Selections from the writings of Edward Payson, 1783-1827

"Remember the words that I spoke unto you, while I was yet present with you." John 14:25

THE HAPPINESS OF HEAVEN!

Only to be permitted to *contemplate* such a being as Jehovah . . . to ponder goodness, holiness, justice, mercy, patience and sovereignty — personified and condensed; to ponder them united with eternity, infinite power, unerring wisdom, omnipresence, and all sufficiency; to ponder all these natural and moral perfections indissolubly united and blended in sweet harmony — in one pure, spiritual being, and that being placed on the throne of the universe — to ponder this would be happiness enough to fill the mind of any creature in existence!

But in addition to this, to have this ineffable Being for *my* God, my portion, my all; to be permitted to say, "This God is *my* God forever and ever!" to have His resplendent countenance smile upon *me*; to be encircled in His everlasting arms of power and faithfulness and love; to hear His voice saying to *me*, "I am yours — and you are Mine! Nothing shall ever pluck you from My hands, or separate you from My love — but you shall be with Me where I am, behold My glory, and live to reign with Me forever and ever!"

This is too much! It is honor, it is glory — it is happiness too overwhelming, too transporting for mortal minds to conceive, or for mortal frames to support!

In Heaven, the saints will be entirely lost and swallowed up in God, and their minds will be so completely absorbed in the contemplation of His ineffable, infinite, uncreated glories!

Oh, then, what must it be, to escape forever from error and ignorance and darkness and sin — into the region of bright, unclouded, eternal day!

What must it be, to behold your God and Redeemer face to face!

What must it be, to continually to contemplate, with immortal strength — glories so dazzlingly bright, that one moment's view of them would now, like a stream of lightning, turn your frail bodies into dust!

What must it be, to see *the eternal volume of the divine counsels*, the mighty map of the divine mind, unfolded to your eager, piercing gaze!

What must it be, to explore the heights and depths, the lengths and breadths of *the Redeemer's love* — and still to see new wonders, glories, and beauties pouring upon your minds in constant, endless succession, calling forth new songs of praise — songs in which you will unite with the innumerable choirs of angels, with the countless myriads of the redeemed, all shouting with a voice like the voice of many waters, *"Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigns!"*

GOD IS ANGRY WITH UNREPENTANT SINNERS

"God is angry with the wicked every day!" Psalm 7:11

Do you ask why He is angry?

I answer:

He is angry to see rational, immortal, and accountable beings — spending twenty, forty, or sixty years in trifling and sin; serving divers idols, lusts, and vanities, and living as if death were an eternal sleep!

He is angry to see you forgetting your Maker in childhood, in youth, in manhood — and making no returns for all His benefits.

He is angry to see you casting off His fear and rebelling against Him who has nourished and brought you up as children.

He is angry to see you laying up treasures on earth — and not in Heaven.

He is angry to see you seeking everything in preference to the one thing needful.

He is angry to see you loving the praise of men more than the praise of God; and fearing those who can only kill the body, more than Him who has power to cast both soul and body into Hell.

He is angry to see that you disregard alike His threatenings and His promises, His judgments and His mercies.

He is angry that you bury in the earth the talents He has given you, and bring forth no fruit to His glory.

He is angry that you neglect His word, His Spirit, and His law, and perish in impenitency and unbelief.

These are sins of which every person, in an unconverted state, is guilty. And for these things God is angry — daily angry, greatly and justly angry! And unless His anger is speedily appeased, it will most certainly prove your everlasting destruction!

THE CONDUCT OF MEN TOWARDS THEIR MAKER

Mankind seem to consider God as a sort of outlaw who has no rights on earth — or at least as one whose rights may be disregarded and trampled on at their pleasure.

They allow that earthly rulers ought to be obeyed — but they seem to think that no obedience is due to the Sovereign Ruler of the universe.

They allow that children ought to love, honor, and submit to their parents — but they do not appear to think that either love, honor, or submission should be paid to their Creator.

They allow that gratitude is due to human benefactors, and that to requite their favors with ingratitude, is a proof of abominable wickedness. But they practically deny that any grateful return should be made to our heavenly Benefactor for His innumerable benefits, and seem to consider the blackest ingratitude towards Him as scarcely a sin!

When a son forsakes his father's house, when he refuses to comply with his entreaties to return, when he chooses to endure all the evils of poverty rather than return home — we are ready to suspect that his father must be a very disagreeable, unlovely, or cruel character, since his own children cannot live with him. At least we shall think this unless we have a very bad opinion of the son. We must condemn one or the other.

In the same way, when God's own creatures, whom He has nourished and brought up as children, forsake Him and refuse to return or be reconciled — it gives other beings cause to suspect that He must be a very cruel, unlovely being; and they must either conclude that He is so, or form a very bad opinion of us.

Now, sinners will not allow that the fault is theirs; of course they throw all the blame upon their Creator, and represent Him as such an unkind, cruel Parent, that His children cannot live with or please Him.

It is true, God has power to vindicate His own character and to show the universe that the fault is wholly ours. But this is no thanks to us. The tendency of our conduct is still the same — it still tends to load His character with the blackest infamy and disgrace. This is all the return we make to Him, for giving us existence and then sustaining us. Thus do you requite the Lord, O foolish and unwise people!

"Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me!" It is evident that you withhold your hearts from God; or, in other words, rob Him of your affections, the very thing which He principally desires. And is this a small offense? Should a person rob you of the affection and esteem of the partner of your bosom, of your children or your friends — then would you not think it a great injury? Would it not in many instances be worse than robbing you of your property?

Is it, then, a trifling offense for intelligent creatures to rob their Creator, Father, and Benefactor of that supreme place in their affections to which He has a most perfect right, and which He prizes above everything they possess?

The world is, in some form or other, *the great Diana*, the grand idol of all its inhabitants, so long as they continue in their natural sinful state.

They bow down to it;
they worship it;
they spend and are spent for it;
they educate their children in its service;
their hearts, their minds, their memories, their imaginations — are full of it;
their tongues speak of it;
their hands grasp it;
their feet pursue it.

In a word, this poor world is all in all to them — while they give scarcely a word, a look, or a thought to Him who made and preserves them, and who is really all in all. Thus men rob God of their bodies and spirits, which are His, and practically say, "We are our own — who is Lord over us?"

From the manner in which we habitually treat the Bible — we may learn what are our feelings and dispositions towards God Himself. For as we treat the Word of God — so would we treat God Himself, were He to come and reside among us in a human form, as He once dwelt on earth in the form of His Son.

The contents of Scripture are a perfect transcript of the divine mind. If, then, God should come to dwell among us — He would teach the same things that the Scriptures teach, and pronounce upon us the same sentence which they pronounce.

We therefore feel toward Him — as we now feel toward the Scriptures.

If we reverence and love and obey the Scriptures — then we would reverence, love, and obey God.

But if we dislike or disbelieve the Scriptures, if we seldom study them, or read them only with indifference and neglect — then we treat would God in the same manner. Never would He be a welcome guest in a family where His Word is neglected.

SEE THAT YOU ABOUND IN EVERY GRACE

Unless we strenuously aim at universal holiness, we can have no satisfactory evidence that we are the servants of Christ. A servant of Christ is one who obeys Christ as his master, and makes Christ's revealed Word the rule of his conduct. No man, then, can have any evidence that he is a servant of Christ — any further than he obeys the will of Christ in His Word. And no man can have any evidence that he obeys the will of Christ in one particular, unless he sincerely and strenuously aims to obey in every particular — for the will of Christ is one.

In consequence of their natural constitution, of the circumstances in which they are placed, or of the absence of temptation — most Christians find it comparatively easy to avoid some sins, to be exemplary in the performance of some duties, and to cultivate some branches of the Christian temper with success.

One man, for instance, enjoys much leisure and has a taste for study — hence the acquisition of religious knowledge becomes easy to him.

Another is blessed with a mild and amiable disposition, and of course can regulate his temper without much difficulty.

A third is constitutionally liberal, and can therefore contribute readily to religious and charitable objects.

A fourth is quiet and retiring, and is for this reason little tempted to pride, ambition, or discontent.

A fifth is naturally bold and ardent. Of course, he can easily overcome indolence and the fear of man.

In a word, there are a very few Christians who, for these and other similar reasons, do not in some respects excel. But the evil is that they are prone, though perhaps without being sensible of it — to attach an undue importance to that grace or duty in which they excel, to make the whole of religion to consist in it, and to neglect other things of equal importance, the performance of which they would find more difficult.

Nay, more — they secretly regard the eminence which they have attained in some respects, as an excuse for great deficiencies in others, and endeavor to atone for a neglect of self-denying duties — by attending with peculiar zeal to those duties which are more easy to themselves.

One man, for instance, is lukewarm in his affections, formal in his devotions, and makes little progress in subduing his sinful propensities. But he comforts himself with the hope that his *knowledge of religious truth* is increasing.

Another, who neglects to improve opportunities for acquiring religious knowledge, derives consolation from the warmth of his zeal and the liveliness of his affections.

One person is by no means disposed to contribute liberally for the promotion of Christ's cause and the relief of the poor; but he hopes to atone for his deficiency in this respect, by the frequency and fervency of his prayers.

Another neglects prayer, meditation, and communion with God; but he quiets himself by pleading the pressure of worldly business and by liberal contributions for religious and charitable purposes.

Thus, as there are few Christians who do not excel in some respects — there are few who are not, in many respects, exceedingly deficient. Small indeed is the number of those who sedulously strive to stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.

Nothing is more common than to meet with Christians who in many respects are eminently and exemplarily pious — but who, by some sinful imprudence or defect, render their characters vulnerable, destroy all the good effects of their example, and dishonor instead of adorning religion. They resemble a beautiful and well-proportioned body which has been disfigured by a wound — or which has lost a limb, or some member of which is disproportionally large. While in some respects they are giants — in other respects they are mere dwarfs. Hence not only their reputation, but their influence, their comfort, their usefulness are impaired — and they adorn religion less than many others who are in many respects greatly their inferiors, but who are more uniform and consistent in their conduct.

Christ commands us, whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do — to do all to the glory of God. Perhaps some will ask, "How is this possible?" We cannot be always thinking of God — we must attend to our business, provide for our own needs and those of our families. True, but look at a man about to send a ship to a foreign port. As he purchases his cargo and makes the requisite preparations — he considers what articles are most suitable for the market, what provisions most necessary for the voyage, and how the ship is to be rigged and manned; in short, all his plans are laid with reference to the end of the voyage.

So the Christian, though not always thinking of Heaven, should take care that all his business and all his pleasures may forward his journey thither, and promote his great object of preparation for that abode of blessedness.

GOD

How much this title implies, no tongue, human or angelic, can ever express — and no mind conceive. It is a volume of an infinite number of leaves, and every leaf full of meaning. It will be read by saints and angels through the ages of eternity, but they will never reach the last leaf, nor fully comprehend the meaning of a single page!

Look back to the time when God existed independent and alone; when there was nothing but God — no heavens, no earth, no angels, no men. How wretched would we, how wretched would any creature be, in such a situation! But Jehovah was then infinitely happy — happy beyond all possibility of increase. He is an overflowing fountain, and a bottomless and shoreless ocean — of being, perfection, and happiness. When this infinite ocean overflows, suns and worlds, angels and men, start into existence.

I would ask you to pause and contemplate, for a moment, this wonderful Being. But where shall we stand to take a view of Him? When we wish to contemplate the ocean, we take our stand upon its shore. But this infinite ocean of being and perfection has no shore. There is no place where we can stand to look at Him, for He is in us, around us, above us and below us. Yet, in another sense, there is no place where we may not look at Him, for He is everywhere. We see nothing which He has not made, no motion which He does not cause; for He is all, and in all, and above all, God over all, blessed forever. Even He Himself cannot tell us fully what He is, for our minds cannot take it in. He can only say to us, "I am that I am. I am Jehovah."

THE ETERNITY OF GOD

Try, for a moment, to conceive of a Being without a beginning — a Being who does not become older as ages roll away. Fly back, in imagination, millions of millions of millions of years, until reason is confounded and imagination is wearied in the flight. God then existed, and, what may at first appear paradoxical, He had then existed as long as He has now; you would then be no nearer the beginning of His existence than you are now, for it has no beginning, and you cannot approach to that which does not exist. Nor will His being ever come to an *end.*

Add together ages of ages; multiply them by the leaves on the trees, the sand on the sea-shore, and the dust of the earth — still you will be no nearer the termination of Jehovah's existence, than when you first began your calculation.

THE LOVE OF GOD

In the words "God is love," we have a perfect portrait of the eternal and incomprehensible Jehovah, drawn by His own unerring hand! The mode of expression here adopted, differs materially from that usually employed by the inspired writers, in speaking of the divine perfections. They say, "God is merciful, God is just, God is holy" — but never do they say, "God is mercy, God is justice, God is holiness." In this instance, on the contrary, the apostle, instead of saying, "God is loving, or good, or kind," says, "God IS love" — love itself. By this expression, we must understand that God is all pure, unmixed love, and that the other moral perfections of His character are only so many modifications of this love. Thus His justice, His mercy, His truth, His faithfulness — are but so many different names of His love or goodness.

As the light which proceeds from the sun may easily be separated into many different colors — so the holy love of God, which is the light and glory of His nature, may be separated into a variety of moral attributes and perfections. But, though separated, they are still love. His whole nature and essence are love — His will, His works, and His words are love — He is nothing, can do nothing but love.

THE WISDOM OF GOD

Often when the church thinks itself in the most imminent danger, when its friends are ready to cry in despair, "All these things are against us — our destruction is inevitable!" But angels are lost in wonder in view of the means which divine wisdom is, even then, employing to effect its deliverance and turn its despondency into triumph. For some thousands of years they have been contemplating this spectacle — their knowledge and their admiration of God's wisdom have been continually increasing, and yet every day they learn something new; every day they see new proofs that Jehovah is indeed the all-wise God, that His resources are inexhaustible, that He can never be at a loss, and that He can effect the same object in numberless different ways and by the use of the most improbable means.

THE DUTY OF LIVING TO THE GLORY OF GOD

We were created and redeemed for the sole purpose of praising and glorifying our Creator. If we refuse or neglect to do this, we transgress the great law of creation, frustrate the end of our existence, leave unperformed the work for which we were made, do all in our power to prove that we were created in vain, and to cause God to repent of having made us.

Should the *sun* refuse to shine, should the *showers* refuse to descend, should the *earth* refuse to bring forth food, or should *trees* in a fruitful soil continue barren — then would you not say that it was contrary to nature and to the design of their creation, and that since they no longer fulfilled this design — then they might properly be reduced to nothing again?

And do you not see that while you refuse to praise God, your conduct is equally unnatural, and that *you may justly be made the monuments of His everlasting displeasure?* What would only be unnatural in *inanimate* creatures — is the height of folly and wickedness in us; because we are capable of knowing our duty, and are under innumerable obligations to practice it.

Let the sun then refuse to shine, the showers to descend, and the earth to be fruitful — but let not rational creatures refuse to praise their Creator, since it is the purpose for which they were created!

HOW CAN CREATURES GLORIFY GOD?

If it be asked how creatures so feeble and ungrateful as we are, can glorify God, I answer — by living in such a manner as naturally tends to make Him appear glorious, amiable, and excellent in the view of His creatures.

A *son*, for instance, honors his parents when he evidently loves, reverences, confides in, and obeys them — because such conduct tends to make those who know him think favorably of his parents.

A *subject* honors his sovereign, when he cheerfully submits to his authority and appears to be contented and happy in his government — because this tends to give others a favorable opinion of his sovereign.

In the same way, men honor and glorify God when they show by their conduct that they consider Him the most perfect and best of beings, and love, reverence, and confide in Him as such; for these things naturally tend to excite a high estimation of God in the minds of their fellow creatures.

REVERENCE FOR GOD

With what profound veneration does it befit us to enter the presence, and to receive the favors of the awesome Majesty of Heaven and earth! And how ought we to dread grieving or offending goodness so great, so glorious, so venerable!

To illustrate this remark, suppose that the sun, whose brightness, even at this distance, you cannot gaze upon without shrinking — were an animated, intelligent body; and that with a design to do you good, he should leave his place in the heavens and gradually approach you. As he drew more and more near, his apparent magnitude and effulgence would every moment increase; he would occupy a larger and larger portion of the visible heavens, until at length all other objects would be lost, and yourselves swallowed up in one insufferably dazzling, overpowering flood of light! Would you not, in such circumstances, feel the strongest emotions of awe, of something like fear? Would a knowledge that the glorious luminary was approaching with a benevolent design for your good, banish these emotions?

What, then, ought to be the feelings of a sinful worm of the dust, when the Father of lights, the eternal Sun of the universe, who dwells in the high and holy place, and in the contrite heart — stoops from His awesome throne, to *visit* him, to *smile* upon him, to *pardon* him, to *purify* him from his moral defilement, to *adopt* him as a child, to make him an *heir* of Heaven, to take possession of his heart as His earthly habitation?

