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THE  
HAPPINESS OF SERVING GOD  
IN OUR  
DAILY EMPLOYMENTS.

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WE read in the Bible of the presence of the Saviour, upon one occasion, at a wedding feast, John ii. 1—11. Some are almost ready to take offence at this, and to ask, "What had the Saviour to do at a wedding? Did that become his character?" But there is another class of persons who exult over it, and say, "This shows, that those gloomy-minded people are mistaken, who make a conscience of refraining from all kinds of pleasure. Our Saviour," they will say, "is best pleased with a cheerful religion, and not with gloomy devotion." This is all very true, but not in the sense they mean it. If our Saviour had gone to the wedding at Cana for the sake of festivity, those would be right who are offended in him; and, on the other hand, those light-minded worldlings, who call themselves cheerful christians, would also be right in quoting this example. But was this our blessed Saviour's object? The gospel narrative shows quite the contrary. Here "he manifested forth, for the first time, his glory," a glory "full of grace and truth." This was his main object in going.

There are persons who think a wedding is not the place for religion; and, that though a man at all other times ought to behave as a christian, a follower of Jesus, it is only reasonable to make an exception at a wedding, or upon such an occasion. When, therefore, they observe any thing sinful or unbecoming, in themselves or others, at such seasons, they are much more lenient in their judgment than usual. They say, "We must set this down to the wedding, or the festival, or the harvest-home;" and such like. They think, in short, there are times and occasions when there is more excuse for behaving like a fool or a heathen, than at other times. Many confine religion within still narrower bounds, and limit it to the church and religious assemblies; but, in their family circle, or in the shop or counting-house, they

say, "This is not the place for religion: all we have to do here is to attend to business, or to family concerns: and these things have no connexion with religion." But he who is not a christian in worldly matters, is not one in the church; for religion is not a dress to be put on and off as we please.

But how must we act in order to be christians in our daily life and calling, which seem to have so little reference to heavenly things? I answer, we must make our worldly business and daily engagements a service of God. I will endeavour to show you what is meant by this.

When men are besought to think of the salvation of their souls, and to come to the marriage supper of the Lamb, it often happens that, either openly in words, or secretly in their consciences, they excuse themselves by their outward situation. "I cannot attend to this subject, I have bought a field, and must go and see it;" or "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them;" or, "I have married a wife;" or, "I have great property and large concerns to attend to, I must give my thoughts to them," Luke xiv. 18—20; or, "I am poor, and have enough to do to get my daily bread;" or, "I am in service, and a hard service it is, and I have no time left for spiritual things;" or, "My husband or my neighbour is always quarrelling with me; how then can I get any good from the word of God?—in short, my situation makes it impossible for me to be religious." "A minister," many will say, "has plenty of advantages for religion; it is the very nature of his calling to be employed about the word of God, and to concern himself about the salvation of himself and his flock; but, as for me, how am I to find time for it?" These, and the like pretences and excuses, are very common indeed; and when upon such grounds men have quieted their own consciences, or put away the call to conversion, they are apt to fancy that they have given an excuse quite to the purpose, and one against which no reasonable person can have a word to say.

But, my friend, if you are determined to plead outward circumstances in excuse for your impenitence, what is this but casting the blame of that very impenitence upon God himself, as the God of providence. For who is it that placed you in your situation and calling? Who is it that gave the command, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread?" Gen. iii. 19. Who is it that "maketh poor, and

maketh rich?" 1 Sam. ii. 7. Is it not God? Behold then, when you cast the blame of your impenitence upon your outward circumstances, you cast it upon God. But is God; who willeth that all men should be saved, who even spared not his only begotten Son, but gave him up to suffering and to death, for their salvation—is he to bear the blame of your impenitence and consequent perdition? Away with such a thought! Your blood is on your own head. Your inclinations and affections are after this world and the things of the world; and you will not even suffer yourself to be saved from this wretched condition. Instead of allowing the word of God, the good seed, to be sown in your heart; instead of allowing this to take root within you, you allow the thorns of mammon, the lusts of perishing riches, and the anxieties and cares, or else the vain delights of this life, and worldly conversation and business, to come in the way, and these things choke the good seed sown in your heart; yes, and you allow these things to choke it. Here then is the real cause of your impenitence, and not your temporal circumstances.

