**THE PRECEPTS OF JESUS**

**A guide through life — to immortality!**

By John MacDuff, 1858

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*"Remember the words I spoke to you."* John 15:20

*"This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to Him!"* Mark 9:7

"O be my Counselor,
 My Pattern and my Guide;
 And through this desert land,
 Still keep me near Your side.
 O let my feet ne'er run astray,
 Nor rove, nor seek the crooked way!"

INTRODUCTION
It is our incumbent duty to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, and give earnest heed to the truths which proceeded from His gracious lips. "Never any man spoke like this man!" was the testimony of the officers who were sent to apprehend him—a testimony altogether spontaneous and unbribed on the one hand — and most faithful and true on the other.

The whole of His instructions have the highest claims upon our devout regards. In every *doctrine* He taught, every *invitation* He uttered, every *promise* He gave — we should "listen to Him!" And while we ought to listen to His voice as He speaks to us in words of *encouragement* and *consolation*, we are also to be equally attentive when, in a more practical strain, He enforces the various *duties* we have to discharge as His followers!

Our attachment to the gospel is very doubtful, if we are only concerned about enjoying its *privileges* — while its *demands* and *obligations* are viewed with less favor. But if we take as much delight in the *precepts* which enjoin holiness of heart and life — as we do in the *promises* which contain the richest blessings, and insure exemption from the sorest calamities — it is a conclusive evidence that our love of the truth is sincere and genuine.

The following brief meditations, intended for the Christian's daily perusal, are based upon a few of those *divine injunctions* which the Savior delivered — and which relate to the *spirit* we should nourish — and the *conduct* it befits us to pursue. Favored with such lessons from the mouth of the great Teacher, all of which are most impressively enforced by His own bright example — what kind of people ought we to be in all holy living and godliness! May each reader of this small volume aspire to reach that high standard which is laid down in these sacred precepts — and thereby afford a living demonstration of the unspeakable superiority of the Christian system, to all that ancient sages ever taught, or the most enlightened moralists of more modern times ever inculcated!
John MacDuff, February 6, 1858

**The Great Commandment**

"You shall **love** the Lord your God with all your *heart* and with all your *soul* and with all your *mind* and with all your *strength*. This is the first commandment." Mark 12:30.

Of all the precepts of Jesus, this is, undoubtedly, the chief. What it enjoins is love to God — even the highest, warmest love of which we are capable. True love to Him cannot be a secondary or subordinate feeling. We cannot love Him *sincerely* — unlesswe love Him *supremely*. He is not loved *at* all — unless He is loved *above* all. "Love," as one remarks, "when *creatures* are the objects of it, should, like ordinary rivers, be kept within banks and bounds; but when God is its object, it should overflow like the Nile, or spread itself like a sea without limits."

**That God is worthy of our supreme love, appears from two considerations:**

The first is, **what He IS in Himself.** He is the perfection of moral beauty, the source and center of all excellence, infinitely holy, just, and true. Whatever is lovely and of good report in created beings — is only a dim shadow of His infinite attractions; nothing but feeble rays from His ineffable light and glory.

If we are for ascertaining what the blessed God is — let us ask those who know Him best. What are the feelings of the angelic legions who surround His throne, and of the spirits of the perfected just who have been feasting for ages upon His smiles? They know full well that their highest admiration of His matchless character falls unspeakably short of what it deserves, and that their affection, if intensified to a degree of fervency ten thousand fold greater than what they have realized in their most ecstatic moments — would be completely disproportionate to His infinite claims!

But, in addition to what He is in Himself — we are to bear in mind **what He has DONE for us.** To love Him, on the former ground, being more unselfish, is, of necessity, a higher feeling — than that which takes the form of *devout gratitude for the benefits we have received from His bountiful hand.*

Some have contended that love of this latter kind is essentially spurious, being based upon *mere selfish* considerations, and that God can only be truly loved on account of His intrinsic perfections. Others, again, have argued that such absolute unselfishness is impossible, and that the emotions of the heart cannot be called forth by any *abstract virtues* in however high a degree they may appear. We believe that both of these classes have fallen into error. Imperfect as we are, our nature is evidently capable of such a state of mind as is repudiated in the second objection. We all feel sentiments of admiration and love while contemplating *true nobility of character* — although we personally have never profited by it.

As to the former opinion, it is in direct contrariety to the whole tenor of the sacred volume. The penitent woman in the house of Simon loved much — *because* she had much forgiven. And the Savior, far from stigmatizing it, in consequence of its being prompted by such a feeling, warmly commended her in the presence of the whole company. "I love the Lord," is the language of David. Why? "Because He has heard my voice and my supplication." "We love Him," says John, not simply or chiefly on account of what He is in Himself — but, "because He first loved us." It is evident that He deserves our love on *both* grounds; whether we regard Him as the "altogether lovely," in His own ineffable nature, or as the fountainhead whence every blessing flows, both of providence and grace — He has the strongest claims upon our highest and holiest affections.

How blessed is the promise, "And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart — to love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, that you may live."

"O Lord, let my heart be thus circumcised. Abundant reason have I to mourn over the feebleness of my love to You; but as You can break the *hardest* heart — so You can warm the *coldest* heart. O shed abroad Your love within me by the Holy Spirit, and enable me to manifest its constraining influence, by doing Your will and devoting myself to Your glory!"

**The True Disciple**

"Not everyone who *says* to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven — but only he who *does* the will of my Father who is in heaven." Matthew 7:21.

We cannot be too often reminded of the important truth — that true religion is a *practical* thing. While it includes *knowledge* and *experience* — it also includes *practice;* and the two former will be altogether worthless — unless they produce the latter.

In doing the will of God, the true believer finds *enjoyment*. He can say, in the language of the great Master, "I *delight* to do your will, O my God; yes, your law is within my heart." "For this is the love of God," says the apostle John, "that we *keep* His commandments; and His commandments are not grievous." The reason why they are not grievous — is because the bias of the believer's mind is towards them; because the desires and instincts of his new nature go after them. Does the *magnetic needle* always turn to the same point? Do the *rivers* flow on without resting until they reach the ocean? Do the *flames* ever rise upward — and *objects* of weight and substance invariably fall downward? As there are natural principles operating in such cases — so there are spiritual principles operating in connection with the child of God.

In proportion as his soul is sanctified — he is sure to delight in the law of the Lord, and take it as his heritage forever. Compliance with the divine requirements may be a very irksome thing to many — but the Christian finds it his food and drink, to do the will of his Father who is in heaven. Others may think it a wearisome drudgery — but the Christian regards it, on the contrary, as pure delight. Perfect freedom does he find that to be — which is looked upon by many as a hard and heavy bondage.

Our *obedience*, in order to be cheerful and joyous, must be *evangelical*. It must be, both as regards substance and motive — such as God requires in His Word. Several things may prompt men to endeavor to walk in the way of His precepts. **Custom** may prompt them. They have been trained from their earliest days to show a considerable amount of respect for the things which are just, true, lovely, and of good report. **Conscience** may prompt them. That *inward monitor*, when allowed to speak, never fails to plead the cause of Him who implanted it as his viceregent in the human heart. A **legal spirit** may prompt them — by doing certain things they expect to secure eternal life, or they have a vague hope that they will at least contribute in some measure to its attainment. But in none of these cases, is the will of God be done with delight. Such obedience will be either *formal* on the one hand — or *wearisome* and *heartless task* on the other. It is only as we comply with the divine precepts upon ***gospel*** *principles*, that we shall find wisdom's ways to be those of pleasantness, and realize that in keeping of them there is great reward.

Reader, endeavor to cultivate such a spirit. Aspire after the mind of the Psalmist, who declared, "I will run the way of your commandments, when you shall enlarge my heart." Thus only can you be regarded as belonging to the household of faith, and be spiritually related to Him who is the first-born among many brethren. "For whoever shall *do* the will of My Father who is in heaven — the same is My brother, and sister, and mother." Such alone are recognized by Him now — and none else will He acknowledge in the great day of judgment!

**The Brotherhood of Believers**

"For one is your Master, even Christ; and you are all brothers." Matthew 23:8.

All men, however divided by language, social position, or mental endowments — form *one vast brotherhood*. All men are the workmanship of the same divine hand; all have emanated from the same original stock; and all are partakers of the same common nature — with its diversified needs, feelings, sympathies, and aspirations.

When our country was agitated on the subject of slavery, a medal was struck, on which a black man was represented with his chains around him, and with clasped hands, and imploring looks, he inquires, "Am I not a *man* — and a *brother*?" The manner in which we responded to that touching appeal, showed that we recognized the claim in both of its branches. We acknowledged him first as a *man*, and then we held out the right hand of fellowship to him as a *brother* also. A brother deeply degraded, it is true — but still a brother. Although often treated like a brute, the tyrant's lash having made deep its furrows upon his lacerated frame, until the blood flowed in copious currents — yet still a brother. And not these sable bondsmen alone — but every kindred and tribe. God has made of one blood, all nations of men that dwell on the face of the earth — and towards all, should the throbbings of tender compassion and generous philanthropy be felt.

But while the *whole human family* should be thus viewed as brethren, there is a class, separated from the rest, who are so in a sense far higher and holier, namely — the *household of faith*. To the former we are bound by *natural* ties — to the latter by *spiritual* ties. And while we should love *all* people with the love of benevolence and good will; towards those with whom we are united in the faith and fellowship of the gospel — our love should be that of delight — a love resembling our Heavenly Father's, who takes pleasure in His saints, and who rejoices over them with joy and singing.

