÷Zion's Pilgrim

by Robert Hawker, 1827

"They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces turned towards it, saying, Come let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten." Jer 50:5

"And confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." Heb 11:13

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**÷PREFACE**

It was not until that I had passed a very considerable portion of time life, that I felt the full conviction of my being but "a stranger and a pilgrim upon the earth"—and it becomes even now, one of the most astonishing circumstances, in the new view of things which are continually opening before me, that there should have been so much ignorance in my mind by nature, on a subject which in itself appears so exceedingly plain and evident. Not that I was altogether void of apprehension, that the present life formed a bounded prospect; but yet my ideas were like those of the great mass of unawakened characters, who believe as though they believed not; and who, **though ready enough to confess in the general, that man is but a dying creature, yet, in the particular instance, as it concerns themselves, live as though they never thought to die.**

I pause—in the moment of recollection, to look back upon the whirlpool, in which for so many years I was hurried on by the unceasing current! unconscious of the perilous situation in which I then moved, and unconcerned at what I saw of the sudden departure of those around me, swallowed up in the vortex!

Dread Power! awful even in your mercies! Do I now stand secure on the edge, upheld by a strength not my own, no longer within the reach of the tide, and beholding the solemn prospect of thousands still engulfed? Can I call to mind the past danger and the present deliverance, unmoved with pity over the unthinking throng, and untouched with gratitude to you the sole Author of every mercy? I feel (blessed be the grace that inspires it!) the rising hymn of thankfulness in my heart, while the tear drops from my eye—"Lord, how is it that you have manifested yourself unto me, and not unto the world?"

The reader who condescends to interest himself in the history of a poor traveler to Zion, must be content to admit of these occasional interruptions by the way.

You may, perhaps, my brother, consider everything of this kind but as the unnecessary parentheses of the tale. But they are not so to the writer. The life of a pilgrim, and of Zion's Pilgrim particularly, furnishes but a comfortless view in the retrospect. It is like treading over large tracts of waste, thorny, and unimproved ground. Every little spot, therefore, which can be looked back upon with delight, is like the sweet herbage and the refreshing stream, here and there only to be found on the barren heath—and which are, beyond all calculation, precious to the traveler.

If the reader cannot enter into a full participation with the writer in these enjoyments, he hopes he will at least allow them to remain as so many *episodes* in the history. It is possible, from an unison of hearts, some fellow-traveler on the road to Zion may find in them an harmony of sound corresponding to his own song of praise; and to him they will not be uninteresting.

One reflection, I think, cannot fail to strike the gracious mind with force, in the review of a long period of unawakened nature, when once brought out of it; and that is, the *distinguishing properties of preserving grace.* I never knew, until grace taught it me; how much I owed, and was continually accumulating the debt, during the season of my unregeneracy, to this one principle—but now, under divine teaching, I have learned somewhat of this spiritual arithmetic, and can enter into the full apprehension of what the apostle means, when he says, "Preserved in Jesus Christ, and called." (Jud 1:1.)

Do you ask what that is? Every man's personal experience becomes the truest commentator—but for the grace of preservation *in* Jesus Christ, there never could have been a calling *to* Jesus Christ. Calculate, if you can, how long a space you lived, unconscious of your state, "without God and without Christ in the world"—and had you been cut off in the awful state of an unawakened, unregenerated mind, where would have been your portion? And were there no seasons of peculiar peril, no sickness, no intemperance, no hair-breadth escapes, in which life hung as by a thread over an hopeless eternity? Oh! the countless instances of preservation *in* Christ Jesus, before the redeemed of the Lord are brought to the apprehension of divine things which are *of* Christ Jesus! Have you never seen the unconscious babe watched over, in all its helpless, defenseless hours, by the sedulous tenderness and care of its anxious parent? Such, and infinitely higher, must be his preservation of his people, who not only watches over them "every moment, lest any hurt them," (Isa 27:3.) but, what peculiarly endears his loving-kindness to the heart, he watches over them for good, in those moments also, in the days of their unregeneracy, when they are "making Him to serve with their sins, and wearying Him with their iniquities." (Isa 43:24.)

Is this view of the subject wholly unprofitable to the soul not in the actual possession of grace? I trust not. Is not every one a monument of *sparing* mercy, while continuing on praying ground? And if preserved *in* Christ Jesus, why not hope there may be yet a calling *to* Christ Jesus? I have often thought that if the most senseless mind could be but brought to stop in the mad career of folly, and put the questions to the heart, "For what purpose am I preserved to this hour?—and why is the morning light again given to one who but lives to abuse it?"—such a solemn appeal to the heart, in the cool moment of reflection, if awakened by grace, would be blessed by grace, and induce a new train of thought, and new principles of conduct in the mind. "How does the Lord wait that he may be gracious unto you? and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you; for the Lord is a God of judgment. Blessed are all those who wait for him!" (Isa 30:18.)

I hardly know at what period to commence my history. All that part of life which I spent prior to my conversion, I cannot reckon in the estimate of really living. He only lives, who lives to God's glory—all else is but a blank in creation. And were the sum total of my days to be made up under this numeration, it could only correspond to the character of him, who, being regenerated after he had attained the age of threescore, ordered for the inscription of his tomb-stone—"Here lies an old man of four years old."

I can only tell the reader, that if from my first apprehension of divine things must commence the calculation of my real life, I have but a little path to go over. But from this era would I desire to date my history.

What were the *secondary* means which the Lord in his providence was pleased to employ, it is not so interesting to the reader to be informed of, as to behold their efficacy under grace. It will be sufficient for him to know, that from an ardent pursuit, like that of the generality of the world, of the several objects which attract attention in the circle of life, I found my mind suddenly arrested by matters of an higher nature; and among the first evidences of the renewed life, I discovered two or three leading principles manifesting the mighty change. As for example—from being occupied in an unremitting regard to things temporal, I now found my heart earnest to pursue the things which are eternal—and if at any time the necessary and unavoidable claims of the world broke in upon me, to call off my attention, my heart, like the needle under magnetic influence, which cannot be long diverted from the object of its attraction, soon was turned again to its favorite pursuit. In like manner the troubles of life and the disappointments necessary to the present preliminary state, which in the days of my unregeneracy operated with all their severity, now lost their power, or at least became lessened, in the great anxiety of what might be my situation in the world to come. This, like the ocean, whose boundless bosom takes in all the rivers flowing into it, swallowed up every lesser stream of sorrow; and an awakened concern for the "one thing needful," made me forget every other consideration.

Add to these, I had been exceedingly prodigal of time, while I knew not its value; and have been literally sending out into the streets and lanes of the city to invite passengers to take it off my hands; but when it pleased God to call me by his grace, I found every part of it to be so precious, that, like the fugitive man-slayer hastening to the gate of Refuge, I dreaded every moment lest the adversary should seize me before I had found a sanctuary from his fury. As well as I recollect (and great cause have I to recollect everything connected with a situation so critical) I was in this state of mind when my desires were first awakened to an inquiry after Zion—and the question involuntarily was bursting from the fullness of my heart, "Who will show me any good? Lord, lift up the light of your countenance upon me; and it shall put more gladness in my heart than in the time when corn, and wine, and oil increase!"

Awakened to a concern which I had never before experienced, and called upon continually by a voice from within, which neither the engagements of pleasure nor the clamor of business could wholly stifle, I found myself, insensibly as it were, entered upon the road to Zion, eagerly disposed to ask everyone by the way, "Who will show me any good?" though unconscious at that time what that *good* meant, or whether there were any means of attaining it.

It was in the midst of one of those highly interesting moments, when my heart seemed to be more than ordinarily impressed with the consideration of the importance of the inquiry, and perhaps too ready to receive the bias of any direction which might first offer, that it occurred to my recollection, there was a person who lived in the neighborhood, who might help me in my pursuits of happiness; whom, for the sake of distinction I would call

**÷THE MORAL MAN**

His house lay on the left hand side of the road in the way to Zion; and, therefore, it would not be going much out of my direct path to call upon him. I mention this for the better information of those travelers who may come after me on the same errand, concerning both his situation and character.

I had long known him, and not infrequently been witness to some striking instances of the benevolence of his mind. He was well known indeed to all around for the extensiveness of his charity. The poor man never went from his door with his tale of misery unheard, or his needs unrelieved; and it was said of him, almost to a proverb, by the pensioners of his bounty, *that if ever any man went to heaven, it would be him.* I considered myself particularly fortunate in the recollection of such a character, to whom I might unbosom myself on the subject which lay so near my heart; so that, calling upon him with that kind of freedom which necessity begets, and which a confidence in the person you address will always excite, I communicated to him, without reserve, the state of my mind.

He heard me with great attention—now and then only, as I stated my distress, expressing much pity for my concern on a subject which he considered to be totally unnecessary; wondering, as he said, that there should be a single person upon earth weak enough to interrupt the enjoyment of his own happiness with an anxiety so ill-founded; and which according to his ideas, tended to reflect so greatly upon the goodness of the Deity. "For my part," says he, "I have too high notions of God, to imagine that he ever made any creature to be miserable; neither can I fancy the possibility of what some gloomy minds are so much alarmed about—of the doctrine of future punishments. It appears to me altogether inconsistent with the benevolence of the Divine Character."

"Hold, Sir," I interrupted him, "and pray satisfy my mind on this point, before you go farther. I readily join issue with you in the highest acknowledgments of the goodness of God; and am most fully persuaded that all praise must fall infinitely short in the description of what it really is; but I see as plainly as though written with a sun-beam, that much misery may, and in fact does, consist with the Divine goodness in the present life; and, as I suppose, no one will venture to impeach God's goodness in the permission of evil *here*—I cannot form the vestige of an argument, why that goodness may not be as consistent with the existence of evil *hereafter;* especially, when Scripture comes in to the aid of my feeble reason, declaring, in a tone of the most determined and unalterable decision, that 'the wicked shall be punished with everlasting destruction, away from the presence of the Lord!' (2Th 1:9.) Can you explain to me how I am to reconcile these things with your opinion? And do you not imagine that there is great danger in entertaining such unqualified notions of the divine character—of complimenting God's goodness at the expense of God's truth?"

My neighbor waved the question—taking shelter under the general covering of a supposed inoffensiveness of conduct, and a well-intentioned frame of mind. "I do not," he replied, "trouble myself with matters of this nature. Providence has blessed me with ample circumstances, and I do all the good I can in my little sphere of usefulness. While, therefore, I enjoy the present, I am thankful for the past, and fearless of the future. These are my sentiments," added my neighbor; "and in the discharge of moral duties, I rest satisfied for the outcome."

"It would be very unfitting in me;" I replied, "to contradict your opinion, having called upon you for instruction, and not to instruct. But forgive me if I err in the apprehension, that what you have advanced in the eulogy of moral virtues, relates more to earthly concerns than heavenly—more to the present well-being of man, than to the future enjoyment of God. There is, unquestionably, a loveliness in moral virtue, which cannot fail to gain the esteem of every beholder; and happy would it be for the circumstances of mankind, if its influences were far more general than they are. And while a proper distinction is made between the duties connected with the present world, and the preparations suitable for the eternal world, too much cannot be said in praise of morality. But if, in the sight of God, an imperfect obedience to a moral system could have answered the purposes of futurity, (I say *imperfect obedience*, because no one upon earth will venture, I imagine, to think higher of his practical attainments in morality, than that they come short of perfection) the religion of Christianity would have been an unnecessary revelation. What nation ever exceeded, in point of morals, the Roman and the Lacedemonian commonwealths?—and yet, after all, we can only place them in the class of unenlightened heathens in respect to religion. Is there not some grand deficiency in that system which totally shuts out, or at least throws far into the background of the piece, the acknowledgment of Him who, one should suppose, would form the first and principal character?

"Permit me to place the argument in a point of view which may, in some measure, tend to decide it. If I mistake not, you have a large family of children, all branched out in life, and you have already made for them a most ample provision, and it is by your liberality that they are enabled to move in a sphere suited to their rank and circumstances. Put the case now, that these children of yours live in the greatest love and harmony with each other; and not content with the bare practice of moral honesty and justice, are kind, affectionate, friendly, tender, even to the anticipation of what one conceives may promote the other's happiness. But suppose, that in the midst of all this attention to the mutual and general felicity of each other, they are never heard to express an affection towards the person of a father, from whom as the source they had derived all their enjoyments—would not any man consider them as deficient in the first and best of all possible obligations? And is not this the very state of those who, priding themselves in the discharge of moral duties to their neighbor, pass by the reverence, the love, the gratitude, and obedience they owe to God?

"Bear with me, I beseech you, Sir, and correct me if I am wrong. I merely state the objections to what you have advanced, as they appear to me, in order that your better judgment may remove them.—But, indeed, it has often struck my mind very forcibly, that there must be some latent principle of evil lurking under a fair form, when I have beheld characters of the greatest respectability, who appear to be everything which is amiable to their fellow-creatures—generous, noble, affectionate; but at the same time totally dead to devout sentiments. Often it has been my lot, in times past, to have been introduced to their tables, where the plentiful provision of all the bounties of God's providence seemed to be continually inviting the conversation to some remarks on the goodness of the great Provider. But, alas! during the many hours which I have sometimes spent at one meal, not a word has dropped in honor of the Almighty Master of the feast. The gifts have been enjoyed—but the Giver totally forgotten. It has been frequently my reproach I assure you, Sir, when returning from such tables in the days while I attended them (for I have long since given them up) that there must be some malevolent principle in the human mind to produce such effects. Will you help me to account for it?"

My neighbor seemed a little hurt at the closeness of the question. "You will excuse me, Sir," he replied, "it is not my province to preach. I would recommend you rather to the worthy vicar of our parish, who is thought by all who attend his church, to be one of the most elegant preachers of the age. Perhaps he may be able to satisfy your enquiries; and I shall very much rejoice if your mind can be made easy."

Disappointed as I found myself in the information proposed from my visit, I could not but be thankful for my neighbor's candor; and finding my anxiety increase rather than diminish, in desires after the attainment of *something,* which I knew not by what term to distinguish, I thought it might be right to follow up my neighbor's advice; and, accordingly, on the on the next Sunday I went to hear

**÷THE MORAL PREACHER**

He took his text from the prophecies of Micah, chap 6 ver. 8. "He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you—but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?" I felt much pleasure in the very idea of the subject proposed from this text of scripture, the moment it was mentioned; and therefore listened with the more attention, in order to discover some leading points, which might be brought forward to give me comfort. The substance of the preacher's sermon, when separated from the flowery ornaments of it, was directed to show that the path to happiness was set before everyone; that God had shown man what was good; and that it was man's own fault if he did not follow it; that what the Lord required was nothing harsh, or unreasonable, or difficult; but the plain, easy, self-rewarding virtues of moral obligation; and that, if, in addition to the line of *doing justly,* the circumstances favored *the love of mercy,* in relieving the needs of the wretched, where ability reached, and dropping over them the tear of sympathy where it did not, and instead of studying to be wise above what is written, respecting divine things, *to walk humbly with God*—these made up the sum and substance of all moral and religious concerns.

"Well, Sir,"—cried my neighbor, who had attended also the church that morning, and was coming out of the porch at the same moment with myself—"well, Sir, what are your sentiments now? I hope our worthy vicar has fully satisfied your mind." And this he said loud enough to be heard by those around, and with that kind of triumph which a man feels when he fancies he has fully established an opinion long disputed.

"It is my mercy," replied a poor man, who overheard my neighbor's observation, "that I have not so learned Christ. God has indeed shown me what is good; and could I look up and say that I have followed it, all might be well. But alas! 'I have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.' I know not what others feel; but I am free to confess, that in many instances which my recollection now reproaches me with, and others, no doubt, which my treacherous heart has long since forgotten, I have neither 'done justly, loved mercy, nor walked humbly with my God.'

"Though I have reason to be very thankful that God's preventing and restraining grace has kept me from the more open and flagrant acts of injustice, yet I am conscious that self-love and self-interest have betrayed me into the *doing* of many things which would not bear to be ascertained by the strict equilibrium of a standard of justice, which admits no partiality. I am no less convinced also that in *speaking,* I have committed, on numberless occasions, a breach of that golden rule of justice which forbids reporting to another's injury, what in similar circumstances, I would have thought wrong to have had spoken of myself. And from the imagination of man's heart, which scripture declares to be 'only evil continually,' I am persuaded that, in *thinking,* many unkind thoughts have arisen in my mind against my neighbor, which become a violation of that law of charity which *thinks no evil.* I dare not, therefore, whatever others may do—I dare not risk the final decision of my everlasting welfare on the point of 'doing justly.'

"Neither under the condition of loving mercy,' can I find greater confidence; for I discover in my nature anger, resentment, pride, and the like corrupt passions; which, in spite of all my endeavors to suppress them, like the eruptions of a volcano, which plainly bespeak the heat within from the lava thrown without, too clearly testify that the love of mercy is not the ruling passion; and therefore never to be estimated by the few casual acts of alms-giving, which, if the heart would be faithful to acknowledge, are sometimes more the result of pride, than the pure effect of real love and charity.

"I blush at the bare mention of 'walking humbly with God,' in the recollection how often my rebellious heart has risen, and is continually rising, in opposition to His government and authority. Fretful and impatient under the slightest afflictions, unthankful for the greatest mercies, and though desiring in my daily prayer that His will may be done, frequently wishing it may not, and even displeased if it is, when it thwarts my own; can such a creature be said to 'walk humbly with his God?'"

My neighbor listened to the poor man's observations; and when he had finished, walked away with out making a reply. For my part, though it appeared that his reasoning was conclusive and unanswerable, yet I ventured to say, "If this is the state of the case, what becomes of the morality of the Christian religion? and in what sense are we to accept the sermon on the mount, with which the great Author of it opened his commission?"

"The morality of the Christian Religion," replied the poor man, "stands, where it always stood, upon its own fixed and immoveable basis; and, sooner shall Heaven and earth pass, than one jot or tittle of the law shall fail. *God does not lose his authority to command, because man has lost his power to obey*.—The creditor forgoes not the right to his just due, because the debtor is become insolvent. By "the Law is the knowledge of sin." (Rom 3:20.) Hence the great Author of the Christian system opened his commission with the promulgation of this law, that its unalterable terms might ever stand in the front of his gospel; and 'the man that does them shall live in them.' (Gal 3:12.) If, therefore, any man can appeal to this standard of decision; can look up with an uncovered, undaunted front, and challenge the strictest scrutiny over every thought, and word, and action; if there be such an obedience found as can give life, 'truly righteousness shall be by the law.' (Gal 3:21.) But if both scripture and experience have concluded all under sin; if all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, and by 'the deeds of the law, no flesh can be justified in his sight;' then it will be found that the moral sermon of the great Author of Christianity on the mount, as well as the moral system of the great Jewish lawgiver in the wilderness, were both designed to act as 'the school-master to bring unto Christ' (Gal 3:24.) and, that 'He is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.' (Rom 10:4.)

"Pause therefore one moment, and examine how the account stands between God and your conscience. In the present season of lightness and inattention, a multitude of occurrences of frailty, and sometimes what deserves a harsher name, pass away in the stream of time, noiseless and inaudible, and are soon swallowed up in the gulf of oblivion. But in that hour, when the Lord will lay 'judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plumbline,' if you and I have no better righteousness than our own to trust in, no Surety to stand in our stead, no Advocate to plead our cause—an effect infinitely more awful than that which loosed the loins of the impious monarch we read of will take place, when 'weighed in the balance and found lacking.'" (Dan 5:6.)

I knew not what to reply, and therefore remained silent. The poor man, bidding me farewell, left me to ruminate on the solemn inquiry, "How should man be just with God?" (Job 9:2.)

I felt the same force of what he said. It was a harsh sound; and the vibration long dwelt upon my ear, "How shall man be just with God?" It followed me to what Job calls the "visions of the night;" (Job 4.) and even then, like the spectre which he saw, the same expostulating voice seemed to cry, "How shall man be just with God?"

The stern demand rang through all the chambers of the conscience, as if a thousand voices had concurred to proclaim the utter impossibility of answering the question in the very moment of proposing it; and as an echo reverberates from broken walls, so the sound of conviction returned from my broken heart. "By the deeds of the law no flesh can be justified in his sight." (Rom 3:20.)

It is with some degree of grateful recollection that I look back upon this part of my history; and bless God, while I trace his divine hand graciously interposing by the instrumentality of this poor man, to rescue me from the dangerous path of delusion into which I had turned, when seeking justification by the deeds of the law. I can now enter into the participation of David's experience upon a similar occasion, and feel somewhat of that spirit which he felt in the instance of the wife of the Carmelite, when under a deep conviction of that sin-preventing providence, he cried out, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me; and blessed be your advice, and blessed be you." (1Sa 25:32.) In like manner I find cause to bless God in the review of this instance as the *Author,* the poor man as the *instrument,* and his advice as the *means,* which the Lord was pleased to commission, for the emancipation of my mind from a self-confidence which, if cherished, must have ultimately ended in my eternal ruin.

And my reader, will I hope forgive me if I interrupt the progress of the history for a moment, only to remind him, that unless the mind be brought under similar conclusions respecting the unalterable and inflexible right of God's demands, "woe unto him who strives with his Maker!" We may fancy what we please, and frame a standard of our own for God to go by, according to *our* notions of the fitness of things; as if an arraigned culprit at the bar should stand up and prescribe laws to his judge! but it would be well to consider, before it be too late, the very solemn tone of decision in which scripture has settled the point, which leaves the subject at once determined and without appeal. "Behold he puts no trust in his saints, even his angels he charges with folly. What then is man, that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?" (Job 4:18; Job 15:14.)

The reader will forgive me if I introduce an anecdote in this place, which will serve under divine teaching to explain this memorable scripture of the Lord by the prophet, and throw a light upon it, in perfect analogy to the whole tenor of the gospel.

