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The Gospel Messenger.

A CONVENIENT SEASON.



NOTHER year breaks upon us, and in its dawning may be seen further beams of mercy—deeper, fuller traces of God's long-suffering.

That sin is fast heaving up, and boldly asserting itself, spite of all that there may be to lessen its virulence, is only too patent to those who look beyond the surface.

The state of things foretold of the "last days" by the apostle Paul is realised to the letter. We have certainly reached them, for all around we see verified the divine prediction, "Men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof" (2 Tim. iii. 2-5). All this was foretold of certain days, and if we find it true of the present time, then we may be certain that we have arrived at those days. Carefully notice that they are called *the last days*. We

have reached the end! If ever sin could be labelled and marked out, it is to-day. We have, in the above indictment, some twenty distinct and different counts, and each of them is preferred against our own generation—against the very people amongst whom we live and move.

Now that is serious. But, it may be suggested, this catalogue of crime cannot attach to Christendom, nor to those areas that are enlightened by learning, elevated by civilisation, or blessed by the sound of the gospel. It must assuredly apply to heathendom, and to regions of moral and idolatrous ignorance, as we may read, for instance, in the end of Romans i. Well, that may be true, but the sad and distressing fact is, that the description given us above does most emphatically apply to Christendom, and to the very place where the gospel is preached—to the Church sphere.

Then, if so, one of two things must be the case—either that Christianity is a complete failure, for, after a trial of some nineteen hundred years, it leaves things just as it found them, or else that the description is false and inaccurate.

But how can the description be false if it be God's description, as it certainly is? Nay, it is true to the letter. Then Christianity must be a failure! Not so. But does it not stand to reason that a system which assumes to ameliorate and improve must be a failure, if, after so long a trial, it has confessedly accomplished nothing? Accomplished nothing! Ah, that is an unwarrantable

leap to a wrong conclusion. Mark, it is from the pages of its own Bible that we have quoted the deplorable state of things in what we called the Church sphere, or the sphere of Christianity, and it is incredible that a system should condemn itself.

Nay, Christianity has accomplished, and will accomplish, its own mission, and perform its own wondrous work, spite of all human failure. The truth is that people have harboured the incorrect idea that Christianity was designed to reform man as man, to make us better citizens, better masters, servants, &c. &c.—that it was intended, in a word, to convert and renovate the world. A grand mistake! If that were its design, it is a huge failure indeed, and the infidel may boast as he pleases, and with abundant reason. What Christianity professes to do—has done and is doing—is to save souls from sin and hell, to form such into the Church of God, and the Bride of the Lamb, that they should be to the praise of His grace for ever. Having saved them, it no doubt makes them morally different in all their ways, by fashioning them according to Christ Himself.

But the Church and the world are, in their natures, distinct one from another—as fire and water. The Church is ever supposed to be the object of the world's hatred and persecution, at the very time that the Church is seeking, like her blessed Head, the world's salvation and blessing. In connection with the Church, not one word of God will fail, and the purpose in Christianity will

be perfected. Then what of our passage in 2nd Timothy? To whom does it apply?

Between the Church, as the true vessel, and the world, there has arisen an immense system of profession—a hollow, unreal imitation of the true thing; and this it is that has failed so palpably. This thing that has a “form of godliness, but without the power”—this powerless, spiritless, godless sham—this that catches the lynx eye of the infidel, and that justly merits all his scorn—this bastard creation of the last days—this fearful snare and pit for unwary souls—it is here that sin finds its convenient lodgment, as the fowls in the branches of the mustard-tree. The evils of the day culminate, alas! in this hideous sphere, where Christianity has been distorted and put to shame.

Again I say that sin is fast heaving up, spite of all the external barriers that would retard its growth. And, believe me, it is the judgment of God, and not a peaceful millennium, that is to terminate this state of things.

Yet God is long-suffering, and the advent of another year of grace and mercy is another proof of His desire that none should perish, but that all should come to repentance. Reader, the last year is gone, irrevocably gone, and so, too, have all its predecessors, and with them many a golden opportunity has been lost for ever. Not one of them can you recall. How your sins of commission, as well as of omission, have been accumulating, and how that convenient season of turning to God, promised

to yourself so long ago, has always been deferred. What increasing guilt is yours! What a treasuring of wrath against the day of wrath! What a gradual purchasing of a place in the lake of fire do all these years witness! Think, soul, think, I beseech you!

Still God—your offended God—lingers over you, not willing that you should perish. Yes, not even you! The sun of salvation's long and lovely day is setting in a murky sky. Shortly all will be over. Then an everlasting night, unrelieved by star or dawn—one eternal *hour* of judgment must settle down on each impenitent soul. How awful!

Ah, friend, let that last lingering ray of light and love and salvation shine upon your heart to-day. Let this be the beginning of days to you. Begin the year with God. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;" and remember the other side, "He that believeth not shall be damned."

J. W. S.

"RESTING ON THE ROCK."



THIRTY years ago, just ere the splendid S.S. "London," a vessel of 2,000 tons, sank in a furious storm in the Bay of Biscay, with 220 souls on board of her, the following letter was written. The letter was given to one of the nineteen persons who got off in the ship's pinnace a minute or two before the doomed vessel went down, stern

foremost, with her freight of living souls. The survivors were picked up by a passing ship, and the letter reached its destination.

S.S. "LONDON," 10th January 1866.

MY DEAR BROTHER,—Before your eyes look on this, your brother Frederick and I will be engulfed in the depths of the sea.

We left Plymouth on the 6th. The weather was stormy, but not such as to render any fear of danger. However, as we proceeded, the gale increased, and while I am penning these lines the awful rocking of the ship is such that it is with difficulty I hold my pen. I cannot describe to you the state of agitation which is written on every countenance—some waiting with the utmost composure their fate, others so alarmed at the prospect of death that their shrieks are truly heartrending. But amidst it all I am resigned to my fate. Blessed be God, I am resting on "the Rock." "I know whom I have believed." Christ is precious to me. I do not know whether by any means you will receive this. Oh, that I could see those with whom I was acquainted. I mourn over my indifference towards their spiritual welfare, and now, with death staring me in the face, I feel I could do anything if by any means I might be the means of their salvation. Tell Joseph to give his heart to the Saviour *at once*, and Sarah not to neglect the salvation of her soul. I want to meet them in heaven. And now, dear brother, farewell. Many have been the happy meetings we have had together on earth—our next will be where not a wave of trouble shall roll over us. God bless you and keep you. I cannot say more.—Your affectionate brother,

G. T.

This voice from the deep should surely speak to every unsaved reader, as well as to the recipients of the letter.

W. T. P. W.

"THE RAILWAY POINTS."



ALL right; right away, Harry; make haste home," said the guard of the last train reaching Barnet, Monday night, August 16, 1869, addressing the engine-driver. This train had brought passengers from London, and was now to

return empty to the next station up the line. For this the engine had been uncoupled from the foremost carriage, and attached to the guard's van. All was supposed to be right. The signalman signalled up the line to a goods train that the line was "clear, come on." The guard of the passenger train jumped into his brake-van, calling out, "All right; right away, Harry; make haste home." But the "*points*" had not been attended to, and the train was traveling on the wrong line. The faster it went, the more in earnest the guard and driver were to reach home, the nearer it travelled to destruction. For the goods train was also moving on upon the same line—the down line—so that before the two trains had gone half a mile, their engines met, and a frightful collision took place. Miraculously the engine-drivers and stokers escaped with their lives, though much injured. It is supposed that the guard was killed instantaneously. The gas-holder in his carriage having burst, set fire to the other carriages; and the burnt and calcined bones of the poor man were all that remained; and these were

lifted up bit by bit—each limb, each joint, each bone, each piece of bone, separately, and placed in a sack, to await an inquest. All this had happened because the points were not attended to!

If you were thus to be suddenly called away from this world, are you ready to meet God? The question must be one between your own soul and Him. The great question of eternal importance is, what does God think of you, and what has God done for you? If this "*point*" is not settled, you are surely travelling on the wrong line—the *down line*. Your refusing to believe that destruction is before you makes no difference. You may flatter yourself that all is right, that heaven is your home, and you expect to reach it. You are in earnest about it—you travel fast; but "there is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. xvi. 25).

Stop, fellow-sinner! stop, and think! Are you born again?—changed from being a child of the devil to a child of God? Have you passed from death to life?

Before another hour flies away, see to it on which line you are journeying. Consider not, I beseech you, *these points* as insignificant and unimportant. Your salvation, your eternal happiness, depends on these points now. It will be too late by-and-by. If you want to have Christ in heaven, you must have Christ on earth. If you would have Him for the end of your course for glory, you must surely have Him for the beginning. He is the strait

and the narrow gate, and He is the way of life. You must personally know Him, to be saved.

"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way which leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." And Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John xiv. 6).

ANON.

THE BEGGARS' BED.



WIDE expanse of dreary moorland, a rough wind-swept road winding through it, and on the road a solitary traveller.

Why does he pause in his onward tread, and gaze westward toward a ravine, where a thin streak of curling smoke, rising slowly behind some stunted fir-trees, proclaimed the presence of a dwelling-house? What concern had he with it? Within its walls there must be souls, immortal souls, whom he wished to warn of coming wrath, and tell of present salvation through faith in a once crucified, but now glorified Saviour.

The lonely traveller had tasted the goodness of God for himself, and his desire for all whom he came in contact with was that they might be saved. During his holidays he had betaken himself to an

agricultural district, and daily o'er its leas, by its fallow fields, or across its moors he trudged, pressing his one theme—Jesus Christ, and Him crucified—on groups of labourers whom he met, on wives at cottage doors, or children at their play.

Daylight was waning, on the day of which we write, as he neared this farmhouse. He had visited nearly every habitation in a circuit of many miles, and prudence told him to pass this one by, and press toward his lodging, ere darkness overtook him. His love of souls, however, overcame his discretion, and presently he was in the farm kitchen, speaking the gospel to its inmates as perhaps they had never heard it before.

Nature, with its ever-changing moods, worked strange freaks while he tarried. The clouds, which during the day had remained banked in heavy masses against the horizon, now overspread the sky. Thick mists enveloped each hill-top, and were stealthily creeping down their rugged slopes. As Mr M—— peered into the darkness from the threshold, he inwardly upbraided himself for his delay.

"How far have you to go to-night?" asked the farmer's son.

Mr M—— named the village to which he was bound.

"It is six miles distant," answered the young man; "it is impossible for you to walk so far in a night like this; the road is unfenced, and the mist will soon be over everything;" and the feeling-hearted youth turned back to the kitchen, and

asked his mother to accommodate the stranger for the night. She objected to take an unknown person into the house in her husband's absence. The usually stout heart of the evangelist failed him as he stepped from the genial light of that open door into the gloomy night.

He had gone but a short distance when the farmer's son overtook him, and strongly advised him to give up the attempt of such a journey. "Better take shelter here till daybreak than risk losing yourself on the moors," he said; and acting on the friendly counsel, Mr M—— returned, and was admitted to an outhouse. A lighted match revealed a heap of straw, some sacks, and an old pair of blankets.

It was the beggars' bed!

It is customary for some farmers in the South of Scotland to reserve one of the numerous out-buildings which surround a farmhouse for the use of tramps and beggars, and many a poor waif and stray has benefited by this kindly arrangement.

Cleanliness had been a cardinal virtue in the quiet home in which Mr M—— had been reared, and he felt as though he would rather face the unpropitious elements than pass a night in such a place. A moment's reflection on the Lowly One who had "not where to lay his head" enabled him to conquer his rising indignation. He thanked the young man for his kindness, pitched the sacks and blankets to a distant corner, and stretched his weary frame upon the straw.

"Surely God is a hard taskmaster," says some one, "to allow His servant to come to such a strait as this." Ah no! In telling us this incident Mr M—— said he never experienced so deeply the love of God in his soul as when lying on the beggars' bed. "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his Lord. *It is enough* for the disciple that he be *as his master* ; " and what had his Master? His birthplace a stable, His sanctuary a hillside, and His pulpit a borrowed boat.

As Mr M—— lay in the darkness communing with his God, one verse came ever uppermost, he could not tell why: "The king commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den." A long train of praise and prayer followed, and again, "The king commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den" came forcibly to him. Sleep was beginning to assert its dominion over him, when the door opened, and the farmer's son, lantern in hand, entered, and requested Mr M—— to come into the house.

God had been deeply exercising the inmates of that house regarding their unusual visitor. The son had spent the evening in the kitchen repairing various implements of husbandry. He did not think it necessary to tell the others that the stranger was passing the night on the premises. In the parlour the grandmother told stories of belated travellers, who had come to an untimely end, in bog or tarn, on these very moors, so effec-

tively, that all believed Mr M—— must be lost, and his death would lie at their door. It was quite a relief when they found their fears were groundless, and the son was at once sent to bring him into the house.

No sooner was Mr M—— seated by the parlour fire than he began and preached to them Jesus. This time he found an open ear. He told them of a full, free, present, and eternal salvation through faith in the atoning work of Christ.

"I believe," said the old woman, "that Christ died for our sins, but nobody will know till the day of judgment whether they are saved or not."

"Do you believe all the words that the Lord Jesus said?" asked Mr M——.

"Yes, I do," she replied.

"Then listen to some of His words," and he read: "'Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation (or judgment); but is passed from death unto life.' Does the Lord say, If you believe on Him, you will get everlasting life at the judgment?"

"I have always thought that was the way," said the honest old woman; "but I must read that verse myself in my own Bible."

She adjusted her spectacles, and having found the place, read slowly and very reverently those wondrous words of the Lord Jesus, which the Holy Ghost has recorded in John v. 24.

"Let me look at it, Mother," said the mistress, who had been listening attentively, and she also read the verse.

"Yes, there it is quite plain, the one that hears and believes has everlasting life. I never saw it before, but I do believe, and I must have everlasting life. Don't you see it, Mother?" she asked, as the joy of newly acquired blessing lighted up her face, and prompted her to urge the acceptance of this divine truth on her mother.

"No, I must be careful what I believe," said the old woman, "for I have looked forward to be saved at the judgment day all my life."

"Is it a pleasant prospect?" asked Mr M——.

"No, it is not; many a night have I spent in fear and trembling, and prayed God that at that great day I might be found among the sheep at His right hand."

"And what made you afraid at the thought of judgment?" asked Mr M——.

"My sins," said the old woman.

"What was it Christ bore on the cross?"

"It was sins."

"Whose sins? Did He bear your sins?"

"Yes, yes, I believe He did," said the old woman with fervour.

"Well, if God punished Christ for your sins, will He punish you for them too?" asked Mr M——.

"I don't know, that is just the thing I am not sure about."

"Grandmother," broke in the young man, to

whom the message of God came as good news from a far country, "it is as plain as day. Christ has been punished for my sins. I will not be judged since He has been judged for me. I believe it because God says it."

"Thank God for that," said Mr M——.

There was staying at the farm at this time a young man, who stood in a particularly friendly relationship to the buxom daughter of the house. These two sat a little apart from the others, and the Spirit of God stirred each of their hearts to a deep sense of their need of salvation. Yet they both hesitated, each wondering how the other would act. Reader, do not waver in your decision for Christ; your tarrying may make others linger, your acceptance smooth the way of peace to another soul.

Long and earnestly were they exhorted to believe in their heart that Christ had suffered for their sins.

"Will you believe?" asked the young woman, as she lifted her eyes to her friend.

"Will you believe?" asked he in return.

"You must both believe," said the evangelist.

And both of them did believe, and confessed with their mouth the Lord Jesus. Thus four of that family were praising and blessing God for the gift of eternal life.

The fear of judgment continued sadly to trouble the old woman, and well may every unsaved soul tremble at the thought of it, for no one who

neglects this great salvation will escape the judgment of God.

Carefully and prayerfully did Mr M—— endeavour to show her from Scripture that it was because death and judgment were such appalling realities that Christ suffered both. Sin put a great barrier between God and man, and Jesus came as Mediator and Ransom, and, on the ground of His atoning death, God can now be "just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus" (Rom. iii. 26). "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God" (1 John iv. 15). Well then may the believer have boldness in the day of judgment, because as Christ is, so is he in this world (1 John iv. 17).

It was a night much to be remembered in that household. Outside the threatened storm raged, within reigned the peace of God, and at length even the old grandmother was enabled to rejoice in God's mercy without fear of judgment, and to sing by faith—

"My sins were borne by Jesus,
The Substitute from God ;
He took them all, and freed me
From sin's accursed load.

My guilt was borne by Jesus,
Who washed the crimson stains
White in His blood most precious,
Till not a spot remains."

JUSTIFICATION: ITS FEATURES AND BASIS.*

"And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness."—GEN. xv. 5, 6.

"If Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness."—ROM. iv. 2, 3.



HE gospel for us is exactly on the same lines as it came to Abraham in this starry night scene. He takes God at His word. The Lord imputes his faith to him for righteousness, of which he had none in himself. He stands reckoned as a righteous man because of his faith in God. He rests upon what God was about to do, we on what He has done; but the principle of our justification is exactly the same.

Justification is presented in three ways in the Epistle to the Romans. In the third chapter we get the complete ruin of man detailed, and then the statement, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (ver. 23). That is our condition by nature. Then we are told that we are "*justified freely by his grace* (God's grace) through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (ver. 24). In the first verse of the fifth chapter of Romans we

* Extracted from "Night Scenes of Scripture," chap. x.—
"A Night among the Stars."

read—"Therefore being *justified by faith*, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." In the ninth verse of the same chapter we have—"Much more then being now *justified by his blood*, we shall be saved from wrath through him." So you see justification spoken of in these three ways.

Are there then three ways of justification? No. There are three parties to justification. Do you know who they are? God, Christ, and yourself. And what is God's part in it? Listen: "Being justified freely by *his grace* through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Grace is the spring of it all. It all comes from God. And what is the next thing? "Being now *justified by his blood*"—the blood of Jesus—"we shall be saved from wrath through him." That is Christ's side—"his blood"—His death. And what is your side and mine? It is faith. Righteousness shall be imputed to us "if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. Therefore being *justified by faith*, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (iv. 24, 25, v. 1). What is your side and mine? Faith! God's side is *Grace*. That is the spring. It all flows from Him. And Jesus' side? *Blood*. His death is the instrumental means and basis—the groundwork of our justification. Your side and mine is *Faith*! And what is that? It is the hand put out to take the blessing which God's grace offers, and Jesus' blood

secures. Justification, therefore, is *by* grace, *through* blood, and *on the principle* of faith—not works.

But there is more instruction in the scene before us as to the basis of the soul's blessing. The Lord says to Abraham: "I am the Lord, that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it" (ver. 7). To this Abraham replies: "*Whereby* shall I know that I shall inherit it?" (ver. 8.) What evidence can I have that I shall inherit the land, is the thought of his heart. The Lord says to him: "Take *me*"—He does not say "Take *thee*"—"an heifer of three years old, and a she-goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtle-dove, and a young pigeon" (ver. 9). Why these five animals? Would not one have been sufficient for God? I believe one would have been enough for God, but the five were needed for Abraham, and for us as learners of his lesson. I believe the truth brought out here is to show us that God's way of blessing is always based on death. Sacrifice is the instrumental means whereby you and I can be justified, and whereby God has been glorified in respect of sin.

Only death can put away sin. Death came by sin—the sin of the first man—and sin can only be put away by death—the death of the last Adam. There must be sacrifice. The groundwork of our blessing is the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore God bids Abraham take these

victims. But you might say, Why the five? Five is always the number in Scripture that is coupled with weakness. The weakness of man, and the weakness of the soul. There are five people in this room to-night, and all five rest on Jesus, but have different measures of apprehension and enjoyment. Do you think that each one is as happy as the other? I never knew two people to be equally happy. I find some happy, and others happier still. We certainly ought to enjoy Christ, but our enjoyment will depend on our appreciation of Him; and that is the point here, I take it.

Now, observe these five animals were of different relative values. There was the heifer, the she-goat, the ram, the turtle-dove, and the pigeon. The heifer was much more valuable than the she-goat; but the turtle-dove, and the pigeon, what were they in value as compared with the heifer? Each victim presents Christ in death, but Christ differently apprehended; Christ, not as God estimates Him, but as you and I estimate Him. There may be five souls in this hall to-night, I repeat, resting on the work of Jesus, and but one having a clear, full grasp of Christ. You will find that person brimful of "joy and peace in believing," with sweet and precious views of Christ, and deep enjoyment of Christ. I come to the one who was only converted last night perhaps, and I find that he has but a very feeble sense of the value of the work of Jesus. One sees the heifer, the other the pigeon, so to say.

Now tell me, Are the souls who are most advanced more truly and certainly saved than those who know little about Christ? Not a bit of it! The most advanced is not a bit more safe than the one who is only just beginning his journey. He may be happier, but he is not safer. Friend, if you to-night can say, I really believe on, and rest in Jesus, then you are saved. If you have found Christ, and have rested your guilty soul on Him, and His wondrous work—even if you know very little about Him—you are as safe as the most advanced Christian. The man of a day's knowledge of the Lord is as safe as the man with fifty years' experience. They have both found the same Saviour. Ah! but, you say, I do not appreciate Christ as I should. True, but God appreciates Him at His true value, that is the point, and He accepts you on His estimate of Christ, not yours. I value the Lord Jesus greatly, but God values Him infinitely more. Our value of Him does not regulate our acceptance, though it may, and does affect our joy. It is God's estimate of the work of Christ, in which the believer is set before Him, and according to which he is accepted and blessed.

Two things have to be borne in mind. It is *the word of God* that connects your soul with the Lord, and it is *the work of Christ* by which you are redeemed, and brought to God. Abraham knew he should inherit the land on the ground of sacrifice. This is exactly, in principle, what the fourth of Romans gives us as the ground of our

knowledge of justification. Jesus has been among the dead, and God has raised Him up from among the dead. He "was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." All the offences were borne by Him, blotted out, and washed away in His precious blood. On the ground of that finished work of His, we are forgiven, and justified by God. We stand in all the credit and value of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ—not as we appreciate it, but as God appreciates it.

Our appreciation of Christ must ever be feeble, because we are finite. God's appreciation of His work is infinite, and we stand in His own infinite appreciation of the work by which He has been glorified. We stand accepted before God according to His own estimate of the work of His beloved Son. He has "made us accepted in the beloved" (Eph. i. 6). He was delivered for our offences—therefore we are delivered from them. He was raised again for our justification—therefore we are justified, and He becomes our righteousness.

A very blessed consequence becomes, therefore, our present possession. "Being justified by faith, *we have peace* with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. v. 1). This is peace with regard to all the past—peace with regard to sin. But there is more than that, for it is added: "By whom also we have access by faith into this *grace wherein we stand*, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God" (ver. 2). If I look back, I have *peace*; if I look

up, *grace*; and if I look to the future, *glory*. That is a fine canopy to be under. There are three segments in the arc of the Christian's firmament. These are the three: Peace, as regards the past; Grace, for the present; and Glory, for the future. No judgment? Nay. No condemnation? Nay. You are justified by faith in Jesus and His work, and God will never bring the work of His Son into judgment; for, mark it well, it is by the work of His Son, and by that alone, that you are justified.

It is important to see that not only has the believer justification from all offences, but also that he has "justification of life" (Rom. v. 18). We are possessors now of eternal life in the Lord Jesus Christ. We have life on the other side of death. I think many a person has learned justification from offences, who has not learned that he possesses justification of life. I live before God in the life of my Saviour. That is where we have peace, rest, joy, and delight in the presence of our Lord.

God give you, my friend, this rest; and if, as in our picture, the fowls come down upon the sacrifice, do as Abraham did—"He drove them away." And what are the fowls? They are the doubts and suggestions of the devil—the doubts of the day. "And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away." My friend, let nothing come in to intercept the view of your soul of that precious work which the Lord Jesus

Christ accomplished on the cross. Drive these fowls away; they are the doubts—the fears—the uncertainties, which spring up in the heart of the believer if he is not careful. If you are beset by them, merely do as Abraham did. “Resist the devil,” says Scripture, “and he will flee from you.” What do you mean by the fowls? you ask. They are the devil really. That is the figure under which he is presented in the thirteenth of Matthew, where the Lord speaks of the birds of the air picking up the seeds by the wayside. That is how the Lord expresses the fact that the devil takes away the word of God out of the heart, lest the sinner “should believe and be saved.” Every evil thought suggested, and every doubt of any kind as regards Christ and the value of His work, is of the devil. Abraham drove the fowls away. You and I must do the same, and “resist the devil.”

God give you rest, and joy, in His Son, and the knowledge of what it is to be justified by Him from all offences, and that you are the possessor of “justification of life.”

“No works of merit now I plead,
But Jesus take for all my need;
No righteousness in me is found,
Except upon redemption ground.
Redemption ground, the ground of peace!
Redemption ground, oh, wondrous grace!
Here let our praise to God abound,
Who saves us on redemption ground!”

"GOD IS FOR ME."

(Ps. lvi. 9.)



OD is for me," joyful tidings!

Who ought to my charge shall lay?

"It is God that justifieth,"

And my guilt doth put away.

Blest to know that Christ, my Saviour,

Bore my judgment on the tree;

And that I, believing on Him,

Have redemption full and free.

God is good, and kind, and gracious,

"Plenteous in mercy," He;

Though I often grieve His Spirit,

Yet in love He pardons me.

Need I fear that He will fail me,

Weak and worthless though I be;

No, for with a love eternal

God my Father loveth me.

In His Christ He me hath chosen,

Ere He spread abroad the skies,

Ere He called forth light from darkness,

I was precious in His eyes.

In His book of life were written,

Earth's foundations long before,

All the names of His redeemed,

Though by nature vile and poor.

Love with us is now made perfect,
 Since from judgment we are free;
 In God's Christ are we accepted,
 "As He is" e'en "so are we."

Praise Him, praise our God and Father,
 Sing His matchless grace and love;
 Let all worship and adore Him,
 Who His boundless mercy prove.

M. S. S.

CHRISTY'S HEN.

"Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?"—JAMES ii. 5.

"They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition."—1 TIM. vi. 9.



WHAT a difference between being "rich in faith" and being "rich in this world" (1 Tim. vi. 17), or rather between those who are "the poor of this world, rich in faith," and those who desire to be rich! The difference

is important, for it is not money, but *the love* of money that is the root of all kinds of evil. I do not know of anything that hinders spiritual growth like the desire to be rich. Read the warning to young men in 1 John ii. 15: "Love not the world,

neither the things that are in the world," &c. For such there can be no spiritual growth, no arriving at what is said of the fathers: "I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning."

I heard a little story lately that illustrates what I mean. A dear old woman, called Christy B——, lived at H——. She was one of the poor of this world, but rich in faith. A Christian lady visiting her one day found she had become the owner of a hen, with which she was much delighted, especially because the hen was a good layer, and she could sell the eggs. Next time, however, the lady went to see her, she found to her surprise that the hen was sold, and, on inquiring the reason, Christy told her that she had found herself so fond of looking after the eggs, and selling them, that she thought she was getting worldly, and fond of money, and so she had sold her hen. This was practically carrying out the admonition, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world."

Dear fervent old Christy had the spiritual instincts that make a father in Christ. She knew Him that was from the beginning, and she would neither let the world, nor the things that are in the world, share her heart with Him. Happy Christy! she could say like the apostle, "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain!" And now she is with Christ, whom having not seen she loved. Like the widow with the two mites, who cast *both*

into the treasury, Christy knew nothing of half measures. The hen came in between her and her Lord, and, although the hen was her all of this world's goods, it must go. This was true discipleship—it was denying herself.

When I heard this story it made me feel ashamed. Reader, how does it affect you? We may well sing,

“O, pardon us, Lord! that our love to Thy name
Is so faint, with so much our affections to move!
Our coldness might fill us with grief and with shame,
So much to be loved, and so little to love.

O, kindle within us a holy desire,
Like that which was found in Thy people of old,
Who tasted Thy love, and whose hearts were on fire,
While they waited, in patience, Thy face to behold.”

Depend upon it, he is a happy man who has suffered loss for Christ. There is no investment like it. Nothing pays so well—see Mark x. 30, “An hundred-fold now in this time,” that is 10,000 per cent., with persecutions (for Christ's sake), and eternal life in the world to come thrown in.

And now, reader, which are you? Rich in faith, or desiring to be one of the rich of this world? Very probably your possessions are much greater than Christy's, but do they come between you and Christ? Is your heart set on them? Do you desire to be rich? You should read what is said in 1 Timothy vi. 11: “But thou, O man of God, flee these things;” and, if inclined to be disobedient, think, with shame, of Christy and her hen.

"THAT SIGHT!"

(LUKE xxiii. 48.)



THAT sight "can never be forgotten. No, never! Lost souls in hell will recall it with horror. Redeemed ones in heaven will find it a fitting theme for their eternal song.

People are very fond of sight-seeing in this day. There never was such a time, when pleasure was so eagerly sought after, and catered for, giving us a sure mark of the last days—one feature of which is, "Lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God."

But this sight is not of modern days. Nearly two thousand years have rolled by since the eager crowds flocked to behold it. Jerusalem is the city with which its memory is connected; and never before had such a sight been witnessed, as the eager throng pressed forward on that memorable day. With the early dawn the trial of a Prisoner had taken place, whom the chief priests and elders had succeeded in taking the night before, as, with a few of His disciples, He had withdrawn into a lonely garden to pray. Having long before planned His death, they were determined that He should die; but not having the power to carry it out, they led Him to Pilate, the Roman governor, that he might give sentence against Him. After examination, Pilate said, "I find no fault in this

man," and would have acquitted Him, had not His captors persisted in His condemnation.

But who was He? and what had He done? we may well inquire. His name was "Jesus," meaning "Jehovah the Saviour," and such He was—Jehovah's fellow, "God manifest in the flesh." He had come to save His people from their sins, but they only hated and rejected Him; and this, their crowning act, was His unjust condemnation. "He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken."

Pilate, hearing that Jesus belonged to Galilee, sent Him to Herod, the Tetrarch of Galilee, who happened to be in Jerusalem at that time, doubtless thinking thereby to relieve himself of Him; and when Herod saw Jesus

HE WAS EXCEEDING GLAD

to see Him. Not that he was a needy sinner, longing, like Zaccheus (Luke xix.), to see the blessed Saviour of sinners; but idle curiosity led him thus to long to see Him. In calm dignity Jesus stood before him, and to his questions He gave no answer. Failing in this, Herod, with his soldiers, in brutal sport mocked Him, putting on Him a gorgeous robe, and then sent Him back to Pilate.

HIS WISH WAS GRATIFIED,

and he returned that Holy Prisoner to Pilate again, and they together shook hands over Him, thereby renewing a friendship that had long been broken.

The court again assembled, and Prisoner and witnesses again stood before the judge. "I find no fault in him" was the just verdict given, when instantly a cry was raised by the angry crowd who had assembled there, "Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas." Barabbas was a felon, who for sedition and murder had been put into prison, and him they desired to be released unto them instead of Jesus, whom Pilate had proposed to release unto them. Again Pilate bore witness to His innocency, and would have set Him at liberty, but with loud voices they cried out that He should be crucified, and to please the people Pilate gave sentence against Him. Jesus was given up to their will to be hanged, while Barabbas was set free, as they desired.

AWFUL CHOICE!

The Prince of Life was rejected, and a murderer chosen in His place. Little did the world think what it was doing when they chose Barabbas instead of Jesus. One came from God, the other was of the devil; and in their cry, "Not this man, but Barabbas," we read the world's choice—

"NOT GOD BUT THE DEVIL!"

And to-day, instead of Christ being owned as Lord, and all being subject to Him, Satan is its

god and prince, and to him thousands are bowing down, and receiving favours from his hands. Base deceiver! But the time is coming when all shall bow to the earth-rejected Jesus, for God has decreed that to Him every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess. All shall yet own Him Lord, as all disowned Him when in lowly grace He was here on earth. All were against Him. One disciple denied Him, another betrayed Him, while Pilate condemned Him. Priest and people, Jews and Gentiles, together combined to taunt and insult Him; while a poor wretched thief reviled Him, and soldiers mocked Him, as He hung there on that cross of shame.

OH, WHAT A SIGHT!

Jesus hanging between two thieves—a spectacle to angels, to devils, and to men. And only one—and that a poor thief hanging at His side—was found to speak a word in His favour, saying, “This man hath done nothing amiss.” In that dread hour, with but a step between his soul and hell, he confessed Jesus as Lord, saying, “Lord, remember me.” Was he forgotten? No, indeed! for he proved most blessedly the truth of those words, “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved;” and the Saviour’s words gave him the fullest assurance, “To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”

JESUS DIED,

and as they watched Him expiring on that cross, they heard His dying cry, “Father, into thy hands

I commend my spirit." "And all the people that came together to *that sight*, beholding the things that were done, smote their breasts and returned."

Reader, may THAT SIGHT be engraven on your heart, that with adoration you may be able to say, "CHRIST DIED FOR ME."

E. E. N.

OLD PEGGY'S GREAT MISTAKE.



PEGGY W—— was a homely old Scotchwoman, who had lived in widowhood for many years; and being of a kindly manner, there was that about her naturally which was admirable and attractive. It was in her strict religious character, however, that she so conspicuously excelled — like "Saul of Tarsus"—the mass of her fellow Church members among whom she moved, and by whom she was well known. She had been for a long number of years a member of the Scotch Presbyterian Church. First, she was a member of the Established, but left with her minister at the Disruption, from which time till the day of her death she was a member of the Free Church of Scotland.

Peggy was not only to be found in church on Sacrament Sundays, but she scarcely had missed a sermon preached from its pulpit during the whole

period of her connection with it. She had the privilege, too, of sitting all this time under the ministry of one of the most eloquent, orthodox, faithful, and evangelical preachers of that body, one who had been much blessed in his labours to both saints and sinners. Though her house was a long way from the church, and she had been afflicted with rheumatism in both legs for years, so that she could only walk with the support of a staff, nothing could keep her out of her pew as each Lord's Day came round—not even a dreadful storm. It was generally observed, too, that she was the first to enter the church after the door was opened; she was even so early sometimes that she had to wait till she could get admission.

