

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

Chap. BT205

Shelf L3

Copyright No.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.



5358.

GLIMPSES OF CHRIST

IN

HOLY SCRIPTURE.

BY

THOMAS LAURIE, D. D.,

AUTHOR OF "DR. GRANT AND THE MOUNTAIN NESTORIANS," "WOMAN AND HER SAVIOUR IN PERSIA," ETC.

17
*"He looketh forth at the windows,
showing himself through the lattice."*

SOL. SONG, ii 9.



BOSTON:
GOULD AND LINCOLN,
59 WASHINGTON STREET.
NEW YORK: SHELDON AND COMPANY.
CINCINNATI: G. S. BLANCHARD AND CO.

1869.

BT205
.L3

Entered, according to act of Congress, in the year 1868, by
GOULD AND LINCOLN,
In the Clerk's Office of the District Court for the District of Massachusetts.

ROCKWELL & ROLLINS, STEREOTYPERS AND PRINTERS.

MV G 30037

P R E F A C E .



THESE pages lay no special claim to originality. They were prepared at first for those to benefit whom the writer was accustomed to read works on the Scriptures, as well as study the Scriptures themselves ; and they are now sent to the press at the urgent request of a dear friend, who, benefited himself by the truths they set forth, desires that others also may be partakers of his joy.

The fact that cold water from the mossy spring quenches thirst, irrespective of the value of the cup that conveys it to the lips of the weary traveller, has been an encouragement to comply with the request, though not even the costliest human setting would be worthy of the divine jewels of the truth as it is in Jesus.

CONTENTS.



CHAPTER I.

	PAGE
<i>LOOKING UNTO JESUS</i>	9

CHAPTER II.

<i>FIRST WITNESS FOR CHRIST</i>	20
---	----

CHAPTER III.

<i>WALKING WITH CHRIST</i>	31
--------------------------------------	----

CHAPTER IV.

<i>THE DESERT PRISON; OR, SHUT UP TO CHRIST</i>	43
---	----

CHAPTER V.

<i>CHRIST PRESENTS HIS PEOPLE UNBLAMABLE IN THE SIGHT OF GOD</i>	55
--	----

CHAPTER VI.

<i>FOR CHRIST'S SAKE</i>	63
------------------------------------	----

CHAPTER VII.

COMPLETE ACCEPTANCE THROUGH CHRIST . . . 72

CHAPTER VIII.

VITAL UNION WITH CHRIST 87

CHAPTER IX.

ABIDING LIFE IN CHRIST 99

CHAPTER X.

THE HUMAN SYMPATHY OF CHRIST 114

CHAPTER XI.

THE MUNIFICENCE OF CHRIST 128

CHAPTER XII.

SERVING CHRIST 142

CHAPTER XIII.

IMITATING CHRIST IN DOING GOOD 155

CHAPTER XIV.

WE WOULD SEE JESUS 167

CHAPTER XV.

THE SAVING GRACE OF CHRIST 181

CONTENTS.

VII

CHAPTER XVI.

CHRIST IN THE ASSEMBLIES OF HIS PEOPLE 192

CHAPTER XVII.

FALLING ASLEEP IN JESUS 209

CHAPTER XVIII.

CHRIST OUR SHEPHERD ON EARTH 223

CHAPTER XIX.

CHRIST OUR SHEPHERD IN HEAVEN 239

CHAPTER XX.

PRAYER FOR CHRIST 251

“O EYES that are weary, and hearts that are sore!
Look off unto Jesus, now sorrow no more!
The light of his countenance shineth so bright
That here, as in heaven, there need be no night.

“And there shall I know the full beauty and grace
Of Jesus, the light of that glorious place;
Shall know how his love went before me each day,
And wonder that ever my eyes turned away.”

GLIMPSES OF CHRIST.



CHAPTER I.

LOOKING UNTO JESUS.

WE love to gaze on noted scenes in nature. We would look at Niagara from this side and from that, and still change the point of view, that we may catch a new aspect of the wondrous scene. We also love to look on the likeness of a public benefactor; and in some cases one portrait does not satisfy us. We want to see the Father of his Country, not only as the first President of the Republic, but as he led the army of the Revolution, and as previous to that he traversed the wilderness; besides that, we search out the pictures painted by different artists, for each has preserved its own expression of the well-known face.

What is thus true of the notabilities of nature and of history is also true of Christ. We glance at

other things, only to come back with more intense desire to him ; for, however they may interest for a time, they do not satisfy : the mind may receive new ideas, but the soul starves. In Christ alone we find abiding satisfaction ; without him, we are like men working, it may be, amid beautiful and fragrant flowers, but starving for want of food.

In holy Scripture God provides for this craving of the renewed soul varied presentations of Christ, each different, but all overflowing with blessing ; fountains ever sending forth the water of life. He is set before us as the Messiah to come ; he is the atoning Saviour, or he is the Son of man, — a loving brother among the sons of men ; or he is the Prince and Saviour, exalted at the right hand of God to give repentance and remission of sins. At one time he is the Shepherd, and again the High Priest ; but on earth or in heaven, in human form or in the glory of the Father, ever the same divine source and support of our spiritual life.

So in Isaiah he says, "Look unto me, and be ye saved." But some may ask, how do we know that Christ says this, when there is no mention of his name ? Many passages in this prophet that seem to speak of the absolute God really speak of Christ. We had never thought of that grand description of the divine Majesty, seated on a throne high and lifted up, amid radiant seraphim and heavenly glory,

as a glimpse of our Saviour. But the Holy Ghost tells us that in that vision Isaiah beheld his glory.

And if no man hath seen God at any time, how can this be an invitation to look on what is not to be seen? If the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father hath declared him, how can this be anything else than a call to look on that brightness of the Father's glory; and if, out of Christ, God is a consuming fire, what mockery would it be to call on us to look unto such a one in order to be saved!

"Look unto *me*," he said, as a person, not a thing; a living, loving heart, not a mere idea. Can an abstraction speak, or can it save? Many speak of religion as something that they are to procure for themselves as they would procure medicine at the apothecary's, or as some change which they are to produce in themselves, as they would change their working for their Sunday clothes. They speak of religion doing this or that for us, as if it had a life of its own, and could perform acts of love. They exhort others to get religion, as if it were a treasure to be heaped together as men gather dollars, while all the time Jesus stands unheeded, and his "Look unto me" is unheard.

The word "religion" occurs only five times in our Bible. In two of these what is rendered "the Jews' religion" is in the original "Judaism." When

Paul speaks of "living after the strictest sect of his religion," it is literally "of our worshipping," that is, our mode of rendering worship to God. When James says, "That man's religion is vain, who bridleth not his tongue," the meaning is, that, whether Jew or Gentile, in that case his Judaism or his Heathenism is alike worthless. There only remains the noted declaration, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." Here it is not said that religion does so and so, as if it were a fourth person in the trinity, but it is itself the doing this and that. Pure and undefiled service to God is to act thus and thus; and even this service is not to be rendered in our own strength, but in the grace which is in Christ Jesus. Paul saith, "Christ strengthening me, I can do all things," and so our Saviour teaches, "Without me ye can do nothing." Religion cannot save us. It is not the piety of Christians that brings them to heaven, but it is Jesus Christ, and their piety is the beginning of the salvation wrought in them by his grace.

As little is it the truth that saves: that only makes us wise unto salvation. It tells us of, and introduces us to, the Saviour. So he says himself, "Search the Scriptures, for they testify of me." We purify ourselves in obeying the truth which bids us

believe on Christ. God sanctifies us through the truth which reveals Christ; but always and in everything it is Christ alone that saves. No step is taken by us toward heaven only as his hand leads and his right hand upholds us.

It may seem to some that this teaching is too precise; but when, on the one hand, Christ says, "Look unto me and be ye saved," and on the other, the mere mention of salvation is a signal for every one to turn to his own way of obtaining it, is there no need to hold up Christ as the Saviour? This looking for salvation from religion robs Christ of his glory. It sends inquirers away from the only Saviour, and makes even the religious experience of true Christians unsatisfactory. Such views lead to the feeling that our salvation depends upon our successful performance of this, and right improvement of that, till the soul, alive to the interest at stake, and its own weakness, sinks into despair, or lives in a state of chronic anxiety.

If any are thus heavy laden, let them listen to this voice of Jesus: "Look unto *me*; not to repentance or to faith, but to me, the giver of repentance and the author of faith; not to piety, but to me, the source of all piety in earth or heaven. Search in truth for me, and not for spiritual machinery to be operated by your own strength." Study the gospel as you would go into a garden where you ex-

pect to meet a friend. Look among those flowers and fruits, not for a balm which you are to apply, but for One who forgiveth all thine iniquities. Let nothing come between our soul and him. There is one mediator between us and God, but none at all between us and Christ. His voice in Scripture is, come to me directly; come to me always; come to me in everything; and behold in me your Saviour, able to save to the uttermost, and saving you for mine own name's sake.

If looking to religion and to the truth crushes us with a sense of our helplessness, this "Look unto me" of our Redeemer fills us with joy and peace. It is as if he lifted off our burden with his own hand and took it on himself, while he walks with us, working all things for us and in us, according to the riches of his grace. It brings the peace of God into the heart, when we look away, from the magnitude of the work and our own helplessness, to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.

Do we ask, "How can I gain access to such a Saviour?" he answers, "*Look* unto me." There is a peculiar meaning in that word "look," which does not appear in our translation. In English we have both a verb and a noun in the word "face;" the noun is that which looks, and the verb implies a turning about so as to look. It is precisely so in the

Hebrew; and here we have the verb. The text reads literally "face," or, as we would say, "face about to me." In recent times the term has become only too familiar. It is as if Jesus said, "You have been poring over your sins; now look to me, the Deliverer from sin. You have dwelt painfully on your need of salvation; now see in me your Saviour. You have tried other modes, and the more you tried them, the more you found that sin abounded; now turn to me, not as a new mode whereby you are to save yourself,—no, not even to a divine mode, but simply to me as the Saviour, who saves his people from their sins." We may not understand all that must be done in order to salvation, or we may not see how it can be done. Our apprehensions of the magnitude and difficulty of the work may be very inadequate. "No matter," says this word of Jesus; "leave the method, and the working out of the method, all to me. Though your mind cannot grasp the great work of redemption, mine takes in the whole of it in its remotest connections. Though your strength is inadequate, mine is sufficient. Fix your eye and trust on me, your Saviour, and let all anxiety disappear as you gaze on me, and the work which I perform for you."

Let us follow the leading of this good word of Christ, and look at his power to save. It is power over all flesh to give eternal life to his people; all

power in heaven and on earth ; power over all the hosts of our great adversary ; power to subdue all things unto himself, even the pride, selfishness, and unbelief of our hearts ; power even to raise our bodies from the grave, and fashion them like unto his glorious body ; power to make us more than conquerors, and then present us holy and unreprouable before the throne. Does not the very sight of such power give peace ?

Look at his love. No earthly relation can worthily illustrate it. Combine the love of father, husband, brother, friend ; and all together fall infinitely short of his. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." So said Jesus, lovingly losing sight of what we are in ourselves, and seeing only what his grace had done for us. Paul describes it thus : "Scarcely for a sternly upright man will one die, yet peradventure for a kind-hearted man some would even dare to die ; but God commendeth his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." Here is a picture of love that never fades. Its beauty and power do not depend on words, for they go beyond all words.

Then look also at the manifold relations of Christ to us. He is the Judge ; and if he acquit us who shall condemn ? He is the Shepherd who watches over us on earth, and the Intercessor who pleads for

us in heaven. The Father hath given all things into his hands, hears all his requests, and approves of all he does. May not such a one say, "He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him"?

Look also at his relations to the Holy Ghost. Nothing short of a Divine Sanctifier can make us holy; and the Holy Spirit sent by the Son perfectly sympathizes with that Son. There is not a sinner loved of Christ who is not also loved of the Spirit, and for whom he does not delight to exercise his power to sanctify.

Christ, then, is a glorious Saviour. Looking unto him is a simple act; but some are troubled about the manner of their looking. Yes, our looking unto him is as unworthy as our persons, and they are more unworthy than we think they are; but salvation does not depend on the perfection of our looking, but on that of the Saviour to whom we look. When the dying Hebrew looked at the brazen serpent, his cure did not depend on the perfection of the view he obtained of it. Distance may have dimmed its outline; age may have bleared his eyesight; some other sufferer may have partly come between; but if he only looked at all, he was made whole: and so here. If the Israelite, after he was healed, gazed with mingled gratitude and wonder on the inanimate means of his cure,

how should we continue to look unto and love this loving Saviour! Is it any wonder that Mary sat at his feet, so entranced she was not conscious that her sister was left to serve alone?

“ My willing soul would stay
In such a frame as this,
And sit and sing herself away
To everlasting bliss.”

Then let us call off our thoughts from everything else to fix them on Christ; let us not think of the manner of our looking; let us see only Him to whom we look, and so rejoice in the Lord always.

But some one, deeply conscious of unworthiness to look unto such a Saviour, asks, “ Are you sure that we may thus look?” Hear his own words: “ Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and feet, that it is I myself. Handle me and see;” and yet again: “ Peace be unto you! 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.” Christ would have us to-day be partakers of the joy of those who conversed with him on earth. He had us in his thoughts when he said, “ Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed.”

But what is the result of this looking? Not that

we shall thereby save ourselves, performing an act so meritorious that salvation is its reward ; — nothing of that ; but He who gives himself to the vision of our faith, with that favor gives salvation also. “ Look unto me and be ye saved,” — not as a result which you work out ; but I shall command salvation, and it shall come to you ; or, since salvation is no more a person than religion is, I myself will be your Saviour, and save you even while you look. And if Jesus saves us, we are saved.

Be it ours to hold fast this confidence and rejoicing of hope firm unto the end. This looking to Jesus must be constant, till, instead of the object of faith, we shall behold him on the throne. From the first step of the race set before us, even to the last, let us run looking unto Jesus. It is only while we behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord that we are changed into the same image. If he is the alpha of our first look, he is also the omega of our last. Only as we continue looking unto him do we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Thus may we live the whole life that we live in the flesh ; in death, like Stephen, look up steadfastly and see Jesus standing on the right hand of God ; and then go to enjoy forever the answer to that petition : “ Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.”

CHAPTER II.

FIRST WITNESS FOR CHRIST.

THE character of Abel is peculiarly interesting. The first of our fallen race to taste of death, and the first of the redeemed to enter heaven; he was the first fruits of that great harvest that shall forever reward the sufferings of our Redeemer. The consideration of his character is so intimately connected with his sacrifice, that, in order to understand the one, we must first understand the other.

What, then, is a sacrifice? All will agree that it is "a form of worship;" for all admit that in this way men have been used to worship. But what is the origin of the custom? Its antiquity and general diffusion indicate that it is from God, and the well-known principle that God accepts no worship which himself did not appoint confirms this. If prayer was only a mode of approaching God which man had devised for himself, he could expect no other reception for his supplications than that curt one accorded to the wicked: "Who hath required this at your

hand?" God hears prayer because he from the beginning appointed this way of approach to himself, and his Spirit led man to walk in it. We hear sometimes of new modes of worship; but let the inventive genius of the age devise a mode as yet unheard of, and reason would at once decide that it is not fitting for the sinner to dictate in what way he shall draw near to God.

"In vain," saith Christ, "do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." The tabernacle and the vessels of the sanctuary were accepted only as they were made according to the pattern shown in the mount.

Those two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown, who insisted that their ideas should override the divine appointment, were consumed in the act of presenting their self-willed worship; and even David, though it was in his heart to do right, was not accepted, when only through inadvertence he substituted beasts of burden for the divinely appointed bearers of the ark.

In view of these things, is it likely that sacrifice was a mode of worship devised by man?

All agree, not only that sacrifice was an act of worship, but that it consisted in slaughtering animals and then burning their bodies on the altar. Now, would man left to himself, ever dream that destroy-

ing the creatures God had made, was the way in which to please him? that butchering innocent animals was an act likely to procure God's blessing for the man that did it? Had we never heard of sacrifice, would we ever dream of propitiating God in that way? Yet we are familiar with the idea of killing animals for food; but to Abel such a thing was unknown. Not till the days of Noah did God give flesh to be food for man. So strange did the institution of sacrifice seem to men in ancient times, that, even though familiar with it from childhood, and history did not reach back to a time when it did not exist, still the old Greek philosophers wondered on what principle so strange a custom could have originated. The more we look, the more we shall be satisfied that nothing short of a divine command could lead men to think of so strange a method of serving God; if, indeed, it did not also require some explanation of its meaning to induce them to engage in it even then. Go and tell a child that the way for him to secure the favor of God is to kill little lambs; and see his looks of surprise and wonder at the announcement! But if this was a divine command, and hints were given of reasons for it such as could not then be fully understood, we can see how it would separate between the righteous and the wicked; for the requirements of God are always so framed as to

call forth unbelief and rebellion where they exist, and at the same time afford exercise for faith and obedience.

It was through distrustful thoughts of God that man had just fallen, and incurred the loss of Eden; therefore it was fitting that preparation to enter the heavenly paradise should educate a trusting submission.

Some may object that there is no record of such a requirement. True; and so there is no command to observe the Lord's day, or to love our sisters, or to admit women to the Lord's table. But if, after eighty-five chapters had been devoted to three years of the life of Christ on earth, the inspired writer could close the whole by saying: "There are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books," is it likely that six short chapters in Genesis contain the whole of the events that transpired in the one thousand six hundred and fifty-five years previous to the flood? And if it is said that this institution of sacrifice was an important event, could six chapters tell even all the important events of so long a period? Can there be a more unfair method of interpreting the first six chapters of Genesis than to assume that nothing took place except what is recorded? In that case, as there is

nothing said of the apostasy of fallen angels, we must conclude that there was none; as there is no mention of death previous to the fall, we must infer that there had been none, and that, therefore, Adam could not understand the penalty denounced against this transgression; or that because it is not expressly said that God made him understand it, therefore he did not; that consequently Adam incurred ignorantly the most tremendous punishment that "man could suffer," and that God, knowing he was thus ignorant, nevertheless inflicted it. Let these serve as specimens of the absurdities such a principle would involve.

We conclude, then, that the omission of the record of the original institution of sacrifices is no evidence that it was not from God. He who created man to serve him would not leave him ignorant of the way to do so. He who intended to lead man to his Saviour through this institution would not leave the discovery of it to chance. Even leaving Abel out of the question, what would be our own ideas of redemption, or of its mode of operation, without this divine symbol? Go, find the Christian to-day, pre-eminently led of the Spirit into the knowledge of an atoning Saviour, whose most precious views of Christ have not come through this divine ordinance. We are learners in the same school where Abel was taught

of God. In the catalogue of its alumni his name stands the first.

We are now prepared to advance another step, and inquire into the meaning of sacrifice. It is a divinely appointed form of worship; but what is its import? If any one replies, it is a mere expression of gratitude, let him tell us how slaughtering innocent victims expresses gratitude. What is there in shedding the blood of lambs, and burning their flesh with fire, suggestive of thankfulness? Is this the way a child would express love to his benefactor? Or why did Job offer burnt-offerings whenever he feared lest his sons had sinned and cursed God in their hearts?

Is it said that sacrifices did sometimes express joy and praise? Yes; but only when expiation had prepared the way for it. After the sin-offering had made atonement, other offerings followed in connection with it, expressive of the joy that a sinner feels when reconciled to God.

It is a suggestive fact that we read of no sacrifices being offered in Paradise. Not till man had been driven forth from Eden do we see the smoke of his sacrifice ascending from the altar. Within the garden he needed only to offer the worship of adoration and praise. But now that he is a wanderer in the earth cursed for his sake, aware of the penalty that he has incurred, and conscious that he deserves

it, what more fitting worship can he offer than that which confesses the justice of his sentence and brings the appointed substitute to die in his stead; thus surrendering himself absolutely to God through that substitute in hope of promised forgiveness? Take away the divine appointment of the victim and the giving of the promise, and the observance is presumptuous; but with these, it is a most fitting expression of penitence and trust; nothing could more appropriately express such feelings.

Let us try to look in on the first sacrifice. Man, already tasting the bitter fruits of sin, seeing them all around him, meeting them at every step in his daily life, feels the pressure of his guilt. Left to himself he would flee from the presence of the God whom he has disobeyed; but the Lord speaks to him unexpected words of comfort. He promises a future deliverer. He appoints a worship symbolical of that deliverance. So, under divine guidance, Adam builds the altar, selects the victim, and with trembling hand inflicts the fatal stroke. What thoughts of his own deservings crowd on him as he watches that gasping breath, those quivering limbs, and then the flames consuming the lifeless form? Does he not at once see the greatness of his own guilt and of divine mercy? And, as the truth pervades his heart, "Thus am I to be forgiven through the sufferings of a victim yet to come,"

does he not feel, "Though I do not yet fully understand all the mysteries of that deliverance, yet trustingly do I thus surrender my forfeited life to God, that in his own way I may receive it back again according to his word" ?

Thus in this ordinance, man made a continual acknowledgment of his guilt, and confession of his faith. The first sin was a rebellious attempt at independence of God; here is the profoundest acknowledgment of dependence on sovereign grace. That sin was an inexcusable mistrust of God; here is an entire surrender to him, in implicit confidence of the fulfilment of his promise; that, too, when its fulfilment is not only in the distant future, but even the manner of it yet unrevealed, save as it is dimly foreshadowed by this ordinance.

These views are strikingly confirmed by the testimony of the Scripture, that "by faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain;" for how can a man have faith, except there is something to be believed? Or how can a man show faith in God by performing an act, save as God commands that act, and its performance is difficult or disagreeable to those who have not faith? Does not the Scripture then teach us that God ordained the offering of sacrifices, and Abel observed the divine ordinance in a spirit of obedient faith? Any change in the offering, or in the manner appointed,

had shown a want of the obedience of faith; and it was precisely because there was no such change that God had regard to his offering and not to that of his brother.

Abel was willing to let God choose how he would be served. Cain would serve God in his own way, or not at all. Abel confessed, in the appointed way, that on account of his sin he deserved to die, and could be saved only through the substitution of another. Cain would make no such confession. He was as good as anybody, and demanded that God should accept service from him just as he was, without an atonement. Abel was willing to be saved in any way God should mark out for him. Cain would not admit that he needed salvation; especially did he refuse to ask for life in a way that acknowledged his own was forfeited.

On the other hand, Abel did not "obtain witness that he was righteous" in the sense of absolute freedom from sin,—for "there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not;" but in the sense in which sinners who comply with God's method of justification are accepted as righteous for Christ's sake. Paul uses the term "righteous" to denote the legal status of sinners who are made the righteousness of God in Christ, and in every age that sinner becomes righteous who accepts the divine method of salvation. It was so with the

Jew who brought the required offering in faith. It is so to-day with the sinner who receives Jesus Christ by faith.

A thoughtful mind cannot but be deeply impressed with the truth, that a sinner in the first generation after the fall obtains witness that he is righteous, by offering a sacrifice in faith, just as we must obtain the same witness to-day. There is a slight difference in the outward form, but none at all in the inward spirit, none at all in the ground of acceptance. Those firstlings of his flock were accepted, because offered in faith of the propitiation God had promised; and we present to God the one offering which Christ has made, "whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood." Then as now, and now as then, it is only the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. Then as now, and now as then, there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. Whoever is tired of the old story of the cross, let him come and see how the first sinner that ever passed from earth to heaven found favor with God. Nothing is said of innocence, but he obtains witness that he is righteous, through compliance with the method God had appointed to unite him to Christ. Compliance and non-compliance here was the turning-point between Abel and his murderer, and to-day it is the turning-point where the feet of those who enter

heaven separate from those who go down to the second death.

The ideas of Abel about salvation on earth may have been very dim; but who shall describe his first interview with his Saviour, as he ascended from that field of blood? How far did the glory of his Redeemer surpass his highest thoughts of redemption, and with what joy did the Son of God welcome that first fruit of the blood which speaketh better things than that of Abel!

CHAPTER III.

WALKING WITH CHRIST.

NOAH was born five thousand two hundred and forty-eight years ago. Perhaps few of us form a definite idea of so long a time, for it covers a period equivalent to one hundred and seventy-five of our modern generations. We look back to the beginning of the Revolution as to a distant point; but the birth of this man took place more than fifty-eight times farther back. Martin Luther was born before the discovery of America; but this man was born nearly fourteen times longer ago than Martin Luther. He died sixty-nine years before Noah was born, or six hundred and sixty-nine years before the deluge. The world was only six hundred and twenty-two years old when Enoch began to live in it, and he lived three hundred and eight years contemporary with Adam. We do not know how often they saw each other, or how much they conversed together; we do not know how far they lived apart; but we are very safe in saying that, amid the wide-spread degeneracy of his descendants,

our first parent must have enjoyed very much the society of a man who walked with God. It must have comforted him with the assurance that a future restoration to Paradise was not impossible; and Enoch in turn must have loved the society of the only man who could tell him about a world without sin.

In heaven to-day Adam and Enoch must watch with peculiar interest the progress of the kingdom of Christ. How often do they compare their earthly anticipations of what would be, with their heavenly observation of what has been and now is! Such words come unbidden; for who can speak of a good man who has been four thousand eight hundred and eighty-three years in heaven, without thinking more of where he is to-day, than of the few years he spent here below? We may not say which one of the redeemed we should prefer to see, where each will have so much to say about Christ, and be able to present views so different from those that we now have of the same unchanging Saviour; but, if God's grace ever introduces us among them, shall we not have a special joy in hearing from the lips of Enoch how he could maintain so close a walk with God in circumstances so unfavorable?

At present, however, we have to do with the little we can learn about him from sources now within reach; for, in looking back to his day, we look beyond the dawn of history. Herodotus, the father

of secular history, was born almost twenty-nine hundred years after Enoch. The only account we have of him is contained in the most ancient and trustworthy of all books, written by holy men of old, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. Scripture, however, answers very few of those questions which we naturally ask concerning the good of other days. It makes no mention of the place of his birth. It does not tell us what mountains looked down on his boyhood, or in what fields he enjoyed his youthful sports. We know not the nature of his occupation, or the amount of his possessions. There is no mention of those pleasant details that make the pages of biography so attractive. All we know is comprised in two facts: "he walked with God," or, as it is expressed in another place, "he pleased God," and "he was not, for God took him;" or, as elsewhere explained, "he was translated that he should not see death." These are the things remembered in heaven, and selected from among all the rest to be recorded of him by the Holy Ghost. He was a man whose walk was so close with God, that, in his case alone, among all the millions who lived before the flood, the sentence of death was remitted.

Not till two thousand one hundred and twenty-one years after, was another found worthy of the same favor; and though two thousand seven hundred

and sixty-two years have elapsed since Elijah left the world, none save these two have ever been so highly favored. It may prepare us to appreciate his walk with God, if we consider the circumstances under which such a life was spent.

He had no Bible. Moses, the first inspired writer of whom we have any knowledge, — for the author of the book of Job is uncertain, — was not born till one thousand eight hundred and eleven years after Enoch ; almost as long as it is now since the birth of Christ. Not only was there no portion of the Bible in existence in the days of Enoch, but we have no evidence of the existence at that time of any written document.

Noah told his children the things that he knew concerning Adam, and Paradise, and Cain, and Abel, and this same Enoch, whom Noah must have loved, for he, too, walked with God. Think of Enoch living such a life without a Bible. In his closet, no well-thumbed copy of the Word ; in his journeys, no sacred Scriptures carried among his other provisions for the way ; in his family devotions and in his preaching, no holy book to pour its divine light on the hearers. Was Enoch, then, sanctified without the truth? And may we look for a sanctification independent of Holy Scripture? Not so, for that same Scripture tells us that " God, at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past

unto the fathers." He spoke personally to Jacob at Bethel, and to Abraham in his tent; and just as he manifested himself to these, so did he to Noah. Is it likely that Enoch was left without such direct teachings from heaven, when long before him God had walked with Adam in the garden, and talked with Cain, even after that murder in the field? That good man had no written word, but doubtless the word of the Lord came to him as afterwards to Ezekiel, and through that word he was sanctified in answer to the prayer of Christ. Those personal communications from God may have revealed far less than is now made known to us. No psalms aided his devotion; no glad tidings of Christ, and redemption through his blood, thrilled his soul; no Gospel of John or Epistle of Paul quickened his spiritual life; but the little then made known gave such a glimpse of the same truths as sufficed to maintain in his heart this walk with God. It is as if the Lord would show us how much may result from a little of the truth as it is in Jesus, that we may be stirred up the more to search the Scriptures which testify of Christ.

Enoch seems to have enjoyed very little of that help which is found in the society of good men. We do not know how much he had of this. We would not forget that, though just before the flood the wickedness of man was great in the earth, so that it re-

pent God that he had created him, and the flood of wickedness needed the waters of the deluge to wash it away, yet that antediluvian world lasted one thousand six hundred and fifty-five years, — longer than from the birth of Christ to the landing of the Pilgrims at Plymouth. Enoch lived as long before the flood, as the renowned Saladin before us. Look back to the times of the third crusade, to the war of extermination waged by Popery against the Albigenses, and you look back just as far as Noah did when from the door of the Ark he looked back to the days of Enoch. True, Enoch was his great grandparent; but it would need only six such lives as that of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, to reach from the creation to our own times. It would, then, be just as wrong to attribute the character of the world at the time of the flood to the days of Enoch, as it would be to transfer the character of this age to that of Saladin and of Dominic, the founder of the Inquisition.

The Bible, however, gives no account of any advance of piety in the days of Enoch. On the contrary, so great had been the declension that he was called on to speak of the Lord coming "with ten thousand of his holy ones, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among men, of all their ungodly deeds which they had ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches

which ungodly sinners had spoken against him." In his day, then, we are warranted in saying that the mass of community was not only wicked, but defiant in wickedness. Men not only gave themselves up to crime, but boldly blasphemed God, and set themselves openly against divine restraints.

Among such men the position of a devout man was not very enviable; he met with no sympathy, but rather hatred, if not indeed downright violence.

It is very striking that the circumstances of Elijah were very similar, who complained to God: "Israel hath forsaken the covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword, and I, I only, am left, and they seek my life to take it away." Then, without waiting to inquire what it is to walk with God, we say boldly to every man who excuses himself from such a life, because his circumstances are unfavorable, that this is no excuse at all. Unfavorable they may be; but, if they were ten times more so, they would not be so unfavorable as either those of Enoch or Elijah; and yet they were both pre-eminent for their piety. Then, let outward things be as they may, they can excuse no man for being ungodly. It would seem as though God had selected two men in such situations, and made them models of holy living, that every mouth might be stopped from pleading outward circumstances as an excuse for ungodliness. But what was the walking

with God maintained amid so much that was adverse?