But the reason why men are so ready to find, in their temporal circumstances, an excuse for their ungodliness, is that their ideas, both of spiritual and of temporal life, are altogether false. They take it for granted, that to lead a godly life in this world, and to fulfil our earthly calling, are things totally distinct, and that to be a man and to be a christian, to live in this world and to live for eternity, are two things which are not only quite unconnected, but even incompatible with one another. This error is a very common one indeed. What is the general notion which people entertain of real piety? Do not they understand by it, a state of mind in which nothing is thought of but heavenly things, in which earthly things are no longer cared for, and in which, consequently, the man is almost incapacitated for any employments but what are spiritual? It is true that many lukewarm and worldly-minded christians, aided by our modern self-enlightened teachers of what they are pleased to term cheerful religion, have, in their way of doing it, considerably abated this general prejudice; nay, by their example and instructions they have brought over many to a contrary opinion; namely, that the love of the world, and of things pleasing to the flesh, is perfectly agreeable to true christianity, and is, indeed, quite a part of it, and taught by Divine authority. Still, however, many have not been able to get

rid of the prejudice, that a man's heavenly calling can never be made perfectly to harmonize with his earthly one; nor indeed are those likely to be free from this prejudice who entertain right notions about the vast importance of our heavenly calling, unless they learn, what many of them have not yet learned, to regard all our earthly duties, as the express appointment of God, instead of viewing them as mere chance allotments, or as matters about which we are merely to exercise our own passions and self-will.

The prejudice we just noticed, was the cause why, a very few centuries after the birth of Christ, it became a prevailing notion in the church, that if any one would lead a truly godly life, he must give up all business, and, leaving the bustle of the world, go into solitude, and there pass his whole time in reading and prayer. Thus it sometimes happened, that husbands and wives, who were awakened by the Holy Spirit to seek after the kingdom of God, separated from each other and retired into some desert, the one to the right hand, the other to the left; they lived almost upon nothing, spent their whole time in praying to God, and never saw each other again. This was called going out of the world. But a true going out of the world does not consist in going into a desert, where we take our ourselves out with us, but in dying daily to the world in our own hearts; namely, the pharisee that resides there, and the sadducee, and the false prophet that is there, and the anti-christ, and the worldling that we carry about within us; and all this may be done in the midst of the business, and the bustle, and the storms of life.

But do not suppose, that the disposition I have been describing has altogether ceased, and that there are none in the present day who are inclined to practise religion in a desert, as men did in former ages. How many, at the commencement of their religious life, have inwardly sighed: "Oh! if I had but a small dwelling or a chamber of my own, where I could be quite retired to myself, then I should be able to be alone, and would let the world go on as it pleased. I would there commune with God in secret, and then what a holy life would I lead! But now, my mind is continually harassed by worldly business; I am torn away from devotional employments by all sorts of things that I am called to attend to; I have too many worldly engagements by half, and cannot be so pious as I wish." Why, my friend, it is the

very best thing for your spiritual health to have these regular calls and tossings from one duty and difficulty to another; it is thus that you may be taught the real state of your own heart, and be brought to true and saving faith, yes, to "believe on him that justifieth the ungodly," Rom. iv. 5; for, believe me, could you realize within yourse'f such an imaginary piety as you fondly dream of, you would rest on yourself, and so fall away from Christ.

What sad management are we sometimes obliged to notice in the spiritual treatment of the sick! A parent, or a child, or some relative is very ill, and nigh unto death; and how is he treated by the friends and relations around him? Why, they remove out of the sick person's sight every thing that can possibly remind him of his worldly concerns. Now, against this I have not a word to say; it is perfectly right: here is so much the less lumber to divert the sick person from that work of the Holy Spirit upon his heart, which would lead him to think seriously of his situation, and to consider what state he is in with respect to God. But suppose the sick man to have been really governed by the fear of God in his worldly calling; suppose he has lived in the habit of referring all his temporal concerns to the Lord, in prayer; and has made it his aim to follow the Divine will both at home and abroad—how injudiciously, nay erroneously, is such a person often treated, upon his happening, possibly, to ask a question about some temporal matter that may concern him! Does not he often hear such an answer as this from his friends? "Oh don't trouble yourself about it; have nothing more to do with earthly things; your soul is all you need to care about." Just as if the care of the soul were a sort of hireling's work, begun at a certain time, and ended at a certain time. O, my friend, the salvation of the soul is no task-work like this: nor is it of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth; but, simply and alone, of God that showeth mercy, Rom. ix. 16.