Now Peggy did not go to church—like too many, alas—"to see and be seen," or because it was fashionable to go. In all her religion she was in earnest; she went because she believed it was her duty as a Christian to go. The most cursory observer could have seen that she was downright zealous from the moment she entered the church till she left it. During the time the minister prayed, she—unlike the majority of church-goers nowadays, who gaze all around them—hung her head, and shut her eyes all the time. In the singing of the Scotch psalms and paraphrases, too, she *apparently* took a hearty part. During the sermon also, instead of going to sleep, or allowing the mind to wander on to anything—like so many—she set herself to listen to every word that came

from the preacher's lips, from the giving out of the text till the end of the address. So assiduous was she in her attention that she could almost carry away in her head every sermon she heard, and tell it over again to others. The time in going home was generally occupied by her comments on the sermon and preacher to those who accompanied her. It was also her regular custom to spend the Lord's Day afternoons reading her Bible. Like many other Bible-readers, she had her favourite chapters. The one above all others she prized was the third of John's Gospel. She had read it so many times that she could have repeated any verse at pleasure without opening the book. In addition to all this Sunday religion of hers, her life, as far as man could judge, was unimpeachable. Honest, truthful, and obliging, she was esteemed by all who knew her.

Now with all her admirable religious and moral qualities, there was one great mistake she made about the most important of all questions, and that was the question of *salvation* and *condemnation*.

A sister in the Lord—an esteemed friend of the writer's—who had been converted under the ministry of Peggy's minister, took a great interest in old Peggy's soul. She sought and found many opportunities of speaking personally to her on the subject of *salvation* by GRACE ALONE, but upon this momentous matter they were far indeed from being agreed. My friend tried to show her from God's Word that all had sinned, and were therefore

lost, and condemned already (Rom. iii. 19, 23), but that Christ, in love for the poor sinner, had borne the judgment and condemnation of our sins on the cross, and that God's claims being all met by His death, He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him in highest glory, thus expressing His perfect satisfaction with the work of atonement He had accomplished when He offered Himself—the one perfect sacrifice for sin—to God; and that from the glory, where Christ now is, has been sent the gospel to a lost world, telling sinners that there is full forgiveness for all who believe in Christ as their *own* Saviour; also, that this forgiveness, and freedom from condemnation, is RECEIVED, and ENJOYED, the moment we believe.

Peggy maintained, on the other hand, that though it was quite true we had all sinned, more or less, no one could know till the "great day of judgment" whether they would be *saved* or condemned. She believed the eternal destiny of every one would be settled by the preponderance of their good or evil deeds. To put her idea in a simple form, as she applied it to her own case, the good deeds of her life would be put in one scale of God's balance, and the bad ones in the other. If the good deeds were heaviest, she would be saved, and go to heaven; if the bad deeds were heaviest, she would be condemned, and consigned to an eternal hell.

Now it was this erroneous idea, so deeply rooted in her, that accounted for her strict, re-

ligious life. She was determined, so far as lay in her power, to have more good works than bad ones against the great and dreadful day when God would sit in judgment on her life.

That she had made a mistake on this important matter God Himself one day gave her to see from His own Word, and that, too, in her own favourite chapter. In reading it over one Lord's Day, all went as usual till she reached the middle of the 18th verse, when the two words, "*condemned already*," arrested her. These two words had an altogether deeply solemn sound about them that day—so solemn that she could not read any further till she read the sentence containing them over again, "*But he that believeth not is CONDEMNED ALREADY.*" "Can it be possible I am reading it aright?" she said to herself, "for I never saw these two words there before, or if I have read them, they did not seem the same as they do this time. CONDEMNED ALREADY! can it be possible that people *are* CONDEMNED ALREADY!" she again exclaimed.

Long, long she had denied the solemn truth she was now reading, and fain would she have continued to do so, but she could hold out no longer, for there was the sacred, inspired, holy Word of God before her eyes, declaring in unmistakable terms that "*he that believeth not is condemned ALREADY.*" For the first time God's Word had found a place in her *heart*, and *conscience*. For many long years her *head* had been *crammed*

with it from the lips of a faithful preacher, and from the Bible itself; but that day God Himself was speaking to her in His Word, which made her feel as if she knew no more of that blessed book (though she had been so familiar with the letter of it) than the solemn statement she had now read in her favourite third of John, which had now carried conviction to her inmost moral being, that in God's sight she was a sinner, "CONDEMNED ALREADY, because she had *not* believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God," but had been trusting alone to her good works (which she now felt to be nothing better than filthy rags) for salvation.

She was now in a state of deep anxiety of soul, which lasted for several days. Then, vainly trying to make herself more acceptable to Christ by prayers and tears, she found she was getting worse instead of better (like the woman with the issue of blood in Mark v.). She at last cast herself, as a lost, hopeless, helpless sinner, upon Christ, and there and then was received into the arms of His everlasting love—saved for time and eternity. She now learned from the same 18th verse of the third of John, that as a believer in God's Son, she was "*not* condemned."

Happy old Peggy she now was. She was not only assured from the 18th verse that she was *freed* from condemnation, but the 15th, 16th, and 36th verses of the same chapter told her that every believer on the Son "*hath* EVERLASTING LIFE."

If the third of John was her favourite chapter before, oh, how much more so now. Then she read it as a duty, in the way of self-righteousness. Now she read it as God's own message to her, assuring her of salvation *already possessed*, on the solid and righteous ground of the "Son of Man" having been lifted up upon the cross, to bear her sins, and meet all the claims of a holy God (ver. 14).

Now, my dear reader, one word with you before I lay my pen aside. It may be you are like old Peggy, working *for* salvation. If so, like her, you are making a great mistake, and the quicker you find out your mistake the better, for find it out you will, sooner or later. But take great care you do not find it out when it is too late to get it rectified for your blessing. For if you wait, as old Peggy intended to do, till you stand before the Judge, the discovery then will *seal your doom* for ever.

You had better accept God's just sentence now resting upon you as a sinner. You must admit you have not lived in this world till the present time without committing at least *some* sins. Be assured then that only ONE SIN, if not forgiven, is enough to condemn you before a *perfectly holy* God. But, thank God, He loved the sinner, and gave His Son to bear the judgment of our sins, that we might not be condemned, but saved. As a lost sinner, believe on Him now, and salvation is yours.

YOUR DESTINY.



T the railway station of W——, a man presented himself at the booking-office for a ticket.

"Where for?" asked the clerk.

"I am not decided," replied the man.

"Then you had better decide at once,"

was the prompt rejoinder of the clerk.

Now I am sure, my reader, you will agree with me that this man was very stupid, and that the booking-clerk's advice was the best that could be given.

But, while you laugh at his folly, I will put a question to *you*. You are here to-day. But you are *going*. And as you pass with rapid flight across the sands of time, I too would ask you, "WHERE FOR?"

Passing on to some grand goal you are. The end of your journey may be reached before another sunrise. It would be ETERNITY then.

You are aware of this, but have you thought that eternity, with its unending ages, must be spent either in God's bright glory-home, or *the darkness of eternal gloom?*

To which of these destinies is time carrying you? YOU DON'T KNOW!

Then surely your folly is infinitely greater than that of the undecided man at the booking-office. And I would in all earnestness echo the words of

the clerk, and say to you, "Then you had better decide at once."

Do you see that long line of human beings stretched as far as eye can see? "Eyes front!" cries the commander; "forward!" and, at double-quick, every Christless soul marches over the love of God, and the precious cleansing blood of Christ, onward to doom and damnation.

Unsaved reader, YOU are in that regiment. The devil is at the head. The fluttering fold of death's dark flag is the standard, but the end of the march is the raging tempest of the lake of fire.

You may laugh at our warnings. But that does not alter the truth that destruction is ahead of you. Soon the hoarse and angry roar of judgment's flood will fall upon your ear.

And when launched into a Christless eternity, WHAT THEN? Shall we drop the curtain lest some be horrified? Must we hush the truth, perchance we offend the ears of the polite? Nay! we will utter God's Word for the sake of your precious soul, unsaved reader, which is in danger of eternal loss.

Death is busy. His icy fingers may soon be laid on your throbbing heart. Then the sad farewells. The sorrowing friends. The open grave. But, oh! WHAT THEN? Remember, hell is an intense reality. Its blasting tempest is the portion of every Christ-rejecter. Its awful gloom settles on all, who turn away from the sunlight of the Saviour's love.

Nor is this all. Hell will not hide you from

God's frown. Unsaved reader, your body may be lovingly laid beneath the cold sod by sorrowing friends, but it will be ruthlessly torn from thence by the hand of judgment, and amid the crashing of worlds you will appear at God's bar. Woe then to your hapless soul, as your guilty life-story is rehearsed in your hearing, which will only be followed by that hope-blasting, soul-crushing word—"DEPART!"

You may be religious, amiable, generous, respected, and loved by everybody, but, if you are **CHRISTLESS**, this is the **DESTINY** to which you are travelling.

We raise the warning. Your sacrament-taking and psalm-singing, your alms-giving and moral living, can never ward off the stroke of righteous judgment. They will not admit you to heaven. Christ's blood is the sinner's only plea.

YOUR WAY may seem right to you, for God says, "*There is a way* which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." And again, "The way of the fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise." Listen to God's counsel. Awake to the interests of your soul.

But you say, I don't mean to be lost for ever. Then you had better decide at once for Christ. One day's delay may mean hell for ever. Oh! let not this world's tinsel or pleasure rob you of eternal joys. The novel, the theatre, the gambling-table will give no solace in hell. Short is mercy's

day. Hesitate no longer, lest this awful doom be your destiny. For the sake of your precious soul, "Flee from the wrath to come."

Thank God! there is a way of escape, and a very different destiny awaits many. You are anxious to be amongst the number. Then let me point you the way.

In one of the Yorkshire towns, the other day, a great show was being held. On the walls all over the town pointers were posted, and also these words, "*This way to the show.*" Now, no one in their senses could possibly make a mistake after reading one of these. And if any one had asked me on that day the way to the show, I would simply have told them to follow the directions on the walls. So GOD'S POINTERS are so plain and simple that you need make no mistake about them, and to these I wish to direct you.

In answer to the inquiry of Thomas as to the way, Jesus replied, "I AM THE WAY" (John xiv. 6). Don't make any mistake here. Jesus did not say 'a way,' but "*the way.*"

"Oh! but," says one, "we are all aiming at the same place, and it matters little which way we take." Possibly you are aiming at the SAME PLACE, but it is salvation you need, and apart from that the place you are aiming at will have no room for you.

For salvation you are shut up to Christ Jesus. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among

men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts iv. 12). This is decisive. This is God's truth in contrast to your opinion, and if you are wise you will cease to seek salvation in other ways, and flee to Christ at once.

God has linked the salvation of sinners with the glory of His worthy Son, and NEVER will one sinner be saved apart from Him.

"But must not something be done," you ask, "before the guilty can be saved?" YES. God's righteousness must be vindicated. Sin's judgment must be borne. Redemption's work must be accomplished. In short, God must be satisfied about the whole question of your sin before you can be saved.

You are not so presumptuous as to think that you could do this, or even help to do it, are you? No. None but Jesus could accomplish this work, and He has done it perfectly.

When, as the dying victor, He rang out those three glorious words, "IT IS FINISHED!" everything was done to God's entire satisfaction, and God has set His seal upon the work by raising Jesus from the dead. "*He was raised again for our justification.*" The cross tells us of the love, which led Him to bear God's righteous judgment in our stead. Can you say, He was there for me? The empty grave speaks loudly to us of death destroyed, and of sin's captives released. Are you one of them? And Jesus fills the throne in heaven now, a proof beyond doubt how satisfied God is FOR

EVER with the work He accomplished at Calvary. And from the place of power and glory He offers to you, not only salvation, but the knowledge of it.

"Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things" (Acts xiii. 38, 39).

Here is a solid foundation upon which you may rest without any doubt or uncertainty. These precious words tell of salvation offered to you, because a work has been done outside of you, and apart from you.

"Let me look at that verse; I never saw it like that before," said a young man at the close of one of our gospel meetings in Canada. Slowly he read the words over, and then rubbing his eyes as the light broke into his soul, he said, "Praise God! I'm justified." Take God at His word, beloved reader, and the peace, which follows, will be yours.

But you say, "I'm such a sinner." Well, that only proves your title to claim Jesus as your Saviour. You may be the worst sinner out of hell. It would still be true that "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from **ALL** sin" (1 John i. 7); and that "all that believe are justified from **ALL** things." The moment you accept the Lord Jesus by simple faith, your destiny will be **THE LAMB'S BRIGHT GLORY**. You will be able to sing truthfully—

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

The One, who loved us even unto death, will be there as the centre of heaven's worship, and the theme of our eternal praise.

What a prospect for us! We wait for His personal return to take us away from this world to His own glory-home. "Then he shall change our vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like unto his own glorious body" (Phil. iii. 21), "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" (1 Cor. xv. 52). He has tarried long, but we believe He will soon be here. Three times over, in the last chapter of the inspired page, He tells us—"I COME QUICKLY." Are you ready?

Once more I put my question to you—Where are you going? Is your destiny to be HEAVEN, or HELL?

J. T. M.

"GOD SAYS YOU ARE LOST!"



OW wonderful God's ways of grace are! "Past finding out," as the apostle Paul wrote. His love is only to be measured by the gift of His Son, and His grace made known in taking up man in his ruin and guilt, forgiving all his sins; and every purpose of that grace will soon

be accomplished in his being with and like Christ throughout eternity. Have you tasted of God's grace? Do you know His love made known in the gift of Jesus? "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

It is sweet to put on record the amazing grace of God. It was indeed 'grace—rich sovereign grace—that picked up the poor infidel blasphemer of whom I write. In his early days he had attended Sunday school, and what is termed a place of worship, but soon all that was thrown aside, and he became an infidel. He was travelling through America with a show as conjurer and ventriloquist, and one day heard that there was a man in the town where he was who was preaching the devil's doctrine. His curiosity was instantly aroused, and he determined to go and hear what he had to say. When he got there he found a lot of people gathered together reading the Word of God. This was not what he expected. He sat and listened. The subject was, "The name of Jesus." That name had no charm for him. Is it sweet to you, my reader? There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we can be saved.

"Precious, peerless name of Jesus,
None can tell its worth;
Sweetest name there is in heaven,
Or on earth."

The reading being over, the preacher got up and

gave an address, taking for his subject those blessed words in the nineteenth chapter of Luke, "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Having finished his discourse, he went up to the infidel and spoke to him about his soul. He immediately began to ventilate his infidel ideas, and blasphemed in a way that he had never done before. The preacher left him, and as he was standing near a form, a man came up and bellowed in his ear, "God says you are lost," recalling the words of the address, where the preacher described man's condition as LOST, telling his hearers that the Son of Man not only came to seek but to save that which was lost. How true these words were, yet how few will believe them, that man by nature is LOST. ALL have sinned and come short of God's glory.

His anger was aroused by being so insulted, as he thought, and he went outside to wait till the speaker should come out to go home, his determination being to knock him down. He waited some time, and others came out, and all seemed to have something to say to him. At last he bent his steps homeward. The arrow shot at a venture had entered beneath the joints of the harness, and the words kept ringing in his ears, "God says you are lost." Get them out of his mind he could not. Sleep fled from him. Those words haunted him throughout the stillness of the night, and all the next day, till he was so miserable and unsettled he could do nothing. He thought of God's love and

that He might pardon him, had it not been for his open blasphemy.

At the end of three days, when hope had well-nigh fled, and despair taken its place, the words used by the preacher came in freshness and power to his soul applied by God's Spirit, "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." The light shone in. He was lost. The Son of Man came to seek and save him. Joy and praise now filled his heart to overflowing, and he found he could do nothing for some weeks but go round and tell them what God had done for him.

Reader, are you saved? If, like the one of whom you have read, God has shown you that you are lost, let your soul drink in those thrice-blessed words. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." Saved by His precious blood, let your voice then be heard in confession of His name. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

"Saved for glory ! yes, for glory,
By the work of God's blest Son ;
Saved for glory, wondrous story,
We believe what Christ has done.

Saved for glory ! saved by Jesus,
All our meetness His alone :
Meetness, which the Father pleases
Ours should be, in Christ the Son."

E. E. N.

REPENTANCE.



It is related of Charles James Fox, that by dint of unceasing practice and untiring industry, he raised himself, from being an indifferent speaker, to be one of the foremost debaters of his time—the compeer of Pitt, the great Commoner. He spoke—whether well or indifferently—every night save only during one of the sessions of Parliament, and regretted that he had missed that one opportunity.

But the speaker, we would draw your attention to, burst upon the scene in the full maturity of his powers. His life had been hitherto spent in obscurity and retirement; simple and plain, almost ascetic, his habits had been.

Doubtless in his solitude he had thought deeply upon the mysteries of life, and the awful hollowness of the conventionalities of society, of the sins men committed so lightly, and of the inefficacy of a religion that made so feeble an impress upon the lives of its professors.

Suddenly, like a meteor, he blazed upon the horizon of public life. The people seemed drawn, as by a mighty spell, to hear him boldly charging them with sin and hypocrisy. His words were unvarnished and unpolished. He spoke with no tongue of velvet. The great burden of his startling

preaching, uttered with superhuman vehemence and burning power, was

REPENT ! REPENT !! REPENT !!!

His name was John the Baptist. His exalted position was that of the forerunner of the Christ.

Oh ! for a nineteenth-century John the Baptist, who would boldly reprove the sins of court and of cottage, rebuke the shameless drunkard, and the debauched profligate, the utterly careless, and the sneering infidel, the whitewashed sinners of both pulpit and pew, the empty formalist, and the cold religionist. Ten thousand such are needed to awaken from their desperate sleep the vast majority around us.

Awake they will, when once they pass into eternity, dark, gloomy, and unexplored ; when once the great clock of time shall have stopped for ever ; when, amid the blazing of worlds, they shall be summoned before the great white throne—the last great assize—to stand before the Judge of all the earth.

Oh ! the awakening that *must* take place. Daniel, the prophet, speaks of some awaking to “shame and everlasting contempt.”

But listen, oh ! ye with an immortal soul, hastening with lightning speed upon the broad pinions of time to an endless doom, listen ;—GOD IS LOVE. Shout it afar and wide—*God is love*. Bear the good news over land and sea, till none of the millions who are hastening in one broad living stream to

eternity, are unacquainted with the fact that the God of unbending justice, of almighty power, of creatorial rights, loves them, and because He loves them, bids them repent.

Repentance is seen all through Scripture to be

GOD'S GREAT COMMAND.

The great apostle Paul, standing on Mars' Hill eighteen centuries ago, rang out those words of deepest import to every man, woman, and child in the wide world—"God . . . NOW commandeth all men everywhere to repent."

What terrible need of repentance on every hand! Not merely the openly profane, but also the outwardly correct; not merely the rough and rude, but also the cultured and gentle. Why? "ALL HAVE SINNED, and come short of the glory of God." ALL are involved in a common ruin. ALL, born *outside* the garden of Eden, are away from God. Hence the absolute need of repentance on your part, unsaved reader.

And what makes it such a serious question is that it is God's expressed command. Dare a soldier disobey his officer—an officer, his general—a subject, his monarch? To do so would bring swift retribution upon their heads.

And dare you pass away from this world into God's presence with a whole lifetime of disobedience against you? Dare you? Trifle not with the living God, in whose hand is the breath of your nostrils. And what makes it so serious

is that behind and beyond the command, God has declared His heart towards you. He commands repentance because the judgment day is fixed—the Judge appointed—when He will judge in righteousness untempered by mercy. It is because of this He desires your repentance, for there is by it a door of escape.

GOD'S GREAT GOODNESS

leads to repentance. It is not by harsh means He would drive you. No, it is by a thousand and one mercies continued day after day, year after year, that He would soften your heart. He may give you health, or chasten you on a sick-bed. The bark of your life may sail under clear skies and over smooth seas, or you may be tossed upon a boiling tempest, enshrouded in deepest gloom. No matter, His love and goodness is in it all.

Now, if you had a dog which treated you no better than you do God, you would poison it. You feed it every day yourself, but it exhibits no gratitude. You call to it, but it takes absolutely no notice. When you go near it, it only snarls, and barks, and bites you. For less than that you would end its existence. Yet you never thank God for your food, your health, your home. When He calls you by an impressive sermon, a pointed tract, or speaks to you in the secret solitude of your soul, you take no notice, and yet His goodness follows you still. "The *goodness* of God leadeth thee to repentance" (Rom. ii. 4), and above and beyond all connected with life here

does not the goodness of God shine out at the cross of Calvary, when it pleased Him to bruise His Son, that He might spare you, when He forsook the Saviour, in the moment of His direst need, that He might welcome you, and cleanse away your guilt through that atoning blood, which flowed from the side of Jesus.

And, further,

GOD'S GREAT LONG-SUFFERING

waits, and waits, and waits for your repentance. Scoffers have arisen asking when the day of the Lord would come. Was He always to leave men to sin with a high hand, and take no notice; was He always to allow wickedness, and slavery, and tyranny, and sweating to exist, and let kings settle things as if He did not exist, and had no rights?

Listen! The apostle Peter gives us the true reason of His slowness to speak in tones of judgment. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is *long-suffering* to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, *but that all should come to repentance*" (2 Pet. iii. 9).

Oh! grey-headed sinner, hoary in your guilt, so long rebellious and wayward, turn at last to the Lord, and yield Him your obedience. In the evening of your life, as the last few sands fall through the hour-glass, with your failing memory, your furrowed brow, your bent back and feeble

limbs, creeping to your grave, oh ! seek the Lord while He may be found. " Oh ! " you say, " I am too old to come now. " Nay, His very mercy has lengthened out your days for this ; and not only so, but as the verse just quoted declares, He has lengthened out *His* day of matchless grace to reach such as you.

And see, if you repent, it leads to

GOD'S GREAT JOY.

Listen to the incomparable words of Jesus, as they fall so sweetly upon the ears of the gathering publicans and sinners, declaring God's own heart : " I say unto you, that likewise *joy* shall be in heaven over one sinner that *repenteth* " (Luke xv. 7).

See that prodigal. He sits on the swine trough thinking of past days. Once in affluence, with a father's smile upon him, he had in passion demanded his portion, and with it had travelled into a far country, only to squander it in drunkenness and debauchery. Now he sits degraded beyond measure, looking upon the very pigs' meat with longing eye, yet " no man gave to him. " And then he thinks of his father's house, with its bread and to spare, of his father's goodness and grace, and it leads him to repentance, and, swifter than the telegraph, there travels a communication from the weary soul of the prodigal to the father, and forthwith there is joy, and preparation, and the very best provided for the returning son.

Ah ! great battles may be fought and won, great

empires may rise and fall, and little note be taken of them in heaven, but let a poor wretch of a sinner in a back street, weary and sick of sin, but turn to the Lord for forgiveness and mercy, and all heaven is transported with joy. Oh! it is wonderful. Sinner, this is the God you cheat of His rights, and this is the welcome you coldly despise.

Soon your little pleasure-loving day will close; soon you will be in eternity for ever; soon you will appear before the Judge of all the earth. Take care! Do not despise this love and refuse this grace.

Turn to Christ now. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts xvi. 31). "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"

A. J. P.

"WHAT is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away? For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed." Have you been ashamed of Jesus? I used to be ashamed of Jesus, and now I am ashamed that I ever was. My dear friend, I hope you may be henceforth ashamed that you have ever been ashamed of Jesus. Ashamed of Jesus! Ashamed of love! Ashamed of infinite grace! Ashamed of the One who gave up everything for us, who did everything for us! Ashamed of Jesus! God forbid that you and I should be ashamed of Jesus!

W. T. P. W.

CONFIRMATION VOWS ; OR, "AN OPEN DOOR."

"These things saith HE that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth ; and shutteth, and no man openeth. Behold, I have set before thee AN OPEN DOOR, and no man can shut it."--REV. iii. 7, 8.



N the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand : for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good " (Eccles. xi. 6). How frequently does it happen that those

who deliver the gospel message, know but little of where the precious seed falls with blessing ; and how often are they apt to feel despondent at the apparent lack of fruit resulting from their earnest and unwearying scattering of that golden grain drawn from the treasury stores of God. A striking instance of this rises to my memory in the following incident, which occurred some few years ago in the life of a young person, whom I shall introduce to my readers by her Christian name of Kate.

Of a naturally lively and social disposition, and placed in a position of society which led her into the allurements of the gay and fashionable world, Kate, at an early age, became one of its fondest votaries. Dancing, dramas, and parties of pleasure, together with their inseparable accompaniment, dress, constituted the only attractions life seemed capable of affording her, and beyond this passing

life she had then no thought, or if the solemn realities of another existence were sometimes forced upon her, by the death of an acquaintance, or the faithful preaching of some servant of God, she speedily strove to forget it amidst the light amusements of the hour.

At one period of her youth she had experienced some serious impressions, with conviction of sin, and of her unfitness to meet God should it please Him to call her into His presence; but of the way into the holiest by the *blood of Jesus* she knew naught.

While under the influence of these feelings, she resolved to join a class of candidates for confirmation, hoping by this means to attain to a more satisfactory frame of mind; and quite believing, like many others, that by *the laying on of hands* she would receive some especial grace, or the gift of the Holy Spirit. The teacher to whom Kate opened her mind on this occasion, though a kind and well-meaning friend, was unfortunately not a spiritually-minded person. When she confided her doubts and fears, and sense of unfitness to approach the Lord's table, it was treated with indifference. She was told for consolation that such feelings and sense of her own unworthiness, though proper, need not cause her any pain; that if she tried to do the best she could, with felt humility, it would be all right with her. God would not expect more from a young person. How many young souls are thus lost, or thrown

back on self and the world, for want of a divinely taught guide to lead them into those green pastures where the water of life flows freely for the thirsty soul, and to point them to the "Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world: who *his own self* bare our sins in *his own body* on the tree," for He, "having made peace by the *blood of his cross*," is now beseeching *us* to be reconciled to God through His work, offering us a free, full, and *present salvation*, without money, and without price.

The day came for the candidates to go up for confirmation, and poor Kate received it as a happy omen, when she, and her fellow-band of young communicants, were sent to a town at some distance from their homes, which happened to be the very parish and church *where her baptism had taken place years before*. She hoped, when the rite was celebrated, it would prove a second baptism to her—a baptism of the Spirit; for she was at this time really in earnest in her desires for grace. The Primate himself gave the confirmation benediction, and afterwards a *very solemn* address to the young people. He was a devout and earnest man, and much of what he said seemed to make an impression on her at the time; but he spoke to them as *already believers*, and as those who had been *born again*. Alas! with how few of them this was really the case. It certainly was not so with Kate! Weeks fled by, and the expected change of heart was not experienced. Where was

that spiritual regeneration which she imagined would *immediately* take place? Old tempers, frailties, coldness, and hardness of heart still bore sway, and she knew not how to appropriate a Saviour's love, pity, and full atonement to herself. She saw Him not as her Intercessor and Advocate with the Father. There was no personal application of His finished work to her own case; she knew He had died for the sin of the world, but with regard to how that affected herself, all was vagueness and uncertainty. She believed she had to work for her own *ultimate salvation*, and acceptance before God, and knew not that it had been wrought out by the work of the cross. Self-improvement, in fact trying to bring some good thing out of self, was all she had been taught to look for; and like all others in similar cases, she failed to find peace of conscience, or to attain to the sinless perfection she expected and desired.

In the divine Word we read the solemn query, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" and then its inspired answer, "Not one" (Job xiv. 4). Again, in the pages of the prophet Isaiah, "We are *all* as an unclean thing, and our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." Further, the apostle Paul adds the New Testament declaration to the Spirit's teaching of old, when he exclaims, "*There is none righteous, no not one*, for ALL have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. iii. 10-23). But perhaps some reader may say, "You are putting me at a greater distance from God than ever!

Though I do not feel sure of being a *saved person*, still I hope I may do something towards self-improvement or self-abnegation, which will at least merit His approbation, and lead to a more filial relationship between us."

Friend, you must learn your utter distance from God by nature, and your thoroughly lost condition as a child of fallen Adam, ere you can see the wondrous efficacy and value of the Redeemer's death and blood shedding, when He became a *Substitute* for sinners before God. Sweet to the troubled soul comes the divine assurance, "The LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us ALL" (Isa. liii. 4). Nor is the Lord Jesus alone our Substitute for the penalty of sin, He is also "the LORD our RIGHTEOUSNESS," "who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor. i. 30). We find ourselves poor, law-condemned, conscience-stricken beings before God, but He regards us not according to our own deservings, He looks upon His Son, our perfect Substitute, and sees Him "*the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth*" (Rom. x. 4).

Unable to find contentment or happiness in the human theory of religion (so-called) which she had been taught, Kate, after a few months spent in vain struggles after self-acquired holiness, gave up in despair all hopes of becoming a *religious person*. A subsequent visit to London, where the fashions and amusements of that gay capital engrossed her

thoughts and tastes for some time, finally settled the question to her mind, that it was impossible for her to succeed in keeping her confirmation vows of *renunciation of the world*. Still she could not at first put aside all concern regarding her soul; the voice of conscience often accused her of being a backslider from the early desires of her heart to serve God. She sometimes went to hear popular and fashionable preachers, but gained no peace of mind; and as time wore on, and the attractions of worldly amusements were presented to her, she yielded to their fascinations, and cast away even *all profession* of being a Christian.

Four years had passed since the events spoken of, and Kate had become thoroughly careless, if not worse, whilst she regarded her past sensitiveness of soul as early folly. It was summer, and the sultriness of the weather, with other causes, had made her feel debilitated and unwell. Many of her friends had remarked her languid appearance, but she strove to battle with her increasing physical debility by availing herself of every opportunity of indulging in any amusement which would enliven her mind. Amongst her recreations was the pastime of archery. She was a member of an archery club, and frequently joined its weekly meetings, remaining often two or three hours on the ground, sometimes under a hot and sultry sun, returning home fatigued, and suffering from headache. As these reunions were held on Saturdays, she frequently felt too wearied to leave

her room the following Sunday morning. After one of these occasions, she was spending Sunday afternoon with some relatives. They asked her to accompany them that evening to hear a preacher who was remarkable for his clear and inviting manner of setting forth the gospel. But she laughingly declined, pleading the oppressiveness of the weather, and begged them not to remain at home for her, as she could amuse herself in their garden until their return.

The garden of her friends' house led out close to the building where the service was held. It happened at that time to be undergoing some alterations. The workmen had erected a wooden shed outside one of the side entrances, where the doorway had been taken away to enlarge the building; and as the weather was warm, there was nothing but a curtain placed before the gap.

After her friends left her, Kate rambled for a short time in the garden gathering summer fruit; but hearing the strains of a hymn wafted from the building by the evening breeze, she approached first to the garden gate to listen, and finally went to the wooden shed, and sat down *inside it*, being concealed by the curtain from the listeners within. The hymn ceased, and the preacher commenced by reading out a passage from Revelation iii.: "These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, *he that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth. Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no*

man can shut it." These beautiful and significant words were addressed by the Lord Jesus to one of the seven churches, and I do not know in what sense the preacher was then applying them; whether he was addressing his hearers on their responsibilities as believers, or if he was directing them in a gospel sense. His manner was warm and earnest, and the sound of his clear impressive voice fell distinctly on the listener's ear, who, prompted by an unaccountable feeling, sat close to the curtain of this open door listening with attention to the subject from beginning to end. Over and over again he repeated the divine message during the course of his preaching—"He that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth. Behold, I have set before you an OPEN DOOR"—dwelling on the solemn responsibilities accruing to the soul which slighted this *open door*.

As Kate heard thus unexpectedly the Word of God which she had refused to listen to with her friends, that sublime passage, spoken by the Divine Alpha and Omega, as He stood between the seven golden lamps, sank into her heart as with the blows of a mighty hammer, leaving an indelible impression on its till then hard and unbroken surface. Although she would not have admitted it at the time, it haunted her mind for weeks, until the hour came when it returned with vivid force to her conscience as a message from Christ to her own soul. The preacher concluded his address, and gave out a hymn. And now for

the first time Kate remembered the peculiar circumstances in which she had placed herself. The congregation inside would be coming out, and some probably through the doorway behind which she sat. She rose hastily at the sound of the parting hymn, and gained the precincts of the garden, where she awaited the return of her relatives.

Not many minutes elapsed before they joined her, and told her she had lost hearing a very stirring address from Mr W——, which they were sorry for. "Oh! do not think I have had any loss," she replied; "I heard every word! The preacher was certainly very *persuasive*, but he would make me low-spirited if I went often to hear him." She then told them how she had sat in the shed, and been an unseen auditor to the preacher's message, which she acknowledged had been a very striking one.

Some weeks elapsed, during which Kate's inability increased. At length, one Saturday afternoon, on returning from the archery ground, she became seriously unwell. Symptoms of fever appeared. The next day she was still worse, and her mind was restless and uneasy. She said she felt a presentiment she was going to have a severe illness, and might never recover. Ere the evening of that Sunday the malady had increased rapidly, and her mind began to wander and grow weak. One thought was uppermost. It was the preacher's text—"An open door!" She accused herself of having trifled with her immortal

interests, and slighted the life-long invitation from the Saviour of an open door of grace and mercy; and now her feverish mind represented to her that perhaps it was about to be closed for ever, and she might ere long have to stand before an angry Judge—*ONE* who, though *He openeth*, yet also *shutteth, and no man openeth*. The words seemed burned in letters of fire into her mind, and she repeated them over, with bitter self-upbraidings for her carelessness and contempt of the message when she had sat and listened to it.

Then she had strength to act and think, and avail herself of the blessed privilege of the open door of invitation and welcome; *now* she tossed on a sick-bed, her thoughts incoherent, and nothing but misery in her heart. For several weeks the poor sufferer lay, and though there were intervals when exhausted nature sank into apathy and apparent calmness, still deep distress about eternal things haunted her feverish mind. At one moment she fancied herself an exile from light and mercy—a tightly shut and never-again-to-be-opened door between her and the bleeding Christ of Calvary, with the bitter and fearful consciousness that the fault was only *her own*, the rejection not Christ's, but hers. Then for moments a softened feeling stole over her, and some text breathing mercy seemed to ring in her ears. Soon in God's goodness the malady abated, but the deep convictions awakened during this illness did not pass away. The words which had echoed in her memory during illness

as a knell of despair now seemed glowing with promise and mercy. She perused frequently the third chapter of Revelation, and as we are told, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. iii. 16), she found what seemed peculiarly applicable to her own case in its concluding verses, "*As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore and repent.*"

She saw the Lord's hand of love in her late illness and distress of mind—a chastening not grievous, but gracious; and that message, "*Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in unto him, and will sup with him, and he with me,*" breathed hope, pardon, and beseeching love to her awakened soul. True, these messages in their original sense were directed to an assembly of professing Christians who had grown cold and lax. Still the Holy Spirit can use His Word how and when He thinks fit—all are not converted in the same way or by the same gospel words. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth: so is every one who is born of the Spirit."