When I was in Gloucestershire, some two years since, a clergyman, whose views of divine things did not then perfectly agree with mine—but who kindly called upon me to propose certain questions, on those passages of scripture in which he supposed we very much differed; and began his interrogations by proposing this portion in the prophecy of Micah. "Suppose (said he), I was to preach tomorrow among my people on this text, how would you recommend me to comment upon it?" I said, "As soon as you have read before them the sacred words themselves, you might very safely say, I take for granted, that everyone who hears me is desirous to follow up the footsteps of the prophet in those acts of holy obedience. And as the highest instance of every other must be to do justice to God; are you everyone of you so convinced of sin, and the natural state in which everyone of you was born in the Adam-fall transgression, that both by original, and actual iniquity, you justly merit the present, and everlasting displeasure and punishment of Almighty God? And that in yourself, as you stand alone before God, you cannot escape the damnation of hell? This conviction wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit, and unreservedly acknowledged by the mouth before God; is doing justice to Almighty God. And where this conviction is deeply wrought in the soul, what the prophet adds will immediately follow, namely, to love mercy; that is to know, and love, and delight in the glorious Person who is mercy itself, and whose glorious work, of the great salvation, wrought out by the Lord Jesus Christ, brought in mercy and peace and all covenant blessings. And where those two leading principles are inwrought in the regenerated heart by the divine unction of God the Holy Spirit; that self-convinced, self-condemned, self-loathing sinner will indeed walk every day, and all the day, humbly with God. (Deu 8:2-3. Eze 16:63.)

My visitor expressed himself so much satisfied with this view of the subject, that he said, he would certainly preach upon it according to this statement the following Lord's day. What took place afterward, I know not—but the reader will forgive this short tangent.

÷**THE FAMILY AT PRAYERS**

Forever driven from the asylum of *moral duties as a justifying principle before God*; and still restless and uneasy from the suspense of an awakened mind, in respect to the solemn events of futurity, I found myself compelled to go farther in the pursuit of the wished for happiness; though what path to explore, or where to direct my inquiry, I knew not.

There lived a family of long reputed piety, whose place of residence lay not far out of my way, from whom it struck me that some information might be obtained; I instantly directed my steps towards the house—and I was led to consider it as a very peculiar coincidence of circumstances, and not unfavorable to my purpose, that the household were engaged at their morning devotions, just in the moment that I entered their dwelling.

There is a principle, I know not by what term to call it, which acts with singular energy on the human mind at the very appearance of religious worship. The heart is instinctively brought within the sphere of attraction, and is secretly inclined to participate in what it beholds. I felt this influence operating the moment I entered the room. I considered what this family was engaged in, as a common interest, a common concern; so that without giving any interruption, I dropped upon my knees, unbidden and uninvited, in the midst of the circle.

When the devotion was finished, the master of the house desired me to be seated; and our conversation naturally taking its rise out of the incident of the moment, turned on religion.

"It is my uniform custom, Sir," said he, "to begin and end the day in prayer—I consider it to be my duty. I know it exposes me to the sneer of the fashionable world; but I cannot help that. It appears to me to be the obligation of every master of a family to set up the form of religion in his house; and for example's sake, to lead his household to the church on Sundays. For the same reason I make it a point that all the elder branches of my family, after they have been *confirmed*, should attend the monthly sacrament; and it is my wish, that my wife and daughters should go to prayers on the week days and festivals; and I believe they are pretty constant in their attendance. And, Sir, we all find the good effects of it. We are prosperous in the world, cheerful and happy, as you see. Religion has nothing gloomy with us. No family, I persuade myself, is more comfortable than ours."

The master of the house said this with so much complacency and satisfaction, and there seemed to be so much cheerfulness appearing in every countenance of this household, that I began to hope the object of my visit was answered without farther inquiry. I concluded with myself, that if *the observance of religious duties* was capable of inducing so much happiness in their instance, it would have the same tendency in mine. I only remained therefore long enough among this apparently happy family to present my congratulations on what I had seen, and then took my leave, to put into practice the lesson which I had learned from them.

It is impossible to tell my reader what a round of duties I labored through, of reading, hearing, fasting, watching, praying; and to the constant routine of this kind, when the monthly sacraments came about in their periodical returns, I added every page which is prescribed in the Weekly Preparations. I could not have ventured in those days to the Lord's table with any of the appointed forms unfulfilled, for the world; and as this path in the *trammels of devotion opened a continual feast to feed the pride of my heart upon*, I soon began to feel the sweet effects of it in the gratification it afforded me; for *finding greater confidence from the supposed rectitude of my life and dutiful obedience towards God*, than heretofore, I concluded that I stood on much safer ground for acceptance with him—not that I then thought that my goodness *alone* and without the merits of Jesus Christ would be sufficient to salvation (for by this time I had learned somewhat of the nature of the Christian religion) but I took it for granted, that *what I did* would be the sure method of recommending me to God for it—so that, upon the whole, I was well pleased with myself. There were indeed certain seasons, now and then, when upon the omission of any duty, or the commission of any sin, my mind would misgive me, and for the moment induce fear. But these were but transient impressions, which I endeavored to efface as fast as possible, *in atoning for the evil, by increasing diligence in the path of what I thought goodx*—and thus by carrying on a communication with God, I strove to make up what was remiss or offensive in one instance, by an over-attention in another.

How long I should have gone on under a delusion so fatal, I know not—but a circumstance occurred which at once threw to the ground the whole edifice I had been building up for myself with so much labor, and leveled all my fancied goodness in the dust. I had been reading a chapter in Paul's second epistle to Timothy, when those words arrested my attention so forcibly, that I could not help dwelling upon them—"Having a form of godliness—but denying the power thereof—from such turn away." (2Ti 3:5.) What if this should be *my* case, I thought with myself; and after all, I am taking up with the *form,* while destitute of the *power* of godliness? The very idea made me tremble; and the bare possibility of the thing itself induced me to bring the matter to an instant issue by examination; and the result terminated to my confusion. That single appeal of the apostle, which I found I could not make, convinced me all was wrong. "God is my witness" said he, "whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son." (Rom 1:9.) "Alas," I cried out, "I am no *spiritual* worshiper. I have the *form* indeed—but not the *power* of godliness. Mine is the *shell*, the *carcass*, the *shadow* only of piety."

Under this renewed conviction and distress of mind, I sat down pensive and melancholy. I considered now that all hopes of salvation were over; and was in a state little short of despair. I knew not at this time that these were the blessed effects of divine teaching; and that God the Holy Spirit was thus, one by one, removing all the props of self-confidence, and emptying the soul—in order to prepare it for receiving out of the fullness of the Savior. Oh! it is a gracious process of mercy. We must become poor in order to be made rich; and the apostle's paradoxes must be literally verified, to be "dying, that we may live; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; having nothing, and yet possessing all things." (2Co 6:9-10.)

Oh! you mourning saints, be not astonished at your afflictions. Be they ever so heavy, or of ever so long continuance, there is a *needs be* for every one of them; *your* God is faithful in sending the affliction; and your God will be equally faithful in carrying you through it. Settle this in your mind as an everlasting maxim, every one of them shall terminate to your benefit. The Lord appoints it for the exercise of your faith; and if your faith gives glory to God, God will confirm and honor your faith. This is among the *all things* which must work together for good to those who love God.

**÷THE TRAVELER**

In the frame of mind which I have here just described, I was seated pensive and melancholy, when a traveler approached me.—"You seem dejected, Sir," he cried, as he advanced towards me. "Yes, Sir, I am indeed," I replied; "I have discovered sin to be a heavy burden."

"Sir, I ought to congratulate you," the man answered, "on this discovery. *The knowledge of our misery is the first step towards a cure.* There is a striking analogy between the diseases of the mind and those of the body. The man in supposed health will refuse the application of medicine; it will be grateful only to the sick; and our Lord says, that 'the whole need not a physician.' It is one of the sweetest and most affectionate recommendations of his character, that he came not to heal the healthy—but to cure the diseased. If you know your *malady*, depend upon it you are not far from obtaining relief. It has been long my complaint, that 'in me dwells no good thing.' And though I have been some years in the school of self-knowledge, I have made but small proficiency in the science. A science indeed so general, which comprises the whole of man, is not easily acquired. The deepest investigations do not reach to the bottom; for we are told by an authority not to be questioned, that 'the *heart* of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;' and that 'none can know it' but he who 'tries the heart and searches the thoughts;' (Jer 17:9-10.) for it is not this or that particular instance of sin only—but our whole nature which is virtually *all sin;* and not a member or faculty of the body but what is tainted by it. Ask the most devout saint the earth ever produced—can you restrain the *mind* from wandering in seasons of worship? even if you close your eyes from all the objects around, will not crude and impertinent thoughts rush into the mind like unbidden and unwelcome visitors? Do you always find freedom for the *affections* to mount on the wings of faith and prayer, when you draw near the mercy-seat? *Alas! there is not a single sense but what is in confederacy to promote sin in the soul!* Our eyes are continual purveyors of evil, and our ears inlets to bring home subjects of defilement. What a train of filthy and impure ideas will some times pass over the most chaste heart, which no education can restrain—but which a man would blush to unbosom to his nearest friend!

"And what makes this awful view of man's total depravity still more awful is, that there is no exemption from it—but it is universal. Corrupt nature is the same in all. This *hand* of mine is as capable of perpetrating any heinous act of sin; and the *heart*, which gives birth to the action, of devising it—as that of the vilest wretch that ever lived; for the only distinction of character between man and man, is in what God's grace effects, not what man's merit deserves. You seem to be surprised; but such is the fact. Look here," he cried, taking a handful of seeds out of his pocket, "here are a number of seeds, all taken from one and the same stock—if I were to put *all* of them into the earth in the same soil, the same situations, under the same aspect of sun, and rain, and dew, they would as certainly produce the same in equal fruitfulness. But if I put a *part* only into the earth, and reserve the remainder in my pocket, is it not equally as certain that the part reserved will remain inert and unproductive; and *that* which is cast into the ground be alone fruitful? The human heart, like those seeds, being from one and the same stock, and in its genus, species, and kind, in all instances the same—must invariably in all cases be alike, if all other circumstances concur; so that if this be not induced, it arises not from a diversity of character—but from other causes. *It is grace which prevents the sun, and rain, and dew* (if I may be allowed the figure) *of temptation and opportunity, from exerting their influence;* and then, like the seeds in the pocket, in the absence of those causes, they remain barren and unfruitful."

"But, Sir," I replied, "if such is the universal state of mankind, what a deplorable situation is our nature in! And how then can any be saved?"

"It is this very state of our nature," the traveler answered, "which made way for *salvation by grace*. Because man is fallen, Christ died. If you were not a sinner, what necessity would there have been for a Savior?"

"Tell me," I cried with great earnestness, "is that Savior for me?"

"I shall be ready," rejoined the traveler, "to answer any questions you think proper to propose to me upon the interesting subject, as far as I am able; from whence you may be assisted to gather information on the point."

"I thank you, Sir," I answered; "but one circumstance I will beg you previously to explain. In calling lately upon a family, whom I found at their devotions, I discovered nothing like what I have since felt of the deadness and unprofitableness of my heart; but they all seemed to be perfectly cheerful and happy. From what principle will you account for this?"

"The thing speaks for itself," replied the traveler. *"In a state of unawakened, unregenerated nature, the carnal security and blindness of the mind induces this false joy, and prevents a real concern for 'the one thing needful.'* False reasonings, presumptuous hopes, and views of religion different from those of the openly profane; these act as mighty persuasives on the imagination, and speak 'Peace, peace—when there is no peace.' Like children amused with the rattle, such people take up with the carcass, and shell of religion, and are ignorant of the vital principle within. An *outward form of godliness* satisfies for the inward *power* of it. And thus resting upon the means, and unconscious of the end, their forms and ceremonies of devotion, instead of leading the heart *to* God, tend to carry the heart *from* God; and they know nothing more of religion than the name; and herewith their conduct uniformly corresponds. You will find such characters as well at the play-house as at the church. They can sit both at the Lord's table and the card-table, and are as well known at the one as the other. Thus they live in the vanity and ignorance of the mind; and thus not infrequently they die; ignorant of themselves, ignorant of their own corruptions, strangers to all the principles of grace, without God, and without Christ. The portrait of these people is accurately drawn by the pencil of God in holy Scripture; and you may view two correct outlines of it in the 21st chapter of the book of Job, and the 73rd Psalm of David. Very different is that which the blessed Spirit has given us in sweet miniatures of his people, throughout his whole word. But come, Sir, as you have seen the gaiety of the *formal* worshiper, let me lead you into the assembly of the *real*. I am just going to a *prayer-meeting,* where you will be introduced, if you think proper, among that 'poor and afflicted people' which the Lord said he would leave in Zion."

I arose, and followed my guide towards the place, with strong expectations of improvement.

**÷THE PRAYER MEETING**

My guide led me into a room upon the first floor of a dwelling, in which everything around indicated the humble circumstances of the owner, where we found several people assembled for the purpose of devotion. They had just began their evening service, and were engaged in singing a hymn as we entered; the words of the hymn were interesting, and, as I thought, not inapplicable to my state and circumstances:

Come, you sinners, poor and wretched,   
Weak and wounded, sick and sore;  
Jesus ready stands to save you,   
Full of pity joined with power, etc.

The hymn was followed up by prayer, which issued from a voice that I thought I had heard before. And it was an agreeable surprise to me, at the close of it, to recognize in the person praying, the countenance of the *poor man,* whose observations at the church-porch had made such impressions upon me. He noticed me also, and with that kind of regard which seemed to say "I am glad to see you here." But the meeting so occupied his whole attention, that he appeared to have no leisure for other objects. By what followed I was led to conclude that, if any place of pre-eminence was found in this humble circle, it was his province; for as soon as prayer was ended, and the company seated, he took up the Bible, which lay upon the table before him, and read from the part where it happened to open, the 16th Psalm. I could not be mistaken as to the number of the Psalm, by what followed in his observations upon it.

**÷THE POOR MAN'S EXPERIENCE**

"In relating my experience," he said, "of the Lord's gracious dealings with my soul, I desire to acknowledge, 'to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he has made me accepted in the beloved,' that I can, with all humility of mind, adopt this language of the Psalmist, and say as he did—'The Lord is the portion of my inheritance, and of my cup. He maintains my lot.' Since that blessed period, when it pleased God to call me by his grace, and to quicken my soul which was before 'dead in trespasses and sins,' through a long series of five and twenty years, I have been learning, little by little, *to discover more and more of my own emptiness and poverty—and of the infinite fullness and suitability which is in the unsearchable riches of Christ Jesus to supply all my needs*; and the attainment to which at length, under the teaching of God the Holy Spirit, I am arrived, is to know, that Jesus is the only portion of his people; for there is salvation in no other. The inheritance lost in the *first* Adam, can only be recovered in the *second.* Jesus is the fountain of all blessings, temporal, spiritual, and eternal. 'Men shall be blessed in him;' and outside of him there is not a single favor provided for any of the bankrupt race of Adam's children; and it is my peculiar mercy, and a lesson which I have learned from our Great Master in the Lord's school, that while the blessed Spirit declares in his church, that 'the Lord's portion is his people, Jacob is the lot of his inheritance,' my heart can make reply to the sweet sound, from the persuasion of a reciprocal interest in the Redeemer—'The Lord is the portion of MY inheritance, and of MY cup. You maintain my lot.' (Compare Deu 32:9, with Psa 16:5, for a precious evidence of this doctrine.)

"It has not been, however, without many hard lessons to flesh and blood, with which I have been exercised, that I have arrived to this knowledge. It was a long time before I could rightly understand, and still longer before I could rightly relish, when understood, *the humiliating doctrine of living outside of myself, and living wholly upon Jesus.* The pride of my heart continually revolted at the idea of depending, like the beggar at the gate, for my daily supply. Though the heavenly manna became doubly sweet by its freshness, yet I frequently found a rising desire within me to have a little stock which I might call my own; and even now, though repeated lessons which I ought to have learned better, and though the preciousness of every gift is enhanced by its being received immediately out of the hand of the gracious Giver—yet such is the remaining power of the unhumbled pride of my heart, that I discover much rebellion at times rising within—and I am prompted very frequently to tell my heavenly Instructor, that surely now I might without danger be rendered somewhat more independent. Blessed be the patience of Him with whom I have to do, that whenever this is the case (so very gracious and condescending is he) a renewal of my old lesson soon sets all to right again, and makes me bless his holy name, that I am placed under a wiser and better direction than my own. By carrying my forgetful heart back to the first principles of learning in the divine science, and by calling to mind my *original* stock and *present* measure of indwelling corruption, I learn the peculiar blessedness of having 'all my fresh springs in Him;' and the sweetness of this life, when grace is in exercise, is inexpressible. While I am enabled to see that Jesus is my portion, every dispensation comes in a way of mercy. When my heart is under the assurance that my Lord is in it—it matters not what it is. His presence alone has the wonderful property of converting crosses and pains—into enjoyments and pleasures. Every affliction which comes directed by his hand, has the sure mark of affection folded up within the cover; and while I sit down with tenfold pleasure to the enjoyment of the thousands of mercies which my God is continually giving me, because I behold with the eye of faith his presence at the table smiling graciously upon all, I no less am enabled, in the hour of calamity to await the outcome, because I can and do hear with the ear of faith that soul-sustaining voice, 'What I'm doing you don't understand now—but afterwards you will know.' Oh, the sweetness of having 'Jesus for our portion!' and 'of living a life of faith upon the Son of God, who has loved me, and given himself for me!'"

I was musing upon the happiness of a frame of mind like this, as the Poor Man ended his talk; and reflecting on the little probability that I should ever arrive at such a state of blessedness, when a deep sigh, accompanied with a voice of complaint from a person near me, roused me from my meditation, and at once spoke both my feelings and his own.

**÷THE MOURNFUL BELIEVER**

"Oh that it were with me as you describe!" said the mourner; "but my case is far different. I fear that I have only 'a name to live, while I am dead before God!' It is not possible, surely, that such a state as mine can consist with a life of grace in the soul. If the love of Christ has been shed abroad in my heart, could I live as I do so far from him? My mind is at times as lifeless and unconcerned towards Christ as theirs can be, who never loved his name. It is true, I feel at certain seasons great desires after the Lord; and I know that a change has taken place in my mind—for the world and its pursuits, which my heart was once running after with the greatest eagerness, now have lost their influence—and the society of the people of God, who were once my song of reproach, I now above all things value. Yet still, so much sin is mixed with all I do, so little do I live to Christ, and to the remembrance of his dear name, and the throne of grace is so often neglected by me from day to day, that I very much fear my hope is all a delusion!"

Had I been called upon to relate my own experience, I could not have done it in more suitable words. I felt my heart drawn towards the speaker, from the affinity that existed between us, and waited with the most awakened expectation, for some kind brother in this humble society to say a word of consolation to a case so much my own. It was not long before the Poor Man, to whom I owed so much before, took up the subject, to answer the doubts and remove the fears of the mournful believer; and in doing this, he added to my obligation to him tenfold.

"Your case, my friend," cried the poor man, addressing himself to the mourner, "is by no means singular; it is the uniform complaint of the faithful in all ages. What *one* ancient servant of the Lord groaned under, *all* of them have found, that when 'we would do good, evil is present with us;' and the reason is obvious. It arises from the workings within of the different principles, grace and corruption. There are in every regenerated person two principles; a body of sin and a spirit of grace—'the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other, so that you cannot do the things which you would.' In the renewed nature, the *understanding* is enlightened, the *affections* spiritualized, the *will* inclined to God—while in the unrenewed nature still remaining, there is darkness in the understanding; carnal and earthly affections still continuing in the heart; and the will stubborn, rebellious, and frequently inclining to disobedience. In short, the mind is like the region of the earth while twilight is upon it; it is neither dark nor light—but a mixture of both—no portion of the hemisphere being so light—but the shades of darkness are blended with it; and none so dark—but the tints of light are beautifully incorporated; and this is perfectly accountable. A state of grace is a middle state, between that of nature and glory. In a state of nature unawakened, unregenerated, unrenewed, sin reigns with unrivaled sway. In a state of glory, grace reigns uninterrupted, and without any opposition; but the intermediate state is a state of warfare; everyone in this state feels and experiences the conflict; and as it is said, in allusion to this very circumstance, in the allegory of the bondwoman's son and the heir of promise, so believers find it—'As then he who was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.' (Gal 4:29.)

"But however mortifying this doctrine is to our nature (and abundantly so it has ever been found to the best of men) yet as it tends, under divine grace, to make the believer go softly all his days, as it makes Jesus more dear; and as it affords to the believer one of the truest evidences of the renewed life—he ought rather to inquire how such a state may be over-ruled to God's glory and his own benefit, than by a false estimate, to question the tender mercy of the Lord toward him, in the very moment of receiving the strongest proofs of them.—Let me ask you to examine your own complaints again; and to see whether in the very moment of receiving the strongest proofs of them, even in the midst of your groaning under the apprehension, that there is no grace in your heart—whether great grace is not then in exercise. You say that if the love of Christ were shed abroad in your heart, you could not live so far from him as you do; that if you really were under grace, you could not stay away from a throne of mercy as you do. But say—could you complain of the lack of love to Christ, if you had never tasted what that love is? And if you visit not a mercy-seat so often as you wish, say—are not these things your continual burden? Do you not groan under such marks of a dead and lifeless heart? And are not these sorrows of the soul, for the unhallowed sins of the body, very plain evidences of the spiritual warfare? *They* never groan at *sin,* though they may be fearful of the *punishment* of sin—who have no renewed nature. It is the believer only who dreads the sin, more than the penalty due to it. And if grace be thus in exercise to endear the person of the Lord Jesus, still more in proportion as we see our daily need of him, to long for the time to come when sin shall be rooted out; and to cause a sense of our weakness to prompt the soul to a greater dependence upon divine strength, by thus over-ruling all dispensations to his glory and his people's welfare—we see a *needs-be* in every dispensation, and discover the beauty and tendency of that Scripture, which says, 'After you were illuminated (not *before*—but *after*) you endured a great fight of affliction.' (Heb 10:32.)

