**Beneath the Cross!**

By George Everard, 1877

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**PREFACE**
Of course the meditations and counsels given here, are but a fragment of a great subject. They do not profess to be anything like a thorough exposition of the scenes and lessons of our Lord's Passion. At best they are but a few clusters from this precious Vine. They are but *a handful of fruit* from the Tree of Life, but they will answer the purpose for which they are intended if they lead the believer nearer to the Savior, and quicken him in the closer study of His last hours on earth.

"**Near the cross of Jesus** stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene." [John 19:25](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%2019.25)

"Like an apple tree among the trees of the forest, so is my beloved among the young men. In his shade I took great delight and sat down, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. He has brought me to his banquet hall, and his banner over me is love. [Song of Songs 2:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Song%202.3-4)

"My soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth offers praises with joyful lips. When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches." [Psalm 63:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps%2063.5-6)

"My meditation of Him shall be sweet — I will be glad in the Lord." [Psalm 104: 34](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps%20104.%2034)

**1. Beneath the Cross**

*The cross* of Christ is the believer's lesson book. The sufferings He bore for our sake, should be the subject of our constant meditation. It is true we should ponder the story of His wondrous life, and rejoice in the victory achieved by His Resurrection. We delight to think upon His Ascension to the right hand of the Father, upon His faithful intercession before the throne, and the hope of His coming kingdom.

But *the Cross is the central point*. It is that to which through life He was ever looking forward. His Resurrection ensures to us the benefits there purchased for us. And as our exalted High Priest, He has no other plea than the work He completed for us. As the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, He abides in His mediatorial kingdom. It is to His death, that the redeemed will ascribe the glory of their salvation: "Worthy is the Lamb who was *slain*

to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing!"

Especially, in the *Lord's Supper* , it is our privilege to dwell on the scenes and incidents connected with our Lord's death. The whole value and significance of the Lord's Supper rests upon the work wrought out for us on the tree. It was instituted by Christ on the night of His betrayal, before He entered the dark valley of conflict, agony, and shame. It speaks to us not of His life or His resurrection — but of that *dying love* on account of which He gave His body to be broken and His blood to be shed for the redemption of sinners. "And to the end that we should always remember the exceeding great love of our Master, and only Savior, Jesus Christ, thus dying for us, and the innumerable benefits which by His precious blood-shedding He has obtained to us; He has instituted and ordained holy mysteries, as pledges of His love, and for a continual remembrance of His death, to our great and endless comfort."

Nowhere, as in the Cross and in the scenes connected with it — do we see such revelations of the heart of Christ. Love bursts forth in every direction, both to friends and foes. The last touch of the hand so soon to be pierced, before it is fettered and bound, must be for the healing of one sent to apprehend Him. No thought for Himself, shall hinder Him from pleading for His disciples, that they might go their way unharmed. *Mercy* shines forth in her beauty, seeking pardon for His cruel murderers, compassionating the daughters of Jerusalem, and saving a sinner of the deepest dye. *Justice*, too, stands forth in unsullied glory. In paying the debt of human guilt, in bearing the penalty of a broken law — Christ is seen to be a just God as also a Savior.

It is our joy to remember that Jesus Christ is "the same yesterday, today, and forever." As He was then, in pity and compassion and, faithfulness and love — so is He now. The *suffering* and the *shame* of the Cross is past — but not the *grace* and *truth* which was there revealed. At this moment is He as tender and as true, as ready to support those who turn to Him, and to pray for those who have hated Him — as He was when suffering on Calvary.

It seems to me, moreover, that in our Lord's suffering and death, there is precious instruction for the believer in almost every matter belonging to the Christian life. What are the perils you are likely to meet with — and how best to overcome them; what should be your life in secret before God — and what your path in the world — what is your strength in the hour of temptation and in the season of sorrow; how to crucify the world; how to glorify God in the position which you occupy — all this may be learned in fellowship with our suffering Redeemer.

Beneath the Cross likewise you may best learn to cultivate every Christian grace and virtue. Meekness and courage, zeal and love, prayer and patience and longsuffering, and submission to the will of God — are the fruits of a believing view of Christ's death. *You may learn, too, to conquer sin by the sight of that which it cost Christ to save you from it.* The nail and the spear may be driven through the sins which have been most cherished. You may thus be enabled to crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts.

And beneath the Cross you may learn another lesson. You may learn how to die. Through death Christ has destroyed the power of death — the sting is gone. To him that believes, death is life; for it is departing to be with Christ, which is far better. Nor will the pattern left you by the Savior be without its consolation. His toil and suffering ended, He committed His Spirit into the Father's hand. And when you have finished the work given you to do, you may peacefully yield up your spirit to the faithful care of Him who has trodden the dark valley before you. To Him you can fly for refuge in *the solemn hour.* "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

Jesus, my God, to You I fly,
You are a refuge ever nigh,
When heart shall fail, when life is past,
You will receive my soul at last.

Therefore let us often betake ourselves to Calvary. Let memory recall and ponder those hours on which our everlasting peace depends. Let our faith bridge over the centuries that have passed between. Let us go and stand in thought, beside the faithful women who were last at the cross and first at the grave. Let us look again — and yet again, and discover new lessons of instruction and fresh grounds for the deepest contrition, as also for everlasting joy and thankfulness — beneath the cross.

"Upon the cross I gaze,
And there behold its sad yet healing rays,
Beacon of hope which, lifted up on high,
Illumines with heavenly light, the tear-dimmed eye."

For such meditation we need, above all things, the anointing of the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit who testifies of the Savior. It is only by the Spirit that we learn the truth for our soul's profit; therefore, in reading the following pages, I would ask you often to lift up your heart to Him, who is the giver of all true wisdom.

"O God, open my eyes to behold the light of Your glory in the face of Jesus Christ. Give me the Spirit of grace and supplication, that I may look upon Him who was pierced for my sin, and mourn in godly sorrow for that which I have done amiss. Enlighten the eyes of my understanding, and give me the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, that I may know more of the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, and of the greatness of His love. Give me the unction of the Holy One, and renew and sanctify me through Your truth. Draw me closer to Yourself, and teach me out of Your book, whatever is needful for my everlasting good, for Jesus Christ's sake."

To Calvary, Lord, in spirit now,
Our weary souls repair.
To dwell upon Your dying love,
And taste its sweetness there.

There, through Your hour of deepest woe,
Your suffering spirit passed:
Grace there its wondrous victory gained,
And Love endured its last.

Dear suffering Lamb, Your bleeding wounds,
With cords of love Divine
Have drawn our willing hearts to Thee,
And linked our life with Thine.

**2. The Beloved Disciple**

"Who is this coming up from the wilderness leaning on her beloved?" [Song of Songs 8:5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Song%208.5)

Near to the suffering Savior, what *strange contrasts* do we see! Light and darkness, good and evil, are found in close contact one with the other. We see the dark form of the traitor, and the Wicked One prompting him to his destruction; but we see also the beloved Apostle who "leaned on the Savior's bosom."

This latter is a description full of instruction for every believer who desires near fellowship with Christ — it is a pattern for a believer. And if you are such, however sinful or unworthy, do not regard it as a privilege beyond your reach.

"I sit down at Christ's footstool" said one, "but I cannot get nearer than this." But the Master calls you both to abide at His footstool in lowliness and meekness — and also to *lean upon Him and rest upon Him* in fullest confidence of His tender love, so that it is no presumption for you to do so. Never forget that *in yourself* you are utterly vile, and altogether unworthy either to come to His footstool or in any way to approach One so holy and so great. Still are you bidden, accepted and beautified in His robe of righteousness, to come up out of the wilderness leaning upon Him. And it will be your comfort and joy thus to act.

Jesus, we rest in Thee —
In You ourselves we hide;
Laden with guilt and misery,
Where can we rest beside.
'Tis on Your meek and lowly breast
Our weary souls alone can rest.

**1. This position, *leaning upon the Beloved*, implies an entire and abiding RELIANCE upon Christ and His salvation.** We need continually to be reminded that all strength and consolation is found in . . . *cleaving* to Christ,  *confiding* in Him,
taking to Him in *prayer* every need and concern, and  *expecting* from His hands every blessing that a God of love can bestow.

If I would go on my way happily and serve the Lord with a free heart . . .
I must trust to my Savior in everything and for everything,
I must trust His *providence* as I trust His grace,
I must ever see Him at my right hand in the midst of life's duties,
I must believe that He is able to keep me in every emergency,
I must never yield to any doubt that His blood cleanses me from my sin day by day,
I must assure myself, from His Word, that He will never deceive me nor disappoint my hopes,
I must learn more and more of His unchangeable loving-kindness to those who flee to Him,
I must thus, by faith, put myself and all that concerns me into His mighty and merciful keeping. Whatever fails me — Christ never will. Therefore my soul rests upon Him — and I shall never, never be confounded.

**2. Leaning on Christ also implies SEPARATION FROM THE WORLD.** Leaning upon Christ, rejoicing in the sunshine of His love, delighting in Him as my rich and satisfying portion — why should I go and mingle in the doubtful pleasures of a world that crucified Him? Has He not told His people, "You are not of the world, even as I am not of the world!" Has He not warned us that friendship of the world, is enmity with God? If I lean on my Savior, shall I love to spend my time in scenes and places where His precious Name is blasphemed? If I go where I must leave Christ at the door — may He not withdraw from me and permit me for many a long day to mourn His absence?

I dare not excuse myself in this matter, by the example of others; neither would I ever claim permission to do as other Christians do. I must *set* examples, rather than *follow* them. Perhaps there is no sin that could be named, but might be excused on the ground that some child of God had at one time or another committed it. Nay, I dare not copy others in their inconsistencies; but I must drink into Christ's Spirit, and walk ever in His footsteps. I will ask myself again and again, "What would Jesus do — were He in my place?" and when I see this, I will go and do likewise. If friends around seek to lead me in another path, I will refuse to go with them. I will not dishonor my Lord by doubtful courses. I will go where Christ will go with me, and nowhere else. If need be, I will go with Him to exile, to prison, to suffering, or to death. But I will not turn away from Him to drink of the poisoned cup! I will never choose as my life-partner one who does not love Him. If I am Christ's, the *ballroom* and the *theater* is no place for me. Even

the *social evening* has its perils for the soul as well as for the body. Therefore I must be on the watch.

O blessed Redeemer, give me grace to resist the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the Devil; and with pure heart and mind to follow You, the only God!

**3. Here, too, leaning on Christ, is the place of WISDOM.** Here may I learn secrets of Divine truth, which I cannot learn elsewhere. While John was leaning on Christ, the Savior whispered in his ear a secret not revealed to the rest — our Lord told him who the traitor was. And our Lord has many *secrets* to impart to those who keep near to Him. "The secret of the Lord is with those who fear Him." In Christ are treasured up infinite riches of wisdom and knowledge; and while I keep near to Him, He teaches me by His Spirit. He gives me the anointing from above. He unfolds something of the mystery of His Providence. He throws a beam of light on some of the hard problems that in this world we cannot solve. He makes brighter and clearer the doctrines of salvation, and the hopes of a glorious immortality.

Would I become truly wise in the things which are most essential? It is not by human reasonings or abstruse arguments — but by the study of the Word in fellowship with the Son of God, that I shall best succeed. He will be my Teacher — He will open my understanding to know more of His truth, and in His light shall I see light.

**4. I shall, moreover, abide in SAFETY while I thus lean on Christ.** Resting in Jesus, reposing in His love — no harm can possibly come near me. Nothing in earth or in Hell can injure one hair of my head, while I stay my soul on Him. I am safe from condemnation. However guilty I am, conscious of evil and failure in heart and life — yet He cannot and will not condemn me. Will He condemn the soul for whom He died, and who is clinging to Him as his sole reliance? Will He take His poor feeble child, resting in His bosom, and cast him away from His presence? Ah, never will He do this — but He will confess him as His own, and set him before His face forever!

In this position I am safe, too, from the assaults of the enemy. In myself I am too weak to resist the least temptation — but in Christ, as my Shield and my Fortress, I can overcome the greatest. He is stronger than the strongest. Until Satan can overcome Christ, he cannot destroy the soul that is trusting in Him.

Here, too, is my Refuge — whatever storm may blow or tempest may beat, I run to my Savior and hide in Him.

In poverty or pain,
in disappointment or desolation,
in anguish of mind or sorrow of heart —
the living, loving Redeemer is my strong Castle. Therefore will I fear nothing. I have peace in Christ, though tribulation in the world. Though every earthly tie is broken and every human comforter is gone — yet I lean on Him as the Friend, the Helper and Support of all who cleave to Him.

**5. I love this position, too, because it is one of HOLINESS.** Every believer ought to seek progress in holiness, and strive after the very highest attainments. But where can this grace be found?

Not in the bondage of legal fears,
not in multiplying external duties and ceremonial observances,
not in leaning too much upon the spiritual direction of ministers
— but in continually keeping near to Christ. If I am much with others, I cannot fail to catch something of their spirit — if I am much with Christ, I shall grow more and more like Him. I shall become meek, and gentle, and patient, and forbearing, for His Spirit will rest upon me. I shall watch against the least sin, for who would willfully wound and pierce the tender heart on which he was resting? I shall love the Savior more, for I shall know more of the reality and depth and tenderness of His love to me.

And I shall be able to make progress in the paths of righteousness, for *strength* is ever being imparted to those who rely upon Christ. Though from first to last I shall ever fall short of the full standard of the image of my Savior, and need His blood and His righteousness as my only plea — yet in His strength I may press forward nearer and nearer to the mark.