Enoch, like every other man, was by nature a child of wrath. His first requisite, then, to communion with God was an atonement for his sin. Before God could look on him with complacence he must be cleansed from guilt. Enoch did not know Christ, but like Abel he offered unto God sacrifices "by which he obtained witness that he was righteous," and so like Noah "became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." Men may have an idea that Enoch deserved translation by his good works; but what saith the Scripture? "Before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God; but without faith it is impossible to please him." Enoch, then, was an eminently good man; but the whole of his piety was built upon the foundation of faith, and the ground of his acceptance with God was the righteousness which is by faith. Let none say within himself, then, "If I could only attain to the personal goodness of Enoch, then God would accept me;" for God accepted him not merely because of his piety, but because of the foundation on which it stood. There was nothing of his own that could challenge blessing in itself. The holiest of his acts was accepted only in Christ, and on the ground of his redemption.

And so, having this faith, he purified himself, even

as God is pure. Accepting reconciliation with God, he lived in communion with the God who had reconciled him to himself. Recognizing the fact that by faith he had access into the grace of God, he entered into it and cleaved to God as his chosen good. Men might cast out his name as evil, but he only felt the more deeply, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee." While the wicked around him looked hither and thither, crying, "Who will show us any good?" he rested in the one desire, "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me." One thing he desired of the Lord, and that he sought after, that he might live all the days of his life beholding the beauty of the Lord, and enjoying fellowship with his Father in heaven.

This desire showed itself, not only in frequent and fervent seasons of devotion, but in a careful avoiding of whatever would mar them. He could not give himself up to sin, and yet retain God; so to retain God he gave up sin. It has been said we do not know whether Enoch was a rich man; but we do know that he did not make wealth his chief object, for then he could not have walked with God. He sought earthly good just so far as it would subserve communion with God, and no further.

He was like a foreign missionary in the midst of heathen that rage, and people that imagine a vain

thing, only he was a self-supporting missionary. He drew his support from no society; he rested on no prayers offered in distant lands. The Lord was the strength of his heart and his portion forever. Missionaries cut off from Christian fellowship, and shut up to God alone, have found such a life running over with the purest enjoyment; but Enoch knew such happiness long before they did, and knew more of it, as his dependence was even more absolute and entire than theirs.

His walking with God did not make him a hermit or a monk. He had an earthly home, and a family, like other men, and supported them by honest industry. So early did God teach men that a life of true piety was within the reach of all, and brand the hypocritical and mischievous celibacy of papal priests with divine reprobation. Three thousand three hundred and seventy-seven years before the apostle wrote, "Marriage is honorable in all," Enoch preached the same truth by his godly example.

It may have seemed as though he could not live a godly life in that age at all, or that, if, he began well, he would soon turn aside; but the moment he stepped into right relations with God he found himself in right relations with all about him, for all things worked together for his good, as they do for the good of every believer in every age. Had he no Bible? That only made the personal instruction

of God the more prized, and that personal communion again bound him the more closely to God. Had he no human sympathy in his holy living? That also drew him the closer to God, for in him he found such sympathy and love and grace as made him independent of every other being. Who is there to-day who fears to try to serve God lest the effort prove a failure? Enoch, though dead, yet speaketh to such, saying, "Cast loose from everything; throw yourself wholly on God; for only so can you be in harmony with all around you; and the more perfectly you cleave to God, the more absolutely you depend on him, the more thoroughly are you in harmony with your outward lot." There are crooks and roughnesses, mysteries and difficulties, in that lot, that will not yield to human skill. But the moment we take hold of God in Christ the crooked becomes straight, and the rough places plain. Hindrances become helps, and the lions that seemed to stand in the way become the ministers of God to us for good. The most dreaded things are found to be divine provisions for our salvation.

Christians sometimes debate the possibility of a steadfast continuance in holy living. Is such a matter open to debate? What says the Scripture? "Enoch walked with God, after he begat Methuselah, three hundred years." And is the power of God, that kept Enoch three hundred years, powerless to

keep us for threescore and ten? Or is our standard of holy living higher than that of the Holy Ghost? Away with such unbelief! So long as the memory of that good man survives, we need never doubt God when he says, "My grace is sufficient for thee." Let our trials be what they may to-day; let them be succeeded by others a hundred-fold more terrible; he who kept Enoch is able also to keep us. He can save to the uttermost; he can make us more than conquerors; and the only thing that hinders the manifestation of the glory of his power to save us is our own unbelief. Let us be strong, then, in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. With that there is no possibility of failure.

We have seen that the want of human sympathy and the pressure of human opposition led Enoch into a richer experience of this grace of Christ on earth; but what a contrast did he find between a frowning world and that welcome into the joy of the Lord! How did those three hundred years of hatred on earth prepare him to appreciate the love of heaven! Not only all that Enoch found in God on earth, but all that he has found in him these four thousand eight hundred and eighty-three years above, is ours in Christ. Even now faith may reach out its hand and gather in the whole as included in the inheritance to which we are joint-heirs with Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DESERT PRISON; OR, SHUT UP TO CHRIST.

THE desert of Paran lies between the Wady el Arabah and the desert of Shur, and extends from Jebel et Tih, which stretches across the peninsula of Sinai, to the mountains south of Beersheba and Aroer. Israel entered it three years after leaving Egypt. The north-eastern part of it, marked Azazimeh on our best maps, is a high table-land very rarely visited, as the two routes from Egypt to Syria pass outside of it on the east and west. High ridges of bare chalk cliffs enclose a sandy waste nearly forty miles square within their mural precipices. These glow in the hot sun like a furnace, and the sand drinks up the stream from the large fountain of Kades before it has gone four hundred paces.

Scattered over this desolate region is the camp of Israel; not a collection of tents uniform in size and shape, and standing in orderly rows around the Tabernacle; here is rather the head-quarters of a population as large as our own at the commence-

ment of the Revolution. Such a multitude could not be crowded into a compact mass, except on a march, or in an encampment for a night; but here with flocks and herds they abode for the long space of thirty-seven years. So we may picture them as scattered irregularly over the Azazimeh, overflowing into the more extensive desert south and west, and pouring down the sides of the desert valleys that lead into the Arabah. Rude huts dot the hillsides, and ruder shelters lean against the rocky sides of the glens. We may descry them here and there on the sandy waste, or perched upon the chalky cliffs. A region, before and since the home of desolation, was then instinct with life.

Scripture gives a full account of the journey hither; it describes minutely the road hence round by the borders of Edom; but about the thirty-seven years spent here it tells us very little, except that out of the more than million adult men then living, all, save two, were doomed to remain in this frightful wilderness till they died. Place yourself on some outstanding cliff that commands the most extensive view of these bare rocks, this barren sand, these verdureless valleys; then look round on these cheerless homes, and think of fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, kept in this desert prison till they died. No outlet but the grave, save for two favored persons mentioned by name.

Never again shall these men and women look on fertile field or verdant meadow. Never again shall they see a running brook or winding river. No grove or forest shall ever again gladden eyes blinded with the heat and glare of these arid wastes. The sight of a town embowered among trees, of a city reclining quietly on the shore of the great sea, shall never again be theirs. Those boys and girls now playing in the sand, or seeking shelter from the sun in the recesses of those rocky cliffs, must abide here till they have buried the last of a rebellious generation.

Is not this one of the most appalling pictures of the evil of sin presented to us in the word of God? While the deluge and the destruction of Sodom are held up as examples of the ruin sin may work in this world, we marvel that this striking scene should be so generally passed over. It seems as though that mountain wall, inclosing on all sides that central plateau, and broken through at intervals by rocky passes into its inner desolation, was created on purpose to be the centre of this terrible judgment; and even now, when that has retreated three thousand four hundred years into the obscurity of the past, the empty frame still remains for us to refill with the events of those thirty-seven years. One almost envies those who died first. What must have been the feelings of those who lived on, year

after year, their number gradually growing less, feeling all the while that those prison doors would not open till all were dead?

Then think again. It was pure, unmitigated judgment. There was not a whisper of pardon. The transgressors were shut up face to face with death. It was nothing but death. There was no possibility of escape. They could not flee, singly, for what provision could they take for the long journey that lay between them and cultivated fields? They were also hemmed in by watchful foes, who would show no mercy to stragglers from that invading host. And should they resolve to march *en masse*, and cut their way through with the energy of despair; they had already tried that, and found what it was to enter into battle without the Lord, yea, with Jehovah on the side of the Amalekites and Canaanites, that smote them and pursued them with slaughter even unto Hormah. Of all those hundreds of thousands only two could escape this punishment, for they had not shared in the sin that was punished.

These multitudes might have objected that God had promised them the land of Canaan; but they had to learn that obedience was the condition of its fulfilment, and that disobedience forfeited all.

They might have pleaded that God, in bringing them out of Egypt, was under obligation to bring

them into a land at least equally as good. But they who refuse to have God for a leader cannot complain if they are left to eat of the fruit of their own ways.

It is not necessary to specify the instances of their transgression, and then bring forward arguments to prove that the punishment was just. It needs simply to state the fact that God inflicted those judgments in righteousness, and if, admitting the fact, any one questions the righteousness, let him settle that point with "Him with whom we have to do."

The infidelity that denies the occurrence of such scenes in that wilderness is bold; the infidelity that admits the facts, but denies their divine origin, is not less bold; but boldest of all is he who admits that God was in them, and yet denies their justice. True poverty of spirit, while it leads us to confess that it is of the Lord's mercies *we* are not consumed, also adores those marked instances of divine justice that occur just often enough to make us appreciate more abounding grace; for, without such examples, we might fall into the popular belief that the divine forbearance with transgressors was his dealing with them according to their deserts. Such scenes as these in the wilderness of Paran are needful to make us appreciate the infinite long-suffering of the Lord. No one who has any right feeling toward God can rise up from the narrative of his dealings

with Israel in the desert, without admiring divine long-suffering on the one side, and marvelling at intractable perversity on the other.

No wonder the descendants of those evil-doers came to Christ with the question, "Are there few that be saved?" The memory of those thirty-seven years in that wilderness must have burned itself in on the national conscience as few historical facts have ever impressed themselves upon any people. More than two million souls shut up in the heart of the desert, till of all then over twenty years of age only two came forth alive. Aaron, the priest of God, forms no exception, and even Moses was never allowed to set foot within the promised land. Was there ever a lesson in all history more striking?

Is this a solitary exception to the general current of history; or does it embody a principle that runs through the ages, — at least, until the dawning of the latter day? Few questions come so close home to us on our way to the judgment-seat of Him who prepared that desert prison of old, nor unbarred the gates till the last one shut up within its walls had died. If now the proportion is reversed; if only the units out of the millions perish; if all the rest shall enter the heavenly Canaan; then may we give ourselves little concern about the future. The proportion of the lost in that case would be so small as to amount practically to uni-

versal salvation. But what if it be the other way? What if still the great multitude perish, and only the few reach the promised land? We ask instinctively if the fact that the millions were in the way to death in that day did not induce God to spare them, will going with the multitude avail us now? If the fact that only two were found in the way of life did not lead to a lowering of the divine requirement then, will a similar fact avail more to-day? God was Love then as now, for he changeth not. If the love of God did not secure deliverance for them, will it secure it any more for the impenitent to-day? If thirty-seven years of suffering endured by so many did not change the law, or the sentence, or the mind of God, in that case, can we hope for any change to be wrought in him by ours?

Pass down the ages to the times of Isaiah and read: "Though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea," "a remnant of them" — only a remnant — "shall return," and what follows? — "the consumption decreed shall overflow with righteousness." Was the mind of the prophet on this thirty-seven years' consumption of Israel in the wilderness? Did men in his day also question the righteousness of the divine procedure, that he so carefully announced not only a consumption decreed, but one that should overflow with righteousness? Hear him again: "Except the Lord of Hosts had left unto

us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah." Here the remnant is very small, and even that is regarded as unmerited mercy. These words of the prophet are quoted by the apostle, and in another place he adds, "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace." This was no utterance of an unsuccessful preacher, rendered morbid by his failure; but it is the inspired statement of one who was more successful than all the rest of the apostles. And does the aspect of things to-day contradict these testimonies of the Word? Look at the proportion of our church accommodations to the population; at the proportion of those accommodations actually occupied from Sabbath to Sabbath; at the character of many who occupy them. Compare the number in the community with the number in the congregation; the number in the congregation and at the communion-table. And how many must we subtract even from this last? Then have Caleb and Joshua no message to us personally?

Do those hundreds of thousands who died in the wilderness say nothing to us? Compare their condition with ours. They were condemned; and so are we, — justly condemned, and our condemnation is no less just. But here the likeness ends. No offer of deliverance from that desert prison encouraged

them to repent; no prospect of release kindled in their hearts one ray of hope. It was one hopeless, unmitigated imprisonment until they died.

It is not so with us. Our doom is indeed more terrible, for it is imprisonment under the curse,—not during the short life of the body, but forever. Once within those prison walls, there is a great gulf fixed that none may ever pass. But here we are prisoners of hope, shut up to the offer of mercy through a Redeemer. Look at the fulness of the forgiveness offered, — pardon of every sin; at its freeness, — without price to whoever will receive it; at the Saviour who procured it, — the Word, who was in the beginning with God, made flesh on purpose to obtain it for us; at the price he paid for it, — not merely laying aside the glory which he had with the Father; not merely being a man of sorrows, enduring the contradiction of sinners against himself, but bearing our sins in his own body on the tree; and then see the grace to which it gives us access, — the full enjoyment of the love of God, now and forever, in an endless increase of the knowledge and appreciation of that love.

We hope some of those who died in that wilderness died acknowledging the justice of their doom, and, through faith, entered into the heavenly Canaan. Shall they, so repenting, and so saved through re-

deeming blood, rise up in judgment and condemn our impenitence and unbelief ?

But some will say, "All depends on my being one of the elect." If any one cherishes such feelings, this history has a special lesson for him. Who was Caleb? Some may answer, "One of the chosen people." He may have been. We hope he is now in heaven. But it is not certain that he was of the seed of Abraham according to the flesh. He may have been one of the few favored Gentiles who, like Melchisedec and Jethro, Rahab and Ruth, even at that early day, gave a hint of the blessed harvest that is now being gathered in ; for it is written, "Unto Caleb he gave a part among the children of Judah, according to the commandment of the Lord." Why did he receive a part among the children of Judah, if he already belonged to them? Or, in that case, what need of a special command for this from the Lord? Read again : "Hebron became the inheritance of Caleb the Kenezite unto this day, because that he wholly followed the Lord God of Israel." Does not that sound as if he followed Jehovah, the God of Israel, in preference to some other god, whom he would be more naturally expected to follow, just as Jethro, the Midianite, might have been said to do, or Ruth, the Moabitess, who said to Naomi, "Thy God shall be my God"?

Suppose, then, that one of the two who were

spared, while those hundreds of thousands perished, was a Gentile who attached himself to the chosen people. Does that look as if the door was shut against any? What if Caleb, in that case, had reasoned, "I am not a descendant of Abraham, therefore it is of no use for me to try to share their blessings"? What if, when all Israel renounced the divine leadership, he had floated with the current and shared their crime? What if he had said, "It is safe to be with the majority; God cannot find it in his heart to punish so many, even if they are wicked; for are they not his children?" What if he had concluded, "It is not prudent to stand up so unbendingly for God and right"? What if he had preferred his own safety to the service of God, when all the people "bade stone him with stones"? We know how he reasoned and how he acted. When such an one in such a manner secures the divine approval, is it manly, — more than that, — is it honest, to sit still and say, "If I am elected I shall be saved," while I do nothing to secure salvation? Surely that stanch maintainer of the right will rise in the great day, and put such presumption to shame. Do such men think how the eye of God looks right through all such words to the root of rebellion from which they grow? Rather let them remember that the same God, who thus rewarded Caleb, when he left

that great multitude to deserved destruction, is the same God with whom we have to do to-day. Did Caleb and Joshua ever regret their course? Was ever a sinner sorry that he had believed in Jesus?

CHAPTER V.

CHRIST PRESENTS HIS PEOPLE UNBLAMABLE IN THE SIGHT OF GOD.

THAT was a strange announcement of the Mesopotamian seer: "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel." We cannot read it without wondering how it could be true. Was not the history of Israel one succession of transgressions?—declension following reformation, and apostasy treading on the heels of declension? They began to chide with Moses even before they left the land of Egypt. No sooner were they safe across the Red Sea than they murmured at the fountain of Marah. Hardly had they obtained relief there, before they complained about food; and when bread had been sent from heaven, straightway they lusted for flesh. Time would fail to recount the perversity at Sinai; the strife at the waters of Meribah; the self-willed attack on Amalek, and their forty years' grieving of God in the wilderness. Now, how can it be said of such a peo-

ple that God hath not beheld iniquity, neither seen perverseness in them?

There must be some explanation of this. Could it be that, though so guilty previously, a total change had taken place in the national character? Not so, for the wickedness of Baalpeor was just about to flaunt itself in the face of Heaven. Nor will it do to say that these are the words of a heathen soothsayer, and so are incorrect; for, however Balaam may have mingled sorceries with the worship of the true God, and however base he may have been personally, yet he spake these words as he was moved by the Holy Ghost; for it is expressly said that "Jehovah put this word into his mouth," and "the Spirit of the Lord came upon him." We must, therefore, admit that it is as truly the word of the Lord as any utterance of David or Isaiah.

Paul may help us to a solution of the difficulty when he tells us, "They are not all Israel which are of Israel;" and as God said unto Elijah, "I have reserved unto myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal," even so, in the days of Balaam, may there not have been a remnant according to the election of grace? Still it may be asked, though there was such a remnant, and they did not partake in the rebellion of the people, were they therefore without sin, so that God could say he did not behold iniquity in them? There is

not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not; and if we may not say that we have no sin, how can God say that he does not behold iniquity in his people?

This question opens up a most interesting view of the grace of God. When Balaam uttered these words, the tabernacle was in the midst of the camp, and in its most holy place was the visible dwelling-place of God. Let us look in on the furniture of the apartment, and see what all Israel was taught to regard as the throne of Jehovah. There was the ark of the testimony, so called because it contained the tables of the law, which was his testimony to his people. It was the law by which is the knowledge of sin. Now, as God looked down upon that ark, what did he see? The law testifying against the sins of Israel? No. That was covered by the golden mercy-seat, and its pure gold bore the stains of the blood which made atonement for sins. That blood-sprinkled mercy-seat covered up the sins of Israel from the eye of God, so that he saw nothing save the type of the blood which cleanseth us from all sin; and so God did not behold iniquity in Jacob. Was it not amazing love that led Israel to associate that mercy-seat with God, so that they could not think of him but in connection with it? Was it anything else that appointed this as the place of meeting for man with God, so that every

thought of intercourse with the Most High should suggest the mercy-seat rather than the throne of judgment?

So David sings of the blessedness of the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin *is covered*; so covered by atoning blood that, as he goes on to say, God does not impute to the sinner the sins thus buried out of sight. So Isaiah is commissioned to say for God, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and *will not remember thy sins.*" Micah is inspired to say, "Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." But Jeremiah is charged with a stronger message than either: "In those days, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, *and there shall be none*; and the sins of Judah, and *they shall not be found.*" All these are precious words of God, and in our moments of deepest conviction, when the burden of guilt is too heavy to be borne, we resort to them for comfort, and, as the warm sun of early summer smiles away the last trace of the dissolving snow, so do these words of God smile away the burden of our guilt. But here is one which it may be we have overlooked. Far back in the dim past, when as yet there was no thought of a temple in Jerusalem; when as yet neither ark nor tabernacle had entered Canaan; when the homeless people still sojourned in tents in the land

of Moab; at such a time, not Moses, though he was yet alive, his eye not dim nor his natural force abated; nor a prophet raised up from among the chosen people, but a heathen soothsayer, is commissioned to say, "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perversity in Israel," so completely is all blotted out by the blood of atonement. There are only two tenses in the Hebrew language, one of which denotes an action already complete, and still existing or recurring, and that is the tense here employed. Already, in the past, the blood on the mercy-seat above the law has so blotted out the transgressions of the law, that God hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, and still, as new sins are added to the list in succession, it covers up each one, so that each moment it remains true that he doth not behold it.

It would be pleasant to resign ourselves to the undisturbed contemplation of this truth; but it may lay a foundation of more lasting enjoyment if we answer some objections that may be brought against it; for, sooner or later, they may occur to our own minds, and, if we know how to meet them, they can have no power to disturb our joy.

It may be asked, Can anything be hidden from the Lord? or can he ever forget that which he has once known?

It will be a relief from all such questionings to bear

in mind that the words of Balaam are spoken of the judicial relations of God to his people, and not of the merely intellectual working of the divine mind. As the Omniscient One, he beholds and has beheld all our transgressions. Nor will the mere intellectual perception of the facts ever pass away; but, as our Judge, he does not behold one thing calling even for censure in the sinner that believes in Jesus; as our Father, he does not see one hindrance to the fullest outflow of his love; as the God whom it is our chief end to enjoy forever, he does not see one cause interfering with the infinite blessedness we are to find in him through eternity. In all these respects it is as if he had never beheld iniquity in Jacob. Some may say that he looks on us as he looks on the angels who have never sinned, and feels toward us as he feels toward them. But that does not express one-half the truth; for we are beloved in the Lord; regarded with favor as members of the body of Jesus Christ; and so regarding us, he hath not beheld iniquity in us.

It is inspiring to think, that, so long before his assuming our nature, the blood of our Jesus should be so efficacious, and that a heathen prophet was permitted to enjoy such a glimpse of the perfection of our justification; and then that it should have been recorded in Scripture, for the comfort of God's people in all ages, is amazing goodness.

From the field of Zophim, on the top of Pisgah, Balaam cries to the Church of God, which he hath redeemed with his own blood: "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perversity in Israel;" and from his humble lodging in the city of Corinth, Paul sends forth the divine message: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." Not a little condemnation, but none at all; not a perfect acquittal to be given hereafter, but here and now. Let us always walk between these royal banners, reading the inscriptions as we go, and let us feel toward the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, as becomes those who believe the message of this good word of God.

If the Israelite always thought of God as enthroned above the mercy-seat; if, whenever he worshipped, he was taught to turn in that direction; if, also, the faces of the cherubim were toward that same mercy-seat, reminding us how angels desire to look into its mysteries, surely Christians, in all their approaches to God, should think of him as the God who "hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

Whenever we meet with anything so admirably adapted to set forth the work of our Redeemer, we instinctively long for some assurance that God de-

signed that adaptation, and so approves the enjoyment we find in it. God understands such feelings in his people, and furnishes the desired assurance in that Scripture which, speaking of Christ, says, "Whom God set forth to be a *propitiation* through faith in his blood; to declare his righteousness, that he might be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." The Greek word rendered propitiation is the identical term that is used in the Septuagint whenever the word mercy-seat occurs in the Mosaic account of the tabernacle. We may conceive of our propitiation as covering sin from the sight of God, or as bearing it away and casting it into the depths of the sea, — that most inaccessible place to human eyes, — or we may think of him as blotting it out with his own blood. But every way God is most just, when, as our Judge, "he hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perversity in Israel."

CHAPTER VI.

FOR CHRIST'S SAKE.

IN the castle of a nobleman beyond the Jordan, whose influence is felt throughout the land, a modest youth leads a life of humble dependence. He is not the nobleman's own son; he is not even a relative; he is simply a guest dependent on the hospitality of the castle for his daily bread. As now the decayed representative of an illustrious name may be fed by the bounty of some Koordish emir, so does this youth enjoy the hospitality of Machir, the son of Ammiel, the Chief of Lodebar. His is not a life to be coveted, for besides the galling feeling of dependence is the constant sense of insecurity. At any moment the guest of to-day is liable to become the exile of the morrow. Even worse than that, — his father's father had filled a throne now occupied by another, and Eastern monarchs are not wont to spare those who may one day drive their own children from the throne. Besides all these things, this man has for sixteen years been a hopeless cripple. When but five

years old his father and his father's father fell on the same bloody field, and his nurse, dreading the indiscriminate slaughter of the whole family, too common on such occasions, fled with her tender charge to a place of safety; but either the road was too rough, or she was too excited, for she let him fall, and crippled him for life. Perhaps it would be hard to find in all Israel a more pitiable object. He had been born heir-presumptive to the throne, and now he drags out an obscure existence at the greatest possible distance from the capital, among the forests beyond the Jordan. He is only too glad to be obscure; indeed, the better to secure concealment, it seems that he has changed his name for one in which a stranger would hardly recognize the grandson of the late king.

Such was his situation when one day a royal messenger was seen approaching the castle walls. What could he want in that secluded place? He enters and summons the young cripple to the presence of the king. What a moment was that! Has some informer betrayed his hiding-place? Perhaps his kind entertainers give him up for lost, for, if the royal eye penetrates the obscurity of a border castle and the disguise of that assumed name, where can their guest be safe? They are well aware, too, that disobedience to a royal mandate has often furnished an excuse for the stroke that followed.

In Oriental lands not seldom has such a messenger been charged to despatch his victim in the first lonely glen through which they passed, or lead him into the ambush waiting for their prey. Yet this son of a noble sire, not knowing the things that shall befall him, voluntarily follows the messenger. Together they wind around the woody hills of Gilead, across the valley of the Jordan, between impenetrable thickets, and go up the road from Jericho to Jerusalem, where a certain man fell among thieves. With what feelings did he climb the sides of Olivet, and catch his first glimpse of the city, from the same point whence, long after, a greater than he wept over Jerusalem! Ushered into the royal presence, in painful uncertainty of what might follow, he falls prostrate before the arbiter of his fate. David notices his trepidation, and his resemblance to his father, — that friend whom he had never ceased to love, — and he says, "Fear not, for I will surely show thee kindness for Jonathan thy father's sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father, and thou shall eat bread at my table continually." The poor cripple bows himself again, though with far different feelings, saying, "What is thy servant that thou shouldst look upon such a dead dog as I?" This language sounds strange to us, but in the East, where dogs do not belong to particular owners, but herd in droves about the streets, and at

evening make a noise, and go round about the city wandering up and down for meat, and fighting together for the garbage in the gutters, it is exceedingly impressive. When the Jew would concentrate hatred and scorn of the Gentile into one word, he calls him a dog. That woman of Canaan did not resent the epithet when applied to her. But a dead dog is a step below even that, and is called forth by the strong impression made by such unexpected favor on one naturally meek, and whom long suffering had made still more humbly submissive.

What a change was wrought in the condition of that poor cripple by those words of David! Before, he was not only homeless and penniless, he was unable to earn his bread, and seemed to have been summoned from obscurity only to be slain. But now, not only is he assured of life, he has also an ample estate. Instead of hiding in distant Lodebar, he dwells in Jerusalem. Instead of being treated as a traitor, he sits at the table of the king; and, instead of poverty, he has all the comforts of royalty, without its cares.

The narratives of Scripture are not mere stories to interest us for a moment and then be forgotten; but each is intended to implant in the mind some truth, which may be an abiding blessing. What truths, then, are taught us by this narrative? The situation

of the sinner, before he comes to God, is illustrated by that fugitive in Lodebar. He dared not meet the king, because of his relation to that bloody Saul, who hunted for the life of David ; and the sinner dares not meet God, because himself is possessed of that carnal mind which is enmity against God ; he loves darkness rather than light, because his own deeds are evil. "For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd." He had rather stay in the woods beyond Jordan than come to the sanctuary where the Word of God reveals his sinfulness, and, when there, he had rather hear a prophesying of smooth things than a faithful setting forth of his sins. In the language of Scripture, he says, "Depart from me, for I desire not the knowledge of thy ways."

As that cripple was unfitted to earn his daily bread, the sinner has unfitted himself to secure his own salvation. There is none lacking among his intellectual faculties ; he is created with no disabling deficiency in his moral powers ; but by his own sin he unfits himself for the exercise of holiness, and, as a delicate instrument, long used for a purpose to which it is not adapted, becomes unfitted for its proper use, so is the heart of the sinner unfitted for the service and enjoyment of God.

As that son of Jonathan knew neither safety nor

happiness till he came to the king, so the sinner never can attain true felicity till he comes to God. He will always live a life of fear and suspense, not knowing what evil may befall him, or when, till he returns to the only Being able to make him blest. It is only when a sinner can say, "The Lord is my salvation!" that he can add, "Whom shall I fear?" In his favor is life. Nothing else can take the place of that favor. Gather together the most of wealth, honor, and earthly pleasure, that mortal ever called his own, and it does not satisfy the soul.

We must leave Lodebar, and go to Jerusalem, if we would find our true resting-place, even though all the way thither it seems anything but an approach to rest. It is significant that the name Lodebar means literally "no pasture," and the name "Salem" means peace; and to find true peace we must come out of the hiding-place where we vainly try to flee from God, and surrender ourselves to him, in Christ.

This narrative illustrates the divine origin of salvation. The son of Jonathan does not come to David, and beg for his favor, but David searches for him and brings him to his palace; and so the sinner does not ask God to provide salvation; but God so loves us as to provide it in Christ, and then urges us to look to him and live.

Here, also, we see the true ground of the divine

favor toward sinners. David, previous to this act of royal favor, had no personal regard for his guest; he may have never even seen him; but before that son of Jonathan was born he had entered into covenant with his father, that he would not cut off his kindness from the house of Jonathan, forever. It was because of that covenant that, as soon as he was firmly seated on the throne, he instituted the inquiry, "Is there yet any left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness, for Jonathan's sake?" All the favor shown to the son of Jonathan, down to the day of his death, was on the same ground; and beautifully does this set forth the ground of the divine favor to us. God does not save us in return for goodness in us, or for service rendered by us, but on the ground of his covenant with the Son, that, on condition he was wounded for our transgressions, he should see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied. We may be full of provocation, and Adam, like Saul, may call for wrath to rest on all his descendants, but the second Adam, like Jonathan, comes in to carry away, with bleeding hands, our sins and the sins of our fathers, and cast them into the depths of the sea.

Does not this ground of the favor of God to sinners shine out divinely by the side of this favor of the king to the son of his friend? David is mindful of the brotherly covenant, but he knows

not whether any one lives to profit by it; so he makes inquiry throughout the land. But when the Father entered into covenant with the Son it was with no such uncertainty. He gave to his Son those who were chosen in him from before the foundation of the world, and then gave him power over all flesh that he might give eternal life to as many as were thus given him.

David was a redeemed sinner, showing now the loveliness of grace, and now the hatefulness of sin. Our benefactor is the unchanging God. Jonathan had been long dead, but He through whom we are saved ever liveth to make intercession for us. Was David moved to this kindness by an earthly love; and shall the infinite love of the Father to the Son ever fail those who come unto God through him? Think of divine love to a divine object, and adore the grace which makes that the foundation of our hope.

Does not the favor shown by David to the son of Jonathan beautifully shadow forth the extent of the favor shown to us in Christ? The poor fugitive is not only made rich, but admitted to daily intercourse with the king. He eats bread with him in his kingdom; he enjoys all that the king would have delighted to have made his father enjoy. And so God in Christ not only pardons sinners for Christ's sake, but we are to eat bread with Christ in his

kingdom, and in that intercessory prayer which, more than any other Scripture, opens up to us the heart of God, we overhear the words, "Thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me." What is David's love to Jonathan compared with that? And this is the portion of the sinner who comes to God through Christ.