"In a word, however we may long for an exemption from all sin, and would purchase it, were it possible, with the price of a thousand worlds; however we may and do groan under this body of sin and death, which we carry about with us; yet, while Jesus, who could, if he saw it right, deliver his tried ones, whom he has chosen in the furnace of affliction, with a word speaking, sees it not fit—let us not despond. If your sense of sin and spiritual infirmities leads you to a more firm reliance upon him; if it makes his promises dearer, his faithfulness more evident, and his presence more desirable—depend upon it, by and by, your groans will be changed into songs of rejoicing, and your language will be like that of the Apostle, 'Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!'"

÷**THE CRIES OF UNBELIEF**

There sat an old man at my right hand in the prayer meeting, to whom the leader of this little circle next addressed himself, in order to inquire into the Lord's gracious dealings with his soul. "I hope," said the poor man, calling upon him with all the freedom of one who had been long acquainted; "I hope," said he "that you will now be able to give us some testimony of the word of his grace. I long, methinks, to hear from an old disciple like you, some evidence of the faithfulness of our covenant-making and covenant-fulfilling God."

"Alas!" replied the old man, "my language must be much the same as you have often heard. I still groan under the burden of unbelief, and know not when I shall obtain deliverance from it. It will be a long time, I fear, before I shall be able 'to comfort those who are in any trouble, by the comfort with which I myself long to be comforted of God.' I frequently compare myself to the unworthy spies, whom Moses sent to view the promised land; and fear that, like them, I shall never attain the possession of it, through the same besetting sin of unbelief. If I attend the means of grace, I return, for the most part, unbenefited, through the suggestions of this evil heart of unbelief. If I hear the word of a preached gospel, though I know the truth as it is in Jesus, and love to sit under the sound of it—yet too often, like the Israelites, it does not profit me, not being mixed with faith. If at any time I read the Bible, and turn to those 'exceeding great and precious promises,' which belong to the Lord's people, their sweetness is lost in me, through a fear that I have no right to them; and how many of the providences of my God, which I well know to be every one of them fraught with a sure blessing in their final outcome to his people, are perverted in their effects on me, by the impatience and distrust of my unbelieving heart! And can such a creature say anything by way of encouragement to the Lord's exercised family, when he himself is so faithless and unbelieving?"

"I confess," rejoined the poor man, "that such a state as you describe cannot afford much assistance to the cause of Christ; but blessed be our God, this is the Christian's character—that 'if we believe not, yet he abides faithful; he cannot deny himself.' Your lack of faith indeed is injurious to your peace—but not to his cause. Unbelief, like a worm at the bud, cankers the bloom and fragrancy of the sweetest flowers of grace; and had our fathers of the church in the wilderness been in this frame of mind, instead of surrounding *the Christian pilgrim as they now do, with such a glorious cloud of witnesses,* they would have stood in the highway only as so many *pillars of salt*. But let me tell you, my drooping brother, that I am too well acquainted with your real character, as well from an insight into your experience as from my own, (long exercised as I have been by unbelief, both in times past—even now too frequently feeling its influence) not to know that the very sorrow which you express, on account of the supposed lack of faith, carries with it an evidence that you must have *some faith* thus to complain. That your faith is not equal to your wishes, I will readily allow—for indeed whose is? But that you differ most essentially from those that are shut up in total unbelief, is most evident. In proof of what I say, compare your situation now—with what it was in the days of your unregeneracy. You were then, not only 'without Christ and without God in the world,' but absolutely unconscious of your lack—whereas now, your most earnest desires are, that 'Christ might dwell in your heart by faith,' and be fully formed there 'the hope of glory.' If there were no faith in your heart, whence arise these desires for more? It is the preciousness of the gift, which makes you long for greater manifestations of the giver; and it is a consciousness of this shameful unbelief, which makes you apprehensive that you have no faith at all. While, therefore, you groan under those fears, every sigh proves that they are but effects from which the merciful goodness of our God will, in his own time, deliver you. Carry your complaints to Him who is both the 'Author and Finisher of faith.' Let us copy the apostle's prayer, 'Lord increase our faith!'—and depend upon it, that if our faith be but as a grain of mustard seed, however small and inconsiderable it may be, still it is not of nature's growth, nor of nature's production. That small portion which you possess, is the gift of the same Almighty power who created the faith of Abraham. Receive it, I entreat you, as 'the pledge of the promised inheritance, to the praise of his glory.'

"And while I say thus much, by way of convincing you that, in the midst of all your complainings, you have great cause of thankfulness before God, let me remind you also, that what you complain of forms a part of the complaints of all the Lord's people. No, more; the greatest instances of faith we meet with in scripture, afford at the same time the greatest examples of unbelief; as if the dear Lord of his people intended to teach *all* this important lesson—that man is nothing in himself; but that all his sufficiency is of Him. Abraham, who is handed down to us in the church's history, as the great pattern of faith, and who could and did exercise such unparalleled confidence in the Lord, in the instance of his intended sacrifice of Isaac, yet even this man could not, upon another occasion, trust in God's faithfulness to extricate Sarah from danger. (Gen. 20.) Job, under the influence of faith, could confidently say of the Lord, 'Though he slays me, yet will I trust in him;' yet so much, at another time, was he borne down, under the pressure of trouble, that he impatiently cried out, 'O that I might have my request, even that it would please God to destroy me!' (Job 6:8-9.) And David's whole life, as it may be gathered from his book of Psalms, was made up of conflicts between believing and doubting. I need not mention Peter's case as an additional proof of the fluctuating state of the human mind; who, in the mount of transfiguration, gave so glorious a testimony; and in the hall of Pilate, uttered so shameful a denial of his Lord's character. (Compare Mat 16:16, with Mat 26:69.) All these and ten thousand lesser instances, serve to show *what man is in himself—and what the same man may be when supported by the grace of God.*

"Let me beg of you then, in the estimate of your spiritual state, as it stands before God, never to lose sight of these things; and while a deep sense of the unbelief of your heart makes you humble, and is continually leading you to a mercy-seat for an increase of faith, from Him whose gift alone it is; do not overlook that portion of the blessing which the bountiful Lord has already bestowed upon you. Never forget that the smallest degree of faith is faith; perfectly distinct from all the operations of nature, and far above all human power to produce. Do not forget also, that it is not the quantity—but the quality, which constitutes the principle. 'By Him,' says the apostle, 'all who believe are justified from all things.' Observe the expression, *All who believe.* He does not say believers of such a description and character, or who come up to such a standard; but *ALL who believe.* While, therefore, you possess the smallest degree of faith, bless God for *that.* The smallest measure indicates from whom it comes; and declares whose you are, and to whom you belong. It is the one uniform family-feature of the Lord's household of faith; for 'as many as believe are ordained to eternal life.' Large portions of so precious a grace are, no doubt, highly desirable; but to poor, timid, *unbelieving* believers (if I may be allowed the expression) it is a refreshing thought, that the Great Shepherd 'gathers the *lambs* with his arm, and carries them in his bosom,' and they are as dear and precious in his sight as the strong of his fold.

Those feeble desires, those wishes so weak,   
'Tis Jesus inspires and bids you still seek—  
The God whom you do you seek will not tarry long—  
And by him the weakest are safe as the strong."

÷**A BELIEVER UNDER THE HIDINGS OF GOD'S COUNTENANCE**

"Your observations, my dear brother," said another, who sat at the corner of the room, "are truly refreshing to my soul. I have been long exercised under the hidings of the divine countenance, and sometimes tempted to cry out, with the church of old, 'My hope is perished from the Lord.' But I perceive, from what you have been saying to our friend, mourning under the unbelief of his heart, that the same arguments, by a parity of reasoning, are applicable to my case also. Spiritual darkness and spiritual doubtings are but too nearly allied, and proceed from the corruption that dwells within. It may be said of both, 'It is your iniquities which have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you;' and when this is the case—when, as in Paul's voyage, 'neither sun nor stars for many days appeared, and no small tempest' is added to the darkness of the horizon, faith will be at a low ebb, and all hope that the soul is then in a state of safety, will for a time be taken away.

"But blessed be God, when I can find no comfort in myself, I know that Christ is the same. I still see a loveliness in his person, and a suitableness and all-sufficiency in his power to save—when I cannot say that I see my interest in him to be clear. 'When will you come unto me?' is frequently the language of my heart, though I cannot always call him mine; and the recollection of past experiences is sometimes a lift to me during the passing cloud. I call to mind the time and place, and the gracious manner and means, when, where, and by which the Lord has heretofore comforted and refreshed my soul; so that, like the wife of Manoah, I am led to conclude, 'if the Lord had not intended mercy, he would not have showed me all these things;' and I always find that sweet text of the prophet to be consolatory during the heaviest night of this kind of trial—'Who among you fears the Lord and obeys the word of his servant? Let him who walks in the dark, who has no light, trust in the name of the Lord and rely on his God.'"

"I rejoice, truly, my dear brother," replied the poor man, "in the testimony you bear to the faithfulness of your God under your sufferings. It is an easy thing to speak a word for God's goodness, when the Lord is surrounding us with the sunshine of his blessings; but it must be a gracious soul indeed, to rejoice in God, when he has nothing but his word to trust in; and when God hides his face from his people—stands at a distance from their prayers—seemingly thwarts all their desires—gives no answer by *Urim* and *Thummin*—*then* to hold fast by God, and to lie passive before him. This is what the Prophet felt, and what none but those who are taught of God the Holy Spirit can say with him, 'Even though the fig trees have no blossoms, and there are no grapes on the vine; even though the olive crop fails, and the fields lie empty and barren; even though the flocks die in the fields, and the cattle barns are empty, yet I will rejoice in the Lord! I will be joyful in the God of my salvation. The Sovereign Lord is my strength! He will make me as surefooted as a deer and bring me safely over the mountains.'"

I had entered with so much earnestness of participation into every man's case, as they related their several experiences one after another, that I was unconscious of the lapse of time, and felt not a little distressed, when I heard one of the company say, "Our hour is finished—it is past eight o'clock." The following hymn was then given out and sung; which appeared to be a very suitable conclusion to the solemn service—

No more, my God, I boast no more   
Of all the duties I have done;   
I quit the hopes I held before,   
To trust the merits of your Son.   
  
Now, for the love I bear his name,   
What was my gain I count my loss;   
My former pride I call my shame,   
And nail my glory to his cross.

Yes, and I must and will esteem   
All things but loss for Jesus' sake   
O may my soul be found in Him,  
And of his righteousness partake!

The best obedience of my hands   
Dares not appear before your throne;   
But faith can answer your demands,   
By pleading what my Lord has done!

But, if I felt myself pleased with the hymn, my mind was more abundantly refreshed and delighted with the concluding prayer which followed it, in which the person who prayed, did not confine himself to general expressions; but, more or less, included therein the needs and desires of all the Lord's tried family; and in particular, the several cases which had been spoken of during the evening. Neither, as a stranger and visitor in this little society, did the leader in prayer forget to mention *me* at the mercy-seat; that the Lord would supply all my needs, whatever they might be, out of the abundant riches of his grace, which are in Christ Jesus.

After withdrawing from the room, and taking leave of the friend who had conducted me there, I retired to my closet to meditate upon what I had seen and heard; and the conclusion I formed upon the whole was this—I had discovered in the Scriptures of truth, that in all ages of the church, the Lord has had a seed which served him. I no less discovered also that this seed were distinguished from the rest of mankind by certain marks and characters. I observed very clearly in the little circle to which I had now been introduced, that its members were widely separated from the unawakened world—in all their pursuits, complaints, and desires. I remarked yet farther, that although their complaints and desires differed in their degree of earnestness, yet, like a family feature, there was a sufficient similarity in all to manifest their relationship to each other; but what became my highest gratification, was the discovery that, however unconscious of it before, their situation was my own; and I felt that union of soul which the mind feels in a state of nature on the discovery of affinity, so as to be drawn towards them in the warmth of a lasting love and affection. I resolved therefore to cast in my lot among them, and to have the same portion. The sweet language of *Ruth* to *Naomi* exactly speaks the feelings of my heart—"Don't ask me to leave you and turn back. I will go wherever you go and live wherever you live. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God. I will die where you die and will be buried there. May the Lord punish me severely if I allow anything but death to separate us!"

My mind has been much exercised through the night, in reflecting upon what I had seen and heard at the prayer-meeting; and the morning had but just opened upon the earth, when I arose to prayer and meditation.

I felt the influence, and having "bowed the knee before the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," I entered upon the meditation of the subject which had engaged my attention so much the preceding evening. The more I considered it, the more I stood convinced that there is a seed in the earth which the Lord has distinguished from the world; and I felt no less conviction also, that it is divine grace alone which makes all the difference between "him who serves the Lord, and him who does not serves God." But that I should be the object of his grace when I sought it not, nor was even conscious of the need of it—here appeared the greatest mystery!

I found my eyes overflowing in the contemplation of such unmerited goodness of my God towards me; and was lost in the thought, when a call at the door roused me from my meditation. It was the *traveler,* whom I have before mentioned, who had kindly introduced me to the prayer-meeting, and who was come to enquire what were my sentiments concerning it; and to offer me that assistance which I had requested of him at our first interview.

I very frankly opened my whole heart to him upon the subject, and hesitated not to tell him how much I felt interested in what I had heard, and particularly in the case of *one* who had spoken, from the similarity of his experience to my own. "How, or when," I said, "or by what means, the Lord has begun the work of grace in my heart, I know not; but, like the poor man we read of in the Gospel, I trust I can say that 'whereas I was blind, now I see.' It is, indeed—but a confused and ill formed view of things which I have at present, in looking at the bright objects of divine truth. I see but indistinctly *men as trees walking;* yet, I cannot but hope that He who has graciously touched my eyes, will touch them again, and make me see clearly."

"Doubt not," replied the traveler, "the divine faithfulness. The 'pledge of the Spirit' becomes no less the 'pledge of the promised inheritance;' (Compare 2Co 5:5, with Eph 1:13-14.) and an Apostle says, 'We may be confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in us, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.' As nothing under divine grace will tend to open your apprehensions more clearly to 'the truth as it is in Jesus,' than the possessing right notions of the covenant of grace, on which the whole system of the Gospel is founded, I have brought with me a sermon, written upon the subject, and which, according to my conception, places the doctrine in the plainest point of view possible. If it be agreeable," he added, "I will read it to you."

"Nothing," I answered, "can be more desirable to me."—He accordingly took it from his pocket, and read as follows:

÷**THE SERMON**

*"I will make an everlasting covenant with you—even* ***the sure mercies of David****."* Isa 55:3

It was a very sweet note which God the Holy Spirit put into the mouth of his servant the prophet, when commanding him to proclaim salvation in the mountain of Israel, when He called it "an everlasting covenant, even the sure mercies of David." In nothing did the Lord more consult the needs and happiness of His people, than in folding the Gospel up under such a cover, and marking it by such distinguishing characters.

Tell me, my brother, do you not feel a very high gratification in the consciousness that salvation is not a work of yesterday—but founded on that "everlasting love with which the Lord has loved his people?"

Besides, an everlasting covenant naturally connects with itself all those properties which are necessary to its completion and design. There must be included in it everlasting **wisdom** to guide, everlasting **counsel** to direct, everlasting **strength** to secure, and everlasting **faithfulness** to make good all its promises. Every attribute stands engaged in its establishment, and it is the consolation of the true believer in Christ, that all the perfections of Jehovah are pledged for the accomplishment of that purpose "which was purposed in Christ Jesus before the world began." The "sure mercies of David" imply as much, to make them *sure.* Nothing new to God can ever arise to counteract the divine purposes concerning them. Neither can any one circumstance occur for which provision is not already made. In the *everlasting* covenant, God himself is the only contracting party. Jehovah answers both for himself and for his people, 'I will—and they shall.' Such is the language of it.

Tell me once more, my brother, does not this consideration also very highly gratify you? You see that, as nothing of merit on your part could have given birth to a covenant which is from everlasting to everlasting; so nothing now of demerit shall arise to defeat its operation—which can owe nothing to you.

The subject opened to our meditation in these words of the Prophet, leads to the most delightful view with which the human mind is capable of being exercised in the present unripe state of our faculties. The text indeed contains but *five* words—but it would furnish a sufficient subject for as many volumes. It is a text in which, as we say, every word is pregnant with truth*.* I consider it a perfectly unnecessary service to lose time by way of pointing to His person, who is here called *David.* No one for a moment can imagine that it means David the son of Jesse; or, as an Apostle has observed, this David, "after he had served his generation by the will of God, fell asleep, and was gathered to his fathers, and saw corruption." But he of whom the prophet speaks in the text, who is David's Lord, "saw no corruption:" but when God the Father raised Him from the dead, as if in confirmation of this very subject, and to show its personal application to him, He expressed himself in these very words, "I will give you the sure mercies of David." (Act 13:33-34.)

In the farther prosecution of this subject, the arrangement I propose shall be as follows—my text, in allusion to this everlasting covenant, calls it "the sure mercies of David." I shall first, therefore, follow up this idea, in showing that *the redemption by the Lord Jesus Christ is a system of grace and mercy from the beginning to end.* I shall then, secondly, go on to prove that these mercies are "the sure mercies of David;" being founded on that everlasting covenant, by which "grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." May God the Holy Spirit, who first commissioned the prophet to proclaim, now enable the preacher to explain those mercies of David; that "our Gospel may not come in word only—but in power, and in much assurance of faith!"

My first intention is to show, that **the redemption by the Lord Jesus Christ is a system of grace and mercy from beginning to end**; and nothing can more decidedly manifest the truth of the observation than the character in which the prophet was commissioned to promulgate it; for when it is distinguished by the property of an *everlasting* covenant, the very term carries with it a most positive testimony that it must be founded in grace, unconnected with any human power, not depending upon any human merit; for what first originated in the free and unmerited mercy of God, confirmed as it was by covenant-engagements between the Father and the Son, before man was created, and is promised to be carried on in all its purposes and effects, by the same divine power, independently of man's agency after his being brought into being—can come under no other description surely than that of grace. Whatever God has done, or is doing, in the accomplishment of his designs concerning it, must all be referred back into the eternal counsel of his own mind, by virtue of its everlasting nature. To this, most evidently, it is that believers owe their being chosen, called and regenerated; and their establishment in grace, their dependence upon the promises, and their hopes of eternal glory, all are founded on that *everlasting* love with which God had loved his people before the foundations of the world were laid. "I have said," the language of God is "mercy shall be set up forever;" and the reason follows—"I have made a covenant with my chosen."

Look, my brother, into yourself, and into your own experience, for a confirmation of this doctrine. A covenant founded in grace can derive no aid from works. You can have nothing to give but what you have first received; and what you have first received is not in fact yours—but the great Giver's; and what he has given, may, without any impeachment of his justice, be again recalled. Neither can you have anything to offer but what God has a right, as his own, to demand. Even all those sweet effusions of the soul, which appear in the worship of the faithful, when drawing near the mercy-seat; as these are wholly the result of the blessed Spirit's work, who brings them forth into exercise, as the sun by his warm beams draws forth a fragrant smell from the flower, and have their origin in God's grace, and not in man's merit—so there can be no merit in them before God. The language of such a creature as man, even in his highest attainment, and among the first order of the glorified spirits of "just men made perfect," must still be the same—"By the grace of God, I am what I am." Everything that has a reference to salvation centers in Jesus Christ; and may be clearly traced up to its origin in that *everlasting* covenant which God made with him before this world had being.

I will advance yet one step farther in the argument; and in ascribing the "sure mercies of David" wholly to grace, observe that it was most unmerited grace which admitted the Lord Jesus to be man's surety and sponsor, to fulfill in our stead the law which we had broken, and in his sacred person to endure the penalty due to the breach of it. There would have been no impeachment of the divine justice, if God had insisted on the sinner's suffering it himself. "The soul that sins shall die;" and was it not then an act of free, spontaneous mercy and grace in our God to admit the substitute?

In speaking, therefore, of our subject in *general* terms, as applicable to the church of the Lord Jesus at large, it must be confessed that the everlasting covenant is very properly called the *sure mercies* of David; for it is nothing else but a system of grace and mercy from beginning to end! And I am very confident, that every humble soul in *particular* who is the happy subject of such bounty by a *personal* interest therein, will be ready to join with the apostle, and say—"But God, who is rich in mercy, of his great love with which he has loved ME, even when I was dead in sins, has quickened me together with Christ, for by grace am I saved."

And as the original cause in conversion sprung from grace, so the preserving and carrying on the great work in the soul since, is wholly owing to the same great principle. When you call to mind, my brother, the coldness and deadness of your best affections, your wanderings and backslidings from God, the provocations and sins with which your life has been marked, (Oh, to grace how great a debtor!) will not you, with the utmost humility, exclaim with the apostle, "Unto him who does exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end!"

But while it thus becomes delightful to the soul, under divine teachings, to be able to see that redemption's work from beginning to end is wholly a system of grace, it becomes doubly sweet at the same time, to have a clear apprehension, that this *grace* works and "reigns through righteousness;" that these mercies of David become *sure mercies,* being made so by virtue of that everlasting covenant of righteousness in Christ Jesus; by which "God can be just, and the justifier of him that believes in Jesus," and the sinner, though in himself nothing but sin and iniquity, can look up and plead the righteousness of Christ as the foundation of his acceptance before God, because in that covenant "God made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

This was the second point of doctrine, I proposed to prove, and which I now proceed to illustrate and explain, under a few leading particulars.

