cause; and the kingdom and nation that will not serve him shall perish. He is the head over all things to the Church which is his body; the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

Let us look at redemption. He trod the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with him. By himself he purged our sins. When he died he said, It is finished. And by the one offering up of himself, we are assured he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. And he is not only the Alpha and Omega in obtaining eternal redemption for us, but in the application of it. He saves us by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. We live in the Spirit; we walk in the Spirit; and this Spirit is "the Spirit of Christ," and derived *only* from him. The Apostle therefore calls him "the author and finisher of our faith." He is all that faith sees, lays hold of, relies upon, rejoices and glories in. Whose blood but his cleanses us from all sin? Whose righteousness but his can we mention in our approach to God? In whom alone are we free from all condemnation? He *only* lives to make intercession for us. He *only* is our advocate

with the Father. In him *all* fulness dwells. Neither is there salvation in *any* other; for there is no other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved. He produces also the *grace* of faith: he maintains it: he perfects it: and therefore the Apostles addressed themselves to him, saying, Lord, increase our faith. And the same, by a parity of reason, may be said of all our religious principles and dispositions. He is the author and finisher of our hope; the author and finisher of our patience: the author and finisher of our humility, our peace, our joy. Therefore on him all believers *alone* depend, and to him *alone* they ascribe the praise and glory of all they possess. "Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace."

JUNE 20.—"And the Lord said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go. Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink."—Ex. xvii. 5, 6.

WE should learn two things from this interposition. The one regards the providence of God. The other, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It should teach us to rely on the providence of God in our difficulties and straits. The trial was great—They pitched in Rephidim, and the people had no water to drink. Consider how indispensable this supply was, in a dry place, under a burning sun, and with such an immense multitude of men, women, children, and cattle! What lowings of the herds! What piercing cries of the infants! What anguish is parching thirst!—God could have led them to a place where were wells of water, or have rained down showers upon them; but this would not have been so sensible and striking a display of omnipotence, as bringing water at once by a stroke out of a rock, which, as we learn from two other passages of Scripture, was a rock of flint; and in such abundant effusions. "He brought streams also out of the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers." What a foundation for their hope in God! Yet see their unbelief. We should have thought it impossible for them, after such a proof of his almightiness and all-sufficiency, to have questioned whether he *could* deliver or relieve them: "yet they spake against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? Behold, he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed; can he give bread also? can he provide flesh for his people?" So it was with them. But how was it with Moses, when God had engaged to furnish the people with flesh for a month? Moses said, "The people, among whom I am, are six hundred thousand footmen; and thou hast said, I will give them flesh, that they may eat a whole month. Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them, to suffice them? or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to suffice them? And the Lord said unto Moses, Is the Lord's hand waxed short? thou shalt see now whether my word shall come to pass unto thee or not." How was it with our Lord's own disciples? They had seen him from a most scanty supply feed a vast multitude, so that as distribu-

tors they had twenty-fold more in their hands when they left off than they began with; yet when they were in the boat, they began to despond, because they had but one loaf! And has not this been still more the case with us? Are we not always limiting the Holy One of Israel, and ready to say, "There is no hope," especially when the usual expedients fail us? But we should remember that nothing is too hard for the Lord; and that if he does not find a way for our release or relief, he can furnish one. Our extremity is his opportunity. He does not prevent darkness; but to the upright there ariseth light in the darkness: and it is often darkest before break of day. He turneth the shadow of death into the morning. He loves to appear to our joy, when all prospect that we should be saved is taken away. Let us remember that what is impossible to us is easy to him. Who ordered the fish to bring Peter the tribute money? Who multiplied the widow's oil and meal? Who brought Elijah bread and meat in the morning and in the evening? Who turned the rock into a standing water, the flint into a fountain of waters?

It will readily be conceded that we are not to look for miracles now. But we are to look for him who performed them, who is a very present help in trouble, whose hand is not shortened that it cannot save, and whose ear is not heavy that it cannot hear. He has said, and the Scripture cannot be broken, "Thy bread shall be given thee, and thy water shall be sure;" and "they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing."

But his work is perfect, his ways are judgment. We do many things to accomplish one purpose; he accomplishes many purposes by one thing. This interposition therefore not only displays the Providential care of God, and teaches us to trust in him in all difficulties and exigences; but it also furnishes an emblem of the Saviour's grace. We love not the spiritualizers of the Scripture. They give it meanings which it never had, finding facts in figures and figures in facts, just as it serves their vain fancies, till sober-minded people are tempted to think that it has no certain and fixed sense in it. But here we follow our inspired guide—"And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ."

JUNE 21.—"And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ."—1 Cor. x. 4.

How was that Rock *Christ*? Not really, but typically. How was it a *spiritual* Rock? Not by substance, but by signification; not by its quality, but by its use. We should not press a metaphor beyond its lawful bounds. But the analogy in the case before us holds

With regard to the Rock *itself*. A rock is remarkable for its solidity, strength, duration, support, shelter, and shade; and so it is a just and striking emblem of Christ, who is so often expressed by the name. It holds also

With regard to the *striking*. The Rock was smitten; and Christ once suffered, the just for the unjust. The Rock was smitten

publicly in the sight of the elders and of the people; and Christ suffered at Jerusalem in the presence of a similar multitude. The rock was smitten by Moses; and the law, of which he is the representative, inflicted the death of Christ: he redeemed us from the curse of the law, having been made a curse for us. Till the rock was thus smitten it yielded no supplies; and Christ being made perfect through suffering, became the author of eternal salvation to all that obey him. Who could have expected that the smiting of a rock would have furnished a flood of living waters? It was the Lord's doing, and is marvellous in our eyes. And Christ crucified was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but to them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God. The foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men—Which things the angels desire to look into. It also holds

With regard to the *streams*. What did these serve to express? The blood of Jesus which "is drink indeed"—The doctrines of the Gospel, whose tidings to the distressed conscience are like cold water to a thirsty soul, and afford a refreshment and satisfaction which no philosophy can furnish—The influences of the Holy Ghost, according to the promise, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty; and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring;" and the invitation, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink—This spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive."

One circumstance must not be overlooked. The streams not only relieved their present wants, but secured them future supplies; for it was in these, the rock followed them in their journeys, so that they were constantly refreshed by them. As long as we are in the wilderness our spiritual wants will return; but the Saviour will never leave us: and as our days, so shall our strength be. Thus our condition is softened; and we can sometimes sing the Lord's song in a strange land. But soon the sun shall not light on us, nor any heat, for the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed us, and lead us unto living fountains of water.

Let us read the Old Testament under the extensions and applications of the New. It was designed to furnish shadows of good things to come; but the body is Christ.

Let us bless *him* who was smitten that we might drink of the river of his pleasure. The rock in the wilderness was smitten unconsciously; but Jesus was exceeding sorrowful even unto death: and he knew the expensiveness of his interposition on our behalf: yet he more than consented to the condition—he delighted in the sacrifice.