Let the sinner who does not trust in Christ look at that trembling one in Lodebar. He does not know David as the sweet singer of Israel, or the man after God's own heart; he knows him only as the man who sits on the throne that should have been his father's. He is summoned to the royal presence, but not one word is said of the reason why; he can only guess that from the dark record of Oriental despotism. Yet he goes at once, not knowing but the path before him may lead to the grave. Look at him, and in the light of his obedience how seems disobedience to God? In view of his submission, how appears want of submission to Christ? By the side of his faith, how stands unbelief in the Saviour? Let the wicked forsake his way, and return unto our God, and see if the difference between what he heard of Christ from others, and what he finds in him, be not far greater than that between the fears of the son of Jonathan and the reception he met with from his father's friend.

CHAPTER VII.

COMPLETE ACCEPTANCE THROUGH CHRIST.

MORE than all else the Christian loves to study the truth that relates to Christ, and more than all else that truth conforms him to God. It is a blessed arrangement of divine grace that thus makes inclination, duty, and blessing to flow in the same channel.

The Epistle to the Hebrews presents very precious views of Christ, but often uses language in a sense peculiar to itself. We have an example of this in the passage, "By one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified," and he who would understand it must study it carefully, for the words have a meaning unusual to us, though perfectly familiar to the first readers of this epistle.

They seem to say that the atonement shall make perfect in heaven those who become holy on earth; but the apostle is not speaking of our attaining unto perfect holiness, but of the sufficiency of the one offering of Christ for justification in opposition to the oft-repeated offerings of the temple.

He had just said "Every priest stands daily ministering and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sin; but this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God;" and afterwards he adds, "Now, where remission of sins takes place, there is no more offering for sin." Both before and after this statement his mind is on the sufficiency of the atonement, not for sanctification, but justification.

With this hint for a guide, let us now search out the meaning of this Scripture. It speaks of an efficacy of the atonement on them who are sanctified. Who are they? We may suppose them the holy in heart. But in the previous chapter Paul speaks of the blood of the sacrifices and the water of separation sanctifying to the purifying of the flesh. Here is no moral renovation, but only such a cleansing from ceremonial defilement as qualifies a man for external worship; and the argument is, "How much more shall the blood of Christ purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God!" The object is to deliver the conscience from the sense of guilt, that it may enter into the enjoyment of peace with God.

But as this meaning of sanctification seems strange to us, though familiar to the Hebrew mind, let us look at some of the things that made it so. Aaron and his sons were commanded to eat those things

wherewith the atonement was made, to consecrate and to sanctify them; that is, the efficacy of these, as an expiation for sin, would qualify them for their service as the priests of God. Again God commanded Moses, "Seven days shalt thou make an atonement for the altar, and sanctify it, and it shall be an altar most holy," by virtue of that seven days' atonement. So, also, it is written of Job that, when the days of his children's feasting had gone about, he "sent and sanctified them." How? The narrative goes on to say: he "offered burnt-offerings according to the number of them all," for Job said, "It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts."

Indeed, the chapter before us declares that we are "sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once." Now, what can this mean but that expiation is made for us by that offering? In this same chapter the writer speaks of one who counts "the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing." Can we make that mean anything else than the blood wherewith expiation was made for him?

In the thirteenth chapter we read that "the bodies of those beasts whose blood is brought into the sanctuary for sin are burned without the camp; wherefore, Jesus, also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the

gate." Now, would the apostle compare the suffering of Christ without the gate to their bodies being burned without the camp, if the sanctification was different in the two cases? And how did those offerings sanctify? Their blood, we are told, was brought into the sanctuary, an expiation for sin. Yet let no one conclude that because sanctification sometimes has this meaning, therefore the ordinary meaning of the word is false. As well might one insist that, because the word interest has a special meaning in the counting-room, it shall never have any other. Even merchants consult their own interest, and consider what will best promote it. Sanctification is as essential to salvation as justification, for "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." But that does not prevent that, when Paul wrote, "By one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified," he meant, and his readers understood him, them for whom it made expiation. If any one still doubts this meaning, let him read in the context, "Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, let us draw near, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience." That is the sanctification referred to, — the heart washed from the corroding torment of guilt in the blood of Jesus. Without the knowledge of this meaning of the term, not only this, but other Scriptures also, must fail to impart to us any spirit-

ual comfort. Take that statement, for example, "Both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one." If we understand this, — the progressive deliverance of the heart from sin, — what consolation does it bring! Did Christ turn from sin to holiness and then struggle toward perfection through such devious ways as we do? But read it, He who makes expiation and they for whom it is made are all of one; and it tells us that, in the very nature in which we sinned, Christ suffered for our sins. It tells us, too, that such a Saviour "is not ashamed to call us brethren," and that we may find in him, thus made like unto his brethren, "a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God."

Put any other meaning on the expression in the text, and the whole passage is out of the reach of the true disciple. Go to that contrite heart, — one of the poor in spirit, whom Jesus blesses, — and tell him thus and thus is true of the holy in heart; and it is as if he heard of the death of his dearest friend. What is the matter? Why, his first thought is, Then it is not for me, for I am unholy, but oh, I should have loved to take into my heart a truth so precious! Now tell him the same is true of them whose hope of pardon rests on atoning blood; and is there any need to explain those tears? His heart is just drinking in this river of consolation till it runs over in those drops of joy. He is thinking

what that means, "By one offering he hath perfected forever;" and the more he thinks, the more heaven seems to open before his wondering gaze. But let us leave him, to dig for ourselves into this mine of truth. It is better to draw water ourselves from the wells of salvation than to look on another as he drinks of the water of life.

What, then, is the meaning of "hath perfected forever"? Bearing in mind that this part of the epistle treats of the superiority of the one offering of Christ over all the offerings of the law, for justification, in the previous chapter we find the key to the meaning in these words: The offerings and sacrifices of the first tabernacle "could not make him that did the service perfect as pertaining to the conscience." That strikes the key-note. It is not, "make perfect" the moral character, but as "pertaining to the conscience." To make perfect, then, in this sense, is to remove completely the sense of guilt, and replace it with the peace of God. The ceremonial law could not do this, with all its divers washings and carnal ordinances. But "Christ, by his own blood, entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." Put that eternal redemption through "entering once with his own blood into the holy place," alongside of these words, and see if it throws no light on his having perfected forever, by one offering, those for whom he died. Then, read again,

in this same chapter, "The law having the rough outline, and not the complete picture of the good things to come," — and every artist knows what that means, — "can never with those sacrifices, which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect; for then would they not have ceased to be offered?" Why? "Because that the worshippers, once purged, should have had no more CONSCIENCE OF SINS." Is it not plain that the sense of guilt is the evil to be perfectly done away by this one offering? The "making perfect," then, is the complete removal of this through the application of the blood of Jesus.

Let us now gather into one statement the result of this, perhaps, too tedious inquiry. According to the Scriptures considered, "Of the things that have been spoken, this is the sum:" Christ, by the sacrifice offered once upon the cross, has completely and forever removed the penalty due to sin, from all his people. This does not mean that they shall be saved even though they do not repent. It is true that Christ tasted death for every man, and he is a propitiation for the sins of the whole world; but only those who have fled for refuge, to lay hold of this hope set before us, shall be saved. And no sinner, however numerous or black his crimes, who comes unto God, through Christ, shall ever perish. He may be the greatest transgressor that ever walked the earth; but whosoever accepts the offer of mercy

through redeeming blood, Christ justifies him completely and forever.

Look at these two ideas separately. Christ justifies all such completely. Adam in Paradise was not more truly an object of the divine complacence than is the sinner who to-day believes in Jesus. No angel round about the throne is regarded with greater favor than the sinner who comes to God through Christ. The grace bestowed on such is not something which God bestows because it is his official duty, — as a banker might count out money to the man who brings the proper papers, thinking only of their correctness, but nothing at all of the man to whom he pays it. He might do this to a stranger whom he never saw before, and would never think of again. He might do it to a criminal, the sight of whom only awakened such abhorrence that he hastened to get rid of him. Nor does God pardon through Christ, half doubting whether it be expedient, as a governor might pardon a malefactor, simply because it was the more merciful alternative, while as a man he would have nothing to do with the object of his clemency. God never hesitates, as if about to do something of doubtful propriety. He never blesses, in his public capacity, a sinner whom in his heart he cannot love. When God gives his hand to a sinner, in Christ, his heart goes with it, his whole heart, in all its infinite and unutterable

love. He does not see our sins ; instead of them, he sees only the stains of the precious blood that blotted them out. He does not even see a sinner before him ; he sees only a representative of his dear Son, and the measure of the love with which he loves us, is the love which he bears to Christ. Tell me the delight of the Father in that only-begotten Son, and I will make known the great love wherewith he loves the members of his spiritual body. The great trouble with Christians is, that they do not half believe it. In their thoughts they diminish it to something that is suitable, as they suppose, to objects of love so vile as they, and then try to believe it, like men trying to use property which in their heart they think is not theirs. Just as though our sinfulness was the measure of the love of God, and not that one offering of our Redeemer. That, — nothing in us, — that only, secures for us the perfect love of God ; not his pity, but his love. We may have a perfect pity for some miserable wretch we would never choose for a companion ; but this is love. An aged parent would love the child of his departed daughter for her sake ; a brother would cherish the infant left behind by the sister who is not, for God took her. They do not ask, is it amiable, or beautiful ? Its beauty and its amiability are its relation to the loved one that is gone. So, only in an infinitely greater degree, God loves

the sinner who comes to him through Christ. We read that Christ is able to save to the uttermost, and in our hearts put that uttermost far off in the life to come. But what is salvation? Is it not reunion to God? Then we have it now and here, and we cannot go to an uttermost, in thinking how we would like God to love us, that he has not gone beyond in the love already procured. Search long, study forever, and still this "he hath perfected" is above and beyond us,— a love which passeth knowledge.

If these imperfect words help us to consider the "completely," turn now to the "forever." Just as God loves Christians to-day in Christ, so will he love them through eternity. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." These things are soon said; but the truth they express moves on through duration with a grander and more enduring sweep than that of the planets through space. Let no man detract from the force of such statements, lest they encourage Christians to sin. Encourage Christians to sin! When other men can be encouraged to be diseased and suffer pain, instead of enjoying health, then will we talk about Christians being encouraged to sin. Such a thing would prove a man no Christian. As well might one fear lest the world fall because it has no solid support. It would not be a world if it stood on a foundation ever so firm. Its very existence depends on its ceaseless

motion along its orbit ; and so the Christian. Cease, then, from such fears and take God at his word. That says, "He has perfected forever," and God never exaggerates.

Then step off the foundation of personal deserving ; step on to this divine basis of that one offering, and look at the infinite fulness of its capacity. It may require something commensurate with God to secure his favor for sinners ; but is not this sufficient ? It may have seemed a small thing for those Roman soldiers to crucify that unresisting Jew. They may have thought that they had done greater things on the battle-fields of the empire. But see ! the sun hides his face ; earth shudders ; the rocks rend themselves. No marvel. This globe was created for that one event and its results. All history moves round it as its centre. Heaven, so far as related to earth, exists only in and through it. And who are the actors ? Not kings, or angels, or archangels. But there, God the Father lays on Christ the iniquities of us all. There, God the Son bears our sins in his own body ; and after this it is a small matter that angels desire to look into these things. Not from the highest created being, but from the Lord God Almighty, this offering derives its efficacy. That efficacy is infinite, because it is divine. We speak of the fortunes of private men, or the wealth of a nation, as employed in some great

undertaking; and in how many cases is the wealth so employed utterly consumed? But in this one offering of Jesus Christ, God has, as it were, employed the infinite power of Godhead, which remains in all its integrity as before. God still lives to impart efficiency to that offering. He liveth forever to render it eternally efficacious, and therefore by it he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.

Well might he who made it stand erect and say, "He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." "This is the Father's will who hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." "I give unto my people eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." Are not these true sayings of God a divine commentary on this utterance of Holy Scripture?

These things teach us where to find perfection, — not in our own hearts, where, aside from grace, dwells no good thing; and even grace is contaminated by contact with our sin. Whoever looks for perfection there must look in vain. But let us look to Jesus, to the infinite perfection of his redemption, and the glory of his power to save; for in him alone shall we find rest. Oh, the blessedness of being allowed to look unto Jesus; and even then of resting not in our looking, but in the one offering of

him to whom we look, whereby he is able to perfect every sinner that comes to God by him !

In the light of this truth the privilege of intercession shines out with new glory. Some view this blessed work in such a light that it becomes a burden. Christian mothers go to God in behalf of their children, full of desire for their salvation, but distressed by the feeling that they cannot offer one petition for them worthy the ear of God. In his presence their faith seems worthless ; their desires seem no desires ; even their love for their children so unspiritual that they dare not plead it before the Lord. No wonder prayer almost dies within them, and they go forth from the closet with a heavy heart. They were trying to prevail with God through the fervor of their own devotion, and they might as well have tried to push the globe from its orbit. Here we discern a more excellent way. That great High Priest, who brings us to the mercy-seat, fills our hands with this one offering which he hath made, and we have nothing to do but to go in just as we are, make known our errand, and point to this precious blood of atonement. This is the foundation on which we stand to pray. This is the life of our petitions. This secures divine favor for us and our intercession. So that the sinner who enters the Holy of Holies, bearing this one offering of

*

Christ, comes forth bearing the thing for which he asked, — it may be blessing for one soul, or for a family, or for a church, or for a nation, or for the world. None of them are too large to be procured by this one offering, and Christ hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father on purpose that we might prove its efficacy in all our intercessions. Would to God that the church appreciated this high calling! Would that it knew the power it may thus have to prevail with God! It is when we look not to our fervor, or our faith, but to this one offering, that we pray the fervent and effectual prayer of the righteous that availeth much.

As our hearts grow up into this utterance of the apostle, how appear those professed ministers of Christ, who sneer at what they term a sacrificial theology as an obsolete dogma? How can they speak so of Christ and his redeeming love? Let us offer that petition of him whom they dishonor, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do."

While they would exalt their human notions to its glorious throne, let us maintain this one offering of Christ against every human substitute. We cannot exalt it higher than God does in his Word, and God forbid that we should glory in anything else! When burdened with sin let us rest on it for pardon. When struggling with evil, thence let us derive our

victory ; and in that last conflict, when our feet shall pass into an untried world, then, too, let us look away from every defect of our own piety to this one offering whereby he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.

CHAPTER VIII.

VITAL UNION WITH CHRIST.

THE soil contributes of its substance for the life of plants. Plants again sustain animal life. And in like manner the lower forms of animal life furnish material for the support of the life of man. Yet all this is true only where there is life already; and, where that is wanting, these vital processes are impossible. For there must be life to take up into itself the material adapted to its support. A dead tree may stand in soil ever so fertile, but its roots, instead of deriving life from the wealth of material round about, themselves decay. Life, then, is indispensable to the processes that sustain life. But when that is wanting, how shall it be restored? To this question nature furnishes no reply. Life produces life; but it is in another existence, not in itself. The plant and animal produce others after their kind; but they are offshoots springing up around the parent stem, each one a separate existence, and, numerous as they may be, they cannot restore vitality to the decaying trunk

whence they proceeded. The fabled fountain of youth is indeed a fable. In all the realm of nature there is no power to bring back the life that has departed. The lifeless form, however full of manly beauty yesterday, to-day craves to be buried out of sight. Only the power that gives life can restore it. Only when the Creator of Lazarus stands before his tomb and bids him come forth, can the sheeted dead obey. Precisely so, when spiritual life leaves the soul, and a divine hand writes over its sepulchre, "Dead in trespasses and sins." Only he who gave that life at first can reanimate it now. In the beginning, life was a direct communication from the living God; and such, nothing less, is its restoration, as it is written, "The first man, Adam, was made a living soul; the last Adam a *life-giving* spirit." The bestowment of this life is a mystery on which nature sheds no light, but the Bible reveals it to our comfort and joy in the Lord. That speaks not only of a communication of life, but of a vital union to the source of life. Christ saith, "I am the vine, ye are the branches." "I am the source whence your spiritual life proceeds, the indwelling power that maintains it and makes it fruitful." Once more, willing more abundantly to impart both life and joy, he saith to us by his Spirit, "Now ye are the body of Christ and members in particular;" that is, addressing the whole number of believers, he calls

them his body, and each one among them a member of that body; collectively they constitute his body, individually they are members of that body in which he dwells as its life; so that each one can say, "I live, yet not I, but Christ that liveth in me." The apostle, in describing believers as grafted into Christ, says it is "contrary to nature," for, in nature, the graft carries over with it its own life, and feeds it out of the life of the tree in which it is inserted. But we, "contrary to nature," having no life of our own save what may well be called a *living death*, receive both life and its nourishment from him. The worthless graft, through a vital connection with Christ, is made good, and receives a perpetuation of that goodness. Each of these illustrations is imperfect, as indeed every illustration must be, for in the nature of things it can only set forth one aspect of truth. The illustration of the vine is imperfect, in that the life it imparts is wholly physical; so that, though the idea of imparting and sustaining life is most beautifully brought out, yet we are in danger of transferring the idea of a life necessarily physical to a life whose nature is spiritual and free. The branch grows out of the vine and lives in it, without thought, — the opposite of the life which we live in Christ; and so this most comforting illustration may be perverted to the encouragement of an idle unbelief, while intellectually

we admire what we do not realize, and revel in fancies instead of solid experience.

The illustration of the body and its members is also imperfect, because while only the part nearest the head is in contact with it, all the rest can only be united to it through the parts intervening, so that some are more remote than others; but every member is immediately joined to Christ. Nothing comes between my soul and him any more than between Paul and the Saviour who spoke to him on the way to Damascus. Nothing comes between any believer and Christ any more than between the disciple whom Jesus loved and the bosom on which he leaned at supper. Therefore, in meditating on this illustration, it is well to think of Christ, not as the outward visible head at one extremity of the body, but as the head of life, which, like a subtile essence, pervades the whole body. There is a word used by some in this connection which when rightly understood is very expressive, though very unmeaning if understood in the ordinary sense. The word is "inform:" it usually means "to give information;" but here is used in the sense of "forming inwardly," creating the inner essence and making it to grow up to perfection. In this sense Christ informs every member of his spiritual body; that is, he forms them such, creating them anew, and working out that new creation till they are complete in him.

Holding fast to this truth, we have no trouble about the Head being so far from our humble position in the body, and so much coming between us and Him who is our life; but in every movement of our spiritual life we recognize the movement of Him who works in us both to will and to do.

The union of the members in the body will be destroyed; but this living union with Christ is indestructible. The vital union between arm and head shall end, and when the life that now binds them together shall pass away, even the material composing them, deprived of the informing life, shall crumble into dust; but the union between Christ and his people shall endure while God endures. Let no one think that this union is eternal because it relates to the soul which never dies; for it includes body as well as soul. If our souls are united to Christ, so are our bodies also. "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ?" It may seem strange that one so glorious should unite to himself these vile bodies, that are doomed to corruption. Certainly we had never dreamed of asking such a favor; but this is not the only thing in which redeeming love does exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think. And if he is pleased to condescend so far, what have we to say against it? That blessed truth, "The bodies of believers, being still united to Christ, do rest in their

graves 'until the resurrection," that has comforted so many on their way down to the grave, and so many weeping at graves, is no theological fancy ; for the bodies of believers are made members of Christ on purpose that hereafter they may be fashioned "like unto his glorious body," and so, reunited to the glorified spirit shall both soul and body be forever with the Lord.

The divine truth, that every believer in Christ is a member of his body, is no mere barren theory. The Scripture abounds in statements of its practical results. One of these is, that we are crucified with Christ. He did not only die for our sins, but as the head of the body, which is the church. Did his death satisfy the penal demands of the law? then by his death every believer is regarded as having also satisfied its penal demands, so that it has no further demands against us. Or, to use the language of Holy Scripture, than which there can be nothing more accurate, "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus,"—that is, united to him, members of his body, — for when Christ died, the penal demands of the law were fully met, so that our guilt rested on no member of that inanimate corpse, and precisely so in the view of our Judge it rests on no member of that spiritual body whose Head then and there died for it; for they are all included in that Head. This is a truth so abun-

dant in comfort that the Holy Ghost expresses it in various ways, in order that we may not fail to see, and seeing to enjoy it. So, in another place, we are "dead with him." Again, "we are buried with him." Now, Christ "died unto sin once," and so "death hath no more dominion over him;" that is, he died to the condemning power of sin, so that the penalty could never again be required at his hand; and if he is thus forever freed from the power of the law to condemn, so also is every member of his spiritual body, for he and they are one. Is there nothing practical in all this?—no depth of peace and joy in God, such as thought cannot fathom, and such as will require eternity for these hearts fully to enjoy?

Inspiring as this is, however, it is not all. Scripture adds, that, by virtue of this union to Christ, "we are quickened together with him;" that is, "made alive again with him;" or, "we are raised up together with him," in his resurrection. And how was Christ raised up? He died, bowed down under the load of our sin; at the moment of death that burden rolled off from him forever, and then he rose eternally accepted, to be beloved not only in himself, but as our Redeemer. The beloved Son is henceforth the beloved Saviour. Hear him going down into the valley of the shadow of death saying, "As the Father hath given me commandment, even so I do." Think with what interest the Father

looked on such obedience even unto death, and in the light of that, look up to the divine delight with which the same Father welcomed him from the grave. And, amazing grace! all that divine satisfaction with him and with his work our Saviour shares with us. Who can enter into such heights and depths of mercy? Yet Christ does not transfer this delight of the Father in him over to us, as though it were something he could spare. He still retains it. He could not forego one iota of the joy set before him, but he shares it with us, and glorious as is that divine complacence, it is more glorious still when we are joint heirs with Christ in its enjoyment. When the heart is full of such truth, it is like stepping into heaven before the time. If any are not taught of God to apprehend it, it must seem incomprehensible. But if the Spirit reveals to us this truth of Christ, we are far beyond the slow help of human words;—a sinner, so one with the Saviour rising from the tomb, as to be partaker of the favor with which he is regarded of the Father! Let others expatiate here if they can; but let us lay our faces in the dust, and in silent reverence adore.

In our most favored moments, the radiance of this truth shines down from all parts of the sky of Holy Scripture. The expression, "We are made the righteousness of God," startles us by its boldness;

but the additional words "in him," that is, as members of his spiritual body, help us to climb even to such a height. So, too, when an apostle says, "Your life is hid with Christ in God," this fact of vital union with a risen Saviour helps us to apprehend such exceeding glory. The same truth shows us how children of wrath can be lifted up to "fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ:" fellowship in work and spirit, and aim and joy, because of fellowship in life. Out of Christ all the exceeding great and precious promises only tantalize our longing hearts; but as members of his body "we are partakers of the promise in Christ." Apart from him that everlasting covenant, "I will not turn away from them to do them good, but I will put my fear in their hearts that they shall not depart from me," always seems like an inaccessible Paradise, just as Eden must have appeared to our first parents when the cherubim and the flaming sword forbade their return. But, united to Christ, we are in that Paradise, and the gates that else forbade our entrance now forbid our ever going forth; for that covenant, in all its fulness, "is confirmed to us of God in Christ." We are "blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ;" "rooted and built up in him," "we grow up into him in all things," yea, "we are made complete in him." Truths which we could once look at only afar off,

with a deep gulf between, are now among the green pastures where the shepherd maketh us to lie down in quiet enjoyment.

There is an expression, also, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, xii. 10, that both illustrates and is illustrated by this union to Christ; for if we are "partakers of his life," it is not strange if we are, also, "partakers of his holiness." Even that bold language of Peter, about being "partakers of the divine nature," is only a ray of the brightness of this vital union streaming down through the darkness to light us home to its full fruition, when, seated together with Christ, on his throne, "we shall judge angels."

Does not that prayer of Christ, "that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us," also refer to this union with Christ, and through him with the Father? Who can be content to limit this to the external union of Christians in one church, or of different churches in one spirit of love? Do not the words, "as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us," point to some heavenly relation of the members of the body of Christ to God, which, now "dark with excess of light," can be known only when in heaven we know what it is to be heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ? It is blasphemous to think of sharing in any incom-

municable attribute of Godhead ; yet when we read, "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me," mere Christian fellowship with each other seems a meaning all too small for words like these. Our Immanuel here introduces us into a fellowship with God, through his incarnation, and our union with him, which words can neither express, nor our minds at present comprehend. We can only rejoice in hope of this glory of God, till our apprehension of union with Christ shall prepare us for these heavenly things ; for Christ tells us that there are truths by the side of which even regeneration by the Holy Ghost is a mere "earthly thing." Blessed and holy are they to whom Christ shall reveal these mysteries ; for in them truly his love passeth knowledge, and in knowing it, we shall be filled with all the fulness of God.

We cannot work out this union for ourselves, when even the nature of it is so great a mystery. Before a mechanic can make a given article, he must understand its construction ; but God alone understands how a soul, dead in sins, is made a living member of a living Saviour. Must we then sit still and resign ourselves to fate? Not so! "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," — not "thou shalt save thyself," but "thou shalt be

saved." God shall save us ; for while we are beginning to trust in a personal Saviour, God is uniting us to Christ, a member of his spiritual body. Alongside of our looking unto Jesus, advances this divine work, wrought in us by One able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. We have only to put ourselves into the hands of Christ, and let him make us a branch in the true vine. In order to nourish our body, we need neither understand nor oversee the processes of that living chemistry that assimilates food to its substance. We eat, and God does the rest. So here, as sure as we "look unto Jesus," he who said, "Look unto me, and be ye saved," will not prove faithless to his promise.

CHAPTER IX.

ABIDING LIFE IN CHRIST.

THE Bible reveals truth which we shall study through eternity ; so it is not strange if we cannot fully fathom it to-day. We may always understand enough for present sanctification, and though there are passages which we cannot master so fully as we wish, yet the study of them is never without profit. We cannot ponder one of the things hard to be understood without finding some new treasure. Just as working among perfumes imbues us with their fragrance, though we carry away no appreciable weight, so holy Scripture never sends us away from its careful study unrewarded.

There is an utterance of the beloved disciple, which every Christian longs to understand more perfectly. He says that " 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 ; " and though the present attempt to explain it may still leave much to be desired, yet it is pleasant to know

that attention cannot be called to it, however imperfectly, without some spiritual good.

The first requisite for a correct understanding of this Scripture is a right apprehension of what it is to be born of God; for the "not committing sin" depends on being born of God, and the fact that one cannot sin rests on the same foundation. The expression, "born of God," forbids us to think of a change brought about by man, either in himself or in his fellow-men. The babe is not born of itself, and whosoever believes on the name of Jesus Christ is born, "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." So that the Christian is not called "a Son of God" by way of metaphor, but he is *made* so in fact. In regeneration God makes us partakers of the life of Christ, so that we become partakers of his holiness. We are members of his body, and holy Scripture even teaches us that we become partakers of the divine nature. Not meaning, of course, that the finite can become infinite, or aspire to any share in the incommunicable attributes of Godhead; but just as every son is partaker of the nature of his parent, so, by being born of God, we become, through Christ, partakers of the moral nature of God. Christ is the vine, and we are the branches; and while, on our part, it was believing on Christ that brought us into this vital union with the Lord, on the part of God it was such

an engrafting of us into the vine that it is not we that live, but Christ that liveth in us. The current of spiritual life in the renewed heart flows also through the heart of God, as our Saviour says, "I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you." So much is involved in being born of God. Outwardly there is a change of conduct; but that is owing to a change of heart; and if we trace that back to its final cause, we will find it in this, being made partakers of the life of Christ.

Now, as the blessed results, "sinneth not," and "cannot sin," are made dependent, not on our efforts and prayers, but on this vital union with Christ, it becomes us to consider it well. Yet let no one understand that those results will take place without effort and prayer, or that it is no matter whether we strive or sit in idleness. If we have this vital union with God, it will manifest itself in spiritual activity; and yet, because this activity is the manifestation of a life in Christ, if we would have a sure ground of hope, we must go back to that life. The Holy Ghost teaches this, when he says that "whosoever is born of God, sinneth not;" not because he prays and strives, but because "his seed remaineth in him;" and "he cannot sin;" not because he loves holiness and hates sin, but because "he is born of God." A child notices two trees growing side by side. One of them is an oak, the other an elm. He

distinguishes them by their leaves, their bark, and general outline, without going back to the causes of that difference, or thinking why the elm-tree never produces oak-leaves, or why the oak never bears the slender, pendulous branches of the elm. A naturalist goes back at once to the difference in the life of the two, and knows that, because of that essential distinction, the one can never yield the products of the other. Yet, because he fixes attention on this inward distinction, lying back of its outward manifestations, it does not follow that these last are either useless or unnecessary. Precisely so, the Bible statement, that our not sinning depends on what is done in us by the Author of regeneration, does not deny one of the results that indicate regeneration, but only teaches us to dig deep, and build our hope on an immovable foundation. To a stranger the house may seem to stand on the grassy turf, or grow out of the gravelled walk, or stand on the city pavement; but if we who live in it have not dug down below them all, to a surer foundation, it will be to our perpetual sorrow.

If so much depends on this being born of God, let us note it carefully. The common idea of it is, that just as Christ changed the water into wine at Cana of Galilee, so what Scripture calls the old man is changed into the new. It is true that the same person is renewed; there is no change in the personal

identity. The Christian of to-day is the same person who was impenitent yesterday. But let us remember that "the old man" denotes not the whole person, but evil in its principles, the germ of all the sin that appears in outward act; while "the new man" denotes the new principle of life as such, not a person, but a seminal principle in a person. Moreover, if "the carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be," how can it be renewed? Indeed, is it not devoted to a lingering death, as it is written, "Our old man is crucified with Christ." Can anything thus devoted to destruction be made over? Besides, Christians after regeneration are exhorted to "put off the old man, which is corrupt;" and how can they do so if it has been already changed into the new man?

The Bible is not given to teach us philosophy; and yet the Holy Ghost, who searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God, may have a view of truth in all its parts, which is as much truer than our philosophy, as the horizon of his view is larger, and his knowledge more exhaustive. We may exercise a more divine wisdom in conforming our philosophy to the word of God than in bending that word to our philosophy. When holy Scripture says, "I will take away the stony heart," and adds, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you," let us take care how we assert

that the new one is the old made over. Would not the same principle require us to affirm that the sins which God cast into the depth of the sea reappear in the holy acts of his children? The apostle says to the churches of Galatia who had received the Spirit by the hearing of faith, "The flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." How can the old nature contend with the new, if the one has been changed into the other? Does not this conflict of nature with grace in every Christian heart indicate that the old man is not destroyed, but only dethroned, and so fights to recover his throne? Take an illustration from the world of matter, which seems designed to furnish the most admirable types of spiritual things. What are called the first teeth in children are not changed into the second, but the germs of these last grow up immediately under the first, which are eaten away as the new teeth advance, till nothing remains but the surface, that is at length displaced without effort.

Sometimes, however, the new tooth slips by the old, and comes to the surface alongside of it. In that case the first one must be forcibly extracted to avoid a permanent deformity; and in how many cases, where this new life fails to eat away the old,

are sore afflictions needed to prevent eternal deformity.