And yet, it is from the false notion that our heavenly calling is completely at variance with our earthly calling, as if the two things stood in diametrical opposition, that many persons come to look upon themselves as true christians who have no right to the name, because their lives and conversation are inconsistent. They imagine that piety is a state of the heart which requires a disregard and indifference to all earthly concerns; but, seeing that such a piety as this

is not practicable in this poor world, in which the wants of our frail bodies, and the duties we owe to our fellow-men, are constantly drawing down our attention from heavenly to earthly things, they have found out another way of getting over the difficulty. They imagine that God, who knows all our earthly troubles, difficulties, and infirmities, can never be severe to enforce his demands to the full extent, or to mark every thing that is done amiss; but that he is quite satisfied, if we devote certain times and seasons to his service, though we employ all the rest of our time in “labouring for very vanity.” There are times, they think, for religion, as for every thing else; and “the chief and principal time for this purpose, is the sabbath day.” So, on the sabbath day, they attend Divine service; and, more than this, they employ themselves at home in reading some religious book; nay, still further, every week day, they give a quarter of an hour, or thereabouts, in the morning and evening, when their business will permit, as a tribute to the Lord; and a moment or two of the same kind before and after meals. Here then you have the sum total of such people’s religion. But do not mistake me; I have no wish to find fault with exercises like these; they are good as far as they go, very good, and suited to promote the real health of the soul. Would to God that men in general regularly attended to them! We should then have more genuine religion in the world than we have at present. I am far, therefore, from meaning to blame men for devoting set times to reading, and prayer, and meditation; but here lies the fault—in thinking, that when we have done these things, we have done with God for the present, and that the rest of our time may be spent in worldliness and vanity. And yet this is the thought of many. Away they rush into the world, into its vain cares and false delights, with the same anxieties, or with the same relish as ever, as soon as they have done, as they think, enough to satisfy the demands of their Maker; and not another thought, except about earthly things, enters their minds, till the time for religion, as they call it, comes round again; and, in the meantime, they can even indulge in known or open sin, and follow the vile inclinations of their own hearts, laying themselves open to the incitements of every spirit of evil, without watchfulness, without reliance upon God, never listening to the still small voice of the Spirit of truth

Look at such a one sitting down with his family to meals, He formally invites the Saviour's presence at his table ; he "says grace." What follows? Down he sits, and what is the next word, perhaps, that escapes his lips? Some word of complaint; and perhaps of ill-temper, about the food set upon the table. And what next? Why he indulges his appetite, in immoderate eating and drinking, and shows, as the Scripture speaks, that "his belly is his god." Again: he has been saying, in his prayers, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us;" and what is the very next thing he does? Why, he will let his tongue loose, against some real or supposed faults of another, either reviling him to his face, or speaking against him behind his back; or he will vent his humour, or his wrath against him, in some other way; and yet he thinks himself all the while a good christian! But a strange sort of christianity is this! If this be christianity then you may find christians, some of whom are like the earth-worm, "lading themselves with thick clay;" others that may be compared to "ramping and roaring lions;" others that resemble "ravening wolves," or infuriated dogs; others who are as "greedy dogs that can never have enough," insatiable, covetous, gluttons, or drunkards; deceivers, caring not whom they defraud or injure; and such like: yet dreaming, all the while, that even they are christians! And how is it that they can possibly put this cheat upon themselves? Why, in the "blindness of their heart," they imagine that they render to God the things that are God's; and so, of course, the flesh is to have its own due also. Ah, dear friend, you may be thinking that these are not your notions; but be not too hasty in deciding that you are free from this error. It often lies so deep in the heart, that men are not aware of it themselves. Let me call to your recollection what a totally different person you often are out of church from what you seem to be in it! How opposite is your behaviour in an assembly of pious characters, or in your intercourse with one or more of them, to what it is under your own roof! What a different deportment do you feel it requisite to manifest during your "preparation" before the Lord's supper, from what you think you may give licence to at other times!