The mercies of David become *sure* mercies to the Lord's people, by virtue of that *everlasting* covenant which occupied the divine counsel in the ages of eternity before the creation of the world, in which there were mutual promises made by the high contracting parties. Jesus on his part undertook to answer all the demands of his Father's righteous law, for the objects of his and his Father's eternal love; who it was foreseen, would subject themselves to everlasting ruin by the breach of it; and God the Father promised, on his part to remit that punishment to the person of the sinner, by inflicting it on the person of the Lord Jesus, as the sinner's surety; and then to entitle the sinner, by virtue of the Redeemer's righteousness, to everlasting life. These were the terms by which each party guaranteed to the other the sure fulfillment of the covenant. Jesus therefore was to assume at a certain period, called "The fullness of time," our nature, and in that nature to repair God's broken law, and sustain the penalty due to the breach of it. Moved with unbounded love to our fallen race, all this the Lord Jesus actually performed when, leaving "that glory which He had with the Father before all worlds," he came into this world, and accomplished all those great events which we read of in the history of his life; and when, by *doing* and *dying*, he had wrought out and brought in an everlasting righteousness, he returned to the bosom of the Father, to make efficient the whole process of his redemption, by sending down his Holy Spirit to apply his merits to his people's necessities, while he himself is exercised in the high character of our Intercessor to plead the efficacy of his death, and continually to appear "in the presence of God for us."

These are the great outlines of the *everlasting* covenant, as referring to the engagement of God the Son; and the promises, on the part of God the Father, were, that he would anoint Christ to the work, and accept of him in lieu of the sinner; and that when the Redeemer had made his soul an offering for sin, "he should see his seed, he should prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord should prosper in his hand." "My righteous servant," says God, "shall justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities. As for me, this is my covenant with him, says Jehovah, my Spirit that is upon you, and my words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, nor out of the mouth of your seed, nor out of the mouth of your seed's seed, says Jehovah, from henceforth and forever." Such then being the stipulated terms between the high contracting parties, and having been fulfilled on the part of the Lord Jesus, the mercies promised on the part of God become sure mercies to all the Lord's people. "Grace reigns through righteousness;" and the positive assurance of pardon and salvation is brought home to the heart by a conviction founded on the veracity of that God "who cannot lie."

Let any man now review the ground we have hastily trodden over, in quest of the testimonies with which these mercies of David are made *sure.* Let him behold an everlasting covenant, founded in grace, accomplished by the great Representative *of* his people in grace, and in all ages accomplishing *in* his people by grace; let him observe how each principle harmonizes to secure God's glory, while it tenderly secures man's welfare; let him carefully remark how grace reigns through righteousness; and I venture to hope, if God the Holy Spirit be the teacher, that the result will be the most absolute conviction that our text very properly characterizes this great salvation, by calling it "the sure Mercies of David."

The application of this doctrine, though of all other considerations the most interesting, may be brought within the narrowest compass—the whole terminating as it respects every individual, in this single question—'Am I, or am I not, the highly-favored object of these sure mercies of David?'

If it be said, How shall this point be ascertained; and by what marks or characters is it to be known?—the answer is direct—God has not left himself without the witness of his Holy Spirit in the hearts and minds of his people; and although it is with the children of God in grace as it is with the children of men by nature—in the infancy of life, while the faculties of the mind remain unopened, the child is unconscious of the inheritance to which he is born—so they to whom "he has given power to become sons of God," will frequently remain a long time unassured of the incorruptible inheritance to which they are begotten by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead; but as the spiritual apprehension is unfolded by the heavenly Teacher, they are brought, by little and little as children under education, to see their interest in "the sure mercies of David," from the characters in which they find themselves distinguished in the everlasting covenant.

See, my brother, see whether you do not possess what Jehovah promised, by virtue of this covenant, to give to Jesus' people. Have you not the *new heart* and the *new mind,* which God, by his covenant, is engaged to bestow? Do you not feel those covenant impressions, which are common to his people? Is not the "Messenger of this covenant" whom God has chosen, become the object of your choice also? If God the Spirit is promised to certify your interest in this covenant, "have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed?" In a word, if these, and these only, are the sure mercies of David, are you seeking salvation in no other way?—and do you say as David did, "This is all my salvation and all my desire?" These are precious tokens of being interested in the sure mercies of David, when pardon, mercy, grace, righteousness, sanctification, and strength, equal to our day, are sought for in nothing else but God's everlasting covenant.

My unwakened brother, what do you know of these sure mercies of David? I cannot, I dare not, be silent, while endeavoring to comfort the people of God with a view of their privileges, without calling upon you to examine and look diligently, lest you fail of this grace. O that the Lord may incline your heart that you may come! O that you may hear the joyful sound and live!—that God may give you also these sure mercies of David!

How shall I conclude my sermon better than by desiring the afflicted, mournful, exercised believer of every description and character, to fold up the sweet text of the Prophet in his bosom, as a motto of consolation for every occasion? And may God the Holy Spirit write upon every heart "I will make an everlasting covenant with you—even in the sure mercies of David!"

÷**THE REMARKS**

When my friend had ended this discourse, he waited as I perceived by his looks, for my observations upon it. I anticipated his enquiry for my opinion, by giving it unasked. It appeared indeed to me very plain, that the sermon comprised the leading principles of the covenant of grace; which, though certainly a subject of all others the most interesting, is perhaps the least understood. For my part, I am free to confess that, previous to this explanation, I had very imperfect conceptions of it. My first object, as soon as he had finished reading the manuscript, was to thank him for his "labor of love," in bringing me acquainted by this means with a doctrine so highly important. How sweet and consolatory is the view, that redemption-work originated in grace!—is carried on and completed in grace! and yet, as if to remove all fears and apprehensions from the believer's mind, it is "grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord;" so that, though founded solely in mercy, it calls in to its assurance to fulfill the covenant-engagements and covenant-faithfulness of Jehovah. Well might one of old, in the contemplation of it, say "Mercy and truth have met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other!"

One branch of this subject particularly arrested my attention; to which, on account of my imperfect conceptions of it, I ventured to communicate to my friend my objection. The scriptures of truth (I observed to him) very strikingly distinguished those "sure mercies of David" as arising out of an *everlasting* covenant. This being the case, the operation of those mercies must, by their very nature, be perpetual, and without any interruption. There can be no period in which they cease to act; for what was promised to be *eternal*, can never admit the smallest alteration in *time*. Is there not, however, sometimes a suspension of those mercies, when afflictions abound in the lot of the Lord's family?

"No, never," replied my friend, "is there the least interruption in the unchanging mercies of God in Christ Jesus; and however dark and seemingly mysterious at times the dispensation may appear to us, yet there is but one and the same purpose of mercy invariably pursued by a faithful God to his people; and the difficulty of apprehending this would be soon removed, by only taking into the account the *whole* process of the divine administration towards believers, and not forming a judgment upon every single and detached part of it. As men regulate their opinion of some admirably well-constructed machine, from a contemplation of the whole when complete, and not of its several constituent parts in a state of separation, so God's divine ordination respecting the government of his people, must be viewed upon the whole—causes with effects; and then all is grace, mercy, and loving-kindness. An earthly parent considers it as no diminishing of his tenderness to a beloved child, that he sends him abroad for education, or that he himself instructs and disciplines him at home; because his future prospects in life are best promoted by this process. So why should our heavenly Father be supposed to have lost sight of 'the sure mercies of David,' to his children, because absence and discipline are made use of by him to forward his gracious designs of greater tenderness towards them? But when we call in question the evidences of divine love, we forget where we are, and the reasons for which we are here; and hence it is a great testimony of those very mercies of David, that the Lord makes use of *the ministry of affliction* to proclaim that 'this world is not our rest, because it is polluted.' Had Jesus intended this world for the enjoyment of his people in a state of worldly prosperity, very different would have been their accommodations—but they are 'strangers and pilgrims upon earth,' and are going home to their Father's house; and what does ever make home more desirable to the traveler—than the ill reception he frequently meets with on the road?

"Sir, look at the subject again, and see whether it does not challenge your highest admiration and praise, when you discover that the afflictions of the Lord's people are among his tenderest mercies?—in that they are so admirably contrived, that not a single trouble shall ultimately do them *harm;* but, on the contrary, shall as positively work for their *good.* Set down this as an everlasting maxim, and compare with it either your own experience or your observation of others. Let us suppose now, for example's sake, that in the great mass of characters in the Lord's tried family, some are laboring under heavy afflictions of body, and some under anguish of mind—some impoverished in worldly circumstances—some smarting under the lash of false tongues—some groaning under the pains of sickness—some bitterly bewailing the effects of sickness in others; yet, be the trial what it may (and wisely ordered it is, exactly suited to everyone's necessities) look only forward to its final outcome, and you will find that not a single individual of the Lord's household is injured by it. Each affliction becomes to them a messenger of sanctification and wisdom, and acts medicinally on the mind, as much as medicine on the body; and can those things be properly called evils, which minister good? Will any man blame the physician, because the medicine he administers is found somewhat nauseous to the taste, and operates roughly?

"But it is not enough to say that afflictions do no harm; they must also do good. The promise else would be lost; 'All things work together for good to those who love God;' so that, unless in every single instance good is wrought to the lovers of God, the truth of Scripture would become questionable. But of the perpetual occurrences which are going on through life, in attestation to this precious assurance, a volume would only give the mere outlines—and who is competent to describe them? Generally speaking, all afflictions which tend to bring the soul to God, keep up a life of communion with the Redeemer—make us sensible of the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit—spiritualize our affections—wean our hearts from a world from which we must soon part, and promote a more intimate acquaintance with that world in which we are shortly forever to dwell; whatever things induce these blessed principles, are undeserving the name of afflictions—they are among the sweetest mercies of God! God removes earthly comforts, in order to make room for heavenly delights. He empties the soul of all creature-comforts, that He may fill it with Creator-mercies. Can there remain a question but that the believer is a gainer by the exchange? No, I am fully persuaded, that if grace were in full exercise, we would embrace our afflictions, as affording the choicest proofs of divine love—and how refreshing would it be to a bystander near the bed of some suffering saint, to hear him say—Praise my God with me for the pains I now endure! for the dearest friend which I have upon earth, if his affection for me and his wisdom were equal to those of my heavenly Father, would inflict every pain and trial which I now feel from *His* gracious appointment."

÷**THE DEAD CHILD**

My friend was going on in his discourse when a shriek from a window in the street, accompanied with a loud voice of distress, interrupted him. We heard the lamentable cry, "My child is dead!" and hastened to the door, to seek the cause of this sorrow. Upon inquiry, we found that it was the only child of an affectionate mother, which had that moment breathed its last in her arms. Alas! thought I, Rachel's case is not singular—the same voice which was heard in Ramah is heard throughout the world. The sorrowful mother refuses to be comforted, because the child is not.

"See here, my brother," cried my companion, taking me by the arm, and leading me, as he said it, involuntarily down the street, "see here an exemplification of our subject. Let us only suppose that this afflicted mother is a *gracious* woman, and her history I will venture to assert, shall sooner or later prove the truth of all that I have been saying. In the first paroxysm of grief she is perhaps insensible of it; for *nature is nature*, and is allowed to express, if without murmuring, her sorrows. But suppose that you or I were permitted to call in upon her at some future period—how different should we find her sentiments! A plain proof this, that it is the state of the mind, and not the affliction itself, which constitutes the difference; and when the appointment comes, as it must come to every *gracious* soul, in a covenant way, the united wisdom of men and angels could not have ordered an event equally suitable, so as to have answered the purpose of God in his merciful dispensations towards her. However painful—it could *not* be spared. Let us consider it for a few moments, as it concerns herself, and as it refers to the child.

"As it concerns **herself**. It is more than probable that this beloved, this *only* child, stole away her heart from the Lord. Perhaps, her visits to the throne of grace were less frequent than heretofore—perhaps, her anxiety for the future provision of this babe made her omit or diminish her charities to the poor; made her question the providences of God; made her affections more earthly, her conversation more savoring of the things of time and sense; and, in short, induced a train of conduct all tending to lead the heart more *from* God, and not bringing it (as ought to have been the case) *to* God. And was it not then, do you think, among the choicest "mercies of David" to remove the cause of all this evil? Was it not time for God to recall his gift, when that gift formed a cloud on the mind to hide the hand of the giver?

"And as it refers to the sweet **babe**. Supposing the most favorable thing that can be supposed—that it was a child of grace, a child of many prayers. Are "the sure mercies of David" altered, because those prayers are answered, and Jesus has housed a lamb of his fold beyond the reach of the prowling lion or the raging bear? Say, you long tried, long exercised soldiers in the Redeemer's army, are the summer's heat and the winter's cold—the furious assaults of the enemy without, and the distressing fears within; so very desirable, that you regret the close of the campaign? Oh, how much the reverse! And who knows but the gracious Lord, reading in the index the whole volume of this infant's life, in mercy shut the book, to stop at once the parent's anxiety and her offspring's sufferings! Thus then here is at once a whole chapter of mercies—mercies to the old, and mercies to the young; and nothing but mercy to all, both in time and eternity! And where is the cruel parent that would retard the flight of his child under such circumstances, and hinder it from taking wing to meet the Lord in the air? Surely, might the infant say, in just reproof to such mistaken fondness, "If you loved me, you would rejoice, because I go to my Father!"

"And what if we reverse the circumstances (for grace is not hereditary) let that parent determine, for none else can determine, what it must be to see a graceless child rising up in life, in spite of all our remonstrances, all our prayers—at once regardless of his present peace and future happiness.—Oh, how awful!"

÷**THE SUICIDE**

As my friend uttered these words, a crowd of people ran across the street in which we were walking, which excited our curiosity to inquire into the cause. The information was a sad one—A rash youth, it seemed, unable to brook the various disappointments which a long pampered habit of poor parenting had induced, dared to defy Omnipotence, by putting an end to his earthly existence! The crowd was running to behold the unhappy object.—As for me and my companion, we both stood motionless, struck with horror.—At length my friend recovered himself, and broke silence. "Holy Lord," he cried, "what a dreadful world is this, through which your people are passing! How close we walk on the confines of everlasting misery, while in the very moment we are the monuments of your saving mercy!—Blessed God," he exclaimed, "write, I beseech you, that solemn truth upon my heart, Those who are kept, are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation."

"Oh, what a lesson is here, my brother," he cried, "for the sorrowful mother whom we just now noticed! And what would this young man's parents give (for perhaps he may have both to survive him) had her case been theirs!"

My heart was too full to reply. I felt all that kind of sensation which the poet entered into, to the contemplation of a subject so hopeless and awful, when he said,

Then if it be a dreadful thing to die,   
How horrid yet to die by one's own hand! *Self murder!*—name it not!—dreadful attempt!   
Just reeking from self-slaughter, in a rage,   
To rush into the presence of our Judge!   
As if we challenged him to do his worst,   
And valued not his wrath!—'Tis mad!  
'Tis worse than madness—nothing can describe   
A phrenzy half so desperate as this! (Blair's Grave.)

It was some time before I prevailed on myself to move from the spot of this awful scene—but at length I caught the arm of my companion, and we walked away together towards the end of the street, which terminated in the fields. We had gone a considerable space without any conversation, the minds of both being, I imagined, fully absorbed in ruminating on a subject that was, beyond all others, the most distressing! For my part, the circumstance had awakened in my bosom a train of thoughts which tended to dissipate all my new-formed hopes. "What," I said to myself, "if an end so horrible should be at length the termination of *my* pilgrimage! What if all my fond desires of grace, should ultimately prove a delusion? Are the people of God exposed to such overwhelming temptations of the enemy? May they really be awakened to the life of God in the soul—and yet finally fall away?"

I found these, and the like distrustful questions involuntarily arising in my mind, and inducing much anxiety, when my friend, as if privy to what passed within me, broke silence—"How gracious," he exclaimed "is our God, in the midst of such awful judgments as are walking by our side through the world—to keep us unhurt! Do you not perceive the evidence of that Scripture, 'A thousand shall fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you—only with your eyes shall you behold and see the reward of the wicked.' (Psa 91:7-8.) Oh, it is a blessed, soul-reviving thought—that amid all the melancholy proofs around us, that we are passing through the enemy's territories, that there is a gracious *nevertheless* in the covenant which screens us from his malice! 'Nevertheless,' says the Apostle, 'the foundation of God stands sure, having this seal, the Lord knows those who are his.' (2Ti 2:19.) 'Let mine outcasts dwell within you, Moab—be a covert to them from the face of the spoiler.' (Isa 16:4.) This is enough. *Outcasts,* and sometimes considered as the 'offscouring of all things,' they are; but still they are God's outcasts. Tempted they may be, and certainly will be—but conquered they shall not be; and could an onlooker but see objects spiritually, he would discover, as the impious monarch of old did, "One walking with his people in the hottest furnace, that even the smell of the fire may not pass upon them." (Dan 3:25, Dan 3:27.)

"You very much rejoice my heart," I replied, "by what you say. My fears were all alive in the view of this awful scene, lest an event so truly hopeless might one day be my portion."

"That," answered my companion hastily "is impossible to a child of God. The promise is absolute. 'No weapon formed against you shall prosper.' (Isa 54:17.) And God 'is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape; that you may be able to bear it.'"

"But is it not said," I replied "that some who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and been made partakers of the Holy Spirit—have fallen away?"

"Yes," replied my companion, "but none of those so spoken of were ever children of God, or 'born again of that incorruptible seed which lives and abides forever.' Only observe the vast distinction of character by which those enlightened people whom the apostle speaks of are marked, from the Scripture-features of the truly regenerate, and the contrast will immediately appear. They are said to be 'once enlightened,' that is, with *head*-knowledge; not renewed in *heart*-affections. They are described as those who have tasted of the heavenly gift; tasted but not approved, like people whose stomachs nauseate what the taste rejects, and digest it not. They are said to 'have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit;' that is, in his common operations upon the understanding, not in his quickening and regenerating grace in the soul. In all these and the like instances, there is not a single syllable said of the Spirit's work in the great and essential points of faith and repentance, and the renewed life. But the whole account is confined to the common operations of nature, as distinguished from grace, in which natural men frequently excel, and sometimes indeed to such a degree, as to surpass in head knowledge children of grace; and God the Holy Spirit is pleased to work by their instrumentality, while they themselves remain unconscious of his power. He blesses his people by them; but they feel not his power in them; for rather than his household should lack supply, he will feed them even from the table of their enemies. They become therefore like channels of conveyance, which conduct to others—but retain nothing themselves; or like the signposts on the road, which point the traveler to the right path—but never stir themselves a step towards it. These things may be done, and perhaps very often are done by men who are total strangers to vital godliness; and therefore when they cease to appear in their assumed character, they are said by the world to have fallen away from grace; whereas the fact is, they were never in grace. Everything in such people is derived from natural causes, is supported by natural means, and adopted for natural purposes—and thus beginning in nature, they end in the same. And if a proper attention was paid to these things, to discriminate between nature and grace, it would, under the divine blessing, very much tend to diminish the apprehensions of the humble and fearful believer, respecting the danger of apostatizing from the faith."

"But is there not a difficulty," I said, "to the cordial reception of this doctrine, in the cases of those unhappy people who die by their own hands, and, as is generally supposed, from the effects of religious melancholy?"

"Not the least," replied my friend, "by those who consider the subject in a proper point of view. It is the grossest mistake to ascribe such instances of suicide to a religious melancholy, when, in fact, they are induced altogether from the total abscence of true religion.

"Men, from the awakenings of conscience, and from the dread of divine displeasure, in the recollection of a mis-spent life, may be driven to despair; and, if there be no grace given to them by God, to make application of the sweet promises of the gospel in the hour of temptation—but left to themselves, may be prompted to do an act at which nature shudders! But who would presume—but a fool, to put this down to the score of true religion, when every circumstance tends but to prove the very reverse—in the total lack of all true religion? Let us only suppose a case in point, which is enough at once to answer all the childish observations which the world has made on a subject of this nature. Let us suppose a man under the immediate pressure and alarms of a guilty conscience, in the prospect of the wrath to come, feels the rising temptation to do away with himself. Let us suppose further, that in this distressed state of mind, some precious revelation and promise of the gospel is, through divine grace, revealed to his heart; that he hears and believes what the gospel graciously proclaims, that 'Though his sins are as scarlet, they shall be made white as snow; though red as crimson, they shall be as wool; that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin.' Is it not evident, that if the mind of such a man is brought to believe in this precious promise, there can be no despair, and consequently there can be no self-murder? And will prejudice itself, even the grossest prejudice, venture to say, or even believe, that a single instance of suicide was ever committed under such circumstances?

"Hence therefore, you see my brother," continued my friend, "it is not faith—but the lack of faith; not from true religion—but from the total absence of true religion—that a melancholy pervades the mind, which sometimes terminates so fatally as in self-destruction."

÷**THE PLOUGHMAN**

I was about to reply, when the voice of one singing attracted my attention. It was an farmer at his labor, busily engaged in ploughing the field, and at the same time exercising his mind in strains of melody. From the solemnity of the tune, I was induced to believe that it was a psalm or hymn that he was singing. How mercifully (I thought with myself) has the Lord provided for the laboring part of mankind, that while the hands are engaged day by day on things of the earth, the heart is unfettered, and able, through grace, to soar among the objects of heaven! As we approached nearer, we paused, and could very plainly distinguish the words, as thus he sung—

Arise, my soul, my joyful powers,   
And triumph in my God;   
Awake, my voice, and loud proclaim   
His glorious grace abroad.

My friend whispered in my ear—"Do you recollect what the prophet predicted of the last gospel-days? 'In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD!' (Zec 14:20-21.) Such shall be the gracious prelude to that day, when there shall be no more the *Canaanite* in the land, that the *highway* and the *way of holiness* shall be so plain, that 'the way-faring men, though fools, shall not err therein.'" (Isa 35:8.) The farmer still sung:

He raised me from the depths of sin,   
The gates of gaping hell;   
And fixed my standing more secure   
Than 'twas before I fell.

"Is not this strange doctrine?" I cried to my friend.—"Ask him yourself," he said; "for if he sings with the Spirit, and with the understanding also, he can explain."

"Are you not mistaken, honest man," I said, "in what you are singing?"—"Oh, no Sir," he immediately answered, "He who raised me from sin preserves me now from falling—

The arms of everlasting love   
Beneath my soul he placed;   
And on the Rock of ages set   
My slipping footsteps fast.

