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Meditations and addresses on
the subject of prayer

MEDITATIONS AND ADDRESSES

ON THE SUBJECT OF

PRAYER.

BY

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P R E F A C E.

As it has pleased the Almighty Disposer of all events, that I should continue in a state of health, which still incapacitates me for active exertion, in my divine Master's service, I have been led to adopt the medium of the press, as a substitute for the ministrations of the pulpit; and thus to labour in my heavenly Master's cause, not, indeed, in the way I would have myself preferred, but in the only way now placed within my reach.

Should these pages meet the eyes of any of the beloved parishioners or congregation, amongst whom I was once privileged to preach the glad tidings of the gospel, I would entreat of them to accept my renewed assurance, that though my pastoral ministrations among them have been suspended, my grateful love for them, and affectionate solicitude for their spiritual welfare, have not, therefore ceased; but that the memory of the time, when I used to meet them, and minister among them, in the house of God, ranks high among the recollections, on which, in the retrospect of my life, I most love to linger.

And if this little Volume should be made to any of them, through the divine blessing, the means of promoting their best—that is, their eternal interests, I shall, indeed, feel that all my time and labour have been abundantly repaid.

Most gratefully will I rejoice in the result of what I have written, if, thereby, through the divine power of the Holy Spirit, even a single soul may be led to cultivate, in the retirement of the closet, more fervent, and more frequent communion with its God—convinced, as I each day more deeply feel, that, in proportion to a believer's progress or decline, in the diligent and devout use of this divinely-appointed means of sustaining and strengthening the life of God within his soul, ~~with~~ all his spiritual energies and attainments advance or retrograde; all his spiritual joys and consolations flourish or decay.

I would now cast this mite, for the service of the sanctuary, into the treasury of the Lord, with an earnest prayer, that He would vouchsafe, in His infinite condescension, to accept it as an offering of His servant's gratitude; and accompany it with that blessing, without which all our labours are utterly in vain.

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MEDITATIONS; &c.

MEDITATION I.

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER.

“Then, began men to call upon the name of the Lord.”
—GEN. iv. 26.

“All things, whatsoever, ye shall ask in prayer, believing ye shall receive.”—MATT. xxi. 22.

“Pray without ceasing.”—1 THES. v. 17.

THAT there is much in the present aspect of the professing religious world, (as it is called,) calculated to excite feelings of sorrow and alarm, cannot be denied, and should not be concealed. Much hollow profession—much feverish excitement—much dangerous love of novelty, and desire to make voyages of discovery, (or, as I have heard such speculations well described, “flighty excursions,”) into Scripture; and an impatient spirit of insubordination to all authority, pro-

ducing a species of radicalism in religion, reluctant to pay the deference that is due to opinions long established, and almost as it were consecrated by the venerable voice of antiquity, and the harmonious consent of the wisest and best of every age of the church of Christ ; or to bow, with any measure of submission or respect, to those veterans in the Christian warfare, who have grown grey in the Saviour's service, and to whose unflinching faithfulness, in many a hard-fought field, and matured experience in all the toils and trials of the Christian conflict, though not a slavish submission, yet assuredly a respectful deference, is due from those inexperienced recruits, who have only just enlisted under the banners of the cross.

It should, however, be equally admitted, and thankfully acknowledged, that there is much connected with the cause of religion, in our day, calculated to call forth feelings of the liveliest pleasure, and the deepest gratitude, in every Christian breast.

There is an unquestionable increase of

thirst for scriptural study, and knowledge of scriptural truth; a more distinctly faithful, and widely extended proclamation of the gospel message of a free, full, and everlasting salvation, through the alone meritorious cross and passion of the Son of God. The preaching of Christ crucified, in all the length and breadth of that apostolical summary of the gospel, has, (blessed be God!) to a great extent, superseded the preaching of that half-heathen, half-Christian morality, which so long usurped, in our pulpits, the place assigned in Scripture to the doctrine of the cross. Christian compassion has, after the sleep of ages, been awakened to pity the benighted condition of the heathen world; and Christian philanthropy has embodied her holy and benevolent zeal, to advance the Redeemer's glory, and the temporal and eternal welfare of mankind, in those numerous societies and missionary labours, which are at once the glory and reproach of our day; its glory, that so many Christian societies, the heralds of a Saviour's love, have been raised

up amongst us ; its reproach, that any of them should be allowed to languish for want of funds, while there is so much that could be retrenched from superfluities, in the decorations of dress, and the indulgencies of luxury, among even the faithful followers of Him, who was crucified for us men, and for our salvation.

But while the wide-extended spread, that in our day has been given to the diffusion of Christian truth, and the mighty impulse that has been imparted to the exertions of Christian zeal, afford matter of honest exultation, and grateful joy ; (and, from my heart, I pity the man, who does not find in them a theme for holy joy and thankfulness,) there is one feature of the Christian character, in which I cannot but fear that there has not been an advance, at all proportioned to the progress discernible in so many others : and, yet, one of such paramount importance, that on it, above every other, the progress of the divine life, in the believer's soul, is suspended. One so indispensably neces-

sary for the furtherance of his growth in grace, and advancement in holiness, that if it be neglected, no knowledge however clear, no information however extensive, no studies however deep, in scriptural truth—yea, no sacrifices however costly, or zeal however ardent, or labours however unwearied, can compensate for the neglect; which will assuredly be followed and chastised by a decline and decay in every spiritual grace, and, *if persevered in*, by every appalling symptom of approaching spiritual death.

Need I add, that I mean the habit of private prayer—of devout communion, in the retirement of our closets, with the Father of Spirits—entering into our chamber, and shutting the door, and praying to our Father in heaven, who heareth in secret—coming before Him, in all the confidingness and grateful affection of children, in whose hearts the Spirit of adoption has been shed abroad, whereby we are privileged to cry Abba, Father—approaching a reconciled God, through His

dear Son, in such a spirit, to spread out before Him all our wants and wishes ; to pour all our griefs and anxieties into His compassionate ears ; to confess to Him all our sins ; and confide to Him all our sorrows ; seeking to be supported by His strength, sanctified by His Spirit, guided by His counsel, and gladdened by His consolations ? Now, I cannot conceal my apprehensions, (and indeed I say it more in sorrow than in anger,) that there has not been a progress in this department of the Christian system, at all proportionable to that discernible in many others. We live in an age of decidedly increased knowledge, zeal, exertion, in divine things—yea ! and increased *social* prayer ; but do we live in an age of proportionably increased *secret* prayer ? I fear not—and to this single fact may, I think, be mainly attributed the many glaring inconsistencies and blemishes, which disfigured the aspect of the professing church of Christ.

Prayer is the divinely-appointed means of sustaining spiritual life, in a believer's soul ;

and by shedding on all within the influence of divine grace, imparting to all without the impress of the divine image.

It is the gathering of the celestial manna—the feeding on the living bread which came down from heaven, to nourish the soul to everlasting life ; and for the divine nourishment thus obtained, nothing can be safely substituted.

Praising the bread of life, however warmly, cannot. Were you to try a similiar experiment with your daily food for the body, what would be the result ? And does the soul less require its appropriate nourishment, to strengthen its spiritual life ?

Distributing the bread of life to others, however liberal, cannot be safely substituted for feeding on it ourselves, by prayer.

Try a similar experiment, but for one day, with the body ; and will not its weakened and exhausted state, at night, painfully remind you, that the most benevolent zeal cannot supply the place of necessary food, in supporting animal life ? Believe me, it can

as little supply the place of secret prayer, in support of the spiritual.

Working *for* God, however laboriously, is no safe substitute for devout communion *with* God: yea! the more work you have to do for God, you but the more require those abundant supplies of divine wisdom, grace and strength, which you can alone obtain by fervent prayer, and without which you will soon grow weary *in*, or weary *of*, your work.

If the invigorating sunshine, and refreshing showers were withheld, would the seed deposited in the bosom of the earth spring forth? Or, if it had put forth its tender buds and blossoms would they not, if unnourished by heaven's sunshine and showers, soon languish, wither, droop, and die?

If the lamp be unfed with fresh supplies of oil, will not the flame burn dimmer and dimmer, and at length expire?

Not less indispensable is prayer to the progress—yea! the very life of spirituality, in a believer's sou!.

Prayer draws down the warming beams of the Sun of Righteousness—the refreshing showers of the Spirit of Grace, beneath whose genial influence all the spiritual graces, which God's own hand has planted, expand in their fullest bloom, and diffuse all round their sweetest fragrance.

Prayer, with outstretched arm, fetches from the inexhaustible reservoir above, those rich supplies of the oil of divine grace, fed by which, the Christian lamp of faith will burn with a steady and increasing brightness; till, having guided the believer through the journey of life; cheered, by its gladdening ray, the gloom of the chamber of death; and even darted a bright gleam of heavenly light deep down into that dark valley, through which he must pass to the city of his God, it will there be absorbed in the blaze of light that burns around the throne; for in that city there is no candle or lamp required, yea! there is no need of the sun or moon to enlighten *it*, for the Lamb is the light thereof, and our God its glory!

Seeing, then, that the habit of devout communion with God, in the secret retirement of the closet, is thus indispensably necessary for maintaining, in vigorous health, the life of God in the soul, and carrying on, with hallowed success, the work of God in the world; and fearing, as I do that this communion is not appreciated or enjoyed, to the extent it should be, by many even of the children of God, in this age of extraordinary excitement on all subjects, when a kind of restless out-of-doors rambling religion, remarkable more, in its best features, for devotedness than devotion, has become fashionable, I have thought that I might profitably employ a portion of the leisure time, which sickness has afforded me, in the consideration of this deeply-interesting and all-important subject.

Should these pages meet the eye of one who knows, by experience, the power and blessedness of the prayer of faith, I would earnestly entreat that believer's fervent supplications at the throne of grace, that the

almighty Spirit would vouchsafe to make the observations that are brought forward, however weak or worthless in themselves, instrumental, through His divine influence, in leading those who may read them, to a juster appreciation of the privilege, and a fuller experience of the power, of habitual secret prayer.

2*

MEDITATION II.

ON THE NATURE OF PRAYER

“ Thus saith the Lord God : I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.”—EZEK. xxxvi. 37.

“ Ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.—MATT. vii. 7.

WE may consider prayer in a four-fold point of view. 1. As a duty. 2. As a privilege. 3. As a pleasure. And 4. As the appointed means of obtaining all the temporal and spiritual blessings which we so urgently want, and which God delights so bountifully to bestow.

1. Prayer is a duty.

Were it not a waste of words to labour to prove this ? Surely, if God’s tender care over us commenced even before we were born, (for His eyes did see and watch over

our members, yet being imperfect, while they lay hidden in the womb ;) if from the moment of our birth up to the present, He has continued to watch over us, with a love, of whose sleepless vigilance and yearning tenderness, the fondest mother's is but the faintest emblem ; if there is not a blessing we enjoy, bodily or mental, personal or relative, temporal or spiritual, that is not a gift of his bounty—a token of his love ; if there is not a source of pure or purified happiness, that has gladdened us in the past, nor a hope that brightens the prospect of the future, for time or for eternity, that has not flowed to us from this Fountain of all our mercies ; Oh ! surely it must be our duty to render to the Author and Preserver of our life, and all its blessings, the homage of our gratitude ; to offer to Him the sacrifice of prayer and praise, and

“ Pay Him thanks—how due !”

If we cannot draw a single breath, but by His permission ; cannot take a single

step in safety, but by His protection; or lay claim to the continuance of a single blessing, but on the ground of His mercy; surely it must be our duty humbly to acknowledge our absolute and uninterrupted dependence on our Almighty Protector and Benefactor; and earnestly to supplicate the continuance of His guardianship and guidance; His directing Spirit, and upholding strength; His providential bounty, and renewing grace.

And if our provocations have been as unnumbered as His mercies, and our sins as countless as His loving-kindnesses; if we have rebelled against His righteous authority; trampled, in contemptuous disobedience, on His holy laws; abused, to His dishonour, His most precious gifts; and requited all His goodness with a stupid forgetfulness of the hand that has fed, and guided, and upheld us, and lavished on us all our blessings—a base ingratitude, which degrades us far below the very dullest of the brute creation; for even “the ox know

eth his owner, and the ass its master's crib ; but Israel doth not know," (is the complaint of God,) " My people doth not consider"—surely, if these things be so, it must be our bounden duty to come before God, in a self-abasing and penitential spirit, to confess our sinfulness, and deprecate His displeasure ; and with that broken and contrite heart, which He will not despise, to acknowledge and bewail our manifold, most aggravated and inexcusable offences, by thought, word, and deed, against His divine majesty and mercy. And if, in the boundlessness of His compassion, He has opened for us a way of forgiveness and reconciliation, oh, must it not be our duty to come before Him, and seek forgiveness, in this way of His own appointment, with all the earnestness of criminals, who believe that over them hangs suspended the sentence of eternal death—with all the humility of criminals, who feel that they deserve to die ?

Surely, surely, the attitude that best becomes us, as sinful worms of the dust, is that

of suppliants, kneeling at the footstool of the throne of grace, smiting on our breasts, and crying—"God be merciful to me, a sinner!"—yet pleading for pardon, with all the humble confidence of faith, in an all-sufficient Saviour's name.

2. Prayer is a privilege.

Had we the liberty of constant access to an earthly monarch, whose wisdom, munificence, power, and love for us, were all unlimited, and would all, on our urgent entreaty, be exerted on our behalf; and were we assured that our frequent visits, and importunate supplications, so far from wearying, or displeasing, really gratified our Royal Master, and were regarded by Him as tokens of our reverence, loyalty, and love; would we not justly esteem this a very exalted privilege, and most gladly and gratefully avail ourselves of the precious boon, which our sovereign's bounty had bestowed?

Yet, were this privilege utterly valueless, compared with that which the believer enjoys in prayer.

By prayer we are admitted into the presence of the King of kings ; we hold communion with the Sovereign of the universe ; we are permitted to enjoy confidential converse with Him, before the blaze of whose uncreated glory, not merely the throned monarchs of the earth, but even the throned principalities and powers of heaven, are but as the particles of shining dust, that glitter in the sunbeam.

By prayer we have access to that Almighty Creator and Disposer of all, who could, with infinite ease, give us ten thousand worlds as our portion, if He saw that the gift would be really for our good ; and, were that too small, could with equal ease, create for us ten thousand worlds more, and bestow them all on us, as a token of His love ; and yet, (surpassing mystery !) had He done all this, would, even then, have done, as it were, nothing for us, in comparison of what He *has* done, in testimony of His love—for He gave^{us} for us, His own, His only Son, gave *Him*, for us, to death—even the death of the cross ;

and, oh ! what are the myriads of worlds, in themselves, or in the eternal Father's sight, compared with His own—His well-beloved Son ?

Is not prayer, as a medium of access to, and communion with *such* a God a privilege indeed !

But let us dwell a little more on the contrast between the privilege of confidential and constant access to an earthly monarch, and to the King of kings, that we may see how the former, when compared with the latter, hath no glory, by reason of the glory that excelleth.

How powerless is all earthly power, to alleviate intense anguish, or impart satisfying happiness ! From how many dangers would that earthly monarch, with all his authority, be unable to protect us ! In how many difficulties, with all his wisdom unable to guide us ! In how many afflictions, with all his love, unable to comfort us ! And oh ! what mere transient flashes of joy, at best, could his smile impart—flashes, that if our

heart were desolated by sorrow, would pass over it like gleams of lightning over a desert, lighting it up with momentary brightness, and then leaving it dark and dreary as before—a bleak, and desolated desert still!

Look now to the contrast! There is no difficulty, in which God's infallible wisdom cannot guide us; no danger, in which His almighty arm cannot defend us; no affliction, in which His divine consolations cannot abundantly comfort us!

Our heart may, by blighting sorrow, have been made a very wilderness, but *His* presence can make that “wilderness rejoice and blossom as the rose!” His favour is life; His loving kindness is better than life; His smile of love—oh! there is heaven's fulness of joy in that smile. It fills the boundless realms on high with gladness and glory; and kindles in the breast of cherubim and seraphim, and all the rejoicing worshippers, around the throne, such rapturous bliss, as constrains them to strike all their golden

harps, in the hallelujah-chorus of thanksgiving and praise.

Alas! is it not strange, that when we are privileged, if believers, to enjoy communion with the Being, whose smile is heaven; and are assured, that the more frequently and fully we avail ourselves of the privilege of constant and confidential converse with Him, He is the more pleased, and vouchsafes to us a more gracious greeting, and imparts to us more abundant communications, and tokens of His favour; is it not, I say, surpassingly strange, and sad as it is strange, that we show ourselves so insensible of, and ungrateful for, the privilege—that the only use we too often make of it, is to come before our God with reluctance and depart with joy—as if released from a painful interview with One, we rather feared to incense than loved to approach.

But how glaring this inconsistency, when we consider what reason there is to regard,

3. Prayer as a pleasure.

Surely the heart of a child of God must

be deplorably out of tune, when it does not feel that prayer is indeed a pleasure—the purest, sublimest, sweetest pleasure. Is it a pleasure to converse with the wise, the good, the excellent of the earth? And must it not be an immeasurably more exalted pleasure, to converse with the Fountain of all wisdom, goodness, and excellence! Is it sweet to hold communion with the saints, in whom we discover some faint traces of the divine image? Oh! then, how much sweeter to hold communion with the King of saints, in whom all divine perfections, in concentrated glory, are combined! Do earthly friends delight to converse together? and shall not he who is privileged to regard himself as “the friend of God,” delight with joy unspeakable, to converse with his Heavenly Friend! What so sweet, to a fond and grateful child, as the society of a beloved and venerated parent? And shall the child of God find the society of his Heavenly Father less sweet to his soul!

Does not gratitude render the efforts to express its glowing feelings to an earthly benefactor, a source of the purest enjoyment? Then, surely the psalmist was right, when he exclaimed—"Oh! praise the Lord, for it is a good thing to sing praises unto our God—yea! a pleasant and joyful thing it is to be thankful."

And even in those parts of prayer, that might seem only painful, there is a pleasure, that would be ill-exchanged for this world's most boasted bliss. In the bitterness of repentant sorrow for sin, there is a sweetness; in the agony of fervent supplication for pardon, there is a joy, as much superior to the best the world can boast, as the heavens are higher than the earth—

The broadest smile unfeeling folly wears,
Less pleasing far than "prayer's repentant" tears.

Oh! what a happy, heaven fore-tasting life might the children of God enjoy on earth, if they would live a life of prayer!

How calm might they be in the midst of the wildest storms. How joyful in the midst of the deepest tribulations. How composed and cheerful, while all around was agitation and alarm—the smile of heaven sparkling round their path the peace of heaven dwelling within their heart.

They say that travellers in Alpine regions are often encompassed with a clear atmosphere, and cloudless sunshine, while traversing the summits of those lofty mountains, at the very time that the world below them is all wrapt in mists and darkness, and thunder clouds are bursting at their feet. Even thus does prayer lift the believer to a loftier and serener region, far, far above the clouds and storms, that darken and distract the world below. In that region of purity and peace, the atmosphere is clear and calm; and the light of God's countenance shines brightly on the believer's soul, while he sees the thunder-clouds of earthly care and sorrow rolling beneath his feet; thus

realizing the beautiful illustration of the poet ;—

‘As some tall cliff, that lifts its awful form,
Swells from the vale, and midway leaves the storm,
Though round its base the rolling clouds are spread,
Eternal sunshine settles on its head!’

4. Prayer is the divinely appointed means of obtaining all the promised blessings, needful for our spiritual and eternal welfare. This truth must be so manifest, to any one at all acquainted with the Scriptures, that it would be superfluous to multiply quotations in its proof; a few, however, may be desirable, to show on what a firm scriptural basis it is established. The lips of eternal truth have uttered those gracious words, which at once prove the indispensable necessity, and I had almost said, the omnipotent efficacy, of prayer—

“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened!”

And, mark, what a blessed assurance follows—"If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, *how much more* shall your heavenly Father give good things, give the Holy Spirit, to them that ask Him?"

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you. Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full!"

"Be careful for nothing," says St. Paul, "but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God!"

And again, "Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; *praying always*, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance!"

And again, "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same, with thanksgiving." And as if he would make the believer's life one uninterrupted act of prayer, he says, "Pray without ceasing."

How solemn is St. Peter's admonition—
“The end of all things is at hand; be ye,
therefore, sober, and watch unto prayer!”

How encouraging the advice of St. James
—“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask
of God, that giveth to all men liberally,
and upbraideth not, and it shall be given
him!”

How endearing the exhortation of St.
Jude ——— “Ye beloved, building up your-
selves on your most holy faith, praying in
the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love
of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord
Jesus Christ unto eternal life!”

How gladdening the declaration of the
beloved disciple—“This is the confidence
that we have in Him, that if we ask any thing
according to His will, he heareth us. And if
we know that he hear us, whatsoever we
ask, we know that we have the petitions that
we desired of Him!”

Surely this consentaneous attestation of
the Divine Founder of our faith, and its most
illustrious champions, all uniting, as with one

voice, to exhort us to fervent and unwearied prayer, must be abundantly sufficient, as far as scriptural testimony can suffice, to convince us of the paramount importance, and promised efficacy, of this divinely-appointed means of obtaining all the precious blessings of the everlasting covenant.

It is not, (oh, they know nothing of the character of God, who think it is,) that our heavenly Father is unwilling to bestow these blessings on the children of His love, and requires His reluctance to be overcome by their importunate supplications. No—no—as one of our collects so beautifully expresses it—“He is more ready to hear, than we to pray, and is wont to give more—immeasurably more—than we either desire or deserve.” But, still, (and it is in the very tenderness of His love, no less than the exercise of His sovereignty,) after having spoken of those very blessings which He is ready, and rejoices, with the freest and most munificent liberality to bestow, He subjoins those emphatic words—

“ Yet for all these things will I be inquired of by the house of Israel, saith the Lord.”

