Every Day!
Author unknown, 1872

"Show me, O LORD, my life's end and the number of my days; let me know how fleeting is my life. You have made my days a mere handbreadth; the span of my years is as nothing before You. Each man's life is but a breath! Selah." Psalm 39:4-5

"So teach us to number our days — that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom!" Psalm 90:12

You alone, O Lord, can teach to profit — help me to number my days aright!

Surely my days are few and fleeting and uncertain! Days past are gone beyond recall — and my future days I cannot number. Let me then this day, and day by day, confide in You — and look to You for the very help and grace I need.

Surely it is the highest wisdom to renounce self, to cleave to Christ, and to keep the great end of my being in view — "to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever." This is an object worth living for, and which may well engage all the powers of my mind.

Nor let me suppose that it is needful to turn aside from the occupations of my daily life to honor the God of my salvation; for He teaches me that whether I eat or drink, or whatever I do — I may do all to His glory. To this then may I apply my heart, with all diligence and constancy — constrained by the love of Him who gave Himself for me!

"Every day I will bless You — and I will praise Your name forever and ever!" Psalm 145:2

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"What do you think of Christ?" Matthew 22:42

I am ashamed of my thoughts of Him — they are so poor, and so unworthy of Him. He is so great, and so glorious, and so good, and so gracious — that I cannot think of Him as I desire to.

Do you inquire what I think of His person? He is the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely One! He unites in Himself Deity and Manhood —
"All human beauties — all Divine,
 In my Beloved meet and shine!"

Do you ask what I think of His work? It is perfect! His obedience is spotless! His atonement is complete! His work of redemption is accomplished, "It is Finished!"

Do you ask what I think of His love? Ah, here it is that I am most at fault — and no wonder, for His love surpasses knowledge! Its height and depth, its length and its breadth — are immeasurable! His love is free, unchanging, and eternal. It is unparalleled — it is Dying love! He loved me — and gave Himself for me! Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends — but Jesus laid down His life for His enemies!

"May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully!" Ephesians 3:19

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"You do not realize now what I am doing — but later you will understand." John 13:7

Peter could not apprehend the design of our Lord in washing the disciples' feet, and impatiently expressed his surprise, "You shall never wash my feet!" Our gracious Savior in effect replied, "Wait a little, Peter — and you will see the reason for My doing so. You do not realize now what I am doing — but later you will understand."

How often are we impatient when we cannot at once see the design of the Lord's dealings with us. Sometimes, when events run contrary to our desires and expectations — we are ready, like Jacob, to say, "All these things are against me!" While in reality, none of them are against us — but all are, in a wonderful way, working together for our good.

Oh for more confidence in Him who, in infinite wisdom, is so ordering the circumstances of our lives as to promote our spiritual welfare here — and our eternal advantage in the world to come.

Even in the present life, the Lord sometimes shows us the meaning of His past dealings with us, and convinces us that when He was leading us in a rough path — He was leading us by the right way towards the city of habitation.

"Blind unbelief is sure to err,
 And scan His work in vain!
 God is His own interpreter,
 And He will make it plain!"

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"My times are in Your hand!"  Psalm 31:15

Is not this truth a joy to you, my soul?

It would be a sorry thing for me if my times were in my own hands — and it would afford me little satisfaction if my times were in an angel's hands. How restful should I be in knowing that they are in Savior's nail-pierced hands!
He sees the end from the beginning.
He knows how to apportion my sorrows and my joys.
He knows what to give — and what to withhold.
He knows also when to give — and when to take away.

But, alas! how often is my heart mistrustful — how often have I murmured under the trying dispensations of His providence! O my soul, be ashamed and confounded — be humbled in the dust that you should ever call in question the wisdom or kindness of the dealings of Him who so loved you as to give His life for your redemption!

Help me, O God of my salvation, henceforth, with childlike confidence and peaceful trust — to yield all to You, and to rejoice in the assurance that "My times are in Your hand!"

"My times are in Your hand;
 Why should I doubt or fear?
 My Father's hand will never cause
 His child a needless tear!"

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"Show me, O LORD, my life's end and the number of my days; let me know how fleeting is my life." Psalm 39:4

Is not the measure of my days a mere hand's breadth? How short is the longest span of life! How many do not reach half that length!

And then, too, how frail is the human frame! Even the most healthy and robust, carry in them the seeds of decay! Their breath is in their nostrils — their heart at any moment may cease to beat.

How fearfully and wonderfully are we made! How mysterious is the circulation of the vital blood; how delicately arranged are the air-cells of the lungs; how finely strung are the nerves of sensation. On how many strings is the harmony of the human frame dependent!

"Strange that a harp of thousand strings,
 Should keep in tune so long!"

Lord, help me not only to realize how frail is my earthly tenement — but to remember with joy how glorious and enduring will be my heavenly abode. "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved — we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens!" 2 Corinthians 5:1

"So teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom!" Psalm 90:12

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"They were longing for a better country — a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them." Hebrews 11:16

"Here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come!" Hebrews 13:14

"Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city!" Revelation 22:14

God has prepared a city for His redeemed people. Towards that city we are ever journeying. And as we are but sojourners, as our citizenship is in Heaven — let us manifest the pilgrim spirit. While we thankfully use and enjoy the accommodations along the way, let it plainly appear that we do not regard this transient world as our home — but that our affections are set supremely on things which are above. Let it be manifest that we act from higher principles than those which govern the men of this poor world. May our companions, our pleasures, and our spirit plainly show that we are not of the earth — but that we are citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem.

As sojourners, let us patiently endure the trials of the way. If we are faithful witnesses for the Lord — we must expect the world's scorn. But like Moses, may we esteem reproach for Christ as greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. And when we find the path thorny, and the journey toilsome — let us remember that it is short, and that,

"Nightly we pitch our moving tent
 A day's march nearer home!"

"Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims — abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul!" 1 Peter 2:11

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"Whoever serves Me must follow Me; and where I am — My servant also will be.
 My Father will honor the one who serves Me!" John 12:26

What an honor it is to be a servant of the Lord Jesus! It is an honor that is not confined to any particular condition in outward life. Not only are ministers and missionaries Christ's servants — but also the humblest laborers in His vineyard! Nor is service to Christ confined to direct efforts in spiritual work:
  the mother in the midst of her family, endeavoring by her spirit and example to train her children aright;
  the servant in the kitchen, doing her work heartily as to the Lord;
  the hard working laborer in the field;
  the attentive mechanic in the shop;
  the honest clerk in the office —
not rendering eye-service as a men-pleasers, but doing their work faithfully and well, as the Lord's redeemed people.
All of these are as truly Christ's servants — as those who are occupied more exclusively in spiritual work!

All who serve Jesus faithfully here — will dwell with Him hereafter. All who follow Him on earth in the path of self-denying love and obedience — will share His glory in Heaven.

Servant of Christ, called now to suffer reproach and shame — let the assurance of your Savior cheer you: "Whoever serves Me must follow Me; and where I am — My servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves Me!"

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"We know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God — to those who are called according to His purpose!" Romans 8:28

We love Him — because He first loved us! When we know and believe the love that God has to us — then we love Him in return. And as we increase in the knowledge of Him — we love Him not only on account of what He has done for us, but also on account of what He is in Himself. As we see His glory in the face of Jesus Christ — we adore Him and delight in Him.

Happy is the state, and glorious are the privileges of all who love God.

God causes all things to work together for their good . . .
  all their trials and their comforts,
  all their sorrows and their joys,
  all their temptations and their consolations,
are so arranged by the wisdom and goodness of God, their Father, that they contribute . . .
  to their spiritual good,
  to the humbling of their spirit,
  to their deliverance from sin and self,
  and to their glorying only in the Lord.

In themselves, many of the things which befall the Lord's people would be evil — even as in medicine, some of the ingredients are poisonous. But as a skillful physician so mixes the toxic ingredients that they work together for the health and cure of the patient — so the infinitely wise and gracious God makes all things work together for the final and eternal well-being of His people!

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"Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name — you are Mine. When you go through deep waters — I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty — you will not drown. When you walk through the fire of oppression — you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you. For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior!" Isaiah 43:1-3

The people of God are not promised exemption from trial — but support under it!

The Lord does not engage to lead His children by a smooth path — but to furnish them with shoes of iron and brass, that they may safely walk the rugged and thorny road.

He does not promise to bridge over the waters of sorrow and the rivers of tribulation — but assures them of His presence as they pass through them. "I will be with you!" He says, "When you go through rivers of difficulty — you will not drown. When you walk through the fire of oppression — you will not be burned up."

Christian pilgrim — will not this suffice?

Support in trial, will suit you better than exemption from it.

Affliction and sorrow, in the hands of the great Physician — are medicine for the soul!
The wounds He inflicts — are for the healing of the spirit!

The fire He may lead you through will not burn — but only purify and brighten you!

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"He led them forth by the right way — that they might go to a city of habitation." Psalm 107:7

Just so will the Lord will lead you, beloved reader, by the "right way" — if you truly yield yourself to His guidance. The path by which He will conduct you will not always be smooth and pleasant. You will have some "Hill Difficulty" to climb, and some "Valley of Humiliation" to walk in. You will have some thorny steps to tread — and occasionally you may have to pitch your tent by Marah — the waters of bitterness.

As you are led by a mysterious and circuitous way amidst perplexity and conflict — you may be ready to think that you are traveling by a needlessly painful and trying path, and that you may safely walk by some smoother one to the home of eternal rest. Do not yield to the temptation of turning aside from the path which the Lord plainly marks for you in His Word, and by the footprints of Christ. Still follow as He leads. He designs to exercise your faith, and patience, and self-denial. The way to the crown — is by the cross!

Trust, then, your All-wise Leader — and depend on His faithfulness and grace. He will surely bring you by the right way . . .
  to the city of habitation,
  to the home of the redeemed,
  to the abode of endless rest, and peace, and love!

"Jesus, on You our hope depends,
 To lead us on to Your abode,
 Assured our Home will make amends
 For all our toil while on the road!"

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"By grace are you saved through faith — and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God — not of works, lest any man should boast." Ephesians 2:8, 9

"Grace, 'tis a charming sound — harmonious to the ear!"

Grace pitied us in our guilty, helpless condition — and provided a Savior for us.

Grace instituted the ministry of gospel reconciliation — and brought the tidings of divine mercy to our ears.

Grace opened our blind eyes — and led us to see and feel our need of the precious blood of Christ.

Grace led us to cast away the filthy rags of our own righteousness — and to receive with thankfulness and joy, the spotless robe that Jesus wrought for us.

Grace brought us to the footstool of mercy, with the cry of the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

Grace enables us to live a life of dependence on Jesus alone, for all spiritual supplies.

Grace has begun a good work within us — and grace will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

By grace we are saved! "We are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus!" Romans 3:24

  'Tis not by works of righteousness
  Which our own hands have done.
  But we are saved by sovereign grace,
  Abounding through His Son!

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"To him who overcomes . . ." Revelation 2:7

The pathway to glory is not one of flowery ease. There are . . .
  trials to be endured,
  difficulties to be surmounted,
  temptations to be resisted,
  and enemies to be encountered!

The Christian is called . . .
  to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ,
  to put on the whole armor of God,
  and to fight the fight of faith.

To stimulate and cheer him in the conflict, many encouraging assurances are given — especially made to those who press forward through all difficulties, and in the strength of Christ overcome all their spiritual foes:

"To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God!" Revelation 2:7

"He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death!" Revelation 2:11

"To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it!" Revelation 2:17

"He who overcomes will be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before My Father and His angels!" Revelation 3:5

"Him who overcomes — I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God; and I will also write on him My new name!" Revelation 3:12

"To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with Me on My throne!" Revelation 3:21

"He who overcomes will inherit all this — and I will be his God and he will be my son!" Revelation 21:7

O Lord, be my strength, give me courage, endurance, and holy fortitude! Increase my faith — that I may overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil, and at last come off more than conqueror through Him who has loved me!

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"Do not despise the chastening of the Lord — nor faint when you are rebuked by Him." Hebrews 12:5

Whenever our heavenly Father uses the rod of correction — it is in love, and for our profit. We should not, therefore, on the one hand make light of it — and on the other hand, we should not sink under it in despondency.

If we err by treating Divine correction with indifference — we thereby ask for severer treatment, for the strokes of the rod must be repeated until we feel them and submit to them!

And if we err by fainting under rebuke — it is a proof that we forget how pitiful and tender a Father corrects us, and that He intends nothing but our present profit and everlasting good. Chastening only benefits us as we are "exercised" by it — and therefore we must feel it. But if we faint — we shall fail to apprehend the gracious purposes of it.

O my Father, let me ever turn to You, when You use the rod — in submission, in trust, and love. Do not allow me to slight Your gentler rebukes, and permit me not to faint under Your severer discipline. May I remember that, though "no chastening for the present seems to be joyous but grievous — nevertheless, afterwards it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto those who are exercised thereby."

"Heed the rod — and the One who appointed it." Micah 6:9

"Trials make the promise sweet,
 Trials give new life to prayer;
 Trials bring me to His feet,
 Lay me low, and keep me there!"

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"He gives us more grace!" James 4:6

Come, then, my soul, to Him — as an empty vessel to be filled. A supply is waiting for you in Christ Jesus. "It has pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell." He is the never-failing Fountain of blessing! Out of His fullness, you may receive grace upon grace. Whatever you need — come to God in Christ for it.

Is your faith weak? He can strengthen it.

Is your hope dull? He can enliven it.

Is your love cold? He can warm it.

Is your patience failing? He can sustain it.

Is your zeal languishing? He can invigorate it.

And observe, the Lord gives not only a new supply of grace, but He also gives it in a larger measure: "He gives more grace!" He came not only that we might have life — but that we might have it "more abundantly."

Come, then, to Him with enlarged desires.
He can fill you with joy and peace in believing.
He can enable you to bear much fruit to the glory of the Father.
He can bless you, and make you a blessing to many.

O Lord, enlarge my desires, raise my expectations, and help me to receive, not only constant supplies of grace — but increased supplies out of Your fullness! For You give "more grace!"

"Open your mouth wide — and He will fill it!" Psalm 81:10

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"Having obtained help from God — I continue until this day." Acts 26:22

This is the testimony of the great apostle of the Gentiles. Many were the perils to which he was exposed, and many were the hardships which he endured — but he was borne up and carried through them all by the help of God his Savior.

Just so, He who was the Helper of the great apostle — is the Helper of the feeblest child in His family, or the weakest lamb in His flock. He is your Helper, beloved Christian reader! He who has redeemed you, not with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with His precious blood — will assuredly afford you seasonable aid. Look then to Him, in the discharge of your daily duties — for all needful wisdom and strength.

In domestic cares and trials — remember that your Helper is near.

In every hour of weakness and sorrow — cast yourself on His sustaining grace.

In the hour of your extremity, when human help avails nothing — then cling to Him, and listen to Him as He says,
"Do not be afraid, for I am with you!
 Do not be discouraged, for I am your God.
 I will strengthen you and help you.
 I will hold you up with My victorious right hand!" Isaiah 41:10

May this be your daily prayer, "Hold me up — and I shall be safe!" Psalm 119:117

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"Father, I want those You have given Me to be with Me where I am, and to see My glory!" John 17:24

Precious Savior, how does Your love to Your own redeemed people appear in these words! Nothing will satisfy You short of the eternal possession of those whom the Father has given to You, whom You have redeemed with Your own most precious blood, and sanctified by Your Spirit. It is Your will that they should be with You. You would have them in Your presence and in Your home — that they may behold You face to face, and share Your glory and Your joy!

And the love of Your redeemed people answers to Your love to them — their chief desire is be with You where You are. The visits of Your love to them here on earth, are their seasons of highest enjoyment — but they are transient, and they see You only as in a glass darkly. They desire to be with You far away from this world of pollution and sin — with You in the place which You have prepared for them! They desire . . .
  to forever abide with You,
  to forever dwell where You dwell,
  to forever behold Your glory, and
  to enjoy continual manifestations of Your love — and so forever be with their precious Savior.

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"By the grace of God I am what I am!" 1 Corinthians 15:10

All that I am . . .
  as a child of God,
  as a servant of Christ,
  as an heir of Heavenly glory
 — I am by the grace of God!

Am I cleansed from the guilt of my sins? It was Your grace, O God of love, which opened the fountain that washed it all away!

Am I justified? It was Your grace that provided the spotless robe of righteousness, in which I stand accepted before You.

Am I sanctified? It is not by works of righteousness which I have done, but by Your grace I am saved from the love and power of my sins.

Am I bearing any fruit to Your glory? It is by Your grace in Christ Jesus — for apart from Him, I could do nothing.

Am I different from what I once was, or from the ungodly who have their portion in this world? It is Your grace alone which has made me to differ. I have nothing which I have not received from You.

"By the grace of God I am what I am!"
  A pardoned sinner,
  a justified believer,
  an adopted child,
  an heir of glory!

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"I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not be conformed to this world; but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Romans 12:2

 Here is a prohibition and an admonition. O Lord, give me grace to avoid what You forbid — and to do what you enjoin.

Enable me to avoid compliance with those customs and ways of the world which are contrary to Your will.

While in the world — let me not be of it.

Give me grace to come out and to be separate from its ungodly principles and sinful pleasures.

Transform me by the renewal of my mind.

Deliver me from pride, from selfishness, and vain-glory.

Afford me a continual supply of the grace of Christ.

Impress His image on me — and help me to tread in His steps.

Let it plainly appear that I am not of the world — even as He was not of the world. John 17:16

O Lord, work in me to will and to act according to Your good pleasure.

"Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you — and you will be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." 2 Corinthians 6:17-18

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"I am my Beloved's — and my Beloved is mine!" Song of Songs 6:3

The Lord Jesus Christ is not only the Father's beloved Son — He is the believer's beloved Savior.

Jesus is the object of a Christian's adoring love — as well as of his hearty trust.

He loves Him — because He laid down His life to redeem him. He also loves Him for what He is in Himself. He loves Him for His personal glories, and for the excellence of His character:

"All human beauties — all Divine,
 In His Beloved meet and shine!"

He is to him the chief among ten thousand, and "altogether lovely." What especially affords him satisfaction, is that he can claim Christ as his own — and that Christ also claims him as His own! His joy is supreme, when with assurance he can say, "I am my Beloved's — and He is mine!"

Every believer who heartily receives Christ as his Savior, his Substitute, and as his Lord and Master, and who unreservedly yields himself to Him — is warranted to claim Christ as His own, and to know also that he is Christ's.

"Oh! I am my Beloved's,
 And my Beloved is mine!
 He feasts a poor vile sinner,
 With love and grace Divine!"

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"If any man will come after Me — let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me!" Matthew 16:24

Our Lord and Savior plainly states that discipleship involves self-denial. He who would tread in the steps of Christ — must be prepared to take up his cross. It was no path of flowery ease that the Savior trod — and anyone who would follow Him must be determined . . .
  to resist self and sin,
  to accept the world's scorn, and
  to take up any cross that might lie in the path of obedience and service.

Those who habitually consult their own ease, who indulge sinful self, and will not take up a cross for Christ — are not His true disciples. Rejecting the cross — they will lose the crown!

Surely, the remembrance of the Cross that Jesus bore for us, and on which He bled and died to redeem us from the curse of the law and all the fearful consequences of sin — should lead us cheerfully to take up any cross that we might be called to bear for Him.

Jesus, I my cross have taken,
All to leave and follow Thee.
Destitute, despised, forsaken,
Thou from hence, my all shall be!

Go, then, earthly fame and treasure,
Come disaster, scorn and pain.
In Thy service, pain is pleasure,
With Thy favor, loss is gain!

I have called Thee Abba Father,
I have stayed my heart on Thee.
Storms may howl, and clouds may gather;
All must work for good to me!

Soon shall close my earthly mission,
Soon shall pass my pilgrim days.
Hope shall change to glad fruition,
Faith to sight, and prayer to praise!
    ~ Henry Lyte

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"May you know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge!" Ephesians 3:19

Christ's love surpasses knowledge! Blessed fact! His love is so vast, so full, so free — that it cannot in its completeness be comprehended by finite minds. But enough of it may be known to satisfy our longing hearts, and to fill us with joy and peace.

Let it be our constant desire to know and feel the Savior's love. Let us dwell with wonder and delight on that marvelous manifestation of it — the sin-atoning sacrifice of Himself for us! What love must that be, that led Him to die, even the death of the cross, for our sins! "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" — but Jesus died for His enemies!

Did He die for us as His enemies — then what is His love to us now that we are His friends? It is unutterable!

May the Holy Spirit reveal Christ's love to us now in such measure as we may be able to understand and enjoy it; but the full disclosures of it await that period when we shall be with Him, and shall see Him as He is!

"May you have the power to understand, as all God's people should — how wide, how long, how high, and how deep His love is!" Ephesians 3:18

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"Speak Lord, for Your servant is listening!" 1 Samuel 3:9

Lord, I may not expect to hear You speak to me with an audible voice, as You spoke to Samuel; but by Your Word and by Your Spirit — You still speak to the hearts of Your people.

O Lord, but speak thus unto me. Speak to my mind, my conscience, and my heart . . .
  words of instruction,
  words of warning,
  words of reproof,
  words of counsel,
  words of comfort —
according as You, in Your infinite wisdom, see fit.

Speak to me as my Savior — tell me of Your redeeming mercy.

Speak to me as my Friend — draw near and commune with my heart.

Speak to me as my Father — and tell me of Your care and constant love.

When burdened with sin, say unto me, "I, even I, am He who blots out your sins as a cloud, and your transgressions as a thick cloud!"

When struggling with inward corruption, say unto my soul, "I am your salvation!"

When distressed in the hour of trial, say unto me, "Do not fear, for I am with you. Do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you — I will uphold you with My righteous right hand."

In every time of need, say to my heart, "My grace is sufficient for you."

"Speak Lord, for Your servant is listening!"

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"You shall call His name Jesus — for He shall save His people from their sins!" Matthew 1:21

Jesus! Precious name, how sweet it is! How well it befits Him who bears it — and how glorious is the salvation which He accomplishes!

Misery is the natural consequence of sin. Everything that God enjoins is good — and everything that He forbids is evil. Jesus saves His people from their sins — and so saves them from misery. He died to atone for transgressions — and He ever lives to save His people from the power and practice of sin; yes, and eventually from the very presence of sin.

My soul, let your whole trust be in Jesus, not only for deliverance from guilt and its consequences — but from sin in its manifold workings. You are powerless against your inward corruptions — but Jesus is "mighty to save." He can subdue your iniquities. Trust Him then, for sanctifying grace as well as pardoning mercy!

Dwell much on all He did and suffered for you — and in His agony in the garden of Gethsemane, and on the cross at Calvary, see something of the exceeding sinfulness of your sins, from which He died to save you.

"He will subdue our iniquities — and cast all our sins into the depths of the sea!" Micah 7:19

"Jesus' blood, for sinners spilt,
 Shows my sin in all its guilt.
 Ah, my soul, He bore your load,
 You have slain the Lamb of God!

"Farewell, world! your gold is dross
 Now I see the bleeding cross!
 Jesus died to set me free
 From the law, and sin, and thee!"

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"There remains, therefore, a rest for the people of God!" Hebrews 4:9

There is present rest in Christ for the weary and heavy laden, who truly come to Him — for He is faithful who has promised, and He has said to such, "I will give you rest! Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart — and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." Matthew 11:29-30

There is present rest for the tried believer in the bosom of his heavenly Father. Amidst the anxieties and turmoils of life — how good it is, my soul, to return unto your rest in Him who has dealt so bountifully with you!

But yet there remains a rest to the people of God — a perfect rest . . .
  from the burden of guilt,
  from spiritual conflict,
  from the temptations of the evil one,
  and from all the sorrowing and sighing of this valley of tears!

There is in the future a perfect repose of soul, abiding tranquility — and unbroken, eternal rest. Not a rest of inaction, but a rest in happy, unwearied service — and in the enjoyment of the perfect love of God.

My soul, trustfully anticipate the rest that awaits you in the home of the redeemed, in the place that Jesus is preparing for His redeemed people!

"Return to your rest, O my soul — for the LORD has dealt bountifully with you!" Psalm 116:7

"There shall I bathe my weary soul
 In seas of heavenly rest;
 And not a wave of trouble roll
 Across my peaceful breast!"

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"You have not yet come to the rest and the inheritance which the LORD your God is giving you!" Deuteronomy 12:9

These words were addressed to the people of Israel in reference to their entrance into Canaan. A better rest and a more glorious inheritance are in reserve for the people of God — and they are freely bestowed. As Canaan was given to the Jews — so is Heaven, with all its joys, given to believers! God has, in unspeakable grace, given His only begotten Son — and with Him, He freely gives all things.

Christian pilgrim, you have not yet come to the rest and inheritance which the Lord your God will give you. You have yet a little longer to tread the wilderness course:
your work is not yet done;
your battles are not all fought;
your trials are not all endured.
But praise your God and take courage!