The city of my blessed abode   
Is walled about with grace;   
Salvation for a bulwark stand,  
To shield the sacred place.

Satan may vent his sharpest spite,   
And all his legions roar;   
Almighty mercy guards my life,   
And bounds his raging power.

"Does this seem strange to you, Sir?" continued the countryman—"surely you ought to know better than I—but for my part, I thank God, I know enough to know that they are safer who are kept by grace, than those who never fell. The angels who kept not their first estate fell, from having no security but their own strength; and our unhappy first father, who had more strength of his own than ever any since of his fallen race have had, soon manifested what that strength was, when left alone. I do therefore desire to bless God that my strength is in another, and not in myself. Oh, it is a sweet morsel to my soul which says 'O Israel you have destroyed yourself—but in Me is your help!' (Hos 13:9.) Besides, Sir, had Adam continued in his original state of uprightness, and all his children have partaken in the same, this would have been no other, after all—but the righteousness of the *creature*; whereas now 'the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord.—He is the Lord our righteousness, and therefore he is himself our strength in the time of trouble,' (Psa 37:39.) and while the soul whom divine grace has snatched, as the Lord has *me,* from the gates of destruction, can take up that scripture, 'Surely, shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength.'—God the Holy Spirit applies that other precious *assurance* of his word, 'Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation; you shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end.'" (Isa 45:17.)

The countryman waited not for a reply—but resumed his labor and his song together—

Arise my soul, awake my voice,   
And tunes of pleasure sing;   
Loud hallelujahs shall address   
My Savior and my King!

Happy soul, thought I, you have that which empires cannot purchase—God for your Father, Jesus for your portion, and the Holy Spirit for your Comforter!

I saw the countenance of my companion glow with pleasure at what the countryman had said—while he finished the observations of the laborer, with asking and making answers himself to some few questions of his own. "Why is it," says he, "that the divine promise of perseverance should be so difficult to be received by our unbelieving hearts—but because we think we must have strength enough of our own? Why is the doctrine of the Redeemer's righteousness, as the sole means of justification before God, so hard to be accepted by us—but because the unhumbled pride of our nature cannot brook the mortification of being saved without doing *something* towards it? And why is it, that sinners are so averse to believe that their salvation is wholly the result of being chosen in Christ 'before the foundation of the world,'—but because it becomes a gratifying compliment to our proud nature, to have it thought that we first sought Christ? But the poor sinner desires that it should be always kept in view, that if *we love him—*it is because *he first loved us.* His language is, 'Lord, it is all distinguishing grace from beginning to end. I know I would fall every hour—but for the promise of being upheld by Him, who having 'loved his own, loves them unto the end.' And as I am fully conscious that I have no righteousness of my own, how precious becomes that assurance to my soul, wherein you have said, 'My salvation shall be forever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished!'" (Isa 51:6.)

÷**THE STRAYED SHEEP**

At that instant a sheep leaped over the hedge, just where my companion and I stood, as if pursued by some enemy. The poor animal seemed much distressed and affrighted. He looked at us—but appeared disappointed. As he stood still I called to him; but he knew not my voice. At length a man appeared at the fence, over which the sheep had broken, and calling in a particular tone which the poor animal understood, he turned and looked upon him. The shepherd then came over the hedge, and advancing gently towards him, still continuing his call as he approached him, the sheep came to meet him, and seemed rejoiced at his presence; and they went away both of them together.—"Ah!" I cried, "I think I could spiritualize this occurrence." "Do so then," replied my friend, "for such should be the custom of Zion's pilgrims—to extract spiritual improvement from everything which they see or hear."

"I would suppose," I said, "this poor strayed **sheep** to be the emblem of the wandering sinner. And I would suppose that the **man** pursuing it is the emblem of Jesus, which the silly animal thought to be an enemy. And under those images, if I mistake not, several very sweet doctrines of the gospel may be discovered. As for example, that the Lord Jesus had a fold before the foundation of the world, is evident; for in the close of his ministry he thanks the Father for those who he had given him, and of which 'he had lost none.' This fold, by the entrance of the prowling wolf into paradise, wandered, and was scattered abroad in the wide wilderness of the world—for so the Lord speaks of them—'My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill; yes, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth.' (Eze 34:6.) But though wandering and scattered, they were the Lord's sheep still. That little foolish wanderer we just now saw, was never altered in his nature, though wayward and perverse in his track. Though he left the sheepfold, yet he was still the sheep, and not the goat. In like manner, Christ's spiritual sheep did not lose their relation to him when they left his fold. This character of Jesus' sheep should never be forgotten by us, for it is plain that Jesus himself never loses sight of it. In the moment he speaks of them as wandering and scattered, as diseased and weak—he calls them still *my* sheep; and hence, in the recovery of every one of them, the same idea is carefully preserved—'I will search for my lost ones who strayed away, and I will bring them safely home again. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak.' (Eze 34:16.)

"And what can there be more refreshing and encouraging to a poor sinner than the consideration, that if of the fold of Jesus, originally given by the Father, however scattered over the face of the earth; however pent up in the den of beasts by the accursed enemy of souls; still he is the sheep of Jesus; concerning whom the promise is made and passed, 'My sheep shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand!' (Joh 10:28.) The eye of the good Shepherd is ever over them; he beholds them as *his* sheep while they appear among wolves; and when the hour is come, according to his blessed promise, like that poor animal we just now beheld, they shall hear his voice and follow *him,* though they flee the voice of strangers. How expressive to this purpose are the words of God by the prophet—'For this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I myself will search and find my sheep. I will be like a shepherd looking for his scattered flock. I will find my sheep and rescue them from all the places to which they were scattered on that dark and cloudy day.' (Eze 34:11-12.)

"And if this doctrine be well founded," I continued, "what a volume of consolation it holds forth to the sheepfold of Jesus, under their own diseases, weaknesses, and wanderings; and the long wanderings and wayward obstinacies and rebellions! The lion and the bear may have taken the tender lamb from the fold; but our David will in *his* time, and not ours, and the proper time too, go out after him, and deliver him from his devouring mouth. 'My sheep,' says Jesus, 'shall never perish.' That's enough!—'Fear not then, little flock; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.' (Luk 12:32.) And how eternally secure must be every one of the fold, when the final presentation of them before the throne of glory is to be expressed in these words—'Behold, I and the children whom the Lord has given me'" (Isa 8:18.)

When I had finished my remarks, my friend thanked me. "I am much pleased," he said, "I assure you, with your ideas upon the subject. You have, in my opinion, very sweetly spiritualized the incident of the strayed sheep—and you certainly have ample authority from Scripture, for the several observations you have made. The frequent allusion which is there adapted to the various circumstances of a sheepfold, is expressly done with this intention, to describe the Lord's gracious dealings with his people.

"There is one view of the subject which has often struck me—but which, so far as my reading extends, has not been sufficiently noticed, if at all, by any writer—I mean, where Jesus is following the thousands of his fold through all their wayward paths, amid the lion's den, and over the mountains of darkness—his eye is still over them for good, and his arm unremittingly stretched forth to keep them from everlasting ruin; though they, as yet in their unconscious state, senseless either of his presence or his favor, continue to weary him with their iniquities! There is somewhat in this view which opens to them a most precious and endearing trait in the character of the Lord Jesus; when once the film which obstructed vision in them is removed, to see things as they are, and that he has brought home any of his wanderers to his fold 'on his shoulders rejoicing!'

"If you and I, my brother," he added, "had the faculty of discerning objects spiritually, we would discover many in this situation now, who appear to every eye but His who knows his own under all disguises, as *goats,* from their behavior—but yet are the real *sheep* of Jesus, which, by and by, he will gather out, and say to them, as he did to the church of old, 'Come with me, my spouse, from the lions' dens, and from the mountains of the leopards.'

"Gracious Power!" he exclaimed, "while speaking of your patience to your people, oh! let me never forget for how many years that patience was extended to *me!"*

"And to me!" I cried. A moment of silence followed, when my friend resumed his discourse.

"I cannot help remarking, my friend," he said, how wonderfully the Lord has brought you on your way—and particularly in the knowledge of divine things. Many there are who, notwithstanding they are very precious plants which the Lord's right hand has planted, do not make great advances. But I may truly say of you, as the apostle did of the church of the Thessalonians, 'Your faith grows exceedingly.'"

"Alas!" I replied, "I fear I do not grow at all. I cannot perceive in myself any progress." "Do not say so," he answered, "for this borders on unthankfulness. In our desires after greater measures of knowledge and grace, let us never overlook the less; nor, while we earnestly beg the Lord to bestow more, unthankfully forget what he has already given. It is very true, as the apostle observes, that our highest attainments in the present state are only as the attainments of children; and that 'if any man thinks he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know.' Nevertheless, an apprehension of the very first principles in grace, no, the circumstance of being taken into the school of Jesus, is an unspeakable mercy, which a whole life of thankfulness is not sufficient to acknowledge."

"Look back, my brother," he added, "from the first traces you can discover of God's manifestations in your mind—to the present period; and compare your situation then with now, and you will at once perceive what rapid advances you have been making in the divine life, under the teachings of God the Holy Spirit. And this is, in fact, the only method whereby to form a true estimate of ourselves; for when we draw conclusions for the present only, or when we erect as a standard, whereby to judge ourselves, the excellency of others more advanced; all these models being ill-constructed and ill-chosen, must invariably induce mortifying views of ourselves by the comparison. This is not, therefore, the right plan by which we are to ascertain our state. But if we so judge of our progress in grace, as we estimate growth in the works of nature, the method will be more accurate. In the vegetable kingdom, for instance, however certain an advance in growth may be, yet the most intense eye can never discern any one plant actually growing—but, by the comparative observation of a few days, every one is enabled to discover that a progression has taken place.

"And while I am speaking of this subject of growth in grace, I would desire to add another observation, which is intimately connected with it—The apostle says, 'Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.' Now, if I really grow in grace (as increasing grace humbles more and more the soul) I shall grow more sensible of my own worthlessness and Christ's all-sufficiency; deeper views of sin in my fallen nature will induce all those gracious effects which tend to enhance the Savior; a conscious sense of need will awaken as conscious a desire of having those needs supplied; and every day's experience will make self more lowly—and Christ more exalted. This is to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord together. The progress of grace therefore, connected with the progress of the knowledge of the Lord, must ever produce those effects. A little grace, like the dawn of day, when shining in the heart, enables the believer to discover by this twilight, something of the darkness around. In proportion as the light advances—he sees the objects clearer; but he then only becomes sensible of all the evils lurking within, when the meridian brightness is completed. Grace, in like manner shining in its full luster, discovers to us more clearly the corruptions of our nature; and while it accomplishes this purpose, it answers the other blessed purpose also, which the apostle connects with it, of giving us 'the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.'"

÷**AN INN**

It became a matter of much satisfaction, I believe, to my fellow-traveler as well as to myself, to behold the appearance of an inn on the road; for we both needed rest and refreshment; so that without any deliberation we entered the door.

"Can you accommodate us?" said my friend to the host, who happened to be near the door as we approached the house. "Certainly," answered the man; and showed us into a room.

"You do not forget, my brother," whispered my fellow-traveler to me, "who it was, among the pilgrims passing through this world, who could not find this accommodation? *There was no room for Him in the inn.* How sweetly is it arranged in all the various circumstances of life, to discover somewhat of his bright example going before us in almost every situation; not by way of reproach—but of pointing out to us, in numberless instances, the superiority of our accommodations to his!

"There is something in the very nature of an inn," continued my friend, "which serves, as it appears to me, to promote the sacred purposes of a pilgrimage like ours, more effectually than almost any other situation; and had I my choice on this point, I would like it, of all others, for my abode in the dying hour; for everyone is so taken up with his own concerns, that there is neither time nor inclination to attend to the affairs of others; so that here a man might be free from the troublesome importunity of attendants, which sometimes becomes a sad interruption to the soul, in her preparations for her journey into the invisible world, while the carriage is at the door."

Our refreshment, consisting of a little tea and bread, was soon served up; which, my friend having first implored the divine blessing to sanctify the use of, we really enjoyed. "Tea is a very pleasant beverage," said my friend, "to my taste; and I should find some difficulty to get anything as a substitute, were I to be deprived of the use of it. I have heard many speak of it as pernicious; but I truly believe, that one great reason why it proves so is, because it is a *graceless* meal. If we do not beg God's blessing over our food, how can we be surprised if, instead of being wholesome, it proves hurtful?"

After we had finished our meal, and, like well-fed guests, had arisen from the table, blessing the kind Master of the feast, "who gives us all things richly to enjoy," we were about to enter upon the perusal of the word of God, by way of profitably filling up the measure of time until the hour of rest; when a circumstance occurred, which at once arrested the attention of us both.

÷**THE JEW**

The instant we arose from the table, as before observed, there crossed the courtyard of the inn, opposite to the room where we were sitting, a Jew (as he appeared to be) with a basket of pens. My friend seeing him, hastily ran to the door, to inquire of him whether he knew a man of the name of Abraham Levi, one of their people. "Yes," he said, "I know him very well; but he is not one of my people." "How is that?" replied my friend; "are you not a Jew?" "No" the poor man said, "I thank the Lord I am not! I was once indeed; but, I trust, I am now a lover of the Lord Jesus." The effect wrought upon my mind by this short conversation, was like that of electricity. "Please, my friend do us the favor," continued my companion, "to come into this room. We are both lovers and humble followers, like yourself, if you are so, of the Lord Jesus and we shall much rejoice if you will communicate to us the pleasing information how this change was wrought." "That I will, most readily," replied the man; "for if it will afford you pleasure to hear, much more will it delight me to relate, a change to which I owe such unspeakable mercies."

"Without going over the whole of my history from my childhood," he said, "which has very little interesting in it, and is unconnected with the circumstances of my conversion, it will be sufficient to begin it at that part which alone is worth your hearing. It is about two years since that I first began to feel my mind much exercised with considerations on the deplorable state of our people. I discovered, from reading the scriptures, the ancient love of God to our nation. In our history, as a people, I saw the many wonderful and distinguishing mercies with which, from age to age, the Lord had blessed us. I remarked also, how, for the disobedience and ingratitude of our people the Lord had punished us; but what struck me most forcibly was, that prophecy of Scripture 'That the scepter should not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until the *Shiloh* should come,' (Gen 49:10.)—whereas I saw very plainly that our nation was without a scepter, without government, without temple. I remarked, moreover, that our people were a light, vain, and worldly-minded people, who took it not to heart; and if the Lord had punished our fathers for their sins, we deserved his displeasure more. Added to all these considerations, which very powerfully operated on my mind, I saw a great mass of people living around me who professed themselves to be followers of the true God; and who asserted, in confirmation of their faith, the Shiloh was come, and to him was the gathering of the people. Distressed and perplexed in my mind, by reason of these various considerations, I knew not what to do, and could hardly find power or inclination to prosecute my daily labor.

"It happened one day, while walking over the bridge of the city, that my mind being more than usually affected, I could not refrain from pouring out my heart in prayer to God. I paused as I stood on the bridge, and lifting up my eyes towards heaven, I cried out 'O God of my fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who has declared yourself as keeping covenant mercy for thousands, look down upon me, a poor Jew! Teach me what I must do! You know my desire is to serve you, if I knew the way! You are justly displeased with our nation and with our people; for we have broken your commandments. But oh, Lord, direct me!'

"It was with words somewhat like these," continued the poor man, "that I prayed; in which I wept much. At length I walked on; and passing by a place of worship, where I saw many assembled, I found my heart inclined to go in. Who knows, I thought within myself—but the Lord may have directed me here! I went in; and near the door finding a seat unoccupied, I entered into it, and sat down. The minister was discoursing on the mercies of God, in sending his Son to be the Savior of the world. If this Savior was my Savior, I thought, how happy would I be! I felt myself considerably affected, and frequently turned my face to the wall and wept; and many times, during the continuance of the service, so much was my heart interested by what I heard, that I wept aloud, and could not refrain.

"I had disturbed some of the congregation, it appeared, by my behavior; so that as soon as the service was finished, two or three of the men came towards me with much anger, asking me what I meant by coming there to interrupt their worship with my drunkenness; but when they discovered the real state of the case, and I had told them the whole desires of my mind, they almost devoured me with kindness. This served very much also, under God, to convince me that their religion must be the true religion, which produced such effects.

"Not to fatigue you with my story, it will be sufficient to observe, that from that hour my mind began to discover hope; and as the kind people, into whose congregation I had thus entered, undertook to instruct me in the principles of the Christian faith, I soon learned, under God, the fulfillment of the Jewish Scriptures in the Christian New Testament; and now I find cause every day, more and more, to bless the Lord for what he has done for my soul.

"One little event more," he added, "I will, if you please, relate, which happened soon after my going into this church. My business of selling my pens obliged me to go to another city, about twelve miles distant from the one where I dwelt; and calling at a pastry-cook's shop, who occasionally dealt with me, a circumstance occurred which became highly serviceable to me in my new path of life. There sat in the shop a venerable gentleman, dressed in black; the mistress of the house stood behind the counter; and I was just within the door. A poor beggar, looking miserably sick, came in for a tart. "Ah! John," cried the old gentleman, "what—have you left the infirmary! Is your disorder declared to be incurable?" "Yes, Sir," replied the poor man, "they say they can do nothing more for me." "Well, John," answered the old gentleman, "there is one Physician more which I would have you try; and he never fails to cure—and he does it also 'without money and without price.'" The poor man's countenance brightened at this; and he said "Who is he?" "It is the Lord Jesus Christ," said the gentleman. "Hasten and go to him, John and if he is pleased to heal your body, it will be a blessed recovery for you indeed; and if not, he can and will heal your soul!" The poor man did not relish the advice; for he went away looking angrily. As for me, I cried out (for I could not refrain) May the Lord bless you, Sir, for what you have said in your recommendations of my Master and Savior! He is indeed all you have described him; for he has cured both my body and soul. Astonished at what I said, the gentleman expressed his surprise, in observing "I thought you were a Jew!" "I was, sir," I answered, "once; but by grace I am now a Christian." He caught me by the hand and entreated me to go with him to his house; where I related to him, as I have to you, the means under God, of my conversion; and when I had finished my story, at his request, we dropped on our knees in prayer; and oh! Sirs, the fervor and earnestness with which he prayed, and the thanksgivings which he expressed for the Lord's mercy to my soul—I shall never forget! The recollection even at this distance, continues to warm my heart."

When the poor man had finished his narrative, my friend and I looked at each other, then at him, and then upwards. One sentiment, I am persuaded, pervaded both hearts; and this was the language, "Great and marvelous are your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are your ways, you KING of saints!"

My companion offered him money; at which he seemed hurt. "I am sorry" he said, "that you should think so unfavorably of me." "Well—but," answered my friend, "we have detained you from your employment, and it is but just; as you have so highly contributed to our pleasure, we ought not to make it detrimental to your interest." "I would be very sorry," replied the poor man, "if my diligence would not make up for those occasional interruptions which are so sweet and refreshing in my own heart, while giving satisfaction to others. No, Sir, I thank you for your intentions; but I cannot accept your offer. Besides, I need it not; I have enough and to spare. God supplies all my needs, and enables me sometimes to help the needs of others."

The poor man took his leave, after mutual wishes and prayers for our spiritual welfare; and the night being now advanced, after reading the scriptures and prayer, we departed each to his chamber.

The town-clock struck five, just after I awoke from a state of sleep much refreshed. I called to mind that sweet promise of God to his people, and found cause to bless him, in that it had been again verified to my experience—"When you lie down, you shall not be afraid; yes, you shall lie down and your sleep shall be sweet." (Pro 3:24.)

I recollected also, that many of the Lord's children were at that moment in a state of pain and suffering, and, like Job, complaining that "wearisome nights were appointed unto them." (Job 7:3.) I felt my heart drawn out, under the fullness of the impression, to adopt the language of the sorrowful sisters, and to tell the Lord "Many whom you love are sick." (Joh 11:3.)

When we consider the defenseless state of sleep, and the many dangers to which our poor fallen nature is then peculiarly exposed—not merely to the ravages of *enemies,* against which bolts and bars might cast up some little security—but the carelessness of *friends,* from which none but His watchful eye, "who never slumbers nor sleeps," can guard us—how suitable is that sentiment of the church of old, to form the first impression of the mind at the dawn of day—"It is of the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not; they are new every morning." (Lam 3:22.)

I have often thought, when looking upon some dear child in its unconscious state of sleep—what creature of all God's works is so truly helpless, and so much exposed to danger, as man in that season! But I have not infrequently found relief therefrom, in the assurance that this very state, in the necessity of it, implies the existence of a peculiar superintendence; and indeed the eventual experience of thousands is continually bearing testimony to the truth of that precious promise—"My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings and in quiet resting-places." (Isa 32:18.)

÷**THE DIARY**

According to my constant custom, since the Lord was pleased to call me by his grace, I opened my Diary, in my little Pocket Companion, to enquire what is the word of the Lord recommended to my serious consideration today? for it is a favorite maxim of mine, with the first dawn of day, to seek a morning-blessing from the Lord in this way, in one of his sweet promises. The promises of God are the present heritage of his people—they are evidently intended to be their support and stay in the house of their pilgrimage. In a little book which I always keep by me for this purpose, to have recourse to as occasion may require, and which I call my Pocket Companion, I have also a *Diary*, containing some refreshing portion of Scripture for every day in the year; and though it cannot be supposed (neither will anyone I should hope imagine) that, by a selection of this kind, a preference is given to one gracious promise to the exclusion of the rest, "which in Christ Jesus are all yes and amen," yet, as the mind is not sufficiently capacious, nor sufficiently alive to exercise itself in the meditation of them all, it should seem to be no unpromising plan of usefulness to have recourse to one or more of them in this manner.

I shall be exempt, I trust, from the charge of presumption, if I add that I have found at times, the promise in my Diary so strikingly suited to my then circumstances, as if a voice had accompanied it, like that of the apostle to the men of Antioch—"To you is the word of this salvation sent."