Now, I hope, my friend, you clearly see that real christianity consists, neither on the one hand in entire seclusion from the world; nor on the other, in living like a christian

only on one day of the week, and like a heathen on the other six. No; christianity is to be the life and soul of our temporal calling: you must be the same man, the same christian, every day and every hour of the week, in the meanest employments as well as in the greatest. Do you ask, "How can these things be? How is it possible for such things to go on together?" Our Saviour answers, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you," Matt. vi. 33. The heavenly calling then is to take the lead, and the earthly calling to be subordinate to it. But, lest the meaner should overpower the nobler, which may easily happen in creatures such as we are, (for "that which is born of the flesh is flesh,") we are under a gracious obligation to change what is earthly into the nature of what is heavenly; or, as I have said already, to make our every-day life, and all our temporal duties and services, a service of God. And this is actually brought to pass by our learning to live up to the apostle's exhortation, "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him," Col. iii. 17.

It is an important truth, that whatever situation of life we are placed in, and under whatever circumstances, it is God who has appointed all. Neither is this truth contradicted by the innumerable instances we behold, of men's own will and pleasure seeming to take the lead in every thing; and making it appear as if God's appointment had nothing to do here. Be it that a man makes his own choice, and fixes upon his own station and employment in life, while God is not in all his thoughts, still God has every thing to do with it, in permitting such a thing to happen; yes, the very situation which that man has chosen, of his own ungodly will, is appointed him by Providence to become his nursery-station for eternity. We are supposing, of course, that the station is not a forbidden one; that the employment contains in it nothing positively sinful; for where that is the case, another consideration arises. A man has then no right to refer his sinful employments to the appointment of God; but his duty is to quit them, without a moment's delay, lest he "lose his own soul;" for "the Lord is not with him." But whenever a man's calling and employments are lawful and honest, then his everyday life, with all its events and circumstances, is



designed as a means of leading him to God, and confirming his dependence upon Him. Yes, God means it to be so; and, for this purpose, he has strung the thread of our daily existence with so many mementos of his providence and grace, that the more attentive we are to mark the finger of God, the more nearly shall we find every changing moment directing us to himself.

Take the simple instance of a poor day labourer in the field. Surely his is an earthly calling. And yet, with what abundant opportunities does that very calling furnish him for thinking upon God! Who created the plants, and caused them to spring forth and grow? Who giveth the rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, with the genial warmth and light of the sun? Who maketh the oxen strong to labour, and the flocks and herds to bring forth their thousands and their tens of thousands? Who is it that maketh man himself strong to labour, and bestows upon him hereby his daily bread? Nay, does not every blade of grass point our thoughts to God, and remind us of Him, who said, "Let the earth bring forth grass?" Gen. i. 11. There is no honest situation of life which is not full of such references to the great God and Lord of all. Who sends to the tradesman his customers, or provides for the merchant his purchasers? Who furnishes the mechanic employment, and thus gives him his subsistence? This hardship, or that affliction, who sends it? Is it not God who is "All in all?" And what is the meaning of all these things? They are no other than those "cords of a man," those "bands of love," which God has fastened to every circumstance of our life, in order to draw our souls up to himself. Oh that such things were but thought upon as they ought to be! How would God then be found meeting us at every turn; yes, God our Father, without whom not a sparrow falleth to the ground, nor a hair of our head can perish!

But while He is thus constantly meeting us, it is our part also to be in every such instance meeting him; and this is the thing, and the only thing that will make our earthly life what it ought to be, and make it really consistent with what is spiritual and heavenly. Every one, according to the nature of his calling, in his place, opportunities, and circumstances, nay, in his very troubles and difficulties, is to approve himself faithful and patient in the strength, and in the name of Jesus. It is for Jesus' sake that he is herein to

guard against every sin of omission and of commission ; and for his sake he is to ask and receive wisdom and strength from above, for that purpose, that, when his Lord the Saviour cometh, he may be found a faithful and wise steward, to whom his Lord will say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant : thou hast been faithful over a few things," the few matters of thine earthly daily life, matters too insignificant for the high-minded of this world to notice, "I will make thee ruler over many things : enter thou into the joy of thy Lord," Matt. xxv. 21. This, then, is the way to turn our temporal life into a truly christian one.