And why will He be thus inquired of for these things? Not surely, that any unkind reluctance in Him, as our benefactor, to bestow, but that all proud reluctance in us, to sue, as beggars for these blessings, may be overcome. Not to teach God what He already knows, or remind Him of what He always remembers; but to imprint on our memories and our hearts the lesson we are so stupidly slow to learn, so sadly prone to forget, even that we are as absolutely dependent on God for every breath of our spiritual, as of our natural life; and as utterly unable to sustain the one as the other, for a single moment by our own strength.

Seeing, men, that our strength consists in a sense of our weakness, our wisdom in the knowledge of our foolishness, and our safety in the consciousness of our danger, is not God as much influenced by a tender regard to our security and happiness, as by a jealous regard to His own honour and glory,

when He suspends the bestowment of His best blessings on the prayer of faith ; and thus incessantly reminds us, of what it is our happiest recollection to remember, that our helplessness can alone be upheld by the almighty arm of God ; and our ignorance alone instructed by the infallible wisdom of God ; and our wants alone supplied by the infinite sufficiency of God : and, in a word, that all our emptiness can alone be filled with all the fulness of God.

May not this convince us, that it is the very overflowing of God's love, which prompts Him to hold up, before the eye of faith, every precious blessing in His power to bestow, with that most gracious inscription written upon each—" Ask, and it shall be given unto you !"

Assuredly this is no hard condition—no unreasonable demand. If God's best blessings are to be had, on terms so easy as asking for them, how utterly inexcusable must His children be, if, by neglect of such a gracious arrangement, they remain in want of

a single spiritual blessing, which God's bounty can bestow, or their necessities require? And yet, I do not hesitate to say, that to the neglect of this most gracious arrangement, more than to any other cause, is it to be attributed, that amidst the superabundant spiritual provisions in our heavenly Father's house—the bread enough, and to spare, for all His children, so many of them starve in the midst of plenty, and continue from day to day, as to their spiritual condition, like the lean kine in Pharaoh's dream, emaciated, famishing, and ready to perish.

“Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it,” saith a bountiful God; but His careless or distrustful children either neglect or fear to obey the divine command. What wonder they are not filled with spiritual blessings? How simple, yet how strange and sad, the solution of their spiritual poverty and destitution—“They have not, because they ask not;” or if they ask at all, ask amiss—ask, so coldly, so carelessly, as to solicit the re-

fusal, to compel the denial, of their prayers. Look now at the results—

Why, if we are indeed believers, in the scriptural sense, why are our corruptions so strong and flourishing, our graces so weak and languishing? Why does sin so often seduce, and temptations so easily triumph over us? Why has our faith so little of that realizing character, which substantiates things hoped for, and embodies things unseen: flashing the light of eternity on the objects of time and sense, and thus exhibiting them in their comparative nothingness—their real insignificance, unless as viewed in their connection with eternal things? Why is our knowledge of divine truth, so often, at best, but as the moonlight of a frosty night—clear, but cold, very cold; instead of resembling the cheering, warming, gladdening, as well as brightening radiance of the summer sun? Why does our professed love to the Saviour produce so little self-denial or sacrifice for His sake, so little devotedness to His service; and yet still less

conformity to His example? Why have we so little, if any thing, of the mind and temper that was in Christ Jesus? Why do we search the Scriptures, and attend all the ordinances of divine worship, and run from lecture to lecture, and sermon to sermon, yea, and even approach the sacramental table, to commemorate the stupendous, self-sacrificing love of the Redeemer, month after month, with so little profit—so little visible growth in grace, or progress in holiness? Why, in a word, is there so little of separation from the spirit, as well as the society, of the world: so little of the life of God in our souls, or the love of God in our hearts, or the peace of God in our bosoms, or the glory of God in our lives?

To all this I answer—chiefly because we are so little in prayer—cordial, humble, fervent, persevering prayer. Because we talk so much *about God in public*, but so little *with God in private*; because we are so much more everywhere, than in our closets; and in every exercise than in devotion; and

in every attitude than on our knees ; and thus, the blessing of the Holy Spirit, not being abundantly vouchsafed, because not fervently implored, a withering blight comes over all our doings, and we read, and hear, and talk, and labour, so almost, if not altogether, in vain.

Alas ! what a melancholy inconsistency there is between our creed, and our conduct—our principles, and our practice !

We unhesitatingly admit, what Scripture unequivocally declares, that without the divine teaching and influence of the Holy Spirit, we cannot profitably study a single verse, cannot savingly understand a single doctrine, or comfortably appropriate a single promise, of the word of God ; that without the almighty aid of this blessed Spirit, we cannot conquer one wrong habit, crucify one sinful lust, subdue one wayward temper, or even check one evil, or cherish one good thought—yea ! that in all that is spiritual, holy, and glorifying to God, without the

inspiration and influences of the Spirit of grace, we can absolutely do nothing.

We admit all this, but how do we act? Is it not, as if we were sufficient of ourselves for all these things? as if all our fresh springs were in ourselves, and not in God? For do we not either neglect to ask for the enlightening, directing, strengthening, sanctifying and comforting influences of the Holy Ghost; or ask for them in such a manner, as practically proves, either that we are very indifferent about the growth of our spiritual graces, or do not cordially believe, that the Holy Spirit's influences are indispensable for promoting that growth?

Do we not too often ask for them, if at all, in a manner, whose very look and tone are stamped with such utter apathy, as to the result of our supplication, that if a criminal were to sue for pardon in the same manner, his offended sovereign would spurn him, in just indignation, from his presence: if a beggar were in such a manner to ask us

for alms, we would turn him away, in well-merited displeasure, from our doors.

And why is God to be expected to lend a gracious ear to a style of supplication, that would ensure only deserved repulse and rebuke from a fellow-worm? Were the Almighty to bestow His most precious gifts—the out-pourings of His Holy Spirit, in answer to such prayers, would it not imply, that He valued those gifts as little as we seem to do, since He would consent to give them to supplications, so heartless and so hurried, that they served only to mark how lightly the suppliant valued how little he cared for what he asked.

When I say hurried, I do not principally allude to the length of our prayers—this must vary according to circumstances; and no fixed or unalterable rule can be laid down. We must not forget that the best prayer beyond all competition, that ever was composed, is a very short one; but we should equally remember that He who composed

it, often, while on earth, spent whole nights in prayer.

Nor do I, by the word heartless, principally allude to the intensity and fervour of feeling. This may depend much on constitutional temperament, and may therefore be different in different persons, and even in the same person at different times—changing with the changes of the health or the atmosphere—varying with the variations of the weather—or fluctuating with the fluctuations of the pulse.

I would not therefore, make the rising or falling of the thermometer of ardent feeling, the standard by which to judge of the spirituality of our devotions. I speak rather of that soul-felt sincerity, that honest heartiness in supplication, which is the genuine language of conscious want and cordial desire, prompted by a just sense of the inestimable value of the blessings we implore, and the deep urgency of our need of them, springing from the conviction, that if we do not obtain them, “it had been good for us

we had never been born." I speak of a heart-breathed earnestness, which would assimilate our feelings, (to reverse our former illustration,) to those of a sentenced criminal, pleading for the pardon, which if not granted, he must die a dreadful death—those of a starving beggar, supplicating the alms, which if refused, he must perish. I speak, in fine, of such a feeling as animated the wrestling Jacob when he exclaimed, "I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me;" and the pleading Abraham, when he said for the sixth time, "Oh! let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once." Such a feeling as inspired the great lawgiver of Israel, when, after having received the promise of God's *presence*, in a holy ardour, he cried out, "I beseech Thee, show me Thy *glory*." Such as seemed to be the life-blood of the royal psalmist's devotions, and, like a pervading soul, breathes through, and animates the whole body of the Psalms. I speak of such a feeling as Ezra felt, when, "at the evening sacrifice he arose, and having

rent his garments and his mantle, he fell upon his knees, and spread out his hands unto the Lord ;” or Hezekiah, when he spread Sennacherib’s letter before the Lord, and prayed unto his God : or Daniel, when “ he set his face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes, and prayed unto the Lord his God.” I speak of such a feeling as constrained blind Bartimeus, when they urged him to hold his peace, to cry out the more earnestly—“ Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me :” and the nobleman, when our Lord asked him if he believed, so as to ensure the recovery of his beloved child, to answer with tears—“ Lord I believe, help thou mine unbelief ;” and the Canaanitish woman to persevere in her petitions, amidst the most discouraging rebukes, with an unconquerable importunity which drew from the Saviour’s lips that glorious commendation of her faith. I contend for the necessity of such a feeling in prayer, as burst from the lips of the sinking

Peter, when he exclaimed—"Lord save me, I perish;" and from the heart of St. Paul, when tormented with the thorn in the flesh, he thrice besought the Lord, that it might depart from him; but above all, such as glowed in the bosom of the Son of God Himself, "when, being in an agony, He prayed more earnestly; and in the anguish of His soul, offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears."

Without such a feeling, in its sincerity, if not its strength—its essence, if not its energy, offering up a form of words, however evangelical in substance, or eloquent in expression, is no more prayer, than a statue, however beautifully sculptured, is a man.

Such a heartless form of words is a mere carcass, not a living sacrifice to the living God; for as the body, without the soul, is dead, so is a form of worship, without the spirit, dead also; and the offering thereof is an offence in the sight of Him with whom we have to do. It is a mockery of the Almighty, as if He were such a one as our-

selves, and could be imposed on by the mere service of the knee and the lip, unaccompanied by the homage of the heart. It is an utter waste of breath, a sinful expenditure of time ; a cheat on our own souls—a libel on devotion—a gratification to Satan—an insult to God.

MEDITATION III.

A REFLECTION AND A CAUTION ON THE SUBJECT OF PRAYER.

“Oh! Thou that hearest prayer, unto Thee shall all flesh come.”—Ps. lxxv. 2.

“While they are yet speaking, I will hear.”—ISAIAH, lxxv. 24.

“We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous, who ever liveth to make intercession for us.”—1 JOHN, ii. 1.

“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered.—ROM. viii. 26.

BEFORE I proceed to consider the spirit in which prayer should be offered up, I would wish to suggest a reflection, which may deepen our sense of the dignity of this exalted privilege; and to correct an error, which I fear, is very prevalent, and tends much to destroy, or diminish, the efficacy of prayer.

With what surpassing grandeur and importance does it invest prayer, when we view it, in the right of Scripture, as engaging the attention, and awakening the interest, of the everblessed God : calling, as it were, into exercise, the most glorious and gracious offices and operations of each divine person of the adorable Trinity.

When we reflect upon the verses prefixed to this meditation, what a wondrous scene is presented to our view, as going on in heaven, while the believer, in the secret retirement of his closet, on his knees, pouring out his heart in prayer. We there behold the eternal Father engaged in listening, with condescending and complacent attention, to the supplications of his beloved child—the eternal Son, lifting up, on his behalf, the voice of pleading intercession, before the throne—and the eternal Spirit helping his infirmities ; teaching him both what to pray for, and how to pray ; drawing up his desires and affections heavenwards, and promoting those most efficacious supplications—even those

groanings which cannot be uttered, but which are all so fully understood, and graciously answered, by him who searcheth our hearts, and knoweth the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

Oh! did we, before we bent our knees in supplication, pierce, with the eye of faith, the veil that hides from mortal sight the sanctity above, and there behold the everlasting Father, waiting to listen to us—His co-eternal, well-beloved Son, waiting to intercede for us—and the Holy Spirit waiting to assist us—surely our prayers would be something very different from the cold, heartless, lifeless lip-offering, they too often are!

Surely, we would feel, that if we expected our prayers to engage the attention, and excite the interest of the adorable Trinity, they ought to engross our own. Oh! surely we would feel, that it was meet, right, and our bounden duty, that all our faculties, energies, and affections, our whole heart, and mind, and soul, and strength, should be employed

in a work, which we hoped would employ in the exercise of their most gracious offices, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.

Let us reflect a little further upon one of these offices—the intercession of the Son of God.

Can we look up into heaven, and in the vision of faith see Him, who there ever liveth to make intercession for us, and forget that it is He, who was once on earth, a man of sorrows, for our sake? Can we behold Him, rising up to intercede for us before the throne, and forget that this is He, who agonized for us in Gethsemane—who died for us on Calvary? Can we gaze on the face of our Advocate, and forget how that face was once, for us, marred more than any man's—bruised with buffetings, and drenched in tears? Or listen to His voice, while pleading for us, before the mercy-seat of the sanctuary above, and forget, what a prayer of anguish, when He tabernacled in the flesh, for our sakes, that voice poured forth in the

garden—what a cry of anguish it lifted up upon the cross ?

Does it not, then, well become us to remember, before we kneel down to pray, that our sins had so separated between us and our God—had raised such a tremendous barrier, to prevent the ascent of our prayers to God, or the descent of His blessings upon us, that had not the Son of God offered up Himself as a sacrifice, in our stead, and thus opened a new and living way of access for our spirits, and acceptance for our services, before the throne of grace, not a single prayer could ever have ascended from us, with acceptance, before that throne ; not a single blessing have ever descended on us from above. And ought we not to love and prize prayer more than we do, and offer it up with an earnestness, an energy, to which we are too much strangers, when we call to remembrance *all* that our dear Redeemer suffered, to enable Him to sustain successfully the endearing office of our advocate with the Father ; all He endured in the days of His flesh

to make His intercession available on our behalf, for the bestowment of the most precious blessings in His Father's power to give.

Could we, with this recollection fresh on our hearts, grudge the cost of our time and thoughts to that, to which He did not grudge the cost of His tears and blood? And must not gratitude to our gracious Intercessor combine with the deep sense of our own need, and the inestimable value of those blessings we implore, to give life to our devotions, and wings to our desires? And how would such prayers, winged at once with strong desire, and fervent gratitude, fly up direct to the throne of God, as swift and successful messengers; and return as swiftly, laden with blessings, bringing back to us from a covenant-keeping, and prayer-answering God, the most encouraging assurances of His love, the most abundant communications of His grace.

I would now advert to the error to which I have alluded, as much hindering the efficacy of prayer.

Too many, I fear, even of those who are Christians in more than name, seem to regard prayer, as the discharge of a distinct duty, the performance of a specific act, which, when once finished, need be no more reflected upon, till the stated period for its repetition shall recur. Such persons seem to think that the devotional feelings, excited and cherished by the act of prayer, are to terminate with the act, to be suspended at its close, as having then fully performed their appointed office. They appear to entertain the opinion that, on rising up from their knees, they are to leave the spirit of devotion confined to their closet, to remain there till they come back, at night, to resume converse with it; instead of taking it with them into the scenes in which they are about to mingle, as their "guide, and companion, and familiar friend;" carrying it as it were, about their persons, as a sacred preservative from the world's ensnaring power—an antidote to its poison—a counter-charm to its spell! Let me not be mistaken; I am fully

aware that stated periods, and specific acts of prayer, are indispensably necessary ; and they who profess to substitute what they call a general devotional habit, for particular devotional exercises—an atmosphere of piety, for acts of prayer, on the plea that they can pray as well, while walking by the way, or sitting in their drawing-room, as when kneeling in their closet, will soon find that they *can indeed* pray equally well at all times, and in all places ; but it is *only because* at no time, and in no place, do they, in any intelligible sense of the word, pray at all.

It is, however, equally necessary to guard against the error, which would at all approximate our devotions to the popish practice of repeating so many words, or counting so many beads, of which all the virtue is supposed to consist in the mere act itself—the *opus operatum*.

Now, this is the most dangerous mistake. For what is one chief design of prayer ? Is it not to set in motion a kind of moral, or rather spiritual, machinery, which is to be

kept in constant exercise throughout the day, drawing up the heart in devout aspirations to God, and directing all our inward meditations, and outward movements, to His glory? Is it not to bring into play a spiritual train of thoughts, which are to abide with us, and feelings which are to animate us, and motives which are to stimulate us, and principles which are to guide us, and promises which are to support us, and prospects which are to gladden us, amidst all the toils, and trials, and temptations of the day?

Is it not to buckle on afresh, not for an hour's parade, but for the day's warfare, that armour of God, which is the only sure defence of the soldier of the cross, and which in our daily conflict with sin and Satan, cannot, with safety, be for one moment laid aside?

Is it not to embody in a specific form, for the purpose of strengthening it, that spirit of devotional communion with God, which is indeed the very atmosphere that a child of God should continually breathe; the only atmosphere, in which all the spiri-

tual graces of the Christian character can flourish, or even live ?

This habit of devotional communion with God, maintained throughout the day, amidst all its business and bustle, its society or solitude, through the medium of devout meditation—a kind of holy abstractedness from surrounding objects, (in which, by practice, we become proficient,) and frequent ejaculatory breathings of love, desire, and gratitude towards God, it is a special purpose of our morning sacrifice of prayer and praise to promote, and render abiding, and influential ; thus realizing what is intended by that beautifully simple expression, concerning the patriarchs of old—“ They walked with God.”

This it is which David meant when he said—“ I have set the Lord always before me ; on Thee, O my God, do I wait all the day long.” This it is which St. Paul meant when he said—“ Continuing instant in prayer ; praying always ; pray without ceasing ; For what is the essence of prayer ?

Is it not a felt and acknowledged sense of

our absolute dependence on God? our fervent desire after His favour? our supreme delight in His presence? our entire devotedness to His service? And is there any moment of our lives, when these feelings should be suspended? Or is there any lawful occupation or enjoyment, which, if pursued or partaken of in a spirit becoming a child of God, need necessarily interrupt this species of mental devotion—of habitual prayer? Should not the soul be always in the attitude of devotion, though the body cannot? Should not the spirit be prostrate in reverential adoration, before God, even when the knees are unbent? and the eye of the mind, the voice of the heart, be continually lifted up to our Father in heaven, even while we are unavoidably engaged in worldly occupations, and worldly cares?

Is God to be remembered only in our closets, and forgotten in the world? acknowledged and adored for a few minutes, morning and evening, and practically denied throughout the day?

Is this to pray *always*? to pray *without ceasing*? Now, I cannot but fear that many, of whom, in the main, we would hope well, do not take the view of prayer, implied by these expressions; and, accordingly, as if the feelings, that follow in the train of faithful prayer, were not merely to come, but also to depart with it, they have no sooner finished their devotions, than they at once plunge into thoughts, speculations, and plans, (I will not suppose positively sinful, but still,) utterly unconnected with the holy exercise in which they have just been engaged; and in these they remain absorbed throughout the day; and yet complain, at night, of the coldness, wanderings, and deadness of their devotions, and seem to wonder they can enjoy no happy intercourse of spirit, no sweet communion of heart, with their God.

Oh! had they regarded their morning sacrifice but as the commencement of a divine communion, to be carried on throughout the day, and then affectionately and anxiously desired, amidst all the various

scenes of that day, whether in society or solitude, to maintain this communion, and thus make the whole day a kind of preparative for the devotions of the night, how different would they find the result? How sweetly would they experience the truth of the poet's declaration, when he says—

“Prayer ardent opens heaven, lets down a stream
Of glory, on the consecrated hour
Of man, in audience with the Deity!”

To convince us of the truth of this assertion, we may derive a consideration both from the character of the human mind, and from the character of God.

1. From the character of the human mind.

Though God acts with absolute sovereignty in the dispensations of His grace, and the Holy Spirit with perfect freedom in the impartation of His influences, distributing them to every man, severally, as He willeth, in whatever manner and measure seemeth best to His infinite wisdom; yet does God exercise this sovereignty, and the Holy Spirit this freedom, agreeably to the essential prin-

ciples of that mental constitution, which has been originally established by the Author of our frame. And to trace and illustrate this harmonious agreement between the dispensations of divine grace, and the constitution of the human mind, is the proper province of the true philosophy of Christianity; and if some master-spirit, highly gifted with intellectual powers, and divinely taught in the school of Christ, would undertake this task, he would not merely produce a deeply-interesting work, but also render an important service to the cause of truth.

Now, it is altogether at variance with every thing we know of the constitution of our minds, to expect that, if we have allowed our thoughts, all through the day, to wander in aimless and unrestrained vagrancy to the ends of the earth, we shall be able, in a moment, as if by some magical charm, merely from the act of bending our knees, to call back our thoughts from their wild excursions, and fix them, in serious and devout meditation on the things of God

If, throughout the day, our spirits have been immersed in utter worldliness ; (for I will not suppose the awfully anomalous case, of the deliberate indulgence of those distinctly sinful thoughts, which utterly unfit the spirit for communion with a pure, holy, and loving God ;) if our feelings have been absorbed in the excitements of earthly joy, or earthly sorrow ; if our minds have been engrossed by the trifles of time, and our affections glued, with idolatrous cleaving of heart, to the objects of sense—yea, even to the most deservedly beloved of earthly objects : then is it utterly unreasonable to expect that, at the recurrence of our stated hour for the devotions of the night, our spirits will be able, all at once, as if by one immense bound, to spring up into the regions of spirituality ; or our feelings to kindle into the ardour of holy joy, or melt into the tenderness of penitential sorrow ; or our minds to rise to the contemplations of the realities of eternity ; or our affections to break away from the entanglements of visible and earthly objects,

and soar upwards; to fasten themselves, with holy gratitude and delight, on the things that are unseen and above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God.

On the other hand, if we have heartily desired, and honestly endeavoured, in divine strength, to maintain habitual communion with God, throughout the day; if we have faithfully followed the apostolical injunction, to “watch *unto* prayer, watching thereunto with all perseverance”—keeping our spirits in that aptitude for prayer, in the act, which constitutes an atmosphere of prayer, in its essence; if we have thus striven to keep a watchful eye, and praying heart, fixed on God, amidst all the avocations in which we have been employed; looking up to Him continually, amidst difficulties, for guidance; and dangers, for protection; in temptations for strength; and in trials of support; if our enjoyments have but made us draw nearer to Him in thankfulness, and our sorrows but taught us to cling closer to Him for consolation; if, in society, we have borne a faithful

and affectionate testimony to His honour ; and in solitude, our meditation of Him has been sweet ; Oh ! can we for a moment doubt, that if we have thus desired and delighted to wait on Him, and walk with Him and live to Him, all the day long, when the hour for approaching Him in the devotional exercises of the closet comes, our spirits will be enabled to enjoy, with freedom and delight, that communion with our God, unto which we have been looking, and hastening, and preparing for its anticipated enjoyment, all the day. If our souls throughout the day, (like a chained eagle, which still keeps its straining eye turned upwards, and struggles, to get free, that it may soar towards the sun,) have been strainingly looking upward, and longing to mount towards heaven, and bask in the beams of the Sun of Righteousness, will they not, as soon as the heavy chain of the day's toilsome labours is taken off at night, the moment they are released from their shackles, rejoicingly mount up, free and unfettered, to the source of light and

life · nor cease their upward flight, till they have reached the throne, and rested in the bosom of their God.