"He who has helped you hitherto
 Will help you all your journey through!"

You have not yet come to your rest — but you are coming to it! It is a little nearer now, than it was yesterday.

You are not yet in possession of your eternal inheritance — but Christ is in possession, and you are a joint heir with Him. Where the forerunner is — there all His followers will be.

"How bright the prospect is!
 It cheers the pilgrim's breast;
 We're journeying through the wilderness,
 But soon shall gain our rest."

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"I will fill their treasuries!" Proverbs 8:21

That is, "I will fill the places where their treasures are kept — their treasuries." Our God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. We are not straitened in Him. If we have not, it is because we ask not — or because we ask amiss. He gives freely, abundantly, and with delight!

Our capacity for receiving is very limited; but if we come as empty vessels to Him — He will fill us out of His fullness in Christ Jesus. He will fill our minds with light, and our hearts with love.

Too often our hearts are preoccupied. There is no room in them for the precious things of God; the vanities of the world, the rubbish of time and sense — fill the space which should hold Divine riches. We must be emptied of self and sin — to be filled with Christ and His grace!

What encouragement does the text afford to those who covet the best gifts! "Open your mouth wide — and I will fill it!" says the great Giver. "I will satisfy your largest desires for spiritual good, in part now — and fully by-and-by. However large your receptacles for durable riches, for heavenly treasure may be — I will fill them!"

"When we come to Christ our King,
 Large petitions we may bring;
 For His power and grace are such,
 We can never ask too much!"

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"Is it well with you?" 2 Kings 4:26

This question is asked, not by intrusive inquisitiveness, but by friendly interest and kindness. Surely then the candid reader will give it that attention which its importance demands.

It is well with all who are in Christ — whatever their outward circumstances may be.
But it is ill with all who are out of Christ . . .
  however moral their character,
  however amiable their disposition, or
  however prosperous their earthly estate.

In Christ, there is safety, life, and peace!
Out of Him, there is darkness, danger, and death!

Are you then in Christ? Have you entered Him as the Ark for your soul? Are you vitally united to "the True Vine"? If so, it is well with you — and you will surely bear some good fruit to the glory of Him who has loved us and given Himself for us.

Believer in Jesus — is it well with you?
Is your soul in health?
Have you an appetite for spiritual food?
Is Jesus growing increasingly precious?
Do you find it good to draw near to God?
Do you enjoy fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ?

Afflicted Christian — is it well with you?
Can you see your Father's hand in your trials?
Can you trust His heart — when you cannot trace His hand?
Can you say, "It is the Lord — let Him do what seems good to Him!"

"Though saints through seas of trouble pass,
 And grief too deep to tell,
 Yet all things work for good to them,
 'Tis with the righteous well!"

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"Lord, what will You have me to do?" Acts 9:6

What an honor it is to be permitted to do anything in the service of the King of kings and Lord of lords! But this honor have all the saints.

Happy is it when we are constrained by the love of Christ to enter on a course of devoted service, and to ask, "Lord, what will You have me to do?"

You know, O Lord, what work I am best fitted to do. I would not choose my own employment — but would follow Your direction. Let me not attempt what is above my capacity. Let me not shrink from what You enable me to accomplish. Let me joyfully be a hewer of wood, or a drawer of water — if I have no higher work to do.

Or if You call me to arduous service, to stand in front of the battle, to defend Your cause and Your truth — let me not draw back from my post, for You will impart needful courage, and make Your strength perfect in my weakness.

Joyful is the thought that You have something for all Your children to do . . .
  some ignorant ones for them to instruct,
  or some troubled ones for them to comfort,
  or some needy ones for them to relieve —
some work of faith or labor of love for all of them to perform!

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"Do you love Me?" John 21:17

Does not Jesus in thus appealing to me, in effect say:
"For you, I left the realms of glory, and the adoration of ten thousand times ten thousand holy ones.

 For you, I became incarnate, took on the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.

 For you, I obeyed the law, and wrought a perfect righteousness for your justification.

 For you, I endured the cross, and despised the shame.

 For you, I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to those who plucked off the hair.

 For you, I endured the crown of thorns, and gave My hands and My feet to be nailed to the tree.

 For you, I shed My blood, and laid down My life!

 I loved you with a love of pity and compassion — when you were dead in trespasses and sins!

 I opened your eyes, revealed to you your sinfulness and guilt, and awakened your cry for mercy.

 I sought you in your wanderings — and found you!

 I brought you up out of the horrible pit, and miry clay — and set your feet upon the rock.

 I have loved you with an everlasting love — and therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you!

 All this I have done for you — do you love Me?"

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"The Lord is my Shepherd — I shall not want!" Psalm 23:1

"I shall not want!" Surely not! He is the Good Shepherd who gave His life for the sheep; and if He has loved me, and given Himself for me — then what will He withhold? Oh that I knew Him better, and trusted Him as He deserves! Then I would be kept quiet from fear of evil, and be ever assured that He will supply all my needs, according to His riches in glory.

Do I need guidance? The Good Shepherd goes before His sheep — He instructs and teaches us in the way we should go.

Do I wander — and need to be reclaimed? He seeks and finds His straying ones, "He restores my soul, and leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake."

Am I wounded? He binds up my wounds, and heals me.

Do I need rest and refreshment? "He makes me to lie down in green pastures, and leads me beside the still waters."

Do I need encouragement? "His rod and His staff, they comfort me."

Do I need provision? "He spreads a table before me in the presence of my enemies."

My Shepherd is infinitely wise and kind and gracious. Surely then, "Goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever!"

"The Lord my Shepherd is,
 I shall be well supplied;
 Since He is mine, and I am His,
 What can I want beside?"

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"As many as are led by the Spirit of God — they are the sons of God." Romans 8:14

Here is a mark of divine sonship. All who follow the leadings of the Holy Spirit — they are children of God.

The Spirit leads His followers to the looking-glass of Divine truth. Here they discover their spiritual deformity and impurity. Here they see what they are, and what they need.

The Spirit leads them to the throne of grace — and there He helps their infirmities, and makes intercession in them according to the will of God.

The Spirit leads them to the cross! When they see Jesus dying for their sins, atoning for their transgressions — they lose the burden of guilt.

The Spirit leads them in the path of loving obedience — and they experience that in keeping Christ's commands, there is great reward.

The Spirit leads them in the track of the Good Shepherd — and enables them to hear His voice and to follow Him.

"As many as are led by the Spirit of God — they are the sons of God."

Many, alas! are following the leadings of a very different spirit — "the spirit that works in the children of disobedience!" He leads, by paths of unbelief and transgression — to misery and endless ruin. Beloved reader, beware of following his leadings, and prayerfully yield yourself to the guidance of the Spirit of truth and love.

Spirit of Truth, my Leader be,
And seal adoption mine;
Impress Christ's image on my heart,
The pledge of bliss divine!

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"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace — that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Hebrews 4:16

We might have been summoned to appear before the throne of Divine Justice — and then every mouth would be stopped, and all would stand guilty before God.

But behold! we are invited to come to the throne of grace! And for what purpose? That we might obtain mercy — that we might receive a free pardon — complete forgiveness of all our sins! And not only this, but that we might "find grace to help in time of need."

The throne of grace is never vacant. The gracious King ever sits there in all His power, and in all His willingness — to bless His redeemed people.

The throne of grace is always accessible. Not once a year merely, nor once a week, nor once a day, may we approach it — but at all times, and under all circumstances.

Oh, what a privilege, my soul, is this! To be permitted, nay, invited and welcomed — to come to the throne of grace whenever you are in want, and for whatever you need! May I come as I have often come before — only more reverently, more trustfully, with larger desires and fuller expectation.

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"My times are in Your hand!"  Psalm 31:15

Is not this truth a joy to you, my soul?

It would be a sorry thing for me if my times were in my own hands — and it would afford me little satisfaction if my times were in an angel's hands. How restful should I be in knowing that they are in God my Savior's hands!
He sees the end from the beginning.
He knows how to apportion my sorrows and my joys.
He knows what to give — and what to withhold.
He knows also when to give — and when to take away.

But, alas! how often is my heart mistrustful — how often have I murmured under the trying dispensations of His providence! O my soul, be ashamed and confounded — be humbled in the dust that you should ever call in question the wisdom or kindness of the dealings of Him who so loved you as to give His only Son for your redemption!

Help me, O God of my salvation, henceforth, with childlike confidence and peaceful trust — to yield all to You, and to rejoice in the assurance that "My times are in Your hand!"

"My times are in Your hand;
 Why should I doubt or fear?
 My Father's hand will never cause
 His child a needless tear!"

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"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again, Rejoice!" Philippians 4:4

Just so, "sorrowful — yet always rejoicing," says Paul, speaking of his own experience. The believer's joy does not exclude sorrow, but . . .
  attends it,
  sustains under it,
  and raises above it.

Joy in the Lord should be constant — for He is the same.
There is as much ground for joy in Him in the winter of adversity — as in the summer of prosperity.
He is as good when he chides us — as when He comforts us.
He is as gracious when He lays us low — as when He raises us up.
He is as kind when He takes away — as when He gives.

If our joy springs chiefly from creature good and agreeable circumstances — then it must be fluctuating at the best, and at times it will entirely dry up. But if our chief joy is in God, then the spring of it never fails!

"When all created streams are dried,
 His fullness is the same!"

Observe, my soul, that joy in the Lord is not only encouraged — but commanded. After once giving the admonition, the apostle says, "Again I say, Rejoice." The Lord would have His children . . .
  happy in His love,
  restful under the shelter of His wings,
  and peaceful in the midst of storms.

Seek then to know more of Him, live upon His fullness, dwell on His unchanging grace — and so will you be joyful in Him even in the midst of tribulation!

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"Blessed are you, O Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the LORD!" Deuteronomy 33:29

Were God's ancient people distinguished among all nations for their privileges and blessings? Then much more happy are God's spiritual Israel. They are redeemed from a viler slavery than that of Egypt — and with a more glorious manifestation of power and grace.

Believers now have not the tabernacle in the wilderness, nor the temple at Jerusalem — but they have all the precious realities typified by them. They are not mere outer-court worshipers — but have access to the Holy of holies through the blood of the Lamb.

They are not fed with the manna of the desert — but with "the True Bread of Heaven."

They do not drink of the waters of the rock of Horeb — but of the river of life, flowing from the Rock, Christ Jesus.

They do not have in prospect an earthly Canaan — but a heavenly city, whose builder and Maker is God.

They do not have a temporal inheritance — but an incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading inheritance!

Israel of old had the shadows — Christians now have the substance.

"Surely God is good to Israel — to those who are pure in heart!" Psalm 73:1

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"He was wounded for our transgressions — He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him — and with His stripes we are healed." Isaiah 53:5

Dwell, my soul, with wonder and adoration on the glorious grace of your great Substitute. Perfectly pure and innocent — He took the place of the guilty, and paid the penalty of the broken law! To redeem us from its curse — He was made a curse for us! In the foresight of all He would have to endure as the Substitute of transgressors — He came willingly from the throne of His glory, and "took upon Him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross!"

With what clearness is the great truth of the substitution of Christ stated in the Word of God:
"Christ died for the ungodly!"
"He was delivered for our offences."
"He gave Himself for our sins."
"He has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust."
"Who His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree."

The guilt of all who believe in Christ was imputed to Him — and His perfect obedience is imputed to them. God "made Him who knew no sin, to be sin for us — that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

Dwell, my soul, upon the grace of the precious Savior. Drop your sounding line into this depth of redeeming love — but you will find no bottom! No! not while you live here, or dwell in the realms of glory — for the love of Christ surpasses knowledge.

"May you have the power to understand, as all God's people should — how wide, how long, how high, and how deep His love is.  May you experience the love of Christ — though it is too great to understand fully!" Ephesians 3:18-19

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"Having obtained help from God — I continue until this day." Acts 26:22

This is the testimony of the great apostle of the Gentiles. Many were the perils to which he was exposed, and many were the hardships which he endured — but he was borne up and carried through them all by the help of God his Savior.

Just so, He who was the Helper of the great apostle — is the Helper of the feeblest child in His family, or the weakest lamb in His flock. He is your Helper, beloved Christian reader! He who has redeemed you, not with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with His precious blood — will assuredly afford you seasonable aid. Look then to Him, in the discharge of your daily duties — for all needful wisdom and strength.

In domestic cares and trials — remember that your Helper is near.

In every hour of weakness and sorrow — cast yourself on His sustaining grace.

In the hour of your extremity, when human help avails nothing — then cling to Him, and listen to Him as He says,
"Do not be afraid, for I am with you!
 Do not be discouraged, for I am your God.
 I will strengthen you and help you.
 I will hold you up with My victorious right hand!" Isaiah 41:10

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"This God is our God forever and ever! He will be our Guide even unto death!" Psalm 48:14

Those who have fled for refuge to the hope set before them in the gospel, all who are living a life of faith — are privileged to say of the Lord, "This God is our God forever and ever!"

Believers are privileged to say the God who has all power in Heaven and earth, whose understanding is infinite, who is good, and who does good continually: "This God is our God forever and ever!"

Believers are privileged to say the God of holiness, righteousness, and justice; the God of mercy, truth, and grace; the "just God and the Savior": "This God is our God forever and ever!"

Believers are privileged to say the God whose name and whose nature is love, and who has manifested His love toward us in sending His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him: "This God is our God forever and ever!"

Believers are privileged to say the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort; the Refuge of the oppressed, the Helper of the helpless, the Hope of the hopeless, and the Savior of the lost: "This God is our God forever and ever!"

Believers are privileged to say the Source of every good and perfect gift; the promise-keeping God: "This God is our God" — and always will be; for He never leaves nor forsakes His redeemed people. "He will be our Guide even unto death," and our portion "forever and ever!"

"This God is the God we adore;
 Our faithful, unchangeable Friend;
 Whose love is as great as His power.
 And knows neither measure nor end!"

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"Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!" Psalm 139:23, 24

What a contrast there is between a child of God — and a man of this world!

The one wishes to avoid the scrutiny of God — and the other desires and prays for it.

The one loves sin, and cherishes it — the other abhors it, and desires to be delivered from it.

The one walks hand in hand with iniquity — the other grieves that he bears about with him a body of sin and death.

It is the earnest desire of all who are born of God, and made partakers of the Divine nature — to be delivered from the power of sin that dwells in them. They would have no lust spared — and no corruption unmortified.
 Chosen by the Father in eternity past,
redeemed by the precious blood of Christ and justified freely by His grace
 — they would also be sanctified by His Spirit.

They would be holy as He is holy — and their desires will eventually be satisfied! He who has begun a good work in them, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. He will present them "faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy!"

"Search me, O God, and try my thoughts,
 And make my heart sincere;
 Let sin have no dominion, Lord,
 And keep my conscience clear!

"Make me to walk in Your commands,
 'Tis a delightful road;
 Nor let my head, or heart, or hands,
 Offend against my God!"

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"You shall have no other gods before Me!" Exodus 20:3

Though there is no danger of our bowing down to graven images — to gods that have eyes and see not, ears and hear not — none are exempt from the danger of being idolaters in spirit. There are gods many and lords many, in lands of Bibles and gospel privileges — as truly as in heathen countries!

Wealth, honor, sports and pleasure — are the idols of multitudes.
 Gold is as truly worshiped — as Baal once was!
Self is as really the idol of many now — as Diana of the Ephesians was anciently.

Then, too, there are "household gods" — idols in family life. Affection in the various relationships we sustain, which is proper and lovely in a right degree — too often becomes idolatrous.

Christians have need to be warned against idolatry, as well as others. The exhortation, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols!" was addressed to believers.

Remember, my soul, that whatever may lead your highest affection and supreme devotion away from God your Savior — would be to you an idol! Help me, O Lord, to watch and pray against the sin of idolatry in all its forms. Show me more of Your glory and Your grace — and ever hold the highest place in my heart!

"The dearest idol I have known,
 Whatever that idol be,
 Help me to tear it from Your throne,
 And worship only Thee!"

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"Your way is in the sea, and Your path in the great waters — and Your footsteps are not known!" Psalm 77:19

When the Lord designs us to follow Him — His footsteps are distinctly to be traced, and even a little child may walk in His paths.

But when He goes forth in the majesty of His glorious power, and in the grandeur of all His wondrous attributes — it is no wonder that we cannot trace His steps or comprehend His course. He makes the clouds His chariot, and rides upon the wings of the winds"

"He plants His footsteps in the sea,
 And rides upon the storm!"

"As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are His thoughts above our thoughts, and His ways above our ways!"

When we cannot trace His hand — let us trust His heart; for just and right are all His ways.

When clouds and darkness are round about Him — let us rejoice in the assurance that justice and judgment are the foundation of His throne.

When the mystery of some of His dispensations is so deep that we tremble to look into it — let us rest assured that infinite love lies underneath it all, and exclaim with the apostle, "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable His judgments, and His paths beyond tracing out! For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever! Amen!" Romans 11:33-36

    God moves in a mysterious way,
    His wonders to perform;
    He plants His footsteps in the sea
    And rides upon the storm!

    Deep in unfathomable mines
    Of never failing skill,
    He treasures up His bright designs
    And works His sovereign will!

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

    His purposes will ripen fast,
    Unfolding every hour;
    The bud may have a bitter taste,
    But sweet will be the flower!

    Blind unbelief is sure to err
    And scan His work in vain;
    God is His own interpreter,
    And He will make it plain!

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"Keep your heart with all diligence — for out of it are the issues of life." Proverbs 4:23

The outward life is but the index of the life within. As the hands of a watch are moved by the hidden spring — so the words of a man's lips and the actions of his life, are the issues of the heart. How important then is it that the heart be well kept — that the spring of action be well looked to!

Keeping the heart is a business that demands all diligence. How can it be best attended to?
By earnestly seeking heavenly wisdom, that our views and principles may be formed in harmony with the revealed will of God.
By a holy jealousy of ourselves — putting no confidence in the flesh.
By seeking a constant supply of the Spirit of Christ.
By watching against unholy thoughts and feelings.
By abiding in Christ, and living in the Spirit.

O Lord, be my Instructor and Helper continually in this important work! Keep me in dependence on You, that I may rightly keep my heart. Help me diligently to observe the workings of my mind, affections, and will; and to take heed what manner of spirit I am of. But above all, O Lord, would I commit my heart to Your keeping — for You alone can effectually preserve it from the power of corruptions within, and from evil influences without!

"For grace to keep my heart aright,
 O Lord, I look to Thee;
 Help me to live as in Your sight,
 And every evil flee!"

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"So we fix our eyes not on what is seen — but on what is unseen.
 For what is seen is temporary — but what is unseen is eternal!" 2 Corinthians 4:18

The men of this world fix their gaze on things below — and their desires are bounded by the limits of time and sense.

But the people of God look beyond the things that are seen — to the things that are not seen; for they know that "what is seen is temporary — but what is unseen is eternal!"

My soul, be it your employ to look by faith at the things which cannot be seen by the eye of sense. Turn away your eyes from beholding vanity — to the glorious realities of the world to come. Fix your gaze upon the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God — upon the inheritance which is incorruptible and undefiled, and that never fades away.

Look chiefly on eternal things — and so will you be enabled rightly to view the things of earth, and safely to pass through the things which are temporal. All that is beautiful and pure of present things — you will then regard as emblems of the glorious realities to come. And all that is evil and sinful — you will loathe, as utterly opposed to the excellent things your affections are set upon!

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"If Your presence does not go with us — do not take us up from here!" Exodus 33:15

"Certainly I will be with you!" Exodus 3:12

Then, Lord, I will go forward. I would not venture a step if You did not accompany me; but if You are with me, then all is well.

With You I will go forth to my daily business in the world — for You will keep me amidst its temptations and snares.

With You I will labor in Your vineyard — for You will make Your strength perfect in my weakness.

With You I will walk the thorny path of trial — for You will furnish me with shoes of iron and brass.

With You I will enter the field of conflict — for You will teach my hands to war, and my fingers to fight, and will cover my head in the day of battle.

With You I will enter the chamber of pain and weakness — for You will make all my bed in my sickness.

With You I will walk through the valley of the shadow of death, and will fear no evil — for Your rod and Your staff will comfort me.

With You I will enter the waters of Jordan — for You will bear me through, and land me on the shore of the heavenly Canaan.

"I will never leave you or forsake you!" Hebrews 13:5

"Surely I am with you always — even to the end of the age!" Matthew 28:20

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"All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth, unto those who keep His covenant and His testimonies." Psalm 25:10

The Lord's faithful ones keep His covenant — for He is their keeper. They keep His testimonies — for He puts His laws into their minds and writes them upon their hearts.

By "the paths of the Lord" — we may understand the different ways He takes in His dealings with His people. Observe that "all" of them are declared to be mercy and truth towards them.

While, commonly, the Lord comes to His people in the way of refreshment and comfort — He sometimes approaches them in clouds and darkness, and in storms of trial. By whatever way He comes — it is in faithfulness and love.

But His people do not always see this, and at times their faith may be sharply tried to believe it — but it is nevertheless true.

Though the Lord's dispensations change — He does not change.

He is good when He gives — and He is equally good when He denies.

He is faithful when He comforts — and He is just as faithful when He corrects.

He is Love when He cheers — and He is Love when He chides.

Believer, seek grace to trust in the Lord at all times, and to bless Him for crosses as well as for comforts.

When you can't trace His hand — trust His heart!

"Your ways, O Lord, with wise design,
 Are framed upon Your throne above;
 And every dark and bending line
 Meets in the center of Your love!"

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"Unto you who believe — He is precious!" 1 Peter 2:7

It is to unbelievers only, that Christ is "as a root out of a dry ground" — having no form nor loveliness.

To those who know Him, and put their trust in Him — He is the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely! To those who believe, He is precious . . .
  in all the offices He sustains,
  in all the relations He bears,
  as their atoning Sacrifice,
  as the Lord their righteousness,
  as the source of their spiritual life,
  as their Teacher,
  as their Example,
  and as their Guide.

O my soul, is Christ precious to you?

Do you realize something of His worth?

Is He your Refuge, your Hiding-place?

Are you sheltered in Him?

Is He your Shepherd, your Guardian, your Friend?

Do you feel that, whatever you are called to part with — you cannot part with Christ?

Do you feel that that He is your Savior, your Life, your All?

Oh, then cleave to Him, serve Him earnestly, and live to His glory!

And know to your comfort that, as unworthy and sinful as you are — you are precious to Him. He bought you with His precious blood, He claims you as His own, and He will treasure you among His jewels when He comes to gather them up!

"Yes, Christ is precious to my soul,
 My transport and my trust;
 Jewels to Him are gaudy toys,
 And gold is sordid dust!"

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"He will wipe every tear from their eyes — and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever!" Revelation 21:4

This is but a glimpse of the glorious state upon which all the people of God will hereafter enter! There will not only be the absence of all evil — there will be the eternal enjoyment of all good. There will be perpetual vigor, perfect purity, happy service, joyous praise, eternal friendship, holy communion, and unmingled and everlasting bliss!

Suffering Christian, a few more pangs — and your last moment of anguish will be past.

Bereaved one, in Heaven you will never wear the garments of sadness — you will never lose a friend.

Sorrowing one, you will soon heave your last sigh, and have all tears wiped from your eyes.

Weary one, your journey is almost ended. Soon you will cross the threshold of your Father's house, find yourself at home, and enter upon the enjoyment of your everlasting rest.

"A few more storms shall beat
 On this wild rocky shore,
 Then we shall be where tempests cease,
 And surges swell no more.

"A few more struggles here,
 A few more partings o'er,
 A few more toils, a few more tears,
 And we shall weep no more!"

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"Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him — for we shall see Him as He is!" 1 John 3:2

"We shall see Him!" — that is, our adorable Redeemer. Now our apprehensions of Him are very feeble and indistinct. Now His personal glories and all His spiritual excellencies are only dimly seen by us, as in a dim mirror. In our present condition, we are incapable of receiving a full manifestation of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

But when our spirits are liberated from the earthly house of our tabernacle, and when our faculties are cleared of all carnal obstructions — then "we shall see Him as He is!"

We shall see the infinitely gracious One, who gave Himself for our sins, who bled and died on the cross for our salvation.

We shall see Him, who is our life, and by whose grace we are daily living.

We shall see Him "as He is" — not as He was in the days of His humiliation; not as He was known in the flesh by His disciples — but in all the glory in which He sits on His mediatorial throne!

And, as His glories fix our adoring gaze, we shall in our measure be conformed to His image. May we daily live under the influence of this blessed hope, and realize its sanctifying power.

"What we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him — for we shall see Him as He is!"

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"Lead me in Your truth — and teach me!" Psalm 25:5

What a mercy it is, in the midst of prevailing errors, to possess the truth of God — the sure word of His testimony — the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ! May we read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the truth — that we may find it profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and instruction in righteousness.

Too frequently the Word of God is read with little profit, because it is read with little prayer. We need Divine illumination. We need the teaching of the Great Expositor, in order rightly to understand the Word of God, and to receive it in the love of it.