"Oh," said David, "Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!" And three of his brave followers broke through the garrison of the Philistines, and brought him a supply. But, said he, "it is the price of blood;" and he was too generous to drink what had endangered life in the procuring. Behold how *they* loved *him*. But what was their love to their sovereign, compared with the Saviour's love to us! He actually poured out his soul unto death, that we might live through him, and with joy draw water out of the wells of salvation. This

is indeed the price of blood, of blood divine! Yet he is charmed to see us partake of the costly privilege!

As from the gushings of the rock there was more than a sufficiency for all the multitude; so in Jesus there is enough for all, and to spare; for it hath pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell.

As all were welcome to drink of the abundance, so none are forbidden here. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

We have met with a painting of this scene. Some were represented as pressing close to the fissures to catch the enlivening draught. Others as falling down upon their knees to drink of the bubbling flow. Fathers and mothers were eager to impart to their parched children who stretched out their eager hands and necks. Others were hastening to bear relief to the lame, the sick, the dying—It is this eagerness for relief and gratification which explains the allusion of Moses: "He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock." It was no oil or honey; but it was as good—it tasted as rich as oil—as sweet as honey. And did we but thirst as they did, such would be our longings after the Saviour, so precious would be a participation of his benefits, so eager should we be, not only to obtain supplies for ourselves, but to communicate them to others also.

How well do those who refuse these rich and blessed streams deserve the place where in vain they will call for a drop of water to cool their tongue. This is the condemnation—"Ye would not come unto me, that ye might have life."

JUNE 22.—"Now it came to pass in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah, that Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the defenced cities of Judah, and took them. And the king of Assyria sent Rabshakeh from Lachish to Jerusalem unto king Hezekiah with a great army. And he stood by the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field."—Isa. xxxvi. 1, 2.

HERE was a great danger. The enemy was powerful. He had subdued many other countries. He was now invading Judah; and carrying every thing before him. He had already taken every stronghold in his way, and was now come to the very gate of Jerusalem. The Lord frequently does not appear for his servants till all hope that they should be saved is taken away. Hence it has grown into a proverb, that our extremity is God's opportunity—"In the mount it shall be seen."

He does not hinder our sun from going down; but he prevents the darkness we foreboded, and at evening time it is light! Thus it was with Hezekiah.

Observe under this alarming trial what he felt. "It came to pass, when king Hezekiah heard it, that he rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth." So Job, that example of patience, when he had heard the successive messengers of wo, "arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped." A natural hardihood, a stoical insensibility, is not

patience or submission ; yea, it renders the exercise of them impossible. There is no patience in bearing what we do not feel, or resignation in giving up what we do not value. The grace of God keeps us from despising the chastening of the Lord, as well as from fainting when we are rebuked of him : and afflictions only yield profit to them that are exercised thereby.

Observe also what he did. He betook himself to prayer. It was his duty, it was his privilege. It distinguished him from men of the world, who have recourse to suicide, or dissipation, or creature-assistance—God was *his* refuge and strength, a present help in trouble. “He went into the house of the Lord.” No doubt he retired and poured out his soul before the Lord in his closet ; but God is known in his palaces for a refuge. Hence he also sent a deputation to engage the supplications of Isaiah the prophet : “And they said unto him, Thus saith Hezekiah, This day is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and of blasphemy : for the children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth. It may be the Lord thy God will hear the words of Rabshakeh, whom the king of Assyria his master hath sent to reproach the living God, and will reprove the words which the Lord thy God hath heard : wherefore lift up thy prayer for the remnant that is left.” This shows the sense he had of his own imperfections, and his confidence that the fervent prayers of a righteous man availeth much. Nor was he disappointed.

Observe what he gained—a complete deliverance. Who ever sought the Lord in vain ? How readily does he answer the cries of his people ! What wonders has prayer achieved ! Prayer is our best weapon—Hezekiah conquered upon his knees.

The deliverance was not only in answer to prayer, but it was foretold. “Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall ye say unto your master, Thus saith the Lord, Be not afraid of the words that thou hast heard, wherewith the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me. Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour, and return to his own land ; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land. Therefore thus saith the Lord concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shields, nor cast a bank against it.” By announcing a thing so improbable, the Lord not only showed his foreknowledge, but afforded Hezekiah an immediate ground of confidence. He could have done all without promising it ; but the word would prove the trial of his faith. If he believed it, his fears would be forthwith removed, and his mind be kept in perfect peace, being stayed upon God.

The deliverance was also founded in a remarkable reason. The reason is two-fold. First, says he, “I will defend this city for mine own sake.” The foe has been blaspheming me, as if I were one of the gods of the heathen, whose worshippers he has conquered, weak as they, and unable to save those who trust in me. But I will display my perfections, and vindicate the glory of my name. Accordingly Hezekiah had pleaded this : “Incline thine ear, O Lord, and hear ; open thine eyes, O Lord, and see : and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent to reproach the living God. Of a truth, Lord, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations, and their countries, and have cast their gods into the fire : for they

were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone: therefore they have destroyed them. Now therefore, O Lord our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the Lord, even thou only." Secondly, I will do it "for my servant David's sake." How honourable was this to the character of the man after his own heart! A similar allusion was often made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. From the beginning some were blessed for the sake of others. It was to show God's regard to righteousness; to enforce religion from its relative influence and advantages; and to prepare for a belief in the mediation of the Messiah, for whose obedience unto death all the families of the earth are blessed. The deliverance also was supernaturally accomplished: "Then the angel of the Lord went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses." What a destruction was here! And what an idea does it give us of the power of these messengers of God, who excel in strength and do his commandments! How safe and how happy are they who have the Lord of hosts on their side! If God be for us, who can be against us?

But wo to those who provoke a Being whose word arms every creature against them! What will it be, "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his *mighty* angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe?"

JUNE 23.—"Where two or three are gathered together."—Matt. xviii. 20.

THERE are *circumstances* which are not essential to the nature, acceptance, and usefulness, of divine worship. Two of these our Saviour here mentions.

The first regards *place*—"Where"—let it be where it will—in the sanctuary, or in the private dwelling, or in the barn, or in the field—"Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." "The hour cometh," says Jesus to the woman of Samaria, "when neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, shall men worship the Father;" that is, exclusively. Thus he dwelleth not in temples made with hands: but wherever we worship him in spirit and in truth we are accepted of him. As to external sanctity, all places are alike to him. It is his presence that confers sacredness and dignity. And where has not this been enjoyed? When Jacob on his journey awoke in the morning, though there was no edifice near, he said, "This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." Our Lord, in the days of his flesh, not only worshipped in the temple, but in the synagogues; and preached by the side of the mountain, and the way side, and the sea side, and on board a barge: and he gives proof now, that he is to be found wherever he is sought. Where the king is, there is the court: but some think more of the place than of the king. Their prejudice and bigotry would confine his regards. But while they cry, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord,

the temple of the Lord are *we* ;” he graciously says, “In *all* places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.”