It is recorded of the early disciples of Christ, that "they remembered His words." Well would it be for those who now bear His name ever to keep this saying in mind, "And all you are brethren!" We may differ concerning many minor matters — but surely any *trifling diversities* of judgment in reference to such points, which have little or no relation to "the weightier matters of the law," should not be permitted to cool our affection, or operate as a *barrier* to united efforts in opposing the great enemy, and advancing the kingdom of our common Lord.

"Let our only rivalry," to quote the striking language of a living writer, "be the holy one of who shall do most and succeed best in converting the *wilderness* into an Eden, and causing the *desert* to blossom as the rose. Like those allies on Crimean fields who forgot their old quarrels, and buried the recollections of the past in oblivion — let us all sit down together before the great fortress of the evil one. They cooperated for the common good. Rebuking our wretched jealousies, and presenting us with a heroic example of generous sympathy and indomitable energy, in the teeth of frost and famine, and pestilence and war — they clung to the rocks of that stormy shore. With mutual cooperation they threw up their batteries — they pressed on their lines — they manned the trenches — they rushed to the assault, mingling the shouts of different nations in the same gallant charge, and the blood of different races on the same battlefield. And if *nations*, once hostile, there fought and fell together — then why should not *different churches* come to as common and cordial an understanding. If we make a united effort, I believe, with God's blessing, we shall make an irresistible assault upon the strongholds of sin and Satan."

"Blessed God! Giver of peace and lover of concord — unite the hearts of all Your people in holy love and harmony. Adorable Jesus! the great object of Your gracious mission to our sinful and distracted world was, that You might gather together in one, all the children of God that are scattered abroad. Soon let Your prayer, offered on the night of Your sore agony, be fully answered, that they all may be one — that the world may believe that you have sent Me."

**Continuance in Well-Doing**

"If you *continue* in My Word — then are you My disciples indeed." John 8:31.

There is an account given of a certain slave who had been treated with great kindness by his master. The favor shown to him was well deserved, for he appears to have been eminently faithful and devoted. At length the master resolved, as a reward for his good conduct, to grant him his liberty; and he was informed that he could go wherever he pleased, and serve any employer he thought proper. His instant reply was, "Me leave you, my dear master — Oh no! not for all the world! I need no wages to serve you!" And with special emphasis he added, "if you turn me out at one door — this poor nigger will come back in at once through the other!"

The spirit which this slave manifested, is one after which we ought to aspire in reference to Him, whose servants we profess to be. He loved his master, and the thought of leaving his service — he could not entertain for a single moment. He resolved to abide with him, for better and for worse, a resolve to which he gave utterance in the above *simple*, but very *striking* and *emphatic* words.

What the Savior demands is not a mere *temporary* allegiance and devotedness — but He requires us to be steadfast and immovable to the *end* of our days. In order to this, several things are indispensable; but to have a thorough renewal of heart is doubtless the chief thing. There may be *deep convictions*, and warm and lively *emotions*, in the absence of this great change; but without a thorough renewal of heart — there will be nothing lasting. Unless the heart of stone is taken away, and a heart of flesh implanted in its stead — all will be in vain. We may be moved and melted, like stones in damp weather, which appear as if they were beginning to dissolve; but the dampness soon evaporates, and they are found to be stones still — cold, hard, and unyielding. So will it be with us — if we are satisfied with anything short of the fulfillment of the gracious promise, "I will cleanse you from all your impurities and all your idols. I will give you a *new heart* and put a *new spirit* within you; I will remove your heart of stone — and give you a heart of flesh. I will place My Spirit within you — and *cause* you to follow My statutes and carefully observe My ordinances."

If a new heart is created in us, and a right spirit is renewed within us, there will assuredly be *patient continuance* in the ways of the Lord. That the *principles of divine grace in the soul* possess a character of permanence, is a truth clearly set forth in the inspired volume. They are not like the summer's brook, which may soon dry up; but they resemble the full and over-flowing fountain. "Whoever drinks of this water," said Jesus, "shall thirst again: but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him — shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life!"

Of all the evidences of the possession of saving grace, a *steady growth* therein, is the most conclusive. If we spotted, towards the hour of early dawn, a faint gleam of light streaking the eastern horizon, and were not certain whether it was the break of day or not, what would be the best course to be pursued in seeking to decide the matter? It would evidently be to *wait a little while*. If it is the light of day, then it is sure to increase, and half an hour's patience will be more than sufficient to settle the point. While on the other hand, if it remains stationary, or, after a few fitful glimmerings, altogether disappears, it may be safely concluded that it is only the reflection of some artificial illumination.

Just so with the great concern. "The path of the just is as the shining light, which shines more and more, unto the perfect day." His course is *steady, progressive, continuous*; and it behooves us seriously to inquire whether ours is of that nature. May He who is able to preserve our goings, grant to us His continuing grace, so that, firmly rooted and grounded, we may never be moved away from the hope of the gospel.

**The Prevailing Plea**

"Until now you have not asked for anything *in My name*. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete." John 16:24.

Among the many indispensable prerequisites of acceptable prayer, one of the chief is that of *asking in the name of Jesus*. "Whatever you shall ask the Father in My name — He will give you." As if He had said, When you draw near to His footstool, only make use of My name — and you will find it a sure *passport* to His favor. Make it known that you belong to Me, and that My name is dear to you — and all your requests will be granted. Ask whatever you will — the forgiveness of your sins — the sanctifying influences of His grace — strength in weakness — light in darkness — joy in sorrow — every blessing you need, both for time and eternity — will He give you. So beloved am I by Him, that *for My sake* — He will refuse you nothing!

Christian, do you believe this? If you do, act upon it. Draw near to the throne of grace with the confidence which such an assurance ought to inspire. The promise is, "*Whatever* you shall ask," implying that you can ask largely, and that you need not fear to extend your requests to the utmost limits of your manifold necessities. "Open your mouth wide — and I will fill it."

It is recorded that an individual once applied to Alexander the Great for a sum of money, as a marriage portion for his daughter. The king sent him to his treasurer, and told him to demand whatever he pleased. He went, and asked for an enormous sum. The treasurer, astounded by such a request, said that he could not think of giving so much without an express order, or without consulting the king on the subject. On laying the case before his royal master, he stated that a small part of the amount requested would be sufficient to serve the purpose for which it was required. But what did Alexander say in response? "Yes; let him have it all; he does me honor; he treats me like a king, and proves, by what he asks, that he believes me to be both rich and generous!" Christian, go and do likewise!

"You are coming to a King,
Large petitions with you bring;
For His grace and power are such,
None can ever ask too much!"

But our requests, whether large or more limited, must ever be *presented in the name of Jesus*. "For Jesus' sake," must be our only plea. As He is the only medium of approach, so must He be the exclusive ground of our confidence. "For Jesus' sake," this is an argument that can never fail. It is the *magic key* which opens all the riches both of grace and glory! It is the *golden key* which unlocks the cabinet wherein is contained inexhaustible treasures! It is only in virtue of His adorable name, that the voice from heaven proclaims, "All things are yours, whether the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and you are Christ's; and Christ is God's!"

**The Power of Faith**

"Jesus replied — I tell you the truth, if you have *faith* and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree — but also you can say to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and it will be done!" Matthew 21:21.

We can say of *faith*, in the language of the Psalmist in reference to Zion, that "glorious things are spoken" concerning it. Whose heart does not leap within him, as he reads the records of *faith's achievements* in the eleventh chapter of the book of Hebrews? All the wonders of the ancient church we are there shown, were wrought through this divine principle. During the personal ministry of the Savior, how clearly was its importance evinced. His miraculous blessings were conferred in almost every case on one simple condition; He required all who applied to Him to *believe*-and to those who were enabled to do so, His power was at once put forth. But there were seasons when *His mighty arm seemed to be paralyzed*, and when the flow of *His omnipotent compassion* was suddenly checked; and what was it that produced so strange a result? "He could do no mighty works there — because of their unbelief."

How necessary, then, is the prayer, "Lord, *increase* our faith!" Those who are strong in faith — can give their fears to the winds; they possess a *shield* with which they are able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one; and against the allurements of time and sense — they have a sure safeguard! "For this is the victory that overcomes the world — even our faith." Well may the poet say,

"O could we but believe;
 Then all would easy be!"

There are two things to which faith has particular respect, namely — the divine *power* and the divine *faithfulness*. The question which the Redeemer put to the blind men was, "Do you believe that I am **able** to do this?" They at once replied, "Yes, Lord!" and according to their faith, it was done to them. The same question is now proposed to us — and happy are those who can exercise similar confidence.

Those numberless **sins** of yours — do you believe that I am able to *pardon* them? Those **evil propensities** of yours — do you believe that I am able to *subdue* them? Those **threatening disasters** — do you believe that I am able to *avert* them? Those **fiery trials** — do you believe that I am able to *support* you under, and bring you safely through them? Let our answer be, "Yes, Lord! for with You nothing is impossible, and You are able to do exceeding abundantly above all that I can ask or think!"

"When He entered the house, the blind men approached Him, and Jesus said to them, 'Do you believe that I m able to do this?' 'Yes, Lord!' they answered Him. Then He touched their eyes, saying, 'Let it be done for you — according to your faith!'" Matthew 9:28-29

We are also to remember that His **faithfulness** is as great as His power. Not merely is He *able* to perform what He has promised — but He will *surely* do what He has declared. Let God be true, though all men were liars; for Him to deceive is altogether impossible; He will not allow His faithfulness to fail.

God grant that we may be preserved from dishonoring Him by giving way to an *evil heart of unbelief*. While we doubt His Word, or cherish any secret misgivings in reference to His adorable character — how greatly do we sin against Him. We are all of us, truly guilty in this matter, and shame and confusion of face befit us in consequence. No wonder that our *souls* have been unblessed; no wonder that our *prayers* have been unanswered. "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must *believe* and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord!" James 1:5-7

**Brotherly Love**

"This is what I command you — love one another." John 15:17.

