WORDS OF DIVINE COMFORT

by Octavius Winslow, 1872

PREFACE

The title of this little work, it is hoped, sufficiently indicates its character and design, irrespective of any formal preface. It is intended to be a faint echo of God's words of divine love, addressed from time to time to His people, amid the varied experiences, duties, and trials of their Christian course. To aid and secure this holy result is the earnest design of this little volume, which the author commends to the devout perusal of the sincere believer in Jesus, and commits to the condescending blessing of the Triune God.

WORDS OF DIVINE COMFORT (the whole book in one file)

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REVERENCE FOR GOD'S WORD

"And Micaiah said, As the Lord lives, even what my God says, that will I speak." – 2Ch 18:13

Micaiah was a God-fearing prophet. His fidelity to the Lord stands in striking and instructive contrast with the worldly policy of Jehoshaphat, King of Judah, who joined affinity with Ahab, King of Israel--an alliance which proved, as all alliances of the holy with the unholy ever will, a source of discomfort and sorrow to the king. The good prophet Micaiah was charged by the Lord with an especial and solemn message to Ahab. It contained a prohibition, and forewarned a danger. The message was distasteful and annoying to the ungodly, self-willed monarch. Other prophets, anxious to conciliate Ahab, had prophesied good, urging the adoption of a course at once contradictory to the divine injunction, and ruinous to the monarch. The moment was a critical one. Micaiah, the true prophet of the Lord, urged to join the false prophets in speaking what the Lord had not spoken to Ahab, refused to disobey God, replying in the noble language which suggests our present reflection--*"As the Lord lives, even what my God says, that will I speak."* What to him was the favor of Ahab? What the earthly and temporary reward of a time-serving, man-pleasing policy, weighed with reverence for, and obedience to, the word and command of the living God? How replete with spiritual and solemn instruction are the words of the prophet? May the Holy Spirit open and apply them to our minds!

Am I a ***minister*** *of Christ?* Then, as the Lord lives, what my God says, that must I speak, nothing more and nothing less. In this point of light how tremendous the responsibility of my ministerial office! I am under the most solemn obligation to preach the Gospel, the whole Gospel, and nothing but the Gospel, as God has spoken it in His Word. I must not dilute, nor pervert, nor withhold it. I must not preach it with reservation, either to exalt myself or to please man. I must preach Christ's obedience as the sinner's free justification; Christ's death as the sinner's full pardon; Christ's example as the believer's rule of life--in a word, Christ must be the all and in all of my ministry--even what my God says, that will I speak. Woe is unto me, if I preach not the pure, simple, unadulterated Gospel of Christ! The blood of souls will God require at my hands!

Am I a ***disciple*** *of Christ?* Then I must believe and accept nothing but what the Lord my God has spoken. Guarded against human additions, man's teaching, and those who would seduce me from the simplicity of the truth as it is in Jesus, I must have a "Thus says the Lord" for what I believe and accept. To the law and to the testimony. By this divine rule I must weigh and examine, taking heed, not only *how* I hear, but also, *what* I hear. An inspired Apostle has told me that, "The anointing which I have received abides in me, and that I need not that any man should teach me;" let me therefore believe and speak only that which my God has spoken.

O Lord! deepen my reverence for Your word! Confirm my faith in its divinity, increase my experience of its power, and deepen my sense of its preciousness. May I stand in awe of its solemn revelations, walk in the holiness of its precepts, live more simply upon its promises, and increasingly find it sweeter than honey, yes, than the honeycomb, to my taste. As the Lord lives, even what my Lord says, that will I believe, that will I accept, and that will I speak. In all my trials, sorrows, and needs, may Your Word be my comfort and support. May it sweeten the bitter waters of affliction, pencil the rainbow of hope upon the dark clouds of my pilgrimage; and, when I die, may its gracious invitations and precious promises bring Jesus near to my soul.

"How well Your blessed truths agree!
How wise and holy Your commands!
Your promises, how sweet they be!
How firm our hope and comfort stands!

"Should all the forms that men devise
Assault my faith with treacherous art,
I'd call them vanity and lies,
And bind the Gospel to my heart."

HONORING THE LORD

"The Lord says, Those who honor Me I will honor."-- 1Sa 2:30

How necessary for our instruction and God's glory that we should accept His Word just as we find it, and not as interpreted by a fallible church, or as reflected from a human standard. It is perilous to study the Bible in any other light than its own, or to recognize any other interpreter than its Divine Author. Guided by this precept, let us consider the words of God which suggest our present meditation--*"Those who honor Me I will honor."* They were originally spoken to Eli on the occasion of his preferring the sinful indulgence of his sons to the command and glory of God. By retaining them in the priests' offices, polluted by their iniquity and scandalized by their sacrilege, Eli had greatly dishonored God. It was on this solemn occasion that He spoke these words--*"Those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed."*

The subject is solemn--searching--instructive. God keep us from Eli's sin! May His glory be our first and supreme object. God is justly jealous of His honor. He would not be God, righteous and pure, were He to part with one scintillation of His glory. *"My glory will I not give to another."* How, then, may I--trusting that, through electing love and sovereign grace, I am His adopted child, His chosen servant--best honor Him?

First. ***By fully believing in the divinity of His revealed Word.*** In magnifying His Word above His Name, God has demonstrated how closely entwined are His honor and His truth. To cast, then, a doubt upon the truth of God's Word, is to cast the highest dishonor upon God himself. My soul, beware of low views of inspiration, of tampering with the Bible, of caviling at any revealed truth; but, stand in awe of its divinity, adore its majesty, and bow unquestioningly to its authority. Then will God honor you, by making His Word your light in darkness, your joy in grief, your strength in service, your hope in despondency and despair. Thus, the Gospel you do implicitly and fully accept, will soothe you in life, support you in death, and be your glory and song through eternity. Thus honoring God in His Word, God will honor you by making that Word the joy and rejoicing of your soul.

I honor God by ***trusting Him****.* As there is not a more God-dishonoring principle than *unbelief,* so there is not a more God-glorifying grace than the *faith* that reposes in Him, with a childlike and unquestioning confidence--a faith that trusts His veracity to fulfill, and His power to perform all that He is pledged in His covenant and Word to do. My soul, you are tried, burdened, and in need. *Have faith in God!* Now is the time to bring honor and glory to His great Name by a simple, unhesitating trust in His power, faithfulness, and love--to comfort your sorrow, to counsel your perplexity, and to bring you out of trouble, with the richest blessing springing therefrom. Then will your God honor you. The faith that trusts the all-sufficiency of God, believing that the promise, though not yet performed, and that the prayer, though not yet answered, still will be, shall be crowned with a full realization of all it needed, all it asked, and all it hoped. God will say, "You have crowned *My faithfulness* by *trusting* Me, I will now crown *your faith* by *giving* to you."

Let me honor Christ ***by fully accepting His salvation****.* O my soul, beware of placing your sin, and guilt, and unworthiness, beyond the limit of Christ's ability and willingness to save. Oh! what dishonor to the Savior--a dishonor with which even devils are not chargeable--to doubt the efficacy of His blood to pardon, and the merit of His righteousness to justify the very chief of sinners.

Lord! what honor have You put upon me, to ask me to believe--to accept--to be saved! What marvelous condescension and grace that, in doing this, You should receive it as an honor done to You at my worthless hands. Blessed Lord! I will trample my own honor in the dust, if Yours be but reared upon its utter ruin. Self shall be uncrowned, that upon Your head the crown may flourish!

THE LORD, THE SAINTS' AVENGER

"Because of the oppression of the weak and the groaning of the needy, I will now arise," says the Lord. "I will protect them from those who malign them." Psa 12:5

Never are the ungodly further from the mark--never committed to a mistake more suicidal and fatal than when they lay the hand of injustice and oppression upon the saints of the Most High! God is for them. He is the Avenger of all those who put their trust in Him--the widow and the fatherless--and those who touch them touch the apple of His eye. *"If God is for us, who can be against us?"* A simple missionary incident may illustrate this truth. A little band of missionaries in the Fiji Islands found their home, on one occasion, surrounded by a troop of armed savages, bent upon their destruction. Unable, as unwilling, to fight, they closed the door, and betook themselves to prayer. Presently, the war-whoop suddenly ceased. On opening the door they found only one savage there. "Where are your chiefs?" he was asked. "They are gone," was the reply; "they heard you praying to your God, and they knew that your God was a *strong* God, and they left." How true this testimony of the savages! The God of the Christians is a *strong* Lord. All that strength is on the side of His people. *"For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself STRONG in the behalf of those whose heart is perfect toward Him."* Consider, O my soul, this truth, that the Lord is the strength of His people and the Avenger of all who are oppressed, and will set them in a safe place from those who malign them.

The Lord's people are an OPPRESSED people. The ungodly oppress them--sins oppress them--afflictions oppress them--temptations oppress them--needs oppress them--infirmities oppress them--the body of sickness and suffering oppresses them--and, alas! that it should be said, even the *saints* often oppress them--for some of their keenest shafts have been forged and flung by a brother's hand. Oh, if there is a spectacle on earth which might well awaken tears in heaven, it is that of the brethren of one Father, the ransomed of one Savior, the travelers to one home, "falling out by the way," by reason of their varied shades of doctrine, or of worship, or of church relation and so, "biting and devouring one another." My soul, be a lover of good men; love them, not because they are of your creed, or of your church, but, *because they belong to Christ*--so shall all men know that you are also one of His disciples.

But, the Lord stands up for His oppressed ones. He is the Avenger of all such. *"It is God who avenges me,"* says David. Leave Him, O my soul, to vindicate your character, to redress your wrong, to rid you of your adversary, and He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your judgment as the noon-day. "O Lord, You have pleaded the causes of my soul."

The sighing of the needy." Jesus was a *sighing* Savior! He often *"sighed* deeply in His spirit." And still He is in sympathy with His members, who sigh by reason of sin and suffering and need. For these He will arise. Sigh on, O my soul! the sigh that breathes from a broken heart, or is wrung from an anguished spirit, or is awakened by the unkindness of the oppressor, or the wounding of a Christian brother, ascends to heaven as music in the ear of the Great High Priest within the veil, and awakens the echoes of His loving and compassionate heart. Weeping has a voice--sighs have a language--and Jesus hears the one and understands the other. To nothing belonging to a saint can the Lord be indifferent. *"O Lord! I am oppressed--undertake for me."* Thus, let the burden of oppression, and sigh of need, prompt you to prayer; then shall you thank and praise Him for both.

"Give to the winds your fears;
Hope, and be undismayed;
God hears your sighs, and counts your tears,
God shall lift up your head."

GOD'S UNCHANGING LOVE

"The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, says the Lord who has mercy on you."-- Isa 54:10

There is nothing true but heaven--none unchangeable but God. "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed"--the lofty and the beautiful, the strong and the attractive of created good shall decay and vanish--the earthquake of time's revolution and of human instability shaking them to the center; but God's covenant of love, and God's love of the covenant, abides forever--for God has spoken it, and it is impossible for Him to lie. Sit down, my soul, and meditate awhile upon this heart-cheering, soul-satisfying truth--the unchangeable love of your covenant God and Father. *"The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, says the Lord who has mercy on you."*

"My kindness." Oh what touching and impressive words are these! Human kindness is sweet and grateful--the kindness and love of the creature; what, then, must be divine kindness--the kindness and love of God? Oh how kind is Jesus! There is kindness in all He does and in all He says--kindness in His promises, kindness in His rebukes, kindness in what He gives, kindness in what He withholds, and kindness in what He recalls; kindness in every stroke of His rod, and kindness in every smile of His love. O! my Savior, how great Your kindness in bearing my sins, in calling me by Your effectual grace, in keeping me from falling by Your power, and in giving me a name and a place among Your saints.

"Shall not depart from you." My soul, consider the love of God for you, as everlasting love. It never did, it never will, depart. Notwithstanding your fall in Adam--your depraved nature--your constant sins and departures, the love of God continues. He may veil for a little moment the light of His countenance, may chastise and afflict you for your revoltings and backslidings; still, having loved you once, He loves you to the end. Whatever else departs, His love never will. Wealth may leave you, health may fail you, friends may forsake you, and life itself expire; but God's paternal love, and Christ's fraternal sympathy, will never, never change.

"Neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed." The covenant of peace made with Christ, on your behalf, O my soul, sealed with His blood, even the "blood of the everlasting covenant," which procured peace, speaks peace, and bequeaths peace, even "the peace of God which passes all understanding," shall never be removed. The mountains of human strength, lofty and sun-gilded--the hills of creature good, clad with verdure, and smiling with fruit--shall be removed--the strongest, the loveliest, and the dearest the first to die--but, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever." Amid the vicissitudes and changes of the present--the dying friends and revolving landscapes of life--cling, O my soul, to Him whose covenant never alters, whose kindness never changes; who, having loved you before all time, and loved you in all time, will love you to the end of all time--yes, when time shall be no longer. The Lord that has mercy upon you has said it.

Unconverted soul! the day will come when, if found out of Christ, you will cry to the mountains and to the rocks to cover you--but will cry in vain! Before His face of glory the heavens and the earth will flee away, and your soul will stand without a shelter or a hiding place. Escape for your life! There is one mountain, and one only, where you can find shelter from the wrath that is to come--it is Mount Calvary. Hidden there, the "Avenger of Blood" cannot reach you. No refuge but the cross--no fountain but the blood--no righteousness but Christ's--no Savior but Jesus--will meet your case. "Him that comes unto Me I will in no way cast out."

"Just as I am! without one plea,
But that the Savior died for me,
And that You bid me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come!"

THE BELIEVER'S SUFFICIENCY OF GOD

"Then I said, Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak--for I am a child. But the Lord said unto me, Say not, I am a child--for you shall go to all that I shall send you, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. Be not afraid of their faces--for I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord."-- Jer 1:6-8

Such was the spirit, and such the prayer, of the weeping prophet Jeremiah, in view of the great mission to which God now called him. How instructive the words! Learn, my soul, this, among other lessons taught by His servant, that before the Lord exalts, He lays us low; before He places a believer in some position of distinction in the Church, or calls him to any great and holy service in the world, He first empties him of all vain and foolish conceit of his own wisdom, power, and holiness; imbuing him with a lowly, obedient, and docile spirit; acknowledging, "Lord, I am but a child; I know not how to go out or how to come in." Is the Lord thus dealing with you, my soul? is He mowing down by His Spirit your fancied strength, worthiness, and importance? or, is He causing you to pass through some fiery trial, and the flame scorching and consuming? Accept this discipline of God as but intended to prepare you for a higher office, a holier mission, greater usefulness in the Church and the world, for which, in the purpose of His grace, He has ordained you. By this training of sorrow and suffering and emptying, you shall become a "vessel unto honor, sanctified and fit for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work."

"You shall go to all that I shall send you, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. Be not afraid, for I am with you, to deliver you, says the Lord." This "thus says the Lord" is enough to quell every fear, to meet every objection, and to inspire the timid servant of the Lord with a giant's strength, and a martyr's fortitude in the "kingdom and patience of Christ." *"I am with you, says the Lord."* You may shrink at the call of God from a sense of personal unfitness; you may plead your educational deficiency--your lack of wisdom--of years--or of eloquence--exclaiming, "Lord, I know not how to speak, or how to act, for I am but a child in knowledge, in experience, in strength;"--but, listen to the word of the Lord, *"Fear not, I am with you."* Enough! O my Lord, put forth Your hand and touch my mouth as You did Your servant Jeremiah, clothing and sanctifying my tongue with heavenly wisdom and grace, that, with a power and a wisdom higher and holier than my own, I may speak a word for You, for Christ, for truth.

Learn, my soul, that in all holy service for God and for man, your true sufficiency is of God. Ever be anxious only to obey His call, to go where He shall send you, to speak what He shall command you, not afraid of the stern look, and frowning brow, and angry countenance of man; for your God is with you to defend you, and to give you a mouth and wisdom, such as all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay or resist. In all your needs, trials, and service, do not forget, O my soul, that it has pleased the Father that all fullness of grace, and wisdom, and strength, and sympathy, should dwell in Jesus. To Him repair with every need, spiritual and temporal. Draw frequently and largely from this inexhaustible Treasury, living by faith as a personal pensioner upon His personal bounty. He can make you strong to bear, eloquent to speak, patient to endure, meek to suffer, wise as the serpent, harmless as the dove, a lamb in your gentleness, a giant in your might, a martyr in your fortitude. "With Christ strengthening me, I can do all things." "My grace is sufficient for you." Forward, then, in duty, forward in service, forward in suffering, mortifying the flesh, crucifying the world, resisting the devil, strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and realizing moment by moment that, "as your day is so shall your strength be." "OUR SUFFICIENCY IS OF GOD."

"One trial more must yet be past,
One pang--the keenest and the last;
And when, with brow convulsed and pale,
My feeble, quivering heart-strings fail,
Redeemer! grant my soul to see
That, 'as her days, her strength shall be.'"

THE LORD'S MEASURED CORRECTION

"I am with you, says the Lord--I will correct you in measure."-- Jer 30:11

Divine correction is an essential element in our spiritual fitness for divine glory. The furnace of trial is as necessary to our heart-sanctification; as the fountain of blood is to our soul-cleansing. There must be, not only a legal title to the possession of heaven, but there must also be a moral fitness for the enjoyment of heaven. Christ produces the one by the imputation of His righteousness, the Holy Spirit produces the other by the impartation of His grace; and one of His most powerful instruments in its accomplishment is, *the sanctified correction of our God.* Oh, who would ask exemption from the discipline of correction, when the rod that inflicts it is so thickly studded with the buds and so richly blooms with the blossoms of *grace,* soon to expand and ripen into the golden fruit of *glory?*

"I will correct you." It is the language of our heavenly Father--for what son is there whom the Father chastens not? Enough, my soul, that all your afflictions and sufferings, trials and sorrows, are paternal, and not judicial--the correction of a Father, and not the condemnation of a Judge; and, though the sword is unsheathed to slay, and the rod is uplifted to smite, both are in the hands of Paternal Love--love, that can do nothing unkind, nothing arbitrary, nothing wrong, nothing that shall injure a hair of our head. "I will correct you." Then, Lord, do as seems good to You. Give me this sign and seal of my sonship; let me but look above and beyond the second and proximate causes of my calamity and grief, and see no one but Jesus, and hear no voice but my Father's--and I bow my head and drink without a murmur the cup You give me.

"In measure," that is, according to judgment; with discretion, with moderation, not measured by what you deserve, but by what you can bear. Ah! how measured, my soul, have the corrections of the Lord been with you! Not according to the scale of my innumerable sins, aggravated backslidings, ungrateful returns; but, according to the multitude--the infinite multitude--of Your tender mercies and loving-kindnesses, have You chastened me, O my Father. Know therefore, my soul, that God exacts of you less than your iniquity deserves (Job 11:6). Truly, Lord, You have not dealt with me after my sins, nor rewarded me according to my iniquities. *"Correct me, but with judgment--not in Your anger, lest You bring me to nothing"* (Jer 10:24).

Listen to the Lord's gracious answer, "I will not accuse forever, nor will I always be angry, for then the spirit of man would grow faint before me--the breath of man that I have created." (Isa 57:16). Jesus bore for you correction without measure, wrath without mixture, draining the cup to its dregs, that He might give it back to you, brimmed and overflowing with a Father's love.

Precious Savior! there had been no mixture of sweetness in my cup of sorrow--no tender mitigation of my discipline of suffering--no measurement in my Father's corrections--no hope in my approaching death--had You not sorrowed, suffered, and died in my stead--exhausting the last particle of my curse, and drinking the last drop of God's wrath. I will love You, Lord, for You have dealt well with Your servant. Correct me--it will but scatter the chaff, and consume the dross, and rid me of the clay; and I shall mount on stronger wing, and soar to a loftier height, and sing a sweeter song, as I ascend–

"All I meet I find assists me
In my path to heavenly joy,
Where, though trials now attend me,
Trials never more annoy–
Sweet affliction!
Thus to lead to endless joy.

"Blest these with a weight of glory.
Still the path I'll never forget,
But, exulting, cry, it leads me
To my blessed Savior's seat!
Sweet affliction!
Which has brought to Jesus' feet!"

THE BACKSLIDER'S RETURN

"Yet return again to Me, says the Lord."-- Jer 3:1

Could there be a more touching *"Thus says the Lord"* than this? The voice of Jesus, as it echoed over the mountains and along the valleys of our unregenerate distance from God, seeking and finding and bringing us home, was inexpressibly sweet and irresistibly gracious. But, to hear that same voice, *after* our many wanderings, our repeated relapses, our sad backslidings, still seeking, still inviting, still imploring us to return, though we had "played the harlot with many lovers," oh, there is music in that voice such as the heavenly minstrelsy must bend their ear to catch.

My soul, you are "bent upon backsliding, even as a backsliding heifer." Your heart is as a broken bow, treacherous to the arrow fixed upon the string, and ready for its flight. Your purposes of good formed, but thwarted; resolutions of amendment made, but broken; plans of usefulness laid, but frustrated; prayers for grace offered, but forgotten; desires and aspirations after God sent up, but, through a deceitful and wicked heart, dissolving into air. Oh! how many and aggravated have your backslidings from God been--backslidings in heart, backslidings in deed--secret wanderings, open wanderings. You have "left your first love," have "forgotten your resting-place;" and, straying from the cross, have gone back to walk no more with Jesus. Truly, your "heart is like a deceitful bow."

But, has the Lord, by some gentle movement of His grace, or by some solemn event of His providence, aroused, overtaken, arrested you? Has He set a hedge around your path, that you could not find your lovers, bringing you to reflection, to penitence, to prayer? Then, listen, O my soul, to the gracious words of your "first husband;" *"Yet return again to Me, says the Lord."*

Spiritual restoration implies a spiritual *re-conversion*. In this sense we are to interpret our Lord's words to His fallen apostle Peter--"When you are *converted*, strengthen your brethren,"--*that is,* when you are restored, recovered, turned back again, employ your restored grace, the experience you have derived, and the lessons you have learned by your fall and recovery, in strengthening your weak brethren--in warning and exhorting, in restoring and comforting those who have been alike tempted, and have alike fallen.

There is something very expressive, tender, and touching in the word--"**Again**." "Yet return *again*." It sounds like the "forgiveness of seventy times seven." Lord! I have wandered from You times without number--"Yet return *again*." Lord! I have so often sinned and repented--"Yet return *again*." Lord! You have received and forgiven me more than seventy times seven--"Yet return *again*." Lord! I come confessing the same sins, deploring the same backslidings, acknowledging the same self-will and base ingratitude--"Yet return again to me, says the Lord." Then, Lord! I come with weeping, and mourning, and confession, since Your tenderness, grace, and changeless love, and outstretched hand bid me.

"Return to **Me**." My soul, rest not until you rest in Jesus. Let nothing come between your returning heart and your advancing, loving, forgiving Father. There is no true return of a backsliding believer but that which takes him past his repentance, past his tears, past his confessions, past his amendments, past his minister, and brings him at once close to Christ. There is no healing of the hurt, no binding up of the wound, no cleansing, no peace, no comfort, no joy, but as the soul comes to the blood, and nestles once more within the very heart of Jesus. *"Return unto ME."*

THE NEARNESS OF GOD

"A God at hand, says the Lord."-- Jer 23:23

More saints than Luther have felt a *personal* interest in the forty-sixth Psalm--"God is our refuge and strength, a *very present* help in trouble;" thus drinking with him of the "river the streams whereof make glad the city of God." My soul, are you not one of them? Has not your praiseful exclamation often been, *"You are NEAR,* O Lord!" God is everywhere, but it is only His own children who forcibly feel, and gratefully acknowledge, and holily exhibit, not His omniscience only, but His especial and personal presence. Look at this precious truth, my soul, in connection with two or three features of your varied experience.

He is a God at hand in the *person of Christ.* The Lord Jesus brings God very near to us. He is not only the revealed One of God, but He is in His own person really and absolutely God--*"He who has seen Me, has seen the Father."* Could a mere creature, a man only, say this? Impossible, with any truth, and without blasphemy. Oh, how near to us has Jesus brought the Father! Come to Jesus, look at Jesus, listen to Jesus, and realize that in so doing you approach to, gaze upon, and hear the voice of, God your Father in heaven.

God is near *in the work of Jesus.* The blood brings us sinners near to God, as it brings a sin-pardoning God near to us. "You that were afar off *are made near by the blood of Christ."* See then your true and present standing, O my soul! Nothing comes between you and God but the atoning blood of Jesus. His blood annihilates all your sin and guilt. Robed in His imputed righteousness, you are to God nearer than the highest angel in heaven--and nearer you can not be--and God draws near to you and speaks--"A God at hand, says the Lord."