May the prayer of the psalmist be my prayer: "Lead me in Your truth — and teach me!"

Lead me into the knowledge and experience of it — let it dwell in my heart, and influence my life.

Lead me into the enjoyment of it — may I find Your Word, and eat it; may it be sweet to my taste, yes, sweeter than honey and the honeycomb.

And lead me into the practice of it — may my ways be directed to keep Your statutes, and may I be a living epistle, read and known by all men.

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"I will ask the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter — that he may abide with you forever!" John 14:16

This promise, in the sense in which it was originally made by Christ to His disciples — was fulfilled shortly after. The Holy Spirit was poured out, in a remarkable manner on the day of Pentecost; and the apostles were taught all things needful for their own instruction, and for the edification of the Church of Christ.

The Holy Spirit is given to all the redeemed — and He dwells in the hearts of the Lord's people. How precious is the name by which He is distinguished in the text — the Comforter! How well does that name befit Him!

He comforts the awakened sinner, not by palliating his offences, nor by lessening his views of his guilt and danger — but by revealing the precious Savior in His ability to save to the uttermost, and by leading him to rely on the sin-atoning Lamb!

He comforts the tried believer, by bringing to his remembrance some of the "exceeding great and precious promises," by drawing him to the throne of grace, and by confirming and strengthening his faith.

He comforts the afflicted Christian, by showing him . . .
that all his sufferings and sorrows are measured out by a gracious Father's hand;
that they are designed for his good; and
that the time is not distant when his last pang will have been endured, and the last tear wiped from his eyes!

Spirit of love, my Comforter — fill my heart with joy and peace in believing!

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"Though you have not seen Him — you love Him; and even though you do not see Him now — you believe in Him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy!" 1 Peter 1:8

It is a spiritual sight of Christ — which leads to confidence in Him, and love to Him. Many who saw Him with their bodily eyes — despised and rejected Him. It is the revelation of Him by the Holy Spirit to the heart — which leads to holy delight in Him.

When we see how suited He is to us as perishing sinners — then He becomes precious to us.

When the glories of His person, the perfection of His work, and the love of His heart, are revealed to us — then He becomes, in our estimation, "the chief among ten thousand," and "the altogether lovely One!"

When His love, in its freeness and fullness, is revealed to us — then love is kindled in our hearts to Him.

May I be led to know more of the precious Savior. May my apprehensions of His compassion and grace be enlarged. May I comprehend the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of His love! Though I have not seen Him, may I rejoice in Him with inexpressible and glorious joy. And may my love to Christ be evident . . .
  by my regard to His will,
  by my concern for His glory, and
  by a constant desire to live to His praise!

"May you have the power to understand, as all God's people should — how wide, how long, how high, and how deep His love is.  May you experience the love of Christ — though it is too great to understand fully!" Ephesians 3:18-19

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"First let the learn to show piety at home — for that is good and acceptable before God." 1 Timothy 5:4

By "piety" we may understand true religion expressing itself in practical goodness. Observe, that piety is not to be concealed, but shown. We are not to put our candle under a basket, but upon a candlestick. It is to be manifested at home, among your own kindred and friends, at your own table, at your own fireside.

Show it, not merely by talking of it, but by your spirit and actions.

Show it, by the gentleness of your temper and the loveliness of your conduct.

Show it, by your patience under provocation, and by giving the soft answer which turns away wrath.

Show it, by a kindly consideration of the wants and wishes of those around you.

Show it wisely, according to your position in the family. Children should show it by their cheerful submission and obedience. While parents may show it by their wise and kindly rule.

"Learn" to show it — and let Christ be your teacher and pattern. He says, "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart."

Learn "first" to show piety at home — and then show it abroad as widely as you can.

Seek to adorn the doctrine of God your Savior in all things!

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"I am going to prepare a place for you!" John 14:2

Blessed Savior — this is enough! I do not desire now to inquire where Heaven is, or what it is — it is sufficient to know that it is a place prepared by Yourself, who has loved me, and given Yourself for me!

This earth was beautiful and good as it came from Your hands, and it is beautiful still. If sin were removed from it, and Your presence and glory were more fully revealed — then earth would be a happy dwelling-place. What then, will Heaven be?

"O Jesus, good beyond compare!
 If thus Your lower works are fair,
 If thus Your bounties gild the span
 Of ruined earth, and sinful man,
 How glorious must the mansion be,
 Where Your redeemed shall dwell with Thee!"

But, Lord, You know that even Heaven, though prepared by Yourself, would not satisfy me if You were absent! Therefore have You, to my joy, added, "I will come again, and receive you unto Myself — that where I am, there you may be also!"

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"The Lord is my portion, . . . therefore will I hope in Him!" Lamentations 3:24

The supplies with which the Lord furnishes His people are good; but He not only bestows upon them innumerable precious gifts — He gives Himself to them! He Himself is their portion and their inheritance!

And what do they possess in Him?

A Father, ever tender and gracious!

A Friend of boundless capacity, and of infinite and unchanging love!

A Fount of never-failing satisfaction and joy!

In the present life, believers only begin to learn how unspeakably precious a portion they have in the Lord. When they enter upon their heavenly state — they will more fully apprehend their blessedness in Him. It will take all the circling ages of eternity to learn what a glorious and inexhaustible portion they possess in the Lord.

Is the Lord your portion, O my soul? Yes! Yours, even yours — if, constrained by redeeming love, you give your poor self to Him.

He pitied you in your ruin.
He ransomed you with the precious blood of Christ.
He renewed you by His Holy Spirit.
He claims you as His own!
As you yield yourself to Him, He would have you, with humble faith, claim Him as your own. "The Lord is my portion, says my soul; therefore will I hope in Him."

"From pole to pole let others roam,
 And search in vain for bliss;
 My soul is satisfied at home —
 The Lord my portion is."

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"He will have compassion upon us — He will subdue our iniquities!" Micah 7:19

He who pitied us when we were dead in trespasses and sins, and died on the cross to atone for our guilt — now lives to save us from the power of our corruptions! As He sees us struggling with our inbred foes, "He will have compassion upon us." He will come to our help, and place His feet upon the neck of our enemies, "He will subdue our iniquities!"

Christ is made unto us "sanctification" as well as "wisdom and righteousness" — and eventually He will be our complete "redemption." He will deliver our bodies from the power of the grave — and present us "faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy."

Help me, O Lord, to live by faith on You for dominion over all sin; fill me with the spirit of truth, of purity, and love. Knowing that the old man is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed, and that I am risen with Christ — help me to reckon myself to be dead indeed unto sin, and alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord, and to mortify the flesh with its affections and lusts. May I live in the Spirit, have my fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life!

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"Do not despise the chastening of the Lord — nor faint when you are rebuked of Him." Hebrews 12:5

Whenever our heavenly Father uses the rod of correction — it is in love, and for our profit. We should not, therefore, on the one hand make light of it — and on the other hand, we should not sink under it in despondency.

If we err by treating Divine correction with indifference — we thereby ask for severer treatment, for the strokes of the rod must be repeated until we feel and submit!

And if we err by fainting under rebuke — it is a proof that we forget how pitiful and tender a Father corrects us, and that He intends nothing but our present profit and lasting good.

Chastening only benefits us as we are "exercised" by it — and therefore we must feel it. But if we faint — we shall fail to apprehend the gracious purposes of it.

O my Father, let me ever turn to You, when You use the rod — in submission, in trust, and love. Do not allow me to slight Your gentler rebukes, and permit me not to faint under Your severer discipline. May I remember that, though "no chastening for the present seems to be joyous but grievous," that "nevertheless afterwards it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto those who are exercised thereby."

"Heed the rod — and the One who appointed it." Micah 6:9

"Trials make the promise sweet,
 Trials give new life to prayer;
 Trials bring me to His feet,
 Lay me low, and keep me there!"

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"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep!" John 10:11

"Rejoice with Me — for I have found My lost sheep!" Luke 15:6

How great is the mercy of being recovered from our wanderings in the wilderness of sin — and of being brought back to the fold of the good Shepherd, who laid down His life for the sheep. My soul, seek to know more of your Shepherd — and dwell much upon His grace in seeking and finding you, and bringing you to His fold.

Had He left you to yourself — you would have wandered to your eternal ruin! But He . . .
  opened your eyes,
  showed you your guilt and danger,
  put an earnest cry into your heart for saving mercy,
  and then came to your help! He . . .
lifted you up out of the horrible pit and miry clay,
washed you and healed you,
carried you as upon His shoulders,
and placed you among His folded ones!

May His love constrain you to keep near Him — that you may hear His voice, and be ready to follow Him wherever He leads you.

In due time, He will conduct you to the heavenly fold, where you will forever be sheltered from harm! There He will feed you and lead you unto living fountains of waters, and wipe away all tears from your eyes!

Jesus sought me when a stranger,
Wandering from the fold of God;
He, to rescue me from danger,
Interposed His precious blood.

O to grace how great a debtor
Daily I'm constrained to be!
Let Thy goodness, like a fetter,
Bind my wandering heart to Thee.

Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
Prone to leave the God I love;
Here's my heart, O take and seal it,
Seal it for Thy courts above.

O that day when freed from sinning,
I shall see Thy lovely face;
Clothed then in blood washed linen
How I'll sing Thy sovereign grace!

Come, my Lord, no longer tarry,
Take my ransomed soul away;
Send thine angels now to carry
Me to realms of endless day!

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"What is a man profited if he gains the whole world — and loses his own soul?" Matthew 16:26

Should the soul be lost — then, when this fleeting and uncertain life is ended — all is lost. "For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out." If the soul is lost — then . . .
  Heaven is lost,
  unspeakable blessedness and joy are lost,
  and eternal glory is lost!

How wretched an exchange, then, does he make who grasps the riches, honor, and pleasures of the world — and parts with his soul's eternal happiness!

Reader, the whole world is lighter than a feather — when weighed against your soul.

Think how precious it is in the estimation of the all-wise God — who, in infinite grace, gave His only-begotten and well-beloved Son to redeem it.

Think how precious it is in the estimation of Jesus — who agonized, bled, and died on the cross to save it.

If you gain the world and lose your soul — then you will be beggared forever. But, if you should be stripped of all earthly treasure, and your soul is saved — then you will be enriched throughout eternity. Be entreated, then, to ponder the weighty question of the gracious Savior, "What is a man profited, if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?"

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"Preserve me, O God — for in You I put my trust!" Psalm 16:1

This prayer of the psalmist fits me well. Snares lie in my path, dangers surround me on every hand — and I am utterly unable to keep myself!

O God, preserve me — encompass me with Your favor as a shield.

"Uphold my steps in Your paths — that my footsteps may not slip!"

Keep me as the apple of the eye — and hide me under the shadow of Your wings!

Keep me from the power of inbred sin — and deliver me from an evil heart of unbelief.

Preserve me not only from outward defection — but from inward decline.

Maintain the spiritual life You have imparted — and keep me in the exercise of faith and hope and love.

O Lord, my trust is in You! You alone are able to uphold me in this wicked world. Your strong arm can protect me when surrounded by my most powerful enemies. Under Your care, in the hour of greatest peril — I am safe. You are able to keep me from falling, and to present me faultless before the presence of Your glory with exceeding joy!

"Hold me up — and I shall be safe!" Psalm 119:117

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"You are the God who sees me!" Genesis 16:13

The ungodly desire to put the remembrance of this truth far away from them. Even if they succeed in doing so, the truth itself remains the same — they are seen of God continually, their most secret actions are open to His view.

To the Christian, the consideration of being under the eye of God is welcome and pleasant. Though he is conscious of continual failure in obedience and love — he knows that it is the eye of his tender and compassionate Father that is upon him, and that He for Jesus' sake forgives all his sins, and graciously accepts his imperfect service. The thought that God sees him . . .
  stimulates and encourages him in duty,
  sustains him in temptation,
  and comforts him in sorrow!

"You are the God who sees me" — and the work I have to do. Enable me to do it aright, to do it faithfully and well, to do it heartily as unto the Lord and not unto men.

"You are the God who sees me" — and the temptations which surround me. Uphold and preserve me; give me grace to watch and pray, and to resist the devil that he may flee from me.

"You are the God who sees me" — and my conflicts. Oh, strengthen me, that I may be a good soldier of Jesus Christ — that I may fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold of eternal life.

"You are the God who sees me" — and my sorrows. Oh, sanctify them to me, sustain me under them, and give me a good outcome — that I may glorify You!

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"I am the Lord — I do not change!" Malachi 3:6

No change could take place in the glorious Being who thus speaks — for He is infinitely wise and holy, just and good. He is all that is excellent in the highest degree of perfection.

My soul, rejoice that, amid all the changes of this transitory state, amidst all the mutations of time and sense — there is One who never changes. Your God, in Christ Jesus, is "the same yesterday, today, and forever."

Your apprehensions of Him may change;
your faith in Him may fluctuate;
your frames and feelings may be very variable
 — but He abides the same; there is no variation in Him:
  His truth is unalterable,
  His grace is immutable,
  and His love is invariable.

In the past He has been the Refuge and the dwelling-place of His people — and He is still.

In the past He has been a prayer-hearing and a prayer-answering God — and He is still.

In the past He has been a Friend to the friendless, a Father to the fatherless, and the Comforter of the comfortless — and He is still.

In the past He has been a very present help in times of trouble — and He is the same still, and ever will be.

"You remain the same, and Your years shall have no end!" Psalm 102:27

All glory be to His name!

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"The Lord shall guide you continually!" Isaiah 58:11

Beloved reader, do you feel your need of a guide? The pathway of life is a difficult one — there are snares and pitfalls on one hand, and bye-paths on the other hand. If you should venture forward without a guide, you would reveal far greater folly than a traveler in an Alpine region, who, ignorant of the mountain pass, should determine to go alone, amidst precipices and chasms.

A faithful guide is indispensable — and God in Christ Jesus is just such a Guide as you need. His knowledge of the way is perfect. His understanding is infinite. He cannot err. And He is as good as He is wise. He is tender and compassionate to all whom He leads. He . . .
  defends them in danger,
  helps them in difficulty,
  supports them when faint,
  and cheers them in sadness.

If you have never before committed yourself to His guidance, oh that you would do so today! First, in your sinfulness — trust in Him for salvation. And then, in your ignorance and weakness — commit yourself constantly to His direction. He will guide you "continually," and lead you by the right way to a city of habitation, "a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God!"

Abandon yourself to His care and guidance, as a sheep in the care of a shepherd, and trust Him utterly. No matter though you may seem to be in the very midst of a desert, with nothing green about you, inwardly or outwardly, and may think you will have to make a long journey before you can get into the green pastures. Our Shepherd will turn that very place where you are into green pastures, for He has power to make the desert rejoice and blossom as a rose.

"He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me." Psalm 23:3-4 "For this God is our God for ever and ever! He will be our guide even to the end!" Psalm 48:14

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"God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ — by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world!" Galatians 6:14

If I should boast in anything else — I would boast in my shame! What am I? And what ground of hope have I apart from Christ crucified? Without Him I am a guilty, condemned, perishing creature!

From the cross of Jesus, from His sufferings and death on the accursed tree, spring . . .
  life for the dead,
  pardon for the guilty,
  purity for the defiled,
  comfort for the miserable,
  and salvation for the lost!

From the cross of Christ, all good arises to sinful men — and abundant glory to the God of salvation.

In the cross of Christ all the attributes of Jehovah are displayed and harmonized; there "mercy and truth meet together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other!" There He shows how He can be both just — and the justifier of the ungodly — "a just God and a Savior."

May I live near to the cross, that I may there learn . . .
  more of the exceeding sinfulness of sin,
  more of the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge,
  and be crucified to the world, and the world unto me.

"Sweet the moments, rich in blessing,
 Which before the cross I spend;
 Life, and health, and peace possessing,
 From the sinner's dying Friend!

"May I still enjoy this feeling,
 In all need, to Jesus go,
 Prove His wounds each day more healing,
 And Himself more fully know!"

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"Behold, we consider them blessed, who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy!" James 5:11

Affliction in itself is not joyous but grievous. Yet they may well be counted "blessed" who, sustained by the Savior's grace — are enabled patiently and trustfully to endure it, and to glorify God in the fires.

As their sufferings abound — their consolation also abounds — for they know that their heavenly Father is dealing with them in love. They know that all they are called to bear is designed for their good, and will issue in their eternal happiness.

Their afflictions, though heavy in themselves — they account light. Though they may be of long continuance — they regard them as short, when compared with the eternal joy they will enter upon hereafter! Adopting the language of the Apostle, they say: "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment — works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory!" "They reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed!"

"It is Your hand, my God;
 My sorrow comes from Thee;
 I bow beneath Your chastening rod,
 I know You lovest me.

"Here my poor heart can rest;
 My God, it cleaves to Thee;
 Your will is love, Your end is blessed,
 All work for good to me!"

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"But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ!" Philippians 3:7-8

Here is a complete change — an entire reversal in the estimation of things!

Saul of Tarsus gloried in his descent, as a Hebrew of the Hebrews; he gloried in his obedience to the law, and in his zeal as a persecutor of the Church. This was in his days of darkness and unbelief.

But when he was enlightened by the Holy Spirit, he saw that by natural birth he was a child of disobedience, and consequently a child of wrath, even as others. He saw that his own righteousness was but filthy rags. He saw that, in persecuting the Church, he was persecuting Christ. The things he before gloried in — he now felt to be his shame; and Jesus, whom he had despised — became glorious in his view, the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely One!

Have not I experienced a change, similar in kind, though not so sudden or remarkable in its attendant circumstances — as the change of Saul of Tarsus? Has not Jesus, who was once to me as a root out of a dry ground — become precious to my soul? Do I not count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord? Do I not desire to "win Christ, and to be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law — but that which is through the faith of Christ?"

"Yes, He is precious to my soul,
 My transport and my trust;
 Jewels to Him are gaudy toys,
 And gold is sordid dust!"

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"We have all had human fathers who disciplined us — and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live!" Hebrews 12:9

Correction by earthly parents is sometimes unwisely applied. But Divine correction, whenever administered, is always needed, and is regulated by a wisdom that cannot err, and a love that cannot be exceeded. God does not willingly afflict, or grieve the children of men. "Whom the Lord loves, He chastens — and scourges every son whom He receives."

How well does it befit us to submit to our heavenly Father, and to yield ourselves confidingly to His hands! He will not lay upon us one stroke too many — nor one stroke too heavy. He will drop the rod from His hands — as soon as the design of the correction is accomplished.

"No chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous. Nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto those who are exercised thereby."

All the sufferings of the children of God should not be regarded as correction on account of particular sins. Some of His children are the subjects of prolonged affliction — yet walk closely with God. Their trials may be designed to strengthen their faith and patience — and to show the power of the grace of Christ in sustaining and comforting them!

My Father, I would yield to Thee,
And bow beneath Your rod,
No needless stroke shall I receive
From my sin-pardoning God!

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"He shall choose our inheritance for us." Psalm 47:4

If I would choose for myself, O Lord, apart from Your light and guidance — what mistakes should I make! How false are my estimate of things — for how little do I know what would be for my good. You, O Lord, are acquainted with me altogether, and know what is best suited to me, with regard to . . .
  my place of abode,
  my connections in life,
  my sphere of service,
  the state of my bodily health,
  and the length of my days.

All — all is known to You. Oh, help me then to refer all to You — and, with respect to everything, may I be guided by Your will. Oh, help me in heart to say, "You shall choose my inheritance for me."

Surely You will choose infinitely better for me than I could choose for myself! You will not withhold what will be for my real good. You will not give me the cup of sorrow to drink — if the cup of joy is wholesome for me. You will not apportion my lot in the desert — if You see rich pasturage would be more suitable. Help me, then, to leave all in Your hands, and to say —
"O choose for me my friends,
 My sickness and my health;
 O choose my joys and cares for me,
 My poverty or wealth.

"Not mine, not mine the choice,
 In greater things or small;
 O be my Guide, my Guard, my Strength,
 My Wisdom and my All!"

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"Your eyes shall see the King in His beauty! They shall behold the land that is very far off." Isaiah 33:17

Now believers see Him who is fairer than the children of men, through a glass darkly — but hereafter they will see Him face to face! And when they see Him — they will be like Him! "It does not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." May I daily live under the influence of this blessed hope, and realize its purifying influence! For "every man who has this hope in Him purifies himself, even as He is pure."

The heavenly Canaan now often seems like a land afar off; but every "Israelite indeed" shall not only behold it, but enter upon possession of it! How ennobling is the thought of dwelling in that good land, in the presence of the King of kings, and of reigning with Him! How wondrous are the riches of the grace of our God! "He raises up the poor out of the dust, and the beggar from the dunghill — to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory!" He remembers us in our low estate, for His mercy endures forever. He awakens expectations of good too great for us fully to apprehend. But all that He has promised — He will perform.

"Yes, He is altogether lovely. This is my Beloved — and this is my Friend!" Song of Songs 5:16

"Yes, soon shall the veil be removed,
 And around shall His brightness be poured;
 I shall see Him whom absent I loved,
 Whom, not having seen, I adored!"

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"God Himself will provide!" Genesis 22:8

He has provided in the past — and He will provide in the future.
He has provided for our spiritual needs — and He will provide for our temporal necessities.
He who in love to our souls has bestowed on us the Unspeakable Gift — will not withhold the smaller favors of His providence and grace.

"The saints, what is fitting shall ne'er be denied,
 So long as 'tis written: The Lord will provide!"

Sometimes, indeed, the Lord delays to appear for the relief of His people — but only that His delivering mercy may be more conspicuous.

It was not until Abraham's hand was stretched out to slay his son — that the Lord interposed, and showed him the ram caught in a thicket by its horns, which he offered up as a burnt-offering in the stead of his son.

It was not until the widow of Zarephath had come to her last handful of flour, and to a little oil in a jug — that Elijah was sent to her, "the jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry" — until the day the Lord sent rain upon the earth.

We are not to look for miracles now; but God will provide what is needful and good for all who put their trust in Him, and walk in uprightness of heart.

"Though troubles assail, and dangers affright,
 Though friends should all fail, and foes all unite;
 Yet one thing secures us, whatever betide,
 The Scripture assures us, the Lord will provide!"

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"He set His seal of ownership on us, and put His Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come!" 2 Corinthians 1:22

Those who have the same mind in them that was in Christ Jesus — bear the impression of God's seal. They are distinctly marked as belonging to Him. The impression of the seal is deeper on some of the Lord's people than on others; but all who have received the love of the truth, and are trusting in Christ alone for salvation — are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.

Any who are entirely destitute of the Spirit of the Lord Jesus, do not belong to Him: "If any man does not have the Spirit of Christ — he does not belong to Him." Many, alas! bear the impression of a seal the very opposite of God's seal. By their love of sin, and by their unholy tempers and their evil doings — they are plainly marked as belonging to the god of this world. Oh that their eyes may be opened, that they may be turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God!

Beloved reader — is sin hateful, and is Christ precious to you? Do you desire to be like Him? If so, then you bear the impression of the Divine seal. You may not clearly see it yourself — but those who know you see it. He who has given you the deposit of the Spirit in your heart — will give the full possession. He who has produced the dawn — will lead on to perfect day. "He who has begun a good work in you — will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

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"How much do you owe my Master?" Luke 16:5

In a sense very different from that in which this question was asked by the unjust steward — let me regard it as proposed to me in reference to my obligations to my Lord and Master.

How much do I owe my Lord? Ah! this is a question I cannot answer.

I owed a debt of perfect obedience to the law of God. I was utterly bankrupt — and had not one good deed to pay! My Lord in infinite grace paid my debt — and became the end of the law for righteousness for me.

I was a slave to sin, and led captive by Satan at his will. Jesus ransomed me, not with silver and gold, but with His precious blood.

I was under condemnation as a transgressor of the law, and was exposed to its curse. Jesus in abounding love took my place, was made a curse for me, and died in my stead, even the death of the cross!

The debt of love I owe Him for His love to me, is vast indeed. It is a sweet debt that I shall always owe. I have some apprehension of the magnitude of it now — but I shall have a fuller view of it hereafter, when I see more clearly all the evil from which He has saved me — and all the good to which He has brought me!

"When this passing world is done;
 When has sunk yon radiant sun;
 When I stand with Christ on high,
 Looking o'er life's history,
 Then, Lord, shall I fully know —
 Not until then — how much I owe!"

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"I am poor and needy — yet the Lord thinks upon me!" Psalm 40:17

Whoever may forget me — there is One who in mercy remembers me. He is ever mindful of me — "The Lord thinks upon me." The more our spiritual poverty is revealed to us, and the more sensible we are of our need of His mercy and grace — the better. The Lord will enrich us, and supply all our needs. Yet will He keep us daily pensioners on His bounty, and lead us to feel that we have no stock or store — but that we must continually live on His fullness, and . . .
  be rich only in His riches,
  be strong only in His strength,
  and be gracious only in His grace.