We shall come to the same conclusion, if we consider,

2. The character of God.

“Those that honour me,” saith Jehovah, “I will honour !”

This is the secret of all God’s dealings with all created beings—the principle that guides Him in the moral government in the universe—the solution of all his mysterious dispensations—the clue to the history of all His doings, in heaven, earth, and hell.

Now, apply this principle, which like that of gravitation in the natural, pervades and regulates the whole moral system, in the spiritual world ; apply to the subject before us, and to what result will it lead ?

Can we wonder, with this principle full before our view, that if God sees that we so lightly value the privilege of devotional communion with Him, in the closet, that we will not practise any self-denial, or exercise

any watchfulness, or use any exertions throughout the day, by which to be prepared and made meet for the enjoyment of this communion at night—yea ! that so far from this, we allow our time, and thoughts, and feelings, and affections, to be engrossed, if not with objects glaringly sinful, yet with such idolatrous attachment to things, in themselves lawful, as indisposes the soul for relishing the purer pleasures, and sublimer exercises of devotion ; how can we wonder that an insulted God, jealous of His glory, should withhold from us a privilege, the highest He can confer, but which, we have shown Him, we so little appreciate, or desire to enjoy ? If we do not desire, or endeavour to live in the light of God's countenance, amidst the occupations of the day, can we complain, if He refuses to lift it up upon us, in our devotions at night ?

But if He sees that it is indeed the first—the dearest desire of our heart, wherever we are, to be with God, and whatever we are doing, to do it to His glory ; amidst all

our employments and recreations, to realize the sense of His presence, and cherish the remembrance of His love ; and that it is the habitual prayer, which is silently offered by our spirits whether in society or solitude—" Let the words of my lips, and the meditations of my heart, be always acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer ;" if He sees that we keep a holy guard, a constant watchfulness over our hearts, that we may not be ensnared, either into any indulgence in unlawful things, or even such an immoderate indulgence in things lawful, as would unfit us for high and holy converse with Himself ; oh ! will He not, when He observes how we value and pant after communion with Him, meet us in the sacred retirement of our closets, in all the fulness of His love : and by the sweetest smiles of His countenance, and the tenderest whisperings of His voice, pour into our hearts a joy, indeed unspeakable, and full of glory ?

ADDRESS IV.

ON "THE UNION OF REVERENCE AND FREEDOM IN PRAYER.

"Behold a throne was set in heaven, and One sat on the throne, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, and they worship Him that sitteth on the throne.—REV. iv. 2; v. 11, 13."

"Our *Father* which art in heaven."—MATT. vi. 9.

WE now come to consider the spirit, in which prayer should be offered up.

In the observations which I shall make on this subject, I shall address myself under the character of a Christian friend or pastor, speaking in the language of affectionate advice to a beloved friend, or a member of his flock, whom he has reason to regard as scripturally a child of God. I mean one, that, by divine illumination and power of

the Holy Spirit, has been taught practically to feel and confess his own utter sinfulness, and the Saviour's all-sufficiency; to repose, with a simple, unmixed, and peace, if not joy-imparting confidence in that Saviour's all-atoning blood, and alone-justifying righteousness, for acceptance and everlasting salvation; and from a heaven-implanted principle of constraining love, to desire and delight to walk, with humble faithfulness, in a Redeemer's footsteps, and to live, with grateful devoutness, to a Redeemer's glory. Such and such *alone*, can I regard, as in a scriptural and saving sense, a child of God.

To such I would say—The spirit in which you should approach your reconciled and covenant-God, in prayer, is one compounded of sentiments and feelings almost contradictory, yet all harmoniously reconciled; namely, the profoundest reverence and awe, combined with the most affectionate freedom and confidence, towards your heavenly Father; the deepest self-abasement, and self-despair, combined with the liveliest trust in

an all-sufficient Saviour's merits and mediation; and the most vigilant guard over your own heart and spirit, combined with the most implicit dependence on the divine teaching and influences of the Holy Ghost.

Thus we see that, as each divine person of the adorable Trinity sustains a peculiar office towards us, in connection with our devotional applications to the throne of grace, we are so to cherish towards each, a peculiar state of mind and feeling, corresponding to the gracious offices which they sustain.

1. We are to cherish a spirit of reverential awe towards God, when approaching Him in prayer.

How many rush into the presence of the Almighty, with an irreverent thoughtlessness, a disrespectful precipitation, with which they would not dare to hurry into the presence of an earthly king. This must be peculiarly offensive to the Sovereign Majesty of the King of Kings, as arguing an utter forgetfulness or disregard, both of who He is, and what we are.

If those angels of His that excel in strength and holiness—those glowing seraphim that are as a flame of fire, burning with fervent love and zeal—if the most exalted principalities and powers of heaven veil their faces before Him who sitteth upon the throne, and cast their crowns at the foot of that throne, in lowliest adoration, oh, with what profoundest prostration of spirit, and deepest solemnity of soul, does it become poor, weak, sinful worms of the dust, like us, to come into the presence of the infinitely great and glorious God.

Before, then, you bend your knees in supplication, seek to have your spirit suitably affected by the consideration of the ineffable majesty of the being you are about to address.

Pause and reflect that you, who are but sinful dust and ashes, are going to speak with Him, before whom heaven's highest archangels presume not, but with veiled faces, to appear; with Him, who chargeth even

lose angels with folly, and in whose sight the very heavens are not clean.

That you may be more deeply impressed with holy awe, in approaching the living God, familiarize your mind with those parts of Scripture, where the Divine Majesty is set forth, in language almost worthy, (if language could be,) of the magnificent theme.

Make such verses as the following, the subject of your frequent and devout meditation.

“And God said ‘Let there be light, and
 “there was light!’ Who is like unto Thee,
 “oh! Lord, glorious in holiness, fearful in
 “praises—doing wonders? See now that I,
 “even I, am He! and there is no God with me!
 “I kill and I make alive—I wound and I heal.
 “neither is there any that can deliver out of
 “my hand—for I lift up my hand to heaven
 ‘and say, ‘I live for ever!’ Behold the
 “heaven and heaven of heavens, cannot con-
 “tain Thee! Blessed be Thy glorious name’
 “which is exalted above all blessing and
 “praise. Thou, even thou, art Lord alone!

Thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas and all that is therein—and Thou preservest them all, and the host of heaven worshippeth Thee ! The Lord reigneth ! He is clothed with majesty—the Lord is clothed with strength, wherewith He hath girded Himself ! Thou art from everlasting ! The Lord reigneth, let the people tremble ! He sitteth between the cherubim—let the earth be moved ! Oh ! Lord my God ! Thou art very great. Thou art clothed with majesty and honour ! who coverest thyself with light, as with a garment—who stretches out the heavens as a curtain—who layeth the beams of His chambers in the waters—who maketh the clouds His chariot, who walketh upon the wings of the wind ! who hath measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and meted out heaven with the span—and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure—and weighed the mountains in scales—and the hills in a balance. Be-

“hold ! the nations are as a drop of a buck-
“et, and are counted as the small dust of
“the balance—all nations before Him are
“as nothing,—and they are counted to Him
“less than nothing, and vanity ! It is He
“that sitteth upon the circle of the earth,
“and the inhabitants thereof are as grass-
“hoppers ; that stretcheth out the heavens
“as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a
“tent to dwell in, even the High and Lofty
“One that inhabiteth eternity ; whose name
“is Holy ! the blessed and only Potentate,
“the King of kings, and Lord of lords, who
“only hath immortality, dwelling in the light
“which no man can approach unto, whom
“no man hath seen, nor can see. Holy, holy,
“holy, Lord God Almighty ! which was, and
“is, and is to come ! great and marvellous
“are Thy works, Lord God Almighty, just
“and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints !
“who shall not fear Thee, oh ! Lord, and
“glorify Thy name, for Thou only art holy !
“Therefore, blessing, and glory, and wisdom,
“and thanksgiving, and honour, and power,

“and might, be unto our God, for ever and ever! Amen.”

Frequent and devout meditation on those portions of the word of God, will more deeply affect your soul with an awful sense of the divine majesty, than volumes of abstract speculation about the divine attributes.

Before you approach the throne of God, in prayer, pause also, a little, to reflect on what Scripture has revealed to us of that throne.

“I saw,” says Isaiah, “the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple. Above it, stood the seraphims; and one cried unto another, and said—Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!”

“I beheld,” says Daniel, “till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head like pure wool. His throne was like the fiery flame, and His wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream is-

sued, and came forth, from before Him; thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him !”

“I was in the spirit,” says St. John, in the apocalyptic vision, “and, behold, a throne was set in heaven; and One sat on the throne, and out of the throne proceeded lightnings, and thunderings, and voices. The four-and-twenty elders fall down before Him that sat on the throne, and worship Him that liveth for ever, and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne. And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying, with a loud voice—Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever! Halleluiah! Halleluiah! Amen.”

Is *this* a throne for a sinner, even a pardoned sinner, to approach, with irreverent carelessness, or unhallowed familiarity?

Shall a mortal voice mingle with those voices round the throne, and not tremble with awe? Shall a worm of the dust join with *such worshippers*, and in *such worship*, and not bow down in the deepest humility—the most reverential adoration?

Does God humble Himself, even when He condescends to accept the homage of heaven's hierarchies—to receive the worship of the seraphim—to listen to the halleluiahs or the spirits round the throne? Oh, then what infinite—what unutterable condescension is it in Him, to accept *your* homage, child of corruption and sin—to take heed to *your* broken lisplings of prayer—to listen to *your* stammering songs of praise!

Seek to be deeply impressed with this view of the divine condescension, and you will thus approach the throne of God, in the attitude best becoming a miserable particle of sinful dust and ashes, coming to hold

communion with the holy and Almighty God.

2. But, however profound the spirit of reverential awe with which you approach God, (and it cannot possibly be too profound,) it must be tempered, and softened, with a spirit of the most affectionate freedom—the most grateful and confiding love.

Remember that, in approaching God, you approach not only the greatest but infinitely the kindest, tenderest, best of Beings—that His mercy is as unbounded as His majesty—His goodness as unlimited as His glory—yea, that His goodness *is* pre-eminently His glory—for when Moses besought of Him—“Show me *Thy glory*,” “I will make all *My goodness* pass before thee :” saith Jehovah ; thus teaching us that we are to regard, even as He Himself does, His goodness as, in an especial sense, His glory.

Remember the title under which He announced Himself to Moses when He passed by before His highly-favoured servant, and proclaimed—“The Lord ! the Lord God

merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands; forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin."

Familiarize yourself with those beautiful psalms, in which the goodness of God is so touchingly proclaimed and praised; especially that most exquisite one, which I would wish to be engraven, in imperishable characters, by the Holy Spirit, on every believer's heart—the 103d psalm.

Oh! how sweet, how exquisitely sweet, those words—"The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy; He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities: for as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy towards them that fear Him. Yea! the Lord is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger, and of great mercy; the Lord is good to all; and His tender mercies are over all His works; yea! the Lord is good, and His mercy is everlasting."

“Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage; He retaineth not His anger for ever, because He delighteth in mercy.”

Oh! is it not sweet to see every possible variety of expression used, to magnify the mercy of our God. “Merciful; plenteous in mercy: keeping mercy for thousands; delighting in mercy.”

Look now at the picture drawn of this merciful God, by Him who alone knows Him fully, even His well-beloved Son.

Turn to the parable of the prodigal son, and there see the heart of the Father of all mercies thrown open to your view, by the hands of His own Son. Oh! what an apocalypse of mercy is unveiled in that one verse!—

“When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.”

Blessed be God for that verse! It has I believe, spoken peace and consolation to the

hearts of thousands, and drawn back many and many a wanderer to His heavenly Father's heart and home.

In truth, it exhibits a picture of the divine character, which no merely human hand could ever have dared to draw. What joy to remember, by whose hand it has been drawn!

Then turn to another brief, but most beautiful, delineation of the character of God, which, within the compass of three short words, comprises the substance of thousands of volumes on the subject—" *God is love.*" God is love.

Oh! do you not feel, even while repeating those three words, as if a voice was calling to you out of heaven, to draw near to the mercy-seat above, with cheerful confidence: for over the throne dost thou not see, as it were, these words inscribed in characters of living light—" God is love?"

Then muse on the apostle's divine commentary on this divine text—" God is love, and *herein* is love, not that we loved God,

but that He loved us, and gave His Son to be a propitiation for our sins." As if the apostle had said, do you doubt that God is love? then, look at the cross! and surely you must confess, that if nowhere else, yet, at least, "*herein* is love." Love whose height is so unscalable, that when the angels attempt to survey its summit, they find it is too high even for them; love, so unfathomably deep, that when they look down into it, even they, in wondering awe, cry out—"Oh! the depth!"

Reflect, in what characters *would* God have written His love for you, that would have induced you to believe that He loved you, if you will not believe Him, when He has written it in the blood of His own, his only Son.

Before, then, you lift up the voice of supplication to the throne, always lift up the eye of faith to the cross, that you may draw nigh to God in the full assurance of trust in His love, for such prayers are very precious in His sight.

No supplications ever enter, with such gracious acceptance, into His ears, as those which are inspired by a firm and full confidence in His love, as manifested in the gift of His well-beloved Son.

Having thus contemplated the general character of God, under this endearing aspect, dwell in grateful contemplation on His covenant-character, in His relationship towards yourself, as a reconciled and loving Father, in Christ Jesus.

You know you have not received the spirit of bondage unto fear, but the spirit of adoption, whereby you cry—"Abba, Father." You know the peculiar title, under which your gracious Redeemer and Intercessor has taught you to approach and address a reconciled God in prayer, is—"Our Father, who art in heaven." You know that all the precious promises of the everlasting covenant might be summed up in this one—"I," saith the ever-blessed God, "I will be unto thee a Father."

Oh! there is something unspeakably kind,

and tender, and encouraging, in the blessed God having revealed Himself under *such* a character, to the pardoned and purified objects of His love, whom He brings nigh unto Himself by the blood of Christ.

Who has not enjoyed the influences, or felt the yearnings, of a father's love? And whether as children, we have experienced its effects, or as parents, have felt its power, or from the union of both characters, have been enabled most fully to understand, what a precious and powerful principle of affection it is, which reigns enthroned in a father's heart, we must surely, know enough, to know, that the blessed God could not, in His infinite condescension, have employed any image more beautifully, or affectingly, calculated to enable us (as far as what is, in itself, incomprehensible, can by any image be brought at all within reach of our comprehension,) to comprehend the nature, to appreciate the preciousness, or to calculate on the movements of His unbounded love.

That one word "Father," seems to make

argument useless, and assurances superfluous, and by the sweetest and strongest of all demonstrations, to carry irresistible conviction to the understanding, through the channel of the purest and most powerful affection of the heart. The only direction that seems required in addition, is simply this—after having calculated on the utmost extent, to which the greatest love of an earthly father can be carried, apply the sweet “*how much more,*” which the Saviour has suggested, to all your thoughts, desires, and expectations, connected with your heavenly Father’s love. Remember that, if all the fatherly love which has glowed in human hearts, from Adam to the present hour, could be concentrated together, it would be no more—yea, immeasurably less, when compared with what glows in the bosom of the Eternal Father, towards every child of His family of grace, than a single drop of water, compared with all the water in all the oceans of the earth.

When, therefore, you are about to approach such a God in prayer, recollect that

you do not so much come, as a subject, before a sovereign, to do him homage, (though this too is meet right, and your bounden duty,) but rather as a child to a beloved and venerated Father, to throw open your heart, before Him, without any reserve or concealment, in all the endearing freedom of filial love.

Seek to have a realizing belief of this most precious truth, with all the gladdening and consolatory reflections that follow in its train, deeply impressed on your heart before you kneel down to pray. Feel assured that God, in the overflowing fondness of His fatherly love, really delights in your happiness, as (if I may, with reverence, say so,) identified with His own. Yes, child of God, you are privileged to believe that God *so* loves you, that He has made your happiness a part of His own, so that His happiness may, in one sense, be said to be increased by yours.

Is there something in this you are afraid to believe, because it seems too condescend-

ing in the great God, towards a worm of the dust ?

Alas ! alas, why will we thus measure God's love by our own ? Why thus degrade it o the level of our own weak and worthless affections ? Why forget that, as His thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor his ways as our ways, so neither is His love as our love ; but a love like Himself, and worthy of Himself, infinite, incomprehensible, unchangeable, from everlasting to everlasting !

Are we not told that the " Lord taketh pleasure in His people—taketh pleasure in them that hope in His mercy."

Who is it that is represented, in the parable of the prodigal son, as crying out, when his long-lost child is recovered, and folded in his fond embrace—" Rejoice with me ! rejoice with me !"

Did you never read those wonderful words—" The Lord thy God in the midst of thee, is mighty, He will save—He will rejoice over thee *with joy*—He will rest in His love—He will *joy* over thee *with singing* !"

I conjure you, child of God, honestly and heartily to believe all this, as applied individually to yourself, as fully as if it was written specially, exclusively, for your comfort and happiness.

Art thou still incredulous, oh ! thou of little faith ? Once again, then, I entreat of you, look at the cross, and tell me, if God did not love you, with a love that passeth all understanding, if your happiness was not so dear to Him, as to be in truth identified with His own, why, oh why, did He give His own dear Son for you to death—even the death of the cross ?

Gaze then upon that cross, till every distrustful doubt dissolves away ; and such an assured belief of God's love towards you is awakened, by the dying agonies of Him who hangs upon that cross, that you will be enabled to approach the throne of grace, with a full confidence that the Everlasting Father is ready to listen, with complacent delight, to the voice of your supplications ; and to bestow on you, with overflowing liberality,

the precious blessings that you come to implore. Yea, that though, at the moment, the full burst of heaven's halleluiah chorus, from the numbers without number, of rejoicing cherubim and seraphim round the throne, may be sounding in his ears, and the feeblest sigh of penitential sorrow, or pleading supplication, that breaks from your heart, will be heard as distinctly, and answered as graciously, by Him, as if there was silence in heaven, and you were the only creature in the universe addressing Him that sitteth on the throne, in the language of prayer and praise!

This union of confiding affection, sobered and solemnized by reverential awe, is the very spirit towards God the Father, in which you should approach Him in devotional communion. It does equal homage to His majesty and His love. It combines what St. John felt, while leaning on the bosom of His beloved Master, at the last supper, with what he felt, when, in the apocalyptic vision, he fell at his feet as dead! It unites what

a grateful child feels, when folded in a father's arms, with what the adoring seraph feels, when bending before the Eternal's throne !

ADDRESS V.

ON THE UNION OF HUMILITY AND CONFIDENCE IN PRAYER.

“I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth which Thou hast showed unto Thy servant.”—GEN. xxxii. 10.

“God be merciful to me a sinner.”—LUKE xviii. 13.

“Having, therefore, *boldness* to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith; and come boldly to the throne of grace, to obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”—HEB. x. 19, 22; iv. 16.

THE Christian scheme is, in one sense a system of paradoxes, in which, almost opposing doctrines and duties, sentiments and feelings, are blended together, in such nice proportions, and harmonious union, that, like the lights and shadows in a picture, by their contrast, they give increased strength of ex-

pression, and beauty of colouring to the whole.

One of these paradoxes is suggested by the second combination of qualities which we specified as contributing to make up the essence of the spirit of prayer—namely, the union of the deepest sense of our own sinfulness and consequent desert of eternal condemnation, with the strongest assurance of the gracious acceptance of our prayers, and the bestowment, in answer to them, of the most precious blessings of grace and glory.

Is it not an apparent paradox, though perfectly intelligible to the heart of a believer, and the very foundation and fountain of all his most precious hopes, and joys, and consolations, that the deeper his conviction that he deserves nothing from God but wrath, the stronger is his assurance, that he shall receive nothing but mercy—the lower he lies in the depths of Christian humility, the higher does he rise in the elevation of Christian hope—the profounder and bitterer his penitential sorrow, the sublimer and sweeter

are his spiritual joys—and that it is when he most fully feels, and freely confesses, that he is entitled, by his own merits, to an inheritance of eternal wrath and woe, in hell, it is then he most fully feels, and rejoicingly remembers, that there are merits, through which he is entitled to an inheritance in heaven, incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.

I would say, then, to the Christian inquirer, who asks, in what spirit shall I approach God in prayer ?

Pre-eminently seek to come before your covenant-God with that broken and contrite heart which He has so graciously assured you, He will not despise. Come in the spirit of Jacob, when he cried—“ I am not worthy of the least of all these mercies, and of all the truth, which Thou hast showed unto Thy servant !” Of David, when he poured forth the very soul of penitential sorrow, and exclaimed—“ Have mercy upon me, oh ! God, according to Thy loving-kindness, according unto the multitude of Thy tender

mercies, blot out my transgressions; hide Thy face from my sins and blot out all mine iniquities; cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me." Come in the spirit of Manasseh, when in affliction he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto Him; and He was entreated of him and heard his supplication.

Approach your God as Ezra did, when, having rent his garment, he fell upon his knees, and spread out his hands unto the Lord his God and said—"Oh! my God, I am ashamed, and, blush to lift my face up to Thee, my God; for our iniquities are increased over our heads, and our trespass is grown up to the heavens."