The second regards *number*—“Where *two or three* are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” It was not without design that our Lord, instead of a multitude, which seems imposing and striking, specifies such a few. It would rectify the mistake of the Jews, who contended that there must be always ten persons present, at least, to give efficacy to social prayer. It would encourage his followers both in cases of choice and necessity. Some few may be disposed to meet together for prayer, reading the Scripture, pious conversation, or to arrange or execute plans of usefulness; and why may they not expect that *he* will meet with them? Did not he join the two disciples going to Emmaus, and made their hearts burn within them? Let us make him our subject, and he will become our companion. When two or three fellow-citizens happen to be in the same place abroad, they soon hail each other, and become acquainted; they are sure to meet together and commune concerning the difference between their present residence and their own country; and inquire when they heard from home; and when they think of returning. How is it that Christians who are strangers and sojourners, do not oftener “meet and mingle?” and compare the vanity of this world with the worth of their own? and joyful, as the children of Zion in their King, talk of the glory of his kingdom, and abundantly utter the memory of his great goodness?

But there are cases in which only a few can meet together. Persecution formerly prevented or dispersed the worshippers; and only small parties, in places of concealment, and in the night, could assemble—Yet these were distinguished seasons and services. When the Gospel now first enters a town or village, it frequently meets with opposition; and fear and shame restrain many from attending. Yet let not the day of small things be despised. Some of our most flourishing Churches arose from very inconsiderable beginnings—a few from time to time passed along unnoticed, or reproached, to some poor apartment, where they claimed the Saviour’s promise, and found it good to be there—And now the little one has become a thousand—What has God wrought! If the weather reduces the number, let us not, if possible, be absent ourselves—The exertion and self-denial will not be in vain—Them that honour him, he will honour: and they that despise him will be lightly esteemed.

This also teaches ministers. Popular excitement is pleasing. But multitude is not essential to usefulness. A sportsman has fired into a flight of birds and not killed one of them; and he has killed one when he has had only one to aim at. When tempted to excuse himself from going, or to *neglect preparation*, because there is such a handful of poor rustics, let the preacher remember the value of a soul—Let him remember that there is joy in the presence of the angels of God, over *one* sinner that repenteth—Let him remember that a much greater than himself—the Lord of all, will be there—“For where two or three are gathered together in his Name, there is he in the midst of them.”

JUNE 24.—“In my Name.”—Matt. xviii. 20.

WE have seen that no stress is to be laid on the *circumstances* of the worship. But it is otherwise with the *nature* of it. The *place* and the *number* of the assembly are nothing—“*where*”—let it be where it will: “*two or three*”—if there be no more—“are gathered together,” it is enough—if they are “gathered together **IN HIS NAME.**” But this is essential to Christian worship. What is the meaning of the requisition?

We cannot do it in his Name, unless we do it by his *authority*. This import of the phrase is too obvious to require proof or exemplification. Jesus is the Judge and the King in his Church; his will is made known in his word: to this our appeal is to be made in all spiritual concerns: it is the only rule by which we are to walk. It matters not who enjoins, if he forbids, or who forbids, if he enjoins—To the law and to the testimony. Nothing is binding on the conscience without his sanction: but his followers must say, “All the Lord commandeth us we will do”—And *because* he commands it.

We cannot do it in his Name unless we do it for *his sake*. When a speaker says, “in the name of reason and common sense;” he means, by the respect which it is supposed men are ready to pay to them. If in arguing with a rebellious child I was to plead “in the name of her who bore him,” I should be understood to mean, by the affection he owed to so dear a relation. And when our Lord speaks of our “receiving a little child in his name,” he means from regard to himself—or because we are desirous of serving and honouring him. He always demands a supreme regard from his disciples. He tells them that whoever loves father, or mother, or wife, or child, more than himself, is not worthy of him. And he deserves what he requires. And when we are brought to know him, we shall feel no reluctance thus to regard his dear Name. “How much do I owe him! What has he not done for me? He has made, preserved, redeemed, saved me. When I consider the state in which he found me—the condition to which he has advanced me—and the awful and expensive manner in which he has accomplished my salvation; I feel that I am not my own. Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth. Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” And does he require us to sanctify his day, to repair to his house, to hear his word, to address his throne, to approach his table; we shall not only do it, but—it is the nature of love, we shall do it with pleasure; and the duty will be found our privilege.

We cannot do it in his Name, unless we do it in a *dependance on his mediation*. Now there are two things which we must rely upon him for. The one is, assistance. We can only serve him in strength derived from him. These are his own words, “Abide in me. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me: for without me ye can do nothing.” Our work is great, and we are weak; but his grace is sufficient for us. The service asks the utmost spirituality, and we feel every thing but a suitableness to it, when we engage: but “the preparation of the heart, and the answer of the tongue, are from the Lord.” The supply of his Spirit helpeth our infirmities,

and keeps us under our discouragements, from giving up so poor and defective a course of duty and devotion.

The other is acceptance. We are come unto God by him; and by him we are to offer up all our spiritual sacrifices. If we are accepted, it must be in the Beloved, not only as to our persons, but services. A Christian feels this. His imperfections are his afflictions; and he is conscious of so many deficiencies that he would have no delight or confidence in drawing near to God without this hope. If when he examines himself, and the sins of his holy things appear, he feels relief, it is by looking unto Jesus. But when he views the infinite value of his sacrifice, the perfection of his obedience, the prevalency of his intercession and advocacy; he has humble boldness and access with confidence, by the faith of him. And even originally he could not have been so endeared to God as he now is—thus coming in his name—sprinkled with his blood—and making mention of his righteousness only.

What a difference is there between the language of the Scripture concerning Christ, and the sentiments entertained of him by some who yet consider themselves to be Christians! *They* refer to him so rarely and so slenderly, that their hearers may almost be considered “as without Christ.” But the Scripture tells us that “we are complete in him”—That he “is all, and in all”—That “whatsoever we do, in word or deed, we are to do *all* in THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS.”

JUNE 25.—“There am I in the midst of them.”—Matt. xviii. 20.

A LARGE portion of the Scripture is promissory; and the promises it contains are exceeding great and precious. Some of these, as we should naturally expect, are designed and adapted to excite and encourage us in the exercises of divine worship. Accordingly the Lord said of old, “In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.” And if such was his language to Jewish worshippers, what says he to Christian assemblies? “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, THERE AM I IN THE MIDST OF THEM.” This cannot be understood of his corporeal presence; for as to this, he said, “I am no more in the world,” and no more will he be in the world as to his bodily presence, “till he shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” It is also to be distinguished from his essential presence; for by this he is every where, and fills heaven and earth. Whenever his presence is spoken of in a way of promise, it intends not the perfection of his nature, but a privilege. Thus though he is not far from any one of us, yet it is said “The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.” It is of such a peculiar and gracious presence he here speaks.