God is near at hand *when you do approach Him in prayer.* Oh, comforting truth! A God at hand to hear the softest breath of prayer--to listen to every confession of sin--to every cry of need--to every utterance of sorrow--to every wail of woe--to every appeal for counsel, strength, and support. Arise, O my soul! and give yourself to prayer; for God is near at hand to hear and answer you. Listen to His word, *"Who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto Me? says the Lord." "You meet him that rejoices and works righteousness, those who remember You in Your ways."*

A God at hand is He *in every time of trouble*. "A very present help." Not far have you to travel for the guidance and deliverance you need. If forsaking the Lord your God you go down into 'Egypt' for help, and trust in the chariots and horses thereof, then will you be ashamed of your confidence. But why fly to creature help, when the Lord your God is near unto you in all that you call upon Him for? Cease from man; for God in Christ is very near, and one step of *believing prayer* will bring you to His feet.

Oh, live as in His presence! Be your life a life of communion, doing and enduring, toiling and suffering, as beholding Him who is invisible. In a little while we shall pass from our partial and imperfect realizations of His presence when on earth, to enjoy His full, unclouded, and eternal presence in heaven! Then shall our eyes see the King in His full unveiled beauty, not as now, through a glass darkly, but then face to face. And, oh transporting thought! we shall be *like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.*

Guard vigilantly and strive prayerfully against that which creates a conscious *distance* between God and your soul. Is it the *world?*--come out of it. Is it the *creature?*--relinquish it. Is it the *flesh?*--mortify it. Is it *sin?*--forsake it. Is it *unbelief?*--nail it to the cross. Oh, let nothing separate you from Christ--no earthly good or carnal delight cause a distance, or coldness, or shyness between God and your soul. Give Jesus your undivided heart, and let God be your all in all. Then shall your happy experience be--*"You are NEAR, O Lord."*

DIVINE ACCEPTANCE

"I will accept you with your sweet savor."-- Eze 20:41

There is not an essential truth of the Gospel more dimly perceived or imperfectly estimated, and yet not one more clearly revealed or more unspeakably precious, than the doctrine of *God's acceptance of the believing sinner*. An error here is destructive of the scheme of salvation, and fatal to our eternal happiness. May the Holy Spirit open it up in all its scriptural clearness to our minds, and apply it in all its saving, sanctifying sweetness to our hearts!

First, there is the Lord's acceptance *of our PERSON*. "I will accept ***you***." Our *person* must first be the object of God's favor and delight before He regards with favor and delight the offerings we bring. It was the *Person* of our Lord Jesus Christ which gave such virtue, efficacy, and acceptance to His sacrifice. Because He was Divine and sinless, His Godhead imparted dignity and perfection to His Atonement--the *Sacrifice* of Christ resting, as its basis, upon the *Person* of Christ. This marked the essential difference between Cain and Abel. Cain brought his offering of fruits and flowers without a *personal* acceptance, and God rejected both him and his offering. Abel *"brought of the fatlings of his flock," "and the Lord had respect unto Abel,"*--first to his *person*, and then to his *offering*.

My soul, are you *personally* accepted in the Beloved? Before bringing to God any flower or fruit of your fancied merit, springing from the stock of your unregenerate nature, have you brought your sins to Jesus--to His blood to be cleansed, to His grace to be subdued? Have you put on in faith Christ's righteousness, *"which is unto all and upon all those who believe?"* And have you tasted of the honey that flows from that precious, glorious declaration of the Apostle--*"Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ?"*

"I will accept *you **with your sweet savor**."* And now comes God's gracious delight in, and acceptance of, the sweet savor of our spiritual offerings! And what are these savory offerings, thus so acceptable to God? What a "sweet savor" to Him is ***prayer!*** The prayers of the saints are *"vials full of odors,"* sweet incense perfumed with the yet sweeter incense of their Savior's divine and precious merits, and so presented by Him with acceptance to God. Pray on, dear saint! If afflicted, *pray;* your words may be few--your utterances stammering--your faith weak--yet pray on. God having accepted *you* in the Person of Jesus, will, on the ground of His worthiness, accept the "sweet savor" of your *prayers.*

What a sweet savor to God are our ***praises!*** *"Whoever offers praise glorifies Me."* What strong ground have we for joy, what rich material for praise! Were we to rejoice in the Lord all the day, and praise Him all the night--as before long we shall without weariness or pause--it would not be a too exaggerated expression of the greatness of our salvation of grace here, and of the preciousness of our hope of glory hereafter.

What a fragrant offering to God is the dedication of our *intellect*--the contribution of our *wealth*--the consecration of our *rank,* influence, and *time*--all, *all* is a "sweet savor" to God, acceptable and accepted through the sweet savor of Christ's atoning merits. Such, too, is the ministry of those who preach Christ. *"We are unto God a sweet savor of Christ in those who are saved, and in those who are lost."* There is a divine savor and power, in that preaching which *exalts the Savior* that no other preaching has. Oh for more of the savor of His Name in the pulpits of our day! Truly His Name would then be as ointment poured forth, delighting all who love Him. And such too the *liberality* of the saints towards the Lord's ministers--*"an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable and well-pleasing to God."*

Approach, my soul, the mercy-seat, robed in the righteousness of Christ; and when you have presented His blood and righteousness, then lay your own offerings at His feet, for your covenant God and Father has said--"I will accept you with your sweet savor."

THE LORD, A WALL OF FIRE

"For I, myself, will be a wall of fire around Jerusalem, says the Lord. And I will be the glory inside the city!" Zec 2:5

This metaphor is, probably, taken from the practice of travelers in eastern countries, who kindle fires by night around their encampments, to guard them from the approach of prowling beasts of prey. How precious and comforting the truth it illustrates--God, the divine defense and Protector of His people, even a wall of fire round about them by night and by day; so that their enemies, like roaring lions and hungry wolves, seeking to alarm and devour, cannot come near to them, but as He permits. O, my soul! carefully and devoutly consider this precious, this sanctifying truth.

You are traveling hence, through a waste howling wilderness, filled with wild and ferocious beasts; often pitching your tent enshrouded by the darkness and danger of the night, where the roaring lion and the hungry wolf, emerging from their lairs, go forth in quest of prey; and your soul is filled with terror and dismay. But fear not. Greater is He that is for you than those who are against you. He who went before the Church in the wilderness, a pillar of cloud by day, and of fire by night--He who encircled Elisha with horses and chariots of fire, when the King of Syria came against him with a huge host, and He who placed the cherubim and a flaming sword to keep the garden of Eden, when man was driven from its Paradise--is a wall of fire round about you; and no foe shall approach you, no threat shall alarm you, no assault shall reach you, no fiery dart shall wound you, not a hair of your head shall be injured, for Israel's covenant God is a wall of fire round about you by night and by day, and the *"beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by Him."*

Such a wall of protection to His people is *the Lord Jesus*. *"Your life is hidden with Christ in God."* What can be more secure? Thus guarded, the work of grace in your soul can never fail. The pulse of spiritual life may beat feebly--the spark of divine love may glow faintly--the principle of faith may act irresolutely--nevertheless, Jesus, who paid too costly a price for your redemption, a part of whose "purchased possession" you are, will never permit the lurking foe, strong and savage and cruel though he be, to hurt you. All His divine perfections--all His gracious safeguards--all His providential dispensations--are round about you. Let this encourage you, O my soul, to be prayerful, and watchful, and circumspect; remembering that, the Lord's *care* is not to encourage our *carelessness;* that, Christ's *intercession* is not to supersede our *prayerfulness;* that, the Savior's watchfulness is not to throw us off our guard--but, rather to stimulate and encourage us to a vigilant, holy, and close walk with God. Fear not, then, O timid believer, trusting in Jesus. Before Satan can pluck you from His hands, or sin condemn you to hell, or man swallow you up, they must--braving their inevitable destruction--break through this Divine wall of flame, perishing in the very attempt, "for our God is a consuming fire."

The subject of our present reflection has a solemn, heart-searching bearing towards the unconverted, unsaved soul. If God in Christ is not a wall of fire round about us, He must be, as we have just read, a "consuming fire" against us. And if we are not *safe in Jesus,* our soul is inevitably and eternally exposed to the burning and unquenchable fire of God's righteous anger. *"Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?"* Not one poor sinner who has fled from the wrath that is to come, and is hidden in a cleft of the Divine Rock, Jesus Christ, wounded, bruised, and smitten for us.

THE HUMAN MEANS

"Thus says the Lord, make this valley full of ditches…That valley shall be filled with water, that you may drink."-- 2Ki 3:16-17

The Christian requires no little spiritual intelligence and skill in accurately balancing the *means* and the *blessing*--the part which belongs to him, and the part which belongs to God. The Word of God nowhere encourages a spirit of inactivity and indolence in us. We are not to fold our arms, sit down, and do nothing. Hence, the varied *means* the Lord has graciously appointed for our use. We must not forget that the *means* are as much ordained as the *end;* and that, if these means are carelessly and willfully neglected, we have no right to expect the Divine blessing. The power of the *divine* does not preclude or dispense with the employment of the *human*.

You will generally find that, in the performance of His wondrous miracles, Christ, as it were, stood at one end, and man at the other. See this thought illustrated in the raising of Lazarus from the dead--*"Jesus said, Take away the stone."* Man was to have some share in this marvelous resurrection; he was to remove the stone that lay upon the dead, as this formed an impediment to the working of the miracle. While, then, we are instructed that the POWER is His, we are at the same time taught that the MEANS are ours. It is man's to dig the well and prepare the ditches; it is God's to fill both with the living water of His Spirit. *"Thus says the Lord, make this valley full of ditches…That valley shall be filled with water, that you may drink."* What, O my soul, are these "ditches," and how are they made?

In the forefront must be placed *the eye, simply and only fixed upon Jesus.* We may sink the well, and dig the trench, and plough the soil, but all will be in vain if we do not this from a sense and conviction of our present spiritual standing in Christ. Thus we shall work *from* life, and not *for* life! Oh, with what celerity we run the way of the Lord's commandments, with what zeal do we His work, and how we prize the means of grace, with a sweet sense of pardon--of acceptance--of a present salvation in all its completeness, fullness, and certainty, in our souls!

We dig the "ditch" *in the valley of prayer*. Communion with God, while it is the most elevating, is at the same time the most humbling employment of the soul. When thus we lie the lowest, then are we the most exalted. When, in the confession of sin, and the abasement of self, we come before God, *"looking unto Jesus,"* oh! what a channel we have prepared for the rain of God's grace, far down in the deep valley of our conscious need and nothingness. Be much in secret, closet prayer, O my soul, and God will rain down abundantly His quickening, fertilizing grace. Pray--*pray*--PRAY--and your fleece shall never be dry, your soul shall never lack the dew of God's Spirit. Dig deep, dig wide, dig constantly the channel of PRAYER--earnest, persevering, believing *prayer*--and He who has promised to be the "Dew unto Israel," and to "come down as rain upon the mown grass," as with "showers of blessing," will fill that channel to overflowing with His grace.

In a few words--such, too, is *the diligent study of God's word*--such a devout and frequent meditation thereon--such the *public* means of grace--such the appointed *ordinances* of Christ's house, and the "communion of saints." Omit not, O my soul, the valley of affliction, of trial, of temptation, in some of which your deepest ditches are often dug, and the richest blessings often flow. *"I will open fountains in the midst of the valleys,"* says the Lord; and to this end He sends bereavement, and sickness, and suffering, and adversity--all of which are but designed to open channels through which His tender love, and soothing sympathy, and increasing grace, and quickening Spirit, might fully and freely flow. *"Blessed is the man who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also fills the pools."* Oh, seek large supplies of this living water! Make the trench deep and broad, for in proportion to your large requests will be your blessing. Ask much, believe much, expect much, and it shall be unto you according to your faith. "Open your mouth wide and I will fill it."

THE BLESSING DIVINE

"Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of Hosts."-- Zec 4:6

Our meditation yesterday was directed to the *human means* we are diligently and believingly to employ; let us today consider the *Divine blessing* which God has promised, and which we may expect, in the proper use of these means. The Temple was a type of the Church, and Zerubbabel was a type of Christ. The great truth shadowed forth by these two types, is that, both the work of preparing materials, and of constructing the house--"the Church of God, purchased with His own blood"--is, from first to last, a Divine and supernatural work, not in any degree wrought by human power, but solely and entirely by the Spirit of God. *"Not by might, nor by power* (that is human), *but by My Spirit, says the Lord of Hosts."* From this subject of meditation many spiritual and profitable reflections arise.