Let your inmost soul be penetrated with such feelings as must have filled the bosom of the mourning Daniel, when he prayed unto the Lord his God, and made his confessions, and said, "Oh! Lord to us belongeth confusion of face, to the Lord our God he-

long mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against Him. Neither have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in His laws, which He set before us. Now, therefore, oh! our God, hear the prayer of Thy servant, for we do not present our supplications before Thee, for our righteousness, but for Thy great mercies. Oh! Lord hear! oh! Lord forgive! oh! Lord, hearken, and do; defer not, for Thine own sake, oh! my God!" Oh! there is indeed an irresistible efficacy in supplication, such as this, when it embodies the spirit of that godly sorrow for sin, which worketh repentance unto salvation!

Be assured, your prayers will never go up to heaven more acceptably, as a sweet-smelling savour before God, through Him who presents them before the throne, than when they thus rise from the depths of an humble, broken, and contrite heart.

You remember who it is, that has told us of a poor publican, who stood in the temple afar off, and was afraid so much as to lift up

his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying—"God be merciful to me a sinner." You remember who it is, that speaks in terms of such gracious commendation of that broken hearted prayer.

You know who has said—"He that humbleth himself, shall be exalted; that humility is the only path to preferment in His kingdom; that penitence is the precursor of glory; and that blessed are they that mourn, with godly sorrow for sin, for they shall be comforted.

You cannot have forgotten what honour He once put on the humility which flows from a penitential sorrow for sin, when, in the Pharisee's house, He addressed such gracious words of encouragement and comfort to that poor penitent woman, whose attitude and actions, in silent eloquence, so touchingly proclaimed the deep humility of her soul, while she stood at the Saviour's feet behind Him, weeping, and washed His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them

with ointment ! Oh ! look on this affecting scene ! listen to the tender language, which our blessed Lord addresses to this weeping penitent—and learn how He loves humility ; and with what peculiar complacency He delights in His people, when, in the humbling sense of their own sinfulness, they feel utterly unworthy to stand before Him, and in their grateful affection towards Him, esteem it their highest honour and happiness to lavish on Him, whatever they possess most precious, in testimony of their deep and fervent love !

But in truth, to bring forward Scripture to prove that an humble spirit, broken and contrite under the sense of sin, is the essence of that spirit in which we should approach God in prayer, would be to quote more than half the Bible ; for the more we study that blessed book, the more will we learn, from almost every line, that humility is the Alpha and Omega of a sinner's faith, and a sinner's hopes—the commencing and crowning grace—the all in all of the spirit of

Christianity. The foundations of the whole Christian superstructure of hope and holiness, are laid deep in humility; the building itself is a beautiful fabric of humility: and all those ornamental decorations, that crown the pillars of the temple, and on which, even the eye of God Himself looks with pleasure, are all the emblems of humility.

Oh! yes, it is humility, which lays the penitent sinner low, in trembling thankfulness, at the Saviour's feet—humility, which presents every work and labour of love, in lowly gratitude, before his cross—humility, which takes the blood-bought crown, and casts it, in self-renouncing adoration, before His throne. And the higher, through eternal ages, that the redeemed spirit will rise in its ascent of glory, the deeper will be the prostration with which it will bend, in self-abasing humility, before that throne.

If, then, child of God, you would offer up your sacrifice of prayer and praise acceptably, appear in the presence of your Heavenly Father, “clothed with humility, for he

resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.”

I do not here mean so much, the self-abasing humility of conscious weakness, arising from the contemplation of the original corruption of our fallen nature, as the self-abhorring humility of conscious guilt, arising from the remembrance of your own actual unnumbered and aggravated transgressions.

I speak rather of penitential sorrow for your own offences, than meditation, (however, in its proper place profitable,) on Adam’s sin.

From not attending to this distinction, I fear many are led to make a most dangerous use, or rather abuse of the scriptural doctrine of original sin, by deriving from it an excuse, or, at least, extenuation of their own. They seem inclined to regard their natural depravity, however aggravated by their personal transgressions, rather as a misfortune for which they are to be pitied, than a fault for which they are to be blamed.

Now, it must be confessed, this mysterious

doctrine of original sin, (so unequivocally declared in Scripture, and there set forth as the very basis of the whole scheme of redemption,) is not calculated, nor was it designed, to produce in us that godly sorrow for sin, which worketh repentance unto salvation.

Its scriptural office seems to be, to humble us under such a deep, penetrating sense of our natural corruption and helplessness, as will lead us, (from feeling our urgent need of the enlightening, sustaining, and sanctifying influences of divine grace,) fervently to supplicate, and continually to lean upon, the promised aid of the Holy Spirit. But when Scripture would excite us to deep and self-loathing repentance, it is always to our own personal sins it directs our view.

'Tis true, David confesses that he was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did his mother conceive him: but it is manifest, that what bowed down his soul, and almost broke his heart, was the remembrance of his own guilt; it is this which wrung from him the agonizing supplication—"Hide thy face from *my*

sins—blot out all *mine* iniquities—cast me not away from Thy presence.”

I cannot but fear that the edge of godly sorrow for sin is, with many even of God's children, blunted, and thus their humility rendered less deep, their repentance less cordial, and their sense of God's patient mercy, and gratitude for His pardoning love, less penetrating and profound, by their making a use of the doctrine of original sin, which it was never intended to answer; perverting it, (perhaps almost unconsciously,) into a ground of palliation for their actual offences, instead of being led by it (as it is God's design in revealing it, that they should,) to distrust entirely their own wisdom, guidance, and strength, and confidently and constantly to look up for, and to lean upon, the directing guidance and upholding strength of divine grace.

Seek, then, to have such a piercing and affecting view of your own personal transgressions, your sins of omission and commission, the innumerable things which you have done,

that you ought not to have done, and those which you have left undone, that you ought to have done, as will constrain you to smite upon your breast, crying—"God be merciful to me a sinner."

If you indeed desire to be thus deeply impressed, beware of resting in those generalities, in mourning over, and confessing your sins, which produce only a feeble, cold, and transitory impression.

Go into detail—descend into particulars—above all, descend into your heart. If you would really make humbling work, you must make heart work of your repentance. Dwell especially on the peculiar aggravations that have attended your sins, making them, in your case, exceeding sinful. If they have been committed against peculiar degrees of knowledge, light, and love; after repeated convictions, warnings, and exhortations of the Holy Spirit; if there be any thing in your case or circumstances, the profession you have made, or the station you occupy, which has rendered your sins peculiarly

odious and inexcusable in you, and peculiarly offensive and dishonouring to God.

Do not seek to palliate your guilt, by any excuse or extenuation; but rather desire to feel it in all its hatefulnes, and confess it in all its enormity, that you may lie as low as you can lie, (short of despair,) in self-loathing shame and sorrow, at the foot of the cross; looking up, with mingled penitence and gratitude to Him whom you have so deeply pierced; and in whose blood you read, at once, the greatness of your guilt, and the assurance of your pardon. For how great must be your guilt, since it required the blood of Him who was God manifest in the flesh, to be shed for its expiation; and how firm may be your assurance of pardon, through faith in that blood, since *such* an atonement *has been* offered, as a propitiation for your sins! Oh! then, if you would indeed view sin in its true light, and abhor yourself as you ought, for your transgressions, look at the Cross—and while gratefully rejoicing in the hope of eternal glory, reflect

on *all* your beloved Saviour had to suffer, in order to purchase for a sinner, such as you have been, not merely pardon, but even an inheritance of glory, incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away !

Do not compare yourself with others ; you know how abhorrent to God, was that proud Pharisee's professed thanksgiving—“ God, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are.” Or, if you will make a comparison, let it be with those, whose superior holiness, progress in the divine life, zeal for Christ's glory, visible conformity to His character, and entire devotedness to His service, ought to crimson your cheek with the burning blush of shame.

There *is* a comparison indeed, you cannot too often make, if you would advance either in humility or holiness.

Compare what you are, with what the standard of the word of God requires you to be ; with what, if you had faithfully followed your Divine Master's instructions, you might have been ; and compare what

you *have* done for the Saviour, with what you *ought* to have done for Him.

Believe me, if you carry on this investigation with an honest desire to know the whole truth, you will require little else, as far as means are concerned, to fill your heart with such pangs as Peter felt, and your eyes with such tears as Peter shed, when, hurrying from the presence of Jesus, he went forth, and wept bitterly.

Alas! have you not, too often, like him, denied your Lord; appeared ashamed of Him, in the presence of His enemies; maintained a guilty silence, when His religion was ridiculed, or His friends reviled! What countless opportunities of advancing His glory have you, through sinful fear, shrunk from, or through sinful negligence, overlooked! How basely have you often betrayed His cause, rather than brave the frown of anger, or the smile of scorn! How often by palpable inconsistencies, by indulging in feelings, tempers, words, and actions, at utter variance with the standard of the gospel,

and the character of Christ, have you brought suspicion on the sincerity, or sanctifying tendency, of the principles you profess ; and thus brought discredit on that name and cause, for whose advancement you should gladly (if called upon,) drain the last drop of blood that fills your veins.

And when you reflect that during all this time, while you have been thus requiting His love with such shameful ingratitude, He has been continually employed in watching over you, and pleading for you, and obtaining for you, from the Father, all the blessings which, while on earth, He purchased for you, with His blood, oh ! can you at this retrospect, when you see Jesus looking on you with that look of wounded love, whose silent reproach cuts so much deeper than the loudest complaints, or severest denunciations — can you refrain from falling down before Him and weeping bitterly ?

Would you be yet more deeply humbled before your God, in prayer ? Then look down, as far as you can and dare, into the

depths of your deceitful and desperately wicked heart; and survey the fearful mass of secret sin, which there lies hidden from every eye but God's. Contrast what the friend, who knows you best, *thinks of you*, with what God, *knows of you*! Just imagine you were obliged to bear the abominations of your heart, all *its* uncleanness, rebellion, repining, impurity of motive—in a word, the world of iniquity within, to the eye of your most indulgent earthly friend. How would he be startled and horrified with the sepulchre of sin, that would burst upon his view. *All* this you have compelled the holy God to look upon; with all this you have offended the eyes of His purity; through all this He has continued to shower His blessings and loving-kindnesses upon you. Must not the thought strike even your heart, hard and rocky as it is, with such a piercing stroke of penitential anguish, as will make the streams of godly sorrow gush forth in a full tide?

But, you will perhaps say, must not this

overwhelming sense of your own unworthiness damp your ardour in supplication to Him, whose loving-kindness you have so shamefully requited? How can you, with all your ingratitude and guilt thus staring you in the face, come before God, to ask Him for fresh mercies; for a further supply of His most precious blessings? Here is one of those Christian paradoxes, to which we have alluded. It is this very sense of unworthiness, which, when most deeply and penitently felt, and accompanied with the profoundest abhorrence of sin, and the most earnest desires and endeavours after the highest degrees of devotedness and holiness, which can be attained on earth, gives you the sweetest assurance of the most abundant and invaluable blessings being vouchsafed to you, in answer to your prayers. How is this? Because it drives you away altogether from standing on a ground, in offering up your prayers, which could entitle you to ask for nothing at God's hands, but the heaviest judgments He could inflict—t} c

ground of your own deserts; and places you on a ground, which entitles you to ask for the very best blessings your covenant-God can bestow, even the ground of the merits and mediation of His well-beloved Son. Resting your claims exclusively on *this* ground, how confident may be your assurance, and how exalted your expectations, of the blessings you desire, and implore, when you reflect that even when you raise that assurance and those expectations, to the highest possible pitch, you are not raising them higher, than you are warranted by the word of God. Yea, so far from this, you are doing that which is most pleasing in your heavenly Father's sight, as you are showing Him that He has not lavished on you the gift of His own Son, altogether in vain; but that you have learned, in some measure, to appreciate aright the preciousness of that gift; and to estimate, in some degree, at their real worth, the value of the Saviour's blood—the merits of His obedi-

ence—the sufficiency of His sacrifice, and the efficacy of His intercession.

I address you as a child of God—as united to the Saviour by a living, therefore, a justifying and sanctifying faith, and thus made a living member of His mystical body—a living branch of the true vine—a living stone in the spiritual temple.

As such, you are privileged to believe, that you have a personal interest in all that the Son of God has done and suffered, for the salvation of His people.

You have the full benefit of His atoning sufferings imputed to you, in right of which your sins are remitted, and your iniquities forgiven; and the full benefit of the imputation of His meritorious righteousness, with which your pardoned spirit is arrayed, as with a seamless robe, that hides all your sinfulness from your heavenly Father's sight; so that He can look on you with infinite complacency, seeing you thus clothed in a garment of salvation, woven for you by the hands of His own dear Son.

If, then, you would approach God in prayer, with a confidence, which the most humbling sense of your own unworthiness cannot shake, habituate yourself to dwell on the privileges, with which your union—I should say your identification—your being one with Christ, invests you. You are privileged to believe, that from the ages of eternity, there were thoughts of loving-kindness towards *you*, in the bosom of the Son of God! That when He descended from His everlasting throne, and shrouded His deity under a garb of flesh, it was for *you* He stooped to this inconceivable humiliation! That when He poured forth that sublime intercessory prayer, the night He was betrayed, on behalf of all that should believe on Him, to the end of time, *you* were in His thoughts, and near His heart. That when, in the garden, He prayed in His agony, that the mysterious cup of anguish might pass away from Him, what partly made that prayer impossible to be heard, and reconciled Him to draining that

cup to the dregs, was His desire and determination, that *you* should be eternally happy! That when He was lifted up on the cross, crowned with thorns, it was that *you* might be lifted up on a throne, crowned with glory; and when He returned to heaven, to sit down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, it was to make intercession on *your* behalf—to present your prayers, perfumed with the fragrance of His merits, as your High Priest and Advocate, before the throne of God.

Now, can you really believe all this, and for one moment doubt the acceptance of prayers, which He presents, or the bestowment of blessings, for which He pleads. More especially when you remember, that the very ground on which He rests His intercessory plea, is the sacrifice He offered of Himself in your stead, upon the cross; and that in pleading for you, He is virtually asking the Father to recompense Him—His well-beloved Son, for all the humiliation,

sorrow, and suffering, which He endured for your sake while on earth ?

Endeavour to grasp some conception, (however faint it must be) of the love, that subsists between the eternal Father, and His own—His only Son ; and can you really believe, that you could offer up in faith, according to the will and word of God, and yet offer up in vain, a single prayer, asking in the Redeemer's name, and for His sake, blessings, however large, costly, or precious, when you reflect that by granting them to your prayer, the everlasting Father is testifying His infinite complacency and delight in His dear Son, and in the work of redemption, which, to advance the Father's glory, He undertook ; and thus rewarding Him for all the travail of His soul, during His pilgrimage of pain, while bearing the burden of His people's transgressions upon earth.

See you not, that there are no blessings in the power of God to give, that you are not privileged on *this* ground to ask ? for

though you are utterly unworthy of the very least of them all, is not the Son of God worthy to have procured, as the recompense of *His* sufferings, the very greatest that His Father can bestow ?

Surely you do not mean to say, that there is in the Father's gift a single blessing, for which the blood of His own Son, would not be deemed by Him a sufficient price ; or which the intercession of His own Son, grounded on the merits of His obedience unto death, could fail to procure for any of His blood-bought people ?

You perceive, then, how it is, that you can at once cherish the most humbling sense of your own utter unworthiness, and the most undoubting assurance of obtaining, in answer to your prayers, the most abundant measure of spiritual blessings ; and how that sweet and precious doctrine of the intercession of Christ may, at once, inspire you with energy of supplication, and confidence of success.

Let, then, the apostolic exhortation sink

deep into your heart. “ Having, therefore, *boldness* to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh, and having an high-priest over the house of God, let us draw near, with a true heart, in *full assurance* of faith; for we have not an high-priest, which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted, like as we are, yet without sin; let us, therefore, come *boldly* unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help, in time of need; enlightening, guiding, sanctifying, sustaining, comforting, grace.

Yes, child of God, encouraged by the sweet, because sinless sympathy of the great and gracious High Priest of your profession, who pleads for you before the mercy-seat of heaven, you may indeed come *boldly* to the throne of grace, assured by His own promise, that “ whatsoever you shall ask in his name, believing, you shall

receive!" And, oh, how should it endear Him to your heart, and make every blessing which your heavenly Father's love so bountifully bestows on you, unspeakably precious in your sight, when you regard them all as the fruit of *your own* Saviour's intercession, the purchase of *His* blood.

ADDRESS VI.

ON THE UNION OF WATCHFULNESS AND DEPENDENCE IN PRAYER.

“Keep thy heart with all diligence.”—PROV. iv. 23.

“Commune with your own heart, and in your chamber,
and be still.”—PS. iv. 4.

“Be sober and watch unto prayer; watching thereunto
with all perseverance.”—1. PET. iv. 7. EPH. vi. 18.

“Praying in the Holy Ghost, with all prayer and sup-
plication in the Spirit.”—JUDE, 20.

THERE has been no subject of grief and
lamentation, more general with the children
of God, in every age, than that so feelingly
expressed by the sweet poet of Christianity—

What various hindrances we meet,
In coming to a mercy-seat.

When we view prayer under its most ap-

propriate aspect, as the endearing converse of a child of God with his Heavenly Father, pouring out before Him, in all the confiding freedom of filial love, all the various feelings of which his overburthened heart is full, encouraged by the sweet assurance, that his Father in heaven is ever ready to listen, with a gracious ear, to all his supplications—and supply, with overflowing liberality, all his wants; one might imagine, that it would have been unnecessary to command as a duty, what one would have expected would be supremely prized, by every believer, as his highest privilege; and supremely enjoyed, as his highest happiness.

So, I am aware, it is prized, in his enlightened judgment; and so enjoyed in many an hour of secret communion with his God, for whose pure and satisfying joys, he would deem the wealth of ten thousand worlds a very poor exchange.

But, alas! how often is it the very reverse! How often does even the child of God feel astonished, and actually horrified,

to discover in himself a strange and hateful reluctance to engage in this sacred exercise! What trifling excuses will he often allow to divert him from its devout enjoyment! And even, if, from a conscientious motive, he continues punctual in the performance, what a weariness is it to his spirit; how is it gone through, merely to silence the monitor within, whose upbraiding voice would allow him no rest, if he entirely neglected to approach his God!

But, oh! what cold formality—what listless vacancy, mark, or rather mar, the performance! What wanderings and distractions of thought and feeling! What a horrible mixture of vain, if not vicious imaginations, mingling with expressions of penitential sorrow, fervent gratitude, or holy joy! Talking to God, but not thinking of Him; almost if not altogether, unconscious what we are saying to Him—His name on our lips, but some earthly object, or worldly care, in our hearts. So that, if what we are uttering with our mouth, and meditating on in

our heart, were to be united together in continuous language, and written on the walls of our chamber; and we were obliged, by the startling summons of the voice of God, suddenly to look up, and read what was traced before our eyes, as the substance of what we had been saying to the Almighty, from the time we knelt down; we would be so startled by the appalling exhibition of the insult we had been offering to Jehovah, that we must wonder that with all His patience, and forbearance, He could endure such an affront as this!

Surely, there is something in this view, which most affectingly magnifies the mercy of the Father of all mercies. Surely, He with whom we have to do, is indeed a patient God, slow, oh! how slow to anger! And unquestionably, were every other evidence withdrawn, to prove that our nature is fallen from its primeval grandeur—very, very far gone from original righteousness: the most devout prayers of the holiest man on earth would be sufficient to show, that

some dreadful catastrophe has happened to our race; some fearful convulsion has wrecked and ruined our moral constitution, since the morning that God made man in His own image, and man walked with God, even as one walketh with a friend.

How impossible to conceive Adam, before the fall, walking with God, amidst the trees of the garden of Eden, holding converse with his Almighty Father and Friend, and *yet*, his thoughts—his heart, far away from God.

Here is the root of the evil—the dark, polluted fountain, from which all the streams of alienation from God, and the indisposedness to divine enjoyments flow.

Ever since the fall, the principle of divine attraction, which united man's heart to God, and drew up his affections to Him and heaven, has been withdrawn; and its place supplied by a principle of carnal gravitation, which draws down the thoughts, desires, and affections of man's natural heart to earth, and earthly things; so that it is as contrary

to the natural tendency of the human heart, to mount up to God and heaven, as for a stone, of itself, to fly upwards. And though this principle of earthward gravitation, (which, if not counteracted, must at last drag the soul into hell,) *is* counteracted, in the regenerated children of God, by the power of divine grace, which propels the thoughts and affections upwards; though the principle of divine attraction, which draws the heart to God and heaven, *is*, in them restored; yet is the renewal of their nature, while on earth, imperfect—the downward tendency, though resisted, is not entirely removed; and this it is, which makes a life of faith, a supernatural—a miraculous kind of life; and heavenly-mindedness so exceedingly difficult to be constantly maintained.

This is, we doubt not, one principal cause of that wandering and distraction of mind in prayer, of which the children of God have, in every age, so bitterly complained.

But we must not omit to notice another cause—Satanic influence. Yes, here also, as

in every other part of our spiritual conflict, "we have to wrestle, not merely against flesh and blood, (against our natural corruption and deadness to divine things,) but against principalities and powers, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Yea, I believe *here especially*, Satan tries all his stratagems and puts forth all his power ; for earth does not, I am convinced, present to his eyes a spectacle which he more hates and trembles to behold, than a believer, wrestling, Jacob-like, with God in prayer.