The text speaks of the seed of the regenerate remaining in him. The seed of a tree which remaineth in it is not the contents of the seed vessel, for that, having grown on the tree, ripens and falls off, but that which remaineth in it is its vital power of development in the line of its own nature; and so here it is not the word of God abiding in us, but the seminal principle of that new life created in us by the Spirit, which groweth up unto the measure of the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus. In the passage quoted from Galatians, Paul distinguished two seminal principles,—one of sin, called the flesh, not changed into the principle of holiness, but coexisting with it in the renewed soul. While the Christian remains on earth his new life is hindered by the old; but that disappears at death, leaving this free to enjoy uninterrupted fellowship with God through eternity. Already the life of Christ in the soul so prevails over the principle of sin as to give character to the entire person, and sin is only a temporary hindrance of that life which in heaven entirely and forever disappears.

If we understand the expressions, "sinneth not," "cannot sin," of the new life by itself, they would be literally true, and in that case there would be no trouble in understanding them; for the new man

cannot sin, not in any sense, or in the least degree ; for is it not the life of God in the soul of man ? And is not that the same in essence which it shall be forever ? The graft growing in the old stock to-day is the same that shall grow in Paradise ; only now it lives in the old stock, but then it shall have roots of its own, and both root and plant shall live in Christ ; instead of a heavenly plant growing in an unkindly soil, and under an inclement sky, shall be that same plant growing in its native soil, and under congenial skies. All this is simple enough in theory, but where shall we find it in fact ? Who can find on earth this new life disconnected from the old ? Then we must look at it as it exists in connection with it, and, so viewing it, we shall find a meaning of this Scripture at once comforting to the Christian and alarming to the hypocrite.

It will be comforting to the Christian ; for while he could never apply to himself what was true of the new life alone, he can enjoy and give thanks to God for what is true of him just as he is, because of this new life. "He delights in the law of God after the inward man ;" here is the result of regeneration. "But he sees another law in his members, warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin which is in his members ;" here are the remains of his old nature. So situated, he could never find joy in what is true

of the new life alone. But show him that the apostle had just said, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us;" show him that the divine testimony is not *whatsoever* is born of God, — that is, the new life alone, — but *whosoever*, — that is, the person in whom it dwells; show him, also, that the "sinning not" is the result of that indwelling, the new life drawing to itself the vital force of the whole man, so that the old nature loses its power to control the character; and do you not fill him with peace in believing? Let any Christian say whether these things do not minister to his joy in God? And are they not profitable? For while they do not puff us up with the notion that we have already attained, or are already perfect, they yet lift us beyond the reach of fear. They disclose the all-sufficiency of the provision made for our victory over all sin, and the certainty of that victory. They are at once exhortation and consolation; we feel bound not to sin, and we are assured that we cannot sin; for that new life abideth and shall prevail.

We enjoy watching the daily growth of a favorite flower. What a progress in loveliness! what a succession of beauties, each going beyond the last, and reaching toward the next, like steps in a stairway of glory! That is delightful; and yet it is as if it had no glory, by the side of this glory that excelleth;

for here is not a plant that flourisheth in the morning, and in the evening is cut down and withereth, but one that shall flourish forever in Paradise. It grows in the heart, sealing it as the chosen dwelling of the Most High. Then, while we watch its divine unfolding, is the blessed feeling, "This is God's pledge of my deliverance from sin;" and that deliverance is not something to be revealed suddenly at some unknown point in the future, but it is even now begun. While this divine life abides within us, we cannot sin. But how long shall it abide? The answer is, "His seed remaineth in him;" remaineth all through cold and storm, and when winter shall no longer chill, then, delivered from uncongenial association with depravity, it shall enter on its own eternal growth in heaven. So full of comfort is this Scripture, which to so many true disciples sounds like the sentence of their exclusion from the society of saints. Instead of smiting, it anoints with the oil of gladness; instead of covering our sky with clouds, it lights up our darkest hour with the joy of our Lord.

It has been intimated that this Scripture is not only comforting to the Christian, but also full of alarm to the hypocrite. It is so because, if we understand the statement, that "whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin" of the new man alone, while the old man exists at the same time in

the same heart, then may sinners, while indulging in sin, assume that their feet are in the way of life; for, whatever of intellectual approval of goodness may exist within them, — and even heathen tell us they approve the good while they choose the evil; whatever of ineffectual desire of good they may cherish, — and a man may desire religion for the sake of its advantages, while he does not choose it in itself at all; whatever of joy may arise from a hope of heaven, — and many a one who will never enter heaven is more sure of admission there than some true disciples; these things hypocrites count as so many certain evidences that they are born of God. A hypocrite is not necessarily conscious of hypocrisy; he may deceive himself more effectually than he imposes on his fellow-men. Indeed, so strong may be his assurance of his own piety, that, though the proofs of his impenitence meet him at every turn, he does not see them; for he says, “These are imperfections, and every Christian is imperfect;” “these are the remaining corruptions of which all Christians complain.” He may even say of deliberate transgressions, what the struggling apostle said of evil suggestions which he refused as soon as suggested, “Now, then, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me;” thus vainly calling that exceptional which is his truest self, and laying to the charge of temptation the natural outgrowth of

an unchanged heart. In this way may hypocrites wrest this, as they do also the other Scriptures, to their own destruction. But that every such mouth may be stopped, it is written not *whatsoever*, but *whosoever*, is born of God doth not commit sin; telling all such that unless the new man moulds the character and shapes the life, they have no right to dream that they are born of God. If a man does not relish spiritual things for their own sake; if God's truth is tolerated only as it is made palatable by eloquence or genius; if religious duties are endured only as they are associated with taste and refinement; if a hope of heaven is the great object, and not present obedience; if sin be counted a delight, and refrained from only lest it mar eternal joys, as a voluptuary shuns excess lest it unfit for future pleasure; if one deliberately advances in sin to what he deems the utmost limit consistent with salvation: let him not delude himself with the idea that he is born of God. He has no seed of holiness to remain within him. He who is born of God has the feelings of a child of God, and they do not consist in mercenary selfishness, least of all in that baseness that would enjoy sin to the last morsel consistent with escape from hell. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin. He does not intend to do so. He does not wish it; and if, in a moment of less vigilant watch, the wave of impulse bears him

away, he cannot rest till he return. It is to such that the apostle says, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, even Jesus Christ the righteous;" so that, pardoned and restored, it is still true of him, that he sinneth not, nor can he indulge in sin, for he is born of God. The life which is in him, through union with Christ, will not suffer him to go contrary to the known desire of God.

These things show that there is a real difference between the church and the world; not between all nominally in the church and those outside of it, but between every true child of God and all others. They may wear no badge of outward distinction; we may not tell them apart in the streets; but while the one is born of God, and the other knows nothing of that change, there is a real difference in their hearts that shall forever justify the difference in their eternal portion. The world may cavil at the contrast revealed in Scripture between eternal life and eternal death, and ask where is the difference in men to warrant it. The answer is to be found in this being born of God; and it is all-sufficient. Hypocrites may fill up the space between the people of God and the men of the world, so that superficial observers shall not notice the dividing line. The children of God may fall very far short of their high calling, but still their divine life, received from Christ and maintained in him, shall warrant forever

all that distinguishes heaven from hell. Men may now judge by appearance, and so judge an unrighteous judgment; but in that day when appearances are stripped off and the essential life is revealed, "then shall ye return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not."

There are men in the church who regard piety as something wrought out by each Christian for himself; and, viewed in one light, the difference between a Christian and others is that he believes in Christ, while they refuse to believe. But running parallel with this act of the believer is another act of God, imparting this life that is in Christ; and it is only as we keep our eye on this that we can appreciate our high calling. So long as we confine our views to our own acts, our conceptions of Christian privilege, Christian hope and joy will be very unworthy. This Scripture teaches us to go behind all our own doings, when we would find a ground for hope and joy. It bids us rest in what God does in us, and procures for us. It is because he is born of God, that the child of God cannot sin; and, if we would know the full meaning of these words, we must look away from ourselves, and let our eyes follow this pointing of the Holy Ghost to the work of God. When we look on piety as made up of acts which we perform and feelings which we exercise, all is dimness and

doubt ; for there is so much imperfection in the acts, and so much uncertainty about our continuing to put them forth. But, viewed as the manifestation of a divine life in us, whose author and finisher is Christ, then we see that our feet are set upon a rock, for God establisheth our goings, and the sight of that puts a new song in our mouths, even praise unto our God.

Some refrain from dwelling on such views, lest thoughts of this divine agency should prevent sinners from exercising their own. But do they exercise it even then? And may it not be that souls truly in earnest fail to grow, just because this truth, of "God working in them to will and to do," does not encourage them to work out their own salvation?

It is only when we look on piety as a life from God, in God, and to be spent with God, that we appreciate it. Then the language of the beloved disciple, strong as it is, is not too strong. We can believe it in all its fulness when we look on it as the result of the life of Christ in his people. And as we think of the eternity of this life, we can look forward with holy boldness to all the perils yet before us, and enjoy a foretaste of everlasting bliss. When we are conscious in heaven of the fulness of everlasting life, then shall we appreciate what it is to have been born of God. Adam, though holy, fell ; but he who lives this life in Christ shall never fall.

CHAPTER X.

THE HUMAN SYMPATHY OF CHRIST.

CHRIST is altogether lovely, but we are so imperfect ourselves, and so accustomed to defects in others, that when we find one perfection in him, we are prone to dwell on it exclusively, never thinking whether there are not others equally worthy of our notice. The crowning glory of Christ in the eyes of a sinner is that he is a Saviour from sin, — “able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by him.” Let us never lose sight of this view of Christ, for of all others it is the most important as well as the most precious.

Still, this does not manifest the whole of his glory, and to those who know him as their Saviour he reveals himself in other endearing relations, in each of which we behold his glory. Some of these have more particular reference to eternity; others to the present life. Perhaps these last have been unduly neglected. We have looked on Christ as the Lord of glory in heaven, till we sometimes forget that he is our “brother,” and, though unseen, is as truly with us

now as he ever shall be. Does not the neglect of these views of Christ occasion an undue strangeness between the flock and their Shepherd? While we expect to meet him in the sanctuary and the closet, do we not shut him out too much from our daily life? Instead of rejoicing in the Lord always, do we not insensibly defer such joy to another world, as though it were one of the treasures to be laid up in heaven? But surely it is not so scarce there that we need starve ourselves now in order to have abundance then. Christ does not present himself to us only in connection with our eternal interests. He knows how men value benefits pertaining to the present life, and so he offers himself to them as a very present help in trouble, — a High Priest who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. We are then only following his own leading in considering him as our sympathizing friend.

We might do this by meditating on those gracious words, "Let not your heart be troubled," for they tell us that, instead of an austere being, intent only on eternal things, he has an affectionate interest in our present comfort. These words fall on the ear like the tones of parental love, reminding us of that Scripture, "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." But incidents illustrating truth impress us more than abstract statements, and therefore let us listen to his last words to his mother just

before he died ; for among all the precious scenes of his life and death none reveals so clearly the tenderness of his sympathy with us as men.

Look at him : he is nailed to the cross, blood trickles from his torn temples ; it drops from those extended hands, those wounded feet ; in his face bodily agony and mental anguish blend with perfect submission, and a benevolence of which we can only say, it is divine. Round about the cross are soldiers, familiar with the sight of pain. They mock his sufferings. But what else could we expect from them ? Outside of these stand his own people. Their neighbors — perhaps members of their own families — have felt his power to heal ; themselves have heard the gracious words that fell from his lips. But these also revile the sufferer, and taunt and scoff. Hemmed in among these, like a few lambs among a herd of wolves, stand four disciples ; three of them are women, and one of these, his mother. Where she was during that trial we do not know. Perhaps she heard — for she could not look on — the scourging, every stroke of which she felt. Or she may have arrived just in time to see the close of agonies mercy had prevented her witnessing till now. With what feelings she stands there words may not tell, though mothers may understand ; few even of them, however, have known such sorrow. Eve had wept over the corpse of Abel ; but what

was her grief to that of Mary standing at the cross of her still-living Son? Yet we hear no passionate outcry. Her grief is too deep for that. A sword pierces through her own soul also, but it is in silent anguish too intense for tears. She is silent; but round about her is no silence. She may not support that drooping head, or bathe those quivering wounds. She may not utter one word of sympathy, while others exult in his agonies. Is she, too, recognized as the mother of the Crucified? Then it is some comfort if, by drawing the attention of his enemies to herself, she can secure for him a moment's relief from bitter words. The mother gladly shields her dying Son by interposing herself between him and the sharp arrows of the mighty. The pains of death take hold of him. Untold responsibilities with reference to the redemption of a world are crowded into this critical moment. The Lord lays on him the iniquities of us all. The Father, with whom he has enjoyed an eternity of uninterrupted love, even He forsakes him who is made to be sin for us. Can he in such extremity of woe notice that mother's grief? His eye takes in the whole; his sympathy embraces all. In the depths of his own, his heart shares all her affliction, and at a time when we engross the sympathies of others for ourselves, Christ forgets himself. He could not forget his suffering, — that was impossible; agony like his could not be one moment

out of mind ; but in the very sorest of it he comforts her. The last use he makes of his eyes in that gathering darkness is to look with unutterable tenderness on his mother, and almost his last words previous to his dying cry are words of affection for her ; brief, indeed, but revealing a care as thoughtful as when with her in her quiet home. He does not call her mother, lest that word, recalling a thousand tender memories, should crush the heart already breaking ; or, if she has not yet been recognized as his mother, he would spare her the insults that name would call forth. "Woman," saith he, "behold thy son." His hand, nailed to the cross, cannot point to that son. Agony forbids the use of many words, if indeed they could be heard above those blasphemies ; but his eye directs her to the beloved disciple, and, looking on him, he says, "Behold thy mother !" What think you were their feelings at that moment ? Unprotected among his murderers, how did *she* receive this token of love in death ? And how was the heart of the disciple thrilled by this proof of the confidence of his Master ? But could Mary and John speak to us they would say, Forget us, to think only of Christ. Let our connection with that event only render impressive the loving kindness which he feels for all.

Look, then, at the tender sympathy beaming in these words of Jesus. His mother, as is generally

supposed, was now a widow, and, unable even to present a lamb for a burnt-offering during the life of Joseph, it is not very probable that she was in better circumstances now. He, whose divine power wrought so many miracles for others, had never enriched his friends. If his parents were poor, so was he. During his life he had not where to lay his head, and now at his death he had no earthly possessions to leave to his mother. He owned no dwelling in Nazareth. He possessed neither field nor olive-grove in the surrounding valleys. No terrace on these hill-sides was entered in his name on the pages of the Roman register. Even his garments, which Mary might have treasured up with motherly care, were snatched away from her, perhaps to teach her and us that the only valuable relic of Christ is that faith which makes us members of his spiritual body.

Amid his own unutterable anguish, that Son thinks of the solitary life that awaited his widowed mother, and therefore, that poverty may not be added to the rest, he provides her a home and a protector; and mark his selection. He might commit her to the hospitality of Joseph of Arimathea, or request those women who had ministered to him of their substance to transfer their kindness to his mother. He could make arrangements for her to spend the rest of her days in elegant ease, amid the

refinements of affluence and taste. But not thus does Christ measure the essentials of happiness. Not thus does he read the heart of his pious mother. Instead of such a provision for her old age, he commends her to the care of the fisherman of Galilee, whom shortly after we find toiling all night for her support, perhaps in the same boat that had so often witnessed the miracles of his Lord. But why did Christ choose such a humble home for his aged mother? For the same reason that he still selects such for by far the greater number of those who shall be partakers of his glory.

Blessed be his name that he, who knows how prone we are to look on the seen and temporal, rather than on the glories round about the throne, instead of losing patience with us, makes even outward circumstances work together with all things for our good; and, if he gives us homes so attractive as to tempt us to forget our home in heaven, yet, in them also, he so deals with us as to make us feel their emptiness, while he sweetly draws us to himself for comfort.

But besides this, was there not a special reason in the case before us? Jesus knew how his mother loved him, not only as her son, but as her Saviour. He knew how she would love to speak of him after he was gone, not only as her child, but as the Word which was in the beginning with God, and was God.

He knew how she would remember this scene, not only as his death, but as the sacrifice of the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. And so he leaves her with one who would enter into all her feelings. He knew how that disciple would converse with her of the Son of man, the beloved teacher, the loving friend, and also of the Divine Redeemer, who had gone to intercede for them at the right hand of the Father. He knew with what kindred sympathies they would recount the scenes of his earthly life, — she telling the things laid up in her heart concerning his childhood, and he narrating many an event on the shores of Gennesaret and in quiet Bethany or busy Jerusalem, while she had been absent at her mountain home. What accounts could he give of evenings in the house of Lazarus; that vision on the mount of glory, concerning which till now his lips were sealed; and then that night in the upper chamber, and Gethsemane; in the palace of the high priest, with Herod and Pilate, down to this last sad scene they share together! How much, too, could he relate to her of the many other things that Jesus did, which, if they should be written, every one, it seemed that even the world itself could not contain the books! Look at these things, and say whether that Son could have selected a more congenial home for his mother. If communion in sorrow hallows human intercourse;

if fellowship with Christ transforms into his image, what holy joy henceforward filled that home ! What endearing memories pervade their worship of him now bleeding on the cross ! What tender recollections hallow his praises ! Was not the Saviour an unseen inmate of their dwelling, mingling in all their communings concerning himself ? — not absent, but only invisible, even as now he manifests himself to those that believe upon his name.

Because he is invisible, even his own may forget that he is Immanuel, "God with us," and address their prayers as to a distant Saviour. But the Lord Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. Even on earth he spake of the Son of man who is in heaven ; and is he less omnipresent now ? Not only so, but those tender sympathies that led him to weep at the grave of Lazarus are just as fresh and tender to-day as then. That love which, just before going to Gethsemane, could say to his disciples, "Let not your heart be troubled," and utter words of heavenly consolation, that their joy might be full, has not lost any of its fervor ; and that benevolence which, when wounded for our transgressions, cared for a mother's earthly comfort, is the same for us that it was for Mary. Have any found it so ? Then no words of another can add to their joy ; language can give but poor expression to the truth which they have been taught of God.

But if any have not enjoyed these things, why not? Has Christ changed? Or is the fault in our own unbelief? If, on the cross, Christ showed such tender care for a disciple, now that he is on the throne, has he forgotten to be gracious? If racking pain, the crushing weight of our sins, or the approaching insensibility of death, could not blunt the tenderness of his sympathy, is there anything in heaven that can?

Some may answer, "That is not my trouble; but Mary was his own mother, who had nurtured and cherished him, while I am a stranger, and so sinful that he cannot have such feelings towards me." It may seem so; and yet, when a certain woman once ascribed pre-eminent blessedness to his mother, Jesus answered, "Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it;" and when one said unto him, "Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without desiring to speak with thee," his reply was, "Who is my mother, and who are my brethren?" as though no tie could be dearer than that which binds him to the sinner who believes. Then, that none might mistake his meaning, he stretched forth his hand towards his disciples, and said, "Behold my mother and my brethren." And lest some heavy-laden sinner should still hesitate to believe truth so precious, again he declares, "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father in

heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." After such words from those gracious lips, can we longer doubt? Impossible. Our Saviour enters as perfectly into our feelings as he did into those of his mother. He shares our sorrows as truly as he did hers. Is it not written, concerning his ancient people, "that his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel"? And when Saul breathed out threatenings and slaughter against his disciples, did not Christ demand, "Why persecutest thou *me*?" Let every believer in Jesus know assuredly that in "all our afflictions he is afflicted." He who doth not "afflict willingly" will never lay one iota more on us than he is willing to share with us. No grief of ours is beneath his notice. It cannot be so small that he shall not see it, or so large as to exceed his power to comfort. It cannot be so heavy that he cannot sustain both us and it, or so protracted as either to weary out his strength or exhaust his sympathy; and, so far from being offended, he is as well pleased to have us lay over our griefs on him as he ever was to see his mother come to him for comfort. Why do we not know and enjoy the preciousness of the sympathy there is for us in Christ? We need not try to create it; it exists already. It always has existed, only in our blindness we do not see it, and so, in our sorrows, we go without it, when faith might find in Christ the God of all comfort. Let

those burdened with care cast it all on Jesus, for assuredly he careth for them. Let those burdened with grief—it may be secret grief, such as they cannot tell to others, lest they expose the failings of their friend, or reveal their own—tell all their griefs to Jesus, and prove the all-sufficiency of his sympathy. Some of us have lived long in the world, and known its trials; others, still in the morning of life, have not yet known the burden and heat of the day; but sorrow awaits us all. The soul of each of us will be exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. Then let us look to him whose soul likewise suffered, on purpose that he might be able to succor ours.

Let us not forget, moreover, that all this is as true of temporal as of spiritual trials. Christ felt for his mother, not only as a disciple, but as a woman, weak and dependent, in a selfish world. Not only as a joint-heir with himself, but as yet in the body, with bodily wants and exposed to physical distress; and just such sympathy does he extend to us. He made our body, and he is interested in it as his handiwork. He redeemed it by his blood, and will hereafter fashion it like unto his own glorious body; and therefore does he sympathize with its sufferings now.

Let those who have the care of families, troubled with countless daily perplexities in the monotonous

duties of home, trials which they would be ashamed to mention to a friend, but which wear away the strength and undermine the health, go tell them all to Jesus. Said Mary Lyon to her pastor shortly before her death, "I have many perplexities and troubles every day, some of them about things so trifling that I should never think of telling them to my own mother, and yet I can carry them all to Christ, sure that he will understand and help me; and never do I go to him in vain." Are any poor, unnoticed, and unknown? let not this discourage them; for "not many mighty, not many noble are called; but God hath chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom." We have seen the mother of Jesus placed, not in the mansion of the honorable councillor, but in the cottage of the fisherman. He did not cause a flattering biography to paint her peaceful old age and happy death. On the contrary, all that we know of her after his ascension is, that she attended the prayer-meetings in Jerusalem; but where she lived, or how, or when she died, who can tell? Not outward wealth, but inward grace; not earthly distinction, but a place in the Lamb's book of life; not freedom from suffering, but the sympathy of Jesus in it, are the marks of his disciples.

If Christ is ours and we are his, there does not live the man so prosperous in earthly things that we

need stoop to envy him. The man who knows Christ, however imperfectly, here, and hopes to know him even as also he is known hereafter, would go to the stake rather than change places with the heir of all earthly good.

The impenitent sometimes complain that God overawes them so that they cannot approach him. But what do they say to God in Christ, — God, and so omnipotent to save; man, and so their elder brother! Let such look at him dying in agony such as others never knew, and even then, thus caring for his mother, and know that he offers to love them with the same love, to sustain them all through sorrow and death, and then bring them, like her, to his heavenly home. Soon they will need such a friend. In their last sickness who can help them like Christ; and after it, when every other friend must leave us alone, who can befriend like him whose power to help only begins to be appreciated when that of all others utterly and forever fails?

CHAPTER XI.

THE MUNIFICENCE OF CHRIST.

IN the discussion of religious subjects, human teachers may not always present truth in its relative proportion; unimportant matters may be made too prominent, and things really fundamental be comparatively overlooked; but whenever we hear the "Verily, verily, I say unto you" of the Great Teacher, we may be sure of something worthy of that note of preparation. A remarkable instance of this occurs in his parting address to the disciples before his death, "Verily, verily I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto the Father." In this whole discourse the value of no sentence can be overrated. Each one is unutterably precious to his people; for it contains the words spoken by Christ at his last interview with his disciples before his death. Each sentence was uttered with his eye on the cross. It was a discourse at the first communion-table, when his full heart poured out comfort, not

only sufficient for the disciples, then, but for all his people, always to the end.

If, then, any inquire why, in a discourse where each word is full of holiest meaning, any one should be thus distinguished, the answer is, that it was probably meant to reassure those who, on hearing this statement, are startled by its strangeness, and doubt whether they can have heard aright. We go back to re-examine it, feeling it is impossible these words should mean just what they seem to say, and Christ meets us with his "Verily, verily I say unto you," as if to assure us that there is no mistake. "It may seem astonishing; but I said it, knowing what I said."

Assured on this point, the question next arises, Of whom does Christ say this? Does not the thought arise; only the most extraordinary piety can aspire to such an honor, and, besides apostles, we fix on the holiest men of every age, martyrs, reformers; we hardly know whom even of these. But is there not an unsuitableness between the piety of the best of them and an honor like this? For their holiness, however great, is imperfect, and this honor is greater than that put on the perfect Saviour. They may have had a second conversion, as some unscripturally speak of, or even a third, or any number of successive cleansings from the dross that still remains; but is not dross still mingled with their gold? while of

Christ alone it can be said, He is altogether lovely. The more we reflect, does not our sense of the inconsistency increase? Then may we not be looking in the wrong direction altogether? After all, can any holiness in creatures be the ground of such an honor? Is even the holiness of angels sufficient; and must we not look elsewhere for an explanation? Then come back to these words of Jesus, and see if they throw no light on the inquiry. "Verily, verily I say unto you, *He that believeth on me.*" There is the portrait of the persons we seek, drawn by the hand of Christ. They are described just as they appeared to His eye. And who are they? Those eminent, or even pre-eminent, for piety? Not that, or anything like that. But the whole matter is viewed from a different point. Christ does not speak of holiness in man, but only of the faith that unites to Himself, and so admits to a share of what is in Him. In the mind of Christ, the ground of this honor lies in Himself, and not in the disciple who receives it. In other words, it could not be conferred on us apart from Christ, and even when united to him, solely through virtue in Him to whom we are united, and of whom we become a part. Had Christ said simply, "He that believeth," the reference had then been to our faith, and efficacy in that viewed as our act. But "He that believeth *in me,*" calls back all thought from faith to Himself.

We cannot put any other meaning into the words, if we would. Do our thoughts still linger about some supposed efficiency in our faith? Then why do we so often bewail its weakness? Why in this instance are we so slow to believe the things freely given us of God? Do we picture to ourselves a power created in us by union to Christ, and then subsisting by a life of its own? But "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered, and men gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned." The power then comes through union to Christ, and only so long as that union lasts does this power abide in us; for its root is in Him. Our completeness is not in ourselves, but in Christ.

This distinction to some may seem strained or unnecessary; and yet, if the point in question be true at all, it is fundamental, essential to true Christian enjoyment and to all progress in holiness. It tells us that our title to this or any other favor lies not in ourselves, but in Him. It turns away our thoughts from the glaring imperfections of our holiest things, and fixes them on the Lord our righteousness, His fulness and His power to save; He altogether lovely, and we complete in Him. While we looked at our holiness, the text pointed to a privilege as inaccessible as the stars. We could no more think of making it ours than of climbing to the sun at noon. Even when

viewed in connection with the piety of apostles, still it seemed inexplicable, and we passed it over as one of the things hard to be understood; so blind were we to this "Verily, verily I say unto you" of our Redeemer. But when we see in him the foundation of this "house not made with hands," we are not afraid to enter, and a voice from heaven seems to say, "By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Let us, then, draw near with a true heart, in the full assurance of faith, to the study of this heavenly grace. If any think that the efficiency must be in us, and not in Christ, why does he add, "because I go unto my Father"? On such a supposition, what connection can that have with the subject? Is it said, that he goes to the Father to send thence the Holy Spirit? Is, then, the indwelling Spirit a part of ourselves? Is not that only another mode whereby Christ worketh to will and to do in them that are his?

We may not presume to explain how it is that Christ, at the right hand of the Majesty on high, is able to work so mightily in them that believe; for we have not mastered the method of the divine operation. But is it not a most gracious arrangement that setting Christ before us as the dispenser of such favors reveals him seated on the throne of his glory? Had we been called to look at him on the cross, we had

seen him working out redemption in weakness and in pain. But here we see it already complete. Its glorious results are visible on every side. Those divine perfections, that shone out so lovely even in his humiliation, are now lifted up into their native sphere, with a mode of manifestation worthy of the glory to be revealed, and it thrills the Christian heart with holiest joy to think of the glory of Christ conspicuous in the midst of the throne, and there beaming out unending loveliness through endless years.

What, then, are the greater works which shall be done by those who believe upon his name? Are they miracles? We do not forget that these constituted no small part of the works of our Redeemer. But were they his *greatest* works? Perhaps one would answer after this manner, and another after that. Then, laying aside our own thoughts, let us sit at the feet of Jesus, and learn his views. His disciples return from a missionary tour with the exulting announcement, "Lord, even the devils are subject to us through thy name." He answers, "Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven." Teaching that the eternal dwelling of the soul with God is an infinitely

greater favor than any exercise of miraculous power for a few days upon earth? And what does the Spirit of Christ say through the apostle? "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." Is not that equally explicit? And while we assign to miracles their due importance in the economy of grace, do we not feel that Christ's work of redemption is greater than those miracles which were only means to this higher end?

Another fact needs only to be mentioned to set this question at rest. Our Lord wrought miracles in his own name; his disciples, only in the name of their Master; and how can these last be greater works than his? In him it was an inherent, self-existent power; in them it was a delegated power, efficient only as they acknowledged that its efficiency was from him.

If these greater works are not miracles, we need not look for them in any superior attainments in holiness. The very mention of such a thing is painful. Was not Christ holy; and was not each apostle a sinner both before and after conversion? Even though working miracles and inditing the communications of the Holy Ghost, were they not continually falling into sin? One had to withstand

another to the face and rebuke him before all, because he was to be blamed, and this reprovcr of a chief apostle confesses his own sins.

It would seem, then, that in all things Christ had the pre-eminence ; and therefore the statement before us could not be literally true. But remember how Christ once compared himself to the vine, and his disciples to the branches. These last alone could never bear fruit. The vine produces them, and fruit on them ; and yet it is the branches that are adorned with those goodly ornaments. Does not that beautiful similitude furnish the key to this statement? Christ is the life ; he is so in himself, and in all his people. Not one of them had known life, had it not flowed from him into their souls. He giveth unto them eternal life, and therefore they shall never perish. But with all this his personal labors seemed barren in results. They only laid the foundation for success. The clusters do not appear on the main stalk, but on the branches. Disciples were the conspicuous agents on the day of Pentecost ; and afterwards Jerusalem, Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, and even the ends of the earth, beheld their labors crowned with the most signal success. Wherever they preached or wrought miracles, at the beautiful gate of the Temple, or in Samaria, or among the hills and valleys of Asia Minor, multitudes were added to the Lord. Doubt-

less there were many spectators of the miracles of Christ in that raging throng that shouted "Crucify him! Crucify him!" It may be that some of them had experienced in their own bodies his power to heal. But when, in that same Jerusalem, many signs and wonders were wrought by the hands of the apostles, believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women. Their preaching was not greater than that of Christ, nor were their miracles; but the *results* which God accomplished through them were. So that Luther doubtless expresses the general sentiment of the church when he says, "For this reason greater works are said to be done by his Christians, because they go further with their influence than he did, and bring more to him than he himself did while bodily upon earth."

