A Happy Old Age

Or, Home Beyond!

Ashton Oxenden, 1870

Life's Journey

What is our life?
Life is a *Journey*, that is soon ended.
Life is a *Tale*, that hours is quickly told.
Life is a *Day*, whose hours roll by apace.
Life is a *Vapor*, which rises for a while, and then vanishes.
Life is a *Flame*, that burns for a moment or two, and then flickers, and shortly goes out.
Our little lifetime — oh, how short it is!

And what are your thoughts, my aged friend, about *this journey of life?* Once you looked upon it as a very different thing from what it appears to you now. Once it seemed to you as if the days of your childhood would never pass away. You longed for manhood or womanhood; but it came very slowly. The early stages of your journey seemed almost endless. And if it had been possible, you would willingly have taken a jump, and sprang into *middle life* in one bound. But now you look back, and wonder how *quickly* your life has passed. It seems but yesterday, that you were a child. Old age has crept on, almost without your knowing it.

Truly the longest life is but a *little while* — when compared with eternity. It is but a *tiny drop* in the wide ocean; but as a grain of sand on the boundless shore! Life soon passes it away — and we are gone forever!

And when we look *forward* — how soon shall we be in our graves! A few more days — and we shall come to the end of our little span. Very soon the silver cord will be severed, the golden bowl will be broken — and our dust will return to the ground it came from, and our spirit will return to God who gave it. Then we will go to our eternal home and mourners go about the streets! (Eccles. 12:5, 6.)

Now, I want you to carefully ponder the *Ninetieth Psalm:*

1 Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations.

2 Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

3 You turn men back to dust, saying, "Return to dust, O sons of men."

4 For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night.

5 You sweep men away in the sleep of death; they are like the new grass of the morning —

6 though in the morning it springs up new, by evening it is dry and withered.

7 We are consumed by your anger and terrified by your indignation.

8 You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence.

9 All our days pass away under your wrath; we finish our years with a moan.

10 *The length of our days is seventy years — or eighty, if we have the strength; yet their span is but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away.*

11 Who knows the power of your anger? For your wrath is as great as the fear that is due you.

12 *Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.*

13 Relent, O Lord! How long will it be? Have compassion on your servants.

14 Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days.

15 Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us, for as many years as we have seen trouble.

16 May your deeds be shown to your servants, your splendor to their children.

17 May the favor of the Lord our God rest upon us; establish the work of our hands for us — yes, establish the work of our hands.

Take it, and ponder it over in your heart; and I think you will find it very profitable sometimes to use it as a prayer for yourself. It is not certain who was the writer of that Psalm. But whoever wrote it must, I think, have been an old man; and he must have written it on purpose for those of his brethren who are going down the hill of life.

I once heard of an aged Christian, who used to be very fond of applying the Ninety-first Psalm to himself. He loved to think how truly it set forth the faithfulness of God to him during his long life. When he was on his death-bed, he exclaimed, in the words of the last verse; 'With long life has He satisfied me; and now I am going to enjoy the only portion which I could not have in this life — He is going to show me His salvation.'

Perhaps, dear reader, you are drawing to the close of a long life. It may be that your thoughts have long been turned heavenwards. And if so, I know that a word of counsel will be welcome to you. But if, on the other hand, you have been thoughtless hitherto, I will try and make you thoughtful now. Whatever has been your past history, I want to give you in this book a few hints as to how you may turn to the best account, the time that still remains to you. I want to do you some good. I want to make your *last* days the *best* and *happiest* of all your life.

I observe that aged people are in some respects much alike — but in other respects are very different.

They are ALIKE in their *infirmities*. Their limbs shake and totter. Their bodies have grown weak. The clay house they dwell in, is the worse for wear. Their *minds* too have lost their former strength. Memory fails them. They can recollect what happened years and years ago; but what happened yesterday is gone — all is as a blank.

They are alike too in their *sorrows*. They have known what affliction is. Some have had to mourn over thoughtless, and undutiful, and rebellious children. Some have had to weep over many an open grave. Some have found, from sad experience, that the world is but a *sorry house* to live in. In these respects, aged people are much alike.

But in other respects, how DIFFERENT they are! Some are rich — while others are poor. Some have but few cares and troubles in their declining years — while others are burdened with anxieties. Some again have many friends around them, who show them kindness — while others are left alone with no one to care for them.

But there is a still greater difference between those who are far advanced in years. Here is one stooping and groaning under his heavy burden — vexed with all around him — full of complainings — discontented with his lot — having no pleasure in life, and yet clinging to it as a drowning man grasps at the only plank that is left — tired of this world, and yet having no hope beyond it.

We see another with the same grey head, and the same bent body; but there is a beam that lights up his aged countenance. He is thankful, contented, peaceful. All goes well with him. He is willing — cheerfully willing — to bear all that God lays upon him. Not a murmur escapes his lips; not a distrustful feeling dwells within. There is a calm tide of joy flowing through his soul.

How is this? What makes all this difference? It is *God's grace* alone. This fills the heart with peace. This gives comfort and rest now, and awakens in the soul a sweet and blessed hope of joys to come.

Such an old age as this is most desirable, is it not? And such an old age, dear reader — is just what I desire for you. May it be your portion.

I once heard of an old man, who was brought to God late in life. He desired that, when he died, these words might be written on his tombstone: 'Here lies an old man of seven years of age.'

And why so? The truth was, that all the past years of his long life he counted as no life at all, for his soul was dead. It was only during the last few years that he had really lived, for he had then lived to God.

You are now grown old. The *shadows of evening* are growing thick around you. You are come to the *last stage of life's journey*. Your state is something like that of Moses, when he had traveled for forty years through the wilderness, and was now come to his journey's end. The Lord announces to him that his death is near. But before he departs, He bids him go up to the top of Mount Pisgah. There he was able to look *back* on the path along which he had been brought, and look *forward* to the *Land of Promise*.

It must have been very good for him to take a survey of that winding path along which God had led him — to cast his eye back upon the many spots where mercy had been shown him — to call to mind all the *difficulties* and *dangers* he had passed through, and the gracious manner in which his God had borne with him, notwithstanding his many sins.

Now, this is just the survey which you should take, my aged friend. Get a quiet half-hour now and then, and look back into the *past*. It will be good for you, I am sure; and I counsel you to try it. I will help you to do so in the next chapter.

The Days That Are PAST

You remember that I spoke in my last chapter of what Moses did before he died. He was directed to go up on Mount Pisgah, and take a glimpse of that *Promised Land* which lay before him. But we can hardly imagine that this was all he did. It is more than likely that another purpose for which he ascended that high hill was, that he might from thence take a survey of all the way that he had *already traveled* in his wilderness journey. And I said that it would be well for you now and then, to *look back* on all the years that you have passed through. Let me now help you a little in doing this.

First take a good searching look, and see what ***sins*** have marked your past life. And, as you look back, you will feel, I dare say, that there is many an act which you would gladly blot out if you could. There are many *days* you would like to live over again, in the hope that you would live them better. There are many *words* you would like to recall. There are many a *deed* which you would give worlds to undo. There are many a *bad thought* which you fostered, and which has left a *stain* behind, that even time cannot wear out.

I know it is very *painful* to be thinking about our *past sins*; but we must not shrink from it. It is folly to deceive ourselves, and imagine that they have not been committed. There they are — and God sees them, if we will not. His eye marked them at the time, and it marks them still. They may almost have faded away from *our* memory; but God remembers them — He forgets nothing.

Aged people are very apt to imagine that what is past and forgotten by them — is also blotted out of the book of God's remembrance. Often for instance, when the sins and follies of their *youth* are spoken of, they just heave a passing sigh, and that is all. They think that such things are *excusable* in times of youth, and that God will not be extreme to mark what was done amiss in those days. They imagine that the bye-gone past will not be laid to their charge, as they have since become wiser and more thoughtful.

But is it so? Is God such a one as ourselves? Can any length of time wear away our sins from His recollection? Is it not written that even 'for *every idle word* that men shall speak — they must give an account?'

I am sure it is very good for us all, and especially for those who are drawing near to the close of life, to look fairly at the sins that we have committed. It is folly to close our eyes upon them and persuade ourselves they do not exist. Indeed, if we have any spiritual life in us, whatever else we forget — surely we shall never forget those hateful sins which have defiled our souls.

But it is not enough to look at them in a sort of general way. We must fix upon them one by one, and draw them forth from their hiding-places. There must be a close searching for them, as with a candle — an honest, hearty, diligent search, so that not one shall escape us.

'And what is the good of this?' you are perhaps ready to ask. Is there any use in making ourselves unhappy? The thing is already done — can it be undone?

Oh, surely it is far better to discover our sins now — than to have them brought to light for the first time when we appear before God. It is far better to know how we stand with God now — than to learn it in that world where there is no more hope for the sinner.

And what are we to do with our sins when we have found them out? is there any way by which they can be gotten rid of? Or must they lie like dark spots on our souls — like unpaid debts which can never be cancelled? No, dear friend; no. There is a way — one only way — by which every sin committed, and every deed left undone, can be blotted out forever.

Christ has bled for sinners on the Cross. He has died that sinners might live. And He is able, at this moment, not only to pardon your every sin — but to cover you with His perfect righteousness, and to make you His forever; 'He is able to save to the uttermost, all who come unto God by him.'

Go now to Jesus, and ask Him to give you repentance. Ask Him by His Holy Spirit to touch your heart — to make you hate your sins, and mourn over them with godly sorrow. Oh, it is good for us to feel grief for our sins. And depend upon it, we shall grieve over them, if we are brought under the power of God's grace.

But remember, sorrow and tears will not *wash out* the stain of sin. They cannot remove one single atom of our guilt. No; it is only the sacrifice of Christ that can pay the debt. In Him alone forgiveness can be found. 'The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin.'

Here, then, my dear friend, is the good of finding out our many sins. It is that we may get every one of them pardoned — it is that we may be made happy in Christ our Savior. He is all power and love. He is able and willing to save. He says, 'Come unto me, and I will give you rest!' 'Though your sins be as scarlet — they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson — they shall be as wool!'