There are some people who can speak on certain subjects with marked propriety. We at once perceive that the apostle John, for example, could with great appropriateness, insist upon the obligations of brotherly love, since he himself exhibited that feature of the Christian character in so conspicuous a manner. And if John, owing to this circumstance, had a special right to enlarge upon such a topic, how much more may the Blessed Jesus call attention to it, and make it a prominent subject of exhortation and appeal. For a loving Savior to command us to love one another — with what special grace could He do so!

But this duty, by *whoever* enforced — is in itself preeminently reasonable. While we ought to regard all our fellow creatures with feelings of kindness and good-will, it is clearly incumbent upon us to nourish other and higher emotions towards those with whom we are united by spiritual bonds. The household of faith should evidently be regarded by us with an attachment of no common kind.

We are told that "everyone who loves the Father — loves His children, also." Loving Christ — we shall love His people; and we shall be likely to love them — just in proportion as we love Him. The lines in a circle, the nearer they approach the center, become increasingly closer to each other. The loadstone cannot attract the particles of iron to itself, without bringing the entire mass into direct contact at the same time. And so with Christ, the great central object of the gospel system — if we live near to Him, we are sure to feel a nearness to all who are animated by His spirit, and bear His gracious image. And while He is a stumbling stone and rock of offence to His enemies — He is a loadstone to His people, who are made willing in the day of His power. And as we are drawn to Him — so shall we, under the influence of the same divine attraction — be drawn to one another. The distance being removed between our souls and Himself as the *Great Head* — it will also be removed in reference to all the members of *His mystical body*.

We are to remember that love to the brethren should not be a matter of *mere theory*, or *vague sentimentalism* — but of a *practical* character. It was said by Jacob in his dying charge concerning one of his sons, "Naphtali is a hind let loose; he gives goodly words." And it is to be feared that the brotherly affection of many consists altogether in *kind expressions*; they give "goodly words," but that is all. The Scriptures, however, in the strongest manner condemn the love which exists in word and in tongue exclusively, and approve only of that which is in *deed* and in *truth*. Hence we read of "the *labor* of love," and when it is genuine and vigorous, its labors will be abundant; it will be "full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy." Love without activity, is like *fire* — without heat; or like a *shadow —* without a substance; or like a *fountain —* without a stream; or like a body — without a soul. What James says of *faith* can be said of *love*, its sister grace, "If it has not *works* — it is dead, being alone."

Child of God, seek for an increase of brotherly affection. Yield yourself more and more to its compassionate promptings. Covet daily that richest of all luxuries — the *luxury of doing good*. Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, "It is more blessed to give — than to receive." Many of your brethren in the Lord, fellow-heirs with yourself of the heavenly inheritance, are suffering great privations; and will you not, from your more ample means, extend to them some trifling relief? "If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?"

**The Divine Work**

"Jesus answered and said unto them — This is the work of God, that you *believe* on Him whom He has sent." John 6:29.

It is evident that *true faith* in the Lord Jesus is something more than a mere *assent* to the things concerning Him. It is a belief that is invariably connected with certain results, the first and chief of which is a personal application to Him for life and salvation. Faith has always respect to some testimony, to some statement made, or assurance given. To have faith in one of our fellow-creatures, is to place reliance upon the veracity of his declarations. In like manner faith in Christ has reference to the Word of Christ. "The one who comes unto Me, I will never cast out," is one of the most precious and encouraging of His many gracious sayings.

Now the sinner, convinced of his lost condition, and conscious of the danger to which he is exposed, believes this promise to be true; but is he satisfied with merely *assenting* to it as such? No! he resolves to *apply* to the Savior on the strength of it. While prostrate at His footstool, his language is, "You have *said* that You will not reject those who come to You, and I praise Your blessed name for having made such a statement. I, therefore, a poor, guilty, hell-deserving creature, present myself before You, not doubting but that You will be as good as Your Word. O Friend of sinners, in infinite love and mercy remember me. You are able to save to the uttermost, and this is my humble, heart-felt cry — *Lord, save me, or I perish!"*

Such, we conceive, is saving faith. It is not a mere *notional* belief in the person, or work, or character, or sufferings of Christ; but it leads the soul in its deep distress to *apply* to Him, in order to obtain the salvation which He procured by His perfect obedience and sacrificial death, and which He has promised to bestow without money and without price.

We have a striking emblem of the sinner believing in Christ, in the conduct of the children of Israel, when they were stung by the serpents in the wilderness. See the serpent-bitten Israelite writhing in the agonies of death. The poison is in his blood; the fever is burning through his convulsed and agonizing frame. But in his extremity he is exhorted to look to the bronze serpent which is lifted up on a pole in the midst of the camp. The bronze emblem of the Redeemer appears before him, and he casts his languid eye upon it. The ravages of the disease are at once stayed; the pulses of health begin to beat within him; and with renovated vigor he is restored to the bosom of his family and friends.

Now in reference to this memorable scene, the Savior says, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whoever *believes* in Him should not perish — but have eternal life." We are thus clearly shown that if we only *look* to Him in the exercise of faith, the blessed consequence will be — that we shall live. He is now lifted up, not on the cross — but at the right hand of the Majesty on high; and from yonder radiant throne on which He sits as a Prince and Savior, His language is, "Look unto Me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other!"

**The Hard Saying**

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

In order to follow Christ aright — we must follow Him *fully*; we must possess the spirit of those of whom it is said, "These are those who follow the Lamb *wherever* He goes!" Such was strikingly the case with the early disciples of the Savior. He said to them, "Follow Me" — and immediately they left all, and followed Him. They did not confer for a single moment with flesh and blood — but at once abandoned their homes, their ease, their earthly prospects — for the great object of promoting His cause. In obedience to His command, they engaged in the most arduous enterprises; they encountered the most formidable difficulties and dangers; perils, whether by sea or by land, they heeded not; the most fiery persecutions they patiently, yes, joyfully bore — rejoicing that they were counted *worthy* to suffer for His sake! None of these things moved them, neither did they count their lives dear to them, so that they might finish their course with joy. Their exclusive desire was that Christ should be magnified — and whether this was done by living or dying, they were equally satisfied.

Now the same command which was addressed to *them* — is addressed to *us.* And is the Savior's authority less binding, and His claims less imperative upon us — than they were upon them? Are we to hesitate — when they were so decided? Are we to recede — when they advanced? Are we to be faint-hearted — when they waxed valiant for the fight, and went forth conquering and to conquer?

In order to be followers of them, as they were also of Christ, a spirit of *self-denial* is indispensable. The great Master did not please Himself — and by having the mind that was in Him, they clearly showed that they were His disciples, not in name only — but in deed and in truth. Alas! how great the disparity that exists between us and *them* — and especially between us and *Him!* "The best of us," as one observes, "have abundant cause to pray for a deeper baptism of His spirit.

Blessed Savior! blessed pattern! how did You leave the delights of heaven and Your Father's bosom, on a mission of most generous mercy! Your *love* grudged no labor; Your *eye* refused no pity; Your *ear* was never shut against the story of distress; Your *hand* was always ready to relieve the sufferer. From Your cradle to Your grave — Your whole life was passed in daily acts of the loftiest self-denial. And, with the blood trickling down Your brow, and the heavy cross on Your lacerated back upon Your way to Calvary, to save the vilest wretches and the chief of sinners — You turn around to say to us — *If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me."* Christian, listen to His voice, and comply with His injunction.

And remember for your encouragement, that such a course will be attended with the richest compensations. "Peter said to Him, 'We have left all we had to follow You!' 'I tell you the truth,' Jesus said to them, 'no one who has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God — will fail to receive many times as much in this age and, in the age to come, eternal life!" Luke 18:28-30

**The Christian and the Secret Place**

There is, we believe, nothing invidious or uncharitable in the statement, that the *saints of old* were in general of a more *eminent* stamp, of a more *robust spiritual constitution* than the majority of the present race of professing Christians. It may be truly said, "There were *giants* in the earth in those days!" But what made them so preeminent? We answer, without hesitation, that it was their *private communion* with God; it was their dwelling in the secret place of the Most High, and abiding under the shadow of the Almighty. The prayer-closet was to them a *hallowed* place; it was truly *consecrated* ground.

It was a *Bethel* to their souls — a spot which they found, like Jacob of old, to be none other than the *house of God*, and the very gate of heaven!

It was a *Peniel* — where they often *wrestled* even until the dawn of day; and in consequence of their importunity — they had power with God and prevailed.

It was a *Tabor* — where *spiritual transformations* were frequently realized, which led them to say, "Lord, it is good for us to be here!" And, like Peter, they would there have pitched their tents, and made it the place of their constant abode — had not the calls of active duty urged them to arise and depart.

It was a *Moriah*, where the most remarkable *interpositions* were given. It was the *mountain of the Lord*, where His covenant was ratified, and His wonders seen! And, filled with rapturous joy, and inspired with holy confidence, they have shouted, *"Jehovah-jireh! the Lord will provide!"*

Christian, resolve to *prize* your closet more — and to *frequent* it oftener. It is only thus that you will become a follower of those, who through faith and patience are now inheriting the promises. They found the advantage of drawing near to their heavenly Father, and if you will imitate their example, you shall not go unrewarded. The benefits will be great and manifold; for while others may be in a languishing condition — your progress and profiting will be evident unto all.

**The Father Glorified**

"Herein is My Father glorified, that you *bear much fruit;* showing yourselves to be My disciples." John 15:8.