And thus abiding, I may find a pledge of the eternal heavenly rest above. At present I am passing through the wilderness — but by-and-by I shall reach the glory. Now I lean upon Christ in the midst of sorrows and troubles and cares — but then I shall lean upon Him in a world where not a cloud will darken the sky. I shall be forever with the Lord. My tears and temptations, my cares and my sorrows, will be left behind — and I shall be with Him who loved me with an everlasting love!

I always go to Jesus,
When troubled or distressed:
I always find a refuge
Upon His loving breast.

I tell Him all my trials,
I tell Him all my grief;
And while my lips are speaking,
He gives my heart relief.

When full of dread foreboding
And flowing o'er with tears,
He calms away my sorrow
And hushes all my fears.

He comprehends my weakness,
The peril I am in,
And He supplies the armor
I need to conquer sin.

When those are cold and faithless
Who once were fond and true,
With careless hearts forsaking
The old friends for the new.

I turn to Him whose friendship
Knows neither change nor end:
I always find in Jesus
A never-failing friend.

I always go to Jesus:
No matter when or where
I seek His precious presence,
I'm sure to find Him there.

In times of joy or sorrow,
Whatever my need may be,
I always go to Jesus,
And Jesus comes to me.

**PRAYER**O Lord Jesus Christ, You are my Hiding place and my sure Refuge. I bless and praise You for Your loving-kindness and Your truth. Manifest Yourself unto me more and more, and bring me still nearer to Yourself. Draw me — and I will run after You! Hide me in the secret place of Your tabernacle — and shield me from all assaults of the enemy. Keep me always mindful of Your presence, and teach me to lean continually on You.

I beg You, O gracious Savior, to fix my heart on You and renew me in Your own image. Send to me the Holy Spirit, the Comforter. May He ever fill me with all joy and peace in believing. Pour into my heart such love to You, that I may love You far above all things. Preserve me from the evil that is in the world. Keep me ever separate from sinners, and may I never choose the company of those who walk in the path that leads to destruction. Strengthen me by Your grace, that I may be fearless and bold in confessing Your name. O keep me as the apple of Your eye, and hide me under the shadow of Your wing. Cast about me the robe of Your righteousness, and be near to me by night and by day. Let those around me see that I have been with Jesus. Show Your marvelous loving-kindness, O my Savior. Give me the comfort of communion with You on earth, and then grant me everlasting rest in Your presence above. Bow down Your ear to hear, and defend me evermore by Your mighty aid, for Your name's sake. Amen.

**3. Around the Table**

Perhaps it may be but a little company of believers with whom you join from time to time in remembering the Savior's death. It may be in a village church; and when the rest of the congregation has dispersed, you meet around the Table of the Master, and in His name partake of the bread and wine. *But why should you do this?*

Go back to Jerusalem — go back to the Upper room where Christ sits down with His chosen band of disciples. It is the Passover season, and He has earnestly desired to sit down with them at the feast. For the time is at hand — the end is drawing near when the true Passover must be sacrificed, when the Shepherd shall be smitten and the flock scattered.

Our Lord partakes, with His disciples, of the Paschal Supper, so full of grateful recollections to the faithful Israelite, and still more precious as pointing forward to New Testament blessings. Christ then institutes a new feast, suited alike for His disciples in all countries and in all periods of the Church's history. He takes in His hand, the small *loaf* from the table. He gives thanks, and breaks it and distributes a part to each of those present, "Take, eat," He says; "this is my body which is given for you — do this in remembrance of Me." Then He takes the *cup* and hands it from one to another, saying to them, "This cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins — this do, as oft as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." Then He adds that He would no more drink of the fruit of the vine, until it should be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. (Compare [Matthew 26:26-29](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%2026.26-29); [Luke 22:17-20](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke%2022.17-20); [1 Corinthians 11:23-26](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor%2011.23-26).)

Very simple and expressive is this ordinance. There is nothing so mysterious about it that we need shrink from the *comfort* and *help* which it is intended to bring. We need but humble, loving, believing hearts, to taste all the precious treasures of grace which it unfolds.

Let us now take but one thought. **Let us consider it as a pledge of our love and obedience.**

In Eden a tree was given to our first parents to prove whether they would follow the will of God. They were neither to *touch* it nor to *taste* it, lest they should die. But they failed. They broke the simple covenant — they forfeited their inheritance of life and peace, and brought upon themselves and their posterity an evil heritage of *sin* and *sorrow* and *death*.

In the Lord's Supper, the disciple of Christ has a way afforded him of proving his obedience. The command as so plain, the precept is so easy in itself, that he can have no excuse for disregarding it. Had the Christian been commanded to perform some hard and painful duty — as Abraham was called to offer up Isaac — or to go upon a distant pilgrimage — or to have done some great act that would have required length of time and considerable effort, and would have taxed his endurance to the uttermost — then no doubt he ought to have done it — it would have been only right for him cheerfully to obey, for the sake of Him who sacrificed all for us and laid down His life for our sake.

But Christ has appointed it otherwise. The test He has given has nothing painful or laborious about it. It is a means of *strength* and *consolation* to all who use it in faith. He has bidden His people meet in His name. He bids them partake of bread and wine, and thus remember His dying love. It is His one express command: "This do in remembrance of Me."

It may be that some reader hesitates to obey this precept of Christ; but if so, be careful to inquire of the reason. What is keeping you back? What is standing in the way? What is your motive for refusing? If you take Christ for your Master, if you reckon yourself as belonging to Him — can you excuse yourself from giving this proof of your sincerity?

Perhaps you say, "It is a very serious thing to come to the Lord's Table, and I am but a young believer, and I am *afraid* to come."

But is it not a very serious thing to stay away? Shall you not be afraid to disobey so simple and loving a command?

If a dear relation or friend were dying — perhaps a mother who had ever shown her tender love for you — and she were to ask you to perform some duty or carry out some wish or plan which she had arranged — would you let anything hinder you from fulfilling her last request? But think of the love of Christ. What more could He have done to show His love for you? And was not this His last command? And does He not say, "If you love Me — keep my commandments"? Ah, is it not sad forgetfulness and great ingratitude to your best Friend, which leads you to turn away from doing that to which He calls you?

Think again what it is that you say as you leave the church, while others remain. Do you not declare, as plainly as if you spoke it with your lips, something of this kind, "Lord, I do not come to Your Table, for I am not one of Yours. I do not trust You, I do not love You, I have no part or lot in the matter. I confess that I am not one of Your disciples now, nor do I look to share Your glory hereafter"

And is it not a serious thing, by thus turning your back on the Lord's Table, openly to acknowledge that you do not belong to Him?

Ah, suppose you disobey Christ in this way — is it not a proof that you do not truly love Him, and may you not look for it, that He may shut His door against you hereafter?

Years ago, in a village church, a few Christians met together at their monthly Communion. One man remained in the porch outside the door as the service was being held. To him the quiet half-hour seemed well-near a year. His conscience smote him — his thoughts accused him of ingratitude and disobedience. He remembered how month after month he had been a stranger to the Lord's Table. "Ah," said he to himself, "I am outside this door! What if I should be found at last outside the door of Heaven!" That quiet half-hour bore its fruit, and led him to a more entire consecration to the Lord's service and obedience to His commands.

But if it is a *command*, it is no less an *invitation* of the most considerate kindness, that the disciple of Christ should come to this feast of love.

When you receive an invitation from a friend to go to their house or sit down at their table — you regard it as an act of kindness on their part. But was there ever such kindness in the heart of an earthly friend as you find in Jesus, when He thus bids you draw near to Him? It is condescending love which prompts the invitation. Here is the great King of Heaven and earth, inviting one of His subjects — one who has been sinful, rebellious, and utterly unworthy — to come into His presence and partake of His goodness. At this feast there is the richest provision and the most lasting profit. You come to partake here of the finest of the wheat, honey out of the rock, wines on the lees well refined — you come to feed on Christ Himself. *He nourishes your soul with the hidden manna of His grace and love.*

Here, O my Lord, I see You face to face;
Here faith can touch and handle things unseen,
Here I would grasp with firmer hand Your grace,
And all my weariness upon You lean.

Here would I feed upon the bread of God;
Here drink with You the royal wine of Heaven;
Here would I lay aside each earthly load;
Here taste afresh the calm of sin forgiven.

You may go the world's banquet — you may taste its choicest pleasures — you may find a passing gratification in the successful pursuit of wealth or of some object of ambition — but by-and-by you lose your interest in it — or disappointment comes, and you grow weary and tired and restless. But come to this banquet of heavenly love, come in faith, trusting in the Savior's gracious promises — and you shall sit down with great delight under His banner of love — you shall have fellowship with Apostles, martyrs, saints — men of whom the world was not worthy — and you shall find everlasting strength and consolation to your soul.

But who are welcome? Whom will Christ reckon as worthy guests?

Not the careless, the heedless, the indifferent.

If you have no earnest desire for salvation, and no longing for a holy, Christ-like life; if you are of the world and like the world — I dare *not* ask you to come. There is something you need first. You need new life in the Holy Spirit; you need conversion of heart to God; you need that mighty change whereby old things pass away, and all things become new.

Neither do I ask you to come if you are well satisfied with yourself. If you are content with your own condition and have no sense of your sinfulness and poverty — you cannot come acceptably. *Only a humble and broken heart can feed on a crucified Savior.* He who is most worthy in God's sight, is most humbled for his exceeding unworthiness.

But there are many who are kept back by a painful conviction that they have so much evil about them — that they have so little faith, repentance, or love, that it would be presumptuous on their part to draw near.

Is this your own feeling? Is it this which prevents your approach to the Table? If so, is it not a mistake? Are you not forgetting the purpose of Christ's work and the meaning of this ordinance? For if anyone comes in the right spirit — what is it which he professes? What does the true believer virtually say? Is it not this: "Lord, I am a sinner deserving damnation, and my only hope is in You. I trust only in Your all-atoning sacrifice. I trust only in Your finished work, and in Your blood which was shed for my sin." And is not this the plea for a sinner — for any sinner who turns from sin and flies for mercy to the Savior?

Look not at your *repentance* or *faith* or *love* — but rather fix your eye on Him who will never cast out any who sincerely come to Him. He knows all your sin and all that you lack — and yet He loves you.

*"Come unto Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."* ([Matthew 11:28](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%2011.28).) These words make it plain that no anxious, penitent sinner need despair, nor anyone imagine that he is forbidden to draw near. Will not this assure you of a welcome? Whatever your burden — whatever your weary, toiling, troubled spirit may need — here is rest and refreshment provided in Christ.

Will not this promise meet your case? A world-wide compassion, a priceless gift, a message bringing home the offer of life to each soul. What more can you ask or seek?

Hear also what Paul says: "This is a true saying, and worthy of all men to be received, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." ([1 Timothy 1:15](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Tim%201.15).)

What abundant consolation is here added. The blessing is for *sinners* — only for sinners — for all sinners who own their sin and will accept it. Christ came to save sinners. He died for sinners — sinners of every kind and degree, therefore for you. And it is a true saying. Why not believe it? Why not honor Christ by trusting Him as a Savior for sinners, even the chief?

Hear also what John says: "If any man sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins." ([1 John 2:1](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20John%202.1).)

Here is yet further encouragement. Perhaps you have been a backslider, or have committed some special sin since first you sought the Lord. But you are not to give up. You are not shut out — the *door of mercy* is open. Though you have sinned, you have a righteous Advocate. His atoning sacrifice will answer for your guilt. He will plead on your behalf. The Father hears Him always. Therefore do not add the sin of unbelief to your other sins. Do not doubt your Savior's free love or His willingness to save. Cast on Him the uttermost of your sin — and be persuaded that to the uttermost He will save. Relying upon His all-sufficient, abounding grace and mercy — come to His Table and set your seal to His faithfulness and truth.

Mine is the sin — but Yours is the righteousness;
Mine is the guilt — but Yours is the cleansing blood.
Here is my robe, my refuge, and my peace —
Your blood, Your righteousness, O Lord, my God.

**PRAYER**Most gracious and merciful Father, I bless and praise You for Your loving-kindness and Your truth. I thank You for giving Your only Son for our redemption. I thank You for all the unspeakable benefits that come to us through His death.

O Lord Jesus Christ, my only Hope and Savior, I cast myself at Your footstool and beseech You to save and bless me. Make me to know more of my sin. May Your precious blood answer for all my guilt. May Your blessed Spirit ever dwell within me, and make me holy both in body and soul.

O Lord, in the days of Your flesh You received *sinners* and ate with them. It is thus that I come to You. I am sinful and vile, and have no good thing to bring to You. I come not unto You trusting in my own righteousness, but in Your great mercy. I am not worthy so much as to gather up the *crumbs* beneath Your table. But I flee to You, and I know that You will not reject me. Oh, cast me not away from Your presence — but take me as I am, and make me all You would have me to be. Give me true profit from this holy feast; strengthen my faith and increase my love. Nourish me with all goodness, and make me bold and faithful in confessing Your name. Help me to crucify the flesh, and to subdue every sinful passion. Enable me to live henceforth only to serve and please You. O Lord, hear this my petition, and make me a true and faithful believer, for Your name's sake. Amen.

**4. The Feast of Remembrance**

The ordinances of the Gospel are very precious and helpful when rightly used. They are *golden pitchers*, and, when filled with the living water, they minister refreshment and strength to the soul. But we need the exercise of faith and love — we need a right knowledge of the purpose for which they were given — we need to keep close to the teaching of the Scriptures, that we may obtain a true view of the way they bring comfort and help to the believer.

This is especially the case with respect to the Lord's Supper. It may easily be perverted. Unless used aright, it may prove a hindrance instead of a help in drawing nearer to the Savior.