But there is something more we should look back upon, besides our sins; we should look back upon our many **mercies**.

Think of the numberless acts of love and kindness which God has shown you during the years that are past. Moses called to mind, I dare say, those forty years in which the Lord had so greatly blessed him. The whole path which he had trodden was indeed strewed with mercies — mercies to himself, to his family, to his people. We are told that for forty years their 'clothing did not wear out, neither did their feet swell.' When they were thirsty, 'He brought streams out of the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers.' When they were hungry, 'He fed them with bread from heaven.' He did not lead them by the *shortest* road, nor by the *easiest* path — but it was 'by the *right* way,' to their promised land.

And has not the Lord dealt as graciously with you? Have not goodness and mercy followed you all your days? Think of your many deliverances from dangers. Think how you have been *spared* — while others have been cut off. Think of the many *blessings* which came to you — when you so little deserved it. Think of God's *patience* with you — when you provoked His anger. Think how He made one thing and another work round for your good. Many a time you said within yourself, 'This thing is unfortunate — it is all against me;' and perhaps that very thing turned out to be for your greatest good.

If you are a sincere Christian, God's past mercies should be a pledge to you, of those that are to come. You may well plead with David, 'O God, you have taught me from my youth: now when I am old and grey-headed, O God, forsake me not!'

You may expect further trials as you reach the remaining stages of the wilderness. But you may be sure that the manna with which you have been fed, will not fail; nor the cloud of protection which has sheltered you, be withdrawn — until your wilderness wanderings are over. Be assured, God has never yet forsaken a worn-out Christian pilgrim. He never yet neglected an aged servant. You know that He has promised you, 'I will be your God throughout your lifetime — until your hair is white with age. I made you, and I will care for you. I will carry you along and save you!' The last words of good old Dr. Guyse were, 'O my God — you have always been with me, and will not leave me now.'

Think of all this, and it will warm your cold heart. You will find some love kindling within you, as you call to mind the goodness of that *heavenly Friend*, who has watched over you so lovingly, and cared for you from your childhood until now.

And oh! if you are a true servant of God — if you have been brought to know and love your Savior — if the path of godliness has been your path — then is there not one mercy which out-tops every other in your case? Does not your heart throb with gratitude — when you think of that *grace* which called you out of darkness into the blessed light of God's truth, which turned your feet out of the path of sin and misery along which you were then hurrying, and brought you into the way of peace? Of all your mercies, there is none so great as that which led you to Christ and made you a partaker of His great salvation!

It is said of *John Newton*, that although his memory failed him in his old age, there were two things which he never forgot — one was, that 'he was a great sinner;' and the other was, that 'Jesus was a greater Savior!'

Let me urge you then, at once to take a look BACK on your past *sins*, and on your past *mercies*. This is especially needful for you who have lived many years in this world, and whose hour-glass has but a *few grains* yet to run out. Do so in a humble and thoughtful spirit, and I believe you will find that much good will come from it.

Take this, and any other counsels which I offer you, as coming from one who really cares for you. Yes, I feel for the aged. I know their *trials*, their *infirmities*, and their *difficulties*. But I also know that the Savior Himself cares for you. He has in store many and great blessings, which He is quite ready to bestow upon you. And what I desire, in this book, is to lead you to the enjoyment of them, so that yours may be a blessed and happy old age.

The DUTIES of Old Age

Every station and stage of life has its own special duties. *Childhood* has its duties; such as obedience to parents, modesty, willingness to be taught. A *husband* and *wife* have their duties. *Adulthood* has its duties; a grown-up man or woman are required to be useful in the world, and to live not unto themselves — but unto the Lord. And so too *Old Age* has its duties. I will mention some of them.

1. You should endeavor to be *patient* and *gentle*. Amidst all your pains and infirmities, how blessed if you can feel a *cheerful submission* to God's will, and if you can accept, not merely with resignation — but with actual thankfulness, all that He lays upon you. Now, God can give you this patient, humble, and submissive spirit, if you will earnestly and daily seek it from Him.

2. You should try to be *cheerful* and *considerate* of others. Sometimes old people are a little apt to dwell too much on their own troubles and needs. Guard against this; and seek to make those around you happy. You cannot do much, perhaps — but you can do something. A gentle word or two, or even a kind look, will cheer some and encourage others.

Little drops of water, little grains of sand,
Make the boundless ocean, and the beauteous land.
Little deeds of kindness, little words of love,
Make our earth an Eden, like the heaven above.

Do not begrudge young people those delights which you can no longer enjoy. But put yourself often in their place, and remember that you were once a child yourself. The very feeling that you are trying to make others happy — will make you happy yourself.

3. Be much in *prayer* and in the *reading* of God's Word. These are great helps to a Christian pilgrim; they are like so many strong staffs along the way. Use them diligently and they will help you onward. As you read a little further in this book, you will see some directions how to profit by the use of them.

4. You should sit loose to this *world* — and be in readiness to leave it. This, you will say, is the duty of us all. Yes — but it is especially your duty; for the *clock of time* seems now to be giving its warning sound in your ears. Every day seems now to be saying to you, 'Prepare to meet your God! The night is far spent; the day is at hand. The judge stands at the door!'

It is a melancholy sight to see an aged person bent down with years, standing at the edge of eternity — and yet unwilling to loose his hold of this world — clinging to it with an eager grasp — as much busied as ever with its *trifling concerns* — still thirsting for its poor pleasures, and yet unable to enjoy them — having no hope as regards eternity. Such an old age is indeed a sad one.

But you will perhaps say, Surely when any one has grown old, and when he has sown the wild oats of youth, he will, as a matter of course, become thoughtful, and turn his mind towards that eternal world which he is so shortly to enter. But no; this does not at all follow. On the contrary, I have seen many in old age, just as worldly-minded as ever, and putting from them even then the thoughts of a life to come.

Dear friend, it is only *saving grace* which can make you concerned about your never-dying soul. It is only grace which can prepare you for eternity. We all need the powerful working of God's Spirit to draw our minds from earth — to heaven; from sin — to holiness.

Happy for you, if heaven is the home of your heart! Happy for you if your thoughts are centered there! Happy for you, if you can say, 'The world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world!' 'So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is *temporary*, but what is unseen is *eternal*. Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands!'

5. Your *conversation* should be heavenly. Your time on earth is nearly ended; and therefore you should not think much about this present world, which you are on the point of leaving. Its pleasures, its riches, its occupations — should not much occupy your mind. You should rather busy yourself about your *journey to your everlasting home*. You should love to speak about *your Father's house*.

True it is, that our poor hearts will ever be 'cleaving to the dust.' There is a weight upon our wings ever keeping us downwards. But oh, struggle against this. Pray against it. Ask God continually to be drawing your mind heavenward, and to enable you to 'set your affections on things above.' Speak thankfully of His preserving mercy. Bear testimony to His goodness and faithfulness. And recommend others to trust Him without a doubt, and to give their whole hearts to Him.

6. Try and set a *good example* to others. We should all wish to be useful in the world. But now that you are grown old, you feel perhaps that your time for usefulness is past. Satan may whisper, 'You are too old to be useful now!' But not so! You may do something still. It is true that you cannot labor for your family as you once did. You cannot go here and there to help those who need your assistance. But you may be very useful; yes, useful even now — useful if you are *rich*, and useful too if you are *poor*.

As you sit by your fireside, you may *speak* Christian words, and you may show by your *conduct* and *temper* — the blessed effects that salvation has upon your heart. You may, by your prayers and praises, by your patience and perseverance, by your watching and waiting — glorify God. A Christian aged man or woman may thus be a great blessing to the house and place in which he is living. He may spread a feeling of contentment around him. He may check many a bad word, and soften down many a quarrelsome spirit. He may show forth so clearly the *power of grace in his own conduct*, that he may thereby lead others to seek it, and pray for it themselves.

Without *speaking* much, or *doing* much — you may honor God by your Christian conduct; and thus your light may so shine before men, that they may glorify Him. We know that a *lovely picture* in a room is a pleasant thing to gaze upon; we constantly turn to it with pleasure. And what picture is there more beautiful than that of an aged Christian — old in years, and ripe in grace? 'Gray hair is a crown of glory; it is gained by living a godly life.'

Yes, remember always you may do much by your *example*. This will be even more useful even than your *words*. For your *words* may be mistaken — but your *life* cannot be; it must and will speak. Paul reminded the Corinthians of this, when he said, 'You show that you are the *epistles of Christ*, known and read by everybody!' That is, your lives plainly declare *whose* and *what* you are.

These are some of the *duties* which belong to aged people. Dear reader, neglect them not, try to fulfill them. It will be for your own happiness — and for the good of others. Thus you will be 'bearing fruit in old age.' 'He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers!'

The TEMPTATIONS of Old Age

Satan tempts every one of us. Who is there that has not felt his power? And oh, how *craftily* does he apply his temptations! He *suits* them exactly to our *stations* and *ages*. He has some temptations for the *rich*, others for the *poor*; some for the *young*, and others for the *aged*. He knows our *weak points* — and there he assaults us!

So you must not be surprised if you have your temptations, and perhaps sore ones too. You may be one of God's dearest children — and yet be tempted. Was not *Joseph* tempted, and *David*, and *Paul?* And was not even *Jesus*, the sinless Savior, tempted by Satan?

Neither, again, be angry with yourself because you are thus tried. It is no *sin* to be *tempted*. It is only when we *yield* to temptation, instead of *resisting* it — that offends God. It is the *falling* into sin that grieves and offends Him — not the mere being *tempted* by sin.

When you find yourself tempted to any wrong feeling, or to do anything sinful, I will tell you how to act. Don't give yourself up to the temptation — but *strive resolutely against it.* And, as you have but little strength of your own — fly unto the Strong One, *God* for help. Turn at once to Him. Satan is strong; but there is a Stronger One than he. Jesus knows both *Satan's power* — and *your weakness*; and, as 'He himself has suffered, being tempted — he is able to help those who are tempted.' In Christ you are safe — and nowhere else. He can throw His shelter around you, and protect you from all harm.