The excellent John Newton, who wrote most of the Olney hymns, speaking of himself, said something to this effect: "When I first entered upon my Christian course, I thought that the Lord had given me a grain of grace, which by care and diligence would become an ounce — and that in time the ounce would become a pound — and the pound in the course of years many pounds. I thus expected an increasing store, and hoped to die rich in grace. But the Lord has so taught and led me, that I now see that my store is wholly in Him! I hope I feel my spiritual poverty more than I ever did. I now expect and desire to die poor in myself — and rich only in the Lord!"

"Blessed are the humble souls that see
 Their emptiness and poverty,
 Treasures of grace to them are given,
 And crowns of joy laid up in Heaven!"

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"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life!" John 6:68

These are the words of Peter, in reply to the question, "Will you also go away?" which was addressed by our blessed Lord to the twelve, when many of His followers were forsaking Him. This question, doubtless, touched them to the quick; and the answer of Peter must well have expressed the feelings of all of them except the traitor. We can easily imagine them all ready to exclaim: "What, Lord — leave You in whom is all our hope! Leave You, who has delivered us from spiritual death! Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

And, Lord, to whom or where could I go — if I were to turn away from You? To the world — to its empty pleasures and vain delights?

What! Shall I leave a child's portion — for the husks that the swine eat?

What! Shall I forsake the fountain of living waters — for cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water?

What! Shall I turn from Your infallible and encouraging teaching — to the foolishness of human philosophy?

What! Shall I leave the light of the sun — for the glimmer of a glowworm?

If I were to turn from You, Lord — where could I go for pardon?
Where would I go for peace of conscience?
Where would I go for help in trouble?
Where would I go for life and salvation?
 Lord, to whom could I go? "You have the words of eternal life!"

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"In Your presence is fullness of joy! At Your right hand there are pleasures forevermore!" Psalm 16:11

The presence of God, even in this world of trial and sorrow — brings peace and comfort.
But in the world above — at God's right hand — there is "fullness of joy."
Here we have the dawn of joys — there the meridian day!
Here we have the bud — there the expanded flower!
Here we have streamlets — there the ocean itself, "Fullness of Joy!"

In God's presence, there will be the joy of gratitude for redeeming mercy — and the ten thousand times ten thousand blessings that follow in its train.

In God's presence, there will be the joy of purity — the happy consciousness of being free from all defilement and stain.

In God's presence, there will be the joy of love — the blessedness of delight in the happiness of others — of loving all, and of being loved by all.

In God's presence, there will be the joy of communion — of happy fellowship with the first-born sons of light, with the just made perfect, and with God our Savior Himself!

All holy joy is there — and there in its completeness!

And to crown all, that holy joy will be abiding, "In His presence is fullness of joy; at His right hand there are pleasures forevermore."

New delight will attend familiar bliss — and new springs of blessedness will rise long as the days of eternity shall last!

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"From the ends of the earth I call to You, I call as my heart grows faint. Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I!" Psalm 61:2

When in the horrible pit and miry clay of darkness and distress, by reason of my sin and guilt — draw me, O Lord, up out of it, and set my feet upon the Rock, and put a song of praise into my mouth for Your redeeming mercy!

When cares and anxieties oppress me, lead me upward to Yourself — and allow me to realize that in Your faithfulness and love, I have a Rock of sure support beneath my feet.

In the hour of temptation, when the enemy has spread his snares for me, and as a malicious fowler is watching to entrap me — draw me to rise, as a bird escaped from a snare, to the Rock that is high above the reach of harm.

In the hour of sorrow and sadness, when lover and friend are put far from me, and my cherished ones are no more — lead me, like a dove, to the cleft of the Rock. Let me hide myself in Your bosom, and enjoy the retreat of Your love.

In the hour of conflict, when my spiritual foes close around me and threaten my destruction — help me to hasten to my Hiding-place, and let the munition of Rock be my defense.

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"You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich — yet for your sakes He became poor; that you through His poverty, might be rich." 2 Corinthians 8:9

We know something of the grace of our Lord Jesus — but, oh, how little do we apprehend it — how feeble are our conceptions of it!

Dwell, my soul, upon your Savior's love — and may the Holy Spirit give You anew, to taste its sweetness and to feel its power.

"He was rich" . . .
  rich in the possession of majesty and glory;
  rich in the enjoyment of the love and praise of ten thousand times ten thousand holy ones;
  rich in the experience of the highest bliss!

But "He became poor!"

How poor in earthly wealth — let His birthplace and manger-cradle tell.

How poor in earthly honor — let the ancient prophet tell, "He was despised and rejected by men."

How poor in outward ease — let His wearisome journeys, let His sorrow of soul, let His anguish in the garden, and His sufferings on the cross tell.

And why did He who was so rich — become so poor?

"That we, through His poverty — might be rich."

He took our human nature upon Him — that we might become partakers of the Divine nature.

He humbled Himself — that we might be exalted.

He emptied Himself — that we might be filled.

He endured shame — that we might inherit glory.

He bore the cruel cross — that we might wear the glorious crown!

O that His love my soul might fill with wonder, joy, and praise,
As long as I tarry here below — and throughout endless days!

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"We walk by faith — and not by sight." 2 Corinthians 5:7

"The life which I now live in the flesh — I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me!" This language should fittingly express the life of every child of God. Our life as Christians should be one of habitual dependence on the Lord Jesus Christ . . .
  for wisdom,
  for righteousness,
  for sanctification,
  and for redemption.

As we live by faith — we shall stand by faith on the rock of God's unfailing truth.

As we walk by faith, and not by sight — we shall go forward in our course homeward, heavenward, resting on the exceeding great and precious promises; and looking for that city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Walking by faith, and not by sight — we shall . . .
  be preserved amid all that is outwardly glittering and attractive,
  overcome the world, with its fascinations and snares,
  be sustained amidst all that appears discouraging in the service of Christ,
  be cheered in the day of adversity, and
  be comforted in the hour of sorrow.

If we walk by sight — we may sometimes conclude that all things are against us. But looking unto Jesus, and walking by faith — we shall know that all things work together for our good! In the midst of the troublous storms of life — we shall rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

O Lord, increase our faith!

"Help me to walk my course below
 In faith, and not by sight;
 To lean upon Your unseen grace,
 And trust Your unseen might!"

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"Since You are my Rock and my Fortress, for the sake of Your name — lead and guide me!" Psalm 31:3

This is the language of one who is conscious of his own ignorance and liability to go wrong — and who has faith in the wisdom and goodness of Him whose help is sought.

Guide me — for I know not the way I should take.

Lead me — for my steps are apt to slip.

Show me the right way, and help me to walk, in it!

Be my strength in my weakness — as well as my director in my ignorance. Take me by the hand and lead me as a simple, trustful child. Let me lean on Your arm, as a weak sister leans on that of her strong brother. Commune with me along the way — and reveal Your love to me. Favor me with Your companionship — as well as Your guidance. So shall I be enabled patiently to tread the thorny path, and trustfully to walk in the midst of perils.

"Yes, even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil — for You are with me! Your rod and Your staff — they comfort me!" Psalm 23:4

For Your name's sake — let Your presence go with me.

For Your mercy's sake — guide a feeble, erring one.

For Jesus' sake — lead me in the way I should go.

"Guide me with Your counsel — and afterward receive me to glory!" Amen.

Lead me, O my Father, lead me;
Ever hold me with Your hand,
Lest my feet should wander from Thee,
Where temptations thickly stand.
O keep me near Thee,
Until I dwell at Your right hand.

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"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me!" Philippians 4:13

The apostle did not mean all things absolutely — but all things which the Lord called him to do. Realizing that without Christ he could do nothing — he felt also that in His strength, he could do whatever the Lord gave him to do.

"Nothing" and "all things" agree well together in the experience of believers.

Nothing without Christ — but all things with Him.

Human nature's utmost power is insufficient in spiritual service — but Christ's grace is all-sufficient.

The true knowledge of this is the key to the apostle's paradox, "When I am weak — then am I strong!"
When I know and feel my own utter weakness — then am I strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

If we attempt a work that the Lord does not call us to do — we may entirely fail in its accomplishment. Yet for any service He assigns to us — He is ready to afford all needful strength. In proportion as we feel our weakness and trust in Him — we shall be empowered. His strength will be made perfect in our weakness.

"And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work!" 2 Corinthians 9:8

Nothing without my Savior's grace
Of good can I perform;
But "all things " — that He calls me to —
While leaning on His arm!

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"Your God whom you serve continually — He will deliver you." Daniel 6:16

Thus spoke king Darius to Daniel when his enemies were about to cast him into the den of lions — and the Lord did deliver him. He sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths, so that they did not hurt him.

In the same way, all the servants of God may trustfully expect that He will shield them from harm while they adhere faithfully to Him and His cause.

Not in every instance, however, have they been preserved from bodily harm — but He has always preserved their soul. When He has not delivered them from death — He has delivered them by death, and taken them out of the hands of their murderers to His own arms — to the embrace of His eternal love!

Christian, He whom you serve, will deliver you. Go straight on in the path of duty — go fearlessly forward wherever the Lord leads you. He can stop the mouth of your most malicious enemy, He can shield you in the hour of danger, and He will preserve your life until your work is done,
"Not a single shaft can hit
 Until the God of love sees fit!"

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"God is our refuge and strength — a very present help in times of trouble!" Psalm 46:1

What an accumulation of encouragement is afforded in these precious words! God is our refuge in times of trouble; and not our refuge only, but our strength. He is our help also — a present help, yes, "a very present help in times of trouble."

Let these truths be received and heartily believed — and then we shall not faint in the day of adversity. Taking God at His Word, we shall . . .
  flee to Him as our Refuge,
  trust in Him as our Strength,
  look to Him as our Help, and
  realize that whatever earthly friend is absent — our God is very near, "a very present help in times of trouble."

Afflicted Christian, yield not to unbelief — watch and pray against it. Listen to no suggestions of the evil one — he would insinuate that God has forsaken you, that He is afar off, that He is indifferent to your sorrow. Believe him not — he is "the father of lies!"

Take God at His Word, trust Him, cast yourself upon Him, pour out your heart to Him — and He will surely sustain you, and you will prove His faithfulness and love!

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"His merciful kindness is great towards us!" Psalm 117:2

All the kindness of the Lord towards us is indeed "merciful" for we have rebelled against Him — we have sinned, and we have done wickedly.

Had He dealt with us after our sins, or repaid us according to our iniquities — He would have shown us no kindness, but would have banished us from His presence, and consigned us to "the blackness of darkness forever!"

How great, then, is His merciful kindness towards us! It is so great that we cannot think or speak of it aright — it is unutterable! "Herein is love — not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins."

And when we came to Him burdened with guilt — He received us graciously. He not only forgave our transgressions — but adopted us into His family! "Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!"

And how manifold are the proofs of His merciful kindness that follow in the train of the greatest manifestations of His love — if I would attempt to count them, they are more than can be numbered!

"What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits towards me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call on the name of the Lord!"

"When all Your mercies, O my God,
 My rising soul surveys;
 Transported with the view, I'm lost
 In wonder, love, and praise!"

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"Store up for yourselves treasures in Heaven — where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal." Matthew 6:20

He is a poor man, however much of earthly wealth he may possess — who has no treasure in Heaven; for he will soon be stripped of all that he now possesses!

But he is a rich man, however poor in this world's goods he may be, whose treasure is above; for when he leaves this world he will enter upon the full enjoyment of the unsearchable riches of Christ, and upon the possession of an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade — reserved in Heaven for him!

Let me take heed to the words of the blessed Redeemer, in the passage of which the text forms a part. Let not my affections be chiefly placed on any earthly good. If riches increase — let me not set my heart upon them. Let me not hoard riches for myself, but use whatever I possess for the glory of God, and the good of others.

Is not Christ the chief treasure of my soul? Let my affections, then, rise to that world where He is gone. Where my treasure is, there will my heart be also!

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"Unto you who fear My name, shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings." Malachi 4:2

The people of God are here described as those who fear the name of the Lord. While His goodness and grace inspire them with trust and holy confidence — His greatness and His glory awaken in them reverence, adoration, and filial fear.

As men at large confidently expect the natural sun to rise morning by morning — so all who fear the name of the Lord may trustfully expect the Sun of righteousness to arise day by day upon their souls, with healing in His wings. If they do not enjoy His clear shining — it is because some worldly fog or cloud of unbelief hides Him from their view. Let them earnestly pray for an increase of faith, and for deliverance from earthly-mindedness; and His bright rays will pierce the clouds, and drive the fog away. Then they will enjoy . . .
  the light of their Savior's countenance,
  the warmth of His love, and
  His healing and invigorating power!

O glorious Sun of righteousness, rise upon my soul morning by morning! Scatter all darkness from my mind, warm my heart, and make me fruitful to Your praise!

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"Ask, and it shall be given to you!" Matthew 7:7

Ask! WHOM? The Giver of every good and perfect gift — the Father of mercies, and the God of all grace.

Ask! WHAT? First and chiefly, for spiritual blessings — and then for such temporal favors as you feel you need. Ask . . .
  for the forgiveness of sins,
  for renewing and sanctifying grace,
  for the Holy Spirit,
  for an enlightened understanding,
  for heavenly affections,
  for a submissive will, and
  for an obedient heart.

Ask especially for a full discovery of the glorious person, the perfect work, and immeasurable love of Christ — and for a constant trust in Him.

Ask! HOW? In dependence on the aid and teaching of the Holy Spirit. We know not of ourselves how to pray, or what to ask for — but He is ever ready to help our infirmities.

Ask in the name of Jesus. Feeling your sinfulness and unworthiness — plead His perfect righteousness and infinite worthiness.

Ask in faith. "He who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him."

Ask with the assurance that He is able and willing to bless you, and that He will fulfill the exceeding great and precious promises He has made to us in Christ Jesus. "Ask, and it shall be given to you!"

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"The Lord takes delight in His people; He beautifies the meek with salvation!" Psalm 149:4

The earliest dawn of grace in the hearts of God's people, affords Him pleasure: "The Lord takes pleasure in those who fear Him, in those who hope in His mercy."

The tear of godly sorrow for sin,
a humble and contrite heart,
a meek and lowly spirit —
are sacrifices in which He delights.

The first faint traces of His image in the saints, He hails with satisfaction. And as they grow in grace, in childlike confidence, in holy affections, and in loving obedience — they are His joy and delight.

He beautifies the meek with salvation. He clothes them now with the spotless robe of Christ's righteousness, and adorns them with the graces of His Spirit. By and-by He will put a crown of glory on their heads that will never fade away!

Christian reader! humbled on account of your sins, of your short-comings, and many infirmities — be assured that the Lord does not despise the day of small things. Your contrition and tears, and your humble trust in His mercy — afford Him more pleasure than the costliest gifts or the most showy outward service of the high-minded and pharisaical. Still cherish a humble and lowly spirit — for He will beautify the meek with salvation.

"His saints are lovely in His sight,
 He views His children with delight.
 He sees their hope, He knows their fear,
 And loves to see His image there!"

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"May you experience the love of Christ, which surpasses knowledge!" Ephesians 3:19

Here is a glorious paradox full of sweetness! It delights me to think I am called to experience that which cannot be known. The love of Christ is . . .
  so high — that I cannot scale it;
  so deep — that I cannot fathom it;
  so broad — that I cannot traverse it;
  so long — that I cannot measure it.
It exceeds my capacity to apprehend — yes, it "surpasses knowledge."

Yet though I cannot know it fully, I may know something of it. I may apprehend and enjoy something . . .
  of its freeness,
  of its fullness,
  of its tenderness,
  of its strength,
  of its constancy.

O Lord, direct my heart into Your love in Christ Jesus — give me a fuller enjoyment of it, and let me live under its power. May the love of Christ constrain me to yield myself unreservedly to Your service, and to live to Your glory. Surely it is but little that a vessel so narrow in capacity as I am, can hold of Your love and of Yourself — but according to the prayer of the apostle, I would ask to be "filled with all the fullness of God."

"Jesus, Your boundless love to me
 No thought can reach, no tongue declare;
 O knit my thankful heart to Thee,
 And reign without a rival there!"

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"Trust in Him at all times!" Psalm 62:8

We stand much in need of exhortations and encouragements to the continual exercise of faith — for Satan is its great enemy, and does all he can to destroy it. He knows that if he can shake our faith, that he will . . .
  deprive us of peace and joy,
  cripple our feet,
  enfeeble our arms, and
  prevent our usefulness.

Let us watch therefore against his assaults, and take heed lest we yield to an evil heart of unbelief. Let us seek grace to "hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end," and to "trust in the Lord at all times," for He is always equally worthy of our trust. Our times may change. We may have days of cloud — as well as of sunshine; seasons of sorrow — as well as of joy —

"Times of sickness, times of health,
 Times of poverty and wealth;
 Times of trial and of grief,
 Times of triumph and relief."

But, amidst all our changing times — our Savior-God never changes!
He is the same in the winter of our adversity — as in the summer of our prosperity.

Therefore should we trust in Him at all times.

"My times are in Your hands!" Psalm 31:15

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"Do not be slothful — but followers of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises." Hebrews 6:12

Here is a spur to diligence, from the example of those who have ran the race and gained the prize — who have fought the good fight and have come off more than conquerors.

My soul, yield to no temptation to indulge in slumberous ease. Be stirred up earnestly to follow those who have gone before, and were distinguished for their faith and perseverance. They were beset with spiritual enemies just as you are — but they overcame them in the strength of the Lord. They had many trials to endure — but looking unto Jesus, they were enabled to endure until the end. The path that some of them had to tread was a very thorny one — but depending on the faithful Promiser, they were furnished with shoes of iron and brass! Their conflicts are now ended, and all their trials are over:

"All their sorrows are left behind,
 And earth is exchanged for Heaven!"

Press on in their footsteps — copy their faith and endurance — be followers of them in their devoted service to Christ; and soon you will join them in the Celestial City, and share their triumph and reward!

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"I will trust, and not be afraid!" Isaiah 12:2

Anxious soul, burdened with guilt, and earnestly seeking deliverance — Jesus came into the world to save sinners, even the chief. Commit yourself to Him — He will never cast you out. May the Lord enable you to say, "I will trust, and not be afraid!"

 Timid disciple, do not yield to fear. If you are weak — your Savior is strong. If your spiritual foes are many — greater is He who is for you than all who are against you. Place all your confidence in Him, and let the language of your heart be, "I will trust, and not be afraid!"
Perplexed one, walking in a way you have never trodden before, in a thorny and intricate path — if you are in the way of duty, then you are in the path of safety. The Lord will make darkness to be light before you, and crooked things straight, and will never forsake you. Let the language of your heart be, "I will trust, and not be afraid!"

Aged pilgrim, nearing the end of your journey, and having Jordan's stream in view — remember the goodness and mercy of the Lord to you in the past, and His Word of promise to you now: "Even to your old age and gray hairs I am He, I am He who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you! I will sustain you and I will rescue you!" Surely you will be enabled to say, "I will trust, and not be afraid!"

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It is far better with a Christian when at his worst — than it is with the worldling when at his best!

If destitute of earthly treasures — he has unsearchable riches in Christ!

If bereaved of earthly friends — Jesus still lives!

If his earthly tabernacle totters — he has "a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

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"For as high as the heavens are above the earth — so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him!" Psalm 103:11

 Our thoughts of the mercy of God towards us, in Christ Jesus — are often low and unworthy of Him. But let them rise as high as the hills — yet His mercy is higher; or as high as the lofty mountains — and still His mercy is higher! Yes, "As high as the heavens are above the earth — so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him!"

That we might have some suitable apprehension of the mercy of our God — let us think of the depth to which it has stooped to reach us — and of the height to which it raises us.

The mercy of our God descended to us in the depths of our fallen, ruined state — it came down to us in our alienation and rebellion. Yes, it reached us when we were "dead in trespasses and sins." "God, who is rich in mercy, with His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in sins — has quickened us together with Christ."

And to what a height does the mercy of God raise us! It lifts us up out of the horrible pit — and puts us upon the Rock of Ages! It exalts us to the dignity of the sons of God! It makes us " kings and priests unto God!" It will raise us to the Heaven of heavens — to eternal blessedness and glory.

"Your mercy, my God, is the theme of my song,
 The joy of my heart and the boast of my tongue;
 Your free grace alone, from the first to the last,
 Has won my affections, and bound my soul fast.
 Your mercy is endless, most tender and free;
 No sinner need doubt, since 'tis given to me!"

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"Do you want to be made well?" John 5:6

The Lord Jesus is the Physician of the soul. He not only forgives all our iniquities, He also heals all our spiritual maladies.
He opens the eyes of the blind,
He unstops the ears of the deaf,
He loosens the tongue of the dumb,
and He enables the lame to walk.
He dispenses His cures in sovereign mercy, and none who apply to Him are sent empty away.

"Do you want to be made well?" is the question He addresses to applicants for healing.
Are you truly desirous of deliverance from your spiritual maladies?
Are you willing to have your eyes opened to your state and condition as a perishing sinner?
Are you willing to have your ears open to My voice as I speak by My word, and by My Spirit?
Are you willing to have your tongue unloosened in prayer and praise?
Are you willing to have your feet strengthened to walk in the way of My precepts?

"Do you want to be made well?"
Will you give up all other physicians?
Will you yield yourself up into My hands?
Will you look to Me and trust in Me alone for spiritual healing and cure?

Yes, Lord, by Your grace I will. Heal me — and I shall be healed! My hope is in You alone; all others I have proved to be physicians of no value. My helpless soul depends on You.

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"Rejoice evermore!" 1 Thessalonians 5:16

You have good reason to rejoice, dear reader — if Christ is yours, and you are His. For in Him you are blessed with all spiritual blessings; and with Him you will share the joy and glory of the eternal inheritance!

Your pathway here on earth may be one of difficulty and trial — yes, you may at times be called to drink deeply of the cup of sorrow. Still have you good reason to rejoice in your present possession and in your future prospects. To assist your joy, dwell less on your trials — and more on your mercies. Think what you are saved from:
  the curse of the law,
  the burden of guilt,
  the darkness of nature,
 the bondage of Satan,
  the dominion of sin, and
  the eternal prison of Hell!

Think what you are in possession of:
  the love of God,
  the spirit of adoption,
  a title to Heaven,
  and a fitness for it.

Think what you are traveling to:
  your Father's house,
  your Savior's presence,
  the society of just men made perfect,
  fullness of joy, and
  pleasures for evermore!

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"He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death — even the death of the cross!" Philippians 2:8

He did this in the exceeding riches of His grace!

Though He was rich — yet for our sakes He became poor!

Though He was high — yet for our sakes He stooped low.

In measuring the depth to which our Lord descended — we have to take into account the height from which He came. But of that height we can form no adequate conception. "Who can by searching find out God? Who can find out the the Almighty unto perfection?" The Lord Jesus declared that He and the Father are one.

From Deity — He stooped to humanity.

From universal rule — He stooped to the place of a servant.

From the highest glory — He stooped to shame and contempt.

From the throne of Heaven — He stooped to the cross of Calvary!

This He did to save a rebellious race — to save sinners — to save me, even me!

Oh, my soul, look into this mystery of love — and wonder and adore!

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"Abhor that which is evil — cleave to that which is good." Romans 12:9

Evil, or wickedness, is the abominable thing that God hates. God's children are called to be imitators of Him — and to this end He gives them His Spirit and His grace.

If evil is merely avoided, while the love of it is cherished — the heart is not right in the sight of God. Only hatred to sin leads to habitual watchfulness against it, and to prayer for deliverance from its power.

O Lord, show me more of the exceeding sinfulness of sin — and grant me to hate it with a perfect hatred. As its presence within is discovered — may I feel my vileness, abhor myself, and cleave closely to Him who shed His precious blood, and died on the cross to deliver me from the guilt of sin, and who lives to save me from its power. May I not only abhor that which is evil — but may I love and cleave to that which is good. May I delight in Your law after the inward man — and follow after holiness, purity, and charity.

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"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." Philippians 2:5

How different an aspect would the Church of Christ present — if every member of it walked in obedience to this precept, and habitually manifested a holy, humble, self-sacrificing, benevolent, and forgiving spirit.

Too often, alas! pride and vain-glory are conspicuous in the professed followers of Him who was meek and lowly in heart!

Too often selfishness is discovered in those who profess to be the disciples of Him who, though He was rich, for our sakes became poor!

Too often is a resentful temper displayed by those who profess to love Him who prayed for His murderers, and died for His enemies.

Oh that every true believer may continually seek a supply of the Spirit of Christ! For it is only in proportion as we have the same mind in us that was in Him, and as we tread in His steps — that we glorify our Father who is in Heaven.

"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you!" Ephesians 4:32

"Lord, may that mind be formed in us
 Which shone so bright in Thee,
 May we be humble, lowly, meek,
 From pride and envy free.

"May we to others stoop, and learn
 To emulate Your love;
 So shall we bear Your image here,
 And share Your joy above!"