And first, whose work is *conversion?* man's work or God's work? God's Word, as vindicating His glory, shall answer--*"Who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God"* (Joh 1:13). O, my soul! your spiritual creation was a mightier work than the natural creation of the vast universe. There is more of the power of God, and the wisdom of God, and the love of God, and the holiness of God, in the new birth of one sinner, than in the creation of myriads of worlds like this! The Divine image restored--the dead soul made alive--the kingdom of Satan destroyed--the empire of sin overthrown--the divine nature imparted--and the soul becoming a "temple of God through the Spirit"--oh, what an unfolding of God is here! "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of Hosts."

And who *carries on in your soul* the work of grace thus divinely begun? The same Spirit--by whom the first tear of penitence was created, and the first look of faith was imparted, and the first throb of life was inspired, and the first spark of love was kindled, is our Teacher, Sanctifier, and Comforter. Dwelling in the regenerate soul, He guards the work He has thus divinely wrought; and, lest anything hurt it, He keeps His sacred vineyard night and day. O, then, my soul! seek to be filled with the Spirit of holiness; and see that no self-dependence, no grieving of the Spirit, no looking off of Jesus whom He glorifies--arrests the progress of your heart-holiness, and so retards your fitness for the inheritance of the saints in light. Oh! honor the Spirit by acknowledging His work, and the Spirit will honor you by completing it until the day of Jesus Christ.

And what is the great secret of power and success *in service?* Still the answer is, *"Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of Hosts."* We are strong for labor--powerful in service--successful in work for God and for man--in the same proportion as we cease from the human and lean upon the Divine--cease from ourselves, and draw all our supplies from the Spirit of God. Not by human might and self power shall we be able ministers, successful evangelists, useful teachers of the young. In drawing sinners to Jesus, in instructing the ignorant, in reclaiming the vicious, in placing living stones in the temple of God, and in planting precious jewels in the diadem of Jesus, deal closely with the life-giving power of the Spirit. Weak though you are, inefficient and unskillful, yet gird yourself to the battle with the world, the flesh, and Satan; go forth to your work of preaching Christ's Gospel, of making Jesus known, of plucking souls as brands from the burning, with these wondrous words ringing in your ears, "not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts,"

DIVINE LOVE QUESTIONED

"I have loved you, says the Lord. Yet you say, How have you loved us?"-- Mal 1:2

Was ever baser, darker, ingratitude than this? Study it, O my soul, for have you not, in spite of the countless evidences of your Lord's love to you, often doubted its reality, and questioned the wisdom, righteousness, and tenderness of its dealings? But, listen to the divine declaration of its existence. God Himself asserts it; and who shall dare call it in question?

"I have loved you." How does the Lord evidence the reality of His love to us? Take the display of God's love to the literal Israel, as typifying His love to His spiritual Israel; and in the analogy we shall see more distinctly wherein He has loved us. The Lord's love to His ancient people was exhibited in choosing them above all nations upon the face of the earth to be His peculiar people in conferring upon them especial blessings and distinctive privileges; by perpetuating their nationality amid many changes and revolutions; by bringing them up out of Egypt; by emancipating them from the Babylonish captivity; and by conducting them to their own land. And to crown these signal and especial blessings, having one Son, well-beloved, He sent Him to deliver and save them, saying, "They will reverence My Son."

In all this, O my soul, see your Lord's love shadowed forth. Did He not choose you to be His peculiar treasure, loving you with an everlasting love, and with love drawing you from your idol state to Himself; making you to forget your own people and your father's house, that He might "betroth you to Himself forever, in righteousness and in judgment, and in loving kindness and in mercy?" Has He not "blessed you with all spiritual things in Christ Jesus," conferring upon you the relation of a child, the dignity of a saint, the inheritance of an heir? And to crown all, has He not given you His dear Son to be your Sin-Bearer, your Surety, your Redeemer, your Portion, and your all? Truly may the Lord say, *"I have loved you."*

"And yet you say, How have You loved us?" Ah! here is your dark ingratitude and base unbelief. When a cloud has shaded His love--when a providence has hidden it--when a trial of faith has tested it--when some dark, crushing dispensation of your God seems to belie it, then you have exclaimed, "How have you loved me? Is *this* love? Has love painted this dark cloud, blighted this beauteous flower, broken this strong staff, and embittered this cup of earthly sweet, emptying me from vessel to vessel, all His waves and His billows overflowing me?"

Yes, my soul, divine love--everlasting love--redeeming love--unchanging love has done it all! Then, Lord, I will no longer distrust your love--no more will I ask, How have You loved me? but will accept every cloud that shades it--every trial that embitters it--every correction that changes its voice from the accents of tenderness and sympathy, to those of austerity and terror, as still love, disguised though it be. Dear Lord, allow me never more--in the gloomiest hour, in the sorest trial, in the severest rebuke, in the saddest moment--to call in question, to allow the shadow of a doubt to rest upon the great, the tender, the changeless love with which You have from all eternity loved me.

But, my soul, how much greater reason have you to doubt your true and deep love to Christ! He may well ask, "Do you love Me?" Be humbled at the cross for this; and yet be not discouraged. Look to the Lord's great and changeless love to you, and not to your poor, faint, faltering love to Him. This will inflame your affections, kindle a more responsive, obedient and patient love in return--a love that will constrain you to do all and suffer all your blessed Lord in love commands and ordains.

THE BEST FOR GOD

"Cursed is the cheat who has an acceptable male in his flock and vows to give it, but then sacrifices a blemished animal to the Lord. For I am a great king," says the Lord Almighty, "and my name is to be feared among the nations." Mal 1:14

What a fearful anathema is this? But is it disproportioned to the sin it denounces? It is a fearful thing to attempt to deceive God; and yet how many religionists, unsuspectingly to themselves, are committing this sin! My soul, examine yourself, and see if there is anything in your dealings towards God unreal and deceptive, false and dishonoring; and if so, drag it to the Cross, and by its revealing light, search it out, and by its crucifying power, slay it. But look at this sin. What is it?

It is the sin of making a solemn vow to God, and then attempting to palm upon Him a deception by offering to Him that which is an abomination in His sight. *"You brought Me that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus you brought an offering--should I accept this of your hand? says the Lord."* Have you not often offered God a divided heart--a heart divided with the world, or, the creature--while He is presented with but a scanty measurement of that love of which He originally and righteously claims the *whole?*

O Lord! make my heart and its love true and constant to You! If there be a rival to this, gently, lovingly displace it; that I might give to You, the First and the Best of Beings, the first and the best of my love.

And am I consecrating to God the first and the best of my *intellectual* powers? Deriving my mind from God, who can strengthen or blight, illumine or darken it, am I consecrating to Him the first and the best of my mental endowments and acquirements? or, am I presenting to Him but the dregs and the drivellings of my intellect; using the first and the best for myself and for the world?

And what of my *worldly possessions?* Am I giving to the Lord, who has so affluently and freely given to me, a due proportion of my wealth, be it much or little, for the advancement of His truth and kingdom in the world? or, am I casting into His treasury, with a stinted and begrudged hand--calculating not how *much*, but how *little* I can devote to His glory, of that which is *all* His own? Will He not say, "Who has required this at your hand? I cannot endure it."

And what of your *rank* and *social influence?* Is this "holiness to the Lord?" Human rank is powerful, and individual influence far-reaching, and for both these talents God holds us responsible! Are we laying it all down at Jesus' feet, a holy consecrated thing, all made subservient to the advancement of His truth and kingdom and glory?

And what of your *time*, my soul? Is the first and best the Lord's? Are the fragments gathered up--the unemployed hours frugally collected, and spent in some good and holy work for God, and for your fellows; in meditation and prayer--in solemn preparation for eternity? O my soul, you have but *one* life, and your days are but as a *shadow!* Devote that one life to God; employ those few and fleeting days in spiritual and gospel preparation for a never-ending future--a future of bliss or of woe!

My soul, conclude this present meditation by remembering that your God has given you the first and the best, when He spared not His Son, that He might spare you. And remember, also, that Jesus gave you the first and the best, when He gave *Himself* for your sins, a sacrifice, and an offering unto God of a sweet-smelling savor. Is it then an unreasonable request that He should ask at our hands, in return, the first and the best we can present of our intellect and heart, of our time, and wealth, and our all?

Blessed Lord, I will not put You off with the lame, and the sick, and the blind. You shall have the best lamb in my fold, the first flower of my youth, the prime of my life, the ripe and golden fruit of my old age.

THE TITHES BROUGHT--THE BLESSING GIVEN

"Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it." Mal 3:10

The Lord's purposes of wisdom and thoughts of love are not intended practically to go before, or virtually to supersede the personal obligations and efforts of His people. He will fully and faithfully do His part, but He expects that they will as fully and faithfully do theirs. They must roll the stone from off the sepulcher, and He will then open it, and call back to life their buried and lamented mercy. They must bring their tithes and offerings into His house, and He will then, as an evidence of their acceptance, and as a proof of His faithfulness and love, pour His blessings affluently into their lap.

"Bring all the tithes." My soul, what will you bring? Lord, I bring a sinful heart--a depraved nature--an empty hand--a needy soul. This is all I have. I dare not speak of my faith, it is so weak; or of my love, it is so fluctuating; or of my service, it is so imperfect. I will speak of nothing of my own, but will make mention of Your righteousness and Yours only. I will take the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord. But, my soul, remember that there must be no keeping back a part of the tithe, for He commands you to bring *all* into His store-house. Lord, let there be no reservation, mental, spiritual, or practical, in my offerings. Oh, take the first, the best, take my all, who has given Yourself and all that You have, for me.

"Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty." Oh condescending love! Oh marvelous grace! Lord, do You delight to be brought to the touchstone of Your word? Do You stoop to the test of Your people's faith? Do You say, "Test me in this." Oh who is like unto You. My soul, draw near and take Jesus at His word. Test Him *now*. Test His *love,* and see if it will not embrace you. Test His *power,* and see if it will not deliver you. Test His *grace,* and see if it will not be sufficient for you. Test His *fullness,* and see if it will not supply you. Test His *blood,* and see if it will not pardon you. Test His *invitation,* and see if He will not receive you. Test His *sympathy,* and see if He will not comfort you. Test His *faithfulness,* and see if He will not make good all that He has promised--never leaving nor forsaking you; loving you always, and loving you forever. Lord, I have tested You a thousand times over, and have never found You to fail.

"I will pour out a blessing." The tithe of prayer and faith thus unreservedly brought--the believing soul having done his part, heaven's window is opened, and the blessing bountifully descends; and so God does His. And oh, the preciousness and largeness of the gift! What an outpouring of the Spirit will follow! What a reviving of grace in the soul! What a bestowment of family blessing! What an increase of ministerial power! What strength in service, guidance in perplexity, shielding in temptation, soothing in grief, will descend in showers, when God draws aside the curtain of heaven, throws open its window, and pours down its blessing, so large, so copious, so expanding, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

My soul! what has hitherto withheld the blessing? Why have the clouds poured down no fruitful showers, and the heavens distilled no refreshing dew, and the sun emitted no vivifying warmth? Is it not because you have not brought all your tithes into the treasury--prayer restrained, faith distrusting, property withheld--thus bringing Him to the test of His veracity to give you the blessing? "You have not called upon Me, O Jacob; you have been weary of Me, O Israel!" Weary of You, my blessed Lord? You are my only Rest. "Whom have I in heaven but you? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside you."

JEHOVAH'S JEWELS

"They shall be Mine, says the Lord, in that day when I make up my jewels."-- Mal 3:17

That which the merchant regards as most costly, and the bride as most ornamental, Jehovah condescends to employ to illustrate the character and relation of His saints--*"My Jewels."* My soul, if, through sovereign grace, you have been quarried from your dead and sinful nature, and have been made a living and polished stone in the house of your God, sit down a while and meditate upon the precious, soul-quickening truths taught you by this beautiful and expressive similitude.

It speaks, first, touchingly of the ***love*** the Lord has for you, as one of His jewels. How much His saints have to learn of the greatness of His marvelous love! And, although it has depths we cannot sound, heights we cannot reach, dimensions we cannot measure, yet, as a little child may dip its tiny shell into the ocean rolling in its immensity at its feet, so may we be able to comprehend in some measure the love of Christ, which passes knowledge. And apart from a personal and spiritual *experience* of Christ's love, what avails it to us?