THE DUTY OF LOVING GOD

We ought to love God, because He has given us the power to love. He might have formed us gloomy, morose, misanthropic beings, destitute of all the social affections; without the power of loving any object, and strangers to the happiness of being beloved. Should God withdraw into Himself, not only all the amiable qualities which excite love, but the very power of loving would vanish from the world — and we would not only, like the evil spirits, become perfectly hateful, but should, like them, hate one another.

Every object which can be presented to us has a claim on our affections, corresponding to its character. If any object is *admirable* — then it possesses a natural and inherent claim to our admiration; if it is *venerable* — then it has a claim to our reverence; if it is *terrifying* — then it demands our fear; if it is beautiful and amiable — then it claims and deserves our love.

But God is perfectly and infinitely lovely — nay, He is excellence and loveliness itself. If you doubt this, ask those who can tell you. Ask *Christ*, who is in the bosom of the Father — and He will tell you that God is infinitely lovely. Ask the *holy angels*, who dwell in His immediate presence — and they will tell you that He is lovely beyond all that even angelic minds can conceive. Ask *godly men* in all ages — and they will lament that they cannot tell you how amiable and excellent Jehovah is. Ask everything beautiful and amiable in the universe — and it will tell you that all its beauty is but a faint reflection of His.

If all this does not satisfy you, ask the spirits of disobedience; and they, though filled with malice and rage against Him, will tell, if you can constrain them to speak — that the Being they hate is lovely, and that it constitutes the essence of their misery that they can find no blemish in His character.

But if God be thus infinitely lovely — then we are under infinite obligations to love Him; obligations from which He Himself cannot release us, but by altering His character and ceasing to be lovely.

THE FOLLY OF PREFERRING CREATURES TO GOD

Would you not consider a person foolish and absurd, who would extravagantly love and prize a drop of stagnant water — and yet view the *ocean* with indifference or disgust; or who would constantly grovel in the dust to admire a shining grain of sand — and yet neglect to admire the *sun* which caused it to shine?

Of what folly and absurdity, then, are we guilty — when we love the imperfectly amiable qualities of our fellow worms, or admire the sublimity and beauty of the works of nature — and yet exercise no love to Him to whom they are indebted for all; Him whose glory gilds the heavens, and from whom angels derive everything that can excite admiration or love!

GOD THE ONLY SOURCE OF EXCELLENCE

God only, the Father of lights, from whom comes down every good and perfect gift — makes one creature to differ from another. They are *wise* only by His wisdom, *strong* only in His strength, and *good* only in His goodness. He is entirely the Author of everything good in Heaven and on earth. When creatures acknowledge this and ascribe all the excellencies they possess to Him alone — they then, in the language of Scripture, bring forth fruit, not to themselves, but to His glory.

God is the source of everything excellent or praiseworthy in the *intellectual* world. To Him angels and men are alike indebted for all their faculties. Reason, memory, wit, prudence, invention and imagination — are only His gifts. The statesman, the warrior, the mathematician, the poet, the orator, the historian, the astronomer, the painter, and the sculptor — all were formed, instructed and directed by Him. By His assistance, all the great enterprises, splendid achievements and admirable works which the world ever saw, were performed. "It is He," says David, "who teaches my hands to war, and my fingers to fight."

It was He who guided *Columbus* to the discovery of this new world. It was He who qualified our revered *Washington* for the great work of delivering his country and assisted him in its accomplishment.

And while we admire the gifts of God in *men* — shall we not admire the great *Giver?* While we admire the achievements, enterprises and works of *men* — shall we not admire Him who enabled men to perform them? Shall we rest in *streams*, and admire them only — without praising the *fountain?* Surely this is highly unreasonable!

THE DUTY OF SUBMISSION TO THE WILL OF GOD

Suppose that the members of our bodies, instead of being controlled by the will of the head — had each a separate, *independent will* of its own. Would they not, in this case, become useless and even mischievous?

Something like this, you are sensible, occasionally takes place. In certain diseases, the members seem to escape from the control of the *will* and act as if they were governed by a separate will of their own. When this is the case, terrible consequences often ensue. The *teeth* shut suddenly and violently and lacerate the tongue; the *hands* beat the face and other parts of the body; the *feet* refuse to support it, and it rolls in the dust a melancholy and frightful spectacle. Such effects we call *convulsions*.

There are convulsions in the moral as well as in the natural world, and they take place when the will of man refuses to be controlled by the will of God. Did all men submit cordially to His will — then they would live together in love and harmony — and, like the members of a healthy body, would all promote each other's welfare, and that of the whole system.

But they have refused to obey His will, and have set up their own wills in opposition to it; and what has been the consequence? Convulsions, most terrible convulsions, which have, in ten thousand thousand instances, led one member of this great body to injure another; and not only disturbed but almost destroyed the peace of society. What are wars, insurrections, revolutions? What are robberies, piracies, murders — but convulsions in the moral world, convulsions which would never have occurred had not the will of man refused to submit to the will of God?

Never will these convulsions cease, never will universal love and peace and happiness prevail — until the rebellious will of man shall again submit to the controlling will of God, and His will shall be done on earth as it is in Heaven.

If all mankind could be persuaded to say, "Not as I will — but as You will," as sincerely as Christ said it — then sin would that moment cease to exist in the world, God and men would be perfectly reconciled, and His will would be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Yes, let every human being only say to God, with his whole heart, "Not my will, but Yours be done" — and holiness and happiness would instantly fill the world; men would be embodied angels, and earth would become a sublunary Heaven.

I look up to Heaven and there see the blessed and only Potentate, the Creator and Upholder of all things, the infinite and eternal Sovereign of the universe — governing His vast kingdom with uncontrollable power, in a manner perfectly wise and holy and just and good. In this Being, I see my Creator, my Preserver, my unwearied Benefactor — to whom I am indebted for everything which I possess.

And what does this Being see — what has He seen, in me? He sees a frail worm of the dust, who is of yesterday and knows nothing, who cannot take a single step without making mistakes, who is wholly incompetent to guide himself, and who, by his own folly, is self-destroyed. He has seen this frail, blind, erring worm, presumptuously daring to criticize and censure His proceedings, attempting to interfere in His government of the universe, and trying to set up his own perverse will against the will of his Creator, his Sovereign, and his God; his own ignorance — against divine omniscience, and his own folly — against infinite wisdom.

This God has seen in me, and this he has seen in you; and who that believes that God has seen this in him, can avoid feeling overwhelmed with sorrow and shame and remorse? We may say what we please of the *difficultly of repenting*, but it would seem to be a thousand-fold more difficult to refrain from repenting, after having been guilty of conduct like this. O, then, come and perform this easy, this most reasonable duty. Come and repent before God, of your disobedience and opposition to His will, receive through Christ a free and gracious pardon; and then learn of Him who was meek and lowly in heart, to say, "Father, not my will, but Yours, be done."

Should an angel who knew nothing of our characters, but who had heard of the blessings which God has bestowed on us, visit this world — would he not expect to find every part of it resounding with the praises of God and His love? Would he not expect to hear old and young, parents and children — all blessing God for the glad tidings of the gospel?

How, then, would he be grieved and disappointed! How astonished would he be to find that Being whom he had ever heard praised in the most rapturous strains by all the bright armies of Heaven — slighted, disobeyed, and dishonored by His creatures on earth!

Would you not be ashamed, would you not blush to look such a visitor in the face, to tell him how little you have done for God, tell him that you are not one of His servants?

O, then, let us strive to wipe away this foul stain, this disgrace to our race and our world.

Let not this world be the only place, except Hell, where God is not praised.

ALL MEN, THE SUBJECTS OF CHRIST

The subjects of Christ's mediatorial kingdom are divided into two grand classes: those who are obedient — and those who are rebellious.

The former class is composed of godly men and angels — the latter of wicked men and devils. The former class serves Christ willingly and cheerfully. He rules them with the golden scepter of love; His law is written in their hearts; they esteem His yoke easy and His burden light, and habitually execute His will. All the bright armies of Heaven, angels and archangels, who excel in strength — are His servants and go forth at His command, as messengers of love to minister to the heirs of salvation — or as messengers of wrath to execute vengeance on His enemies.

Nor are His obedient subjects to be found only in Heaven. In this world, also, the standard of the cross, the banner of His love, is erected, and thousands and millions, who were once His enemies — have been brought willing captives to His feet, have joyfully acknowledged Him as their Master and Lord, and sworn allegiance to Him as the Author of their salvation.

Nor is His authority less absolute over the second class of His subjects, who still persist in their rebellion. In vain do they say, "We will not have this Man to reign over us!" He rules them with a rod of iron, causes even their wrath to praise Him, and makes them the involuntary instruments of carrying on His great designs. He holds all the infernal spirits on a chain, governs the conquerors, monarchs, and great ones of the earth; and in all things wherein they deal proudly, He is still above them.

In one or the other of these ways, all must serve Christ. Is it not better to serve Him willingly and be rewarded — than to serve Him reluctantly and be destroyed?

THE SINFULNESS OF UNBELIEF

The reason why people who appear to be in some measure convinced of sin, so often lose their convictions; and why so many professors of religion fall away and disgrace their profession — is because the work of conviction was never thoroughly performed; because they were never convinced of unbelief. They saw, perhaps, that they were sinners. They felt convinced of many sins in their tempers and conduct. They in some measure corrected and laid aide these sins; then their consciences ceased to reproach them, and they flattered themselves that they had become new creatures.

But meanwhile, they knew nothing of the great sin of unbelief — and therefore never confessed, repented of, or forsook it, until it proved their destruction. They were like a man who should go to a physician to be healed of some slight external wound — while he knew nothing of a deep-rooted cancer which was preying upon his vitals.

Professors, try yourselves by these remarks. Look back to the time when you imagined yourselves to be convinced of sin — and say whether you were then convinced, or whether you have at any time since been convinced of *the exceeding sinfulness of unbelief*. If not, there is great reason to fear that you are deceived — that you have mistaken the *form* for the *power* of godliness.

It is God's invariable method . . . to humble — before He exalts; to show us our diseases — before He heals them; to convince us that we are sinners — before He pronounces our pardon.

When, therefore, the Spirit of all grace and consolation comes to comfort and sanctify a sinner, He begins by acting the part of a reprover, and thus convincing him of sin. The sin of which He more particularly aims to convince him, is unbelief. "He shall reprove the world of sin," says our Savior. Why? Because they are murderers, thieves, or adulterers? No! Because they are guilty of slander, fraud, or extortion? No! Because they are intemperate, dissipated, or sensual? No! Because they are envious, malicious, or revengeful? No — but because they are unbelievers, because they believe not on Me. If there is one fact or doctrine or promise in the Bible which has produced no practical effect upon your temper or conduct — be assured that you do not truly believe it.

THE LANGUAGE OF THOSE WHO NEGLECT THE BIBLE

No man will ever voluntarily neglect to make himself acquainted with the contents of a message sent to him by one whom he acknowledges as his superior — or on whom he feels himself to be dependent. Let a subject receive a communication from his acknowledged sovereign — so it will receive his immediate attention. Nor will he, especially if it contains various and important instructions — think a *hasty perusal* of it sufficient. No, he will study it until he feels confident that he is acquainted with its contents, and understands their import.

At least equally certain and equally evident is it, that every man whose heart acknowledges God to be his rightful Sovereign, and who believes that the Scriptures contain a revelation from Him — will study them attentively, study them until he feels confident that he understands their contents, and that they have made him wise unto salvation.

The man who does not thus study them, who negligently allows them to lie, for days and weeks, unopened — says, more explicitly than any words can say, "**I** am Lord; God is not my Sovereign; I am not His subject, nor do I consider it important to know what He requires of me. Carry His messages to those who are subject to Him, and they will, perhaps, pay them some attention."

THE LANGUAGE OF ALL WHO NEGLECT PRAYER

It is natural to man, from his earliest infancy, to cry for relief when in danger or distress, if he supposes that anyone able to relieve him is within hearing of his cries. Every man, then, who feels his own dependence upon God and his need of blessings which God only can bestow — will pray to Him. He will feel that prayer is not only his duty — but his highest privilege.

The man who refuses or neglects to pray, who does not regard prayer not as a privilege, but as a wearisome and needless task — practically says, in the most unequivocal manner:

"I am not dependent on God! I lack nothing that He can give! Therefore I will not come to Him, nor ask any favor at His hands. I will not ask Him to crown my exertions with success — for I am able and determined to be the architect of my own fortune. I will not ask Him to instruct or guide me — for I am competent to be my own instructor and guide. I will not ask Him to strengthen and support me — for I am strong in the vigor and resources of my own abilities. I will not request His protection — for I am able to protect myself. I will not implore His pardoning mercy nor His sanctifying grace — for I neither need, nor desire, the one or the other. I will not ask His presence and aid in the hour of death — for I can meet and grapple, unsupported, with the king of terrors, and enter, undaunted and alone, any unknown world into which He may usher me."

THE REASON OF GOD'S FORBEARANCE WITH SINNERS

How wonderful is the patience and forbearance of God! Here are sinners who have been, for twenty, forty, sixty years — abusing His patience, and misusing all His benefits. Yet, instead of cutting them down, He adds another year, perhaps many years, to their long since forfeited lives.

There are sinners who have wasted and profaned a thousand Sabbaths — yet He allows them another Sabbath, another opportunity of hearing the offers of salvation.

There are sinners who have repeatedly been urged in vain to be reconciled to God — yet He condescends still to offer a reconciliation.

There are sinners at whose hearts Christ has knocked a thousand and a thousand times — but, though they refuse to admit Him, He still knocks again.

O, why are such treasures of goodness lavished on such foolish and self-destructive creatures? Why is such an inestimable prize, put into the hands of those who have no heart to improve it? Why, indeed, but to show what God can do, and how infinitely His patience and forbearance exceed ours.

One reason why God bestows on sinners the day and the means of grace — is that they may have an opportunity of clearly displaying their own characters, and thus proving the truth of the charges which He has brought against them. He does, as it were, say to the world, "I have accused these creatures of being enemies to Me and to all goodness, and of cherishing in their hearts an obstinate attachment to vice. They deny the charge. I am therefore about to bring them to the test, to try an experiment which will clearly show whether My charges are well-founded or not. I shall send them My word and the gospel of My Son, clearly revealing to them the way of salvation. I shall send messengers to explain and press upon them the truths there revealed. I shall allow them one day in seven to attend on their instructions, and I shall offer them the assistance of My Spirit, to render them holy. These privileges, they shall enjoy for years together. If they improve them aright, if they believe My word, receive and love My Son, and renounce their sins — then I will acknowledge that I have accused them falsely, that they are not so depraved as I have represented them. But, should they, on the contrary, neglect My word, disbelieve the gospel, and refuse to receive and submit to My Son; should they profane the Sabbath, misimprove the day of grace, refuse to repent of their sins and be reconciled to Me — then it will be evident to all that I have not accused them falsely; that they are just such depraved, obstinate, irreconcilable enemies to Me and to goodness, as I have represented them to be in My word.

WE ARE LORDS!

"O my people, listen to the words of the LORD! Have I been like a desert to Israel? Have I been to them a land of darkness? Why then do my people say: We are lords! We don't need Him anymore!" Jeremiah 2:31

If men are indeed independent of God, it may with safety be asserted that He is almost the only being or object in the universe on whom they are not dependent.

From the cradle to the grave, their lives exhibit little else than a continued course of dependence. They are dependent on the earth, on the water, on the air, on each other, on irrational animals, on vegetables, on unorganized substances.

Let but the sun withhold his beams, and the clouds their showers for a single year — and the whole race of these mighty, independent beings expires!

Let but a pestilential blast sweep over them — and they are gone!

Let but some imperceptible derangement take place in their frail but complicated mind — and all their boasted intellectual powers sink to the level of an idiot's mind.

Let a small portion of that food, on which they daily depend for nourishment, pass from its proper course — and they choke and expire in agony.

An insect, a needle, a thorn — has often proved sufficient to subject them to the same fate!

And while they are dependent on so many objects for the continuance of their lives — they are dependent on a still greater number for happiness and for the success of their enterprises.

Let but a single spark fall unheeded or be wafted by a breath of air — and a city, which it has cost thousands the labors of many years to erect, may be turned to ashes!

Let the wind but blow from one point rather than from another — and the hopes of the merchant are dashed against a rock.

Let but a little more, or a little less, than the usual quantity of rain descend — and in the latter case the prospects of the gardener are blasted; while, in the other, his anticipated harvest perishes beneath the clods or is swept away by an inundation.

But in vain do we attempt to describe the extent of man's dependence, or enumerate all the objects and events on which he depends. Yet all these objects and events are under the control of the great Jehovah! Without His superintendence and appointment — not a hair falls from our heads, nor a sparrow to the ground.

O how far is it, then, from being true, that man is not dependent on God!

"For in Him we live and move and have our being!" Acts 17:28

TO THE IMPENITENT

My friends, God offers you the water of life, without money and without price. Everyone may come and take it if he will; and is not this sufficient? Would you have the water of life *forced* upon you?

What is it that you wish for?

My unconverted friends, I will tell you what you wish for. You wish to live as you please here on earth, to disobey your Creator, to neglect your Savior, to fulfill the desires of the flesh and of the mind. And at death, you wish to be admitted into a kind of sensual paradise, where you may taste again the same pleasures which you enjoyed on earth.