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"I am Yours — save me!" Psalm 119:94

This is not the cry of a sinner just awakened to a sense of his danger, and seeking deliverance from the wrath to come. It is the prayer of one who realizes that he is the Lord's, "I am Yours" he says, "save me!"

Probably the psalmist uttered this cry in the view of some external peril; for in the next verse he says, "The wicked have waited for me to destroy me."

This prayer of the psalmist will often suit the believer well — as when the fowler is spreading some net to entangle him.

Or when, in the business of life, he is much in the midst of worldly or ungodly men.

Or when he is assailed by fierce temptations.

Or when his inward corruptions gain strength, and threaten to prevail over him.

Because, O Lord, I am Yours — because You ransomed one — redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, and adopted by Your grace — I trustfully look to You! O save me from the power of all my spiritual enemies, and uphold and preserve me to the end. "I am Yours — save me!"

"Yours in sickness, Yours in health,
 Yours in poverty, Yours in wealth;
 Yours, Whate'er my lot may be,
 Yours throughout eternity.

"Your forever! Oh how blessed
 'Tis to find in You my rest!
 Savior, Guardian, heavenly Friend,
 Oh, defend me to the end!"

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"Be very careful, then, how you live, not as unwise but as wise — redeeming the time, because the days are evil." Ephesians 5:16

Time already lost cannot be recovered. Yet we may redeem much of it that remains to us . . .
  from needless sleep,
  from vain conversation,
  from profitless reading,
  and from frivolous occupations.

If the character of the times in which the admonition of the text was first given supplied a motive for enforcing it — then surely the days in which we live press it upon us with additional urgency.

Temptations to worldly pleasures and sinful indulgences surround us on every hand! Iniquity abounds — and the love of many waxes cold. Let us, then, earnestly seek grace rightly to employ the precious hours that are given to us, and to redeem all the time we can for the spiritual advantage of ourselves and others.

Colonel Gardiner always secured two hours for devotional exercises before the business of the day commenced. Philip Doddridge wrote his "Family Expositor" by rising at five in the morning, instead of seven, as he had previously done.

But apart from all other examples, we have that of our blessed Lord Himself, who said, "I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day — the night is coming, when no man can work."

"Not many lives have we, but only one,
 One, only one!
 How sacred should that one life ever be,
 That narrow span!"

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"Your Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." Psalm 119:105

How necessary is a lantern when we are walking in a dark night in an unknown and dangerous path!

We cannot walk safely in the devious paths of life, amidst the darkness of error and sin — without the lamp of God's Word, lit by the Holy Spirit. How many have stumbled and fallen to their eternal ruin — by neglecting to take this lamp!

Beloved reader, have you taken the Word of God as a lamp unto your feet? Is the lamp lit, in answer to prayer for the light of the Holy Spirit — and are you walking in the light of it?

If so, it is well. You will see the dangers of the way on the right hand and on the left, and will be preserved from harm, notwithstanding the snares and pitfalls that lie in your course.

Walk on still in the light of God's blessed Word — and so will you be brought in safety to that land where there is no night, and to that city that has no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it — for the glory of God does lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

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"Hold me up — and I shall be safe!" Psalm 119:117

None are so likely to fall, as the presumptuous and self-confident. Peter did not know his own weakness when he said, "Though I should die with You — yet I will never deny You!" How soon did he stumble, to his confusion and shame, and to the dishonor of his Lord and Master! The Lord, in His rich mercy, lifted him up, healed his wounded spirit, and taught him henceforth to put no confidence in the flesh.

May I be preserved from vain confidence. Morning by morning may I rise, feeling my liability to stumble — but full of hope in the God of my life and the Father of all my mercies. Day by day, may I be helped to place my hand in the hand of my Heavenly Father, and to cry, "Hold me up — and I shall be safe!"

What a happiness it is to have One near us continually who is able to keep us from falling. Whatever stones of stumbling may lie in our path, however precipitous the road may sometimes be, though abysses be on one side and quagmires on the other — if we walk hand in hand with God, we shall walk surely and peacefully. "Hold me up — and I shall be safe!"

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"You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You." Isaiah 26:3

"Those who know Your name," says the psalmist, "will put their trust in You." True knowledge of God always leads to reliance on Him and confidence in Him. And when the mind is stayed upon God — what can shake or disturb it?

If we know God as He has revealed Himself in Christ — then no view of our past sins and transgressions will alarm us; for we know that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin.

If our minds are stayed on God — then the thought of the great tribunal will not agitate us; for the Judge is our Savior, our Father, and our Friend!

If our minds are stayed on the Lord — then no knowledge of the number and malignity of our spiritual foes will disturb our peace; for we know that greater is He who is for us, than all who are against us

If our minds are stayed on the Lord — then no trying dispensations of Providence will greatly trouble us; for we know that all things work together for our good.

My soul, seek a growing acquaintance with the God of your salvation. Seek to know more of Him in whom you are trusting — then will you feel persuaded that He is able to keep that which you have committed to Him. And, amidst all the trials of life, and all the storms of adversity, you will have a quiet mind — a pledge of the perfect and eternal peace you will enjoy in your heavenly home.

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"Give Your servant an understanding heart!" 1 Kings 3:9

In order to live and act aright — we require not only good mental capacity, but "an understanding heart."

In order to profit under communications of Divine truth — we require a disposition to receive it, as well as a mind to apprehend it.

Many know the way in which they should walk — and go in a contrary direction.
Many know the truth — but do not love it; they have clear notions in their heads — but darkness in their hearts.

How excellent is the petition of the text, "Give Your servant an understanding heart!" Give me, O Lord, not only an apprehension of what is right and true — -but a disposition to embrace and follow it. May I love Your will — and walk according to it.

We may ask God for some things, and be denied. However desirable they may appear to us — they may not be good for us, and so they may be withheld. But if we seek spiritual wisdom, if we ask for an understanding heart — then our prayer will assuredly be answered; for the Lord has promised to give wisdom to all who earnestly desire it.

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"I will greatly rejoice in the Lord!" Isaiah 61:10

In Him there is ample ground for joy! He is the same now as He was when Peter wrote, "Whom having not seen — you love; in whom, though now you see Him not — yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

There is everything in Him to meet the deepest necessities of our souls.

In Him we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins.

In Him we have righteousness and strength.

In Him we have . . .
  resources that never fail,
  springs of blessedness that never dry,
  treasures that are never exhausted,
  and unsearchable riches!

In Him we have a Friend whose love never wanes, and whose kindness never fails — One who never leaves us or forsakes us.

In Him we have wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption.

In Him we are blessed with all spiritual blessings.

Surely, my soul, you have cause to be joyful in your God!

In yourself, you have much reason for shame and sorrow — but in the Lord, you have abundant reason for joy and gladness. Look away then from yourself — look to Him, and think . . .
  of what He is,
  of what He has done for you,
  and of what He will yet do!
And so will you greatly rejoice in the Lord, and rejoice in the God of your salvation.

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"May the Lord bless you, and keep you!" Numbers 6:24

It is a favor to have the good wishes of our friends; it is a privilege to enjoy an interest in the prayers and intercessions of the Lord's people. But, above all, it is an unspeakable mercy to be borne on the heart of the ever-living Intercessor — who, as our Great High-Priest, has passed into the heavens, there to appear in the presence of God for us.

The words at the head of this portion form a part of the Divinely-appointed blessing that was used by Aaron and his sons. How beautiful is the whole of it, "May the Lord bless you and protect you. May the Lord smile on you and be gracious to you. May the Lord show you his favor and give you his peace." Numbers 6:24-26.

Our Great High-Priest not only lives to plead for His redeemed children — but He also lives to bless them. He came from Heaven to bless. He lived on earth to bless. His last act below was an act of blessing. And now He ever lives and reigns to bless.

May the Lord bless you, reader, with such blessings as you need — and may the Lord keep you, fellow-traveler, as in the hollow of His hand, and bring you safely to glory.

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"If God is for us — then who can be against us?" Romans 8:31

God is on the side of His people — and all His attributes are engaged on their behalf. And if God is for us — then who or what can be against us?
The law? It is fulfilled and honored.
The judge? It is He who justifies.
Conscience? It is sprinkled with the peace-speaking blood of Jesus.

But are there not enemies many and mighty against us? Yes . . .
  the world, with its host of evils;
  the flesh, with its manifold corruptions; and
  the great adversary, the devil, allied with all the powers of darkness.
Surely then we must quail! Yes, if He who is "for us" were less mighty than He is. But with omnipotent power and infinite love on our side — what have we to fear?

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"As the deer pants for streams of water — so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God!" Psalm 42:1-2

Here is a vivid image of strong desire — a poor deer that has just escaped from the pursuit of the hunters, fevered and parched — panting for the streams of water.

Just so, the counterpart is sometimes found in the experience of the Lord's people:
  harassed by earthly care and anxiety,
  hotly pursued by the great enemy,
  anguished by his darts, and
  distressed with fears through the weakness of faith
 — the desire for relief, which can only be found in God, is like an ardent thirst! The fitting language of one in such a case is, "As the deer pants for streams of water — so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God!"

And, blessed be His name — He is near in the fullness of His grace to satisfy the thirsty one. A poor deer may thirst in vain for the streams of refreshing water — but a soul thirsting for the living God shall be satisfied! For He has said, "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue fails for thirst — I, the Lord, will hear them; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them."

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"He loved me — and gave Himself for me!" Galatians 2:20

This is grace indeed! I read of it, I think of it, I sing of it — but it is a mystery of love too vast to comprehend!

Mark, my soul — Jesus did not simply pity you and weep for me, He did not simply give time and thought for me — but He gave Himself for me — His body and His soul! He gave His body to be pierced and broken on the tree for me — and He gave His soul an offering for my sin. He gave Himself . . .
  to be my substitute,
  to be wounded for my transgressions,
  and to be bruised for my iniquities!

Consider who it was that did this.
It was God's co-equal Son;
it was He who was in the beginning with God;
it was He by whom all things were made;
it was God manifest in the flesh;
it was the Creator giving Himself for the creature;
it was the Holy One giving Himself for the ungodly;
it was the innocent One giving Himself for the guilty!

"He loved me — and gave Himself for me!" Precious Savior! let me dwell on Your love and grace — let me wonder and adore. Help me to yield myself to You — and to live to Your praise.

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"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." Philippians 2:5

Write this admonition, O Lord, upon the tablet of my heart — and work in me to will and to do of Your good pleasure. May I commune much with Christ — that I may imbibe His spirit. May I live in sweet communion with Him — that I may walk in resemblance to Him.

How holy and humble He was! Save me, O Lord, from the love and power of every sin! Deliver me from pride and vain-glory — and give me a meek and lowly spirit.

How benevolent He was! He went about doing good. Make me something like Him. May I be tender-hearted, kind and compassionate, and disposed to give to the need of others according to my ability.

How patient was Jesus under reproach — and submissive under suffering! Grant me, O Lord, the same mind. When reviled — may I not revile again; and when persecuted — may I not threaten, but commit myself to Him who judges righteously. In all the afflictions and trials of life — help me in patience to humbly resign myself to You.

How gracious and forgiving Jesus was! One of His last prayers was offered for those who crucified Him: "Father," He cried, "forgive them, for they know not what they do!" Deliver me, O Lord, from a spirit of resentment! Help me to do good to those who hate me, and to pray for those who despitefully use me.

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"Though the LORD is on high — He looks upon the lowly; but the proud He knows from afar!" Psalm 138:6

The Lord satisfies the poor in spirit with good things; while the rich — those who vainly imagine that they are so — He sends empty away. The Pharisee, who entered the temple boasting of the evils he had avoided and of the good deeds he had done — went down to his house as empty as he came from it! But the publican, who came in lowliness and contrition, crying for mercy — went down to his house "justified" — pardoned and accepted by God.

"For this is what the high and lofty One says — He who lives forever, whose name is holy: I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite!" Isaiah 57:15

Our hearts are naturally proud, and nothing less than the teaching and grace of the Holy Spirit is effectual to bring us in lowliness and contrition to the footstool of mercy. A true sight of ourselves, and of Christ crucified for our sins — lays us low, and keeps us low. We then feel that unto us belong shame and confusion of face — while "to the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses."

"Our condescending God —
 To whom else shall we go?
 Remove our pride, whatever betide,
 And lay and keep us low!"

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"Trust in the Lord with all your heart — and do not lean on your own understanding!" Proverbs 3:5

Use your understanding — the Lord has given it to you for this purpose. To the lower animals He has given instinct — but man He
has endowed with powers of reason and reflection.

But while you use your understanding — do not lean upon it. By reason of the fall, it is darkened. Pray therefore for the teaching of the Holy Spirit, and ask that the eyes of your understanding may be enlightened. Lean upon Infinite Wisdom, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart" — then you will be enabled rightly to use your understanding — in His light you will see light.

Many men of large mental capacity and great scholarship are in the dark respecting some of the simplest truths of Divine revelation — for they boast of their reason, glory in their learning, and lean upon their own understanding.

On the other hand, some people of small natural capacity, and who are destitute of any of the advantages of human learning — are truly wise; for they trust in the Lord with all their heart, and sit, with childlike simplicity, at the feet of the Great Teacher, and He reveals His truth to them, and allows them to enjoy its sweetness and to feel its power.

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"He restores my soul — He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake." Psalm 23:3

He who knows anything of his own heart, does not feel that he has too much reason to say:
"Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
 Prone to leave the God I love!"

And not only is there a proneness in us to wander — too frequently we go astray like lost sheep. If by Divine grace we are preserved from open defection — we often backslide in heart from our God. How great a mercy it is, that the Savior and Shepherd of our souls is our Restorer! He seeks us in our wanderings, brings us back, and leads us in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. By a variety of means He reclaims us, humbles us, and draws us closer to Himself.

Sometimes He restores us by the voice of alarm.
Sometimes He restores us by storms of adversity and sorrow.
And sometimes He restores us by the Shepherd's gentle call or look of love — such as sent poor Peter away to weep bitterly.

By some means, more gentle or more severe — Christ's own sheep are brought back to feed in the pastures of mercy; and to walk in the paths of righteousness. Keep me, O Shepherd of Israel, from wandering from You! Draw me, and keep me near to Your side!

"The Lord my Shepherd is,
 And He my soul will keep;
 He knows who are His,
 And watches o'er His sheep.
 He leads my feet — and when I roam,
 He seeks and brings the wanderer home!"

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 And watches o'er His sheep.
 He leads my feet — and when I roam,
 He seeks and brings the wanderer home!"

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"Do not be afraid — for I am with you." Isaiah 41:10

There are two things very difficult to accomplish, namely,
  1. to awaken fear in those who ought to fear, and
  2. to remove fear from the minds of those who have no just grounds for it.

All who are out of Christ, who live in sin, and neglect the great salvation — have great cause to fear, for there is but a step between them and eternal perdition!

But all who are in Christ, and give evidence of it by their hatred to sin, and their love to God and His people — have no reason to fear; yes, rather they have ample ground for holy trust and joyful expectation.

The frequency with which the Lord gives the admonition, "Do not be afraid," to His people, shows how much they are given to needless apprehension. In the text, an all-sufficient reason is assigned why they should not fear: "For I am with you!" says the Lord. This blessed assurance should quell every rising fear; for Jehovah is almighty to protect, and infinitely good and gracious to provide and bless.

"Fear not, I am with you, oh be not dismayed;
 For I am your God, and will still give you aid;
 I'll strengthen you, help you, and cause you to stand,
 Upheld by My righteous, omnipotent hand!"

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"You will be blessed when you come in — and blessed when you go out!" Deuteronomy 28:6

This promise was made to Israel as a people, on condition of their obedience to the Divine commands — but a curse was threatened if they departed from the statutes of the Lord.

God's spiritual Israel are redeemed from the curse of the law by the precious blood of Christ — and they are blessed in Him with all spiritual blessings. All who are living a life of faith in the Son of God, and who do not walk after the flesh, but after the spirit, are under the abiding blessing of God — they have passed from death unto life, and will never come into condemnation. They are blessed when they rise up — and when they lie down; when they come in — and when they go out.

Child of God, endeavor to live in the realization of your condition of blessing in Christ — in Him, you are pardoned and accepted — in Him, every new covenant blessing is yours!

When you go out, carry with you the remembrance that the blessing of God your Father is upon you — and pray that you may be an instrument of blessing to those among whom you may mingle. And when you come in to re-join the family circle, enter your home in the enjoyment of the same blessing, that you may scatter some rays of gladness and goodness around.

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"Lord, lift up the light of Your countenance upon us!" Psalm 4:6

"Truly, the light is sweet, and it is a pleasant thing for the eyes to behold the sun." But the light of God's countenance is sweeter far than the light of day — and the enjoyment of a sense of His favor is pleasanter than the shining of the sun even amid the gloom of winter. The light of God's countenance illumines the darkest hour — and turns the shadow of death into morning. It has filled the prison cell with brightness — and made the captive's heart leap for joy. It has cheered the martyr at the stake; and while the flames were consuming his body, it has carried his spirit on the wings of gladness to the presence of his Lord!

It is not always that the Lord's people enjoy the sunshine of His love. The fogs of earthliness and clouds of unbelief often conceal the brightness of His face.

"Chase away, O Lord, all darkness from my mind — and all unbelief from my heart. Help me constantly to walk before You in the paths of Your own appointment — and favor me with the light of Your countenance, and the beams of Your love!"

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"He will keep the feet of His saints!" 1 Samuel 2:9

This assurance and other similar ones, expressing the preserving grace of the Lord — are designed to withdraw His people from all trust in themselves, and to lead them to confide wholly in Him.

But they are misapplied and perverted, when any take occasion from them to relax in circumspection and vigilance.

The Lord is the Keeper of His people — but all who are kept by Him are preserved in the exercise of faith, of watchfulness, and prayer.

All who walk carelessly and presumptuously, may expect nothing but to stumble to the distress of their soul and the dishonor of their Lord. But all who feel their own inability to walk safely, amid the snares and perils of the way — may rejoice in the assurance that the Lord keeps the feet of His saints.

Christian pilgrim, anxious to avoid bringing reproach on the name of the precious Savior — put your hand by faith in your heavenly Father's hand! He is able to keep you from falling; trust in Him with all your heart — and He will uphold your goings in His paths, and none of your steps shall slide!

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"What do you want Me to do for you?" Mark 10:36

This question was addressed by our Lord to the two sons of Zebedee, who came to Him saying, "Master, we ask that You should do for us whatever we desire." And their request was their own exaltation to a position of superior honor, irrespective of any special fitness for it. "Grant us," said they, "that we may sit one on Your right hand, the other on Your left hand, in Your glory."

Our Lord could not, consistently with His glory and their good, grant such a petition. And often still do the people of God ask and receive not — because they ask amiss. Either the object of their earnest desire is not good — or their motive in seeking it is an improper one.

It is our happiness in prayer to come to One who, while He encourages us to make known all our desires to Him — will, in infinite wisdom and goodness, withhold such things as would be harmful to us, however earnestly we may desire them.

Or He may even deny us things which are good in themselves, but which we are not prepared to receive — as when He sees that the bestowment of them would minister to pride and vain glory.

Oh that when He says to us, "What do you want Me to do for you?" — we may be enabled to present such petitions as He can consistently with His glory fulfill!

"Not what we wish — but what we want,
 O let Your grace supply!
 The good unasked, in mercy grant;
 The ill, though asked, deny!"

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"In the time of trouble — He shall hide me in His pavilion!" Psalm 27:5

The people of God are not exempt from trouble — but they have a refuge in it — the pavilion of God's love!

"He shall hide me," says the psalmist, "in His pavilion; in the secret of His tabernacle, He shall hide me."
Sheltered by the Lord — my most powerful enemies cannot injure me.
Concealed in His retreat — I shall elude the search of my most vigilant pursuers!

Christian, you have a hiding-place — when beset with your spiritual foes, or hotly pursued by temptations of the evil one. In the secret place of the Most High — you shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. He will cover you with His feathers, and under His wings shall you trust. His truth shall be your shield and buckler. In all times of tribulation, the Lord is near you. He is a very present help in times of trouble.

Pour out your burdened heart to Him, and tell Him all your grief. He will sustain and comfort you, and give you "beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."

"When, overwhelmed with grief,
 My heart within me dies,
 Helpless and far from all relief,
 To You I lift my eyes.

"Within Your presence, Lord,
 Forever I'll abide,
 You are the tower of my defense,
 The refuge where I hide!"

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"The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting — upon those who fear Him!" Psalm 103:17

The people of God are here described as, "those who fear Him."

The fear here referred to, is very different from the ordinary fear of apprehension or dread. The fear that characterizes the Lord's people, is the fruit of divine love. It is reverential confidence, and manifests itself in a constant desire to avoid what is offensive to God, and to do the things that please Him. Those who thus fear the Lord, are the objects of His special regard.

Their love to Him, and reverence of Him — is the result of His love for them. He loved them with an everlasting love — and therefore with loving-kindness He drew them. And as His mercy towards them reaches back to ages in the past — so it will extend to distant ages to come. The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed — but His kindness shall not depart from them, neither shall the covenant of His peace be removed, says the Lord, who has mercy on them.

If the children of God walk contrary to His will — He may withhold the light of His countenance from them for a season, and visit their transgression with the rod — but His love towards them abides unchanged. Addressing His ancient people, He says, "In a little wrath I hid my face from you for a moment — but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on you, says the Lord your Redeemer."

As from eternal ages past, Your love to us does flow,
So shall Your mercy to us last, as endless ages grow!

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"May the Lord fulfill all your petitions!" Psalm 20:5

This language may be properly used, when the petitions referred to are plainly in accordance with the word and will of God.

Awakened one, earnestly asking for Divine illumination, for a new heart and right spirit, and for grace to trust alone in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation — "May the Lord fulfill all your petitions."

Believer, earnestly coveting the best gifts, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, asking for an increase of faith, and hope, and love; and fervently praying for conformity to the image of Christ — "May the Lord fulfill all your petitions."

Afflicted one, asking for Divine support, for submission and patience, and for deliverance in the Lord's time and way — "May the Lord fulfill all your petitions."

Christian parent, earnestly praying for the salvation of your children, and asking for grace to teach and train them aright, and to set them an example worthy of their imitation — "May the Lord fulfill all your petitions."

O Lord, teach me what to pray for, and how to pray aright — that You Yourself may say to me, as You did to an earnest applicant of old, "Be it unto you even as you will."

"The humble suppliant cannot fail
 To have his wants supplied;
 Since He for sinners intercedes,
 Who once for sinners died!"

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"I have set you an example, that you should do as I have done for you." John 13:15

When our blessed Lord uttered these words, He had just washed His disciples' feet, and wiped them with the towel with which He was girded.

Our gracious Savior, who is Lord of all, thus stooped to one of the lowest acts of service to teach His disciples in all ages . . .
  to serve one another in love,
  to stoop to each other's need, and
  to regard no office of kindness beneath them which they might have occasion to perform.

And in all spiritual matters, so far from seeking to exercise lordship over each other — that they should each be willing to take the lowest place, and minister to each other's help and comfort. "Whoever will be chief among you — let him be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." O Lord, impart unto us Your grace — that we may be Your true followers, and tread in Your steps.

In serving grace, in lowly love,
In true humility,
May Jesus my example prove,
May He my pattern be!

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"He makes me to lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside the still waters." Psalm 23:2

God affords me rest when I am weary — and refreshing quietude after turmoil and struggle.
He leads me away to Himself and His truth — and He reveals to my heart His love and grace.
He gives me a fresh view of His complete atonement for my sins — and of His perfect righteousness for my justification.
 He causes me to lie down in the pasture of redeeming mercy and dying love!

And then, too, He affords refreshment after conflict with enemies within, and foes without. He assures me that as He has conquered for me — so He will conquer in me. He leads me to drink of the river of life which flows freely and gently along my course. He . . .
  renews my strength,
  quiets my spirit, and
  affords me a measure of that peace which passes understanding.
This is the rest with which He causes the weary to rest — and this is the refreshing.

"The Lord my pasture does prepare,
 And feed me with a Shepherd's care,
 His presence shall my wants supply,
 And guard me with a watchful eye.

"My weary, wandering steps He leads
 To fertile vales and dewy meads,
 Where peaceful rivers, soft and slow,
 Amid the verdant landscape flow."

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"My meditation of Him shall be sweet — I will be glad in the Lord." Psalm 104:34

Let me strive in these days of ceaseless activity, to secure a little time every day for meditation, as well as for prayer.

Let my thoughts be chiefly of the Lord and His goodness, for that is a theme I can never exhaust; and it is one full of refreshment and delight! "My meditation of Him shall be sweet."

Let me then think of His loving-kindness in the morning — and of His faithfulness every night.

Let me dwell upon His grace as it is revealed in Christ Jesus — and of all the relations of love that He bears to His people, in Him.

Let me think of His past dealings of mercy — and of His promises of future good.

Let me especially dwell upon His grace to myself . . .
  in enlightening my dark mind,
  in pardoning my sins,
  in clothing me with the robe of His righteousness, and
  in giving me His Holy Spirit to be my Teacher, my Sanctifier, and my Comforter.