If this be the meaning of Christ, does it not set before us a most precious view of Immanuel? He takes upon himself the painful part, that we may enjoy the pleasant. His is the seemingly fruitless toil, that ours may be the gladness of success. He plants, that we may reap. He once said to his disciples, "Other men labored, and ye are entered into their labors." With even greater truth he might have said, "I labor, and ye enter into my labors." But he did not boast. He left the works which he did to bear witness for him; and precious

is the testimony they utter in the ear of love. He laid the deep foundation, not in the sweat of his face, but in his blood, and having carried it up to the surface, he lets his disciples build where they can see the structure grow under their hands through his power in them. He knew how they whom he taught to pray "Thy kingdom come" would love to see its coming; and so, as they successively enter into his kingdom he assigns them those labors through which he breathes the breath of life into other souls. What a blessed intercourse that will be between the Redeemer and the redeemed, when in heaven he unfolds his personal agency in their conversion, and his own efficiency in their successful efforts for the salvation of others!

And this suggests another view of his love. He knew how his disciples would mourn his absence; how they would long to feel that though he had returned to the glory which he had with the Father before the world was, yet still he was with them in the battle; and so he arranges that in each instance of success they may see a present Saviour. We, too, cannot see his face or hear his voice; our name is not uttered by those sacred lips; but we may detect his presence, approving our labors and crowning them with his success.

And if success seems to delay, then may we in our measure partake of his sufferings, who loved

sinner so tenderly, and yet saw so few coming to him that they might have life. We read of his weeping over Jerusalem; but we hear little of his rejoicing over converts. In this matter, with few exceptions, he was a man of sorrows. Oh that our unholy hearts could enter more deeply into these sorrows of the Son of man! — the feelings with which he saw that young man go away who had great possessions; the grief that prompted the words, “how hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!”

If Christ so suffered then, does he now look unmoved on such of his people as do nothing for the salvation of others? How much of sympathy with Christ do they lose! How many an occasion of intimate communion with him on matters very dear to his heart! Is it any wonder that such grope in spiritual darkness, when there is so wide a gulf between their want of interest in the conversion of sinners, and that love that poured out its own blood for their salvation? How must the heart that uttered the glowing words before us feel towards professed disciples who neglect a privilege so precious! Have any of us been permitted to eat of the crumbs that fall from this table of the Master? Surely if Christ so honors disciples on earth, they should find their heaven in the sight of his glory. We should regard those we are allowed to bring to him, not so much

our joy and crown, as the travail of his soul, who hath washed both them and us from our sins in his own blood; and yet why speak of them apart? Will not both views blend together in heaven into one surpassing glory? Just as when in the city an evening congregation assembles in comparative darkness, the sudden brightening of the light reveals many a friend whom we had deemed a stranger, so will our entrance into heaven light up the connection of our usefulness with Christ. Our joy will not consist so much in a separate consciousness of bliss ourselves as in what we see He enjoys. The gladness of the Head shall thrill each member of his spiritual body as their own. When the full meaning of the prayer, "I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one," is there revealed, it will no longer seem strange that Christ on earth should speak of his disciples doing greater works than those which He did.

But we are not yet in heaven. We are here in the vineyard of our Master, and on every side his work summons us to labor. Let those words of his teach us how to do it; not by a painful struggle after such holiness in ourselves as shall make us worthy to work for him. This we cannot have; and, if any think they have it, they deceive themselves. How many, conscious that it is not theirs, and still deeming it essential, put off till to-morrow the

work which God requires to-day, and, when the morrow comes, still defer it, because as far off as ever from such a qualification! Christ here tells us to renounce forever all thought of such a qualification in ourselves, and look to Him. As in the matter of justification He bids us renounce our own righteousness, and rest in His; so in the matter of worthiness to labor for God He bids us abhor ourselves, and stand complete in Him. Paul speaks of fightings without and fears within, and yet says, "I can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth me." He gloried in infirmity that the power of Christ might rest upon him. The work which he wrought, like the life which he lived, was by the faith of Him who loved him and gave himself for him. So Paul sought qualification for work; and how he wrought, let the world tell, indebted so much to him for the knowledge that it has of Christ; let heaven say, filled up so much by those converted and sanctified through his labors.

We need not hold back from work because unworthy. We need not defer work till to-morrow, hoping to be more worthy. For Christ saith: "Verily, verily I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father." Christ is our authority, as he says, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

Go ye therefore and teach all nations." Christ is our subject. Paul determined to know nothing among men save Jesus Christ, and him crucified; and when Philip, the deacon, went down and preached Christ in Samaria, the people with one accord gave heed, and there was great joy in that city. Christ is our efficiency; for even apostles could speak of seals of apostleship only in the Lord. That Lord and Saviour who wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in Paul towards the Gentiles. And to-day we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power might be of him and not of man.

The whole of the fulness of Christ, then, is our worthiness for work. Do we need to wait for its increase, or fear for its sufficiency? It is simple faith in Jesus that has enabled every successful laborer of the past to gather in his harvest for Christ. Nothing else is needed now to make us worthy to labor for God, nor ever shall be till the harvest of the whole earth is reaped.

CHAPTER XII.

SERVING CHRIST.

WE are always interested in home life. The scenery of foreign lands may seem strange, but in its homes we may watch our own movements, and recognize our own feelings. There are families to-day where Christ loves to make his home, and where he is refreshed after the formal reception he meets elsewhere ; but the best interior view of a Christian home is that painted by Luke, at the close of the tenth chapter of his Gospel. As we look in there on Martha and Mary, we feel among familiar friends, and there is something almost heavenly in a home where Christ is visibly present, sitting at the table, and filling the house with "the brightness of the Father's glory." We envy the happiness of this household, which enjoys on earth the bliss that cannot be ours till we enter heaven.

Some, perhaps, are confused, because Christ had just addressed Capernaum and Bethsaida as if in sight, and now he is entered into a certain village,

the evangelist does not tell us where. Is there, then, a Galilean village that has a Martha and Mary, like the familiar one on the eastern slope of Olivet? We know of none, nor of any other Martha and Mary than the sisters of Lazarus. The scene of the parable of the Good Samaritan, mentioned just before, lay on the road below Bethany. Luke sometimes groups different events, when a spiritual unity binds them together. Did he feel that we might pervert that parable to the promotion of a self-righteous zeal, that, immediately after, he points us to this sitting at the feet of Jesus?

It is humiliating to know that there is no truth, however divine, that may not be perverted to evil by an unholy heart. As the activity of a holy benevolence may degenerate into the restless bustle of self-righteousness, so even sitting at the feet of Jesus may become a selfish indulgence when we ought to be at work for the Master.

The evangelist does not mention Lazarus, because there is nothing that calls for any allusion to him. It is only the contrast in the conduct of the two sisters that he seeks to set before us. Martha seems to be the mistress of the house; it therefore devolves on her to care for the comfort of our Saviour. Mary appears to be a younger sister, on whom responsibility does not fall so directly. It may be inferred, however, that Mary was with her sister at

the beginning of her labors, and aided her up to a certain point, when, as Martha says, "she left her to serve alone." She was justified in doing this, however, by Eastern customs, because it is a great point in Oriental hospitality (as travellers from Western lands can tell you to their sorrow) never to leave a guest alone. To this day, in the East, etiquette requires that one of the family remain with the guest while the rest are providing for his wants.

So Mary sat at Jesus' feet. While thus engaged Martha comes, heated with much work and worried with many cares, saying, "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her, therefore, that she help me;" and Jesus answered her, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." What are the lessons to be learned from the occurrence?

One lesson, which has become inseparably connected with this Scripture, is, the importance of choosing the one thing needful rather than all the activities of the world; in other words, the importance of preferring Christ before all else. This lesson has become so associated with this passage that men can hardly think of one without the other, and rightly too. The world is toiling in a painful anxiety, while the trusting believer sits at the feet

of Jesus, kept in perfect peace ; and Christ endorses the exhortations of preachers to choose this good part, and choose it now. It is worth choosing. The choice cannot be too speedy, or too determined, and none who make it ever repent the act.

But, after all, is this not a mere surface lesson? It is a true one ; but are there not others, not so conspicuous it may be, and yet springing from the "inward root and centre" of this occurrence?

To be satisfied of this, we need only remember that Martha was not a follower of the world in distinction from a true disciple. If Mary was a Christian, so was she. If Christ loved Mary, it is written that he "loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus ;" Martha being put first, lest any should misjudge her, and the name of Mary left out, lest any should unduly exalt her. True, it is written that, while Mary sat at the feet of Jesus, Martha was cumbered about much serving ; but serving whom? Was it not this same Jesus at whose feet her sister sat? And, if it be objected that she overdid the matter, remember who it was that found fault with Mary because the ointment was not sold for four hundred pence and given to the poor. The fact that it was Judas who grudged so much waste, as he called it, may well make us pause before condemning Martha for the same thing. And if any say, still she ought to have improved the opportunity to have been with

Jesus, the answer is, the same activity that now led her to the much serving, on another occasion led her to run to meet Jesus as soon as she heard that he was coming; while she who now sits at his feet, then sat still in the house. Plainly, then, we do great injustice to Martha, if we conclude that she had not chosen Christ for her Saviour. Moreover, when Jesus said unto her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die," he added, "Believest thou this?" And Martha answered, "Yea, Lord, I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, who should come into the world."

Are the sisters, then, to be equally commended in the scene before us? As we see the one cumbered about much serving, and the other sitting at the feet of Jesus, are we to conclude that the conduct of one was just as acceptable as the other, and so infer that all Christians, however diverse their modes of service, are equally acceptable to God? That different modes of service may be equally acceptable is doubtless true, for different persons are gifted with different capacities for work. This one is better adapted to go out into the highways and compel men to come in to the gospel feast; and that one is better fitted to set it before them when they enter. This one is made to honor Christ by the

sweet influence of a holy example ; and that one is gifted with a fascination of address that leads captive the listener from the first ; while this other one wields a facile pen, through which, more than in any other way, he may work for Christ. Now, it is very true, that each one of these, in his or her sphere of action, may be equally acceptable to Christ, for our acceptance does not depend on the manner of service which God has fitted us to render, but on the spirit in which we render it.

All this may be, and yet Martha and Mary not have been equally acceptable in the occurrence before us, not because one was a Christian and the other not, but because at that particular moment there was a difference in their feelings and motives, their spirit and their ends.

We cannot deny that two persons, both of them justified freely by God's grace, may nevertheless commend themselves to Christ in a very unequal manner. And so it was here. Martha was not less acceptable because she was engaged in necessary outward service. Mary was not more acceptable because she was busied about spiritual things. But Martha offended in the spirit which at that moment had possession of her heart, while her sister gave Christ a better reception, because her spirit was more after his own heart ; though both were alike accepted of him on the ground of his atonement.

What, then, was the difference between them? It was not merely that Martha was engaged in giving to Christ, and Mary was receiving from him; for one may give to Christ in a right spirit. But in giving, the mind and heart of Martha were for the moment drawn away from the grace of Christ to her own doings. There may be an element of self-righteousness even in a believing heart; something of the spirit of Jehu when he said, "Come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord." There may be a temporary losing sight of Christ, to dwell on what I do and feel, and then the step is very easy to what another does not do or feel; so the door is thrown open to envy, or to hasty judgment, yea, to every wrong feeling. How easy is it, for example, to dwell on our privations, our painful labors, till we begin to feel that we are in labors more abundant, in self-denials above measure, and there comes a feeling of resentment against those Christians who live easier, suffer less, and do not offer to help us in our toil for their Master! So poor Martha felt when the turbulence of her feelings, more than the pressure of her work, led her to address Christ so unworthily. She seems to reproach the calm Redeemer because he was not as restless as herself. "Carest thou not that I am so full of care?" And then she even dictates to the Lord what he ought to do. Let us beware when our feelings lead us to become accusers of the

brethren. When we dare, even in thought, to dictate to God how he shall deal with them, it is time that we were on our knees, crying for mercy. We may be regenerate ; but so was David, and Peter ; and this Martha. When we stand gazing on the mote in a brother's eye, it is time we were searching for the beam in our own. When we passionately demand sentence on another, we utter our own condemnation. How great was that commotion in the heart of Martha that led her to dare to tell the Son of man what he should do, and what he should leave undone ! yea, reproach the All-Seeing as though he did not see, and the All-Holy as though he needed an angry sinner to point out to him the path of judgment !

When we feel a desire that Christ should take sides with us against our fellow-disciple, we stand on dangerous ground. "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant ? To his own master he standeth or falleth." See how the sea of passion wrought and was tempestuous in that troubled heart. She, too, would like to sit with Mary at the feet of Jesus ; but, instead of bringing her much serving into subordination to this, she envies Mary ; she is jealous of her happiness ; she is angry because her sister fares better than herself. She boasteth to her guest that all the elaborate preparations for his comfort are the work of her own hands ; and yet she complains of it as a burden too heavy to bear alone. Just so inconsist-

ent is sinful feeling with itself, while the sense of the inconsistency makes the soul yet more wretched than before.

But see how gently Christ deals with this fretful complainer. He does not crush her with stern rebuke; he does not hold up before her the hatefulness which he plainly sees; but, in an almost playful manner, he says, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things." He repeats her name in that peculiar tone that a mother uses when her child does something which she would check without chiding; and then he shapes his words so that the poor burdened one shall feel that all her toil for his comfort is gratefully appreciated, while he gently reminds her that only one thing was needful in receiving such a guest, and that was the giving herself up unreservedly to receiving from him. For "the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." When he asked water to drink at the well of Jacob, it was only that he might call attention to the living water which he would give; and so, when he came to the house of Martha, it was not so much to be entertained as to feast his hosts with the bread of heaven. Mary had chosen this good part, and, instead of saying to Martha, I will not bid her to help you; I will not send her away from sitting at my feet; he says, "It shall not be taken from her." But what was

the good part chosen by that younger sister? It was not a place of ease, in distinction from one of labor. Christ pays no premium on sloth. He has no blessing for the selfishness that would avoid unpleasant toil under the pretence of securing a deeper work of grace in one's own soul. Had he, who knoweth what is in man, seen aught like that in Mary, he had never said, "She hath chosen the good part." But he came to give grace for grace, and she, in her deep sense of spiritual want, could not stay away from his fulness. She must hear his gracious words, that, through their divine efficacy, Christ may be made unto her, sanctification. It was not ease she sought, but Christ.

"More of thy presence, Lord, impart,
More of thine image let me bear."

Such is the spiritual hunger that leads her to the feet of Jesus. She does not stand before him to attract notice, but she sits down in the humblest place, where she can be most out of sight herself, while eye and heart are filled with him. Martha, indeed, is providing food for Christ; but Mary is being fed by him. As says a German writer quoted by Stier, "We must not be always *seeking* God, we must also *find* him. As long as we are still seeking, there is much running and commotion; he who has found him enjoys and *works* quietly."

Perhaps Martha, profiting by the words of Jesus so wisely spoken, joined her sister at his feet; and it may be that Mary also aided her sister in her household cares, still communing with Jesus through words which she had heard, and which his Spirit continued to unfold as she pondered them in her heart. But, however that may be, it is our part to combine the Martha and the Mary in our own experience; not working around Christ merely, but communing with him, while we labor for him; not offering a sacrifice of our own toil, but receiving of his fulness, that we may render it back in holy service. Let every Martha, whom God calls to be busy about many things, keep Christ in her eye, and carry him in her heart. So shall she work without distraction, as saith the Christian poet:—

“With thee conversing, I forget
All time and toil and care;
Labor is rest, and pain is sweet,
If thou, my God, art here.”

And so let every Mary spend the strength and life she renews at Jesus' feet, in labor for his glory. Paul wrought more abundantly than all the apostles; but he could not have done so had he not sat so much at Jesus' feet, or, to use his own expression, which means the same thing, lived the life which he lived in the flesh, by the faith of him who loved him and gave himself for him. The beloved dis-

ciple lay on the bosom of his Master; and whose words come home to our hearts with greater sweetness or sanctifying power? In Martha, Christ did not blame work, but an unquiet spirit of working. It was not irreligious, but it had too little of the peace which Jesus gives. It was not Christless, but it might have had more of Christ. The service of Christ is perfect freedom only while our hearts sweetly rest in him. The moment self-righteousness usurps the place of his free grace, confusion and every evil work begin.

The spirit which this Scripture would have us cultivate is beautifully expressed, by one who seems herself to be at home in the position of Mary, in the following lines:—

“I ask Thee for the daily strength,
 To none that ask denied;
 A mind to blend with outward life,
While keeping at thy side;
 Content to fill a little space,
 If thou art glorified.

“And if some things I do not ask
 Among my blessings be,
 I'd have my spirit filled the more
 With grateful love to thee;
 More careful — *not to serve thee much,*
But please thee perfectly.”

Another kindred spirit said, not long before she died, “If I had my life to live over again, I should

not be so anxious to see the result of particular acts of service, but rather give myself to God as a channel through which he may pour his saving grace, according to his own good pleasure."

Oh for a deep and abiding faith in the truth that the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister! Not that he rejects our service; he is too kind for that; but he would have us, first of all, be filled with himself, that so the overflow of our activity might be Christ; and still, as that received from him flows over in holy activity, he would have us continue looking unto him, that so the fountain of our activity may be perennial.

How beautiful the Son of God appears drawing Mary to his feet, by his grace within her, and then keeping her there by the outflow of grace from him, like a spring whose waters fail not! Does the picture seem lovely? That same Jesus wants us to sit down with Mary, keep that place through all the activities of Martha, and never leave it, till we exchange this most blessed of all earthly seats for his immediate presence.

CHAPTER XIII.

IMITATING CHRIST IN DOING GOOD.

THE Apostle John says, "He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk even as he walked."

These words need no explanation. They are easily understood. They also commend themselves to the conscience. We cannot help approving them. A profession of union to Christ ought to be sustained by a life corresponding to his. The example of Christ ought to be our pattern in everything. It should be the standard to which we constantly strive to conform. No matter what duty we are called to perform, or what trial to endure, in Christ we may find the precise pattern of excellence which we are to copy. But, viewed in this broad light, the subject is too vast for a single lesson. Let us, then, select a single department of duty, and study Christ as our pattern in living for the salvation of men.

In thinking of this subject, we are struck with the preparation there was in the heart of Christ for such labor. Many seek to do the work while un-

qualified ; but Christ was qualified for it by his love for men. This with him was not a superficial excellence veneered on the outside of a mass of selfishness ; but it was love through and through. It was not something put on those parts most exposed to view ; but, search where we will, from every nook and corner there looks out on us the same holy love. It was not an occasional walking contrary to inclination ; but it was a constant walking in accordance with inclination. In public and in private the current flowed in the same direction. Whether sun, or moon, or stars looked down on it, they detected no eddies of selfishness, no counter-current. In this respect the love of Christ to men is infinitely worthy of our imitation.

And this love of Christ was to men as sinners. His was not love to man as amiable, attracting love to himself, and rewarding as well as attracting ; it was love to men who deserved the condemnation that rested on them, by one who knew how perfectly they deserved it. Men have entered the ministry, allured by the respect and love that seem to centre around the office, but have left it when they found how much of thankless toil it involved. How often the minister's sorest trials come from those who receive the largest blessings from his labors ! Even missionaries, who went forth with romantic ideas of the missionary work, have left it in disgust when

brought face to face, not merely with privation and suffering, — for that they expected, — but imposition and unkindness from those for whose sake they had welcomed both suffering and privation! Jesus Christ, when he uttered that wonderful word, “God so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son,” said, at the same time, that when light was thus come into the world, men loved darkness rather than light, and would not come unto the light, lest their deeds should be reprovèd. He loved, though he knew that he would not be loved. He loved sinners, knowing that they would betray and crucify him; and, even when they mocked his dying agony, still he loved them. Then, after his resurrection, when he sent his disciples to preach the gospel, he charged them to begin at Jerusalem; in the place where wicked hands slew him, there first of all to offer pardon to those guilty of that crime; and this forgiving love, which we delight in as the source of our salvation, is also our pattern in love to sinners. Let us not enjoy it in the one aspect and reject it in the other, for only as we have this spirit of Christ are we prepared to be co-workers with him in saving souls. Is there no labor for souls that fails of success because of deficiency here?

We are accustomed to speak of the love of Christ to sinners as self-denying, and point to his leaving

the throne of his glory and taking upon him the form of a servant as the greatest possible self-denial ; but what finite mind can take the measure of that infinite descent? Do we not appreciate it better when we bear in mind that this self-denial was for just such sinners as nailed him to the cross? We can understand the self-denial of leaving the throne to die for such, though we cannot accurately estimate the distance of the descent involved in the Word becoming flesh. But here, too, while we enjoy the sight of such self-denial endured for us, let us not forget that this, also, is a pattern for our imitation. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, yet made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant." No created being can ever equal such renunciation of self. Yet we are to have the same mind in us, and it will do us no harm to inquire what manifestations we have given of such a mind ; and when tempted to shrink from the self-denial necessary to labor for the salvation of men, let us look up to the infinite self-denial of our Lord, and be ashamed of self-indulgence.

Christ not only denied himself, he also suffered for sinners. We are apt to confound self-denial and suffering, because the denial of self is so difficult to us that it involves more or less of suffering ; but

with Christ they were separate and distinct. He so loved sinners as to be made in the likeness of sinful flesh ; but this was in order that he might be able to suffer and to die. And this becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, was not only a necessary means of procuring our salvation, but also a part of the example which Christ left for us to follow. As saith one apostle, " Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow his steps ;" and another, " He laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

Perhaps it will be said that we are not now considering love to the brethren, but labor for those who are out of Christ. Yet it is labor to bring them to Christ. We hope that it will be blest to the salvation of some ; and if so, do not such become brethren, and can we ever do so much for a child of God as to be the means of his becoming such? and is not this the meaning of the apostle when he says, " I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory " ? His sufferings were not for Christians already converted, but for those who, through his toil and suffering, became his brethren in the Lord ; and so Christ encouraged him to remain in Corinth, saying, " for I have much people

in this city ;” that is, heathen who shall become my people.

While there is so much that is trying to nature, in faithful, earnest dealing with the impenitent, let us not rob ourselves of the divine power there is in the example of Christ to sustain us. We need it all ; and only as we continue looking unto Jesus as our example in suffering for the sake of doing good, can we overcome the power of suffering to discourage.

There is one view of the love of Christ overcoming the suffering involved in doing good, which demands particular attention. Some men, desirous of saving souls, when they find that certain truths which God requires them to set forth, always give offence, are disposed to say nothing about them ; not that they cease laboring to save men, but they try to find some other mode of laboring that may give less offence. How was it with Christ? He knew that, if he taught certain truths, he must endure the contradiction of sinners ; and yet, knowing that these were precisely the truths they needed to hear, his love made him willing to encounter their hostility for the sake of doing them good. He foresaw all that would follow his teaching, in Nazareth, that God hath mercy on whom he will have mercy. Did he then select a less offensive doctrine? Nay, verily ! but, knowing that this was precisely the truth their state of mind required, he was willing to meet the

rage that sought to cast him headlong from the brow of the hill, for the sake of saving them. And who knows but in heaven we shall meet some of that raging mob, brought there through the love that was strong enough to meet their wants even at the peril of life? It is not impossible that some, subsequently converted under apostolic preaching, dated their first impressions from that most unpopular sermon of the Teacher from heaven.

We know that afterwards, when Peter would have stopped Christ from speaking of his sufferings and death, the Saviour turned and said unto him, "Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence unto me, for thou relishest not the things that be of God."

Christ's love to sinners did not need to keep anticipated suffering out of sight in order to sustain its composure; but it found pleasure in thinking of those sufferings through which it would save us. In this also Christ left us an example, that we should follow his steps. Let no one excuse his self-indulgence, by pronouncing the imitation of such love an impossibility. It is not so; for here is one who counts all things but loss, that he "may know the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ, being made conformable unto his death;" one whose "earnest expectation and hope was that Christ should be magnified in his body, whether by life or by death;"

and just in proportion as we resemble Paul in this imitation of Christ do we rejoice in the Lord.

Look on this conformity to Christ from a distance, and it seems unendurable; draw near to it, and it is the joy of the Lord. From the stand-point of the world, it is a living martyrdom; to the spiritual mind, it is the most joyous fellowship with Christ.

This labor for the salvation of sinners, originating in love, and glorying in the tribulation involved, with Christ was ever the chief end of life. It was not a subordinate end, filling up the blank spaces left by something else. Christ was like other men, in that he lived for his own enjoyment. He was unlike them, in that his joy was to glorify God in saving sinners, even at the cost of his own life. Christ had to provide, not only for himself, but for a family of twelve; yet so engrossed was he in the great work of saving souls, that no mention is made of his working for a support, though it is morally certain that at some period of his life he must have done so. There is as little record of his soliciting aid from others, and none at all of his working miracles either for the support of himself or his disciples. But always, from that noted saying of his, at twelve years of age, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" his mind and heart are full of the one object. Whether actively engaged in his public ministry, or only preparing

for it, it was his meat and drink to do the will of him that sent him, and it was the will of him that sent him, that every one who seeth the Son and believeth on him may have everlasting life.

Nothing was ever counted an interruption or a task that promised to promote this end. When weary from a walk, under the burning sun of a Syrian noon, he was ready to preach to the woman of Samaria while he rested. It was while laboring to pour light into her dark heart, that he told the wondering disciples, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of, even to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." And on another occasion, though he had not time so much as to eat, still he did not weary of his work of love. In all this he is a pattern for each of us; not that our strength is equal to his any more than our knowledge of God, or our ability to make known the things of God; but the disposition to seek first the kingdom of God should be in us, as it was in him. The interests of that kingdom should ever be preferred before our own.

Christ always orders his providences so that we may know whether we do so prefer them. Stormy Sabbaths try whether we put the same value on the place of prayer as on the place of business. Diffidence in ourselves, and unkind criticism from others, test our desire to serve him in the social meeting.

The cavils, and it may be the angry remarks of the impenitent, measure the strength of our desire to witness for Christ, and to do them good.

There is a strong indisposition in many to speak a word for Christ to the members of their own families. But his faithfulness even on the brow of the hill at Nazareth, joined with the fact that neither did his brethren believe on him, teach us that though Christ was no stranger to the embarrassment of such labors, yet here also he was without sin, so leaving us an example that we should follow his steps.

Perhaps there is no way in which we can do more for the salvation of sinners, than by praying for them the effectual and fervent prayer that availeth much. It is an interesting inquiry, what is the example Christ has left us on this point. The evangelists do not tell us the subject-matter of his prayers, save in a very few cases, but we know that he was in the habit of praying for his disciples, from the incidental mention of his prayer for Peter in his foreseen temptation. If he prayed for one who so denied him, even after being forewarned of his danger, we may be sure he prayed much and often for them all. We know how he prayed for them and prays for us: "Sanctify them through thy truth;" and can we think that he prayed so for them after conversion, and offered no petition for their conversion? Not such is the teaching of that Scripture,

“Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost part of the earth for thy possession.” That tells us that whosoever believeth in Jesus, does so in answer to his prayers. That prayer of Christ on the cross, “Father, forgive them, they know not what they do,” was not offered for sinners already penitent. The Spirit was poured out on the day of Pentecost by Him who ever maketh intercession for us, as was testified by the apostle: “Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the gift of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear.” Then, in prayer for others, let us be strengthened not only by the example of Christ when on earth, but by his co-operation now. We never offer effectual prayer on earth, only as Christ intercedes for the same object in heaven.

Union with Christ involves more than we think it does; much more than the lives of many professors give the world an impression that it does. “He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk even as he walked.” The object of Christ is to assimilate us to himself. Just as he shall deliver our bodies from corruption, by fashioning them like unto his own glorious body, so does he deliver our souls from selfishness and sin, by conforming us to his own character, and that character is love. We

have seen something of the nature of this love. How far are we advanced in this likeness of Christ? How much of his image do men recognize in us? More important still, there is One who to-day walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, as he did in the days of his beloved disciple. The increased number of his churches, or of the members they contain, does not diminish the thoroughness of his knowledge, or the constancy of his observation of the life of each. How much of his own love does he see reflected from our hearts?

Not regular attendance on ordinances, not outward respectability of life, not an unchallenged church membership, but a walking even as Christ walked, will bear the scrutiny of that day. "If we be dead with him, we shall also live with him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with him."

CHAPTER XIV.

WE WOULD SEE JESUS.

SOME Greeks, not necessarily proselytes, but more probably heathen, were present at the Passover in Jerusalem just before the crucifixion, for in that age heathen visited distant cities to worship in the most celebrated temples. Dissatisfied with a false religion, many were diligent in their inquiries after the true faith, and used to frequent the synagogues for instruction, though they did not submit to circumcision. These Greeks had not come up to keep the feast, but only to worship at it, as Gentiles did, in the outer court of the temple.

It is an interesting fact, that just as wise men from the East came to the manger in Bethlehem, so these from the West came to the cross in Jerusalem, and, as we hope, not in vain; for Solomon, when he dedicated the temple, made mention of "the stranger who did not belong to Israel," and prayed — to use his own words — for "those who should come out of a far country for thy name's sake." Were not these

Greeks some of those whom the Spirit had in view when he indited that prayer of Solomon? It was a peculiarly interesting moment when they visited Jerusalem. Lazarus had just been raised from the dead, and perhaps the popular excitement growing out of that event first turned their attention to the Saviour; for many of the Jews who had seen that miracle believed on him, and the Pharisees were nerving themselves to the murder of Jesus, by reasoning like this: "Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? Behold, the world is gone after him:" in other words, gentler measures avail nothing; do something more decisive.

These Greek pilgrims in Jerusalem could not fail to hear much of him whose deeds and claims were the theme of all tongues; and one of his deeds must have interested them very deeply. Forbidden to enter the temple itself, the outermost court was assigned to them, as Gentiles; but even this right the Jews trampled on, by bringing in there sheep and oxen, and the rough noises of those who bought and sold them. The wonder is, that any Gentiles continued to come to the temple, when compelled to worship amid such unseemly sights and sounds. This wrong Jesus rectified, and rescued their place of prayer from such desecration. Perhaps they were present when he did it; for, if not done, as some think, that day, it took place only three days before, and it must have

seemed to them a very kind, as well as righteous, interference in their behalf.

Then, too, the public entry of Christ into the holy city that morning, garments and palm branches strewing the street before him, while hosannas rent the air, may have determined them to see at once him whom till then they had only intended to see at some indefinite future.

Christ was at this time, most probably, in the inner courts of the temple, and they could not approach him. So they wait patiently in that outer court, so lately the scene of his gracious interference. Little did they know how soon, or at what cost, he was about to open a way for us Gentiles into the Holy of Holies, where even Jews could not enter, no, nor yet priests, but only the high priest, and even he but once a year. Had they known this, how much stronger had been those favorable feelings they now cherish toward Jesus!

But the Saviour approaches, surrounded by his disciples, and, singling out Philip, they apply to him to bring about the coveted audience with his Master. Perhaps they select him because they hear him addressed by a Greek name. Perhaps they hear him speak to a bystander in their native tongue. It may be they had even been his guests at Bethsaida; or perhaps he was the only one within reach, who seemed especially intimate with Christ, and so to

him they open their errand. "Sir, we would see Jesus;" that is, we would have a personal interview with him in private.