You wish that God would break His Word; stain His justice, purity, and truth.

You wish that God would sacrifice the honor of His law, His own rightful authority, and the best interests of the universe — to the gratification of your own sinful propensities!

Look back to those who have passed the *great change* through which we must all pass. Think of the patriarchs who died before the flood. They have been perfectly happy for more than four thousand years — yet their happiness has but just commenced.

Think of the lost sinners who died before the flood. For more than four thousand years they have been completely wretched, and yet their misery is but begun.

In the same way, there will be a time when you will have been happy or miserable four thousand years — and for four times four thousand years — and yet your Heaven or your Hell will even then be but *beginning*.

OBJECTIONS OF SINNERS TO THE GOSPEL ANSWERED

Suppose that, while you are dying of a fatal disease — a medicine of great reputed efficacy is offered you, on making trial of which you find yourself restored to health and activity. Full of joy and gratitude, you propose the remedy to others afflicted with the same disease.

One of these people replies to you, "I am surprised that you place so much faith in the virtues of this medicine. How do you know that it was really discovered by the person whose name it bears? Or, even if it were, it is so many years ago, and the medicine has passed through so many hands since, that it is probably corrupted, or perhaps some other has been substituted in the place of the genuine medicine."

Says another, "It may not be suited to the constitutions of men in this age, though it was undoubtedly useful to those who first used it."

"The disease and the cure are both equally imaginary," says a third.

"There are many other remedies of equal or superior efficacy," objects a fourth.

"None of the most celebrated physicians recommend it," replies a fifth.

While a sixth attempts to silence you by objecting to the bottles in which it is stored, and saying that boxes would have been more suitable.

What weight would all these objections have with you? Would they induce you to throw away the healing balm, whose effects you even then felt, sending life and health and vigor through your whole frame? Even thus may infidels and cavilers urge objections against the gospel; but the Christian heeds them not, for he has felt, in his own soul, its life-giving power!

Will you say there are no real *stars* — because you sometimes see meteors fall, which for a time appeared to be stars? Will you say that blossoms never produce fruit because many of them fall off, and some fruit, which appears sound, is rotten at the core? Equally absurd is it to say there is no such thing as real religion, because many who profess it fall away or prove to be hypocrites in heart.

Or will you say that a medicine does no good because, though it removes the fever, it does not restore the patient to perfect strength in an instant? Equally groundless and absurd is it to say that religion does not make its possessors better, because it does not, in a moment, make them as perfect as the angels of God.

The many false and counterfeit appearances which we meet with, instead of proving that there is no religion in the world — not only prove that there is, but that it is extremely precious; otherwise it would not be *counterfeited*. No one will be at the trouble of counterfeiting either what does not exist, or what is of no value. No one will make false stones or false dust — though many make false pearls and diamonds. If there were no real money, there would be no counterfeit.

In the same way, if there were no real religion — there would be no false religion. One cannot exist without the other — any more than a shadow can exist without a substance.

He who rejects all religion because hypocrites sometimes borrow its name and appearance — acts no less absurdly than he who throws his gold or jewels into the fire because gold and jewels have sometimes been counterfeited.

Surely if Christianity is a delusion, it is a *blessed delusion* indeed — and he who attempts to destroy it is an enemy to mankind. It is a delusion which teaches us to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God. It is a delusion which teaches us to love our Maker supremely and our neighbor as ourselves. It is a delusion which bids us love, forgive, and pray for our enemies, render good for evil, and promote the glory of God and the happiness of our fellow creatures, by every means in our power. It is a delusion, which, wherever it is received, produces a humble, meek, charitable, and peaceful temper. It is a delusion, which, did it universally prevail, would banish wars, vice, and misery from the world. It is a delusion which not only supports and comforts its believers in their wearisome progress through this valley of tears — but attends them in death, when all other consolations fail, and enables them to triumph over sorrows, sickness, anguish, and the grave. If *delusion* can do this — then in delusion let me live and die — for what could the most blessed reality do more?

THE FOLLY OF REJECTING THE GOSPEL

Shall we listen to *men* — when *God* speaks? Shall blind and ignorant worms of the dust, pretend to know what God will do, better than He who was from eternity in the bosom of the Father? Have you O man, whoever you are, that pretends that the words of Christ are unreasonable or improbable or false — have you ascended into Heaven or descended into Hell? Have you measured *eternity* and grasped *infinity?* Have you by searching found out God? Have you found out the Almighty unto perfection? Can you tell me more of Him, than can the Son of His love, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge? Does the dim taper of your darkened reason — shine brighter than the glorious Sun of righteousness?

Are those to be branded as fools and madmen, who choose to walk in His light, rather than to be led by a mere shadow? No, until you can bring us a teacher superior to Christ, who is the wisdom of God; until you can show us a man who has weighed the mountains in the hollow of his hand, and meted out Heaven with a span; who has lived in Heaven from eternity and can prove that he knows more than Omniscience — we will, we must cleave to Christ! Here is a *rock*. All is *sea* besides Him. Nor shall the unbelief of sinners nullify faith in God; for, if we believe not, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.

THE INSUFFICIENCY OF HUMAN REASON

Viewed through any other medium than that of Scripture revelation — man is a riddle which man cannot expound, a being composed of inconsistencies and contradictions which unassisted reason must forever seek in vain to reconcile.

In vain does human reason endeavor to ascertain the origin, object, and end of man's existence.

In vain does human reason inquire in what man's duty and happiness consist.

In vain does human reason ask what is man's present concern and future destination.

Wherever human reason turns for information — she is soon lost in a labyrinth of doubts and perplexities, and finds the progress of her researches interrupted by a cloud of obscurity which the rays of her feeble lamp are insufficient to penetrate.

Suppose you should see a man carrying a little, glimmering candle in his hand at noonday, with his back turned to the sun, and foolishly endeavoring to persuade himself and others that he had no need of the sun, and that his candle gave more light than that glorious luminary. How amazingly great would be his folly! Yet this illustration very feebly represents the folly of those who walk in the sparks of their own kindling — while they disregard the glorious Sun of righteousness!

"Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish, the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know Him." 1 Corinthians 1:20-21

NATURAL RELIGION

I know that those who hate and despise the religion of Jesus because it condemns their evil deeds, have endeavored to deprive Him of the honor of communicating to mankind the glad tidings of life and immortality. I know that they have dragged the moldering carcass of *paganism* from the grave, animated her lifeless form with a spark stolen from the sacred altar, arrayed her in the spoils of Christianity, re-enlightened her extinguished candle at the torch of Scripture revelation, dignified her with the name of natural religion, and exalted her in the temple of reason — as a goddess able, without divine assistance, to guide mankind to truth and happiness.

But we also know that all her boasted pretensions are vain — the offspring of ignorance, wickedness, and pride. We know that she is indebted to that revelation which she presumes to ridicule and condemn, for every semblance of truth or energy which she displays. We know that the most she can do is to find men blind and leave them so — and to lead them still farther astray, in a labyrinth of vice, delusion, and wretchedness.

This is incontrovertibly evident, both from past and present experience; and we may defy her most eloquent advocates to produce a single instance in which she has enlightened or reformed mankind.

If, as is often asserted, she is able to guide us in the path of truth and happiness — then why has she ever allowed her votaries to remain a prey to vice and ignorance? Why did she not teach the *learned Egyptians* to abstain from worshiping their leeks and onions and crocodiles? Why not instruct the *polished Greeks* to renounce their sixty-thousand gods? Why not persuade the *enlightened Romans* to abstain from adoring their deified murderers? Why not prevail on the *wealthy Phoenicians* to refrain from sacrificing their infants to Saturn?

Or, if it was a task beyond her power to enlighten the ignorant multitude, reform their barbarous and abominable superstitions, and teach them that they were immortal beings — then why did she not, at least, instruct their philosophers in the great doctrine of the immortality of the soul, which they earnestly labored in vain to discover? They enjoyed the light of *reason* and *natural religion* in its fullest extent — yet so far were they from ascertaining the nature of our future and eternal existence, that they could not determine whether we would exist at all beyond the grave! Nor could all their advantages preserve them from the grossest errors and most unnatural crimes!

What would you say of a man who would throw away his compass because he could not tell why it points to the north? What would you say of a man who would reject all the best astronomical treatises because they do not describe the inhabitants of the moon and of the planets? What would you say of a man who would treat with contempt, every book which does not answer all the questions that may be asked respecting the subject of which it treats?

Or, to come still nearer to the point, what would you say of a man, who, when sick of a mortal disease, would refuse an infallible remedy, unless the physician would first tell him how he took the disease, how such diseases first entered the world, why they were permitted to enter it, and by what secret laws or virtues the offered remedy would effect his cure? Would you not say a man so unreasonable deserves to die? He must be left to suffer for his folly.

Now, this is precisely the case of those who neglect the Bible, because it does not reveal those secret things which belong to God. Your souls are assailed by fatal diseases, by diseases which have destroyed millions of your fellow creatures, which already occasion you much suffering — and which, you are assured, will terminate in death unless they are removed. An infallible Physician is revealed to you in the Bible who has, at a great expense, provided a certain remedy; and this remedy He offers you freely, without money and without price.

But you refuse to take this remedy, because He does not think it necessary to answer every question which can be asked respecting the origin of your disease, the introduction of such diseases into the world, and the reasons why they were ever permitted to enter it. "Tell me," you exclaim, "how I became sick — or I will not consent to be well." If this be not the height of folly and madness — then what is?

We have not the smallest reason to suppose that, if God had revealed all those *secret things* which belong to Him, it would have made it more easy than it is now, to know and perform our duty. Suppose, for instance, that God should answer all the questions which may be asked respecting the *origin of moral evil* and its introduction into the world; would this knowledge at all assist us in banishing evil from the world, or from our own bosoms? As well might we pretend that a knowledge of the precise manner in which a man was killed, would enable us to restore him to life.

Or, should God inform us of the manner in which divinity and humanity are united in the person of Jesus Christ — would this knowledge assist us in performing any one of the duties we owe the Savior? As well might we pretend that a knowledge of the manner in which our souls are united to our bodies would assist us in performing any of the common actions of life.

The Bible tells us that an enemy came and sowed tares. Now, if any man chooses to go farther than this and inquire where the enemy got the tares — then he is welcome to do so; but I choose to leave it where the Bible leaves it. I do not wish to be wise above what is written.

FATE OF THOSE WHO REJECT THE GOSPEL

It is God's invariable rule to deal with His creatures, in some measure, as they deal with Him. Hence we are told that, with the upright — He will show Himself upright; with the merciful — He will show Himself merciful; and with the crooked — He will show Himself shrewd. When, therefore, people come to Him with a pretended desire to know their duty, but in reality, with a view to find some excuse or justification for their errors and sins — then He will allow them, as a punishment, to find something which will harden them in their wickedness.

Thus He will suffer the obstinate believer in universal salvation to deceive himself with his delusive dreams, until he wakes in torments. He will allow the proud, self-righteous opposer of His gospel, to trust in his moral duties, until it is too late to discover his mistake. He will suffer the self-deceived hypocrite to please himself with his false hopes of Heaven, until he finds the door forever shut against him.

All these people did, in effect — wish to be deceived; they hated the light, shut their eyes, and would not come to it; they leaned to their own understandings instead of trusting to the Lord; they never prayed Him to keep them from self-deception and from false paths; they chose to believe Satan rather than God — and therefore are justly left to feel the effects of it.

THE WICKED ARE LIKE A TROUBLED SEA

Ungoverned passions are to the mind, what winds are to the ocean; and they often throw it into a storm; for in such a world as this, the sinner must meet with many things which are calculated to rouse his passions. Sometimes he is injured, injured perhaps without cause or provocation — and then his mind is agitated by revengeful feelings.

Sometimes he sees a rival, perhaps an unworthy rival, outstrip him in the race and seize the prize which he had hoped to obtain; and, in consequence, envy, mortification, and chagrin lie gnawing at his heart and cause the greater pain, because he is obliged to conceal them.

Often he meets with some slight affront or insult which wounds his pride and sets his angry passions in a flame — like Haman, who could enjoy nothing because Mordecai refused to pay homage to him. In addition to these things, he is daily exposed to a thousand little nameless vexatious occurrences — which tease and fret and harass him, rendering his mind a stranger to peace.

Often, too, his mind is disturbed by its own workings, without any assignable cause. He feels restless and unhappy, he can scarcely tell why. He wants something, but he cannot tell what. One wave of troubled thought after another comes rolling upon his mind, and he cannot say with the Psalmist, "In the multitude of my thoughts within me — Your comforts delight my soul." These troublesome thoughts and tumultuous workings of the mind, are to the wicked man what the daily flow and ebb of the tide are to the ocean. They keep it in *agitation* — even when the waves of passion cease to flow.

THOUGHTS OF GOD, PAINFUL TO THE SINNER

Sinners do not like to retain God in their knowledge — because He is omniscient and omnipresent. In consequence of His possessing these attributes, He is a constant witness of their feelings and conduct, and is perfectly acquainted with their hearts. This must render the thoughts of His holiness still more disagreeable to a sinner — for what can be more unpleasant to him, than the constant presence and inspection of a holy being . . .

whom he cannot deceive, from whose keen, searching gaze he cannot for a moment hide, to whom darkness and light are alike open, and who views his conduct with the utmost displeasure and abhorrence?

Even the presence of our fellow creatures is disagreeable, when we wish to indulge any sinful propensity which they will disapprove. How exceedingly irksome, then, must the constant presence of a holy, heart-searching God be to a sinner! No wonder, then, that sinners banish a knowledge of Him from their minds, as the easiest method of freeing themselves from the restraint imposed by His presence.

"They say to God: Leave us alone! We do not desire to know Your ways!" Job 21:14

The armor with which Satan furnishes his followers, is directly the reverse of that Christian armor described by the apostle Paul. Instead of a belt of truth — he girds the sinner with the belt of error and deceit. Instead of the breastplate of Christ's righteousness — he furnishes him with a breastplate of his own imagined righteousness. Instead of the shield of faith — the sinner has the shield of unbelief; and with this he defends himself against the curses of the law and the arrows of conviction. Instead of the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God — he teaches them to wield the sword of a tongue set on fire of Hell, and furnishes them with a magazine of cavils, excuses, and objections with which they attack religion and defend themselves. He also builds for them many *refuges of lies*, in which, as in a strong castle — they proudly hope to shelter themselves from the wrath of God!

The false peace and security in which sinners indulge, instead of proving their safety — is only a further evidence of their danger. It proves that the strong man armed, is not disturbed in his possessions, but that he keeps them in peace.

THE GROUNDS OF THE SINNER'S PEACE

There is, perhaps, scarcely a person to be found who does not, in his own opinion, exemplarily perform some part of his duty. On this he looks with no small degree of self-delight and flatters himself that it will atone for all iniquities in his temper and conduct. To this he flies for *refuge* whenever conscience reproves his deficiencies — and instead of believing the apostolic assertion, that if a man shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all — seems to suppose that if he transgresses the whole law and yet obeys one precept, he is guiltless.

I have met with a person who, though guilty of almost every crime which could disgrace her gender — thanked God, with much apparent self-congratulation, that she was not a thief; and who evidently imagined that her abstaining from this one vice, would secure her from the displeasure of Heaven.

CONSCIENCE

Conscience is God's vice-regent in the soul — and though sinners may stupefy and sear it, they cannot entirely silence or destroy it. At times, this *unwelcome monitor* will awake, and then her reproaches and threatenings are, above all things, terrible to the sinner. During the day, while he is surrounded by thoughtless companions or wholly engrossed by worldly pursuits, he may contrive to stifle, or at least to disregard, her voice.

But at night and upon his bed, when all is silent around him, when darkness and solitude compel him to attend to his own reflections — the case is different. Then an awakened conscience will be heard. Then she arraigns the sinner at her bar; tries, convicts, and condemns him; and threatens him with the punishment which his sins deserve.

In vain does he endeavor to fly from her torturing scourge or to find refuge in sleep. Sleep flies from him. One sin after another rises to his view, and the load of conscious guilt which oppresses him becomes more and more heavy, until, like the impious Belshazzar, when he saw the mysterious handwriting upon the wall — the joints of his loins are loosed, and his knees smite one against the other. He finds that something must be done. He has heard that prayer is a duty, and he attempts to pray. He utters a few half-formed cries for mercy, makes a few insincere resolutions and promises of amendment; and having thus, in some measure, quieted the reproaches of his conscience, he falls asleep.

In the morning he wakes, rejoiced to see once more the cheerful light; the resolutions and promises of the night are forgotten; he again spends the day in folly and sin, and at night retires to his bed — again to be scourged by conscience for breaking his resolutions, again to quiet her reproaches by insincere prayers and promises, and again to break these promises when the light returns.

There is a season and often, perhaps, more than one, in the life of almost every person who hears the gospel faithfully preached — in which it affects him more than ordinarily. Something like light appears to shine into his mind, which enables him to discover objects previously unseen or unnoticed. While this light continues to shine, he feels a much more full and strong conviction of the truth of the Bible and of the reality and importance of religion than he ever felt before. He sees, with more or less clearness, that he is a sinner; that, as such, he is exposed to God's displeasure; and that, unless some means can be found to avert that displeasure, he is undone.