And thus he is with all his people. He is with them in their own persons; with them in the closet; with them in the family—But “the Lord loveth the gates of Zion better than all the dwellings of Jacob”—

“His mercy visits every house,
That pay their night and morning vows;
But makes a more delightful stay,
Where churches meet to praise and pray”

It is observable that he does not say what he will *do* there, but only that he *is* there, in the midst of them. This is assurance enough. His presence is all his people can need; for with him is the fountain of life. Moses desired nothing more than that his presence should go with him. David was emboldened by this to look into the valley of the shadow of death—"I will fear no evil, for thou art with me." What is heaven? To "be for ever with the Lord."

Well, when they are gathered together in his name; there he is in the midst of them, as a physician in the midst of his disordered patients; as a father in the midst of his family; as the sun is in the midst of the garden in spring; as the soul is in the body, animating every member, and penetrating every particle of the frame. There he is, to enliven their devotions, to hear their complaints, to relieve their wants, to give them grace and glory, and to withhold no good thing from them. There he is, to pardon the guilty, to enrich the poor, to comfort the mourners, to be the father of the fatherless and the judge of the widow in his holy habitation.

Christians! you are his witnesses. This assurance you have often tried; and it has now become a matter of history and experience. There he gave you these eyes to see, and ears to hear, and hearts to feel. You know the preacher could not have made you "a new creature"—"the excellency of the power was of God"—"God was in the midst of them of a truth." There you have found him in painful discoveries, which laid open the chambers of imagery in the heart; and made you cry, "Behold, I am vile;" "wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." There you have enjoyed him in the manifestations of his love; and have been convinced that they were not the delusions of fancy, or the ferments of animal nature, by their humbling, holy, heavenly tendency. There he has removed your perplexities and doubts; freed your conscience of its galling load; and spoken many a word in season to your weary souls: so that you can now say,

"In every new distress,
We'll to his house repair;
We'll think upon his wond'rous grace,
And seek deliverance there"—

And go—always pleading this promise, and saying, "Do as thou hast said:" "Fulfil thy word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope." That hope will not, cannot make you ashamed. Your expectation is sustained not only by his goodness, but also by his truth. You could not have bound him, but *he* has bound himself. He *cannot* be absent from your assembly if you meet in his name—For he hath said, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, **THERE AM I IN THE MIDST OF THEM.**"

JUNE 26.—"Where two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them."—Matt. xviii. 20.

LET me take this blessed assurance, and consider it

As a demonstration of my Saviour's divinity. Who less than God could have given such a promise? He does not say, there shall my blessing be, but myself: yea, not there *will* I be, but there I *am*. This necessarily supposes omnipresence. How else could he be in so many companies and places at once? How many assemblies

are there on the Sabbath in the various parts of the earth? And, if there be truth or meaning in this promise, he is in every one of them, attending to all the peculiarities of individual condition, and affording the most suitable relief. Could an angel do this? But

Let me consider it as a standard by which to estimate his condescension and grace. Here I find David before me—"When," says he, "I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained; Lord, what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou visitest him?" So felt also his son Solomon at the dedication of the temple. It was a glorious scene; and a common mind would have been struck with the splendour of the building, the largeness of the audience, and the sound of such a multitude of performers; but he, wondering that the Supreme Being should deign to notice it, exclaims, "Will God in very deed dwell with men upon the earth? Behold, the heaven, even the heaven of heavens, cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built?" See, O my soul, he not only allows us to wait upon him, but he waits upon us. Small as our number may be, wherever we meet together he is in the midst of us—however poor and unworthy—and as often as they choose to assemble—and he has been always doing this—and will continue to do it to the end of time! "Who is a God like unto thee?"

Let it serve to bind me to a proper demeanour in his house. There is always something impressive in a company of human beings, especially if there be in the midst of them some very distinguished personage, such as a hero, a philosopher, a king. "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him." In his presence let me guard against a roving eye; wandering thoughts; drowsiness; hypocrisy; formality. When I enter the sanctuary, I place myself immediately under his view—and he sees me, and knows whether my devotion be any thing more than a form of godliness or a fair show in the flesh. Let it impress me with the importance of social and public worship. Some ask, "May we not read and pray and meditate at home? And will not this equally answer the purpose with our joining in the service of the sanctuary?" But the Judge of all has decided this, not only by his command that we forsake not the assembling of ourselves together, but by his promise that he is in the midst of us. Indeed reason and experience will lead us to the same result. In his house the greater number of the Lord's followers are called by grace; and they who are not born, are nourished there. It is thus excitement and allurements are provided to draw the ignorant and the careless together. Nothing tends so much to civilize and harmonize men as their frequently uniting in such exercises; and nothing tends so much to keep the distinctions of life from excess and abuse.

Let it also prove a stimulation to the use of the means of grace. Some think it is needless for them to go to the sanctuary, because the minister can tell them no more than they know already. This is very questionable. But allowing that the servant is unable to do any thing more for them, is the master too? I do not go only or principally because the preacher is there, but because the Saviour himself is there, whose sufficiency is divine. How is the company

of the great courted! If the Lord Jesus was now on earth, should I not, if I had an opportunity, repair to him; and deem it a privilege to see him, hear him, and hold converse with him? But I know where he now is, waiting to be gracious, and exalted to have mercy; and I have full and easy access to him. Let me then suffer nothing to keep me from the assembly of his saints. Let not the creature prevent my serving and enjoying God. If I had an engagement with the king, should I not deem it even an honour to be able to allege such a reason for my refusing a person who called at the appointed hour? If I am indifferent to the Lord's gracious presence on earth, what right have I to expect his glorious presence in heaven? But if I now love the habitation of his house, and the place where his honour dwelleth, at death I shall only remove to his temple above, where I shall worship him, not with a few, but with the general assembly; not with infirmities which make me groan, being burdened, but with powers equal to the service; not with long intervals between, and the returns of worldly care and vexations, but to be still praising him—

JUNE 27.—“Singing.”—Ephes. v. 19.

ALL believe that hearing is a duty, and that prayer is a duty; but some question whether this is the case with singing. Now there is something in our very structure that seems equal to a proof of the obligation. We cannot imagine a faculty was given us which was never intended to be used; especially a faculty from which so much pleasure and advantage can be derived and communicated. We are fearfully and wonderfully made, and this power of vocal music far surpasses all mechanical performance: no instrument, however surprising or perfect, can *express words*: but in singing, man can *speak*; and inform, while he delights. How shameful is it that such an unrivalled endowment should be perverted, or degraded to evil purposes! But we are not to argue against the use of a thing from the abuse of it. Let us remember that God is to be glorified in our body, as well as in our spirit. Let us say, with David, “Awake up, my glory: I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.”