One wonders they did not apply to John; but he might have been so close to Christ that they could not speak to him without being overheard by his Master; and we know, from John's account of these scenes, that at the time both his eye and ear must have been devoted to the Lord. Philip, too, may have had that peculiarly genial expression of countenance which would draw a stranger to speak to him rather than to a score of others equally within reach. That spirit that led him, as soon as he began to follow Christ himself, to go and find Nathanael, and then answer his objections so judiciously, may have still marked him out as the most fitting medium of introduction to his Lord. But this was a novel case: Nathanael was an Israelite, these were Gentiles, and Christ had said he was not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. When Nathanael came, Christ was at leisure; now he was in the midst of a crowd, and the disciples were in momentary expectation of his publicly assuming the throne of the Messiah; so, not daring to act on his own responsibility, he makes a sign to Andrew, and, taking him aside, consults what to do. The result is, the two go and tell Jesus.

Perhaps, by this time, they had got away from the

pressure at the temple gates, and the Greeks keeping within reach, though modestly holding back till called to come forward, Jesus turns him about, and speaks so as to be heard both by his disciples and the strangers who had sent them. Some have objected to this, that he spoke in the language of the Jews, which was unintelligible to the Greeks; but no one familiar with the East finds any difficulty here; for there is hardly an oriental who does not speak two or more languages, and we know that our Saviour conversed alone with Pilate, in the palace. Jesus speaks, then, at once, to the Greeks and his disciples, saying, "The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified." As if he had said, Ye have come opportunely, for the time when the world shall see me, and the glory of God in me, is already come; for in his death, — now regarded by Christ as having come, — is the Son of man glorified. From this darkness of shame his glory beams forth; from the cross proceeds power to draw all men unto himself, and at the same time power to wrench the world from the grasp of Satan. On the mount of glory he spoke of his decease, and now, from the beginning of that, he speaks of his glorification.

See, too, how kindly he adapts himself to his heathen auditors. They had not read the prophets, who spoke of a suffering Messiah, and so he does not refer them to the prophets. But, as he knows

they had learned from the Jews to look for a triumphant Messiah, he seeks so to prepare their minds for the disappointment of that hope, that they shall not be offended. It is as if he had said, the Son of man shall indeed be glorified, but not as you anticipate. But how can he break the matter to those idolaters? He knows they are deeply read in nature, and can understand her language; therefore he says, with his accustomed solemnity, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." Such will be the case with me. Should I fulfil your hopes, and appear at once in pomp and power, I should abide alone; the great object of my coming to earth would remain unfulfilled. But if ye shall soon hear of my being crucified, remember that I told you beforehand, that the corn of wheat which falls into the ground and dies, bringeth forth much fruit; therefore do not stumble at my death, however it disappoints your mistaken hopes. And then, as regards yourselves, if, instead of the honors you expect, you are hated of all men, for my sake, neither let this offend you; for "he that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." If any man will serve me, let him follow me, through suffering, to glory, and "where I am, there shall also my servant be," whether as now on

my way to heaven, through suffering, or hereafter with me in the enjoyment of its glory ; for as sure as the hour is come that I should be glorified, so surely "if any man serve me, him will my Father honor."

If the Lord Jesus, instead of being then on his way to the cross, had possessed a home of his own, where he could have invited those Greeks and discoursed to them at length, could he have imparted instruction more appropriate, or in a manner better adapted to their modes of thought? Doubtless they could not at the time fathom all its meaning ; but would they ever forget the few mighty words they heard from that heavenly Teacher, as for a moment they met and parted again at the gate of the temple? And as on Friday the corn of wheat was buried in Joseph's garden, was not new light shed on its bringing forth much fruit? And as his disciples also passed through much tribulation into the glory whither Christ had gone, did not these heathen inquirers go with them, rejoicing in a greater favor than the purification of that outer court, even admittance into his Father's house above?

Where they lived, or how, or where they died, Scripture does not inform us. But, if we are Christ's, shall we not meet them in that day when he makes up his jewels? And shall we not have a common experience in the matter of personal intercourse with a visible Saviour here on earth? They

longed for it, and so have we. They on one occasion almost had their wish, and anticipated much from the interview ; but he did not bless them in the way they expected. He only uttered a few pregnant words, which his Spirit afterwards unfolded, and passed on. And shall not we, also, have many things to tell in which the Lord did not bless us in the way we expected, but overturned our foolish plans to make way for his infinitely wiser and every way better methods of sanctification?

Their desire to see Jesus is not theirs only, but the desire of all that have ever known the Saviour before or since, as he himself tells his disciples : " Many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them." " Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad." We do not hope to see Jesus in the flesh ; but if our souls have one desire stronger than all others, it is that we may see him as he manifests himself unto the eye of faith.

The multitude who sang hosannas that day said, This is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth in Galilee. We, too, would see Jesus as a prophet, " revealing to us, by his word and Spirit, the will of God for our salvation." When burdened with guilt, we know that nothing but the knowledge of Christ can meet our case. No other name but his can dispel our fears. And when we have long prayed and looked

for this manifestation of himself, but instead of it come only darker views of the evil that is in us, we would see that Prophet, if only to ask whether we are in the right way; for if this be his method of healing us, — if he see that it is better for us to be in heaviness through manifold temptations, — we will submit; even in our tears we will say, “not as I will, but as thou wilt.” Only we would be sure that we are in the King’s highway, and not in some by-path of our own.

We do not deserve God’s sunshine on the way home to our Father’s house; but if we know that we are in that way, it seems as though we could run and not be weary, walk and not faint, however dark it be; for in the matter of sanctification we have a feeling that there are expositions of that corn of wheat falling into the ground and dying, in order to bring forth fruit, which only Jesus is able to explain.

There was written on his cross, “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews,” and we would see Jesus reigning supremely in our hearts, every feeling, impulse, and desire brought into captivity to his obedience. We cannot conceive of a more lovely vision. We could bear the loss of rapture, and look on without murmuring at the peace of others, while we ourselves are in deep waters, if we could only see Christ subduing us to his most blessed will, and his

hand holding up our goings in his paths that our footsteps slip not.

There is one other sight of Christ as King we would also see; we cannot tell which is the more lovely, only we are sure that we would not like the one without the other. It is the sight of our King subduing others also to his gentle sway. We would not see him reigning in our hearts alone, nor would we see him enthroned in other hearts, while ours were left rebellious; but if we could only see Christ king in both, then were we blest indeed; nor would we cry enough, till he shall reign King of kings and Lord of lords.

Scripture speaks of Jesus as our great High Priest, who is passed into the heavens; and we would look up to him who, having finished the work of redemption, has gone there to apply it. We would not be impatient to follow after. Fixing our eye on that blood which cleanseth us from all sin, we would endure hardness as good soldiers just as long as he sees best; but oh that, when the enemy presses sorest, and even faith seems giving way, we could look up and see Jesus pleading for us before the throne! We would not insist on seeing our name engraven on his breast, or hearing it repeated by his lips; but oh for the sight of that Intercessor, able to save to the uttermost, because he ever liveth to intercede; for even when sinking it would renew our

strength, and we should rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

The apostle speaks of him also as the Forerunner, who has entered within the vail. We would see him, also, as in this capacity he has gone forward to take possession for us ; and then it seems as though we could wait even fourscore years for the call to follow.

But, among all these other names of Jesus, there is none more precious than this one given him of the angel before the incarnation, and under which he was spoken of by those heathen pilgrims. Happy men, if they understood that he was called Jesus because he saves his people from their sins. We are sinners, but we long for that deliverance. We are not yet delivered, nor can we save ourselves, and therefore, morning, noon, and night we would see Jesus ; as transgressors, we would hear him say, " Thy sins are forgiven thee ; " as depraved with a desperate depravity, we would fain see him washing us from our sins in his own blood, though the wish startles us by the magnitude of the grace which it desires.

Let those who feel that they are deserving of salvation stand aloof from the Saviour, or seek to justify their neglect of his grace. We cannot do the first, and we would not undertake the last, and so still the language of our hearts is, we would see

Jesus; and ever as we go deeper in the knowledge of ourselves that desire is the more earnest. Even in a revival, when men might look for the Christian to give himself wholly up to gladness, his heart pants after the sight of Jesus; for the very energy of grace seems to rouse a corresponding energy of corruption in his evil nature, and he lives only as his eye rests on Jesus and his power to save.

At such a time the babe in Christ may so abound in his new-found joy that he can think of nothing else; and does not this correspond with the care of God for children? He provides for them a sheltered nook called home, a cradle, and a mother's arms; but for the man, there is toil, and trouble, and the constant surging of life's battle, where he needs something to nerve his fainting heart and renew his failing strength in the conflict with sin. This cordial is found only in the sight of Jesus.

One additional view of Jesus is indispensable to the Christian. It may have seemed to some that the mention of him as a Saviour from sin includes all that heart can wish. But there are moments in the Christian warfare when that alone cannot bear up the soul, and when, if we could not lean on a stronger support, we must sink. And what can that be? Let him, whose name is Legion, answer, as he cries out, "Jesus, *Son of God Most High.*"

There are lessons about Christ to be learned even from devils. Those fallen spirits who have suffered much longer than our globe has existed know the strong points in the person of our Immanuel, and what is strong to their dismay is just as mighty to our comfort.

As yet we know not the necessities of eternity, — what views of Christ will be best fitted to meet the wants of the glorified spirit; but we can conjecture what they will be; for there are times, even now, when the soul feels itself so helpless in the power of mighty sins, such a grip and grasp of wicked principalities, infernal powers, that if we could not look up to a divine Saviour, and be assured that it was God himself in the person of Christ that had undertaken to save, we would despair at once and forever. With what untold intensity does the soul at such times agonize for a sight of Jesus as the Son of God Most High! Jesus the prophet, the priest, the Saviour, — we love them all; but nothing satisfies until we see Jesus the Son of the Most High God. That atonement on the cross, unless it be the work of God, affords no comfort. That intercession before the throne — unless it be the prayer of one who can stand up before the Father on equal terms, and in perfect harmony of heart say, “Father, I will,” and “what I will, thou willest also” — is equally barren of com-

fort. But when the believer sees Jesus in the beginning with God, — yea, God himself, possessed of glory with the Father before the world was, — then all is peace. He can look in on the evil of his own heart, and say, “Thou shalt be rooted up and cast forth, for strong is the Lord who has undertaken it, and faithful is He who hath promised.” He can look out on temptation without fear, and even to infernal workers of temptation can say, “He who cast you out of heaven, and hath reserved you in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day, hath come down from heaven to destroy your works, and deliver me; and what He purposes, He does.” Thus may we see Jesus as our Immanuel, God with us, for us, in us, and so preparing us to be with him forever.

Heaven is the home of bliss,
Rather, the home of homes where Jesus is,
Himself its light and life, its love and bliss,
Its very perfectness.

If, for that home made meet,
I might far off, beyond the lowest seat,
But gaze enraptured on his blessed feet,
My heaven would be complete.

CHAPTER XV.

THE SAVING GRACE OF CHRIST.

WHEN burdened with sin, and weary with conflict, the Christian longs to turn away from all thought of his own doing, and gather strength for new labors from a view of Christ. After long riding on the dusty highway, oppressed by the heat of summer, we may have turned the horse's head into a cool avenue, shaded by leafy trees, and then driven slowly round a grassy lawn, inhaling the cool breeze, and refreshed by the sight of vale and hill, and verdant woods that opened up before us. At such a time, eye and heart found rest; we had nothing to do but to sit still and drink in enjoyment through every sense. So, after long bearing the burden and heat of the day, we would fain turn aside from toil, and have our strength renewed by a sight of the grace that is in Jesus Christ.

There is one Scripture that then seems written on purpose for our refreshment. After Cornelius had been led to Christ by the apostle of the circum-

cision, some of the Jewish converts felt that though Gentiles might come into the church, yet they must needs be circumcised, and observe the law of Moses. Others took a more Christian view of the matter; and in this way commenced a wide-spread division in the church that had scarcely yet begun to assume a fixed form, or have definite regulations. The apostles and elders came together to consider the point, and, in the course of their conference, Peter told how God had given the Holy Ghost to Gentiles, as well as unto Jews, and had put no difference between them, purifying both by the same faith, and, at the close of his remarks, says, "We believe that, through the grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, we shall be saved even as they."

We do not listen to these words as the expression of mere private opinion. That company of apostles receive them as uttered by the inspiration of God, and make them the basis of a "result of council" which "seemed good to the Holy Ghost;" but apart from all thought of their divine authority, the truth which they embody is refreshing. We lose sight of speaker and venerable council, in our enjoyment of the statement itself. It is eminently suggestive, and all its suggestions conduce to spiritual joy.

We should have expected the ardent speaker to say "Our Lord." That would sound more like

him who said, "Lord, I am ready to go with thee to prison and to death." "The Lord" seems too phlegmatic an expression for the eager spirit that plunged into the sea to go to Jesus on the shore, and again leaped into the waves to meet his Master walking on the waters. Why, then, did he use it? Not because it was more passionless, or savored more of calm philosophy. Was it not that he had come to look on Christ as so exalted, and having such a multitude of disciples from every tribe and kindred under heaven, that he lost sight of his own relation to Christ, in the enjoyment of theirs. His Master seemed more glorious as the Saviour of so many. It was just such holy benevolence that prompted him to write afterwards, "Grace and peace be multiplied unto them that have obtained like precious faith with us." We are apt to regard the faith of apostles as not only stronger than ours, but radically different. He tells us that ours is of equal value; was it not equally precious to his own heart as that through which himself was saved? His beloved brother, Paul, also writing to all that "call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord," hastes to add "both theirs and ours." Beautiful illustrations of the love which binds in one all who believe in Jesus!

But here is something more than unity; this apostle, whom some would exalt above the rest,

speaks as though he was following on after Gentiles into the kingdom. We believe that we shall be saved "even as they," as though they were the leaders entering first, and he their humble follower treading the same path of salvation over which they had passed before him. He speaks as if they had already obtained, and he was hoping to be so happy as to obtain upon the same terms.

This is a glorious vindication of the value of salvation; for some think that though we do not deserve to be saved, yet the exalted piety, the peculiar labors, and the great sufferings endured by apostles for Christ's sake, gave them a sort of right to heaven; but here Peter says, "After all our toil and suffering, our fellowship with God in prayer and in the advancement of his kingdom, we are no nearer deserving than others, but are totally dependent on the grace of Christ." Let us here learn more worthy views of the worth of salvation. The difference between apostles and private Christians to-day, whether in official position or in anything else, aside from this grace, is an infinitesimal quantity compared with the infinite grace that stoops to save any sinner at all.

Sometimes we find unconverted men unwilling to be put on a level with other sinners. They do not like it that the most notorious criminal may be saved on the same terms that are offered to them.

But how different the feelings of this apostle! Though a Hebrew of the Hebrews; though so specially favored of Christ, after as well as before his fall, yet here he says, "We shall be saved even as these sinners of the Gentiles." While so many are feeling, "I am holier than thou," is it not a privilege to gaze on this poverty of spirit which Jesus blesses? The world may demand with a sneer how in lowliness of mind each can esteem others better than himself. But here is a living and lovely illustration of the grace which they pronounce impossible. Could grace have selected a subject by nature more opposed to this heavenly humility?

But how was this change effected? The answer to this will reveal to us the especial glory of the words before us. - Peter learned humility in learning how he was to be saved. "We believe," says he, "that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they."

Some very good men walk in darkness as to the relation of our faith to salvation. They are all the while looking to their faith, and not to Christ. Each new discovery of imperfection in it fills them with distress, as though it forfeited their hope of heaven. So, instead of the peace of God ruling in their hearts, they are in constant anxiety. Alarm would better describe their state of mind than either

hope or joy. See how this Scripture guides these troubled ones into the path of peace, — “we believe.” Here is faith, but faith in what? — The goodness of our own spiritual character? — The excellence of our own religious feelings? By no means; see how sweetly self passes out of sight when the soul is looking unto Jesus. “We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved.” Here faith is but the gate through which the soul turns from the hot, dusty road of self-righteousness into the green pastures where it enjoys adoring views of free grace in Christ. The wearisome street is forgotten, not in admiration of the gate through which we left it, but in the enjoyment of the beauties within. The eye wanders from one to another in overflowing satisfaction. We stop here and there as some new vista of field and grove invites us to delay, and again glimpses of distant hills and quiet rivers beckon us away. We may have seen each object before, but they present themselves in new combinations, with different arrangements of light and shade, and the rich variety of loveliness rivets our gaze and perpetuates our joy. Ask us about the gate, and it has passed from our thoughts. It is not the gate that makes us glad, but these delightful scenes within it. Even if the gate was massive and costly, it is crowded out of mind by a glory that excelleth; and if it was small and mean,

that also is lost sight of amid this wealth of beauty. Even while passing through it, our minds were on the prospect opening before us, and not on it.

The apostle's "we believe" is crowded out of mind by "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," to which it points. Even in the act of believing, our mind was on this grace, and ever since it is this grace, and not our faith, which yields us joy. Talk to us about "our faith," and you fill us with shame on account of its palpable deficiencies. We can find peace only as we confess them before the Lord. Speak to us of "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ," and we are like the long-absent son when he first catches the accents of his mother's voice, or like the pilgrims in the land of Beulah when "they heard voices out of the city, loud voices, saying, 'Say ye to the Daughter of Sion, behold thy salvation cometh.'" In the one case our own sins and imperfections fill our thoughts. In the other it is what Christ has done for us, and is doing; what he has suffered for us, and promises still to do.

There is a richness in the expression, "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ," which no mere definition can exhaust. In one view, it is the divine favor manifested in his work of redemption, and what a variety is here, holding him up before us, as Mediator, Saviour, Shepherd, Intercessor, or atoning Priest! Does not each one of these words suggest

a separate fulness of spiritual joy? In another view, this grace is the divine favor procured for us by Christ; and here the variety is no less extensive or precious. For in it is contained pardon and sanctification, strength and comfort, blessing to-day and victory at last; every form which God's love assumes, from the choosing us in Christ before the foundation of the world, to the welcome into the joy of our Lord.

Yet, manifold as is this grace, there is not one iota of it which the Christian is willing to forego. Ask him whether he prefers to look on Christ procuring, or on the favor procured, and he cannot tell you. They are like the separate threads wrought into one beautiful pattern, from which he cannot spare a part. Ask a mother which of her children she is willing to spare, and she cannot reply; the more she tries, the less is she able to answer, for her heart fills to think that soon, willing or unwilling, she and they must part, — she leaving them motherless, or else weeping at their graves. So the Christian cannot tell you what part of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ he is willing to forego; but, unlike the mother, he looks forward to no inevitable separation from this grace. For, like Christ himself, it is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. The only change it knows is from glory

to glory, from dimmer to clearer revelations, from these earthly foretastes to the heavenly fruition.

If this grace itself is manifold, its results are not less varied and abundant. It is pleasant to notice the comprehensive way in which the apostle describes them all. He does not say, through this grace we shall be justified or sanctified or glorified, but he uses a word that expresses all in one, when he says, "we shall be saved;" not "we are saved," though in a blessed sense that also is true, as it is written, "By grace ye are saved." But in that case he would have pointed us to a work not yet complete. True, the part already done involves the completion of that yet undone, still it is not yet completed. But "we shall be saved" carries us forward to the day when all that Christ has undertaken shall have been fulfilled, and each of the exceeding great and precious promises fully performed; when the glorious plans of God shall have been all carried out in the complete perfection of the divine ideal, and no one of the redeemed shall have one desire unsatisfied. The apostle points us forward to all this, and then tells us that the whole of it is through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. That procured all, it performs all, and it shall finish all. The motives that lead it to save, and, if I may so express it, the material out of which it creates salvation, all are in and of this grace.

Well may we cry, "O glorious salvation!" and the more we search into it, the more will we find occasion to repeat the cry. But, glorious as it is, there is one thing yet more glorious. The grace that produces it is more excellent, even as he who hath builded the house hath more honor than the house. Just as the heavens are glorious, while all their splendor reveals only a portion of the glory of their Creator, so does the glory of salvation point to the greater glory of this grace of the Lord Jesus Christ in which it lives and moves and has its being.

Look up, then, from this handiwork of grace to that grace itself. It is the grace "of Jesus," that is, of the Saviour, our Saviour, the Saviour of all who have already entered, or shall yet enter, into rest; of "Jesus Christ," that is, the anointed Saviour, he whom God provides to save us, and authorizes to perform the work. Can there be any disappointment, then, to them who trust in his redemption? — of the "Lord Jesus Christ," that is, a Saviour whose is all power in heaven and in earth, who is God over all, blessed forever. He procured this grace; he applies it; he guarantees its eternal success. Add to all this, it makes us one with him, most intimately and forever; it makes us partakers of his life, so that he is our everlasting life and joy; it makes us members of his spiritual body, that body which shall never know sickness, or suffering, or old

age, or death; it shall make us like him, and seat us with him on his throne.

Then let us seek more worthy views of this grace and of him whose it is; so shall we enjoy more of this salvation. Having access by faith into this grace, let us so stand in it that we shall rejoice in hope of the glory of God; neither trusting in our faith as though it were our Saviour, nor despairing because we find in it so many imperfections, but exercising a faith whose highest glory is to believe that, "through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved;" assured that simple reliance on that grace is as efficacious for the salvation of the chief of sinners to-day, as it was for the apostles of our Lord.

CHAPTER XVI.

CHRIST IN THE ASSEMBLIES OF HIS PEOPLE.

THERE are some words in almost constant use ; we can hardly speak without them ; and so there are some Scriptures which we make mention of whenever we pray. Even when not mentioned, still they are in our thoughts, and are our encouragement to worship. Such is that word of Jesus, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." As we may often go to the same spring, and never come away thirsty, so we never recur to this word of Christ in vain.

Some say the man Christ Jesus is not bodily present in Christian assemblies, and therefore he speaks here of the presence of the Spirit. The man Christ Jesus is not bodily present ; but if, when among men, he could speak of a Son of man as in heaven at the same moment, now that he is on the throne can he not speak of himself as present with his people here ?

When he says to his sorrowing disciples, "It is

expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away the Comforter will not come to you," and then tells them that the Comforter is the Holy Ghost, we cannot misunderstand him; and is it any less plain when he says, "All power is given unto ME in heaven and in earth," and the same speaker adds, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world"? It is the same person who here says, "Wherever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I."

Whenever Christians meet together, then, in the name of Christ, they have both the presence of their Redeemer and their Sanctifier. It may seem superabounding grace; but it is just like God, and illustrates what the apostle calls the "riches of his grace." Let us not limit the Holy One of Israel. Let us not suggest to the Lord that he be more sparing in the bestowment of inexhaustible goodness; but if Christ be pleased to come himself, and bring the Holy Spirit with him, let us not refuse his mercy, but enjoy it and him the more. Surely, when he says, "If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we — both Father and Son — will come unto him and make our abode with him," we can doubt no more.

He knows little of the Blessed Trinity who looks upon it as a mere dogma in a creed. It is a world of life and love, into which the soul enters through

Christ, and of which it finds neither limit nor end. He must be a new scholar in the school of Christ who thinks that, because he sends the Spirit, therefore he does not come himself. The Spirit reveals the glory of a present Saviour, and that Saviour is the Brightness of the Father's glory, so that he that has seen him hath seen the Father; and still as of old, when Jesus speaks peace to his people, the words that he speaks he speaks not of himself, for the Father loves whom he loves, and speaks through the Son his love to us.

Then away with the parsimonious view of grace that says, because Christ sends the Spirit, he does not come himself. We love the Spirit. We owe to him all that we know of Jesus. We depend on him for grace on earth and in heaven; we will not undervalue the great love wherewith he now loves us, in spite of all our provocation. It is not instead of him, but along with him, that our hearts cry out for our Elder Brother, who is Immanuel, God with us.

This promise is frequently referred to as proving that Christ is divine, because it represents him as omnipresent; but that is not the only way in which it sets forth his deity.

When a man bids farewell to his friend, he speaks of enduring friendship that cannot change; but Christ makes no protestations. He simply says,

“Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I,”—a statement most unpretending, but infinite in the blessing which it brings to the believing heart. In bidding farewell, a man’s thoughts are on the friends before him. “You and I,” he says, “may grow gray ere we meet again; we may hardly recognize each other as the friends of former days; but, change as the body may, my heart will abide unchanging.” It was more than that which Jesus said. Not merely, “Though one of you deny me, and all forsake me, yet I will love you still,”—though having loved his own he loved them to the end,—but, taking in all in every age who should believe on him through their word, he says, “Where two or three are gathered together in my name,”—they may be some of you now present, some of the next generation, or some whose bodies in the morning of the resurrection will be changed without tasting death,—they may live amid these familiar scenes, or dwell in the ends of the earth; but, whoever they are, and wherever they meet, “there am I.” We ask not only, could less than Omnipresence be in so many places at once? but, could less than Omniscience look so far into the future? and could less than divine Immutability fulfil such an engagement? Look at the long succession of the redeemed, their untold variety of sins, each wearing out the love that seems wasted on it. Could less than

divine love survey the whole length and breadth of this mass of provocation, and yet utter such a promise? Surely he who looked across the whole of this sea of transgression, and felt no disposition to draw back as he looked, apprehended no change of feeling in the future, and was not afraid to bind himself by these words to every generation of his people, must be God.

And just as he promised, so has he fulfilled. With us, the regular recurrence of the same duty for a few years soon becomes a lifeless form; but this grace of his, incessantly repeated through the ages, is as vital and hearty to-day as when it first began, and so shall be to the end. No less than the Omnipresence these words imply, this unchanging, inexhaustible goodness approves the speaker, God.

It is pleasant to reflect that Christ spoke these words of his own accord. None of the disciples, foreseeing the loneliness and afflictions of the future, had begged the Master to be with them. His own loving foresight utters the promise that soon will be so precious. It was just like him to prevent them with the blessings of goodness; in other words, to go before their prayers, and even their sense of want, with his divine supplies; and, when the time arrived to appreciate this promise, how delightful must have been, not only its fulfilment, but the

sight of the grace that provided it so long beforehand.

Herein, also, is wonderful condescension on the part of Christ. One would think that, having emptied himself of the glory which he had with the Father before the world was, and been so long in the form of a servant, now, when he is about to return to his home in heaven, he would be loth to think of leaving it again to come back to earth; but the joy set before him was not the mere satisfaction of a personal return to the Father; it was the holier joy of bringing many sons with him to share his heaven, and so he looks beyond sufferings as yet unfinished, to a return to earth, in order to impart his grace. To-day also this condescending love is as fresh as when he spoke these words. He left his throne for the cross, and that is past never to return. But now, often does he turn from the praises of heaven to where two or three gather together in his name on earth. The one was a condescension never to be repeated; but this shall continue while there are two or three of his disciples in the world.

It is no matter how obscure they may be, or how poor; of the two or three, one may be illiterate, the second a beggar, and the third a slave, yet Christ does not scorn to join the humble party. His own people may pass by on the other side. Their taste may be shocked by want of refinement

in dress, or language, or modes of worship; but Christ is not ashamed of the humblest disciple that ever called upon his name. His presence is neither attracted by refinement nor repelled by coarseness; it is drawn toward his own, who, whatever their outward appearance, are inwardly thirsting for his grace. When the "Dairyman and his Daughter" talked together of Jesus, he was there. When grateful freedmen meet in some rude cabin, to sing of Jesus and call upon his name, he does not despise their cry; and when Zooloos walk home together, trying to recall the words of the missionary, and understand them better, Jesus is just as ready to walk with them and open their understandings as he was to walk with Cleopas on the way to Emmaus.

Some two or three disciples in the far West may talk over in a log cabin the privileges of their New England home, and long to hear once more the Bible preaching of their childhood. They may not think of it, but Jesus is present, a delighted listener, and if they only knew how long he has been training up a pastor expressly for them; above all, if they could see how he has purposed to visit* them with his salvation, they could not refrain from falling down at his feet to worship.

So, too, it is no matter where the two or three are gathered together. It may be in some dark recess of the mine; or up on the yard-arm where the

roar of the wind prevents the oaths of the deck from mingling with the words of worship; or in the dungeon where martyrs encourage each other for the death-scene. Christ does not shrink from being present in even such places with his own. How often has he turned his back on the palace, and passed by the mansion of the noble, to enter some poor garret where two or three were waiting for him with longings that could not be denied!

On stormy Sabbaths, when the majority of the congregation stays away, Christ does not stay with them in their comfortable homes, but, true to his promise, meets with those who press through cold and storm to the appointed place. Did such ever practise self-denial in order to meet with Christ for naught? And if some ease-loving disciples did but search into the reason why, on such Sabbaths, they find so little inclination to pray at home, they might find the explanation in their neglect of this word of Christ. He thinks much of a Sabbath that calls forth those whose hearts are warmed with love, while it leaves at a distance the lukewarm and the cold.

So, in the evening meeting, this one may be absent because he is tired, and that one because it is not convenient to attend, and still another because he has forgotten it altogether; but so long as two or three meet together in his name, Christ's place is never empty. He never forgets.

But some one asks, "What does he do when he is present? I never saw him. I never heard him speak;" that is true, but not because he was absent. If there was ever any praise that came from the heart, Christ was in the heart that sang. If ever there was freedom in prayer, it was his hand that touched the spring of feeling. If the soul of any has been lifted up as on eagle's wings, that, too, was from Jesus. There was never one good thought, or word, or feeling, in a Christian assembly, that could not be traced back to a present Saviour. There never yet was any good done where he was absent, and there never will be. Point to a meeting productive of spiritual good, even to one soul, and we look on a meeting blessed with the presence of Immanuel.

If there is any difference between Christian and heathen worship, and between the meetings of evangelical Christians and those who are not, it is not because one is by nature better than the other, or has more learning, or more heart. All the difference lies in this: Christ is present with the one, and absent from the other. The one welcomes him in, the other shuts him out. If any cannot keep up prayer-meetings it is because Christ does not meet with them, and not because they are lacking in anything else.

Never let us forget that all our springs are in

Christ ; if he departs, all spiritual blessing goes with him. There does not remain a little good, or a little life, but none at all. Ministers may set forth the doctrines of God's word plainly, faithfully, and with great affection ; but if Christ does not give spiritual apprehensions of the truth no doctrine is rightly understood. So, too, the preacher may set forth with great tenderness the consolations of the gospel ; but if Christ be not there to set them home to the heart, there is no comfort. Everything may be fitted to edify ; but if Christ be absent there is no edification. Everything may promise conversions ; but without him none take place. Like the priests of Baal we may become frenzied with excitement ; but without Christ there is neither heavenly fire nor life. It is only his presence that kindles the flame of devotion in our hearts. It was not the things written in the Scriptures concerning Jesus that made those two hearts burn within them on the road to Emmaus ; but it was Christ unfolding the Scriptures, and opening their hearts to receive what he unfolded. Without Christ we can do nothing ; we are nothing but masses of guilt and misery. He is our life, and in him we live, strengthened with all might according to his glorious power.