After such means, he is, therefore, very inquisitive. He reads the Bible more frequently and carefully; he becomes a more diligent, attentive, and interested hearer of the gospel; he is fond of conversing on religious subjects — and perhaps attempts to pray for mercy. Christ stands at the door of his heart and knocks for admittance. With a person in this situation, He is as really, though not as visibly, present, as He was with the Jews, when He said, "Yet a little while, is the light with you."

A WOUNDED SPIRIT, WHO CAN BEAR

One reason why the anguish of a wounded spirit is more intolerable than any other species of suffering, is that it is impossible to obtain the smallest consolation or relief under it. This can scarcely be said of any other species of suffering to which mankind are liable. If they lose *friends* — then they have usually other friends to sympathize with them and assist in repairing their loss. If they lose *property* — then they may hope to regain it; or, if not, their losses cannot be always present to their mind, and many sources of enjoyment are still open to them. If they are afflicted with *painful diseases* — then they can usually obtain, at least, temporary relief from medicine and receive some consolation from the sympathy of their friends. In all cases, they can, for a time, lose their sorrows in *sleep* and look forward to *death* as the termination of their troubles.

But very different is the situation of one who suffers *the anguish of a wounded spirit*. He cannot flee from his misery — for it is within. Nor can he forget it — for it is every moment present to his mind. Nor can he divert his attention from it — for it engages his thoughts, in defiance of all endeavors to fix them on any other objects. Nor can he derive consolation from any friends or temporal blessings which he may possess — for everything is turned to poison and bitterness, and the very power of enjoyment seems to be taken from him. Nor can he even lose his sorrows in *sleep* — for sleep usually flies from a wounded spirit, or, if obtained, it is disturbed and unrefreshing. Hence the exclamation of Job, "When I say, 'My bed shall comfort me, my couch shall ease my complaint,' then You scare me with dreams, and terrify me through visions!"

Look which way it will for relief — the wounded spirit can discover nothing but aggravations of its wretchedness. If it looks *within* — then it finds nothing but darkness and tempest and despair. If it looks *around* on its temporal possessions — then it sees nothing but gifts of God which it has abused, and for its abuse of which it must give a terrible account. If it looks *back* — then it sees a life spent in neglect of God and ten thousand sins, following it as accusers to the judgment-seat. If it looks *forward* — then it sees that judgment-seat to which it must come and where it expects nothing but a sentence of final condemnation. If it looks *up* — then it sees that God who is wounding it, and whose anger seems to search it like fire. And if it looks *downward* — it sees the gulf which awaits its fall!

Not even to death can it look forward as the termination of its miseries, for it fears that its miseries will then receive a terrible increase. True, there is one object to which it might look for relief and find it. It might look to the Savior, the great Physician — and obtain not only a cure for its wounds, but everlasting life. But to Him it will not look, until its impenitence and unbelief are subdued by sovereign grace.

THE SINNER'S UNWILLINGNESS TO GO TO CHRIST

The sinner tries every place of refuge, before he will enter the ark of safety. He is like a person exposed to the storm and tempest, for whom a place of safety is provided which he is unwilling to enter. He flies from one place of imagined security, to take refuge in another. The storm increases; one hiding place after another is swept away — until, at length, exposed without a shelter to the raging storm, he is glad to flee to the refuge provided for him.

Suppose an apparently strong and healthy man should apply to you for needed money, and, when asked why he did not labor for his subsistence, should reply, "Because I can find no one to employ me." If you wished to know whether this or indolence were the true reason, you would offer him employment; and if he then refused to labor, you would feel satisfied that he was slothful and undeserving of your charity.

In the same way, when God puts into the hands of sinners a price to get wisdom and they do not improve it — then it becomes evident that they do not wish, that they are not willing, to become pious.

EXCUSES OF THE SINNER ANSWERED

Numerous as are the excuses which sinners make when urged to embrace the gospel, they may all be reduced to three:

The first is that they have *no time* to attend to religion.

The second is that they do not know how to become religious.

The third, is that they are not able to become so.

Lack of *time*, lack of *knowledge*, or lack of *power* — is pleaded by all.

Foreseeing that they would make these excuses, God determined that they should have no reason to make them. By giving them the Sabbath — he has allowed them *time* for religion. By giving them His word and messengers to explain it — He has taken away the excuse of ignorance. And by offering them the assistance of His Holy Spirit — He has deprived them of the pretense that they are unable to obey Him.

Thus He has obviated all their excuses; and therefore, at the last day, every mouth will be stopped, and the whole impenitent world will stand guilty and self-condemned before God.

The convinced sinner wishes to be saved — but then he would be his own savior. He will not consent to be saved by Christ. He cannot bear to come as a poor, miserable, self-condemned sinner — and throw himself on the mere mercy of Christ. He wants to purchase Heaven; to give so many good deeds, as he calls them, for so much happiness hereafter. He goes on to multiply his religious duties, and, with great diligence, makes a *robe of his own righteousness* with which he hopes to cover his moral nakedness and render himself acceptable in the sight of God.

In vain is he told that all his righteousness is as filthy rags; that he is daily growing worse, rather than better; that eternal life can never be purchased. He will stop here, as thousands have done before, resting on this foundation, having the *form* of godliness, but denying the *power* — unless the Spirit of God continues to strive with him, and complete the work by showing him his own heart.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST BRINGS PEACE TO THE SINNER

Even a knowledge of the divine perfections, if it could have been obtained without Christ, would only have driven us to despair, as it did our guilty first parents; for *out of Christ, God is a consuming fire*.

The convinced sinner looks at the *greatness* of God and says, "How can He stoop to notice a being so insignificant as myself?" He looks at His *holiness* and says, "God cannot but hate me as a vile, polluted sinner." He looks at His *justice* and says, "God must condemn me, for I have broken His righteous law." He looks at His *truth* and cries, "God is not a man that He should lie; He must execute His threatenings and destroy me." He looks at God's *immutability* and says, "He is in one mind, and who can turn Him? He will never change — He will always be my enemy." He looks at His *power* and *wisdom* and says, "I can neither resist nor deceive Him." He looks at His *eternity* and exclaims, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

Thus do *all the divine perfections* become so many sources of *terror* and *dismay* to the convinced sinner. But no sooner does he obtain a knowledge of Christ — than his fears vanish. The divine perfections no longer forbid him to hope for mercy, but encourage him to do it. Instead of the thunders of the law — he hears the compassionate voice of Christ saying, "Be of good cheer, My blood cleanses from all sin! Your sins, which are many, are forgiven!" He feels boldness to enter into the holiest of all through the blood of Jesus, and exclaims with the apostle, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Such are the blessed effects which Paul experienced from a knowledge of Christ, and which every true believer experiences. Can we then wonder that, Paul exclaims, "What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ — the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith!" Philippians 3:8-9

THE *CONVINCED* SINNER BELIEVING IN CHRIST

When a convinced, guilty sinner, who feels condemned by the law of God and his own conscience, and fears the sentence of eternal condemnation from the mouth of his Judge hereafter — hears and believes the glad tidings of salvation, they cause hope in the mercy of God to spring up in his anxious, troubled bosom. He says to himself, "I am a miserable, guilty creature. I have rebelled against my Creator, broken His law, and thus exposed myself to its dreadful curse. How, then, can I escape from this curse, which threatens to plunge me in eternal ruin? Can I call back . . . the idle *words* I have uttered, the sinful *desires* I have indulged, the wicked *actions* I have committed, the *life* I have wasted, or the precious *privileges* and *opportunities* I have misimproved?

No!

Can I wash away the *guilt* of these sins from my troubled conscience, or blot out the black catalogue of them which is written in the book of God's remembrance?

No!

Can I make any satisfaction or atonement for them, to appease my justly offended God?

No!

Even should I be perfectly obedient in future — still this will not blot out my past sins. Besides, I find that I daily commit new sins; so that, instead of diminishing my guilt — I increase it!

What, then, can I do? Where can I turn? On what can I build any hope of mercy? Why should God pardon me and give me Heaven — when I have done and still do nothing but provoke Him? What can I, what must I do to be saved?

The gospel indeed says, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.' It tells me that though my sins be of a crimson color and scarlet dye — yet if I forsake them and turn unto the Lord — then He will abundantly pardon. Why should not *I* believe in Christ, as well as others? His blood cleanses from all sin. But perhaps I am too great a sinner to be saved. Yet the gospel assures me that Christ came to save the chief of sinners. Why, then, should I doubt? Why should I not believe? I must, I will, I can, I do believe! Lord, help my unbelief!"

THE EFFECTS OF CONVERSION

When a man stands with his back to the sun — then his own shadow and the shadows of surrounding objects are before him. But when he turns towards the sun — then all these shadows are behind him.

It is the same in spiritual things. God is the great Sun of the universe. Compared with Him — creatures are but shadows. But while men stand with their backs to God — then all these shadows are before them and engross their affections, desires, and exertions. On the contrary, when they are converted and turn to God, all these shadows are thrown behind them, and God becomes *all in all*, so that they can say from the heart, "Whom have we in Heaven but You? And there is none on earth that we desire besides You!"

The effect produced on a sinner who is brought from darkness into God's marvelous light, may be illustrated in the following manner: The Scriptures teach us that *angels* are continually present in our world and employed in executing the designs of God. Being spirits, they are of course invisible to mortal eyes. Hence we are unconscious of their presence, and therefore are not affected by it.

Now, suppose (for the supposition involves no impossibility) that God should impart to one of our human race the power of seeing these active and benevolent spirits. It is evident that this power would occasion a great change in the conduct and feelings of that man. He would see angels — where other people could see nothing. He would be interested by the sight; he would wish to form an acquaintance with these newly-discovered beings; he would frequently speak of them, of their employments and pursuits.

Of course he would no longer be like other men — he would become, in one sense, a new creature, and the angels would appear to him so much more interesting than other objects, that his attention would be much diverted. Hence he would be thought either a visionary, or a deranged man.

Now, the height of divine truth does not make angels visible — but it makes the Lord of angels, the Father of spirits, in some sense, visible. It makes Him, at least, a reality to the *mind*, or, in the language of Scripture — it enables men to feel and act as if they saw Him who is invisible. It brings God into the circle of objects by which we perceive ourselves to be surrounded; and in whatever circle He is seen — He will be seen to be the most important object in it.

Now, if the sight of angels would effect a change in a man's character — then much more will seeing the infinite God! His favor will appear all important, His anger dreadful; all other objects will, in a measure, lose their interest — and the man will be thought to be deluded or visionary or deranged.

Suppose a man engaged in some enterprise, for the success of which he is exceedingly desirous. He is surrounded, we will suppose, by a number of people who have it in their power either to aid or oppose his designs. Knowing this, he will, of course, make it his great object to secure their cooperation; or at least, to induce them not to oppose him.

Now, suppose another person to be introduced into the circle around him, possessed of far greater power than any or all of these united, to aid or oppose his designs. This circumstance will produce a great alteration in his views and feelings. It will now be his great object to secure the assistance of this new and more powerful person; and if he can obtain this, he will neither desire the aid nor fear the opposition of others.

To apply this to the case of a lost sinner, living without God in the world — he desires to be happy and, for this purpose, to obtain those worldly objects which he deems necessary to happiness. He finds himself surrounded by creatures who have power either to aid or oppose him in procuring these objects. Of course, his principal aim is to avoid their opposition, and secure their friendship and assistance.

Now, suppose this man to begin to realize that there is a God — a being who superintends, directs, and governs all creatures and events; who can make him happy without their assistance, or render him miserable in defiance of all their endeavors to prevent it. Will not the introduction of such a being into the circle around him produce a great alteration in his plans, his views, and feelings?

Before this, he regarded *creatures* as everything. Now, they will appear comparatively as nothing. Before, God was nothing to him. Now He will be all in all.

THE SELF-CONFIDENT

We see many who seem to promise fair for Heaven. They set out as if they would carry all before them, and say to Christ's people as Orpah did to her mother-in-law, "Surely we will go with you." For a time they appear to run well. Like a flower plucked from its stalk and placed in water — they look fair and flourishing. Many of their sins seem to be subdued, and many moral and religious duties are diligently practiced.

But at length a day of *trial* comes. *Temptations* assault them; the *world* opposes them; the sins which seemed to be dead, revive; the effect of novelty wears off; the tumult of their feelings subsides; their little stock of *zeal* and *strength* and *resolution* is exhausted; and they have never learned to apply to Christ for fresh supplies.

Then it appears that they had no root in themselves. They begin to wither. Their blossoms fall off without producing fruit. They first grow *weary*, then *faint*, then utterly *fall*.

He depended on himself — and not on Christ. He depended on his own promises and resolutions — and not on God's. Hence, when his own stock fails, as fail it must — then he has nothing.

Everyone knows that no stream can rise higher than its fountain head. It is the same in religion; the stream that is to rise as high as Heaven — must have its fountainhead in Heaven. It must flow from that river of life which issues out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, and from that river it must be fed, or it will dry up.

If, with a careful and enlightened eye, we trace the path of a numerous church — then we shall find it strewn with the *fallen*, the *fainting*, the *slumbering*, and the *dead* — who once set out in their own strength and have been stopped, ensnared, and overthrown by various obstacles and enemies.

CHRISTIANS DISSIMILAR

We must not expect that all people will see the truths of religion with equal distinctness, or feel an equal degree of joy on being first brought from darkness into God's marvelous light. While some pass in a moment from the deepest distress and anguish — to the most rapturous emotions of joy and gratitude; others are introduced so gradually into the kingdom that they are hardly able to tell when they entered it.

The subject may be illustrated by the different views and emotions which would be excited in *three blind people*, of whom one should be restored to sight at midnight, another at dawn, and a third amid the splendors of the meridian sun.

The first, although his sight might be as perfectly restored as that of the others — would yet doubt for some time whether any change had been effected in him, and tremble, lest the faint outlines of the objects around him which he so indistinctly discovered, should prove to be the creations of his own imagination.

The second, although he might at first feel almost assured of the change which had been wrought upon him, would yet experience a gradually-increasing confidence and hope, as the light brightened around him.

While the third, upon whose surprised and dazzled vision burst at once the refulgence of mid-day, would be transported, bewildered, and almost overwhelmed with the excess of surprise and joy and gratitude!

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE CHRISTIAN AND THE SINNER

Suppose you have a child who frequently disobeys your commands and neglects the duties which you require of him. Yet, if this neglect and disobedience seem to proceed from thoughtlessness, rather than from a rebellious disposition; if he appears sincerely penitent and every day comes and tells you, with tears in his eyes, "Father, I love you; I am sorry that I have done wrong; I am ashamed of myself and wonder that you have patience to bear with me and that you do not disinherit me" — then you would love and forgive such a child and feel that there was hope of his reformation.

But should your child say, or could you read the feeling in his heart, "Father, I cannot love you. I have never felt one emotion of love toward you, and I have no wish to obey your commands" — then would you not say that his case is hopeless — there is nothing for me to work upon — no feeling, no affection, no desire to do right.

Suppose you wished to separate a quantity of brass and steel filings, mixed together in one vessel — how would you effect this separation? Apply a magnet, and immediately every particle of iron will attach itself to it, while the brass remains behind.

In the same way, if we see a company of true and false professors of religion, we may not be able to distinguish between them; but let Christ come among them, and all His sincere followers will be attracted toward Him, as the steel is drawn to the magnet, while those who have none of His spirit will remain at a distance.

Suppose we perceive a number of children playing together in the street — we could not, without previous knowledge, determine who are their parents or where are their homes. But let one of them receive an injury or get into any trouble — and we learn who are his parents, for he immediately runs to them for relief.

Thus it is with the Christian — and the man of the world. While we observe them together, pursuing the same employments and placed in the same circumstances, we may not be able at once to distinguish them. But let *afflictions* come upon them — and we are no longer at a loss. The man of the world seeks relief in earthly comforts — while the Christian flies to his heavenly Father, his refuge and support in the day of trouble.

FEAR AND HOPE

True religion consists in a proper mixture of *fear of God*, and of *hope in His mercy*. Wherever either of these is entirely lacking, there can be no true religion. God has joined these things, and we ought by no means to put them asunder. He cannot take pleasure in those who fear Him with a slavish fear, without hoping in His mercy — because they seem to consider Him as a cruel and tyrannical being who has no mercy or goodness in His nature. Besides, they implicitly charge Him with falsehood by refusing to believe and hope in His invitations and offers of mercy.

On the other hand, He cannot be pleased with those who pretend to hope in His mercy, without fearing Him. For they insult Him by supposing that there is nothing in Him which ought to be feared. In addition to this, they make Him a liar by disbelieving His awful threatenings denounced against sinners, and call into question His authority, by refusing to obey Him.

Those alone who both fear Him and hope in His mercy — give Him the honor that is due to His name.

THE LAW HONORED IN THE SALVATION OF THE SINNER

That the gospel method of justification by faith in Christ secures the honor of the law, will appear evident if we consider the views and feelings which it requires of all who would be justified and saved by this method. These views and feelings, taken collectively, are called *repentance* and *faith*.

