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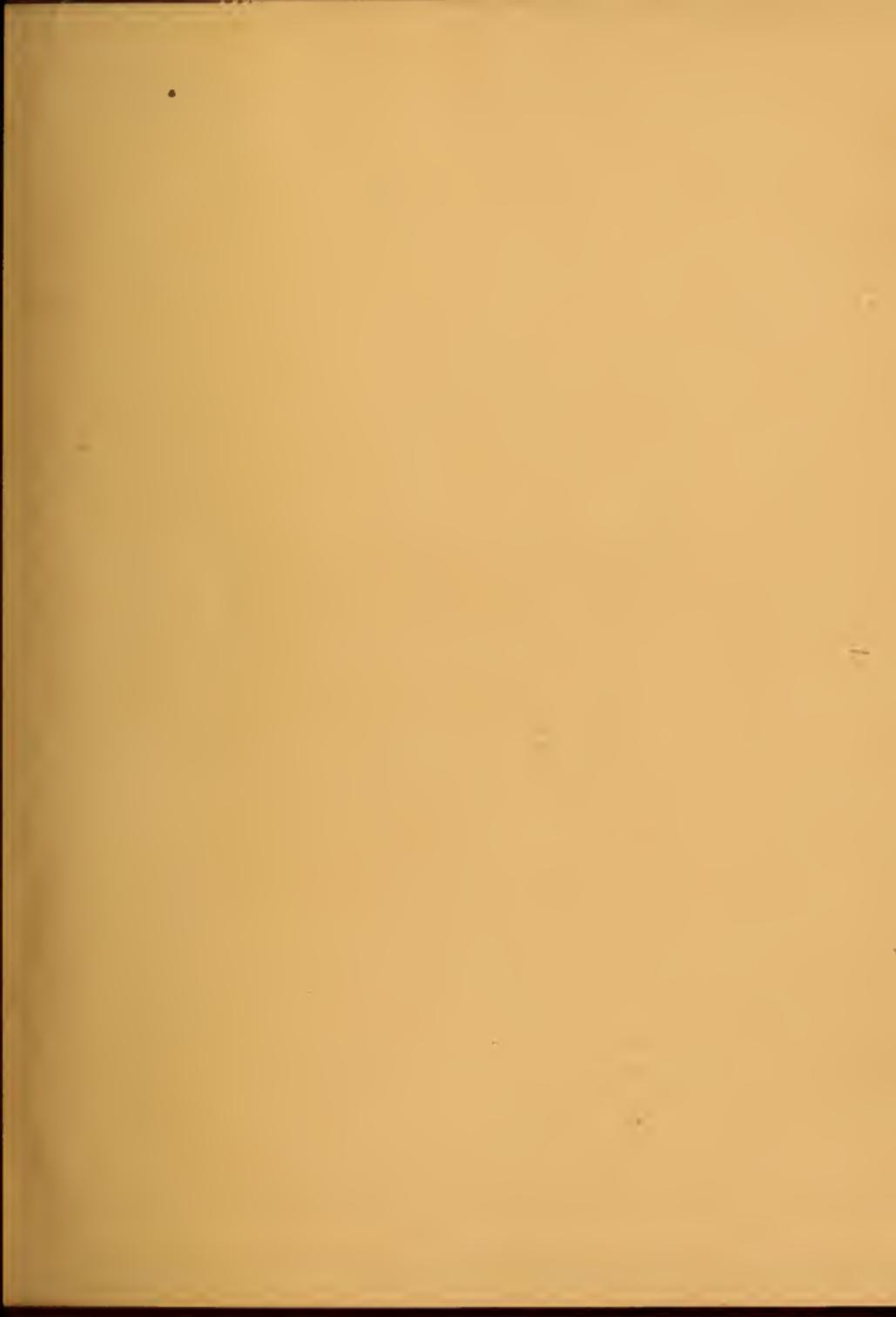
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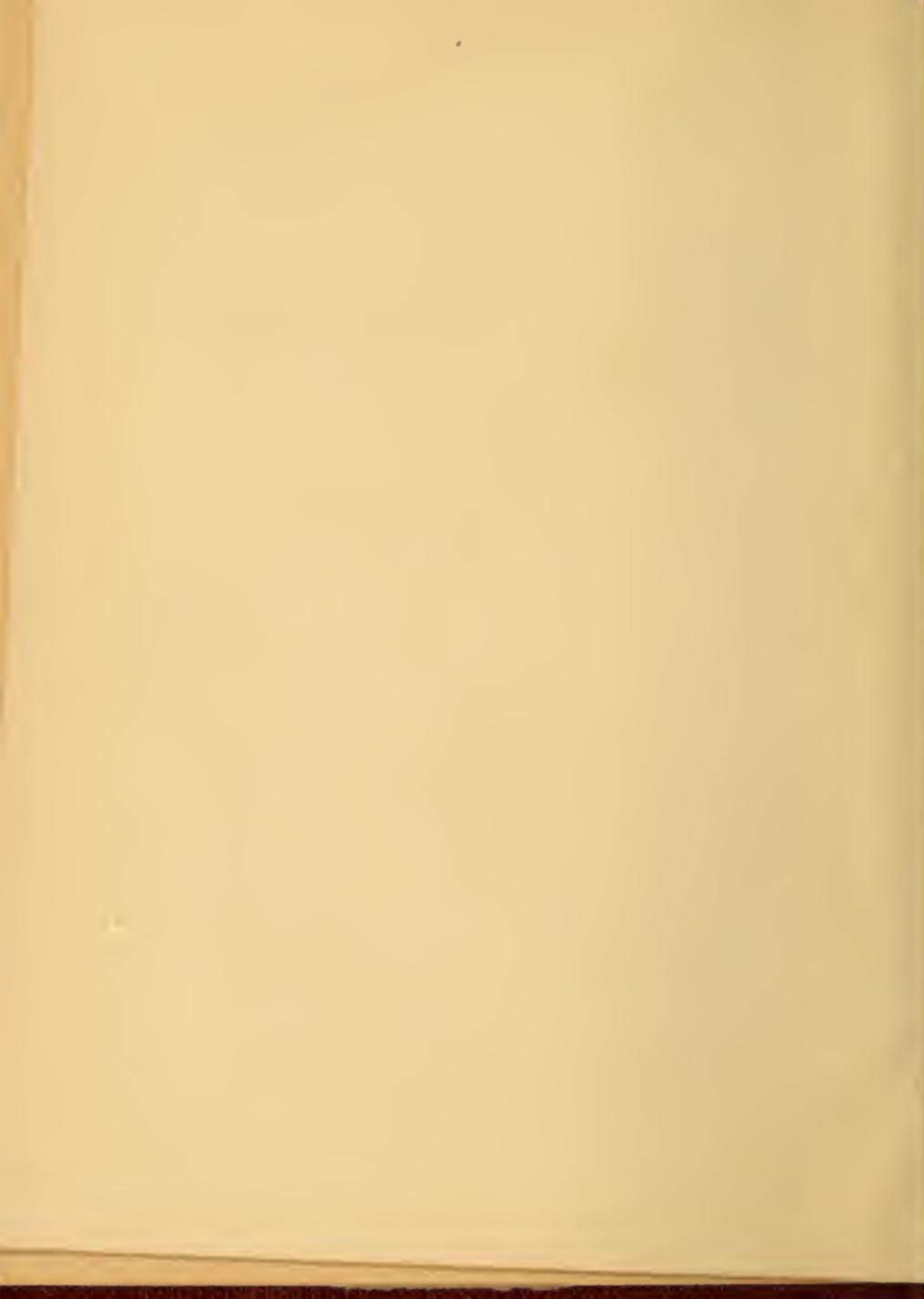
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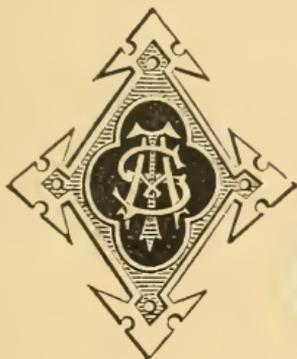
ONLY BELIEVE:

OR, THE

HUNGERING SOUL FED.

BY

JAMES WILLIAM KIMBALL.



AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY,

150 NASSAU STREET, NEW YORK.

1874

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ONLY BELIEVE.

I.

DIMNESS OF SPIRITUAL SIGHT.

“And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees walking.” MARK 8; 24.

“Come, thou Light of all that live!
Thy pure, beaming radiance give!”

LYRA CATH.

THERE are in every Christian congregation some who cannot rest in mere church-membership—who cannot content themselves in taking what Dr. John Mason Good described as “the middle walk of Christianity;” “endeavoring to live up to its duties and doctrines, but living below its privileges.” They would SEE JESUS—realize his personal friendship, and the “fellow-

ship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ," which John declared in the beginning of his first epistle. But they are fearful and doubting.

May it please God to make the following pages comforting and helpful to such. The gospel feast is spread royally for all, and whosoever will, may partake. And may "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give unto" all who read "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of their understanding being enlightened; that they may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe." Ephesians 1:17-19.

When I had, by the guidance of the Spirit, found Him whom my soul loveth, it became my overpowering desire to share the blessings of His grace with others. I was sure I could, with God's help, throw some light upon what had once been to me altogether inscrutable. Soon an opportunity offered. A dear friend with

whom I was associated in carrying on "neighborhood meetings," said, "After meeting to-night, I want you to converse with M——. She will talk more freely with you than with me. I think she has some serious impressions."

She was farther on than that. She had long ago yielded her heart to Jesus; her desire to know him better and better—to become his "friend," John 15:15—was now very great. Her heart's cry was like that of old, "Sir, we would see Jesus." She had reached my old perplexity.

I said to her, "You are to love and trust Jesus unreservedly. To do that, you must first know him. If I wished you to love my mother, you would not do it merely because I wished it. You could do so only as you perceived her loveliness. Were I to sketch for you a vivid picture of her, and you believed the sketch to be truthful, this would seem in a measure practicable. Better still would it be to put into your hands some of her letters in which her character is disclosed. Jesus has thus provided you the means of seeing him with the spiritual perception. In his very first sermon, in telling you

who are blessed, he pictures out himself; for what he praises he also lives. When he came down from the mount a leper came to him, saying, 'Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make me clean.' And Jesus put forth his hand and touched him, saying, 'I will; be thou clean.' Like to this was his kindness to the centurion; to the sick of the palsy; to the Syro-phœnician woman; to the widow of Nain. Is he not able? Is he not lovely? You have noticed his patience with his rough, uncultivated disciples; his painstaking with their instruction. Have you considered that every kind word spoken to them is equally spoken to you? The words of Jesus are living and perpetual. The living Christ himself, in each of his recorded words, speaks out his very heart to you now. And can you do otherwise than love and trust him?"