This promise forbids us to look to the mesmeric influence of large numbers for spiritual profit. In a large assembly excitement is intensified by the inter-

action of many minds ; but it is not a spiritual power ; it operates just as powerfully elsewhere as in the church ; it is just as efficient against the truth as for it ; it works as efficaciously for vice as for virtue. If spiritual profit depends on large assemblies, then this promise should read, "Where thousands assemble together, there am I."

The same is true of the effects of eloquence and music. Some may think that with an artistic choir and an eloquent preacher spiritual profit is secure ; but music and eloquence stir the soul in the political assembly, or call forth tears in the theatre as well as in the sanctuary. Spiritual profit is not tied to any of these things. It is not affirmed that Christ does not bless large assemblies, or that he does not pour his grace through the channels of music and eloquence ; but wherever spiritual profit exists it is the fruit of the presence and the grace of Christ ; it is the work of his Spirit. All else is incidental and accessory, and not essential to the result which he produces.

He knew how many of his disciples would dwell in lowly seclusion, not only in obscure abodes, but with numbers, learning, and public sentiment leagued against them ; that, as the servant of Elisha cried, "Alas, my master, how shall we do?" when the army of Syria hemmed in the prophet, so they would be ready to give up all for lost ; but, instead of open-

ing their eyes to see the place full of horses and chariots of fire round about them, He simply says "there am I," — not angels, or hosts of angels, but *I*, — and what need they more?

The family is a sphere of action which the world forsakes for more conspicuous theatres; but Christ appreciates that divine institution. Whenever a Christian father and mother meet for family prayer, or the religious instruction of their children, there is Christ; and if any cry, "Alas! I cannot claim the promise, for God has taken the companion whose prayers uniting with mine had secured this blessing;" nay, bereaved one, rather will Jesus cleave the closer, and make up the loss by his own presence; yea, from among your children he will raise up those who shall join the glorified one in worshipping their and your Redeemer.

Christ has a special liking for the families that call upon his name. It was so in the days of Abraham and Isaac, of Hannah and Samuel, when he appeared as the angel of the covenant. It was so when he was on earth, as Lazarus and his sisters could testify; and Lois, her daughter, and her grandson, with many more since then, can bear witness that he has not ceased to love the pious household. Though now he does not take our children in his arms, lay his hand on them and bless them, yet, if he puts his

Spirit in them, and makes them joint heirs with himself, is it not better?

Was it not with special reference to the daily performance of domestic duties that Jesus said, "Whoever shall do the will of my Father in heaven, the same is my brother and sister and mother"? The brother, sister, or mother, who performs the everyday duties of these relations in the fear of God, may feel all the day long that where they are, there, too, is their Lord and Saviour.

These words of Jesus relieve the difficulties of some good men on the subject of missions. They look out on heathen lands, and in some, they see not scattered tribes of barbarians, but a dense population; the cities are more populous than the largest in our own land. Of course their inhabitants are not ignorant, but possessed of an extensive literature, and institutions of an advanced civilization. Looking out on such a prospect, as they see two or three feeble missionaries undertake the conversion of such a people, they admire their zeal; but they pity them in view of their anticipated disappointment. What can a handful of despised stammering foreigners do?

In themselves they can do nothing; they cannot secure a foothold among the people, much less out of those confirmed idolaters make true disciples. But if Christ is with them, is anything too hard for the Lord? And it is "where two or three are gath-

ered together in his name," not merely in Christian lands, but wherever such are found, that Christ is present. Has he not said, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me"? And is not all power in heaven and in earth given to him on purpose to fulfil this promise? The whole machinery of missions, then, is very simple. It is just taking Christ at his word, and sending two or three into a heathen nation in his name, that through them Christ may subdue the world; that he may make the heathen like fuel, and missionaries like a torch, and so light up a fire of devotion that shall not be quenched, until he come the second time without sin unto salvation. So has Christ been with his missionary servants in time past, and so will he be with them always even to the end; and blessed be his name that the fulfilment of this promise does not take him away from us, nor does his abiding with us interfere with his presence at the very ends of the earth.

Whenever, then, we are gathered together in his name, no matter how few, or how unworthy, let us "enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise;" let us "be thankful unto him, and bless his name, for the Lord is good, his mercy is everlasting, and his truth endureth unto all generations."

Some look on faith as a mysterious emotion of

untold power, which a man is to create within himself, and on the excellence of which all good depends. It is, doubtless, a mysterious emotion of untold power, but not of our creation. We are not to create it, but we are to come just as we are; and, as in this case, when Christ says, "I am in the midst of them," take him at his word, and leave him to manifest his presence in his own way. We are not to create the tokens of his presence, but to let him reveal them. We are not to produce the effects of his presence, but to expect them according to his Word. Indeed, for us to produce those effects, and then call it his work, would be a shameful untruth.

If, when we gathered together, it was with a childlike dependence on the promise "there am I," what might we not behold of the power of Christ to save? But if, on the Sabbath, we only hope that the discourse will be interesting, and on the week-day that this one rather than that will take a part in the meeting, is it any wonder our souls are starved? Is that gathering together in the name of Christ? Can we ask him to bless, when all the credit would be given to man?

This promise shows us who is slighted by the neglect of the sanctuary. Some deem it a slight to the preacher who has toiled to prepare something for their spiritual profit, or an injury to their own

piety, or a pernicious example to others. It is all these ; but all together are not to be compared to the slight put upon the Lord Jesus Christ, who has made this appointment with his people.

Men may count it a light thing to stay away from the house of prayer ; but Christ does not so regard it. Such as see in public worship a mere compli-ance with a good custom, or a compliment to the preacher, may stay away for a slight cause ; but no threats, no, not even persecution, could keep him away who has felt the power of this good word of Christ. He might fail to keep an appointment with man, but not with his Redeemer.

Such men may be easily recognized by the abounding of their spiritual life, for it is still true that "those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God."

If we know something by experience of the meaning of this promise, then have we sat together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. And yet it is but a foretaste. The feast is not here ; it awaits our coming in a better world. If here, in addition to the intrinsic excellence of spiritual things, we have enjoyed them not as the fruit of human eloquence, but as the loving gift of Him who purchased them for us with his own blood ; then are we prepared to appreciate the bliss of heaven. Communion and fellowship with a present Saviour here prepare us

for the more blessed communion of that world where he prays that we may be with him, and behold his glory. Much as the Giver of this promise imparts on earth, he longs to have us where he can reveal his grace more fully, and we enjoy more of the infinite revelation.

CHAPTER XVII.

FALLING ASLEEP IN JESUS.

IT is written of Stephen that he fell asleep. What a close to such a tragedy! What a conclusion for such a tale of suffering! Who can look on that raging mob in their work of blood, and not start when the writer concludes all with a word like that?

Such language does not express the thoughts of the world. Men dread nothing more than death, and at midnight will go far out of their way rather than pass alone through the graveyard. They not only fear the presence of death, but even when it is far off they tremble lest it come near; and if a passing object suggests it, it is as if a dark shadow rested on a pleasant landscape. Why thus? Amid so much complaint of evil here, why do not men look with an equal eye on him who enters and him who leaves the world? or even say with one of old, "Better is the day of death than the day of one's birth"? Because after death is the judgment, and God sits there as Judge.

Scripture presents quite another view of death to those in Christ; pointing to the place that he has gone to prepare it bids them rejoice, for though their "earthly tabernacle be dissolved, they have a building of God eternal in the heavens."

Revealing such views of death, no wonder the Bible speaks of it exultingly, for it does not disguise a terror, but unfolds a joy. It is a change so desirable as to lead one to say, "All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come." Instead of a departure to a land of darkness, it is the dawn of the light that proceedeth from the throne of God and of the Lamb. If we go through the Bible and gather together the words used to describe a Christian death, what other event on earth shall we find so full of joy?

"Gave up the ghost" may indeed sound gloomy, but put it in modern English, "He resigned his spirit," and language cannot be more beautiful. The good man resigns himself to God; he has long loved to trust him; and, after finishing his appointed labors, and enduring his last trial, we hear the Lord call for the spirit he has been training for heaven, and see the believer resign it into his hands in perfect peace, saying, "I know in whom I have believed, and that he is able to keep that I have committed unto him;" and, ere the sentence is finished, the shadows flee away and the light of heaven beams

upon his soul. To whom does the Christian thus resign his spirit? What does the Saviour mean to do with it? He does not tell us, for as yet we cannot understand. But he says to one that can, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." And if ever we come into his blessed presence, then shall we also know how fitting is that last prayer of so many, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!"

If the trembling one cannot otherwise conquer his fears, let him put his fingers into the print of the nails; yea, thrust his hand, if it must be, into that wounded side; anything but withhold confidence from Christ. The way lies through a dark valley, but only through it. That is not the place prepared for us. It lies beyond, and Jesus is there; his grace is with us; his angels about us, and we are as safe as though the gate of pearl had been already passed. We go down into a cold river, and its waters chill the heart; but it is soon crossed, and he who saith, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee," on the other side wipes all tears forever from our eyes. Truly, the death of the self-righteous we may fear; but that revealed to us in Christ is a favor for which we may thank God to-day and forever. In listening to the words, "He fell asleep," as men we must exclaim, "How beautiful!" but as Christians, "How triumphant!"

Here is no fear; but like the disciples in the case of him whom Jesus loved, we think of taking rest in sleep. Thoughts of repose lead us to dwell on its suggestions of peace. The anxious cannot sleep; carefulness plants thorns in the downy pillow. And how can a soul out of Christ fall asleep with his sins around and within him, and the Judge before him? But he who believes in Jesus is at rest; his preparation is complete, for Christ has made it for him, and wrought it in him, and the Spirit witnesses that he is a joint heir with his Redeemer. When God calls such an one, let him fall asleep, for he sleeps in Jesus, and neither death nor life can separate him from the love of God which is in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Do you say these are mere generalities, and sound well only while things are omitted that would mar the painting? Must not the Christian leave friends? And can he fall asleep untroubled by their tears? Yes. Here dies a father; one joined to him by sacred ties stands weeping with those soon to be fatherless. He may leave them poor, far from home, and friendless; but a voice says, "Leave thy fatherless children; I will preserve them alive; and let your widows trust in me." To him that is not the voice of a stranger. And, having trusted his own soul to his keeping, would he withhold them from the care of the Good Shepherd? Do they, too,

know that voice? Then they shall meet again, for Christ keeps every one of them until that day.

If anything can disturb his peace, it would be the thought that they do not know his Saviour; and, as the eye rests on one whom it may not see again, save on the left hand in that day, agony may thrill the soul; but only for a moment. He loves God more than he loves them. He may fear the results of their present course, but he has no fear about God, for his way is perfect, and in his hand he leaves them all, without anxiety, for God and his glorious character fill his heart with peace.

But is not he himself a sinner? Yes; but that name, believer, tells the secret of his peace. Do his sins gather around him, and clamor for his condemnation? Let them all join to accuse him, Jesus is with him, who washed him from them in his own blood, and how can they disturb him when his peace rests on one able to save to the uttermost, for his own name's sake? How can he be troubled to whom Jesus giveth peace? How can he fear when God lifts up the imperfect sanctification of earth into the finished holiness of heaven?

But, aside from the fact of guilt, is there not a natural dread of death? There is, for in itself death is dreadful. It is a fearful mark of the abhorrence God feels toward sin, that even those whom he pardons and loves, for Jesus' sake, must nevertheless

pass through death into the place that Christ has gone to prepare. It is not strange, therefore, if the grave continues to be their terror; but even then, Jesus knoweth their frame, and like as a father pitieth his children, so does he pity them; himself walketh at their side through the dark valley; and will he who saves them from the second death leave them to be overwhelmed by the first? To those who are faithful unto death — only unto it, not through it — he giveth the crown of life. When, even in the prospect of its terrors close at hand, they hold steadfast the beginning of their confidence, he cares for them in the actual encounter. To such he can unveil heaven so clearly and so near, that, as they gaze on its glories, they forget their fears, nor know through what places they are passing, till, on again looking down, instead of the cold border stream, they see the river of life flowing from the throne. Have we not known the timid one, who in health could not see a funeral without trembling, astonish friends by her peace, triumphant over the most protracted agonies; while he of firm nerve passed away in silence, and we wondered that he spoke not of his Saviour and his crown? He did not need those helps; even without them his faith could calmly rest on Christ. But the Good Shepherd carries the lambs in his bosom.

Falling asleep also implies weariness. The sloth-

ful find a restless pillow ; but to the laborer rest is sweet. The Bible points us to a place where the weary are at rest ; not sluggards in the vineyard, but faithful servants. And yet these are not weary of their work. So far from that, they long to change these feeble bodies for those "raised in power," that, like the angels, who excel in strength, they may do his commandments. But they are weary of the sins of a world alienated from God ; weary of the wrong and outrage with which earth is filled. They are weary of dishonor heaped on the Saviour, and cry, "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because men keep not thy law."

It would be a relief if they could turn to a church instinct with holy activity ; but when bowed down with distress for the perishing, to this is added the apathy of those who ought to point them to Christ, no wonder they are weary. How can Christians feel no more and do no more for Christ, and those for whom he thought it not too much to die ?

But there is another thing of which the Christian is more weary still. He has charity for others, but knows that himself is without excuse. Each day the Bible picture of his evil heart is more painfully distinct in the light of his own experience. If at any time he rejoices over one sin uprooted, straight-way he meets it flourishing in a different form. He finds that no confession, however humble, no en-

treaty, however fervent, not even tears dropping from a broken heart, can ensure his safety. With confusion of face, he acknowledges the same sin deplored a thousand times before. Often has he thought that he had prayed fervently to be washed thoroughly from his iniquity, and then been overwhelmed to find that after all he was not willing that God should sanctify him in the only way that end could be attained.

How welcome to such an one, rest from sin in the world, in the church, and in his own soul! To go where there is no need to pray "Thy kingdom come," for the throne is there, and holiness round about it; no need to ask "Thy will be done;" for it used to follow "as it is in heaven," and now he is there, and round about him saints and angels do nothing, desire nothing, delight in nothing but that will. Not one there is imperfect, and, strangest of all, there is no evil in himself. Once he could say, "I know that in me dwelleth no good thing;" but now he knows that in him is no shadow of a stain. What shall describe the blessedness of the man who hungered after righteousness, when he is filled? It is a privilege to confess our unworthiness, sweet to lay all our sins on Jesus; but that bliss is sweeter still. Prayer is turned to praise, and sight supplants faith forever. And such sight! No eye on earth has seen it. God grant that here we may be

so weary of sin, and of hindrances to service, that at the close of the day we may enter into that rest, and know the joy of that heavenly service!

Falling asleep implies also that we shall rise again. Sleep lasts only for a time. When we lie down we expect to rise again. We would not sleep always. Rest only fits us to act with more vigor and delight. The invalid loathes even a pillow of down. Our hearts cannot find comfort in an eternal sleep. We pity the wretchedness that can. We love the bright sun, the living trees, and the running waters. Existence would be misery did the clouds not move nor the winds blow, and nothing stirred on land or sea or in the air. Let the infidel enjoy his gloomy prospect. Not such is the glory for which we look. Indeed, take away this idea, and the thought of falling asleep is desolate indeed. For what is peace if it lead to oblivion? And what is rest, if motion and emotion, thought and action, forever cease? Instead of saying, "Lord, if he sleep he shall do well," we must cry out in despair, "Then they also that are fallen asleep in Christ are perished!"

Sleep may refresh, but it cannot remove sorrow from the heart. It brings a short forgetfulness, only that we may suffer a new distress. The sick may dream of health, but he wakes to toss more restlessly, from the contrast of his dream with the reality.

The prisoner loses sight of dungeon walls, and in dreams again he is a little child, rejoicing in a mother's love; but he wakes only to find the hand on the dial of the city clock slowly nearing the time of execution. It is not so with this sleep. That does not remove evil one moment to bring it back with more crushing weight the next, after we have tasted the sweetness of relief, but removes it as far as the east from the west, there to remain forever. It is a most blessed deliverance, because it is eternal.

Does any believer still hesitate to enjoy it as his own? Has all said of the Christian deathbed seemed like a dream of poetry when he thinks of his own departure? And does he look for its certain approach in an unknown hour, through unknown paths, with unabated fear?

So far our thoughts have been on one falling asleep at home, kind friends about him, ready to imperil their own life in preserving his, stepping gently lest they disturb him, or dropping silent tears as they think of the separation that shall leave them desolate. We have supposed that amid their affectionate assiduities he sinks down gently to his place of rest. Now let us go back to the scene that turned our thoughts in this direction; for, better than even his composure, who in his last illness sent for an unconverted friend, to see in what peace a Chris-

tian could die, will it teach us the secret of a peaceful end to this sinful life.

The rage of the Jews against Christ was not satisfied with the cruelties of Calvary. It burned only more fiercely against all that called upon his name. They sought to quench the fires of conscience in the blood of the witnesses of their crime. Repeatedly had they been maddened by the boldness of the apostles, and as often had their victims escaped; but now they clutch another. They cannot answer his arguments; but they can buy false witnesses, and drag him before the council. Then, exasperated that a Nazarene should rebuke them publicly for the murder of their Messiah, they gnash on him with their teeth, their furious cries drown his unfinished defence, they even stop their ears. Who ever heard of such intense malignity? With us, even the murderer has time to prepare for death; guarded from those exasperated by his crimes, he is shielded from insult, even to the end; but here a frantic mob rush on the innocent. They do not wait even for the forms of law, that sometimes lend a show of right to tyranny. Think you, after that cruel mocking that preceded and accompanied the crucifixion of his Master the disciple fared any better? Over and above their revilings did none press close up to smite that unoffending victim? No friend is there to shield him. They dare not, for they would only

furnish another victim, without helping him. No representative of law protects him, for judge and scribe are mingled with the mob. But that sea of wrath surges through the narrow streets, and pours through the city gate. From the flat roofs on either side, maledictions and missiles shower on him as he is dragged to the open fields, and — there we leave him, for who can dwell on the dreadful scene? Those ferocious men; those coarse, dull instruments of death; that shelterless, unpitied, helpless sufferer! Who expects it to be said of him "He fell asleep"? We shudder to use expressions adequate to the occasion.

Hitherto we have looked on the malice of his enemies. We have thought only of his bodily torture. Now turn to the man himself. See how calmly he moves amid that frenzied crowd. No breath of agitation disturbs those tranquil features. He hears not those blasphemies; he heeds not those cruelties. Mark that inward peace, ripening into rapture. See the glory transfiguring every feature. Notice that steadfast, upward gaze. Nothing of pain distracts it. Hear his enraptured cry, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God." On no other occasion is Christ seen standing. He sitteth forever on the throne of his glory; but here he rises to meet his faithful follower. He holds out the crown to the first martyr.

He permits him to behold his glory, even before he comes into his presence.

No wonder that, beholding such glory, he is changed into the same image, and, kneeling amid his murderers, prays, not for himself, but for them: "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."

Here we would linger to gaze on the power of our Saviour. We would look through these opened heavens into that world of which he is the light and life, so as neither in life or in death to fear to commit our soul to him. We will not fear, for

"Jesus can make a dying bed
Feel soft as downy pillows are;
While on his breast we lean our head,
And breathe our life out sweetly there."

Is it not as unnatural for the Christian to fear death as for others not to fear it? For what does he leave? His sins, his sufferings, his disappointments; all he struggled against, all he grieved over, everything that marred his joy. What does he obtain? Perfect holiness; whatever has been the object of his prayers and hopes, all summed up in the words, "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." On what depends all this? Not on man, not on angel, but on Christ. Then all is safe; "for whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

What can unbelief say to these things? If any still cry, "My sins! my sins!" then, as Stephen dealt with his murderers, so let us deal with our sins. Let them crowd around our dying-bed. Let them all come, and with one voice clamor for our condemnation. We will not reply to their accusations; but we will look up steadfastly to Jesus, interceding for us at the right hand of God, and commit our all into his gracious hands. He has promised that he will not forsake us; and he never will. That very present help in trouble will not leave us in the last and sorest. And if we still feel anxious about that final conflict, we will employ ourselves in the work of serving Christ to-day, and leave to him that hath loved us, and given himself for us, the whole care of making us more than conquerors in that day. He who enabled Stephen to fall asleep in such circumstances is able to do exceeding abundantly for us also, above all that we can ask or think.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CHRIST OUR SHEPHERD ON EARTH.

THE question may be asked, "Why is such prominence given to the office of a shepherd in the Bible?" for it is a most painful life, as one who had spent many years in it testified. "In the day, the drought consumed me, and the frost by night, and my sleep departed from my eyes." Shepherds also rank low in the social scale, and a community devoted to pastoral pursuits never attains the prosperity of one devoted to agriculture or commerce. When Israel settled in Canaan the shepherd tribes selected the most remote parts of the country as best suited to their employment. They were shepherds who treated the daughters of Jethro so discourteously at the wells of Midian, and had we been present at those encounters of shepherds and shepherdesses, we had found the swarthy daughters of the priest as vociferous, to say no more, as their scarcely more masculine assailants. Ziporah afterwards proved that however poets sing of "gentle shepherds," shepherdesses sometimes are

not so gentle. When Israel prospered, shepherd life retreated to the borders of the desert, as at Bethlehem and Tekoah, and prophets denounced desolation, saying, "O land of the Philistines, I will even destroy thee, that there shall be no inhabitant, and the sea-coast shall be cottages for shepherds and folds for flocks."

Why, then, is this office assigned to Christ to represent one of the most precious relations he sustains to his people?

The occupation became invested with glory in Jewish eyes, because their great ancestor was a shepherd. They looked back on the days of Abraham as on a golden age, and the life which he led was in their eyes only less than heavenly.

David could not have forgotten the discomfort of such a life, but lifted up as he was to a bleak elevation, on which every passing tempest spent its force; the relief found in looking up to One far higher above him than he had been above his flock, guiding, protecting, and caring for him, as he once cared for them, must have been one to which each discomfort of both past and present experience only lent additional sweetness.

The idea of a shepherd is dear to all men, because it is so associated in our thoughts with Paradise. Of all other animals the sheep retains most of the spirit of Eden. It still clings to man, and looks up

to him for food and shelter, for guidance and protection. We cannot conceive of a flock of sheep roaming the forests like wild beasts. They look to man as their divinely appointed guardian, and there is that in their helplessness, and the number and ferocity of their enemies, which touches the Christian heart, for it so vividly sets forth our own absolute dependence on the Good Shepherd. It will not sound blasphemous in a Christian ear to say that it seems as if we loved these innocent flocks for Jesus' sake, for thoughts of him are linked in with them; and is not the peculiar attraction every child feels towards "a little lamb" intended to draw them to the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world? Doubtless through this association of ideas many a dear child has been brought to Jesus.

God has so constituted man that "shepherd" is a pleasant word. It paints before the eye of the mind a whole Arcadian landscape, with its groves and fields, its streams and fountains, its grassy knolls and rocky steeps, and the flocks cropping the green grass, or lying under the shady trees; but it is far more than this to the Christian. While the poetry of every land speaks of the ideal beauty with which all invest the shepherd life, he discerns in it a most precious glimpse of Christ. The relation seems to have been created on purpose to set forth the loving kindness of Immanuel. All the beauty of rural

scenery pales before the greater beauty of this view of Christ.

To the sick man, lying in one position till every nerve thrills with agony, that is a precious view of God which represents him as making all his bed in his sickness, as if God's hand reached down from heaven to do for the sufferer what he could not do for himself, tenderly making that soft, and cool, and pleasant, which had been hard, and hot, and full of misery ; but what that does for one phase of distress, this does for the whole circle of troubles and wants, yea, even fears. It makes God a very present help in trouble, and he wears such an aspect of friendliness that we are sweetly attracted to his side. We may have felt that one so great could not stoop to our little affairs ; but the name " shepherd " helps us to enjoy Him, without whom not even the sparrow falls. We can speak to him more freely of our troubles, and under his watchful eye we feel both safe and satisfied.

Christ does not say, " I am the strong Shepherd," though he is the Lord God Omnipotent ; nor " the faithful Shepherd," though, " even if we believe not, yet he abideth faithful ; " but " I am the Good Shepherd," as though among all his attributes he gloried most in goodness. So, when Moses would see his glory, the answer came, " I will make all my goodness pass before thee."

There is peculiar tenderness manifest in this view of God; but the Good Shepherd does not come divested of power to bless. Only his power wears such a friendly look that we do not fear it. The same power that moves the planets in their orbits defends us from all evil.

Is wakefulness needed in a shepherd? Ours never slumbers, and while in a mere man this truth would suggest a painful, and, in the end, unavailing struggle against nature, in his case we have no such thought, for he is the living God, and in his heaven even the redeemed find no need of night to recruit exhausted energies.

One would think tender care essential in a good shepherd, from the frequency with which we hear the expression "tender shepherd;" and ours, though so mighty, is yet so gentle that the epithet applied to his mercies is not, abundant, or, constant, though they are both, but tender. "Tender mercies" best describes the nature of his dealings with our want and misery. We have heard of hammers, too ponderous for human hands to lift, that strike through huge masses of iron in their resistless sweep, and yet can be guided so as to touch the most fragile substance without breaking it; but what are such things to that Hand which upholds all worlds, and yet imparts comfort so gently that even the dying are strengthened by the consolation? Talk of gen-

tleness and tenderness ! We cannot know them till we know the care of Christ our Shepherd. The softest touch of man sometimes causes the sensitive flesh to quiver with agony ; but His touch soothes and heals.

Delightful as may be our associations with a shepherd, we cannot appreciate all its sweetness, for we do not live in a land of shepherds ; but in Bible lands, a shepherd is to-day just what he was when Jesus said, "I am the Good Shepherd." Let us look at this relation as there revealed, for it may help us to determine whether we have any right to say, "The Lord is my Shepherd," as well as afford some precious glimpses of Christ.

Here, if a flock pass along the street, they are driven with force and outcry ; one urges them from behind, and another beats them back from the tempting side street, while the timorous flock, huddled together, rush along in terror ; but in the East, to-day, the shepherd calleth his sheep by name, and leadeth them out. As he goes forth in the morning we might think he was leaving his charge behind ; but see ! he goes before, and they follow him, and if any, attracted by tender grass, stop by the wayside, or stray into the tempting fields, he calls, and they run after him. He calls them by name, and they respond to the call. If he stops, they stop ; and when he goes on, they, too, go with him. Some-

times he may meet a fellow-shepherd, and, tempted by the pleasure of social intercourse, they may remain together till the flocks seem mingled in hopeless confusion, and we look for a protracted work of sorting them out again. But look! the moment one rises to go, and speaks to his own, they at once separate themselves from the rest and follow him, while the others know not the voice of a stranger. At noon they rest together under some shady tree, or in the shadow of a great rock in that weary land, and in the evening he gathers them together in the fold, where they are safe from ravenous beasts, their guardian, wrapped in his outer garment, lying down among them. Cases have been known where a hireling, whose own the sheep were not, has gone off at night-fall to find more comfortable quarters in the adjacent village, and returned in the morning to find the bleeding remnants of a flock which the wolf had slaughtered in the fold at his leisure; but our Shepherd redeemed his flock with his own blood, and never leaves them.

In Syria, the roads at the best are mere narrow paths, and these are often very steep and rough. Sometimes they occupy a shelf of rock, between a precipice that rises from the inner edge, and a perpendicular descent on the other. Such places seldom have the protection of a wall; but in one so protected, where only one horse could pass at a time,

some travellers found themselves face to face with a shepherd and his flock. It was too narrow for the horses to turn; what shall they do? Dr. Jessup, who was present, and describes the scene, looked for the shepherd to retreat with his charge. Instead of that, he leaps on to the low wall, and, though the waves of the Mediterranean dash far below, at his word, the flock follow him, one by one, along the dizzy verge, till they can leap down again into the path beyond the line of travellers. So our Shepherd does not send us away from his presence into peril or suffering; but himself goes before, "leaving us an example that we should follow in his steps," and, at the same time, "holds up our goings in his paths, that our footsteps slip not." Doubtless it was just such a rocky pass, clambering up and down the face of the precipice, that suggested to David this illustration of the providential care of our heavenly Shepherd.

While dwelling on these general views, let us not forget the diversity that is sure to show itself in actual life. A part of the flock may follow close after the shepherd, and respond at once to his call, but others follow afar off; attracted by inviting objects on all sides, they just keep the main body of the flock in sight, so as not to be left entirely alone. That is an instructive scene, described by Dr. Thomson, where the shepherd goes down the steep banks of a

river and wades into the rapid current; the faithful ones of the flock follow close behind him, and so cross easily where the stream is most shallow and the footing most secure, while the stragglers are swept into deeper water, and cross with much danger as well as difficulty. A little lamb is borne away helpless by the rushing waters, but the shepherd plunges after it, lifts it into his bosom, and bears it safely to the shore. Let us keep so near our Shepherd, that, when we pass through deep waters, instead of sinking under a sense of overpowering evil, we shall hear his voice directing us where to go, and cleave to him who selects the way and sustains us in it; and in that last river this side the better land, may we respond to his "Fear not, for I am with thee," with our "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me."

Standing by the gate that opens at the end of the bridge which connects Mosul with ancient Nineveh, we may see a Koordish shepherd step upon the crazy structure, that, without railing or other protection, stretches across the arrowy Tigris; his flock follow after, shrinking in terror from the loaded animals that they meet, and keeping close to their well-known leader. They pass through the city gate and along the narrow, crowded street, picking their way among bales and boxes; now and then they start at the strange

sights and sounds that meet them on all sides ; sometimes darting between the feet of horses and camels, and amid all responding confidently to him who thus leads them to the slaughter.

Does the Good Shepherd thus betray his flock? Nay, verily. "He leadeth us in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake ;" but himself was thus led as a lamb to the slaughter. We cannot look on such a sight without thinking of Him who giveth his life for the sheep ; not driven by a force he could not resist, but led by his own love to the last ; not allured all unsuspecting to a cruel fate, but looking forward from eternity to the garden and the cross, and hastening forward to lay down his life, though he had power to ascend uninjured to the throne, and leave us to the destruction that we deserved.

The life of his ancient people was made bitter by cruel bondage, and their children were doomed to death by their oppressors lest they should avenge their fathers' wrongs. Then the Good Shepherd called his own sheep by name, and brought them out of Egypt with a mighty hand. He slew the men that sought their life. He opened a path for them through the sea. He went before them in a pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night. He rained bread for them from heaven ; he led them ; he instructed them ; he kept them as the apple of his eye. And so now does he lead out his people from under the

power of Satan. He became partaker of our nature, that through death he might open up our way to life. How carefully Scripture describes his incarnation! God sent his Son, not in the likeness of flesh merely, for that might have been the likeness of man unfallen. Nor did he send him "sinful flesh," for then he had shared in our ruin; but "in the likeness of sinful flesh," tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin.