It speaks, also, of the ***rarity*** of the Lord's people. Jewels are not common, every-day things. How rare are real Christians, true believers in Christ! How many can talk about religion, and about churches, and about ministers, and about societies, and about sacraments, who have not been converted, are not born again, who know nothing experimentally and spiritually of the Lord Jesus Christ--nothing of the blessedness of a broken heart for sin, nothing of the healing application of atoning blood! Oh how few among those who crowd the sanctuary and encircle the communion-table, are safe for eternity! Lord, are Your jewels so rare? Oh may I make full proof of being one of them!

Jewels are ***precious***. Who can fully estimate the preciousness to Jesus of His saints? Their persons are precious, their faith is precious, their love is precious, their sacrifices are precious, their petitions in prayer and ascriptions of praise are unutterably precious, to the heart of Christ, upon whose breast-plate they are set as stones of light and glory. They must be precious for whom a precious Christ poured out His most precious blood!

Jewels are ***polished*** stones. Taken from the quarry of nature, they need the chiseling of the Jeweler, and the purifying of the Refiner, before they prove their genuineness, and emit their luster. "The Lord tries the righteous." And oh, the untold blessings that spring from the discipline of His hand! "Not joyous, but grievous now, yet afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who are exercised thereby."

How ***beautiful***, also, are these precious jewels! Washed in the blood of the Lamb, clothed with the righteousness of God, adorned with the graces of the Spirit, complete in Christ, and lovely through His loveliness put upon them, no marvel that He should thus commend their beauty and completeness--"You are all fair, my love; I see no spot upon you."

Jewels are ***guarded*** with vigilance and care. Is there a being in the universe more vigilantly watched, incessantly upheld, or divinely kept, than the believer in Jesus? Destined to deck His brow when the Savior comes in His glory, wearing His many crowns, none of these shall perish; but all shall constitute a "crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of our God."

Dear Savior, set me as a seal upon Your heart, as a seal upon Your arm, and when You come in Your kingdom, may I be found among those redeemed and precious ones of whom thus it is written, "They shall be Mine, says the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels."

GOD'S WOUNDING AND HEALING

"I wound and I heal."-- Deu 32:39

It is no little comfort to the afflicted child of God to be thus divinely assured that both the wounding and the healing flow from one Hand--that Hand a *Father's*. The sword that wounds--"bathed in heaven"--bears upon its point the balm that heals. Meditate awhile, my soul, upon this wondrous truth; and should you, like the stricken deer, endure your wound in solitude, the assurance that He who smites is He who heals, may rouse you from your lonely sorrow, and draw you closer to the heart of Him "by whose stripes we are healed."

"I wound." What majesty in these words! How worthy of Him who is the sovereign disposer of sickness and health, of life and death, from whose belt hang the keys of the grave and of Hades. To His Hand, O my soul, trace the wound which now fills you with sore pain and grief. What is the sword? Is it the visitation of bereavement--the decay of health--the loss of wealth--the fickleness of friends--the unkindness of other believers--or the taunt and cruel slanders and reproaches of the world? Rise above the sword that has pierced you, and see only the Hand that holds and controls it. *"I wound."* It is a loving Father's voice. O Lord, I lose more than half my sorrow when I hear Your voice, *"It is I,"* and when faith responds--*"He Himself has done it."*

And whose Hand inflicts the *spiritual wound?* Who convinces of sin--gives the broken heart--imparts the humble, contrite spirit--and brings the soul to His feet with the prayer, *"God be merciful to me the sinner."* Still the language is--*"I wound."* Then, Lord, let the "sword of the Spirit" pierce me through and through, might it but penetrate the deep-seated evil of my heart, revealing to me more of my sinfulness, thus preparing me for the touch of that Hand that heals the broken in heart and binds up their wounds.

"And I heal." Blessed Lord! who can heal the wounded spirit--who can bind up the broken heart but Yourself? My wound is too fresh, my sore too tender, my sorrow too deep, for any hand but Yours to touch. Lord, Your wounds are my healing--Your blood my balm--Your soul-sorrow my heart's joy. Keep me from a false healing. Let Your blood be the only balsam of my wounded conscience; let Your love be the only solace of my troubled spirit. Precious Jesus! smite and bruise me as You will, may but the hand that bears in its palm the scar of the nail pour the wine and the oil of Your love into my bleeding, sorrowing heart. "Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed."

But, perhaps, your wound is self-inflicted, and the consciousness of this keeps you back from Christ. Your own hand has pierced you! You have sadly departed from God, have willfully sinned against conviction, against your own conscience; against so much divine love experienced, so much covenant mercy received, so many rich blessings given, so many sins pardoned and backslidings healed, and wanderings restored. Be it so. Still the language of God is--*"And I said after she had done all these things, Turn unto Me." "I will heal their backslidings, I will love them freely--for my anger is turned away from him."* Bring, then, these wounds to Jesus which your own or another's hand has inflicted; and with the balm that flows from His own pierced heart, He will heal you. *"O Israel, you have destroyed yourself, but in Me is your help found."* Oh, remember that there can be no wound too deep or too desperate for Christ's healing, loving touch.

THE VOICE OF THE LORD IN THE CLOUD

"He spoke unto them in the cloudy pillar."-- Psa 99:7

And still the voice of the Lord is in the cloud. Not, indeed, in a visible and audible manner as of old, when the pillar of cloud, in fan-like form, expanded above them, and, as a thing of life, went before them in the wilderness. But, not less divine, not less real, not less distinct, does the Lord now speak to His saints from out of every cloud that casts a shadow upon their path.

Clouds comprise a great part of the believer's experience. It is no strange thing that a child of the light should walk in darkness. Clouds of varied shape and hue lie in his track to heaven; and he can no more avoid them, than can the sun careering its pathway through the skies. Our Blessed Lord Himself was not exempt. They formed an essential part of that learning of obedience by the things which He suffered, though He were a Son. Behold Him on the cross! The sun clothed in sackcloth above, the earth draped in shadows beneath, were fit, though faint, emblems of the deeper, darker clouds that enshrouded His holy soul, when He uttered that dolorous cry, *"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"* But every cloud that shades the path of the believer is vocal with the voice of the Lord. *"He spoke unto them from the cloudy pillar."*

And still the Lord speaks to His saints from out the cloud. He speaks to us from *the cloud of His* ***glory***. The Gospel of the grace of God is the revelation of the grace and glory of His great salvation. As, from the cloud of His glory on Mount Tabor, the voice of love issued, so, from the glorious cloud of His Gospel, a voice comes, saying, *"Whoever will, let him come and drink of the water of life freely;" "I came to call not the righteous, but sinners to repentance;" "Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" "Him that comes unto Me I will in no way cast out."*

Is it a trial of ***faith****?* This cloud is often very dark--yet Jesus speaks to us from it. He assures us that tried faith, though tried as by fire, is more precious than gold; that He anticipates every trial of faith by His intercession on behalf of His beloved disciple; and that, when the trial actually comes, though faith be purified as gold, and winnowed as wheat, it shall not fail. *"And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat--but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not."*

Is it the cloud of ***adversity****?* Property gone--health failing--friends changed--social position altered? The voice of the Lord speaks in the cloud--*"Fear not! when you pass through the water, I will be with you." "I will never leave you, nor forsake you."* The moment faith can anchor itself on God, the believing soul is brought into perfect peace--the tempest subsides, and there is a great calm.

Is it the cloud of ***bereavement****?* Dark and overwhelming as this cloud often is, the voice of Divine love sweetly speaks from its somber bosom. "It is I, fear not. I have done it. I plucked the flower, broke the stem, bent the oak to the ground; and dark though the cloud be that rests upon your tabernacle, love sent, love shaped, love tinted it." "Be still, and know that I am God."

Is it the cloud of ***mental depression****?* This cloud is often very dense and protracted; and some of the holiest and most eminent saints of God have been called to pass through it. But, blessed be God, it cannot touch the soul's union with Christ! It may hide Jesus from us, but it cannot hide us from Jesus. It may quench the light of our Christian evidence, but it cannot extinguish the light of our Christian grace. But the voice of divine love is in this cloud, and it tells you that there is a bright light in it, that the sun shines behind it, and that, before long God's wind will pass and scatter it, and your soul shall bathe itself in eternal sunshine!

"He makes the clouds His chariot." Then, blessed Lord, I would welcome every dispensation You do send; and though I may fear as I enter into the cloud, faith believes that I shall find you there, and hear no voice but that of redeeming love!

PATIENT ENDURANCE OF WRONG

Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. Rom 12:19

Offences will come, both from the wicked and from other believers. We live in an ungodly world, and are members of an imperfect Church. We must not, therefore, expect freedom from wrongs and injuries, from woundings and opposition, from which none have ever been exempt, not excepting our Lord himself, who, in addition to the wrongs He personally endured, was "wounded for *our* offences."

But how are we, as believers in Jesus, to acquit ourselves under a sense of injury and injustice? Are we to take the law in our hands? Are we to revenge ourselves? Are we to vault into the judgment-seat? God forbid! The law of Christian duty touching this matter is clearly laid down. "Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath."

But does this precept of patient endurance and non-resistance imply that wrong is to go unpunished, injustice unrequited, injury unrepaired, malignity unrebuked, and falsehood unrefuted? By no means! An individual, by becoming a Christian, does not cease to be a citizen. In coming under the law of Christ, he is not the outlaw of man. His spiritual duties and privileges do not abrogate his civil rights and obligations. Our Lord was a striking and instructive example of this. He claimed justice at the hands of his accusers. *"Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil--but if well, why do you smite Me?"* (Joh 18:23.) And Paul asserted his rights and privileges as a Roman citizen.

Therefore, not prompted by malice or a feeling of revenge, not acting from personal resentment, or a desire to inflict an injury, but moved by a concern for the public virtue and peace, in order to maintain truth and justice, and at the same time to vindicate our personal character from slander and falsehood, it is strictly within the province of the Christian to take his case into a court of human justice; for to this end--*"the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of those who do well"*--the magistrate holds the sword by God's ordinance.

But what is the *high ground* the believer in Jesus should take under every species of injury, injustice, and wrong? It is first, if not exclusively, to go into God's court of justice, to commit his case to Christ, his Advocate, who has undertaken to plead the cause of his soul. Let us look at this for a moment.

Beloved, are you suffering injury? Has a foe assailed you? a friend wounded you? a relation wronged you? Avenge not yourself, but rather *"leave room for God's wrath;"* that is, make room for it to pass by and escape; and that no feelings might possess your mind but those of pity, charity, and forgiveness, go into God's court of justice before you go into man's. Take your cause *first* to Jesus. Oh, what a powerful Advocate and wonderful Counselor is Christ! He will avenge you of your adversary, and will compensate your wrong. He will refute the foul slander, silence the lying tongue, and bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your judgment as the noonday. For thus has the Lord spoken.

But, oh, the blessedness of reposing trustfully, calmly on the bosom of Jesus amid the unkind criticisms, bitter calumnies, unjust accusations, and the cruel envyings and jealousies of man! Sheltered there, who or what can harm us? "Oh, how great is Your goodness, what You have laid up for those who fear You, which You have wrought for those who trust in You before the sons of men! You shall hide them in the secret of Your presence from the pride of man--You shall keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues. Blessed be the Lord for He has showed me His marvelous kindness in a strong city."

SEPARATION FROM THE UNGODLY WORLD

"Therefore, come out from them and separate yourselves from them, says the Lord. Don't touch their filthy things, and I will welcome you." 2Co 6:17

There is not a stronger mark of the Lord's people than their *separation*. They are separated from the world, separated from their families, separated from their own righteousness, and often separated from the religious world--a godly people whom the Lord has set apart from all others, that He might set them apart for Himself. Now, it is this distinctive badge of *separateness* the Lord will have His saints retain in all their Christian course. We are very apt to forget it. We live in the world, mix with the world, hold transactions with the world, and, in some measure, are guided by the conventional habits of the world. Still, we have need to be continually reminded that, though living in the world, and, of necessity, compelled to conform to its proper and lawful customs, *we yet are not OF the world. "I have chosen you OUT OF the world,"* says the unworldly, loving Savior to His disciples; *"therefore the world hates you." "You are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."* Now, in what sense, oh my soul, and to what extent, does your loyalty to Christ demand your separation from the world?