But let us see what *KINDS of temptation* belong especially to the aged.

A deadness and dullness of soul is very apt to come over an aged person. Your *feelings* are not as lively and strong as they once were. Your *affections* are somewhat blunted. There was a time when a powerful sermon or a striking book moved you, and the tear started in your eye. The love of Jesus made your heart to glow. But perhaps this warmth and tenderness of spirit is in a measure gone.

Now, you have need to be on your guard on this point. Take care that you do not settle down into a cold and easy frame of mind. Take care that your *faith* does not wither, and your *love* grow dull. It will do so — if you are not very watchful. Pray constantly that God may touch your heart, and enliven it. Especially pray that you may have a bright view of that gracious Savior, who has done so much for you.

Very often, too, aged people give way to **a peevish and irritable temper**. They allow *little things* to ruffle them and annoy them. This is wrong, and it very much interferes with their happiness.

When you yourself have indulged in this spirit — what has been the consequence? Why, you have felt thoroughly uncomfortable afterwards, and you have wished that you had more command over yourself.

Watch against it then. I know that it is one of the temptations to Which *old age* is especially liable. But God can strengthen you against it. He can enable you to overcome it — instead of its overcoming you. He can give you a happy, contented, peaceful frame of mind; and enable you to take all the *little roughnesses of life* — with calmness and evenness of temper. Thus will your latter days be happy, instead of miserable; and you will enjoy a peace within, which nothing can rob you of!

Again there is such a thing as **weariness of living**, which it is very wrong to foster. At the end of sixty or seventy years, a person often feels *a little tired of this world*. He is weary of its *trials*. He has tasted of its *disappointments*. He wishes to get away from them. A *suffering body* too perhaps weighs him down. And he is ready to cry out with David, 'Oh, that I had wings like a dove! then would I fly away, and be at rest!'

But this is not a holy wish. We ought cheerfully to bear all that our Heavenly Father sees it good for us to bear. Even our greatest sufferings — should be willingly endured for His sake. Christ could say in the very midst of His agony, 'The cup which my Father has given me — shall I not drink it?' *Elijah* was wrong when he requested that he might die, and said, 'Now, O Lord, take away my life!' Jonah, too, was wrong when he exclaimed, 'It is better for me to die, than to live!' There was a good deal of *discontent* in their minds, when they made such a request. It was in a moment of *disappointment* and *distrust* — that they breathed the unholy prayer.

How different were Paul's feelings when he expressed a 'desire to depart.' It was not because he was *tired of life* — or because he was *discontented* with the lot which God had appointed for him. No! He desired to depart for a far different reason. It was because *he wished to be with Christ*. He loved his Savior, and longed to be in His presence!

May God give us the same *holy longing!* And may we at the same time be content to remain here — just so long as He in His wisdom and love sees fit.

My dear friend, you see there are certain *temptations* to which in your old age you are especially liable. I have mentioned three — namely, *deadness of soul*, *peevishness*, and *unwillingness to bear the sufferings of this life*. But there are others which I have not noticed. Now, look well into your heart and think what is the temptation to which *you* are most inclined to yield. And then ask God to set you free from it, and to strengthen you. That was a comforting word which our Lord spoke to Peter, 'Satan has desired to have you, and sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not.'

Satan is a *mighty tempter*; but you have also an *almighty Protector*. Rest in His promise; trust in His strength; and no power on earth or in hell can ever harm you!

The TRIALS of Old Age

'Here on earth — you will have many trials and sorrows!'

John 16:33

This present life, is a life of trials! There are none who are altogether free from them! We must *expect* them, and be ready to *meet* them when they come. Sometimes they cluster so thickly around us, that it needs a *stout heart* and *much grace* — to bear them meekly, and to pass through them unhurt.

Let us talk over those trials which belong to *old age*; and perhaps we shall find ourselves all the better for saying a few words about them.

Loss of *strength* is a great trial to an old man or woman. It is painful to feel that you cannot do many things now — which you once did so easily. To be busy and happy — was once perhaps your greatest enjoyment. But now your old limbs can hardly carry you; and many of the *routine tasks of life* are a burden to you.

But let not this distress you. It is your portion, and God has so ordered it. And though 'the *outer* man decays,' He can strengthen you in your soul, so that the 'inner man is renewed day by day.'

And is there not *mercy* in your very feebleness? For it reminds you constantly that your life is drawing to a close, while a voice from heaven whispers to you that 'there remains a *rest* for the people of God!' In that Heavenly Home — there will be no weakness, no weariness, no infirmity, no sin!

Loss of *memory* is another great trial, which generally accompanies old age. I dare say you can remember pretty well what happened years ago; but what happened *yesterday* — you entirely forget. What you read is soon lost; it passes away like letters written on the sand. You hear a sermon — and what your minister said is all gone an hour after; even the very text is forgotten! It may be, that you are sometimes vexed with yourself for this; and you even fear that God may be angry with you. But not so! He is no hard master, He 'does not reap — where He has not sown.' He is quite aware of your infirmities! He knows very well — the weakness of your frame, and 'remembers that you are but *dust*.' He is too *kind*, and too *just* — to require of you what you cannot reasonably give Him.

Never mind then, your declining *memory*. God will not call you to account for that. The great thing is to have your *heart* right with God. Entreat Him to cleanse and purify *that* by His Holy Spirit — and then all will be well.

There is a third loss which aged people often have to mourn over, and that is **the loss of dear friends and family members**. One after another drops off into the grave — and they find themselves left behind like a *solitary tree* in the wilderness. Their dearest *children* have perhaps been taken from them; and it may be a *lonely widowhood* is their portion. Ah, there is something truly sad in all this. It is sad indeed, to see an aged one bereft of those who once clung to him with fond affection — and now left all alone. But, my dear friend, remember this: you will never be alone — if God is your God. Christ is the Friend, the Brother, the Husband of His people! Others may forsake you — but He never will. You may depend on His love — it will not fail you. He is with you now — and He will never leave nor forsake you. If you can truly say, 'The Lord is my Shepherd;' then you may certainly add, 'Therefore I shall not want.'

Again, aged people often **feel that they are only a *trouble* to others**. This is a heavy trial to some. But why should it be so? It is the will of God that in *infancy* and *old* age — we would need others for help. And surely a son or a daughter ought to feel it not only a sacred duty — but also a pleasure, to supply the needs of an aged parent. And I am sure, where the heart is right, it will be done with real cheerfulness and goodwill.

There is one more trial which I will mention — **the feeling of not being able to *earn* one's own livelihood**. If a person has honestly supported himself and his family during a long life, he does not like to feel that he must be *indebted to others* in his latter days. Perhaps this is the case with you. Perhaps you laid aside some money in the days of your strength, and looked forward to maintaining yourself in old age. But you lent your money to a friend, and he has made off with it; or you had a long illness, and all your savings were spent during that time. And now you are forced to *depend* on the kindness of friends and family.

Well, if such is the case, you have no cause to blame yourself, and there is no *disgrace* whatever in being now a *pensioner* on others. Instead of such a feeling — you may well be thankful that there are ways in which you can be helped in the hour of your need. Look upon those who assist you — as sent by your Heavenly Father! He it is who graciously provides *means* for supplying your necessities. He raises up friends for you. He puts it into their hearts — to help you. He is the great Fountain from whence all your blessings flow.

Receive then every *gift* — as from God. Acknowledge His hand in it; and depend on Him from day to day for all you need. I believe that, if we thus trust God — we shall never be disappointed. We may sometimes be at our wits end. There may be but a *little meal in our barrel*, and but a few drops of oil in our cruse; but let us remember that word which comforted Abraham of old, 'Jehovah-jireh' — *The Lord will provide!* He who feeds the ravens — will feed you. He cares for His people, and will never let them starve. 'Once I was *young*,' (said David), 'and now I am *old.* Yet I have never seen the godly abandoned or their children begging for bread!'

I have mentioned some of your *trials*. And I dare say there are many more — many which the world knows nothing about, and which none will ever know but yourself. But however *thick* they fall around you, and however *heavily* they press upon you — you have only to carry them to God, and He will lighten your load, and make it easy to bear. He is your *remedy*. He has given you His promise, 'Cast your burden upon the Lord — and He will sustain you.' He will not only carry your *burdens* — but He will carry *you*. He who has so often laid you as a *tender lamb* in His bosom — will *carry you* now that you are old. 'He will carry the *lambs* in His arms, holding them close to His heart!' He will never turn away from you — but rejoice over you to do you good. He will be with you amidst all your infirmities. He will not only bring you to *Jordan* — but will *carry you over it*, and conduct you safely into the Promised Land!

And then, too, remember that your *trials* are *good* for you. If we had none, we would be like a wild bull caught in a net; we would have our own way too much, and never learn submission to our Father's will. Our Lord suffered greatly — and shall not we? Suffering was His daily portion when on earth — let us not wish to escape it.

As it is — we are *tied* and *bound* to this world far too much! We *love* it too well. And how would it be with us — if we met with no trials here on earth? We would be still less disposed than we now are — to look for another resting place above!

Think too how *light* our trials are — compared with the Savior's. His was a *storm* of suffering; ours but a *few drops*.

Think also, for how *short* a time do our troubles, even the severest of them, last! They are 'but for a moment!' In eternity — how small they will seem to us, as we look back upon them! In heaven we shall *thank* God for them, for we shall then see how *needful* they were for us! 'For our *light* and *momentary* troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory which far outweighs them all!'

Cheer up then, my fellow-Christian! Bear these trials of yours patiently, meekly, thankfully. Look upon them as the sick man does upon the *remedies* which are sent to do him good. Look upon them as the traveler does upon the *rough rocks* which serve as *steps* to bring him to his father's house.