Take, now, a very simple instance of the same kind, that of a female servant in her daily round of domestic employments. We will suppose that these employments may be well and regularly discharged ; but in what very opposite states of her own mind may they be done, and for what very different ends ! For all may be done in ill-humour, in a complaining temper, or, at the best, with a slavish spirit, working only for wages, and industrious only for hire, or because she has been always used to work, and would really be more miserable by being idle. And, if this be the case, her daily employments, so far from leading her to God, will only have the effect of leading her farther and farther from him. But, on the other hand, she might do every thing she has to do for the Lord's sake, from motives of love and dutiful obedience to her Saviour, who has placed her in this situation, and for whose sake she might perform all its duties with industry, faithfulness, and punctuality ; and thus might sanctify even her most homely engagements. If she really do this in all her different occupations, then will they all tend to promote her growth in grace, and while she fulfils the humblest duties in this state of mind, she better pleaseth the Lord, than if, at the time when she ought to be performing them, she were upon her knees at prayer.

Take another instance in the mother of a family. She has young children, and much to attend to on their account ; their bodily health and comfort, their manners and habits, and so forth. These duties descend into numerous little details, which must occupy her attention, and take up her time. And, she has, beside these, a variety of domestic duties to attend to, in the daily superintendence of her household, even through a single day. And duties or trials sometimes come upon her so rapidly, that she has much

need of patience to guard her against peevishness and loss of temper through one provocation or another. Now, it is just in proportion as she recollects herself, and feels the ground of faith firm beneath her, and converses all the while with her Saviour in her inmost soul, to the following effect: "Thou, Lord, hast placed me in this situation, and as these things come of thee, I will endeavour, for thy sake, to make them the occasion of my faithfulness, composure, and patience; grant me, therefore, wisdom and strength, and 'send help from thy sanctuary,' into this poor life of temptation and difficulty!"—it is just as she thus goes forth, and in the name of Jesus, puts her hand to whatever work God has appointed her, with renewed cheerfulness, that she carries on her dutiful service to God, and turns all into one sacred course of piety, as real and as substantial as when at another time duty calls her to public worship, and she enjoys the purest pleasures of devotion.

Take another instance in the case of a common artisan, a weaver sitting at his loom. Now if, while he is throwing his shuttle to and fro, he thinks thus in his heart: "This weaving is indeed a tedious and unhealthy employment, and my earnings are but small; but if I, in my humble measure of poor labour, may honour thee, my blessed Saviour, this will more than make amends for all. O give me grace to be wise and faithful, that I may serve my employer well, and let me be careful lest I should injure him through any negligence or selfishness of mine." If, I say, such a poor artisan proceeds in this state of mind, and, for the sake of Jesus, applies himself to his labour with all the diligence in his power, he turns his outward calling into a real service of God, and the very room in which he labours becomes a sanctuary. So, in like manner, if the farmer drives his cattle to market, committing all his ways to the Lord, and making it his principal concern, for the Saviour's sake, to refrain from all deception in his dealings, from overpraising his goods, and from every idle word; taking care so to speak, that his yea may be yea, and his nay, nay; and choosing rather to suffer injury himself than injure his neighbour, all from obedience and love to his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, then he makes even his trading a service of God.

Is it necessary to give any more examples? I hope you now understand what I mean. Every business in every

calling, whatever may be its name, must be done as in the Lord's sight; for, not the employment itself, be it ever so dignified or ever so mean, but the spirit with which it is performed is accounted of importance in his sight.