And well may he tremble ; for he knows that the fervent prayer of faith invests the believer with a strength with which he vainly endeavours to cope ; provides him with a counter-charm to all *his* spells ; and arrays him with a celestial armour, against which no weapon forged in hell can prosper—especially that all-covering "shield of faith, which is able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one." Hence it is that the wily adversary uses every artifice, which diabolical subtlety can suggest, to render the be-

liever, as much as possible, a formalist in prayer—to divert him from or distract him in, his devotions, by forcing on the mind worldly occupation, anxieties, and cares ; or presenting to the eye of the imagination visions of such a character, as almost at times to drive the believer in terror from his knees, lest he should be only sinning against God, by continuing to pray, with such imaginations floating before his eyes. A suggestion of Satan, to which it would be as manifest madness to yield, instead of flying, by faith, into the Saviour's outstretched arms, as it would be for a man pursued by a roaring lion, to be terrified into standing still, or throwing himself into the lion's jaws, while close beside him stood One, who could protect him from the monster's fury—One, whose outstretched arm it only required one vigorous effort to rush forward, seize, and be safe.

We have thus seen, that the wanderings, distraction, and deadness in devotion, which are among the sorest trials of a child of God, are to be traced to the combined

influence of the remaining corruption of his imperfectly-renewed nature, and the direct agency of the enemy of our souls; and therefore if honestly and heartily striven against, (however deeply they must ever be deplored, and however profound the humiliation, and piercing the anguish of soul, they must ever awaken in one, who desires continually to walk with God,) they must not be regarded as invalidating his claim to a believer's privileges and hopes. It is, however, an inquiry of the deepest interest and importance, what remedy can be provided for an evil of such appalling magnitude—so fatally injurious to the highest interests, and purest enjoyments of a child of God.

This leads us to consider the third union of qualities of which we spake, as entering into the composition of the spirit of prayer—the union of the most careful watchfulness over our own thoughts and feelings, combined with the most implicit reliance on the promised aid of the Holy Ghost.

We have already glanced at the former branch of the subject, when we alluded to the importance of maintaining, throughout the day, a constant guard over our thoughts and desires, so as to restrain them from whatever has a tendency to unfit us for devotional communion with God in the closet ; and thus to breathe all day long an atmosphere of devotional feeling, which, the purer it has been preserved through the day, will be the more easily and enjoyingly concentrated in acts of devotion, when we retire to our chamber to hold converse with our God.

As, however, the distractions of thought in prayer, so much complained of by Christians, arise more perhaps from the neglect of this habit of constant watchfulness throughout the day, than from any other cause, it may be desirable to consider the subject somewhat more fully in detail. More especially as there appears to exist, among many religious professors in our day, an unreasonable jealousy and dislike of

every exhortation to a believer's personal vigilance and exertions for the attainment, establishment, and increase of holiness, as if all such exhortations necessarily savoured of a spirit of legality; entrenched on the sovereignty and freeness of divine grace; manifested a presumptuous desire to share with the Saviour, and the Holy Spirit, in the glory of the work of man's salvation; and tended to encourage a feeling of proud self-righteousness, and self-dependence. I cannot but fear this unreasonable alarm, at hearing the scriptural injunctions—"Watch, strive, labour, wrestle, run, fight;" echoed and enforced, has tended very much to hinder the progress of sanctification, in many sincere believers. For if they are taught to regard every effort of their own (however humbly made, in unqualified dependence on divine grace,) as calculated to rob the Holy Spirit of the honour which is exclusively His due, this must manifestly have a direct tendency to lead them to relax those very exertions, with the faithful and persevering

use of which it has pleased this Sovereign Dispenser of all grace, in the most absolute exercise of that Sovereignty, to connect the promised aid and influence which He can alone impart.

Really many in our day seem to think, that any injunction to a believer to exercise his mental faculties, heartily and vigorously, in reliance on, and co-operation with, the influences of divine grace, is an insult to the God of all grace; as if the God of grace were not the God of nature—as if He who regenerates, were not the very same Being who created us—as if, in truth, our mental faculties were not bestowed on us by our heavenly Father, but were the gift of Satan so that every exercise of them was an act of homage to him, and not to God.

This is a dreadful error. 'Tis true, our mental faculties have all been ruined by the fall; but majestic even in their ruins, they still bear, in desolated grandeur, like the fallen pillars of some magnificent temple, the impress of the divine hand which

originally formed them. And though all the glory, because all the power, of the work of raising them out of their ruins, and setting them up anew, as pillars in the temple of God, belongs exclusively to the Spirit of grace, yet is the believer at once privileged and commanded to labour, under the directions and in the strength of this Spirit, with all diligence, zeal, and perseverance, in his subordinate station, in the building of the heavenly temple.

Surely, this is not to rob the Holy Spirit of His glory! Surely, our having *abused* all our faculties in the service of Satan, is no reason why we should not *use* them in the service of God. Surely, to work in humble dependence on divine grace, is not to aim at a proud independence of, or presumptuous encroachment on, the divine glory!

Might not the analogy of creation, and providence, teach us a wiser lesson? When the husbandman prepares the ground, and sows the seed, does this argue an atheistical forgetfulness, that no matter how carefully

he may plant or water, it is God alone that giveth the increase? Is he not perfectly aware that it is no power of his own, but exclusively the power of God, which makes the buried seed shoot forth, and bring forth fruit to an abundant harvest?

What would we say of the man, who, under pretence of honouring the divine omnipotence, inasmuch as he could not make a single blade to grow, neglected to sow the seed, and yet came in harvest-time to reap a luxuriant crop? Would we commend him for his trust in God, or rather would we not condemn him as a hypocrite, or pity him as a fool?

Then how is it more a denial of the divine power, or an usurpation of the divine prerogative, if, in hopes of an abundant spiritual harvest, the believer cultivates, with unwearied diligence the field which the Lord of the harvest has committed to his care; provided, in all his watchings and labours, he ever remembers, that even when a Paul plants, or an Apollos waters, it is God alone

who giveth the increase. And whether is it really honouring God most, to work strenuously, and unweariedly, in the allotted field of labour, lifting up the eye of faith, and the voice of supplication, for the divine blessing to prosper the work; or to fold the arms in slothful inactivity, and do nothing under pretence of leaving it to the Spirit of grace to do all, that so all the glory of the work may be given to God?

And if, from the analogy of creation we turn to the testimony of Scripture, how loudly does it echo the call to exertion, which rises with such an authoritative voice, from the constitution of nature, and the providence of God.

Might we not challenge the advocate of the system, which would represent personal exertion as offering insult, and lazy inactivity as doing honour to the Spirit of grace, to produce any passages in Scripture, where the undivided glory of the work of sanctification is attributed to the Holy Spirit, in language clearer or stronger than is the

necessity of the diligent and persevering exertions of our own faculties, in the use of all the appointed means of grace, set forth in the following passages of the word of God,—

“ *Strive* (literally agonize) to enter in at the strait gate ; for the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. *Labour* not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth to everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you. *Watch!* watch and pray, yea, pray without ceasing. *Work* out your own salvation with fear and trembling, *for* it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of His own good pleasure. *Fight* the good fight of faith. *Run* with patience the race set before us, yea, *so* run that ye may obtain.

Whatsoever a man *soweth* that shall he also reap. He that soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly ; and he that soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully. Give *diligence* to make your calling and election sure ; for if ye do these things ye shall never fall ; for so an entrance shall be ministered unto

you abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

Now combine with these, and a thousand similar expressions, the plain purport of the parable of the sower, and still more of the two parables of the talents, and surely it is as plain as Scripture can make it, that while we ought, each of us, heartily to feel, and honestly to confess,

"Help I every moment need,"

and that we cannot take one single step in our heavenward journey, in our own unaided strength, yet we are to expect God's promised grace, to help in every time of need, and bring us safe to heaven at last, *not* while lazily standing still, in slothful inactivity, under any pretext, *but* while watching—striving—praying—labouring—wrestling—running—using a holy violence to seize on heavenly things—giving *all* diligence to make our calling and election sure.

I have been led into this apparent digression, by a conviction, that the neglect of the

principle I have endeavoured to establish, has tended much to promote that wandering distractedness of mind, in devotion, which so often consumes, as it were, its very vitals.

We are more responsible for the regulation of our thoughts, because the control of them is placed more within our reach, than we are perhaps aware, or willing to admit: and I would again and again impress the all-important truth, that a due and hallowed regulation of our thoughts throughout the day, would have, under the divine blessing, a most powerful tendency to restrain them from wandering, and enable us to fix them on holy and heavenly things, in our devotional communion with God.

There are several things palpably in our own power, connected with this subject, a faithful observance of which would have a most beneficial influence on our devotional enjoyments.

If I find that reading a particular book has a tendency to excite in my mind a train of thoughts and feelings, unfriendly to a de-

votional spirit, because unfitting me for converse with a God of infinite purity and holiness, it is, beyond all controversy, in my power to avoid reading that book.

If I *will* read it, notwithstanding my experience of its baneful effects, I may then be utterly unable to stem the tide of vicious thoughts that rushes in upon my mind ; or to bid away the voluptuous visions that are conjured up before the eye of my imagination ; because I have, with my own hand, opened the flood-gates, that poured in that tide of thought ; and, by my own voice, evoked those spirits of evil, that will readily come at my bidding, but not at my bidding depart. Still, it is manifest, that I am answerable before God, for all the guilt I contract through the medium of that ensnaring book, because it was plainly in my power not to take up the book.

Satan cannot compel me to do this ; though if I venture, in opposition to the plain and positive command of God, to read what by experience I have found is fraught with in-

jurious influences, Satan may be permitted to use the instrumentality of that work, to excite in me thoughts and desires utterly incompatible with a devotional spirit. And as, in reading such a book, I have ventured on a disobedient act of self-indulgence, and wandered out of the pale of the Holy Spirit's promised protection, I must encounter Satan in my own unaided strength.

Can we calculate, without a shudder, the consequences of such an encounter, when we look at the warm-hearted, zealous Peter, in consequence of a similar experiment, denying, with horrible oaths and imprecations, that he ever knew the Lord!

I have dwelt more in detail on this particular instance, because the spirit of these observations will equally apply to indulging in any style of conversation, society, occupation, or amusement, which is found by experience to awaken such imaginations or passions, as unfit us for direct devotional intercourse with God. And must not this test, if honestly applied, stamp with the

strongest mark of condemnation, as altogether unsuitable recreations for a child of God, the theatre, the ball-room, and all those resorts of fashionable gaiety, which are so deeply impregnated with the essential spirit of worldliness, that devotional feelings cannot but droop and die in their chilling atmosphere? For how can a child of God consistently seek for enjoyment in scenes, in the midst of which it would be an impious mockery of the Most High to bend the knee in supplication or thanksgiving before a throne of grace; and from which it would, indeed, be no less than a miracle to be enabled to bring home a devotional spirit to the retirement of the closet, or to retain a relish or a meetness, with feelings distracted, and exhausted, by scenes of feverish excitement, for devout intercourse with a holy God. So that if we are really desirous to enjoy such intercourse in our closet, undistractedly, we must resolve, in divine strength, throughout the day, to avoid every thing, (no matter what attractions it may present, or what pretences for

indulgence either from constitutional temperament, or deep-rooted tastes, or long-cherished habits, it may plead,) which conjures up any class of thoughts or feelings, that, if suddenly called upon to unite in prayer to God we would wish to bid away, before we could presume to address ourselves to Him, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.

How can we expect thoughts, whose abiding with us we have wooed all day, to depart from us, at a moment's notice, at night? How can we complain, if feelings that have been cherished as welcome guests all the day long, refused to be turned out of doors, the instant we choose to order them away?

If, then, child of God, you do indeed desire to be relieved from that wandering distractedness in devotion, under whose galling burthen you have so often groaned, I know no rule of more vital importance than this one; abstain, with conscientious strictness, I had almost said scrupulosity, from *whatever* (no matter how, in other

respects, desirable or delightful) you have found, or may justly fear, to be calculated to excite in you such thoughts, desires, or feelings, as would unfit, or indispose you for *immediately* joining in prayer to God.— And if such spontaneously arise, without external excitements of your procuring, or are suggested by unavoidable objects, or by the inspiration of Satan, immediately check them; do not indulge or parley with them for a moment; look up for strength to overcome them—silently implore the Spirit's aid; *thus* resist the devil, and you *shall* conquer.

Having thus, throughout the day, in the spirit of the apostolical injunction, “watched unto prayer with all perseverance,” when the hour of offering up the sacrifice, for which you have been thus making such diligent preparation, arrives, seek to enter on the solemn service with all possible seriousness, and recollectedness of spirit, as feeling that you are about to be engaged in the most sublime and important occupation,

in which a created being can be employed—holding direct communion and converse with Almighty God.

Pause for a while, before you kneel down, that by reflecting on the unutterable majesty of the Being you are about to address, your soul may be stilled into a deep solemnity of feeling; and the very atmosphere, hallowed, as it were, by the divine presence, may seem to breathe a holy awe around.

Seek to come before God with an overwhelming sense of His infinite purity and glory, and your own utter unworthiness and vileness. Such as constrained Isaiah, when he had seen the Lord, sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and had heard the seraphims crying one to another, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts,” to exclaim with trembling awe, and self-abasement, “Woe is me, for I am undone! because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!”—Such as forced from Job, after the Al-

mighty had spoken to him out of the whirlwind, (in language, compared with whose grandeur the loftiest of human compositions are, indeed, but as a whisper to the loudest thunder,) the self-abhorring exclamation, "Behold, I am vile! what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee; wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes!"

Realize the conviction that God is listening—look up, by faith, into the heaven of heavens—behold the scene at which we have before glanced, there opened to your view. See Jesus waiting to present your petitions before the throne, and, through His all-prevailing intercession, to obtain from the Father a gracious answer to your prayers.

Glance at Gethsemane and Calvary! Call to remembrance what your divine Advocate had there to suffer, to make the throne of God, to you, a throne of grace;

to which you might be privileged, through His blood, even to come boldly, with an humble confidence, that you cannot ask for blessings greater than the Father is willing to give you, for His dear Son's sake.

Then seek to realize an affecting sense of the value of the blessings you are about to implore—blessings, in themselves so precious, that the Son of God thought it not too much to purchase them for His people, at the price of His own blood! And just consider what their value must be, to be worthy of *such* a price—what it must be, when He who created all things in heaven and earth, and whom what is infinite alone can satisfy, deems the procurement of these blessings for His beloved people, an abundant recompense for all the travail of His soul, on their behalf; a recompense, with which—*even He* is satisfied.

But, while it is thus meet, right, and your bounden duty, that you should use every exertion, to excite and maintain a devotional spirit, as energetically as if every

thing depended on your own efforts, oh! never for one moment forget, that you could as easily, by your own strength, scale the heavens, as by any efforts of your own, independently of the influence of the Holy Spirit, send up a single fervent and effectual prayer to the throne of God.

Were I asked, which of all the scriptural injunctions, on the subject of prayer, I conceive to be of paramount importance, for enabling a child of God to maintain a prayerful frame, I would at once answer—“Praying always, with all prayer and supplication in *the Spirit*—*praying in the Holy Ghost.*”

And if there be one passage, pre-eminently distinguished above all others, for the instruction and consolation it imparts, it is that precious one in which we are assured, “that the Spirit helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for, as we ought; but the Spirit maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered.”

Yes! child of God, if you would indeed, pray acceptably, you must approach the throne of grace, in a spirit of the most implicit reliance on the divine teaching and inspiration of God, the Holy Ghost. You must remember, that after all your preparation of thoughts and recollections, suitable to the solemn occasion, you have but laid the wood in order, and arranged the sacrifice on the altar—it is the Blessed Spirit that must send down the fire from heaven, to consume the sacrifice, and make it ascend as a sweet-smelling savour before God. To this divine Teacher you must look, to instruct you both in the subject and spirit of your devotions; both what to pray for, and how to pray.

You must apply to Him, as your divine Agent, to draw up those petitions, which Jesus, as your divine Advocate, is to present unto God.

It is the Holy Spirit's breath, which can alone kindle the sparks of devotional feeling, and fan them into a flame. It is the

Holy Spirit's power which can alone, with almighty energy, lift up your earth-bound soul out of the dust, and raise it to the skies. It is He who can alone invest you with that divine panoply—the whole armour of God.* It is He that must give your desires those wings of celestial workmanship, the wings of faith and hope, with which they will soar up, as eagles, and pierce the yielding skies, till they have won their way even to the very throne—yea! to the ear of Him who sitteth upon the throne. And though the winged messenger you thus send up to heaven be but an unutterable groan, an almost inaudible sigh, yet will He who understandeth the meaning of the Spirit, and can hear the very faintest whisperings of His voice, listen to every supplication He inspires, with an attentive and delighted ear.

In every part, then, of your spiritual work and warfare, but more especially in

* See on this subject, one of the most valuable treatises in the whole range of practical theology—"Gurnall's Christian Armour."

all your devotional intercourse with your God, maintain an entire dependence on the promised inspiration and influence of the Holy Ghost.

Ever keep in mind the glorious and all-important offices, which this blessed Spirit sustains, in the economy of redemption.

Remember He is the impartor and sustainer of all spiritual life—the guide into all spiritual truth—the dispenser of all spiritual grace—the fountain and conveyancer of all spiritual peace, and joy, and consolation.

This is the Spirit, who moves upon the rude and restless passions of a soul, darkened and distracted by sin; and out of its chaos of conflicting elements, educes a new and beautiful creation, where all is harmony, and holiness, and happiness.

This Spirit also is the alone infallible commentator on the word of God—the revealer of mysteries—the expositor of precepts—the remembrancer of promises—the inspirer of prayer.

In the church, this divine Spirit has been,

in every age, the source of its illumination—the sustainer of its influence—its beacon, and bulwark—its guiding pillar, and protecting shield—the inspirer of prophets—the teacher of apostles—the upholder of martyrs—the comforter of Christians—the glorifier of Christ.

To every individual member of Christ's mystical body, this blessed Spirit is the Alpha and Omega, the all in all, of his spiritual knowledge, safety, strength, and joy—the enlightener of his understanding—the regulator of his will—the controller of his passions—the cleanser of his imagination—the purifier of his heart—the sanctifier of his soul.

“ Has he peace and joy in believing, and does he abound in hope? It is through the power of the Holy Ghost. Is he strengthened with might in the inner man? It is by the Spirit. Is he, on beholding with open face, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, changed into the same image, from glory to glory? It is by the Spirit of the

Lord. Does he know, to his unspeakable comfort, that Jesus is the Lord? No man can say this savingly, but by the Holy Ghost. Is any offering he presents to God, in faith, acceptable? It is, as being sanctified by the Holy Ghost. Is he chosen unto salvation? It is through sanctification of the Spirit. Is he sealed unto the day of redemption? It is by the same Spirit."

Yes, believer! I would deeply impress on you the recollection, that if there be a single breathing of spiritual life within your soul; if a single spark of the love of Christ, glowing within your heart; if a single trace of conformity to Christ, discernible in your character; if ever a promise of the gospel has spoken peace to your troubled spirit; or a hope of the Gospel has ever brightened to your view the visions of eternity; for all this you are indebted to the Spirit of all grace, and love, and peace, and glory!

And why do I thus impress on you nere a sense of your infinite obligations to this blessed Spirit? Is it to give emphasis to

the apostolical injunction, “ Quench not the Spirit ! Grieve not the Holy Spirit ;” for it is to Him you must look for all those holy tempers and dispositions, of which we have spoken, as constituting the necessary preparatives and ingredients for composing the spirit of prayer.

Yes, it is He that must rouse your sluggish faculties—warm your cold heart—elevate your grovelling affections—check your wandering thoughts — cleanse your polluted imaginations,—and thus fit you for communion with a pure and holy God.

Beware, then, of quenching the Spirit’s inspiration ! Grieve Him not, by the indulgence of sinful thoughts, tempers, or desires. He is a pure Spirit, and dove-like, will not dwell in a defiled habitation—a sin-polluted soul, in contact and converse with impure and unholy appetites and lusts. He is a gentle Spirit, that loves peace, and holy quiet ; the loud angry voice of contention and clamour will frighten Him away ! He is a loving Spirit, and will not fix His abode

in a breast, where envy, malice, resentment, or unkindness are allowed to dwell ! Oh ! do not drive Him from you, by preferring to His companionship such guests as these. Gratefully listen to His slightest whispers ; cheerfully obey His gentlest suggestions ; cherish, with a holy jealousy, His celestial influences. Then, indeed, may you expect often to enjoy such sweet communion with your covenant-God, in the devotional retirement of your closet, that, like Jacob, you will be ready to exclaim, “ Surely God has been in this place, and made it no other than the very gate of heaven ! ” and from this high and holy converse with your God, you will return to the world, like Moses, coming down from the mount, with such a heavenly light, still lingering about you, and shedding such a lustre of holiness over all your words, and actions, as will proclaim to all around that you have been with God.

Thus combining all that Scripture requires, as essential to the spirit of devotion, you will increasingly find prayer, as you

travel heavenward, your support and solace, amidst all the toils, and trials, you may meet with on the way.

Continually supplied, through this channel, with invigorating and refreshing influences from above, you will pass on from strength to strength, till you reach that blessed place, where there will be no more need of any channel for divine communications ; for *there* you shall drink direct from the divine Fountain of light, and life—exchanging the foretastes of faith for the fulness of fruition ; the prospects of hope, for the possession of heaven : and the supplications of struggling prayer, before the throne of grace, for the songs of triumphant praise, before the throne of glory.

ADDRESS VII.

ON PRAYER FOR TEMPORAL BLESSINGS.

“ Be careful for nothing ; but, in *all* things, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.”—PHIL. iv. 6.

IT has been, I believe, a question among Christians, whether a child of God should make temporal blessings a subject of supplication at the throne of grace ; or whether he should leave the disposal of them unre-servedly in his heavenly Father’s hands, not merely not presuming to dictate what his covenant-God should give, but even venturing to intimate what he himself would wish to receive.