Turn your trials into *means of grace*. Let them not be *hindrances* to you — but *helps*, on your way to heaven. Ask God to change them into *blessings*, and to make them *useful* to you. And just as, when Noah was in the ark, every wave which swelled only bore him up higher and higher towards heaven — so may every trial raise your soul above the world, and bring you nearer and nearer to God.

'God disciplines us for our good — that we may share in His holiness!' Hebrews 12:10

'Before I was afflicted I went astray — but now I obey Your Word.' Psalm 119:67

'It was good for me to be afflicted — so that I might learn Your decrees!' Psalm 119:71

'I know, O Lord, that in faithfulness You have afflicted me!' Psalm 119:75

The JOYS of Old Age

A happy old age! Is such a thing possible? Do we ever meet with an old, worn out person — who is really happy? Is the *evening of life* ever bright and sunny? Yes, such a thing is quite possible; and we now and then meet with a fine specimen of it! Though the *body* is decayed by time, though the *limbs* are feeble and the mind is somewhat weakened too — yet still there may be a *calm joy* within, and a *deep peace* which time can never wear out.

Dear friend — do you wish to be happy? I know you do; for everyone is a seeker after happiness; though many look for it in the wrong direction, and therefore never find it.

Shall I tell you *how* and *where* to find happiness? The *world* cannot give it to you. It holds out large promises — but it has no peace to bestow. *Friends* cannot give it to you. It is a blessing to have kind friends, and to be surrounded by those who love us; but this cannot give peace to the conscience. *Money* cannot give it to you. It is well to have enough, and something to spare. And I dare say, you often long to be a little richer than you now are. But money cannot drive away worry. It cannot bring joy to the heart.

What then is it, which will make us truly happy? **The *grace of God* is the one great thing which can bring peace to the soul.** Oh, what a happiness to know that He is your *Father* and your *Friend!* To be able to look up and feel that He is yours, and you are His — this is happiness!

You have sinned — perhaps very long and very greatly. But remember, 'God is love' to His redeemed children. He is full of mercy, and ready to forgive. He has sent His dear Son to save you. And He will receive every penitent sinner who comes to Him through Christ, looking to His precious blood to save Him.

Yes, dear friend, you may be very happy — happier in your old age, than you have ever been before. God can give you happiness; and He will give it to you if you cast yourself on Him, and take Him as your portion.

Now, go to God and ask Him to show you your sins, and to pardon them all for Jesus' sake. Oh, seek Him in earnest prayer, and never rest until you have found Him. Pray for the Holy Spirit. Entreat Him to come into your dark soul and *enlighten* it. Beseech Him to change your evil heart — to take away all that is wicked in it, and to fill it with what is holy and good. Ask Him to show Christ to you, and to enable you to believe in Him. Ask Him to lead you in that blessed path of holiness, which He points out for His people. Then you will be happy. Here is the grand secret of all real peace. Here is *rest* for the weary soul — *joy* for those who have never tasted it before.

But there are two or three more *hints* I should like to offer you:

Try and take a *bright view* of everything. Look at things on their sunny side. Do not dwell much on your pains and aches, your troubles and infirmities, your trials and misfortunes. They may be very great; but they will not grow lighter by always *harping* upon them! Rather love to dwell on your many *blessings* — and your many *mercies*.

You will say, perhaps, 'I cannot help thinking of my troubles!' Yes — but you can help it, by making an effort to do so. A dull, complaining spirit grows upon people sometimes without their knowing it. Do try and check it — or it will make your days miserable, and displeasing to God.

Determine to be *content with your lot* — whatever it is. Paul says, 'I have *learned'* (ah! and he found it a good lesson when he had *learned* it!) 'I have learned in whatever state I am, therewith to be content.' A thankful and a contented spirit is a *continual feast*. We *ought* to be contented, and we *shall* be contented — if we are in the habit of seeing God in everything, and living upon Him day by day. Oh, for a spirit of true thankfulness!

Oh, for a heart to praise the Lord,
A heart from sin set free,
A heart that's sprinkled with the blood,
So freely shed for me!

Jane Down was a woman of about sixty-five. She was *well-off* in the world, having much money of her own. I never went to see her, that she did not find something to *complain* of. Either her *head* ached; or her *knee* troubled her; or somebody had been speaking against her; or the *weather* was too hot — or too cold. You could at once see that she had not found out the secret of true happiness. She was a constant trouble to herself — and a weariness to her friends!

Widow Kingston lived near her. She was supported partly by her son, and partly by parish dole. But her cottage was as clean and tidy as Jane Down's, though she had not half as many things in it. She was sure to welcome you with a smile, if you went to see her. She was sure to say something pleasant; and you felt afterwards that it did you good to pay her a visit. She had not much of this world's good things; but she possessed Christ. She loved her Savior, and it was her greatest joy to speak of His goodness. There was a calm peace in that poor widow's heart, which nothing could rob her of. Having Christ — she had all!

What made the difference between these two old people? What made the one contented and happy — while the other was sour, and discontented, and miserable? It was *grace* that made them to differ. The one was under the influence of the Holy Spirit — the other was destitute of His indwelling power. The one knew Christ and loved Him — to the other He was a stranger.

Try and live above the *world*. A ship that is 'homeward bound' cares little for the winds and waves — just so long as it sails on speedily towards the desired harbor. *Heaven* is the *peaceful Harbor* which you wish to reach. Why then think so much about the *storms* and tempests, which buffet you on your way? They will soon be over. Face them manfully. Take them patiently. Bear them meekly. Keep your eye ever fixed on *Christ* and *Eternity!* And then the troubles of this present world — will not greatly trouble you.

Oh, that Christ may give you, dear reader, His own peace — that peace which He promised to His people, when He said, 'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid!'

The Aged Christian and His BIBLE

Possibly you may have met with a very nice tract, called *'The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain.'* This shepherd was a plain, simple man, with scarcely any learning. But there was one sort of *knowledge*, of which he had a great deal. And there was one kind of *happiness* which he enjoyed more than most men. He was one who feared and loved God, and the Holy Scriptures were his delight. He read them daily, and his soul was greatly refreshed and comforted by them. They were 'more to him than his necessary food.'

Some were astonished at his *knowledge*. They wondered how one who had so little learning — could know so much. Where did it come from? How was it, that he, a poor unschooled man, had so much wisdom? He gleaned it all from the *Word of God*. That Word was brought home to his heart by the Holy Spirit, and it taught him much.

And what has the Word of God done for you? Has it brought life and comfort to your soul? You have a Bible, I dare say, and often *read* it. But do you *enjoy* it? Is it *precious* to your soul? Had you rather give up every other book, than give up your Bible? Is it your constant companion? Do you feel, as you read it, that it is as if God was speaking by it to your soul?

Two people may read their Bibles very differently. One may read down a chapter or two every day, as regularly as the clock strikes. He may get through a vast deal of Scripture in the course of the year. The Sacred Volume may often be seen in his hand. And yet he may be none the better for his reading. His mind may be as dark as ever, and his hopes of heaven as dim and cloudy. With all his reading — he may never receive God's truth into his soul. He may never know Christ as his Savior.

Another may study the Bible with far greater profit. He may not be a learned man, or have had much schooling. He may find a difficulty in making out some of the hard words he meets with. But he is a *humble* man; and so he looks up to God for His teaching. He never opens the Holy Volume without breathing a prayer — a secret, silent prayer, it may be, within his own heart — a prayer that the Holy Spirit may open his eyes, and help him to *understand* and *feel* the truths he reads. Thus the Word falls like *seed upon the open furrow*. It does not remain on the *surface* — but sinks down into his very *soul*. It takes root there. It instructs him. It brings joy and peace to his heart. It makes him 'wise unto salvation.'

Let the Bible be your constant study. It is God's Word — and it is therefore the best of books. It tells you the way to be saved; therefore it is most precious. It speaks to you of your Savior and your eternal home; and therefore it should be most sweet to you.

I would recommend you to get a good large Bible with a clear print. And when you have got it — use it. Do not put it aside on the shelf, and be afraid to use it for fear of its getting soiled. But read it very often, so that you may become well acquainted with its blessed truths. And a happy thing it is, if you can say with one of old, 'Your word is sweet to my taste; it is sweeter than honey to my mouth!'

I dare say you will find, in the course of your reading — much that you do not understand. Do not let this trouble you. There are many passages in God's Word, which even the most learned find it difficult to explain. God's thoughts are higher than our thoughts, and His ways higher than our ways — so it is no wonder that we cannot understand everything.

I have heard of an aged Christian who was once asked — 'How is it that you have so good a knowledge of your Bible?' 'Why, this,' she said, 'is the plan I always go upon — when I come to a hard verse or a difficult word, I do not dwell much upon it; but I put a slip of paper in the page, and then read on. And presently I come to some passage which explains the one I could not understand. Thus I am able to take out one marker after another. And the consequence is, there are but few places which cause me much difficulty.'

Try this plan, and I think you will find it helpful. There are *difficulties* in God's Word; but Scripture will often explain Scripture. And, after all, ought we not to be very thankful that there is so much that we *can* understand — so much that we can receive for the life and nourishment of our souls!

One thing is very necessary, and that is, to read the Bible with **prayer**. Our minds are dark and ignorant, and we need enlightening. Now, even if we had a friend always at our elbow, ready to explain to us every passage — we would still need something more. For man cannot make the *blind eye* to see. This is *God's work*. He who commanded the light to shine out of darkness — He who said, 'Let there be light, and there was light' — He must shine into *our* hearts!

Then, ask for His enlightening grace. Pray earnestly that the Holy Spirit may come and enlighten your mind and heart. He is the teacher that we need; for 'who teaches like Him?'

Whenever you open the Bible then, remember to ask God to open your heart. Put up some such short and simple prayer as this: 'O Lord, I am blind and ignorant; do enlighten me. Teach me by Your Holy Spirit; and grant that Your Word may do my soul good, for Christ's sake.'

There are few prayers more fitting for this purpose, than that short but beautiful Collect which we have in our Prayer-books. Let us see that we understand it:

'Blessed Lord, who has caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning' — here we acknowledge that the Scriptures are God's Word which He has made men to write expressly for our instruction.