See then, how we may serve God in every thing, in eating and drinking, in sleeping, in waking, in speaking and in keeping silence, in activity abroad and in quietness at home, by labour and by rest. Yea, more; in this manner, every thing is overruled for the good and for the advancement of those who love God, and neither Satan nor the world can ever prevent it. And although we perceive a thousand faults in the manner in which we do these duties (for our best works are imperfect, and bear upon them marks of our fall and natural corruption) yet these failures and sinful infirmities which a christian observes in himself, drive him again to God, so that he is always under Divine discipline day and night. Such then is the life of a true christian.

Let us now consider a little the blessedness of such a life.

If any one learns to look at his outward calling and earthly connexions in this point of view, and to act in them in this spiritual manner, he is in a blessed and happy state. It is true, and we have no wish to conceal it, that a christian has, after all, a toilsome pilgrimage, and many bitter experiences. The more a man is separated from the world in his mind, the more does he experience here below the wearisomeness of his pilgrimage. But, notwithstanding this, the christian has abundance of consolation in all his toil and labours. When a man earnestly endeavours to live to the Lord every day to the end of his course, and to spend and be spent for his glory, the Spirit of truth speaks many a sweet word of consolation to his heart. Then, fountains of water are opened in the desert, and bread comes down from heaven, to recruit his wearied strength until he reaches his home, for the Lord will not withhold from his people any good thing. He is their Shepherd, and they shall not want, Psa. xxiii. The christian's course is, with all its difficulties, a blessed one.

But "the ungodly are not so," Psa. i. 4; they feel the troubles of this life tenfold. Great plagues remain for the ungodly; there is no peace to them, saith the Lord, Isa. xlviii. 22. If a man lead a life without God in the world, if he pursue his earthly calling without God, nothing like a blessing can be found in any of his ways. What a

cold, dull, insipid, monotonous life do some men lead. There is no light, no strength, either in their rising up or lying down, either in their labour or their rest. They know not wherefore they are in the world, except to attend to some little employment or care, to earn their bread, or satisfy their animal wants. Besides this, they have many troubles. One is poor : and how much trouble does it give him ! Another is rich : how much does he suffer from anxiety ! One person is seeking to acquire wealth ; but to-day he misses of one advantage, to-morrow of another. To-day he forms some excellent plan, to-morrow his whole calculation is defeated ; and though many of his schemes succeed, yet the desires of his heart are not satisfied, because avarice is insatiable. Another makes it his chief aim to obtain the comforts, conveniences, and enjoyments of life, as they are called. But oh, the wonderful judgment of God ! The path to this end leads most men through nothing but uneasiness, inconveniences, and over exertion. Oh, how many obstacles are there in the way ! Another is urged on by some other desire, but he meets with nothing but disappointments. Then he becomes peevish, fretful, morose, contentious ; finds the cause of it now here, and now there ; despises and hates his neighbour ; considers him a mere instrument for his own ends, and when these are not attained, treats him as an enemy. Then he comforts himself at least with his own superior understanding, skill, or honesty ; but, after having consoled himself in this way, he makes a new mistake, is vexed at it, and plunges again with new fury into his occupations. In short, the way of the ungodly is altogether unblest ; nothing but a course of inward and outward disquietude, disappointments, and vexations. Such is the misery of living without Christ.

Yet men have found out expedients for themselves. As the flesh has to seek its support and sustenance by daily exertions, and must, in those very exertions, be almost perpetually meeting with something to oppose and annoy it, they endeavour to compensate themselves in other ways. A variety of things are resorted to for this purpose. Some, who have abundance of earthly means, seek their relief from the troubles of life in eating and drinking, or rather in feasting and drunkenness ; or they endeavour to sweeten this life's bitterness by some favourite ruling passion : while many who are in poorer circumstances, make sensual plea

tures, and the various excitements of appetite, the very business of their lives. Thus we find self-pleasing people, without any other object, following eagerly their own favourite passion: thus intemperance is practised in thoughts, and language, and even in open acts of immorality. And all this is done in order to sweeten a little, as they think, a wretched unblest life. Moreover, men have found a variety of other expedients for this same purpose. In great towns and cities there are theatres, all kinds of exciting novelties, the lusts of the eye, the more refined lusts of the flesh, fashionable pleasures as they are termed. These things they call the means of making life agreeable. In country villages there are also similar assemblies; and there foolish or sinful stories are told, absent persons are traduced, men provoke each other, in order to have the diabolical pleasure of beholding strife. They indulge in all kinds of impure conversation, or they resort to other means of amusement; now and then races, or a wake, or the like. These are the things in which they seek compensation for the troubles of life, which they feel press heavily upon them, because they live without the Saviour.