Let me think of His patience and forbearance, of His faithfulness, and unchanging grace!

As I linger in contemplation on these themes . . .
  my meditation will be sweet,
  my soul will be refreshed,
  my gratitude will be awakened,
  I shall be glad in the Lord, and
  rejoice in the God of my salvation!

How sweet and cheering is the theme,
Of God my Savior's grace;
May it employ my daily thoughts,
'Til I behold His face!

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"The name of the Lord is a strong tower — the righteous run into it, and are safe!" Proverbs 18:10

Whatever name the Lord bears, there is that in Him which answers to it. So the expression, "His name," is sometimes used for the Lord Himself, and thus when we read — "The name of the Lord is a strong tower" — we at once understand that God Himself is the refuge.

Towers built and fortified by human hands have often proved insecure. Even fortresses deemed impregnable, have by skill and perseverance been taken captive, and those who sought refuge in them have fallen into the hands of their enemies.

But "the name of the Lord" is a strong tower that cannot be scaled! It presents a front that resists every attack, and all who run into it are eternally secure. No earthly foe, nor any spiritual enemy — can destroy the soul that is sheltered in Jehovah-Jesus!

My soul, rejoice that the tower of your defense is ever at hand — and when hard pressed by your enemies, run into your refuge! There you will find safety and peace, and with the psalmist joyfully exclaim: "I love you, O LORD, my strength. The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer — my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold!" Psalm 18:1-2

O Lord, Your name's a mighty tower;
I run thereto and hide,
There I'm secure from hellish power,
There I in peace abide!

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"He who overcomes — I will write upon him My new name!" Revelation 3:12

The people of God bear an inscription now — they are "manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God!" And hereafter the Lord Jesus will write His new name upon them, marking them once again and forever as His own redeemed people, His jewels, His peculiar treasure!

What that special name here referred to is — we need not curiously inquire. We may be sure that it is a name that harmonizes well with the precious ones He now bears, and with which we are already familiar, "Immanuel," "Jesus," "Alpha and Omega," "all-in-all." If it is a name which we have never yet heard — we may feel assured that it will be one that will help us more fully to understand what He is to us — who is the brightness of the Father's glory, the express image of the God of love.

The new name will be written upon every one who overcomes. It will be written upon you, beloved reader — if, renouncing dependence on your own strength, you are strong in the Lord, and victorious over your spiritual enemies through the power of His might!

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"Trust in the Lord forever — for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength!" Isaiah 26:4

Our trust in the Lord should be constant — for He does not change, and His power to save and help never fails.

Many have leaned on an arm of flesh — and it has deceived them.
Many have trusted in horses and chariots — and have discovered their utter helplessness.
But all who have made the Lord their trust have proved His power and faithfulness. Our fathers trusted in Him — and He delivered them; they trusted in Him — and were not confounded; none who have trusted in Him have been put to shame.

The Lord has been communicating strength to His people from generation to generation — but His power is undiminished, and His arm is not shortened. He is still mighty to save, and strong to deliver, "In the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength!" "Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in Him. He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit." Jeremiah 17:7-8

Trust, then, my soul, in the Lord at all times, and hope in God continually!

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"Seek His face evermore!" Psalm 105:4

"Seek His face" that is, draw near to Him, commune with Him as your Father and Friend.

You who feel your weakness, wait on Him — and He will renew your strength, for He gives power to the faint, and to those who have no might, He increases strength.

You who have sought and found Him — seek Him still, for continued supplies of help and grace.

Seek the light of His countenance, a sense of His favor, and the manifestations of His love.

Seek Him in the day of prosperity — that you may be preserved amidst its snares.

Seek Him in the day of adversity — and you will find Him near to sustain and comfort you.

Seek Him in the hour of temptation, when the enemy comes in like a flood — and He will lift up a standard against him, and deliver you.

Seek Him at all times. Seek Him as long as life shall last. "Seek His face evermore!"

"Lord, evermore I'd seek Your Face,
 Obedient to Your call;
 I'd seek Your presence, and Your grace,
 My strength, my life, my all!"

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"Every day will I praise You! I will extol Your name forever and ever!" Psalm 145:2

God of my salvation, I pray that the purpose of my heart may answer to the resolution of the psalmist. Every day may I praise You! Whatever I forget — let me remember Your great goodness and mercy to me.
For all Your providential favors, I would exalt You.
For food and clothing, I would praise You,
For home and friends, I would bless You.
For spiritual mercies, I would extol You.
For Your written Word, I would bless You.
For the ministry of Your truth, I would extol You.
For the throne of grace, I would bless You.
For opportunities of Christian fellowship, I would exalt You.

Above all, I would extol You for the exceeding riches of Your grace in Your kindness towards us in Christ Jesus! Herein is love, not that we loved You — but that You have loved us, and sent Your Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins!

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me — bless His holy name. As long as I live here below — would I praise You; and then rise to join all Your redeemed above as they worship You, saying, "Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might — be unto our God forever and ever. Amen!"

"I'll praise my Savior with my breath,
 And when my voice is lost in death,
 Praise shall employ my noblest powers,
 My days of praise shall ne'er be past
 While life, and thought, and being last,
 Or immortality endures!"

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"Live in the fear of the Lord always!" Proverbs 23:17

That is, live and act as in His sight. Do not let your religion be fitful — nor be confined to any particular time or occasion. Let it habitually influence your spirit and pervade all your conduct. Live and walk with God, and aim to honor Him in all your interactions and dealings with your fellow-men. Whether you are at home or abroad, in the family or in the world — remember Whose you are and Whom you serve.

Help me, O Lord, thus to live. May I begin the day, go through it, and end it with You. In the discharge of my hourly duties, may I act as Your servant, and do whatever I do heartily as unto the Lord. Let integrity and uprightness preserve me, for I trust in You. May the law of kindness rule my speech — and the spirit of Christ influence all my conduct. Help me day by day to live to Your glory, who has redeemed me with the precious blood of Christ.

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"I will praise the Lord all my life — I will sing praise to my God as long as I live!" Psalm 146:2

Let me practice much on earth — what I trust will be my delightful employment in Heaven. It is a good thing to praise You, O Lord — to show forth Your loving-kindness in the morning, and Your faithfulness every night! The more I dwell, in a spirit of gratitude, on Your goodness and mercy — the more happy shall I be in the enjoyment of Your love, and the more earnest will be my desire to live to Your glory.

May my thanksgiving and praise not be confined to the bright hours of life when comforts abound; but help me, O Lord, to praise You in the cloudy and dark day. Let me then think of Your past goodness, and of Your unchanging love. Let me remember that You as surely designed the winter of adversity to be for my profit — as the summer of prosperity is for my enjoyment. Let me remember that You are as good when You deny my requests — as when You grant them. And if nothing else can make my heart sing in the hour of trouble — let Your redeeming mercy, and the unspeakable love of Christ, move me to gratitude and praise!

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"I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you shall go. I will guide you with My eye!" Psalm 32:8

Our heavenly Father would not restrain and curb His children as with bit and bridle — like the horse or the mule which have no understanding; He would gently lead and guide them, as a loving father guides an obedient trustful child — by his hand, or by his eye.

Give me, O Lord, a truly humble and teachable spirit. Show me my ignorance and liability to err. Make me truly willing to be led and guided by You — and so shall I prove You faithful to Your promise. You will instruct and teach me in the way I should go; and if, like a simple loving child, I am willing to be led by the gentler intimations of Your will — You will not employ the coercion and restraint which an intractable and stubborn spirit would require.

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"My prayer is not that You take them out of the world — but that You protect them from the evil!" John 17:15

This petition occurs in the prayer which our Lord offered, not only for the disciples by whom He was then surrounded — but also for His redeemed people in all ages.

From it, we may gather that they are mistaken who withdraw from the ordinary occupations and relations of life, and seclude themselves in monasteries. So far from encouraging withdrawal from the world, after this manner, our Lord said, that as His Father sent Him into the world — so He also sends His disciples into the world. Again, He said, "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden." "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in Heaven."

It is from the evil of the world that Christians are to withdraw — from its pomps and vanities, from its unholy associations and sinful pleasures.

O Lord, may I be willing to live in the world as a sphere of service, until You shall take me from it — but while I am in it, keep me, I beg You, from the evil of it.

While in the world, I yet remain,
O keep my spirit free from stain;
Preserve me 'midst its many snares,
Temptations, and corroding cares!

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"I will lift up my eyes unto the hills, from whence comes my help!" Psalm 121:1

Not to the hills literally, but to Him who made the hills — for the psalmist immediately adds, "My help comes from the Lord, who made Heaven and earth."

"The everlasting hills" are a fit emblem of the power and unchangeableness of Jehovah. "The strength of the hills is His also." "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem — so the Lord is round about His people, henceforth, even forever."

As we stand at the foot of a lofty range of mountains, and trace their summits until they pierce the skies, and remember they have continued the same amidst all the revolutions of earth, the rise and fall of empires, and the birth and death of many generations — they help our thoughts to rise to some apprehension of the power and immutability of Him who formed them. Let us realize that the power that raised the lofty mountains is our defense, and that love as unchanging as the everlasting hills is our portion — and we shall be satisfied.

"To Heaven I lift my waiting eyes,
 There all my hopes are laid;
 The Lord, who built the earth and skies,
 Is my perpetual aid!"

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"If you love Me — you will keep My commandments." John 14:15

The love of Christ to us — begets our love to Him. As transgressors of the holy law of God, we were exposed to the curse of it; and Jesus, in infinite compassion, died to redeem us from it, "being made a curse for us." And when His love to us is truly known and felt — we love Him in return. True love manifests itself not in words only — but in deeds. If we truly love Christ, we desire . . .
  to please Him,
  to walk according to His will,
  and to keep His commandments.

Those who profess to love Christ, but live in the habitual disregard of His Word and will — are only deceiving themselves. "If you love Me," He says, "you will keep My commandments." "This is the love of God — that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not grievous."

The obedience of those who truly love the Savior is a very imperfect one — for when they would do good, evil is present with them. But all who truly love Christ, aim to walk in obedience to Him. They are humbled on account of their defection and frequent failure, and they grieve that they do not serve Him better — who has redeemed them with His own most precious blood.

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"He feeds His flock like a shepherd. He gathers the lambs in His arms and carries them close to His heart; He gently leads those who have young." Isaiah 40:11

O my soul, dwell a little on the care, the tenderness, and compassion of the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for His sheep. He feeds and nourishes His flock . . .
  by His Word,
  by His ordinances,
  by His faithful under-shepherds, and
  by the immediate communication of His Spirit and grace.

While He lives, His sheep can never die or famish for lack of sustenance. Because He lives — they shall live also. He gathers the lambs with His arm, and carries them in His bosom.

The young, the weak, and helpless, are objects of His special care and tender regard. The arm of His power is around them for their protection — and His heart of love is open for their solace and comfort. He gently leads those who have young. He is full of pity and compassion for those in His flock who are in trial and difficulty, who are oppressed and burdened.

My soul, what a Shepherd have you! No image can adequately set forth His goodness, and the tenderness of His mercy. Trust Him entirely and constantly — keep near to Him. Listen to His voice, and follow Him wherever He leads.

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"You are near, O Lord!" Psalm 119:151

Not merely are You near, O Lord, as You are in every place, and as You fill Heaven and earth with Your presence — but You are specially near — graciously near to all who call upon You in truth. You are near to me as my Savior, as my Father, as my Friend. You are near . . .
  to instruct me in my ignorance,
  to strengthen me in weakness,
  to guide me in perplexity,
  and to comfort me in sorrow.

Help me, O Lord, to realize Your nearness — open my ear to listen to Your softest whisper. Make me quick to discern Your guiding hand, and render my heart sensitive to the impressions of Your love.

When the morning dawns, and the duties of another day are before me — allow me to feel that You are near to strengthen and to help me. In the midst of the activities of life and its engrossing cares — may I realize that You are at my right hand as my Preserver and my Shield. And when the day closes, and the shadows of night gather over me — let me feel that You are near . . .
  to cleanse me from defilement,
  to calm my restless spirit, and
  to afford refreshment and repose.

Let me remember in all my changing seasons, that You are near, O Lord. In the hour of my joy — may Your presence increase my gladness; and in the day of adversity — let a sense of Your nearness be my solace and support.

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"My son, give Me your heart!" Proverbs 23:26

Those who are enabled freely to receive — are disposed freely to give. Those who with simple faith and grateful heart receive God's "unspeakable gift" — His own dear Son — and the precious blessings that are bestowed in and with Him — pardon and life, and a title to eternal glory — are led individually to ask, "What can I render unto the Lord for His wondrous love to me?"

There is only one thing the Lord asks in return: "My son, give Me," He says, "your heart. I have given My best gift to you — now yield your poor heart to Me." He knows that no true child of His will withhold that gift from Him.

His love, revealed to the heart by the Holy Spirit — draws forth our love in return. Those who freely receive the forgiveness of sin, through the precious blood of Christ, and the spirit of adoption whereby they cry, "Abba, Father!" — cannot keep back their hearts from God their Savior. Their affections go forth to Him — as the rivers run towards the sea.

When darkness, unbelief, and worldliness prevail in the soul — the heart is slow to move Godwards. But when God's love in Christ is known and felt, when we are living in the enjoyment of the precious blessings that are freely given to us in Him who died to save us — we joyfully yield our hearts to God our Father.

"Take my heart, and let it be,
 Forever closed to all but Thee!
 Seal my heart, and let me wear
 That pledge of love forever there!"

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"Open your mouth wide — and I will fill it!" Psalm 81:10

These are the words of Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. And He is not only able — He is ever willing to bless to all who come to Him. The God of all grace does not simply permit His needy creatures to come with their wants to Him — He invites and enjoins them to do so! In the text He encourages enlarged desires: "Open your mouth wide," He says, "and I will fill it!"

He delights in mercy! He loves to bless! He is ready to satisfy us with His favor! God pities us when, in the weakness of our faith, we ask only a little of Him, and with small expectation of receiving anything. He would have us, in the name of Jesus, to ask much — and with the full assurance that we cannot ask in vain, when we covet earnestly the best gifts.

Often, O Lord, am I straitened in myself, but never am I straitened in You. If I have not — it is because I ask not, or because I ask amiss. Enlarge my desires, and increase my faith. Help me to come to You . . .
  hungry — to be satisfied;
  needy — to be enriched;
  empty — to be filled.

Help me to some suitable apprehension of Your inestimable love in the gift and sacrifice of Your dear Son — so shall I feel assured that You will with Him, freely give me all things.

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"Lord, help me!" Matthew 15:25

This was the cry of the Syrophenician woman in the sharp trial of her faith, when our blessed Savior uttered words which seemed to discourage her requests on behalf of her afflicted child. It was in His heart to grant all that she desired — but for a time, He greatly tried her faith and perseverance.

Christian, are you discouraged and perplexed? Do some dark words of Scripture or some mysterious dispensation of Providence trouble you? Then follow the example of the woman of Canaan — fall at the feet of your Savior, and cry, "Lord, help me!" He is pitiful and full of compassion; and though, to sight and sense, He may seem to be dealing severely with you, and all things may appear to be against you — it is not really so, but it is far otherwise —

"Behind a frowning providence
 He hides a smiling face!"

In your trouble and conflict, only trust Him! Deliverance is at hand — soon He will show you His mercy, and enable you to rejoice in His love.

The woman of Canaan's earnest cry for help was, in the end, changed into the voice of praise and gladness. "Be it unto you," said Jesus to her, "as you will! And her daughter wag made whole from that very hour."

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"Only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her." Luke 10:42

The one thing needful is to have a saving interest in Christ — to be found in Him — to partake of . . .
  the blessings of His salvation,
  His teaching,
  His pardoning love,
  His justifying mercy,
  His sanctifying grace.

When, by the grace of God, we choose this good part — we possess that which cannot be taken away from us. We may be deprived of our earthly treasure — but we can never be deprived of our treasure in Christ. We may lose our friends, our health, our life — but we cannot lose our portion in Christ, for it is hidden in Him beyond the reach of harm.

The enjoyment of our portion in Christ may, indeed, be affected by many circumstances, and especially by a careless walk and conduct; darkness and unbelief attend laxity in conduct. If we walk unworthily — then fears may arise whether we have any portion in Christ.

A true child of God cannot be satisfied with any earthly portion, and in his desires after the enjoyment of Christ and His love, he possesses the pledge of that inheritance in Him which he will eternally enjoy!

"Engage this roving, treacherous heart,
 O Lord, to choose the better part;
 To scorn the trifles of a day,
 For joys that none can take away!

"Then let the wildest storms arise;
 Let tempests mingle earth and skies;
 No fatal shipwreck shall I fear,
 But all my treasure with me bear!"

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"Anyone who does not carry his cross and follow Me cannot be My disciple!" Luke 14:27

The love of Christ, and the supply of His Spirit — enables those who are truly His to take up their cross and to follow Him. But those who are strangers to Christ and His love, fail when the cross lies before them — they will not take it up and carry it. They love their own ease too well, and seek their own pleasure too much — to bear a cross for Christ, and to follow Him under shame and reproach.

Living faith in Christ and His cross, is essential to the endurance of the cross which His followers are called to bear. Our blessed Lord, for the warning of any who are His followers only in profession, declares in the text, that no one can be His disciple who does not carry His cross and come after Him. Faith in Christ crucified begets love to Him, and dependence on Him for grace to take up any cross we are called to bear. Christian, when you shrink from your cross — think of the cross that Jesus bore for you!

"Take up your cross; nor let its weight
 Fill your weak spirit with alarm,
 His strength shall bear your spirit up,
 And brace your heart, and nerve your arm.

"Take up your cross, and follow Christ,
 Nor be in haste to lay it down;
 For he who bears on earth the cross,
 Shall wear in Heaven a glorious crown!"

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"Wash me — and I shall be whiter than snow!" Psalm 51:7

Thus the psalmist prayed under a sense of guilt and defilement. He knew that no tears that he might shed could wash the stains of sin away; but he believed that the Lord could thoroughly cleanse him. "Wash me," he cried, "and I shall be whiter than snow." The Lord has in infinite grace, opened a fountain for sin and impurity. He gave His beloved Son to die for the guilty — and His precious blood cleanses from all sin.

Those whom the Lord washes — are clean "every whit." On the purest snow there may be some specks of defilement, though not discernible by ordinary vision; but a soul washed in the blood of Christ is spotless even in the sight of God.

The Lord's people are often humbled under a sense of sin and corruption; but as they confess their sins, and trust in the atoning Lamb of God — their transgressions are forgiven, their sin is covered, their iniquities are not imputed to them! Their filthy garments are taken from them, and they are clothed in the spotless righteousness of Christ.

And not only are they perfectly cleansed from guilt — they also experience the washing of regeneration. The Holy Spirit dwells in them, and when His work in them is complete, and grace issues in glory — they will be purer than the freshly driven snow!

Lord, cleanse my soul from every sin,
Wash all my guilt away;
O make me pure and clean within,
And Your rich grace display!

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"Christ is all, and in all." Colossians 3:11

All our attempts to set forth the glory, the worth, the fullness, and the excellence of Christ are utterly inadequate! So, in one word, to convey some idea of His completeness — we joyfully proclaim Him to be our ALL.

Do we build for eternity? Christ is our Foundation.

Do we wash our sin-corrupted soul? He is our Fountain.

Do we walk heavenwards? He is our Way.

Do we live towards God? He is our Life.

Are we free from sin's bondage? He is our Emancipator.

Do we possess the riches of God's grace? He is our wealth.

Are we happy and content? He is owe joy.

Christ is . . .
  all in the forgiveness of our sins;
  all in our justification;
  and all in our redemption.

He is "made unto us wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption." He is "all in all" — all in everything appertaining to our eternal life and blessedness.

We are blessed in Him with all spiritual blessings — and we shall behold His glory, and adore and praise Him forever"

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"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might." Deuteronomy 6:5

We are laid under the highest obligations to love the Lord our God — not only on account of what He is in Himself, but also on account of all that He has done for us.
He brought us into being,
He has preserved our lives,
He has bestowed on us innumerable favors!
Above all, He has redeemed us with a price that is beyond all price, even with the precious blood of His only-begotten and well-beloved Son!

But how constantly do we fail and come short of loving the Lord with all our powers! How continually do we need His mercy on this account! And how manifest it is that we can be justified only by grace through faith!

Let all the wonders of redeeming mercy, draw forth our warmest affections to the God of our salvation. Let us aim to love Him perfectly — and let us rejoice in hope of that period when, being entirely delivered from sin, we shall, with all our heart, and soul, and might, love the Lord our God — and that forever and ever!

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"Behold, we come unto You — for You are the Lord our God." Jeremiah 3:22

In the words immediately preceding, there is a gracious exhortation and promise, "Return unto Me, backsliding children — and I will heal your backslidings." This exhortation, applied by the Holy Spirit to the heart, brings the wanderers back with shame and penitence — and yet with humble trust. "Behold, we come unto You — for You are the Lord our God."

Unto whom can I come but unto You, O Lord — from whom I have wandered, and against whom I have sinned and done evil?
You alone can receive one so unworthy and so vile.
You alone can cleanse me from my guilt and defilement.
You alone can restore my soul.
O Lord my God, I come to You — for You in infinite mercy call me to Yourself, and will receive me graciously, and love me freely. Oh draw me and keep me near to Yourself. Never allow me to wander from You anymore.

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"Delight yourself in the Lord — and He shall give you the desires of your heart." Psalm 37:4

The Lord is so glorious and so good, that those who are well acquainted with Him not only find rest and satisfaction in Him — but holy joy and delight also.

Delighting in God, it is to be feared, is comparatively rare — even among true Christians. Where it exists it is always in connection with habitual intimate communion with God.

The soul of one who enjoys this close fellowship with the infinitely wise and gracious One, becomes assimilated to Him — and the prevailing desires of such a one are in harmony with His will. When any temporal favor is sought, it is asked for in trustful submission; and if it should be refused, a happy degree of acquiescence is experienced. So far as a soul delights in God — it desires to receive only what He in His infinite goodness sees fit to bestow; and thus its desires are granted.

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"Keep me as the apple of the eye — hide me under the shadow of Your wings." Psalm 17:8

How carefully is the human eye protected! It is surrounded by bony walls, overhung by a well-thatched brow, and guarded by the ever-vigilant lid.

And how tenderly does the parent bird shelter her young under her downy wings!

"Keep me," O Lord, "as the apple of the eye — hide me under the shadow of Your wings." My danger from foes within and without is great — but if You keep me, I shall be well protected. As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so surround me henceforth and for evermore.

Keep me not only in safety, but also in the enjoyment of Your comforting mercy.
Draw me close to Your side;
reveal Your love to me;
allow me to realize Your Fatherly care; and
as a tender mother comforts her child, so may You comfort me. Cover me with Your feathers, and hide me under the shadow of Your wings. "Because You have been my help — therefore under the shadow of Your wings I will rejoice."

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"Those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint!" Isaiah 40:31

How precious has this promise been to the Lord's needy ones from generation to generation! And how constantly have they proved Him to be faithful to His Word! Whenever they have come to Him under a sense of their entire weakness, and have trustfully waited upon Him — He has afforded them fresh supplies of grace, and strengthened them to do what He has given them to perform, or to bear what He has called them to endure.

All true waiting upon the Lord includes three things:
  a sense of need,
  application to Him,
  and expectation from Him.

A sense of need is one of the greatest mercies we can enjoy on this side of Jordan — for it leads us earnestly to apply to the Lord, and we cannot wait upon Him with earnestness and faith, and be sent empty away.

How full of hope and expectancy we should be in all our applications to the Lord! for His resources never fail, and He has engaged to afford us timely supplies — and strength according to our day. "The Lord will give strength unto His people." "Wait upon the Lord," says the psalmist, "be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, upon the Lord."

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"We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God!" Acts 14:22

These words were addressed to Christians at a period when they were exposed to severe persecutions. Trials and sorrows in all ages, more or less, lie in the path to the world of endless peace and joy.

But all the trials which the people of God experience are designed for their good. They are not for the present joyous, but grievous — nevertheless afterward they yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness.

Afflicted Christian, you are but traveling the road on which thousands have gone before. You are but realizing what the blessed Savior foretold: "Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows," but, He added: "take heart, because I have overcome the world."

Christ has overcome, and He lives to enable you to overcome. His grace is sufficient for you. He will sustain and comfort you, and will soon give you complete deliverance. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous — but the Lord delivers him out of them all."

"The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
 Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown;
 No traveler e'er reached that blessed abode
 Who found not thorns and briers in the road."

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"Ask, and it shall be given to you.
 Seek, and you shall find.
 Knock, and it shall be opened unto you."
Matthew 7:7

There is no "if" or "but" here to discourage any earnest applicant for mercy.

Heavy-ladened sinner, ask in faith, in the name of Jesus — for the removal of your burden, for the forgiveness of your sins, and a sense of pardoning love — and you will not ask in vain. Seek the Lord with all your heart — and you will assuredly find Him, as your God, as your Savior, and your Friend.