Thus he became our Redeemer, and he redeemed us with his own blood. But how does he impart to us this redemption? Standing afar off, does he summon, at once, whole churches into the enjoyment of his grace? Not so; one by one he calleth his own sheep by name. We may picture him as occupied with so many and so weighty cares that he cannot notice us, or, if he does, only in a general or hurried way; but he listens to each broken cry, looks into each particular case, and, selecting out of all others the methods most appropriate to each, he blesses every one who comes unto God by him, just as though he existed alone in the universe, and was the sole object of his gracious care.

To form the acquaintance of a stranger, we need an introduction; even then he may forget our name, or fail to recognize us when next we meet; but Christ needs no introduction, for he has known us from the beginning. He never forgets either names or faces.

Those twelve names borne on the breast of the high priest into the holy place are the symbol of a reality found only in Christ.

Preachers can only say in general terms, "Come, for all things are ready;" "Whosoever will, let him come and partake freely;" but all the while One, whose latchet preachers are not worthy to unloose, is speaking to individual hearts, calling them by name, as when he said "Follow me" to Matthew, and James, and John. Now, as of old, singling out one from the multitude of impotent folk, he saith, "Wilt thou be made whole?"

Some may suppose that, though words of comfort are recorded for our use, yet the personal comfort that Christ imparts is reserved for another world; but Scripture teaches us to say, "I will fear no evil, for thou art with me,"—not hast been in days past, not wilt be in days to come, but art now here; and the Shepherd himself saith, "Fear not, for I am with thee,"—not my promises only, or my blessing, but I myself, a very present help in trouble.

Would it be pleasant, when sick among strangers, to have our mother step into the room and resume the loving ministrations of early days? Then in the day of darkness, listen: "The Master is come and calleth for thee;" yes, for thee; not for the disciples in Bethany, but for thee, Mary. So he calleth his own sheep by name in time of trouble; none is for-

gotten, but he giveth to each his portion in due season; and if, when all absorbed in our grief, we hear a loving utterance of our name even at the sepulchre of those we love, let our "Rabboni" be as prompt and as cordial as was that of Mary Magdalene.

Can none of us recall a time when our spirit was overwhelmed within us, and this precious promise seemed spoken by a voice from heaven, or that other Scripture appeared written in characters of glory?

Who uttered that promise with such heavenly sweetness? Who made that word of God radiant with light divine? It was not man; for then why did not others around us share in the blessing? Was it not Jesus, opening our understanding, as once he did that of his disciples among the mountains of Judea?

The same ascended Saviour, who once showed himself to Saul in the way, while those around him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no man, calls us by name to-day. Give ear to that voice, and "Ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace; the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands."

There is not a more blessed comfort in any affliction, than to rejoice that the nature and degree, the circumstances and duration of it, are all in the hands of the Good Shepherd, who gave his life for us.

In like manner at the end he calls his own out of

a world of sin and sorrow into rest. Darkness veils the morrow till it comes, and then sometimes it seems as if events happened at random. One friend dies far away, another falls at our side. The mother is taken away from her helpless babe. The aged widow is left childless, and it seems as though some "general law" rushed blindly on, crushing under its ponderous wheels whatever stood in the way of its merciless advance. Our feeling is, that if Christ had the control of things, these events had not occurred. It is true that man, trying to arrange for many, may be unable to secure the highest good of one, and the best he can do is to secure the general good of the largest number with the least injury to the few. But with the Lord nothing is impossible; where we see only jarring interests, his eye detects a common unity. He is Most High over all difficulty. General laws are his servants, not his masters. "They do his will, hearkening unto the voice of his commandments."

There is no chance in either the time or the manner that his people are gathered home; not one arrives too late, or too early, at the door of our Father's house; not one finds his coming unexpected or his welcome unprepared. If the kingdom was prepared for them before the foundation of the world, so was the time of reaching the gate of pearl. Our Jesus hath the key of death; every turning of

that key was arranged from eternity, and he never forgets or mistakes the time; nor does the soul, on entering heaven, find that an earlier arrival, or a longer delay, would have been more for his advantage. He who prepares a place for us, also prepares us for that place; the two preparations advance with equal step, and are complete at the same moment; one neither anticipates the other, nor needs to be waited for. No heartless general law tyrannizes over us in the absence of Immanuel, but at the best moment, best for him who goes, and best for those who remain, each one in his own order enters into rest. Happy he, whether having tarried many years or few days in this vale of tears, to whom Christ opens the door of endless rest!

Christ does not love us in the mass, but feels a special love for each disciple, and shows it in a special way; his dealings with no two are the same, and he never gives to one what is best adapted for another. Each is learning to sing a part all his own in the heavenly symphony of praise, and all will blend into one perfect harmony. Christ does not make promises to classes, but to the persons that compose them. He knows no other good of Zion than that which results from the highest good of each.

We may lay hold of every promise as though addressed to us alone, and have no fears that any less supply will remain for others. If we light our lamp

at that of our neighbor, or drink from his spring, will he have any less of either water or light? and is the water of life, or the light of God's countenance, more easily exhausted? Has God appointed a day for us to fast from the fulness that there is in Christ? Does he rebuke us for enjoying more than our share of his grace? Is Christ so poor that we must eat sparingly lest we exhaust his stores, or live frugally lest we expend his treasures?

Should Christ, to-day, appear in person and invite us by name to partake of his saving grace, would we be startled? That grace is as specific as though he did so, and so is his desire that we should enjoy its fulness.

Could we read our name in the Lamb's book of life, would our cup of gladness overflow? His intercession to-day is as particular and personal as though we heard the mention of our names. We may not look within the leaves of that book of life, but if to us his name is as ointment poured forth; if we know his voice, and love nothing better than to hear it; if we love to follow his leading, and our greatest burden will be lifted off when we have respect unto all his commandments;—the time is not far off when we shall read the names in that book with joy. Oh that our obedience to him were as affectionate as his love is specific! When shall our faith do more justice to the love which he bears to us?

CHAPTER XIX.

CHRIST OUR SHEPHERD IN HEAVEN.

THE Bible presents many attractive views of heaven. Now it is the New Jerusalem whither God's chosen ones are going up to worship, — the glorious capital, towards whose palaces they bend their steps. Again it is Paradise, where the redeemed rest beside the river of life, and under the shadow of the tree of life, hard by the throne. At another time it is our Father's house, where all the family now scattered shall meet together, one glorious household of the Lord. But, whatever the view, Christ stands in the foreground. In the New Jerusalem the Lamb is the light thereof. In Paradise the river of life proceeds from the throne of God and of the Lamb. The mansions in our Father's house are all made ready by the hands once pierced for us; and what is the rest that remaineth but a falling asleep in Jesus, — not merely with him, but in him, as the place of eternal safety and everlasting peace.

The beloved disciple gives us a delightful glimpse

of Christ in heaven, when he says, "The Lamb in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters." He is there, as here, "The Lamb of God." Him in whom we trust to-day, we shall recognize in that day; only what is now dimly seen in shadow and symbol shall there stand forth, not merely in the light of heaven, but himself that light.

Now we look on him as the Lamb slain; but there he is the Lamb in the midst of the throne. There is no such sight as that on earth. Here, lions sit on thrones, and lambs lie bleeding in the dust; but there, he sitteth forever on the throne of his glory; yes, His glory, not only belonging to him, but proceeding from him. The throne does not glorify him, but he glorifies the throne. All glory there, be it of throne, or crown, or sceptre, exists for him and proceeds from him. The Lamb, however glorified, will still be recognized by those that knew him here; but his glory, as it shines out from the midst of the throne, we cannot know till these eyes shall behold it. Foretastes of it we may enjoy, and on these, as a foundation, we may build up anticipations of what shall be; but one glimpse of the reality will put them all to shame. We may think of infinite purity and gentleness wielding infinite and supreme authority. We may think of him as making compensation to all that ever suffered wrong on earth, —

a compensation so ample that all previous suffering shall be swallowed up in present felicity, and then we may think of this power as universal and eternal, so that evil shall be thenceforth impossible; still eye hath not seen such glory. We can only look round on the wrong and outrage with which earth is filled, and vainly try to imagine that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory that shall compensate for it all.

The sight of the Lamb in the midst of the throne will also give us views of the "God-man," unknown till then. Now, we think of him as a man, and our own feelings help us to apprehend him as such. But what do we know of him as God? What sympathy can we have with his recollection of the glory which he had with the Father before the world was? or with that consciousness of all power on earth and in heaven? Then, we shall know even as also we are known. We shall see him as he is, and the sight will reveal the fulness of the glory of this union of God and man in our Immanuel. Now, it may seem to some a mere dogma in theology; then, even those who now find in it the nourishment of their spiritual life will see in it a glory surpassing all their hopes.

But this glimpse of his majesty only prepares the way for another manifestation of his glory. "The Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shall feed them." He is not only on the throne to receive

adoration, but he feeds those who have come out of great tribulation, and washed their robes white in his precious blood. "Feeds?" some may ask, wondering; can those heavenly bodies suffer hunger and partake of food as these do here? It is not strange that they ask the question; the English word "feeds" so feebly represents the beauty of the original, which conveys a meaning as full of sweetness as this is gross and earthly. It is a verb formed from the noun shepherd, meaning, literally, to "act the shepherd," and tells us that in heaven, as well as on earth, "Christ is our Shepherd."

Some might call this a confusion of metaphors, making one person at once a Lamb and a Shepherd; but whenever language has to do with Christ, it exhausts itself in the effort to set forth the fulness and variety of his glory.

Any illustration can only set forth one view of the many-sided excellence of our Redeemer. It needs many to furnish a complete picture of him in whom all fulness dwells. So, in other instances, he is at once both victim and officiating priest, corner-stone and top-stone, yea, and temple also.

Even on earth we love to sing, "The Lord is my Shepherd," for, as we have seen, it is a most precious view of Christ. Precious, not merely because it suggests thoughts of rural scenery and quiet happiness, of pastures clothed with flocks, or rest at noon under

shady groves, but because of the ineffable sweetness of the relation itself; the kind interest, the loving care, the personal intercourse of the Good Shepherd with his flock. Other shepherds may encounter danger in defence of their charge; but ours made us the sheep of his pasture at the cost of his own life; and then, "He calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out." What Christian does not understand this? If we are not now going astray, it is because he brought us back from our wanderings. If we are in the right way, it is because he leadeth us in the paths of righteousness. If we neither want nor fear want, it is because the key of every storehouse of blessing is in the hands of our Joseph. If in danger we are not afraid, it is because we hear him saying, "Fear not, for I am with thee." Some rest in the guardian care of angels; but the sweetest thing about them is that they are His angels, sent by him to camp round about us, the Lord of angels being captain of the guard. If we do not tremble at temptation, it is because he prays for us that our faith fail not; so are we more than conquerors through him that loved us. He sees the plotting of our enemies from the first, and, when they rise up against us, himself is the strong tower into which we run and are safe. Therefore, though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we fear no evil; for not departed friends, not angels, but

Christ is with us ; and, if he be with us, who or what can harm us ?

Now, this relation so precious on earth does not end with death. He leadeth us into the green pastures of Paradise, and beside the river of the water of life. No pastures so green as those on either side of that river. No waters so still as those that flow from the throne of God and of the Lamb.

If Saviour is the most prominent title of Christ on earth, Shepherd is the most conspicuous there, not as superseding the other, but bringing out its fulness. Now we wait for his salvation ; then we explore its treasures. As our Saviour on earth he saves us ; as our Shepherd in heaven he unfolds that salvation more and more to our admiring eyes.

It is not for us on earth to know all that will be done by our Shepherd in heaven, any more than the other glories of that inheritance ; for none of them all has entered into the heart of man. No earthly balance can weigh that weight of glory.

But we can compare Christ, as he appears to-day, with what we shall see of our Shepherd in that day, by simply noting the imperfections of our present view ; for, though Christ does not change, though heaven does not add to, nor earth take from, his perfection, yet our apprehension of his agency will be very different in heaven from what it is on earth. Our knowledge of his dealings with us, as our

Shepherd in this life, will be very different from what it is to-day.

Now we see the agency of our friends ; they love us, and love prompts them to deeds of kindness. We see also the agency of our enemies. But then we shall see how Christ employed both, and acted through them for our salvation, guiding the goodwill of these into profitable channels, and overruling the ill-will of those, so that it wrought together with all things for our good. Besides his agency through others, we shall also see his own personal dealings with us. In many a place, and many an event, where now we do not think of Christ, we shall find that he was present. Many a wonderful deliverance, which now we do not understand, will then be all plain. Many an unexpected enjoyment will then find fitting explanation. We shall find our whole life, from the cradle to the grave, radiant with his presence. Himself will point out the connection of events as we cannot see them now. Many an incident now forgotten will he recall to our recollection, and tell what he had to do with it, and what it had to do with events that followed. When the veil that now hides his agency shall be taken away, think what a view of our Shepherd will unfold to our gaze. But, besides his agency at the time, will be a view of all the preparation he made for each occurrence, in ourselves and in others, in circum-

stances and influences, and manifold lines of action, all tending to the one result; and not preparation only, but where now we see only disconnected events, there we shall perceive the relation of each to each, all working out our salvation according to an eternal plan, and under the supervision of our divine Shepherd. Now, we do not see him, we catch no glimpse of his person. Our communion is the communion of faith. But there, these eyes shall behold him; not as we now see one another, beholding only the external appearance, but we shall see in him the brightness of the Father's glory. In him we shall behold the beauty of holiness, as nothing ever revealed it hitherto. In him we shall admire the beauty of love that now passeth knowledge. The union of divine majesty and glory with human sympathy shall then shine out in the Good Shepherd in a manner undreamed of before. Now, when our Shepherd does us a kindness we do not see his loving face, his beaming eye; we do not feel the thrilling touch of the hand once wounded for us. There it shall be different, how different we do not know, but far, very far beyond aught that is known on earth. We only know how he prayed, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory;" and will the sight of that glory disappoint us?

But, besides the difference in our knowledge of what he does as our Shepherd here, there will also be a great contrast between what he did on earth and what he shall do for us in heaven. Now he protects us from foes ; then we shall need no protection. Now he succurs us in temptation ; there Satan will no more annoy. The world, with all its allurements, shall have given place to a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Our own hearts, too, now deceitful above all things, demand much attention from our Shepherd. On their account we are in heaviness through manifold temptations, without which we would make shipwreck concerning faith. Could we but see the dangers on every side ; could we see how deliverance from one, exposes us to another, — the same instrumentality that destroys worldliness fostering spiritual pride, Christian activity weakening our sense of dependence on God, and dependence on God dulling the edge of active obedience, prayer taking the place of work, and work made an excuse for neglecting prayer, — could we see these, and many more perils to our piety, we should have a deeper sense of our need of this Shepherd to-day. But there, all this is passed away. The evil heart is destroyed ; the new heart is perfect in holiness. The Shepherd, once busy in defending and sanctifying, is employed in giving an eternal reward. The love that once bore with our sins, now bestows the

inheritance. Is not this a precious glimpse of our Shepherd in heaven? But wait till we can look back on every hindrance to salvation, removed by his hand, and in the light of that, we will be prepared for the view of this, that shall then unfold forever. How often will we compare that everlasting reward with this preparatory discipline; that land of promise with the desert; that Father's house with the perils and privations of the way!

Thus far we have been groping our way by contrasting present things with things to come; but this Scripture reveals a precious view of the work of our Shepherd in heaven. "He shall lead them by living fountains of waters." The picture is beautiful, but its spiritual meaning is more than that. In Eastern lands, the shepherd leads his flock to the deep well, whence he draws water for them all; and so our Shepherd, with joy, draws water out of the wells of salvation above. Those waters above the firmament are more refreshing than all below. Would any know what they are? Hear the complaint of God: "They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters!" Hear the invitation of Christ: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink;" and again: "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but it shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life." God is the portion of the

soul, and knowledge of God is the enjoyment of that portion. Are not these living fountains of water, then, the clear knowledge of God which Christ will bestow in heaven? Just as in Syria the shepherd leads his flock to refreshing streams, so does Christ in heaven reveal God forever to his people. On earth he revealed the Father; but it was only the alphabet, preparing them to read that perfect revelation. Blessed knowledge of God! imparted in his immediate presence by his beloved Son! and thrice blessed they who drink forever at those living fountains! Why more than one? Not that there is more than one God; but the one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, will be known, not as one monotonous apprehension, but in an infinite variety of views, eternally new and fresh. Just as the same fountain ever gives forth an abundant supply of living water, the outflow ever new, but the fountain the same; or, just as the same hidden source pours of its abundance through many openings, imparting life wherever it comes, so our Shepherd in heaven forever reveals the infinite fullness of God,—now one attribute and now another, now in this line of manifestation and now in that, but ever the same infinitely glorious Jehovah. Here indeed he reveals God; but he has to remove external hindrances, and create an inward preparation of heart. He reveals through imperfect media, slowly

and gradually, as Christians are fitted to receive it. Here, even the best know but in part. There, the knowledge is perfect; not that all is known at once, but it is a perfection of knowledge, ever enlarging as the soul can contain more of God. We may not fully understand it, but we know that Christ reveals it, and if from the bottom of some deep pit of sorrow he gives such glimpses of God on earth, what will he impart in the immediate presence? If, amid clouds and darkness, he enables us to see so much, what will he reveal to us in the light of heaven? If, amid so many hindrances, he reveals such glory in God as to lead one to say, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord;" and another, "to count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord," what may we not expect when nothing remains but to reveal God forever to those prepared for the revelation?

CHAPTER XX.

PRAYER FOR CHRIST.

THE book of Psalms has much to say of Christ. Some entire psalms are devoted to him alone ; from the first verse to the last they do nothing else but proclaim his glory. In one of these it is written that "Prayer also shall be made for him continually, and daily shall he be praised." It is not strange that Christ should be praised ; but it strikes us with amazement that prayer should be made for him. We are not worthy to pray for ourselves, and who are we that we should be lifted up to the privilege of praying for Christ? The devout reverence of some has been so overwhelmed by the idea, that they have sought to translate the sentence "Prayer shall be made through him continually ;" but this rendering does violence to the original. The same expression is used when God says to Abimelech, King of Gerar, concerning Abraham, "He is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee." Moses also uses it when he says, "I prayed for Aaron also ;" and Samuel, when he said, "Gather all Israel to Mizpeh,

and I will pray for you unto the Lord." The Hebrew may be rendered either "he," that is, the poor man whom Christ has delivered, "shall pray for him continually," or as it stands in our version; but, since either way the meaning is the same, we need not dwell on this variation.

In this psalm Christ is spoken of as a King; and, though we are citizens of a republic, we know that the form of a government is not so important as the spirit of its administration. Indeed, in devising forms of government, men, thus far at least, have sought more to render rulers powerless to do evil than positively efficient for good, because experience has shown that the first is by far the more important while man remains as he is; but we do not need to guard against evil from Immanuel. There does not exist on earth, under any form, a government so righteous and beneficent as his; for he is love, and his cross reveals at once his supreme regard for right and his kindness to men. In adoring him as a Saviour, let us not forget that he is also King of kings. He shall reign, not in a beautiful theory of government, crying out against its contradiction in practice, but "He cometh to judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth." His is a perfect administration of perfect laws, the boon which the whole earth groans and travails in pain for to-day.

This title of King gives the most fitting utterance to loyalty and love for Christ. We rejoice that he shall reign supreme, because, "without iniquity, just and right is he;" we rejoice that he shall reign forever, for his reign shall be forever faultless. Through eternity he can say, even to those suffering the penalty of transgression, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" and never will one of them find anything to reply, not though every fallen spirit should combine in the search, and the discovery of the smallest wrong would fill Pandemonium with frenzied jubilation.

The joyful subjects of this King are said to bring tribute of the best which they possess, the gold of Sheba being considered the purest and most precious. Have our hearts thrilled as we read of love pouring its alabaster box of fragrance on those precious feet? Do we sympathize with the petition that has gone up for ages, and still cries, "Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven"? Then let us look forward to the day when the gold of Sheba will be but a poor symbol of the tribute rendered by that multitude which no man can number, that treads yon golden streets. If pearls so large stand idle on hinges that never turn, what do they not render to the King whom they adore?

As long ago as the days of Darius, loyalty was wont to pray, "O king, live forever!" "Long live

the king!" has in all ages been the spontaneous cry of grateful hearts. Alas that the subjects of this prayer should have so often made the answer to it only prolong the misery of them that offered it! But such is man; and as we have the gospel in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be seen to be of God, and not of man, so kings have been allowed to teach the race that the truest loyalty is due to Christ alone. If the wealth of love and service squandered on tyrants had been laid at the feet of Jesus, what a different world would meet our eyes to-day! Such thoughts make us rejoice that this King "shall prolong his days;" that "his kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him."

Here is the Scripture view of prayer for the conversion of the world. It is not merely prayer for so many millions of heathen, or in concert with so many myriads of Christians; but it is prayer for Christ. It may be offered in unison by the whole church, or go up like a solitary pillar of smoke in the desert; but its crowning glory is that it is prayer for Christ. Is he, then, poor and needing to be made rich, or weak and in want of help? How can he, by whom all things were made, and for whom they all exist, need anything from man? Personally he is above the need of man, but the exceeding great and precious promises made to him are not yet ful-

filled. So the apostle quotes the promise, "Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet," and then adds, "but now we see not yet all things put under him." This world was made for his glory; but its inhabitants do not yet delight to honor him. Many sons were given him, to be made like him, and gathered with him into his Father's house; but many of them are still children of wrath, not children of God. Prayer may be made for him, then, that his love may be appreciated, that his claims may be recognized, and that men may love him who so loved them; that the good seed he sowed in tears and blood may grow and cover the face of the earth with golden grain; in short, that he may see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied.

Such is this prayer for Christ, and to offer it brings us near to God. It establishes the soul in him. So long as we give, without prayer, our thoughts are on what we do, and hope varies with the shifting aspect of events. We may send forth missionaries, and our hearts, intent on what they do, still fluctuate between the extremes of hope and despair, at one moment anticipating speedy and glorious success, the next mourning over the graves of our missionaries, and heathen hearts untouched by the love of which those graves are the memorials. We may come to God in prayer, and feel that his power is as great at the ends of the earth as in our

own homes, and yet will he put forth that power? The heathen are sinners, and therefore have no claim. They stifle the truth by their wilful transgression, and therefore provoke God to anger. The church also is self-indulgent and remiss in duty; we dare not plead its devotion before him who knows of what sort it is. Our own zeal is still less worthy to be mentioned before God. How, then, have we courage to pray? In offering prayer for the conversion of the world, as prayer for Christ. All others may be unworthy, but he is infinitely deserving; and as the elders of Capernaum came to him in behalf of the centurion, saying "that he was worthy for whom he should do this," so may we go to the Father in his behalf. Do not our hearts burn within us at the thought that we may pray for our Redeemer? If, when we plead his righteousness for ourselves, God heareth us, will he not much more hear us when both the plea and the person for whom we plead is his beloved Son? Have we not heard the Son ask for that crowning glory of redemption, our presence with him where he is, on the ground of this love, saying, "For thou lovedst me from the foundation of the world"? As we think of that love, so infinite, so unchanging, resting on an object inconceivably worthy of love, are not our hearts strong, ay, bold, in coming to the throne of grace on such an errand? For what other object

of prayer can we be so bold, adoring the infinite excellence of Him for whom we pray, while we ask that he may be glorified?

We think, too, of the promises made to Christ, and every one of them lends new sweetness and fervor to our prayer. "His name shall endure forever;" "Men shall be blessed in him; all nations shall call him blessed," — are promises recorded alongside of this mention of prayer for Christ, as if on purpose to call it forth. And is not that "Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession," addressed to every sinner, who, grafted into the true vine, becomes one with him to whom these words apply? The Father intends that every believer in Jesus should have a tongue to put him in remembrance of this command to ask, and promise to bestow.

Is it not, also, an inspiring encouragement to prayer, that the promises made to Christ are based on the redemption which he wrought out for sinners? "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin," — or, as the Hebrew may with equal accuracy and more propriety be rendered, "When his soul shall make an offering for sin, — he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hands." Now, has not that offering for sin been made? Has not the Father

crowned it with his approval? And on that ground may we not with all boldness offer prayer for Christ, since the unworthiness of the suppliant is swallowed up in the infinite worthiness of the atonement made by him for whom we pray?

Thus praying, may not our little, narrow requests enlarge themselves to a magnitude corresponding to the infinite glory of the person and work of our Redeemer? And, as in all the confidence of faith we urge them before the throne, do not our most earnest prayers spontaneously turn to praise,—praise for such a Redeemer and such a redemption, praise for such a prospect of glory to Christ, and that we are allowed to have anything to do in bringing it about? No wonder that the psalmist cannot mention this praying for Christ without adding, “and daily shall he be praised.”

Such prayer benefits our own souls. By nature we are selfish; our thoughts centre round ourselves; our personal interest is preferred before all else; but this sweetly and yet with divine power draws us away from self. It enlarges our sympathies to the circumference of the sympathies of Christ. We look on God, not as loving us first or chiefly, but the whole world, in the Redeemer. It glorifies our apprehension of Christ as not our Saviour only, but the Saviour of the world; and thus beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, we are changed into

the same image of Christlike benevolence. The arms of our love embrace the world now beloved for Jesus' sake. The church needs this education; and does not the moral beauty of those who have been taught in this school of Christ glorify the Saviour who works such a transformation?

The Christian always loves Christ; but as the river, that creeps sluggishly along its channel in midsummer, rushes headlong, a tumultuous flood, in early spring, so love to Christ has its seasons for overflow, and then the channel, ample enough at ordinary times, cannot meet its wants. There are times when the glory of Christ so enlarges before the eye, and glows in the heart, that our utmost service seems as nothing. His love appears so great that we feel we must make some return; but then, more than at other times, all that we can render seems no return at all. The richest feels that his whole wealth is an offering all too poor; and the missionary, dying like Gordon Hall, under the shadow of the heathen temple, where he had gone to preach of Jesus, feels that life itself falls far below the claims of such a Saviour. At such moments what can bring relief to love?

This prayer for Christ opens a channel large enough for the fullest tide of devotion, overpowered by the sight of that "love which passeth knowledge;" and at such a time those words are not unmeaning.

It is bliss to look up to one who fully comprehends all the glory of his person, and the perfection of his entire mediatorial work. We may never be able to reward him for his love, not though angels come to the help of the church and eternity be devoted to the effort; but the Lord God Omnipotent can render him a full reward, and the full heart pours itself into the prayer, "Glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee." Let the Infinite Mind, which alone can measure the fulness of his claims, devise his reward, and let Almighty power provide and bestow it. Let the most high God "divide him a portion with the great," "because he hath poured out his soul unto death," "and bare the sins of many." As we think of what Omnipotence can do for our Redeemer, a divine gladness fills the soul, and we rejoice even on earth with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

When an earthly friend confers a favor, we say, instinctively, "May God reward you!" and soon the event gives place to other thoughts; but here the mind dwells on the wondrous fitness of divine power to reward redeeming love, and the longer we think, the greater is our delight, till it seems as though the claims of our Redeemer furnish our deepest, clearest, and most joyful insight into the mystery of Omnipotence. Not ocean in its wildest moods, not earthquakes upheaving continents amid carnage

and consternation, not the calm movements of the noiseless spheres, reveal a power so great, or reveal it in a way so glorious, as when we think of the Father rewarding Christ for all that he has done for us.

Another glory of this prayer for Christ is seen in the blessing for which we ask : that God — his God and ours — would bless the Redeemer by making known to all men the life he has purchased for them by his blood ; that “at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father ;” that “the knowledge of this Lord may fill the earth as the waters cover the sea.” These are the breathings of the same life in us that we ask for others. We pray that they may have the same desire for the glory of Christ, and that he may be glorified in them ; and as we see Christ implanting and maintaining this life in us and others, does not the sight of his excellence continually grow larger and more clear? Not only on the cross did he work out redemption, but also on the throne he works out the application of this redemption, nor shall he cease till the last one of the redeemed is glorified.

What words can describe the joy of sympathy with such a being in such a work? If there is joy in the exercise of benevolence, if there is bliss in fellowship with God, here is the perfection of them

both, since in prayer for Christ, we have fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. Our Lord ascended on high that he might receive gifts for men, especially the gift of the Holy Ghost, and in that behold an illustration of this gracious fellowship. Christ says, "I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Comforter;" and to encourage us to do the same, he tells us, "If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" The Head in heaven, and the members on earth, together pray for the Holy Ghost, who worketh in men to lead them to Jesus, and reveal to them his glory; but it is a fellowship in which he gives and we receive; for while he offers prayer divinely efficient in itself, it is his grace in us that repeats the same, and through him comes the answer.

This fellowship with Christ is wonderful. It is amazing grace that, while Christ intercedes for us in heaven, grants us on earth the blessedness of praying for our Intercessor. Yet, however wondrous in itself, it is no less so in its duration; for while "He ever liveth to make intercession" "prayer shall be made for him continually." A great American orator once said of England, that "the morning gun of her garrisons heralded the rising of the sun around the world." The Christian can say more than that;

for, before England was known, prayer went up day and night for a Messiah to come, and, ever since, that outflow of supplication has grown larger and broader, till now, like the swell of the tidal wave, it sweeps across the ocean from the Equator to the Poles, — only unlike that wave it rolls over land as well as sea, — and soon prayer for Christ shall rise unceasingly from all lands, in all languages under the whole heaven. We shall die; but this prayer shall not die; other hearts shall take it up, nor shall they cease till they, too, shall hand it down to others; and so shall it be until his second coming. In each access to the throne of grace, we may sing, “One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall make known thy mighty acts.” “O Lord; the living, the living, he shall praise thee as I do this day.”

If it was a relief to Christ on the cross to say, “It is finished,” what will be his joy when he can look round on the entire results of his death, and say, “These, too, are finished; not one iota of the joy set before me remains incomplete”? We cannot measure the capacity of that infinite heart for joy; but, large as it may be, beyond even the ken of angels, we know that “when he shall see of the travail of his soul, HE SHALL BE SATISFIED. Glorious truth! Christ shall be fully and forever satisfied! for God shall satisfy him; and to-day ours

is the privilege of praying for that result, that in that day we may enter into THE JOY OF OUR LORD, AND REJOICE IN HIS REWARD.

Lord, thou hast loved us with a love
We cannot measure or express;
It smiles upon us from above,
A very heaven of tenderness.

The more thy love our thought exceeds,
The more we feel the impotence
Of service, which from man proceeds,
To render thee thy recompense.

Even angels, mighty though they be,
Their knowledge vast, their thought profound,
For such a work are weak as we;
This sea of love they cannot sound.

There is a mind hath power to know
The fulness of thy love divine;
There is a hand that can bestow
Meed worthy of such grace as thine.

We ne'er behold such sumless dower
Of glory in Omnipotence,
As when shines forth in it the power
To give to thee meet recompense.

If gifted with but one request,
It should be spent in prayer to see,
With all the millions of the blest,
The portion God bestows on thee.

THE END.

Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date: July 2005

PreservationTechnologies
A WORLD LEADER IN PAPER PRESERVATION

111 Thomson Park Drive
Cranberry Township PA 16066
(724) 779-2111

BT
205

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 014 477 662 8