No: the more she saw him thus, the less could she withhold her love. He seemed to her no longer the dead Christ of past history, but a living, loving, personal Friend, and she loved and trusted him as she had not done before.

When the blind man was brought to Jesus

for healing, and his eyes were touched, Christ asked him if he saw aught. The man looked up, and said, "I see men as trees walking." A fit comparison this with the spiritual perception of multitudes who have been doubtless renewed, but whose discernment of divine truth is still very obscure. They need what the blind man needed and received — another touch from the healing hand of the great Physician, that they may be fully restored and see clearly.

II.

FULL ASSURANCE.

“According to your faith be it unto you.” MATT. 9: 29.

“If my immortal Saviour lives,
Then my immortal life is sure ;
His word a firm foundation gives,
* Here let me live and rest secure.” STEELE.

IN the heat of my first love I imagined that every Christian might and should live in the full assurance of faith and abounding joy in the Lord. As a rule, I should be most unwilling to abandon that high ground now ; but observation shows that Christians too often fall far short of it. Many shrink from the brusque avowal of assurance as it is sometimes made, and we cannot but think the doctrine has suffered in the hands of some who assume to know most of it. But there is a blessed truth in it, otherwise the apostle would not have spoken of the “full assurance of faith,” Heb. 10:22, and

"of hope," Heb. 6: 11. Nor is it an assurance at all dependent upon ourselves, but wholly, from beginning to end, on Christ. Nothing could be more presumptuous than to assure ourselves of salvation by anything we can do; but when we give up our own struggles, and cast ourselves fully on Jesus, then indeed are we safe, and may assure ourselves of the fact.

Is this assurance the completion of the divine life in the soul, as some suppose? I think not; for if you, dear reader, are admitted to the most intimate communion and fellowship with God and the Lamb ever enjoyed by the believer, you will not be "satisfied" until you "awake in his likeness." That is, you will continue to hunger and thirst and pant and long after God and holiness. And yet you may have perfect peace, for "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee."

You wish to be "one with Him in everlasting love." Settle it in your mind that he will in no wise cast out any who come to him; that Jesus does not offer himself as a Friend to perfect

people, for there are none such. He is a Friend of sinners. Take in this idea fully, ay, fully, for here is where you have doubtless failed: that you are received and loved of the Father, not for your own sake, but for Jesus' sake. Then it follows that no imperfection of yours can separate you from your Father, nor in the least weaken the bond that binds you to him. He never received you for your excellences; you need, therefore, never be alienated from him by your imperfections. In theory this is as familiar to you as the alphabet, and yet you have not made it your own. Make now a new gift of yourself to God, as comprehensive and unconditional as you can conceive; and then believe that, without a shadow of doubt, whatever you freely give he absolutely receives.

“How shall I know that I do in fact make this absolute gift of myself to him?” you ask. Dear reader, there is one thing you have no right to do, and must not do; you must not *doubt your own consciousness*. To do this is torture, and is of no benefit to God or man. It is in fact to violate a law of your own mind as made by God

for your government. I ask you now, as though we were face to face, Do you not at this moment wish to give yourself wholly away to God? I hear you answer, "I do." Have you any doubt that he wishes to receive you? "I cannot doubt it." Then it only remains for you to believe that you are received, and to rejoice in this momentous and blessed reality. Do not fly back to the review and reiteration of your own unworthiness. That is all true, and you are a great deal more unworthy than you ever suspected yourself of being; but our Father has received you *for Christ's sake*, and for his sake alone. Dare you magnify your unworthiness above the Father's love for his only-begotten and well-beloved Son? Do you not perceive that the less worthy you are, the more is God honored in the bestowal of eternal redemption for Christ's sake? I know how many times you have heard all this of old; but I have a hope that as you read this the truth is flashing upon you in a new light, and that you are seeing more clearly than ever before how sweet and blessed it is to be nothing, and to find Christ all. I have this hope

because these convictions are God's gift, a free gift, if we will but divest ourselves of the exaggerated estimate of our doing, doing, and attain to a worthy estimate of the simple receiving. "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God."

We know there are those only too indifferent about receiving; but the message is not to such. It is a message to those who fear and tremble under the terrible consciousness of so much to be done within, and the fear of never overtaking it. To such God's message is, "Open your mouth wide;" "Freely receive;" "I will pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it." Dear friend, only believe the love which he has to you. Many waters cannot quench it, neither floods drown it. And as he did not find the motive to love in you, so no more will aught in you be able to extinguish that love, while there remains in you the desire to follow God as a dear child. That resolution of President Edwards has been of ineffable service to me, to "believe nothing but what is generous and noble of God." Never was this more

admirably expressed than in Charlotte Elliot's hymn:

“Just as I am, without one plea,
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bidst me come to thee,
O Lamb of God, I come !”

If you have not hitherto been able to say that Jesus seemed to you like a “Friend dearly beloved,” what then? Must that fact needs be perpetual? By no means. You cannot make, but you can receive that faith which is the gift of God. One thing you can do; you can empty your heart for him. You can say, “Lord, as thy soul liveth, if I cannot have thee, I will have nothing.” Believe me, for I have tried it, and I know, if you empty your heart for him, he will fill it. Say to him, “Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee,” and mean it, and you shall not long have occasion to say, “Oh, why do his chariot-wheels delay?”

“Ah, I have said this already countless times,” I hear you say. Then, dear reader, it is only that you have not believed. In what form do

you expect the answer which you crave? Do you expect to see any sights, or to hear any sound? The true answer to your desire can be given only to faith. You can believe in a friend you have never seen. Believe just so in God. He is interested in you, cares for you, yearns over you, loves you, just as your best earthly friend does, only a million times more. Believe it, and give him love for love. I am no more truly writing these words to you than he wrote the fourteenth chapter of John to you. Find him in that. Look up in his face like a little child, and bless him for it. It means you—that precious chapter—as certainly as though there were never another reader of it. Do not let Satan, or your own unbelief, cheat you out of the comfort of it.

III.

THE WAY TO ASSURANCE.

“ Lord, I believe ; help thou mine unbelief.” MARK 9 : 24.

“ Lo, glad I come, and thou, blest Lamb,
Shalt take me to thee as I am :
Nothing but sin I thee can give ;
Nothing but love shall I receive.”

I CANNOT feel quite satisfied, dear inquiring friend, to let you alone at this point. Perhaps, being naturally modest and reticent, you have unconsciously nursed the idea, that it would be presumptuous in you promptly to believe, when you give yourself to Jesus, that he actually and warmly receives you. Nay, my friend, on the contrary, I shall, with his gracious aid, convict you of presumption in *daring to doubt* that he so receives you. What would you, what could you, have more in the way of evidence, than he has already supplied? Fix your attention simply on what he says. Dis-

miss all philosophizing about it, and take him at his word. He says explicitly this: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." That means *you*. He says: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." That means *you*. Again he says: "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst come; and *whosoever will*, let him take the water of life freely." That means *you*, most unquestionably. Now I must not speak pityingly of your holding back; nor for a moment consent to regard it as "proper modesty." For, admitting as quite true all that you can allege of your undeserving and ill-deserving, I must demand of you, How dare you make that a pretext for discrediting the solemn and earnest—ay, the heart-moving asseveration of your Lord, that he will and does receive you? This is your particular and preëminent sin—this unbelief—which you are to confess to God, imploring him to conquer what you find too strong for

you. *Hate* this unbelief in God's love. You do not begin to know how sinful and hurtful it is. You do not conceive what an indignity it puts upon God. You perhaps know some poor, degraded, ignorant persons, whom it is in your heart to bless and elevate. You exert yourself to the utmost to do them good. Your reward is, that your good-will is declined, disbelieved, or ignored. You are told by the objects of your kindness, that they could not possibly do so presumptuous a thing as to believe that you mean your kindness for *them*. They prefer to believe that you are good to mankind in general. How would you feel under such a repulse? Would the self-styled modesty of it mend the matter, or save your wounded feelings?

You have a chronic habit of doubting; do you find anything good in it? anything lovely or to be desired? Hate it; spurn it as the vilest thing you know, and sing,

“ I will believe, I now believe,
I can hold out no more ;
I sink, by dying love compelled,
And own Thee conqueror.”

“If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.” Only give and commit all that you have, and are, and hope, and wish, and fear, to him; that is all, and receive the Holy Ghost. Only offer him sincerely and cordially the hospitalities of your heart; prepare him room, and he will dwell with you, and will do all.

IV.

REST IN JESUS.

“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee.” ISA. 26: 3.

“Since all the varying scenes of time
God’s watchful eye surveys,
Oh, who so wise to choose our lot,
Or to appoint our ways?”

WHEN I was first converted I hardly dared go to sleep, lest I should lose ground. But then I bethought me, or, more properly, the Lord suggested, that I should rest in the Lord. So I said, “Lord Jesus, I cannot keep myself; let me lay my head upon thy bosom.” And he did. Then I slept, oh, so sweetly! I praised him in my dreams, and waked with a song of praise on my lips and in my heart.

When I went to my room to pray, I said to myself, “Now, if my father were in the adjoin-

ing apartment, though I could not see him for the partition between us, I could know him to be there; and by raising my voice, I could make him hear me. Well, Jesus is here, actually here. I cannot see him; the veil of sense forbids; but I know absolutely that he is here. And I have no need to raise my voice to make him hear, for he can hear the lowest whisper. I will tell him all my heart. Holy Spirit, guide me, that I may speak as thou wouldst have me. Make intercession within me, I entreat thee, that my prayer may be thy prayer." And then I turned to my Father and asked him if he would redeem his Son's pledge: "If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it." John 14:14.

I never have any confusion about Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. It is all just as I would have it. It makes the position of the believer so strong, his argument so irresistible. The Spirit originates the prayer; the blessed Saviour takes it up and advocates it; the Father gladly grants what is so acceptably presented. I often tell him he cannot say nay to his only-begotten and well-beloved Son, who is also my well-beloved

Lord. Here, you see, we rest all our desires and all our burdens.