Singing is not a ritual duty. It preceded the ceremonial law; and when our Saviour had abolished the passover, and his own supper had succeeded to it—“after supper he sang a hymn.” He thereby showed that such a service belonged to the new state which he had introduced, and was to be a part of *Christian* worship. Accordingly the sanction of his example, which had the authority of a command, was not disregarded by his disciples, either in practice or precept. Thus the Apostles at Philippi not only prayed, but sang praises in the prison, so that the prisoners heard them. And Paul says to the Ephesians: “Speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.” And James adds, “Is any merry? let him sing psalms.”

How should singing be performed? Sometimes when we are alone. David had his “songs in the night:” the solitary effusions

of pious excitement. In the life of Joseph Alleine, we find that he always sung in his closet devotion, and which in the morning was never later than five o'clock.

It should prevail where it can be established in family worship. He does well, says Henry, who, with his house, prays night and morning; he does better who prays and reads the Scriptures; but he does best who prays, and reads, and sings too. I fear this holy custom of our forefathers has been for a long time on the decline. The observance of it would tend much to exclude dulness and formality; and be far more interesting to servants and children than long reading and lengthened prayer. This should be done at least on the Sabbath. An old author tells us, he remembered the time when in numberless houses, at certain hours on the Lord's day, singing might be heard as you passed, from one end of London to the other. The ninety-second Psalm is called "a Song for the Sabbath day;" and, says David, "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O Most High: to show forth thy loving-kindness in the morning; and thy faithfulness every night;" he here means, peculiarly, every Sabbath-day morning and night.

But when we enter the courts of the Lord, and engage in public worship, the command lays hold of us, "Serve the Lord with gladness; and come before his presence with singing." Here the singing should be congregational. For this purpose few things should be introduced which the people cannot *soon* join in. Hence also, persons should *learn* to sing, at least *decently*, that when they join they may aid and not injure—The singing in family-worship would be a preparative for public devotion. What can be said for those who are well able to help, and yet seldom or never lift up their voice in this divine exercise, from sloth, fastidiousness, or pride? Who introduced the mode of sitting we know not; but surely it does not appear the most desirable one; and though the posture is not essential to the spirituality of our worship, we should be governed even in the outward acts, by what is most preferable, by being most suitable, and becoming, and useful, and scriptural. How often do we read of the people standing up to praise the Lord. What should we think to see the choir sitting while they perform? And what can the choir think, when they see us sitting during the psalmody—but that we have nothing to do with it—unless as an entertainment from them.

But what is to be said in recommendation of this duty? It is a very instructive ordinance. How many important truths are we mutually informed or reminded of by it, and which are also rendered peculiarly impressive, by the pleasing manner in which they are again and again repeated—Hence, says the Apostle, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

It is also a very enlivening exercise. Nothing is so adapted to excite holy affections. Let any one, in order to prove this, *read* only, and then *sing* the very same words; and what a difference will he feel in the effects of the two? Nothing tends so much to animate to

courage and confidence ; and therefore it has always been employed in warfare. On a similar principle, there never has been a revival of religion, in any country, or in any neighbourhood, but has been attended with a fondness for psalmody. Luther knew the force of it, and much and successfully encouraged it in the beginning and progress of the Reformation in Germany.

It is the most social ordinance. In preaching and prayer one leads, and the rest silently join ; but here all concur, and stimulate each other.

To which we may add, it is the most permanent of our religious engagements. Our other sacred employments will soon cease ; but we shall be still praising Him. In heaven our harps will never be hung on the willows ; our hearts will never be untuned. We shall perfectly and for ever sing the song of Moses and the Lamb. The work and the joy of heaven are more represented by this service than by any thing, and by every thing else.

JUNE 28.—“ In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death.”—2 Kings xx. 1.

SICKNESS is one of the common calamities of our nature, from the assailings of which we shall never be secure till we enter Immanuel's land. There “ the inhabitant shall no more say, I am sick ;” for sin, the cause of all our maladies, will be removed, and all the moral purposes for which Providence employs them, will be accomplished. And with what bodies shall we come ? Bodies no longer requiring the insensibilities of sleep ; no longer feeling the cravings of animal appetite : no longer exposed to accidents ; no longer susceptible of disease. How trying and humiliating the scene now ; for an immortal spirit to stand and nurse a crazy fragment of flesh ; to be tethered within a few yards of space ; to suspend its operations and enjoyment, in obedience to a writhing foot, or an aching tooth : to view every thing through a dull and distracting medium, and approach God himself through the wretched medium of shattered nerves ! Oh, what will it be to have a body like the Saviour's own glorious body ; a body far superior to the body of the earthly Adam in paradise ; a body meet to be the companion of the soul—not a disgrace to the soul, but its ornament—not an incumbrance to the soul, but its helper ; enlarging its sphere of action and enjoyment by relating it again to the material universe, to the new heaven, and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness !

Some have had little sickness. These should admire and bless the care that has secured to them so long the possession and indulgence of health. Yet let them remember the days of darkness, for they may be many ; and let them sympathize with the sons and daughters of bodily affliction. How many are there at this moment drowning with dropsy, burning with fever, oppressed with asthma. Some are made to possess months of vanity, and have wearisome nights appointed unto them ; others are chastened also with pain upon their bed, and the multitude of their bones with strong pain, so that their life abhorreth bread, and their soul dainty meat.

Hezekiah's sickness may be viewed three ways. First, in con-

nexion with his age—He was between thirty and forty. He had reached the perfection of manhood: and was in the midst of life—but in the midst of life we are in death—and forty is as mortal as fourscore.

Secondly, in reference to his condition and rank. He was a king and a mighty monarch. "I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the Most High. But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes." The great and noble too often despise those who are below them. Wherefore? Are they not partakers of the same flesh and blood? subject to the same infirmities? inheritors of the same mortality? Are they not also hastening to the grave, where they will say to corruption, thou art my father, and to the worm, thou art my mother and my sister? We are prone to envy the great and the affluent. But does a man's life consist in the abundance of the things which he possesses? Can honour or titles terrify away, or bribe off any of the ills that flesh is heir to? Can they assuage the anguish of disease? Yea, are not the upper classes more liable to disorders? and less qualified to bear them?