The promise for this day I have found to be, Psa 121:5. "The Lord is your keeper." Sweet and precious indeed to all his people, is this assurance! My mind, as I lay upon my bed, was much exercised in the contemplation of God as a covenant-God, in keeping his people. It is he who keeps them in the faith; keeps them in the hour of temptation; keeps them from the power of the enemy—from a thousand unseen, and as many visible evils—from finally falling, and from eternal death!—and though he has nowhere promised to keep his people from tribulation, or persecution, or the strife and slander of tongues—from sickness, or sorrow or the like—yet he has promised, that "no weapon formed against them shall prosper—no temptation shall take them, from which he will not make a way for them to escape. He will bruise Satan under their feet shortly." Oh, the blessed privilege of those who have the Lord for their keeper!

÷**MARKET-DAY**

From the very great noise which I heard in the street, as I arose from my bed, occasioned by the passing of horses and the tumult of the people, I concluded that something more than usual occupied the public attention. In looking for the cause from the window of my chamber, which opened into the street, I discovered that it was *market-day.* Though the hour was so early, and the sun had not far advanced in climbing the heavens, yet the world was risen, and everyone eagerly engaged in preparation for the sale of their different commodities.

Ah! thought I, how just is that aphorism of our blessed Lord, "The people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light." If, on the market-days for the soul (I mean the sabbath-days of the church) they, whose office it is to bring forth out of God's treasure things new and old to the people, we were truly as anxious as those men of the world—what gracious effects might we hope would follow under the Spirit's blessing!

The apostle of the gentiles desired the church of Corinth to consider him and his faithful companions under this character. "Let a man," says he, "so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God." A steward is an upper servant in a family, one whose office (according to our Lord's own explanation of the Jewish householder) is to provide for the family, &c. whom "his Lord has made ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season." And were that also properly considered, which the apostle adds, that "it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful," the solicitude of the earthly market-man would fall infinitely short of that which *he* feels who ministers in heavenly things—in proportion as the object and the end of the latter transcend in importance those of the former. How early would the stewards of Christ's mysteries arise, in order to prepare the "feast of fat things, of wine on the lees, and of fat things full of marrow—for the feast of the Lord's house!" How extremely anxious would they be that no hungry nor thirsty soul of God's household would be overlooked nor neglected!—and conscious, after all their best and most earnest preparations, that there can be no actual enjoyment, no real participation on the people's part—but from the predisposing grace of the Lord, how ought every steward to bring forth what he has prepared with prayer and supplication, that the Lord himself would direct every heart and influence every mind!

Imagination can hardly form a character more truly valuable than the man who ministers in holy things; who spends his time, his gifts, his talents—in short, his all—to this one purpose; who becomes indeed the "faithful and wise steward," to feed the babes of Christ's household with the "sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby;" and those who are of "full age, with strong meat, when by reason of use their spiritual senses are exercised to discern both good and evil;" and who to both can humbly recommend, like the apostle, the goodness of the food, as being what "he himself had seen, and looked upon, and tasted of the word of life." It must be a refreshing consolation, I can well conceive, in the close of life, to every *faithful* steward, after the day's fatigue to provide spiritual food is over—to be able to take up the same language as the apostle Paul—"I have kept back nothing that was profitable—I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God—I have fed the church of God, which he has purchased with his own blood—and now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace!"

When I came down from my chamber, I found my friend waiting breakfast for me, for the hour was by this time past eight—and, as his custom was, he proposed inviting as many of the family as felt disposed, to attend our morning-prayers. The mistress of the house, with only one servant, accepted the offer—and after my companion had read a portion of God's word, he followed it up with prayer.

When the mistress and the servant had withdrawn, we sat down to breakfast; my friend having first implored the usual **blessing** on our food:

÷**THE GRACE**

"Bountiful Father of mercies, who is supplying the daily needs of the millions which are looking up to you from all parts of the universe, we desire grace to praise you for this seasonable and suitable portion of food, which you have spread before us for the support of our perishing bodies; and we entreat you for grace from your Holy Spirit in the use of it, that we may receive this and every other blessing, as coming from our Covenant Father and God in Christ Jesus. Give, dearest Savior, to sit at the table which you have furnished, and may we be among those "who shall sit at your table in your kingdom;" and while, as your children going home to your house, you are refreshing us thus by the way, though all the benefit be ours, let yours be all the glory. Amen."

÷**THE PARALYTIC**

We had scarcely finished our meal when the mistress of the house came in, to inform us of the situation of a poor man in the street, who had been bed-ridden from age *fifteen.* "He is a very pious person," added the mistress, "and a great number go to visit him. I thought it might be pleasant to you to hear of him." My friend replied, "We will go to see him; where is his dwelling?"—"Only five doors from our house."

When we carne to the poor man's room, though everything manifested the indigence of his circumstances, yet it was that kind of poverty which recommended itself by its cleanliness. There stood a lady at the foot of his bed in conversation with the sick man. "How do you live?" I heard her say as I entered the chamber. "Live, madam!" replied the poor man, "I am in very good circumstances; I am not only rich by reason of present possessions—but I am heir to a large estate."—"Astonishing!" said she, "you were pointed out to me as a very poor man; and I came to give you some relief."—"That you may still do, madam, if you please," answered he, "for the riches I possess, and the inheritance to which I am born, do not at present make me above charity. I am only 'rich in faith, and an heir of the kingdom of God.'"—"Oh," replied the lady, "is that all? but in the mean time, how do you manage for this world?" "My God," cried the poor man, "supplies all my need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound. I am instructed both to be full, and to be hungry; both to abound, and to suffer need. When my worldly stock is reduced low, and I have neither bag, nor bread, nor money in the purse, I make use of bank-notes." "Bank-notes!" exclaimed the lady. "Yes, madam," he answered, "here is a book full of them;" taking up a Bible which lay upon the bed, and opening it; "and oftentimes I find many folded up together in the same place to which I open. Look here, madam," he continued; "see here is a promise suited to every man's case. 'The poor and needy search for water, but there is none; their tongues are parched with thirst. But I the Lord will answer them; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them. I will make rivers flow on barren heights, and springs within the valleys. I will turn the desert into pools of water, and the parched ground into springs.' (Isa 41:17-18.) And the high value of those promises is, that they are sure and certain. Faith draws upon the Almighty banker, and his is all prompt payment."

While the poor sick man said this, he opened the Bible to another part, and he exclaimed again, "See, madam, here is another promise to a soul under doubts and fears—'I will instruct you, and teach you in the way wherein you shall go; I will guide you with my eye;' (Psa 32:8.) and thus, madam, in every state and every circumstance of life, in this blessed book, are assurances exactly suited to the wants both of my body and soul. Promises of provision for the way; deliverances under danger; preservation in seasons of affliction; support under trouble; direction in times of difficulty; and the Lord's assured presence in every time of need. 'Fear not, for I am with you—be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you; yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of my righteousness.'" (Isa 41:10.)

The lady, without adding anything, put a piece of money into the poor man's hand, and withdrew. What her sentiments were, I know not; but as soon as she was departed, my companion addressed the sick man—"I am much delighted," he said, "to see you, my friend, so cheerful. It is a pleasing consideration that your sickness is sanctified; but are you enabled always thus to rejoice in the promises?"

"Oh, dear Sir," the poor man answered, "no; very frequently, through unbelief, I am tempted to exclaim with the church of old, 'My hope is perished from the Lord.' (Lam 3:18.) I have seasons of darkness, and times of temptation; notwithstanding I can and do say, through grace strengthening me, sometimes under both, 'Rejoice not against me, O my enemy; for though I fall I shall arise; though I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light unto me.' (Mic 7:8.) Yes, in my haste, I cry out, "All are liars;" but blessed be the Lord under all, my God is faithful. He is better to me than all my fears."

At the poor man's request, my friend and I sat down, and we had a most refreshing season. I could truly say, It is good to be here!

We parted not until we had spent a few minutes in prayer; and in the conclusion, the paralytic broke out in a faint and trembling voice,

My willing soul would stay   
In such a frame as this   
And sit, and sing itself away   
To everlasting bliss.

Our departure from the sick room was affecting. We parted as those who were to meet no more on this side the grave.

At our return to the inn, our intention was to tarry only for the moment, just to settle with the host, and be gone; but an event took place, which not only retarded that intention—but finally set it aside. How short-sighted is man! what a perilous path he is walking!

We were returned to the inn, and while my friend left me to pay the expenses which we had incurred there, he visited, as his manner was, the stables, in order to drop a word on the *best things* among that class of people who inhabit those places, and who are not in the way of hearing it elsewhere. He used to say, that in his opinion, no order of beings whatever stood in a situation more pitiable. Formed as their society is, for the most part, of the children of the poor, they are introduced from their earliest days into this path of life without the smallest education, or the least idea of its usefulness; and as they advance in years, though advancing at the same time in all the corrupted manners of the stable, they remain totally destitute of any apprehension of divine truths. Perhaps without a breach of charity it may be said, that very few of the whole body of this order, have any more consciousness of "the things which accompany salvation," than the cattle with whom they herd.

What a vast body of such characters (could the imagination form the group) do the various inns of the kingdom contain! And what a mass of corrupt living is perpetually produced in their daily interaction with one another, without a single sentiment flowing from the lips of any to "the use of edifying," so as "to minister grace unto the hearers!" And what tends to make the evil greater, as if the contagion of the stable, in the corruption of manners, had not sufficient scope for exercise during the six days' labor of the week, there is no remission to this unhappy class of beings on the Lord's Day. The warning bell of the church, which kindly calls all ranks without discrimination to the house of prayer, calls in vain to them. Unaccustomed to any means of grace, and unacquainted with either the morning prayer, or the evening worship, they who among them find no immediate employment, lounge their time in the stable—while by far the greater part are engaged as drivers of stages, and diligences, and chaises to conduct, (in defiance of all laws, human and divine,) a set of sabbath-breakers like themselves, in their several journeys of business, and journeys of pleasure. The number which the various inns of the kingdom pour forth upon those occasions every Lord's day is incalculable.

How frequently has it excited my commiseration, when in some sweet morning of the sabbath, the *Diligence* has passed the street under my window! "Alas!" I have said, "what a wretched way of life must that be, which loses the very distinction of days by such uninterrupted labor! Surely, except in form, there can be no difference of character between the driver and the horses, when both are trained to expect the going over the same tract of ground in their daily labor."

How irresistibly has my heart sometimes, when pursuing the reflection, been impelled to admire, and in that admiration to adore, the distinguishing grace of God! "Who makes you to differ from another?" is a sweet morsel for the gracious soul to feed on, whenever such occasions of reflection occur. I have felt the full force of it many times on the Lord's day; particularly when in the same moment, in which I have beheld a party of pleasure-loving creatures, driving through the streets on their various excursions, in order to consume this blessed day in idleness and dissipation, I have seen some gracious souls gladly hastening to the house of God to adore his goodness, to hear his word, and to implore the effusion of the Holy Spirit on his churches, both ministers and people, on this sacred day of rest. The reader will pardon this digression, I hope, induced by the impulse of the moment.

My friend, as was before observed, had left me in the inn, in order to visit those regions of ignorance and sin which the stable furnishes; and never surely was a mission to the most darkened nations of any hemisphere more needed, than to such British heathens of our own. My friend possessed every requisite for the office. Added to a natural gentleness of manners, and a suavity of deportment, he had acquired the most winning art of persuasion. He knew how to adapt his discourse in the least offensive method, so as to arrest the attention of his hearers; and although few perhaps were better formed to shine in the circle of the great and the learned, yet he had imbibed the full spirit of the apostle's lesson, and knew how "to condescend to men of low estate."

His first endeavor was directed to find out some leading trait of character in the poor and uninformed mind of the person he addressed. His next object was to suit his discourse in correspondence to his apprehension; and in cases where but little opportunity offered of a personal conversation, if providentially any of the fraternity had acquired any knowledge in reading, he had the pleasing art of prevailing upon them to accept of one or more of the pious little tracts which are now so generally circulated, and which he always carried about with him in his pocket for this purpose.

÷**THE STABLE BOY**

It so happened that a poor boy in the stable, was engaged in rubbing down one of the horses in the stall, when my friend entered the stable. The gentleness and condescension with which my friend bid him "Good day," so very dissimilar to the surly language which he in general received, from his companions, soon called up his attention; and as my friend entered farther into conversation with him, first on subjects pertaining to his work, and then by an easy transition, and by a manner peculiarly his own, on matters of a higher nature, the poor lad's heart, like that of Lydia mentioned in Scripture, was opened to attend to the things spoken.

The subject (as I afterwards learned) to which my friend adverted, was the happiness of "that rest which remains for the people of God," in the upper and brighter world, contrasted to the toilsome and unsatisfying nature of all things here below; and when he came to describe the love of the Lord Jesus in purchasing this rest for his people, and his affectionate desires that the poor and the weary and the heavy-laden should come to him, and find this rest unto their souls, the poor youth, unable to contain his emotions, melted into tears. He did not in so many words say what he felt—but his eyes expressed it. My friend, who possessed great quickness of penetration, perceiving the effect, without seeming to notice it, then made his discourse somewhat more personal, and held forth the pleasing consideration to his view, that this love of the Lord Jesus was intended for him. The poor boy wiped away the tear which had fallen on his cheek, and drew nearer to my friend, as to one whose kindness had begotten confidence and affection, and manifested that kind of sympathy of soul which seemed to thank him for what he had said, and to request him to say more.

÷**THE DISASTER**

Interested in the highest degree, with this awakened concern in the youth, my friend had forgotten the situation of one of the horses in the stall near him, and was unconscious of any danger until he felt its effect. By a violent kick which he received in his side, just beneath the ribs, he was thrown on the pavement in the stable, and remained in a state of insensibility for a considerable time, after we had brought him into the house, and placed him on a bed. The alarm given on the first rumor of this disaster, soon reached my ears, and it was some consolation to me in the very afflicting circumstance, that I was present to see him taken up, and very gently carried to his chamber.

As soon as he had recovered from his fainting, I ventured to approach his bedside, and taking him by the hand expressed my great concern for what had happened. "How unfortunate (I exclaimed) is it, that you should have gone to the stable! How sad a thing that you should have stood so near this horse; if one could but have foreseen." "Be patient, my kind friend, I beg of you," he interrupted me, with saying, "and in your affection for me, do not forget the first principles of your holy faith. You are looking wholly to *second* causes, to the mere instrument, and totally shutting out our gracious God from the government of his own world, and all his tender concern and gracious watching over the persons, and interests of his people! Alas, my dear brother," he continued, "by this method you increase every trouble, and rob yourself of a thousand comforts. Would you have me to be angry with myself for going into the stable, or displeased with a senseless horse, for acting according to his nature as a horse? As well might we take offence at the winter's cold or summer's heat. Mere instruments are nothing—but as they are acted upon; and what folly it would be to ascribe to them a power with which they have no connection! No, no, my good friend," he continued, "never lose sight of that gracious and Almighty Being, who 'orders all things according to the counsel of his own will,' and then you will discover wisdom, and faithfulness, and love in every providence. It is not enough," said he, "in my apprehension, merely to acquiesce in the divine will—every true believer in Jesus ought to do more; he should approve of it. It is one thing to say 'The Lord's will be done;' and another to say 'Good is the will of the Lord concerning me;' and this is no more, after all, than what is frequently observed in the common circumstances of the world. If, for example, I see an artist of esteemed excellence in his profession, constructing his machine upon various principles of a complicated nature, though the whole appears to *my* view intricate and confused, yet I take it for granted that he knows how the several parts will harmonize together, and I yield an implicit obedience to his superior judgment. And shall we so readily ascribe such sagacity to men, and yet venture to question wisdom in the arrangements of God?

"Do my brother," he replied, "do settle this in your mind as an everlasting maxim—Our God, our gracious, covenanted God in Christ, is unremittingly pursuing, in every minute event of his government over his church and people, their real welfare, whether it be through the path of pain or pleasure. If they are exercised with suffering, or even deeply drenched in affliction, it is because there is a *needs-be* for it. Not a single pain or trouble could be dispensed with. It is not sufficient barely to say that the affliction will ultimately do them no harm—this is but a negative kind of approbation. We must say more—It will do them, sooner or later, much good; and so infinitely interesting is the most minute circumstance in their life, that to prevent (were it possible) one trouble, or to add one prosperous event, would derange the whole plan of God's government. Oh, depend upon it, we are under a wise as well as a gracious superintendence! A synod of angels could not add or diminish, without manifest injury.

"With respect to the present providence," he added, "I know not what is the will of my God concerning me—but one thing I know, that 'all the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies,' (Psa 25:10.) and lifting up his eyes he cried out, "It is my mercy, O dearest Lord, that my times are in your hands! I have long been enabled, by your blessed Spirit's grace, to commit my *soul* into your keeping. Well may I then leave this *body* of sin and death to your care!"

My companion had quite exhausted the little strength left him, when he finished these words. I requested him to spare himself. He moved his head as if consenting, and turned his face upon the pillow.

To everyone present, besides my friend, it appeared to be a matter of great uncertainty, for many days together, whether the injury he had sustained would terminate fatally. The surgeon whom I had desired to be called in on the occasion, did not (for indeed he could not) speedily decide upon the question. The contusion was very great from the violence of the blow; and the injury extended far around the regions of the loins; but the surgeon only ventured to speak of it in a general way, as a case which must necessarily be attended with great danger; but however *others* thought, the patient himself had already formed *his* opinion; and the event proved that *that* opinion was justly founded. The period was arrived for his "going down to the house appointed for all living."

For my part, my concern was so great, that I seldom, unless from necessity, left his chamber. He had been a father to me; and I felt all that tender affection for him which a kind father might be supposed to excite in the mind of his son; and indeed independent of all personal attachment, my small services, during his confinement, were abundantly recompensed by the spiritual good that I had gathered from the many precious observations which dropped from his lips—and although I had so highly profited from the great lessons on piety which he had endeavored to teach me while *living*—yet in his *dying* hours he favored me with the sweetest instructions I had ever received. He had been a kind of candle, burning with much brightness, to enlighten me in the path of grace but, like a candle, the most vivid rays were those which were emitted while expiring in the socket.

The reader will forgive me once more if I pause to remark how exceedingly mistaken, in their calculation of the means of happiness, are the children of the world—who seek it in the various haunts of what is called *Pleasure,* notwithstanding the constant and uniform experience of thousands, in every age, has determined that it is not there to be found. If my reader will give me credit for the assertion (and I do most solemnly assure him of the fact) never, until the hour of my friend's confinement, when *living* in his chamber, did I know what that pleasure of the heart is, which arises from all those solemn but infinitely interesting reflections which engage the mind under sorrowful dispensations; such, I mean, as considerations of the solemn government of God—the rich discoveries of the importance of salvation—the littleness of the earthly pursuits—the sweetness of the sympathetic feelings; and, in short, all that train of thought, connected with those ideas which a sick-chamber is so admirably calculated to induce. Circumstances of this kind, no doubt, are solemn; but if solemn, they are only the more congenial to the soul's purest enjoyments. The "countenance may be saddened—but the heart is made better." (Ecc 7:3.)

But to return. The stable boy before mentioned, in whose spiritual interests my friend was so warmly engaged at the time when this providence visited him, soon manifested the concern in which this affliction had involved him. It would indeed exceed all description to say what were his feelings. Every little portion of time which he could spare from the demands of the stable was employed in running up to the chamber door to enquire after my friend. One trait in his character of this kind was peculiarly affectionate. He was always found, with the first dawn of the morning, watching at the door of the room, in order to gather the earliest information from the people who should first come out, how my friend had passed the night.

Neither had the good man, amid all his pains, forgotten him. He mentioned to me several times, with much pleasure, the hopes which he had conceived of serious impressions forming on the youth's mind, from the conversation which he had with him; and upon being told of the lad's frequent and earnest enquiries after him, it served to confirm him in this opinion the more, and he very much wished to see him. The poor boy was soon introduced; and the interview was truly affecting. After frequent visits, the youth acquired some little confidence; and my friend found many opportunities of instructing him in that wisdom which, under God the Holy Spirit, makes "wise unto salvation."

It was seemingly a long season of uncertainty for the exercise of my mind, in waiting the Lord's will respecting the final outcome of my friend's state. Sometimes my hopes were high, and at others low, according as the symptoms appeared to vary—but having acquired a little portion of that precious lesson in the school of grace, that the Lord's mercies are nearest unfolding, when our expectations of them are nearest closing, I felt, I thought, much sweetness in that scripture, "It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord."

It was in the midst of these exercises the surgeon informed me, that his apprehensions were, that a deadly injury had set in. He had, as usual, in his morning visit, examined my friend's bruised body; and then, for the first time, it was that he discovered the advancing gangrene. Our hopes now were all over. Whether my poor suffering friend, from our looks, or from the whispering of the surgeon, was led to suspect the cause, I know not; but so it was that he anticipated the question, by saying, "I believe, Sir, that you find a mortal injury has taken place—I have been free from pain in the part injured for several hours." The surgeon expressed his hopes that it might not be so; but my friend, with a look of complacency which I shall never forget, replied, "Why would you wish so? It is not the smallest reproach, surely, to men of skill and ability, when the ordination of the Lord baffles all the efforts of medicine; and with respect to *my* feelings, allow me to assure you, Sir, that it is an event more to be desired, than dreaded. I have long been looking forward to this period as to the happiest moment on earth. Although I have the least cause of all men to be dissatisfied with the pilgrimage of this world (few travelers through it having been more highly favored) yet I long to be at home in my Father's house, and cannot but rejoice in the pleasing prospect; knowing that when I am 'absent from the body, I shall be present with the Lord.'"