The *essential glory* of the Divine Being admits of neither *limitation* or *increase*. Shall the *sun* borrow beams from the glow-worm? Or can the tiny candle add to the effulgence of his noontide splendor? God would have been infinitely glorious in Himself — had not a single creature been called into existence! He was infinitely glorious in the solitudes of eternity — before any of the bright legions of cherubim or seraphim were created. The adorations of angels add nothing to His essential glory; and the blasphemies of men on earth, or of devils in hell, detract nothing from it. "Look at the heavens and see; gaze at the clouds high above you. If you sin — how does it affect God? If you multiply your transgressions — what does it do to Him? If you are righteous — what do you give Him, or what does He receive from your hand?" Job 35:5-7. There is thus, an important sense, in which He is altogether *unaffected* by our *obedience* on the one hand — and by our *rebellion* on the other. The wickedness of men cannot hurt Him; neither can the righteousness of men profit Him.

At the same time, it is possible for us to glorify God. An individual of exalted rank may possess every blessing in abundance, so as to need nothing that we might be able to do for him; and yet, such a one may be honored by us. In like manner, although the blessed God is in no way dependent upon our services — we are permitted, notwithstanding, to show forth the honor of His name, and make His praise glorious.

Not merely are we *permitted* to do so — but it is our incumbent *duty* — the neglect of which involves the greatest guilt, as well as the basest ingratitude. To glorify God is the *great design for which we were formed*, and, therefore, to lose sight of it is to miss the very end of our existence! What if the *sun* refused to diffuse its light and heat? Would not the law of its creation be transgressed, since it was expressly designed for that purpose? What if the *showers* refused to leave the clouds to fertilize the thirsty ground; or the *earth* to bring forth her treasures, after all the cultivation it had received?

What, however, would be merely unnatural in the inanimate creation — would in us be far more monstrous, inasmuch as we are capable of knowing our duty, and are under the highest obligations to perform it! Let the *sun* refuses to shine, and the *showers* refuse to descend, and the *earth* refuses to yield its produce — they but transgress the great law of their creation. Let us see to it — by all that is binding in the *authority* of the Most High God, by all that is solemn in the thought of our *responsibility* to Him, and by the appalling *consequences* which must ensue if His claims are disregarded — that we do not transgress that higher law under which we are placed — a law which requires us to glorify God, both with our bodies and spirits, which are His.

How fearful was the charge brought against the impious monarch of old — "The God in whose hand your breath is, and whose are all your ways — you have not glorified!" Reader, beware lest the same charge is brought against you. That it may not, seek to ascertain what the divine requirements are — with a full determination to *comply* with all of them. And what does the Lord your God require of you?

He requires your *warmest gratitude* — "for whoever offers praise glorifies Me." He requires your *fullest confidence*, so that, like the father of the faithful, you may be "strong in faith, giving glory to God." And, above all, He requires that every feeling and faculty of your nature be consecrated, in *unreserved devotedness*, to Him!

"What will you have me to do?" — should be your daily inquiry! And to be ever abounding in the work of the Lord — should be your constant aim and object. Seek, then, to be filled with all the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

**The Important Injunction**

"But I tell you: *love* your enemies, *bless* those who curse you, *do good* to those who hate you, and *pray* for those who despitefully use you and persecute you." Matthew 5:44.

This precept, like every other which the **Savior** delivered, was strikingly exemplified in His own history. The spirit which He manifested towards those who hated Him with the most bitter hatred, was truly admirable. Let us think of Him especially while passing through the trying scenes which issued in His death. At His trial the officers of government were convinced of His innocence, and therefore acquitted Him. But this would not satisfy His foes, who were determined to take away His life; and hence on the very day on which He was publicly declared to be guiltless, He was led forth to die. Yonder is the *meek sufferer*, driven on by a shouting, infuriated rabble up the hill of Calvary. In a short time He reaches its summit, and, after being stripped of His clothing, He is stretched upon the ignominious cross. Large iron spikes, strong enough to bear the weight of a man's body, are hammered through His hands and feet; and He is then lifted up between heaven and earth — a spectacle of shame and agony — naked, and wounded, and bleeding!

When thus suspended, the crowds mock Him, the scribes and priests revile Him, and the soldiers torment Him with crude violence. But while all this is going on, let us turn to look at Him; let us contemplate that visage which is so marred, and that blessed face which is spit upon and buffeted. And what does it express? In all its lines there are indications of grief and bitter anguish — but there are no traces of anything approaching to resentment or revenge. Let us, however, not merely gaze upon His countenance — but listen to His *voice*. It is addressed to Him who is the God of truth and righteousness, and who executes judgment for those that are oppressed. And for what does He ask? Is it for legions of angels to avenge the insults He receives? Is it for the thunderbolt to strike, or the consuming flame to devour the impious wretches around Him? No! But lifting up His languid eyes to heaven, He cries, "Father, forgive them — for they know not what they do!" What a prayer to issue from the quivering lips of one so cruelly treated! What a spirit for Him to manifest while thus mocked, insulted, tormented!

In the apostle **Paul** we have also a striking example of the same feeling. On one occasion we hear him saying, "Not that I have anything to accuse my own nation of." But how could that be, since it is well known that they cherished the bitterest animosity towards him? Who was it that hunted him from place to place, even as David was hunted by Saul, like a partridge upon the mountains? Who was it that shouted in a burst of malignant frenzy, "Away with such a fellow from the earth, for it is not fit that he should live!" Who was it that vowed a solemn vow, that they would neither eat nor drink until they had taken away his life? They were not Romans — but Jews; they were his own kinsmen according to the flesh. And yet he declares that he has nothing to charge them with, notwithstanding their cruel treatment of him; a declaration which shows that their vile conduct was forgiven and forgotten, and that all their deadly animosity was buried in the oblivion of love.

Christian, seek to be like-minded. Pray to be baptized with the same spirit, for a nobler, lovelier one cannot be conceived. "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; and be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you."

**The Fear of God**

"I tell you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear Him!" Luke 12:4-5.

The representations which are given of God in His Word are eminently calculated to produce, in every reflecting mind, a feeling of sacred awe. What is there declared of *His infinite greatness* — is especially adapted to secure such a result. How striking, for example, are the words of the prophet:
"Who has measured the *waters* in the hollow of His hand,
 Measured *heaven* with a span
 And calculated the *dust* of the earth in a measure?
 Weighed the *mountains* in scales
 And the *hills* in a balance?" Isaiah 40:12

What a view of the Divine greatness is here presented! Let us think of the mass of *waters* contained in the caverns of the various oceans. How vast their depth, and how extended their length and breadth! Yet to God so insignificant are they — that He measures the whole in the hollow of His hand!

Let us think again of the *heavens* above — the sun, and moon, and stars; how amazing their dimensions, how immense their orbits! But He measures with a *span* — almost the least of measures — all the boundless regions through which they sweep in their majestic courses!

Let us also think of the *earth* beneath, with its islands, its cloud-capped mountains, its trackless forests, its boundless plains; yet He measures the *dust* of the earth in a measure, and weighs the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance!

And as to the nations, with their teeming myriads of population, "Behold all the nations of the world are but a drop in the bucket. They are nothing more than dust on the scales. He picks up the whole earth as though it were a grain of sand. Yes, all the nations of the world are worth nothing to Him. In His eyes they count for less than nothing — mere emptiness and froth."

How reasonable is it, then, that this glorious Being, whose greatness is unsearchable, should be regarded with feelings of the profoundest reverence. "Who would not fear you, O King of nations!" It is, indeed, His due, and as such He claims it from all His creatures. To have no fear of Him before our eyes, is at once the greatest *injustice*, and the most unutterable *folly!* All who have the boldness to lift up their puny arms in rebellion against Him — are engaged in a conflict, which, if persisted in, is sure to terminate in their utter destruction!

Reader, think of His **incomprehensible greatness** and majesty. Think of Him as the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity — the heavens His *throne*, the earth His *footstool*, the light His *garment*, the clouds His *chariot*, the thunder His *voice!* Viewing Him thus — it will be impossible for you to treat Him with indifference, far less with scornful disdain. If you are only brought in some measure to realize the fact that He is great — you cannot fail to acknowledge that He is greatly to be feared, and to be had in reverence by all His creatures.

Just so, with all the other attributes of His nature. Who can think of His **power** so mighty, so irresistible — a power that is able to crush us into atoms with infinitely greater ease than we can tread the crawling worm beneath our feet — and not fear Him?

Who can think of His **knowledge**, nothing being hidden from His omniscient glance, the darkness of midnight and the splendor of noon, being altogether alike to Him — and not fear Him?

Who can think, especially, of the terrors of His avenging **justice**, as when He proclaims from His exalted throne, "I kill, and I make alive, neither is there any who can deliver out of My hand! If I sharpen My flashing sword and My hand grasps it in judgment, I will take vengeance on My adversaries and repay those who hate Me!" — and not fear Him? Our God is, truly, a consuming fire! It is most befitting for us, to regard Him with reverence and godly fear.

It is not those who can deprive us of our present life, that we should so much dread. It is not the loaded musket aimed as us; it is not the axe of the executioner suspended over our heads; it is not the naked sword ready to be plunged into our vitals — which should alarm us. The sight of the instruments of death has, it is true, unnerved the stoutest heart; even the *frowns of a fellow-worm* have often caused the most reckless to tremble. Limited, however, and of brief duration — is the power of all mortal foes at best. They can kill the body — and then have no more that they can do. "But," says the faithful witness, "I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear Him!"

**The *Evidence* of Love**

"If you love Me, keep My commandments." John 14:15.

The Savior was accustomed often to state the same truths, in His addresses to the people, and in His more private conversations with His disciples. It was not because of any lack of matter that He did so, for He might have kept His hearers in enrapt astonishment at the perpetual freshness of His ideas. But He chose to harp again and again on the same strings, for the purpose of impressing the truth upon the minds of His hearers.