“I have no will, O blessed Lord,
For all my cares are thine.”

You may think you could rest, if you could but learn to connect God with everything you hear and see. Cherish that wish, and he will establish the connection for you. “If a man love me,” said Jesus, “he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” Accustom yourself to the recognition of his having actually done this for you; actually come and taken up his abode in you. The Holy Ghost, the Comforter, dwells with you and in you. Do not ask with Nicodemus, “How can these things be?” It is true, because Jesus declared it should be so.

Be sure that from the moment of your conversion, the Holy Ghost charged himself with your education. And he makes no mistakes. He knows to a day, to an hour, when to put us upon this, that, and the other study. You have your personal and family or peculiar cares. Take

each and every one of them from the Lord. Do not forget that he makes his abode in you, and knows all, and is going to work in you, as you have often desired, that which is well pleasing in his sight. He then appoints all your daily cares and trials. Take a headache from him; take broken china from him; take a dishonest clerk from him; take rainy Mondays from him; take rainy church-meeting-nights from him. It is wonderful how the habit of taking everything from him turns a vexation into a blessing. "All things work together for good to them who love God."

And I have never been more deeply touched than in the discovery of our Lord's using my faults to teach me lessons of humility, love, trust, and sympathy for others. I was culpable for my fault of course; but, so far as I am able to judge, nothing in the world could have been so useful to me as being left to commit it, and to see my Lord employing it to impart his lessons. Sometimes it has been an error too contemptibly little to be worth mentioning; and yet, so wonderful is the divine alchemy, that little,

pitiful, nameless fault, in the hands of the infinitely wise and infinitely loving One, has been of a healing and teaching efficacy never to be forgotten. Our God takes us *just as we are*, to make us just what he would have us to be. Were this not so, our sufficiency would not be of God, 2 Cor. 3:5, and our redemption from sin would not be wholly his work. Consider, if God were to make no use of our faults for the disciplining and development of our souls, how large a part of all we have and are, would be, as it were, without his province. Now we have only to remind ourselves of Jesus' own gracious assurance, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance," to feel sure that his foresight and providence, all through the days of our impenitence even, were laying the foundation for the "polished shaft" he means to set up in the New Jerusalem. Is it not glorious to discern that even sin is so completely under the control of our Almighty Friend, that he can not only limit its scope, but absolutely overrule it, so that we shall be more capable of appreciating and commending his love, than if we had never

sinned? If this seems inadmissible, I leave it for those to settle who can show a better account of the matter.

I fall back upon the unquestionable affirmation also, that God does, by the discipline of trials brought upon us by our sins, qualify us to be helpful to others, as we could be qualified in no other way, so far as mind of man can see. Can you not feel assured that God, in some cases which you readily recall, has so overruled your wrong-doings, as that by the sin and the discipline you have been fitted to pity, save and build up in the faith, those who have in like manner erred? Suppose you had never sinned, been forgiven, and rescued from the sins and their consequences—is it apparent how you could be touched with the feeling of the infirmities of those whom you are commissioned to save? Thus you see that in all things, even in those which would seem to hinder, we may rest in our abiding, indwelling Lord.

V.

PRAYER.

“Be careful for nothing; but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.” PHIL. 4:6.

“Oh dull of heart! Enclosed doth lie,
In each ‘Come, Lord,’ a ‘Here am I.’
Thy very prayer to thee was given,
Itself a messenger of heaven.” TRENCH.

“AND whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it.” Surely this is an immense promise; and at the first glimpse it seems incredible. But two thoughts come to our relief and to our assurance; namely, first, that which is to be done, is to be done by the Father, for the glory of his Son, and of himself in his Son; and in this view nothing can be too great. Secondly, that the very condition, rightly understood, utterly precludes the gift of anything but

that which it is best should be given; namely, "Whatsoever ye shall ask *in my name*." How strange that so many miss the force of this condition and limitation.

You wonder if you know anything about real prayer. Undoubtedly you do. Yet how large the sphere of prayer is! And how much, even to the most advanced, ever remains to be known. Be frank with our dear Redeemer, our beloved Lord. Tell him everything, and the day is not distant when you will cease questioning whether you know anything of real prayer.

"Whatsoever ye ask believing, ye shall receive;" that is, whatever you exercise faith in Jesus for, in that you will be accepted; which is, I apprehend, the true intent of that passage. And is not this incomparably more and better than merely receiving literally the precise thing you ask? I should be sorry to be compelled to believe that I could stand only on the literal ground; that I must ask with unerring accuracy for just what I needed; that I must believe that I shall receive just that, and nothing more or else. I believe I never made a truer prayer than

on one occasion, years ago, I poured out my soul thus: "O Lord, give me what thou seest me to need! I know not what it is. I am sensible, deeply, painfully sensible of need; but what I need I know not; thou knowest. Take me, Lord, just as I am, and make me just what thou wouldst have me to be, for Christ's dear sake!"

This prayer necessitated faith. By placing me in this condition of extreme ignorance, He placed me in the condition most favorable to faith. I knew neither what to expect nor when to expect it. That did not preclude, but rather predisposed to affectionate trust and childlike confidence in his ordering of events and results. You cannot but see that a childlike faith honors God more than anything you can do; and thence you derive the strongest possible argument when you plead, "Lord, increase my faith." Just consider the absolute impossibility that the Father should refuse anything that will honor Jesus; and consider what is implied in asking in the name of Jesus. Why, it is asking in the interest of Jesus; the asking of one who is "one

with him ;" and so it becomes in one sense the asking of Jesus himself.

Faith calls for the extremest simplicity, the utmost possible naturalness of speech to Jesus. Thus, though it is right to have set times for prayer and for listening to God, it is by no means enough that we have such seasons. Human intercourse is rendered delightful by its spontaneity ; by the welling up of warm affections, whenever the crust of our ordinary life is penetrated by a friendly word, a kindly tone or look, or any other revelation of regard. Our beloved Lord is the nearest, dearest, tenderest Friend we have ; constant, unwearied, wonderfully considerate, and for ever anticipating our possible desires. How natural, then, how eminently suitable, that we should be breaking out, at every turn in the road, with the psalmist of old, " I will praise thee, O Lord, with my whole heart ; I will show forth all thy marvellous works." President Edwards says his custom was to talk with Jesus, to sing to him in a low tone by himself. It is a blessed way to do. The best Christians I have ever known have been given to it.

This is treating him as real. And he gives in return real and most substantial tokens of his appreciation and friendship.

When it is "hard work to speak to him," is it not that your desire is to speak in a way not compatible with your condition just at that moment? Suppose you cannot employ the language of exultation, can you not use that of tender appeal? "Lord, save, or I perish." "Dear Lord, I am a worm and no man." "Lord, I am thine; poor, weak, sinful as I am, I am thine, and only thine. To whom else can I go?" And when you cannot talk at all, call to mind the beautiful illustration of the child too ill to speak, but who now and then opens his eyes to assure himself that the enclosing arms are his mother's; then shuts them, and rests content.

One thing more. A friend wrote me recently: "You are better acquainted with the Master than I am; wont you ask him to keep me from growing careless and indifferent again." Have you never asked a Christian friend to pray thus for you? But in this how little have you done the Master justice. Christian friends may pray

for you with all the earnestness of their being ; but who prompts them so to pray? *The Master himself.* And yet you want others to stir him up to love and care for you. O thou of little faith! Do you know what a tender mother's love for her infant is? It is nothing in comparison with His love for thee.

Do you ask how, when you pray, you are to know that your sins are forgiven? Many years ago, our Father, yours and mine, put into my hands a little work by Robert Philip, "Communion with God," in which is a chapter entitled, "The Promises of God to the Prayerful, the Real Answers to Prayer." This idea was then new to me; but our Father enabled me to see it. You know how it is between you and some dear friend. That friend promises to do something for you on a certain day, and your faith in that person settles the thing in your mind as sure. Now our Father has said, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Here is an absolute promise. "Ah, but it is qualified by my confessing," you say; "and how

can I be sure that my confession comes within God's meaning?" I repeat what I said before: you must learn to stop at the margin of your consciousness. If after careful self-examination it appears to you that you are sincerely sorry for your sin, you are not at liberty to doubt, that as it appears to you, so it really is; that you are really sorry for your sins, and that your confession is that which is implied and demanded by our Lord. There remains, therefore, only that you believe that he does forgive and cleanse you.

VI.

PRAISE.

“Every day will I bless thee ; and I will praise thy name for ever and ever.” Ps. 145 : 2.

“Sun, moon and stars thy love attest,
In every golden ray ;
Love draws the curtains of the night,
And love brings back the day.”

I HAVE a proposition to make to you ; it is this ; that for one week you shall ask no specific petitions for yourself, but shall devote yourself to thanksgiving for the mercies you have received, and to the renewed consecration of yourself and all you have to God. You have been praying doubtless a great deal, but you have not praised much. I know it as surely as if you had said so in words, because a restful happy heart is a praising heart ; and a praising heart is a happy one. Spend then a week in counting up your mercies.

And in making the new consecration of your-

self to God, don't be content to do it in the mass. Take up all, each, everything you deem yourself to possess; all you have and all you are; give the whole to God, and give it unconditionally. Do you remember Mrs. Edward's consecration? She told the Lord her entire resignation of her husband to him, and her contentment that the Lord should save the people of Northampton by some other minister if he pleased. Do not be discouraged because you have tried many times to give yourself thus to Christ, and seem not to have succeeded. How do you know you have not? The answer will be given to faith. *All you have given he has received.* Draw near to him and he will draw near to you. Do not say, "I cannot." Try. "Then shall ye seek me, and find me, when ye search for me with all your heart."

"But I do not find God real," you say. Do you own Dr. Spencer's "Pastor's Sketches," First Series? If so, read his first sketch, "The Young Irishman." It makes this point clear; viz, that we know more of spirit than of matter; and therefore God can become real to us. At the

beginning of my new life I said, "God is real and I am going to realize him. I am not going to pray to the walls, to the ceiling. I am not going to lose my prayer in any form of words. I am going to speak to my living, present, personal Lord. I will say just what I mean to this realized friend." I did so. I would not tolerate a single petition or utterance that did not express just what I meant and felt. You need to do the same. Do not waste a moment in thinking how you ought to feel, or in struggling after any particular state of mind. Express to him exactly what you think and feel. But you say, "Suppose that my thoughts, wishes or feelings are not what they ought to be, not what I desire them to be." So much the more need of your telling Jesus the exact truth, and the whole truth. When you go to your physician do you tell him how you ought to feel?