**1. Remember that this is an *ordinance*, and not a *sacrifice*.** It is in no sense a sacrifice, except as a part of that sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving which the Christian ought ever to be offering. There was nothing *sacrificial* about the ordinance at its institution. It was in the *upper room*, and not in the temple — it was on a *table*, and not on an altar. Nor is there in its present observance anything of a sin-atoning offering or sacrifice. There is no *priest* to offer it, for Christ's ministers in the New Testament are never once spoken of as such. There is no *altar*, for it is the "Lord's Table" around which Christ's people meet. There is no victim, for the body of Christ is in Heaven and not on earth.

Remember, then, that the Lord's Supper is an ordinance, and not a sacrifice. The original meaning of the word "ordinance" teaches the believer a precious lesson. It was the word used for the oath of fidelity which the Roman soldier took to the Emperor — it may therefore remind you how faithful each believer is bound to be as a soldier of the great Captain of his salvation. But in its present meaning it reminds us that *the Lord's Supper is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace*. Through that which we see, we are to look up to that which we do not see. Through the outward ordinance, we are to look up to the invisible Savior, and learn more to rely upon Him.

Remember, also, that the Lord's Supper is the ordinance of *remembrance*. Its main design is to lead Christians to remember Christ — it is to lead us directly to Himself. We are not to rest in the ordinance, but to fix every thought on Jesus and His dying love*. When you go to His Table, think on Gethsemane and Calvary.* Ponder all that He has wrought for your salvation, that as you dwell upon His tender pity and loving-kindness, your hearts may burn within you, and every power of your soul may bless His holy name.

Be careful ever to keep this in mind. Only in proportion as the Lord's Supper leads you straight to Christ Himself, and binds you closer to Him, do you reap its true profit. Too often Christ Himself, His love, His promise, His free salvation — is obscured, rather than set forth in this ordinance.

"I grieve over my church," said an aged Christian lady, with reference to a church where extreme views and practices prevailed: "they have hidden Christ behind the altar!" Alas, in many cases it is too true! The table is changed into an altar, and then, behind a cloud of ceremonies, behind exaggerated and unscriptural views of this ordinance — Christ Himself — the crucified, risen, exalted, glorified Savior, the living Friend, the great High Priest of His Church — is too often left in the background. The Sacrament is frequented; but the Savior Himself is forgotten, or not enthroned supreme on the altar of the heart.

**2. This ordinance is a Parable — and not a Miracle.** As there is nothing *sacrificial* — so is there nothing *miraculous* about it. The bread remains bread — and the wine remains wine. There is no change in the elements, neither is there anything added to them. They are set apart for a sacred purpose; but neither the words of Christ Himself in the first instance, nor the words of His ministers now, effect any change in their substance.

When people bow the head and worship as if Christ's body and blood were present on the Lord's Table — it is as truly idolatry, as if they worshiped an idol of gold or silver.

A caution is needed in these days, and may be a word to guide the young believer. Never bow the head to anything you can see — whether it be to the elements in the Sacrament, or the so-called altar, or to any image of Christ or Virgin or Saint — whatever it is, never bow down to it! "Flee from idolatry." Shrink from any approach to so great a sin. Watch against the first step to that which is dishonoring to God, and so distinctly forbidden in the second commandment and throughout His Word.

But if the Lord's Supper is in no sense a miracle — it is *an exquisite parable of redeeming grace*. It is a lively representation, a beautiful type and emblem of the marvelous love of Christ.

It is said that our Lord's words, "This is my body," ought, without question or dispute, to make us believe a *presence* in the elements. But what are words, except to show the mind of Him who utters them? And must we not judge one part of our Lord's teaching by another? And was not our Lord's teaching from first to last ever by *figure* and *parable*, leading those who heard Him to further inquiry and thought?

And was it not so very evidently in this case? Our Lord takes into His hand the bread, and, having broken it, He gives it to each one of them, saying, "Take, eat — this is my body which is given unto you; do this in remembrance of Me."

As if He would say, "See here in *type* and *figure,* my sacred body. Now you see it whole, active, living — but as I break this bread before your eyes, so before another day pass shall you see this body of mine bruised, wounded, torn, broken. The nails shall tear these hands and feet. The cruel scourge shall plough deep furrows on my back. The spear shall pierce this side. And it is all for you. Others may give you less costly gifts — but I give you myself, my body to bleed and die for your salvation. And whensoever you eat this bread, ever think of my dying love, and nourish your souls by trusting in my finished sacrifice."

So likewise was it when our Lord gave them the cup: "Drink of this, for this cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins. This do you as oft as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." (Compare [Matthew 26:27](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%2026.27), [28](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matthew%2026.28); [1 Corinthians 11:25](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor%2011.25).)

As if He would say, "You know how in olden times the blood was perpetually shed. Moses took the blood of beasts and sprinkled both the book and the people. Aaron went into the Holy Place every year, with the blood of the sacrifices. But all this could never give peace with God, for such sacrifices could never take away sin. But now I make a *new covenant* with you — I offer you, in my blood, free and complete remission. And this cup is a figure of this new covenant, and of the blood which seals it — this wine poured forth testifies of the blood which tomorrow shall be shed for the sins of the world. It tells of that *crimson stream of salvation* in which the souls of my people shall be cleansed. Therefore drink of it, every one of you. Take this cup and drink this wine, and thus give a pledge that you accept my covenant and trust only in my precious blood."

Taken in this sense, all is plain and clear. There is nothing forced or unnatural about it. It is exactly in a line with our Lord's other teaching, and it gives us a very blessed view of the work Christ wrought on our behalf.

**3. This ordinance is a blessed Channel of grace — but not the Fountain of grace.** You are not to regard the ordinance as *necessarily* bringing grace to the soul — you are not to put the ordinance in the place of the Spirit, who alone can quicken and sanctify the believer. At the same time it is a channel of rich blessing to all who come to it in the spirit of faith and prayer. While we deny that there is grace in the elements, we most strongly affirm that there is grace to be found in *a believing use* of the ordinance.

But it is all the work of the Holy Spirit. You obey Christ's command, you come to His Table, you eat the bread and drink the wine — and Christ, by His Spirit, draws near. You have fellowship with Him in His sufferings. Your heart is cheered with a fresh sense of His pardoning mercy. You see His love in a clearer light; you are strengthened inwardly, as by faith you feed on His body once given for you. You are comforted, as you trust more fully in His cleansing blood. You know not how, but Christ has been by your side manifesting Himself to you as He does not to the world. You go back to the common duties of life with His peace in your heart, and longing more than ever to live to His glory.

*But how may you gain most of this true and lasting benefit?* How may you come to this ordinance, that you may grow in grace and have nearer fellowship with Christ?

Secure a time for quiet, thoughtful communing with your own heart, *before* drawing near to the Table. Contemplate your daily life, and inquire whether you are walking consistently with your high calling. Have you been pressing forward — or halting along the way? Has any special sin been drawing you back? Then, in the remembrance of what you are, hiding nothing and excusing nothing — yield yourself afresh to the Savior without the least reserve. Fall low, and look up. Be humble, and yet trust the Lord fully. He will accept you and He will help you. Therefore "be not afraid, only believe."

Make it your habit to come *regularly*. Whether it be each month, or more frequently, have your fixed time for coming, and let nothing but the most urgent necessity hinder you. Do not keep back because of your failings — let them rather lead you to seek more strength by coming. Do not stay away because you do not feel as you desire. It is a great snare to dwell upon feelings — they are very changeable, but Christ is ever the same. When you seem to lack all right feeling, throw yourself on Christ, and He will in due season supply your need.

When you come to the Holy Communion, draw near in a prayerful, trustful spirit. Come, ever taking the lowest place — sit down in the lowest room. What are you but a sinner — a saved sinner at best? "What do you have, that you did not receive?" Still, come praying, trusting, expecting. The Lord delights to fill empty vessels, and to make the weakest and most unworthy monuments, to His praise and glory. Open your mouth wide, and He will fill it.

And when the Communion season is over, take heed to your heart, that you lose not the blessing you may have gained.

Keep the fire burning;
stir up the grace that is in you;
watch against declension in prayer;
study the Word diligently;
be faithful to your King, and work and live for Him;
cherish a spirit of genuine, sincere love to your fellow-believers. So shall you approve yourselves to be the Lord's. He will ever be with you, and set you before His face forever.

**PRAYER**O Lord Jesus, the Hope of Your people, I come to Your Table, for You have bidden me. Teach me ever to come aright. May the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, reign in my heart. Give me the spirit of wisdom and understanding, that I may know Your truth. Fill me with the fear and love of Your holy name.

Blessed Savior, draw very near to me, and make this ordinance a means of blessing to my soul. Bring me into closer fellowship with Yourself. My soul cleaves unto the dust. Oh, quicken me, that I may love You with my whole heart. Grant unto me the grace of the covenant which You have made in Your blood. Remember no more against me, my sins and iniquities. Write Your law in my heart, that I may not depart from You. Anoint me with an unction from above, and keep me faithful to You forever by Your mighty power. O Lord, I beseech You, bless those who draw near with me to Your Table. Knit us together in Christian charity, and make us to love one another with a pure heart fervently. Stir up Your faithful people, that they may abound in every good word and work.

Hear these my prayers — and when You hear forgive, and do for us according to Your mercy, for Your name's sake. Amen.

**5. Infinite Condescension**

"Jesus got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him." [John 13:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%2013.4-5)

In many ways does Christ, before His death, set forth His endless love to His redeemed people. The Supper is ended, but not the love that appoints it. He abides for a short season longer with the little flock, and strengthens them for the coming trial. He tells them . . .
of the Father's house,
of the Comforter's presence,
of His own abiding with them, and
of the peace which the world gives not.

He gives them a sample of His future intercession in the prayer which He offers on their behalf.

But in addition to this, we see Him performing an act of very peculiar kindness and condescension — He washes the feet of His disciples. I know nothing more touching in the whole story of our Lord's life, and the incident abounds in precious instruction for the faithful believer.

The Master leaves the Table.He girds himself with a towel. He pours water into a basin, and goes from one to another of that little company, washing their feet and wiping them with the towel with which He is girded.

Once we read of a sinful woman washing the feet of Christ with her tears, and wiping them with the hairs of her head. But now it is the other way. It is not the sinner washing the feet of the Savior — but the holy Savior washing the feet of His sinful disciples. There was such an exceeding depth of tender, considerate kindness in the act. Christ was just entering upon the dark night of His Agony and Passion. Before His mind were Gethsemane, and the house of Caiaphas, and Pilate's judgment hall, and Calvary with its cruel cross. Yet, in the presence of these unparalleled sorrows and sufferings, His heart is set upon showing kindness to those who followed Him. He will show them that He is mindful not only of their salvation, but of their comfort and refreshment.

Remember it, Christian, for Christ is still the same. He cares for you in little matters as well as in great. Believe it, that in His sympathy and love, He will bestow upon you the lesser mercies of His providence, as well as the greater blessings of His grace. Learn to bring to Him each want, each necessity. Though it may seem trifling in the eye of others, He will not disregard your petition.

But no less in this narrative do we see the depth of Christ's humility and condescension. He had said, "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." And again, "For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves." [Luke 22:27](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke%2022.27)

And by this deed of love He showed how true were these sayings. He remembered at that hour, the glory He had left, and to which He was about to return. He was fully conscious of the supreme authority with which the Father had invested Him, for He knew that the Father had given all things into His hands. Yet He stoops to this lowly deed of kindness.

It was the work of a *slave boy*, or of the lowest menial — to attend to the feet of the guests. So we read of Abigail expressing her willingness to serve David in any capacity: "Behold, let your handmaid be a servant, to wash the feet of the servants of my Lord." (1 Samuel 25:41.) So we read of the Baptist reckoning himself unworthy "to unloose the latchet of Christ's shoe." Yet this position Christ willingly takes. He condescends to men of low estate; yes, and performs for them the very lowest office.

Never before had Christ been so glorious in grace and in humility. The Lord of glory, the King of angels — stoops to wash the feet of a few poor Galilean fishermen. We read, in the Book of Revelation, of Christ being clothed in a garment of royal majesty, and girt about with a golden belt. But in this laying aside His garment — in this girding with a towel for such an act of love, is there not something more glorious still? Never would the disciples forget that hour. All through their pilgrimage, they would ever remember the touch of those gentle, loving hands. Nor should we forget it either. It abides recorded in the Word as an everlasting memorial of the humility of the Lord Jesus.

What a lesson for each true believer, for each sincere follower of the Lamb! Let us speak to our own hearts as we ponder it — let us learn the life we ought to live.

Yes, if I am Christ's, I must *learn* of Him. I must make Him *my Pattern*. I must *walk in His footsteps*. Many a costly garment has been worn by the rich and great. But was ever any garment so beautiful as that towel — the token of the greatest humility the world had ever seen?

I, too, must be *clothed with humility*. I must watch against pride in any shape. Pride of dress, pride of personal appearance, pride of rank, or birth, or wealth, or gifts — all this I must trample under my feet. I must sit down in the lowest place. I must be willing to sacrifice my own right or position, when it may be for the glory of God or the good of His Church. I must be lowly in service, willing to do any work to which my Lord may call me. I must be willing that others should rise above me. If I would be greatest — I must be content to be the least.

The *violet* is one of the most fragrant flowers — but it grows low, and often hides itself from view. The *ear of corn*, when ripe and most precious, bends down its head to the ground.

Great is the strength of humility. I read, in the old classic fable, of one whose strength was renewed whenever he touched the ground — his enemy could only destroy him when he lifted him up high in the air. So Satan can only prevail when he can lift me up in pride. If only I am humble, he can never harm me. For God resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble.