We have a striking example of this in the last discourse which He delivered. He had but a short time to remain with the disciples, and He had much to say to them on various subjects; but, notwithstanding, we find Him frequently reiterating the same lesson, giving them line upon line, and precept upon precept. In the fourteenth verse of the chapter before us, He says, "If you love Me, keep My commandments." A little further on He adds, "He who has My commandments, and keeps them, he it is who loves Me." Again, He declares, "If any man loves Me, he will keep My Words, and My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He who loves Me not, keeps not My sayings." It is evident that there must be something specially important in this subject, or He would not have thought it necessary to advert to it so repeatedly.

And what topic can have higher claims upon our attention than that which is here set forth? The question *"Do you love Me?"* is of all others, the most momentous; and hence, to ascertain whether the Savior's love has been shed abroad in our hearts — is a matter that demands our most serious consideration. It is a point on which our *present state* and our *future destiny* depends. Without love to Christ, we cannot be the friends of Christ; and if we are not His friends, we are enemies to Him, by wicked works, and as such, we are exposed to His everlasting displeasure.

There are various ways in which we may evidence the sincerity of our love to Him — but the chief is *compliance with His commands*. "Why do you call Me, *Lord, Lord —* and do not *do* what I say?" It is not by the *leaves of an empty profession*, nor by any blossoms or buds, however full of promise, which, after all, frequently prove abortive — that we are to be known — but by the actual fruits of holy, sincere, constant, and universal obedience. Such is the *practical* test, by which we should now examine ourselves, inasmuch as our acceptance or rejection with God, will turn upon it in the great day of final reckoning.

The commands which the Savior enjoins, are not grievous. He does not require us to offer thousands of rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oil; to make long and painful pilgrimages, to inflict tortures upon our bodies, or cover ourselves with sackcloth and ashes. The rigors of *superstition* are altogether alien to the spirit of that gracious system which He came to establish. His yoke is easy and His burden is light; and all His injunctions are intended to promote our happiness, both here and hereafter. Let our language, then, be, "O that my ways were directed to keep your statutes! Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all your commandments."

**The Needful Caution**

"But he who shall *endure* unto the end — the same shall be saved." Mark 13:13.

There was great need for the Savior to caution His followers against the sin of backsliding, inasmuch as many who had once identified themselves with His cause, went back, and walked with Him no more. In the times of the apostles also, the same danger existed, as appears from Paul's exhortation to the Hebrews — "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God," and a similar warning is greatly applicable in the present day.

That there is something peculiarly heinous in such conduct is evident from the following considerations: In the first place, it is a sin expressive of the most ***extreme folly***. This feature belongs to every sin, and therefore wicked men are frequently represented as *fools*; but this is especially the case with the sin of backsliding. What would be thought of people in a time of *drought* — if they moved their tents from a full fountain which was close at hand, with the expectation of getting a larger supply by settling in a dry desert, where, with the greatest labor, they had to hew out for themselves cisterns — yes, broken cisterns, which could hold no water? Now, this is what we do when we *depart* from God; and hence both heaven and earth are called upon to wonder at such *detestable folly* — the folly of leaving Him who is the source of all felicity — and of engaging in the useless toil!

In the next place, it is a sin committed ***without any provocation*** whatever, there being nothing in the Blessed God to deserve such treatment from us. Has He ever been a hard or austere Master? Has His conduct on any occasion evinced an unfeeling and unforbearing spirit? Have we found any iniquity in Him, that we should forsake Him? "O My people, what have I done to you — or how have I wearied you? Testify against Me!" Alas! what can we testify? All we can say is, "O Lord, righteousness belongs unto you — but unto us confusion of face, as it is this day."

Again, it is a sin that involves the ***greatest ingratitude***. Not merely has He done nothing *against* us — but how much has He done *for* us! He led His people of old through the wilderness, and brought them to a plentiful land, to eat of the fruit thereof, and the goodness thereof; and yet, notwithstanding all His mercies, their hearts were fully set upon backsliding from Him. And how often has it been with us — as it was with them!

Finally, what ***solemn engagements*** are violated by this sin! To bind ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant, to declare publicly that we would be His entirely and forever — and *then* to break our vows, and prove faithless in the face of our most express and deliberate promises!

Reader, dread the most distant thought of putting your hand to the plough — and then turning back. Having entered the army of Christ, resolve, in the strength of His grace, never to become a deserter — but to fight His battles at all hazards, and to stand your ground until you become either a corpse — or a conqueror!

**The Shining Light**

"Let your light so shine before men — that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." Matthew 5:16.

What unspeakable injury has been done to the cause of Christ — by the *inconsistent lives* of many professors of religion! To this must be mainly ascribed the comparatively little progress which Christianity has hitherto made. It is this — which emboldens the scoffer, which encourages the profligate, which strengthens the hands of the infidel, and which seals the eyes of the impenitent in death-like slumber!

Those who bear the name of Jesus should ever remember that *the eyes of an ungodly world are upon them*, and that their impression of the gospel, both in its nature and results — is derived from what they witness in the conduct of those who are identified with it. "The Bible," as one observes, "is God's revelation to Christians; and Christians are God's revelation to the world." That *sacred book* is not read by the careless and ungodly multitude — but they are eager in reading the *character of the followers of Christ!*

How important is it, then, that we should give, by our spirit and deportment — a correct representation of our holy religion. What a blessed thing it would be if all the members of our churches could be addressed in the language of the apostle, "You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everybody. You show that *you are a letter from Christ*, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts."

Great is the power of impassioned oratory, as embodied in burning words, dramatic gestures, and flowing tears. But, after all, *the most effective eloquence — is that of a pure, upright, consistent life!* It shames the accusers of our holy faith; it puts to silence the ignorance of foolish men, and often constrains them, by the good works which they behold, to glorify God in the day of visitation.

Christian, let it be your *earnest prayer* and *daily endeavor* to be kept from dishonoring that worthy name by which you are called. Prefer, a thousand times over — to suffer for Christ, rather than that He should suffer by you. *Adorn* the doctrine of God your Savior, not in some — but in all things. Adorn it by the purity of your *conversation*, by the blamelessness of your *life*, by the integrity of your *dealings*, by your abhorrence of all which is base or impure. Adorn it in the various *conditions* in which you may be placed — in prosperity and adversity; in obscurity and eminence; in health and sickness; in joy and sorrow; in youth and old age; in life and death. Let there be nothing lacking, which will contribute to the completeness of your godly character — but seek that *every grace* may be in you and abound more and more. Add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, Christian love. Thus you will thus be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Persevering Supplication**

"And He spoke a parable unto them to this end — that men ought always to pray, and not to faint." Luke 18:1.

The success which attended the importunity and perseverance of the *poor widow*, whose case is here referred to — should stimulate and encourage us in our approaches to the Divine footstool. The person whom she addressed — was an unjust and hard-hearted judge. But He with whom we have to do — is very compassionate and of tender mercy, being more ready to hear than we are to pray; and delights to give not merely more than we deserve — but exceeding abundantly above all that we can solicit or desire!

"Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful." Colossians 4:2. It must, however, be remembered that the prayer which God honors, and in answer to which He bestows His promised blessings — is heart-felt, fervent, wrestling prayer. Such was the prayer of Jacob on the memorable night which preceded his interview with his brother Esau. "And Jacob was left alone; and a man *wrestled* with him until the breaking of the day. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaks. And he said, I will not let you go, except you bless me." And he was blessed! As a prince he had power with God — and prevailed. O Christian, aspire after his spirit — that you may meet with his success. Our *formal lifeless* and *lukewarm* petitions are altogether unavailing; but "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective."

O what losers are we, in consequence of not possessing more of such a spirit. It is for lack of it, that in *affliction —* we are not consoled; that in *perplexity —* we are not directed; that in *temptation —* we are not preserved. It is for lack of it, that we are *barren —* when we might abound in all the fruits of righteousness; that we are *indigent —* when we might have been rich in faith; that we are such *dwarfs —* when we might have been spiritual giants! We have not — because we ask not, or because we ask amiss; and we certainly ask amiss if we ask in that spirit of coldness and indifference, which is so common.

But to *earnestness —* we must add *perseverance*. The question is asked concerning certain formalists, "Will they always call upon God?" a question which implies that their zeal and importunity will soon pass away. It is not sufficient for us to be anxious and earnest for a short time — but we must hold on until we obtain the blessing. Our fervor must not be like a mere blaze of straw; it should rather resemble the sacred flame on the Jewish altar, which kindled by the breath of heaven, never went out. O reader, beware of restraining prayer before God; but seek, in giving yourself to this sacred exercise, to do so with *importunity* on the one hand — and with *perseverance* on the other.

**Mutual Forgiveness**

"But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins." Matthew 6:15.

The expression, "an unforgiving Christian," is a contradiction in terms. We might almost as well speak of a *wise fool*, an *honest thief*, a *chaste harlot*, a *sober drunkard*. And yet there are those who bear the name of the meek and loving Jesus — who live in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.

"Ah!" said a shrewd Indian on one occasion, "Englishman's *book* is very good; but *Englishman* is not so good as Englishman's *book*." And the testimony is true. It is so concerning many particulars — but especially as regards the spirit to which we are now adverting. In reference to the *forgiveness* and *brotherly kindness* we ought to cherish — the love, and peace, and harmony we ought to pursue — Christian's *book* is good indeed; its goodness in that one department loudly proclaims its heavenly origin, for where besides are such precepts to be found? Let the treasures of classic lore be searched, the ethics of pagan sages be ransacked — and can anything worthy of being named the same day, be produced from such sources. But while the Christian's *book* is thus good — let the Christian take shame to himself — that *he* and his *book* are so unlike each other! The pages of the *book* full of love — but how frequently is the *man* characterized by hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness! Now what are we to think of such? There is much room for suspecting that the religion of such people is vain!