Here you need the conscious presence of the Holy Spirit; and for this "Ask and ye shall receive." Your Heavenly Father is more willing to give this good gift unto you, than you or I to give good gifts to the tender children who hang

on us for everything. It is assuredly true. Put him to the proof. You can in no way please him more. Would you receive the Holy Ghost? Tell him. Do you value the Holy Ghost? Tell him so.

You fear to apply endearing epithets to Jesus. You are surely sensible that Jesus has done something for your soul. Can you conceive of its being otherwise than agreeable to him that you should say, "Dear Jesus, I thank thee"? And when you have said that a few times it will sound so pleasantly in your ear, that before you are well aware you will find yourself using other like terms. Do not let any person or consideration drive you off from the use of such expressions, in the sacred privacy of your own closet. Strange, passing strange, that very honest people can be hoodwinked into the delusion, that while the language of truest and tenderest affection may and ought to be lavished on earthly friends, propriety and piety alike forbid that He who demands our "whole heart, soul, mind, and strength," should be accosted with anything more tender and loving than the

stilted and frigid language of earthly ceremony. My answer to all this is, He *is* dear Jesus.

“Jesus I love thy charming name !
’T is music to my ear ;
Fain would I sound it out so loud
That earth and heaven might hear.”

A friend writes, “You advised me to use endearing epithets in my communion with Jesus ; and I have, until now I am almost frightened lest I love to the extent of forgetting reverence and awe. I have been searching the New Testament to find a warrant for such intimacy of affection, but I do not find it. He seems on the contrary to put the people off.”

I do not wonder at this conclusion. When one came saying, “I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest,” his service was declined. Doubtless he had not counted the cost. James and John were made to understand that their case was the same. Peter was confident, but self-ignorant. But the Syro-phœnician woman, who was sound at the core, was given an opportunity to show to all the world that she looked beyond his words into the heart of the speaker,

and knew how to take her Lord. Jesus would encourage only those who would forsake all for him ; he wants your full heart's love, and he wants it now. And having himself given you the undeniable warrant, in Mark 12 : 30, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and mind, and strength," there is not a shadow of doubt of his offering you the utmost possible freedom of loving access to him. John, the beloved, adds his plain testimony in his first epistle 1 : 3, "And truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." There can be, I think, no loss of reverence and holy awe, in consequence of a greatly growing affectionate regard, providing only that we take pains to see Jesus, as far as we are capable, in the whole range of his attributes ; remembering that while he is "the man Christ Jesus," he is also "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person." But there is less danger of our being presumptuous here than of erring in the opposite direction. Awe is much more likely to repress love. You should listen to his assurance ; "I am the Rose of Sharon

and the Lily of the Valleys :” and if you are beginning to find him whom your soul loveth, you should hold him fast and not let him go. He may, to try your faith, make as if he would go farther, and yet be well pleased to have you constrain him to abide with you. Luke 24 : 28, 29. My belief is, that we may have just as much love, and as much freedom to love him, as we can appreciate.

But it seems to you that you are so sinful it will never do to stop praying for yourself lest you should be swept right away from your new-found friend. This is pure unbelief ; want of confidence in our Lord ; and not that alone, but a mistaken idea that you are keeping yourself. “ Underneath you are the everlasting arms,” and you need have no fear that Jesus will withdraw them. We may always turn from prayer to praise securely, knowing, on his own assurance, that “ whoso offereth praise glorifieth God.” Suppose you have a child so touched with gratitude for all your kindness, as to be quite drawn off from all thought of its own wants : forgetful even for the time being, of how great its ignorance,

and how many its faults. Could you leave that child while thus oblivious, and from such a cause, to come to any grief?

And do not fail to give our dear Lord Jesus credit for loving tenderness. When you do not think of him as pleased with you, it being true that you have desired and tried to please him, you go about, consciously or unconsciously, slandering him as a hard master. You are bound to think of what is due to him three times for every once you pore over your ill-desert. When you do this, you will fall to praising, as you ought. You magnify your failures out of all proportion to their actual importance. This is very plausible, but it will not stand the scrutiny of a close examination. True humility cannot be blind to the number and magnitude of its blessings. It will break out in recognizing acknowledgments; "Whence is this grace of my God to me?" "Oh, how canst thou thus overwhelm with thy blessings one who is so unworthy? Dear Lord, my praise is all unworthy of thine acceptance; but, poor as it is, I must praise thee, or the very stones will cry out."

VII.

PEACE.

“When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?”
JOB 34 : 29.

“Just as I am ! Thou will receive ;
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve !
Because thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come !” ELLIOT.

“THEREFORE, being justified by faith, we have peace with God ;” no more trouble or anxiety about ourselves or our condition.

With regard to this exercise of faith, observe, it is not “working yourself up” to believe—“working yourself up” to a mysterious and required “feeling.” It is only an intelligent, earnest demand of a reasoning, believing soul upon itself, to honor God by accepting his word. In the case of the friend already supposed who had promised on a certain day to do you some great favor, would it be fanaticism or any excitement of the imagination, while thinking of the fact, for you to get the letter, saying within yourself,

“Let me see; let me read over carefully what he did promise”? And when you had carefully re-read the epistle, would you not conclude, “Why, yes, he surely does say that, just that, and I may rejoice in the certainty; it is all so”?

You do n't know anything of such a religion as this? Perhaps this is a suggestion of Satan, perhaps the natural reasoning of a heart perverted by sin. We do not always rightly apportion the blame due to Satan and to ourselves. But without lessening your culpability, it may be right for me to suggest that your feeble piety may be referred in part to the atmosphere in which you were born and reared. Do you know the Memoir of James Brainard Taylor? Had you been a member of his family, or had you been one of his Bible-class, it might and probably would have made a very great difference. In the beginning we are greatly dependent on the piety and teachings of others.

You are not to make the vehemency of another person's experience a model for yourself, nor a standard by which to condemn your own. Let us accept the wholesome stimulus which a

seraphic life inspires ; but do not let us pervert it into a discouragement. One is called to a very different work from another ; and a race-horse would not be as useful in the furrows of common life as an animal of more moderate movement.

In the beginning of my religious life it troubled me greatly that I found no glow of love, and no depth of sorrow. At last it occurred to me to ask, "What is in fact the true test of the reality of any sentiment ? How much feeling must we have in order to be sure that we have the right feeling ?" And the Lord made me see that the feeling which *secured appropriate action* was right both in kind and degree. I have often illustrated it thus : In my own home there are opportunities every day to act the part of a true friend ; ten thousand little ways of being swayed by love for those around me ; no great thing to be done, no demand for vehement emotion ; nothing to arrest attention ; only that frequent unconscious regulating of words, tones, and countenance by a loving regard for the happiness of others. Now, shall it be alleged in dis-

paragement of my love that it has evinced itself in no extraordinary deeds, in no surpassing emotion? If I have grieved one of my household, how much feeling need I have before I make my confession and entreat forgiveness? Is not that a suitable amount which, instantly on my becoming conscious that I have given pain, leads me frankly to own my fault and ask forgiveness? And is there one rule for our conduct towards one another, and another towards God?

Do not weigh and measure your feelings, but do simply and ingenuously what seems to you right. Often say, "Dear Lord, I am very sinful and very ignorant, but I mean to please thee." You are beginning to realize, more than ever before, how much "all the heart, soul, mind, and strength" means; and seeing how far short you have been willing to stop, you are tempted to condemn the love you have really borne your Lord as naught. Now that is neither wise nor true. Moreover, it is ungrateful; for it refuses to recognize what he has actually done for you; and it would stop all praise. He has done great things for us, and we must and will praise him.

If you are not careful, Satan will worry you into a fever of anxiety also because there is so much to be done, so much lost time to be made up. Many years ago, when these same anxieties and desires had laid hold on me, I wrote to Dr. Skinner for advice; and I must hand over to you, dear reader, his short prescription: "Mem.: Restlessness is not holiness." Quiet yourself in the Lord. Often recall to mind that the most you have to do is to cast yourself on him. He is really to do all. You are to hunger and thirst; and you are blessed in so doing. But you are to believe in his love, and to rest in his love. The yoke of Christ is easy and his burden light, and you have no right to make it oppressive even to yourself. Do not despise the day of small things, but be willing and thankful to increase from very small beginnings. The dear Lord will give us time enough to do what he has for us to do, and to become what he intends us to become; therefore do not allow the adversary or your own impatience to goad you into a fever. Worry comes of unbelief in Jesus and his unceasing care for us. Remember the

assurance, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee."

Some one has said that "a good book is not a work, but a growth." The same may be said, and truly, of faith. We have something to do with it, just as the farmer has to do with preparing his field. But when he has done all he can do, God only can quicken the seed into life. The analogy here is, that to the best of your ability you separate yourself from *all* entanglements. You give your ear and your mind, so far as you can, to his word; but only the Holy Ghost can quicken it, so that it shall come to you as the very word and love of Jesus, rooting itself in your heart and growing vigorously.

One word about sorrow for the past. How much sorrow should we feel? Not so much as to carry us to the verge of despondency. Even a right exercise of the mind may be turned to an evil, by pressing it to an extreme. This is a common device of Satan. To look at our sinfulness long enough to despair of salvation by works, and to feel the need of Jesus, is well; one

sight of his forgiving love is worth a thousand sights of our sinfulness. After having confessed your sins and received forgiveness, you have no right to dishonor him by reviving the past, as though his blood had not sufficient atoning power.

Nor need you be anxious about the future. It is written, "My God shall supply all your need." He will love and keep you to the end. If you commit your way to him now, the promise is that he will bring it to pass. "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee." What can be better? If your fears come upon you, run to him. He is a high rock, a strong tower, a sure defence, a refuge. It is Satan who drives you first to the past, and then to the future. There is no resting-place in the one or in the other. But in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength, present strength. Renew your self-consecration to him as often as you are disquieted. That is just putting yourself and your disquiets into his hands; precisely what he invites and commands you to do.

VIII.

SEEING JESUS.

“And their eyes were opened, and they knew him.” LUKE
24 : 31.