The surgeon expressed much satisfaction in seeing his patient so composed and tranquil, and soon after withdrew. When he was gone, I sat down by his bedside. Taking me by the hand with the warmth of affection which distinguished his character, he thus spoke—"My kind friend and companion, I am going to leave you; but I will say to you as Joseph did to his brethren, 'God will surely visit you.' I have nothing to bestow upon you but my prayers. Had I indeed the wealth of the whole earth, it would not be worth your consideration. The most invaluable legacy I pray the Lord to give you, is what the apostle coveted above all things for himself—"To know Jesus, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings." If the Lord gives you this, possessing it, you possess all things; and 'the God of all grace, who has called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that you have suffered a while, will make you perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.'

"With respect to myself," he continued, "and my views concerning the solemn state about to open before me, blessed be God, from the security I possess in him 'who is the resurrection and the life,' I have no fears. I have been enabled again and again, during my confinement on this bed of sickness, to take the most deliberate reviews of the faithfulness of a covenant-God in Christ; and the result of the whole enables me to rejoice in the finished salvation of my God. It is indeed a solemn idea that, in a few hours, I am to appear before 'God, the Judge of all.' But it is my mercy that I am come also to 'Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant.' While therefore I look at him, who is "fellow to the Lord Almighty," I find holy confidence; for I discover in him and his redemption, a full, complete, and all-sufficient righteousness, adequate to every need, and answerable to every demand, to satisfy the law of God.

"Under the influence of this well-grounded persuasion which God the Eternal Spirit (I trust) has graciously wrought in my soul, I have more than once since this illness, been refreshed by the same comfortable promise with which the Lord favored the Patriarch of old, to encourage him in his journey—'Fear not to go down into Egypt; I will go down with you.' So, methinks, the Lord encourages me; and I know indeed, that Jesus will go down with me to the chambers of the grave. 'He has the keys of hell and the grave—he opens, and no man shuts, he shuts, and no man opens.' Oh, it is a rapturous consideration to my soul, that in all places, and in all states, my Redeemer is with me. The covenant holds as firm as ever in the grave; and death, which dissolves all other bonds, frees not the bonds of the everlasting covenant. Our union, my brother," he proceeded, "with our great mystical Head, is as perfect when in the dust of the grave as when that dust is animated in the body. When Jesus from the bush proclaimed himself the 'God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob,' this blessed distinction of character was carefully marked and preserved—'God is not the God of the dead—but of the living; for all live unto him.'

"Those patriarchs, though moldered at that time for many years into dust, were still as much living to God, in all the purposes of covenant connections, in their dust, as when in an animated body; and hence the apostle observes, 'Whether we live, we live to the Lord; or whether we die, we die to the Lord—whether we live therefore or die, we are the Lord's.'"

My friend paused a moment to recover strength, and then proceeded—"This body of mine, my dear brother, will very shortly be fit only for worms and corruption; and when in this state the tenderest hearted friend, the fondest lover, would say of such a carcass, however engaging before it might have been, as Abraham did of Sarah, 'Bury my dead out of my sight.' But as these sensations are not *his* with whom we have to do; as Jesus never set his affection at first upon his people for the loveliness of their persons; so neither does that affection lessen when their loveliness is turned into corruption. Neither is their union with his person, even for a moment only, interrupted by death; for as the divine and human nature of the Lord Jesus received not the smallest separation when he died upon the cross, so of that union between Jesus and the members of his mystical body, there is no dissolution when their bodies are gathered unto their fathers, and they see corruption; for their souls are received into his bosom; and with respect to their bodies also, they still live to him. 'Because I live,' says Jesus, 'you live also.' Every particle of their dust, is the same to their great spiritual head, when dust, as before that change; for as the union in Jesus with their whole persons, that is, their bodies as well as their souls, is indissoluble, it is evident that the same must continue with the dust of their bodies. And hence when Jesus says, 'Fear not to go down into the grave, I will go with you," it explains in what a tender and consoling sense we are to understand this; and indeed, as in death so in the resurrection, the certainty of this glorious event arises from the same consideration; 'for if,' says the Apostle, 'the Spirit of him who raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwells in you.' (Rom 8:11.) And thus the resurrection of the just is certified to them, not simply by the power of God—but from the indwelling residence of the same Spirit of God, by which they are first awakened in grace to a new and spiritual life, and then finally quickened to eternal glory, by virtue of their union to the person of Jesus, from the operations of the Holy Spirit."

My friend would have proceeded—but his strength did not admit of it. He took occasion, however, at every interval possible, to say something suited to the circumstances of a dying saint. The poor stable-boy was indulged by his master to spend much of his time in the sick chamber; and the many precious sayings, which fell from my friend by way of caution, encouragement, advice, and entreaty, became truly edifying and refreshing both to him and to every attendant around.

It would swell the history of my pilgrimage to a large volume indeed, were the whole of the circumstances which attended my friend's departure to be written down in it. The reader will excuse the omission I hope, and rest satisfied without any further enumeration of particulars, than just to observe, that he continued to the last moment in the perfect enjoyment of his senses and the divine consolation. He sunk gradually; and as he fell lower and lower, the words which he uttered evidently proved that his views of the glory about to open upon him were fuller and brighter. I sat by him with his hand clasped in mine when he died. The last words on his trembling lips were, "Dear Lord!"

I buried him without pomp, and without any mourners but the poor stable-boy and myself, in a vacant corner of the parochial graveyard.

The youth returned with me to the inn, where we took an affectionate leave of each other. I could only say, "May he who has, I trust, begun a good work in you, perform it until the day of Jesus Christ!"

On the morrow, having paid all expenses incurred at the inn, I left it without regret. The time was now arrived when a reverse of situation was to take place in the circumstances of my pilgrimage. Hitherto I had met with little else but "joy and peace in believing." Some few natural fears and apprehensions, arising from the remains of unbelief, had now and then it is true arisen in my mind but the Lord had so graciously over-ruled them, that they generally ended in my stronger assurance.

I have been often led since to reflect, with peculiar pleasure, on the wisdom, as well as the mercy, of that process of grace through which the Lord is leading his people. Like Israel of old, in their emancipation from Egypt, of whom it is said that "God led them not through the land of the Philistines, although that was near, lest when they should see war, their minds should be tempted to return; but God led the people about through the way of the wilderness." (Exo 13:17.) Similar to this now is the first opening of the spiritual path; the difficulties and discouragements are by no means like those which believers meet in the after-stages of their pilgrimage. Thousands there are who, like Israel, have sung the song of triumph, as they did at the Red Sea, when a forty years traveling through a dreary wilderness lay still between them and Canaan; and many, no doubt, like Israel too, afterwards, in the midst of some heavy unlooked-for trial, have been prompted to exclaim in the bitterness of their soul, "Is the Lord among us or not?"

The reader will indulge me again to pause over this remark, and ask him if his experience has nothing of a correspondence with it? I am persuaded the case is very general. The gracious leader of his little flock, who feeds them, as it is said, like a shepherd, "gathers the lambs with his arms, and carries them in his bosom; and gently leads those that are with young." He always suits the strength to the day—he proportions the burden to the back. Hence the earliest manifestations of divine love are generally the most pleasing, and, according to our conception of things, in that period the most powerful. It is in grace as it is in nature, first impressions are most affecting. When the eye of the body, suddenly emerges from darkness into light, the transition is most strongly felt; and in like manner, when the eye of the soul is first opened to see the wondrous things of God's law, the effect is proportionably greater than when accustomed to their view. I could wish the reader of long experience would consider this more than I am persuaded is generally done, and mark it down in the diary of his pilgrimage. These things formed many hard problems in David's life, until frequent experiments, aided by frequent visits to the sanctuary, explained them. It was not in the first trials that he adopted that sentiment, "I know that you in faithfulness have afflicted me." (Psa 119:75.) It becomes a very blessed proof of advances in grace, when the tried soul can use such language.

But to return.—The season was come when my trials were to be given me; and for the better opportunity of trial, all human aid was to be first withdrawn, that, like the pelican in the wilderness, being solitary, Jesus might be my sole resource. My faithful friend and companion, the Lord had removed out of my sight. He had sent the worm to destroy this highly prized gourd; and now the storm began.

÷**MY RELATIONS**

I have not, according to the usual mode of histories, brought my reader in the former part of my tale acquainted with an account of my connections in the world. The reason has been, that objects of an higher and more interesting nature claimed a priority of attention. It would not even now be at all important in the memoirs of a Pilgrim to Zion, to inquire "To whom related or by whom begotten?" but if he wishes to know, he may be told, that I have not been without the enjoyment of those sweet charities of life. The Lord has given me many who are very near and very dear to my affection in the ties of nature. Even in the moment while writing, I feel all the tender influences of the claim, and pause to lift an eye of humble supplication to the God of all grace, that he may give to "everyone of them grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." **Grace does not destroy, it only heightens and refines our feelings.**

Among the number there was *one* more intimately wrapped about my heart, whose influence in everything but religion I have ever found it to be both my interest and happiness to feel; for whom there needs no other claim than nature's feelings to call forth every energy of the mind in the promotion of *her* welfare; and in grace, my earliest and last prayers for her salvation will cease but with my breath.

Perhaps some reader, circumstanced in the same peculiarity of situation and of sentiment, may feel his mind drawn out in a similar affection. "As in water face answers to face, so the heart of man to man." (Pro 27:19.)

I sustained very much of conflicts and persecutions from the whole of my unawakened relations; but from her, in the sweet and almost irresistible claims in which her arguments were encircled, tenfold more than all. "You have made up your mind, I suppose," said one of them to me, in a very pointed and half angry manner, one day when the conversation had been serious, "to forego all your future prospects in this world. Neither the profits nor pleasures of this life can be worth *your* attention and as to the scorn and derision of mankind, no doubt you move in an atmosphere too high to be sensible of it." "I do very earnestly wish," said another "that you would reflect, before it be too late, on the folly and scandal of associating yourself with such low and ignorant people as you have lately made your companions—a man of your education and ability to be seen with such! Have you no pride, no regard to your own character?"

A third upbraided me with blasting all the hopes of my family, and that I should certainly bring myself to beggary. And a fourth very jocularly desired me first to be assured of the reality of what I professed to be looking forward to another world for, before I relinquished all the prospects and enjoyment of this.

But all these were trifling, compared to the solicitations, the remonstrances, the jealousies, displeasure, and a long train of other persuasions, with which that very near and tender friend before mentioned armed herself to prevail upon me to relinquish my pursuit; and if no power but nature had been with me to resist her claim, very sure am I, that I must have yielded to entreaties coming from an advocate so endearing. "If," said she, in a moment of peculiar solemnity, after speaking of a dear friend to both, departed into the world of spirits, "if those new sentiments of yours be really founded in truth, what is become of him who died? It is impossible that so much sweetness and amiableness can be lost." The reader who knows what the conflicts of nature and grace mean; whose heart at times is like that of the Shunamite, in the contentions of two armies, will know somewhat of what I have felt in those seasons.—Adored Redeemer, I have not lacked, you know, that evidence of being your follower, in plucking out an eye, cutting off an arm, and taking up a cross! It was the legacy of my late companion, that I might know the fellowship of Christ's sufferings; and here was an answer to his prayer.

It was much about the same period, while thus deeply exercised with the unceasing importunity and persecutions of my relations, that I received a more formidable assault from another quarter. While I was seeking consolation from retirement and reading, in the intervals of a more important engagement, a circumstance arose, in consequence of the latter, which very much affected me.

÷**THE BOOK**

I found an author, whose writings were particularly directed to the subject of divine grace. The title first attracted my notice, and invited me to the perusal; but the trial it afterwards proved to me, will be, I hope, thus far useful, to caution me against curiosity in future. "It is a good thing (the apostle says) that the heart be established with grace." (Heb 13:9.) But it is dangerous in the unexperienced and the unestablished, to be running about in quest of novelty. The leading doctrines of this writer's creed, were to this purpose—"That grace is equally free, and equally offered to all; the acceptance or refusal of it depended upon ourselves—and hence, that the improvement or misimprovement rests upon the will of man. That the regeneration of the Holy Spirit does not so operate as to be irresistibly effectual—but that a man's own conduct may frustrate the life-giving power; and lastly, the final perdition of the people of God is very possible, notwithstanding all that the everlasting love of the Father, and the infinite merits of the Redeemer, and the operation of the Holy Spirit, has wrought, in order to prevent it."

The reader, who has accompanied me thus far in my pilgrimage, has seen enough of my weakness not to know that such a train of doctrine was sufficient for a time to throw a damp upon all my confidence. I am like the sensitive plant in these things; the least touch makes me recoil. To hear, therefore, of the bare possibility of falling from grace in the close of life, and apostatizing from "Him whom my soul loves," (and apostatize I certainly would—if the perseverance depended on myself,) what a distressing apprehension!

Neither did my trials end here. There was yet another in reserve for this season of temptation. What David remarks of the *natural* world, is equally applicable to the *spiritual—*"You make darkness, and it is night, wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth." When the Lord withdraws his shining on the soul; the *enemy,* who knows the time of darkness to be the most favorable for his work, "goes about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour;" and never until the "sun arises again, will he lay him down in his den." (Psa 104:20-22.)

÷**THE BROTHERS**

It happened one evening, while my mind was reeking under all these united attacks, that I walked forth into the way. My path lay through a field in which were two men, who, from the congeniality of their sentiments, more than from the tie of kinship, I considered to be brothers. They were so engaged in conversation as they walked before me, that I escaped their notice, so that I had an opportunity of hearing the whole of their discourse unperceived.

"Can you reconcile your mind to the doctrine of redemption," said the one to the other, "and place the least confidence in the merits of Christ? For my part," continued he, "I am quite a Freethinker; I see no necessity upon which it is founded. The world, take it altogether, according to my opinion, is good enough, and cannot need an expiation; and indeed, when I consider what modern discoveries have been made respecting the immensity of creation, and that the globe which we inhabit is but a speck in it, the idea lessens the doctrine of Revelation altogether in my esteem."

"You are perfectly right," answered the other; "I have long thought as you do, and have made up my mind to reject it altogether. All the doctrines of Christianity, excepting the moral part of it (and that the world had before) are, in my esteem, only calculated for weak and vulgar minds; and indeed their authority is precarious, depending upon writings that, for anything we know, may or may not be true."

The reader will at once conclude that these observations tended not to dissipate my former gloom; and although, low as my spirits then were, I thought a mere child in grace might easily have refuted their false reasonings; yet my mind was too sore and too sorrowful in the moment to enter into controversy. Every application to a wound, if put on with roughness, acts like a caustic.

I had heard enough not to desire more; and therefore withdrew from the brothers as unperceived as I came. The words of Job struck my mind with great force as I left them—"Shall he who contends with the Almighty, instruct him? He who reproves God, let him answer it." (Job 40:2.)

It was a considerable time before I was enabled to shake off the ill effects induced in my mind by reason of the conversation which I had overheard between the brothers. Not that my faith (I bless the Great Author and Giver of it) was in any danger of being overthrown thereby; for a faith like mine, founded in grace, will ultimately triumph over all the powers of nature. He who is born of an *incorruptible seed* lives and abides forever, and therefore nothing corruptible can destroy it. It may apparently be choked with weeds, and may at times languish and seem ready to die; but die it cannot, for the seed is incorruptible; and by the way, I would desire my reader to set this down in the memoranda of his mind, as an everlasting maxim—That what originates in God cannot be lost by man. Divine teachings baffle all the malice of human reasonings.

But my distress, induced by the conversation which I had heard, sprung from another source. **There is in every man's heart, even when in a renewed state, a much stronger propensity to evil than good.** Hence nothing is more easy than the introduction of a train of corrupt thoughts into the mind, which the greatest exertions, void of divine aid, cannot afterwards expel; while, on the contrary, the chaste and pure images of grace, tending as they do, in every instance, to mortify and subdue the corrupt desires of our nature, nothing but a higher influence than what is human can gain admission for them at the first, or cause them to be cherished when received; and this explains why it is that *false impressions, from being more congenial to our nature, are more easy of access, and more permanent in their duration, than the true.*

I know not, reader, what *your* feelings on this point are; but with me, I confess, that it is quite the case. It is a work of much difficulty with me to keep alive in my mind the remembrance of some sweet portion of Scripture, or some delightful verse in a psalm or hymn, to help me on to the hour of meditation and prayer; whereas the idle, corrupt jingle of some foolish song, which was lodged in the memory of my boyish days, too frequently rises to my recollection, in spite of all my endeavors to suppress it; and I fear, that if encouraged, I could repeat it with the greatest exactness. Pause, to observe with me what a decisive proof this is of indwelling corruption!

It was an ill effect of this kind which the skeptical conversation of the brothers left upon my mind. By the ludicrous turn which they gave to some portions of Scripture, and the impious and bold reasonings which they made on others, they gave birth to a train of images within me, which, like a spectre, arose continually to my view.

I stop the reader one moment again to remark, (and what I humbly conceive, if closely adopted, will not prove an unprofitable remark) how little they consult their own happiness, who mix indiscriminately with the world, and who are not sensible of the dreadful consequences of seeing and hearing the corruptions which are going on in life! What from the lightness and indifference to divine things with which some treat the truths of God, and what from the open contempt poured upon them by others, it is really like running into the midst of pestilence, to come within the circle of their society. Our eyes are the purveyors of the evil, and our ears inlets of the corruption; and never was that aphorism of Solomon more easy to be observed than in the present moment—"Do not set foot on the path of the wicked or walk in the way of evil men. Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn from it and go on your way." (Pro 4:14.) For my own part, I have never found my peace of mind so unbroken, as since I have totally withdrawn myself from all but the necessary and unavoidable communion with men of the world. By ceasing from their communion, we live *out* of the reach of the contagion of their principles, and we live *above* the influence of their good or bad opinion; and it is a maxim of as much beneficial consequence to the mind as it is to the body, to breathe a pure atmosphere. You cannot come within the region of anything filthy and corrupt—but its poisonous effluvia will attach themselves to you.

I have often thought what a peculiar providence it was, that while my mind was under the impression of such accumulating trials, God should direct my steps towards the means of relief; but so it was, that in prosecuting the path of my pilgrimage, as I passed the road, there stood an house on my right hand with this inscription in the front of it:

÷**THE HOUSE OF THE INTERPRETER**

I considered it then, as experience has taught me to regard it many times since, as among the special appointment of a Covenant-God that my path was directed this way. He has promised to "bring the blind by the way that they knew not" and in this instance nothing could be more pointed.

I pity the man from my heart, who passes through life and discovers nothing of divine wisdom arranging and ordering all the events of it; and particularly in those instances where the Lord's enemies are promoting and forwarding, by their unconscious conduct, the very designs which they are seemingly opposing. There is something very striking in proof of a Divine superintendence, when men unintentionally fulfill that will which all their designs and actions are directed purposely to thwart. When the sons of Jacob sold their brother for a slave, little did they dream that Joseph's future dignity and Israel's salvation were to result from this cruelty. No (what is infinitely more important, and a higher testimony than this), when the Jews had nailed the Lord of life and glory to the cross, who would have thought that from that very cross all the everlasting happiness of his people was to spring! And (to compare small things with great) when the persecutions of my *relations*, the false reasonings of the author whose *book* I had read, and the conversation of the infidel *brothers—*which all conspired to give me such distress, became the very foundation under God, of my establishment in grace, who will but conclude that such a peculiar coincidence of circumstances cannot be the result of anything fortuitous—but "comes forth (as the prophet speaks) from the Lord Almighty, who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working." (Isa 28:29.)

It will be no doubt, one portion of the felicity of heaven to look back, and trace the whole of our eventful history to the full; but it is now, in my esteem, walking in the highway of communion with God, when at any time we are enabled to trace it in part here below.

*The house of the Interpreter.*—I have read of such a house, and of such a character, as being in the pilgrim's path, when in my days of childhood; but I knew not at that time that I should myself live to behold either of them realized. A thought, however struck me, as I read the inscription—"Perhaps I may find here some help to explain to me the difficulties under which I am at present exercised!" I recollected what Job had said, that "if there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to show unto man his uprightness, then he is gracious unto him." (Job 33:23.) Encouraged by these considerations, I drew near to the house. The door was wide open. Jesus has said "Behold I have set before you an open door, and no man can shut it." (Rev 3:8.) I found that it opened into a spacious vestibule; in one of the compartments of which there was written in large characters as follows:

÷**THE RULES OF THIS FAMILY**

*First.* It is expected that everyone who comes under this roof fail not to be present at Family-prayer, and the Reading of the Scriptures.

*Secondly.* It is hoped that, beside these things, attention be given to the private engagements of the closet. They who begin the day in prayer, will probably find cause to end it in praise.

*Thirdly.* The apostle's maxim is to be invariably followed, under the divine blessing—In all things, "conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ." "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen" (Eph 4:29.)

*Lastly.* "Whatever is done in word or deed, all is to be done in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him. (Col 3:17.)

To everyone who, looking up for grace to render it effectual, sincerely desires to act in conformity to these rules, the good man of the house says, "Come in you blessed of the Lord; why do you stand outside?" (Gen 24:31.)

Thus invited, I entered the door, and found that it led into a large room like a hall. There were several people seated round a table, at the head of which a venerable old man appeared to preside. Having taken my place at the bottom, to which the kind looks of the master at the top seemed to invite me, I soon discovered by what dropped from his lips in discourse, that the characters around me were Zion's Pilgrims, like myself; and that the Lord of the way had directed them in his providence here, for refreshment and counsel.

It is a very precious thing when little societies meet together on gracious errands. There is a restraint upon the mind in the assembly that is mingled. "Two cannot walk together except they be agreed." I venture to believe that, more or less, every follower of the Redeemer knows somewhat of this in his own experience, and it should seem that the dear Lord himself, at his last supper, restrained those sweet and incomparable discourses which the apostle John has recorded in the fourteenth and following chapters of his gospel, until Judas the traitor had withdrawn; for as soon as he was gone out, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of man glorified!" and immediately the Lord began his farewell sermon.

At this assembly of the Interpreter, there was something visible in every countenance which indicated that "they were all of one heart and of one soul." They were come together to lay down their several burdens, and to unbosom their minds to each other; and the good man of the house seemed to be deputed to speak a word of consolation to every case.