Our utter ignorance of what is really for our good in our temporal matters, may have suggested the propriety and prudence of thus leaving all that concerns them, unre-

servedly, in our heavenly Father's hands, without even the expression of a wish upon the subject; and this idea may have appeared to be countenanced by the advice of our blessed Lord, when He enjoined His disciples to take no thought, even about the necessary supplies of food or raiment; for, says Jesus, "after all these things do the Gentiles seek; and your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things; but seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

But surely we are not entitled to infer from these expressions, that prayer for temporal blessings is forbidden. For if the fact of our heavenly Father's knowing that we have need of them, and the assurance that, if we seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, all these, in whatever measure He knows to be best, shall be supplied to us; if these render prayer on their behalf unwarrantable or superfluous, the same mode of reasoning would apply, with in-

creased emphasis to prove the superfluity of prayer for spiritual blessings ; because here, pre-eminently, our heavenly Father knows that we have need of them, and has specially promised, that, if we seek them in faith, they shall be given unto us. But, if this knowledge and promise, on the part of God, in the one case, do not supersede the necessity or propriety of prayer, why should they in the other ?

Besides, if we examine the passage, and its context, more closely, we shall perceive that our Lord's design was not to prove the impropriety of humble prayer, for temporal mercies, but the sinfulness of a dishonouring disbelief of God's providential care over His children : not to forbid devout supplication, but distrustful solicitude, about the objects of our earthly wants and wishes.

For this purpose he appeals, with affecting beauty of language, and tenderness of feeling, to the birds of the air, and the flowers of the field ; that He may thus carry home to our hearts, with irresistible demon-

stration, the precious and consolatory assurance, which ought to dispel all our anxieties and alarms about our earthly wants, that He who feeds the birds, will not starve His babes,"—that He who is so mindful of sparrows, will not be unmindful of His saints.

And when our Lord desires us, because of the paramount importance of eternal things, to "seek *first* the kingdom of God, and His righteousness," with a cheerful assurance that to those who do so, all needful temporal blessings will be supplied, (super-added, as it were, to the spiritual blessings so abundantly bestowed,) this by no means forbids, but rather by implication, directs us, *secondly*, to seek, and, therefore, to pray for, those inferior blessings, with desires and supplications proportioned to their inferior value. Just as the Redeemer's command, to "labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth to everlasting life," does not imply that we are not to labour at all for the body's necessary food, but only that we should labour more

earnestly for the spiritual food of our immortal souls! The design, in both instances, is manifestly the same—to make us feel the supreme, the infinite importance of those things, which have impressed on them the stamp of eternity, that we may learn to labour for *them*, with a zeal proportioned to their infinite value; and to pursue all temporal good with that subordinate solicitude, with which beings, born for immortality, should seek any object, whose value is, in the light of eternity, seen to be of comparatively so little worth.

We see, then, that this passage, (apparently the strongest dissuasive from prayer for temporal blessings,) is only designed, when rightly understood, to teach the children of God the sweet lesson of cheerful trust in their heavenly Father's providential bounty and care, as pledged to supply them with all needful accommodations for their journey through the wilderness, to their inheritance above.

But though not prohibited, are we war-

ranted, by scriptural authority, to pray for temporal blessings?

I think we are, and by an authority so decisive, as at once to determine the point—the authority of the Author and Finisher of our faith.

If we turn to that brief, but most beautiful prayer, which has been taught us by more than human lips—that divine directory for our devotions, which, though so compendious in substance, is yet so comprehensive in spirit, that there is not, perhaps, a petition we can suitably present to God, which is not reducible under the head of some one of its clauses, we shall find, (as it appears to me,) our divine Redeemer's sanction, for making temporal blessings the subject of supplication, in the clause—"Give us this day our daily bread."

That our blessed Lord included, in this petition, a reference to our spiritual food, the bread of life, which nourisheth the soul, may be fully admitted; as also that He designed to remind His people, that they as in-

dispensably require a fresh supply of this celestial food each day, to keep the soul in spiritual health and strength, as of their daily bread for the support of their natural life. But it is more consistent with the beautiful simplicity of our Lord's style, to conclude that, in its primary sense, He intended us, by this petition, to lay our temporal wants before our heavenly Father, and thus to look up to the same all-bounteous hand, to supply both our temporal and spiritual necessities; that so, receiving both alike from the same gracious God, they may both draw our hearts closer, by the threefold cord of dependence, trust, and gratitude, to the Giver of all our blessings—the Author and Sustainer both of our natural and spiritual life.

'Tis true—and it is most worthy of all observation, that both the place it occupies, and the nature of the petition itself, teach us to pound our desires and supplications for temporal things, within the limits of the soberest moderation.

When we consider how little it asks, and

that even that little is not asked, till after the heart has poured forth its fervent desires for the advancement of our heavenly Father's glory, in those repeated supplications—"Hallowed be Thy name : Thy kingdom come : Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven : " how strikingly are we taught, that the spirit in which a child of God should approach his heavenly Father in prayer, is a spirit of supreme solicitude for that Father's glory, absorbing all other anxieties and aims, and subordinating to this grateful feeling all solicitude or supplication about our own wishes or wants.

It seems to put this language into the lips of a child of God, when coming to pour out his heart in prayer, before his Father in heaven—" Oh ! my Father, thou knowest that it is the first, the dearest desire of this heart, that Thy name may be hallowed ; Thy kingdom come ; Thy will be done ! Thy glory is far dearer to me, than any separate or selfish interests of my own. This, therefore, I would make the object of my

first, my most fervent supplications. If *this* be accomplished—if Thy glory, O my Father, be but advanced, in the wide-spread extension of thy kingdom, and universal and unlimited obedience to Thy will, in earth and heaven, the most ardent desires of this heart are abundantly satisfied; and as for myself, all I ask is—Give me, this day, my daily bread!”

Oh, surely, when we thus contrast the priority of place, and fervency and frequency of entreaty, distinguishing the petitions for the advancement of God’s glory, with the simple supplication subjoined—“Give me my daily bread!” are we not forcibly reminded, that when our heavenly Father’s honour is concerned, we should be indeed, ambitious; and our desires should burn with intense ardour; and our supplications be enlarged, and importunate, and persevering; but where our own wants or wishes are concerned, we should be most unambitious, and our desires be bounded by simplicity and moderation, and our supplications be propor-

tionably simple and moderate. But still, does not this very petition, while it suggests the *spirit* in which we should pray for temporal blessings, supply us with a scriptural *warrant* for such prayers? And does not the petition thus understood, afford a most beautiful commentary on those words of our blessed Lord, to which we have before adverted, as containing, in the opinion of some, a dissuasive from prayer for temporal blessings—"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you?"

Does not this clause in the Lord's prayer give us His own divine comment on His own injunction; and tell us that, while the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and His glory, should be sought by us, as objects of prime and paramount solicitude, (because of their prime and paramount glory in themselves, and value to us as destined for immortality,) still may those temporal blessings, of which our heavenly Father knoweth we have need, be desired and supplicated but,

only with that strictly subordinate measure of interest, which is suitable to their altogether subordinate value.

This petition seems to determine the point in question, because, though the thing supplicated be but daily bread, to intimate with how small a portion of this world's goods the children of God should be content, still does it fully sanction the *principle*, that we are permitted to make temporal blessings the subject of supplication.

To this I will only subjoin, by way of confirmation, the apostolical injunction—"Be careful for nothing; but in *all things*, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God."

Observe in all things without limitation or exception; all things—temporal and spiritual—all things connected with the concerns and interests both of time and eternity.

Now two important advantages appear to result from being thus privileged, in regard to temporal, as well as spiritual things, to make our requests known unto God.

The first is, that it supplies a most valuable directory for the regulation of our desires, in all temporal matters. A child of God could not adopt a safer rule, on this subject, than never to *wish* for any thing, for which he could not properly *pray*—never to cherish a *desire*, which he could not convert into a *prayer*.

It were a waste of time to multiply words in proving, how this cuts up by the root, at once, all sinful desires ; all such as have for their object any forbidden indulgence—any gratification, incompatible with the character of a christian, as being opposed to the will and word of God. Only think, how horrible even to glance at the idea of asking the pure, and righteous, and loving God, to enable us to gratify some impure desire, or succeed in some fraudulent speculation, or accomplish some revengeful plan.

The spirit of this observation will apply to all inordinate desires, whether prompted by ambition, covetousness, or that most subtle and seductive sin, to whose snares the

children of God are especially exposed—idolatrous affection.

Picture to your mind a child of God praying to his heavenly Father, to indulge him in such desires as these; to raise him to some exalted station, that his pride may be gratified, by his being admired and applauded among his fellow men; or to lavish on him abundant wealth, that he may possess the means of plunging deeper into worldly luxuries, and sensual enjoyments; or to render him an object of idolatrous love to some fellow-creature, to whom he may be allowed, as a supreme source of hope and happiness, to stand in God's stead. You feel how you would shrink from offering up *such prayers*. Then equally shrink from indulging *such desires*.

In truth, you may at once determine the lawfulness of any desire, by bringing it to the test of this spiritual touchstone.

Just consider for a moment, can you come into your heavenly Father's presence, with an assured heart, and cheerful courage,

grounded on the warrant of His revealed will and word, to ask Him to give you the desire of your heart. If you can, it is quite compatible with your character, as a child of God, to cherish that desire. But if there be anything, either in the object itself, or the circumstances connected with it, or the means necessary for its attainment, which makes you pause, and feel uncomfortable and reluctant at the thought of bringing the matter in prayer before God, and asking what you wish for, at *His hands*, then should you suspect the lawfulness of such a desire; and in this case, you should examine it more closely in the light of Scripture, and weigh it more carefully in the balance of the sanctuary, with an honest determination, (formed in humble reliance on divine strength,) to abide by the result of this scriptural investigation. And if your desire be found wanting in any essential qualification, which characterizes such as are suitable to a child of God, then be it even dear to you as a right hand, or a right eye, cut it off—pluck

it out—cast it away from you. And if you make this sacrifice, in a spirit of grateful submission and love to God, oh! will you not be abundantly recompensed for any earthly enjoyment you may give up, when you hear His voice saying to you—“Because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld this darling desire of thine heart from me, but hast cheerfully sacrificed it for my sake, and at my command, therefore, blessing I will bless thee, saith God, even thy God.”

The second advantage that results from making all our requests, in all things, known unto God, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, is, that it supplies the most effectual antidote to that feverish thirst, that fretful solicitude, about earthly enjoyments, and earthly cares, which so constantly agitate and harass the children of the world—making their hearts like the troubled sea, that cannot rest; and which too often, alas! are allowed to disturb the peace even of the children of God: distracting with agitating anxiety those bosoms, which ought ever to

exhibit a tranquillity, as unruffled as the smooth surface of the placid lake, when the moonbeams are sleeping on its peaceful bosom, and not a breath of wind is abroad, to disturb its deep repose. Is not this the state of mind, which a child of God is privileged to possess, when he reflects, that if the combined exertions of all the glorious attributes of the Godhead, which all are solemnly pledged, and unceasingly employed on his behalf, can secure his happiness both for time and eternity, then is his happiness as secure, in the hands of the God of his salvation, as his heart could possibly desire.

Is not this what the apostle meant, when he said—"Be careful for nothing?" And having recommended prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, as a divine remedy for all carefulness, does he not represent, as the blessed result of following his prescription, the enjoyment of that peace, which no worldly joys can ever give, and (blessed be God!) no worldly sorrows can ever take away?—"Let your requests, in *all* things,

be made known unto God; *and* the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your heart and mind, through Christ Jesus?"

Yes! believer, follow this one rule faithfully! and you will have as much of heaven on earth, as can possibly be enjoyed.

Oh! it is strange, it is surpassingly strange, that when the children of God are privileged to get rid of all care, by casting it all on God, rolling over the whole burthen of it on His almighty arm, and so might travel on to His house in heaven, with a light step, and a lighter heart—unencumbered by a single solicitude about temporal things; they are yet so enamoured of earthly sorrow—so averse to the enjoyment of heavenly peace, that they prefer dragging on the galling chain of worldly anxiety, which so clogs and fetters their every step, in running the race set before them, making them so often halt, and stumble on the way.

Strange, is it not, that God should be so tenderly—so affectionately solicitous, that His

children should enjoy uninterrupted peace by reposing, in a spirit of faithful carelessness, on His own faithfulness, wisdom, power, and love; and that they should be so reluctant to be as happy, as their heavenly Father wishes them to be?

Now, for the maintenance of that blessed frame of mind, which makes the breast where it reigns a very miniature of heaven, I know nothing more calculated, under the divine blessing, to be efficacious, than the habit recommended by the apostle, of making our requests, *in all things*, known unto God.

It is such a sweet feeling, to be allowed to treat the blessed God with all the endearing freedom and confidence of filial love—to tell Him *all* that is in our hearts—to spread out before Him *every* wish that is cherished there—and to ask from Him everything that we think is calculated to promote our happiness, in the sweet assurance that, *if* for our real good, He will most gladly grant us the desire of our heart.

It does so unburthen the heart of its load of solicitude, to take and fling the whole weight of it on the arm of God. It does so tranquillize our spirits, to unbosom all their most secret feelings to the Father of spirits, in the humble confidence—the holy freedom of filial affection, and fervent prayer.

Having, then weighed your desires in the balance of the sanctuary, and ascertained that they are such, as you can consistently present before God, always bring them before Him, in prayer and supplication with thanksgiving.

Make your request fully known to Him—lay the whole case unreservedly before Him—relieve your full heart, by pouring out all its wishes into your heavenly Father's ears; and then, leave the matter cheerfully and confidingly in His hands. And you may rest assured that if what you desire, and have asked for, will really conduce to your true—that is your spiritual and eternal welfare, God will as freely give it to you, as he freely gave His own Son.

But never forget, how utterly incompetent you are to form a correct judgment of what, in temporal things, is really best for you; how prone you are to be deceived by false appearances of seeming good; how totally ignorant you are of the results to your spiritual interests, that would attend the attainment of your earthly wishes.

Of all this you are ignorant, but your God is not. Leave it therefore to Him to choose for you. Remember how often, if your own choice had been allowed you, and the desires of your heart granted, you would have been utterly ruined, as to your present peace, if not your eternal prospects. Oh! learn wisdom for the future, from the experience of the past. Whenever God's judgment and will run counter to yours, with regard to some desired object which you have asked, as thinking it would ensure your happiness, but which He refuses, accustom yourself to say—“*He knows best.*” Trust me, there is in those three short words, repeated in faith and resignation, a sacred charm.

which can allay the most distracting anxieties—reconcile a believer's mind to the bitterest disappointments, and enable him to receive, with a calm, and even a cheerful smile, the refusal of his fondest earthly wishes—the blighting of his dearest earthly hopes.

Whenever, therefore, your heavenly Father refuses your request for any earthly object, say to yourself, “ Because He loves me, He refuses to give me, what He knows Satan would render a successful snare, to seduce me into sin. My Father sees the lurking mischief in the object of my wishes, which I cannot detect—the serpent concealed amidst the flowers, which strew the path I would so delight to tread—the secret poison, mingled in the sparkling draught, which I so desire to drink—and, *therefore*, in the very faithfulness and tenderness of His love, He shields me from the dangers, and saves me from the ruin, I neither see nor fear, by denying requests,

which it would be cruelty to my soul to grant."

May you not, in this, learn a lesson from an earthly parent's love? Suppose you were walking in the fields with a beloved child, and that he, tempted by the beautiful aspect of some poison berries, were eagerly to entreat of you to gather them, and give them to him to eat: would a father's love allow you to comply with his request? And if he persevered in his entreaty, yea, even if he asked you with pleading tears, would you be acting a father's part, if you were to yield to the eagerness of his desire, and the importunity of his supplication, and give him the poisoned fruit?

And shall your heavenly Father be expected to act a part, the bare supposition of which would be so deep an insult to an earthly Father's love?

But even admit, what you desire is not poisoned pleasures, but pure and legitimate enjoyments—such as He permits, and could be asked to hallow and bless; still they may

be utterly unfit for you. You could not, perhaps, from your peculiar temperament and bias, be safely trusted with them: would it then be kindness in God to give what, He knew, would hurt your soul?

If you had a child, whose delicate constitution rendered sweet-meats injurious to his health, and tonic bitters indispensable, to brace his debilitated frame, which would a father's love prompt you to give your child? what would gratify his palate, or what would promote his health?

Alas! the children of God are indeed little capable, even in their healthiest state, of digesting the cloying sweets of worldly ease, and earthly enjoyment. They require, much more, the strengthening bitters of affliction, to give tone and vigour to their spiritual frame, and fit it for active exertion in the service of their God. But of this they may be assured, that, as their heavenly Physician is their heavenly Father too, He will not make the cup, in the smallest degree, unnecessarily bitter; but will propor-

tion it, with equal tenderness and skill, to the constitution of the children of His love ; for he knows their frame, their malady, and the only means of cure ; knows all this, with infallible certainty—and surely should not be suspected of deriving a cruel pleasure, from putting his children to unnecessary pain. So that they should cheerfully say, however bitter the draught He has prepared—“The cup which *my Father* hath given me, shall I not drink it ?”

There is another train of thought, that will tend much to reconcile you to the refusal of your prayers for any temporal blessings, by confirming the assurance that they are refused by your heavenly Father in loving-kindness to your soul.

Habituate yourself to view them in the light of Eternity, that you may not rate them above their real value, or desire them with an eagerness, disproportioned to their worth.

Compare them with the spiritual blessings of the everlasting covenant ; and must you

not confess that the most precious of them are, at best, but *precious trifles*, when compared with these ?

I do not deny that health, competence, worldly comforts, domestic happiness, are in themselves desirable and valuable ; but what are they, compared with the pardon of sin—the sanctification of the soul—the restoration to the divine favour—the renewal in the divine Image—the love of Christ—the comforts of the Holy Ghost—the means of grace—and the hope of glory ?

Will He who has given you the greater, withhold from you the less, if they would indeed be blessings to your soul ?

You desire, and with cheerful submission ask from God, some temporal blessing—the realization of some darling scheme, round which you have fondly twined your dearest hopes of earthly happiness. God refuses it to your prayers. Why ? Because it is *too great* a blessing for Him to bestow ? Indeed ! Do you really mean to say so ? What ! does it, in the eternal Father's esti-

mation—yea, or in our own—exceed in preciousness His own, His only Son? Do you rate it above Christ? Does it transcend God's well-beloved Son in worth? Now God gave Him for you; *how then shall He not*, if for your good, give the other too? Still, you plead, the blessing you desire is very precious! Granted! But does it, in value, exceed "the inheritance among the saints in light, incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away?" Now God has reserved *this* in heaven for you; and can He then deem the other too great a blessing to bestow? For shame! believer, to rate your heavenly inheritance, Esau-like, below a mess of pottage. The great God our Saviour, the Giver of all, gave *Himself for you*; and yet, you think He grudges you some trifling earthly gift, as a token of His love. Why, what was the sin of Judas? He valued Jesus less than thirty pieces of silver! Oh! have you never seemed to estimate the Saviour, at as low a price? Does not a spirit of repining or distrust, because

any earthly object of desire is denied, while you profess to believe, that in the boundlessness of His love, the eternal Father spared not his own Son—does not, I say, such a spirit approximate towards a Judas' valuation of the Saviour's worth? And oh! how should this thought make you shudder, at the most distant approach towards overvaluing earthly blessings, and undervaluing the well-beloved Son of God.

I have dwelt the more anxiously on this point, because there is, on this subject, the strangest inconsistency in many of the children of God. They are willing to trust God with the vast concerns of their immortal souls for everlasting ages, but reluctant to trust Him with the petty concerns of their perishable bodies, for a few years, or it may be hours. They thankfully believe, that He will delight to make them perfectly happy, throughout eternity; and yet appear to suspect, that He is unconcerned about their happiness now; yea, that He even visits

them with trials and afflictions, superfluously severe.

Now really can it be imagined that God at an infinite cost, even at the price of the blood of His own Son, has provided for the adopted children of His love an eternal inheritance of inconceivable blessedness and glory in heaven ; and yet will neglect to furnish them with all needful supplies and comforts, on their way through this world's wilderness, to take possession of their inheritance above ?

But perhaps unbelief will suggest the thought—Is it not altogether incompatible with the infinite majesty of the Almighty, to take any interest in such contemptible trifles, as the temporal concerns of poor, perishing worms of the dust ?

Indeed ! Then what meant the Son of God, when He said—“ the very hairs of your head are all numbered.” Why did he fasten on a circumstance, of all conceivable ones the most utterly unimportant to our weal or woe—the number of the hairs of our head ?

Why select such an image—such an expression as this? Was it not to say to the children of God, in a language so emphatically strong and endearing, that one might have thought it would have been found sufficient to overcome the unbelieving distrust of the most incredulous, or the diffident fears of the most timid—“Believe me there is no circumstance connected with your welfare, either for time or eternity, which your Heavenly Father deems too trivial—too minute, to be placed within the sphere of His directing superintendence, and watchful care.”

Oh! not for the wealth of ten thousand worlds, would I give up the blessed assurance, which this sweetest expression warrants me to cherish, that the minutest events of my life, (if I am a child of God, by a living faith in His dear Son,) the exact measure of health or sickness, comforts, or cares—the precise proportion of earthly joys and earthly sorrows—the fulfilment or frustration of my dearest earthly hopes—all, all are

arranged for me, with the tenderest regard to my weakness, and the kindest adaptation to my wants, and the wisest consultation for my welfare, by Him, the infinitude of whose love for me, when I look at the cross, I vainly endeavour to grasp, and can only look *there*, and weep, and wonder, and adore.

Whenever, therefore, child of God, you feel tempted to repine, because your prayers for some earthly object of desire are denied, just reflect, if your God were to give you the choice of two plans for the future arrangement of the events of your life, which of them would you prefer. Either to continue to keep it in His own hands, and, while giving you the privilege of making *all* your requests known unto Him, in prayer, to reserve to Himself the prerogative of putting His veto on *such*, as He knew would prove injurious to your eternal welfare—or, to promise, that, for the future, he would entrust the guardianship over your affairs into your own hands, and immediately grant your every request, without limitation or re-

serve, oh! could you be mad enough to hesitate, for one second, which of these two plans to prefer?