Great likewise is the reward of humility. It shall sit down in the highest mansion of the redeemed — it shall taste even now, the sweetest fruits of the Tree of Life.

But we find a break in the story. Peter stops for a moment the completion of Christ's work. His love, his zeal, his view of Christ's glory, yes, and his rashness and self-will come in: "Ah, it is too much. I the disciple, You the Master! I the sinner, You the Savior. Lord You shall never wash my feet!" There was much here that was commendable. But mingled with this, *self* was lurking beneath: "I know better than Christ. This act does not befit Your majesty or glory."

Christ answers very tenderly, as if He would say, "I have a purpose you know not. Leave me alone to act as I think best. By-and-by I will explain it all. You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

Christian, learn the lesson our Lord teaches. You must not *dictate* to the All-wise — you must not interfere with His working. In the most unlikely ways, He will fulfill His bright designs of mercy. By a path you know not and would never have chosen — He will perform that He has promised. Gladly leave all in His hands.

Though it be the *storm* that wrecks your treasure here,
though it be the *mystery* you cannot fathom,
though it be the *sorrow* that well-near breaks your heart,
though it be a *loss* or a *disappointment* that blasts all your fair prospects and makes life a desert,
though it be the *pain* that calls forth many a groan
— yet in the future all will be clear, and as bright as day. He has led you forth by the *right* way — that you may go to the city of habitation.

In Peter's answer, we see nothing but self-will. He sets his will against Christ's, and refuses to permit Him to fulfill the task He has chosen. In the original the language is very strong: "As long as the world lasts — You shall never wash my feet!" Ah, bold and presumptuous speech! It was now all self — self — wretched self. But *self* must have a fall. Self-will is self-destruction. So Christ rebukes him sharply: "Unless I wash you — you have no part with Me." As if He would say, "Then I must disown and reject you. Unless you yield to my will, you can no longer have part in my kingdom."

In a moment all is changed. The thought of being cast off is intolerable. "Nay, nay, this must never be! If this is the alternative, let Christ do as He will with me — let Him take me to the bath and wash me from head to foot. To be His, and His forever — this is all my salvation and all my desire. Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!"

Nay, there is no need. He who has been in the bath in the morning, needs at night but the washing of the feet, from the dust that through the day may have clung to him. "A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean." [John 13:10](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%2013.10)

In this subject there yet lies in the background precious instruction as to the cleansing from sin. Meanwhile let us carry away the twofold lessons of *humility* and *self-renunciation*. We must rejoice to be nothing — and let Christ's will be supreme.

Renew my will from day to day,
Blend it with Yours, and take away
All that now makes it hard to say,
'May Your will be done.'

**PRAYER**O GOD, my Father, behold me in Your mercy and loving-kindness. Give me the anointing of Your Spirit, that I may perfectly know You, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. Lead me to the Savior's footstool, and teach me to consider Him in His life and death.

I thank You, O merciful Redeemer, for Your endless love to Your people. I thank You for stooping so low in Your pity for Your disciples. You are ever the same, yesterday, today, and forever. O make me truly to believe in Your care. In every trial and sorrow, may I trust in You. Supply every lack of my soul, and give me all that is profitable for me in this present life. Undertake for me in everything, both great and small — and in every hour of darkness make me patient, in hope of Your coming and kingdom.

O God, grant me by Your Spirit to follow in the footsteps of Christ. Give unto me the spirit of meekness and of true humility. You dwell with the humble and contrite in heart — make me to be such indeed. Break down my pride, and lay low every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of You. Make me more thoughtful for the needs of others, and willing to do for them that which lies in me.

Help me, O Father, and fulfill my humble desires, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

**6. Washed and Forgiven**

"Jesus got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him." [John 13:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%2013.4-5)

In the lowly act of *condescending love* which Christ performed in the Upper room, I see another lesson for the consolation of the whole Church. It is a true and blessed type of His redeeming work. It tells me what as a sinner I so greatly need — and how the blessing may be mine. If I would indeed be a worthy believer, if I would by faith be nourished by the body once given for me, and drink to my soul's health that precious blood which was shed for me — I may learn the secret here. Let me then tarry for a while in the Upper room, and learn for my everlasting peace, what my Lord would teach me.

I see here *Everlasting Love* stooping low to cleanse and sanctify His people. Christ lays aside His garments, taking the position of a servant. He takes the towel and the basin, and then washes His disciples' feet.

What was this, but an emblem of His whole work? He came from Heaven, He laid aside His Divine glory, and made Himself of no reputation. He took upon Himself man's nature, that He might live on earth as the servant of Jehovah, — yes, more, that He might work and suffer and die in the service of man. He humbled Himself to the death of the cross. He was despised, pierced, bruised, smitten. And why? Was it not that He might cleanse and sanctify His Church, and present her at last, without spot or blemish, to the Father?

I see too the *individual application of His redeeming work*. He washes the feet of the disciples one by one. He goes to James and John, to Philip and Andrew and Peter, and the rest — and thus manifests His special, peculiar love to each. It is thus with Christ now — He deals with man each alone by himself. He takes them as He took the deaf man aside from the multitude. He says to each one, as to Peter, "If I do not wash you — you have no part with Me."

Nor is this the reception of baptism by water — the rite may be duly administered — but the inward and spiritual grace altogether lacking.

Nor is it the washing of an outward reformation — certain sins in the life may be cast off — and yet the heart remain without any true spiritual renewal.

The true washing which brings salvation is when the soul is led to heart-repentance and living faith in Christ's finished work.

Christ awakens and convinces the soul of sin, by the Holy Spirit. He leads the sinner to acknowledge his lost condition and to cry, "Unclean! Unclean!" He leads him on to discover that these is no salvation but in Him — and that His precious blood-shedding is enough to remove every stain of guilt. Thus is he washed, justified, accepted, saved.

We read of *Naaman* laying aside his robes of state, and washing seven times in Jordan — and then his flesh is clean as a little child.

So the sinner comes down from the chariot of pride, and, casting off every vestige of self-glorying — is washed and cleansed perfectly in the precious blood.

It may be well to explain further what is intended by washing in the blood. Of course there is nothing material about it. If you could have been sprinkled with the blood which actually flowed from the crucified Savior — it would profit you nothing! If it were possible, as some teach, that you could now, by a miraculous change in the wine, drink of the same blood — it could be of no avail for the cleansing of the soul.

The blood is the life. To be washed in the blood is to **have your sins purged** by Christ's life being given instead of your's. He gave His life as the sacrifice for your sin, and the Father accepted this on your behalf. You rejoice in this, you place your full confidence in Christ alone and in His all-sufficient offering — and you are washed in His blood and forever justified. Mark this well, for it is the very hinge and turning-point of salvation.

Your sin is ever before your eyes. Pride, selfishness, lust, worldliness, ingratitude to your God and Savior — these and many other sins trouble and burden your conscience. But by-and-by the light shines further, and you see the value of Christ's work. You trust in Him who died in your stead — you cry to Him, "O Lord, I flee to the refuge of Your mercy! I rely upon Your death! I cast myself upon Your promise. Let Your sufferings be instead of mine — Your death instead of my death. In You alone is my hope and salvation."

Dust and ashes is my name,
My all is sin and misery.
Friend of sinners, spotless Lamb,
Your blood was shed for me!

Thus are you thoroughly cleansed from guilt. Your conscience is at rest. You have peace with God. You are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus.

It may be helpful to consider **the perfection of this cleansing**.

A beautiful thought is thrice given to us, with reference to it. It is compared to the snow as it comes from above: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." ([Isaiah 1:18](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa%201.18).) "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." ([Psalm 51:7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps%2051.7).)

Look at that field on which the snow has lately fallen — everything is covered — wrapped up in the fair mantle of snow which has descended upon it. Clods of earth, stones, weeds, blades of grass — all are hidden, not one is to be seen. In every direction nothing scarcely can be seen but the pure, white snow.

And is it not thus with you, believer, in the sight of God? God looks upon you in Christ, as if you had never sinned. Your earthliness, your hardness of heart, your follies, your mistakes, your sins, your failings, your ingratitude and your utter unworthiness — all are alike forgiven and forgotten! You stand before God in the Divine righteousness of the Son of God, perfectly justified in Him from all charge and accusation of evil.

Mark likewise the **exceeding beauty** of the newly-fallen snow. It fringes the branches of the leafless trees, and forms a canopy over the evergreens. It makes often a sort of terrace over the roofs of our houses and trees, and traces many a fantastic outline in our gardens. Scarcely any natural object has more beauty than sometimes we have seen in the snow, especially when the Sun has just risen upon it.

And is there not precious truth to be found here? If trusting only in the Savior — if His righteousness and blood are upon you by faith — then are you fair and beautiful in God's sight. True, in yourself there is nothing but defilement. Yet, as one with Christ, you are perfect through His loveliness which He has put upon you. The beauty of the Lord God is upon you. The Sun of Righteousness has arisen with healing in His wings — and your Father delights in you — yes, and rejoices over you with joy and singing.

Side by side with this perfect cleansing of justification, Christ **renews** and **sanctifies** the soul that trusts in Him. He purifies the heart by faith. He makes the Word effectual by the Spirit, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. He transforms the character, mortifying the love of sin and making the believer desire above all things to be holy and like the Savior.

"Lord, not my feet only — but my hands and my head!" The Christian would have every member consecrated to the Lord's service and freed from the power of evil.

O Lord, Your heavenly grace impart,
And fix my frail, inconstant heart.
Henceforth my chief desire shall be
To dedicate myself to Thee —
To Thee, my God, to Thee.

The story of the Upper Chamber teaches me yet another lesson of great consequence. **The believer needs daily renewal and daily cleansing**. He abides in a state of justification — yet, for the peace of his conscience, for abiding in fellowship with God, for the maintenance of humility and self-abasement — he needs daily to confess sin, and daily to experience afresh the cleansing power of His blood.

The traveler, though in the bath at the commencement of the day — yet needs the dust washed off from the feet at night. Thus the pardoned, justified believer *needs daily to be cleansed afresh from the sin and evil which he may have contracted.*

In a large Hotel in Sweden, "the day's reckoning" was placed at night on the bed-room door. So the Christian should night by night recall the faults and failings of the day, and then bring them for pardon to the Savior.

Christian, go often to your Savior. Let nothing be permitted to remain on the conscience. When a still, small voice tells you of sin, however small it may seem — look at once to Christ for pardon and deliverance. Keep close to Him, and ever look to Him for the cleansing that you need.

One thought more. *Let every believer be unwearied in praise and gratitude for the inestimable benefit of salvation through the blood.* In words not my own, I would remind you of the spirit that should be nourished by every child of God:

"I confess that to me there is nothing in all creation so precious as the blood of Christ. I would rather part with all I have, than part with what I have in this precious blood. I have found in the blood of Christ — pardon, and peace, and everlasting felicity, and blessings, and gifts too vast, too numerous to estimate. I look *inward* upon this sin-polluted heart, and by this blood I see all my guilt removed. I look *backward* on my sin-stained life, which cries justly for vengeance — and by this blood I see my sins expiated, and the cry of accusation silenced forever. I look *forward* to the hour of death, when a lifetime's sins might compass me about in crowding legions — but I see them all scattered and dispersed like a summer cloud — all by this precious blood. I look *downward* into the dark pit, where wrath and wretchedness are mingled in the sinner's doom — my own just and proper doom — but in this blood I find the ransom that delivers me from the wrath to come. I look *upward* — upward to the pure and hallowed scenes of Heaven, to the throne of God and the abode of spotless angels — and by that blood I find a full and sufficient title, by which I shall enter into the Heaven of heavens."

"Heaven, it seems to me, has no song loud enough, sweet enough to celebrate the praises of Him who shed His blood for me! It is the song of the saved on earth: 'Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His blood.' It is the song of the redeemed in heaven — the company who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb: 'You are worthy — for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood.'"

Glory be to Jesus,
Who, in bitter pains,
Poured for me the life-blood
From His sacred veins.

Grace and life eternal
In that blood I find.
Blessed be His compassion,
Infinitely kind.

**PRAYER**O merciful God, I thank You for Your inestimable love in my redemption. I thank You for salvation through the death of Christ, and for all the benefits purchased for me by His blood. O Father, I am truly guilty before You. I have sinned against Heaven, and in Your sight. I have broken Your laws. I have forgotten Your love. I have been ungrateful for Your rich and abounding mercies. But I come to You for the pardon which You have promised. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity in the *Fountain* which has been opened for sinners. Forgive all the sins that are past, and reckon them no more against me. Cleanse me from all my present failings and infirmities, and cover me with the spotless robe of Christ. Sprinkle me day by day with the atoning blood, and make me to hate the sins which crucified my Lord.

I beg You, O Father, make me henceforth to be wholly Yours. I am not my own — for You have redeemed me with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect! ([1 Peter 1:18-19](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Pet%201.18-19).) Help me to praise and bless You with joyful heart, and to yield myself entirely to You. May every member be given up to Your service. In health and in sickness, in life and in death — may I glorify Your holy name, and do that which is pleasing in Your sight.

O Lord Jesus, keep me from all evil, and preserve me blameless to Your kingdom. By Your agony and bloody sweat, by Your cross and passion, by Your precious death and burial, by Your glorious resurrection and ascension — good Lord deliver me. Amen.

**7. Dark Gethsemane**

"Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called *Gethsemane*." [Matthew 26:36](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%2026.36)

"My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death!" [Matthew 26:38](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%2026.38)

"And being in anguish, He prayed more earnestly, and His sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground!" [Luke 22:44](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke%2022.44)

It were well for the faithful believer often to frequent this sacred spot. It was a garden to which Jesus often resorted with His disciples. And as in quiet thought and meditation we go thither also, we may learn in His name to overcome the Tempter and to be partakers of His sufferings.