The Bright and Morning Star Himself was pleased to dispel the clouds and darkness of Kate's mind, and meet her case, with the sequel to that beautiful address, which fell on her heart and

conscience the evening she listened *outside* that memorable *open door*.

Reader! ere I lay down my pen, let me press upon you the dread consequences of leaving for a sick-room or a dying bed the immense matter of your soul's salvation. "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark viii. 36.) The delirium of fever, the apathy of sinking nature, or the weary and pain-racked couch, are too often neither the times nor places where we are capable of seeking pardon for a life of careless neglect, or open aversion to the gospel's pleadings of mercy. "*Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation!*" The only promise of pardon Scripture authorises us to give is a *present* one. "TO-DAY!" "NOW!" "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts" (Ps. xcv. 7; Heb. iii. 7). Free, and broad, and full is the invitation Jesus gives us: "I AM THE DOOR; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved" (John x. 7-9). And again, from the glory of heaven itself comes His divine Word, spoken on that wondrous Lord's day in Patmos, "*Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it.*"

"Behold the Saviour at the door!

He gently knocks—has knocked before;
Has waited long—is waiting still;

You use no other friend so ill.

Open the door, He'll enter in,

And sup with you, and you with Him."

"K."

DIVINE CERTAINTY OR VAIN THOUGHTS—WHICH ?



DON'T *think* there is a hell. By "*hell*" I mean a lake that burns with "fire unquenchable." Neither do I *think* there is a real personal devil, or that any creature is incorrigibly bad and wicked.

I am writing this in a graveyard. I see around me tables of stone declaring that underneath this green sod lie multitudes of both sexes and of all ages, from the "infant of days" to the almost centenarian, mouldering into dust. Some of these were carried off suddenly from the midst of life's busy bustle, others after a lingering illness.

I don't *think* any of these people will ever rise again. I don't *think* there is anything after death. I know that some other people do; but their thoughts must not regulate mine. I am not bound to think as they do, for *my thoughts* are just as sound as *theirs*. When they are able to speak with certainty, and to advance a few proofs, they shall find me listening with both ears. But their *thoughts*—no, they are just so much rubbish.

I used to *think* about these things. Sometimes I would *think* there might be a resurrection, a heaven, a hell. These thoughts would steal in upon me at night at the time when I should have been going off to sleep, when the day's business was over, and when I was ALONE, and had time to THINK.

And then I was afraid to fall asleep lest I should die in the night, and wake up in hell. Strange I should have been troubled like that. It never seemed to occur to me that I might wake up in heaven. You see I somehow felt I deserved hell. And these thoughts would not be banished, but would come and fill my head like a colony of wasps, and crawl up and down over my poor burning brain, and sting, and sting, and sting, until I thought I should go mad. Then, again, I would think there was no hereafter, and this would give me a measure of relief, but there was no *certainty*.

I have got rid of this miserable piece of business altogether; and what is better, I have got rid of it *for ever*. It will never return. I have not had one anxious thought of the kind for the last twenty years. It was a once-for-all perfect and everlasting cure of the whole malady, and for all these years there has been A GREAT CALM.

I don't *think* and study and plague my brains one bit more about it. Where is the wisdom of thinking and puzzling over a thing at the bottom of which you know you never can get by all your labour?

I might think there was an island of considerable size right over the South Pole, and you might think there was a block of ice, and we might together argue the point warmly enough, but a wise man might say to both of us: "How do you intend to settle the dispute? Have either of you been there to see?" No. "Has any other person

been who can come and tell you?" No. "Then you are a pair of fools for discussing a subject of which you know nothing."

And so as to things outside the circle of the visible, I HAVE GIVEN UP MY THOUGHTS ABOUT THEM ALTOGETHER. Perhaps you will tell me I should have done this years before I did. I admit it, but I was unable to do this. You see, if it were now the hour of a moonless, starless midnight, I might be feeling about in the dark, and debating in my own mind which of these several paths led to the entrance of this graveyard, and I might find the one path leading so into the other, that I might almost despair of ever finding the way out; but if the sexton appeared upon the scene with a bright lamp, which let me see a door not twenty yards to my left, my fears and doubts and reasonings would fly to hide themselves like owls and bats from the light of day. Thus have my reasonings fled. I do not *think* the things are true. I do not. What then?

I KNOW THEY ARE. It is not that I hope they are, or feel they are, or fancy they are. I neither think nor reason one bit about it. I am as certain of the truth of these things as I am that this is a real graveyard, and that in spite of the pleasant odour and bloom and freshness of those lovely flowers, a little way below their tender roots death is reducing coffin and winding-sheet, bone and muscle, heart and brain to dust. I am as certain of the truth of those eternal things as I am of my own existence.

What gave me the certainty? Listen. GOD HAS SPOKEN. And the heavens and the earth shall pass away, but His word shall not pass away. "*The word of our God shall stand FOR EVER*" (Isa. xl. 8). If He had not spoken, my thoughts were mere speculations of the human mind, biassed by a strong desire to justify a life of sin. Such thoughts could only lead me astray. But seeing that God has spoken, I do not need them. The Son of God has come, who has told us *the truth*. I can now say, I KNOW. I have done with speculations.

I know there is a God of infinite holiness, truth, and goodness. *I know* there is a real, personal devil, and that he is both prince and god of this world. *I know* that he has been this since Cain laid the foundation of this world in the land of the vagabond (Nod), but by the rejection of Christ he has been publicly exposed as the world's prince and god. *I know* that man is God's enemy, and under the devil's power, and that he is not awake to his condition. *I know* that God has displayed what was in His heart to man by sending His only begotten Son as Saviour of the world, so that the whole extent of the infinite love of God has been declared at the cross; and *I know* that man displayed what the state of his heart was toward God by murdering that Saviour.

I know that, so far as man's relations with God is concerned, every man naturally is an enemy to himself; his nearest acquaintance will use every

effort to lead him astray; and the devil, his untiring enemy, works with restless energy his destruction. I *know* that the only Friend of man is the One he distrusts and dreads to have to do with; but "GOD IS FOR US." I *know* that the wisdom of this world will lead a man to trust his own heart at all times, but that divine wisdom will lead a man to trust the heart of God; and I *know* that the day of judgment will demonstrate that every man who trusted his own heart was a fool.

I *know* that Jesus is risen from the dead; that God has found His perfect satisfaction in Him; and that He is seated on the right hand of God, all power in heaven and on earth being given to Him, and that He is going to judge the living and the dead. All must give account to Him.

I *know* that there shall be two resurrections, distinct both in time and character. The first a resurrection of life. All who have part in it are "BLESSED AND HOLY." All believers are in this resurrection, and they come forth out of their graves GLORIFIED. These do not come into judgment. They reign over the earth with Christ for one thousand years. The *last* resurrection will be one of judgment. They stand before the great white throne when earth and heaven have fled away, after the thousand years, and for their sins are judged, and cast into the lake of fire. This is the *second* death, and this shall be no more annihilation than the *first* death was. Every one shall come out of his grave in response to the voice of Jesus.

I know that sin has terribly dishonoured God on this earth, but that, through the death of Christ, He has been infinitely glorified. He has been no loser through sin, because He has been compensated by Christ; and because of this He is at liberty to send, in the name of Jesus, a free pardon to every sinner under heaven. This goes out in the gospel. "Through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins, and by him all who believe are justified from all things." *I know* that if my reader believes in that risen glorified Man, the Lord Jesus Christ, HE IS JUSTIFIED FROM ALL THINGS this moment.

I know that all will not believe; many will despise or neglect the salvation of God. All such will most certainly perish. They love their own ways, their own thoughts; they think themselves quite competent to judge God and His revelation. They are not content with it as it stands; they have pleasure in unrighteousness. Neither the love of God nor the terrors of His wrath can turn them from their own course. Neither Christ nor His precious blood is anything to them. Sin has more attraction for their wretched hearts than the love of Jesus. They will have a long eternity in which to regret their folly.

I know the Lord is coming very soon, and that when He rises up He will shut the door of grace; and if my reader has put off his soul's salvation until that hour, he will be found among that company who stand without and cry, "Lord, Lord,

open unto us." And I tell you I know the answer He will return—"Depart from me! I never knew you!" I KNOW this—I DO.

I say again, I do not *think* it. I KNOW it. I am as certain of it, and have been for twenty years, as that I am sitting in this graveyard, and that the sun is shining in the heavens over my head. Before I heard His heavenly voice, it was all *vain thoughts*; since then it has been DIVINE CERTAINTY.

May the truth of God have place in the heart of the reader, that he also may have the certainty of these things.

J. B—D.

"I WILL APPEASE HIM." *

"I will appease him with the present that goeth before me, and afterward I will see his face; *peradventure* he will accept of me."—GEN. xxxii. 20.



BELIEVE in these words you have the soul-history of many described, possibly of some who read this. How many labour under the delusion that they have something to do to propitiate God. What a mistake! "I will *appease* him with the present that goeth before me, and afterward I will see his face; *peradventure* he will accept of me." Of course if your present is the

* Extracted from "A Night of Wrestling" in "Night Scones of Scripture."

ground upon which you are to appear before God, you may well say "peradventure." Can you appease Him with a present? Impossible! Yet that is the first thought in the heart of the sinner when he would draw near to God. He wants to appease Him.

It is in the heart of a child even. I remember perfectly a lady telling me once of her niece who was disobedient. Her mother bade her go to bed at a certain hour, and left the house. When the hour came, the aunt said, "Now, Mary, go to bed." The child refused. The aunt rejoined: "Then I must put you to bed. Mother's orders must be obeyed." The child retorted, "If you put me to bed, I will not say my prayers," and kept her word, as to bed she was put, and the gas turned out. Very soon conscience began to work in the darkness, which no child of six years of age likes. Her aunt soon heard a pitiful voice calling her. "What is it, my dear?" she asked. "Aunt, if I were to buy that box of sweets I saw yesterday in Ferguson's shop window, and give it to God, do you think He would forgive me?"

I hear you say, "That was a child." But the same thing comes out in your history and mine. Did we not each think—if not say—"I will appease him with the present"? He needs no appeasing, or turning of the heart to us. His feelings toward us were shown in the gift of His Son. "God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him" . . . and "to be

a propitiation for our sins." You do not need, in that sense, to appease Him. His heart is towards you. There is nothing in His heart towards you but love. We needed to be reconciled to God; not God to us. He ever was, and is *for* us.

I quite admit that, because sin has come in, there must be propitiation. But propitiation is not to turn God's heart towards us. It is required in order to meet the righteous claims of His throne, and that He may be able to let His heart flow out to us in grace, and accept of us in righteousness. The love of God is shown in the gift of His Son, and His righteousness in the death of His Son on the tree. The holy, spotless Son of God—Jesus—who had no sin, was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. He offered Himself voluntarily on the cross to God, and met the claims of God in respect of sin. In the cross righteousness was demonstrated, holiness maintained, and the character of God vindicated. If God passed over our sin, as lightly as man would pass it over, where would be His holiness? On the other hand, if He judged sin without giving an opportunity of escape, where were His love? The cross of Christ is the divine solution of these problems. I get the love of God displayed in the provision of the Victim, and I get the righteousness of God maintained in the death of that Victim in atonement. On the altar the righteous claims of God are met, and sin is put away. God's holiness is justified,

and His righteousness is demonstrated. The blood of the Victim cleanses away the sins of the poor, guilty sinner.

Thus, you have not to appease Him now. But you may turn and say, I have been so long away from Him that I am afraid to come to Him. You need not be afraid of Him. He would fain win your heart's confidence. I know it has been said that Jesus came to do the work by which the Father is now reconciled to us. Such a thought is totally foreign alike to Scripture, and to God's nature. God was never unreconciled. God's heart was ever towards man. Man turned away from God. Man would not trust God. "God is love," and "God is light." And what He is, He has ever been. His character has been shown us in the manifestation of His love, and in the maintenance of His righteousness.

If you were to get forgiveness without the cross of Christ, you would never be really happy. You would not be sure that God might not some day raise the question of righteousness with you. If, on the other hand, you see that God is just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus; if you see that His holy nature has been expressed in the judgment of sin on the tree, when Christ suffered for sins, the just for the unjust; if you see that atonement has been made, and that all God's righteous claims have been met to the uttermost in the atoning death of His blessed Son, then you have a firm basis—an imperishable and

unshakable groundwork for the peace of your soul. The atonement alone can be that firm basis; by it you see God saves you, and saves you *righteously*. He saves you in love, but He saves you on the ground of a righteous atonement.

There is a doctrine abroad that God is so good, that He will not judge sin. He loves everybody, and will judge nobody. Lie of hell! Judge nobody? Well, if He does not judge anybody, He is not God. He is no better than you and I. If He does not judge sin, He is no better than the sinner. God must judge sin to the uttermost, and, blessed be His name, He has judged it in the cross of His dear Son, that He may save the sinner who trusts in His Son, who once died on the tree. That is the gospel. He maintains His righteousness, while saving the vilest. Hence the apostle can say, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" And then he says: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? *It is God that justifieth*" (Rom. viii. 32, 33). Look! God is on your side. And if God be for us, who can be against us?

My friend, if you have thought to appease Him with a present, may your mind be changed henceforth. If you have thought, "I will see his face; *peradventure* he will accept of me," listen, and I will tell you what I know. Atonement has been made by Jesus, and accepted by God, and the One who offered the atonement to God has

gone up into glory to God, and He has been *accepted for me*, and I know I am *accepted in Him*. Jesus did everything, and I get all the benefit and the blessing of His work. Oh, silly soul, to harbour the thought of appeasing God with a present. You need conversion. You need to be reconciled to God. You need to have your thoughts of God changed. You need to be broken down. You need to get alone with God. That is a different thing altogether from appeasing Him.

When Luther went up the five hundred steps at the Vatican on his knees, he was doing what Jacob did here. He was practically saying, "I will appease Him," but when he got half way up, he was struck by the text, "The just shall live by faith," saw his mistake, and went quickly down. The poor Indian Fakir, with the hook in his back, who is hung up for hours in the eye of the sun, no doubt thinks that he is going to appease God by that. He too is mistaken. When his servants said to Naaman, "If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it?" (yes, he would surely have done some meritorious act to get his leprosy cleansed;) "how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?" (2 Kings v. 13), it was the same spirit. But you will never appease Him with presents. He does not want to be appeased. All He wants He has found in Christ, and all you need, sinner, you can find in Christ.

"I HAVE FOUND A RANSOM."



WHAT a magnificent announcement, and it is made by God Himself!

God has found a ransom, for so we may read in Job xxxiii. 24, and you will notice that it says not, "You must find a ransom," although in fullest truth we were the debtors, and it was incumbent on us to pay our debt and find our ransom if possibly we could.

But that was impossible; our debt had amounted to a measure that was far beyond our ability to liquidate, nor could we by any means find in ourselves or in our best endeavours a ransom adequate to such a liquidation. Indeed the same book tells us that we "cannot answer him one of a thousand" (chap. ix. 3), and if that be so—if it were possible that we could exonerate ourselves before Him of the criminality of one, we should still be charged with the nine hundred and ninety-nine damning offences.

How overwhelming!

But in point of fact we cannot answer Him for that one, and therefore we are placed at the bar of absolute condemnation.

Hence we read that "all have sinned," and that "all are under sin!"

The case is thus hopeless!

Further, why are we not commanded to find a ransom ?

For two reasons—first, we are utterly unable to furnish by any means an atonement equivalent to the enormity of our guilt ; and second, because the holiness of God, and His abhorrence of sin, are such that no ransom we might propose could meet the claims of His Throne.

Hence the prophet said, " Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul ? " (Micah vi. 7.)

Certainly not ! A costlier oblation cannot be conceived than the sacrifice of your first-born, yet even that is inadequate.

So, we read again, " By the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified in his sight " (Rom. iii. 20). Let that one brief sentence suffice !

Well, then, neither can we answer for our guilt, nor supply an atonement.

What is to be done ? Our guilt is apparent, our poverty proved, our condition deplorable.

Hearken to the announcement of divine and welcome grace, "*I have found a ransom !*"

It bursts upon the forlorn ear of poor, fallen, guilty, and helpless men, like a chord of heavenly music.

List, oh, ye needy ones ! A ransom—an atonement has been found ! It was necessary. The outraged claims of justice were clamouring aloud for the ransom price. The very heavens had been sullied by human sin, and were not clean in God's

sight (Job xxv. 5). They too cried out for an atonement. The whole creation had been soiled, perverted, ruined, alienated by the awfulness of our sin, and it craved reconciliation.

Could man, the sinner, the offender, the rebel, supply the ground of this? Impossible! Once more our first statement breaks upon us with ever increasing delight and wonder, "*I have found a ransom.*"

God Himself, the offended, has in purest love found the atonement. His grace has supplied what His justice demanded.

"Behold," He says, "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world" (John i. 29).

And again, "Having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things to himself, whether they be things on earth, or things in heaven"—here we have the future reconciliation of all these things on the ground of the blood of the cross—"and you that were sometime alienated . . . yet now hath he reconciled" (Col. i. 20, 21). Here we have the present reconciliation of believers on the same precious ground—"the blood of his cross." And this, notice, is all God's work, what He hath done and will do. The ransom and the reconciliation are His finding. One can only say, "What a charming thing is grace." Oh, how it suits poor things like us. "By grace ye are saved!" How it magnifies God! How it enriches man! "He giveth grace and glory" (Ps. lxxxiv. 11). Now, He who found the ransom merits all the praise.

Yet I may not finish without begging you, dear reader, to observe most carefully that whilst in Col. i. 20 we read of the reconciliation of all things in heaven and earth, there is no reconciliation of things under the earth. No, what is under judgment remains there for ever. There is no extension of mercy to the lost in hell. For them there is neither reconciliation nor hope, "larger hope," or any other kind. "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still" (Rev. xxii. 11); and therefore I earnestly beseech of you while yet on earth that you avail yourself of the atonement that has been wrought by the blood of His cross—believe in Him who died and paid so vast a ransom, that you may know here, and now, the joy of being reconciled to God.

"'A ransom for all!' Hear the marvellous story
Of Jesus, the Saviour, who came from the glory,
The lost to redeem, and God's children to gather,
By suffering, and death on the tree.

Sing! 'A ransom for all,'
Sweet fruit of the Saviour's loud call—
'It is finished!' Hallelujah!
Jesus died on the tree—
'Died for all'—hence for me.

While here upon earth—then e'en welcoming any—
His life Jesus promised, 'a ransom for *many*,'
But now that His work of redemption's accomplished,
The Spirit declares 'tis 'for *all*.' "

THE CLEAN DOOR-STEP.



LITTLE did Miss R—— think one morning, as she was going about her usual house duties, that the labour she was bestowing on her door-step was to be used of God as a sign to bring to her house one of His servants, with a message of peace for her troubled soul.

J. L——, a devoted young Christian, who had got work in an outlying district of Northumberland, was looking to the Lord to guide him to suitable lodgings.

Having heard, from inquiries he made, that a certain Mrs ——, not far from his work, took in lodgers, he set off to learn if he could be received. On reaching her house, but before he knocked at her door, there rushed suddenly into his mind a remark which a Christian friend had made to him some time previously—"Whenever I want lodgings in a strange district, I always look out for a *clean door-step*, as it is generally an indication of cleanliness and comfort within." This sudden invasion of his mind made J. L—— turn his eyes to another cottage quite near, and there, sure enough, was the "clean door-step."

This otherwise trivial incident had the Lord's voice in it to him, as he had been seeking His guidance in this matter. Without further reasoning, he went straight to the door and knocked,

which was at once answered by Miss R—— and conversation of the following nature took place:—

“Would you mind taking in a lodger for a short time?”

“Well, I am not in the habit of doing so; but what is your occupation?”

“At present I am a drainer, and have got work in the district.”

After taking a good look at him, Miss R—— asked if he was steady, as she could not think of taking a lodger who drank; and being able to satisfy her on that score, J. was received. Miss R—— said afterwards, there was something about his manner that so impressed her that she could not refuse him, though she had no thought of taking lodgers at the time.

Miss R—— had stayed with, and nursed her mother till the day of her death, which took place some months previously. Since that event she had been left the lonely occupant of the house, feeling most keenly her bereavement and isolation.

Her sorrow, however, instead of diminishing as time rolled by, deepened, and was coupled with real conviction of sin, which made her anxious about her soul's salvation.

This was quite a new thing to her, as, previous to her bereavement, she was very self-righteous, and had a special dislike to those who said they were converted, calling all such “canting hypocrites,” &c.

Perhaps the reader does the same. If so, it is a

sure sign that you are yet in your sins, and on your way to an endless Hell; for the Word of God plainly declares that unless a man be "CONVERTED" he cannot "ENTER into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. xviii. 3; Acts iii. 19).

Though convicted of sin, and anxious to be saved, *pride* and *shame* were not so dispelled from Miss R——'s heart yet as to make her go to any of the Christians around her to inquire the way of salvation, though she then wished, from the bottom of her heart, she had the joy of forgiveness which they possessed. But God, who is ever gracious, knew the longing desire of her soul, and sent His humble, devoted servant thither, guiding his feet to her very door—bringing thus together two longing souls; the servant longing to lead weary sin-laden sinners to his precious Saviour, and a weary sinner *longing* to be led.

He had not been long in the house till they discovered each other. She soon got the impression that he was a truly *converted* man, while he soon found she was an anxious soul; and this led him to speak freely to her on the subject that was uppermost in both their hearts—the question of the "soul's salvation."

Like nearly all awakened and anxious souls, she had for some time been trying to make herself better, in the hope she would make herself more acceptable to God. She found, however, like the woman in Mark v. 25-35, who spent all her living to get cured of her disease, that she was

daily getting worse instead of better, as each day's sins and shortcomings were only adding to the great load of guilt that she felt lying on her conscience when first awakened.

This was her state then when J. L—— set before her "God's salvation," which is—blessed be His Name—all of *PURE grace*—"Not of works, lest any man should BOAST" (Eph. ii. 8, 9). He showed her from God's Word that all our best deeds, BEFORE we accept Christ, are, in *God's sight*—whatever value man may put on them—only "*dead works*" and "*FILTHY RAGS*" (Heb. ix. 14; Isa. lxiv. 6). Therefore any efforts of ours cannot in the least help to fit us for God. But what we could not do, God Himself has done. He has provided salvation for the sinner at infinite cost to Himself and His Beloved Son. "He spared not his own Son," but delivered Him up to the death of the cross for our sins—yea, for "our offences"—and "raised him again for OUR JUSTIFICATION" (Rom. iv. 25, viii. 32).

The full punishment that our sins deserved was endured by Jesus, when He was on the cross—for-saken of God; and so completely did He atone for them, that, in dying, He said, "It is finished." As a result of this work, He could assure the *penitent* thief who died at His side, that He would take him *that day* with Him into paradise (Luke xxiii. 39-43; Matt. xxvii. 46). The fact, too, that God raised His Son from the dead and put Him into heavenly glory, shows how perfectly He was satis-

fied with the work of the cross; and now He sends His message of forgiveness to every poor sinner who believes on His Son (Luke xxiv. 46, 47; Acts x. 43, xiii. 38, 39).

This was the message Miss R—— *needed*, and the Lord sent His servant *with* it; and by His grace she received it, and there and then was saved.

I relate this incident specially for the encouragement of those who may be in a similar state to Miss R——, for I believe there are many longing to be at "peace with God," but who have not the courage to state their difficulties to those Christians they know, and who would only be too glad to help them. If the reader is in this state, be assured God has His eye upon you, and is thinking about you, as truly as He was about Miss R——; and though He may not use a sign, as He did in her case, to bring a servant of His to your house, He is none the less anxious to meet the longing desire of your soul.

It may be that He has led me to write this *purposely* for you. The very fact that it is in your hand at this moment, and your eyes reading it, is surely a sign—yea, a proof—that He is thinking of you for blessing.

May you then, like Miss R——, *receive* the message of forgiveness He sends you now, and then God's salvation, which you so long for, will be yours at once, and for ever.

J. M.

LOT AND HIS FAMILY.*

(GEN. xix.)



HE Lord Jesus bids you and me look at and learn from this scene, otherwise He would not have said so emphatically: "As it was in the days of Lot . . . thus shall it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed;" and, lest there should be among His followers any lingering in sin or procrastinating, He adds that sharp, short, trite sentence, that I would to God were burned deeply into the conscience of every lingerer here to-night—"Remember Lot's wife!" She was a person who was almost saved, but was not. She was within sight of the place of safety, but failed to reach it. She was on the verge of getting divinely appointed security, but missed it. Two things worked in her heart to her ruin. Unbelief and disobedience. She did not in her heart believe that God would judge Sodom, and spite of His plain command to the contrary, she would look back, and stands an everlasting beacon of the awful folly of disobeying the Lord.

Ah! my unconverted, world-loving friend, you think you can have your own way. You can; I admit it; but you will repent it for eternity, unless God bring you to deep repentance here. Lot's wife may well warn you. She stands an

* From "Night Scenes of Scripture." A Night in Sodom.

everlasting beacon, I repeat, to this world of the insensate folly of a soul that might have been saved, but was not, through unbelief and disobedience. Therefore our Lord cries, with the most emphatic language possible—"Remember Lot's wife!" God help you to remember Lot's wife; for if you do not receive Jesus as your blessed Saviour now, you may never have another opportunity; and you will repent in eternity the awful folly of not simply obeying the gospel.

Let us turn to our chapter now. Two angels go to Sodom in the evening. The sun is setting. The shades of night are falling on that city of corruption and lust, as these two messengers, freighted with the thoughts of God, and tidings of deliverance for souls in that doomed city, enter it. Just as these men spoke in Sodom, so I tell you, my friends, that judgment is about to fall; but you yet have time to escape it. You may have salvation just now, for I tell you of the wonderful way of escape that God is pointing out to sinners, through the death and resurrection of His Son the Lord Jesus Christ.

These two angels—I call them heavenly evangelists, because indeed they were such—enter the city. Lot sees them, and accosts them. He feels that there is something about them to which his heart responds. He wants them to go into his house. But no, they are chary about that. They say, "Nay, but we will abide in the street all night" (ver. 2). They would not enter Lot's

house. You say, Why not? I think the reason is very simple. They did not think Lot's house was of good repute. The manners of his house were such that the two messengers felt that they would rather stay outside than enter it. Christians, what a lesson for you and me. What is the atmosphere of your house and mine? Is the atmosphere of your house and mine such that God would like to come into them? Is your house one where Jesus is always to be found, and His disciples always welcome? These servants of God felt that Lot's house had not a good savour about it, and they proposed to stay outside.

However, at length, Lot constrains them, and they come in: and no sooner are they inside than the men of the city gather round about, and the true character of the iniquity and godlessness of the place is made manifest. The crowd demands that the strangers be brought out. Lot expostulates with them. He pleads with them. He is even ready to abase his own children to cover and protect these strangers. At length the riot gets so bad that they say to him, "Stand back." Their anger is aroused, and they cry, "This one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge." What moral power has he over them when their passions and lusts are aroused? None, and they plainly tell him, "Now will we deal worse with thee than with them." They would have broken in the door; but at that moment the door is opened, and the men draw Lot within.

The next thing we find is that those outside are struck with blindness. Now, mark you, God is striking Christendom with blindness in the very hour I speak—with moral blindness, spiritual blindness. We are drifting with lightning rapidity to the moment of which the second chapter of 2nd Thessalonians speaks, when it says that—"Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved . . . for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (vers. 10-12).

I quite admit that the full application of that scripture will be consequent on the day when the Lord Jesus has come for His people, and when the Church, then completed, has been taken away, and every Christian has been removed out of the scene. Then will judicial blindness fall upon those who have rejected the light, as well as grace and privilege. But although the moment of the full application of the scripture has not yet come, every man, that looks abroad to-day, and sees what is going on, cannot but be struck with the amount of what I call moral blindness that is passing over Christendom, and more than in any other place under the sun—the land you and I live in—the British Isles, so favoured of God with His Word.

The Bible is being slowly but surely torn to pieces, and committed to limbo. The very men who should have been the conservators of the

Scriptures—the professors, the up to date, but alas! unconverted professors of theology—have stripped it page by page, and book by book, until, were we to believe these learned infidels, there would not be seven pages of it left for faith to lay hold of, or for the soul to feed upon. Moses, a myth! Isaiah, a fool! Daniel, an impostor! and John not to be believed in! The pseudo-friends of the Bible have been so impregnated with scientific infidelity—with what God calls “profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called” (1 Tim. vi. 20)—that their evolutionary theories—in the very face of Scripture—lead ordinary newspaper critics to say, “If Professor ——’s arguments are sound, the Bible of the future will be a good handbook of biology, and common-sense will take the place of the Holy Ghost.” What a scathing rebuke to a professed friend of the Lord Jesus!

And this in the end of the nineteenth century of grace! God is striking this land with blindness, you may be certain. Thank God for the men that hold on to, and proclaim His Word simply. They have the light anyway. Have you not got that light? May God give it to you. What I have been alluding to is really, the world—the natural man—tinkering the Word of God; but it has no capacity whatever to grasp its contents. It is only by the Holy Ghost that Scripture is rightly to be understood. The natural man understands not the things of the Spirit of God, and that is the

lesson which one learns from Sodom in Lot's day. The world is left to its blindness; and the next thing is that judgment falls.

We are not told whether the blindness was removed from the eyes of these people, but this we are told, that they groped to find the door, but could not. And now these evangelists address the people for whom they came. And I, too, turn from those who oppose the Lord, and address any who are wanting salvation, and who, when they hear that judgment is coming, are anxious to escape it. The angels say to Lot, in verse 12: "Hast thou here any besides? son-in-law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring *them* out of this place: for we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord; and the Lord hath sent us to destroy it" (vers. 12, 13). They have a double commission. They are sent by the Lord to intimate the fact of coming judgment; but, ere the judgment falls, they desire to deliver and bring out, not only Lot himself, but any in whom his heart is interested. How touching are these words—"Hast thou here any besides?"

Christian! have you no unconverted sons? Have you no unconverted daughters? Have you no unconverted loved ones? Hear God's solemn query and command of grace: "Hast thou here any besides? son-in-law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring *them* out of this place."

God warns; faith hears, and acts accordingly. So we read: "And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons-in-law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city" (ver. 14). His soul is roused, and he goes forth. He is awakened to solemn realities, and is in earnest. If we have not hitherto been in earnest, may God waken us up. Dear Christian friends, what we want is earnestness! I feel how I want it. I long for it. Oh! that we were all truly awakened to the gravity of the situation around us. What ought to mark every one of us is a sense of the value and the danger of immortal souls, and the urgent necessity of impressing every one of them with the fact that judgment is coming, and that there is a way—and one way only—to escape from it. Are you and I wanting our relations, our friends, our neighbours, to be saved?

There seems to have been a *carte blanche* given to Lot. "Hast thou here *any* besides?" He had two daughters in the house, but the angels say, Have you any others in whom you are interested? Go and tell them! He is roused, goes out, and speaks to his sons-in-law. I think I see that scene. It was night, for we are told the morning had not yet come. No, the morning of the day had not come. The morning does not break till the fifteenth verse. It was thus in the dead of night. I think I see Lot. He leaves his house and goes down to the houses of his sons-in-law. He

hammers at the doors. He knocks so loudly that every sleeper in the house is wakened. May God wake up every sleeping soul in this hall to-night. Would to God I could waken you, and rouse your godless soul. Lot awoke those he went to. I have no doubt they wondered. "Who knocks?" "I." "You, father-in-law—what is it?" He replies, "Up, get you out of this place, for the Lord will destroy this city." What a message! And, coming too, from the man, who had been going to put the city right. "Up, get you out of this place, for the Lord will destroy this city," falls on the ears of the suddenly roused ones.

And what now? Does the message produce much effect, when the father-in-law gives it. Now, listen; so much for worldliness; so much for tampering with the world; so much for our hearts being enamoured of the things, and getting engaged with the favours of the world. The men of the world read our lives, and know perfectly well whether we *live* in the world, and love its things, or not. Lot's family read his life, and here is their comment. Do the sons-in-law mock Lot. Oh, dear, no! They have too much reverence for that. They do not mock him. They listen to his words, hear all he had to say, and draw their conclusion. What is it? "He seemed as one that mocked unto his sons-in-law" (ver. 14).

I think they said to one another: What has happened? What has come over him? Has he lost his reason? The man that has come into the

city to live, has got into a position in the municipal government thereof, and has given us his daughters in marriage, now in the dead of night comes and tells us that the Lord is going to destroy this place. What absurdity is this? Truly he seemed to them as one that mocked. They thought he was mad, or was playing the fool for a purpose. They did not mock, but judged he was doing so. They declined to believe him, because this message was so totally different from, and out of keeping with all his previous pathway. That is the point. They could not reconcile the two things. They could not reconcile this startling message, given in the dead of night, with the fact that he had voluntarily come to, and lived in the city, loved its society, its company and its pleasures, and though pained by its sins, nevertheless chose—after being taken once out of it—to remain as a citizen in it. They could not understand this. “He seemed as one that mocked.”

What was the effect of Lot's exhortation? I do not believe there was any effect. I think his sons-in-law went back to their beds, to continue the slumber, out of which they were so unexpectedly roused to hear of coming judgment of which they were incredulous, because of the bygone ways of the herald. Lot completely failed in his mission. It is of no use for us to proclaim “judgment to come” to our neighbours, if it be patent and manifest that our hearts are engrossed with the world's things. There is no use in our speaking of

the future, if it be plain that we are only living for the present. The effect of such inconsistency must be to rob our testimony for God of all power. Oh! what a lesson to learn in Sodom! May we each heed it.