“In darkest shades, if he appear,
My dawning is begun ;
He is my soul’s sweet Morning Star,
And he my rising Sun.”

LAST summer I found a dear friend making a singular mistake—one that had never occurred to me as possible. He thought he must realize the person of Jesus as one realizes, for instance, George Washington in Stuart’s portrait of him. You would not, I hope, make that mistake ; but it occurs to me to ask, What do you in fact expect ? Possibly there may be something amiss in your expectation which will explain your disappointment hitherto. The majority are hindered by indifference ; but when, as we suppose to be the fact in your case, dear reader, there is no indifference, but an earnest desire to reach the truth, there is reason to conjecture the exist-

ence of some misapprehension preventing that realization of Jesus which you say you have never had.

There is a fundamental idea in Butler's Analogy, which was very serviceable to me; that, namely, of its being the mind, not the eye, that sees. If you are near-sighted, you use glasses; but the glasses do not see; and Dr. Butler adds, "no more does the eye see, but the mind looks through the eye, and also, and in like manner, through the glasses. So again the mind moves matter. You push a ball on the floor with your hand; or, taking a cane, you push it with the cane. In the one case, as in the other, it is the mind that moves matter, and it cannot be shown that matter was ever moved but by mind."

This annunciation was of the utmost worth to me, because it set me free from the despotism of the senses. It accustomed me to regard unseen powers as just as truly real and efficient as things visible, audible, or tangible. Now having made this truth your own, you go to your closet to meet Jesus, your true, living, loving Friend, whose form you have never seen, and do not

need to see, because faith in God's testimony, and loving trust in God himself, makes him so present and real, that form and color could add nothing to the reality of his presence. You begin to treat him as real. You address him in a simple, frank, ingenuous manner. You speak in your natural voice and tone, though your reverence may subdue that tone, your love pervade it with tenderness, and a sense of the greatness of your privilege make it tremulous with emotion. With the Christian poet you can say:

“I cannot feel thee touch my hand
With pressure light and mild,
To check me, as my mother did,
When I was but a child.

“But I can feel thee in my thoughts
Fighting with sin for me ;
And when my heart loves God, I know
The sweetness is from thee.”

Now, how shall this Friend, invisible to human eyes, impalpable to mortal touch, become real to you. I answer, it must be wrought in you by faith. Faith is spiritual sight, and will be given to him who values and seeks it. The place to seek it is in the word of God, for therein Jesus

reveals himself; and the medium is the Spirit of God, by whom alone "the eyes of our understanding" can be "enlightened," Eph. 1:18, and whose office it is to take of the things of Christ and show them unto us, John 16:15.

That such a clearness of vision is possible we know from Scripture facts. Enoch "walked with God;" Joseph was sustained and comforted in all his changeful life, for "the Lord was with him;" and Moses "endured as seeing him who is invisible."

And yet seeing is not quite the word to express the nearness, the consciousness, the confidence you desire. You want Jesus to be in you—"Christ formed within." You have perhaps a friend whom you have never seen, yet to whom you have opened your heart, and who has thus grown familiar and quite near, despite the distance which lies between you. So open your heart to Jesus; trust him wholly, and keep trusting him. The inevitable consequence will follow in God's best time, and Jesus will reveal himself as "the chief among ten thousand, the one altogether lovely."

IX.

ABIDING IN CHRIST.

“They shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.” MATT. I : 23.

“I need thy presence every passing hour ;
What but thy grace can foil the tempter’s power ?
Who like thyself my guide and stay can be ?
Through cloud and sunshine, oh, abide with me !”

It may be that the Lord is trying the reader’s faith. This is his work. Yet, “Wait, I say, on the Lord;” “It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.” When it comes it will be fully, gloriously, and wholly of the Lord. In my own case, after this crisis, my experience has been that of one who “finds Christ so near that he can almost be touched.” And yet that does not express it, because it falls back on sense for an illustration. He is nearer than that. John Foster, speaking of friends, says: “I will converse

with my friends in solitude ; then they seem to be within my soul ; when I am with them, they seem to be without it."

And Faber,

"But God is never so far off
As even to be near ;
He is within ; our spirit is
The home he holds most dear.

"To think of him as by our side
Is almost as untrue,
As to remove his throne beyond
Those skies of starry blue.

"So all the while I thought myself
Homeless, forlorn, and weary,
Missing my joy—I walked the earth,
Myself God's sanctuary."

Our soul is a receiver ; only exhaust or empty it, and the Holy Spirit will come in, as the air rushes into a vacuum. Our part is just to make room for him. Only purely purge his temple, and you cannot keep him out.

You will say, "Ah, that is what I cannot do ; I must depend on him to do that." Admit it ; but one thing remains for you, namely : to *will* to do it. And then "he that shall come will

come, and will not tarry." A scriptural paradox, yet not unintelligible; for he who comes in the best time cannot be charged with delay. Doubtless you will have the sense of nearness you crave; and yet if your heavenly Father finds something to be corrected by withholding the blessing for a time, shall we prescribe to him? Nay, Lord; but "be it unto me as thou wilt."

Sometimes it seems within your grasp, and again it is far off. You read one day, and find only words, words, words. Another day you are saying, "Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib." As Fénelon testifies: "A line or a word will keep the soul agoing a long time." President Edwards bids us "watch for the gales of the Spirit." Now this is not because God wishes to deal with us in an arbitrary way, but because it is to our profit to become thoroughly aware of our utter dependence upon him.

Do not be discouraged because when you try to talk to a real and present Friend you seem to talk into the air. This naturally comes of "dead

orthodoxy," of allowing yourself for many years to talk to the ceiling. Can such a habit be broken up in a few minutes? No, nor in many years, if it depended on us alone. But our Lord, through his Spirit the Comforter, can do what we cannot. Let us cultivate a steadfast confidence in Jesus. Let us make it our aim to know Jesus better. Let us ask him to fulfil his promise to send the Comforter to guide us into all truth—truth of feeling, as well as truth of perception and comprehension. You cannot doubt that "He who spared not his own Son," will with him also "freely give you all things."

Again, you must trust Jesus in little things if you would feel him to be near. Let me tell you a morsel of personal experience. When we began housekeeping, to get notice from a cook or chambermaid of intention to quit was a great source of disquiet. Several times I said, "It is vain to expect to get another servant to suit us as well." In time our Lord opened my eyes to the impropriety of this. I resolved never to say that again, but instead, "Our Lord has taken this one away because her mission

here is finished, and he has a better one in store for us." Once or twice he tried us, whether under adverse appearances we would hold to that. Once he left us alone in the house. But we held fast our confidence, and never since then, for thirty years or more, has he failed to supply all our need. Oh, his love is wonderful! his care-taking endless!

X.

THE NIGHT OF FAITH.

“At evening time it shall be light.” ZECH. 14 : 7.

“Up to the hills I lift my eyes,
There all my hope is laid ;
The Lord who built the earth and skies,
From him will come my aid.”

IF I remember rightly it was in Thomas à Kempis I first found this expression, “the night of faith.” I soon came to regard the experience as of exceeding worth. May we not discern a foreshadowing of it in Gen. 15:12? Then, as now, it was a prelude to great blessings. In such seasons, dear reader, stay your soul upon Psalms 112:4: “Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness.” Our blessed Lord is only trying you, to see if you really care for the great boon you are asking. Not that he needs the evidence ; but you need it, and principalities and powers in heavenly places need it, and are wait-

ing to see him redeem his promise, "Then shall ye know him, if ye follow on to know the Lord." Be firmly resolved that when he has tried you, he shall not find you wanting in trust. Only believe; that is all. Trust Jesus. A prolonged, painful experience is by no means a denial of your request. Every heart-breaking desire of yours, "Oh, that I knew where I might find him!" is a nearer approach to that emptying of your heart for him, which absolutely insures the receiving of your desire, and hastens the hour. The discipline of mind and heart involved in darkness and delay is what we need. We get that, and not only that, but we are infallibly directed.

How often we are told by hasty and heedless speakers, "The way of duty is easily found when you have the disposition to walk in it." To such I reply, I have not so learned Christ. He has nowhere promised that. He has indeed assured us of infallible guidance; but not a word has he said of the way being *easily* found. Sometimes it is found only with great painstaking and heart-searchings. He "leads the blind by a way they

know not." What an opportunity this gives for simple faith! the very grace we most need to cultivate. Sometimes we find persons who profess to have sought God's guidance, giving up their confidence in his guiding hand, because they found "hills of difficulty" instead of a garden and bowers of ease. This is surely to be faithless. I have found, in my own case, the path in which the Lord led me, hills of difficulty and all, to be the right way. Ps. 107:7. He leads us as it were by a silken thread, ever so fine, but strong enough to hold us, provided we do not pull from but with him. Obedience is better than all the philosophy in the world.

There is no progress without suffering. Christians I think never get beyond their days and hours of trial. Many a one is brought to the verge of asking the Lord to let him lie down and die. Life's work is irksome. They have not physical force enough to rough it as is often needful. But let such a one think, "I am where my Lord wishes me to be. Would I be willing to take my education and all my appliances out of his hands? No; never, never,

never!" "Behold thy servant, Lord; be it unto me even as thou wilt." "All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come!"

"For flowers need night's cool darkness,
The moonlight and the dew."

Sometimes God makes us comprehend that in order to be of service to suffering ones, we must acquire fellowship with them through companionship in trials. Perhaps you, dear reader, may find in such a necessity a reason for your not immediately obtaining the liberty and joy you are longing for. Suppose the Lord should say to you, "My child, all that you crave I will most assuredly bestow; but suppose I see it best in granting your desire, to place you in the company of sufferers, that, like Cowper, you may minister to the comfort and spiritual wealth of others, while yet wholly unable to taste the consolation." It must have been at sore cost that Cowper learned to sing,

"There is a fountain filled with blood."

XI.

SERVICE.

“Freely ye have received, freely give.” MATT. 10 : 8.

“Christian, wouldst thou fruitful be ?
Jesus says, ‘*Abide in me.*’
From him all thy fruit is found ;
May it to his praise abound.”