Go to dark Gethsemane,
You that feel the Tempter's power:
Your Redeemer's conflict see,
Watch with Him one bitter hour,
Turn not from His griefs away,
Learn from Him to watch and pray.

Jesus had loved the *stillness*, the *retirement*, the *loneliness* of Gethsemane. What hours of peaceful communion did He there enjoy with His heavenly Father! What blessed repose for His wearied spirit did He there find, after the noise of the city and the strife of tongues!

The contradiction of sinners,
the sights and sounds of evil around,
the mistakes, the failings, the slowness of the disciples
— all these must often have pained and distressed Him. But He found *refreshment in solitude*. Alone, with His Father, He found peace and consolation.

And you, believer, may do so likewise — you may find joy and comfort in some secret pavilion of your Father's presence. Go alone, and shut your door, forbid worldly scenes, and, as far as possible, worldly thoughts to intrude — and there, in conscious nearness to your Savior and your God, look up for strength to maintain your warfare with the powers of evil.

And if you have a garden, or *some retired nook* to which you can go away from the crowd, away from the haunts of men, hallow it by meditation and prayer.

The calm retreat, the quiet shade,
With prayer and praise agree;
And seem by Your sweet bounty made
For those who follow Thee.

There, if Your Spirit touch the soul
And grace her mean abode,
Oh, with what joy and peace and love
She communes with her God!

"Blessed Redeemer, when I am in a garden, may I remember the ardent love You showed in Gethsemane! May the labors and enjoyment of a garden be sanctified by this recollection! *O heavenly Gardener, happy is the heart which is Your garden, watered by Your blood.* O break the rocks, root out the thorns, and make my heart a fruitful soil. Sow the good seed of Your Word therein; water it with Your grace; shine on it, O Sun of Righteousness; blow on it with the soft gales of Your Spirit — that the spices thereof may flow forth."

*Eden* and *Gethsemane*, each a garden — but what a contrast do they present! In the one, Adam tastes the fruit which was good for food and pleasant to the eye; and, in doing so, brought on himself and his posterity the bitterness of sorrow, shame, and death. In the other, the second Adam begins to taste the bitter cup of woe and anguish, that His Church might reap the fruits of endless joy and life everlasting. From Eden, Adam goes forth as a culprit, under the severe rebuke and judgment of the God whose command he had disobeyed. From Gethsemane, Christ goes forth, as bold as a lion, to die and to bring in deliverance and everlasting Righteousness for all His spiritual seed.

But let me draw near — let me behold this wondrous sight. If Moses took off his shoe when the Lord came near at the burning bush, still more should I regard Gethsemane as holy ground.

I see the Redeemer of sinners prostrate on the cold earth. I hear a groan, a sorrowful complaint. Never before has Christ complained but for the sin, and impenitence, and unbelief of those around. But now it is otherwise. There is deep soul agony; there is sore dismay; there is darkness that may be felt.

In a vision, a horror of great darkness fell on Abraham, foretelling the bondage of his seed. For three days a strange, mysterious darkness fell upon Egypt. Dark and gloomy was the shadow cast by those olive trees in the Garden. But a deeper darkness overshadowed the spirit of the Savior. Well might He employ the language of the Psalmist: "Fearfulness and trembling have come upon Me, and a horrible dread has overwhelmed Me!"

For this hour He had come into the world — for this hour He had lived and prayed. To enter upon His work, He had eagerly trodden the path to Jerusalem, going before His disciples so hastily that they were astonished. But now He starts back from the path He has chosen. At least there is a *solemn pause* before He advances. His soul is amazed and very heavy. He prays in an agony. The conflict is great, and His sweat is as drops of blood falling to the ground.

Who can pierce the darkness?

Who can tell the secret of that hour?

Who can explain the cause of that mysterious agony?

Was it the last struggle with the great adversary? In the wilderness He had met the Tempter, and thrice had triumphed. When Peter would have Him put aside the cross, He discerned the Tempter's form: "Get behind Me, Satan!" and at once rejected the thought. Is it now the final struggle?

Or is it that, in some way altogether beyond our thought — sin, our sin — is touching the Holy One? Is it the guilt of mankind oppressing our Surety — the judgment and the wrath we had merited, descending upon Him? Who shall answer? Who has known the mind of the Lord? Rather let us worship and adore.

O sinless Lamb, O Lord Jesus, I bow before You, and praise You for Your love! What marvels do I behold!

You, the source of all joy — are borne down with heavy sorrow!

You, the source of all comfort — faint for lack of it.

You, the Fountain of Life — wrestle with death.

You, the highest Majesty, before whom Principalities and Powers bow — bow down Yourself to the earth before Your Father.

You, before Whom cherubim and seraphim veil their faces — lie in the dust and tread the winepress of wrath for man.

Ah, I learn here the fearful reality of **sin**! Sin, sin! What have you done! This is your work. Never, but for sin, would we have seen the holy, spotless Savior thus enduring unspeakable sorrows. Never, but for sin, would Christ have drunk the cup of suffering, wrath, and death. Can it be a light thing which cost the Son of God such groans, such tears, such dismay?

O that I may abhor the faintest shadow of evil! O that I may shrink from the least taint of *this deadly thing*. Who can utter all that sin has done? The whole creation groans beneath the burden. Countries are filled with cruelty and oppression. Homes are made wretched by its power. Ten thousand times ten thousand hearts it has crushed and broken. On account of it, myriads of death-beds have been without one ray of hope — -and unnumbered souls have perished eternally.

But chief of all — who can tell the woe, the anguish, the misery it brought upon the Son of God? May God give me His grace, that I may . . .
hate it with perfect hatred,
mourn over it with godly sorrow, and
flee from it as the greatest and only evil!

But I would learn from Gethsemane a lesson of **prayer**. It was our Lord's command to His disciples, as they entered it: "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation." But they fail. Some little solace would it have been to the Savior in His agony, had He found them earnest in pleading for themselves, and in true sympathy with Him in His hour of sorrow. But not so.

What do we find? The Son of God in an agony; Satan, with his artillery, preparing to attack the Shepherd and His flock; the enemies of Christ awake, and close at hand to bind Him and carry Him away to Annas — and the disciples asleep!

Poor, frail man! well is it that you have a pitiful and compassionate Savior! While He rebukes, He yet is ready to excuse and forgive. "Could you not watch with Me one hour?" "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Truly does Christ fulfill that which was spoken of Him: "A bruised reed will He not break, nor quench the smoking flax."

But while the disciples fail — Christ fails not; and His prayer may well teach us how to pray.

Let me copy His *humble reverence*. Christ fell on the ground as He prayed; and let me bend low before my Father in heaven — let there be the *attitude* as well as the *spirit* of true devotion. In the house of God, and in the secret chamber, it is right to bend as we pour out our confessions and prayers before the Mercy Seat.

Let me copy the *fervency* of Christ's prayer. I would be distinct, and hearty, and real, in whatever I desire and ask of God. Whatever is my request — the removal of trial, the bestowment of temporal good, the forgiveness of sin, more grace and power in the Spirit — whatever it is — I would realize my urgent need, and ask for it with earnest and heartfelt longings. In the power of the Spirit, let prayer be *prayer indeed*. No mere utterance of words can be accepted as prayer by Him who ever looks on the heart.

Let me catch, too, the *filial confidence* which is seen in Christ's prayer. I need the humility of a sinner — joined with the happy confidence of a little child. As one with Christ, accepted and highly favored in the beloved, I may go before God, crying, "Abba, Father!" *Even in seasons of deepest distress, I shall find peace while clinging fast to a Father's hand, resting in a Father's love, and telling out every care and trouble in a Father's ear.*

But with this there must be *perfect submission*. We must be willing to drink the cup even to the dregs — if it is our Father's will. We must not rebel or repine, if the petition is answered otherwise than we have desired. We must say, "Nevertheless, not as I will — but as You will."

His will is love;
His will is unerring wisdom;
His will is covenant faithfulness and truth;
His will is our everlasting peace and glory —
and, therefore, we must be still in perfect submission.

"I would lie still,
Do Your holy will."

And we must *continue* and *persevere*. We mark the thrice-repeated petition — we hear the same words yet again and again, until the conflict is over. So must we pray always, and not faint. My Father hears my first cry for help — yet He would have me pray on, though I see not how my petition is answered.

Large and abundant answers shall reward those who are constant and persevering in prayer. "For the vision is yet for the appointed time — it hastens toward the goal and it will not fail. Though it tarries, wait for it — for it will certainly come, it will not delay." [Habakkuk 2:3](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Hab%202.3)

Christ's prayer was heard — an angel was sent to strengthen Him. And in going forth so *calmly*, so *willingly* to the scene of trial and of death, His request was plainly fulfilled: the Father's will was done, and He rejoiced to do it. "The cup which my Father has given Me — shall I not drink it?"

So, too, shall our desires be accepted and our prayers be fulfilled, in the very best way. We have an example in the Apostle Paul. Very beautiful is the parallel between Gethsemane and the narrative given in 2 Corinthians 12. Three times Paul prayed for the removal of the thorn — yet it remained; but grace was promised and was given: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

And the Apostle is content; yes, more than content. He believes the promise, and glories in infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon Him. Thus may we rest in God's dealings, and be assured that His way, not ours, is best.

Lamb of God, to You I cry!
By Your bitter agony,
By Your pangs to us unknown,
By Your heart's parting groan,
Lord, Your presence let me see,
Manifest Yourself to me.

Prince of life, to You I cry!
By Your glorious majesty,
By Your triumph o'er the grave,
Meek to suffer, strong to save.
Lord, Your presence let me see,
Manifest Yourself to me.

Lord of glory, God most high,
Man exalted to the sky —
With Your love my bosom fill,
Prompt me to perform Your will:
Then Your glory I shall see,
You will bring me home to Thee.

**8. The Crown of Thorns!**

"When they had twisted *a crown of thorns*, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying: Hail, King of the Jews!" [Matthew 27:29](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%2027.29)

It was a new and strange device. The Roman soldiers took a thorny shrub, and weaved together a few slender branches in the shape of a garland, and place it on the head of Jesus. A little before this our Lord had been scourged — the stripes which our sins deserved had fallen upon Him. Very soon His hands and feet will be pierced with nails — and the head of Christ has now its wounds also. That head so often bowed with grief for another's woe — that head which received from Mary's loving hand the precious ointment — now has, from the rough, unfeeling hands of the soldiery, this strange coronation. The cruel thorns pierce His brow, and there flows afresh the blood which redeems a lost world from sin. We have it in our hymn:

O sacred head! once wounded,
With grief and shame bowed down;
Now scornfully surrounded
With thorns — Your only crown!

O sacred head! what glory,
What bliss until now was Thine;
Yes, though despised and gory,
I joy to call You mine!

A Crown of Thorns! It took but a few moments to make — it was a token of contempt on the part of the soldiers. Yet would I prize it far more than any crown of human glory; for it tells me of Christ, and His grace and love: it opens out to me fresh views of His work; it brings me nearer to the Savior whom I love.

A Crown of Thorns! Let me be reminded of Paradise. When sin entered, the curse came; and, as a mark of it, the earth brought forth thorns and thistles. But Jesus had His crown of thorns, for He took upon Himself the curse. He was made a curse for our sake — that to us the blessing might come. His precious blood has washed the earth from its curse, so that to all who are in Him its fruits might come in blessing. Yes, by-and-by they shall have their part in the new Heaven and the new earth, where there is no more curse, but wherein dwells righteousness!

A Crown of Thorns! It well points out the path of Jesus as "the Man of Sorrows."

We have here and there a thorn that pierces the foot as we journey along our pilgrimage: we cannot escape it if we would.

There are briars besetting every path,
Which call for patient care:
There is a cross in every lot,
And an earnest need for prayer.

Paul had his thorn in the flesh — and each Christian, ever since Paul's day, has had his thorn too — perhaps many. But Christ alone had *the* crown of thorns; for He was the King of sufferers — the chief among all the children of sorrow and affliction. Ah, this shall be my refuge in days of trouble! Should my head be racked with pain — should it be fevered and restless through disease, or be wearied with anxiety and care — I will think of the thorn-crowned Savior! I will remember that in all my affliction, He was afflicted — and that He can sympathize for me in the least, or in the greatest sorrows.

I will remember, too, that the thorns He wore extracted the pain from mine. For to Him they came as part of the great atoning sacrifice for man's guilt — but to me pain and sorrow come as wholesome discipline, to heal the diseases of my soul. Thus the sight of Christ wearing His crown of thorns, shall confirm my faith in His sympathy, and shall enable me more patiently to bear my cross.

A Crown of Thorns! "He was despised and rejected by men." He enters into Jerusalem honored by the multitude who throng around Him. There is something like a day of triumph. The people greet Him as a King. They cut down branches and straw them in the way — they cast their garments beneath His feet. Young and old cry, "Hosanna!" and salute Him as David's royal Son.

But a few days have passed, and all is changed. The *fickle crowd* have joined His enemies, and the soldiers mock His kingly pretensions. Hence the crown of thorns; hence the purple robe — some cast-off rag of royalty; hence the reed put into His hand in place of a scepter. Yes, and they bow the knee in scorn, and cry, "Hail, King of the Jews!"

"You, Galilean — a King! You, doomed to die as a malefactor — a King! No palace, no throne, no army — yet a King!"

Thus they dishonor the Son of God. And He bore it all without a murmur or an angry word. Let Him but move the hand, but utter a word, but will it in His heart — and the whole host of them would have perished!

Strange and marvelous *forbearance*. Oh! that I could learn the lesson, and be more gentle, forgiving, and patient towards those who wrong or reproach me!