The words which suggest the present reflection are, by a slight variation, taken from the prophet Isa 52:11, and originally were applied to the captive Jews in Babylon,

"Depart, depart, go out from there! Touch no unclean thing! Come out from it and be pure, you who carry the vessels of the Lord." Now, Babylon, a city of proud, unclean idolaters, and opposed to God, was an emblem of this ungodly, Babylonish world, in which the saints of the Most High dwell, but from which they are called to come, and from whose inhabitants they are called upon to separate themselves, touching not the unclean thing.

The religion of Christ is not ascetic and monkish. It knows nothing of "nunneries," or "monasteries," or "retreats." These are all opposed to the genius and requirements of Christianity--its divine, social, and spiritual nature. Our blessed Lord, the Divine Founder of our religion, expressly warns His disciples of this perversion of His gospel--*"Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold He is in the desert; go not forth--behold, He is in the secret chambers; believe it not."* It enjoins nothing like this upon its disciples, *"for then must you needs go out of the world,"* says the apostle.

But it does teach crucifixion to the world, nonconformity to the world, spiritual and marked separation from the world, from its pleasures, its gaieties, its principles, its religion. We are the professed disciples of an unearthly Christ, the followers of an unworldly Savior. *"Let us go forth, therefore, unto Him outside the camp"* (of the Babylonish world), *"bearing His reproach,"* keeping our consecrated garments unspotted from the world, touching not the unclean thing. Then will Jesus, our Lord, receive us, and infinitely make amends for all we have lost of power and wealth and honors, for His holy and precious Name.

Let our separation from the world be our closer union and fellowship with the Church of Christ in its every branch, and with Christ Himself, the one Head of the Church. This will tend more strongly to define and sharpen the line of demarcation between us and an ungodly world. Association with the saints will render us a more marked and distinct people. The world will take account of us that we are the Lord's. O my soul! come away from an unclean and defiling world. *"If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."* Lord! by Your cross may I be crucified to the world, and the world to me!

OBEDIENCE TO CHRIST

"Whatever He says unto you, do it."-- Joh 2:5

What reader of his Bible is not reminded by these words of the mother of Jesus referring to her Son, of the command of Pharaoh addressed to the Egyptians concerning Joseph--perhaps the most remarkable personal type of Christ, *"Go unto Joseph; what he says to you, do."* The Lord Jesus is our Lawgiver, the only true Legislator of the Church, the only spiritual Head of authority and power. It is to Him we are to go for our orders. His Word we are implicitly to obey, finding His service perfect freedom, and obedience to His commands great reward.

"What He says unto you, do it." Such--could her voice be heard from heaven--would still be the language of the Virgin Mary to all her poor deluded worshipers! "Look not to me, pray not to me, invoke not my intercession and aid; what *He,* God, my Savior, says unto you, do it." What a sweet echo of the words of Jesus himself, *"If you love me, keep My commandments."* These words are pregnant with meaning and power. Oh my soul, sit down at His feet, and learn what He would have you do, and then do it unhesitatingly and with all your heart.

"What He says unto you." Lord, I would bend my ear attentively, believingly, to know what You say unto me. Speak, Lord, Your servant hears. Do You bid me *believe?* Lord, enable me to give full credence to all Your gracious invitations, and precious promises, and good words addressed to Your sin-burdened, guilt-distressed, travail-weary ones. Do You bid me in simple faith look to You, accept You, rest on You? Lord, I believe, help my unbelief. My trembling heart sincerely seeks repose from guilt and fear and labor in You, and in You alone. Do You command me to take up my cross, and follow You along Your unearthly, self-denying way? Lord, You would I then follow, and You only. "Through floods and flames, if Jesus leads, I'll follow where He goes."

Do You bid me, my Father, take from Your hands the cup of sorrow, and meekly drink it? Your will, not mine, be done! Do You ask me to slay my Isaac, to yield my Benjamin, to tear my fondest idol from its shrine? Lord, give me grace, and I will obey. Whatever You say unto me, I will do. Do You bid me mortify my strong corruption, nail to Your cross my bosom sin, part with the Delilah upon whose treacherous lap I have slumbered, and by whose hands the locks of my strength have been shorn? Lord, perfect Your strength in my weakness, and, Samson-like, by faith in Your all-sufficient grace, I will slay Your foes and mine, and will be Your servant, Yours only, and Yours forever. Number me among the blessed ones, of whom it is said, *"These are they who follow the Lamb wherever He goes."*

Let there be no mental reservation in your obedience to the Lord, O my soul. The Lord searches the heart and weighs the actions of men. He hears the bleating of the herds we have spared, ostensibly for sacrifice, yet in reality but to condone our sin of disobedience to God (1Sa 15:22). O Lord, to whom *obedience* is better than sacrifice, let my obedience to Your word be sincere and honest, full and unreserved, lacking nothing, that I may stand complete in all the will of God.

Let *love to Jesus* be the all-constraining principle of my obedience, as the all-authenticating evidence of my discipleship. *"If you love Me, keep My commandments."* Oh, how smoothly and swiftly will the wheels of obedience revolve when divine love to a precious loving Savior moves them! How light will be Jesus' burden, how easy His yoke, how pleasant His cross, how sweet to deny myself for Him, of what was so sweet to myself, when the all-constraining principle is *love* to Him who loved me unto death!

Keep the eye fixed upon the reward of obedience to Christ. *"If you be willing and obedient, you shall eat the fruit of the land."* We shall eat the sweet fruit of peace and joy and hope *now;* and we shall eat the golden fruit of the fullness of joy and of the pleasures that are at God's right hand in a holier world, and beneath a brighter sky hereafter.

IT IS THE BLOOD THAT SAVES

"And He said unto them, This is My blood of the new testament, shed for many."-- Mar 14:24

Never did those lips, upon which grace shed its divinest, sweetest fragrance, utter words so precious as these. The language is figurative, but the truth is literal. *"This is My blood,"* or, this cup is the 'emblem' of *"My blood of the new testament,"* the new covenant, *"shed for many,"* for the sins of beings whom no man can number. We are thus brought into contact with the most essential and vital doctrine of the Bible, the great *Atonement of the Son of God.* Beloved, the blood of Jesus is very precious to a poor, guilt-burdened sinner. *It is the blood that saves him.* There is everything you need in the blood of Jesus, forgiveness for every guilt-burdened, healing for every sin-wounded conscience.

The blood of Jesus speaks peace, the blood brings us into the holiest, and places us in the very presence of the Father. It is the blood that keeps the heart pure, and supplies it with the most powerful motive to holiness. It is the blood that sustains the soul in death, and after death places it before the throne in robes washed white, with the "new song" breathing from its joyous lips. My soul, consider the blood of Jesus in two or three essential points of light.

It is the blood of the Incarnate God. Herein lies its intrinsic worth, its essential efficacy. The Deity of the Savior gave it all its merit to atone, and all its virtue to cleanse. We marvel not that the apostle should denominate it, "the *precious* blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish." It is the most precious thing in the universe--it is the precious blood of Him whose person is precious to those who believe. Is it, my soul, precious to you?

And, then, remember that *faith* alone is necessary to make its saving virtue ours. Believe only, and all the sovereign efficacy of Christ's blood is ours. This "precious blood" and "precious faith" constitute the two most precious things in the universe.

Look at it, also, as *applied* blood. We know that the blood of the paschal lamb would have availed nothing to the Israelites when the angel of death swept through the land to slay the first-born of the Egyptian, had it not been really and visibly *sprinkled upon their dwellings.* It was the *applied* blood that saved them. So must it be with the blood of Jesus, our Passover slain for us. If we want to be placed in a state of non-condemnation, if we desire to be quite sure that we are safe from eternal death, the blood of Jesus must be *applied* to the conscience. Rest not short of this, my soul! Clearly this is the mind of the Spirit in those remarkable words of the apostle, "You *are come* to the blood of sprinkling." There is a *present* coming to the blood of Jesus, and this gives us a present salvation.

It is the blood of Jesus that *sanctifies.* It sets us apart as a holy people for God, it cleanses the heart from vain thoughts, worldly imaginations, and impure desires--from the taint and defilement of indwelling sin. Rest not short, then, of the *applied* blood of Jesus. This will remove all your doubts, quell all your fears, and bring you into perfect peace. The Holy Spirit is prepared to take of the blood of the covenant, and sprinkle it upon your heart, and then all will be *peace*.

The blood will give you *great power in prayer*. Coming to God with this plea, you may open all your heart to Him, confess every sin, disclose every sorrow, make known every need, and reveal, as in the light of the noontide sun, every secret cloistered there.

In a word, it is the blood of Jesus that SAVES, saves us from a present condemnation, and saves us to a future and eternal salvation. There is no salvation elsewhere. Here is pardon for the vilest sinner, for *the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin.* Yes, dear Lord! it is Your blood, Your own blood, possessing all the dignity and virtue of Your Godhead, and this will be my song and my joy through eternity, *"Unto Him who loved us, and washed us from our sins IN HIS OWN BLOOD,* and has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father--to Him be glory forever and ever. Amen."

JESUS IN THE CHAMBER OF SICKNESS

"Jesus said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby."-- Joh 11:4

Sickness stands high up in the catalogue of the believer's covenant blessings. When it is recognized as coming immediately from the hand of God, and when it lays us lower at the feet of Jesus, and when it draws us closer within the bosom of Jesus, oh, a lovelier flower or sweeter fruit of holiness blooms and grows not upon the rod of correction than this! Deem not that a cold, unsympathizing heart that dictates this sentiment. He whose hand traces it is too conversant with the scenes of the sick room--its suffering and weariness, its despondency and depression, its hopes and fears--to speak flippantly and unfeelingly of this painful discipline of God. He looks upon the believer's chamber of sickness as one of most sacred and hallowed spots this side of eternity. He never approaches it, never gently opens the door, and with silent footfall glides within that solemn and shaded room, but with an unearthly awe resting upon his spirit. God is there--Jesus is there--the Holy Spirit is there--attendant angels are there; and, it may be, the spirits of the just made perfect are permitted to hover there, fanning, as with noiseless and invisible wings, the fevered brow of the being they love, to whom they are permitted to minister, and whose ransomed soul they wait to escort up to the gate of glory.

"This sickness is not unto death." Oh no, there is *life* in it, you sick one, you child of Jesus! This shall prove a time of spiritual quickening to your soul. You shall know more of God, see more of Jesus, read your title to the mansion in heaven in a clearer light, and with stronger faith than ever. No, it is not unto death! The Lord may, by this sickness, be preparing you for greater service and usefulness in His Church and in the world than ever. Wycliffe was at one time supposed to be upon his dying bed. An embassy of friars and doctors from Oxford was deputed to call upon him to urge and receive a recantation of his published opinions. They entered the apartment of the rector of Lutterworth, and, surrounding his bed, expressed the hope that, as death was about to remove him, he would not conceal his penitence, but distinctly revoke whatever doctrines he had advanced to their injury. The noble reformer, fixing upon them his languid but now flashing eyes, and summoning all his remaining strength, exclaimed, "I shall not die, but live, and shall again declare the evil deeds of the friars." He recovered, and lived to preach the doctrines of the Reformation even with greater power and success than he had ever done! Be still, then, you sick one, dear to Jesus. Who can tell for what great work in your Lord's vineyard this sickness and suffering and depression are preparing you! But, should it terminate fatally--should it be the chariot sent from heaven to bear you home, still it will not be unto death, but *unto life,* life eternal--"forever with the Lord!"

"When languor and disease invade
This trembling house of clay,
'Tis sweet to look beyond our cage,
And long to fly away.

"Sweet to look inward, and attend
The whispers of His love;
Sweet to look upward to the place
Where Jesus pleads above.

"Sweet to reflect how grace divine
My sins on Jesus laid;
Sweet to remember that His blood
My debt of suffering paid.

"Sweet in the confidence of faith,
To trust His firm decrees;
Sweet to lie passive in his hands,
And know no will but His."

THE DYING BELIEVER

"And she lay dying."-- Luk 8:42

The transition of the believer from the chamber of sickness to the bed of death is a natural and often a short one. The Lord's *sick* one now becomes the Lord's *dying* one. It is by the process of 'wasting disease' that the loving Savior, for the most part, comes into His garden, and gathers His plants of righteousness--the lily in its youthful bloom, the rose in its matronly beauty, the cedar in its manly strength, the oak in its grace and grandeur--transferring them to His paradise on high.