A FRIEND writes : “The Comforter has taught me many things ; but I do not see that I have learned the one lesson—Jesus.” You, dear reader, perhaps say the same thing ; that is, you feel that your sensibility toward Jesus has not become what you desire. Perhaps your soul has been more exercised by attempts to get near Jesus, than your understanding has been enlightened by an increased knowledge of his adorable character. Your solicitude to make progress has been so deep and constant, that you could not forget *yourself* and the *question of progress* ; but could you have wholly forgotten your

own interest in the matter, and have been absorbed in the study of Christ, your love would have devoured all your doubts. Introspection is doubtless sometimes indispensable; but too much of it is a bar to progress in the knowledge and love of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Another great help in acquiring this one precious lesson is the communicating to others as fast as we ourselves receive. There is no substitute for this, and no dispensing with it if we would advance. It is the law of the road on which we have resolved to travel. Do not err in thinking yourself incompetent to speak for Jesus because your knowledge of him has been so unsatisfactory to yourself. You may and should tell what you know, and should be adventurous in your endeavors to be useful. You have the right to put forth exertions, counting upon Jesus to give you words and wisdom. Jesus bade his disciples, "Take nothing for your journey, neither staves nor scribe, neither bread, neither money." There are many holding back from service on the ground that they are not furnished for their work; but how are such to

come into the highest exercise of liberty, except in casting off all other dependence, and launching out fearlessly upon the broad sea of Christian effort in simple dependence upon Jesus?

I am more and more persuaded every day that for successful work we need nothing, absolutely nothing but simple, affectionate faith in our blessed Redeemer. I went to church-meeting last night feeling that perfect silence would best become my circumstances. But when a brother read, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me," such a sense of the sweet privilege of following Jesus came over me that I could not sit still; I must needs get up and tell them how sweet it was to follow always and only Jesus. and how rich the reward.

When you would speak to others, ask the Holy One to touch your heart and lips with a coal from off his altar, and he will do it. No matter whether the result compares with another's experience; you were not made to do another's work, but your own.

When you "can't do anything," you are re-

quired patiently to accept that disability, and be content to let some one else do it. "They also serve who only stand and wait." We often have to avail ourselves of this prescription. But "all things," even such as this, "work together for good to them that love God." No man's dross, we believe, can be purely purged away without the refining fire of this particular discipline. I know that there is a possibility that some temperaments, under such teaching, will sink into supineness; but one who is really honest and earnest will not. And then a part of our discipline may also be to keep balancing the question. This, though very uncomfortable, may not be unprofitable. Jesus has said, "My yoke is easy and my burden is light." It is our business to find it so; not to find it so, is to have somewhere failed of due attention to the rules of his service; and we must go back, searching each step of the way, till the wrong step is found.

Speak of the goodness of the Lord; let others have the benefit of your experience. God's goodness to you, and your recognition of it, is as much of a boon to your Christian brother or

sister as to yourself. Are we not "joint heirs with Christ"? You surely wish to strengthen the faith of all his saints, as well as to convert sinners; therefore speak of what he has done and is still doing for you. We do not want the experience of perfect people. It is the knowledge of what he has done for imperfect people, like ourselves, that touches us most nearly. But let the utterance always be preceded by speaking to the Lord.

One word more about service. Faith is the antidote to a fevered, anxious hurry, even to do good. Our dear Lord is most mercifully considerate of these frames of ours. He knows that they are but dust, and we honor him when we decline to be hastened beyond our strength. We must trust him for all we cannot do, and for all that must be omitted because of our inability; and so long as our heart is true to him, he will not suffer his work to be retarded, but will provide some other way to meet the exigency.

Work sometimes seems our own, and not the Lord's. It lies before me now, work consuming time and strength; hard work, not agreeable,

and so absorbing as to leave no time, or strength, or mental force for that which seems best worth the while for an immortal. Then in an instant I say, "It is all right, Lord; I see it all now. This is thy way of answering my most earnest prayer for holiness in order to usefulness. I perceive that in crossing my natural preferences, thou art giving me my heart's desire and prayer."

Then again we are perplexed because the multiplied labors thrown upon us leave us no undisturbed time for prolonged reading and prayer. Now, how should we feel towards a mother in like circumstances? "Mother, I delight in doing anything for you; and whatever you bring me I shall do to the best of my ability, and I know that in filling my hands with work, you leave me less time to converse with you; but you will not, I know, suspect me of indifference or voluntary absence from you." So much confidence have we in a mother; can we not trust Jesus as far? Besides, every word you speak for Jesus in an act of co-operation with him which you cannot separate from prayer with-

out a strange perversity of unbelief. Hold yourself to the recognition of the fact that Jesus is in very deed with you and in you—in all your work. And certainly you were never, in the secrecy of your chamber, nearer to him than when employed in doing his will.

XII.

HELPS.

“Through thy precepts I get understanding.” Ps. 119:104.

“Thy gospel makes the simple wise :
Thy laws are pure, thy judgments right.”

THERE is no way by which a Christian will grow so fast as in reading the Book of books ; not by chapters, but by verses, and parts of verses, as the Spirit makes them fresh and interesting. I have been living for a year past on Colossians 1:9, 10: “For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding ; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.” I have turned this passage into a prayer. It was the Comforter who one

morning, in answer to prayer for a blessing on my reading, made these verses spring up in my soul like living waters from a deep spring. The Comforter will do as much for you, dear reader, if asked.

It will be of infinite benefit to take up the leading points of Christian faith, which it may never have occurred to you to doubt, and turn to the Scripture passages which teach them ; settling each one upon your own personal investigation, taking nothing for granted, as is, alas, too common. In this way you will come to feel the solid rock under you ; the Deity of Christ ; the perfect satisfaction made by his atoning sacrifice ; and the forgiveness of sins to all who repent, confess and believe ; the indwelling of the Comforter ; the efficacy of prayer ; the acceptability of praise ; the reality and sphere of faith ; the absolute surety of your own salvation, as a believer ; the constancy and greatness of God's love ; the extent and certainty of his providence.

Realize that the Bible is God's living word to you. Holy men wrote as they were moved by

the Holy Ghost, because that is God's way of communicating with his creatures. But the words recorded are God's words, spoken in the first instance to representative men, and intended for each and every believer. Listen to his voice by the mouth of John the beloved: "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you. And these things write we unto you that your joy may be full." And John the Baptist says, "Behold the Lamb of God." "He is the true light which lighteth every man." "As many as received him to them gave he power to become the sons of God." The ability to appreciate the revelation is God's gift. Take each word appropriate to your necessities as actually spoken by our dear Lord to you, now at this moment a present, living utterance, and act upon it.

Not a few Christians make a superstition of regular readings of the Bible and prayer; and especially of reading a full chapter or more. I have heard Sunday-school teachers proclaim to their schools that by reading two or three chapters a day on week-days and five on Sunday

they can accomplish the task of reading through the Bible in a year. Now this may answer for children, and persons unfamiliar with the holy Book, in order to get a general knowledge of the word ; but Christians do not need to read so. I find that I never read the Bible so profitably as when some single verse, or two verses, get such hold of me that for days, weeks, and sometimes months, I cannot consent to give them up. Earnest, growing Christians will neither, on the one hand, catch at slight excuses for omitting regular daily devotions, nor, on the other, make a rule so inflexible as to substitute daily reading and prayer for love and obedience to Christ.

XIII.

COMFORT OF LOVE.

“I will love thee, O Lord, my strength.” PSA. 18 : 1.

“I cannot live contented here
Without some glimpses of thy face ;
And heaven, without thy presence there,
Would be a dark and tiresome place.”

THE history of one sometimes helps another. Two years ago, H—— was, though a church-member, as nearly as possible a total skeptic. When reminded of the necessity of loving Jesus as she loved her mother, her reply was, “That is impossible, for I have been accustomed to go to my mother, all my life, with everything, and have been counselled and comforted by her times innumerable ; of course I cannot love Jesus as I love my mother !” She was told that as long as she put Jesus at that disadvantage, it would continue impossible ; but how would it be if she were to give Jesus his own place—the place he

claims—and go always first to him with everything? Would he not then prove himself to be as kind, ay, and an infinitely more tender, as well as wiser Friend? Now she has found it so. Now she is so absorbed with Jesus that she “forgets herself totally, sins and all.”

Must you wait until you reach “love’s own country” before you can drink such refreshing draughts from the deep, sweet well? No, indeed! for our Emmanuel says, “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” When President Edwards was exercised with a longing to be filled with Jesus, he resolved to do all in his power to encourage, increase, and intensify the longing. This is just what our Lord would have you do. Jesus is the one altogether lovely. The more you cherish him the more you will find him so. There is no holding back on his part, but your eyes are in part holden. You do but see men as trees walking. This very moment you may unchecked lay your head upon his bosom, and

there rest for ever. It is what he would have you do. Long delay to do it has infused distrust, has made you timid, has led you to reason, "If I were only thus and so; if I had only done this or that, then might I cast myself on him, and take my fill of love divine." The moment will come when you will let go the last doubt, and rest on him. You will be borne along through "love's own country" in the bosom of the Lord of the country, with fulness of joy, as on the wings of the wind.

Will Jesus ever be tired of you? What, he who has said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, mind, and strength"? Would you be tired of one who in like manner was seeking to deserve your love?

"Why can you not revel in the ocean of his love?" do you ask? For the same reason that some persons cannot swim; they are afraid to trust the element that would buoy them. Only believe his assertion, "Underneath are the everlasting arms," and nothing can prevent your rejoicing in the ocean of his love. Were you ever so advanced a Christian, so long as you remain

in the body, your hunger and thirst must needs at once attest your sonship, and that absence from the Lord which constrained Paul to say that "to depart and be with Christ is far better."

Follow your impulses to believe wholly. There is no danger that you will believe too much or expect too much. Believing is loving. Every hour you struggle on, faint yet pursuing, hungering for Jesus, yet not rebelling or murmuring because he keeps you waiting, you give him a treasure of loyal love, far, far beyond the offerings of one who has no such aching, insatiable void. "How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God!" thoughts of thine absolutely perfect knowledge, Psa. 139:1; that thou knowest my very thoughts, ver. 2; thoughts of thy nearness, ver. 3; and protection, descending to the smallest details, ver. 4; and steadying me with thy hand, ver. 5; filling me with ineffable peace in the joyful assurance of thy presence, ver. 6-12; thoughts of thy foresight and painstaking, ver. 13-19; and thy generous intentions in my behalf, sure deliverance from the

wicked, and the still more momentous deliverance from every way not agreeable to thy pure will.

“’Tis not the skill of human art
Which gives me power my God to know ;
The sacred lessons of the heart
Come not from instruments below.