Do you know so little of your own heart's deceitfulness, or Satan's wiles, as not to fear, that thus left to choose for yourself, God's unreserved compliance with your every request would prove your ruin? Because, in your blindness, you would be in fearful danger of not only plunging yourself into inextricable trials and miseries upon earth, but even plunging yourself, soul and body, into the intolerable and unending torments of hell.

Bless God, then, that you are not left to choose or arrange for yourself; but that He vouchsafes, in His infinite condescension and love, to take the guidance and guardianship of your life into His own hands. Dwell, rejoicingly and thankfully, on the contemplation of those *three* attributes, whose union in your covenant-God secures your happiness, beyond the possibility of chance or change; a wisdom that nothing can deceive

—a power that nothing can resist—a love that nothing can exhaust.

Meditate upon these, till they have infused into you such a sweet contentedness to “lie passive in the hands of God, having no will but His ;” that the peace of God will descend from above, and settle on your soul, dispelling the dark clouds of earthly disquietude and care—and driving away from the hallowed breast, where it sheds the sweetest foretastes of heaven, *every* anxiety, except the anxiety to please the God of your salvation ; *every* fear, except the fear of offending Him ; *every* solicitude, except the solicitude to promote His glory.

And when once this supreme solicitude to glorify God is triumphantly established as the master-passion of the soul, the regulator of all its desires, the main-spring of all its movements, then are all the principles and powers of the mysterious mechanism of our spiritual frame harmoniously balanced and arranged. Each part, from the mightiest wheel to the minutest pivot, is in its proper

place and directed to its proper end; and that end, the very noblest to which the highest archangel can aspire—the advancement of the glory of God.

Assuredly, then, if we are ambitious to attain, on earth, to something of angelic bliss, we must learn in this to copy the angelic character, and seek our supreme felicity in glorifying God.

ADDRESS VIII.

ON INTERCESSORY PRAYER.

“ I exhort, therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men.”—1 TIM. ii. 1.

“ Pray one for another.” —JAMES v. 16.

“ Brethren, pray for us.”—1 THESS. v. 25.

THERE is one species of prayer, to which we have not yet adverted, which, in its constitution, bears such an unequivocal impress of the character of that “ God who is love,” and in Scripture, is honoured with such peculiar marks of His approbation—one, which contains such abundant and gracious provision for giving a safe direction, and sweet expression, to our fondest affections ; and has such a powerful tendency to cherish every benevolent, expand every generous, rebuke every selfish, and utterly eradicate

every resentful feeling of our nature, that I cannot conclude these imperfect observations on devotional communion with God, without touching on one of its most delightful branches—intercessory prayer.

Its value will be appreciated when we consider how prominent a place, in the constitution of our nature, has been assigned by its Divine Author, to the affections which link us so closely together, in all those endearing ties of earthly love, for which “home is a name so dear:” and when we reflect how much of our happiness or misery depends on the due regulation, and legitimate indulgence, of those affections; and also, how fatally prone we are to indulge them to an idolatrous excess, and thus defeat the gracious purpose for which they were bestowed, perverting what God designed for a blessing into a curse. Surely, then, it bears a special stamp of the loving-kindness of our God, that He should have provided in intercessory prayer, a way, by which the poisonous sting of idolatrous love

may be extracted from our hearts, and a channel opened, in which our affections may not merely flow with safety to our spiritual welfare, but become a medium of conveying to our souls a rich supply of spiritual blessings.

Yes, it is sweet to think that there is *one place*, at least, even before a throne of grace, where our love for those, twined round our heart-strings, cannot be too warmly, or tenderly cherished; where the language of its fond and fervent feelings cannot be breathed forth with too intense an ardour of affection, or earnestness of intreaty; where all our happiness, connected with the objects of our love, if they are fellow sharers with us in a Saviour's love, can catch a glow of celestial radiance from that Saviour's smile; and all our anxieties on their behalf be lulled to rest, by being reposed in the bosom of their Father, and our Father—their God and our God.

Nor is it one of the least decisive, or delightful, of those distinguishing marks, by

which the children of God may be discriminated from the children of the world, and their immeasurable superiority over them, in all the materials for true happiness, displayed ; that while, with the latter, all the enjoyments flowing from the affections are but so many idolatrous enticements to seduce—and all the anxieties awakened by them but so many corroding cares to alienate, their hearts from God ; these both are instrumental, through the medium of intercessory prayer, in drawing the hearts of the children of God closer to their Father in heaven, as the sanctifier of all their affections, the sweetener of all their happiness, and the soother of all their cares.

For, by the gracious arrangement which has appointed that, through the instrumentality of intercessory prayer, we may become, in the best sense of the word, benefactors to those we love, by obtaining for them supplies of spiritual blessings from our Divine Benefactor, we are reminded, that the surest and strongest expression of our love for them

is that which draws both them and us nearer to God. Thus, the more tenderly we are taught to love those for whom we intercede, the more gratefully do we learn to love Him, to whom our intercessory supplications are addressed. The deeper sense we have of our obligations to each other for the blessings obtained through our mutual intercession, we but feel a deeper sense of the infinite obligations we all owe to Him, by whom all those blessings are bestowed.

Surely on this arrangement is legibly impressed the stamp of heaven, with those precious words—"God is love,"

And oh! it is only those that have experienced, who can at all appreciate, what a healing balm intercessory prayer pours into the bleeding heart of a child of God, who is mourning over unconverted relatives, linked round his affections by the closest and most endearing ties of earthly love. How it supports and comforts him, under his otherwise overwhelming weight of anguish on their account, to bring them in the arms

of faith and prayer to Him, who can breathe into their souls that spiritual life, to which as yet they are strangers, and draw them to Himself, by the sweet attractions of redeeming love! What precious consolation it imparts, to confide this bitterest of earthly sorrows to a compassionate Father's ears, and to be cheered by the delicious hope, that He may, in His infinite mercy, hear and grant the prayer of interceding supplication, on their behalf, and, by His Divine Spirit, infuse into their souls a living, sanctifying faith; kindle in their hearts the glow of gratitude to a Saviour-God, and make them partakers of all the inestimable blessings of His great salvation! Yes! when faithful remonstrance, affectionate expostulation, tender entreaty, all have failed, to awaken in their bosoms one feeling of serious solicitude about their eternal interests, it has often stayed up the sinking spirit, that was just on the point of giving way to agonizing despair, to turn, as its last best refuge, to intercessory prayer, and with all the intense fervency of

Christian love, to plead for those who never plead for themselves, that they may be converted by the divine mercy of that blessed Spirit, who can enlighten the darkest understanding, soften the hardest heart, subdue the most stubborn will, and constrain the stoutest rebel, or most careless contemner of a Saviour's love, kneel, in penitential sorrow, adoring gratitude, and unreserved self-surrender, at the foot of His cross.

And if the fervour of such intercessory supplication be faithfully followed up by a consistent exhibition of the Christian character, displayed in all its attractive loveliness, in the domestic circle, and by an affectionate appeal, on every seasonable opportunity, to the heart as well as the understanding of the objects of its tender solicitude, what abundant encouragement is there to hope, that this labour of love shall not be in vain in the Lord—but that He who delighteth to hear and answer the prayers, and especially the intercessory prayers of His people, will, in gracious approbation of the Christian

love and zeal which they display, pour out the influences of His live-giving Spirit on the souls, for which *such* prayers are offered up before the throne of grace!

The mother of Augustine is not the only one, who has been supported, through years of intense anxiety on behalf of a beloved object, by the consolatory reflection which the good bishop suggested to the weeping Monica, “that the child of so many tears and prayers could not finally be lost!” A similar hope has, in every age of the Christian church, prompted the fervent prayers, and upheld the fainting spirits of multitudes of Christians, mourning over beloved ones, who are living in the world without God, without Christ—and *therefore* without hope—at least, without a scriptural hope of salvation!

Delightful also are the feelings, which flow from intercessory prayer, when it is offered up, with all the cordial sincerity and fervency of Christian love, on behalf of our bitterest enemies—of those who have heaped

on us the most unprovoked and aggravated injuries and insults! When we are enabled by divine grace, to pour out our hearts, with affectionate energy of supplication for *them*, that they may be abundantly blest with all spiritual blessings, in Christ Jesus, then may we hope, that we have indeed, in the strength of the Lord, triumphed over every resentful emotion, and that the spirit of Christian forgiveness is reigning in our hearts! And oh! it is sweet, when we are thus enabled at once to comply with our Divine Master's command—"to love our enemies, and to pray for them who despitefully use and persecute us,"—and to follow *His* example, who, on the Cross, poured out His expiring breath in a prayer for the forgiveness of His murderers!

And thus does intercessory prayer supply a decisive test, by which we may ascertain, whether we have, from our hearts, forgiven all who have injured us—and a source of the purest pleasure in the indulgence of the sweet sensations, which accompany the tri-

umph of Christian love over our resentful feelings, and the consciousness of obeying the precept, and participating in the spirit of Him, who was Divine Love manifest in the flesh—and who not merely prayed for, but even died for, His enemies !

Intercessory prayer has also a powerful tendency to counteract that deep-rooted selfishness, which, in some of its innumerable shapes, is the besetting sin of fallen human nature, while unrenewed by divine grace ; and to substitute, in its stead, that diffusive benevolence—that generous philanthropy, which delights, with such disinterested joy, in promoting the welfare and happiness of others—and which more perhaps than any other principle, when sublimated by the spirit of Christian love, assimilates the character of man to the character of God, and approximates the human nature to the divine.

How beautiful is intercessory supplication calculated to effectuate this triumph of implanted philanthropy over innate selfishness, by reminding the child of God, that he

is not to come before his Father in heaven, in devotional communion, as a solitary and selfish being—entirely engrossed with his own wants and desires, solitudes and sorrows, to pour forth supplications, which would only embody the very spirit of selfishness; but as the member of a large and loved family, whose father is his God, and therefore all its members his brethren, beloved by him for that Father's sake; and endeared to his heart's tenderest affections, by sympathy in suffering, and participation in privileges—by fellowship in a Saviour's love, and communion in the Holy Ghost—as sharers in all the exceeding great and precious promises of the covenant of grace, and all the unutterably rich and magnificent prospects of the inheritance of glory.

The believer is thus taught to bear all his brethren in Christ on his heart, before the throne of grace; to spread out their wants, as well as his own, before their common Father in heaven; and seek for them, as for himself, a supply of all spiritual blessings in

Christ Jesus, with an ardour of affectionate desire, which shows that he is not forgetful of the command to love them, even as he loves himself. And what can have a stronger or sweeter influence, to raise him out of the narrow sphere of selfishness, with its low aims, and confined prospects, and contracted feelings; and lift him into that loftier and lovelier region of Christian charity—so much nearer heaven—with its enlarged aims, and generous affections, and boundless prospects—where an atmosphere, impregnated with the very essence of God's character, breathes all around him; and every object is sparkling with the radiance of that Sun, which rejoices to fling, far and wide, His beams of gladness and of glory—even the Sun of Righteousness.

Since, then, the habit of affectionate intercessory prayer is so peculiarly fitted to cherish the spirit of Christian benevolence, can we wonder it is honoured, in Scripture, with such special tokens of the divine approbation: for what is the ultimate design

of the gospel dispensation? Is it not to assimilate our character to that of God—to re-stamp the divine image on the soul of man—and so to make the human, in all its moral features, a partaker of the divine nature, as to be capacitated for a happiness, derived from God, and consisting, in its very essence, in likeness to God: without which, it is manifest, we can never derive happiness, either from the service of God on earth, or even from the presence of God in heaven.

Now, is it not the fact, that the greatest is also the most generous of beings—that the most unselfish of all spirits, (if we may with reverence use the expression,) is that very Spirit who is alone, and infinitely, sufficient to Himself, for His own blessedness—that He, who is altogether independent of all other beings, for happiness, is He who most of all delights, in promoting the happiness of others, to find his own.

Can we, in truth, form a more correct conception of the ever-blessed God, than

that of a Being of the most disinterested and unbounded benevolence—rejoicing to replenish, out of His own inexhaustible fulness, innumerable beings with abundant joy; to send the streams of His bounty, flowing in innumerable channels, throughout the boundless extent of His creation; to light up an universe with the sunshine of gladness, by the smile of His countenance: and then to find His own supreme happiness, in looking from the throne of His glory on all the happiness which He has created, and cherishes around Him on every side; feeling, as we cannot but believe He does, an increase to His own infinite felicity, in every smile of gladness that glows throughout creation; in every voice of rejoicing, that thrills throughout the universe, from the warbling of the linnæus in the grove, to the song of the seraph before the throne.

Oh! the attempt is delightful amidst all its hopelessness, to strain our faculties to the very uttermost, in the endeavour to grasp even a faint conception of what must

be the happiness of the blessed God, in surveying all the happiness diffused throughout the universe, and feeling that of *all* this happiness He is Himself the Source.

To grasp the full conception of this blessedness, is not within the reach of the finite faculties of mortal man—to comprehend it fully were indeed to be as God.

But if ever the child of God is conformed to the character, and participates in the happiness, of his Father in heaven, it is when, with all the benevolent affections exalted to their highest pitch, and enlarged to their utmost extent, he comes before the throne of grace, to plead, with all the ardour of Christian love, and all the energy of Christian supplication, on behalf of all his brethren in Christ—yea, of all his brethren of mankind. To pour out his heart, in fervent prayer, for the happiness of the whole human race; and thus to seek, in the sphere of his humble instrumentality, as an intercessor, to be a benefactor to the world, by entreating the God of all grace to send down showers of

blessings from on high—even the former and the latter rain of the Spirit, whose fertilizing influences shall repeal the curse of barrenness, pronounced on our guilty world, and make “its wilderness rejoice and blossom as the rose.” A change that shall be wrought in that blessed period of millennial glory, to whose promised advent the Christian loves to look forward, and plead, with intensest fervour, for its speedy approach—that time of universal peace, and holiness, and happiness, to a regenerated world,

“ When one song shall employ all nations—and all cry—
 ‘ Worthy the Lamb, for He was slain for us !’
 The dwellers in the vales, and on the rocks,
 Shout to each other ; and the mountain tops
 From distant mountains catch the flying joy—
 Till nation after nation taught the strain,
 Earth rolls the rapturous Hosanna round !”

But it is not, merely because of the sacred luxury of feeling, the impartation of divine enjoyment, which intercessory prayer supplies, that it should be so highly prized—so habitually practised. It is, chiefly, because it

is so pre-eminently fitted to give to a believer's principles and practice, a tone corresponding to that which has characterized his prayers ; and thus to establish, within his soul, the ascendancy of that principle of Christian philanthropy, which will make his life an embodied exhibition of practical benevolence, delighting to administer to the temporal and spiritual welfare and happiness of all that come within the sphere of his influence ; and thus identifying his spirit and purposes, his hidden life before God, and his daily walk before man, with those of Him, of whom, in that brief, and simple, but most beautiful delineation of the divine Philanthropist, it is recorded " that he went about doing good ! "

Knowing that it would be a very mockery of the Almighty, to *plead* earnestly for an object, which he did not *labour* earnestly in his allotted sphere of instrumentality, to promote, the consistent Christian will endeavour, to the very utmost extent of his opportunities and means, to assist in accomplishing, what he is in the habit of fervently supplicat-

ing God, by His Almighty power, to effect. He will learn to live for the object, for which he loves to intercede, even the diffusion of universal righteousness, and peace, and joy, throughout the wide compass of the habitable globe.

Habituated to contemplate the identity of sin with sorrow, and of holiness with happiness, he will do all that in him lies, by the consecrated use of his time, talents, wealth and influence, to extirpate the former, and establish the latter, in the heart of every individual—every family, to which he can gain access.

Thus will his object, every day, become more and more the very same, for which his divine Master came on earth, and returned to heaven—even to promote “glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, good-will towards men.”

Then, in the full sense of that sweet and sublime expression, he will be “one with Christ!” And oh! what unspeakable grandeur and glory does it fling around the hum

blest Christian's life, when viewed in this connection, as identified, in aim and object, with the life of no less than—"God manifest in the flesh."

Such being the blessed tendencies of a devout habit of fervent intercessory prayer, how suitable to the gracious purpose of the gospel-scheme, (even that of conforming us to the image of Christ,) to stamp on it the especial mark of the divine approbation. Let us turn, in confirmation of this assertion, to one or two instances, which will establish its truth.

Look at Abraham, interceding for the guilty cities of the plain. Six times does the fervent patriarch plead for the devoted Sodom, and six times does the condescending God grant his intercessory petition; and, (as has been truly and beautifully remarked,) Abraham left off interceding, before God left off complying with his requests. The patriarch's faith failed, sooner than the patience of a long-suffering God!

Oh! what an encouragement to plead,

with importunate and persevering supplication, on behalf of the most abandoned sinners—the very vilest of the human race.

Look again at Lot, pleading for the city of Zoar; that it may be spared, as a place of refuge to which he may escape.

What is the answer of a gracious God to His interceding servant? “See! I have accepted thee concerning this thing also, that I will not overthrow this city, for which thou hast spoken.”

How God seems to love to listen to intercessory prayer!

Look again at Moses; how eloquent is his example!

While he was in the mount with God, the people of Israel made a golden calf, and worshipped it. Filled with righteous indignation, Jehovah said unto Moses—“Let me alone, that My wrath may wax hot against this people, and that I may consume them; and I will make of thee a great nation.”

With a heart overflowing with the most grateful zeal for God’s glory, and the most

generous love for his brethren after the flesh, the disinterested lawgiver of Israel pleads, with humble boldness and holy importunity, for the pardon of this idolatrous people.

Now mark the glorious triumph of intercessory prayer—"The Lord repented him of the evil, which He thought to do unto His people."

Again the people rebelled against God; again Jehovah threatens to disinherit them, and repeats His offer to Moses, to make of him a "greater nation, and mightier than they."

The people had just been murmuring against Moses, and proposing to choose another captain, and return to Egypt.

With a love undamped by their ingratitude, the generous patriot again lifts up the voice of pleading intercession on their behalf. "Pardon," he cries, "the iniquity of this people, according unto the greatness of thy mercy!" and what was the result? Oh! how does God, in His answer, set the seal of His special blessing on intercessory

supplication—"Pardon this people," cried Moses ; and the Lord said I *have* pardoned according to thy word."

What a touching display is here of the noble generosity of Moses, and the unbounded grace of God. How suitable a type does the forgiving intercessor appear of the promised Prophet, that was to be like unto him. How beautifully is here shadowed forth, in his example, one of the most gracious and endearing offices of the divine Intercessor of all the Israel of God.

What a deep sense must Samuel have entertained, of the obligation and duty of intercessory prayer, when he cried out, (and this, after the people of Israel had greatly provoked God, by asking for a king.) "Moreover, as for me, *God forbid* that I should *sin against the Lord*, in ceasing to pray for you."

Could language more emphatically mark how pre-eminently such prayer is pleasing, and the neglect of it sinful, in the sight of God ?

Look again at Elijah, by his prayers, opening and shutting the windows of heaven—suspending the showers—or bringing down rain upon the earth.

Now, remember how invaluable is St. James' comment on this instance of the efficacy of intercessory supplication, when, having brought it forward, to prove that the fervent effectual prayer of a righteous man availeth much, in connection with the command "*Pray one for another,*" he reminds us that "Elias was a man subject to like passions, as we are—and he *prayed earnestly*, and the heavens withheld, or gave rain according to his prayer."

As if to tell us, that it was not the voice of an archangel, which had such power on high, but that of a mere mortal—a poor weak worm of the dust, like ourselves, lifted up in the earnest prayer of faith: and so to remind us that still, and to the end of time, such prayer can never plead in vain, because

"It moves the arm that moves the universe."

But it is in the New Testament that we find the full-length and finished portrait of intercessory prayer, exhibited in the example of St. Paul.

Yes! if ever there was a man, who lived for others, not himself—willing to endure any sufferings by which the sufferings of others might be soothed, and in promoting the happiness of others, supremely desirous to find his own—that man was St. Paul.

If ever there was a human heart, in which the divine spirit of Christian benevolence was enthroned, and had brought every feeling, affection, and passion, to bow beneath its sceptre of love, it was the heart of the great Apostle of the Gentiles.

If ever there was a character, moulded in every feature after the adorable Redeemer's, and reflecting, in beautiful clearness, the image of Him, who was the incarnate manifestation of divine love, it was the character of this greatest of merely-human philanthropists. And if ever there was a life of mere man, which might be considered but as one

embodied and unbroken exhibition of disinterested zeal, for the advancement of human happiness, it was the life of St. Paul, from the moment that he met Jesus on the way to Damascus, and fell to the ground, beneath His piercing expostulation, till the moment when, as the dying testimony of his gratitude to that Jesus, he bowed his head beneath the murderous axe.

And if, among the numberless manifestations of his generous and glowing love to his brethren in Christ, there be one, in which he seemed more especially to delight, that one assuredly is intercessory prayer.

Observe how he opens and closes every epistle, with affectionate prayer—"Grace, mercy, and peace unto you, from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ."

How solemn his appeal to his beloved Roman converts—"God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit, in the gospel of His Son, that, *without ceasing*, I make mention of you always in my prayers."

Mark how he reiterates this assurance in

every epistle—"I thank my God always on your behalf." "I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers." "I thank my God, upon every remembrance of you, always, in every prayer of mine, for you all, making request with joy." "We give thanks to God always, for you all, making mention of you in our prayers."

How does he throw open his heart before us in those touching words—"God is my record, how greatly I long after you all, in the bowels of Jesus Christ; and thus I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more."

Who does not envy the feelings of the apostle, when he cried out, in a transport of the most disinterested joy:—

"What thanks can we render to God, again, for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes, before our God, night and day; praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and perfect that which is lacking in your faith." And then he bursts out

into that beautiful prayer for them—"The Lord make you to increase, and abound in love one toward another?"