There are, indeed, some of God's children whose departure may be regarded more in the light of Enoch--like *translations* than of an ordinary death. The chariot has descended so suddenly and with wheels so noiseless, the last enemy has approached so stealthily and with tread so softly, that we had scarcely seen them enter the celestial carriage before it bore them beyond our weeping eyes and wondering gaze; they themselves not knowing that it was *death,* until they had passed through its portal, and found themselves in heaven! Absent from the body, as in a moment, they were present with the Lord.

But with you, beloved, the Lord's wise and loving dealings may be far otherwise. It is, perhaps, by slow disease and acute suffering He is taking down the earthly house; wearisome days and sleepless nights are appointed to you; and looking through the lattice of the dissolving tabernacle, you exclaim, "Why is His chariot so long in coming? why tarry the wheels of His chariot?" And now, as with unclasped and uplifted wings, your soul lingers upon the border land–

"Only waiting until the angels
Open wide the mystic gate,
At whose feet I long have lingered,
Weary and poor and desolate.
Even now I hear their footsteps,
And their voices far away;
Only waiting to obey."

Dying saint of God, how enviable is your state! Soon you will see Jesus in all His glory; soon you will mingle with apostles and prophets and martyrs and all the heavenly host; soon you will be clasped in the fond and welcoming embrace of the loved ones who preceded you to glory; soon you will be freed from all taint of sin, from every fetter of corruption, from every tear of sorrow, from every pang of suffering, and from every feeling of languor and faintness. Oh blissful exchange! Oh glorious prospect! Fear not! Keep your eye upon Jesus. Look not so much to His work as to *Himself,* not so much to His salvation as to the *Savior,* not so much to the gospel of Christ as to the *person* of Christ. Let yours be a *personal* dealing with a *personal* Savior. Let nothing come between you and Jesus. He is with you, and He bids you come--not to His cross, or to His work, or to His sacrament--but--*to Himself. "Come unto ME; I will give you rest."* He wants you to lay your dying head upon His very heart, to clasp His very hand in yours, and to feel that nearer to Him you cannot be, until your disembodied spirit speeds its flight, and folds its weary wings upon His glorified bosom.

"Shudder not to cross the stream,
Venture all your hope on Him,
Not one object of His care
Ever suffered shipwreck there."

One word as to the world you are about to leave. Have you made a wise and equitable adjustment of your *temporal* matters, so that, after your decease, the near and beloved ones who survive and succeed to your property, may be free from all anxiety, allegation and litigation? Our Lord Jesus made His last will and testament, bequeathing to His people the richest treasure He could leave--His peace which passes all understanding--do you follow His example, and set your worldly house in order, that those who inherit your goods may bless your memory, and glorify God for the grace and wisdom and uprightness given you. The criminal neglect of this significant duty has been the productive cause of more domestic unhappiness than almost any that can be named. "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of *the life that now is,* and of that which is to come."

THE BELIEVER IN GLORY

"You shall receive me to glory."-- Psa 73:24

We have followed the believer in Jesus from sickness to death; we now follow him from death to glory. In each stage of this his earthly pilgrimage, how precious is he to the heart of Jesus, how firmly and safely kept by the power of God unto full salvation! The journey is not long, the transition is often very quick. The instant that he has suffered the last pang, and wept the last tear, and heaved the last sigh, and looked his last look of love on earth, he is before the throne of God and the Lamb, drinking of the crystal river that flows from beneath it, and basking in the effulgence of glory that beams around it. My soul, let faith, with its far-seeing eye, look within the veil, and behold the glory into which you shall before long enter, and exclaim, in the sweet exercise of that faith, *"You will receive me to glory."*

And, first, think of its ***certainty***. The inspired Scriptures, which cannot be broken, affirm this truth in the most clear and positive terms. Nothing is more certain than the final glory of all God's saints. *"You will show me the path of life--in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand there are pleasures for evermore." "As for me, I will behold Your face in righteousness--I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Your likeness." "The hope which is laid up for you in heaven."* And if these aspirations and declarations of faith are not sufficient, then, listen to the crowning evidence affirmed by the words of Jesus himself, *"Father, I will that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory."* Yes, my soul, glory is at the end of your weary, tearful, toilsome pilgrimage. It is the *last* link in the golden chain that binds you to the throne of heaven. The first link of that chain is God's *foreknowledge* of His saints; the last, His *glorification* of them. "Whom He *foreknew,* them He also *glorified"* (Rom 8:30).

And now the sick and suffering and longing one is--*in glory!* The soul has passed the portal of death, has dropped its chain, and is free! All it believed, all it expected, and all it longed for is now realized, fully and forever realized, and its traveled feet walk the golden streets, and its weary wing is folded upon the bosom of its Savior. No more sin, no more impurity, no more suffering, no more weariness, no more tears--the former things are passed away, behold, all things are new! It has seen Jesus--it is now mingling with prophets, apostles, and martyrs, and all the holy angels--it is "without fault before the throne," hymning the high praises of the Lamb. Listen to its triumphant, rapturous song–
"I shine in the light of God,
His likeness stamps my brow,
Through the shadows of death my feet have trod,
And I reign in glory now.

"No breaking heart is there,
No keen and chilling pain,
No washed cheek where the frequent tear
Has rolled, and left its stain.

"I have found the joys of heaven,
I am one of the sainted band;
To my head a crown of glory is given,
And a harp is in my hand.

"I have learned the song they sing,
Whom Jesus has set free,
And the glorious walls of heaven still ring
With my new-born melody.

"No sin, no grief, no pain,
Safe in my happy home;
My fears all fled, my doubts all slain,
The hour of triumph come.

"Friends of my mortal years,
The trusted and the true,
You are walking still in the valley of tears,
But I wait to welcome you.

"Do I forget? Oh, no!
For memory's golden chain
Shall bind my heart to the hearts below,
Until they meet to touch again."

"These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Rev 7:14

JESUS IN THE HOUSE OF MOURNING

Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Joh 11:23

We have lately been with Jesus in the chamber of sickness and of death; let us now accompany Him to the house of mourning. He was equally Himself in both. His loving, sympathizing heart was at home in every place where suffering and woe found a lodgment. He Himself had passed through this school. And well He had learned its lessons, emerging from its teaching and discipline in all respects fitted for, and in all points assimilated to, His peoples' trying and afflictive circumstances. Oh, wondrous truth! oh, marvelous love! Must the divine Son of God, must the sinless Son of man be perfected by suffering, that He might suffer when I suffer, weep when I weep, bear the heaviest end of my cross, and in all my afflictions be Himself, by sympathy and support, afflicted? So I read, and so I believe.

You are a bereaved one--the Lord's bereaved! Himself has done it. Arise, oh my soul, from second and proximate causes. With them you have nothing to do. Like pieces of wreck floating on the surging waves, they will but wound and bruise you, and, perhaps, loosen your hold of faith on the Divine and faithful plank to which you are clinging, and which will assuredly bear you up, and float you in safety to the shore. Every view of your bereavement which draws your eye away from Jesus will but lacerate and inflame your wound. Looking above, seeing Jesus only, recognizing God's hand in your calamity, and referring it all to His infinite wisdom, perfect righteousness, and unchanging love, will enable you to bow meekly in your sorrow, and with your mouth in the dust, exclaim, in lowly imitation of your Lord, "My Father, if this cup may not pass from me except I drink it, Your will be done."

Yes, beloved, your brother shall rise again. Did he not die in the faith of Jesus? Did he not depart in the hope of glory? Then, that faith has saved him, and that hope sheds a halo around his grave. He shall rise even now, for the memory and the influence of his holy life and love still live in undecaying power and fragrance; and, "he, being dead, yet speaks." But he shall rise again in the resurrection of the just at the last day, when, at the Second Resurrection, the trumpet of Christ, the Archangel shall sound, and the *"dead in Christ shall rise first."* Oh, the glory and the bliss of that moment, when the ruined temple of the Holy Spirit shall spring from the dust, a spiritual body, freed from all the taint of sin, the grossness of the flesh, the sorrows and sufferings of earth, resplendent in beauty, perfected in holiness, "fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body." And, until my body shall be committed to the dust in the faith of Him who is "the Resurrection and the Life," may I live and die, dear Lord, to You, and, then, be with You forever!

Jesus is one with you in your bereaved grief. He is in your house of mourning now. He goes with you to the grave to weep there. Spiritual blessings will bloom around that grave, sweeter and more beautiful far than the flowers with which you deck it, if your sorrow draws you closer to Christ, making you better acquainted with Him, the weeping and sympathizing Savior, and loving Friend and Brother, born for this crushing adversity.

JESUS THE SINNER'S GUEST

When Jesus came by, he looked up at Zacchaeus and called him by name. "Zacchaeus!" he said. "Quick, come down! For I must be a guest in your home today."

But the crowds were displeased. "He has gone to be the guest of a notorious sinner," they grumbled. Luk 19:5, Luk 19:7

The social element of our Lord's nature found its appropriate and widest scope in the race He had come to redeem. It formed, indeed, one of the most marked and effective instruments of His mission of love. Overcoming every class barrier, and penetrating the hardest surface of society, it bore Him into every abode of man, blending Him with every form of sorrow and suffering. Jesus was now the guest of Zaccheus. He had come to seek and to save that which was lost; and this rich man, and chief among the publicans, was one of them. Living in sin though he was, and now concealed amid the foliage of the sycamore tree, the Savior knew where to find, and how to call this "hidden one" of His eternal love, this "vessel of mercy afore-ordained unto glory." "Quick, come down! For I must be a guest in your home today." But the crowds were displeased. 'He has gone to be the guest of a notorious sinner,' they grumbled." Blessed testimony! Jesus is still our guest; He still abides and banquets with us.

What a banquet is the *Gospel Feast* at which we meet the Savior! It is just the feast our famished souls need. Here is the full forgiveness of all sin; here is a free grace, justification from all things; here is adoption into God's family; here is the wine and the milk of God's love and the Savior's grace, "without money and without price," for all who have "nothing to pay." Approach, my soul, for, "all things are ready." Come, not waiting to change your clothing, or for some self-cleansing, but just as you are, since Jesus has provided the fountain that washes, and the robe that clothes you; the only plea springing from yourself, that you are "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Oh, remember that Jesus is the guest of *sinners!*

Jesus meets His saints at the table of His Holy Communion. If ever heaven and earth unite and embrace, it is then! When the King sits at the table, surrounded by the people of His love, eating by faith of His flesh, and drinking by faith of His blood--symbols, and nothing more, of His atoning death--it is a heaven below, lacking but the immediate and unveiled presence of the glorified Lord. Approach, then, oh my soul, take your place as a welcome guest at this heavenly banquet, and hear your Lord's sweet welcome, "Eat, O friends, and drink, yes, drink abundantly, O beloved."

"He knows what wandering hearts we have,
Apt to forget His lovely face;
And to refresh our minds He gave
These kind memorials of His grace.

"The Lord of life this table spread
With His own flesh and dying blood;
We on the rich provision feed,
And taste the wine, and bless our God.

"While He is absent from our sight,
'Tis to prepare our souls a place,
That we may dwell in heavenly light,
And live forever near His face."

Oh my soul, invite Jesus often to your house, for none ever entertained such a guest as He. He brings His own refreshment, and always gives more than He receives. Receive Him into your house, worship Him at your domestic altar, acknowledge Him at your meals, invite Him to your marriage feasts, and see that He has on all occasions a loving reception, and the best entertainment--even a loving and an unreserved heart. O Lord, since you receive sinners, and eat with them, enter my humble abode, and abide with me, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.

THE GENTLENESS OF GOD

"I will do you no hurt."-- Jer 25:6

What a tender, touching declaration of God is this! How condescending and considerate of His people's feelings! Would God, could God hurt a hair of the head of His child, severe and painful though His dealings maybe? Oh, no! They may be called to leave their father's house, as was Jacob--they may go down into Egypt, as did Israel--they may be tried in their children, as was Eli--they may be bereft of property and children and health, as was Job--they may be cast into the lions' den, as was Daniel--and into the fiery furnace, as were the Hebrew children--they may have a thorn in the flesh, as did Paul--they may be banished, as was John--yet God will do them no hurt!