“Love is my teacher. He can tell
The wonders that he learned above ;
No other master knows so well ;
’Tis Love alone can tell of love.”

XIV.

GROWTH.

“First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.” MARK 4 : 28.

“He sendeth sun, he sendeth shower ;
Alike they ’re needful for the flower ;
And joys and tears alike are sent
To give the soul fit nourishment.”

IF some fond mother should bring you her daughter, a promising child of ten years, and say to you, “I want you should take my child and fit her for the highest and most useful sphere in life, in a week, or month, or year,” you would be compelled to reply: “You know not what you ask. It is a thing impossible in the nature of the case. Your child’s mind requires time as well as books. My business is simply to lead the way, assisting in the development of the powers which God has given her. You may count on my letting none of these suffer from

neglect. Whatever talent reveals itself shall receive judicious encouragement."

So you may count with absolute confidence on our Lord's tender interest in you and care for you, and that he will put you forward as fast as you have strength to go. Nor is his attention to your needs, nor your progress under his tuition, to be measured by any particular sensation, or by complacency in any visible improvement you may seem to discover in yourself. Not but that you may discover in yourself such improvement as may justly impel you to give thanks to God. But after all, your hope and encouragement must be his promise, and that his Spirit makes this real to you. Here is the solid ground, the rock, standing on which you can neither be unduly exalted by sensible fervors, nor depressed by any diminution of emotional sensibility. Gradually the conviction will gain upon you that Jesus is unchangeably your friend, quite irrespective of your ebb and flow of feeling, of the ups and downs of your spiritual life.

In judging of your standing or progress, two things are probable: first, that you do not make

sufficient allowance for physical influences ; and secondly, that you do not rest in Jesus. You think you would rest if you could only feel thus and so. But he requires you to rest unconditionally in him. This misapprehension about feeling is almost universal. There is a preconceived idea of a successful act of faith, involving peculiar if not overwhelming emotion, and a persuasion that if this be not realized, nothing is accomplished. Now the truth of the matter is, men catch sight of Jesus from every possible angle of vision, according to the endless varieties of need ; seeing him as just the Saviour needed for their own particular exigency ; and the kinds and degrees of emotion are as various as the peculiarities of circumstances.

There is a precious lesson for you in Col. 2 : 10 : "And ye are complete in him." Each Christian is a temple of the Holy Ghost, not yet finished, but being advanced day by day by Him who formed him for Himself. On B—street a new church is being built on land reclaimed from the river. Nearly a year ago they were driving piles whereon to lay the founda-

tion. When we went away, two months ago, I said to myself, "We shall see great progress when we return." But when I went to view it, they had not reached even the top of the doors. Shapeless blocks and bits of stone were lying around, and the workmen were not idle; but the work is large, and to be built for long continuance. Meanwhile this slowly-advancing edifice is all complete in the mind of the architect. It is completely illustrated in his drawings, some of which I have seen. If the workmen live; if disasters do not overtake them; if the blessing of God shall favor, by-and-by the building will be complete to the eye of every beholder. About yourself there is no *if* but one: "You shall know, if you *follow on* to know the Lord," for his own mouth hath spoken it.

At present you are enduring the trial of hope deferred. You desire the immediate realization of Jesus' love for you. So far as your inability to do this is the effect of sin, your disappointment will intensify your abhorrence of sin. And is not that a great gain? Does any one love God and holiness, who does not equally hate sin

and Satan? We are not apt to think of this; but we must hate sin as God hates it; and we cannot do this except as we learn its hatefulness from its disastrous influence on our usefulness and happiness. What you want is, that our Lord should educate you for the everlasting enjoyment of his friendship and service. That he is doing. He says so. "You are no more strangers and foreigners, but . . . built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone. In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit." For what has Jesus reconcilèd you to God? "To present you holy, unblameable, and unreprouable in his sight." It is a progressive work. Some few Christians seem to be brought, by the grace of God, to a point from which it is but one step to a fulness of joy and peace in believing. They see the step and take it; others protest they cannot see it. But the Lord is dealing with you in his own way, and you may trust him.

XV.

SENSIBLE FERVORS.

“The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water sprinkling up into everlasting life.” JOHN 4 : 14.

“Oh, may my love to thee
Pure, warm, and changeless be,
A living fire.”

THERE are few things in the religious life so misleading as sensible fervors. I have many a time been completely extinguished by the astonishing fervors of persons, whom I found on acquaintance to be neither truthful nor honest. Others I have seen whose fervor soon burned out, and the persons subsided into a state of living which compelled serious doubt whether they ever had any fire of true devotion. Meanwhile my own love, which in comparison had seemed to be nothing, consciously suffered no abatement, but had gone on increasing, through summer's heat and winter's cold, quite independent of others.

Our need is of fresh supplies continually of divine truth and love. The feeling that we must and ought to be effectually "stirred" by what we hear sometimes steels us against all right feeling. To sit meekly at the feet of Jesus, and learn patiently of him, and of him alone, is one of the least common attainments. I do not mean to imply that we may not learn from our fellow-Christians. But I think there is a temptation, not uncommon, to expect church-members to get stirred up under fervid appeals from one another. This is not saying anything against the use of a genuine power to arouse and benefit others; but the eloquence of truth, God's truth, dropping quietly into a mind always offered to the occupancy of the Comforter, oh, how superior is this! And how much more enduring the inspirations thus received than those heats which alternate with frequent and most reprehensible irregularities, even to suspension of spiritual life.

Conscientious individuals often deceive or misunderstand themselves. They say, "If I could only say truly that I entered into this

matter with all my soul, I should be content." What do you mean by "all your soul"? You are "not vehemently excited." Neither are you about your mother or your child, your husband or your wife. Yet you doubtless love these with all your heart. Vehement excitement is not necessarily the only type of an all-the-soul interest. Your love to earthly friends is to be measured by your steady, continuous endeavors to promote their interests, or to forward their usefulness, with that measure of feeling appropriate to each day's demand. And if you can sincerely say that it is the desire of your heart to be emptied of self and conformed to the will of God, do you not come up to that test in your relations to him?

Do not misjudge yourself either because you have days when prayer seems utterly unsatisfactory. Such days are a trial of your faith, and every Christian probably knows something of such an experience. Do not be appalled by it. It may be an intellectual obscuration, often occasioned by our physical condition. If one depends on frames and feelings, such a condition

brings dismay. On the other hand, if one has learned to look up and say, "Lord Jesus, I am thine in sunshine or in shadow, with comfort or without, I shall go steadily on, doing what I think to be acceptable to thee;" then faith grows, even as the grass in the night. The time will come, too, when you will thank Jesus for just this trial. You need not, unless you consciously have occasion, refer it to ill health; nor need you conclude that by it you have lost ground. If you cannot trace it to some known sin, refer it in a childlike spirit to God's goodwill, and find in it the evidence that he has set his heart on your sanctification. Were you always to have the fervor and fluency you sometimes have, you might mistake what in a thousand instances comes of mere animal spirits, for pure spiritual life. At such seasons of privation one gets excellent opportunities for faithful and sensible self-examination. Thus we inquire, "Do I wish to turn to any other than Jesus for life, light, or joy? Am I any less bent on serving my Lord? Can I not truly and with emphasis say, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee?'"

and there is none upon earth I desire beside thee'? Am I not more ready than ever to exclaim, 'If I forget thee, let my right hand forget her cunning; let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I prefer not thee above my chief joy'?"

Even if we do make a little slip, or find a duty omitted here or there, it does not follow that we have lost ground to that extent that we need be discouraged in our attempts at recovering it. What one is apt to lose in such circumstances is self-complacency. It is vexing, just when we are ready to think we are becoming pretty good, to be reminded that all the apparent improvement has oozed out through a flaw in the vessel. Now the real improvement is seen in the resolve we immediately adopt, "Well, if I never succeed, I will keep on trying till the end of time." "By patient continuance in well-doing," not by sensible fervors, we shall "inherit glory, honor, and immortality."

XVI.

LIBERTY.

“For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty.” GAL 5:13

“Rest in the Lord, sweet, silent rest,
At last my soul hath found ;
Rest from myself : in him so blest,
I sink in peace profound.
Rest from the ceaseless surge of guilt :
‘ No condemnation ’ here !
Sufficient is the blood he spilt,
His love forbids my fear.”

THE controlling desire and endeavor in all things to please Jesus should cover the whole ground of solicitude with the Christian. Especially if with this he connects the great principle of justification by faith alone, without the deeds of the law. If I love a friend truly, I shall certainly do all the deeds, and say all the words, which would be demanded by perfect obedience to the highest and strictest law. But what would satisfy him, would not be the compliance with the law, but the love. So keep in

mind that you are justified by faith alone, and that your works are of no value except as they are the consistent and inseparable accompaniment of your loving confidence—that is, your faith—and all will be well.

But here is a point of danger, lest you tend towards such a critical surveying, weighing and measuring everything you do, say, or think, as to lose all freedom. Do you need an illustration? Suppose that in the society of a very dear friend, I should be so anxious to please, as never to have a particle of mental rest or peace. Would that be well or wise? Bear in mind the verse, “Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.” I am a friend of yours. I come to your house with all the laws of polite intercourse laid down in my mind. “Thou shalt do this;” “Thou shalt not do that.” I might keep to all these rules and have a weary time of it. As George Herbert tersely says,

“How wide is all this long pretence !

There is in love a sweetness ready penned ;
Copy out that, and save expense.”

If I love you in my heart I may or may not keep fully up to the rules; love will set me at ease. My heart will assure me of my loyalty to you, and I have confidence in your love for me. So if our Lord finds a loving heart in you, he will not condemn you. If he finds in you a legal spirit, relying or trying to rely on your obedience to rules, without love in your heart, he will find you wanting.

XVII.

PERPLEXITIES.

• “My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him.” Ps. 62 : 5.

“O foolish man ! where are thine eyes ?
How hast thou lost them in a crowd of cares !”