Repentance consists in hatred of sin, and sorrow on account of it. But sin is a transgression of the law. The penitent then hates and mourns for every transgression of the law of which he has been guilty. But no man can sincerely hate and mourn over his transgressions of any law — unless he sees and feels that it is a just and good law. If he does not see this, if the law which he has transgressed appears in his view unjust, or not good — then he will hate and condemn not himself, but the law and the lawmaker.

Every real penitent then sees and acknowledges that the law which he has violated is *holy* and *just* and *good* and *glorious*; that he is justly condemned by it; and that he should have no reason to complain of God, if he were left to perish forever. He can say, "I deserve the curse, and let no one ever think harshly of God or of His law, though I should perish forever."

And can those who exercise or those who inculcate such feelings as these — be justly accused of making void or of dishonoring the law? Do they not rather honor and establish it, by taking part with it against themselves, by saying, "The law is right — and we alone are wrong"?

To place this in a still clearer light, permit me to throw into the form of a dialogue, the feelings which a penitent, believing sinner exercises and expresses when he applies to Christ to be justified or pardoned. Let us suppose the Savior to say to such a person, as He did to those who applied to Him for relief while on earth, "What would you have Me do for you?"

"Save me, Lord, from my sins and from the punishment which they deserve."

"In what do your sins consist?"

"They consist, Lord, in numberless transgressions of Your law."

"Is that law unjust?"

"Lord, it is most just."

"Why, then, did you transgress it?"

"Because, O Lord, my heart was rebellious and perverse."

"Can you offer no excuse, no plea of extenuation of your sins?"

"None, Lord; I am altogether without excuse, nor do I wish to offer any."

"Is not the punishment with which you are threatened, too severe?"

"No, Lord, I do deserve it all; nor can I escape it but through Your rich mercy and sovereign grace."

Such is, in effect, the language of everyone who applies to Christ for salvation; such the feelings implied in the exercise of repentance and faith.

The gospel method of justification, sets before us new and powerful motives to obey the law. For instance, it presents God, the Lawgiver, in a new and most interesting and affecting light. It shows Him to us as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, displaying the most wonderful compassion for our lost and guilty race, and so loving our revolted world, as to give His only begotten Son to die for its offences.

Of all the attitudes in which God was ever revealed to His creatures, this is incomparably the most interesting and affecting. It is indeed interesting to view Him as our *Creator*, our *Sovereign*, our *Preserver* and *Benefactor* — and we are sacredly bound to regard Him in these characters — with gratitude, reverence, and love. But how much more interesting to see Him pitying the sorrows which our sins against Him had brought upon us, and taking His only Son out of His bosom, to give Him up as a ransom to redeem us from those sorrows!

If God said to Abraham, "Now I know that you love Me — seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me". Then well may we say to God, "Lord, now we know that You love us, that You do not willingly punish us, that You have no pleasure in our death — since You have given Your Son, Your only and well-beloved Son, to die on the cross for our sins."

Thus the gospel method of salvation by revealing God to us in this most interesting and affecting light — powerfully urges us to love Him, to love His law, to repent of having disobeyed it, and to obey it hereafter.

Suppose human legislators could write their laws upon the hearts of their subjects. Would they not then secure obedience far more effectually than they can now do, by all the penalties which they annex to a violation of their laws? If they could give all their subjects a *disposition* to abhor murder, theft, injustice, and fraud — then would they not secure life and property in the most perfect manner?

In the same way, if the law of God can be written in men's hearts, if His love can be shed abroad in them, if they can be made holy — then it will secure obedience to that law far more effectually than all the thunders and lightnings of Sinai.

ADAM, OUR REPRESENTATIVE

It is sometimes asked, "How it can be right that we should suffer in consequence of the sins of our first parents?"

In the first place, it is right because we imitate their example — and thus justify their conduct. We break the covenant and disobey the law of God, as well as they.

Another answer may be given by considering the subject in a different light. The angels who kept not their first estate had no covenant head or representative, but each one stood for himself. Yet they fell. God was therefore pleased, when He made man, to adopt a different constitution of things; and since it had appeared that holy beings, endowed with every possible advantage for obeying God's law, would disobey it and ruin themselves — He thought proper, instead of leaving us like the angels, to stand for ourselves — to appoint a covenant head or representative to stand for us and to enter into covenant with him.

Now, let us suppose for a moment, that we and all the human race had been brought into existence at once and that God had proposed to us that we should choose one of our number to be our representative and to enter into covenant with him on our behalf. Would we not, with one voice, have chosen our first parent for this responsible office? Would we not have said, "He is a perfect man and bears the image and likeness of God; if anyone must stand or fall for us — then let him be the man"?

Now, since the angels, who stood for themselves, fell — then why should we wish to stand for ourselves? And if we must have a representative to stand for us — then why should we complain, when God has chosen the same person for this office that we would have chosen, had we been in existence and capable of choosing for ourselves?

CHRIST OUR REPRESENTATIVE

Christ "bore our sins" in the same sense in which the Jewish sacrifices, under the law, were said to bear the sins of him in whose behalf they were presented. The *lamb* which was offered did not itself become a sinner; and as little did Christ, our great Sacrifice, become sinful by bearing our sins. When, therefore, it is said that God laid on Him the iniquities of us all, and that He bore our sins in His own body on the tree — then the meaning is that God laid on Him, and that He bore the punishment which our sins deserved. Our sins were, by His own consent, imputed to Him, or as the word signifies, laid to His account. And He, in consequence, though innocent, was treated as a sinner.

It is a maxim in divine law, as well as in human laws — that what a man does by another, he does by himself. Now, in and by Christ, their surety, all who believe have done and suffered everything which the divine law, and consequently which justice, required. In Him, they have obeyed the law perfectly. In Him, they have suffered the curse which is due to sin. He was made sin for them — and they are made righteous in Him. Thus He is the end of the law for righteousness, to everyone that believes. The *law* of God is more highly honored by the obedience — and the *justice* of God more clearly displayed in the sufferings of so exalted a personage — than they could have been by the obedience or the sufferings of the whole human race.

Then, in the plan of redemption, God appears to be, at once, a just God and a Savior. Thus He can be *just* and yet the *justifier* of him who believes in Jesus. Justice and truth, as well as mercy and peace — will welcome to Heaven every redeemed sinner who is brought there through the merits of Christ.

Thus we see that these divine attributes, which were set at variance by the fall of the first Adam — are reunited and satisfied by the atonement of the second Adam.

Mercy may now say, "I am satisfied, for my petitions in behalf of wretched man have been answered, and countless millions of that ruined race will sing the praises of boundless mercy forever and ever."

Truth may now say, "I am satisfied, for God's veracity and faithfulness remain inviolate, notwithstanding the salvation of sinners. Not one word that He has ever spokenn has failed of its full accomplishment."

Justice may say, "I am satisfied, for the honor of the law over which I watch has been secured; sin has met with deserved punishment; the Prince of life has died to satisfy my claims; and God has shown the whole universe that He loves me, even better than He loves His only Son; for when that Son cried, in agony, 'Father, spare Me,' and I demanded that He should not be spared, God listened to my demands rather than to His cries."

Finally, *Peace* may say, "I am satisfied, for I have been permitted to proclaim peace on earth, and have seen God reconciling a rebellious world to Himself. Come, then, my sister attributes, Mercy, Truth and Righteousness — let us once more be united in perfect harmony and join to admire the plan which thus reconciles us to each other!"

SINNERS PARDONED FOR CHRIST'S SAKE

It was highly proper that the unexampled benevolence, humility, and other graces which Christ displayed in condescending to obey, suffer, and die in our stead — should receive from His righteous Father a suitable reward; and that God should manifest, in a signal and illustrious manner, His approbation of such unequaled goodness to all His intelligent creatures. But the Son of God neither needed, nor could receive any reward for Himself; for He is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person, and possesses in the highest degree all possible perfection, glory, and felicity.

Since, therefore, it was necessary that Christ should be rewarded, and since He needed no reward for Himself — His Father was pleased, in the covenant of redemption, to promise Him what would be to His benevolent heart, the greatest of all rewards. He promised Him that if He would make His soul an offering for sin — then He should have a seed and people to serve Him; and that all His spiritual seed, all His chosen people who were given Him by His Father — should, for His sake and as a reward of His obedience, suffering, and death — be saved from the guilt and power of sin, be adopted as the children of God, made joint heirs with Christ of the heavenly inheritance, and receive, through Him, everything necessary to prepare and qualify them for its enjoyment.

Thus God bestows everlasting life, glory, and felicity on guilty rebels, merely for the sake of Christ — and with a view to convince all intelligent beings that He is infinitely well pleased with the holy benevolence which His Son displayed, when He consented to die in their stead.

PERFECTIONS OF GOD DISPLAYED IN THE PLAN OF REDEMPTION

There is more of God, more of His essential glory displayed in bringing one sinner to repentance and forgiving his sins — than in all the wonders of creation! In this work, creatures may see, if I may so express it, the very heart of God. From this work, angels themselves have probably learned more of God's moral character, than they had ever been able to learn before. They knew before that God was *wise* and *powerful* — for they had seen Him create a world. They knew that He was *good* — for He had made them perfectly holy and happy. They knew that He was *just* — for they had seen Him cast down their own rebellious brethren from Heaven to Hell for their sins.

But until they saw Him give repentance and remission of sins through Christ — they did not know that He was *merciful*; they did not know that He could *pardon* a sinner.

And O! What an hour was that in Heaven, when this great truth was first made known — when the first penitent was pardoned! Then a new song was put into the mouths of angels; and while, with unutterable emotions of wonder, love, and praise, they began to sing it — their voices swelled to a higher pitch, and they experienced joys unfelt before. O how did the joyful sounds, "His mercy endures forever!" spread from choir to choir, echo through the high arches of Heaven, and thrill through every enraptured angelic breast. And how did they cry with one voice, "Glory to God in the highest — on earth peace, and good will to man!"

On no page less ample than that of the eternal, all-enfolding mind which devised the gospel plan of salvation — can its glories be displayed; nor by any inferior mind can they be fully comprehended. Suffice it to say, that here the moral character of Jehovah shines full-orbed and complete! Here all the fullness of the Godhead, all the exquisite splendors of Deity burst, at once, upon our aching sight. Here the manifold perfections of God — holiness and goodness, justice and mercy, truth and grace, majesty and condescension, hatred of sin and compassion for sinners — are harmoniously blended, like the party-colored rays of solar light, in one pure blaze of dazzling whiteness! Here, rather than on any other of His works, He founds His claims to the highest admiration, gratitude, and love of His creatures!

Here is the work which ever has called forth, and which through eternity will continue to call forth — the most rapturous praises of the celestial choirs, and feed the ever-glowing fires of devotion in their breasts. For the glory which shines in the gospel is the glory which illuminates Heaven — and the Lamb who was slain is the light thereof.

CONDITION OF THE WORLD WITHOUT A SAVIOR

Would you learn the full extent of that wretchedness which sin produces — you must follow it into the eternal world and descend into those regions where peace and hope never come. And there behold sin tyrannizing over its wretched victims with uncontrollable fury — fanning the inextinguishable fire, and sharpening the tooth of the immortal worm!

See angels and archangels, thrones and dominions, principalities and powers — stripped of all their primeval glory and beauty — bound in eternal chains, and burning with rage and malice against that Being in whose presence they once rejoiced, and whose praises they once sang!

See multitudes of the human race, in unutterable agonies of anguish and despair — cursing the Giver and Prolonger of their existence, and vainly wishing for annihilation, to put an end to their miseries.

Follow them through the long, long ages of eternity — and see them sinking deeper and deeper in the bottomless abyss of ruin. View them perpetually blaspheming God because of their plagues, and receiving the punishment of these blasphemies in continued additions to their wretchedness.

Such are the wages of sin — such the doom of the finally impenitent!

From these depths of anguish and despair — look up to the mansions of the blessed, and see to what a height of glory and felicity, the grace of God will raise every sinner who repents. See those who are thus favored in unutterable ecstasies of joy, love, and praise — contemplating God face to face, reflecting His perfect image, shining with a splendor like that of their glorious Redeemer, and bathing in those rivers of pleasure which flow forever at God's right hand!

Follow them in their endless flight towards perfection. See them rapidly mounting from height to height, darting onward with increasing swiftness and unwearied wing, toward that infinity which they will never reach. View this, and then say whether infinite holiness and benevolence may not, with propriety, rejoice over every sinner that repents.

THE GOSPEL GLAD TIDINGS

Do any doubt whether the gospel is indeed glad tidings of great joy?

Come with me to the Garden of Eden. Look back to the hour which followed man's apostasy. See the golden chain which bound man to God and God to man, sundered, apparently forever. View this wretched world, groaning under the weight of human guilt, and its Maker's curse — sinking down, far down, into a bottomless abyss of misery and despair!

See that tremendous Being who is a consuming fire, encircling it on every side and wrapping it, as it were, in an atmosphere of flame. Hear from His lips the tremendous sentence, "Man has sinned, and man must die!"

See the king of terrors advancing with gigantic strides to execute the awful sentence, the grave expanding her marble jaws to receive whatever might fall before his wide-wasting scythe. See Hell beneath, yawning dreadfully, to engulf forever its guilty, helpless, despairing victims!

Such was the situation of our ruined race after the apostasy. Endeavor, if you can, to realize its horrors. Endeavor to forget, for a moment, that you ever heard of Christ or His gospel. View yourselves as immortal beings hastening to eternity, with the curse of God's broken law, like a flaming sword, pursuing you. See death, with his dart dipped in mortal poison, awaiting you! View a dark cloud, fraught with the lightnings of divine vengeance, rolling over your heads. See your feet standing in slippery places, in darkness — and the bottomless pit beneath expecting your eternal fall!

Then, when not only all hope, but all possibility of escape, seemed taken away, suppose . . . the flaming sword suddenly quenched; the sting of death extracted; the sun of righteousness bursting forth and painting a rainbow on the before threatening cloud; a golden ladder let down from the opening gates of Heaven, while a choir of angels, swiftly descending, exclaim, "Behold, we bring you glad tidings of great joy, for unto you is born a Savior, who is Christ the Lord!"

Would you, could you, while contemplating such a scene and listening to the angelic message — doubt whether it communicated glad tidings? Would you not rather unite with them in exclaiming, "Glad tidings! Glad tidings! Glory to God in the highest, that there is peace on earth, and good will to men!"

CHRIST OUR EXAMPLE

It was highly important and desirable that our great High Priest should not only obtain for us the heavenly inheritance, but also go before us in the path which leads to it; that He should not only describe Christianity in His discourses, but exemplify it in His life and conduct. This our blessed Savior has done. In Him we see pure and undefiled religion embodied. In Him Christianity lives and breathes. And how amiable, how interesting does she there appear! How convincing, how animating is our Savior's example! How loudly, how persuasively does His conduct preach!

Would you learn submission to parental authority? See Him, notwithstanding His exalted character, cheerfully subjecting Himself to the will of His parents and laboring with them, as a mechanic, for almost thirty years.

Would you learn contentment with a poor and low condition? See Him destitute of a place where to lay His head.

Would you learn active beneficence? See Him going about doing good.

Would you learn to be fervent and constant in devotional exercises? See Him rising for prayer before the dawn of day.

Would you learn in what manner to treat your brethren? See Him washing His disciples' feet.

Would you learn filial piety? See Him forgetting his sufferings, while in the agonies of death, to provide another son for His desolate mother.

Would you learn in what manner to pray for relief under afflictions? See Him in the garden.

Would you learn how to bear insults and injuries? See Him on the cross!

In short, there is no Christian grace or virtue, which is not beautifully exemplified in His life. There is scarcely any situation, however perplexing, in which the Christian, who is at a loss to know how he ought to act — may not derive sufficient instruction from the example of his divine Master.

"He who says he abides in Christ, ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked." 1 John 2:6

"Leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps." 1 Peter 2:21

CHRIST A TEACHER

A celebrated philosopher of antiquity, who was accustomed to receive large sums from his pupils in return for his instructions, was one day solicited by an indigent youth, who requested admission into the number of his disciples.

"And what," said the sage, "will you give me in return?"

"I will give you *myself*," was the reply.

"I accept the gift," answered the sage, "and engage to make you much more valuable than you are at present."

In similar language does our great Teacher address those who apply to Him for instruction, conscious that they are unable to *purchase* His instructions, and offering to give Him themselves. He will readily accept the gift; He will educate them for Heaven, and will, at length, make them incomparably more wise, more happy, and more valuable, than when He received them.

HOW IS YOUR BELOVED BETTER THAN OTHERS?

"How is your Beloved better than others?" Song of Songs 5:9

Does not our Friend as far excel all other friends — as Heaven exceeds earth — as eternity exceeds time — as the Creator surpasses His creatures?

If you doubt this, bring together all the glory, pomp and beauty of the world; nay, assemble everything that is great and excellent in all the worlds that ever were created. Collect all the creatures which the breath of Omnipotence ever summoned into being. Then place beside them, our Savior and Friend — that you may see whether they will bear a comparison with Him.