'Grant that we may in such a way hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them' — here is a prayer that we may not only read the words with our eyes — but that we may dwell upon them; and gather from them something for our good; and turn them over and over in our minds, just as animals chew the food they eat, in order to digest it.

'That by patience and comfort of Your holy Word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast, the blessed hope of everlasting life, which You have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ.' This is the great object of reading God's Word — that we may get comfort from it, and be enabled to lay fast hold of that everlasting life which Christ has purchased for us.

You see there is a great deal in this Prayer, and it is very suitable to our needs. But it matters not whether you use the Collect I have mentioned, or any other suitable words — so long as you earnestly pray for God's teaching and blessing.

Only read the Bible in a prayerful, humble, childlike spirit — and I am sure you will not read it in vain. You will find there a *treasure* — which will enrich and comfort your soul day by day!

There was a time when the Bible was a scarce and costly book — so that few could own one. Now, thank God, it can be purchased by the poorest person, and we may each of us have a copy of it which we can call our own. May we prize it as our dearest possession, and be very thankful to God for giving us so rich a gift!

Holy Bible! Book Divine!
Precious treasure, you are mine!
Mine, to tell me whence I came;
Mine, to teach me what I am!

Mine, to chide me when I rove;
Mine, to show a Savior's love!
Mine are you to guide my feet;
Mine, to judge, condemn, acquit!

Mine, to comfort in distress,
If the Holy Spirit bless;
Mine, to show by living faith,
Man can triumph over death!

Mine to tell of joys to come,
And the rebel sinner's doom!
O you precious book divine!
Precious treasure, you are mine!

The Aged Christian in the House of God

The House of God has special charms for the Christian in his old age. There is a calm, quiet, soul-refreshing atmosphere there, which is peculiarly sweet to one who longs for rest. You can leave the noise and turmoil of the world, with all its vanities and sins — and there meet your God, and hold sweet fellowship with Him.

The Lord is everywhere. He is 'about our path, and about our bed.' But He is *specially* with us in His own House. There we feel His nearness, and we are sometimes ready to exclaim, as Jacob did at Bethel, 'Surely the Lord is in this place; this is none other but the *house of God*, and this is the gate of heaven!'

Good old *Eli* loved the Lord's House. Many a happy and blessed hour he spent in those sacred courts. *David* too rejoiced to be there: 'A day in your courts is better than a thousand spent elsewhere. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God — than dwell in the tents of wickedness.' *Simeon* enjoyed his visits to the Temple. There it was that he saw the Savior, whom he so greatly longed to behold. And this made him quite willing to die, 'Lord, now let you your servant depart in peace, according to your Word; for my eyes have seen your salvation.' We read also in the Gospels of one *Anna*, who was of a 'very old,' ' a widow of about eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying.' The House of God was her delight. It seemed like a *little heaven* below. The voice of prayer and praise was music in her ears.

Well, dear friend, I hope you can say of the courts of the Lord, 'I love to be there. There I have spent my happiest moments. There I have found a peace, which the world can never rob me of. There I have often had my heart warmed with love to Christ and to His people. There I have oftentimes gone with a heavy burden — but I have left it behind me, and come away lightened.'

Dear is to me the Sabbath morn,
The village bells, the pastor's voice;
These oft have *found* my heart forlorn,
And these have bid my heart rejoice.

And dear to me the winged hour,
Spent in Your hallowed courts, O Lord;
To feel devotion's soothing power,
And catch the manna of Your Word.

And dear to me the loud *Amen*,
Which echoes through the blest abode,
Which swells, and sinks, and swells again,
Dies on the walls — but lives to God.

Oh, when the *world*, with iron hand,
Would bind me in its six days' chain,
Thus burst, O Lord, the strong man's band,
And let my spirit loose again!

But it is not every kind of church-going that does us good. Many a young person, and many an old one too — goes there without getting much profit. Let me offer you then a few friendly directions.

1. Always go to God's House expecting a blessing. Look out for it, and specially ask for it. Go in a devout spirit. Before you leave your home, kneel down for a moment or two and beg of the Lord to prepare your heart by His Holy Spirit, and enable you to worship Him as you ought.

2. When there, enter with all your heart into the service. During the prayers, join earnestly with your fellow-worshipers. It is not enough to sit quietly while your minister sends up his petitions to heaven; but pray the prayers yourself. Yes, pray them with all your soul.

3. When the verses are read out of God's Word — listen with your whole attention. It may be you have often heard those chapters before, or read them yourself; but they contain precious truths, which are always new to the hearing ear and the understanding heart.

4. During the sermon — be a humble listener. You should be as a *little child* — feeling that your knowledge is but small, and that you have much to learn. You should be like a *hungry man* — who comes to be fed, seeking to get your soul nourished by the bread of life. You should be like the *thirsty soil* — which waits to drink in the falling shower. If we all heard in this way — who can tell what blessings would flow from every service, and how many would come away from this ordinance of God filled and refreshed!

Perhaps you are growing *deaf* — and can only pick up a part of what is said by the preacher. Perhaps too your *memory* fails you — when you try to gather up what you have heard. Still, you can carry away *something*; and you will be thankful for that something, if you feel that it is a part of God's own message.

5. When you come home from church — do not forget the service in which you have been engaging. Converse about it, if you have an opportunity. Get out your Bible, and find the text; and then talk over any part of the sermon which you can remember. This is the way to refresh your memory, and to lay up a store of spiritual knowledge.

6. When Holy Communion is administered — do not fail to receive it. Be thankful when your *Communion Sundays* come around, and rejoice in the opportunity of feeding on the body and blood of Christ.

Some aged people 'take the Sacrament,' as they call it, as a mere matter of *form*. They come to the *Lord's Table* because there is something respectable in doing so, or because their minister expects to see them there. But if they only come for this reason, it is to them but a poor, cold, dry, unmeaning service; and, instead of pleasing God, they only offend Him!

But I trust that you, my dear friend, are not one of these *formal communicants*. I trust that you come to this blessed ordinance under a deep feeling of your own sinfulness and unworthiness, and desire to draw near to Christ with humble and living faith. You come, not because you are *worthy* to come — but because you feel your *need of strength and grace*. You come to Jesus to be pardoned and healed, and to receive fresh life from Him.

I have said that David, and Simeon, and Eli, and Anna — all loved God's House. But you have reason to love it even more than they did. For they lived only in old Jewish days. The *light* was but very dim then. But now it shines brightly and clearly upon us. Christ has come; and He has plainly set before us as 'the way, the truth, and the life.'

Then *love* the House of God. Go there as often as the bells of the sanctuary call you. And remember your Savior's gracious promise; 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name — there am I in the midst of them.'

May your Sabbaths be more and more happy, as you draw nearer to that endless Sabbath which you hope to spend above! May your love for God's House, for God's Word, and God's people — be ever increasing, until you are called away to join the 'one family in heaven,' and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God!

Your earthly Sabbaths, Lord, I love,
But there's a nobler rest above.
Oh, that I might that rest attain,
From sin, from sorrow, and from pain!

The Aged Christian in His CLOSET

There are times when we must be *alone with God*. There are times when the Christian needs to get away from others — and draw near to his Heavenly Father. Our Lord knew that this was needful for the well-being of our souls; and therefore He said, 'When you pray, enter into your *closet*, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in secret.' Jesus, you see, is here speaking of *private prayer*, when no one is present with us but God Himself.

Think how *great your* ***need*** is — both as regards your body and your soul. Have you not need of God's *protecting care* to keep you alive from day to day? Have you not need of His *guiding hand* to direct you in your path? Have you not need of His *grace* to keep you from falling into sin, and to strengthen your faith? Have you no *bad habits* to get rid of, and no *bad tempers* to subdue? Are there no friends, or neighbors, for whom you should intercede? Is there no *work* of Christ going on in the world, for which you should pray? Surely these are matters which you have great need to bring before God.

Think too how *great are your* ***sins***. There are sins, committed long ago in the days of your youth, which you need to confess. And there are later sins — newly committed, perhaps — which lie heavy on your conscience; these too must be repented of — or you cannot be happy. Oh, how many things there are which we have *left undone* — how many that we have *done wrongly* — how many *little* sins, which we scarcely notice at the time — how many *secret* sins, which the world knows nothing of! We must carry all these to the Cross — and entreat Christ to wash them away in His own blood.

Think again how *great are your* ***mercies***. You have cause to thank your Heavenly Father for all His

past goodness to you, and for all His *present* gifts. Oh, how great they are — and how little you have deserved them! Why has He *spared* you so long? Why are you yet alive — when so many have been cut off? Has He not *fed* you, and *clothed* you — all your life long? Has He not *preserved* you from ten thousand dangers? Has He not *shielded* you in the hour of temptation? Has He not *kept* you from sin — when others have fallen into it?

A clergyman was once visiting a hospital. And as he went from bed to bed in the different wards, he came to an old man, who was apparently suffering much pain. He began to express his pity for this poor sufferer. 'Is there anything, my friend, that you need?' he asked. 'No,' replied the old man; 'I have many mercies and blessings in this place. I want but one thing.' 'And what is that?' asked the clergyman. 'I want,' said he, 'a more thankful heart.'

Yes, we have all of us great *needs*, great *sins*, and great *mercies*. And this should bring us on our knees, and stir us up to prayer.

But, my dear friend, do you know what prayer, real prayer, is? It is not the mere utterance of words. It is not the mere moving of the lips. It is not the mere repeating of a string of sentences, which we have learned by heart.' No, this is not prayer. Prayer is *drawing near* to our gracious Father, *telling* Him all about our soul, *begging* of Him to pardon all our sins, *asking* Him to give us all we need, and *thanking* Him for His daily mercies. Prayer is speaking to God, though we cannot see Him.