GOD hears our prayers for sanctification by sending trials. Is not this the history of the saints from long before the time of John Newton ? And in daring to “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,” we lay our dearest friends under the same liability to discipline to which our prayer and endeavor expose us. Not but that the Divine wisdom finds a need-be for them too, in it all, as truly as though they or we were alone the objects of God’s care. Hardly anything brings a more affecting illustration of the wonderful extent of the Lord’s resources than this, that he can carry on the edu-

cation of two or of twenty souls as easily as that of one ; and moreover, that he can and does provide that the discipline which primarily is for one, is equally in place for the other ; and still again, that the suffering of one, sympathized in and shared by the other, shall be the precise thing most needful and useful for both.‡

We are sometimes thrown into circumstances where we have to choose our way. We seek the Divine guidance. But we say to ourselves, "What if, through failure to seek earnestly or importunately enough, we are left to make a mistake!" Anxious importunity has its place in the transition state between unbelief in the Divine guidance, and a simple, affectionate trust. But to those of you who have long known the Comforter, and are assured that he dwells with you and in you, and that he constantly guides you, how proper is that serene trust which rejoices in the promise that he "abideth faithful," that he "will never leave nor forsake you." In that profound, undisturbed conviction we may rest. A friend long tried would rightly feel grieved if we should write in a

flutter of doubt and anxious concern, lest a slip of our pen, or an unguarded utterance should alienate his regard, and provoke him to leave us unaided in a time of perplexity and trial. We would not so distrust a companion. And is it not plain that we ought not to conceive of the possibility that Jesus would leave us, his disciples, his friends, to err, for the lack of greater earnestness or importunity, when he knows our sincere and fervent desire? Does not quiet confidence, and soul-refreshing rest in his promises of guidance, and in his love, honor him? as well as contribute greatly to our own happiness, and so to our power to help others to a like precious faith?

In making such a choice there must be a limit to our questioning; some point at which, in a case calling for a decision, we must come to a decision. In our courts of law there could never be an adjudication, if a point were not reached at which it should be ruled that "the evidence is all in." When that point is reached, the advocate is permitted to make the best showing he can, on the one side or the other,

and the jury give their conclusion on the evidence. We have to go over just this ground often ; and be it that we have to be judged in our own case, and that human judges are liable to err, if we go into the examination with carefulness, prayerfulness and painstaking to get at the truth, we are bound to accept the result as the decision of our Lord. And as God himself is settled and serene in his conclusions, he doubtless desires, and has provided, that we, in our measure, shall be in ours. We are not warranted to assume that Jesus never suffers his disciples to err in judgment ; for our errors in judgment often furnish avenues for the admission of most valuable lessons ; lessons which rarely come home to us by any other way.

Just in proportion as we are conscious of a controlling desire to do as we think Jesus would be best pleased to have us do, in that proportion are we bound to believe that he is pleased with us. To indulge any other belief is, in effect, to make void his assurance that his yoke is easy and his burden light. For if the sincerely desirous to do right cannot know what He esteems

right, then miserable suspense and self-condemnation are inevitable. Questionings at such time may arise from unbelief, veiled in the plausible garb of a deep sense of our own fallibility. True, we are fallible, prone to err; but is the promise of God of no effect? And for whom is the promise? Is it for those who have least need of it? or, also, for those who need it most? When God presents the two sides of a question so nearly balanced that we cannot discern which indicates the path of duty, the point at which he aims is less the issue of the question than the process. The desire of our heart, evident to him, and the pains we take to please him by our decision, are the things of value in his esteem. The even balancing of the question forces on us a closeness and a frequency of appeal to our Lord, most evidently suited to make him real to us.

We have no right to think it a proof of sin that we are "tossed about," so long as the tossing is the result of rowing against wind and tide, by God's appointment and direction. The "waver- ing" we are warned against is of quite an-

other sort; namely, that of a man who has no such faith as impels him to struggle in defiance of winds and waves. It is not well to be anxious about remote results. Our true solicitude should be, to act as well as we can, with the light we have to-day, this hour, *now*. Jesus has said, "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you." We must believe that, just because Jesus said it; and believing it, we may well rest, firm as the everlasting hills, upon his love, assured that if anywhere among the inexhaustible treasures of our Lord there is a single thing better for us than those which try us most, we shall have it.

The cry, 'Why am I thus?' sooner or later comes up out of the suffering experience of every child of God. With intervals, long or short, of peace and quietness, Christians have extreme perplexities, with the consciousness of being at their wits' end, and void of wisdom to meet a pressing emergency. But such seasons of bewilderment and tempest come and go, and leave the sufferer unscathed. Though while they are pending they seem fateful as destiny,

in the hands of our Lord they prove only blessings. How this may be we can easily believe. First, he desires to bring us into the most perfect sympathy and oneness with him. Second, this consists in a profound deference to the Father's will, and in great tenderness towards the burden-bearing and suffering. Third, he would bring us into the exercise of a faith that nothing can disturb. To know whether a tree or a Christian's faith can be uprooted or blown down, it is needful that it should be blown upon most furiously by every wind of heaven. If it stands bravely through it all, we have an evident and most encouraging result not to be reached in any other way. There is need of all this discipline of perplexity, because the transforming of such creatures as we are into the image of Jesus, is such a great work. If we take this view of it, we shall account every new perplexity new evidence that our beloved Lord is using the attrition of trial to make us more like himself.

XVIII.

VICTORY.

"This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." 1 JOHN 5:4.

"If man be nothing, God is all ;
Love sets the captive free
From every burden, bondage, thrall ;
Of dungeons dark, the key."

It may be that some one of our Lord's little ones having read these few simple pages of testimony and counsel, will be led to ask, "Do any attain to this high and blessed experience of love, joy, and peace in believing in Jesus?" Thanks be to God, many have reached it. Here is the record of one. Not long before she was called to her heavenly home, she wrote the following letter to a timid believer:

TRUSTING ALL TO CHRIST.

MY DEAR FRIEND: For many weeks I have been waiting to feel strong enough to write to you. I have thought a great deal of you and

very tenderly, and have been longing to be permitted to lead you into the quiet rest which the Lord has given to me.

Now don't be surprised to hear me say this, and begin at once to say that I have received some new light, or come into some marvellous experience. Not a bit of it; but I think I do know more of what trusting in God means than I used to. When my kind doctor first told me that I had a fatal disease upon me, and that I must at once drop everything, and care first of all for my health, in that same hour I believe I did "drop everything," spiritual burdens as well as temporal. I had been tugging away at myself for months and years, trying to grow better; trying, I rather think, to make myself of some account in God's sight. I was always looking forward to the time when I should be more prayerful, more diligent, more consecrated, and then God would be pleased with me, and I would know I was his child. There it was, you see, just nothing but self-righteousness after all. But my doctor's words made me feel that I carried about a disease that might at any moment end

my earthly existence. In one little hour I was brought face to face with the fact that my doing, of whatever sort, was nearly ended; and that I might have no more time in which to finish my work in this world, or to get ready for another.

I was not alarmed or troubled, though greatly surprised. But my first thought was, "Well, I am in the Lord's hands, and I know it now." And my next, the prayer, "Lord, take me; I give myself to thee just as I am. I can do nothing more to make myself better, I can never be more fit to come to thee than in this moment." And I think the Lord must have heard that prayer. No rustle of angelic wings stirred the air. No visible revelation appeared to me. No deep joy flowing into my soul made me feel that my prayer was accepted, and that I was just taken up into the Good Shepherd's arms. But very quietly and calmly, without a wish to have anything different, I sat that long Sabbath afternoon, and talked with a dear friend of the message the Lord had sent me.

How strange it all was! In the morning, not

feeling strong, to be sure, but with no suspicion that anything ailed me beyond a temporary weakness; in the afternoon, sitting already by the bank of the river that separates us from our heavenly home. Well, the quiet calmness that came to me in that hour, my Lord's own gift to me, has never left me. "It is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes." I have no fears for the future, so far as my sickness is concerned; nor any wish that I know of, as to the length of my stay here. This, you know, cannot be any human experience; for I have much to make life pleasant to me. Nor have I a longing desire to depart. All that I put into the Lord's hands once for all. And he has given me grace to leave it there. Jesus is not more real to me, perhaps, than he was before. I do not know that I love him better, or am nearer to him. I should be glad to do so; but I do not fight any longer because I can't do this. I find I can trust, if things are not as I think they ought to be, or as I wish they were. And I think this trust is what God wants of me more than anything else. So I have stopped trying

to earn God's favor, and have left myself in his hands to be saved like any other poor sinner. And all I have to do is just to take the blessings he sends me day by day—and they are innumerable—and enjoy them as his gifts, and wait quietly till he takes me out of this lower school, and puts me into a higher class in the heavenly home, where I shall learn to love him as I ought.

I have written this, because it seems to me as though it might help you a little. Friends have told you, I suppose, a hundred times just to give up all your own efforts and trust in Christ, whether you felt or saw anything or not. I can only repeat the same lesson. You will never be any more fit to trust than you are to-day. Suppose you knew your life would end this week, would not your instinctive feeling be, "I can only trust in the Lord"? Well, if you can only rest on him in like manner *now*, he will in time make known to you that you are his. Do you suppose any enemy of God was ever distressed as you are because God was not more real? Never! I wish I could tell you some of the sweet thoughts I have had about Jesus visiting the sick when he

was upon earth. Have you noticed how much the gospels say about it? And I have thought, if he came to me and healed me, I should want to take him right to your room, and ask him to heal you. Some day he will.

They tell me that I am an entirely different person since my illness; and I think it is true. It is the Lord's doing. Earthly cares laid aside in a great measure, spiritual burdens dropped at his feet, who bid us "let not your heart be troubled," I have been quietly waiting through sunshine and shadow for the coming of his messenger.

I have enjoyed much this winter, though I have no wonderful experiences, no ecstasies, no new views of Christ and his love. I love to live. And God has lavished such countless blessings of every description upon me in these months of my decline, that it has been a perpetual joy to recount them to myself and to those about me. The future seems so full of awe and mystery as to bewilder me; so I do not think much about it, but go trusting along from day to day with a glad heart, knowing that my God will not

fail me when the time of trial comes. I have not attained what I have struggled for so many years ; but I am one of the Lord's little ones, I hope. And he keeps me, oh, so quiet ! It sometimes almost seems to me as if I had begun to live in a little piece of heaven already.

E. T. G.



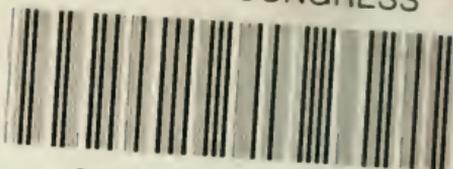
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