Thirdly, with regard to his piety. For he was a good man, and the friend of God. So was Epaphroditus; yet was he sick nigh unto death. So was Lazarus; and therefore the sisters sent to him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick. And his love is almighty. Why then does he not exempt the objects of it from every thing disagreeable and distressing? Surely if by a mere volition *we* could ease the complaints of a beloved connexion, we should instantly do it. But his love is as wise as it is powerful. His ways and his thoughts are as much above ours as the heavens are higher than the earth. Say not, therefore, if we belong to him, why are we thus afflicted? The correction results from the relation: what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? You are pruned because you are vines. You are put into the furnace because you are gold. He has designs to answer by such dispensations which will more than justify them. He intends to wean them from the world; to make them witnesses for himself; to display in them the truth of his word, the power of his grace, the tenderness of his care. As one whom his mother comforteth, so, says he, will I comfort you. The mother disregards none of her offspring; but she arranges things with a peculiar view to her poor weak sickly infant. The knee; the bosom; the delicacy; the softest bed; the breathless movement is for him. So has it been, as Scripture and experience have testified in all ages, with Christians; as their sufferings have abounded, their consolation has abounded also. Perhaps they are never so impressive as by the exercise and display of the passive graces: never glorify God so much as in the fires. For this they are concerned; and therefore, when they are led into the chamber of sickness, and laid on the bed of languishing, their fears are awakened lest they should dishonour their profession: and they pray to be examples of the reality, and excellency, and efficacy of their religious principles and resources. And he hears and answers them. He is with them in trouble. He enables them in patience to possess their souls. He fills them with all joy and peace in believing. They instruct, in-

vite, and encourage others; while their own praise, wonder, and confidence, are excited; and they can sing,

“Bastards may escape the rod,
Sunk in earthly vain delight:
But a true-born child of God
Must not—would not—if he might.”

JUNE 29.—“Thou wilt recover me.”—Isaiah xxxviii. 16.

AND he did so. This is not always the case. Sickness to some, yea to many, is the messenger, the forerunner, the beginning of death. And Hezekiah's sickness seems to have been in itself mortal, and would have issued in his speedy dissolution, but for the divine interposition—he “was sick nigh unto death;” and the Lord said unto him, “Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die and not live.” But he was the subject of recovering mercy; and five things are recorded in connexion with the event.

It was in answer to prayer. “Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the Lord, and said, Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore.” One of the designs of affliction is to bring us to God; and by prayer we obtain support under it, and sanctification by it, and deliverance from it—“Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee.” And did any ever seek him in vain? Did Hezekiah? So far from it, and to show how quickly prayer reaches God, and brings down the blessing, before Isaiah could get through the palace-yard the word of the Lord came to him, saying, “Go and say to Hezekiah; I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears.” Thus he not only hears and answers prayer, but fulfils the word, “Ere they call I will answer, and while they speak I will hear.”

The second circumstance was the definite prolongation of his life—“Behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years.” This was a considerable reprieve. Yet it was nothing more. For so long a time he was raised up, but he was left mortal. The sentence, “Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return,” was only suspended. Have any of you been recovered from the bed of sickness? Remember you are dying creatures still; and *you* have no assurance of *your* life. *You* know not what a day, or an hour may bring forth. The addition of fifteen years would not make Hezekiah an old man; and they would soon pass away like a dream. He is the only person who was previously informed how long he had to live. Doubtless he was concerned to improve the information; and would often say, “Well, there is another of the fifteen years gone, and the remainder is rapidly going—So teach me to number my days that I may apply my heart unto wisdom.” Yet it was awful for him to know the term of life. None of us would know it if it were in our power. It is better for our comfort to be ignorant; and it is better for our improvement. As the shade upon the dial is useful as well as the sunshine; so our ignorance may be rendered profitable—“Watch, for ye know not at what hour the Lord doth come.”

The third circumstance is the important blessing that accompanied the announcement of his restoration. He was pressed by the Assyrian force which had entered the country, taken all the strongholds in the way, and was now besieging Jerusalem—What would fifteen years have been had he passed them in personal captivity, or in a subdued and degraded empire, or in a state of constant alarm or suspicion? Yet God perfects the mercy: “And I will deliver thee, and this city, out of the hand of the king of Assyria: and I will defend this city.” What would it be to lengthen out our existence, without our limbs, our senses, our reason, our relative comforts? But God giveth liberally. He giveth us richly all things to enjoy.

The fourth circumstance regards the supernatural confirmation of it—“And this shall be a sign unto thee from the Lord, that the Lord will do this thing that he hath spoken: behold, I will bring again the shadow of the degrees, which is gone down in the sun-dial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward. So the sun returned ten degrees, by which degrees it was gone down.” Why was this sign given? Was not the word of a faithful God sufficient? The Lord does nothing in vain. He saw the state of Hezekiah’s mind: he knew that there was something ready to faint in his faith and hope: and therefore he passes by the infirmity and indulges his wishes—for he had said, “What is the sign that I shall go up to the house of the Lord?” Thus he stoops, and accommodates himself to the imperfections of his people. He does not break the bruised reed, or quench the smoking flax. And shall we despise the day of small things?

The last circumstance is the employment of means—“For Isaiah had said, Let them take a lump of figs, and lay it for a plaister upon a boil, and he shall recover.” It is well known that figs have a virtue to ripen and imposthume, and bring it to a head, that the peculiency may be removed: but in the case before us, from the nature and prevalency or the disease no means would have availed without the peculiar agency of God. The fact therefore is very instructive. We see that *prayer* does not supersede the use of means. We also see that the *divine assurance* does not supersede the use of them: for no sooner has Isaiah promised his recovery as a prophet, than he prescribes for him as a physician. Yea, the very *miraculousness* of the cure does not supersede the use of them. Miracles were never a waste of power; never intended to make people wonder only; or to save them the trouble of doing what they are able to do for themselves. Miracles therefore were never needlessly multiplied: and even when they have been performed there was nothing in the *degree* of them that was unnecessary or superfluous. The manna descended from the clouds; but the people were to gather it. The angel opened the prison door, and released Peter from his fetters;—this he could not do himself: but he did not take him up in his arms, and carry him to the house of Mary; but said unto him, Follow me; for he had legs and feet, and why should he not employ them? It is a great thing to unite activity and dependence: to use means, and not neglect to trust in God; and to trust in God, and not neg-

lect to use means. "I lead," says Wisdom, "in the midst of the paths of judgment."

JUNE 30.—"The writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, when he had been sick, and was recovered of his sickness."—Isaiah xxxviii. 9.

MANY persons are afraid of their trials. It would be wiser to fear their mercies. They are in more danger from their friends than from their enemies; from their comforts than from their crosses; from their health than from their sickness. They often desire our prayers when they come into affliction: but they need them most when they are coming out of it; and are returning into scenes of danger and temptation again.