A Crown of Thorns! What was this but an acted prophecy of glory yet to come? The crown of thorns foreshadows the crown of glory — yes, the many crowns that Messiah shall wear!

"I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud sat one like the Son of Man, having a golden crown on His head." ([Revelation 14:14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev%2014.14).) "Now I saw Heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns!" [Revelation 19:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev%2019.11-12)

History tells of a Roman Consul who brought back from Macedonia four hundred golden crowns from the kingdoms and cities he had subdued. But more than these, shall be the crowns of our Emmanuel.

The Crown of creating power and wisdom,
the Crown of providence,
the Crown of earth and Heaven,
the Crown of universal dominion,
the Crown of a glorious redemption,
the Crown of victory over death, and Hell defeated
— all these shall grace the head of Him who shall be owned by all as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Nor these alone — for of the great multitude before the throne, all shall place on His head the crown of their salvation. It is His victory, and not theirs. "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us; but unto Your name give the praise, for Your glory and Your truth's sake!"

Meanwhile, until that day shall come, let us learn our duty and our privilege.

But there is a word for the Lord's own people. Christian, crown the Savior by your unlimited confidence. Trust Him always, and under all circumstances. Keep back nothing from Him, but leave everything in His hand. Let your fellow-Christians see that your faith in Him is a reality, and brings you support and comfort in the most adverse seasons. Make Him your Hiding-place in the day of trouble. Bring to Him day by day your wants and your worries, your cares and your fears — and leave them in His hand. Let every fresh temptation or trouble give you a fresh errand to His mercy-seat. Take the *key of promise*, and then, by the *hand of faith*, you can open wide the treasury of His boundless grace. Lean your weakness upon His strength, and in every conflict look to Him to put your adversary to flight.

Crown Him by joyful songs of praise and thanksgiving. Since He is never weary of blessing you — you should never tire of praising and magnifying His name. Give thanks always for all things in His name. Stir up your heart perpetually in this blessed exercise. Every note of praise, every breath of thanksgiving, every remembrance of His loving-kindness and mercy — brings honor to His name, and is pleasing and acceptable in His sight.

Crown Him by yielding yourself entirely and in everything, to His rule and direction. Submit to Jesus as *King indeed*. Open wide to Him, the gate of your heart, and let Him rule in every department of your life. Let His will be your law. Submit to His sway, and own Him Lord and Master.

Where you shall go,
what you shall do,
what vineyard-work you shall undertake,
what friendships you shall form,
what engagements you shall make and what decline,
what joys or sorrows may be your lot —
leave all to Him, and desire only to know and do and suffer all His holy will.

So shall He lead you in the paths of peace and holiness, and give you at length the crown of life, purchased for you by His bitter and painful Crown of Thorns!

**PRAYER**O Lord Jesus, by all Your pain and suffering, by all the scorn You endured — I beg You to make me faithful in Your service. Teach me to prize You and Your crown of thorns more than all the world can offer me. Reveal Yourself to me in all Your majesty and grace, that I may ever bow before You with deepest reverence.

O lowly King of peace, hold out to mo the scepter of Your love, and let me draw near and touch it by faith. You were clothed with a purple robe, in shame and contempt. O clothe me with the garments of salvation, and adorn me with the beauty of Your holy character. O Lord, may I behold and see the glory of Your love. May I trust You without a doubt, and cast upon You every trial and trouble, knowing that You care for me! Prepare my heart to welcome You at Your return. May I behold You, with joy, wearing the golden crown; and at that day, may You accept me to reign with You forever. Blessed Jesus, hear my prayer, for Your name's sake. Amen.

**9. The Love of the Cross**

"To know the love of Christ, which surpasses knowledge" [Ephesians 3:19](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph%203.19)

On leaving the harbor and setting out on a sea voyage in my early days, my ear was struck with the sailor's cry, "Ten fathoms deep!" "Twenty fathoms deep!" and so on, as they sounded the depth of water through which the ship was passing. By-and-by the cry ceases — they reach the *deep water* where they need to sound no longer.

And so it is with the love of Christ — it is a deep we cannot reach! Who can fathom it? Who can conceive it? Who can express it? The Apostle can only stand on the shore and bid us pray, that we may know its height and depth and breadth and length. And then he tells us that "it surpasses knowledge." But let us dwell upon this heavenly theme. The faithful believer will love to ponder it; for in doing so he will learn more of Christ, and trust Him more, and love Him more, and possess Him more fully as his own everlasting Friend.

The Comforter, the Holy Spirit, will be ready to enlighten and teach us; for it is His special office to take of the things of Christ, and reveal them to His people.

Christ died for sinners. Not for the good and worthy — but for the lost and perishing, did He lay down His precious life.

When we had no strength to do right or to keep God's holy law,
when we willingly went astray,
when our evil hearts hated the God of love,
when we were rebels and enemies against the great King —
then He loved us and died for us, and by His death opened to us the gate of everlasting life! "You see, at just the right time, when we were still *powerless*, Christ died for *the ungodly*. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still *sinners*, Christ died for us." [Romans 5:6-8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom%205.6-8)

Ah, here is one depth — a marvelous depth — love, pity, salvation, for the ungodly and for sinners! Need I doubt whether He died for me? Nay, surely, for I am a sinner, and more sinful than tongue can tell; and as a sinner only — I go to Him and trust in Him. And I would know and feel this more and more — so I go to His mercy-seat for the broken and contrite heart that befits a guilty one like me.

But what a death He died! To die a common death for others would be love — but He died ten thousand deaths in one!

I have read of a soldier giving a cup of water on the battle-field to a dying comrade, and losing his life for his kindness; for a shell burst near the spot where he was tarrying, and he was killed. Here was kindness and love — here was life sacrificed for another's good. But the suffering was short. Death came in a moment, and the faithful friend was gone.

But not so in the death of Christ. Wave upon wave, depth upon depth of unknown and unutterable woe — did He experience for our sakes. And was not each depth of woe, an evidence of the marvelous depth of His love toward us?

There are *four great depths in our Lord's Passion* — and, as we look down into each, though it is but a little way, may He teach us something of *the ocean-depths of His redeeming love!*

**1.** I think of **all He suffered in the flesh** during those long hours of the night and day, between His apprehension in the garden and the yielding up His Spirit to His Father on the cross.

How was that sinless body tormented with cruel anguish!

I see those *hands*, ever stretched out to bless, now pierced with nails!

I see those *feet*, which ever went about doing good, carrying consolation and healing to the sad and suffering — now transfixed to the cross!

I see that *brow*, so full of holy benevolence, now covered with blood!

I see the scourging, and the weariness, and those parched lips, and those hours of bitter agony, as life slowly ebbed away.

Ah, the suffering and the love it manifested! Who shall tell what it was!

In *my* hours of pain and sickness, let me ever look back to Calvary! As I trust in Him, shall I not regard the suffering that may be appointed me, as *light* beside His; and not now the punishment of my sin — but rather the chastening of a Father's hand?

But I see another depth in those sufferings.

**2.** **What shame, what scorn and mockery and indignity did Christ willingly endure!** He is taken as a thief, with swords and staves. He stands for whole hours as a prisoner before vile and wretched men. He is buffeted — yes, He hides not His face from shame and spitting. His very deeds of mercy are cast in His teeth. A murderer and a robber is chosen instead of Him — the Prince of glory. Oh, what a depth of love do I see in the endurance of all this!

How hard do *I* find it to bear a word of reproach for His sake! How a slight, a cutting remark, a look — wounds and pains me! How great the trial is to any honorable and upright man, to be taken for a defrauder, and to be contemned by those who formerly had him in honor! And what must it have been to the Son of God, who had been honored and worshiped by the holy angels above — to be the scorn and mockery of men, the outcast of the people?

In this depth of shame and indignity, I see a vast deep of redeeming love!

I see yet another depth.

**3. Let me think of the desolation of Christ in those dark hours.** How forcible are the words spoken of Him in the prophetic Psalm: "Scorn has broken my heart and has left me helpless; I looked for sympathy, but there was none, for comforters, but I found none." [Psalm 69:20](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps%2069.20)

We think of *David* at Ziklag — his wives and children captive in the hands of the Amalekites, his abode laid waste, and all his friends turning against him and speaking of stoning him.

We think of *Jeremiah* sitting down amidst the ruins of the city, alone and desolate, lamenting the loss of the sons and daughters of Zion.

But no desolation was ever like that of *Christ*. He was hated and rejected by His own nation. Their chief men unite for His destruction. One of the twelve betrays Him to them. Another of the twelve, in the very midst of His trial, denies Him thrice. The rest all forsake Him and flee. Where are those who have been *healed* by Him? Where are those who have been *comforted* and *instructed* by His words of love? Not one will now stand up for Him, and plead His cause — not one will show the kindness and sympathy that might, in some measure, have alleviated His heavy sorrows.

But chief of all these, was that exceeding great and bitter cry, "My God! My God! Why have you forsaken Me!"

Ah, this forsaking of God, this hiding of the light of heaven — this was far more than all! Here was desolation indeed? Forsaken by *man* — this is much. But forsaken by His own Father, as to the comfort of His presence, as to the sweet assurance of His love — this were above all things terrible! And with this, we couple another depth — all the *soul-anguish* that came to Him through our sin. Here is that which we cannot conceive or tell.

The travail of His soul in the work of atonement, in taking upon Him our guilt and condemnation, in making amends to Divine justice for a broken law — all this is in a region which no eye of man has seen, and no foot of man has trodden! So that here, most of all, we see the incomprehensible love, surpassing all knowledge. Oh, to bear such desolation of spirit, to drink such a cup of soul-anguish for our salvation — what can it mean? How can it be?

Jesus, the sinner's Friend,
We cannot speak Your praise:
No mortal voice can sing the song
That ransomed hearts would raise!

One thought more.

**4. We see the marvels of this love, in the purpose of it all.** It is for . . .
our *forgiveness*,
our *deliverance* from all condemnation,
our *acceptance* as dear children of the Father in Heaven.

Innumerable are the benefits purchased for us by the precious blood-shedding of the Son of God — and on every one of them we see inscribed the love that endured so great things for us.

Where else could *such* love have been found? What earthly friend would have thus sacrificed himself, to obtain peace and life and salvation for us?

A few words, once spoken by the late Sir James Simpson of Edinburgh, before a large number of his fellow-citizens, put it in a very telling way. This excellent man, laden with honors for his discoveries in medical science, late in life attained the still higher honor of rejoicing in the privilege of a son of God. Let us hear his words:

"When I was a student at the University, I saw a sight I never can forget — a man brought out to die. His arms were pinioned, his face already pale as death; thousands of eager eyes were upon him as he came up from the jail. Did any friend come up and loose the rope, and say, Put it round my neck! No, he underwent the penalty of the law! For many offences? No — for one offence: he had stolen money from a stage coach! He broke the law in one point, and died for it. It was the penalty of a changing human law — the last instance of death for that particular offence.

"But I saw another sight — *myself a sinner*, standing on the brink of ruin, deserving nothing but Hell. For one sin? No — for many, many sins committed against the unchanging laws of God. But again I looked, and saw *Jesus*, my Substitute, scourged in my stead and dying on the cross for me. I looked, I cried, and I was forgiven."

Oh, that each believer may truly see this great love, and more fervently love Him who first loved us!

It is a privilege beyond all price, that we may love Christ — that we may have an object that will never disappoint our affections.

He who once died for us, is now our living Redeemer — still retaining all the love He had for us when on earth. And, in the power of His endless love, giving us a safe resting-place for our longing hearts. It is well to set our love on the changeless, ever-living Friend.

Let me lean most on *any man* — and in an hour I may lose my treasure — and my heart's affections will be like ivy trailing on the ground, when the tree on which it grew has fallen. But let me lean only on *Christ*, let my heart cleave intensely to Him — and I shall never lose the One dearest to me, the One who alone can satisfy my soul forever.

"For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again." [2 Corinthians 5:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor%205.14-15)

Beneath the cross of Jesus, I gladly take my stand,
The shadow of a mighty Rock, within a weary land,
A home within the wilderness, a rest upon the way.
From the burning of the noontide heat, and the burden of the day.

O safe and happy shelter — O refuge tried and sweet —
O trysting-place where Heaven's *love* and Heaven's *justice* meet.
As to the holy Patriarch, that wondrous dream was given,
So seems my Savior's cross, to me a ladder up to Heaven.

Upon the cross of Jesus, my eye at times can see
The very dying form of One, who suffered there for me;
And from my smitten heart with tears, two wonders I confess,
The wonders of His glorious love — and my own unworthiness.

I stand beneath its shadow, as my abiding place,
I ask no other sunshine, than the sunshine of His face.
Content to let the world go by, to know no gain nor loss,
My sinful self, my only shame — my glory all the cross.

**PRAYER**O blessed and merciful Redeemer, I would come to Your footstool. Draw me — and I will run after You. Reveal to me Your heart of love, and make the light of Your countenance to shine upon me. O send Your Spirit to lead me into the fuller knowledge of Yourself.

I thank You, O gracious Savior, for laying down Your life for my sake. I thank You for the pain, and mockery, and desolation of heart You willingly endured. I thank You for drinking to the very dregs, the bitter cup of holy wrath, which my sins deserved. I thank You for all wondrous benefits You have thus purchased for me. O that You would make my heart Your dwelling-place, and fill me with Your love. I bless You, that I may love You; and that in loving You, my soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness. O make me love You more and more continually. May Your love constrain me to live to Your glory. Crucify within me all selfishness and self-will, and teach me to serve You and do Your will. Make me like Yourself — meek and gentle and loving unto all men. Fulfill these my desires, and make me wholly Yours, for Your name's sake. Amen.