Reader, cultivate the important and lovely grace *of brotherly forgiveness.* No duty is urged more clearly and repeatedly; it is a subject on which we have line upon line, precept upon precept. In the beautiful form of prayer which the Savior gave His disciples, they were taught to say, "Forgive us our debts — *as* we forgive our debtors" — a petition which He enforced by adding, "For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins." Says the apostle, "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved — clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."

In extending forgiveness to our fellow creatures, and especially to our fellow Christians, we should seek to do it after the divine pattern. "I, even I — am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember your sins." We are here shown that God not merely *forgives* but *forgets* — and we are required to do the one as well as the other. Let, then, all animosity be buried, and let no *tombstone* be erected to mark the place of its interment, and serve as a memorial to keep it fresh in mind. Above the grave in which God has laid the sins of His people — no such *remembrancer* can be put up; for what says the prophet? "He will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea!" They are buried in the *fathomless ocean*, and thus, if sought for, can never be found. "Be therefore, followers of God, as dear children;" yes, "Be perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect."

**The Savior Reverenced**

"That all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father." John 5:23.

There are several ways in which the Lord Jesus should be honored by us. We should honor Him with our *confidence*, our *affection*, our *obedience* — and especially, with our most *devout adoration*. The latter is the highest honor which we can render Him, and that it is proper for us to do so, is clearly shown in the sacred volume. When Jesus was a man of sorrows in this lower world, He was *repeatedly worshiped*, and in no instance did He refuse such homage. How was it with the Eastern sages at His birth? Not merely did they present their costly offerings — but they fell down before Him, and *worshiped* Him. How was it with those who heard Him rebuke the winds and waves, and who saw Him walking upon the boisterous billows, as upon a solid pavement? "Those who were in the ship," we are told, "came and *worshiped* Him." How was it with the blind man, upon whose sightless eyeballs, He poured the light of day? No sooner was he brought to know his great Deliverer, than he exclaimed, "Lord, I believe; and he *worshiped* Him." How was it with those devoted women who first beheld Him after He rose triumphant from the tomb? "They came, and held Him by the feet, and *worshiped* Him." And what was the last act of the disciples as He ascended from the heights of Olivet? "It came to pass, while He blessed them, He parted from them; and they *worshiped* Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy."

In that blessed state on which He then entered, the homage that awaited Him was, not only equal — but immeasurably surpassed what He received here below! That such was the case appears from the glowing representations which are given by the exiled prophet of Patmos. Who, according to his statements, is the *great object* of the adorations of the heavenly multitudes? It is the Lamb who was slain; not separate from — but conjointly, with the Eternal Father. Not the least distinction is there between the worship paid to the one, and that which is rendered to the other. The same blessing, power, glory, thanksgiving, and might are equally ascribed to Him who sits upon the throne — and unto the *Lamb*. What a transporting sight! How do the heavenly legions, in countless multitudes and shining troops, press forward to present their profoundest homage!

O my soul, what are your feelings towards this exalted Personage? Are you despising Him on earth — who is thus honored by saints and angels in heaven? Be assured that to reverence the Son is at once your bounden duty — and your highest privilege; and if you have at present no heart for such exercises as those to which we have referred — dream not of dwelling hereafter with those who will be thus employed, without intermission, and without end! "In a loud voice they sang: Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!" Revelation 5:12

**The Golden Rule**

"Do unto others — what you would like them to do unto you. This is a summary of all that is taught in the law and the prophets." Matthew 6:12.

All the duties which are enjoined upon us by our Lord may be enforced on the ground of their being essentially right and reasonable. The precepts of Jesus, and especially the one before us, are neither *above* reason, nor *contrary* to reason — they are in complete accordance with all its dictates. Their propriety is instantly recognized, and every candid mind must acknowledge, that to comply therewith is "our reasonable service."

What a happy world would this be if the command, "Do unto others — what you would like them to do unto you," or the parallel one of "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," were universally acted upon. There would be then no wars, no antipathies, no unhallowed rivalries among nations; no jealousies or bitter contentions among neighbors and families; no haughtiness or oppression in the rich, and no envy or discontent in the poor. No heart would burn with anger, no breast rankle with revenge. Every species of violence, fraud, deceit, and treachery would be abolished. Such would be the effects produced, were this precept embodied in the hearts and lives of men. Our *moral wilderness* would be made into an *Eden*; and the desert would rejoice and blossom as the rose.

Let us guard, then, against every violation of this simple but sublime law. Let us seek, especially, to mortify that selfishness to which we are so prone; and, after the example of the Great Master, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus!"

**Neutrality Condemned**

"He who is not with Me — is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me — scatters." Matthew 12:30.

In the world there are many opposite *subjects* discussed, and many conflicting *causes* advocated — in reference to which we may say that we are on neither side; but as to the claims of Christ, and the concerns of religion — *neutrality* is altogether impossible. It is clearly revealed in the Word of God, that there are but *two ways*, in one or other of which, all mankind are traveling. There is no middle condition. If we are not the friends of God — we are His enemies. If we are not quickened by divine grace — we are dead in trespasses and sins. If we are not pardoned — we are condemned. It is impossible to occupy any *neutral ground* between the armies of the Prince of light — and the Prince of darkness. "We know," says the apostle John, "that *we* are of God, and the *whole world* lies in wickedness."

All, it is true, are not equally holy on the one hand; and all have not gone to the same length in sin on the other; but while there may be thus *manifold gradations*, there is but one separating line whereby the whole race of Adam are divided. "And you will again see the *distinction* between the righteous and the wicked — between those who serve God and those who do not."

"Who is on the Lord's side?" was the inquiry of Moses. A more important question cannot be proposed. Reader, should you not resolve, by the help of divine grace, that you will now be on that side which you will wish to be on — when the trumpet of the archangel shall sound, and when the startled dead shall be swarming from their sepulchers to hear their final doom! Be assured that the Lord's side is the happiest, the safest, and the most honorable side; it is the side on which are found all the holy and faithful throughout the whole universe; it is the side of truth and righteousness, of love, mercy, and peace.

If we are on the Lord's side, He will be upon ours; and having Him for our guardian and guide — we need not be alarmed though ten thousand foes should set themselves against us. "The Lord is my light and my salvation — whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life — of whom shall I be afraid?"

If we would, then, be undefended in the hour of danger; if we would be left without support and support in the day of affliction and distress; if we would have our souls uncheered with a single ray of hope when the *last enemy* shall stare us in the face; if we would be undone to all eternity, and have our portion with those who will be eternally banished from the presence of the Lord; if such is our desire — then let us choose the side of the ungodly, pursue their carnal pleasures, and walk according to the course of this present evil world.

But if we would have peace with God; if we would have a well-grounded assurance of a blessed immortality; if we would have the everlasting arms beneath our dying pillow; if we would hear on the great day the transporting language, "Come, you who are blessed by My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!" — in a word, if we would be happy in life, happy in death, and happy forever — let us choose the side of Christ, follow Him, and yield ourselves unreservedly to Him.

**The Reasonable Requirement**

"Render unto Caesar — the things which are Caesar's; and unto God — the things that are God's." Matthew 22:21.

The enemies of Christ, being envious of His growing popularity, endeavored in every way to lower Him in the estimation of the people. For this end, they frequently sought "to entangle Him in His words," as appears from the occasion on which the above words were spoken. It is shown that they addressed Him in very flattering terms, and pretended to regard Him as a teacher pre-eminently distinguished by His incorruptible integrity. "Teacher, we know," was their language, "that you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren't swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are." This, we need not say, was strictly correct; but, although *words of truth*, they proceeded from *deceitful lips* — and were prompted by cunning craftiness, and the most hollow and heartless hypocrisy.

After this ensnaring preamble — a question of some difficulty, and under the circumstances which then existed, of considerable delicacy, was proposed by them, namely, "Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?" It seems that they were fully assured in their own minds that the object they had in view would be gained — *whatever* answer might be given. If He had said that it was not lawful — He would have been called a sower of sedition, and been charged with fostering a spirit of rebellion, and as such He would doubtless have been arrested by the civil authorities. On the other hand, if He had stated that it was lawful — it is not improbable that the populace might have mobbed Him; for they regarded the Roman yoke with feelings of the deepest hatred! But in neither of the *snares* which were laid by these which cunning fowlers, was the Savior taken. "But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, 'You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap Me? Show Me the coin used for paying the tax.' They brought him a denarius, and He asked them, 'Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription?' 'Caesar's,' they replied. Then He said to them, 'Render unto Caesar — the things which are Caesar's; and unto God — the things that are God's!'" No wonder, seeing how completely they were defeated, that, abashed and mortified, "they left Him, and went their way."

While, however, this answer was intended to *silence them* — it is also adapted to *instruct us.* What belongs to Caesar, we should give to Caesar. In the words of the apostle, we should "Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes — pay taxes; if revenue — then revenue; if respect — then respect; if honor — then honor."

But while we render to Caesar the things which are Caesar's — let us not forget to render to God the things are God's. Has He no claims upon us? Doubtless He has; and these ought to have the precedence of every other. In rendering to all their due, we should, in the first place — render to *Him* His due. He demands our love, our gratitude, our reverence, our worship, our submission, our devotedness; and if we disregard His requirements, we are guilty of the most dreadful sacrilege; and to us may the withering rebuke be addressed, "Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me!"

Reader, remember that you are also the subject of another and eternal Sovereign — and He cannot hold you guiltless if you disown His authority, and desire not the knowledge of His ways. His language is, "My son, give Me your heart!" — and may your sincere and cordial response be,
"Here's my heart, O take and seal it,
 Seal it from your courts above!"