Look, then, first at your idols — behold the vast assemblage which you have collected; and then turn and contemplate our Beloved. See all the fullness of the Godhead, dwelling in One who is meek and lowly as a child. See His countenance beaming with ineffable glories, full of mingled majesty, condescension and love, and hear the soul-reviving invitations which proceed from His lips. See that *hand* in which dwells everlasting strength, swaying the scepter of universal empire over all creatures and all worlds. See His *arms* expanded to receive and embrace returning sinners; while His *heart*, a bottomless, shoreless ocean of benevolence — overflows with tenderness, compassion, and love.

In a word, see in Him all natural and moral excellence personified and embodied in a resplendent form; compared with whose effulgent, dazzling glories — the splendors of the meridian sun are dark.

He speaks — and a world emerges from nothing. He frowns — and it sinks to nothing again. He waves His hand — and all the creatures which you have collected to rival Him, sink and disappear. Such, O sinner, is our Beloved, and such is our Friend.

Will you not then embrace Him as your Friend? If you can be persuaded to do this — you will find that half, nay, that the thousandth part has not been told you!

All the excellency, glory, and beauty which is found in men or angels, flows from Christ — as a drop of water from the ocean, or a ray of light from the sun. If, then, you supremely love the *creature* — then can you wonder that Christians should love the *Creator?* Can you wonder that those who behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, should be sweetly drawn to Him by the cords of love, and lose their fondness for created glories? All that you love and admire and wish for in creatures, and indeed infinitely more — they find in Him.

Do you wish for a friend possessed of *power* to protect you? Our Friend possesses all power in Heaven and earth, and is able to save even to the uttermost!

Do you wish for a *wise* friend? In Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Do you wish for a *tender*, *compassionate* friend? Christ is tenderness and compassion itself.

Do you wish for a faithful, unchangeable friend? With Christ there is no variableness nor shadow of turning. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

His *unchangeable love* will ever prompt Him to make His people happy!

His unerring *wisdom* will point out the best means to promote their happiness!

His *infinite power* will enable Him to employ those means.

In all these respects, our Beloved is more than any other beloved; for creatures are not always disposed to render us happy. When they are disposed to do it — they do not always know how; and when they know how — they are often unable. Better is it, therefore, to trust in Christ, than to put confidence in princes.

CHRIST'S INVITATIONS TO THE WEARY AND OPPRESSED

To all who are afflicted either in body, mind, or estate; all whose worldly hopes and prospects have been blasted by losses and disappointments; all who are weeping over the grave of some near and dear relative — the language of Christ is, "Cast your burden upon Me, and I will sustain you. Call upon Me now in the day of trouble, and I will answer you. You have found that earthly friends and relations die — come, then, to Me and find a Friend who cannot die, One who will never leave nor forsake you, in life or death. You have found that treasures laid up on earth, make to themselves wings and fly away — come, then, to Me, and I will give you treasures which never fail and make you heirs of the heavenly inheritance. No longer spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfies not — but hearken diligently to My call and come unto Me; hear, and your souls shall live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David."

CHRIST'S DISPLEASURE AT SIN

We read of Christ's being angry but three times during the whole period of His residence on earth — and in each of those instances, His anger was excited not by insults or injuries offered to Himself, but by conduct which tended to interrupt or frustrate His benevolent exertions in doing good.

When He was reviled as a glutton and drunkard, and possessed by a devil — He was not angry. When He was buffeted, spit upon, and crowned with thorns — He was not angry. When nailed to the cross and loaded with insults in his last agonies — He was not angry.

But when His disciples forbade parents to bring their children to receive His blessing; when Peter endeavored to dissuade Him from dying for sinners; and when sinners, by their hardness of heart, rendered His intended death of no service to themselves — then He was angry and much displeased.

Suppose a person whom you had found deserted in the streets when an infant and adopted and educated as your own child, should, when arrived to manhood, rob and attempt to murder you. Suppose him tried, convicted, condemned, and confined to await the execution of his sentence. You pity him, forgive him, and wish to save his life. You fly to the proper authority, and after much expense and labor, obtain an assurance that if he will confess his crime, he shall be pardoned. You hasten to his dungeon to communicate the happy news. But he refuses to hear you, believe you, or confess his fault — he regards you with aversion, suspicion, and contempt, and turns a deaf ear to your entreaties.

Would you not be unutterably shocked, disappointed, and grieved?

What, then, must be the feelings of Christ, when treated in a similar manner by those whom He died to save! Well may He look on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts.

THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST

Come with us a moment to Calvary. See the meek sufferer standing, with hands fast bound, in the midst of His enemies, sinking under the weight of His cross, and lacerated in every part by the cruel whips with which He had been scourged. See the savage, ferocious soldiers raising, with crude violence, His sacred body, forcing it down upon the cross, wresting and extending His limbs, and, with remorseless cruelty, forcing through His hands and feet, the ragged spikes which were to fix Him on it. See the Jewish priests and rulers watching, with looks of malicious pleasure, the horrid scene, and attempting to increase His sufferings by scoffs and blasphemies.

Now contemplate attentively the countenance of the wondrous sufferer, which seems like Heaven opening in the midst of Hell — and tell me what it expresses. You see it indeed full of anguish — but it expresses nothing like impatience, resentment, or revenge. On the contrary — it beams with pity, benevolence, and forgiveness. It perfectly corresponds with the prayer, which, raising His mild, imploring eyes to Heaven, He pours forth to God: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Christian, look at your Master — and learn how to suffer. Look at your Savior — and learn to admire, to imitate, and to forgive.

SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST

It has been supposed by many, that the sufferings of Christ were rather apparent than real; or at least that His abundant consolations, and His knowledge of the happy consequences which would result from His death — rendered His sorrows comparatively light, and almost converted them to joys. But never was supposition more erroneous.

Jesus Christ was as truly a man as any of us. As man, He was as really susceptible of grief, as keenly alive to pain and reproach, and as much averse from pain and suffering — as any of the descendants of Adam. As to divine consolation and supports, they were at all times bestowed on Him in a very sparing manner; and in the season of His greatest extremity — they were entirely withheld. Though a knowledge of the happy consequences which would result from His sufferings. rendered Him willing to endure them — it did not in the smallest degree take off their edge or render Him insensible to pain. No, His sufferings, instead of being less, were incomparably greater than they appeared to be. No finite mind can conceive of their extent; nor was any of the human race ever so well entitled to the appellation of *the man of sorrows*, as the man Jesus Christ.

He saw, at one view, the whole mighty aggregate of human guilt and human wretchedness — and His boundless benevolence and compassion made it, by sympathy, all His own. It has been said by philosophers, that if any man could see all the misery which is daily felt in the world, he would never smile again. We need not wonder then, that Christ, who saw it all, never smiled, though He often wept.

THE LOVE OF CHRIST

In order to form some faint conception of the love of Christ, suppose, my Christian friends, that all your toils and sufferings were ended and you were safely arrived in Heaven, the rest which remains for the people of God. Suppose that you were there . . . crowned with glory and honor and immortality, listening with unutterable ecstasies to the song of the redeemed, contemplating the ineffable, unveiled glories of Jehovah, drinking full draughts from those rivers of pleasure which flow forever at His right hand, and tasting those joys which the heart of man has not conceived.

What would tempt you to revisit this valley of tears, commence anew the wearisome journey of life, and encounter all the toils, the temptations, the sufferings and sorrows which attend it? Must it not be love stronger than death, love such as you cannot conceive of, which would induce you to do this?

How infinite, how inconceivable, then, must have been that love which brought down the Son of God from the celestial world to redeem our ruined race! How wondrous must be that love which led Him to exchange . . . the bosom of His Father — for a veil of flesh; the adoration of angels — for the scoffs and insults of sinners; and the enjoyment of eternal life — for an accursed, painful and ignominious death!

Nothing but love could have done this! Not all the powers of Heaven, earth, and Hell combined — could have dragged Him from His celestial throne and wrested the scepter of the universe from His hands! No, it was love alone — divine, omnipotent love, which drew Him down! It was in the bands of love, that He was led as a willing captive, through all the toils and sufferings of a laborious life — and it was these bands which bound Him at the bar of Pilate, which fettered His arm of everlasting strength, and prevented His blasting His murderers to the bottomless pit!

Unless we could ascend into *Heaven* and see the glory and happiness which our Redeemer left; unless we could descend into the *grave* and learn the depths of wretchedness to which He sank; unless we could weigh, as in a balance, all the trials, toils and sufferings of His life — never, never can we know the immeasurable extent of His love!

But these things we cannot do. None but the omniscient God knows what He felt or what He suffered — none but the omniscient God, therefore, knows the extent of His love.

To think of the love of Christ, is like trying to conceive of existence which has no beginning, and of power which can make something out of nothing. Tongue cannot describe it — finite minds cannot conceive of it — angels faint under it — and those who know most of it can only say, with inspiration, that it surpasses knowledge!

SELF-DENIAL OF CHRIST

The life of Christ was one of self-denial. He denied Himself, for thirty years, all the glories and felicity of the heavenly world — and exposed Himself to all the pains and sorrows of a life on earth. He denied Himself the praises and adorations of saints and angels — and exposed Himself to the blasphemies and reproaches of men. He denied Himself the presence and enjoyment of God — and exposed Himself to the society of publicans and sinners. He denied Himself everything that nature desires. He exposed Himself to everything which she dreads and abhors — to poverty, contempt, pain, and death.

When He entered on His glorious and godlike design, He renounced all regard to His own comfort and pleasure — and took up the cross, a cross infinitely heavier and more painful than any of His disciples had been called to bear, and continued to carry it through a rough and thorny road, until His human nature, exhausted, sank under the weight!

In short, He considered Himself, His time, His talents, His reputation, His happiness, His very existence — as not His own, but another's; and He ever employed them accordingly. He lived not for Himself, He died not for Himself — but for others He lived, and for others He died!

HE SHALL SEE OF THE TRAVAIL OF HIS SOUL

How great, how inconceivable will be our Savior's happiness, after the final consummation of all things! Then the plan for which our world was formed, will be completed. Then every member of the church, for the sake of which He loved and visited our world, will have been brought home to Heaven, to be with Him where He is. And if He loved and rejoiced and delighted in them before they existed, and before they knew and loved Him — then how will He love and rejoice in them when He sees them surrounding His throne, perfectly resembling Himself in body and soul; loving Him with unutterable love, contemplating Him with ineffable delight, and praising Him as their deliverer from sin and death and Hell; as the author of all their everlasting glory and felicity!

Then — O blessed, animating thought — He will be amply rewarded for all His sufferings and for all His love to our ruined race! Then His people shall cease to grieve and offend Him. Then they shall no longer degrade Him by weak, confused, inadequate conceptions of His person, character, and work — for then shall they see as they are seen, and know even as they are known!

Then the whole church shall be presented to Him — a glorious church, without spot or blemish or imperfection; and shall be as a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and as a royal diadem in the hand of our God.

Then, O Zion, as a bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you. Then shall your sun no more go down, nor your moon withdraw itself — but the Lord shall be your everlasting light, and your God, your glory; and the days of your mourning, and of your Savior's suffering, shall be ended!

If we love and prize and rejoice in any object in proportion to the labor, pain, and expense which it has cost us to obtain it — then how greatly must Christ love and prize and rejoice in every penitent sinner! His love and joy must be unutterable, inconceivable and infinite!

For once, I rejoice that our Savior's toils and sufferings were so great, since the greater they were — the greater must be His love for us, and His joy in our conversion. And if He thus rejoices over one sinner that repents — then what must be His joy when all His people are collected, out of every tongue and kindred and people and nation, and presented spotless before His Father's throne! What a full tide of felicity will pour in upon Him, and how will His benevolent heart expand with unutterable delight — when, contemplating the countless myriads of the redeemed, He says, "Were it not for My sufferings — all these immortal beings would have been, throughout eternity, fully miserable; and now they will be as happy as God can make them! It is enough. I see of the travail of My soul, and am satisfied."

CONDESCENSION AND LOVE OF CHRIST

The lowest beggar, the vilest wretch, the most loathsome, depraved, abandoned sinner — is perfectly welcome to the arms and the heart of the Savior — if he comes with the temper of the penitent prodigal. To all who come with this temper — He ever lends a gracious ear. He listens to catch the first penitential sigh; He watches their first feeble step towards the path of duty; He goes before them with His grace, hastens to meet them, and while they are ready to sink at His feet with mingled shame, confusion, and grief — He . . . puts underneath them His everlasting arms, embraces, cheers, supports and comforts them, wipes away their tears, washes away their stains, clothes them with His righteousness, unites them to Himself forever, and feeds them with the bread and water of life!

Thus He binds up the broken reed, and enkindles the smoking flax. And, like a most tender, compassionate shepherd — He gathers the helpless lambs in His arms and carries them in His bosom.

Thus, by the condescending grace of our Immanuel, Heaven is brought down to earth; the awesome majesty, and inaccessible glories of Jehovah — are shrouded in a veil of flesh; a new and living way is opened for our return to God; and sinful, guilty worms of the dust — may talk with their Maker face to face, as a man talks with his friend.

Trembling sinner, desponding Christian, permit me to take you by the hand and lead you to Jesus. Why do you linger, why do you hang back? It is to Christ, it is to Jesus, it is to the Babe of Bethlehem, to a man like yourselves, to the meek and lowly Savior of sinners — that I would bring you. Here are no terrors, no flaming sword, no burning throne to appall you.

Come, then, to His feet, to His arms, to His heart — which overflows with compassion for your perishing souls. Come and contemplate the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth — and receive from His fullness, grace upon grace.

COMPASSION AND CONDESCENSION OF CHRIST

"Fear not," says the Savior to His penitent, heart-broken disciple.

"Fear not, trembling, desponding soul. My glory, My perfections need not alarm you — for they are all engaged on your side — all are pledged to secure your salvation.

"Tell Me not of your sins. I will take them away.

"Tell Me not of your weakness, your folly and ignorance. I have treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and strength for you.

"Tell Me not of the weakness of your graces. My grace is sufficient for you, for its riches are unsearchable.

"Tell Me not of the difficulties which oppose your salvation. Is anything too hard for Me?

"Tell Me not that the favors you are receiving are too great for you. I know that they are too great for you to merit — but they are not too great for Me to give.

"Nay, more, I will give you greater things than these! I will not only continue to pardon your sins, bear with your infirmities, and heal your backslidings — but give you larger and larger measures of My grace, make you more and more useful in the world, render you more than a conqueror over all your enemies, and at death wipe away forever all your tears! I will receive you to the mansions which My Father has prepared for you in Heaven, and cause you to sit down with Me on My throne forever and ever!"

Thus does Christ comfort those that mourn. Thus He encourages the desponding. Thus exalts those who humble themselves at His feet and constrains them to cry, in admiring transports of gratitude and love, "Who, O who is a God like unto You, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin!"

DEPART FROM ME, FOR I AM A SINFUL MAN, O LORD

As our views of our own sinfulness and of the abominable malignity of sin, are always in direct proportion to our views of the divine purity and glory — the Christian never appears to himself so unspeakably vile, so totally unworthy of his Savior's love, or so unfit to enjoy His presence — as at the very time when he is favored with these blessings in the highest degree. The consequence is that he is astonished, confounded, crushed, and overwhelmed by a display of goodness so undeserved, so unexpected.

When he has perhaps been ready to conclude that he was a vile hypocrite and to give up all for lost; or, if not, to fear that God would bring upon him some terrible judgment for his sins and make him an example to others — then to see his much-insulted Savior, his neglected Benefactor, his injured Friend — suddenly appear to deliver him from the consequences of his own folly and ingratitude; to see Him come with smiles and blessings, when he expected nothing but upbraidings, threatenings, and scourges — it is too much for him to comprehend — he knows not how to bear it — he scarcely dares take the consolation offered him, and thinks that it must be all a delusion.

Even when convinced beyond a doubt that it is not so; when he feels the healing virtue of his kind Physician pervading his whole soul and sees Him stooping to cleanse, to comfort, and embrace him — he shrinks back, involuntarily, as if the spotless Savior would be contaminated by his touch! He sinks down ashamed and broken-hearted at His feet! He feels unworthy and unable to look up! The more condescendingly Christ stoops to embrace him — so much lower and lower does he sink in the dust.

At length his emotions find utterance, and he cries, "O Lord, treat me not thus kindly. Such favors belong to those only who do not poorly requite Your love as I have done. How can it be just, how can it be right — to give them to one so undeserving? Your kindness is lavished upon me in vain! Your mercies are thrown away upon one so incorrigibly vile! If You pardon me now — then I shall offend you again! If You heal my backslidings — then I shall again wander from You. If You cleanse me — then I shall again become polluted. You must, O Lord, give me up; You must leave me to perish — and bestow Your favors on those who are less unworthy, less incurably prone to offend You!"

Such are often the feelings of the broken-hearted penitent; thus does he shrink from the mercy which pursues him — thus he seems to plead against himself. And, though he desires and prizes nothing so much as his Savior's presence — he feels constrained by a sense of his vileness and pollution to ask Him, and almost wish Him to depart and leave him to the fate which he so richly deserves.