Lot having failed in his mission, returned to his house. Unbelief destroyed his relations, and procrastination almost destroyed him. This is evident. Manifestly he lingered, and would have stayed yet awhile in Sodom, but we read: "When the morning arose, then the angels *hastened* Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; *lest thou be consumed* in the iniquity of the city" (ver. 15). Lot's outside testimony had absolutely failed, and inside the house it was not much better, but his wife and his two daughters evidently are impressed by the testimony of the two strangers. As far as Lot's influence outside was concerned, it had not the weight of a feather. Not one solitary soul in all Sodom believed him, and, I repeat, there is to me in this a most pregnant lesson.

Mercy always rejoices against judgment, and this scene is no exception to this principle. "Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; *lest thou be consumed* in the iniquity of the city," was Mercy's voice to Lot. She, so to speak, says to Lot: "You cannot now impress other people. You have had your chance, and you have missed it. You might have been God's witness in Sodom. You have failed in this, and lost your

opportunity. Now, ere judgment falls on it, escape yourself." And what does he do? He lingers. He procrastinates. He starts, if I may so say, the sad history of the race of procrastinators of whom you read so much in Scripture, and see so many around you.

Lingerer, you have often thought of coming to the Lord; but you have procrastinated. Young man, son of Christian parents, you know perfectly well the deep desire of their hearts for your salvation, and you have felt that you ought to come to the Saviour, yet you linger. Lingerer, procrastinator, you know full well that your only safety and wisdom lie in coming to the Saviour, and you mean to do it some day, but still you linger. What folly is yours. More souls are eternally lost through procrastination in coming to Christ, than by open, glaring sin.

But, to follow our story, we read: "While he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; *the Lord being merciful unto him*; and they brought him forth, and set him without the city" (ver. 16). Oh, what grace! It is just like God's grace to take a lingerer by the hand. Give me your hand to-night, friend, that I may lead you to Jesus. Let me lead you to the Saviour! Will you not do it? I wish you would do what a woman did once in this very hall. While speaking, I had said, "Oh, give me your hand, and let me lead you to Jesus." As the meet-

ing separated, I met her. Tears ran down her cheeks, as I asked, "Are you decided?" "Thank God, I am," she said. "And when did you come to Jesus?" "To-night while you were speaking. When you put out your hand and said, 'Give me your hand,' I put out mine, and I came to the Lord on the spot, and He saved me then and there!" Now, that is just what I want you to do to-night. Give me *your* hand, and let me lead *you* to Jesus. Oh! be saved to-night! Be won to-night. Be really decided for Jesus to-night! Be on the Lord's side. Procrastinate no longer.

But you may ask, What do you mean by procrastination? I daresay you read it when you were a child at school. Procrastination simply means putting off until to-morrow, what should be done to-day. Its meaning was burned into me by a copy slip I used in my school days. Hundreds of times I wrote it—"Procrastination is the thief of time." I should like a similar copy slip to be put into every school to-day, and I tell you how I would alter it—"Procrastination is the thief of souls." There is not a man in hell to-night that meant to be there. There is not a single soul lost that ever meant to be so. Each meant to get right with God some day; but put it off just one day too long, and died suddenly in sin. And *you* mean to come to Jesus some day. Why put it off, then?

Rowland Hill was perfectly right when he labelled it "Procrastination—the recruiting officer

of hell." What? "Procrastination the recruiting officer of hell!" Yes. There is nothing leads a man to perdition like procrastination—putting off till to-morrow what should be done to-day. That is what it means. And what should you do to-day? Bow at the feet of Jesus. Make up your mind for the Lord. Decide for the Lord. You have thought on many a previous occasion that you would be a Christian; but you could not make up your mind. Oh! to-night, be the Lord's. May the Lord's mercy meet you, as it met Lot. "And *while he lingered*, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the Lord being merciful unto him." The infinite mercy of that God has spared you till now, and again gives you the opportunity of salvation through this simple message. I wish from the bottom of my heart that I could draw you to Jesus, and get you morally outside this doomed world, as God's angels eventually led out Lot and his family.

By this time it was morning, and the sun was up. The inhabitants of Sodom were beginning to stir about; and I think I see that company going down the street. It would be a strange sight to the Sodomites, doubtless. Two angels, and each with two captives. One had Lot in one hand, and his wife in the other. The other angel had the two daughters by the hand. They were being fairly dragged out. And is that the way men get converted? you ask. Very often. It was the way

I got converted. The Lord really dragged me out of the path of folly and sin I had been so long in. It is really grace that does it. Think of it! I have little doubt the people of Sodom sneered, and the sons-in-law laughed, and that many a joke was made that day as they saw Lot and his family setting forth. Scoffer, you are welcome to your jokes; but you will repent them in the eternal damnation of hell. You will repent your sneers at preacher and preaching, and at Christ my Master, and at God's true people. You will yet repent of all your unbelieving folly, but, let me beseech of you, repent of it ere it be too late.

Yes! without doubt fine fun those Sodomites had, as they saw Lot led to the outside of their city, and then treating his exodus as nothing but a joke, they resumed their ways of sin, and business went on as usual. "They did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded," says our Lord. They held their market; their exchange was opened; business men met in it; and in came the peasants with their produce from the country. The housewives went out to buy the food for the day, and everybody was busy. The sons-in-law would no doubt be there—godless men they were—and they would be telling their friends how the old father-in-law had come in the dead of night, and roused them with a foolish story about their city being about to be destroyed. Why, it never was more prosperous. Look at the sun. It never shone more brightly. Yes, quite true, "the

sun was risen upon the earth, when Lot entered into Zoar" (ver. 23), and outwardly all was unchanged in nature, and in the city. "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation" or "outward show" (Luke xvii. 20) is our Lord's remark, which leads to His comment on Sodom's case. Note this, for God is not going to give the world one single bit of warning, when He judges it, any more than He gave Sodom. Its only warning was the angels leading Lot out of it, and that warning they clearly despised, just as careless men despise the fact that God is saving many by the gospel now, just before the Lord comes again.

And now what about Lot? Led outside the city, he and those with him are put on the road to safety; but being on the road is not enough—they must reach the spot of safety. Hence the emphatic *injunction that now rings in his ears*: "*Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed*" (ver. 17). Sinner, have you really escaped to Christ? "Escape for thy life," is the word. "Look not behind thee," do not turn back; "neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed." That is also God's monitory word to you, my friend. Have you escaped for your life? "Then look not behind. Tarry not. Reach the only spot of safety, Christ. Your life is in danger. Soul, your eternal destiny hangs in the balance to-night. Know this, that there is nothing but judgment for those who tarry

in the plain. There is no safety until you reach God's appointed spot at the mountain top. There is no safety except in Christ, in the blessed Saviour, who died and lives again. If you trust in Him, He will save you for time and for eternity.

Fairly outside the city, Lot pleads for a little bit of a respite—a little bit of the world, so to speak. It is a strange thing how the heart clings to what is to be judged. He says, "Behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one; oh, let me escape thither . . . and my soul shall live" (ver. 20.) He gains his point, and goes to Zoar instead of to the hill-top. And now what do I read? "The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar. Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven; and he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground." As Lot got to the place of comparative safety, the doomed places around were destroyed; for "the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all" (Luke xvii. 29). Shortlived indeed was Sodom's fate after Lot's departure.

At Zoar Lot had safety, but he had not quietude, for he had not implicitly obeyed the Lord. The soul that turns to God in a half-hearted way is safe, but he is not very happy. Many a man who believes in Jesus is not at peace. I will tell you why. He does not fully follow the Lord. He

has not got enough energy of soul. Perhaps you have just enough of Christ to make you miserable. There are many men of that sort, and Lot illustrates them. He is safe, but not at rest in Zoar, so presently he goes on to the mountain top, to the real place of safety (ver. 30). The real place of safety for you and me is to be in Christ, and then to be occupied with Christ, to be delighting in Christ, as He now is accepted in glory. We need not only to trust Him, not only to believe in Him, not only to rest in the work that He finished for us, but to have the heart occupied with Christ, and Christ alone.

The man who simply looks to Christ in faith for *salvation*, and does not break thoroughly with the world is never happy. You will find him troubled by doubts, and fears, and uncertainty. That was what happened to Lot. He was saved, but he was not happy till he went to the spot to which God bade him go.

And now one word about Lot's wife. We read that she "looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt." Half-hearted soul! "Remember Lot's wife." Nearly saved, but not quite! Near to the place of safety; but not in it. Are you almost converted, but not quite? To be "almost persuaded" is of no avail. "Remember Lot's wife!" if such be your state.

It is quite possible that you may have been impressed, and been made somewhat anxious, before to-day. Possibly you have been brought

under the sound of the gospel by some Christian friend against your will. Do you believe its tale? It is true. But you say, I cannot believe that God will judge a scene like this. "Remember Lot's wife." That was the thought, I believe, that Lot's wife indulged in as she walked along. She lingered a bit behind her husband, and then up came this thought, I do not think the Lord will judge the place after all. Although her body was outside Sodom, her heart was within it. Thus thinking, she determined—spite of the word, "Look not behind thee"—to have a little bit of a look, and just at the moment she was entering Zoar, the place of safety, she disobeyed God, and judgment overtook her. This foolish woman disobeys the plain command of the Lord, "Look not behind thee." Unbelief led to disobedience. She evidently did not believe that God would judge Sodom, and harbouring the thought, Was it true? she turned, and "she became a pillar of salt."

Friend, have you learned the lesson of that pillar of salt? A stranger travelling through that scene afterwards, and looking over the blackened country as he journeyed, would, with surprise, be attracted by the bright and shining pillar, untouched by smoke, which met his view. Small wonder if he said, "What means this?" Lot's wife did not fall in the judgment of Sodom. It was a distinct judgment by the hand of God on unbelief, which He always judges sooner or later. Disobedience, too, He always judges.

And there that pillar of salt stood, a witness to the awful folly of the soul that disobeys God. My dear unsaved friends, may God cause you to learn the proper lesson from that beacon. And what is it? Be whole-hearted. Be simple and sincere. Do not procrastinate. Believe in Jesus fully. Receive Him, and let Christ, the heavenly Saviour be the object of your heart, and from this moment set out to serve Him. "Remember Lot's wife." You must push on in faith and be saved, or you will be cut down in unbelief shortly. You must reach the spot of safety, or be cut off. She was very near the place, but not in it; and how she resembles lots of souls in Christendom to-day!

Perhaps you say, "Whom do you mean? Unsaved friend, "thou art the man." Thou hast been moved, touched, reached, almost saved, but thou art still outside the place of safety. Possibly your friends think you are all right, but God knows, and you know also in your conscience, that you are not all right; and the future will show that, too, if you die in your sins. Oh! God give you just now to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, to be Christ's fully, and to walk in His service till He come? I trust that whatever you and I forget, we shall each of us, day by day, "remember Lot's wife."

"Where will you spend eternity?

This question comes to you and me!

Tell me, what shall your answer be—

Where will you spend eternity?"

DUTY OR LOVE.



NE Friday afternoon in September 1869, Albert Drecker went to close the draw-bridge over the Passaic River, for a train of the New York and Newark Railroad to cross. His little boy of ten years old came running at his side, and playing on the bridge. While the watchman was engaged closing the bridge, he heard a scream, and saw his child fall into the deep water beneath. At this moment the train was not in sight, owing to a curve in the line, but he heard it already near at hand, and knew that no time must be lost. To save the boy's life would have been an easy matter; but the whistle of the train made it evident that the rescue of his child would involve the loss of many lives that were in his hands. What was he to do?

We may well suppose it was a moment of supreme agony! His child was drowning before his eyes, but Drecker stood to his post; he did his duty, and the train passed safely over. But what was left for him? His darling child was drowned.

With an overwhelmed heart, the father stole down to the brink of the river, and drew to him the lifeless body of his child. And then, what a sight to meet a loving mother's eyes, as he bore in

his arms the precious burden ! But the train passed on ; the passengers were safe.

Our hearts are thrilled as we picture *this* scene. But what is *it* to that all-surpassing scene which happened at Calvary rather more than eighteen hundred years ago. The actors in *that* scene were God and Christ *for the world*. And by it, "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. v. 8).

This was the great question—Shall the people who have brought just wrath upon them on account of their sins—shall they be damned in hell-fire, or shall God's own Son bear the judgment due to them ?

Indeed, faint is the story of Drecker when you think what it cost God the Father to give His Son. With the one it was a point of *duty* ; but with God, it was unsought grace. Oh ! what a sacrifice was the Lamb of God's providing when God "spared not his own Son." Hear that cry in Gethsemane—"O my Father ! if it be possible, let this cup pass from me : nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." That cry was heard in heaven ; that cry was heard by the Father who delighted in His Son, and angels came and ministered unto Him. But if you were to be saved, if you were to go to heaven, there was no other way than that Christ should drink that bitter cup—that was the cup of wrath, full for you, the just reward of *your* deeds ; but Jesus took it, Jesus drank it, Jesus drank it to the very dregs when the billows of

divine wrath against our sin swept over His soul, and He cried, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" Thus He suffered and *died*, that all who believe on Him might be *saved*.

ANON.

"IT IS FINISHED."



ON one of the western Shetland Islands, a workman had been building a wall along the top of a steep cliff to prevent the cattle falling into the sea.

The wall was finished, and pronounced by the master to be quite safe.

The workman, however, thought one more stone was needed to make it complete, and forthwith proceeded to make this addition. The stone was raised and placed upon the wall, when lo, his foot slipped, and in a moment he was flying through a space of some hundreds of feet into the great cavern beneath. Had he obeyed his master, who said the wall was complete, his life would have been spared. It was endeavouring to add to a work which needed no addition that brought him to so untimely an end.

Like him, many who read these lines are trying to add something to a finished work.

When Jesus died at Calvary, the victorious shout burst from His blessed lips, "*It is finished.*" God looked upon the work which He accomplished,

was satisfied with it, and pronounced it perfect. So glorified was God about the question of sin, that He raised from the dead His beloved Son.

Redemption's great work was completed, and the claims of the eternal throne fully met. Full atonement was there made for sin, and a righteous basis laid upon which God could receive and bless the vilest sinner.

"It is finished!" Heaven heard the shout, and opened wide the gates of glory to let the risen Victor in.

"It is finished!" Earth caught the words, and trembling sinners, who feared the sentence of everlasting doom, rejoiced to know the work complete.

"It is finished!" Sinner, hear thou the precious proclamation, and let those thrice blessed words assure thee the debt is paid, the work is done.

What need of thy works, when the atoning blood has flowed?

The once-crucified Saviour now adorns the glory-throne on high: blest proof that all is done, for God's eternal glory, and our blessing.

May the Lord give you, instead of trying to save yourself, to rest upon what He has done. All your efforts to save yourself are of no avail, and not until you rest on Christ and trust His blood, will you find peace. Then trust Him now.

"Thy pains, not mine, O Christ,
Upon the shameful tree,
Have paid redemption's price
And purchased peace for me."

JUDAS AND JESUS.*

MATT. xxvi.-xxvii.



HE eternal destiny of every soul of man hangs upon his relation to Christ. Your eternal destiny, my friend, depend upon it, hangs upon your relation to the One of whose sorrow and death these scriptures speak. It is of paramount and vital importance that you should know Him and the meaning of His suffering and death. As He passed out of this scene, the Roman centurion, and those that were with him, said, "Truly this was the Son of God." And if He be the Son of God, what should the relation of your soul and mine be to Him? Surely one of confidence—not of rejection. Nay, more, it should be one of attachment. It is a blessed thing to be attached to Jesus. It is an awful thing not to be attached to Him. Very solemn are the words of the apostle: "If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha," *i.e.*, "cursed when He comes." Do you love Him? He loves you. I hope you will begin to love Him to-night, for He is worthy.

Man did not want Him at the outset of His history here, and the close of that wondrous tale of incarnate grace reveals the same indifference—yea, hatred towards Him.

* From "Night Scenes of Scripture"—A Night of Sorrow.

All that can be said is that the world put up with Him for the three and a half years of His public ministry. They did not mind eating the bread created by His mighty hands in the days of hunger. They did not mind their lepers being cured, the blind receiving sight, and their dead being raised. They did not mind their need being met—their mere physical need; but inasmuch as He was the light, the truth, and the living expression of what God is in His own Person upon earth, the world, always afraid of Light and Truth which reveal moral state, got tired of Him, could not bear Him, and said, first quietly, then boldly and openly, We must get rid of Him. A terrible tale for the Holy Ghost to tell us! A frightful charge to lie at the world's door!

Man could not bear the presence of the blessed Son of God. That is the solemn lesson which one learns in the gospels. He was rejected on earth from the outset. In the chapters before us we reach the climax, and the truth of what was really in the heart of man comes out. They plotted to get rid of Him. Once or twice previously had the religious leaders of the nation tried it, but could not manage it. At length the fitting moment came.

The 26th of Matthew opens two days before the feast of the passover, or on what we should call our Wednesday. Our Lord said to His disciples, "Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of Man is betrayed to be crucified." He does not say the Son of Man is

going to be betrayed. He says *He is* betrayed. Thereafter we read: "Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people unto the palace of the High Priest, who was called Caiaphas, and consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty, and kill *him*." There was a confederation of the heads of the nation to put Him to death. The priests, the scribes, the elders of the people—all the heads of the nation—gathered together in solemn conclave to see if they could, by any possibility, take Him and put Him to death. "But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people." Now the very thing they did not want God brought about, because Scripture had to be fulfilled, and at the very moment when Israel was sacrificing the paschal lamb, according to the Word of God, I repeat, at that very moment, Christ, the true Paschal Lamb, was sacrificed also. "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us" is the touching way this is described by the apostle Paul (1 Cor. v. 7).

Now the way it came about is very solemn, because so frightfully descriptive of what the human heart left to itself, and hence under Satan's power, can do. Jesus is betrayed by a man who had been His companion for several years. That is what made me call this "A night of sorrow," for I can conceive of nothing more sorrowful to the Lord—nor is any page of man's history darker before God—than the circumstances taking place during the night, which Matthew here describes

to us. Three men pass before you—Judas, Peter, and Jesus. They give us two warnings and an example. Judas exhibits the wickedness of the flesh, Peter shows us the weakness of the flesh, while Jesus passes before the eye as the perfect example of what man should be in a moment of deepest sorrow and trial.

A question of interest arises here, viz., Why do you find the evangelist Matthew at this point introducing into his narrative the account of the anointing of Jesus at Bethany? It is not given by Matthew in its historical place, *i.e.*, it is not in its chronological order. It had happened several days sooner, as a matter of fact (see John xii. 1-12), and its relation should have come in between the 20th and 21st chapters to make it chronologically correct. Why then does Matthew bring it in here? I have no doubt it is brought in, in connection with the perfidy of Judas. It flings the baseness of Judas into most terrible relief, as you see the devoted affection that marks the woman that anointed Jesus.

The chief priests were looking for an opportunity of laying hold of Jesus. What was this occasion? The Spirit of God tells us the story of what took place four days previously. If you will read the 12th of John's Gospel you will find that "Jesus, *six* days before the passover, came to Bethany," and there, in the house of Simon the leper, He was anointed. There it is that Mary, with a heart full of love for Him, brings her box of ointment, and

breaks it over His feet, as John says. On the other hand, Matthew tells us that it was His head that was anointed.

The difference is easily explained. Matthew looks at Jesus as the Messiah, and as such He is King of the Jews, and in the light of His kingship Mary therefore anoints His head. John, however, presents Him as the Son of God, and shows Mary anointing His feet. She sees Him travelling through this sandy desert, and is careful that His feet do not lack ointment. In point of fact, it was done to both His head and His feet, but each evangelist records what suits his gospel.

Mary could never forget that He had walked with her in her sorrow. Crushed by the power of death, when Lazarus fell asleep, she had known the sympathy of Jesus in the moment of her deepest sorrow, and she had also seen Him take her brother from the grave. She had learned what His grace could do, and what was His power also. He had walked with her in the moment of her sorrow, and now, in the hour of His sorrow, she is, so to say, walking with Him. The Lord greatly valued her affection, and said that wherever the gospel goes the story of that woman must also go. He will never allow it to be forgotten that when the world did not want Him one heart wanted Him above all things else. Is there a Mary here to-night? Is there a heart in this hall that wants Him above everything else? Happy indeed are you if you have put Christ before everything.

Christ was everything to Mary. That is the point in Matthew's relation of the scene, and what a contrast to this was the action of Judas. He and his fellow-disciples grumbled over the waste of the three hundred pence—£10 according to our money. Judas thought of himself, the others were full of philanthropy. It could have gone to the poor. Yes, there are a good many people who think more of philanthropy than of Christ; but Mary thought more of Christ than of philanthropy. But is not philanthropy a good thing? No doubt it is, for the Lord says, "For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good, but me ye have not always." Here was a woman whose heart was wrapped up in Him. Judas was angry, I have no doubt, at the loss of the money which, as he was a thief and bore the bag, he could have purloined.

It is easy to appreciate what led to the scene that follows. Judas and his fellow-disciples are rebuked for troubling the woman. The Lord says, "Why trouble ye the woman, for she hath wrought a good work upon me?" Any one can learn the lesson here that devotion to Christ is worth everything to Him—is better than anything else. She was devoted to Christ. "She has wrought a good work upon me: let her alone," are weighty words which we should all ponder.

Immediately after this, away goes Judas, saying to himself, "I have lost that money; I must make it up." The love of money was his ruin, and he

sold his soul for gold. The thought entered the wretched man's mind clearly at this moment to sell his Master, so that he might recoup himself for the money just lost. Having made up his mind, what did he do? Evidently he walked straight into the midst of the priestly conclave gathered together at that time. Verse 3 records the conclave; verses 6 to 13 relate Mary's love; and verse 14 shows Judas visiting the priests, and making his bargain. They were considering how they could get hold of Jesus, and Judas at the moment was considering how much money he could make by giving Him up.

God has told this story of Judas to warn money-lovers. Well, Judas, the traitor, enters the company of the bloodthirsty religionists of the day. Truly was it a hellish conclave! He is a bargaining sort of a man, and he says, "What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you?" They were delighted to see him. What will you give me? How much do you think He is worth? What will you give for my Master, the Son of God? What will you give for Him? Such was the haggling that heaven heard. And the reply? "Thirty pieces of silver!" Why, the meanest and most miserable slave in the slave-market would have brought more money. That is why it says so ironically in Scripture, "A goodly price that I was prized at of them" (Zech. xi. 13). Think of it! Thirty pieces of silver! And yet for those paltry thirty pieces of silver will that poor man—now

filled with the devil—really sell the Son of God, his Master, to the priests, and his own soul to the devil at the same moment.

Do you think Judas a bad man? Judas and you and I are cast in the same mould. We are children of the same parents. Do not be too hard on Judas. I pity him from the bottom of my heart. Poor Judas. Where is he now? Sinner, take care lest you spend eternity with him! Look how the Lord seeks to reach his conscience, and is He not seeking to reach yours also? He says, "He it is to whom I shall give a sop when I have dipped it." Presently He gives this expression of special interest to Judas. The dipping of a piece of food into the vinegar, and giving it to a guest, was in the East an expression of very deep interest. He dips the sop, and gives it to Judas; and the latter steeled his heart against grace, and determined to go on in his wickedness, and Satan enters into him. The last act of grace on the Saviour's part, instead of softening him, hardens his heart. And, mark you, if you do not get saved and converted, the devil will harden your heart. If you despise the grace that lingers over you, the next thing you will find is that your heart will get harder and harder.

The last thing Judas does is to despise the touch of grace. "And Satan entered into him." Awful words! Fairly in the devil's net through his own cupidity, and now hardening himself against grace, off he sets to do his deadly work, thinking—if not

saying—I know where He will be found, and where He can be caught to-night. “He then, having received the sop, went immediately out; and it was night” (John xiii. 30). It was night, indeed, in every sense of the word.

Leaving the upper room, the blessed Lord with His disciples now crosses over the brook Kedron. Judas knew the place, because this was a well-known place of retirement for Jesus and His disciples. He was wont to go there. Arrived in the garden of Gethsemane, He withdraws from the main company of His disciples, taking with Him now only Peter, James, and John. These three He had taken with Him to the mount of transfiguration, and they went to sleep in the presence of His glory. Now He takes them into the garden, and they go to sleep in the presence of His sorrow. Such is man. Such is human nature. Such are you and I. We can be alike indifferent to the glory and the sorrow of Christ. They go to sleep, while the blessed Lord passes from them a little distance and prays. Have you ever pictured this scene of sorrow in the garden? Ah! what sorrow filled the Saviour’s heart. Think what lay before Him. All that God or man could put into the cup of woe He was about to drink He foresaw. It says, “Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth” (John xviii. 4). The Lord knew at that moment everything coming upon Him, and knowing everything, He went calmly forth to meet it. How He felt everything!

—the betrayal of Judas—the coming denial of Peter—the forsaking of all the disciples—the being cast out and cast off by His earthly people the Jews, misunderstood and unwanted—the failure of His earthly mission—the temptations of the enemy—the bearing of sin—the forsaking of God—wrath, judgment, and death as the end of His pathway here.

Oh, beloved friends, sorrow might well break His heart; and I do not wonder that He says, as He goes away yonder to pray, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death" (Matt. xxvi. 38). Think of that. Or, again, "Reproach hath broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness" (Ps. lxix. 20).

But some one may inquire, Was propitiation effected by all this? No, my friends. Propitiation—the meeting of the righteous claims of God, the glorifying Him about sin, the making of atonement in respect thereof—was not effected by the living agonies of Jesus, neither by the sorrows He tasted, nor by the tears He shed. In the garden you have our Lord calmly, quietly pondering everything, facing everything, looking at everything, weighing everything, and that is what produced this deep sorrow in His blessed soul—but Gethsemane was not Golgotha. In Gethsemane He looked at and measured everything. In the garden He took the cup, if I might so say, and looked at its ingredients; on the cross He drank its contents. He bowed before His Father's will as He says, "O my Father, if it be possible, let

this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." You have the perfection of Christ there, the absolute perfection of His soul as He shrinks from the cup—for having to do with sin was in it. 'He bows before God's will, prepared to drink it. Precious Saviour! He sees what is coming, and since it is for God's glory, He accepts it without a murmur. In that cup of which the Lord speaks, there was not lacking one single element of sorrow that either the hand of man or the hand of God could furnish. I do not doubt that Satan too, at that moment, drew near to the Lord, and put before Him what must be the consequence if He was determined to drink that cup. They had met in the wilderness before, and Satan was overcome by the obedience of Christ and His dependence on the Father. But Satan returns to the assault. Jesus had said, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me" (John xiv. 30); and again, "This is your hour, and the power of darkness" (Luke xxii. 53).

I do not doubt, therefore, that Satan pressed on the spirit of Jesus what must be the consequences if He was determined to go on to the end that He had in view, viz., death, as God's judgment on man, and the being forsaken by God on the cross. But, oh, blessed be His name, He did not turn from it. If you and I saw sorrow coming, we should try to avoid it. Were some great crushing blow about to fall on you to-morrow, would you not avoid it if it were possible? You would not be human if you

did not. Jesus saw what was coming. He weighed it, fathomed it, measured it to the bottom, if I may so say; and then He said to His Father, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt."

Jesus is here seen as the perfectly subject man. What a man! That man is my Saviour, thank God! Is He yours? That man has redeemed me by His obedience even unto death, and by drinking the cup. Could you but see what was in that cup you would trust and adore Him. It was the cup of judgment, the cup of wrath, the cup of indignation, the hiding of God's face, the expression of what God must be in regard to sin. Do you not see that it was the expression of God's holy nature in respect of sin. It was the expression of the judgment of God against the sin of the first man. Christ drained that cup. Blessed be His name, on the cross He drank that cup to the very dregs; but in this night of sorrow I see the blessed Lord anticipating it all, and, as He prays, in an agony, deprecating what He was willing to drink, "his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground."

What that agony was we can gather from the touching words: "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong cryings and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared" (Heb. v. 7). While He deprecated death, He said, I will die. Though He deprecated the cup, He said, I will drink it. He deprecated

the judgment, but said, I will bear it. "Not what I will, but what thou wilt," was His resolve. The will of God must be done. He came to do it. What was the will of the Father? That He should die, "the just for the unjust." That He should give Himself to death, which had no claim on Him. Blessed be His name, He did die that He might be free to give you and me eternal life.

He looked at the cup, deprecated it, but said, I will drink it. Our eternal salvation hung upon His drinking that cup. If He did not bear that wrath and judgment, we must; and if He did not drink that cup, we must drink it. If He did not drink it for you, my hearer, you must yet drink it. Could you drain it? Sinner! you, who do not think much about the subject, if you go into judgment, and drink the cup of God's wrath, do you think you will drain it? You foolish man! Drain it? You will drink, and drink, and drink it again as the eternal ages roll on, but you will never drain it. Thank God, my Saviour has drained it for me. He has drained it to the very dregs, and has filled another cup—the cup of salvation—to the brim with love, and has put that cup to my lips, and I drink, and receive eternal life.

If you think that you will escape God's judgment of sin, apart from the cross of His Son, you have made a huge mistake. Do not be foolish, God is not mocked. God has said that sin must be judged, and hence of necessity propitiation

must be effected ere man can be saved. This Christ alone could do. How was that propitiation effected? It was not, I repeat, by the tears of Jesus in the garden, nor by the bloody sweat of the Lord in the garden, nor by the living agonies of the Saviour—though in all these we see the intensity of the purpose of His life. Propitiation could only be, and, thank God, was effected by His death, when “by the eternal Spirit he offered himself without spot to God,” was made sin, sustained God’s righteous judgment thereof, and poured out His soul an offering for sin even unto death. His shed blood thereafter tells of the reality of His death.

No sooner does the blessed Saviour, in the scene before us, express His determination to drink the cup, than a company led by Judas arrives. The traitor appears with an armed band. And now let us follow the Lord for a moment or two. They take Him, and bind Him fast. One gospel says, “Now Annas had sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest” (John xviii. 24). Annas mocks Him, and sends Him to his son-in-law, Caiaphas. There he is jeered at, mocked, spat on, and smitten with rods. They even blindfold Him, and then when He is smitten, ask, “Who is it that smote thee?” That is what man will do to Jesus, the Son of God. “He is brought like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.” He makes no reply. He bears it all in patient grace. He

bears all the jeering, and jibing, and mockery without resistance.

Christ is then taken away, first to Pilate, next to Herod, and then back to Pilate, where again he is mocked, and jeered at, crowned with thorns, and arrayed in a gorgeous robe to give the semblance of royalty.

Every insult that hatred could possibly suggest is heaped on Him. Everybody sets Him at naught. What does He do? He bears it. At length the choice is made between Him and Barabbas, the murderer and the robber, the very scum of the earth, who is about to die for his own sins. Pilate asks the multitude which they will have released to them, and they cry, "Not this man, but Barabbas." Barabbas is released, and the Son of God goes, bearing the robber's cross, to Calvary to die. I have little doubt that the cross which was designed for Barabbas was laid on Jesus, and He falters under its weight as He goes to Calvary, where they crucify Him. But nothing but love is seen in Him. At length He is heard to cry out in agony, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" It was in that darkness that the sin of man was being estimated, and Jesus by His sufferings there, was effecting propitiation, and making atonement, as He met all the claims of God in righteousness and holiness. He then lays down His precious life.

There is a deep unspeakable significance in that cross. There He is made sin, and there God for-

sakes Him. The work of atonement is there "finished" by the suffering, dying Saviour. He dies with a cry that rends the rocks, and the veil of the temple is rent by God's own hand from top to bottom. Propitiation is effected. All God's claims in righteousness are met, and what is the result? The Holy Ghost comes now to tell you and me, that there is cleansing and salvation for the worst sinner, through the blood of this beloved One, who died on that tree.

Oh! there was never a night of sorrow like that. There was never suffering like the suffering of Jesus. How precious are the words: "Christ suffered once, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." Oh, may the Holy Ghost lead you to rest your poor guilty soul on that precious Saviour. You may know Him as your own from this moment forth. Will you not praise Him? Shall not your heart be all for Him in future?

W. T. P. W.

"THEY HAVE MOSES AND THE PROPHETS."



THAT is, they have the writings of both—two collective and credible witnesses—deserving attention, and demanding faith.

And "at the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established."

The reader may remember that the above words were spoken by Abraham to "Dives" (so called) in that remarkable parable of our Lord given us in Luke xvi.

The rich man (for such is the meaning of "Dives") had passed from his wealth into endless poverty, and from his unbelief into the region of stern facts and hopeless remorse.

Having learned, from the lips of Abraham, that there could be no hope for himself, but that the "fixed gulf" sealed his state in torment, he pleaded that a message from the other world might be sent to his brothers, of whom he had five, to testify to them, lest they also should come to that place of torment.

Poor man, indeed! He had, doubtless, like many another man, both rich and poor, been sceptical, during his days of life and health, of any such a place as hell, and presumed therefore, on his disbelief in it, to indulge his tastes and passions, and shut his heart to God.

Now, however, unbelief was a thing of the past, and scepticism as to "hell" had given place to the dread and eternal experience of its torment, and now prompted not, alas, by desire for the welfare of these five brothers, but by the conviction that their presence in hell would only intensify his misery, he sought that "Lazarus" should be commissioned to warn them lest they should come there too!

It is an awfully solemn thought that each

additional soul in hell contributes to the agony of his fellows!

The more damned, the greater the damnation!

A young man was passing a brick-kiln. As he saw the burning bricks, it seemed to him that the more bricks, the greater the heat.

He had hitherto thought that the more souls there were in hell, the smaller the punishment of each. Now he saw his mistake, and repenting of his sins, turned, through grace, to the Lord, and was saved.

Hence, reader, I beg of you not to say that, if you should be there, there will be plenty others. The more the worse!

Nay, the hell of "Dives" would have been five times hotter did these five godless brothers come there too.

Hence his selfish solicitude. What then was Abraham's reply? Was he careless about their fate? Was he indifferent as to whether they should follow their brother into hell, or find, like Lazarus, a place in his bosom?

Can heaven be indifferent on such a matter? Nay, God is "not willing that any should perish"—He "desires that all should be saved"—He "so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son"!

A greater proof of divine solicitude could not be given, but what did Abraham say? "*They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them*"!