**The Sacred Oracles**

"You search the Scriptures because you believe they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to Me!" John 5:39.

Unspeakably great are our obligations to the God of all grace for His holy Word. Truly wretched would our situation have been without it. The unhappy *mariner*, tossed to and fro on the tempestuous ocean without chart or compass — affords only a faint emblem of our condition — if destitute of this precious treasure. We are indebted to it for all the light that ever chased the thick gloom of ignorance, or cheered the darkness of despondency and despair. From it is derived whatever can give *confidence* to faith, *energy* to hope, *ardency* to love, and *fervency* to devotion.

God's Word embodies everything that the child of God can possibly require during his pilgrimage through this *valley of tears*. In trouble — it is his *solace*; in difficulty trouble — it is his *guide*; in danger trouble — it is his *protection*; in conflict trouble — it is his *shield*; and, when descending the dark valley — it is the day-star which illumines his solitary pathway, brightening his pallid countenance with unearthly joy, and cheering his departing spirit with the prospect of a blissful immortality! And when death will be swallowed up in victory, it will furnish the glorious company of the redeemed with themes of adoring contemplation, while eternal ages will be rolling their ceaseless rounds!

O blessed book! It is the gift of infinite love, to sinful men! How ardently should we *prize* it, and how diligently should we *search* it. Millions of our fellow-creatures have never been blessed with this priceless blessing, having nothing but the dim and flickering *light of nature*. But we are favored with the *lamp of life* — a lamp lighted at the altar of heaven, to guide our feet in the ways of peace.

Reader, imitate the conduct of the noble Bereans, of whom it is said, "that they received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily." With them the perusal of the sacred volume was not an occasional employment — but one in which every returning day found them engaged. And if *we* are anxious that our soul should prosper and be in health — we shall no more allow a day to pass without reading some portion of it, than a person who wished to be strong and vigorous in body, would allow a day to pass without partaking of his necessary food. To advance in the divine life is altogether impossible — if the Scriptures are neglected by us. Hence the apostle's exhortation, "As new-born babes, *desire* the sincere milk of the Word — that you may *grow* thereby."

And, above all, let us not forget to implore the illuminating influences of the *Divine Spirit*, through whose inspiration it was first given. We are sure to read the Bible without profit — if we read it without prayer. "Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Your law!"

**Intolerance Rebuked**

"When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, 'Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?' 'You know not what manner of spirit you are of; for the Son of man has not come to destroy men's lives — but to save them.'" Luke 9:55-56.

It is a circumstance worthy of notice — that the *failings of godly men* have often been in those points, where there was the least likelihood of their being overcome. *Abraham* was strong in faith — and yet the darkest spot upon his character was produced by a spirit of distrust, which led to the most unworthy prevarication. *Moses* was the meekest of men — yet he lost his temper and spoke unadvisedly with his lips. "You have heard of the patience of *Job*;" for so marked was his calm endurance and submission under unexampled sufferings, that his name has been identified with patience in all ages — yet when he acted inconsistently with his high character, it was in reference to that feature in which he most excelled. And so with *John*, whom we are accustomed to regard as the embodiment of all that was gentle, loving, compassionate; but he, irritated by the conduct of the Samaritans, displayed a spirit altogether opposed to that tenderness and forbearance which the gospel enjoins.

Had the Savior complied with the request of John and his brother James on that occasion, what a powerful argument would have been thereby afforded to the enemies of the Christian cause. How triumphantly would they refer to the circumstance as indicative of the spirit of that system to which they are so much opposed. "Go," would have been their language, "to yonder Samaritan village, and see the place reduced to a mass of ruins. View the whole of its hapless inhabitants perishing together. Behold those wretched mothers, with their babes in their arms, consumed without distinction by the devouring flames; and all, forsooth, to avenge the affront received by those upstart fishermen; all to gratify and glut their old Jewish antipathies against the poor and oppressed Samaritans! Go and learn the character of your Christianity there; study its mild and beneficent genius in those cruel deaths and abounding desolations!"

Happily, however, such an occasion of triumph to our enemies was not afforded. The Master was not like-minded with the disciples, as the answer He gave them clearly evinces.

We are thus shown that *there may be many things in the conduct of those whose general character is excellent, against which it befits us to be on our guard.* What is good in them — we are to imitate; while we are to shun — whatever is censurable. *"The best of men — are but men at the best!"* How pleasing, then, is the thought that in following Jesus — there is no possibility for us to go astray. He could say in reference to His Heavenly Father, "I always do those things which please Him" — His *spirit* at all times, and His *conduct*, on all occasions being altogether such as the divine law required. O gracious Lord! impart unto us more abundantly of that mind which was in You. O gentle Jesus! who is still meek and merciful — help us to learn of You; and may we, by laying aside all malice and resentment, cause those by whom we are surrounded to take knowledge of us, that we are Your disciples indeed.

**The Honor of Humility**

"For everyone who exalts himself — will be humbled;
 and he who humbles himself — will be exalted." Luke 18:14.

We are very prone to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think. But if we unduly magnify our own importance, whether mentally or morally — the consequences cannot fail to be pernicious.

In the teaching of Christ, a place of special prominence is given to **humility**. "As portrayed by Him," as one observes, "it is a *little child*, to whom belief is natural — which is an emblem of candor, simplicity, and faith. When hearing His Word — humility sits at His feet, and is all docility and attention. On entering the presence of God — humility throws itself prostrate, or smites on its breast, and dares not lift up so much as its eyes to heaven. When it is free to take the highest seat in the assembly — humility voluntarily selects the lowest, and is taken by surprise if called up higher. In the presence of superior excellence — humility is praise and imitation. When associated with fellow-Christians — humility is willing subordination, desiring of no distinction, but that which arises from pre-eminent service. Humility declines to be called *master* — and lays all its honors at the Savior's feet. And when, at length, he shall ascend his throne — he is filled with self-abasement even there, and diffident of receiving his divine award. Under the reign of holiness, it is the office of humility to lay a foundation for universal obedience — by filling every subject with gratitude for the blessings he enjoys, and making him feel that the lowest situation is a post of unmerited distinction, held by a grant from sovereign grace."

Among the various means which are calculated to lead us to entertain humble thoughts of ourselves — one is the contemplation of *real* greatness and pre-eminent worth. In the report given by the people sent by Moses to examine the land which the tribes were about to possess, they stated, "And all the people that we saw in it are men of great stature; and there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers." Such, in their case, was the effect of *contrast*; it was the sight of these imposing individuals which caused them to appear so insignificant in their own eyes. Let us, in like manner, place ourselves beside those of high spiritual stature — and we shall be likely to feel our own nothingness.

It is the purpose of God, in all His dispensations, to "keep man from pride". And until our haughtiness is subdued, and our lofty looks are brought low — we cannot be happy on the one hand, nor in a state of safety on the other.

"He who is down need fear no fall,
He who is low no pride;
He who is humble ever shall
Have God to be his guide."

To the meek, He has promised to teach His ways. He has special respect unto the lowly; and while He resists the proud — He gives grace unto the humble.

Reader, seek to be clothed with deep humility; continually aspire after the ornament of a meek and humble spirit, which is, in the sight of God, of great price. And, being brought low in your own estimation, you will surely find that the saying is faithful and true, which declares that those who humble themselves shall, in due time, be exalted. "He shall save the humble person."

**The Dying Command**

"Do this in remembrance of Me." Luke 22:19.

These words are addressed to all who love the Savior, even to the end of time. They show that it is the incumbent duty of all such to observe that *sacred memorial* which He appointed on the memorable night in which He was betrayed. Far from leaving it optional with themselves, to attend to it or not, as *inclination* or *convenience* might dictate — He has commanded them, in the most distinct manner, to "DO this in remembrance of Me."

The design of this interesting ordinance, is the commemoration of the Savior's death. And how reasonable is it that such an astonishing event should be *remembered*. And if remembered at all — ought not *He* to be allowed the privilege of fixing *how* it should be done. It may not be the method that we would have thought of; but having been appointed by Him, it behooves us cheerfully and gratefully to comply. *Unkind*, to use the mildest expression, must it be to refuse. Christian, embrace every opportunity of commemorating that glorious event, to which we are indebted for every blessing we enjoy, and every hope we are permitted to cherish. Let your language be,

"According to Your gracious Word,
In meek humility,
This will I do, my dying Lord—
I will remember Thee.

"Your body broken for my sake,
My bread from heaven shall be,
Your testamental cup I take—
And thus remember Thee.

"Gethsemane can I forget?
Or there Your conflict see,
Your agony and bloody sweat—
And not remember Thee?

"When to the Cross I turn my eyes,
And rest on Calvary,
O Lamb of God, my sacrifice—
I must remember Thee!

"And all Your love to me;
Yes, while a breath, a pulse remains,
Remember You, and all Your pains—
I will remember Thee.

"And when these failing lips grow dumb,
And mind and memory flee,
When You shall in Your kingdom come—
Jesus — remember me!"

**Inordinate Anxiety**

"And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not *worry* about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them." Luke 12:29-30

The "worry" of which the Savior here speaks, has reference to our *temporal necessities*. It is often found more difficult to trust God with the interests of the *body* — than with those of the *soul*. Not a few are oppressed with gloomy doubts and fears concerning the former — who enjoy the sweet assurance that all will be well with the latter. It is a very common thing for people to distress themselves with the painful apprehension that they will be left destitute of the necessities of life, or that they will have to end their days in the poor-house — who have a good hope through grace, that there are everlasting mansions prepared for them, above. But such anxious thoughts should not be entertained, inasmuch as He who has promised to His people eternal life in heaven — has also promised to supply all their needs upon earth. Why, then, should there be confidence in the one case — and distrust in the other.