I found my mind much relieved under one part of my burden (I mean under the sorrows induced from the persecutions of my relations) by what the Interpreter said to a woman in the company under similar circumstances. "My best advice to you," he said, "will be to recommend you to seek grace, in order to adopt the prophet's example; for when he found no favor from man, he recollected that he had the favor of God—so that however wicked the times were in which he lived, yet the righteousness of Jehovah was unchangeable. The best of them, (he said,) was as a briar—the most upright is sharper than a thorn-hedge. Who, therefore, could venture to come near either? Your case, you see, is not singular, in the unkindness you sustain from your relations on account of your religion. In all ages it has been the same; and hence the prophet says, 'Even the best of them is like a brier; the straightest is more crooked than a hedge of thorns. Don't trust anyone—not your best friend or even your wife! Your enemies will be right in your own household.' But what was the prophet's conduct under these heavy troubles? 'As for me, I look to the Lord for his help. I wait confidently for God to save me, and my God will certainly hear me.' (Mic 7:4-6.) The more the world frowns—the sweeter will be the smiles of Jesus; and the greater unkindness you meet with from your relations, the greater will be your esteem of the affection of the Redeemer. What though all your earthly connections fail, and their friendship is continually fluctuating and changeable—yet in Jesus you find an unchanging friend, 'at all times—one born for adversity, and who sticks closer than a brother.'

"And it should very evidently seem that God overrules those very events which tend to loosen our attachment to everything here below, on purpose to raise our affections, and to fasten them on the great objects which are above. By *tinging* our most innocent enjoyments in this mortal state with vanity and disappointment, what is it but in effect saying, 'Arise, and depart, for this is not your rest, because it is polluted?' There is much meaning in that word of the prophet, when he says *'Therefore* I will look unto the Lord;' that is as much as to say, because all things else are dissatisfying, I will look where I am sure not to be disappointed. Though all creatures leave me, my Creator is the same; and though every earthly friend fails me, my heavenly Friend never will! O, depend upon it, let a child of God be persecuted, forsaken, slighted, or despised ever so much by man—yet while he has a God to look up to, and a Covenant-God to trust in—while he can say, *'my* God'—he may at the same time, with full assurance, say, *He will hear me.*

And I believe it possible, no more than possible, even frequently induced by divine grace, that where the love of God is shed abroad in the heart, in its fullness and strength, it drives out all lesser considerations—as the effulgent brightness of the sun outshines the fire of the hearth; and it is in this sense we must accept that otherwise seemingly harsh doctrine to flesh and blood, where the Redeemer says 'If any man comes to me, and hates not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yes, and his life also—he cannot be my disciple.' That the apostle Paul felt the influence of this hating his own life, no one will question who attends to the holy saint's groaning under 'the body of sin and death,' which he tells us he carried about with him; and that a believer in the present hour, who knows what it is at times to loathe, and even hate his own flesh from the corruptions of it, may, without violence to the purest affections, be well supposed to feel something of obedience to the Redeemer's precept, in hating every tie which tends to separate the soul from the great and unrivaled object of his love, will not be doubted. 'Whom have I in heaven but you? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside you,' is an appeal which many besides David have been enabled to make."

When the Interpreter had finished his discourse to the woman, he addressed himself to me; and concluding, from my appearance among the circle, that one and the same motive as brought others to his house had brought me also, he desired to know what was the immediate subject of my present attention.

I simply repeated to him the distress with which my mind had been exercised since I had perused a little *book* on the subject of grace, and had overheard the conversation between *The Brothers.*

He prevented my adding more, by saying "I know very well that author's writings, and can easily conceive how his reasonings may have operated upon your mind; but a moment's reflection, under God the Spirit's teaching, will be enough to refute doctrines of such a tendency.

"To suppose that the gift of God's grace depends upon man's merit, is to invert the very order of things, and make the creature the first mover in his salvation; which is in direct opposition to the whole tenor of scripture. This, if true, would destroy God's *foreknowledge.*

"To imagine that our acceptance or refusal of grace is the result of our own pleasure, is to rob God of another of his glorious perfections of character; for it is in effect saying, that man is more powerful than his Maker, in that what God wills, man may defeat; and this takes from God his *omnipotence.*

"To fancy that our improvement or misimprovement of grace will render it effectual, or the contrary, is committing another breach on the divine attributes; for this is reducing the covenant of grace to a covenant of works; and hence, after all God has said and promised concerning the freedom, and fullness, and sovereignty of his salvation, in this case, the outcome of it would depend on the merit of the creature; and this is taking from God both his *wisdom* and his *glory*.

"And to believe, after what God the Father has given, and God the Son has accomplished for the salvation of his people in a covenant way, that souls renewed by God the Holy Spirit, and called with an holy calling may yet finally perish—this is bringing down redemption-work to so precarious and uncertain an outcome, as must leave it altogether undetermined whether a single believer shall be saved or not; and this throws to the ground the distinguishing character of God's *immutability.*

"I will very readily grant," continued the Interpreter, "that grace is brought forward into many sharp and trying dispensations in the lives of the faithful. God is certainly exercising the gifts of his holy Spirit which he bestows upon them, by temptations and troubles, and a variety of providences; and in fact, such must be the case; for unexercised grace would otherwise find no scope to manifest itself; but for anyone to imagine from hence, that our acceptance with God depends upon the event of those exercises, would be to make the present life a life of probation and trial, as some injudicious teachers have taught their people, and to render the Redeemer's merits and death still questionable, whether it would become available for the sinner's justification before God.

"Blessed be the divine benignity, things are not so! It is our mercy that the finished and complete salvation of the Lord Jesus does not rest upon so uncertain a tenure. 'An everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure,' can never leave the outcome of it doubtful. What Paul says, when resting the whole stress of the sinner's hope for acceptance before God upon the justifying merits of Christ Jesus, may be equally applied to the case of every believer—'I do not,' says he, 'frustrate the grace of God, for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ died in vain.'"

My heart rejoiced in the consolation. "God be adored, I cried, who has brought me to this place, and has given you (taking the Interpreter by the hand as I said it) the tongue of the learned, to know how to speak a word in season to him who is weary. (Isa 51:8.) I see now the fallacy of those arguments in that *book,* by which my mind has been exercised with distress."

÷**THE PICTURE ROOM**

After this conversation, the Interpreter led me, and the few pilgrims also who were standing at that time around him, into *The Picture Room,* to explain to us a beautiful representation of the Jewish Passover.

"Perhaps, said the good man of the house, "it may never have struck you, that so infinitely important a point in the salvation of sinners, is the precious death of the Lord Jesus, that the Holy Spirit caused it to be shadowed out, by various representations in his church, according as the several objects intended to be accomplished by it required.

"See here," said he, pointing to the first compartment in the painting, "'the *passing over* the houses of the Israelites by the destroying angel.' Here are no bolts, no bars to their windows; but behold that blood on the *lintel* and on the *two side-posts*—this became the security. Now this represents the deliverance of the sinner from divine visitation for sin. Hence the Lord Jesus is said 'to have delivered us from the wrath to come.'

"But it is not enough to deliver from the wrath to come, if that had been all that the Lord Jesus had accomplished by redemption; our nature, though rescued from merited punishment, would still have continued polluted and defiled, without an expiation; and, consequently, incapable of drawing near to God. See here, therefore," cried the Interpreter, pointing to the *second* compartment in the painting, "the great doctrine of Atonement, represented in the death of the Lamb; and this doctrine is again more fully typified by the sin-offering on the day of atonement. (Lev. 4.)

"Neither is that all. Our deliverance from wrath, and the expiation of our souls from sin, though exempting from merited punishment, and cleansing away the guilt of our nature, yet could not qualify for the enjoyment of happiness, without a change of heart. Hence, therefore, the regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, as essential to prepare the mind for divine communications here and glory hereafter, became an interesting point in the doctrine of salvation; and this was represented in the Jewish church by the typical purification enjoined under the law. Here," cried the Interpreter, pointing to a *third* division of the painting, "is a cluster of them sketched together. In the passover, 'the leaven was put away;' implying the regeneration of the heart makes all things new; and the cleansing of the *leper,* and the *living bird* dipped in the blood of the slain over running water, and causing it to fly away in the open field. These all shadowed it out. (Lev. 14.)

"And, finally, you see," said the Interpreter, "in order to confirm all the new covenant promises, Moses is hereby described as sprinkling the people with the blood, to intimate, that, in the conveyance of those mercies in Christ Jesus, it is not enough that the blood of Christ is *shed;* but it must be personally *applied.* This office of the Holy Spirit is therefore here represented in the *fourth* compartment of the picture, to testify that 'Christ is made God unto us, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; that, according as it is written, he who glories, let him glory in the Lord.'

"I hope," said the Interpreter, when he had finished his remarks on the picture, "that God has given you grace to understand all these things. Now let me conduct you to a spot, which, if I mistake not, will do more under his blessed teaching to relieve your mind from the distressing doubts the sophistry of the *infidel brothers* has occasioned, than all the volumes of human learning. What a man's real sentiments are, will best be known in his *dying* moments! In that hour the mask of deception falls off; and you may be sure then to see his real features."

Saying this, the Interpreter took me by the hand, and led me into an outer court; the rest of our little company followed us. After descending a very deep flight of steps, we came to a cave. He opened an iron gate; and upon entering it, I found myself surrounded with

÷**MONUMENTS**

In this solemn spot, the first thing that caught my attention was the tomb of *The Author of the Leviathan.* "Alas!" said I, "is that the memento of that celebrated infidel of the last age?" "The very same," answered the Interpreter; "that is the man whose writings poisoned the mind of the Earl of Rochester, as that nobleman himself declared, after his conversion. The author of the Leviathan lived to be an old sinner; for he was upwards of ninety when he died. His life was rendered remarkable for the many blasphemous expressions he uttered against God and his holy word. He was always bold in impiety when in company; but very timid when alone. If he awoke in the night and found his candle extinguished, he was full of terrors. His last words, as related of him, were, "I shall be glad to find a hole to creep out of the world!"

"And pray whose monument is that," said I to the Interpreter, "which has a bust on the tablet of it, looking so pensive?" "Read the inscription it bears," replied the Interpreter; "and from his last confessions, which are there recorded, you will recollect whose it is." I looked with attention, and read as follows—

"I have run the silly round of business and of pleasure, and am done with them all. I have enjoyed all the felicities of the world, and consequently know their futility, and do not regret their loss. I appraise them at their real value, which is, in truth, very low. Shall I tell you that I bear this melancholy situation with that meritorious constancy and resignation which most people boast of? No! for I really cannot help it. I bear it, because I must bear it, whether I will or no. I think of nothing now but killing time the best way I can. It is my resolution to sleep in the carriage during the remainder of my journey."

"Well, my friend," cried the Interpreter, when I had finished reading the inscription, "what are your ideas of infidels now? *Here* they speak plainly what are their real sentiments."

"I think," answered I, "my situation is like that of David, when he went into the sanctuary of God—I now understand the end of these men. How truly awful!"

Turning myself round, by way of passing from the contemplation of a sight so very distressing, I beheld in one niche two sculptured figures together, on one column. "Who are these?" I cried. "This, on your right hand," answered the Interpreter, "is the great *Apostle of Infidelity,* as he wanted to be called, of a neighboring nation; and him on your left is a *celebrated historian* of our own.

"The *former,* in great agonies of mind, exclaimed to his physician, "I am abandoned both by God and man! Doctor!" cried he, "I'll give you half I am worth, if you can give me life six months!"—and upon the doctor's telling him he feared he could not live six weeks, "Then," he replied, "I shall go to hell!"—and expired soon after.

"The *latter* spent his last days in playing at cards, in cracking jokes, and in reading romances. He is said to have acknowledged, that, with his bitter invectives against the Bible, he had never read the New Testament with attention."

My mind was so sickened from the meditation on those few characters, that I begged to hasten from the place. I saw a group of other tombs, some with inscriptions, and others without, "whose memorials were perished with them;" but I could bear no more. We ascended the same steps by which we had come down, and on leaving the dreadful place, my heart exclaimed, "Oh, my soul, come not unto their secret! unto their assembly!"

What impressions the rest of the company felt I know not; but, for my part, never shall I forget the awfulness of the scene. "Is this the sure termination," I said to myself, "of Infidelity? Oh, for that warning-voice, and that more powerful grace to make the voice effectual, which the man of God uttered in the holy mountain, to be sounded in every infidel's ears—'Be not mockers, lest your bands be made strong!'"

My mind acquired great strength and greater knowledge in divine things during my abode in the house of the Interpreter. I was with him somewhat more than three months, and the time seemed to me but a few days—for the reward in expectation which sweetened the whole. At length it became necessary to depart; and the morning arrived in which I was to bid him farewell.

There were several other of Zion's Pilgrims in the house besides myself, who were also on the eve of departure; and, therefore, the good man of the house called us together into the hall, in order to receive his parting blessing.

÷**MOTTOS**

"It is my uniform custom," said the Interpreter, "when Christian friends are about to leave my house, to give them, by way of token, a written motto; consisting of some particular passage of God's word, which, by wearing it in their bosoms, may serve at once, through divine grace, to bring to their remembrance the instructions which they have received from me; and also furnish them with somewhat of consolation suited to the peculiar frame and constitution of their own minds." In saying this, he presented to a poor man who stood near me, and whose appearance indicated that the glass of his life was nearly run to the last sand, a piece of paper on which was written Jer 49:11, "Leave your orphans; I will protect their lives. Your widows too can trust in me;"—and within this paper, there was *another* folded piece, bearing this inscription, Isa 54:5, "For your Maker is your husband—the Lord Almighty is his name— the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; he is called the God of all the earth;"—and within this also a *third,* with this motto, Psa 27:10, "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up." As the Interpreter presented this paper to the poor man, he said, "You have heard all that I have said to you, my brother, on the subject of your own everlasting welfare; and I am much pleased to see, from the evidences which appear in your experience of the renewed life, that a work of grace is wrought in your heart, and that your hopes are well founded; but as I know that the several claims of nature in your family have a strong hold upon your feelings, I beg you frequently to have recourse to these sweet covenant-promises. The *first* is for yourself; the *second* for the beloved partner of your heart; and the *third* for your children."

To another, who stood also near me, and whose concern had been very greatly exercised respecting the deceitfulness of his heart, and who feared lest, after all, his religion should be found to be nothing more than a cloak of hypocrisy, the Interpreter presented a paper with this motto—"Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any evil way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." (Psa 139:23-24.) And, as he presented it, he said, "Take this, my friend, and make it the subject of your daily enquiry before God. See whether you can pray with the same earnest desire as David did; or appeal to the great Searcher of hearts, as Paul did—'God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son.' (Rom 1:9.) If the approbation of God, and not the applause of man, be the desire of the heart—if the mind hates sin as sin, and not for its consequences—if you can bless a *taking* God, as well as a *giving* God—if you feel your soul humbled with a sense of unworthiness, while God is showering down upon you the abundance of his grace—if Jesus is loved for his own sake, more than for his gifts—these are all so many marks and touchstones of character which never can belong to hypocrisy, and therefore may be considered by you as evidences of a well founded hope."

"Young man," said the Interpreter to a very hopeful and promising youth who was in the circle, "the best motto I can present you with, is the declaration which the Lord commanded the prophet to make in the ears of Jerusalem—'Thus says the Lord, I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals, when you went after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown,' (Jer 2:2.) Keep this precious text of scripture in your bosom as an infallible antidote against all the poisonous influence with which you may be surrounded in the long pilgrimage through which you have yet to pass. The man that has many days to count, has many wintry dispensations to be exercised with. Nothing can serve, more effectually, through divine grace, to bear up the mind under all its pressures, than the recollections of early notices *of* God and *from* God, and so sweet a promise of being remembered through all."

"And as for you, my brother," the good man said, addressing himself to me, "there is no passage of Scripture more suited to *your* case and circumstances than that which is contained in the prayer of the Lord Jesus, in the conclusion of his ministry upon earth, (Joh 17:11.) 'Holy Father, keep through your own name those whom you have given me.' Originally *given,* as all the faithful are, by the Father to the Lord Jesus, *before* the Redeemer manifests the Father's name unto them; evidently the *property* of the Father at the time of the donation, 'for yours they were, and you gave them to me;' fully proved to be *redeemed* by Jesus, by having the Father's name *manifested* unto them, and having *kept his word;* strongly and powerfully recommended to the Father's keeping by one whom the Father hears always, and whose joint interest in the believer is one and the same with the Father's, for 'all mine are yours, and yours are mine;' how is it possible that such can ever perish—or that any should pluck them out of his almighty hand? Keep this sweet scripture therefore, I charge you, always in your bosom, and carry it about with you wherever you go—that its influence may be perpetual, and that the *will* of the Redeemer, corresponding with the *gift* and *grace* of the Father, may never escape your recollection. 'Father I will that they also whom you have given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold the glory which you have given me.'" (Joh 17:24.)

The Interpreter conducted me to the door; and as I stepped over the threshold, I turned about once more, to express my thankful acknowledgment of the affectionate manner in which I had been entertained.

But it was an event which the coincidence of circumstances in a Pilgrim's life, like mine, could only produce, that soon after I left the house of the Interpreter, I met the *poor man,* of whom such honorable testimony is made by me in the former part of these Memoirs, accompanied with my *moral neighbor,* at whose instance I attended the elegant preacher's sermon, who is also mentioned in the first days of my enquiry for the way to Zion. Struck with astonishment at what I saw, that such an one should come on pilgrimage, I was going to express my surprise, when he anticipated all my enquiries, by accounting for the change. "To this dear friend," he cried, taking the poor man by the hand, "I am indebted, under God, for the gracious conversion of my mind from the error of its ways. I felt no small confusion from the strength of *your* observations respecting the ineffectual tendency of morality to justify before God; and particularly from the manner in which you stated it in your conversation, as instanced in the conduct of brethren towards another, while deficient in love and obedience towards their Father—but the remarks of this poor man at the church-porch, after the sermon we had heard, were such as threw to the ground, through God's grace, all the building of self-confidence which I had been rearing up from the supposed rectitude of my life; and since that time, I have been so thoroughly convinced, from the frequent instructions of this dear friend, whom I have made my constant companion, of the utter impossibility of man's being justified by anything of his own before God, that all my astonishment now is, not that I have forever relinquished the vain pretension—but that I ever should have imbibed it. I am now most fully satisfied, I bless God, that so far is the highest moral virtue from affording any ground of justification before God, that unless divine grace keeps the soul humble under all its attainments, it is apt to produce pride in our hearts, and thereby to subject us to the greater condemnation. It may very safely be granted, that all moral excellencies will be the necessary result of true religion, as good fruit will be the natural production of a good tree; and that after the greatest pretensions, we have no authority to call that man truly pious who is immoral; but it must at the same time be insisted upon as strenuously, that so far detached is morality from piety in a great variety of instances, that nothing is more common in life than to see people who are truly irreproachable in their conduct towards man, who are totally remiss and even profane as to their demeanor before God. Hence, therefore, there are a thousand cases to which the best and most extensive laws of morality cannot reach; but yet they are all cognizable before Him who tries the heart. I discovered these truths by this poor man's instruction, through divine grace, and immediately found the fallacy under which I had been living; and, blessed be God, I have now learned, that 'without repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ,' the most punctual and diligent discharge of the moral obligations I owe my neighbor, cannot justify me before God."

My heart rejoiced at what I heard, and secretly I felt within me the full force of that question, "What has God wrought!"

I detain not the reader with the relation of what followed this unexpected meeting; neither do I think it necessary to extend my narrative by an account of a great variety of occurrences with which my pilgrimage has since been distinguished. I promised him at the commencement of my history, that it should be a short one, from the hour in which the Lord was pleased to call me by his grace, to the period in which I sat down to communicate it; and having brought the subject thus far, I shall therefore now relieve the reader's attention altogether.

To tell him of my present feelings, amid a mingled state of many precious assurances, tempered with many trying dispensations, would be to relate the uniform history of every pilgrim to Zion. These are the "spots of God's children;" and they all prove a family-likeness. I am frequently exercised with deep and sharp trials, and sometimes feel a heart disposed to tell my heavenly Teacher, that I think I might be spared many such lessons; but the upshot of the instruction generally brings me to this conclusion—"How happy is it for me that I am placed under a wiser and better direction than my own!"

I am now waiting the Master's call, rather I persuade myself (if I know anything of my own heart) with a pleasing than an anxious expectation. My desire is, "to die daily to the world, and to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts." I wish to sit as detached as possible from everything here below, that, when the carriage to fetch me stops at my door, I may rise up instantly and depart, "to meet the Lord in the air." Under this view, my heart is weaning more and more, I hope, from all things beneath the sun. Little of this world can I speak, for I know but little of its employments. I am seeking "a better country, that is, an heavenly." And what is it to the man under sentence of death in Newgate, what is transacting on the Royal Exchange?

And as to the *full assurance of faith,* respecting the possession of those immortal objects which open before me, I can and do say, with the humblest—but at the same time, with the best grounded confidence, "I know in whom I have believed; being confident in this very thing, that he who has begun a good work in me, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." That "crown of righteousness," which the apostle declared was not only laid up for *him*—but for all those who "love the appearing of the Lord," is laid up for me also. I have examined myself by this standard, as well as by every other which I know of. Do I love the Lord's appearing? Yes! I love his appearing in the conversion of every poor sinner whom God the Holy Spirit makes "willing in the day of his power." I love his appearing in the gracious, seasonable, and suitable relief of all his tried family. I love his appearing in the defense of his oppressed ones from sin and Satan, in the ten thousand instances with which they are exercised here below. And, I trust, I am of that happy number who are said to be "looking for and hastening unto, the coming of that great day of his appearing, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all those who believe."

Reader, farewell!—May our experience, when Jesus comes, correspond with the declaration of the prophet—"It shall be said in that day, Lo! this is our God, we have waited for him, and he will save us—this is the Lord, we have waited for him, we will be glad, and rejoice in his salvation." Amen.