Knock at the door of mercy;
knock in all your helplessness and need;
knock as one desiring to be heard;
knock in expectancy —
and the door will be opened, you will be graciously received, and you will be cleansed and clothed and comforted.

For your darkness — you will have light;
for your filthy rags — you shall have the spotless robe of Christ's righteousness;
for your sentence to Hell — you shall have a title to Heaven;
for your poverty — you shall have plenty;
for your misery — you shall have peace and joy in believing.

Mark well, there is no doubt about your success, for the Lord of the house has given a threefold assurance that He will answer the cry of a praying soul:
"Ask, and it shall be given to you.
 Seek, and you shall find.
 Knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

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"My soul follows hard after You!" Psalm 63:8

By this we understand the psalmist to mean that he was earnestly seeking the renewed enjoyment of the Lord's presence and love. In the earlier part of the psalm, he says, "O God, You are my God, earnestly I seek You! My soul thirsts for You, my body longs for You, in a dry and weary land where there is no water."

Sometimes the believer gets into an indifferent, carnal state of mind. When he is finally aroused from it, he finds that he has wandered to a distance from God, and lost . . .
  the enjoyment of His presence,
  the light of His countenance, and
  the manifestations of His love.

Then he seeks the Lord with concern and anxiety; and, for his correction, for a time he maybe left to struggle with darkness and difficulty. Then he knows what it is to follow hard after God, to press on amidst conflict and temptation. But though faint, he pursues — he is restless until he is again in the enjoyment of the presence and favor of God his Savior.

An earnest seeker will, before long, be a joyful finder. One who follows hard after God — will soon be rejoicing under the shadow of His wings!

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"God is able to make all grace abound toward you!" 2 Corinthians 9:8

The resources of our God are boundless. He "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think!" "He who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all — how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"

Whatever grace we may need — let us then trustfully look to God in Christ for it; for He is able to make all grace towards us abound.

He can give us grace to watch and pray, and to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

He can give us grace patiently to endure, to return good for evil, and to pray for those who despitefully use us.

He can give us grace to live for Him in all the relations of life which we sustain, and to glorify Him in our daily walk and ways.

He can give us grace in times of trial, sorrow, and bereavement.

He can give us grace to acquiesce in His will, and to say, "It is the Lord — let Him do what seems good unto Him."

He can give us grace to meet our last enemy without fear, and to say, "Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

"Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

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"Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." 2 Peter 3:18

There is growth in natural life — the babe advances to childhood, the child to youth, and the youth to manhood.

And there should be a corresponding growth in spiritual life — babes in Christ should in time become young men in Him, intelligent in His truth, and valiant in His service; and young men should become fathers in Christ, bearing the fruits of ripened judgment and mature experience.

The great essential to growth in grace, is the growth in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. As we learn what He is, under the teaching of the Holy Spirit — we advance . . .
  in love of Him,
  in dependence on Him,
  and in likeness to Him.

As we grow in grace, we shall have a deeper sense of the evil of sin, and of our innate depravity. We shall abhor ourselves — and glory only in the Lord.

As we grow in grace, Christ will become precious to us, His cause will lie near to our hearts, we shall steadfastly aim to live to His glory, and to be fruitful to His praise.

O Lord, lead me on in the knowledge of Christ! Enable me by faith to derive spiritual nourishment from Him — that I may grow in likeness to Him, and in fitness for Heaven.

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"Peace I leave with you — My peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid!" John 14:27

What a legacy is this which the gracious Savior left His disciples! Peace — His own peace, "My peace," He said, "I give you." Does not this mean that He imparted to them a measure of that perfect inward tranquility which He Himself enjoyed? Amidst all outward confusion, disorder, and strife — the depths of His peace were undisturbed; and in Him, His disciples enjoyed peace amidst all the tribulations of the world through which they passed.

And still does Jesus live to bestow His peace.

He imparts peace to the troubled conscience through His own most precious blood.

He calms the storm of conflicting emotions, and stills the tumult of anxious and troubled thoughts.

In answer to prayer, He imparts a tranquil trust, a restful confidence, a peace that passes understanding.

Jesus gives not as the world gives — fitfully, scornfully, or grudgingly — but in tender compassion, in freest love and richest grace. O blessed Jesus, I humbly claim a part in the legacy of love which You bequeathed to Your disciples.

O precious Savior, breathe Your peace
Into my anxious breast;
Calm all my restless troubled thoughts,
Impart Your own sweet rest!

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"Come unto Me all you who labor, and are heavy laden — and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28

Burdened one, listen to this call of love. Whatever oppresses or troubles you — come with it to the gracious Savior. He bore the tremendous load of sin in His own body on the tree — that every burdened sinner might lose his load of guilt. And He took on Him the heaviest weight of sorrow — that we may trustfully come with our lighter burdens and roll them upon Him. Many a weary and burdened one has come to Jesus and proved His faithfulness; many a one can sing —

"I came to Jesus as I was —
 Weary and worn and sad;
 I found in Him a resting-place,
 And He has made me glad!"

Beloved reader, are you burdened with guilt, and weary with a load of sin? Then come and prove for yourself that there is rest in Jesus. He invites you as truly as if you heard His voice calling you by name! Cast yourself, in your helplessness, on His love! Trust in His atoning blood and in His finished work for pardon and acceptance — and commit yourself to His all-sufficient grace. When you can cease from depending on yourself, and can trust your all with Christ — you will find rest, and be filled with joy and peace in believing.

To Jesus, then, burdened and weary one, come,
And find in His bosom your rest and your home.

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"Whatever you do in word or deed — do all in the name of the Lord Jesus!" Colossians 3:17

True religion is not confined to times or seasons; it influences its possessors at all times and under all circumstances. It operates . . .
  in private — and in public;
  in the family — and on the farm;
  in the shop — and in the mart.

The exercises of the prayer-closet and the services of the church are designed as means to an end — that we might live to the honor of God in all the circumstances of our daily life; that whatever we "do in word or deed" — we may "do all in the name of the Lord Jesus;" that is, that we may act in the spirit of Christ, and as befits His followers.

 Write this precept, O Lord, upon the tablet of my heart! Help me to live as a true disciple of Christ. May His Spirit influence my words and deeds in all my fellowship with my Christian brethren and with the world. May I aim to be a humble representative of my Lord and Master. Under a continual sense of deficiency and failure, still may I follow in His footsteps, and aim to be like Him — while I depend alone on His finished work for salvation.

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"Who is a God like You, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of His inheritance? You do not stay angry forever — but delight to show mercy!" Micah 7:18

How ready is our God to pardon! In the foresight of our fall and transgressions — He devised the plan of mercy. He purposed to give His beloved Son for our redemption, and in the fullness of time He delivered Him for our sins, that . . .
  the claims of Divine justice might be met,
  His law honored, and
  His righteousness maintained.
Thus at infinite cost He opened a channel through which His mercy might flow freely to the guilty.

How ready then is He to pardon! Forgiveness is in His heart — He delights in mercy.

How abundantly does He pardon! Our sins may be more numerous than the hairs of our head, and our transgressions may be attended with peculiar aggravations; but when the wicked forsake their way, and the unrighteous their thoughts — He is plenteous in mercy towards them, and abundantly pardons.

How strikingly does our blessed Lord set forth the freeness and fullness of God's pardoning mercy — as He describes the father of the prodigal running out to meet him, falling on his neck and kissing him, clothing him with the best robe, feasting him with the fattened calf, and rejoicing over him with great gladness!

"Great God of wonders! all Your ways
 Are worthy of Yourself, Divine!
 But the fair glories of Your grace
 More Godlike and unrivaled shine!
 Who is a pardoning God like Thee?
 Or who has grace so rich and free?"

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"Lo, I am with you always — even unto the end." Matthew 28:20

What a comforting assurance is this, my soul, which your Lord and Savior gives you — it may well remind you of another similar one: "I will never leave you, nor forsake you."

Think of what the presence of your best Friend secures to you — strength for the discharge of duty; the work He gives you to do, He will help you to perform. Weak in yourself — He will empower you. He will furnish you with ability equal to your need.

His presence secures direction in your times of perplexity. Habitually consult Him — and He will counsel you. He will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go.

His presence secures deliverance in temptation. He will not allow you to be tempted above that you are able to bear, but will with the temptation also make a way of escape.

His presence secures support in trial. While He is always near — He is "a very present help in times of trouble." If change and bereavement should deprive you of all other friends and comforters — He will be near to sustain and cheer you. He will be with you "always — even unto the end." And then you will be with Him in glory everlasting! "Remember Your word unto Your servant upon which You have caused me to hope."

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"He gives power to the faint; and to those who have no might, He increases strength." Isaiah 40:29

True Christians are not always the same — they are liable to changes in their frames and feelings.
If they are sometimes on the mount of joy — they are also sometimes in the valley of sadness.
If they can sometimes smile at the storm — at other times the rising billows fill them with anxiety.
If sometimes they feel strong to do and bear — at other times they feel weak and powerless — their courage fails, and their spirits faint.

The Lord gives power to "the faint" — to His redeemed people whose hearts sink . . .
  under the burden of heavy duty,
  under the pressure of great trial,
  under the power of strong temptation,
  under a sense of sin and defilement,
  or, it may be, under the force of several of these combined.

The Lord can lift up such, revive their spirits, and renew their strength! And, blessed be His name, He does it, "He gives power to the faint." He does it . . .
  by a renewed supply of His Spirit,
  by bringing some precious promise to remembrance, and by enabling the fainting one to rest upon it.

Tried believer, trust in your Almighty Savior! "To those who have no might, He increases strength!" He will bear you up — and bring you through!

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"I love the Lord — because He has heard my voice and my supplications!" Psalm 116:1

Christian reader, surely you are ready to join your testimony to that of the Psalmist, and to praise your God as the Hearer of prayers! Often have you found it good to visit His throne of grace.

You have come to Him with your darkness — and He has scattered it.

You have come to Him with your burden of guilt — and He has removed it.

You have come to Him with your corruptions — and He has subdued them.

You have come to Him laden with care — and He has helped you to cast it on Him.

You have come to Him in your perplexity — and He has guided you.

You have come to Him in your sorrow — and He has comforted you.

He has been very gracious to you at the voice of your cry. And when He has delayed to answer your petitions — His delay was in love; at the right time He has appeared for you, when you have asked the right thing. And so among many other reasons for loving the Lord — you love Him because He has heard your voice and your supplications.

And what return will you make to Him for all His goodness to you in the past? Surely you are ready to reply, "I will praise His name, and tell of His goodness to others! I will still wait upon Him — and ask Him for more. Because He has inclined His ear unto me — therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live!"

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"Now abides faith, hope and love — these three; but the greatest of these is love!" 1 Corinthians 13:13

FAITH, "precious faith" . . .
  takes God at His Word,
  looks to Christ for salvation, and
  rests alone on Him for pardon and life.

HOPE, happy offspring of Faith — anticipates all promised good, and rejoices in the prospect of full possession of the glory that is to be revealed.

LOVE, fairest image of its heavenly Parent — lives to be kind and to do good. As a streamlet from the Fount of blessing — it refreshes and gladdens everywhere as it flows.

By FAITH we derive all spiritual supplies from Him in whom it has pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell.

By HOPE we are gladdened with expectation of good things to come.

By LOVE we are conformed to the image of the ever blessed God; and fitted for the enjoyment of eternal communion with Him in the heavenly world.

Earnestly seek, my soul, an increase of faith — every grain of it is more precious than gold that perishes.

Constantly desire also a lively hope — it will sustain and cheer you in all the trials and conflicts of life.

But, above all, fervently pray for an increase of the grace of love — for God is Love.

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"Draw near to God — and He will draw near to you!" James 4:8

When Joseph's brethren stood at a distance from him as he made himself known to them — he was grieved, and said, "Come near to me." As they came near, he said, "I am Joseph, your brother!"

In the same way, surely God is grieved when His erring children, full of apprehension and fear, stand at a distance from Him. In harmony with the text, we may regard Him as saying to such, "Why do you stand so far off? Draw near to Me in humble trust — for I am ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy. You who have tasted My grace, you who have proved My forgiving love — do not dishonor Me by hard thoughts and unbelief. As a father pities his children — so do I pity you. Come, poor wanderer — to your Father's arms! Your transgressions grieve Me — but your distrust grieves Me more. Come near to Me — and I will draw near to you, and show you something more of the tenderness of My mercy and the fullness of My love!"

"Come too, you trembling one, who has never before come near to Me. Think how near to you I have come in the Son of my love, whom I gave for a ransom for sinners. Think of the fountain of His precious blood which I have opened to wash away sin and impurity. Come near to Me — I will receive you graciously, and love you freely."

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"May Your will be done on earth — as it is in Heaven." Luke 11:2

Everything moves on in perfect harmony in Heaven, because the will of God is done there constantly and cheerfully. All the holy ones above know that everything the Lord wills is good; and being entirely free from sin, their will perfectly harmonizes with His. They obey with perpetual delight; they serve with unchanging joy. Their great pleasure is to do just what the Lord gives them to do.

John Newton remarks that, "if God were to command one angel to rule an empire, and another to sweep the crossing of a street — each would go about his respective employment with equal pleasure."

Happy will that period be, when the will of God is done on earth as it is in Heaven! For this our Lord has taught us to pray — and this may lead us to expect that in His own time the prayer of His people will be answered — and that earth will be a little Heaven below. In the meantime, may we in our individual life endeavor to follow the holy ones above in their cheerful obedience to the will of God. And though we continually fail and come short — still may we, in the strength of Jesus, persevere until we join the spirits of the just made perfect.

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"My God shall supply all your needs, according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus!" Philippians 4:19

The needs of the people of God are very numerous, but this promise assures us that they shall all be supplied. A fullness of spiritual blessings dwells in Christ for their use. And He who opens His hand, and satisfies the desire of every living thing — will not withhold any needful temporal blessing from His children.

"The saints what is fitting shall never be denied,
 So long as 'tis written, the Lord will provide!"

Come, then, indigent one, with your pressing necessity to your heavenly Father: "the silver and the gold are His, and the cattle upon a thousand hills." He who hears the young ravens when they cry — will not turn a deaf ear to His needy child. "Your bread shall be given to you — and your water shall be sure."

And whatever spiritual good you need, ask for it in faith, and you shall receive.
Is your spiritual vision hazy? The Lord can clear it.
Is your hope low? He can raise it.
Is your love languishing? He can inflame it.
Look trustfully to Him.

"My God," says the Apostle Paul, "shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

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"Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Matthew 11:28-30

The greatest Teacher — is the most gentle and tender of all teachers. He is "gentle and humble in heart." Possessing all the treasures of knowledge, He will stoop to impart the very elements of it to the weakest and dullest learner.

"Learn from Me," He says; "sit at My feet, be My disciple, and I will teach you what you have need to know, and as you are able to bear it. And as you receive the truth at My lips — you shall experience deliverance from the trammels of darkness and unbelief. The entrance of My word shall give light. The truth shall make you free, and you shall be free indeed — free from the guilt of sin, through faith in My precious blood; and free from the power of inward corruption through My sanctifying Spirit; and so you shall find rest unto your souls. Learn of Me, imbibe My Spirit — and you too shall become gentle and humble in heart. You shall be delivered from the restlessness of pride, have true humility and lowliness of mind, and enjoy repose of soul amidst all the distractions and turmoils of life!"

"Jesus, cast a look on me;
 Give me sweet simplicity;
 Make me like a little child,
 Of my strength and wisdom spoiled,
 Seeing only in Your light;
 Walking only in Your might;
 Leaning on Your loving breast,
 Where a weary soul may rest!"

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"In My Fathers house are many mansions!" John 14:2

The universe is God's house — and each habitable globe is but a single room of it!
Who can measure the dwelling-place of the Infinite?
Who can mark the bounds of His habitation?
Who can number the abodes on His estate?

"In My Father's house," said our Lord to His disciples, "are many mansions. I am going to prepare a place for you." The home of the redeemed, specially prepared by Him who loved us and gave Himself for us — will doubtless be one of the brightest and best throughout our heavenly Father's domain.

Our title to an abode in it, is the infinite worthiness of Christ — His obedience unto death, even the death of the cross.

Our fitness for dwelling there, is the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, whereby we are made partakers of the divine nature, and fitted for fellowship with God, and the holy ones who love and serve Him continually.

Beloved reader, have you a title to the mansion above? Have you received it as the gift of God through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ? And have you a fitness for it? Do you love the society of the people of God? Do you hunger and thirst after righteousness? If so, you will surely have a place in the mansion above, and be forever with the Lord!

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"If we suffer — we shall also reign with Him." 2 Timothy 2:12

Suffering endured for Christ — is to be distinguished from affliction experienced as fatherly correction. The latter is the result of defection and failure; the former is frequently the attendant of devoted service.
Affliction for sin is a reproach — suffering for Christ is an honor.
Fatherly correction is for our present profit — suffering for Christ will result in future glory.

"Blessed are you," said our Lord, "when men revile you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad — for great is your reward in Heaven!" In these days, open persecution is but little known — but many are still called in various forms to suffer for their faithfulness to Christ and His truth. "If you are reproached," says the apostle Peter, "for the name of Christ — happy are you; for the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you." "Rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings — that when His glory is revealed, you may be glad also with exceeding joy." "If we suffer — we shall also reign with Him."

"Oh what, if we are Christ's,
 Is earthly shame or loss?
 Bright shall the crown of glory be,
 When we have borne the cross.

"Bright is the glory now,
 Of martyred saints above,
 Where, on the bosom of their God,
 They rest in perfect love."

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"The joy of the Lord is your strength!" Nehemiah 8:10

Christian, aim to rise to your privilege, and be happy in the God of your salvation.
You have reason for it; for who is a God like unto Him . . .
  so ready to pardon,
  so gracious and full of compassion,
  so wise to instruct,
  so strong to protect,
  so able and willing to bless,
  so faithful to His engagements,
  so unchangeable in His love!

Be glad then in the Lord, and bless His name! Praise Him for what He is — and for what He has done. Give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness — and extol Him for His redeeming mercy. Serve the Lord with gladness, come into His presence with singing, and speak well of His name. Be joyful in your God . . .
  who clothes you with the garments of salvation,
  who covers you with the robe of righteousness,
  who redeems your life from destruction, and
  who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies!

Gloom is for the sons of night — but gladness is for the children of day.
Gloom depresses and enfeebles — gladness inspires and strengthens.

"The joy of the Lord is your strength." The more you dwell on His goodness, exercise faith in His grace, and rejoice in His name — the more you will be enabled to do and bear for Him. The joy of the Lord will . . .
  sustain you in service,
  comfort you in sorrow,
  be an ornament to your profession,
  and bring honor to His name.

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"If any man loves the world — the love of the Father is not in him." 1 John 2:15

The love of the world which is referred to in the text, is utterly inconsistent with the love of the Father: "Friendship with the world is enmity with God!" If a man delights in the principles and maxims that govern the world; if his heart is given to its sinful pleasures and indulgences — then "the love of the Father is not in him."

Light and darkness are not more opposed to each other — than the love of the world and the love of the Father. There is indeed that in the true Christian which would find gratification in the world, for in "the flesh" dwells no good thing. But the love of the Father . . .
  subdues the flesh,
  delivers from the love of the world, and
  raises the soul to a sphere of holy enjoyment and satisfaction.

O God my Father, maintain in my heart a filial love of You — and while in the world, keep me from the evil of it.

The love of You, my Father, God,
Expels the love of worldly dross;
Leads me to prize superior joys,
And count earth's glittering gain as loss!

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"The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by Him; and the Lord shall cover him all the day long." Deuteronomy 33:12

These words were originally spoken of Benjamin — but all the people of God are "accepted in the Beloved," and in Him they are loved of the Father; they are His "dear children."

But all the members of the family of God do not alike enjoy the privilege of living near to Him. Too many, alas! live at a distance from Him — they follow Him afar off. They are very much strangers to close communion with Him; they do not enjoy the light of His countenance, and are peculiarly exposed to the evil influences of the world, and to the snares and temptations of the devil.

But those who live near to the Lord, "dwell in safety by Him," and He "covers them all the day long." They are not only kept by His power unto final salvation, as all the true children of God are; they are also sheltered from much temptation, and enjoy special tokens of the love and favor of their heavenly Father. He shows them His glory in the face of Jesus Christ — and enables them sometimes to rejoice with a joy unspeakable and full of glory!

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"Your sun will never set again, and your moon will wane no more! The Lord will be your everlasting light, and your days of sorrow will end!" Isaiah 60:20

"The Lord God is a sun and shield" to individual believers now, and He will be their everlasting light, and the days of their mourning will be ended.

Pilgrim to Zion, in your eternal home there will be no night. Here on earth you have your seasons of darkness, and times of sorrow and temptation. Sometimes your nights appear long and dreary — but "there shall be no night there!" Before the presence of God your Savior, all darkness flies away. In the bright world above, you will have no mental obscurity, no spiritual gloom, no night of weeping, no hour and power of darkness.

Already you have the dawn — you are a child of the morning. Your day breaks, the shadows flee away. Your sun rises to set no more — for "the Lord shall be your everlasting light!"

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"If any man sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." 1 John 2:1

How completely are all our necessities met in the Lord Jesus! How suited is He to us, in all the offices He sustains!

Here He is set before us as our Advocate. Under every charge of guilt, and sense of sin — give Him, my soul, your cause to plead, and do not fear the issue. His plea on your behalf will be His sufferings and death on your account, and pleading with "the Father" — His Father and your Father, He will surely prevail; your transgressions will be forgiven, and your iniquities blotted out.

What then? shall I "continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid!" What! shall I indulge in that evil that cost the Father the sacrifice of His Son — and the Son His sufferings and death on the cross? May the thought be far from me!

O God of my salvation, deepen my abhorrence of all sin. Give me grace to watch and pray, that I fall not into temptation. Enable me to crucify the flesh, with its affections and lusts; to put off the old man with his deeds, and to put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness; and by the mercies of God may I present my body a living sacrifice, which is my reasonable service.

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"In the morning, O Lord, You hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before You and wait in expectation!" Psalm 5:3

The psalmist, as we may well suppose, closing the day with God — here expresses his purpose to begin the following day with Him.

Like him, may I begin every day with God. Before I enter into any fellowship with my fellow-creatures, may I enjoy communion with my heavenly Father, may I place myself in the hands of God my Savior, and seek His guidance, protection, and blessing. Morning by morning may the language of my heart be, "If Your presence does not go with me — do not carry me up from here." Without You, O Lord, I am without my shield in the hour of temptation, and without my staff in the hour of weakness. Let Your presence be continually with me — and I shall be happy and safe.

Like the psalmist, may I not only direct my prayer unto the Lord; but may I also "look up" with faith and expectancy! May I realize not only His ability — but His willingness to bless me. May I cherish the assurance that He is gracious to me at the voice of my cry, and that He will afford me all the help and grace I need.

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"You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about Me!" John 5:39

The holy Scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. While the sacred writings contain the revelation of the mind and will of God at large — they are especially precious as they testify of Christ and of the salvation that is in Him. The main design of holy Scripture is to reveal to us . . .
  our fallen, sinful, and helpless condition by nature; and
  the exceeding riches of the grace of God in His kindness towards us in Christ Jesus.

But even the Word of God will not profit us, unless it is rightly used. It should be read with prayer for the light and teaching of the Holy Spirit. When we open the sacred page, like the psalmist we should pray, "Open my eyes — that I may behold wondrous things out of Your law."

We should read with diligence and perseverance — we should "search the Scriptures." The noble Bereans, as they heard Paul preach, searched the Scriptures daily — therefore many of them believed.

In the same way, all who humbly and prayerfully read and search the Scriptures — will surely find Christ to their comfort and satisfaction.

"Behold the book whose leaves display
 Jesus the Life, the Truth, the Way!
 Read it with diligence and prayer,
 Search it, and you will find Him there!"

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"He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." Psalm 91:1

What is the "secret place of the Most High" — but the hiding-place of His love in Christ Jesus?

The believer who does not merely resort to this retreat occasionally, but who takes up his abode in it — who dwells in the love of God in Christ Jesus — abides "under the shadow of the Almighty." He not only has the perfect security that arises from the protection of omnipotence — but enjoys also a comfort and refreshment comparable to that derived from the shadow of "a great rock in a weary land;" or from the shade of a large tree laden with precious fruit, "I sat under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet unto my taste."

Let the Lord be your habitation, O my soul, and dwell in the secret place of the Most High — so shall you realize the blessedness of abiding under the shadow of the Almighty. "He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings shall you trust. His truth shall be your shield and buckler." You shall dwell in safety by Him, and be kept "quiet from fear of evil."

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"Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!" Colossians 1:2

What a salutation of love is this with which I am greeted this morning! What better desire for me could be expressed, than that I might receive grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ?
How precious are the blessings desired — Grace and Peace!
How glorious the source of them — God Our Father!
How inestimable the channel of communication — our Lord Jesus Christ!