Wicked and worldly men are only anxious to escape from their troubles. But it ought to be our concern to inquire whether we "come forth as gold"—whether we are brought nearer to God, or are left farther from him, by the things we suffer. Constantine the Great said, "I marvel that many of my subjects, since they became Christians, are worse than they were when they were Pagans." Young speaks of some as "worse for mending," and "washed to fouler stains." And it is lamentable to think how many, instead of being improved by their recovery from disease, are injured by it. They poured out a prayer when God's chastening hand was upon them, and confessed, and resolved, and vowed unto the Lord; but when he relieved and released them they turned again to folly. Many think we are severe in our reflections on death-bed changes; and wonder that we think such conversions can never be entirely satisfactory to the subjects of them, or their surviving friends. Yet of how many ministers have we inquired, all of whom have affirmed, that they never knew such converts, when recovered, living according to their promises; yet had they died they would have entertained a firm hope concerning many of them. And it is probable funeral sermons would have been preached for some of them—and how would others have been chronicled in the magazines! Even Jacob forgot the vow his soul made when he was in trouble, till God said unto him, "Arise, go up to Beth-el, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother." Then, and not before, did the backslider say, "Let us arise, and go up to Beth-el; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went."

Hezekiah did better upon his recovery. He wrote a song, and had it sung in the temple-service. He might, indeed, for this purpose, have availed himself of one of David's songs; and we read that he appointed persons to sing the songs of his illustrious ancestor in the worship of God. But he composed one himself on this occasion, not from vanity, but from sentiments of piety. He wrote it in particular for three purposes.

First, to show the importance of the blessing he had experienced.

Read his language, and you will find how much he valued life. This to some may seem strange. To a good man, is it not gain to die? When a voyager is entering the desired haven, is he so glad and grateful for a wind that blows him back again to sea? The fear of death is as much a natural principle as hunger or thirst. Every good man, though always in a state to die, is not in a frame to die. He may not have the light of God's countenance, or the assurance of hope. He may be also influenced by relative considerations. This was the case with Hezekiah. He might have feared for the succession; for he had no offspring at this time: Manasseh was only twelve years old at his death, and therefore could not have been born till three years after his father's recovery. The enemy was also at the gates of the capital. He had also begun a glorious reformation, and wished to see it carried on. Even Paul, though he knew that to depart and to be with Christ was far better, yet was more than willing to abide in the flesh, for the advantage of the Philippians and others.

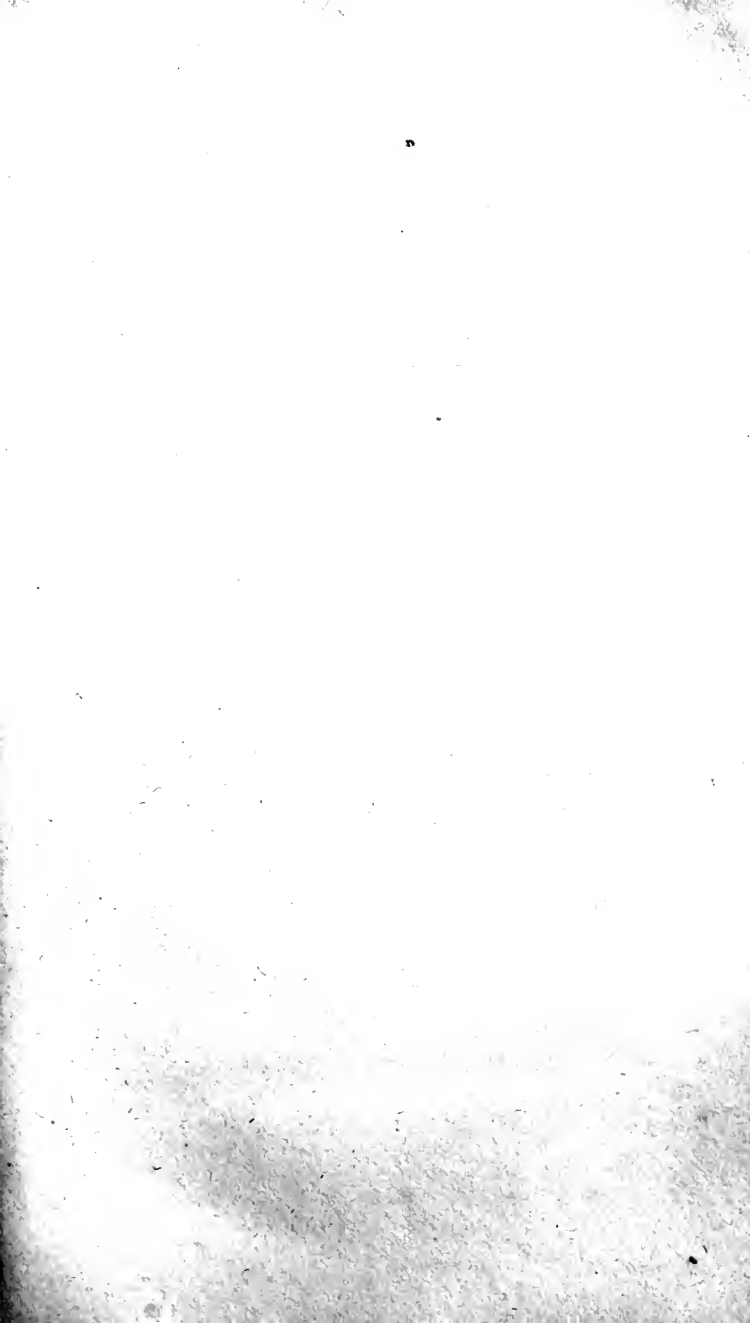
Secondly, to excite his gratitude. Hence he so vividly recalls all his painful and gloomy feelings in his late danger, that he might be the more affected with the goodness of his deliverer and benefactor—read the whole chapter—Do as he did. Dwell upon every thing that can give a relish, and add an impression to the blessing you have received; and be ye thankful—and employ your tongues, your pens, your lives, in praise of the God of your mercies. Did the heathen upon their recovery hang up tablets of acknowledgments in the house of their gods? Have Papists built churches and altars to their patron saints? And will you do nothing for the Lord your healer? Yet so it often is! The physician is cheerfully rewarded; the attendants are paid for their trouble; friends are thanked for their obliging inquiries—only one Being is overlooked—*He* who gave the physician his skill; he who rendered the means effectual; he who inspired the inquiring friends with all their tenderness.