**10. Self-searching Beneath the Cross**

To be pleasing to God is the main desire of each faithful believer.

To have a single eye,
to be genuine and true-hearted in serving the Master,
to keep a conscience void of offence —
such will ever be your object if you have known the grace of God in truth. And for this there needs self-scrutiny — an honest wish to know what you are, and what are your failures. "Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me, and know my thoughts — and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." ([Psalm 139:23](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps%20139.23), [24](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Psalm%20139.24).) "How many are my iniquities and sins? Make me to know my transgression and my sin." ([Job 13:23](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Job%2013.23).) "That which I see not, teach me. If I have done iniquity, I will do so no more." ([Job 34:32](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Job%2034.32).)

Such *prayers* and *desires* as these, will often arise in the heart where the Spirit of God dwells.

For many reasons it is our truest wisdom frequently to speak to ourselves as to the path we are treading, and to lay bare our inmost thoughts before the eye of the most High God.

Let me remember the sinfulness, the deceitfulness, the treachery of the human heart. It has its countless lurking places of evil. "The human heart is the most deceitful of all things, and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?" ([Jeremiah 17:9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer%2017.9).) "He who trusts in his own heart is a fool." ([Proverbs 28:26](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov%2028.26).)

Let me remember that *sin concealed*, shuts the ear of God to prayer. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." ([Psalm 66:18](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps%2066.18).)

Let me remember that undiscovered evil is the root of all the terrible falls of professing Christians. The sin has been permitted to take up its abode within, and then by and by breaks out in the form of some gross and open transgression! Secret sins lead to presumptuous sins. ([Psalm 19:12](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps%2019.12), [13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Psalm%2019.13).) Sin is like a fire smoldering in some secret recess or hidden flue, which at length bursts forth, burning down the house, perhaps causing the death of some of those within. It is like the snake concealed in the grass — and yet whose bite is deadly.

I will remember too *the ingratitude of sin*. It is rebellion against the King who tenderly loves those beneath his sway.

When an Emperor of Russia, whose life had been devoted to the good of his subjects, heard of an insurrection in a distant province of his realm, he heaved a sigh, and said, *"They do not know me."* Just so, if men but knew the love and mercy of our God — they would be ashamed to reject His authority and trample His laws beneath their feet.

But sin is not only rebellion against a King, but it is turning against the kindest parent. It is like the sin of Absalom who was plotting against his father's life, while his father was giving charge to his soldiers not to touch a hair of Absalom's head. Our Father is kind and forbearing to the unthankful and the evil — and yet men forsake His laws and, if they could, would cast His throne down to the ground!

I will remember also *the infection of sin*. It spreads far and wide. As a man going about with some infectious distemper might easily convey it to hundreds and thousands around — so is it with the sinner. Any cherished sin may prove fatal to others, as well as to myself. My example may prove injurious to very many with whom I mingle. "O that I could bury my wicked influence with me," said a young man on his death-bed, who grieved over the evil he could never undo.

Neither may I forget that whether or not I am careful to search myself — God searches me through and through. "All things are naked and opened to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." ([Hebrews 4:13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb%204.13).)

The remembrance of all this will be helpful to me:
it will quicken me in this duty of self-examination;
it will make me really anxious to know the uttermost of the evil that is in me;
it will bring me low before the mercy-seat, in true confession and humiliation for my sin.

But what is the **right position** for this? Not before the eye of a fellow-creature; not beneath the awful heights of Sinai — but *beneath the cross of Christ shall I best learn to know my sin aright.*

For in the presence of Him who was crucified for me, I learn how fearful is the character of sin. Sin is . . .
the *knife* that slew my best friend;
the *nail* that pierced His hand;
the *spear* that wounded His side;
the *scourge* that bruised Him;
the *thorn* that marked His brow.

With this sight before me . . .
let me hate my sin with deadly hatred;
let me never cloak or excuse it, though in the most subtle form;
let me abhor the very shadow, the very approach of evil;
let me keep at the utmost distance from that which crucified my Lord.

And in thus desiring to know my sin and its exceeding evil — there is a thought of *consolation*. I need not lose my peace, because I cannot always grieve for sin as I would. Perhaps I feel that the language of the Confession with reference to past sins, "the remembrance of them is grievous, the burden intolerable," goes beyond that which I can realize. But the Lord knows my desire, and He accepts it. And the more I keep near to Jesus, the more shall I grieve over the evil I have done, and grow in humility before God.

For another reason, too, to keep near the cross, to be looking up in humble faith to the dying Redeemer — is the best position for me to occupy in recalling my sin.

Beneath the cross of Jesus, I also see the completeness and the all-sufficiency of my sin's remedy. However great the evil I discover, help and salvation is close at hand. I can never despair, while I gaze on Him who was wounded for my transgressions and who bore my sins in His own body on the tree. As I look up to Him I know that He can cover and He can conquer them; he can give pardon and power; for He, the Crucified One, is now the exalted One; and He can support, and sanctify, and save evermore those who look to Him.

In what *way* shall I conduct this search?

What *guidance* will be most profitable?

By what *standard* shall I prove and try my ways?

The whole volume of God's Word, and every part of it may be used for this purpose. But I will name a few of those points more especially needful to be considered.

I may take from time to time each of the Ten Commandments with the light thrown upon them in the New Testament. Though the *condemnation* of the law is past to those in Christ — yet it is still to be to them, a rule of life. And the various precepts given on Sinai, as in the Sermon on the Mount and elsewhere, may assist us in applying the great law of love to the details of the Christian life.

I must consider how far I am striving to honor God and to do His will in the different relationships of life.

In the world of commerce, in the house of business, in buying and selling, in payment of debts, in all my transactions with reference to money, in my dealing with the property of others — am I guided by the plain rules of truth and justice? Do I invariably speak the truth, and do unto others as I desire they would do unto me?

In society, in fellowship with friends, in seasons of recreation, when I mingle with those I know or with strangers — am I watchful that my influence should be for good? Do I try to turn the scale, where I can, in favor of kindliness, a hopeful view of eternal realities, a higher tone of conversation? Do I strive to check anything that borders on evil? Does my presence in any way tend to keep down lightness, and frivolity, and evil speaking, and the like?

In the Church of God, what am I doing? Am I an element of help and blessing in the Lord's House? Do I engage my heart to approach God? Do I worship Him in spirit and in truth? Do I receive the Word with meekness and readiness, searching the Scriptures for confirmation of that which I hear? Do I join heartily in the songs of praise? Do I pray earnestly in behalf of my Pastor and of the congregation? Do I render all the assistance in my power, by gifts and personal labor, to advance the kingdom of Christ?

In my own home, am I living out, day by day, the life of Christ? Am I bringing all the little details of common life, to the test of Christ's holy example? Do I ask myself again and again*, "What would Jesus do if He were in my place?"* Do I make a conscience of the smallest mutters? Am I earnest and thorough in all the work I have to do? Am I doing my duty faithfully as a parent or a child — as a brother or a sister? If I have those younger than myself around me — am I careful that my daily life and conversation is such that they may safely copy? Am I guilty of the *neglect* or *omission* of any plain duty? Do I *redeem the time* from indolence and sloth and profitless reading? Am I striving to add to the happiness of each member of the family? Do I readily yield to others when it may do good? Do I sacrifice my own pleasure and comfort, if by this means I may adorn the doctrine of Christ? Do I carry the *sunshine of cheerfulness* about with me? Do I watch against evil tempers, and sullenness, and repining, a clouded brow, and fretfulness, and fault-finding?

In my own *heart*, has Christ possession of the throne? Is His Word and will supreme? Or is any idol set up there? Ambition, love of praise, sight-seeing, craving after riches, the world's pleasure, display in dress — is any one of these taking the rule of my heart and life?

What are my *motives of action?* Do I strive to put *self* down — and do all things for the love of Christ and for the glory of God? Do I act from Scriptural principle — or from the impulse of the moment? What is the bent of my thoughts when I am most free for quiet meditation? Are they earthward — or heavenward?

Is it my desire to keep in the lowest place? Whatever *talents* God may entrust to my care — do I realize that I am but a *steward* and must give account for them all? Do I go often to the Savior's footstool, and learn to follow Him in meekness and humility of heart? Do I trample beneath my feet all pride and vain glory and self-sufficiency, and act and feel as a little child towards my Father in Heaven?

Such *self-examination* may be very helpful to me. Let it only be genuine and sincere — let it be carried on as beneath the eye of my Father and in sight of a crucified Savior — for then it will not lead me to despair, however sinful I am, but to more hearty and continual dependence on Christ. In spite of all failure and short-coming and sin, if I humble myself and trust only in Christ, there can be no condemnation. I am accepted in the Beloved and justified from all things. The ample folds of the righteousness of my Surety covers my every spot and stain. And I know that Christ will perfect that which He has begun — He will not forsake the work of His own hands. His Spirit will rest upon me and cleanse me from evil and corruption. The old man in me shall be subdued more and more, and the new man — that which is born from above — shall grow day by day. Therefore will I watch and pray, and commit my soul to His faithful keeping.

Search, try, O God, my thoughts and heart,
If mischief lurk in any part;
Correct me where I go astray,
And guide me in Your perfect way.

**PRAYER**Almighty God, unto whom all hearts be opened, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden — cleanse the thoughts of my heart by the inspiration of Your Holy Spirit. Examine me, O Lord, and prove me, and make me to know the evil that dwells in me — make me to be an Israelite indeed in whom is no deceit. Let my heart be sound in Your statutes, that I be not ashamed. O God, I beseech You, root out every covetous desire, and deliver me from pride and ambition, and the love of this present world. Teach me to hate every false way, and make me to love Your testimonies more than gold or precious stones. Save me from the crafts and assaults of the devil, and keep me ever in Your fear. Guard and protect me in the hour of temptation, and make me more than conqueror through Christ. O merciful Father, *forgive*, I beseech You, whatever You have seen in me contrary to Your will. Pardon anything of deceit and hypocrisy, through the Savior's blood. Grant that henceforth, my love may abound yet more and more in knowledge. May I approve the things that are excellent, and be sincere and without offence until the day of Christ. Fill me with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the praise and glory of God.

O Lord, regard me with Your favor, and fulfill these my humble petitions, for Jesus Christ's' sake. Amen.

**11. Cross-Bearing**

"Then Jesus said to his disciples: If anyone would come after Me, he *must* deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me." [Matthew 16:24](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%2016.24)

The true believer must needs be a cross-bearer. The Master has plainly told us. The precept of cross-bearing is co-extensive with the promise of salvation — it carries with it the same breadth of expression. We have the "any man" of promise: "If any man thirsts — let him come unto Me and drink." So too of precept: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me." ([Luke 9:23](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke%209.23).) We have the "whoever" in the glorious promise of salvation: "Whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." So too in plain word of duty: "Whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me, cannot be my disciple." ([Luke 14:27](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke%2014.27).)

When Peter would have Christ spare Himself and turn aside from the cross, the Lord rebuked him, and told Him that he too must be prepared to suffer, and even to sacrifice life itself for His sake. Nor is it otherwise in the history of the early Church and in the apostolic Epistles. All through, the Christian is seen to be a cross-bearer. The disciples rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for Christ's sake. Paul, who bore in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus — the evidence of the persecutions he had endured — yet still desired "to know the fellowship of His sufferings" and to be "made conformable to His death." Timothy is reminded that "if we *suffer* with Christ, we shall reign with Him." And the Colossian Church is told that the Apostle rejoiced in his sufferings, and was content to "fill up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ for His body's sake, which is the Church."

This is God's plan for our sanctification. In the path of cross-bearing, the Spirit molds the believer in the likeness of Christ. It is God's plan, moreover, to manifest to the world the reality of the Christian's faith — it is thus seen that he is of a different spirit to the world around; and thus, too, others are brought near to Christ.

But what is to be your *motive* in taking up your cross? It must not be a thought of winning eternal life and glory — your sufferings can never be the purchase-price of the eternal inheritance. Suffering is the *path* to Heaven — but not your *right* and *title* to it. The price has been paid once for all in the precious blood of Christ, and you can never add to it by anything of your own. Ah, let your motive ever be the sight of Christ's cross, and His free love in bearing it for You! He says to you, "My child, I bore my heavy cross for your sake. For you, I went to Gethsemane and Golgotha. For you, I tasted the bitter cup of shame and death. It was to remove your guilt and to give you peace — it was to raise you from the pit and to set you on a glorious throne."

"All this I did for thee!
What will you do for Me?"

Come, hearken to the voice of your Redeemer! Take gladly and thankfully the pardon and the peace, the comfort and the hope that spring up beneath His cross. Trust fully in Him to grant you a sincere and complete and present forgiveness of sins, and failures, and backslidings, and short-comings. Rest your weary soul beneath the shadow of this Tree of Life, and doubt not that He welcomes you to shore His everlasting love. Then, in His strength, and in His name, and in the joy of His salvation — go forth willingly to bear your cross, remembering that He is ever with you — that He bears the heaviest end, and will support and uphold you all your journey through.

But what is this cross-bearing? What does it imply? In what way are you to act so as to fulfill the precept?

There can be no doubt as to the main purpose and intention of it — it does not mean simply that you are to *endure* a certain amount of affliction. You are to *take up* your cross, and be willing, if God calls you, to die on it — you are to be prepared, if need be, to yield up life itself. You may be so placed that it is your duty to lay down your life for the brethren, or for the truth of God. Therefore you must cherish a martyr spirit. You must rise above a common every-day Christianity, that would have the comforts of the Gospel — but shrink from its high and lofty responsibilities. You must catch the Spirit of the Master. You must look for His mighty resurrection power, even the power of His Spirit, to rest upon you — to make you glory in tribulation, and count it all gain to renounce all things and count them but dung, that you may win Christ, and glorify His name either by life or by death.