You need not offer up *long* prayers. God does not judge our prayers, by their *length*; but He looks to our *earnestness*. You need not offer up *learned* prayers. The sighing of a contrite heart, and the words of a soul that feels — are enough for Him. Perhaps you may find it best to speak to God in your own words, or perhaps you had rather use some prayer which you have learned. It matters little which — just so that your prayer comes from the heart.

Let me now say a word as to **when** you should offer up prayer. Certainly *morning* and *evening* are the natural times for prayer. I dare say you have always been accustomed to say your prayers then. We should *begin* and *end* the day upon our knees. We should do nothing in the *morning* — before we have solemnly put ourselves under God's care; and in the *evening* — one of our last acts should be to visit the throne of grace before we lie down to rest. Yes, these are the two best and most proper seasons for regular private prayer.

But, dear friend, if you know the value of prayer — you will not be content with your morning and evening devotions. Twelve or fourteen hours are a long while to go without speaking to *your heavenly Friend*. I would recommend you to have a little time for prayer in the middle of the day. Get a quiet five or ten minutes, if you can at noon. This was David's custom and Daniel's; and it is the custom of most of God's people. I strongly advise you to try it, if you have not already done so. When you come to die, you will not feel that you have prayed too *much* or too *often*. Your sorrow will then be, that although God was always ready to hear you — you were so backward in drawing near to Him.

But does not Paul say, 'Pray without ceasing?' This, at first sight, seems to be a very hard direction to follow. To be *always* praying! To be *ever* on our knees! To be at the throne of grace all day long! This is more than the holiest men — even Paul himself — could do. What he means is, that we should be always in a *praying frame* — that we should be ready to go to Him on all occasions — and that there should be a *constant fellowship* between us and our God.

Try, then, and act on Paul's advice. Besides praying at stated times, get into the way of putting up a word or two to God, oftentimes during the day. When you are sitting in your chair, you can lift up your heart to God. When you are walking along the street, you can breathe out a *secret petition* to your gracious Father. Though you may say nothing aloud — your inward soul may pray. No one will hear you; but God, who hears in secret, hearkens to your request.

For instance, if you are going to do anything for which you want strength given you, put up some such words as these, *'Lord, help me!'* If a feeling of your *sinfulness* comes across you, you may breathe a secret prayer, saying, *'Lord, save me!'* Or if you want to have your Savior near you, you may dart up some such short request as this, *'O Lord, be with me!' 'Jesus, make me to feel Your presence.'*

My dear reader, if you wish to live a heavenly life, this habit of constant prayer will be a great help to you. It will keep you close to God, and will bring down His grace upon you. If you are a true Christian, you will love prayer.

You hope to spend eternity with God; oh, then, seek to know Him and to love Him now. Let Him be no *stranger* to you — but your daily and hourly *companion*. If you had a friend near you whom you specially loved, would you not wish often to look upon him? Would you not feel that those moments were the happiest — which you spent in his presence, and when he was by your side? Would you not be often speaking to him? I am sure you would. Then act the same with Him who is better than all earthly friends, in whose favor is life, and whose presence is fullness of joy!

If you wish to be much blessed — pray. If you wish to have a foretaste of heaven even while on earth — pray. If you wish to know, and to love, and to possess Christ — be much in prayer. If you wish to tread safely the path of life, and to go on your way rejoicing — pray. 'Pray without ceasing.' 'Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving — present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus!' Philippians 4:6-7

The Aged Christian Ready for His Departure

One would think that the longer a person lived — the more willing he would be to leave his present earthly abode. But this is not always the case.

Sometimes, alas! we see very *aged* people clinging to this world more tightly even than the *young*. We see them close to the grave's mouth — and yet loving the *riches*, the *pleasures*, the *trifles* of this world — with all their affections! Oh, this is a sad sight! It is sad to see a poor dying creature entering upon a solemn eternity — with a heart glued to the world which he is leaving, and full of its concerns!

When this is the case with a Christian — God often in mercy sends us some *affliction*. He withers our gourds which have grown up around us, that He may lead us to seek a truer and a safer shelter. He sees that we are too fond of these *clay cottages* of ours; so He makes the walls to crumble, that we may be content to leave them at His call.

Look at your growing *infirmities*, dear reader, as so many *mercies*. Let them serve to remind you that you will not be here always, and that this world 'is not your rest, because it is polluted!' Let your growing *infirmities* make you long for that happier land, where there shall be no more old age — where sorrow and sighing shall be unknown — and where 'the inhabitant shall never say, *I am sick*.'

Oh, it is well for us that all is not health, and strength, and sunshine here — else we would be even fonder than we are, of our present earthly home. I do not ask you to take a gloomy view of this world, and to be full of eagerness to leave it. I do not wish you to look upon it as a dungeon, from which you are impatiently longing to escape. No, while we are here, we should 'use the world' thankfully.

We should look upon it, not as our *lasting* home — but as *our appointed dwelling-place for a short while*. It is well — if we are *contented* and *happy* here, and at the same time ever ready for our departure! It is well indeed — if we can say with Paul, as this world closes in upon us, 'I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day.'

Sit as loose as you can to this world, and be always in a state of readiness to leave it. Arrange all your worldly concerns. The more cares you have upon your hands, the more will your dying thoughts be disturbed, and your last work interrupted. Our death-bed moments are solemn ones; and therefore it is very desirable to have nothing then to do — but to die.

Above all, let not the work of *salvation* be left undone. Every funeral you see or hear of, every pain and infirmity you feel — seems to say to you, as Isaiah said to Hezekiah, 'Put your house in order, because you are going to die!' It is a poor thing to leave to the last — the soul's great work. It is often too late to seek a Savior then. The *body* will then perhaps be too weak, and the *mind* too feeble — to begin to seek the Lord. Perhaps too, the Savior, when we most need Him — will then be far off from us. Having rejected Him — He will turn His face away from us, and leave us in that trying hour to ourselves. Oh, then, 'seek the Lord now, while he may be found; call upon him while he is *near*.'

There are many old people, who, if you question them about the future, will say that they *hope* all will be well. But if you press your question a little more closely, you will find that perhaps they have no *true grounds* for their hope. They trust that *God will be merciful to them*; but they cannot say with the Apostle, 'I *have* obtained mercy.' They have never sought it in Christ, where alone it is to be found. They have never fled for refuge to the Savior. They love Him a *little* — but they have not given Him their *heart*. All is uncertainty with them. This world is slipping from under them; and they have no *sure footing* on the heavenly shore.

It is a fearful thing to take the last and most important steps of our journey *alone and in the dark* — not to know where we are going, whether to heaven or hell. It is a fearful thing not to be sure whether we are the *friends* of God — or His *enemies*. Dear friend, if it is so with you — your deathbed will be a cheerless one.

Suppose any one was going to take a *long journey*; he ought to be ready for it. His traveling clothes should be prepared. Nothing should be left unsettled. Everything should be put in order. He ought to know all about the *way* that he is going to take. He ought to have no misgivings about his journey. His mind should be quite made up.

And should we be less ready for that great and important journey which we are all going to take? Our happiness — our eternal safety — depends on it!

Oh, that we may be able to say, 'I die daily!' 'The world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world!' ' To me to live is Christ; to die is gain!' Live as a *stranger* and a *pilgrim* upon earth; daily look forward to your eternal home, and be hastening towards it. Live much with Christ now; and then, instead of dreading death — you will heartily welcome it when it comes. You will not look upon *death* as your *foe* — but as your *friend*. It will be to you as the *gateway*, through which you will pass to your glorious inheritance. You will feel no lingering attachment to the world you are leaving behind you; but you will have 'a desire to depart, and to be with Christ — which is far better!'

The Aged Christian in Death

Death sometimes seizes the *young*. Sometimes it overtakes a person as he journeys carelessly along the road of life. Sometimes it checks the *seed* — before it springs up. Sometimes it nips the *flower* — as it begins to open to the sun.

But death, while it has seized one and another person — has hitherto passed you by. You have lived, it may be, your sixty or eighty years. But now *your turn* is coming soon! The *shore of eternity* is not far off. You feel that you are drawing near to it.

Perhaps death has sounded its *warning note* in your ear. Its chariot wheels are drawing near. Your *strength* is breaking up. Your *appetite* is gone. Your *hearing* is thick and dull. Your *sight* has grown dim. Ah, if this world was your eternal home — it would be but a sad one now! If your only delights were to be found in the world — your lot would indeed be a mournful one; for the world can do but little for you in your present state. It seems to turn its back upon you now.

But brighten up! Your Heavenly Father is near! He has blessings for you. He will not leave you in your declining years. 'I will be your God throughout your lifetime — until your hair is white with age. I made you, and I will care for you. I will carry you along and save you!' He is able to *strengthen* and *comfort* you in your hour of weakness. He can give you a *peace* which the world never gave you.

Now, I dare say — you wish to *die well*. You wish to leave this world with a *true hope*. Do you not? Then three things are specially needful to make your deathbed a happy one.

1. You must be brought to feel your *guilt* in God's sight. Many acknowledge this in *words* — but they do not thoroughly feel it in their *hearts*. But if the Holy Spirit awakens your soul — if you are really brought under His blessed influence — then you will not merely *speak* of being a sinner; but you will *feel*, and that *deeply* — the burden and guilt of sin. What a difference there is between the cold acknowledgment that you and all the world have sinned — and that deep conviction of sin which leads you to cry out in the agony of your soul, 'God be merciful to me — the sinner!'

Ask God to make you see what sin is. Pray that the Holy Spirit may show you your guilt, and lead you to sigh and cry for its removal.

'Ah,' you will say, 'is this what you mean by *happiness* on a deathbed? Such thoughts as these will only make me miserable!' There is some truth in this. But depend upon it, there can be no real happiness, until you have felt the misery of your sin — and had it removed. Your wound must be probed and laid open — before it can be healed. And is not this a *blessed misery* — if it leads to happiness? What if sorrow endures for a night — if joy dawns upon us in the morning? It is better to feel your sins now — than to feel them when you are beyond the reach of pardoning mercy! I always think that those are on the fair road to happiness, who have made the discovery that they have wandered and strayed from the right way, and are earnestly seeking to find a better path.