Thirdly, to insure a sense of his obligation in future. The Jews soon forgot the works of the Lord, and the wonders he had shown them. And we are very liable to the same evil. But we should say, with David, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and *forget* not all his benefits;" and avail ourselves of every assistance that can enable us to recover and preserve the feelings we had at the time when the Lord appeared for us. Thus the Jews established the feast of Purim upon their deliverance from the plot of Haman. Thus Samuel raised a stone after his victory, and called it Ebenezer. Joseph named his sons Ephraim and Manasseh, to remind him of the contrast between his former and present condition. And thus Hezekiah would compose this writing, that he might compare himself with its sentiments, months and years after; and that it might be a pledge of his dedication to God; and a witness against him if his love should ever wax cold—

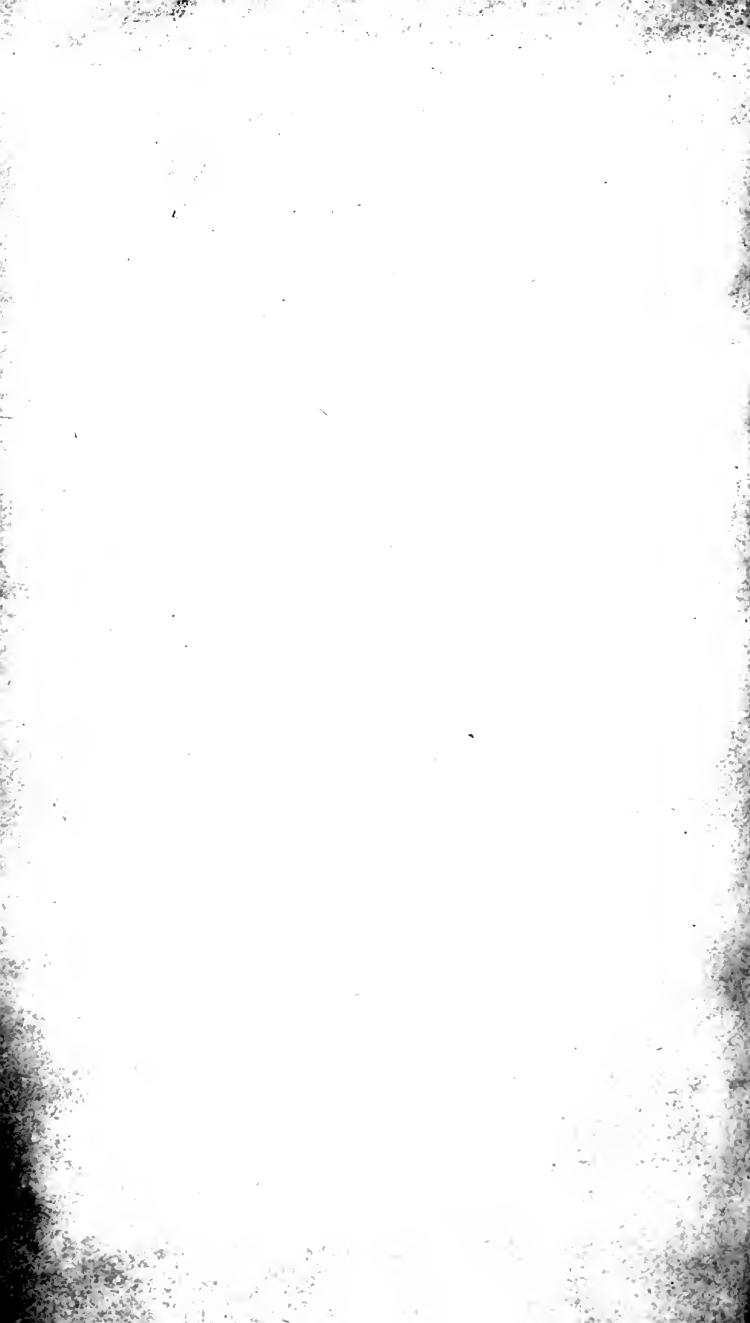
And how was it with him? Can I proceed? So far all is well. He is wise, humble, grateful, resolved. But, alas! how shall we say it? "After this Hezekiah rendered not according to the benefit done him; for his heart was lifted up; therefore wrath came upon him and upon all Judah." Lord, what is man! Who is beyond

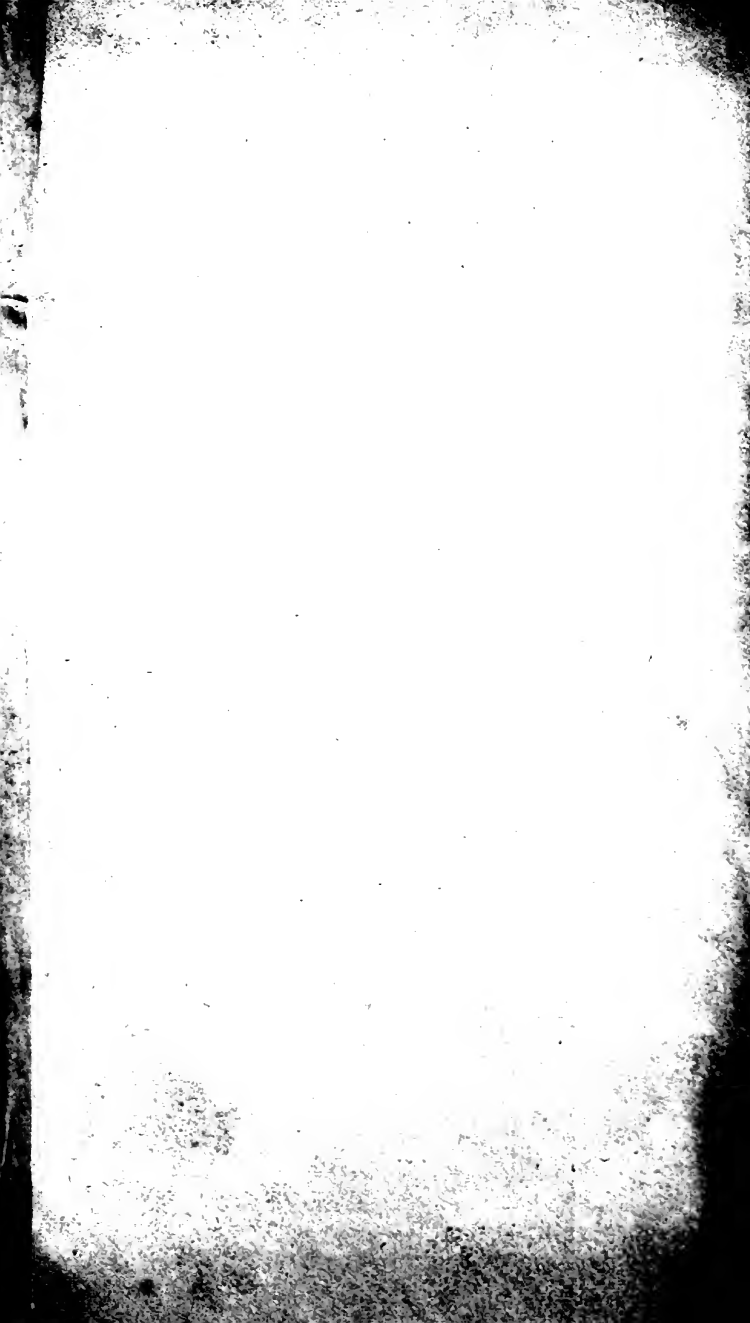
the danger of falling while in this world? On what can we safely rely? He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool. And he is not much better that trusts in his own grace. It is not *our* grace, but *his* grace that is sufficient for us. Let us therefore be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Let us not insult over others when they err in doctrine or in practice; but tremble for ourselves, and pray, Lord, hold thou me up, and I shall be safe. Blessed is the man that feareth always.

END OF VOL. I.









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