JOY OF COMMUNING WITH GOD

At times, God is pleased to admit His children to nearer approaches and more intimate degrees of fellowship with Himself and His Son, Jesus Christ. He sends down the Spirit of adoption into their hearts, whereby they are enabled to cry, "Abba, Father!" and to feel those lively affections of love, joy, trust, hope, reverence and dependence, which it is at once their duty and their happiness to exercise toward their Father in Heaven.

By the influences of the same Spirit He shines into their minds, to give them the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. He causes His glory to pass before them, and makes them, in some measure — to understand the perfections of His nature. He also reveals to them the unutterable, inconceivable, unheard of things which He has prepared for those who love Him! He applies to them His exceeding great and precious promises, makes them to know that great love with which He has loved them — and thus causes them to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. He shines in upon their souls with the dazzling, melting, overpowering beams of grace and mercy proceeding from the Sun of righteousness. He gives them to know the heights and the depths, the lengths and the breadths, of the love of Christ which passes knowledge, and fills them with all the fullness of God.

The Christian, in these bright, enraptured moments, while thus basking in beams of celestial light and splendor — forgets himself, forgets his existence, and is wholly absorbed in the ravishing, the ecstatic contemplation of uncreated beauty and loveliness. He endeavors to plunge himself into the boundless ocean of divine glory which opens to his view, and longs to be wholly swallowed up and lost in God. His whole soul goes forth in one intense flame of gratitude, admiration, love and desire. He contemplates, he wonders, he admires — he loves and adores. His soul dilates itself beyond its ordinary capacity and expands to receive the flood of happiness which overwhelms it. All its desires are satisfied. It no longer inquires, "Who will show us any good?" but returns unto its rest, because the Lord has dealt bountifully with it.

The scanty, noisy, thirst-producing streams of worldly delight — only increase the feverish desires of the soul; but the tide of joy which flows in upon the Christian is silent, deep, full and satisfying. All the powers and faculties of his mind are lost, absorbed, and swallowed up in the contemplation of infinite glory! With an energy and activity unknown before — he roams and ranges through the ocean of light and love, where he can neither find a bottom nor a shore! No language can utter his feelings; but, with an emphasis, a meaning, an expression which God alone could excite, and which He alone can understand — he breathes out the ardent emotions of his soul, in broken words, while he exclaims, "My Father and my God!"

TO CHRISTIANS IN THE COMMENCEMENT OF A REVIVAL

Yes, O Christian, whoever you are, however tempted and distressed, however languishing and despairing you may be — the Master has come and calls for you. He does, as it were, call you by name, for He knows the names of His sheep. They are engraved on the palms of His hands, and He cannot forget them.

His language is, "Where is this and that and the other one, among My flock, who used to watch for the tokens of My approach and come at the sound of My voice? Why do they not come to welcome My return and rejoice in My presence? Have they backslidden and wandered from My fold?"

Go and tell them that their Shepherd has come, and calls for them. Say unto them, "How long will you go about, O backsliding people? Return unto Me, and I will heal your backslidings."

Are they tempted and distressed?

Go, and tell them that their High Priest and Intercessor, One who has been in all points tempted like as they are and who can therefore be touched with the feeling of their infirmities — has come and calls for them to spread their temptations and afflictions before Him.

Are they borne down with a load of guilt and the weight of their sins against Me, so that they are ashamed to look Me in the face?

Tell them that I will receive them graciously and love them freely.

Are they carried away by their spiritual enemies and bound in the fetters of vice, so that they cannot come to welcome Me?

Tell them that I am come to proclaim deliverance to the captives and the opening of the prison to those who are bound. Is am come to rescue the lambs of My flock from the paw of the lion and the jaws of the bear.

Are they oppressed with fears that they shall one day perish by the hand of their enemies? Go and tell them that My sheep never perish, and that none shall finally pluck them out of My hand.

Are they slumbering and sleeping, insensible of My approach?

Go and awake them with the cry, "Behold the Bridegroom comes! Go out to meet Him!"

It is profitable for the children of God often to . . . reflect on what they formerly were, meditate on their once wretched and helpless condition, look to the rock whence they were hewn, and to the pit whence they were dug.

Look back, then, Christians, to the time when you were . . . the enemies of God, the despisers of His Son, the willing slaves of the father of lies, and children of disobedience!

Look back to the time when . . . your *hearts* were hard as the nether millstone; your *understandings* were darkened; you were alienated from the life of God; your *wills* were stubborn, perverse and rebellious; your *affections* were madly bent on the pleasures of sin; every imagination of the thoughts of your hearts was evil only, and continually evil!

Look back with shame and self-abhorrence to the time when you . . . lived without God in the world, drank in iniquity like water, served various lusts and vanities, fulfilled the desires of the flesh and the mind, casted God's law behind your backs, stifled the remonstrances of conscience, quenched the influences of the divine Spirit, neglected the Holy Scriptures, mocked God with pretended worship, while your hearts were far from Him.

How many calls and invitations did you slight! How many sermons did you hear, as though you heard not! How many prayers were offered up in your presence — while you, perhaps, never considered for a moment in what you were engaged, but allowed your thoughts to wander to the ends of the earth!

Even then, God was watching over you for good — and yet how ungratefully did you requite Him! How many mercies did you receive without making one grateful acknowledgment! How did you strive to provoke Him to jealousy and lead Him, if possible, to alter His gracious designs in your favor!

A rebel against God, a resister of the divine Spirit, a slave of Satan, a child of wrath, an heir of Hell — such, O Christian, was once your character! And nothing was then before you, but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation!

When we remember an absent friend, we usually think with deep interest of the *place* where he is, of the *business* in which he is engaged, and of the *time* when we shall meet him.

Christians, you know where your Master is. You know what He is doing. You know that He now appears in the presence of God for you, that He ever lives to make intercession for you, and that before long you shall see Him and be with Him.

Think then, much and often, of the Heaven where He resides, of the perfect wisdom, fidelity, and constancy with which He there manages your concerns.

Remember that . . . He watches for you while you sleep, He labors for you while you are idle, He intercedes for you even while you are sinning against Him!

Will you, then, ever sin? Will you, while awake, ever be idle? Will you be unfaithful or slothful in laboring for Him — while He is ever active and faithful in promoting your interests?

Admire the free grace of God, who save you from such a dreadful plight!

"Look to the hole of the pit from which you were dug!" Isaiah 51:1

CHRISTIANS, MEMBERS OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

Since Christ is the *head* of the *body* of which Christians are members — then He has a right to expect the same services from them, which we expect from our bodily members. Now what we expect from our bodily members is that every one, in its proper place, should perform the services allotted it, executing the purposes and obeying the commands of the head. We do not expect that each member should have a *separate will* or pursue a *separate interest* or *act* in any respect as if it were independent. If any part of our bodies does not fulfill these expectations and yield prompt and implicit obedience to our will — then we conclude it to be diseased. If the acts of the will produce no effect upon it — then we conclude it to be dead and remove it, if possible, as a useless encumbrance.

We further expect that our bodily members, instead of attempting to provide, each one, for its own needs — will depend upon the wisdom and foresight of the head for all necessary supplies.

In a word, we know that it is the part of the *head* to plan, direct, and provide — and the part of the *members* to obey and execute. Precisely similar are the duties of Christians, considered as the members of Christ.

No Christian must have a separate *will* or a separate *interest* of his own — or act, in any respect, as if he were an insulated, independent individual. As there is but one head — so there must be but one governing, guiding will, and that must be the will of Christ. If any neglect to execute His will — then they are spiritually diseased. If this neglect is habitual — then they are spiritually dead and were never really united to Christ; for His real members never die.

It is also their duty to depend on Him for everything, for the supply of all their temporal and spiritual necessities; and never to attempt anything but in reliance on His wisdom, grace, and strength. As well may our feet walk safely or our hands work skillfully, without assistance and guidance from the head — as Christians can perform any service without the grace of Christ their head, in whom are laid up all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge and grace.

THE CHRISTIAN'S CONSOLATION

Christians, a *man* now fills the throne of Heaven. And who is this man? Believer, mark it well. It is a man who is not ashamed to call you *brother*. It is a man who can be touched with the feeling of your infirmities, for He has been in all points tempted like as you are — yet without sin. Whatever your sorrows or trials may be — He knows by experience how to sympathize with you.

Has your *Heavenly Father* forsaken you, so that you walk in darkness and see no light? He well remembers what He felt when He cried, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

Has *Satan* wounded you with his fiery darts? He remembers how sorely His own heart was bruised when He wrestled with principalities and powers and crushed the head of the prince of darkness.

Are you assaulted with various and distressing *temptations?* Christ was tempted to presume upon His Father's love, and to worship the father of lies.

Are you pressed down with a complication of *sorrows*, so as to despair even of life? The soul of Christ was once exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.

Are you mourning for the danger of unbelieving friends? Christ's own brethren did not believe in Him.

Does the *world* persecute and despise you, or are your *enemies* those of your own household? Christ was despised and rejected of men, and His own relations stigmatized Him as a madman.

Are you suffering under *slanderous* and unjust accusations? Christ was called a man gluttonous and a drunkard — a friend of publicans and sinners.

Are you struggling with the evils of *poverty?* Jesus had nowhere to lay His head.

Do Christian friends forsake or treat you unkindly? Christ was denied and forsaken by His own disciples.

Are you distressed with *fears of death?* Christ has entered the dark valley that He might destroy death.

O, then, banish all your fears. Look at your merciful High Priest who is passed unto the heavens, and triumphantly exclaim with the apostle, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"

There are *promises* of light and direction to find the path which leads to a holy life; promises of assistance to walk in that path; promises of strength to resist and overcome all opposition; promises of remedies to heal us when wounded, of cordials to invigorate us when faint, and of most glorious rewards to crown the end of our course.

You will hear Jehovah saying, "Fear not, for I am with you. Be not dismayed, for I am your God! I will strengthen you — yes, I will help you — yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness." Though you are in yourself but a worm, you shall thresh the mountains and beat them as small as the dust.

Look next at *Him* who gives these promises. It is one who is almighty — and who therefore can fulfill them. It is one who cannot lie — and therefore will fulfill them. It is one who possesses all power in Heaven and on earth, one whose treasures of grace are unsearchable and inexhaustible, one in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. With all this fullness — faith indissolubly unites us.

Say, then, you who despond and tremble when you contemplate the almost immeasurable distance between your own moral characters and that of Christ — what, except faith in these promises and in their Author, is necessary, to support, encourage, and animate you in going on to maturity?

Let not the Christian listen to the suggestions of indolence, despondency, and unbelief — but let him listen rather to the calls and promises of Christ. See what He has already done for those who relied on His grace.

Look at Enoch, who walked with God.

Look at Abraham, the friend of God.

Look at Moses, the confidential servant of God.

Look at Daniel, the man greatly beloved of God.

Look at Stephen, full of faith and the Holy Spirit.

Look at Paul, glowing with an ardor like that of "the enrapt seraph, who adores and burns" — and at the many other *worthies* with whom the historian and biographer have made us acquainted. See to what heights they soared. And who enabled them to make these approaches, to soar to these heights? He, I answer, who now calls upon you to follow them — He who now offers you the same assistance which He afforded them.

Rely, then, with full confidence on His perfections and promises, and recommence with new vigor your Christian warfare.

Do you still hesitate and linger? O you of little faith — why do you doubt? Why cast a trembling, desponding glance upon the roaring wind and stormy waves which oppose your progress? Look rather at Him who calls you onward — at the omnipotent arm, which is to be your strength and support. Look until you feel faith and hope and courage, reviving in your breast. Then say to your Lord, "I come. I will follow where You lead the way. I will once more aim, with renovated strength, at the holiness which I have long deemed unattainable."

This world is the place for labor, and not for rest or enjoyment, except that enjoyment which may be found in serving God. We shall have time enough in the coming world to rest and to converse with our friends. It may well reconcile us to separation here, if we hope to be forever with them there.

The young Christian thinks it would be best that he should be always lively, zealous, and engaged in religion — that he should feel faith, love, and humility in constant exercise and be like a flame of fire in his Master's service.

But our blessed Teacher thinks otherwise.

He knows that the most effectual, and, indeed, the only way, to *mortify sin* in our hearts — is to make us *hate* it; and the way to make us hate it is to allow us to *feel* it.

He knows that the only way to make us fervent and diligent in *prayer*, is to show us how many things we have to pray for, and convince us of our absolute need of His assistance.

He knows that the best way to make us *humble* and *contented* is to show us what we are and what we deserve it.

He knows that the only way to *wean us from the world* is to render it a place of fatigue and uneasiness.

He knows that there is nothing like the want of His presence to teach us the worth of it; and nothing like a sense of the dangerous nature of our disease, to show us the value of an almighty Physician.

Upon this plan, therefore, it is, that all His various dispensations toward Christians are conducted — and until they are acquainted with this, they cannot understand them.

CHRIST UNCHANGEABLE

As amid all the vicissitudes of the seasons, the succession of day and night, and the changes of the weather — the *sun* remains and shines in the same part of the heavens.

In the same way, amid all the daily changes which the Christian experiences, from darkness to light, and from summer to winter, in calms and tempests — the Sun of righteousness still continues the same; and 'tis the same love and wisdom which leads Him to hide or to unveil His face.

But the Christian is at first ready to imagine that the changes in his feelings, proceed from changes in Christ; as those who do not consider the motion of the earth, imagine that the sun really rises and sets.

Above all, I would say to the Christian — never distrust the kindness, the love, the wisdom and faithfulness of your Savior — but confide in Him who has promised that all things shall work together for your good. Though you may not *now* know what He is doing — you shall know *hereafter*. You will see the *reason* of all the trials and temptations, the dark and comfortless hours, the distressing doubts and fears, the long and tedious conflicts with which you are now exercised; and you will be convinced that not a sigh, not a tear, not a single uneasy thought was allotted to you — without some wise and gracious design.

Say not, then, like Jacob of old, "All these things are against me!" Say not, like David, "I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul!" For all these things are for your good, and you shall never perish, neither shall any pluck you out of Christ's hand!

Why should you, who are sons of the King of Heaven, be lean and discontented from day to day? Remember that, if you are in the path of the just — then you are the heir of God and joint heir with Christ, of an inheritance which is incorruptible, eternal, and that fades not away. Be not discouraged at the small progress you appear to make or the difficulties you may meet with. Why should the infant be discouraged because he has not the strength of manhood or the wisdom of old age? Wait on the Lord in the diligent use of His appointed means, and He will strengthen your hearts, so that you shall mount up as on eagles' wings — you shall run, and not be weary — you shall walk, and not faint.

Who is he that walks in darkness and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay himself upon his God. Let him go to Jesus, the compassionate Savior of sinners, who heals the broken in heart, who gathers the lambs in His arms and carries them in His bosom. Go, I say, to Him! Tell Him all your griefs and sorrows! Tell Him that your souls cleave to the dust! Tell Him that iniquities, doubts, and fears prevail against you! Tell Him that you are poor and miserable and wretched and blind and naked. Go to His mercy-seat, where He sits as a merciful High Priest, on purpose to give repentance and remission of sins. Go and embrace His feet, lay open your whole hearts, state all your difficulties, complaints, and diseases — and you will find Him infinitely more gracious than you can conceive; infinitely more willing to grant your requests than you are to make them. He is love itself — it is His very nature to pity.

Have you a hard heart? Carry it to Him, and He will soften it.

Have you a blind mind? He will enlighten it.

Are you oppressed with a load of guilt? He will take it of.

Are you defiled and polluted? He will wash you in His own blood.

Have you backslidden? "Turn unto Me," says He, "O backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings."

Come, then, to Christ and obtain those influences of His Spirit by which you shall be enabled to grow in grace and in the knowledge of your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. So shall your path be as the shining light, which shines more and more unto the perfect day.

How great are the privileges which result from an ability to say, "Christ is mine!" If Christ is yours, then all that He possesses is yours.

His power is yours, to defend you!

His wisdom and knowledge are yours, to guide you!

His righteousness is yours, to justify you!

His Spirit and grace are yours, to sanctify you!

His Heaven is yours, to receive you!

He is as much yours as you are His, and as He requires all that you have to be given to Him — so He gives all that He has to you. Come to Him, then, with holy boldness, and take what is your own. Remember you have already received what is most difficult for Him to give — His body, His blood, His life. And surely He who has given these, will not refuse you smaller blessings. You will never live happily or usefully — you will never highly enjoy or greatly adorn religion — until you can feel that Christ, and all that He possesses, are yours, and learn to come and take them as your own!

THE BIBLE ENTIRELY PRACTICAL

We may challenge any man to point out a single passage in the Bible which does not either teach some duty or inculcate its performance — or show the grounds on which it rests or exhibit reasons why we should perform it. For instance:
all the *preceptive* parts of Scripture prescribe our duty;
all the *invitations* invite us to perform it;
all the *promises* and *threatenings* are motives to its performance;
all the *cautions* and *admonitions* warn us not to neglect it;
the *historical* parts inform us what have been the consequences of neglecting and of performing it;
the *prophetical* parts show us what these consequences will be hereafter;
and the *doctrinal* parts show us on what grounds the whole superstructure of duty or of practical religion rests.

In the judgment of God, there is no more heinous sin than that of hearing, with unconcern, His messages of love and mercy. "Does not My word do good to him that walks uprightly?" It always does. Yet Christians often go away from hearing the word unaffected.