These were Christ's striking words. These men

were in possession of two divinely given witnesses whose words should have carried conviction both as to their guilt, their peril, and their door of escape. "Let them hear them." Supreme importance attaches, in the mind of heaven, to the testimony of Moses and the prophets—to the written word of God.

On earth, however, that same wondrous testimony is slighted and set at nought.

The most wonderful volume ever handled by man, full as it is of the very light that he needs, is coolly and deliberately set aside, as in part fabulous and self-contradictory, and at best as little above the range of other writings. What suicidal folly!

And "Dives" seemed to have known the kind of treatment that was accorded to "Moses and the prophets" by his five brethren. He was conscious that their solemn testimony was utterly disregarded. The *Book* was laid on the shelf, and allowed to be dust-covered.

It was ignored and its warnings were scouted.

How common is this practice! Ah! reader, pay heed to the written Word of God. It is the one voice in the wide world to which you should pay the most rapt attention. And if the learned infidels of the day pour contempt on its sacred page, remember that it is the infidel who dares to do so, and treat his infidelity as it deserves.

Should they tell you that Moses did not write the "Pentateuch," mark that their statement is in

direct conflict with that of the Son of God, who invariably attributed these five books to the pen of Moses. Treat their criticisms with silent disregard. Satan, your enemy and theirs, is behind them, and should ever be viewed as the foe. "He is a liar, and the father of it." And one of his cleverest lies is the denial, in some form or other, of the Word of God.

"If I speak the truth," said our blessed Lord, "why do ye not believe me?"

How comes it that the devil should be believed sooner than the Lord? the Foe than the Friend? Yes, why? Just because the heart of man is the ready and willing material in the hand of the enemy. How ensnaring! Abraham knew the value of the writings of "Moses and the prophets," and thus he spoke to "Dives."

All God's words are the expression of His solicitude for the welfare of poor fallen man. Had the mission of an angel, or ten thousand of them, answered better, that would have been adopted. But the word, in Old and New Testaments, tells, as no angelic mission could have told, how that the eternal Son became man, lived, died under judgment for our sin, rose as man, ascended to heaven, where He is the glorious Saviour bidding all welcome to Him through simple faith in His blood. What boundless solicitude!

"Nay, but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent," replied "Dives."

Would they? How could a mere external miracle

produce saving faith? The eye might be dazzled, and the mind astonished—that is all. No, the conscience must be reached, the soul convicted, and the heart won! A disinterred Lazarus could not effect that!

If they turn a deaf ear to Scripture, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.

Notice, the Scripture is the great test, the crux, the battlefield! If wrong on that point, you are wrong on all. The unbelief that rejects the Scripture rejects miracles too. Such a soul is dead to God.

But has not *one* risen from the dead? Does not the page of the precious New Testament glow with that fact, and with the rich and everlasting fruits flowing therefrom?

Surely, surely! Oh! the glorious effects of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ!

See how He, in resurrection form, appeared to His disciples and chased away all their gloom and sorrow! See what solid and abiding peace took possession of their hearts! See the "great joy" that thrilled their spirits as they worshipped Him. See how He called upon them to handle Him for themselves—that it was "He Himself"; and see how He attributed all that had occurred to the "*Thus it is written*" of Scripture! Yes, the scriptures of Moses, the Psalms, and the prophets too! A risen Christ and a written testimony burst upon their conviction as divinely linked and bound together. If the one fails, so

does the other. If one stands, so does the other.
"Moses wrote of me."

Dear reader, hearken to the Word of God. It is paramount in His estimation. To discredit what God has written is to incur His wrath. You have "Moses and the prophets" and more beside! Oh! hear their voice and live!

J. W. S.

WHAT A CONTRAST!



HE shocking tidings of a dreadful disaster called for a day of general humiliation and prayer throughout the entire State of Virginia.

On a Wednesday, in May 1870, the court-room in the second story of the Richmond Capitol was densely crowded. The audience was eager to hear an important decision in the Court of Appeals. The bells had just struck the hour of eleven. The clerk of the court had entered, and placed his books on the table. One judge was in his seat, but his associates had not yet left the conference room. The counsel and the reporters were in their places, and the spectators were engaged warmly in conversation, when all at once, without a moment's warning, a large girder snapped in twain, causing the crowded gallery to be wrenched away from the wall and precipitated into the centre of the court-room, the floor of which could not bear such a sudden extra weight, and

was crushed through; and this, with its mass of human beings, fell into the Hall of Delegates below. The scene was terrible. Those who survived in the ruin saw, through the confusion of plasters and timbers, the mangled bodies of fifty or sixty dead, and above a hundred wounded.

A member of the Legislature thus describes his fearful situation:—"An unearthly yell of agony; then came the crash, and I sank into darkness. I found myself under a mass of rubbish, with a dead body over me, and a wounded man under me, and another at my side. The poor fellow under me said, 'Oh, my! if I could only fear God always as I do now! How wicked I have been all my days! O God, forgive me, spare me, and I will be a true follower of Jesus.' The man at my side exclaimed, 'O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory?'"

What a contrast in the dying cries of these two men! That morning they had entered the Capitol in perfect ignorance of what that day might bring forth; but the one was ready to answer his call, and the other a neglecter of the great salvation.

Now the procrastinator longed for five minutes, though a lifetime had been given him; but he whose trust was in the Lord Jesus could triumphantly cry out, "O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory?" If the Christian might summon the rider upon the pale horse, and demand, "O death! where is thy sting?" he should answer, "I left my sting buried long ago in the heart

of the Son of God, when he delivered the prey from the hand of the mighty, and set free the captive."

As death passes on, thus preaching good tidings to the trembling sinner, let the grave follow in his wake—O grave! where is thy victory? "I am overcome, I am robbed of my victory. One has been and passed through: he has broken the bars of the tomb, and gone up on high leading captivity captive: for it was not possible that the glorious Son of the living God should be holden by me."

Glorious news, indeed, is this, told forth by vanquished death and the emptied grave. This is a gospel to die by, and if to die by, to live by. "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

Oh! put not off the day of your salvation till the day of your death, for "behold, *now* is the accepted time; behold, *now* is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. vi. 2). ANON.

A FREE AND A FULL SALVATION.

"Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God."—1 PET. iii. 18.

"By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."—HEB. x. 14.



IF we examine the value of the death of Christ, what do we find attached to it in Scripture?

Do I need REDEMPTION? We have redemption through His blood, an eternal redemption; for "neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he

entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption " (Heb. ix. 12, 14, 15).

Do I need FORGIVENESS? That redemption which I have through His blood is the forgiveness of sins; yea, "without shedding of blood is no remission" (Eph. i. 7).

Do I need PEACE? He has made peace through the blood of His cross (Eph. ii. 14; Col. i. 20).

Do I need RECONCILIATION with God? Though we were sinners, yet now hath He reconciled us by the body of His flesh through death, to present us holy and unblamable and unreprouable in God's sight. When we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son (Col. i. 21, 22).

Do I desire to be DEAD TO SIN, and have the flesh crucified with its affections and lusts? I am crucified with Christ. Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed; for in that He died, He died unto sin once, and in that He liveth, He liveth unto God. This is my deliverance also from the charge and burthen of the law, which has dominion over a man as long as he lives (Rom. vi. 6; Col. iii. 3).

Do I feel the need of PROPITIATION? Christ is set forth as a propitiation through faith in His blood. The need of JUSTIFICATION? I am justified by His blood (Rom. v. 9; 1 John iv. 10).

Would I have a PART WITH CHRIST? He must die; for "except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone: if it die, it brings forth much fruit" (John xii. 24; Eph. ii. 4, 5).

How have we boldness to enter into the holiest? By the blood of Jesus, by that new and living way, which He has consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh? for till that was rent the Holy Ghost signified by it that the way into the holiest was not yet made manifest (Heb. x. 19).

Hence it was a lifted-up Christ that was the attractive point for all. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John xii. 32).

In the power of what was the great Shepherd of the sheep brought again from the dead? Through the blood of the everlasting covenant.

How was the CURSE OF THE LAW taken away from those who were under it? By Christ's being made a curse for them; as it is written, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Gal. iii. 13).

How are we washed from our sins? He has loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood; for His blood cleanseth from all sin (Acts xiii. 38, 39; 1 John i. 7).

If I would be delivered from the world, it is by the cross, by which the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world (Gal. vi. 14).

If the love of Christ constrains us towards men in the thought of the terror of the Lord, how is it so? Because I thus judge, if One died for all then were all dead, and they that live should live not to themselves, but to Him who died for them and rose again. Hence the apostle knew no man after the flesh—no, not even Christ. All was a new

creation. If I would live in divine power, it is always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus may be manifested in my mortal body. If He would institute a special remembrance to call Him to mind, it was a broken body and a shed blood. It is not less a Lamb as it were slain that is found in the throne (2 Cor. iv. 10).

All was love, no doubt; but do I want to learn it? Hereby we know it, that He laid down His life for us, and that even of God, in that He loved us, and gave His Son as a propitiation for our sins. It is to the sprinkling of that precious blood of Christ that we are sanctified, and to obedience; and through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once (contrasted with the many Jewish sacrifices) sanctified and perfected for ever, so that there is no more offering for sin; for having offered one sacrifice for sins, He is set down for ever at the right hand of God. For He should not "offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto *men* once to die, but after this the *judgment*: so Christ was once *offered* to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation." (Read Heb. ix., x.)

J. N. D.

THE BLOOD.

[An old song for an evil day that denies "the precious blood of Christ."]



PRECIOUS blood, O glorious death,
By which the sinner lives,
When stung with sin, this blood we
view,
And all our joy revives.

The blood that purchased our release,
And washes out our stains,
We *challenge* earth and hell to show,
A sin it cannot cleanse.

The blood that makes His glorious Church
From every blemish free;
And, oh! the riches of His love,
He poured it out for me.

The Father's everlasting love,
And Jesus' precious blood,
Shall be our everlasting theme,
In yonder blest abode.

A. TOPLADY.

FAITHFULNESS REWARDED.



APTAIN C—— and Miss —— had become most intimate friends through meeting each other at church and mission meetings. This friendship so soon deepened into real love, that it was felt by both that their earthly happiness depended on it culminating in marriage.

Some time previous to this friendship being formed Miss —— had been truly converted to God; and as Captain C—— took an interest in religious matters, she concluded he must be a Christian also. In this, however, she was deceived, as she afterwards learned to her deep sorrow.

Months passed by before ever she suspected that his religion was nothing more than a mere form. But once her suspicions were aroused, she had not long to wait till they were confirmed by his own lips, in answer to her following pointed questions: "Have you ever been really converted? and when did it take place?"

These questions brought from him the confession that he knew nothing of such a change, and did not see any need for it in his case. "What harm is there," he said, "in having a glass of spirits or beer, and a little jollification with my friends at times, when I don't let these things make me forget my religion. I never miss a meeting, as you know, that you go to."

The discovery that his religion was only an outward show and sham was to the one whose affections he had won a most dreadful shock. All her hopes of a life of happiness on earth seemed dashed to the ground. "How can we live happy together, as he is not saved?" she said to herself. "Besides, the Bible says a Christian is only to 'marry IN THE LORD,' and not be 'UNEQUALLY yoked together with *unbelievers*' (1 Cor. vii. 39; 2 Cor. vi. 14). Oh! if I had only asked him at first if he was converted, I should have been saved from all this sorrow."

From this time she set herself to pray earnestly to God for him, and lost no chance of speaking faithfully to him of his need of salvation, and pled affectionately with him to come to Christ. But all seemed in vain.

It was not, however, till all hope was gone of bringing their friendship to its desired issue, *consistent with faithfulness* to the Lord, that she sat down to write her farewell letter, intimating, in most affectionate terms, that their present friendship must close, but her love for him would not let her cease to pray to God for his salvation.

So deeply affected was he by her letter that he soon after left England, intending never to plant his foot again on the shores of his native land.

The next three years of his life were spent as an officer on board a steamer trading between ports on the Chinese coast. During this period he passed through an exercise of soul never to be

forgotten. The cliffs of "old England" had just faded from view when the Spirit of God began to work in his soul, showing him his true condition as a lost, guilty sinner. Like many a sin-convicted sinner, he set about reforming his ways, in the hope of meriting the favour of God, and thus finding peace for his now troubled soul.

He was not many months, however, on this track till he found peace was unattainable on such lines, for each evening found him further and further from his goal. He rose each morning with the best of resolutions formed for the day, but night always found him crushed under the sense of having broken them. To use his own words to the writer, "It was one continuous experience of *sinning* and *repenting* alternately," till he gave up all hope of ever getting God's forgiveness, or being able to live a Christian life. Then the thought took entire possession of his mind that he must have committed the "unpardonable sin" he had heard others speak of. From this point he tried hard to keep God, death, judgment, and eternity out of his thoughts, as his awful dread of either made him tremble.

The sense, too, that he now had of his own vileness made him shudder at the thought of having deceived so long, by a false profession of religion, a woman so virtuous as Miss —, and also the thought that a life like hers had been so nearly thrown away on a wretch like him.

In this state he remained till one day he felt

compelled, by some unseen power, to go to a service held at a British China Mission Station in the port where his vessel was lying. The service he felt had little or no interest for him except to give him the deeper conviction that he was outside—and would always be so—of the circle of Christian blessedness.

On leaving the meeting, he was followed by the missionary, who shook hands with him, and after making a few kindly inquiries as to his name, ship, native place, &c., expressed a desire to accompany him to the ship side, to which a glad consent was given, and the following conversation ensued:—

“Well, how did you enjoy the service?”

“As well, I daresay, as any one in my *state* could.”

“What do you mean by that? Have you no interest in these things?”

“How can I have an interest in them when they are not for me?”

“But would you not like to be a Christian?”

“Like to be a Christian? No one would like better, if there had been the least chance of my being one; but I am shut out of all hope of ever being such, for I have sinned the ‘*unpardonable sin*’ against God. So you see it’s no use of me ever thinking of such a thing as religion now.”

“Then you believe you are too great a sinner to be saved?”

“I’m sure I am.”

"You suppose then that had you lived a better life there would have been a chance for you?"

"I do."

"Well, now, will you kindly tell me what kind of people Christ died for?"

"Sinners, to be sure."

"He died for sinners, you say. Now, what are you?"

"What am I? Why, you need not ask that; I am a poor lost sinner."

"Well, then, if Christ died for sinners, and you are a lost sinner, do you not know some one that He *must* have died for?"

He was silent for some time, and then exclaimed, "He *must* have died for ME." Then with all the ecstasy of a soul just passed from *darkness* to LIGHT, he continued—"I SEE IT! I SEE IT! Praise the Lord, I AM SAVED NOW!"

Happy man. He laid his head on his pillow that night for the first time, *assured* that all his sins were borne by Jesus on the cross, and were therefore not now on him, but all forgiven (1 John ii. 12).

Next day he was put to the test by his fellow-officers asking him, after their duties were over, to go and have a glass, and a little jollification, as formerly. The Lord gave him strength to say, "No, I am going to the mission to-night instead."

Somewhat startled, they said, "What's come over you?"

"Well, I was there last night, and by a talk

with the missionary, I have got what I have for long thought I was too bad for—the salvation of my soul.”

This sudden change was more than they had expected, and somewhat took the breath from them, until, after a minute or two's silence, during which they looked at their changed fellow-officer, and then at each other with amazement, one of them stepped forward and shook hands with him, congratulating him on his “great find,” as he termed it, wished him every success, and hoped he would stick to it. All the others went through the same form, bade him “Good-night,” and left.

From that moment companionship with them was ended. As a “Christian,” he could have no fellowship with them in their ways, and as “men of the world” they felt they could have no fellowship with him, as his presence was only a check to the pursuit of their pleasures.

Some time subsequent to this, he secured an engagement on a vessel belonging to the Japanese Government, but had not been many months on board his new vessel till a strong desire to visit his old friend the missionary took possession of him, and the way being soon opened up, he embraced his first chance of doing so. On arriving, he made straight for the mission, and after the happy Christian greetings were past, the missionary handed him several letters, which had been lying awaiting his arrival—the missionary having de-

tained them for some time, expecting he must be coming soon, owing to the letters being addressed there. Amongst these, to his glad surprise, was one from his old, true, and affectionate friend, Miss —, expressing her delight at the good news that had reached her, through some friends of the missionary in England, about his conversion, and pressed him to come home without delay, as all hindrance to their union was now removed.

The news seemed almost too good to be true. "Can it be possible," he said to himself, "that all these years I have been away she has kept true in her love to me, after the way I refused all her entreaties to come to Christ? All this time, as she says in her letter, she has been praying for me, and from the day I left never gave up hopes of God answering her prayers."

On reflection, how clearly he could now see the gracious hand of God in all His dealings with him, since he bade adieu to England, in answer to the prayers of his truest earthly friend. He needed no further persuasion to go back; and as he was then free from all marine engagements, he had only to tarry till a home-bound vessel was in port, and for this he had only to wait a few days, when he embarked with a heart filled with brightest prospects for time and eternity.

The sea voyage past, he lost no time in reaching the presence of the one who soon after became his happy wife, and fellow-heir of "the grace of life" (1 Pet. iii. 7), enjoying the reward of her faithful-

ness both to the Lord and the earthly object of her affections.

The foregoing narrative of God's gracious dealings with a *poor sinner* on the one hand, and with a faithful and tried saint on the other, is sent forth in these pages in the hope that God may be pleased to use it for the salvation of some sinner, and for the encouragement of His tried and faithful children.

ANON.

THE FOUR SUPPERS.



YOU will find four suppers spoken of in the New Testament — all entirely different in character.

God invites us to be present at three, but not at the fourth. It is because men will pay no heed to the invitation to the first supper that they will be present at the last. Whoever is present at the first supper, and a partaker of it, has the privilege of being at the second supper, will certainly be present at the third, and will not be at the fourth. On the other hand, whoever rejects the first, even though he take the second, will certainly not be present at the third, and is in very great danger of being present at the fourth.

I.—THE SUPPER OF SALVATION.

The first is given from the lips of our blessed Lord in the fourteenth chapter of Luke, which I

would ask my reader to carefully peruse. There we see the Lord going into the Pharisee's house ; He heals the man with dropsy, bids His hearers choose the lower place, and then, in verse 13, He says, "When 'thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and thou shalt be blessed ; for they cannot recompense thee : for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." Here we get instruction from the lips of the Lord about the resurrection of the just, as contrasted with the resurrection of the unjust, and from other parts of Scripture we learn that the former takes place at least a thousand years before the latter.

"And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God."

I suppose there is no person but would echo this, and say, What a blessed thing to eat bread in the kingdom of God ! to be in the resurrection of the just—a time of full and thorough blessing under the hand of God in a future day—what a blessed thing to be with the Lord ! a blessed thing to be saved ! Yes, but let me ask you, *Do you know it ? Are you saved ? Are you blessed ? Have you eaten this bread ?* You say, "I cannot tell." Then you do not really believe it is a blessed thing to eat it. This man was a mere religionist, who wished to pay the Lord a compliment, like those in the present day who are content with a mere form of religion, but who have never been broken

down before God, have never eaten this bread, and have never entered into what Jesus proposes to them. If I really believe it is blessed to eat bread in the kingdom of God, I shall leave no stone unturned until I am sure I have eaten it.

The Lord at once detects what the state of the man is. Every one says, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God"—but when you bring the gospel down to man, alas! he does not care for it. *Man is so deeply degraded by sin, and withal so full of himself, so proud too, that he does not care to go down amongst the poor, the halt, the maimed, and the blind—he has got a great many things between himself and God to hinder this.*

Have not you, dear reader, paid attention to everything connected with your life here, and the only thing you have really neglected is your soul? Your body you have cared for well—you have fed it, clothed it, protected it, pampered it, indulged it; but as for your soul, you have cared nothing for it. The salvation of the soul with men is usually a secondary thing, and is displaced by pleasure, and endeavouring to get on in this world; and is it not the same with you? Yes, unless you have been broken down by the grace of God, smashed to pieces, as it were, before Jesus, and been made glad to take salvation.

The Lord then says, as it were, to this man, "I will test you. You say, 'Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.' I will see whether you are in earnest. 'A certain man made

a great supper, and bade many.'” The “certain man” is God. Mark the word *great*: it is not merely a supper, but “a *great* supper”—great because of the elements included in the supper, *great* because of the Onè who spreads it, *great* because of the wondrous grace that spread it for those who, alas! would only slight and despise it.

Why is it a supper? No doubt the Lord meant here the blessed gospel, that love of God which is travelling out now to sinners, and pressing on them that which He gives—eternal life through the Saviour’s precious name. There is something peculiarly interesting in its being *supper*—not breakfast, nor dinner, but *supper*. Which meal is that? The last meal in the day. I understand therefore that this is the last dealing of God in grace towards man; the gospel now preached is the very last dealing of God in grace with man: the next dealing will be the *midnight* of judgment.

When Israel was in Egypt, in Exodus xii. we read, “At midnight there was a cry heard.” God was abroad in the land at midnight, and there was nothing but destruction, and death, and ruin, and judgment for those who had not sprinkled the blood of the lamb upon the doorpost, nor eaten of the supper within. What a lesson is there taught us!

There was a *morning* of innocence, where everything was beautiful and bright, and all shone fair; but Eve was deceived by the devil, and Adam followed his wife into ruin and sin, and man was

cast out. Then came the *noonday*—the trying and testing of man under law, and man became a law-breaker. Then the Lord Jesus came Himself in the *evening* of the ways of God, in fulness of grace, gentleness, kindness, and goodness. What did men do? They spat in His face, and said, "Away with him." The last thing is, the Holy Ghost comes down and tells the news "It is finished"—that God has spread a feast for man, and that all that man has to do is to eat of the feast which God, in blessed love, has provided.

Whom has He bidden? He has bidden you. Have you believed it? Have you accepted His invitation? God prepares a supper, and sends servants to say, "Come, for all things are now ready." There is the gospel note! Do you want salvation? "Come, for all things are now ready." Do you want pardon, forgiveness, eternal life? "Come." Do not stop away and think you have something to do—"all things are now ready." How sweet is that word "*Come*." Whoever you are, come! and find all ready. I want righteousness, you tell me. God has provided righteousness in Christ—life, cleansing, justification, *all things* are ready in Christ.

But now of the bidden ones; what did they do? "They all with one consent began to make excuse"—every one of them. Have not *you* made excuse? One said, "I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it."

This man put his bit of land in between his soul

and God. Another said, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them; I pray thee have me excused." There is no open rebellion, yea, there is external politeness—"I *pray* thee have me excused." The moment God wants to have you and Himself in close quarters, you say, No. Man cannot bear to get close to God. "I pray thee have me excused." How solemn!

If God spreads a supper, it is not merely that you are to be blessed, though that is included—the grand and great thought in God's heart is that He wants you and me near to Himself.

If I go to a supper, I go because of the person who bids me, and makes me welcome. God says, "I want to have you in My presence, to feed you with what I have provided." Man says, "I pray thee have me excused." Oh! what a heart man has. And what a heart *God* has, longing to bless!

You say, "What a desperately bad man that must be who can reply thus." Stop, have *you* eaten the bread? Have *you* accepted? Not yet. Then *you* are the man, because you have put something in between your soul and God—it may not be a piece of land, it may not be five yoke of oxen, but it is something that keeps God and you asunder.

Another says, "I have married a wife, and *therefore I cannot come.*" Was that a good excuse for refusing God's supper? Had he been a right-minded man, had he had a sense of the grace of Him who invited him, he would have gone himself and taken his wife with him; but he makes her

the excuse for avoiding close quarters with God. How easily the Lord reads the secrets of our hearts! How easily the devil finds an excuse in the things of life to hinder us!

If you are in earnest, if you have a deep sense that you are on the verge of eternal damnation, you will not be hindered by wife, husband, father, mother, brother, sister, master, or servant; you will fling all aside in determined unquenchable desire to have salvation.

If you do not know your need, if you are not thoroughly broken down, you are always glad to make an excuse, and you think it a good one. Do you think it will be a good excuse when the Lord says, "Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment?" You will be speechless then, and He will say, "Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness." If, my friend, you are an excuse-maker (what an awful occupation! yet the devil has crowds of apprentices, young and old), give that trade up on the spot, for you are only forging the chains and soldering the rings that must hold you through all eternity, in the depths of hell!

Excuses have ruined and damned thousands of souls. Have you one solitary excuse that will bear the light of Christ's day? "Not one! You say, 'I am too bad,—too old,—too young.'" No, the Lord says, "*Ye will not come to me that ye might have life.*"

Oh! that the Lord may show you the sin of

these devilish (for so they are in truth) excuses why you should not come to God. The true reason is that you do not like Jesus, you like anything and anybody but God, close dealings with any one under the sun but God. But you must have to do with Him, you must be brought face to face with God; better far be brought face to face with Him now, in the day of grace, than in the day of judgment—now when He calls you in love, and spreads before you a supper. Why not come? Why not accept Him? Do not hold back in the thought of anything you must do, anything you must bring or provide. Come as you are!

"So that servant came, and showed his lord these things. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind." These grand ones, these self-occupied ones, He says, shall not eat of My supper—bring in the poor.

The sinner without Christ is a very poor person. Though he may have the riches of the whole world in his coffers, he is poor without Christ—poor indeed. There are very few rich people converted—riches are often the ruin of the rich. The Lord says, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!"

When I get a person who is poor, broken down, outcast, with neither character nor fortune, I can tell him of one Friend—the Friend called Jesus.

Tell me, have you a Friend called Jesus. Do you know Him, trust Him, adore Him? Is He the object of your heart, the One you delight in? There is nothing so sweet to me as the company of my friends, and there is no company so sweet as the company of Jesus.

The "maimed" are those whom sin has wounded and crippled—and what maims a person as sin does?—all vitality, vigour, freshness, and power gone. "The halt," that is, the lame, are those who are unable to walk. Who can enter heaven's pearly gates crippled by sin, and unable to walk in? None! Furthermore, "the blind" are called. Who are "the blind"? You are, if still Christless. Do you see any beauty in the Lord Jesus? "Well, I can't say I do." Then *you* are blind. Jesus is the most lovely object in the universe of God—the "chiefest among ten thousand." If the Christian is asked what he thinks of Christ, he answers, "He is altogether lovely." Though I might paint the most lovely landscape on canvas, and describe it to a blind-born man, he cannot understand it, for he cannot see it. The real state of man, as before God, is that he is "born blind."

"The poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind," this is God's company—not the good, but the bad. Whoever you are, I am bidden by my Master to make you welcome, for "yet there is room." That is a sweet word to an anxious sinner. How it should encourage him to come. Listen to it, my friend, "Yet there is room."

Now see how the urgency of the charity of God comes out here, and note the universality of its expression: "And the Lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and *compel* them to come in." "

Yes, says God, I have still room for many wayward sinners—"Go . . . *compel* them—yes, *compel* them to come in." I thank God for that word. May I not entreat, implore, invoke you to come? I am bid to *compel* you to come in. Perhaps you do not care to come, you are not interested or anxious: "Go," says the Lord, "*compel* them to come." Oh! sinner, do you want to be damned? "No," you say. You certainly must be if you turn your back on Jesus. Oh! listen to His grace—"Go, *compel* them to come in." You have nothing to do, His grace has provided all: the blood of atonement has been shed, the claims of God have all been met on the cross by the Lord Jesus, and the sinner has now only to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and be saved on the very spot.

Oh! receive this word, let it sink down deeply into your heart; look back at the cross, see the shed blood of the Saviour, see the atonement finished, God's claims all met, the whole question of sin settled for ever. That work being done, the cup of wrath drunk, the righteousness of God vindicated, His truth maintained, His character fully revealed, and man's need fully met, what remains? Jesus has died, but God raises Him, puts Him at His own right hand in glory, sends

down the Holy Ghost, and what then? God says, "Come and eat." You want to eat bread in the kingdom of God—come and be His guest. He would have you come. He invites you, as you are, to accept salvation. He invites you to His supper, to glory, to everlasting rest with Christ. He bids you to come to have forgiveness, and says if you do not you will offend Him. You must either receive or refuse. God brings before you Christ as a living, loving Saviour. Make your choice, but do not, oh! do not refuse, do not despise such grace; when He bids you, come,—when He invites you, respond. At your peril make an excuse. The sinner should heed the word, "Yet there is room!" Even as the evangelist seeks to respond to the command, "Go . . . *compel* them to come in," let me compel you, my dear reader, to come now to Jesus.

The gospel feast, then, is the first, the supper of salvation. If you eat God's supper, you are a saved soul—if you look to Jesus you are saved, and washed whiter than snow, for "the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin." That is the supper of salvation.

II.—THE SUPPER OF COMMUNION.

The second supper is the Lord's Supper, the supper of communion. Look at 1 Cor. x. 16-21, xi. 23-34, "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." And who takes this supper? Do you who are not

converted? you who are not washed in the blood? Surely not. But you say, "It is a means of grace." No! it is a means of *judgment*, because the very thing the Lord will answer when you say, "We have eaten and drunk in thy presence," will be, "Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness." The only one who has the privilege of the Lord's Supper is the one who knows he has partaken of the gospel supper—the real, true Christian.

The Lord's Supper is like a photograph. A photograph is a faint, and always feeble, resemblance of an absent one. This supper, then, is a lovely, beautiful photograph of Jesus—not as He now is alive in glory, but as He once was, dead on the cross for our sins. Therefore the gathering round the Lord's Table to eat that supper is the memorial of the Lord's death. There is nothing like it! it has the greatest and sweetest claim on our hearts. I remember a betrayed, denied, thong-bound, thorn-crowned, crucified Christ. If, being unconverted, you partake of this supper, I would warn you, never do it again. You reply, "I have the minister's communion token." That is not your qualification. Have you received God's communion token? "When I see the blood I will pass over you." "And THE BLOOD shall be to you for a TOKEN." God's communion token is the blood.

This briefly is the supper of communion. May the Lord give us to enjoy, understand, and appreciate it more. We are called to walk worthy of

it, separate from all that is of the world. That cup tells me of the blood by which I am separated from my sins, from wrath, and from judgment; but it tells me also that I am separated from the world, and am to walk through it as a pilgrim and a stranger.

Let us look now at the two suppers given in Revelation xix.

III.—THE SUPPER OF JOY.

This is the marriage supper of the Lamb by-and-by (vers. 6-9). I do not wonder at the word, "Let us be glad and rejoice." Heaven breaks out in melody, the hosts of heaven in thanksgiving—it is the bridal supper. It is the moment when the Lord has gathered His own people up in heaven with Him—all are caught up to meet the Lord, ~~all are bright with His likeness—the day of the~~ marriage has come, the day of the joy of His heart and ours.

"The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready."

In that day the Church, the bride of Christ, shall be "arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, for the fine linen is the *righteousnesses* of saints." We have done here some little acts of service for the Lord: He has marked all, every cup of cold water, every loving deed, and He will reward it by-and-by. In that day the practical righteousness, the godly conduct of the believer down here in the world, will find its counterpart and answer. As you have,

walked down here, so you will be known up there; our practical life and conduct will be remembered and manifested in the presence of the Lord. It is spoken of as a garment, because it will be seen,—it is what is manifest, 'external. Nobody has seen your service down here, everybody will see up there what you have been, and done for the Lord, in the course of your pilgrim sojourn on earth, during His absence.

How beautiful to go to the supper of salvation, the supper of communion, and then to the marriage supper of the Lamb—the day of joy when with our blessed Lord, we see Him face to face, and are like Him.

If, my beloved reader, you have not taken the first, though you may have taken the second, you will not be at this third one—for these three go together. The supper of salvation meets me as a sinner, the supper of communion as a saint, and at the supper of joy, by-and-by, the bride will be with her Lord, and like Him. Tell me, will you be there? Make no mistake.

IV.—THE SUPPER OF JUDGMENT.

The last is not a supper of brightness, or gladness, or communion—it will be the dark, black supper of judgment, to which God will invite many guests, and they will all come. It is the Lord coming to deal with this earth in judgment (see verses 11-21), coming down in solemn, fearful judgment on this scene where you and I now are.

They refused Him on earth when He came in grace, but He will come back to make war. They crowned Him with thorns, God crowns Him with glory; they parted His raiment amongst them, and cast lots upon His vesture—here on His vesture He has a name written, “King of kings and Lord of lords,” and they will see Him again clothed. The world will see Jesus come back again. When did the world see Jesus last? What was the last glimpse the world had of Him? When they had stripped Him, crowned Him with thorns, nailed Him to a tree, and His blood was flowing down to stain the very earth they trod upon. When they see Him again He has still a crown, but not of thorns—“on his head were many crowns,” crowns of glory. His hand, once pierced and nailed to the tree, holds now a sceptre. He is clothed with a vesture dyed with blood. It is the Lord coming in swift, solemn judgment—a day that draws terribly near.

“He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.” It is the wrath of God poured out on the men who have refused the supper of the blessed God. Now the dealings of God are reversed, it is not grace but judgment. The Lord Jesus comes as the administrator of the judicial power of God. He comes to tread the winepress. In the vintage time the luxuriant bunches are cut down one by one, and thrown into the winepress; presently down comes the weight and every grape is crushed. So will the blood be

crushed from His enemies. Do you know a figure more fearful? You have trifled with God once too often when that day comes. His patience has then worn out, His wrath will come to the surface. He will come as "King of kings, and Lord of lords"; you have never owned His Kingship, His Lordship yet. Christ and you are strangers; He loves you, but you do not love Him, and now comes the hour when you must know Him in His Kingship, and His Lordship, and be crushed by His wrath.

Oh! careless soul, brave not, risk not that day. Then goes forth the word, "Come, and gather yourselves together unto the great supper of God." It is another "Come"—no longer the "Come" of grace, of invitation to the gospel feast. It is, Come, ye fowls, be a witness of the righteous judgment of God, "eat the flesh of kings," &c. Man in the end rises up in daring rebellion against the Lord; the once despised, refused Jesus comes as King of kings, and Lord of lords, and swift destruction overtakes them all. In the 20th verse we see the beast and the false prophet cast into the lake of fire—two men cast alive into the lake of fire, as in the Old Testament we see two men, Enoch and Elijah, taken up to heaven alive. Men may delude themselves with the thought of coming days of brightness—but, one of these days, like lightning everything will be altered; the saints will be taken up, and desolation will begin to cover the earth. Satan will have the reins of govern-

ment in his hands, the name of God will be cast out of the earth. Then the Lord of glory appears, and this fourth supper is enacted.