Nevertheless, His *dealings* with His beloved saints and servants of old, were but among the all things that worked together for their good. It was a mysterious; and to them a trying and afflictive way. Nevertheless, He was but unfolding His purposes of wisdom, His thoughts of peace and His ends of love. Consider this, my soul, whatever God's way with you is, He will do you no hurt.

And first, there is the utter *impossibility* that God could hurt one of the children of His love. His nature is love--His heart is love--all His attributes are manifestations of His love--all His dealings but unfoldings of His love. Listen to David's representation of God, *"You, O Lord, are a God full of compassion, and gracious, long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth."* Can not you, my soul, affix your seal to this testimony? What has your God been to you through these many long years of your pilgrimage but a God who could do you no hurt? Oh, no! He loves you too deeply, cares for you too tenderly, watches over you too vigilantly--you are too dear to Him as a child of His adoption, too precious to Him as a jewel of His cabinet, too lovely in his eye as accepted in the Son of His love, that He should do you hurt. Whatever His conduct may be, you shall exclaim with David, *"Your gentleness has made me great."*

His *rebukes* will do you no hurt. They are the *probings* of the Lord, searching into the deep evil of our heart, and into the sinnings of our spirit, but to bind up and heal. We may shrink from the cuttings of the surgeon's knife, wince at the searching of his probe as it penetrates to the core of the disease--nevertheless, painful for the moment as the process may be, it is essential to our cure. And so God's searching of the heart, His deep probing of its hidden evil, His intent to discover the concealed agent that has caused so much ill health to your soul, will do you no hurt, but will result in your greater purity of heart, conformity to Christ, and real advance in the divine life.

The Lord will do you no hurt in His *afflictive* dispensations. For the present the disappointment is grievous--the blow is crushing--the hand of your God is heavy upon you--nevertheless, underlying all, there is a divine tenderness, infinitely more gentle than the gentlest nurse with her child, infinitely more tender than the tenderest love of a mother towards her first-born. Then, be still, lie passive, and as a weaned child, behave and quiet yourself beneath a loving Father's gentle hand, for He has said, *"I will do you no hurt."*

Nor will He permit *others* to hurt you. What a wonderful passage is that in the history of His dealings with His people in the wilderness, "When they went from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another people, *He allowed no man to do them wrong."* And so He will shield and protect you.

And when we hurt ourselves, as we continually do by our sin and folly, He graciously and tenderly binds up our self-inflicted wounds, soothes the bruises of our falls, and makes our broken bones once more to rejoice. Then, my soul, yield yourself to Jesus. He never has hurt you, He never will.

NOTHING TOO HARD FOR GOD

"Then came the word of the Lord unto Jeremiah, saying, Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh--is there anything too hard for me?"-- Jer 32:26-27

The believer has nothing to do in his religious life with anything, as his guide and directory, except with the Word of the Lord. Not with the "ifs" and the "buts" of unbelief--not with the changeful frames and experiences of the soul--not with the ever-varying providences of God--but with the Word of the Lord alone, eternally settled in heaven, and which lives and abides forever. With a "Thus says the Lord," the believer may confound every suggestion of Satan, may silence every "if" and "but" of unbelief, rise above each shifting phase of Christian experience, and anticipate with confidence and composure the solemn moment of his departure out of this world to go unto the Father. Have we, in the course of our daily thoughts, met with a "Thus says the Lord" more precious and comforting than this--*"Is anything too hard for Me? says the Lord"?* Let us meditate upon it for a moment, and extract from it the honey that will enlighten and revive us even more than that which David's weary and exhausted army experienced from the honey they found in the forest.

This condescending challenge of our God, while it conveys to us a gentle rebuke, contains also a self-evident truth. The answer of faith would admit of not a moment's hesitation. The reason is simple. Can anything finite outdistance infinity? Can any difficulty confound it? Can any contingency thwart it? Can any demand exhaust it? Can any sin out-measure it? In a word, can anything be too hard for God? Oh, no! We deal with INFINITY, with whom nothing is too hard, and nothing impossible, except that He should lie. *"That by two immutable things, in which it is impossible far God to lie, we might have a strong consolation."*

Let us consider these words of God as a great strengthening of our faith. We need every view of God calculated to enlarge our thoughts of His greatness, and to increase our faith in His power and love. Our low thoughts and limited views of God lie at the root of all unholiness. Our hatred of sin will be in proportion to our conception of God's holiness, the infinite purity of His nature, and the spirituality and extent of His love. Behold, then, the strength faith may derive from its dealing with God's all-sufficiency! The difficulty that has out-measured your power--the perplexity that has confounded your wisdom--the impossibility that has paralyzed your efforts--the demand that has exhausted your resources. But what is it all that with God? Let your faith, then, deal not with yourself, but with God--not with your perplexity, but with His wisdom--not with your difficulty, but with His power--not with your need, but with His wealth--not with your vileness and ingratitude, but with His great love, grace, and all-sufficient merit treasured in Christ Jesus.

Let this view of God encourage you to cast yourself upon His boundless mercy in Christ Jesus. Is any sin too great, any guilt too deep, any ingratitude and unworthiness too vast for the compass of His pardoning grace lodged in the Son of His love? Oh, no! If His salvation could not and did not reach infinitely beyond the utmost bound of human sin, guilt, and unworthiness, then there would be a limit to Infinity. But this is impossible.

Let this view of God's all-sufficiency deepen our love to Him. Faith works by love. They are twin graces in the renewed soul. The closer the transactions of your faith with God--dealing with Him in all the *little things* of life--the deeper will be your love to Him! The more intimate our acquaintance with God in Christ, the warmer will be our love. Sinners have not the love of God in them, because He is to them an unknown God. They know not what a God they hate, rebel and sin against. But, my soul, you have seen the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and in the trials and needs, the sins and sorrows you have transacted with Him; you have known Him but to confide in Him; and have trusted Him but to love Him; and have loved Him but to go forth and live and labor, and, if need be, die for Him.

THE LORD'S LOVING REMEMBRANCES OF YOUTH

"Thus says the Lord; I remember you, the kindness of your youth."-- Jer 2:2

If there is a stage of the Christian's life ever verdant, ever precious in God's remembrance, it is that important and memorable period when he gave his *youth,* consecrated his first and best to God. God calls it "kindness." How gracious and condescending is our God! Can he ever forget that solemn moment of life's turning-point, when the great and blessed decision for eternity was made, when the world was forsaken and sin renounced, and the creature relinquished, and the good part was chosen? that hour of the soul's espousals to Christ, when the divine marriage between Jesus and your heart took place, and all the angels sang the nuptial song in heaven?

"Your youth." In its spiritual aspect what an important period is youth! It is the moral spring of human life. It maintains the same spiritual relation to our being, as the natural spring does to the autumn of the year. It is the seed-time of life. It seems to hold the future of our existence in its grasp, fixing and foreshadowing its mold and destiny. In almost every case the noon and evening of life reflect the morning. A religious, virtuous, God-fearing morning predicts a career holy, happy, and useful. On the other hand, youth tainted, stunted, and shaded by sinful indulgence, often transmits a sad and fearful heritage of suffering, sorrow, and remorse, mental and physical, to life's future; crippling its prime, and bringing down the grey hairs of age--if indeed it reach that period--with shame and sorrow to the grave.

Oh! then, seize the golden period, and by prayer and God's Word, by Christ's grace and the Spirit's help, seek its renewal, sanctification and dedication, that you may be like the Savior, a "holy child;" like Josiah, fearing God in your youth; like Samuel, early found in the Temple, hearkening to the call of God and doing His will; like thousands we could mention, of later times, who consecrated the "dew of their youth" to Christ, and gave the first and best to God.

"The kindness of your youth." The early seeking and finding the Lord, He condescends to denominate a kindness shown Him. He seems to lose sight of His own kindness in early giving His Spirit, in early calling by His grace, and to speak only of the kindness done Him in responding to that call and in yielding to that grace. Are you prepared to manifest this kindness to Jesus? It is kindness to Him when you weep in penitence at His feet. It is kindness to Him, when you arise in faith and wash in His precious blood. It is a kindness to Him, when you accept the free gift of His salvation without a work of your own. It is a kindness, when you lay the sheaf of the "first fruits" of your being--intellect, rank, wealth, service--upon the altar of consecration.

"'Tis done! the great transaction's done!
I am my Lord's, and He is mine;
He drew me, and I followed on,
Charmed to confess the voice divine.

"Now rest my long-divided heart,
Fixed on the blissful center rest;
With ashes who would grudge to part,
When called on angels' bread to feast?

"High Heaven that heard that solemn vow,
That vow renewed shall daily hear;
Until in life's latest hour I bow,
And bless in death a bond so dear."

"I remember you." Lord, amid the myriad thoughts and memories that crowd Your mind, do You remember that sacred vow, that solemn hour, that blissful moment, when You and I did became *one?* Oh! matchless love! oh! infinite long-suffering, to remember it still, after all my sinful and sad forgetfulness of You and of Your love! Here beneath Your cross, let me renew my vow of dedication, consecrate myself afresh to You; devoting more holily and unreservedly than ever the little remnant that is left of this sinful, transient being. Remember your servant, O Lord, for good; and give Your grace that, in hallowed remembrance of his "first love," and of all the long line of Your mercies, he may be faithful unto death, and through Your grace receive the crown of life that fades not away.

THE LORD FAITHFUL, AND HIS WORD TRUE TO THE LAST

"Now I am about to go the way of all the earth. You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the Lord your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed." Jos 23:14

There is no testimony to the faithfulness of God in His Word so convincing and touching as that of the dying believer. If ever a man is sincere, it is then. If ever the veil is laid aside and the soul appears real and undisguised, be it a saint or a sinner, it is at that solemn moment. No motive now exists for the false, and no cloud can conceal the true; the coin that has passed current with many for genuine is now found to be counterfeit, and that which many regarded as counterfeit--even the possessor himself--proves to be genuine! Nature now appears to be but nature; and grace, vindicating its true character, proves itself grace. The specious hope dies, and the true hope gathers life; the false faith sinks, and the real rises; and the timid believer, who went doubting and trembling all the way to Jordan's brink, plunges boldly into the river, and passes over to the other side, with the paean of triumph breathing sweetly from his lips, "O Death, where is your sting? O Grave, where is your victory?"

Such is the picture which the position of Joshua now presents to our view. He is standing upon the sunny slope, and before the soles of his feet smite the cold waters, he casts a back glance upon all the way the Lord his God had brought him; and in words the most emphatic and impressive, testifies to the divine faithfulness and unchanging love of his covenant God in making good all His great and precious promises He had so graciously given, *"Not one thing has failed of all the good things which the Lord, your God, spoke unto you; all are come to pass."*

Such is the divine assurance with which we conclude our daily thoughts. What more precious truth, blended with sweeter melody, could linger upon the ear as we close the volume than this--*God's faithfulness in the fulfillment of His Word?* Let us look at this truth as confirmed by the experience, first, of the living, and then of the dying believer, for both are God's witnesses.

What is the life of the child of God but a continuous experience of the truth of His Word, and the veracity of His promises? You have, perhaps, been placed in trying circumstances; resources have lessened and demands have increased; your faith has been sharply tried; your spirits depressed; the sky has lowered and the waters have risen; but lo! the Spirit, the Comforter, has guided you to some precious promise which has just met your case. It has touched your heart, moistened your eye, uplifted the pressure, and your whole soul has been, as it were, absorbed in God. And now the harp that hung sad and mute upon the willow is taken down, and thrills with a new song of praise and thanksgiving to the faithfulness of God in the fulfillment of His Word.

Yes, my soul, you can testify to the truth that every sweet invitation and precious promise and loving word of Jesus, upon which He causes your soul to rest in its grief and desolation, has come to pass--not one word has failed. This is a clear proof of God's veracity in the making good His every word of promise. Has He not promised to *provide* for you? then trust Him. Has He not pledged Himself to *guide* you? then commit your way to Him. Has He not undertaken to save you? then believe His Word and pray--"Say unto my soul, I am your salvation."

Soon the *living* witness to the faithfulness of the Lord in His Word will become the *dying* one. When heart and flesh are failing--when the solemn curtain of eternity is rising--when the eye is darkening, and the pulse is sinking, and earth is receding, and eternity is nearing, and, heaven is opening, oh, then, like Joshua, you shall testify to the unchanging love and faithful word and precious comforts and secure supports of your covenant God and redeeming Savior, as He gently leads you down the valley, radiant with His presence, resounding with your song--up the delectable mountains, home to your Father's House--"Forever with the Lord!"