But what sort of compensations are these? If the wedding company at Cana in Galilee had not been the friends of the Lord Jesus, and consequently had not invited him to their wedding, how might things have gone on there? They might have sat down, and have eaten, and drunk, and joked, and laughed, and indulged in sinful idle chat, (for on such occasions even grave and orderly people think it no harm to indulge in sallies of their folly,) but what benefit would they have gained from the occasion? Would they have gained any thing for eternity, or even for the present life? Would the master of the house have borne his family cares more easily? Or, if any individual of the party was suffering under the daily pressure of some domestic trial, would he have been enabled to bear his cross the better in future? No; all they would have gotten by the whole business would have been this: that they would have said afterwards, "What a pleasant evening it was! we had plenty of merriment, and abundance of good eating and drinking;" so that, in future, they would have had one subject more for idle conversation, and they would have sown a few seeds more for the harvest of eternal perdition, Gal. vi. 7, 8. **Such are the best things of this world.** In the world you

find men poor in the midst of wealth, joyless in their so called joy ; leading an unblest, miserable, degraded life, though they varnish it over with the best names they can invent.

But, on the contrary, if we live in Christ, in communion with him, engaging in our labours and our very recreations with an eye to him, how every thing is changed ! What is burdensome, becomes easy ; what is bitter, becomes palatable ; what is sweet, becomes still sweeter. Here is something worthy of the name of life. When people have Christ with them, then they are rich in poverty, courageous and comforted in embarrassment, and raised above all that is mean and degraded, however coarse or tattered the garments they wear.

Did we only serve God in the daily occurrences and business of life ; did we make it our care to have the Saviour's presence always with us, and for his sake show faithfulness in all our concerns both great and small—how would be our whole course through this frail life ! Then our christianity would not consist of so many scattered fragments, with large breaks between them, of all sorts of strange and inconsistent things, lukewarmness, slothfulness, dissipation, and shameful excesses of natural depravity ; but all would proceed in a regular, uniform tenour : fidelity for the sake of Jesus in little things, would run through all our actions and demeanour, and stamp our life with the unquestionable seal of christian excellence. How far removed should we then be from those unhallowed excitements and pursuits in which men selfishly grasp at every thing, in order to lose nothing, and yet at last lose all that is most valuable ! How quietly should we do our duty, and leave every thing else to God ! how would God meet us with his blessing in our daily life ! Then we should daily find occasions for thankfulness, for praising the goodness of God, as well as for earnest prayer and supplication ; and these occasions would not be only, or even chiefly, in the house of God, but in our daily occupations, worldly business, family relations, household duties, on sabbath days and on week days, in summer and in winter, in labour and recreation. Whatever is given us, by God's bounty and kindness, would all lead us to Him. Then, also, should we daily learn to know our own hearts better ; and daily be led more earnestly to repent and to pray for

the forgiveness of our sins, trusting in Christ alone for salvation, rejoicing in Christ Jesus, and having no confidence in the flesh. This is what we may call a christian life.

But we can never arrive at this happy state till we have, by true repentance and conversion, obtained real heartfelt joy in Jesus; for how can we do anything pleasing to the Saviour while we neither know him nor love him? But let any one only begin at once with the little duties of daily life, and give up those particular things in which he has detected sin in himself; and let him begin, on the other hand, to be faithful in little things; thus will he be led forward by the hand of the faithful God, who will, by these means, give him a knowledge of his own heart, and teach him his way; and will also open to him the riches of the grace and mercy of Jesus. But whosoever will not do this, must remain a poor, forlorn, anxious, restless, and fearful creature; whose whole portion consists of the wretched enjoyments of sense; but in eternity he has nothing!

'Tis religion that can give  
Sweetest pleasures while we live;  
'Tis religion must supply  
Solid comfort when we die.

After death, its joys will be  
Lasting as eternity!  
Be the living God my friend  
Then my bliss shall never end.

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