Will you be there? It is possible, nay, probable—because if the Lord Jesus came this hour, and took up His saints, not one gospel-rejecter then left behind would be saved; for God says He will send you strong delusion. “In the twinkling of an eye” we shall be taken. The world may miss us a day or two, but not one week or month will have rolled by before the mischief will appear, and the power of Satan will be displayed. Then the world, led astray by the devil, and ruled over by antichrist, will go on in full-blown sin, till at length God’s patience tires, and this terrible judgment takes place. The Lord shall come from heaven in judgment. And all this precedes the Millennium, the thousand years of blessing, when the Lord will reign on the earth.

I would not, if I were you, risk being at the fourth supper. I have made sure of the first, delight in the second, know I shall be at the third, and am sure I shall not be at the fourth. Friend, be thou of the same mind. May God give you to hear and believe His word in faith, and by-and-by, when Jesus comes, be found part of His bright company, who shall be with Him, and like Him for ever!

A STRIKING CONTRAST.



SEVERAL years ago I was passing through a village in Cheshire, and was distributing gospel leaflets by the way, when I noticed an old man engaged in mending the road. Accosting him, I inquired how matters stood about his soul. He

gave me, with evident self-complacency, an account of his *own goodness*. He went regularly to his church, he was honest, he always paid his debts, did not tell lies, did not curse and swear, he was always ready to do a kind turn for a neighbour, and so forth!

Poor fellow, *how blind* he was! I endeavoured to show him that all *these* things, while good and right in themselves, formed but a foundation of *sand* on which to build for eternity!

I had to leave him, feeling sad enough at heart, but just a little farther on I encountered an old woman. She was bent with the weight of years, and toiling feebly along, supported partly by a stick and partly by the arm of a younger person. So I went up and said, "Well, friend, you seem very feeble, evidently you have travelled long and far upon the road of Life, but tell me, are you on your way to the bright home above?" Her eyes sparkled at the question. "Oh, yes!" she replied. "Well, but what reason have you to say so? How do you expect to reach there?" "Only through

the PRECIOUS BLOOD OF JESUS!" Truly my heart leaped to hear the words, they sounded like the genuine "ring of the metal." We had a little interesting talk, and I found she was indeed a dear old pilgrim, journeying Zionward. Oh, it *was* so refreshing to meet her, and just after the other one, too! This dear old saint has since then gone in to see the "King in his beauty."

Now, a word to thee, my reader. That old man was brimful of *himself*. It was all the great big capital letter "I." *I* do this and *I* do that, or else *I* don't do this or that! Not a syllable, mind, about the *Saviour*! Turn we now to the dear woman; with her it was exactly the *reverse*. Not one word about *herself*. No, she spoke of "*JESUS only!*"

Suffer this plain, loving question,—On what foundation art *thou* resting? Is it *Self*, or is it *Christ*? Ah, beware, beware, I entreat thee!

Off the coast of Kent lie the Goodwin Sands. What are they? Most dangerous quicksands. Many a gallant vessel has been stranded and wrecked on those perilous shoals, her hull gradually sinking until at last it has disappeared entirely from view. Many a poor mariner has miserably perished there! But, oh, Satan has *his* more terrible quicksands, of self-righteousness, on which myriads of silly souls are resting, and sinking, alas, down, lower and lower, until they land in an eternal *hell*! Dear reader, art thou able to say, in the words of the sweet hymn—

"On Christ, the *solid Rock*, I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand!"

SALVATION OFFERED AND TAKEN.



OW often we find people really anxious to be saved, and in trouble about their sins, who only need the gospel to be simply presented to them, to get saved.

Others again (and they are many) are puzzled by the very simplicity of God's way of salvation. That the Lord means exactly what He says in John v. 24, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life," seems incredible, and salvation simply through hearing and believing, without good works of any kind, seems to be too easy, and too good to be true.

I met an old woman lately, whose history illustrates what I said at the beginning. She was anxious to be saved, and when the gospel was presented to her in a simple way, she received it at once. After a little conversation, I gave her a gospel book, and asked her about her soul. She told me she was most anxious to be saved, and was praying for salvation. "But," I said, "salvation is all ready for you; you have only to take it." I then asked her to give me back the little book I had just given her, and said, "Now I am going to give the book back to you, but remember when I offer the book to you, God is offering salvation

to you in just the same way, and the question is, Will you take salvation?"

I then held out the little book to her, and said: "God is offering salvation to you. Will you take it?" At once the old woman put out her hand and took the book.

"Well," I asked, "what are you going to say?" when to my joy she began to thank God for having saved her. "Are you saved?" I asked, a little later, and at once got a decided Yes. "What has He done for you?" I asked again. "He has saved me," was the answer.

The old woman had so simply and readily received Christ, that it seemed too good to be true.

I left the neighbourhood soon after, but a friend has since written to tell me, that he has been to her house, and found the old woman rejoicing in the knowledge of salvation. She told him all I had said to her, and that she had seen it quite plainly when I offered her the little book the second time; that she had been anxious for years, and had been praying God to send some one to speak to her.

And now, reader, have you put out the hand of faith and taken salvation? God's message to you is, "Whosoever will, let him *take* the water of life freely" (Rev. xxii. 17).

W. M.

MISCALOUATION.*

"And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater: and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? so is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."—LUKE xii. 16-21.



LEARLY from the circumstances described here, the subject of this scene must have been in his counting-house cogitating what he should do. "And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room

where to bestow my fruits?" You say, What part of the building was his counting-house? I believe it was his bed. That is a splendid place in which to think. There is no better time for thinking than just ere your eyelids close in sleep, or when you awake through the hours of the night.

Friend, will you think, when next you are in your bed, of where you are going to spend your eternity? Ere you close your eyelids in slumber to-night, let me ask you, Will you think seriously of where you will spend eternity? What views have you for eternity? How will you spend it? What is

* Extracted from "Night Scenes of Scripture"—a Night in a Counting-House.

your relation to God? If this should be the last night of your life, where will you spend eternity? Think on these things. Ponder them. They are worthy of consideration.

But these were not the subjects of grave consideration with the rich man on that night. He thought within himself, saying, "What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?" All his barns were crammed to the roof. His storehouses were filled to bursting. He knew not where to put the incoming goods, with which God had so richly blessed him. What a strange thing, you say. Were there no poor round about to whom he might minister? Was there no Lazarus at his door? Were there no needy ones on all hands? Ah, my friends, these things did not disturb him, for the man lived only for himself; and have not you, friend, till now? The centre and pivot round which he circled was self. He was self-surrounded, self-governed, and self-indulgent, I do not doubt.

Now, as he says "What shall I do?" a wonderful scheme opens up before his mind. Does it concern the poor and the needy on every hand to whom he could give the surplus? Ah, no, that is not the thought. "And he said, This will I do; I will pull down my barns, and build greater." Before his mind's eye, in the darkness of that night, as he lay there, what does he see? The old barns removed, the old granaries set aside, and the ground cleared. He has fixed upon his

architect. He has got the measurements, and plans, before his mind's eye, and he sees pile after pile of palatial storehouses rise, and into these greater barns he already sees the goods which God was giving him, stored and packed away, for "there," he now says, "I will bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry."

Now, my friend, tell me, did you ever hear such a soliloquy? Have you ever put yourself beside this man? I daresay many of you have not gone exactly the same road, but you have planned out your future for not a little while. You have determined what you will do next, and next, and so forth. Perhaps some of it has come to pass. God has let you increase in the things of this life, and you have got on, as this man no doubt had got on. But stop, what about the salvation of your soul? What about that which is due to the Lord? What about the claims of the Lord? Ah! the Lord has been left out entirely. God has had no place, no part in your plans. God has not been in your thoughts. So it was with this man.

Take a good look at him as he says, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." I think I see him as he closes his eyelids. A smile of placid contentment has come over his face, as he says, Soul, I have arranged everything satisfactorily,

and have made provision for many years. Think of it! "For many years." Eternity he left out of his calculations entirely. How many are like him? There was a man living last Sunday night, and arranging for things to go on far into the future; but yesterday he was buried. Many a man has gone into eternity since this night week, unprepared — unconverted — unblessed — unsaved, because unbelieving and unregenerate.

Look at the folly, the audacity of this worldling, spreading himself out for the future! Sinner, see thyself. See the guilt of this lost soul, as with untouched conscience, and in disregard of God he says, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years;"—"much goods!"—"many years!" "Take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." Watch him closely and note what happens. His eye closes, and he passes into slumber, contented with all, looking forward to a great future of "many years" of carnal enjoyment.

But that night an unwelcome visitor intrudes on the scene. He does not expect him. No, he is an unexpected, unwanted, unlooked-for visitor; and you say, Who is it? Ah! it is death. He wakes with the dew of death upon his brow; and he hears the voice of God saying to his guilty and godless soul, "Fool." What wakes him? The voice of God. Oh, man, may it wake you to-night. Sinner, may it wake you. And what does God say to this unsaved, selfish soul, who has got his plans for the future so well laid? "Fool!"

Young man, you have sketched out your life, have you not? Listen. God speaks: "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." Oh, my friends, what a change that word effects! What amazement takes possession of that man's soul. His eyes are closed, but, as he listens, he hears the voice of God, saying, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall these things be, which thou hast provided?" My dear friend, God may so speak to thee this night. But, thank God, you are yet in the land of the living; and if you are only thinking of the future for this life, may God cause you to hear His own blessed voice speaking to your soul, and also cause everything to give way to this momentous question—What is the state of your soul, and where will you spend eternity?

You may have a lease of your house; but you have no lease of your life. Your soul belongs to God, and this night, if God says the word, the soul will go back to God. But what about that soul? Is it still steeped in sin? Is it yet black in iniquity, or is it washed in the blood of the Saviour? Let me inquire most affectionately and earnestly. Let me implore you now to hear the word of God. Do not fall into the devil's trap as did this poor man. I label this scene MISCALCULATION, because I cannot get any better word to describe what is true of many souls to-day. It is a scene of downright miscalculation. Why? Because the man was making his plans, and all along

he left God out, and nothing came to pass as he had planned. Oh! sinner, you too have left God out. I know you have your plans as to what you are going to do to-morrow. Possibly the new house you are about to build, the new business you are going into, the new situation you have got, wholly engage your attention, and you have made your plans for a good long time to come—"many years," in fact. "Much goods" to be enjoyed, and "many years" to be spent in their enjoyment, is what the rich farmer pictured to himself, and the next thing he found was that he was in hell. He passed from time into eternity. The last word he heard upon earth, was the word of God addressed to him, "Thou fool!"

What kind of a fool was he? Scripture speaks of many classes of fools. He was the representative of a very large class of fools that live in the world to-day. They must be called the eternity-neglecting fools. There are many such fools in this town, and some of them are in this hall to-night. I mean you, my friend, *you!* You know it yourself. You are not saved. You are not converted. I suppose the interests of your immortal soul have not given you ten serious moments of consideration all your life. You have occupied all your time with getting on, and enjoying yourself in this world. Your aim has been to get a place in the world. Yes, you say, but we must work. I know that, and I conclude that this man was not born, as men say, with a silver spoon in his mouth.

I suppose he had to work hard, and the blessing of the Lord was with him. But what took place then? He did not acknowledge God. He did not turn round to God in thankfulness. He had no sense of the expression of God's love towards him. He had no sense of the goodness of God. He was not rich toward God, as the giver of every good.

Now, you may think it a serious charge that I lay against you. It is not I. I do not lay it. "So is he," says the Lord, "that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." I remember perfectly well a servant of God speaking from this chapter some two and thirty years ago. I shall never forget a little sentence that dropped from his lips, as he came to this part of the chapter. "I suppose, my friends," he said, "there is not one here to-night, but would rather have a ten-pound note than a five-pound note. Yes, and God says, 'Thou fool.'" Weighty words were these, and should speak to you, if you are not content with what the Lord has given you.

But now tell me, What shall a man gain if he lose his own soul? Is your soul saved? That is the question. Have you yet learnt the value of that soul, because what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? It is really the most important part of you. It is the invaluable part of you. You take care of the body. You clothe it, feed it, keep it out of danger, and out of the way of disease. Why, if you thought there was any infectious disease within a house, would you enter it? Ah,

no! A lady said to me the other day, "I went up to see So-and-so, but she was ill with influenza." "And did you go in?" I asked. "Oh, no, not for the world would I go in; I might catch it and die." Yes, people take care of the body, but what about your soul, friend? Jesus said, "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mark viii. 37); and this man said to his soul, Soul, you have a good long time yet on earth, many years of enjoyment shall be yours, and that night God said, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." And what became of his "much goods," and of his "many years," and, above all, what became of his soul?

What a frightful upset to all his plans, and all his schemes, was God's "Thou fool." Do you not see your own case, my friend, in this man's history? Ah, you say, I have not yet gone into eternity. Thank God, you have not! If you are a wise man you will get down on your knees this moment, and thank God that you are yet among the living. "Oh, God," you should say, "I thank Thee that I am living yet. Lord, save me; Lord, bless me; Lord, save my soul. I have thought of my body, and my comfort; thought of my banker's account, and of my house. I have thought about everything, in fact, except my soul, and Thee. Lord, pardon, and save me!"

I KNOW IT ALL !



WHILST visiting a dying woman, a child of God, she mentioned to me the case of Mrs C——, a respectable woman, who had cancer, and had just left the hospital to come home to die, and was saying “that God could not be

Love to make her suffer such bodily agony.”

The desire filled me to be able to go and see Mrs C——, and the Lord graciously opened the way, by the nurse residing in the same house as Mrs C—— asking me to do so.

On my first visit, I was shown upstairs into a comfortable bedroom, which looked as if much care was being bestowed on the sufferer, and stood by the side of the bed on which Mrs C—— was lying. Her face was ashy white, and the features like chiselled marble, for, dear reader, from this visit to the day she died was six weeks exactly. I spoke to her of the love of the Lord Jesus in dying for sinners. She surprised me by consenting to all that was said, and, for the first few visits, she said Yes to everything; but from all I heard, from the lips of others residing in the same house, she did not bear testimony to being a saved soul. But why was she so quiet with me? Was it bodily sufferings that made her quiet? No, it was God's own Word going home to her soul, and she did not like it.

One day, whilst speaking to her of the old

old story, she suddenly raised her voice (which was very low, as the cancer was in the upper part of the chest, and no food was swallowed) to quite a loud strain, and said angrily, "My dear Miss —, you need not tell me, *I know it all! I know it from a child!*" and continued in a loud angry strain for some minutes, till, utterly exhausted, she sank back on her pillow and ceased.

For some minutes I felt quite wordless, and feeling my extreme weakness, my heart went up to the Lord in silent prayer for a word to speak, which He graciously answered, and strikingly brought to my lips these words, "Mrs C——, in God's Word we have an account, told by the Lord Jesus, of a certain King who made a marriage for His Son, and one came in who had not on a wedding garment, and the King came in to see the guests, and saw the man without it. And when the King asked him how he came without it, *he was speechless*, and you will be *speechless* if you wish to go into His presence your own way." I then arose and stood over her, speaking of the precious blood of the Lord Jesus; then pressing a kiss on the motionless forehead, and without her once again opening her lips or eyes, I slowly left her room.

The next three visits I paid her she refused to see me. The nurse apologised for Mrs C——'s rudeness to me, at the same time remarking that she often heard her engaged in prayer at nights when alone.

The fourth visit she consented to see me, and received me quietly. I asked if I might read God's Word to her? She assented, and opening my Testament I read Matthew xxii. 1-13, and then spoke of the night when the destroying angel was to smite the first-born in Egypt. The people of Israel had to sprinkle the blood on the lintel, and when *God* saw the blood, He did not destroy. Similarly, the Lord Jesus on the cross shed His precious blood, so that lying there she could have all her sins washed away by faith in that blood, which God saw, for "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth from *all* sin." Then kneeling by her bed in prayer, with her hand in mine, I pleaded aloud to God for her precious soul.

A few days after I heard she was passing away, and was quite happy at the thought of going to be with Jesus; she was speaking to others also, especially to one of her daughters, of the Lord.

I was told she was too far gone to see me, but on knocking at her door, some one from inside ran quickly down and opened the door, saying, "Mrs C—— wants to see you." On entering her room she raised herself up in her bed, holding out her hand, and said my name; but the exertion was too much, she fell back, and was too far gone to speak again. I bent over her and asked, "Are you trusting in knowing it all from a child, Mrs C——?" Slowly her head moved from side to side, expressing No! I then mentioned the precious blood of the Lord Jesus, and was her trust in that? The head

quickly moved, expressing Yes, yes! A few words more with her, and I left her, after she had by signs assented that we should meet in heaven.

Her daughter followed me downstairs, and told me her mother had told them the word spoken on the day of her anger was what God had blessed to her soul. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain" (Ps. lxxvi. 10). An eye-witness said her end was bright, and, as if addressing some one she saw, she exclaimed, "It is Jesus!" and was with Him who *proved* Himself to be a God of Love, in seeking and saving that which was lost. A grandchild in her room at her death repeated several times during the day, "Grandmother said she saw Jesus!"

Dear reader, this true story is written in the simple hope that it may arouse you to ask yourself, "Am I like Mrs C——, do I know it all?" You may know in your *head* the way of salvation, and be a *lost* soul; knowledge is one thing, and belief in the *heart* quite another (Rom. x. 9, 10).

It is "the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul," and "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John i. 7). You need salvation first, and then God's Word will be your security. Or you may not give heed to these realities at all; in fact, treat lightly His Word when brought before you.

A preacher, addressing some careless listeners, said, "I would sooner play with forked lightning than play with the Word of God!"

My Saviour-God is pleading with you *to-day*, but He holds you *responsible* for every time His love is brought before you; yes, even these few lines—

“Why distrust the Saviour, sinner?
Has He ever souls deceived?
No; beyond all others, *Jesus*
Worthy is to be *believed*.”

Give thou to the winds thy doubting,
Take the gift His hand bestows;
Haste! accept the offered mercy,
Soon the day of grace will *close*.”

M. F. D.

ARE YOU QUITE SURE?



NOT for a single moment am I supposing that you are thinking, or that you desire to think, about the eternal welfare of your precious soul. Neither am I expecting you at this moment to thank me for seeking through the means of this paper to lead your thoughts in this direction. It may be it is the very thing with which you are earnestly engrossed. If so, it is cause for thankfulness to God. But I am not taking this for granted. I assume you are careless, and wanting to be let alone, and seeking to persuade yourself that the evil day is far

distant, and that when it does come it glooms not so darkly as it has been painted.

Now let me in all love and faithfulness to your soul say to you, that not only has the horror of that day of wrath never been overdrawn, but that no human language is able to convey anything but the faintest impression to the mind of man of the awful blackness, and darkness, and terribleness of that hour of the withering indignation of Almighty God. I have frequently heard the eloquence of mortals, labouring to portray the gloom and terror of that hour, but not only did it fall far short of the reality, but it was so horribly distorted by the imagination, and such a human (not to say devilish) tinge was given to the whole affair, that it was made perfectly repulsive.

Scripture is grand in all its utterances, and the finger of God is visible in all its scene-paintings. Whether it be the glories of heaven or the miseries of hell, the touches are divine. All is full of simplicity, supremely solemn and majestic—nothing of the littleness of the mind of man revelling in great things. There is no high colouring—no harrowing details. God's pictures are alone in solitary grandeur. If it is the day of reckoning, God meets His adversary, and the scene closes in everlasting night upon the enemy of God. Eternal love has been refused, and eternal wrath must be borne. The holy Son of God, who knew what He had to meet, going to the cross to bear wrath as a substitute for His people, was "sore amazed and

very heavy, and his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground." "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." No human mind has ever had anything but the faintest conception of the awfulness of the danger to which you are at this moment exposed if you are unsaved.

Look the matter straight in the face, I beseech you, and do not say he is a fanatic who has penned these lines. These are words of truth and soberness. You may tell me there is no danger to fear, but I am not so sure that you are able to satisfy your own mind as to this. That you are not as sensible of your danger as you ought to be, I am ready to admit; but that you are quite certain no danger exists is another thing. And in a case like the present, you need perfect assurance, because it would be a fearful thing about which to be mistaken. It is not the risk of health, wealth, or fame—all these might be lost and found again in your short history on earth; but to make a mistake which would be the everlasting wreck of all your joy and happiness—ah! you want to be quite sure there can be no danger of this. You must not have a peg to hang a doubt upon. You must have clear uncontrovertible proofs that this hell-fire story is a baseless fable. Nay, you must not swallow an opiate to dull your senses and keep you from thinking; you must be certain that you have heard the whole case with an unbiased and a sound mind, and that there is not a shadow of

foundation for the smallest fear, before you can have an hour's rest. Have you thus examined the report? Have you found it baseless? Have you the *proofs* that it is so? Then rise up and be the first man to give them to the world.

Do you tell me there are no proofs to establish the dread theory. You are very much in error, but allow me to say that is not the point. It is *reported* that the Lord will take vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel. Do you know for certain He will not? In natural things men seek to be on the safe side. You do not need to cry "FIRE" twice in a crowded house. Let the alarm be once sounded, and you will bring every one to the street who can fight his way to the door. He will see about the truth of the report once he is in a place of safety. Ah, you say, there is no time to be lost there. And are you sure you have so much time at your disposal? As I write this a woman lies dead in the opposite house across the way. She was seen on the street yesterday—she is a corpse to-day.

Take out your watch and put it to your ear. How quickly the moments of your life are flying into the buried past! You cannot recall one of them. You will soon be finished with your responsible life here on earth. The sexton may be toiling at your grave to-morrow. Are you sure all will be well with you? What does your conscience say? Is all calm within the breast? What does the groaning creation around you say?

What does the state of this world say, where you dare not speak of God or His Christ except at stated times and places for fear of losing caste? Does not every groan of this miserable creation declare that "an enemy hath done this," and does not its devil-ruled population show you that there must be a day of vengeance?

And what about yourself, my reader? How does your individual history read with regard to your relationship with God. When God made man He made him for Himself. Man is not a brute, like a dog; neither is he a god. He is a being set in intelligent relationship with God, and answerable to Him. He is not an independent being; he is responsible to God. How have you answered to His claims upon you? Is it your own will or His you have done? Have you sought His glory or your own? Have you lived to please Him or yourself? Have you lived to His satisfaction or the satisfaction of yourself? Has He found in you all He could have desired? Have you in the distrust of your own mind kept an open ear to hear what He had to say to you, and have you done it with all your heart? If your dog paid as little attention to you as you have paid to God, what would you have done to him? If he shunned your presence, pleased himself, regarded neither you nor your commands, how would you have treated him? You say he knows better than disobey. But that means he knows better than you. Yet you are not his creator. You did not give

him life and breath. God gave you your existence. He made you for *Himself*, and you have lived to *yourself*. Yet you think He ought to be content. Let me tell you that you would not be content with one who owed you less than you owe to God, and yet paid you more than you have even sought to pay Him. Looked at from God's side, your life has been a tremendous failure.

You see I do not charge you with being a drunkard, or a murderer, or a thief, or with any gross evil. Looked at from a human standpoint your life may be blameless—you may even have it spiced with a little bit of religion; but if you are unsaved, I would seek to bring before you the solemn fact that you have lived to yourself and have done your own will, as if there were no God to be taken into account; and if you have kept yourself moral and respectable, you have done it because it suited you to do it, because it was to your own advantage, and not with any pure desire to please God; and yet because you have done this, and as you say pay your way, and do no harm to anybody, He must of necessity wink at your practically atheistical life. And yet if you had a dependent who treated you after the same fashion, you would soon have a day of reckoning. How long is this to go on?

You need not tell me you do not know what His will is. If you had had the least desire to do it He would not have left you ignorant of it. You have never gone to Him in the confession of

your ignorance. Wherever there rises the cry, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do," from an honest heart in this world, light is given from heaven. I believe if you consider your godless career calmly for ten minutes in the solitude of your own room as in the presence of God, you will soon be down in the dust crying for mercy.

But perhaps my reader owns to a careless life, and hopes to turn to Christ some day. And may I ask what time have you set for this? How is it you have tarried so long? I very much question if six months ago you would have made an agreement to remain up to the present Christless. Do you think you would? Dare you make such a promise now? Let us see how it would look:—

I call upon heaven, earth, and hell, angels, men, and devils, to witness that I hereby solemnly promise and declare that I will not on any account seek Christ for salvation for six months after this date.

Date,

Signed,

No, you would not sign this—not for worlds. You would not have done it six months ago; yet here you are at the end of the time Christless, without any pledge binding you to remain so. What a fool you are to be going on thus from day to day, and week to week, and year to year, getting through your short life, until it may be published some day that such an one "fell ill about a week ago. It looked like a cold, but the doctor

did not pronounce upon it. He was expected to be well in a day or two, and not even the patient himself was alarmed about it; but the third day there was a decided change for the worse, and in spite of everything that could be done, he gradually sank until yesterday morning, when he passed away. He is to be buried to-morrow."

Passed away! PASSED AWAY! AWAY! WHERE? I thought you said he was to be buried to-morrow. Yes, his body is to be buried; but he is gone from his body. The body is the house in which he lived—the tenant is gone. There is such a thing as being "*absent from the body.*" For a believer this is "*present with the Lord.*" While we are *at home in the body* we are alive in this world, and in association with things here, with our families, relatives, and neighbours, in our life of responsibility on earth. But *absent from the body* means either "present with the Lord," or in misery. Lazarus left his body and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. Also the penitent thief went absent from the body to paradise with Jesus. But Dives, when his body was being tenderly consigned to its resting-place, his spirit was in the flame of torment.

Then in the resurrection the body will be raised up. Believers will be raised up in incorruption, and in power, and in glory. All must get their bodies. The unsaved will also be raised. Here is an account of their resurrection and judgment.

"I saw a great white throne, and him that sat

on it, from whose face the earth and heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell gave up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Rev. xx. 11-15). "The fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (Rev. xxi. 8). This is in eternity, where change of circumstances never comes.

But there is no judgment for believers. They are saved through the work of Christ. In a day of grace, and while alive on earth, they saw themselves as guilty and condemned sinners in the sight of a holy God, and they humbled themselves before Him. They heard of Jesus, of His precious blood, and how God had found His perfect delight in Him; that sin had been condemned in His cross; that God in mighty grace to man had sent Him to remove the barrier which stood in

His way of blessing sinners ; that in His cross the thing which offended God had received its judgment, and that God had raised Him from the dead and glorified Him to His own right hand in heaven ; that the blood was upon the mercy-seat, and that God's Word was COME ; that there was no demand being made upon man for anything—he was to come empty-handed in the confession of his deep sinfulness ; and that coming through faith in Jesus and His precious blood he was made welcome. “There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repents.” The invitation was to all—sinners of every class, colour, and degree. The gates of eternal salvation are thrown open to all. Many have come. They were glad to hear the blessed news. They were not cast out. He will receive you. Do not put it off, I beseech you. “The pleasures of sin for a season” will not compensate you for an eternity of misery. There is no time to be lost. “To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart.”

“Where will you spend eternity ?
This question comes to you and me !
Tell me, what shall your answer be—
Where will you spend eternity ?
Eternity ! Eternity !
Where will you spend eternity ?”

SURELY.



EN think lightly of sin, and hence sin lightly. This is part of sin's deceit. We are conceived in it (Ps. li. 5), brought up under it (Rom. iii. 9), live in it. It entered the world through man's disobedience to God. Its wages is death (Rom. vi. 23).

God said to him in Eden, if he partook of a certain tree, he should *surely die* (Gen. ii. 17). He eat, and he died. He broke God's sole command, the test of his subjection to Him as His creature, and in so doing *sinned*. God's word is ever true. He was henceforth alienated from Him, a sinner in a state of moral death; and, further, subject to bondage all his lifetime here through fear of the death of the body, the portal to eternal judgment beyond. *Most surely* is the whole human race in a state of death. Man's mind is darkened, his body diseased, his soul depraved, and he is a dupe of the devil, with his every and highest aspiration clouded by the dark shadow of death.

Now man in this state of darkness, distance, and death, instead of turning to God, vainly seeks to make himself happy and content here. Shutting his eyes fast to sin and its consequences, staying off the thought of death, and oft denying judgment, he pleases himself and lives for the present. Some indulge the lusts of the flesh and the mind; others

pride themselves on their moral culture and conduct. Some live a life of constant vexation and trouble; others struggle with every energy after the prizes of this life for a season—honour and riches. Hear the word of the Lord about all:—
“*Verily, every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Selah. Surely every man walketh in a vain show; surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them*” (Ps. xxxix. 5, 6).

Dear reader, will you learn a lesson from the Psalmist, who says in view of it all, “*Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am*” (ver. 4). He was a truly wise man; he considered his latter end; he thought seriously of the future. Have you? Death is here, stamped upon everything; it may overtake you to-day! Now, where are you going? Are you concerned about it? Is it the all-burning question of your soul, “*Where am I going; what must I do to be saved?*” Once the question is fairly raised in the soul, there can be no peace, no rest till it is answered, and answered according to God.

Now when Israel of old realised their terrible condition in bondage and affliction in Egypt, the Lord said, “*I have surely seen.*” “*I know their sorrows.*” “*I am come down to deliver.*” How forcibly applicable is this language to the state of troubled souls to-day! Are you troubled on account of the hard bondage of sin and Satan?

The Lord says, "I have *surely* seen." His eye is on you ; He is not unmindful of your state. He fully knows the depth of the sorrow of your soul ; and, moreover, He has come down to deliver you. Yes, He has actually visited this world of sin, sorrow, and death, and Himself wrought a work in the midst thereof whereby you can *now* be delivered. He, the sinless One, has solved the whole question of sin, by being made sin, and bearing its judgment. Christ died for the ungodly, and lives again, triumphant in glory (Rom. v. 6 ; Heb. i. 3). Salvation, full, free, and eternal, is now offered to all in His blest Name. "*Surely* his salvation is nigh them that fear him. . . . Mercy and truth are met together ; righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Ps. lxxxv. 9, 10). "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." If, through the fear of Him, your soul has been aroused to a sense of its deep need, *surely His salvation is nigh you*. Why should you not receive it now ? "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and *thou shalt be saved*." "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, *thou shalt be saved*" (Rom. x. 9).

You may exclaim, But I am unrighteous ; and though I have tried again and again, I find I am powerless to please God. True, but in Christ you will find His righteousness, and from Him you will receive the gift of the Spirit, the alone power to please Him. "*Surely*, shall one say, in the

Lord have I righteousness and strength: even to him shall men come" (Isa. xlv. 24). All are unrighteous without exception, and all without strength, and hence every effort to be righteous before God utterly vain. Submit to Him, and to His righteousness. He has provided all for you, and all you need is ready for you to-day. You can find it alone in Christ. Bow to Him, believe on His blessed Name, and henceforth He is your righteousness before God, and the Holy Ghost will enable you to walk in practical righteousness here.

But, "if ye will *not believe, surely ye shall not be established*" (Isa. vii. 9). There is no other way of receiving the blessing your soul craves. The work is done, and the One who did it enthroned at God's right hand. You can do nothing. Your works as a sinful man of Adam's race are worse than useless, *an insult to God*. You must *believe*. Thus alone can you be established in the blessed grace of God. If ye *will not believe, surely ye shall not be*.

Moreover, "if ye believe not that I am He," said the Saviour, "ye shall die in your sins" (John viii. 24). If you remain in unbelief, you remain among the ranks of the enemies of God—the wicked. Now hear what the Word of God says of them: "Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God: depart from me, therefore, ye bloody men. For they speak against thee wickedly, and thine enemies take thy name in vain" (Ps. cxxxix. 19, 20). Unbelief shuts you up to judgment. There

is no other alternative. "God is angry with the wicked every day. If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and *made it ready*. He hath also prepared for him *the instruments of death*; he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors" (Ps. vii. 11-13). God is "ready to judge the quick and the dead" (1 Pet. iv. 5); and His judgment is eternal (Rev. xxi. 8; Jude 13).

How blessed, on the other hand, for every one that believeth! For them, instead of awful threats of judgment and eternal woe, the Word abounds with promises, exceeding great and precious, and Christ is about to come and fulfil them. His last message to His people is, "*Surely I come quickly*" (Rev. xxii. 20). No man knoweth the day nor the hour of His return (Mark xiii. 32). But the all-important matter for every reader of these lines is, Can you respond with joyful heart in the words of Scripture, knowing that all is settled for ever through grace between God and you. "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. xxii. 20).

"What think you of Christ?" is the test

To try both your state and your scheme;

You cannot be right in the rest

Unless you think rightly of Him.

As Jesus appears in your view,—

As He is believed or not;

So God is disposed to you,

And mercy or wrath is your lot."

ETERNITY ! ! !



COME, O my soul, thy certain ruin trace,
 If thou neglect a Saviour's offered grace;
 Infinite years in torment thou must
 spend,
 Which never, never, never have an end.
 Yes, thou must spend in torturing despair
 As many years as atoms in the air.
 When these are spent, as many moments more
 As grains of sand upon the ebbing shore.
 When these are gone, as many to ensue
 As blades of grass or drops of morning dew.
 When these have fled, as many yet behind
 As forest leaves when shaken by the wind.
 When these are spent, as many millions more
 As moments in the millions spent before.
 When all these doleful years are spent in pain,
 And multiplied by myriads again,
 Till numbers drown the thought, could I suppose
 That then thy wretched years were at a close,
 That would afford some ease, but oh, I shiver
 And tremble at that awful word, *For ever!*

ANON.

A SERIOUS QUESTION.

FRIEND, where will you spend Eternity ?

W. T. P. W.

THE DYING SKIPPER; OR, "YE MAY KNOW."



HERE he lay alone on his dying bed, thirty-eight, a widower and friendless, and beholden to the kindness of the strangers who had received him into their house, and made him welcome to the pleasant little chamber in which I

found him. I had never seen him before, nor have I seen him since; but I had been asked to visit him, and, if possible—for his powers were fast ebbing away under the debilitating effects of consumption—to make known to him, even at the last moment, the way of God's salvation.

I found him lying with his face to the wall, and the bed-clothes drawn closely up to his ear. An appearance of solitude marked this death-chamber. It was beautifully clean and sufficiently furnished. There was placed on a small round table near the bed a glass of milk and a biscuit or two, but these were evidently of little relish to one so feeble as he.