It may be well to add *a few hints as to the way in which you must exercise this cross-bearing spirit in daily life.*

Remember you have to take up the cross laid on you by the Master — but not to make a cross for yourself. There is a self-denial which the Word of God does not require.

To put yourself needlessly to bodily pain,
to endure self-imposed penalties and austerities,
to shut yourself up within the four walls of a monastery,
to forsake those whom you are bound to love and honor —
such self-denial as this God neither demands nor will bless. There is neither peace of mind nor spiritual profit in a course like this. Neither are you required to seek for trials or to pray for them — crosses enough there will be of God's appointing, without adding to them.

Go straight on in the plain path of duty;
turn neither to the right hand nor to the left;
endeavor to fulfill every Christian duty to the utmost;
live for the good of others;
shine as a light in a dark world;
never be ashamed of the Captain beneath whose banner you serve;
glorify God by your devotedness in maintaining His honor and spreading His kingdom — and you will be sure to find crosses enough to tax your patience and endurance to the very utmost. Again and again you will have to cross your own will, and sacrifice your own inclinations. You will have to trample underfoot . . .
love of ease,
and sloth,
and self-indulgence,
and self-pleasing,
and self-will.

You will have to perform unpleasant duties.

You will meet with opposition from the world, and disappointment in your fellow-Christians. To bear all this meekly for Christ's sake, will require a life of continual self-denial.

To be a cross-bearer, requires that you should be quite prepared to brave reproach and ridicule, and even harsh treatment it may be, in confessing and following Christ. You must make up your mind to own Christ as your Lord and King, in all places and in all companies where you may be placed. When the woman had touched Christ's garment and had gained an immediate and perfect cure, He would not let her go away unobserved. She could not be hidden — she must come forth and confess what she had done, and what Christ had done for her. Even so, must you act. Humbly, prayerfully, wisely — yet withal boldly and fearlessly — stand forth as a witness for Christ's name; and though it will often bring you discomfort or loss — yet it will deepen your piety and make your crown brighter by-and-by.

When *Dilawur Khan* — a very devoted native convert in India — was sorely persecuted and ill-treated for Christ's sake, he would take it meekly and cheerfully, and even glory in it: "I never lost a little finger for Christ," he would say; "but He gave His whole body for me!" Even so let us never be ashamed of Christ, but ever glory in His grace and love.

You must not turn from the path of the cross, when it comes to you through keeping God's commandments and following the dictates of your conscience. Do not turn from the hot, sultry mountain side, or the track to the summit — when the sharp briars and thorns or the rough stones wound or cut your feet. It is the way *home* — it is the way the Master went, and you must faithfully keep to it.

For instance, it may be easier to let a man pass by whom you are bound to reprove, or to permit some wrong to be practiced and say nothing about it. But would Jesus have done it? Does He not require it at your hand?

Then, too, you may find many a cross to take up in business matters. To be true and honest, as before God, is not easy. An employer may expect you to hide the truth, or speak falsely; those about you may say that *trade lies* cannot be avoided; deceit may appear as it were the only policy you could follow, or you must lose a situation and perhaps experience great difficulties. What are you to do? If you are Christ's disciple, there is only one course to adopt. Do what is right — and suffer for it! "But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. [1 Peter 3:14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Pet%203.14)

Act according to the plain precepts of the Word, and leave all *consequences* with God. Don't worship the golden image — though you may be cast in the furnace for refusing. Stand alone, if need be, and remember there is One who can deliver and save, so that not a hair of your head shall perish. Or, if God should permit you to be tried for your faithfulness, refuse to sin, though you die for it. Nor shall it be loss. You shall receive a hundred-fold more in some shape — and hereafter the crown of everlasting life.

In the various *providential* sorrows and afflictions which may come to you — you must accept them as from the hand of God, and take Christ as your Pattern and Example in the endurance of them.

It may be pain and bodily suffering;
it may be gradual failure of health;
it may be straitness of means or actual poverty;
it may be the loss of a parent, or a husband, or a child.

But whatever it is — do not murmur or repine. Trust all in God's hand — and yield to His wise disposings. Let God's will be your pillow. Fret not, fear not, faint not. Forget not His loving-kindness in the past, nor His tender care for you in the present. Though He slays you — yet put your trust in Him.

Another point is important. Be willing to put your shoulder beneath the cross which *others* have to bear. Share the burdens of those who live with you. Let your heart go out in sympathy towards a sorrowing or suffering fellow-Christian. Stretch out your hand to lift the load from one sore oppressed with care and grief. Don't shrink from the trouble or expense which may thus come to you. "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." [Galatians 6:2](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%206.2)

For all this, you have need of heavenly strength. But the strength is provided for you. Weak in yourself, you may yet be strong in the Lord.

He will strengthen you with might by His Spirit.

He will nourish and sustain you by the manna of His Word.

He will uphold you, that your foot shall not slip.

Take up your cross — let not 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 think until death to lay it down;
For only he who bears the cross
May hope to wear the glorious crown.

**PRAYER**O merciful God, my Father in Christ Jesus, I draw near to You in His name. Teach me to pray aright. Grant me Your help and grace continually. Put forth Your mighty power in me, and quicken me by Your holy Spirit. Fill me with hearty thankfulness to You for Your great salvation, and teach me to follow in the footsteps of the Good Shepherd. O Gracious Savior, I thank You that You bore the bitter cup of agony and shame for my sake. Make me willing to deny myself and take up my cross and follow You. Give me such love to You that I may desire in all things to be like You. Crucify in me all sin and self-pleasing. May I shrink from no cost or trial which You may appoint. Make me ready to sacrifice ease and comfort in doing Your will, and to count all things but loss for the knowledge of Yourself.

Blessed Lord, give me true sympathy for the sorrows and sufferings of those around me. Show me how to bear the burdens of Your people. Lead me in the path of self-denial — and may I never turn away my eyes from the miseries You would have me relieve. Make me to weep with those who weep, and rejoice with those who rejoice.

Endue me perfectly with Your own mind and Spirit. Draw me — and I shall run after You. And when my work on earth is done — may I reign with You in glory. Hear me, O merciful Redeemer; and sanctify me wholly, both in body and soul, for Your name's sake. Amen.

**12. Until He Comes**

"For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup — you proclaim the Lord's death *until He comes*." [1 Corinthians 11:26](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor%2011.26)

The faithful believer must be a *watcher* looking out for the morning of Christ's appearing. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. The power of darkness shall not always triumph. The King's chariot is on the way, and His presence will banish evil forever, and shed eternal sunshine over His chosen ones!

And one purpose of our Holy Communion seasons is to remind us of this. "For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup — you proclaim the Lord's death *until He comes*."

We look forward to the marriage supper of the Lamb. Our Communions are like a chain reaching from the last supper in the Upper room — to the hour of Christ's second Advent. From the very beginning, there has ever been found a little company of true disciples meeting to commemorate His dying love — and there will be to the end. And each genuine believer touches a link in that chain which is ever growing longer behind, and shorter before. Each successive Communion bears witness that more of the Church's waiting time is gone, and less remains. We hearken to the Savior's voice in ever clearer note proclaiming, "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with Me to give to every man according to his works."

And when the chain is finished, when the last Communion has been held on earth, and the purpose of its institution accomplished — then from every nation, and from every branch of the visible Church, will be gathered to one everlasting Communion above, all those who have by faith been indeed partakers of Christ.

So you must be *waiting* and *watching*. If you are Christ's, you have *great expectations*. Your kingdom is being prepared, and He will come to place on your head the crown of life. So let your thoughts be often turning to this blessed theme. Read over again and again the promises of His appearing, given in the Gospels, Epistles, and in the book of the Revelation. Study also for this purpose, the book of Psalms, and the prophecy of Isaiah. They give a glorious view of the King coming in His Royal Majesty. Yes, and tarry patiently and hopefully for the King, though as yet His chariot wheels seem to delay.

I remember thinking of this one evening during my travels in Sweden. I had spent the afternoon in a lovely spot. In one direction the eye caught sight of a gushing cataract pouring forth its mass of waters into the abyss below. In another direction, one could see the calm, flowing river and the five-arched bridge which spanned it. Then, all around, the hills and pleasant pasture fields added to the beauty of the scene. On the occasion I refer to, the village was all astir. Crowds were seen wending their way to the river-side where arches had been erected, and flags of every color were waving in the breeze. Then came a season of long delay.

Some hundreds of men, women, and children were waiting all about, some standing on the bridge, some sitting on the hill-side, some gathered around the little village Inn, and many grew weary. The sun was sinking low in the West, clouds were arising that foretold storm and rain, and the chills of evening began to prevail. But hark! There is a murmuring of voices. And now a joyful cry: *"The King is coming! The King is coming!"* was the shout that in a moment awoke the enthusiastic cheers of the throng, and dispelled every thought of weariness or fatigue.

Good King Oscar and his Queen were paying a visit to the place, and as the cortege of the royal party passed along from spot to spot amidst the glad greetings of those simple country folk — I question if there was one but felt happy and proud to welcome their King. An hour soon passed by, the King drove away, the crowd dispersed, and the only *Englishman* present that day walked on toward his resting-place for the night, thinking of *another King* and another meeting.

Yes, the King is coming, even the King of all the earth, the king of Saints, the King of Angels, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.

But what a contrast to the scene at Elf-Karlby which has just been described! On this occasion some half dozen carriages and a few attendants accompanied the royal party, and a few hundreds of their subjects were present to meet them. But by and by, we shall see the air filled with the angelic hosts that will attend our King, and what countless myriads shall behold Him on that day!

I often recall a crowd that assembled at the time of peace being made with Russia. There could not have been less than three to four hundred thousand within sight of the spot where I stood. I remember well that *sea of faces*, and when the lurid light fell upon them. I could not but think of that hour when *a far vaster multitude* will be assembled, and the solemn light of the Great White Throne will make visible the presence of every single individual that has ever trodden our earth!

But the King Himself! Upon *Him* every eye is fixed. He was glorious in the days of His humiliation. What glory shone forth in Him when as the infant in Bethlehem, the angels sang His praise! What glory shone forth at the marriage feast, at the grave of Lazarus, at His cross — when love could endure such contradiction of sinners, and, though suffering, triumph in the salvation of His Church.

But in the eyes of His saints, He shall be still more glorified at His appearing. Together with the revelation of His everlasting love, shall He display the majesty of His power, and of His impartial justice, equity, and truth toward all mankind.

The King is coming, and toe must be **awake** and ready to meet Him. Let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober; let us cast aside the sleep of indolence, the sleep of false security, the sleep of ease and self-indulgence. "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour?" the Savior once said to Peter — and thus He speaks now to each slumbering soul.

We see sometimes an advertisement on the walls: "*Sleeping coaches* from London to Bradford, Edinburgh, Glasgow, and the North." But no sleeping coach will convey you from earth to Heaven. You must be awake, and on the watch tower.

A little while, He'll come again.
Let us the precious hours redeem;
Our only grief to give Him pain;
Our joy to serve and follow Him.
Watching and ready may we be,
As those who long their Lord to see.

The King is coming, and we must be **decided** for Him. There must be no halting between Christ and the world. There must be no blowing hot today, and cold tomorrow. There must be nothing of veering round from North to South, from East to West, to suit the company in which we are thrown. We must . . .
acknowledge the King,
carry His standard,
wear His uniform,
boldly fight in His cause,
and glory in His name.

Shame on us for our timid, time-serving thoughts! If God is for us — then who can be against us? If the King is coming to reward His faithful ones — then can we be too bold, too courageous, too faithful in His service? He has said it: "He who is not with Me, is against Me!"

The King is coming, and we must **cast aside every sin** and whatever will not endure the light of His presence. If you are a true believer, you must not excuse yourself in the least evil. You must not palliate any inconsistency, but search it out and forsake it.

Never forget that *the sins of the Lord's own people* are far more hateful to Him, than those of others. The more precious a jewel is, the more you grieve over any *flaw* in it, or any accident that might befall it. So the Lord is most dishonored in the evils that are found in those that He regards as *His jewels*.

Or you might look at it in another light. A parent has a child dearer to him than all the world. But if that child is rebellious, or ungrateful, or unmindful of that father's wishes — will it not pain him more than the misconduct of all beside? Even so is it that God reckons His children very dear to Him, and therefore their sin and disobedience are doubly grievous in His sight.

Oh, watch against everything in word, in spirit, in temper, in action — that will wound the Savior's heart, or bring a shadow of dishonor upon His name! Think of His coming, and do nothing that will not stand approved in that day.

The King is coming, and **we must not grow faint or weary** along the way. It may be somewhat with you, as at the village in Sweden.

The sun of life or of prosperity may decline,
darkness may begin to overspread your home,
shadows may rest upon the Church of Christ,
unbelief and error may hide the light,
storms may lower, and tempests of trouble may threaten
— but be *patient* and *hopeful* and *wait* for the King.

In one sense you know that even now you have Him always with you. He is near you in loving-kindness, in faithfulness, and in His readiness to comfort and help you. You have "the real presence" in a far higher way than if you could eat His body and drink His blood by any imagined transformation of the elements of bread and wine. "When I go to rest at night, the Savior is so near me that it seems as if He were walking on the stairs by my side," said a widow, who had lately lost her husband.

Ah, this is indeed a reality which supports and consoles the sorrowing heart!

And then, when waiting time is over, the King shall come in His beauty — and His bride shall share His glory! "And if I go away, I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am there you may be also."