O God, my Father, give me today an enlarged apprehension of Your love, and enable me to receive a rich supply of grace out of Your fullness in Christ. Increase my faith, enliven my hope, inflame my love, and fill me with Your Spirit!

Give me, O my Father, peace also — peace in my conscience through the precious blood of Christ; and peace of mind, tranquility of spirit, amidst all outward disturbances, by the indwelling of Your own Spirit. And so my soul shall be satisfied with Your favor, and I will praise You with joyful lips!

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"Father, forgive them — for they know not what they do." Luke 23:34

Thus did our blessed Redeemer pray for His murderers as He hung in agony on the cross! What an inlet is this to His love!

Burdened sinner, can you not gather relief from this manifestation of grace?
Did Jesus come into the world to save sinners?
Did He die for the ungodly?
Did He lay down His life for His foes?
Did He shed His blood for His enemies?
Did He pray for His murderers in the midst of His agony on the tree?

Then surely He will hear and answer your cry for forgiveness! Surely He will pardon your transgressions, however many or however great they may be. Do not be faithless, but believing!

"Hark! His dying word forgive!
 Father, let the sinner live!
 Sinner, wipe your tears away,
 I your ransom freely pay!"

Believer in Jesus — ever keep the example of your Savior before you. Seek constantly a supply of the Spirit of Christ, that you may . . .
  love your enemies,
  bless those who curse you,
  do good to those who hate you, and
  pray for them who despitefully use you and persecute you.

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"We love Him — because He first loved us!" 1 John 4:19

With grateful joy we trace the stream to its source. Our love to God — springs from God's love to us. He pitied us in our rebellion and alienation — He had compassion on us when we were dead in trespasses and sins. Yes, He so loved us, that He gave His only-begotten Son that we should not perish, but have everlasting life! And when, feeling our sinfulness and guilt, the love of God was revealed to our hearts by the Holy Spirit — then we began to love Him in return.

 If God had withheld His love from us until we loved Him — we would never have loved Him at all, for "the carnal mind is enmity against God." We would, then, to the glory of His free grace, acknowledge that His love to us — has kindled our love to Him. We feel assured that as we more fully apprehend His love to us — the flame of our love to Him will burn more ardently. Alas! that we are so slow to learn the exceeding riches of the grace of our God, in His kindness towards us in Christ Jesus!

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"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:6-7

The privilege of enjoying this blessed peace lies open to all the children of God. The way to its possession is habitual prayer respecting all that concerns us, together with praise for the ever-flowing mercies of God our Savior.

Trustful prayer and hearty praise are in themselves happy exercises, and exert a tranquilizing influence on the spirit. But, beside this, God has specially promised to impart His own peace to those who "in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present their requests to God."

My soul, be it yours to come to your God respecting everything, to commit all your concerns and interests into His hands; and with all your petitions mingle praise to Him for all His past goodness and mercy to you. So shall you prove the blessedness of enjoying the peace that transcends all understanding — you will be "satisfied with God," and restful in His love.

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"When He gives quietness — who then can make trouble?" Job 34:29

When Jehovah calms the storm — who can raise a tempest?
When He stills the tumultuous working of the troubled heart — who can agitate it?
When He imparts peace to the conscience "through the blood of the everlasting covenant" — then where is the enemy that can disturb it?

O You, who are the God of peace — increase my faith in You. Give me such a view of what You are in Christ Jesus; give me such an apprehension of Your wisdom, of Your goodness, and grace — that my mind may be stayed upon You. Speak peace to my conscience, through the precious blood of Christ. Give me inward tranquility amidst all the storms and trials of life, from the assurance that You do all things well. Keep me quiet from fear of evil — let my heart be fixed, trusting in You.

If You give me quietness, I shall not fear, "Though the earth gives way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea — though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging!"

"O hidden Source of calm repose,
 O all-sufficient Love Divine!
 My help and refuge from my foes,
 Secure I am, for I am Thine!
 You are my fortress, strength, and tower,
 My trust and portion evermore!"

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"The Lord is my strength and song. He has become my salvation!" Exodus 15:2

When we realize that the Lord is our salvation and strength — then we can make Him our song. Under a lively impression of all that He is to us, and of all that He has done for us — our hearts overflow with gratitude, and with our voices we sing His praise.

Show me, O Lord, by Your Holy Spirit, day by day . . .
  that You are "my salvation,"
  that You have redeemed me with the precious blood of Christ,
  that You have saved me from all condemnation, "the curse of the law," and "the wrath to come,"
  that You are my deliverer from the power of sin, and the tyranny of Satan.

Allow me also to realize that You are "my strength." While I feel my own impotence and helplessness — enable me to rely on Your power, and to prove the all-sufficiency of Your grace. With You for my strength — I can go forward trustfully to conflict and duty. In Your might, I can . . .
  surmount difficulties,
  endure trials,
  overcome my foes,
  and live to Your glory!

Say then, O Lord, unto my soul, "I am your salvation and your strength," and I will be joyful in You, and will sing praise unto Your name!

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"Your Word have I hid in my heart — that I might not sin against You." Psalm 119:11

The children of God love their heavenly Father — and thus they steadfastly aim to please Him and to do His will. Earnestly do they desire not to sin against Him — yet do they feel their proneness to do so, for there is "the flesh" in them as well as "the spirit;" and when they would do good — evil is present with them.

The psalmist hid the Word of God in his heart — that he might be restrained from evil. The great instrument of sanctification is Divine truth, "the truth as it is in Jesus." "Sanctify them through Your truth," was the prayer of the blessed Savior Himself for His people. The Word of God not only instructs us in what is right and wrong — it also supplies motives for avoiding the one and pursuing the other, and especially as it unfolds to our view the love of Christ and the all sufficiency of His grace.

Help me, O Lord, like the psalmist, to hide Your Word in my heart! May it dwell richly in me, and may Your Spirit sanctify me by it. May I find it "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and instruction in righteousness." May I not only be restrained from evil — but may I be constrained to happy loving obedience.

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"You have need of endurance, that, after you have done the will of God, you might receive the promise." Hebrews 10:36

The full enjoyment of what our God has promised is future. We "have not yet come to the rest and inheritance which the Lord our God gives us." Now we have foes to encounter, and trials and tribulations to endure — and we have need of endurance. Sometimes, under the pressure of afflictions, cares, and anxieties, we may be ready to exclaim with the psalmist, "Oh! that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away and be at rest." But it is better earnestly to pray for grace to endure, and patiently to wait the Lord's time of deliverance — for His time is always the best.

Christian, as you feel your need of endurance, repair to your treasury — for all fullness of grace dwells in Christ. By faith, look to Him who bled and died for you — and He will help you to endure whatever suffering you may be called to bear. He will enable you patiently to wait all the days of your appointed time until your change comes. Sometimes to "sense" the waiting time is long — but to faith it is but a little while. "For yet a little while, and He who shall come will come, and will not tarry."

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"Do not be slothful, but followers of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises." Hebrews 6:12

Our great Example is the Lord Jesus Christ — but we have also presented before us the example of men of like passions with ourselves who were compassed with infirmity, and who felt that when they would do good evil was present with them; yet who, through the grace of God, steadfastly pursued their course; overcame the world, the flesh, and the devil — and, through faith and patience, now inherit the promises.

Let us, casting sloth and self-indulgence away, strive to follow them.
He who was their help and strength — lives to aid us.
His grace is our sufficiency. Let us . . .
  mark the path they trod,
  seek to exercise like precious faith, and
  declare plainly that we seek a better country, even a heavenly one.

Let us patiently endure all the trials and difficulties of the narrow way, encouraged by the expectation of joining those who are now in the enjoyment of the glorious things promised by a faithful covenant God!

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"Christ has once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust — that He might bring us to God." 1 Peter 3:18

How plainly in these few words is the great work of the Lord Jesus set before us — and how simply is the design of that work stated. It teaches us . . .
  that Christ suffered on account of our sins;
  that He suffered as our Substitute;
  that, perfectly innocent Himself, He suffered for the guilty, "the Just for the unjust;"
  and that He did this with the gracious design of bringing us to God.

Believer, think how glorious a Substitute you have in Christ; think . . .
  of His personal excellence,
  of His spotless purity, and
  of His compassion and love.
Think of all He endured in body and in mind on your behalf.
Think of the all-sufficiency of His sacrifice — by once suffering, He has made a complete atonement for sin.
And think also of the design of all He did and suffered — that you might be brought unto God. By nature and by wicked works far off — you are brought near by the blood of Christ; brought . . .
  into the embrace of your heavenly Father,
  into the enjoyment of His love and favor,
  into the privilege of walking with Him now, and
  the expectation of dwelling forever with Him hereafter!

"More marred than any man's, the Savior's visage see,
 Was ever sorrow like to His endured on Calvary?
 Oh, 'twas because our sins on Him by God were laid;
 He, who Himself had never sinned, for sinners sin was made!"

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"You shall guide me with Your counsel — and afterwards receive me to glory!" Psalm 73:24

This is the language of Asaph. He had proved the folly of following counsel of his own heart. He says: "My feet had almost gone, my steps had well-near slipped!" Deeply humbled on account of his folly — he expresses, in the text, his steadfast purpose to be led henceforth by the Lord alone. Addressing Him, he says, "You shall guide me with Your counsel — and afterwards receive me to glory!"

May the language of Asaph be the language of your heart, beloved reader.

Consider what a wise and gracious Counselor the Lord is. His understanding is infinite. He is well-acquainted with you and all your circumstances. He knows the way that you should take.

And He is as good as He is wise. He will therefore give you faithful and kind counsel — counsel which, if you follow, will prove for your highest advantage in the present life, and the life that is to come.

If you inquire how you may expect to receive counsel from the Lord, we reply:
  by His Word,
  by His faithful ministers,
  and by His Spirit.

Renounce dependence on your own understanding,
put no confidence in the flesh,
sit at the Lord's feet,
seek, in fervent prayer, His guidance —
and He will instruct you, and teach you in the way you shall go.

"In all your ways acknowledge Him — and He will direct your paths."

"To You, great Counselor divine — I now commit my way,
 Into my inmost spirit shine — and guide me day by day!"

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"Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning — like men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet; so that when he comes and knocks, they can immediately open the door for him." Luke 12:35-36

In the passage of which these words form a part, we have a picture of devoted servants waiting in expectancy for the return of a master whom they love and delight to serve. He is coming home from the wedding with his bride. The exact time of his return is not known, so they wait and watch with their lamps trimmed and burning brightly, and with their flowing garments girded — that they may rise quickly and move without hindrance. They listen for his well-known footsteps, that as soon as he knocks they may open the door to him immediately.

Be like such servants, says our blessed Savior to His disciples. Let your love to Me be manifest by your watchful waiting in My absence, and the joyful welcome you give Me at My return.

No earthly master bears such love to his servants, as Christ has manifested to us. He laid down His life for us — He redeemed us with His own precious blood! Now He has gone to prepare a place for us — and He has assured us that He will come again and receive us unto Himself. And shall we not wait and watch for His return with expectation and joyful hope? While He tarries, may we aim . . .
  to do His will,
  to serve Him faithfully,
  and to occupy until He comes.

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"Those who are planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God." Psalm 92:13

The trees of righteousness planted by the Lord are fair to look upon, even in the Church below. They are not, indeed, at all times alike, they have their winter as well as summer — but their vitality abides, and they bring forth their fruit in their season. When the winds of adversity blow upon them, they strike their roots more deeply — they take a firmer hold of the truth and faithfulness of the Lord. By-and-by they will be transplanted to the heavenly garden — to the paradise of God, and will flourish in perpetual vigor and beauty, to the praise of Him who has planted them.

O Lord, remember me with the favor You bear unto Your people; refresh me with the dew of Your blessing, and cheer me with the sunshine of Your favor. May I be "a tree of the Lord — full of sap." Make me to flourish like the palm-tree, and to grow like a cedar in Lebanon. May I be rooted and grounded in Your love, and bring forth the fruits of righteousness to Your praise.

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"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving-kindness." Psalm 51:1

The psalmist commence his prayer under a deep sense of his sin. Nothing but divine mercy can meet the case of the guilty. Transgressions committed under peculiar aggravation — need peculiar mercy, such as Divine loving-kindness alone can show.

God in His infinite grace has made a provision for cancelling sins of the deepest dye! He has sacrificed His only-begotten, His well-beloved Son, whose blood cleanses us from all sin. On the ground of the sufferings and death of Jesus on the cross — every penitent sinner is freely and fully forgiven forever!

"Blessed are those whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him!" Romans 4:7-8

"O'er sins, unnumbered as the sand,
 And like the mountains for their size,
 The seas of sovereign grace expand,
 The seas of sovereign grace arise!"

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"With You is the fountain of life — in Your light shall we see light." Psalm 36:9

Our highest wisdom is to apply directly to the Source of spiritual good for supplies. Indeed, it is utterly vain to expect life and light from any but the Lord Himself.

He is the Fountain of life. He gave us our natural life — and He is the giver of spiritual and eternal life, which He bestows in and with Christ. "This is the record, that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." All who by faith receive Christ as their Savior — are delivered from eternal death, and are made partakers of everlasting life.

And as God is the Fountain of life — so He is the Source of light. He created natural light. He said, "Let there be light — and there was light." He who commanded the light to shine out of darkness — shines into the hearts of His people. He delivers them from darkness, and brings them into His marvelous light.
They then see sin in a light in which they never saw it before — they see something of its exceeding sinfulness.
They see Christ in a light in which they did not see Him before — they see something . . .
  of His personal glory,
  of His wondrous grace,
  of His unspeakable love!

O You who are the Fountain of life — in Your light may I see light!

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"The blessing of the Lord brings wealth — and He adds no trouble to it." Proverbs 10:22

"Those who would be rich" — those who make wealth their object, and are determined to acquire it without regard to the means they employ, and who have recourse to expedients wholly contrary to the will of God, "fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition, and pierce themselves through with many sorrows!"

But wealth, acquired by the blessing of God upon upright and persevering industry, carries no sting with it.

Ill-gotten wealth draws a man down to destruction, like a heavy weight attached to a drowning animal — but wealth acquired in dependence on God, by legitimate means, is attended with His favor and blessing, and brings no sorrow with it.

Reader, if your riches increase, through the blessing of God on the work of your hand, "set not your heart upon them" — but use them for the advantage of your family, and in the service of Christ, and for the glory of God. But if you are poor in your earthly estate, you are truly blessed if you are possessed of Christ and His unsearchable riches!

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"Who shall stand when He appears?" Malachi 3:2

"The ungodly shall not stand in the judgment" — unbelievers, formalists, mere professors, those who have a name to live but are dead — cannot stand before the Lord when He appears.

But those who are in Christ — those who are justified by faith, and sanctified by the Holy Spirit — stand before God in grace now, and will stand before Him in glory hereafter. Mark the words of the Lord Jesus, "Truly, truly, I say unto you: He who hears My word, and believes in Him that sent Me — has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life."

And the apostle, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, declares, "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit."

Every renewed soul, every genuine believer, every penitent sinner, whose trust is in Jesus only for pardon and eternal life — will stand before Him justified and accepted.

"When You, my righteous Judge, shall come
 To fetch Your ransomed people home,
 Shall I among them stand?
 Shall such a worthless worm as I,
 Who sometimes am afraid to die,
 Be found at Your right hand?

"Among Your saints let me be found,
 Whenever the archangel's trumpet shall sound,
 And see Your smiling face!
 Then with what rapture shall I sing,
 While Heaven's resounding mansions ring
 With shouts of sovereign grace!"

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"If we confess our sins — He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9

The only ground of the forgiveness of sin, is the great atonement made for it by our Divine Substitute. We only come into the possession of pardoning mercy — only as we are led to feel our need of it, as we confess our sinfulness and guilt, and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

To Him alone are we called to confess our sins — who has power to forgive them. And if we humbly and penitently confess our sins to God, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, because Jesus died for them, and His blood cleanses from all sin.

And not only does God for Christ's sake forgive us our transgressions when we come to Him in contrition and acknowledge them — but He also "cleanses us from all unrighteousness."
He renews us in the spirit of our minds;
He delivers us from the love and power of sin;
He cleanses the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of His Holy Spirit.
And when grace finds its outcome in glory — He will present every saved one, "holy and without blemish — having no spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing!"

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"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man — the things which God has prepared for those who love Him!" 1 Corinthians 2:9

These words, which the apostle quotes from the prophet Isaiah, are often used in reference to the state of glory; but it is well to observe that they are not employed by the apostle in reference to the heavenly state, as will be obvious from a careful reading of the preceding verses, and from the words which immediately follow, "But God has revealed them unto us by His Spirit." The text is quoted by the apostle in proof of the fact that the mysteries of redeeming mercy are not apprehended by natural wisdom.

But although the text in its original use does not refer to the future state of blessedness — it is nevertheless true that . . .
  no eye has seen the glorious realities of Heaven;
  no ear has heard any suitable description of them; and
  no adequate conception of them has ever entered into the mind or heart of man.

The future glory remains to be revealed. "It does not yet appear what we shall be — but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is!"

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"Bear one another's burdens — and so fulfill the law of Christ." Galatians 6:2

The law of Christ — is the law of love. "A new commandment," said He to His disciples, "Love one another. As I have loved you — so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another." John 13:34-35

Love, manifesting itself in practical sympathy and in deeds of kindness — should characterize the followers of Christ. They are exhorted to look not only on their own things, but also on the things of others; to be pitiful and tender-hearted one towards another; to lighten each other's loads, to "bear one another's burdens — and so fulfill the law of Christ."

O Lord, give unto us more of the spirit of Christ, who, though He was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we, through His poverty, might be rich. Help us, as we have opportunity, to do good unto all men — but especially unto those who are of the household of faith. Oh that it may be manifest to the world that we are the disciples of the loving Savior — by our love one to another!

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"I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you shall go." Psalm 32:8

How precious is this promise to those who feel their need of Divine guidance!

One day, in imagination, I was wandering in perplexity in an extensive forest — I had lost the track, and toiled for hours in vain to recover it. At length, completely wearied and helpless, I threw myself on the ground.

Presently, the friendly voice of one whose approach I had not observed, addressing me, said, "Why are you lying there?"

I replied, "I have lost the path, and have tried in vain to find it."

"Are you willing," he rejoined, "to trust yourself to My guidance, and to follow Me, step by step, as I lead?"

"Yes, Lord," I replied, for I discerned in the hands and feet of Him who addressed me, the print of the nails that once fastened Him to the cross.

"Then arise and follow Me."

I at once obeyed, and in peaceful trust followed my gracious Guide. Soon the increasing light showed that the bounds of the forest were nearly reached, and speedily I was led into a plain open path, from which I could clearly see my way home. Then my Guide disappeared, but before leaving me He said, "Do not lean unto your own understanding. in all your ways acknowledge Me, and I will direct Your paths. I will instruct you and teach you in the way you shall go."

Lord, henceforth my Leader be;
By Your grace I'll follow Thee,
Until the realms of light I see!

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"You shall fear the Lord your God. Him shall you serve — and to Him shall you cleave." Deuteronomy 10:20

Mark, my soul, this threefold obligation:
  to fear the Lord,
  to serve Him, and
  to cleave to Him.

Help me, O Lord, my God, as one redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, to live in obedience to this command. Maintain in my heart a holy reverence for Your name — a filial fear of You. Help me to serve You in faithfulness and love — to do heartily whatever I have to do, as unto You and not unto men.

As the eyes of a faithful servant are upon a good master, so may my eyes be towards You — to know Your will and to do it. Work, O Lord, in me to will and to do Your good pleasure. Enable me to cleave unto You, for You are my Rock and my Refuge, my Savior and my All. Never allow me to be drawn away from You by any worldly allurements. May all my affections gather around You — and may I cleave to You with purpose of heart.

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"It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man." Psalm 117:8

It is better, infinitely better, to trust in the Lord than to put confidence even in the best of men. In our soul's deepest need, human helpers are utterly unavailing; but the Lord and His grace are sufficient for us. And in all other exigencies, it is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in men. Our best friends may not be able to help us, even when they have the disposition to do so — but the power of the Lord never fails. He is able . . .
  to counsel us in perplexity,
  to help us in difficulty,
  to protect us in danger,
  to sustain us in trial,
  and to supply all our needs.

The best of earthly friends may be taken from us, when most we may seem to require their help; but the Lord ever lives, "He is a very present help in times of trouble" — and will never leave or forsake those who trust in Him.

"One there is above all others,
 Oh, how He loves!
 His is love beyond a brother's,
 Oh, how He loves!

"Earthly friends may fail or leave us,
 One day soothe — the next day grieve us;
 But this Friend will never deceive us,
 Oh, how He loves!"

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"I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified." 1 Corinthians 2:2

This was the great theme of the apostle's preaching, and he had proved that it was the power of God unto salvation to every one who believed. Christ and Him crucified should be the main theme of the servants of God still; for human nature is the same, the need of sinful men is the same — and "there is no other name, under Heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved."

"The old, old story" is ever new, and ever fresh, when it is told and heard under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ and Him crucified is . . .
the great manifestation of the love of God;
the sure foundation of a sinner's hope;
a never-failing spring of joy to the believer;
and the song, ever new, of the redeemed in glory.

My soul, let Jesus Christ and Him crucified be the theme of your daily meditation.
Dwell upon the glory of His person, and His redeeming love. Think of all He did and suffered on your account.
Rejoice in His finished work.
Glory only in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, by whom you are crucified to the world, and the world is crucified unto you.

"Here it is I find my Heaven,
While upon the cross I gaze.
Love I much? I've much forgiven;
I'm a miracle of grace!"

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"Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield — your very great reward!" Genesis 15:1

We live in a world of dangers, and we are entirely unable to protect ourselves. But when, in the consciousness of our own weakness, we commit ourselves into the hands of our Almighty Savior — He takes us under His protection, and to each weak but trusting one He says, "Do not be afraid — I am your Shield!" O Lord, speak these words to my heart in the hour of exposure to temporal peril; so will my anxious fears be allayed, I shall be kept quiet from fear of evil, and be assured that You will either preserve me from injury, or overrule it for good.

In the hour of trial and sore temptation, again speak to me, and say, "I am your Shield" — and help me to retreat under Your sheltering wings.

When my spiritual foes gather round, and I am filled with dismay at their number and malignity, again say to me, "Fear not — I am your Shield!" So shall I be inspired with fresh courage, and in Your strength shall fight and conquer.

And when the last enemy stares me in the face, and the grave opens to my view, speak once more to Your servant, O Lord, and say, "I am your Shield!" So shall I be delivered from my fears, and be enabled to exclaim, "O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

"How are Your servants blessed, O Lord!
 How sure is their defense!
 Eternal Wisdom is their guide;
 Their shield, Omnipotence!"

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"There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men — the Man Christ Jesus." 1 Timothy 2:5

There is one peacemaker between God and men — the Lord Jesus Christ. In His Divine nature He is one with the Father — and in His human nature is one with man, only perfectly without sin. And being on an equality with God, and being also truly man — He is well fitted to mediate between the just and holy God and guilty men.

In His mediatorial work He has, on the one hand, had the fullest regard to the claims of Divine justice, righteousness, and truth; and, on the other hand, to the salvation, the happiness, and the eternal security of His people. He perfectly obeyed the law of God, as the representative of all who trust in Him, and by the sacrifice of Himself made a complete atonement for their sins. He is full of pity and tender mercy; and, with human sympathy, He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He is the Mediator of "the new covenant" — the covenant of grace. It is through Him that all its rich provisions and inestimable privileges are enjoyed.

Rejoice, my soul, that you have "one Mediator," and such a one as Jesus Christ the righteous. He has made peace by the blood of His cross, and by Him you have freedom of access, at all times, to the Father of mercies!

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"I will heal their backsliding — I will love them freely." Hosea 14:4

Backsliding "in heart" is a serious evil. But open departure from God and indulgence in sin is far worse, as it brings a reproach upon the name of Christ, and serves to harden the ungodly in their evil ways.

The backslider not only dishonors religion and grieves the Holy Spirit — he also fearfully wounds his own soul. But the Great Physician can even heal the wounds of the backslider. Our God is gracious and full of compassion. He calls to the wanderer, and says: "Return unto the Lord your God — for you have fallen by your iniquity." He helps his infirmity — as with shame and confusion of face he comes back. He puts, as it were, a prayer into his lips, for He says: "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord; and say unto Him: Take away all my iniquity — and receive me graciously."

 Reader, have you wandered in some forbidden path, and brought dishonor on your Lord, and distress into your soul?

Be humbled, but do not despond. There is mercy for you. Jesus, who gave Peter, after his grievous fall, such a look of tender compassion that he went out and wept bitterly — waits to be gracious to you. Cast yourself at His feet, confess your sins — and you will prove His forgiving love and healing mercy.

"Return, O wanderer! return!
 Your Savior bids your spirit live;
 Go to His bleeding feet, and learn
 How freely Jesus can forgive!"