Yes, solitude, loneliness, the absence of love's tender providings and thoughtful care, gave a peculiar feeling of desertedness to that dying pillow.

No mother's tender hand, no wife's deep solicitude, no child's ready footstep, no nurse's firm advice! No! He was alone!

Yet all these sad surroundings seemed only to

draw out my sympathy the more. I felt keenly for that dying man. There are moments in our lives when the human heart craves compassion; when it feels and owns its need; when it bends and breaks; when, burdened and depressed, it cries for succour; and when, in awful solitude, it says, "No man careth for my soul." It was thus with him at that moment, and glad was I that I could lend, in measure, the very consolation he required.

The preliminaries of introduction were very simple, and easily gone through. A few kindly words as to his sufferings, &c., paved the way for the more important object of my call.

"Now tell me," I said, "is it well with your soul?"

"Ah, sir," he replied, "I know that I'm a great sinner, but I've cried to God for mercy, and thrown myself at His feet."

"That is right—that's just the very thing!" I answered. Why, that was exactly what the prodigal proposed to himself, and what he did, and we all know the blessed result.

"Yes," I said, "that is right so far; but now for another step—Has God heard your cry and shown you mercy? Are you saved?"

Up to this point he had been lying on his left side, and had answered my queries with face averted, but now he turned his eyes full upon my own, and with a glance that, accustomed as it was, when in command of his vessel, to penetrate the darkness and read the skies above, seemed to

search into my innermost thoughts, he said, "No one can tell that!"

Oh, how often have I heard that rejoinder—"No one can know." It is, alas, the common expression! *It is none the less the expression of unbelief.* We should know, and may know, and, thank God, many of us do know!

Well, I met his gaze firmly, and I could read in that earnest eye, and shattered, though manly countenance, of only thirty-eight summers, a feeling of wonderment as to whether, after all, any could tell for certain that God had shown them mercy, and that their sins were pardoned. His pleading, earnest, inquiring look seemed to say—If any one can tell, let *me* know, and know at this moment, for I have no time to lose! He appeared to hang breathless on my answer.

"Yes, my friend," I replied, "we can tell that God has had mercy upon us, we can know on His authority that we are saved. Let me read these words to you: 'He was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ' (Rom. iv., v). 'WE HAVE PEACE WITH GOD!' Yes, we have it; and peace is a thing so comfortable, that, if you have it, you most certainly know that you have it. And it is PEACE WITH GOD!" How that dying man listened to, and drank in the truth of this well-known scripture! His eye was riveted on mine, his ear was divinely opened, whilst the one thing that

he craved, the one link in the chain, was being made known to him. God had wrought in his soul, and convinced him of his sins, had used the very desolation of his circumstances to act upon him, as his destitution had acted on the prodigal, had led him to throw himself at His feet, and cry for mercy. All that was God's work by His holy Spirit.

What a fit subject for the gospel, for the good news of redemption!

And if to a hungry soul a bitter thing is sweet, what to this poor famished spirit were the tidings that Jesus was delivered for our offences—all the awful load being laid on Him when He died on the cross—and that, having borne both them and their judgment, He was raised again for our justification! Death could not hold Him. The judgment against sin was exhausted by our sinless Sin-bearer, so that God raised Him from the dead, and therefore the one thing between God and the believer is, not now *sin*, but *peace*! "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." What a settlement! And we know it, thank God, on His authority.

"*I see it*," said the poor dying fellow, as the light gently but clearly, spread itself over the long-desolate heart, and the load was removed, and the difficulty banished. He apprehended by faith the truth of the gospel.

Observe, dear reader, that a cry for God's mercy, however importunate, is not just the same as faith

in God's word. The one leaves me uncertain—it is but a cry, the other places me on a rock of eternal security; the one may give me a hope, the other carries assurance; the one leads me, at best, to hope for mercy, the other puts me in possession of eternal life!

And hence we read in 1 John v. 13, "These things have I written unto you who believe on the name of the Son of God; that YE MAY KNOW that ye HAVE eternal life." What certainty! what divine assurance!

Ye may know, ye who believe in the name of the Son of God, that ye have eternal life!

Now this is not an idea, nor a fancy, nor a hope—no, it is a divine fact that he who believes on the name of the Son of God may know that he has eternal life; and, as we saw, these things were written for that very end. But may he not lose it? How, O, incredulous man, can eternal life be lost? What does *eternal life* mean? Tell me that, and I can assure you that the enjoyment of such a life will captivate the heart for time and eternity.

I have lately heard of my poor dying friend through a letter from one who kindly went to see him—that letter stated, "*He is now saved.*" A fine and grateful corroboration of my hopes concerning him!

Oh, how that little lonely chamber must have been lit up and rendered happy by the company of a dying sinner's living Saviour! What it is to

have such a Saviour in life or in death, in strength or in weakness, and to know, even now, that eternal life is ours!

Friend, if you know not, if you have hitherto questioned and discredited the possibility of the believer *knowing* that he is blessed, be persuaded to-day to rest on the written word of God. For "YE MAY KNOW!"

If, like that dying sailor, you crave for mercy, but cannot tell whether God has shown it, then, like him, drink in God's peace-giving word, and rest on the mighty work of our dead and risen Lord, and know, with assurance, that you, too, have "*peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*"

Since having written the above, I received another letter from my friend, in which he says, "I don't expect he will survive the night, but he tells me to let you know '*It is all well with my soul!*'"

Thank God for this welcome message from the lonely, but happy death chamber! It is a full and God-given answer to the first question I put to the dying man. I asked him, "Is it well with your soul?" No, it was not! He was dying, and unfit to die, yet he craved the knowledge of the way of salvation. This, through faith in the work of Christ, and in the written word of God, he received.

Then came a week or two of conscious salvation; and, finally, when on the brink of the grave, he could calmly say, "*It is all well with my soul!*"

He got to know, and again I repeat, "*Ye may know!*"

I must close by adding the verse that gave this knowledge to my own soul many years ago, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." I saw that *believing* and *knowing* go together; I knew that I, through grace, believed on the Son; and this written word certified to me that I had everlasting life! A solid foundation indeed! But notice how the same verse ends: "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John iii. 36).

I beseech you then, dear friend, to see to it that you are in the first part of this verse, and not in the second. It is either "*everlasting life,*" or "*the wrath of God.*"

J. W. S.

THE FOUR LEPERS.

(Read 2 Kings vii.)*



THESE lepers knew they were lost. They were outside the gate, and they thus wisely reasoned: "Why sit we here until we die? If we say, We will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there: and if we sit still here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let us fall into the host of the Syrians: if they

* From "Night Scenes of Scripture"—A Night in a Camp.

save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die" (vii. 3, 4). They have the sentence of death on them, and so have you, my friend, but you may get life. Well, they conclude that they will go forth, as they think, to meet their enemies; and when they go out, expecting to meet foes—just like a poor sinner when he comes to God, whom he thinks is his foe—what do they find? A feast, and a royal one too, for all they needed was there. Sinner, you do not know what you have missed by not coming to the Saviour all these years, but if you will be wise now, you will follow the example of these simple men. They go out in the twilight (ver. 5), hoping nobody will see them, or pay attention to them. They get to the camp of the Syrians, and all is quiet. They come near a tent, and listen, but there is no sound. What does it mean? The fact is, God has cleared the scene of the enemy, and left the spoil for them to appropriate.

Can you not apply this? There is nothing to hinder your getting God's blessing now; every foe is gone. Sin has been put away, the power of the enemy has been broken, Christ has annulled death. The Son of God has come into the prison-house of death, and what has He done? He has burst open the door, He has broken all its bolts and bars, and spoiled the lock, and it is well to remember that Satan cannot repair that lock, or put back those bars. He tells you that you cannot be saved, that you are too bad a sinner to be saved,

and that you dare not come to Jesus. He tells you a lie. I tell you that you may come, and you ought to come to Christ, and if never before, you ought to come this very moment to Him. The door of the dungeon has been opened by the mighty Son of God, and all you have to do is to march out into the light of day, and feast on the good things that the love of God has provided for the needy and the lost. Appropriate what His love provides.

Whom do the lepers find in the camp of the Syrians? Nobody, not an enemy to be seen. They go into a tent, and what do they get? A good big loaf, and a nice bottle of water. They eat and drink. That is what the sinner needs—bread and water—the bread of life, and the water of life—and Christ declares: "I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." Come to Jesus, and your hunger shall be met, and your thirst satisfied for ever, for He says: "He that drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life."

"And when these lepers came to the uttermost part of the camp, they went into one tent, and did eat and drink, and carried thence silver, and gold, and raiment, and went and hid it; and came again, and entered into another tent, and carried thence also, and went and hid it" (ver. 8). The lepers eat

and drink till they begin to feel satisfied, and then enrich themselves. They had not had such a meal for ever so long. And when their hunger and thirst are satisfied, what next? Why, here is a bag of gold, and there a bag of silver; and as for clothes, they never saw such garments in their lives. So they load themselves with silver, and gold, and raiment, and go and hide their treasures. They were not only saved, but enriched. God not only pardons the sinner, but He enriches him, makes him His child, and gives him a place in Christ. Silver, in Scripture, typifies *redemption*; gold, *divine righteousness*; and the raiment tells of *fitness* for God's presence. Christ answers to them all, as it is written, "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor. i. 30). The moment I come to the Saviour, I not only get my need met, and the hunger of my soul satisfied, but all that God can give me I find wrapped up in the person of Christ, and I appropriate it.

The attractiveness of the gospel is this: that God having sent His Son into the world, and Christ having accomplished the work of redemption, the testimony of the Holy Ghost now goes out on every hand: "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." Christ is the bread of God that came down from heaven, that a man should eat thereof and not die: but that could not be till He had died, and risen again. But now that He

has died, and risen again, you and I are called on to eat and drink, to take that which God provides. In Revelation xxi. the Lord declares, "*I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely*" (ver. 6); and in Revelation xxii. we read, "*Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely*" (ver. 17). I will give freely, says the Lord; let the thirsty take as freely. There is God's side, and your side. He gives; you have only to take and enjoy. I said to a man the other night, "I will give you a book." "Will you?" he replied. I gave it to him; and when it was in his hand, he asked me, "When am I to return it?" "Never," I said; "it is yours. If I give you a book, you take it, and it is yours. When God makes you a present of His Son, and His salvation, what have you to do? Simply to take it." He saw the simile, and was helped.

These four lepers were very wise men, I think. They ate and drank, and carried forth gold, and silver, and raiment. They possessed in figure what God gives us in the gospel. Christ Himself is our redemption, our righteousness, and our raiment. Believers have put on Christ. You must stand either in Adam, or in Christ. If you are in Adam, you are on your road to hell; if you are in Christ, you are on your road to glory. Do not forget this, that a Christian is a man who has a title to glory without a flaw, and a prospect before him without a cloud. The title is the blood of Jesus, and the prospect is going to be with Him for

ever. What can compare with that? There is nothing in the world like it, and it may be yours now, my friend, if you will in simple faith turn to Christ.

After these lepers have got their own need satisfied, and have become enriched, they begin to think of others: "Then they said one to another, We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us: now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king's household." They want everybody else to know what they have got for themselves. Sometimes people ask me, Why do you preach the gospel? Well, simply because I cannot help it. It is a joy to share what fills one's own heart with gladness. The blessing is so great, and so sweet, that, when you have it, you will want everybody else to know it. Conversion is truly contagious: if it gets into a house, it is apt to spread all through it. Each blessed one wants to communicate the blessing to his fellow.

So the lepers wake up the porter, and the porter tells the king's household (vers. 10-12). What is the news? There is plenty of food outside, and nobody to hinder you from getting it. Oh, says the king, in his wisdom, I do not believe that: I will tell you what it is: these Syrians are very crafty: "they know we be hungry," and they have laid a trap for us: they have gone to hide in the field, and when we come out, they will

catch us alive, and get into the city. God was going to relieve these poor starving Samaritans in the moment of their deepest need, and the king thought the news too good to be true: he could not take it in. . . .

What did the king do? He did what many people are doing to-day: he sent out scouts. He could not believe the good news. And yet there were those four leprous men, with beaming faces, well fed, clothed, and happy, bearing witness to what they had found outside the city. They could each say, I got my hunger appeased, and my thirst quenched; I am rich, and I am satisfied; there is abundance left; and there is not a single soul in the camp to hinder you from getting the same as I have, for God has swept all our foes out of the field. Ah, I do not believe that, says the king; the enemies are still there, they are only hiding. At this juncture one of the king's servants says, Let us take some of those starving horses, and send a couple of scouts to see whether it be true or not. Happy idea, says the king, we will have the country scoured (vers. 13-15). Away they go all the way to Jordan—some fifty miles. It took them, I suppose, six hours to go, and the same to return, so that they put off their blessing by about twelve hours at any rate.

People now are doing just the same thing. They do not believe God's good news. They do not believe that God is giving salvation without money and without price. But, thank God, there are

some who will believe it. Do you believe that God loved you enough to give His own Son for you, and that Christ has died for you? The moment you believe that, God gives you the salvation of your soul.

The scouts go off all the way to Jordan, and the people are waiting anxiously to hear the news. They had heard the truth hours before from the lepers, but they did not receive it: they were not the authorised, recognised heralds: but when these tired-out messengers come back, they just confirm the message of the lepers, and out go the people to find the reality for themselves. "And the people went out, and spoiled the tents of the Syrians. So a measure of fine flour was sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, according to the word of the Lord" (ver. 16). This is what souls have said to me often: I have been all my life in darkness, and now when I have come to the Saviour, I find it exactly as it was told: I have been all these years without salvation, and peace, through unbelief.

And now see the doom of the doubting lord. The word of the prophet came true. The king appointed this lord to be over the gate, and the people in their hurry to get to the food trod upon him, so that he died—died in sight of the relief that had come to the beleaguered city. The fate of the unbeliever is always dreadful. He had said: "Behold, if the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be?" And

the servant of God answered solemnly: "Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, *but shalt not eat thereof.*"

Now, my unbelieving friend, dwelling in your cold scepticism, untouched, unregenerate, and saying, I do not believe a man can be saved that way, beware lest this come upon you, to see God's salvation with thine eyes, and yet have no share in it. By-and-by, when the Lord returns, and gathers up His own into glory, then, if still in unbelief, you will know, when it is too late, that the gospel was true, and that the way of salvation was plain, and simple; that it was not to him that worketh, but to him that believeth, that salvation came by the free sovereign grace of God. But, alas! it will be too late: "Thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof." I do not doubt that as the sacks of flour passed through the gate, this hungry lord said to himself, "I shall have my turn presently." But he did not get his turn: he died under the judgment of God in the very sight of salvation, "for the people trode upon him in the gate, and he died" (ver. 20). Oh, do not you be like him; turn to God, believe in Jesus, and get God's salvation now.

"O say, hast thou been to the Saviour,
Who life everlasting will give?
He asks nothing hard of thee, sinner,
'Tis only to *trust Him, and live!*"

"NOBODY NEVER TOLD ME."



PASSING near an encampment of gipsies, I went in amongst them. Whilst buying some of the skewers they were making, I learned that one of their number was ill, and begged to be allowed to see him.

The father asked, "Did you want to talk religion to him?" "No," I said. "What then?" "About Christ."

"Oh, then you may go in: only if you talk religion to him, I'll set my dog on you."

In the large gipsy tent I found a lad alone, and in bed, evidently at the far end of the last stage of consumption. His eyes were closed, and he looked as one almost dead. Very slowly in his ear I repeated the scripture, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John iii. 16). I repeated it five times without any apparent response, and I thought he did not seem to hear. On my repeating it for the sixth time, he opened his eyes slowly and smiled. To my delight he whispered: "And I never thanked Him! but *nobody never told me!* I'll turn Him many thanks: only a poor gipsy chap! I see! I see! I thank Him kindly!" He closed his eyes with an expression of intense satisfaction. And as I knelt beside him I thanked God. The

lips moved again. I caught, "That's it." There were more words, but I could not hear them.

On going the next day, I found the lad had died (or rather had fallen asleep in Christ) eleven hours after I had left. His father said he had been very "peaceable," and had a "tidy death." There was no Bible or Testament in the encampment: I left one of each. The poor men wished me "good luck," and gave me a little bundle of skewers the "boy Jemmy" had made.

It was apparently the first time this boy ever heard of God's salvation, and with unquestioning faith *he took God at His word*, and with his dying lips thanked Him, that He "so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." God is satisfied with the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ: this dying lad was also satisfied, and this mutual satisfaction was instant and everlasting salvation. And eleven short hours afterwards he exchanged that forlorn, cheerless tent for the paradise of God, where he is tasting that God is as good as His word. If *you*, reader, have not with your heart yet "accepted" God's way of saving *lost sinners*, you are on the verge of that death which God calls "eternal." But "the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men." Will you walk past it, to the "great white throne of judgment" lying ahead of you, and thence to the fire that "never shall be quenched"? or will you pause and take

it—take salvation now—and “return Him many thanks,” as that poor lad did?

“While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

Can you say, “He loved me and gave himself for me”? See Him as your substitute, for there is life in a look.

“You say that a man can know that his sins are forgiven! No, never. If a man were pure as the running stream, or white as the driven snow, he might; but for mortal man to know that his sins are forgiven is presumption.” So said a man to one who had been urging that sin was forgiven once and for ever through the Blood of the Atonement. But is it so?

Hear what God's book says:—“There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. viii. 1). “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions” (Isa. xlv. 22). “Justified freely by his grace” (Rom. iii. 24). “Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more” (Heb. x. 17).

“Weary, weary, who can give me rest?

Weary, weary, who can give me rest?

Hark! it is thy Saviour calling,

Sweet and low His voice is falling,

Anxious and distress,

Christ can give Thee rest!

Sinful, sinful, who can make me clean?

Sinful, sinful, who can make me clean?

Hark! it is thy Saviour pleading,

Wilt thou pass Him by unheeding?

Sinful though thy past has been,

Christ can make thee clean!”

ANON.

MONEY.



"POOR, wretched, miserable," gasped out the dying man, and he was gone.

When a lad he had resolved to be rich. Prosperity had rolled in upon him. Everything he touched had turned to gold. He had made money like hay.

Eighty-one years old when he died, and they say he was worth almost untold wealth.

At the last moment he had beckoned to his business partner, who was at his bedside. To catch the feeble utterance of the old man, he had had to stoop down, and put his ear to his mouth, and this was the last business communication of the dying millionaire. "Poor, wretched, miserable!"

One can imagine the sense of utter loneliness that took possession of the dying man's soul, as he felt he was leaving all his gains, and going into God's presence unprepared. Would that we could have sung softly in his dying ear—

"When the gain thou hast hoarded is slipping from thy grasp,

When thou standest needy and alone ;

When thy cold hand no longer the wonted props can clasp,

Oh ! who will listen to thy moan ?

THERE IS ONE—the Friend of the friendless—

JESUS, JESUS saith, ' Come unto me.'

None other friend but Jesus can e'er thy Saviour be,

O sinner ! Jesus calleth thee."

Yes, many a man has sold his soul for money. Said a Lancashire millowner, "If God Almighty will give me another hundred thousand pounds, I will willingly be damned for ever." Shocking words!

Yet it is not always for great stakes that men run the risk of eternal damnation.

Judas Iscariot sold his Lord for thirty pieces of silver—thirty paltry pieces of silver. Foul, dark deed! Conscience awoke at last, even in his dark breast, where the blackness of hell itself was brooding. Into the presence of the High Priests he thrust himself, flung the money, for which his avarice had tempted him to sell his Lord, at their feet, and the double-dyed hypocrite went out and hanged himself, and went—as Scripture puts it—to his own place—the place his deeds merited—hell. Balaam, too, the hireling prophet, sold his soul for the wages of unrighteousness. Thousands have done the same.

Yet it is not always for money that people barter away their priceless souls. It may be a ball dress, the billiard cue, the beer pot, the lusts of the flesh, political fame, the trashy novel, or even a CHRISTLESS religion. As you read this, ask yourself the question, What am I selling my soul for? I care not what it is. The bargain is short-sighted, and you will be the eternal loser in the lake of fire.

Unconverted reader, wake up, you are lost. Your sins have ruined you. Hell is the awful

end of the road you are travelling. You have no bright prospect after death. **YOU NEED SALVATION.** God wants to save you, and bless you for ever.

Well, if money played its wretched part in the death of Jesus, so did love. If base, sordid avarice tempted Judas to sell his soul for thirty pieces of silver, and if hatred against Christ made the High Priests stoop to such a truckling of justice, thank God, we can say of Jesus—

“ His errand to the earth was love,
To wretches such as we !
To pluck us from the jaws of Death,
Nailed to th' accursed tree.’

But you must look past Judas' act, the brutality of the soldiers, the selling of justice on the part of Pilate. We must see that Christ willingly stepped into the sinner's place, that God forsook His Son on the cross, that there He suffered the penalty due to sin, that there His precious, atoning blood was shed, that there God's righteousness was satisfied, and that God can now therefore in justice forgive the vilest sinner, who comes pleading alone the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and His atoning blood.

And this salvation, wrought out at such infinite cost, is free—free as the air you breathe—“ without money and without price.”

Look at that richly clad captain as he drives his chariot along. Who is he, and what is he doing? It is Naaman, Syria's successful and

valiant general. The brilliant uniform hides a loathsome leper beyond the help of man. No doctors can meet his awful case. Fit picture of my unconverted reader! He is bound for the humble cottage of Israel's prophet, where he hopes to get healing.

What is that which makes his chariot wheels drag so heavily? MONEY! Look into his chariot, see what he is bringing. Ten talents of silver, 6,000 pieces of gold, ten changes of raiment.

A pretty big doctor's fee, at the smallest computation equal to £15,000; and considering the relative value of money then, equal to £150,000 at the very least. Is his money taken? Does the humble prophet of God enrich himself at the expense of the great captain? Nay, though urged to take it, he refused.

And shall the same God, who cleansed the leper for nothing, make a charge to you for salvation?

Nay, it is too priceless to sell, and we have nought wherewith to buy. What can we give to merit it? Will the money of tears, of almsgiving, of good works, of turning over a new leaf, satisfy God? Never!

You have nothing to do—ALL has been done. Jesus cried on the cross, "IT IS FINISHED." Would you insult God by adding to a finished work?

Let me give you an incident occurring not many months ago.

A young lady remained at the close of a gospel

meeting to be spoken to personally about her soul's salvation.

She said to me, "I have heard them say in the village that you preach that we don't need to pray for salvation. I can't understand such strange doctrine. I always thought we ought to pray earnestly for salvation." She was deeply in earnest, tears were freely coursing their way down her cheeks as she said this.

I replied, "You see this Bible in my hand. It was given to me by a dear friend. Now suppose when he offered it to me as a free gift, I fell upon my knees, and earnestly prayed him to give it to me in language like this, 'Oh! Mr So-and-so, do give me that Bible; I know it is far too good for me, and I am not worthy of it; but do give it to me, and I will try to merit it.'

"And when again he pressed upon me the gift, I burst into tears, and still more earnestly pleaded for the Bible. What would you think of such conduct as that?"

The young lady replied, "I would think you were mad, or that you were insulting him."

"Exactly," I replied; "and that is the way many people are doing with God, when they earnestly pray month after month for salvation. They don't mean to insult God, but nevertheless that is what they are doing. 'THE GIFT OF GOD is eternal life.' 'Without money and without price' are the gospel terms."

'In words something like these we talked her

difficulty over, and the result was, thank God, that she accepted salvation as a free gift from God that very evening.

The Scriptures are so plain upon the point. Not a tear, not a prayer is asked. No doubt when the sinner feels the burden of his guilt, as indeed he should, the tear of repentance may fall. But the tear of repentance no more gains salvation than the fact of a man feeling ill makes him well. When he feels ill he sends for a doctor; and so when the needy sinner feels oppressed with the burden of his guilt, he looks about for a Saviour, for he cannot save himself, or even **HELP** to save himself.

To wait till he is better is far more foolish than a sick man waiting till he has recovered before he sends for the doctor. **NAY, MORE, YOU CANNOT MAKE YOURSELF BETTER.** "They that are in the flesh cannot please God." "Without faith it is impossible to please God." Religious flesh can no more please God than sinful flesh. Nothing but pride keeps the sinner back from trusting Christ alone, and finding in Him all his salvation. "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom. v. 6).

Ah! reader, believe that God is a giving God, delighting in mercy, willing to save you this moment, and dismiss all your low thoughts of Him, and your exalted ideas of your own ability to do even a hair's breadth towards your salvation.

"If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord

Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be **SAVED**" (Rom. x. 9).

And then saved, and knowing it on the authority of God's imperishable word, it will be your happy privilege to spend and be spent in the Master's service. Then there will be ample scope for good works and devotedness to Christ. For instance, David prepared gifts, computed at £1,500,000,000, for the Temple at Jerusalem. The last recorded offering is the widow's two mites, precious in God's sight, for it was all her living. Between the million and the mite there is ample room for the richest and the poorest Christian to show their devotedness, though there are many more ways of showing it than that of giving money.

Good works before salvation cannot procure salvation, and good works after salvation do not merit it, but are the evidence of faith in God, the mark of one whose life is linked up with a risen Saviour in glory, and who seeks to please the One who has redeemed him.

Salvation is free, bestowed by the absolute sovereignty of God upon the believing sinner as a free gift, when there is not one spark of grace on his side to merit it.

"The Lord's on the throne, God has raised up His Son,—
He could not be there if the work were not done ;
But now that it is, just "*Believe on the Son,*"
And glory is certain for thee."

NEAR; BUT MISSED IT.



—

“WAS once in a certain place, where several people were getting what you call ‘converted.’ Indeed, I was within the toss of a halfpenny of being converted myself; but it all passed off again, and I have never been troubled with those kind of feelings since.”

So spake a fashionable lady as she sat at dinner with an officer in the army, as gay and thoughtless as herself. Alas! to be so close to the blessing, and yet to miss it! If that lady should ever reach eternal perdition, what unutterable remorse will the memory of those flippant words bring her? “Within the toss of a halfpenny of being converted!” Whatever her words might have really meant, they left the heart-saddening impression that she had been once amongst the “*almost persuaded*.” But there had been no *real* work wrought in her soul. Felix “trembled,” but it only made him wish to get away from the searching light of the truth—“judgment to come.” “Go thy way for *this time*; when I have a ‘convenient season I will call for thee,” were words which made only too apparent his true condition. But we are not told that he ever “trembled” again under the Word of God, or ever found “the convenient season” he presumed upon.

“Near to the door, and the door stood wide,
Close to the port, but not inside ;
Almost persuaded to give up sin,
Almost persuaded to enter in ;
Almost persuaded to count the cost,
Almost a Christian, and yet lost.”

A Christian man still lives in the North of England, who was once as near to damnation as the lady just spoken of was near to salvation. He had spent all, at least to his last halfpenny. How should he spend that? He was despairingly miserable at the moment. But could he not find a short way out of it? “Oh, yes,” whispered his old master, “you have just got enough to pay the bridge-toll. Pay your halfpenny, and jump from the bridge into the river below, and end your misery.” He obeyed. The solitary coin was paid, the bridge was reached. Now for it! *End your misery!* But wait, whispered another voice, *will it end your misery?* “AFTER DEATH THE JUDGMENT.” Jumping into the jaws of Death will not end your misery. It was enough. He fled from the bridge. God had spoken; his precious soul was ultimately saved, and to-day he is a rejoicing Christian.

Truly, if we may use the poor worldling's words, he was literally within the “toss of a halfpenny” of eternal damnation, yet, through grace, he missed it, and his old master missed him. Thrice happy he!

Are you aware, my reader, that you are getting

perilously near—not, perhaps, to your last half-penny, but to your last half-hour of Gospel opportunity? Have you yet seen nothing in Christ to attract you? Nothing in your own deep need to drive you to Him? Well, remember, as a general rule, people die as they live; and that SALVATION MISSED is DAMNATION REACHED. If you continue in your sins, EARTH ONCE LEFT IS HEAVEN EVER LOST.

Are you longing for deliverance, sighing for peace? The precious blood of Christ is all you need for a guilty, upbraiding conscience; His changeless love is enough for the cravings of an aching breast.

"Behold, *now* is the accepted time; behold, *now* is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. vi. 2). "Be it known unto you . . . that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things" (Acts xiii. 38, 39).

"Almost persuaded," come, come to-day;
 "Almost persuaded," turn not away,
 Jesus invites you here,
 Angels are lingering near,
 Prayers rise from hearts so dear;
 O Wanderer, come!

"Almost persuaded," harvest is past!
 "Almost persuaded," doom comes at last!
 "Almost" cannot avail;
 "Almost" is but to fail!
 Sad, sad, that bitter wail—
 "Almost"—BUT LOST.

BELSHAZZAR AND HIS BANQUET.*

PART I.

(Read DANIEL v.)



OD always warns before He judges. He is giving you your warning to-night, friend. You will do well to be wiser than Belshazzar. He had his warning, but did not heed it; nevertheless he had it. Had he heeded it, I think

it might have ended differently with him, because God, although He does judge, loves mercy. Scripture calls judgment "his strange work" (Isa. xxviii. 21). He loves mercy, He loves blessing. He loves to bless the soul. Do you suppose, friend, that God wants to judge you? No, it is the last thing in His heart; but, if you refuse to be blessed by Him, you must be judged.

Now of all the night scenes in Scripture I think this in the fifth Daniel one of the most suggestive and striking, because it shows the way in which God can step into a scene where man is doing his very best to make himself happy without God, and what the effect of the intrusion is. Here we see Belshazzar doing his best to insult and defy Him. And mark this, my friend, Belshazzar is not the only man who has openly insulted God in the way

* From "Night Scenes of Scripture"—A Night in a Palace.

that this chapter describes. It is a scene of the most daring impiety the eye could possibly rest upon, and when Belshazzar defies God, He as it were rises, and says, We will see who is the greater. Friend, if you are on the road of impiety, sin, carelessness, and opposition to God and His grace, you had better learn the lesson from this chapter, that the man who resists God always gets the worst of it. What God wants is your salvation. He wants your blessing. He desires to bring you into touch with Himself in the day of His grace, for, I repeat, judgment is "his strange work."

Now look at this scene. "Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand" (ver. 1). It must have been a marvellous assembly. The banquet took place in one of the many palaces which adorned the city regarded as the mistress of the earth. Babylon stood on a broad plain, and was exactly square. Its walls ran fifteen miles in each direction, were 300 feet high, 75 feet broad, and pierced by a hundred brazen gates, with lintels and side-posts of brass. The broad river Euphrates divided the city into two parts as it ran through its midst, the river banks being faced with burnt brick, and brazen gates closed the streets which ran at right angles to the river and dipped into the water. Brazen gates, dipping low, also guarded the opening in the walls through which the river glided. Thus defended, Babylon thought herself impregnable. It was a city where all the gaiety, the godlessness, and the

luxury that man could possibly surround himself with were gathered together. The king and the inhabitants thought themselves proof against every power, either heavenly or earthly. But they were mistaken, for they had forgotten God, and He had said by one servant, one hundred and fifty years before, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen" (Isa. xxi. 9); and a hundred years later had predicted the manner of the fall: "One post shall run to meet another, and one messenger to meet another, to show the king of Babylon that his city is taken at one end" (Jer. li. 31).

Little did Belshazzar the king regard God, or trouble his head with His predictions—on the eve of fulfilment—the day that he "made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand." History says it was an annual feast. Of that I am not certain, but Scripture tells us that it was a feast marked by daring impiety on the part of "Belshazzar, whiles he tasted the wine." Many a man has been led to ruin through wine. Whisky will do quite as well. Many a man, many a woman, has made his, or her bed in hell, if not through wine, through whisky. Ah, friend! are you a whisky-lover—a wine-lover? Let Belshazzar warn you. There is no pravity to which the soul will not descend that gets under the influence of strong drink. Its victims worship it, while it damns them. I met a woman a little while ago, in this town, in a stair in College Street, as I passed up to see a sick child. I was led to speak

to her about her soul. She listened quietly for a minute or two, and then when I said, "Would you not like to go to heaven?" she nervously said, "Is there any whisky there?" "No," I replied, "and there is no water in hell." She was perfectly sober when she spoke, but it was a revelation as to what governed her. My negative surprised her evidently, and the statement as to hell startled her. Good would it be for every lover of strong drink if it were borne in mind.

"Belshazzar, whiles he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father (or grandfather) Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, might drink therein. Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem; and the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, drank in them. They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone" (vers. 2-4), and they thought they had done bravely, doubtless. But what had they done? I will tell you. Belshazzar had flung down the gauntlet before the eye of God. The bringing into that feast of the golden vessels, which were taken from "the temple of the house of God," was tantamount to saying to Jehovah: "My gods are better than you. My gods helped the men who took your golden vessels, and brought them here." That is what he meant. These golden

vessels, brought from the house of the Lord, in the days of Nebuchadnezzar, were exhibited as trophies of the Babylonian victory over Jehovah's people, and therefore over Jehovah.

But who was the king of Babylon? What was this Nebuchadnezzar but the whip that the Lord had selected and used to chastise His guilty and law-breaking people Israel? A hundred years before He had said: "O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so. . . . Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks" (Isa. x. 5, 6, 7, 12). God raised up Nebuchadnezzar for that purpose. He was the head of gold in the remarkable figure which you read of in the second chapter of this Book of Daniel, and God used him to punish His chosen earthly people, who had departed from Him. All men wondered when they learned that Jehovah had allowed His temple to be razed to the ground, and His holy vessels to be carried to Babylon.

The lesson to be learned from this is, that God will never be a party to hypocrisy, nor will He maintain His people in a false condition. He

knows how to take care of His own glory, even though His people utterly fail, so He allows the vessels of His earthly sanctuary to be carried into captivity; but when Belshazzar, intoxicated with wine, flaunts in the face of Jehovah these trophies of victory, as a sort of indication that the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone, were those who had helped in the victories, and won these trophies, and thus, you see, insulted God to His very face, then God takes up the gauntlet.

Ah, my careless, worldly, sin-loving friend, you may not defy God in the same way perhaps as Belshazzar. You may not be running full tilt against God in exactly the same way as this impious king did, but are you not following dangerously in his track?