DUTY OF STUDYING THE BIBLE

The Scriptures are given to us as a rich mine, in which we may labor and appropriate to ourselves all the treasures we find. The more diligently we labor, and the more wealth we obtain — so much the more is the Giver pleased. As we cannot be too careful not to pry into the secret things of God — so we cannot be too diligent in searching into everything which God has revealed. If we search in the manner which He has prescribed — then we shall make all the good things contained in the Scriptures our own, in a still higher sense. We shall make that God, that Savior, that holiness, that Heaven which the Bible reveals — our own forever, our own to possess and to enjoy. In short:

Every *truth* of Scripture, is ours to enlighten us.

Every *precept* of Scripture, is ours to direct us.

Every *admonition* of Scripture, is ours to warn us.

Every *promise* of Scripture, is ours to encourage and animate us. For these purposes God has given Scripture, and for these purposes we are to receive it.

PRAYER

We may judge of the state of our hearts — by the earnestness of our prayers. You cannot make a rich man, beg like a poor man; you cannot make a man that is full, cry for food like one that is hungry; no more will a man who has a good opinion of himself, cry for mercy like one who feels that he is poor and needy.

The symptoms of spiritual decline are like those which attend the decay of bodily health. It generally commences with loss of appetite, and a disrelish for spiritual food, prayer, reading the Scriptures and devotional books. Whenever you perceive these symptoms, be alarmed, for your spiritual health is in danger; apply immediately to the great Physician for a cure.

The best means of keeping near to God, is the prayer-closet — here the battle is won or lost.

If a man begins to be impatient because his prayers for any blessings are not answered, it is a certain proof that a self-righteous dependence on his own merits prevails in his heart to a great extent; for the language of impatience is, "I deserve the blessing! I have a right to expect that it would be bestowed, and it ought to have been bestowed before this."

It is evident that a man who feels that he deserves nothing, will never be impatient because he receives nothing; but will say, "I have nothing to complain of — I receive as much as I deserve."

Again, when a man wonders or thinks it strange that he does not receive a blessing for which he has prayed — it shows that he relies on his own merits. The language of such feelings is, "It is very strange that I, who have prayed so well and so long and had so much reason to expect a blessing — do not receive it."

People who feel truly humble, on the contrary, are surprised, not when blessings are withheld, but when they are bestowed. It appears very strange and astonishing to them, that God should bestow any favors on creatures so unworthy as themselves, or pay any regard to prayers so polluted as their own. This is the temper to which every person must be brought before God will answer his prayers.

PRAISE

No one needs to be told that the surest method to obtain new favors from an earthly benefactor, is to be thankful for those which he has already bestowed. It is the same with respect to our heavenly Benefactor.

I have somewhere met with an account of a Christian who was shipwrecked upon a desolate island, while all his companions perished in the waves. In this situation, he spent many days in fasting and prayer that God would open a way for his deliverance; but his prayers received no answer. At length, musing on the goodness of God in preserving him from the dangers of the sea, he resolved to spend a day in thanksgiving and praise for this and other favors. Before the conclusion of the day, a vessel arrived and restored him in safety to his country and friends.

Another instance, equally in point, we find in the history of *Solomon*. At the dedication of the temple, many prayers were made and many sacrifices offered without any token of the divine acceptance. But when singers and players on instruments began as one to make one sound to be heard, in praising and thanking the Lord, saying, "For He is good, for His mercy endures forever," then the glory of the Lord descended and filled the temple. The reason why praise and thanksgiving are thus prevalent with God is that they, above all other duties, glorify Him. "Whoever offers praise," says He, "glorifies Me"; and those who thus honor Him, He will honor.

THE LORD'S SUPPER

At the communion table, we are in fact assembled to attend our Savior's funeral, to look at His dead body, as we look at the countenance of a deceased friend before the coffin is closed. And if every wrong, every worldly feeling should die away while we are contemplating the corpse of a friend — then how much more ought this to be the case when this friend is Christ! I think it may be profitable sometimes to shut ourselves up in imagination, in our Savior's tomb, and feel as if He were there buried with us.

At the table of our Lord, each of us should recollect the personal favors and marks of kindness which we have received from Christ, or through His mediation. Our temporal mercies, our spiritual privileges should all pass in review. We should look back to the never-to-be-forgotten *time of love*, when He found us poor, miserable, wretched, blind and naked; dead in trespasses and sins, having no hope, and without God in the world.

We should remember how He pitied us, awakened us, convinced us of sin, and drew us to Himself by the cords of love. We should remember how often He has since healed our backslidings, pardoned our sins, borne with our unbelief, ingratitude, and slowness to learn; supplied our needs, listened to our complaints, alleviated our sorrows, and revived our drooping spirits when we were ready to faint.

In short, we must remember all the way by which He has led us these many years, through a wilderness of sins, sorrows, trials, and temptations. Thus we shall be convinced that no sickly infant ever cost its mother a thousandth part of the care and labor and suffering — which we have cost our Savior; and that no mother has ever shown her infant a thousandth part of the watchful tenderness which our Savior has shown to us.

Was Christ a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief? Then, Christians, we need not be surprised or offended if we are often called to drink of the *cup of sorrows*, or if we find this world to be a *valley of tears*. This is one of the ways in which we must be conformed to our glorious Head. Indeed, His example has sanctified grief and almost rendered it pleasant to mourn. One would think that Christians could scarcely wish to go *rejoicing* through a world which their Master passed through *mourning*. The paths in which we follow Him, are bedewed with His tears and stained with His blood. It is true that from the ground thus watered and fertilized, many rich flowers and fruits of paradise spring up to refresh us, in which we may and ought to rejoice. But still our joy should be softened and sanctified by godly sorrow.

When we are partaking of the feast which His love has spread for us — then we should never forget how dearly it was purchased.

"There's not a gift His hand bestows,
But cost His heart a groan!"

The joy, the honor, the glory, through eternity shall be ours — but the sorrows, the sufferings, the agonies which purchased it, were all His own.

RELATIVE DUTIES OF CHRISTIANS

Since all Christians are members of the same body — they ought not to *envy* each other. What could be more absurd than for the eye to envy the dexterity of the hand — or the feet to envy the perspicuity of the eye which directed their motions and prevented them from running into danger? Still more absurd is it, if possible, for one Christian to envy the gifts or graces or usefulness of another — since the whole body, and he among the rest, enjoys the benefit of them.

The fact is, whenever God bestows a favor on any Christian — He does, in effect, confer a favor on all; just as when a man heals or clothes one part of the body — he confers a benefit on the whole. Rejoice and bless God, then, Christians, when He honors or favors any fellow Christian — for it is an act of kindness done to you, and will promote your present and eternal felicity.

No Christian should be dissatisfied with his lot, if he is poor and despised. Neither should he indulge pride, if honored and prospered. Every Christian is in that exact situation which God in His infinite wisdom, sees best for him — and the most highly favored Christians are, in many respects, dependent on the lowest. "The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you.' If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? And if the whole body were hearing, where were the smelling? But now God has set the members in the body, every one as it has pleased Him," and it is the same in the great body of Christ.

It is incumbent on every Christian to ascertain for what he is qualified — and what service he is called to perform for the body of which he is a member. You can easily conceive what would be the consequence, in the human body — should the feet attempt to perform the work of the hands; or the hands attempt to perform the office of the eye.

Almost equally pernicious and ridiculous are the consequences occasioned by the self-ignorance, vanity, or false modesty of many Christians. They either do not know their place — or if they do, will not perform the duties of it.

Hence some will attempt to perform the duty of social prayer or of exhortation or of expounding the Scriptures, whom God never designed, and therefore never qualified for that work; and who, of course, cannot perform it in an edifying, acceptable manner. While others, whom He had thus qualified, for some cause or other, decline attempting it. Hence it is too often the case, that a church of Christ, instead of resembling a well-organized body in which the several members know and keep their place and perform its duties — resembles a disorderly family in which no one knows his place, and, of course, there is nothing but confusion and complaint.

LOVE ONE ANOTHER

There are some Christians whom it is not very easy to love, on account of some disagreeable peculiarities about them. But we shall love them hereafter, as we love our own souls, and they will love us in a similar manner. Besides, *our Savior loves them, notwithstanding all these imperfections*. Ought not we to love those whom He loves? If He were now visibly on earth and we were permitted to stand by His side, if we saw Him bend a look of love on any individual, would not our affections immediately flow out toward that person, however disagreeable or imperfect he might be? Such a look our Savior does bend on the most unlovely of His disciples. Let us, then, love them all, for His sake.

"Not for ourselves, but others" is the grand law of nature, inscribed by the hand of God on every part of creation. Not for itself, but others — does the *sun* dispense its beams. Not for themselves, but others — do the *clouds* distill their showers. Not for herself, but others — does the *earth* unlock her treasures. Not for themselves, but others — do the *trees* produce their fruits or the *flowers* diffuse their fragrance and display their various hues.

In the same way, not for himself, but others, are the blessings of Heaven bestowed on man. And whenever, instead of diffusing them around, he devotes them exclusively to his own gratification and shuts himself up in the dark and flinty caverns of selfishness — he transgresses the great law of creation; he sacrilegiously converts to his own use, the favors which were given him for the relief of others — and must be considered, not only as an *unprofitable* servant, but as a *fraudulent* servant who has worse than wasted his Lord's money!

He who thus lives only to himself and consumes the bounty of Heaven upon his *lusts*, or consecrates it to the *demon of avarice* — is a barren rock in a fertile plain! He is a thorny bramble in a fruitful vineyard! He is the grave of God's blessings! He is a desert of the moral world.

And if he is highly exalted in wealth or power — then he stands, inaccessible and strong, like an insulated towering cliff which exhibits only a cold and cheerless prospect, intercepts the genial beams of the sun, chills the valleys below with its gloomy shade, adds fresh keenness to the freezing blast, and tempts down the lightnings of angry Heaven.

How different is this from the gently-rising hill, clothed to its summit with fruits and flowers, which attracts and receives the dews of Heaven, and retaining only sufficient to supply its numerous offspring — sends the remainder in a thousand streams to bless the valleys which lie at its feet!

DUTIES TO THE HEATHEN

It is a fact that vigorous and persevering exertions in favor of religion abroad, naturally excite, and are inseparably connected with similar and successful exertions at home. Witness the example of Great Britain. While she was reaching the full cup of life and salvation to other countries — the drops which fell from it refreshed and fertilized her own. Witness the present religious situation of our own country. Never, in the same space of time, was so much done for its amelioration; never were the Scriptures so generally diffused among us; never were our domestic missions in so prosperous a state; never were their endeavors crowned with so much success — as since we began to send Bibles and missionaries to the heathen. God has been pouring out spiritual blessings upon our churches, our towns, our villages and our schools. Thus, for every missionary whom we have sent abroad — He has given us ten to labor at home.

If we wish to obtain greater blessings of a similar kind — then we must seek them in a similar way. If vice and infidelity are to be finally conquered and banished from our country — then the battle must be fought, and the victory won, on the plains of India.

True charity receives her instructions, as well as her existence, from faith in God's Word; and when faith points to human beings in danger — then charity, without delaying to propose questions, hastens to their relief.

Our houses are built, our vineyards are planted, around the base of a volcano. They may be fair and flourishing today — tomorrow, ashes may be all that remains. Open your hands wide, then, while they contain any blessings to bestow — for of that which you *give*, you can never be deprived.

CHRIST GLORIFIED IN HIS CHURCH

When we look at the *sun*, we only perceive that it is a bright and glorious luminary. But when we behold the earth in spring, in summer, or autumn, clothed with luxuriant vegetation, adorned with flowers, and enlivened by myriads of sportive, happy beings; when we compare this state of things with the rigors, the frost, the barrenness of winter — we recollect that the *sun* is instrumentally the cause of this mighty difference, and reflect how gloomy and desolate our world would be if wholly deprived of its beams, we have far more clear and enlarged conceptions of the value and excellence of this luminary. The sun is then, if I may so express it, glorified in the earth, and admired in all the productions and beneficial effects which result from his influence.

In a similar manner will Christ, the Sun of righteousness, be glorified and admired in His people. It will then be clearly seen how much mercy was necessary to pardon their sins, how much grace was required to sanctify, preserve and glorify them; how much wisdom, goodness, and power were displayed in devising and executing the wondrous plan of their redemption. They will not, therefore, be admired — but Christ will be seen and admired in them. The assembled universe will be ready to exclaim with one voice, *"How infinitely powerful, wise, and good must He be — who could transform sinful, guilty worms of the dust — into beings so perfectly glorious and lovely!"*

MISCELLANEOUS DIRECTIONS TO CHRISTIANS

God commands all men to repent. Christians have enough to repent of daily — and should always be in a penitent frame.

Let your great Physician heal you in His own way. Only follow His *directions* and take the *medicine* which He prescribes — and then quietly leave the result with Him.

What God calls a man to do — He will carry him through. I would undertake to govern half a dozen worlds — if God called me to do it; but I would not undertake to govern half a dozen sheep — unless God called me to it.

To a person who has been frustrated in a benevolent design: I congratulate you and anticipate your eventual success. I do not recollect ever to have succeeded in anything of importance, in which I did not meet with some rebuff at the commencement.

THE WAY TO CURE A COVETOUS SPIRIT

Suppose you were to pass over a pit which had no bottom — would you endeavor to fill it up, or bridge it over?

Anticipated sorrows are harder to bear than real ones — because Christ does not support us under them. In every trouble, we may see the footsteps of Christ's flock who have gone before us.

Christian friends, when separated from each other's society, may derive comfort from the reflection that God is able to extend a hand to two of His children at the same time, however remote may be their places of habitation.

Everything we do or say should be immediately tried by a little court within our own hearts. Our motives should be examined, and a decision made on the spot.

Our best rule is to give God the same place in our hearts — that He holds in the universe. We must make Him all in all. We should act as if there were no beings in the universe, but God and ourselves.

As the eye which has gazed at the sun, cannot immediately discern any other object; as the man who has been accustomed to behold the ocean turns with contempt from a stagnant pool — so *the mind which has contemplated eternity, overlooks and despises the things of time*.

If at any time you have enlargement in prayer and are favored with access to the throne of grace — do not go away satisfied and self-complacent. Pride says, "I have done very well now — God will accept this." You perhaps discover that this is the suggestion of pride; it then takes a new turn, "Another would not have discovered it to be pride — I must be very humble to see it thus." Thus if you continue the search, you will find pride, like the different layers of an onion, lurking one beneath another to the very center.

Praise Christ for everything. He is the foundation of every good thought, desire, and affection. It should be our aim to draw all we can from Him by prayer — and return Him all we can by praise.

O DEATH! WHERE IS YOUR STING?

The power of death, the last enemy, is destroyed — as it respects all who believe in Christ. Instead of being the jailer of Hell and the grave — death is now, as it respects Christ's people, the porter of paradise! All he can now do, is to cause them to sleep in Jesus, release their immortal spirits from the fetters which bind them to earth, deposit their weary bodies in the tomb, as a place of rest until Christ comes at the last day to raise them incorruptible, glorious, and immortal; and reunite them to their souls in a state of perfect, never-ending felicity.

TO THE MINISTERS OF CHRIST

Every benevolent person is gratified by being made the bearer of pleasing news. The messenger who is commissioned to open the prison doors of an insolvent debtor or pardoned criminal, and restore him to the embraces of his family; the officer who is sent by his commander in chief to carry home tidings of an important victory; and still more the ambassador who is appointed to proclaim pardon and peace, in his sovereign's name, to conquered rebels — thinks himself, and is thought by others, to have received no common favor.

Should God put into your hands the wonder-working rod of Moses; should He commission and enable you to work miracles of beneficence, to enrich the poor, to comfort the miserable, to restore sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, health to the diseased, and life to the dead — you would esteem it a favor and honor incomparably greater than earthly monarchs can bestow.

But in committing *the gospel* to your care, God has conferred on you honors and favors, compared with which even the power of working miracles is a trifle! He has put into your hands, the *cross* of Christ — which is an instrument of far greater efficacy than the rod of Moses. He has sent you to proclaim the most joyful tidings that Heaven can desire, or that earth can hear. He has sent you to preach deliverance to captives, the recovery of sight to the blind, the balm of Gilead and the great Physician to the spiritually wounded and diseased, salvation to the self-destroyed, and everlasting life to the dead.

In a word, He commissions and enables them to work miracles, not upon the bodies, but upon the souls of men; miracles not merely of power, but of grace and mercy; miracles, to perform which, an angel would think himself highly honored in being sent down from Heaven; miracles from the performance of which it is difficult to say whether greater *glory* redounds to God, or greater *happiness* to man. Well then may every minister of Christ exclaim with Paul, "I thank my God for that He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry!"

Though in committing the gospel to their trust, God has conferred on ministers the greatest honor and favor which can be given to mortals — yet, like all other favors, it brings with it a great increase of responsibility. Remember that the more highly anyone is exalted, in this respect — the more *difficult* it becomes to stand, and the more *dangerous* it is to fall. He who falls from a pulpit — seldom stops short of the lowest abyss in Hell.