Child of God, shall we refresh your memory, by reminding you of some of those precious promises which appertain to the present life — in contradistinction to that which is to come. Is it not written, "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shall you dwell in the land, and truly you shall be fed." "O fear the Lord, you His saints, for those who fear Him lack nothing. The lions may grow weak and hungry — but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing." "He will dwell on the heights, whose refuge will be the mountain fortress. His bread will be supplied, and water will not fail him." "For the Lord God is a sun and shield. The Lord will give grace and glory — no good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly." And remember He is *faithful* who promised — and that none of His declarations have ever been forfeited yet.

Give not way, then, to *undue anxiety* about those lesser things which, as well as the weightier matters of your soul's salvation — are secured to you by an inalienable charter. He "who clothes the lily", who gives to the beast his food, and who listens to the young ravens when they cry, who opens His bountiful hand, and satisfies the desire of every living thing — He will surely care for you His child, and not fail to be present with His aid in your every exigency. Has it not been so in the past? Has He not interposed again and again on your behalf, when all human help seemed vain, and thus showed that *man's extremity — is God's opportunity?*

**Concealed Allegiance**

"If any man *serves* Me — let him *follow* Me; and where I am — there shall also My servant be." John 12:26.

The Savior requires those who follow Him to do so publicly — by confessing His name before men. This is one of the laws of His kingdom which cannot be slighted without incurring His displeasure. Not merely does He forbid open rebellion — but *concealed attachment*; not merely open enmity — but *concealed love*. We are not to endeavor to reach heaven by some unobserved or secluded path — but we should go along the *King's highway*. If we have been made partakers of that religion which is pure and undefined — we should not seek to keep it to ourselves; we should let it be known, on the contrary, to all around us — whose we are and whom we serve.

In all the representations which are given of the followers of Christ, this feature is most clearly involved. They are set forth, not as wandering sheep — but as a *flock* — and as such they have a fold and a shepherd. They are represented, not as solitary plants growing waste and wild — but in an *enclosure*; they are a *vineyard* walled around; they are a *garden* watched and watered. They are described not as stones, loose on the ground, scattered here and there — but as in a *building*; they are built up a spiritual house, a habitation of God through the Spirit. They are spoken of not as vagrants, not as wanderers in the highways and hedges — but as fellow citizens with the saints, and composing of the *household* of God.

When addressing the Romans the apostle says that, "If you shall *confess* with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall *believe* in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead — you shall be saved. For with the heart man believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." These words ought to be seriously pondered by those who have been accustomed to regard a *public profession* of religion as a comparatively unimportant matter. If believing with the heart is the great concern, and confessing with the mouth an affair of trifling consequence — then it is strange that both should be thus connected together in so close and decided a manner.

Reader, if you would serve the Redeemer, follow Him; identify yourself with His people and His cause — and fight under the blood-stained banner of His cross. If you do so, He will be your present defense, and He will abundantly reward you hereafter. Confessing Him before men — He will confess you before His Father and all the holy angels. He was not ashamed to call us brethren — and should we be ashamed to call Him Lord? Love, gratitude, honor, consistency, unite in exclaiming, *God forbid!*

**The Infallible Test**

"By their *fruits* you shall know them." Matthew7:30.

*True religion is an internal principle* — its essence being hidden in the heart. But although it is inward as regards its *essence* — it has always an outward and visible *influence* and *manifestation*. Its *roots* are concealed, like those of a tree, to which it is so often compared — but its *fruits* are exposed to public observation.

*Conversion* is invariably followed by certain *effects* — whereby its reality is manifested. Where there is a change of *heart* — there will be a change of *life*. Where there is the *faith* which is so much spoken of by Paul — there will be the *works* referred to by James, and the one is the evidence of the other.

How is the approach of *Spring* ascertained? It is by those *effects* with which it is invariably attended. The lengthened days, the milder temperature, the singing of the birds, the blooming vegetation, the flowers with which the fields are decked, and the blossoms with which the trees are adorned — all these are indications that winter, with its chilling blasts, has passed away.

In like manner, how do we know when the *winter of the soul* has passed? It is by those fruits and results, with which the work of the Spirit is always accompanied. We know it by a holy consistency of conduct; by a spirit of deadness to the world; by devotedness to the Savior's glory, and warm attachment to His cause. In a word, we know it by an exhibition of all the *graces* of the gospel, and a constant abounding in those *fruits of righteousness* which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

Reader, if you are savingly interested in Christ? Then show it by the old things having passed away, and all things becoming new. Do you say by your profession, that you abide in Him? Then prove it by walking even as He walked. Is secret communion with Him a privilege enjoyed by you? Then let your whole spirit and demeanor be such that men shall take knowledge of you, as they did of the early disciples — that you have been with Jesus!

**Love of the World**

"You cannot serve both God — and mammon." Matthew 6:24.

Of the *enemies* of the cross of Christ, the apostle declares that they "mind earthly things." They are only concerned about increasing their stores, and thus be able to say with the rich man of whom the Savior speaks, that they have much goods laid up for many years; on the strength of which they intend to take their ease, and eat, drink, and be merry. All their thoughts are of the earth, earthy. The things of *time* and *sense* — they regard as first and last, middle and end.

It is recorded of a certain *Dutch trader,* that if he could get riches by it — that he said he would be willing to run his vessel into the mouth of hell, though he should scorch his sails in so doing. We may be ready to shrink with horror while contemplating a spirit so reckless and profane — and yet how many are there who virtually act upon a similar principle. If they can only buy and sell, and get gain — what do they care if they hazard all that ought to be dear to them, as immortal creatures. While making haste to be rich, they often do it with the consciousness that they thereby fall "into temptation and a snare, and many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition!"

It is impossible for the mind to be governed at the same time by *two opposite principles*. The love of the *world*--and the love of *God*--are diametrically opposed to each other. "If any man loves the world — the love of the Father is not in him." "Don't you know that the friendship of the world — is enmity with God? Whoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world — is the enemy of God." "You cannot serve both God — and mammon."

To borrow a quaint illustration from one of our old writers, "When you see a dog following two men — as long as they walk together, you do not know to which of them the dog belongs. But let them come to a *parting road* and there separate from each other — then it will soon be seen who is the owner, for *the dog will follow his master wherever he goes."*

Just so, an individual may pursue the world, and retain a Christian profession at the same time — and it is often difficult to ascertain whether God or the world possesses his affections. But by and bye he comes to a *parting road*, when God calls him one way, and the world another way — and then he will show to whom he really belongs. If God is his master — then he will follow and obey God. But if the world is his master — then he will follow after it!

O my soul, how are you affected by the respective claims of the things of *time* — and those of *eternity?* After a few more rising and setting suns, it will be a matter of total indifference to you — whether you have been rich or poor, successful in your business or unsuccessful. But it will be of unspeakable consequence — whether you have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before you in the gospel.

Listen, then, to the words of the Lord Jesus, "Do not labor for food that spoils — but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you." "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also!"

**The Solemn Warning**

"So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect Him!" Matthew 24:44.

A minister was once called to visit a young lady who was seriously ill. On entering her apartment, he asked her how she felt? *"I am dying!"* was the reply she gave. He then said to her, "If you think you are dying, how do you feel in prospect of the eternal world?" Her brief — but mournful answer was, *"Not prepared!"* and in a short time she expired!

Reader, it will be a fearfully solemn thing, if death should come, and find you *not prepared*. To be in the grasp of the *King of terrors*; to enter upon the dread realities of an unending eternity; to stand, single and alone, before the great tribunal — and yet unprepared! Is it likely to be so? If you are living regardless of your immortal interests — then you have great reason to apprehend that it will, for the summons may come at an hour when it is least expected.

What is the *preparation* that is required, in order to secure a happy death — and a blissful immortality? All is included in "winning Christ, and being found in Him." Those who possess this one blessing are saved, and they will not be ashamed nor confounded, world without end. United to the Lord Jesus by a living faith — their guilty persons are accepted of God; they enjoy His favor which is life, being reconciled to Him by the death of the cross; from the condemnation of that holy law which they have broken — they are fully discharged; their sins, which are many, are all forgiven; their hearts are renewed by the quickening energies of the Divine Spirit, and by His effectual working — their natures are sanctified, whereby they are led more and more to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord.

Should we be asked, then, What is *your* petition, and what is your request? Let us not hesitate to say, in the language of the apostle, "That I may win Christ, and be found in Him — not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ--the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith!"

To the true Christian, *death*, whatever form he may assume, and at whatever season he may appear, will be a *messenger of joy and peace*. In his case — the day of *death* will be better than the day of his *birth*. It will be the day when, as a weary *traveler* — he shall arrive at home; when, as a tempest-tossed mariner — he shall reach the desired haven; and when, as an heir of God and a joint-heir with Christ — he will take possession of his promised glorious inheritance!

If we are in Christ, we have thus nothing to fear in looking forward to the coming of Christ — either His coming at our *death*, or His coming at the final *judgment*. We ought rather to long, with an ardent longing, for His appearing. In the meanwhile it is our duty to serve Him, not hiding our talent in the earth like the unprofitable servant — but to be up and doing, having our loins girt, and our lamps burning. Constrained by His matchless love, seeking continually to glorify His adorable name, following the perfect example which He has set before us, and taking His sacred precepts as our daily directory — we shall, while pursuing such a course, possess the surest evidence ourselves, and afford the most conclusive proof to others — that when the hour of our departure shall have arrived, it will be to leave a world of sin and sorrow — and enter upon that blessed state where we shall be forever "with Christ, which is far better!"