How often does he break away from the language of admonition, or interrupt his chain of reasoning, to give vent to the fullness of his fervent love, in some such prayer as this—

"The God of hope fill you with all peace and joy, in believing. The God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded, one towards another, according to Christ Jesus. The Lord of Peace, Himself, give you peace always, by all means. Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even our Father, comfort your hearts. And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God, your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless, unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The man who can read these expressions without feeling any sympathetic glow kindled within his soul—any chord, touched in his heart, that vibrates in unison with the apos-

tle's, has great reason to doubt his claims to be called a Christian. And where is even the decided and devoted Christian of our day, who, on comparing his own experience with that of St. Paul, must not confess, with mingled shame and sorrow, how very far he has fallen below the standard of Christian love, as exhibited in the example of this most finished earthly portraiture of the Christian character?

Nor was intercessory prayer, with St. Paul, the benediction of a superior being so raised above human infirmities, or spiritual wants, as to be independent of, or indifferent about, the supplications of others, on his behalf. No, the humility of the apostle was as deep, as his love was fervent, or his charity comprehensive. He felt that he stood in need of his fellow-Christians' prayers' altogether as much as they could do of his; and intreated their intercessory supplications for himself, as fervently as he poured forth his own for them. "Brethren," he earnestly exclaims, "pray for us." "I be-

seech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me." "Praying always with all prayer and supplication for all saints, and for me." "In whom we trust that He will yet deliver us, ye also helping together by prayer for us." "I know that this shall turn to my salvation, through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ."

Do we not here see the links of a mysterious chain, (of whose very existence the children of the world know not,) which binds the hearts of believers together, in a bond of sacred and indissoluble union, strengthened by the feeling of common wants and weaknesses, sympathetically experienced; and endeared by the interchange of benefits and blessings, mutually conferred. A chain of divine workmanship and power, wrought in heaven and held in the hands of God; by which the affections of all His children are closely and inseparably knit together, and all alike, with sweetly irresistible attraction,

drawn upwards to Himself, as the common source and centre of all their love, and hopes, and happiness ; before whose throne of grace they all meet, in spirit, in the sweet fellowship of prayer and praise on earth : and before whose throne of glory they shall all meet, face to face, to unite in everlasting songs of praise in heaven.

But the example of St. Paul's intercession is also most valuable as a guide to direct us in offering up our own.

What are the objects which the apostle implores, with all the glowing fervour of his warm capacious heart, for those beloved brethren in Christ, whose happiness seems as dear to him as his own ?

When we cast our eye over them, we see that he deems no riches worth asking for them, except "the unsearchable riches of Christ"—no honours, but "the honour that cometh from God"—no glory, but "the crown of glory that fadeth not away"—no possession, but the incorruptible inheritance

—no blessings but those which shall endure throughout eternity.

Accustomed to look at objects in the light of that eternity, he considers nothing really valuable, on which God has not stamped the impress of immortality,

Earthly wealth, earthly honours, earthly possessions, earthly pleasures—these he does not deem worthy of one passing thought—of one single wish—of one solitary prayer.

He had weighed them in the balance of the sanctuary, and found them wanting in every essential requisite for administering to the true happiness of a child of God—a follower of Jesus, an heir of immortality: and, therefore, he has not left on record a single intercessory supplication, that any of those objects, which the world's votaries idolize, might be bestowed on his beloved brethren in Christ.

How should this silence of the apostle, when contrasted with the reiterated recurrence of his fervent prayers for all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus, to be abundantly

poured out upon those he loves—correct the false estimate we are so prone to form, of the comparative value of things temporal, and things eternal.

How should it teach us, to regulate our judgment in this matter by his, which so entirely coincides with the judgment of God; and like St. Paul, looking not at the things which are seen, and temporal, but the things which are unseen, and eternal, to count, like him, by the unerring calculation of spiritual arithmetic, that neither “the light afflictions,” nor the yet lighter joys, “which are but for a moment, are worthy to be compared with the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, which shall be revealed in the children of God, when Christ, who is their life, shall appear, and they also shall appear, with Him in glory.

And how should we thus learn to desire most ardently, and implore most fervently both for ourselves and those we love, those blessings which rank highest in the estimation of Him, who is assuredly, the alone

infallible Judge of what is most valuable—even that God, who with truly divine liberality, delights to lavish most largely on the children of His love, the blessings He Himself esteems the most precious in His power to bestow.

And these, we have the unequivocal and unbroken testimony of His written word to assure us, are such as have Himself, for their substance—holiness, for their essence—the blood of His Son, as their purchase-price—the stamp of His Spirit, as their seal—grace, for their channel—glory, for their crown—the place of their habitation, heaven—and the period of their continuance, eternity.

Make it then the subject of your most fervent supplications on behalf of those your soul holds dearest, that love to a Saviour-God, shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost, may every day become deeper and more constraining, and zeal for His glory more intense and influential; that increased energy of exertion in His service may keep pace with increased simplicity of

reliance on His righteousness; and that conformity to His character, more strongly marked, and communion with His Spirit, more devoutly enjoyed, every day, may enable them at once to evidence to all around, a growing meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light, and to experience within themselves a sweeter foretaste of the fulness of joy, which is to be their portion in heaven for ever and ever.

The sublimest intercessory prayer on record, (except one,) embodying the supplication for these blessings, in language the most magnificent that ever issued from merely human lips, will be found in the 3d chap. of Ephesians, from 14th verse to the end.

The man, on whose behalf that prayer is heard, has arrived at the highest possible pitch of happiness, of which a created being is capable; for what can be added to the happiness of him, who, according to the riches of God's glory, is strengthened with might by His Spirit, in the inner man—in

whose heart Christ dwells by faith—so that he, being rooted and grounded in love, is able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height—and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge—and who, to the utmost extent of a creature's capacity, "is filled with all the fulness of God."

Here is the safest pattern and standard, to regulate a believer's intercessions, on behalf of those he loves.

I said—the sublimest on record, except one.

That one was offered by more than mere mortal lips, and remains recorded in the 17th chapter of St. John—one of the most valuable legacies of His love, which the Son of God has bequeathed to His church.

When we compare these two patterns of intercessory prayer, might not St. Paul here also, as in all the other branches of his humble, but faithful imitation of the Saviour's example, exclaim, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ!"

Let me not, however, be mistaken.

So far as the Redeemer's intercession is to be regarded as the all-prevailing plea, grounded on the infinite merits of His own sacrifice, which procures for His church every blessing purchased for it by His blood, He stands alone, in the unapproachable majesty, the incommunicable glory, of His divine office. And of His people, in this view of His work of intercession, as well as His work of atonement, there is none with Him. But so far as His intercession is to be regarded as an evidence of His love for His church, and an exhibition of one of the most endearing methods, by which He delights to manifest that love, He has, (in this view of the subject,) left us, in His intercessory supplication, an example, that we should follow His steps.

And never, perhaps, does the believer more closely follow his divine Master's steps, or more deeply drink into His Spirit, or more plenteously participate in His joy—(even “the joy set before Him, for which He endured the cross, despising its shame,”))

than when He comes before God, to plead on behalf of that church, which His well-beloved Son has bought with His own blood; and, in the spirit of that sublimest of all prayers, intercedes for that church, that it may be sanctified by *His* word, whose word is truth; and that all its members may be one—one, in the unity of the Spirit, and the bond of peace—one, in the mysterious union of Christian love—*one with Christ, and one in Christ*, “even as He and the Father are one.” How dear does this union seem to be to the Redeemer’s heart; and how earnestly should all who love the Lord Jesus—but especially all His ministers, labour, by their preaching, prayers, and practice, to promote an object, for which the Redeemer pleaded, with *such earnestness*, at *such a time!* And oh! if *this* prayer of His had been constantly remembered and acted upon, by all His people, as it ought to have been, how would it have tended to prevent, or to allay, those disgraceful divisions about non-essential points, which have broken the

unity, disturbed the peace, and disfigured the loveliness of the church of Christ, in every age ; and thus impeded the progress of Christianity in the world, by dimming the lustre of that glorious attestation of its divine original, (even the display of the spirit of love and unity among all its faithful followers,) with whose full-orbed exhibition the Saviour appears to have linked the triumphant establishment of the claims of His Gospel, to be recognised by all men as a religion that has come down from heaven—a revelation from that God, whose nature and whose name is Love.

ADDRESS IX.

ON THANKSGIVING AND PRAISE.

“It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O Most High!”—*PS.* xcii. 1.

“By Him let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually; that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.”—*HEB.* xiii. 15.

“In everything give thanks.”—*1 THESS.* v. 18.

THERE is not, perhaps, a more puzzling or painful inconsistency in the Christian character, than the reluctance so often felt, even by sincere and devoted servants of God, to abound in the work of praise. For however the sweetness of other parts of devotional services may be dashed with many drops of bitterness, the pleasure of this employment is unalloyed with the slightest admixture of pain. It touches on the bliss of angels—the borders of heaven.

Yes! praise more than any thing else, assimilates the suffering saint on earth to the glorified saint in heaven. It approximates, most closely, the worshippers in the terrestrial to those in the celestial sanctuary; for in that world, where they rest from confession—because they have no sins to be pardoned; and from supplication—because they have no sinking weakness to be sustained, no craving wants to be supplied; there they *rest not*, day or night, singing praises unto Him who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever.

Consider, too, believer, what amazing condescension it is in God, to allow you to present to Him the poor and worthless offering of your praise; and yet (oh! who can fathom the depths of the divine condescension?) Jehovah speaks, as if your praises added to His glory.

Yes! He, who, wrapt in the unapproachable glory of His own uncreated majesty, is exalted immeasurably above the homage of all created beings—He, who humbleth Him-

self, with amazing condescension, to accept the adoration of the burning seraphim, that worship, with veiled faces, before His throne—He who is so infinitely sufficient to Himself, for His own happiness, that if not merely earth, but heaven itself, were silent in His praise—if rebellion were to spread throughout the whole universe of created intelligences, and all the principalities and powers, in heavenly places, were to be cast down from their thrones on high, and heaven to be left one vast unpeopled solitude—He, who would still remain, though alone in heaven, in the mysterious unity of the adorable Trinity, perfectly, supremely, infinitely blessed—His uncreated happiness unimpaired—His uncreated glory unobscured—*He* vouchsafes to represent Himself as glorified by the grateful adoration of worms of the dust—He, whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, allows Himself to be spoken of, as inhabiting the praises of His Israel: as finding in them a habitation, where He not only deigns, but delights to dwell!

And will you, believer, be reluctant to raise such a residence for the God of your salvation, in your heart ; and this, when the very happiest employment, in which you can be engaged, is building the sacred walls of this hallowed habitation, for your God.

Perhaps you have never deeply pondered the import of those words, “Whoso offereth Me praise, glorifieth Me ;” or dwelt on the recollection, *whose* words they are.

And just look at the psalm from which they are taken, and I am persuaded they must strike your mind with a solemnity, which will exercise a powerful influence over your future life, when you see how (if I may with reverence use the expression,) God seems to have set His heart on impressing upon all His people, the peculiar delight which He derives from the offering of their praise.

The psalm opens with singular sublimity—

“The mighty God, even Jehovah, hath spoken, and called the earth, from the rising of the sun, unto the going down thereof.”

God is then represented as appearing in all His majesty; a devouring fire before Him, and a mighty tempest round about Him. He calls to the heavens from above and to the earth; for He is about to judge His people. All His saints are to be gathered together, at the summons of the Almighty—for God is Judge Himself.

And now the voice of God bursts on the solemn assembly. "Hear, oh, my people, and *I* will speak—oh, Israel, and *I* will testify against thee; for I am God, even thy God."

And what is the complaint which Jehovah calls on a listening earth, and witnessing heaven, to hear Him prefer against His people? Is it for the neglect of sacrifices or burnt offerings? "No," says God, "I will not reprove thee for these things; these are not the sacrifices I desire—the offerings in which I delight."

Then what *is* the offering, which, with such solemn announcement, such a magnificent display of awful grandeur, Jehovah

claims from His assembled saints? Hear His own words—

“Offer unto God *thanksgiving* ; for whoso *offereth praise, glorifieth Me!*”

Words would but weaken the force of such a command, and such a declaration, as this. I can only pray, Christian reader, that thou mayest not be disobedient to the voice of this heavenly vision ; or refuse, by withholding the offering, which He claims with such surpassing solemnity of attestation and appeal, to glorify thy God.

Come, then, and collect with me materials for a louder, sweeter song of praise, than you have ever lifted up before the throne on high.

But here I am perplexed, and bewildered, how to begin. Such a crowd of mercies rushes on my view, that it is difficult to know what to select out of the mighty mass, the countless sum of blessings, that burst upon my sight. I feel lost in the labyrinth of divine love ; and know not which way to turn.

Like the ladder, that was seen by the pa-

triarch in his dream, the pile of mercies that seems to stand, as a monument of the grace of God, before my transported gaze, rests on the earth, but reaches unto the heavens ; where I lose the sight of its towering summit in the skies, and only know, by faith, that it is firmly fixed against the throne of God, and is therefore, as immoveably secure as the everlasting pillars of that throne.

Look then at this lofty pile ; for though no human eye can discern its summit, (which retires from mortal gaze, amidst the glories of eternity, in the heaven of heavens, into the unapproachable light which burns around the everlasting throne,) yet does it bear on its surface, many an inscription to the praise of God, traced by the finger of gratitude, and legible to the eye of faith. And will it not be a sweet employment to read some of these, that your heart may glow while you read with such gratitude, as would make it indeed pain and grief to you, to keep silence from the praises of your God.

Look—but in what direction shall I bid

you look? In one sense it matters not, for you cannot look in any direction, in which some sweet appeal to your gratitude, some precious material for your praise, will not start up before your wondering eyes.

Look *back!* even to the ages of eternity.

Further than you can travel in imagination into the abyss of that eternity, there were thoughts and purposes of loving-kindness towards you, in the bosom of the eternal Father—for His love towards you has been from everlasting, and will be to everlasting.

When the well ordered covenant of grace to guilty man was entered into between the eternal Father and His well-beloved Son, you were included in that covenant, and the stupendous plan arranged for securing your salvation.

When the fulness of time was come, God sent His Son into the world to purchase for you *all* the blessings of that everlasting covenant, and to give you a title, written in His blood, to the kingdom prepared for you, before the foundations of the world were laid.

And when the well-beloved of the Father came to earth, and tabernacled amongst men, as a "Man of sorrows," He came as fully, as if He came exclusively on your account.

Not a tear He ever shed, not a groan He ever uttered; not a day He ever passed in toil and tribulation, not a night He ever spent in sleeplessness and prayer; not a sorrow of His life, nor a pang of His death, that He endured; but in all, and through all, He was thinking of you; toiling for you—watching—weeping—sorrowing—suffering—dying—all for you! Yes! all as much for you, as if you were the only sinner, that He came from heaven to save.

When He set His face steadfastly towards Jerusalem, though knowing all the sufferings that awaited Him there; it was to accomplish your redemption.

The prospect of your eternal happiness in heaven, as the result and recompense of His sorrows, cheered and sustained Him along His pilgrimage of pain on earth! The Lord

of life submitted to death, that you might enjoy everlasting life ! The Judge of all stood, as an arraigned criminal, before an earthly tribunal, that you might stand uncondemned and unterrified, before the great white Throne, in the judgment of the great day. The Lord of glory, stooped to humiliation—yea, even to scorn, and scoffing, and spitting of face, that you might be exalted to everlasting honours, and crowned with eternal glory.

Can you believe all this, and yet your heart or voice ever be untuned for singing the praises of the Lord ?

Then *look up!* raise your eyes and thoughts to heaven,

There is God, your heavenly Father—Preserver—Benefactor—constantly employed in shielding you from evil ; showering on you, every moment, some fresh mercy ; making your pathway through life, one unbroken line of light, all sparkling with the sunshine of His smile—all studded over with a crowded succession of testimonials and

tokens of His love ; and arranging all the varying vicissitudes of your chequered history, so as to make them all work together for your eternal good.

There is Jesus—your divine Redeemer—Advocate, and Friend—constantly watching you, from his mediatorial throne, with a look of the most affectionate interest, the most unslumbering care ; and sympathizing in all your alternations of joy and sorrow, with a tenderness of sympathy, so close, so endearing, so identifying, that it can be but faintly imaged by the fondest relationship of earthly love.

There is the Holy Spirit—your divine Teacher—Sanctifier—Comforter: constantly employed in bringing to your remembrance all things that Jesus said, while on earth, for his people's purification, guidance, comfort, and happiness ; filling your heart with all peace and joy in believing ; making you meet for your inheritance in heaven ; and enabling you to abound in hope, even

that hope, full of immortality, which maketh not ashamed.

There also, are the holy angels: those benevolent and blessed spirits, who now cherish towards you feelings of the tenderest affection, and are delightfully employed in ministrations of mercy on your behalf; (for “are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation?”) and who will, ere long, be your companions and familiar friends, the sharers and sweeteners of your celestial bliss.

There, too, is your inheritance among the saints in light. Faint, indeed, are the glimpses you can catch, with the most straining glance of the eye of faith, of the glory of that inheritance; for “eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered into the heart to conceive, what good things God has prepared for them that love Him.”

But can you, believer, look up, and catch even the faintest glimpse of its glory, and

forbear to lift up your heart in adoring gratitude ! your voice in songs of praise.

Finally, *look forward.*

Yet a little—and He that cometh will come ; for however the careless may forget, or the scoffers deride, the promise of His coming ; “ behold He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him ;” and for what will He come ? “ To be glorified in His saints ; to be glorified in you, whom He has numbered among His saints, in glory everlasting.”

Yes ! He will come to make you an assessor with Himself, in the solemn judgment of that day—for “ the saints shall judge the world ;” to make you a partaker of His own glory, even the glory which He had with the Father, before the worlds were ; to pronounce you, before the assembled universe, the blessed of His Father ; to put you in possession of the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world, purchased for you by His own agony and bloody sweat ; yea ! even to give you, as having by

His grace overcome, to sit down with Him on His throne, even as He also overcame, and is set down with His Father in His throne.

Look forward, further still, into the distant ages of the coming eternity. Carry on your thoughts millions, and millions, and millions of ages beyond the day of Christ's appearing. When this mighty roll of ages shall have passed away, you shall be still a living, rejoicing, glorified being—the possessor of a glorified body, and a glorified spirit—rejoicing in the fulness of joy, in the presence of the God of your salvation.

Travel onward in imagination still through ages to come, so innumerable, that they could not be reckoned, though the longest life were to be spent in the ceaseless employment of adding myriads to myriads of ages ; still—still you shall be rejoicing before God, with joy unspeakable and full of glory ; and thus onward, for ever, and for ever, and for ever.

Oh ! to be perfectly, inconceivably happy,

because perfectly holy, *for ever* ; to be eternally ascending higher and higher in the scale of blessedness ; to be passing on from glory to glory, as age after age, throughout eternity, rolls on ; to be everlastingly drawing nearer and nearer to God ; seeing more and more fully His divine glories unveiled ; drinking more and more deeply from this inexhaustible fountain of felicity ; and this by a perpetual progress, that shall never have a limit !—Child of God, can you really believe that *this awaits you, you*, a vile, rebellious, worm of the dust—you, a hell-deserving sinner—and yet refrain from bursting out into a song of praise, deeper, louder, sweeter, than could be sung by any angel before the throne ? And oh ! will you not—yea ! *must* you not even now resolve, with fervent gratitude for such stupendous love, and humble reliance on Almighty grace to enable you to keep the resolution, that henceforward you will *largely* mingle praise with prayer, in all your devotional communion with your God, whether in the

retirement of your closet, or in the worship of the domestic or social circle : assigning in them all, a more prominent place to thanksgiving, breathed forth in your family devotions, in the sweet voice of sacred psalmody, singing, with grateful heart, the praises of your God. And, above all, will you not henceforward make it the object of your supreme solicitude, and unwearied aim, that the entire of your future life, consistently consecrated to His service, and continually employed in promoting His glory, shall sound in the ears of the God of all your blessings, as one uninterrupted hymn of thankfulness, one unceasing song of praise ?

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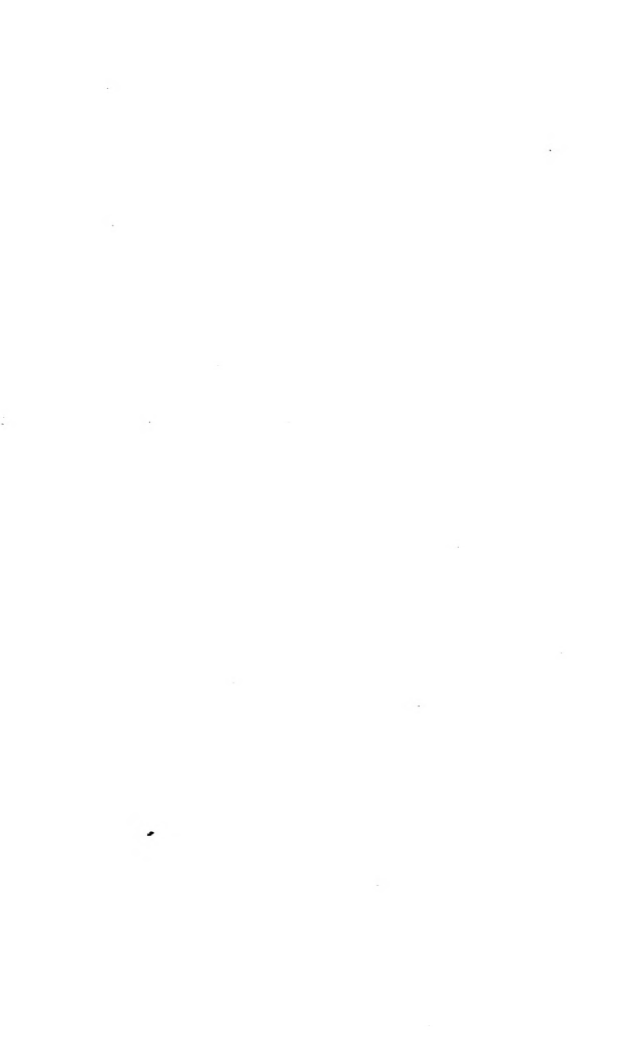
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