Look closely into your own evil heart. Try and bring every sin from its hiding-place. They lie, some of them, very deep. Pray then, 'Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.'

Remember that there is not a sin which you have ever been guilty of — even though it be years and years ago — that is not written down in *God's iron memory*. The sins of your youth, which you may have long since quite forgotten — there they are, as fresh as if they had been just committed! Yes, you have need to ask God to wipe them out of His remembrance, though they will always be fresh in your own. The prayer of David will just suit you, 'Do not remember the sins of my youth. Remember me in the light of your unfailing love, for you are merciful, O Lord.'

To *feel* your sins then is important — very important. But something more is needful. You must get them *pardoned*, blotted out, put away forever. And how can this be?

2. There is a way by which the guiltiest may obtain full and free forgiveness. There is a *fountain* in which the vilest may wash and be clean. The *blood of Christ* can wipe away our deepest stains. God has sent His Son to die upon the cross; and in that cross you may find mercy.

But perhaps you may imagine that you have no great need of such a Savior — that you have done nothing particularly wrong — that your heart is as clean as others — that you have lived a tolerably harmless life, and that God will at last accept you. No, dear friend, you are a *sinner*, a *great* sinner, in God's sight, though *man* may have nothing to lay to your charge. Oh, how much you have left *undone!* How much you have done *wrongly!* How much you have thought about your *body* — how little about your *soul!* How much have you cared about this *world* — how little about *eternity!* How much more have you loved yourself — than you have loved your Lord!

Be assured, your sins are great and many — far greater, and far more, than you can ever imagine. Go then, and throw yourself on Christ the great Sin-bearer. Bring your debt to Him, who has paid it with His blood. Believe on Him. Give your whole heart to Him. Say, 'Lord, enable me to love You. Make me to taste of Your preciousness. Look in mercy upon me — a vile sinner. Help me in my great need. Pardon all my guilt, and clothe me with Your perfect righteousness.'

3. But further — we need a holy heart. And God must give this. He alone can take away 'the heart of stone' — the hard, unbelieving, unloving heart. He alone can give you a 'heart of flesh' — a believing, loving, tender heart. Happy those in whom the Holy Spirit dwells, whose souls are filled with His grace, and are daily more and more conformed to the image and likeness of Christ.

And can we ever be perfectly and completely holy here on earth? No, we shall carry about with us a *sinful nature* to the very last. Our refuge in a dying hour must not be any goodness of our *own* — but the merits and atonement of Jesus our Savior.

Perhaps this book may fall into the hands of one who has been long lying upon a sick-bed. Dear reader, your bed may be a bed of peace; and it will be so if you have found the Savior. All is well — if God is your God, and Christ is your Savior. Then you need not fear. He who is your Father keeps you there. You are His prisoner. He has the keys, and in His own good time He will unlock the door — and welcome you into His presence, to be with Him forever.

Or perhaps your end is near. Happy is it for you, if death and eternity are no strangers to you. Happy for you — if Jesus is your portion, and heaven your home. Then you have only to die; and death has lost its sting with you. Christ has plucked it out. You can say with the Apostle, 'I know whom I have believed.' And you can add with David, 'Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.'

There is now but a *step* between you and death. And well that it is so, if you are a true servant of God. You have nothing to dread. Death, which is 'the king of terrors' to the ungodly, is like a 'welcome messenger' to you. It is like the plank on which the sailor walks to shore, after having been tossed on the troubled ocean. It will bear you to your Father's arms! It will lay you in your Savior's bosom.

Ah, though it is hard to bear weakness and suffering — though days of pain and nights of weariness are appointed you — still you will willingly endure all this — if Christ is with you. If He 'makes all your bed in your sickness' then that bed will be a bed of *blessing* to you. It is better to lie there with God for your Friend — than to enjoy health and strength without Him. Your last illness may be a very precious time to you — the most important season of your whole life — the time when you shall receive the fullest communications from God, and enjoy the truest peace.

Let Christ be your watchword in death, your hope, your joy, your portion, your all. *Think* of Him, when you can think of nothing else. *Cling* to Him, when all else is slipping as it were from under you. Be assured — He will never leave you, nor forsake you.

I have read of a dying Christian, a venerable servant of God, whose wife and children stood around his bed weeping. His speech was well-near gone, and his memory had nearly left him. One of his children had asked him, 'Father, do you remember me?' and received no answer. Another and another also — but still no answer. Then his aged partner drew near. She bends over him; and as tears fall down her cheeks, she says, 'Do you not remember me?' A vacant stare. There is no light in that filmy eye. The seal of death is upon those lips. His sun has almost gone done. The shadows of death are upon him.

Then one calmer than the rest, who remembered that the love of Christ is 'strong as death,' stooped to his ear, and said, 'Do you remember Christ?' That name seemed for a moment to call back his consciousness. His pale countenance lighted up, like the last beam of day; and with a smile he replied, 'Remember Christ! Dear Christ! He is all my salvation, and all my desire!'

May this be your feeling and mine in the hour of our departure!

The Aged Christian in Heaven

What is Heaven? *Where* is it? We know not. And there are many more questions we would like to ask about it — but they cannot be answered. This, however, we know — That Heaven is a *holy* place, a *happy* place, an eternal resting-place, the abode of God Himself.

Heaven will be a HOLY Place. The Word of God says, 'There shall never enter into it, anything that defiles.' No unpardoned one shall be there; no Christless souls; none with unchanged hearts.

This world is under a curse. Sin spoils all our actions. But there will be 'no more curse' in heaven. We shall be as holy as the angels. We shall be like the Savior. 'Beloved,' says John, 'now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him!'

Heaven will be a HAPPY Place too. Where there is holiness — there must be happiness. When is it that we enjoy the most peace here? It is when we are living nearest to God — doing His will, and following Him faithfully. Think then how great will be our bliss in heaven, when we shall be as holy as He is holy.

There will be nothing to interfere with our joy then. One would think that our happiness would be spoiled by the *absence* of some whom we loved here on earth, and who will not be there to share our heaven with us. But no; in some way God will prevent even this from grieving us. So long as He is glorified — we shall be content. Our song will be, 'Just and true are Your ways, O king of saints.'

I hope you can feel that you have many happy moments now. But every moment will be happy in heaven. *Now*, it is only chequered happiness — sorrow will creep in. But *then* it will be perfect and unmixed. *Now*, you feel peace, when you think of Jesus, and what He has done for you; and when your cold heart is warmed with His love, you are happy. But *then* your heart will be filled full of His love, and your cup of joy will run over!

Heaven is an Everlasting RESTING-PLACE. Oh, what a world of toil and trial this is! Perhaps you have had to work hard all your life, and eat your bread with labor. Perhaps you have also lived poor, and often found a difficulty in getting enough. You have met with many a trial too in your day, and this has left its mark on your care-worn brow. But there will be an end of all this in heaven. It has been said, 'Earth for toil; heaven for repose.' There the weary rest. The tired limbs will ache no more. The tear will not again trickle down your cheek. There will be no more strife and confusion. We shall no more be tossed about on the troublesome waves of this world. All will be rest.

But it will *not* be a rest of *sloth* and *idleness*. There would be no happiness in that. We shall all *serve* God day and night. The angels serve Him now; it is their greatest joy to be employed for Him. And so it will be with us. To do His will — will be our constant employment; and to sing His praises — our great delight. We shall not rest day nor night, saying, 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty.'

Heaven is the dwelling-place of GOD Himself. We shall be with Him. We shall spend eternity in His presence. What an honor! What blessedness! If we have any dear friend on earth whom we specially love — are we not very happy in his company? What will it be to be near our Lord — to *see* Him, and be *with* Him, forever? 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them!'

This, my dear friend, is the prospect before you. Why should you grieve then that your *earthly* house is tottering and giving way — when you have such a house as this in store for you? Oh, be of good courage. A few more days in this weary world — and then a home of perfect joy forever!

Is this Heavenly home yours? I hope it is. Jesus has prepared it for His people. But remember, you need to be prepared for it. You need to have every sin washed away in your Savior's blood. You have an evil, wicked heart. Ask God to take it away, and to give you a new and clean heart. Ask the Holy Spirit to teach you, to enlighten you, to show Christ to you, and to make you every day more and more like your Savior. Ask Him to bend your will to His.

It is possible that some reader of these pages may have been traveling all his long life towards Hell. He may have followed his own ways, and despised the ways of God. He may have loved sin and rejected a Savior. And now he has come to the brink of eternity; and all before him is dark and hopeless.

O sinner, I tremble for you! It is written, 'The wicked shall be turned into hell — and all the people that forget God.' 'The wages of sin is death.' What is to become of you? You will soon die. *And what then?* What is there after death? There is the awful judgment; 'the great white throne;' and all gathered before it — and *you* among the number. The books will be opened, and your sins all written there! And then the final sentence — the just and righteous sentence! Oh, who shall stand, when He appears? Who shall dwell with everlasting burnings?

Your case is bad, very bad. Shall I say that it is utterly hopeless? No, I dare not say so. I have seen on a dark gloomy day, when almost the whole heavens have been covered with a thick mantle of clouds — I have seen a little speck of light in the distant sky, which has given me hope. And if you open God's Word, you may see a little bright opening of hope ever near. There is a whisper from heaven to you, more welcome than the gleam of sunshine, which says, 'Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.'

You have greatly sinned. You have done much to shut yourself out from God's mercy. But He has followed you in all your wanderings. He is ready to win you back. He calls to you in words of love and tenderness. Ah, and He seems now once more to hold the door of mercy open. He seems to say to you, *'Why will you die?'* He can pardon even now. Think of the cross. Throw yourself down, as it were, before it. Look there for mercy — and you may yet find it.

Yes, my brother, or my sister, you are late, very late; but your day of grace may not yet be past. You may seek Christ, and find Him even now. 'Today, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.'

But if, on the other hand, you are a true servant of Christ, though you feel yourself unworthy to be called His — if, as you have grown in years, you have gone on loving and serving Him more and more — then you may think of death without alarm — and what is more, you may think of *the bright and happy home beyond*.

Is there not something very sweet in those words, 'My Home!' Happy is the hardworking *laborer*, who, when evening comes — has a home to return to! Happy is the *prisoner*, who, when his day of liberty arrives — has a home to receive him! Happy the traveler — who journeys on with the cheering prospect that he is getting nearer home! But still more happy the Christian, whether rich or poor — who, after a long life in this poor world, has a sure and certain hope that he is daily and hourly drawing nearer to his Heavenly Home! And how sweet the thought of entering that Home — never more to leave it! How blessed, when all our trials and all our journeyings are over, to enjoy that rest which remains to the people of God! Then we shall be permitted to sing —

It is no longer 'going home,'
For heaven is reached at last!
The weary wilderness, thank God,
Is now forever passed!

I've bid the world a glad farewell;
I've done with suffering now;
And never more one passing grief
Shall shade my peaceful brow!

I've reached at length my native land,
The place I truly love.
Clad in my Savior's spotless robe,
I've joined the hosts above!

I've reached my home, that home so dear
To every pilgrim's heart;
And never shall my feet again
From its glad walls depart!

I've joined that blessed band above
Of brethren kindred dear;
But better far, my Lord I see,
And His loved voice I hear!

I've reached my home, my happy home,
So holy and so pure;
And (blessed thought!) I know it shall
Eternally endure!

For those whom Jesus died to save,
He ever lives to bless;
Those Mansions which His love prepares,
His children shall possess!

And now, dear reader, it is time that I bid you farewell. If I have said one word that has helped you on your way — if you have learned a single truth from this book — if I have given a little spur to your faith, or kindled a spark of love in your soul — if, in short, you are in any way the better for having read these pages — to God be all the praise! We shall both give it to Him throughout eternity.

May you and I, unworthy as we are, be numbered among God's blood-bought family — among the Savior's friends! And may we hereafter sit down together in the kingdom of our Father!

Private Prayers

1. For the Morning.

O Almighty Father, look down in mercy upon me Your sinful creature, who now approach You. I dare not come to You in my own name — but in the name of Jesus, my beloved Savior. Hear me, for His sake.

You know, Lord, how much I have done wrong in the days that are past. I have sinned against You in my youth, in my riper years, and even in my old age. Oh, make me to feel my sins. Make me to mourn over them with godly sorrow. Bring them all to my remembrance. Hide nothing from me. Show me my own evil heart.

I thank You that You have sent Your dear Son to die upon the cross for me. Pardon me, for His sake. Wash away every stain of my guilt in His precious blood.

And, O blessed Spirit, make me holy. Be pleased to take away this stony heart of mine, and give me a heart to love You. Teach me all that I need to know. Especially teach me to know, and to love, and to serve my Savior.

I thank You, O God, for having kept me safely during the past night. Let Your blessing rest on me this day. Be with me in my going out and coming in, in my sitting down and rising up. Keep me this day from sinful thoughts and evil tempers. Make me contented and happy. May I desire to do Your will in all things. May I live not for this world — but for eternity.

Hear me, O my Father, bless me, and save me, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

2. For Noon.

O My God, I come to You, for I feel that I cannot live without You. Be very near to me, and take up Your abode within my heart.

You know how apt I am to forget You, and how ready my mind is to wander from You. Be pleased to call me back. Draw me upwards towards You. My soul cleaves unto the dust; quicken me according to Your Word.

Blessed be Your name for having spared me through a long life, and for showing me so many mercies, which I have but little deserved. Be with me during the remainder of my earthly pilgrimage. I have lived long enough to the world and to self; may I now live unto You.

Keep me watchful. Keep me prayerful. Keep me humble. Strengthen my poor weak faith. Kindle some love in my soul. Oh, make me truly Yours — Yours now and Yours forever, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

3. For the Evening.

O Most gracious God, I thank You that I have been brought safely to the close of another day. Blessed be Your name for all the mercies which surround me — for the food I eat, and the clothing I put on. Above all, I thank You for the still greater mercies which concern my soul. I thank You that I have a Savior, and that He has promised pardon and eternal life to all who believe on Him. Lord, I believe; help my unbelief.

Blessed Jesus, grant me to love You. May my last days be my best days. Grant that I may *redeem the time* that I have so often wasted, and live henceforth more entirely to You.

Prepare me for death. Enable me to look forward to it without alarm. Give me a full and happy trust in Christ my Savior. As I grow in years, may I each day grow riper for heaven.

Lord, bless my family, my neighbors, and friends. May I ever be trying to be useful to them. Bless all who are kind to me. Be with my minister, and give him grace to speak words that will do me good.

O my Father, hear me in this my prayer, which I offer up in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

HYMNS for the Aged

For a Time of SICKNESS.

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 look back, and see my name
In life's fair book set down;
Sweet to look forward, and behold
Eternal joys my own!

Sweet to reflect how grace Divine
My sins on Jesus laid;
Sweet to remember that His blood
My debt of suffering paid!

Sweet in His righteousness to stand,
Which saves from second death;
Sweet to experience day by day
His Spirit's guiding breath.

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

If such the sweetness of the stream,
What must the fountain be,
Where saints and angels draw their bliss
Immediately from Thee?

SUBMISSION.

"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." Luke 22:42

My God and Father, while I stray
Far from my home on life's rough way,
Oh, teach me from my heart to say,
'Your will be done.'

If You do call me to resign
What most I prize — it ne'er was mine;
I only yield You what was Thine:
'Your will be done.'

Should pining sickness waste away
My life in premature decay,
My Father, still I strive to say,
'Your will be done.'

If but my fainting heart be blessed
With Your sweet Spirit for my guest,
My God, to You I leave the rest:
'Your will be done.'

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

Then, when on earth I breathe no more,
The prayer, oft mixed with tears before,
I'll sing upon a happier shore,
'Your will be done.'

Rest for the Weary.

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28

I Heard the voice of Jesus say,
Come unto Me, and rest;
Lay down, you weary one, lay down
Your head upon My breast.

I came to Jesus as I was,
Weary, and worn, and sad;
I found in Him a resting-place,
And He has made me glad.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
Behold, I freely give
The living water: thirsty one,
Stoop down, and drink, and live.

I came to Jesus, and I drank
Of that life-giving stream,
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
And now I live in Him.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
I am this dark world's light;
Look unto Me, your morn shall rise,
And all your day be bright.

I looked to my Jesus, and I found
In Him my Star, my Sun;
And in that light of life I'll walk
Until traveling days are done.

The Wanderer Restored.

"For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls." 1 Peter 2:25

I was a wandering sheep,
I did not love the fold;
I did not love my Shepherd's voice.
I would not be controlled.

The Shepherd sought His sheep;
The Father sought His child;
They followed me o'er hill and dale,
O'er desert, waste, and wild.

Jesus my Shepherd is:
'Twas He who loved my soul,
'Twas He who washed me in His blood,
'Twas He who made me whole.

'Twas He who sought the lost,
That found the wandering sheep;
'Twas He who brought me to the fold;
'Tis He who does me keep.

I was a wandering sheep,
I would not be controlled;
But now I love the Shepherd's voice,
I love, I love the fold!

The Better Country

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

I'm but a stranger here,
Heaven is my home;
Earth is a desert drear,
Heaven is my home.

Danger and sorrow stand
Round me on every hand;
Heaven is my fatherland,
Heaven is my home.

What though the tempest rage?
Heaven is my home:
Short is my pilgrimage,
Heaven is my home.

And time's wild wintry blast
Soon will be overpast;
I shall reach home at last,
Heaven is my home.

There at my Savior's side,
Heaven is my home;
I shall be glorified;
Heaven is my home.

There are the good and blessed,
Those I loved most and best,
And there I too shall rest;
Heaven is my home.

Therefore I murmur not,
Heaven is my home:
Whatever my earthly lot,
Heaven is my home.

And I shall surely stand
There at my Lord's right hand
Heaven is my fatherland,
Heaven is my home.

Heavenly Mansion.

"In my Father's house are many mansions." John 14:2

I have a home above,
From sin and sorrow free,
A mansion which eternal Love
Designed and formed for me.

My Father's gracious hand
Has built this sweet abode;
From everlasting it was planned,
My dwelling-place with God.

My Savior's precious blood
Has made my title sure;
He passed through death's dark raging flood,
To make my rest secure.

The Comforter is come,
The promise has been given;
He leads me onward to the home
Reserved for me in Heaven.

Bright angels guard my way,
His ministers of power,
Encamping round me night and day,
Keep me in danger's hour.

Loved ones are gone before,
Whose pilgrim days are done:
I soon shall meet them on that shore
Where partings are unknown.

Your love, You precious Lord,
My joy and strength shall he,
Until You shall speak the gladdening word
That bids me rise to Thee.

And then through endless days,
Where all Your glories shine,
In happier, holier strains I'll praise
The grace that made me Thine!

The Pilgrim's Song

A Pilgrim and a stranger,
I journey here below;
Far distant is my country,
The Home to which I go.

Here I must toil and travel,
Oft weary and oppressed,
But there my God shall lead me
To everlasting rest.

I've met with storms and dangers
Even from my early years,
With enemies and conflicts,
With fightings and with fears.

There's nothing here that tempts me
To wish a longer stay;
So I must hasten forwards,
No halting or delay.

So I must hasten forwards,
Thank God the end will come!
The land of my sojourning
Is not my destined home.

That evermore abideth,
Jerusalem above,
The everlasting city,
The land of light and love.

There still my thoughts are dwelling;
'Tis there I long to be.
Come, Lord, and call Your servant
To blessedness with Thee.

Come, bid my toils be ended,
Let all my wanderings cease,
Call from the wayside lodging
To the sweet home of peace.

There I shall dwell forever,
No more a stranger guest,
With all Your blood-bought children,
In everlasting rest.

The pilgrim toils forgotten,
The pilgrim conflicts o'er,
All earthly griefs behind us,
Eternal joys before!