Without doubt the wine had begun to circulate, and had inflamed Belshazzar's mind ere he gave the order that wrought his ruin. "They that be drunken, are drunken in the night," we are told (1 Thess. v. 7), and that this was a night scene is unmistakable from the statement that "in the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote"; and also that "in that night was Belshazzar king of the Chaldeans slain" (vers. 5, 30). In the middle of the festivity, when all is gay and bright, and hilarity and impiety are at their height, all of a sudden

God steps in. Now every one knows the utter collapse of everything worldly when God comes in. Bring the Lord into a scene of worldliness, and what is the effect? He spoils it. Solemn thought! It is the effect of sin, and the answer of conscience regarding God as an intruder. How does He intrude here? "In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote." It was only part of a hand, but the king saw it. The light of the candlestick shone on it, the eye of the impious monarch was arrested by it, and in a moment that man's conscience awoke with the sense, The eye of God is upon me. Do not forget, my friends, that God has His eye upon you too.

Belshazzar recognises the hand of God as he sees those fingers writing his doom on the plaister of his own palace. What is the result? "The king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another" (ver. 6). He is frightened. His conscience is reached. It is a blessed thing when a man's conscience gets divinely reached. Has your conscience ever been reached? Come, friend, now frankly and honestly own, has your conscience ever been reached? And have you ever been convicted of your sins against God? Oh, you say, we are all poor sinners. I do not call you a poor sinner.

God calls you a guilty sinner. Possibly you are a hardened sinner, even an impious, sacrilegious sinner. Oh, but you say, I have not sinned like Belshazzar. Are you sure of that? Belshazzar made light of the Lord. So have you, my friend, and your guilt is great, for "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God," Scripture says.

You may not have been mixed up in a scene of revelry and devilry as manifestly as Belshazzar and his guests were, but "as in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man" (Prov. xxvii. 19). The devil was the spirit that ruled that feast. They were all pleasing themselves, but the devil was behind them all. You have been pleasing yourself, and the devil has been working behind us all, for Satan is the god of this world. Are you aware how Satan has ruled you, governed you? The man who does his own will is in the service of Satan. The man who does his own will is but the property and the slave of Satan. Therefore our Lord said, "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, *his goods are in peace*" (Luke xi. 21). The strong man is the devil; his armour "the pleasures of sin"; his palace the world; and his goods sinners in their sins. Possibly you do not believe that. I do. Of course the devil will not let you believe this solemn fact if he can help it. He keeps his goods in peace—false peace—till it be too late to get God's peace. Belshazzar pleased himself, and so have you. So did I until Christ met and saved me. That is what He wants to do for you. Will you let Him?

The king saw the part of the hand, and his conscience, although seared by depravity, was reached, for the moment. What was written on the plaister, was perfectly plain, since it was written in Chaldee characters, but the king nevertheless did not understand the import. Blinded by the god of this world, whose utter slave he was—as is every man till God illuminates his heart—writing in his own language failed to convey to his mind any definite sense of what was meant, though he trembled before the hand that wrote his doom. He felt instinctively that One whom he had impiously defied had him in hand.

God was giving Belshazzar his warning ere He judged him. He does the same now, in the day of His grace, ere judgment arrives. He is on the pathway of blessing now, in the gospel, and is saving, not judging. His blessed Son has lived on earth, accomplished redemption, and gone up into glory; and the Holy Ghost has come down to tell the tale that God is now seeking to bring men to believe in, receive, and exalt Him. That is what God is doing now. Judgment is not His work at this moment. He warns men that He may awaken and save them.

I believe God is giving you your warning just now. I wish I saw your "countenance change." I have often seen such a change in a meeting like this; many a careless, worldly, sin-loving man has come into a meeting like this, and the arrow of conviction has entered his conscience, and he has

learned he is a sinner on the road to hell, and his countenance has changed. The night I was converted—and I am not ashamed to admit it—my countenance changed so much that a lady labelled me as a man of five-and-forty, when I was not half that age. Why? Because I looked serious; and thank God, I felt it. I was a convicted sinner—an awakened man—an anxious soul—a man in the travail of the new birth. I saw I was a man hurrying on the road to hell, and that if God cast me into hell, it would be a perfectly righteous action. God grant that you, young man, and you, young woman, may have your “countenance changed” and your thoughts troubled. I should like to see it. Think of the lost opportunities of your life; look at the whole period of guilt and sin in your history of rebellion against God.

Little wonder that Belshazzar’s “thoughts troubled him.” In a moment the past came up, with its memories of godlessness; the future loomed darkly before him. The eye and hand of God were on him, and he knew it, and “the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another.” He was profoundly moved, deeply alarmed, and thoroughly wretched, for the moment. Have you ever in your history passed through an experience of this kind, when your countenance changed, your thoughts troubled you, and your knees knocked one against the other? Yes, God was speaking to Belshazzar then, and He is speaking to you to-night. I am certain He is

speaking the voice of warning to you, my friend, and your eternal destiny may hang on this night's meeting.

So alarmed was Belshazzar, that, forgetful of kingly dignity, in his anxiety to understand the writing, he "cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers" (ver. 7). There were plenty of them in Babylon, so they were brought in. "And the king spake, and said to the wise men of Babylon, Whosoever shall read this writing, and show me the interpretation thereof, shall be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom." Why the third ruler? Because Belshazzar was the second ruler. His father was in reality the king, but he was not in Babylon at that moment, and Belshazzar was in joint kingship with him.

The king got no help from his wise men. "Then came in all the king's wise men: but they could not read the writing, nor make known to the king the interpretation thereof" (ver. 8). A spirit of deep sleep was on them; every eye seemed closed to the truth, and the offer of the highest reward produced no effect. "Then was king Belshazzar greatly troubled, and his countenance was changed in him, and his lords were astonished" (ver. 9). Tremendous was the effect made upon this godless man. We rejoice when sinners are impressed, aroused, troubled, and yet more deeply troubled. The devil, however, is always keen and anxious to

get these impressions removed, and in the case before us, I do not think the effect was long-lasting. It is fear, not of God, but of the consequences of sin, that sometimes affects men in this way—fear produced on a death-bed—pure fear of hell, and damnation.

But, you say, some men turn to the Lord on their death-bed. I do not deny it. But who gives you the assurance that after you have spent your life in the service of sin, and after you have lived only for this world, to the utter neglect of eternity, that you will be able to turn to the Lord at the twelfth hour, and have all settled up? Take warning, Belshazzar died that night, and you may die this night.

At this juncture, in the midst of the still increasing alarm of the king, and the bewilderment of his lords, a friend comes into the banqueting-hall in the person of the queen (the queen-mother most probably, see vers. 2 and 10). She had evidently taken no part in the feast, but “by reason of the words of the king and his lords, came into the banquet-house.” Clearly she kept aloof from this scene of sacrilege and devilry. She was outside it, and there was one more outside than herself, the man of whom she can now speak. She comes and says to the king in verse 10, “O king, *live for ever.*” What a delusive wish! Poor man, he died that night. And you, my friend, may not have many hours before you. Death, that terrible archer, has his arrow fitted to the bow to-night,

and ere the morning that arrow may have sped its way, found a target in thy heart, and the morning light may find thee gone.

W. T. P. W.

(To be continued.)

WHO CAN TELL?



WHO CAN TELL *a man what shall be after him under the sun?* was a question asked long ago. Well, it might be interesting to know, but it would be of little use. A question of greater importance is, "What shall happen to him when he is gone?"

A man lay dying; his lawyer was at his side, and his will was made, in which were special instructions as to the disposal of his house. Business settled at last, he was left alone with his family.

"Father," said his little daughter, "you are leaving this house, where are you going to live?"

A very natural question, but "who can tell?" he had said in health, and now, at the portal of a lost eternity, he could not answer.

I met a young fellow the other day who had moved about the world a good deal. "Where do you intend to go next?" I asked.

"Oh! I am going to stay here," he replied.

"What! for ever?" I again asked.

He was startled; he had not thought of it, and did not know where he would go when time had ceased to be for him, and his soul had passed into the great forever. "Nobody can tell," he remarked.

One thing is certain, my reader, that you, along with others, must go. The wisest man of ages gone by wrote: "There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit: neither hath he power in *the day of death*: and there is no discharge in that war; neither shall wickedness deliver those that are given to it" (Eccles. viii. 8). Now, the truth of these words you cannot deny. You are here to-day, but you may be gone to-morrow. But where? is the great question. One of the nineteenth century philosophers said: "There are three things that every man ought to know—

"1st. Where he is.

"2nd. Where he is going.

"3rd. What is the best thing to do under the circumstances."

He could not have put it better, and I should say, the man who does not know these things is lamentably ignorant, though he be possessed of all the learning of the universities.

But *who can tell*? God's Word alone. Ephesians ii. 14 tells us of some who were "*far off*." If you are Christless, my reader, this is where you are. John iii. 18 tells us of some who are under condemnation, and the 36th verse speaks of those

upon whom the "wrath of God" abides. Oh! unconverted friend, where art thou?

But again, Where are you going? "To hell," was the honest answer I got to this question the other day. Yes, solemnly true it is that many are travelling the broad road to the everlasting flames. But what will you answer to this question? Can you tell where you are going? One thing is certain, it is either

"To join the song of the ransomed throng,
Or the wail of dark despair."

If Christless, then it is the latter; for there is but one Person who can bar hell's gates against you. That Person is Jesus, and you are a stranger to Him. His blood alone can open heaven's gates, and give you a clear title to yonder realms of eternal song, but you know nothing of its cleansing virtue.

Now face these awful facts. *You are a guilty sinner, afar from God, under condemnation, and going to hell.* What think you is the best to do under the circumstances? Not to be occupied with trifles surely. If I were a prisoner condemned to die, and on the eve of the day of execution, I should not trouble my brain as to the state of the markets—I should not be putting my money on the favourite horse. No, with feverish excitement I should await the result of the petition which had been got up in my favour, and the question would be, Shall I get a free pardon to-morrow, or hang at

the gibbet? And if you are a condemned sinner, in danger of perishing eternally, surely the best thing to do is to seek to escape from your peril, yes, **ESCAPE FOR THY LIFE.**

But is there a way of escape? Thank God, there is! In the great love of His heart, He has provided a Saviour—One who was able to accomplish the work of redemption. He says, "Deliver him from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom" (Job xxiii. 24). That ransom is Jesus. He died on the cross for sinners, and rose triumphant from the grave. He is now crowned with glory at God's right hand, and faith in that living Saviour saves. Is it your sins that trouble you? "His blood cleanseth from all sin" (1 John i. 7). Is it the judgment to come that makes you afraid? "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but is passed from death unto life" (John v. 24). Would you like to change your "far off" position for a near one? To-day you can "be made nigh by the blood of his cross" (Eph. ii. 13).

Delay no longer. Make sure that Christ is yours to-day.

"The Saviour, Christ the Lord
'Mid guilty sinners came,
Maintained the truth of God,
Bore grief, reproach, and shame :
Unwearied in His love, His grace,
He took the guilty sinner's place."

J. T. M.

"NO TIME TO WASTE."



HAD no idea that night when God awakened me that I was listening to a sermon, preached purposely, against the evangelistic meetings being held in the town, or I would not have gone to the one I found peace at the night fol-

lowing."

The foregoing is in substance the comment G—— made to some Christians on learning, shortly after he was saved, that his minister's sermon the previous Lord's Day night had been preached in opposition to the blessed work of God then going on in the town, and at which he had got *assurance* of salvation; though the fact could not be denied that God, who is "sovereign," really used part of his minister's ill-designed sermon to awaken him to the need of getting "ready to MEET GOD." But for that awakening, he would not have gone to the meeting where he found peace, as he had no desire for anything religious beyond the mere form of attending the church of his forefathers on Sundays, and paying that respect to his minister that he judged due to one occupying so sacred a position.

The "work of God" referred to had been going on for a few weeks in a small Scotch town. Gospel addresses had been given nightly by an earnest evangelist with great power, and souls

were getting saved at every meeting. Some of the ministers in the town lent both their presence and help in the good work, while one or two others kept entirely aloof. One of the latter (some of whose flock had got saved at these meetings), took for his text on the night referred to Matt. xiii. 31, 32—"The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds; but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come, and lodge in the branches thereof."

During his exposition, he made some remarks to the following effect:—

"We learn from this parable that the 'kingdom of heaven' is a very *small thing* in its *beginning*, so small that it is scarcely perceptible *in the heart* in which it is sown. This shows us how *impossible* it is for any one to be *positive* he has become the 'subject of grace' until a considerable time has elapsed after the deposit of the seed in the soul. In fact, it is questionable if any one since apostolic times could make themselves *certain* on that matter *in this world*. True, we do read of a few in the Bible, such as Paul, who had that certainty at times, but these were exceptions, and for special reasons was this assurance given to these select individuals.

"Now, what are we to think of the audacity of many we hear of in these days, and at present in our own town, who, we are told, went into a meet-

ing utterly godless, and come out at the finish *full-grown* Christians, able to say they *were* saved? What a contradiction is all this to the parable before us! Think on the time it would take for the smallest of all seeds to grow to the large mustard-tree of the East; and yet we are asked to believe by itinerant preachers of the present day that the seed of the 'kingdom of heaven' can be planted in a man's heart, and go through all the successive stages of growth, till he become a *full-grown* Christian with *assurance*—all within an hour or so.

"No, my brethren, the thing is against all reason, as well as against the teaching of our Lord in this parable. Instead of being carried away by these excitable and sensational fallacies, let us 'apply our hearts unto wisdom,' and seek to avail ourselves of every means of grace afforded us; for be assured there is really no time to waste if we want to escape hell and gain heaven.

"It may be the seed of the kingdom has been planted in our hearts when very young—perhaps at baptism or our mother's knee. But what have we been doing with the seed? Have we been diligently cultivating the soil in which it was sown, by reading the Bible, attending to public and family worship, partaking of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, giving to home and foreign missions, and helping on every good work? Depend upon it, my brethren, we need to be 'up and doing,' if we want to be true Christians. A man's

life at the longest is but short to *prepare* him for the '*life to come*.'

"If any of you feel you have not lived in the past as you should have done, there is all the more need to give yourself to it now in real *earnest*, for again I say, '*there is no time to lose*.' 'Avail yourselves of every means of grace.' If we 'go on living in carelessness, in the hope that we can become a full-grown Christian within an hour, and thus be fit to meet God, we make a great mistake."

Now, what was the effect of this remarkable sermon on the heart and conscience of G——? He was completely arrested by the latter part of it. The former part—text as well—like all the sermons he had ever heard, went over his head as if it had never been uttered. But when the minister said, "There is no time to waste if we want to *escape* hell, and *gain* heaven," he was divinely arrested, and was held spell-bound to the finish, feeling most keenly what a dreadful failure his whole past life had been; how it had been wasted in sin and folly; and instead of attending to all the "means of grace" within his reach, he had attended to none, save going to church on Sundays. He went home with a very sad heart, almost despairing of ever being able to make up for lost time.

He lay in bed that night thinking over his minister's words, "There is no time to waste if we want to escape hell and gain heaven," and "life at

the longest is but short to prepare for the life to come."

"Will it be worth while," he said to himself, "to attempt being a Christian now? Yes, I must try it, for I cannot make up my mind to be *lost for ever*. The minister said, 'if we had not lived a right life in the past, we might by greater earnestness become true Christians yet!' So, by God's help, I will now attend to 'every means of grace,' and thus do my best to escape the hell that I fear I should be sent to, if I was called to meet God in my present state."

As he had fortunately missed the evil *design* of the sermon, and learned the day following there was to be a gospel preaching that night in the hall where the evangelistic meetings were held, he was fully determined he would not miss it, nor any such meetings, remembering well the exhortation of his minister to "avail ourselves of *every means* of grace."

At eight o'clock that night he was found for the first time in a meeting of the kind, eager to hear all the preacher had to say, who took for his text, "Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. vi. 2).

The preacher went into his subject with an earnestness that at once arrested the attention of his already anxious hearer. If ever two sermons, both in their *object* and *substance*, were diametrically opposed to each other, they were those G—— listened to these two successive nights.

He drew special attention to the word "NOW," twice repeated in his text, showing that the poor sinner who believed in the Lord Jesus was a *possessor* of salvation "NOW." He further showed there was *no other way* of getting saved than through Christ; for there was "no other name given among men whereby we *must* be saved," but the name of Jesus (Acts iv. 12). And to *despise* or *neglect* this salvation, which is now offered to all by free grace, would land all who did so in the "lake of fire" for ever (Heb. ii. 3; Acts xiii. 41). "Those who were trying," he further said, "like the Jews, to work out a 'righteousness of *their own*,' in the hope that God could accept them on that ground, were making a fatal mistake. Nothing we could do could ever satisfy God for the sins we had committed. So all who are saved, or ever will be, *must* be saved by the work of another, and that work the work of God's own Son, which He accomplished to the eternal satisfaction and glory of God when He died for our sins on the cross. His own words, as He bowed His head in death, '*It is finished*,' conclusively prove that there is nothing left for the poor sinner to do. How could the work of atonement be FINISHED, if it required the very *smallest* thing of ours *added* to it to complete it?"

"Then, if we want a PROOF that God is satisfied with the work of His Son, we get it in the fact that He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in heavenly glory as Man

This a *righteous* and *holy* God could not have done with the One who took the *responsibility* of all our sins and guilt upon Him if those sins had not been fully *atoned* for, and put away for ever from before His eyes.

"Further, it is from the glory where He now is that the gospel comes, proclaiming in the ears of lost, hell-deserving, and hell-bound sinners a full, free, *present*, and eternal salvation, to be received 'NOW,' where you sit—yes! *where* you are, and *as* you are!"

The preacher afterwards referred to many Scripture proofs of what "God's salvation" had done for the *worst* of sinners. "Look how it saved the repentant thief on the very *brink* of death and hell (Luke xxiii. 43). Also three thousand of the very *murderers* of Christ the first day the gospel was preached 'by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven' (Acts ii. 41; 1 Pet. i. 12). The notorious 'blasphemer' and 'persecutor,' the 'chief of sinners,' Saul of Tarsus. How the Philippian jailer got saved by it, when so miraculously wakened out of his sleep in the dead hour of the night; and all kinds of sinners since—the speaker among the rest. The proof is not wanting either that it is as effectual to-day as ever it was; for look how God has been saving souls here every night of late—many of whom are sitting before me now with the very 'joy of salvation' *expressed* in their faces.

"Now, should there be one here who is yet with-

out this '*assurance*' and 'joy of salvation,' but is anxious to have it,—thank God! he can have it 'NOW,' for 'now'—not to-morrow—'is the *accepted* time, as our text shows. To-morrow might find those who put it off till then in the torments of hell."

This, then, was in substance the gospel G—— heard that memorable Monday night. For a time he felt more bewildered than anything else. It was so contrary to all he had listened to the previous night. But there was such power and point about it that he had the distinct conviction that he was listening to a God-given message for his own soul.

As the preacher proceeded, backing up the assertions he made by quotations from the "*Word of God*," G—— became more and more enwrapt; listening as for life, till he was convinced that this "salvation" was the very thing he a poor sinner needed, and now wanted; and finally, as the speaker assured the anxious soul that it was offered to him "NOW"—and only now—he gladly closed in with the blessed offer, and got on the spot what he thought when he came into the meeting it would take a lifetime to secure—the salvation of his precious immortal soul. Blessed salvation! that can thus meet the guiltiest of Adam's fallen race, bringing with it to the heart that receives it such a *conscious knowledge* of God's wondrous love which drives from the heart all that fear that has torment which lodges in the

heart of every one in their *natural state* (1 John iv. 18, 19).

Now, blessed and happy as G—— was that night with the perfect ASSURANCE that he was saved for time and eternity through believing in Christ (Acts xvi. 31; Eph. ii. 8, 9), and even *fit*, through the blood of the Lamb, to go to heaven, should the Lord have called him hence that same night, yet he was only a "babe in Christ," and not, as his minister said on the previous night, a "full-grown Christian," *because* he had assurance.

It is the portion of the youngest believers in Christ to know that their sins *are* forgiven (1 John ii. 12; Eph. i. 7; Heb. x. 17, 18; Rev. i. 5). In fact, no one has a right to call himself a Christian who does not *know* that his sins *are* forgiven. It is not till this fact is known that we *really start* on our Christian course. From that point we are to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." From "babes in Christ" to "young men," and from "young men" to "fathers" in Christ (1 John ii. 12-14; 2 Pet. iii. 18; 1 Cor. iii. 1, 2).

In conclusion, one word of comment on the parable of the "mustard seed," as the interpretation and application in the sermon alluded to are so plausible that those who do not read God's Word for themselves might quite easily be misled. "The kingdom of heaven," as presented in *this parable*, is *not* that which is sown *in the heart*. We have that aspect of the kingdom in the first parable in the

chapter, viz., the "parable of the sower" (see Matt. xiii. 3-9). Then the Lord's interpretation of it in verses 18-23. Verse 19 distinctly says it was *sown in his heart*. Now the parable of the "mustard seed" sets forth the *planting and growth* of the "kingdom of heaven" as a religious system set up on the EARTH. Like the "mustard seed," it was very small in its beginning, being confined to those who believed in Jerusalem when Peter, who got the keys to open the kingdom, preached his first sermon on the day when the Holy Ghost was given by Christ the "King," who had now taken His place IN HEAVEN (see Matt. xvi. 19; Acts ii. 14, 47). From that small thing it has spread over a great part of the earth, embracing all Christendom, with its millions of souls. Thus has the small seed *planted* in Jerusalem grown till it has become the large tree of all Christian profession, true and false, as the parable of the ten virgins shows—"five *wise*" and "five *foolish*" (Matt. xxv. 1-13).

I have no doubt most of my readers will belong to the kingdom of heaven in its *outward* or *professing* form, but that will do no more for you than the lamp and wick did for the five foolish virgins. It was only those who *had oil* who *went in* when the bridegroom came. So will it be when the Lord comes for His people; it will only be those who have been truly "born of God" by His Spirit and Word that will be taken to glory. Will you, my reader, be one of them? Do not rest till you can say, "Yes, thank God!"

The foregoing narrative of God's dealing with G—— shows how He can and does work in carrying out His purposes of love and grace, notwithstanding all the wicked designs of the enemy to hinder poor sinners from getting the blessings that a *Saviour* God has for them.

J. M.

THANKSGIVING.

2 COR. ix. 15.



THANKS be unto God our Father
For His gift unspeakable ;
Christ His Son, His well-beloved,
Gift of love ineffable.
Thanks for full and free redemption
Through the Saviour's precious blood,
Blood that makes the vilest sinner
Meet to stand before our God.

Praise Him for His Holy Spirit,
Sent these hearts to dwell within,
Bringing joy and peace and gladness,
Vict'ry over self and sin.
And give thanks for daily mercies,
Countless as the seaside sands ;
Health and strength and food and raiment,
Gifts from God's own loving hands.

Bless Him for the gospel message
To lost sinners to proclaim ;

Telling of "so great salvation,"
God's free gift through Jesus' name.
Telling of a home in heaven,
Purchased by the Saviour's blood,
Where nor pain nor death shall enter,
And where we shall see our God.


Hallelujah ! Christ is coming,
Coming soon to claim His own ;
To behold His face in glory,
And to share with Him His throne.
Oh ! what bliss for us His ransomed !
How it makes our hearts rejoice !
Knowing that at any moment
We may hear the Bridegroom's voice.

M. S. S.

FRAGMENT.

THE certainty that God will *never* remember our sins and iniquities is founded on the steadfast will of God, on the perfect offering of Christ, now consequently seated at the right hand of God, and on the sure testimony of the Holy Ghost. It is a matter of *faith* that God will *never* remember our sins. . . . Sins being remitted, there is no more oblation for sin. The one sacrifice having *obtained* remission, no other can be offered in order to obtain it. Remembrance of this one sacrifice there may indeed be, whatever its character ; but a sacrifice to take away the sin which is already taken away there cannot be. J. N. D.

A SAILOR'S CONVERSION.



“SHALL be glad to hear of your former life,” I said; “when you first began really to think about unseen things, and to guide yourself with reference to them. I suppose there was such a beginning, and that until such beginning, your life was as really careless and prayerless as other lives. It will be instructive and helpful to me if you will just tell me, in your own words, why you wish to turn from the people of the world to the people of God.” The deep red bronze of a sea life upon a thoughtful and kindly face, bespoke the calling of the one thus questioned, and here is his reply:—

“I was as careless as I could be, until my return from my last voyage but one,” he replied; “but something that happened while I was at home was always in my thoughts; it seemed to come across me in every way, meeting me at every step, and where it was least expected. You remember old Langford, what a dirty, drunken old character he was, filthy in person and thought and speech; as griping, selfish, and unbelieving an old wretch as ever lived. I used to hate the very sight of him, crawling when sober, reeling when drunk, about the streets.”

“Your picture is as unsparing as it is true,” I replied, “but not at all coloured by gentleness of judgment.”

"I want you to see him as I saw him," he replied, with a smile, "that you may understand how he affected me. I saw you and him together one Sunday morning, when you had the great breakfast, and service afterwards. I did not want the breakfast, but intended to go and hear the preaching; and I did so. Then I saw you meet the old man, and speak kindly to him, and offer him a ticket. I heard him blackguard you for your offer; and I thought you were foolish to waste your time over such an old 'rep.' I heard you try and try again, till you got him to take the ticket and promise to come; and I thought you more foolish than ever—that you had wasted your breakfast as well as your time. I resolved to watch the old man; and I went into the great breakfast hall, and sat down behind him. I saw him receive a large bag of food and some coffee; and I saw the old man wanted it badly, by the way he ate and drank; and I pitied him, while I scorned his dirty, drunken habits. Then the service was announced, and I expected to see him get up and go out, laughing at you for your 'softness'; but he sat still, and listened to the singing, and reading, and praying that followed one another.

"Then that middle-aged man with the pleasant face came forward and began to speak, and I forgot old Langford for a little while. It was like long-forgotten music returning to hear him talk of peace and comfort, of good hope and good cheer, of our loving Father, and the Saviour that gave Him-

self for us and ours. But when he was done I looked at old Langford, and he was a sight to see; he was all up of a heap, and the big tears had washed two clean lines down his dirty face, and were dropping from the end of his fiery nose. I could hardly believe it was in the old man; but there he was before my eyes. And there he sat all through the service—all of a heap, and the big tears cleaning his face as he wiped them with the back of his hand.

"I saw him the next time on Sunday evening creeping into your church, and I said to him, 'Hallo! old chap! come to the wrong shop, eh?' He looked up and growled out, 'No! no! come to the right at last!' and slinked into a corner for almost the first time in his life, I thought. I watched him next day hanging about—no drink, no tobacco, no swearing, but with a clean face, looking for a job. Day by day I watched till Thursday, and then at your service you gave out the 'tokens' for the Lord's Supper; and I saw the old man come up and try to get one. I was close by, and I heard you refuse him, telling him he was mistaken in supposing it was money that was given. He said he knew they were for the Lord's Supper, and he wanted to come. Then I saw you hand him over to some one else to be spoken with, and afterwards talk with him yourself. Next I saw him at the Lord's Supper, and I was astounded. Clothed in rags but clean—there he *was*, and there I *was not*! and it went through me like a knife.

"But I watched on still; I thought him an old hypocrite, and determined to find him out and expose him. All that week I watched, but you remember how well he lived, how true and humble he was; and I could but feel and own that his conversion was real, and that he was changed as from black to white. On the Saturday he had a job, and fell down with an apoplectic stroke while doing it. He lived unconscious till the next Thursday, and died during your evening service.

"When I heard he was dead I was almost stunned; it was like one of our narrow escapes at sea, only more important. Just a few days to make such a difference! and then I remembered how I thought you a fool for trying to get him, and how you had got him for Jesus, and that he died safe through your perseverance; I remembered also your telling us 'they that turn many to righteousness shine as the stars'; and I thought he was *one* for *you* at any rate; and I was miserable and lonely because I was not another.

"Then I went away to sea, and in the work and change of my life I sought to find ease and forgetfulness. But I could not; I had a horrid feeling of being unsafe, of some unseen danger very near me, and I could not shake it off. Through all the months of our outward passage this feeling clung to me. I dared not speak of it to my shipmates, but kept it secret, and thus suffered from it the more.

"We were upon our way home again, and it

was my midnight watch; the sea was rolling in mountain waves in the pitchy darkness, and I was alone on the head of the vessel looking out. Suddenly there came a mighty wave and swept me from the vessel far out upon the rolling waters. I could feel that I was borne forward on the crest of a great wave as helplessly as a straw. I knew that I could not be missed from my station for a short time, or seen if I was missed. The roar of the waves around drowned my weak attempt to cry out, and I felt that there was no hope for me. Oh! the horrible, heart-sinking agony! my wife widowed! my children fatherless! only a great void where I had been! Oh, the awful upspringing of unknown horrors within me! all my life flashing at once in a blaze of strong blinding light upon me! I thought of Langford, of you, of the sermons I had heard, of my lost chances, and my death close at hand; all this while struggling fiercely with the dashing water, and the wave that was blinding and choking me!

"No hope! no hope! a grave in the black, unfathomable, raging sea; and then from the black water to the scarlet fire of the unforgiven; and it was near me, close upon me—a matter of a few seconds—and then eternal darkness and sorrow! Oh! how I struggled with the choking waters. I was going fast; my strength was failing me; a little more struggling and it would all be over. Then my heart went up in a mighty cry for pardon; all that there was in me of life, and sense,

and feeling, was in that cry. I had given up all hope of being saved, but I struggled on that I might cry and pray; and prayer after prayer, as swift as lightning, went from my heart, as I strove more and more feebly with the raging wave that was killing me.

"My senses were fast going, all hope of life had left me, when I suddenly felt something near my hands, and I clutched in desperation. It was one of the ropes of our ship! She had forged forward while I was in the belly of the wave, and I reached again the deck, safe and uninjured, except by the fright I had passed through. I had not been missed. But when my watch was out, and I could go below, the first thing I did, in the presence of all the watch, was to fall upon my knees, and humbly and heartily thank God that my life was brought again from the dead. There was no mocking; they stood in respectful appreciating silence, as feeling that I was doing that which it was quite right to do.

"And since then I have always prayed; morning and evening and noon has my cry been unto Him who was out upon the wild waters that night with me, and whose loving, pitying hand snatched me from water and fire, gave me back to my wife and children, and has led me in safety home!"

BELSHAZZAR AND HIS BANQUET.*

PART II.

(Read DANIEL V.)



UT three days have rolled away, since a young man came to my house, in hot haste, and said, "Can you come, and see my father at once." I went, and saw him. He had been ill but a few days.

I found the mark of death on the old man's face, and they asked me how long he would live. "Twenty-four hours at the longest," was all I could say. He was dead in eighteen hours, but, thank God, he was a believer, and went to glory. Friend, if you die now in your sins, you will go down into eternal judgment, spite of some friend whispering to you, "Live for ever." Belshazzar died that night. Does he live for ever? He *exists* for ever, but we have no reason whatever to think that Belshazzar was a saved man. I believe he earned his bed in hell, and went there. He was awakened, and he was impressed, but he was not converted. I will prove that shortly.

The queen-mother now tries to calm her son's anxiety—just as the devil would calm an awakened sinner to-day. She says: "Let not thy thoughts trouble thee, nor let thy countenance be changed :

* From "Night Scenes of Scripture,"—A Night in a Palace.

there is a man in thy kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of thy father (or grandfather) light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him; whom the king Nebuchadnezzar thy father, the king, I say, thy father, made master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers; forasmuch as an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams, and showing of hard sentences, and dissolving of doubts, were found in the same Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar: now let Daniel be called, and he will show the interpretation. Then was Daniel brought in before the king. And the king spake, and said unto Daniel, Art thou that Daniel which art of the children of the captivity of Judah, whom the king my father brought out of Jewry? I have even heard of thee, that the spirit of the gods is in thee, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom is found in thee. And now the wise men, the astrologers, have been brought in before me, that they should read this writing, and make known unto me the interpretation thereof: but they could not show the interpretation of the thing: And I have heard of thee, that thou canst make interpretations, and dissolve doubts: now if thou canst read the writing, and make known to me the interpretation thereof, thou shalt be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about thy neck, and shalt be the third ruler in the kingdom" (vers. 11-16).

Evidently Belshazzar knew nothing about Daniel. He had quite forgotten, even if he had ever heard, that Nebuchadnezzar, his grandfather, had exalted him to the place next himself; and placed him as "ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon. . . . Daniel sat in the gate of the king" (chap. ii. 48, 49). Godless men do not like, and usually do not know godly men. Godless men are not in touch with godly men; and therefore Belshazzar, the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, did not know the man whom his grandfather had placed at the head of affairs only a few years before. This fact speaks volumes as to Belshazzar. Great as might be the pride of Nebuchadnezzar, he had recognised the moral worth of the captive Daniel, as his exaltation to be second ruler in the kingdom showed, but his depraved grandson had ignored his very existence. But Daniel was there all the time, separate, devoted to God, having His mind, and ready to reveal it at the fitting moment.

This scene has been often repeated in the history of the souls of men. When eternity confronts an ungodly man, he resorts to the godly man, for light, help, and comfort if possible. This proves that godliness is profitable in this life, and in the one to come. Depend upon it, the godly man has the best of it. It is very likely, my unsaved friend, you live quite close to a godly man, one who could help you to apprehend the truth, and yet you know nothing about him really. You give him a wide

berth, close quarters is the very thing you avoid. You will want him yet, that God-fearing, holy, separate man, who lives for Christ, and labours to present Him to needy souls, and win weary hearts for Him. The careless sinner does not like such neighbours. But what a wonderful thing it is that God has His witnesses even in Babylon. You should thank God if He has put one of His servants near you, who will speak faithfully, and tell you the truth plainly.

Such was Daniel, and the dissolute king had to admit it as he says: "I have even heard of thee, that the spirit of the gods is in thee, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom is found in thee. . . . And I have heard of thee, that thou canst make interpretations, and dissolve doubts." Yes, the truth of God is unveiled by the servants of God. He reveals, and they proclaim the truth. You need not have the slightest doubt of your bourne, my unsaved friend: it is an absolutely divine certainty that unless you become converted to God, and washed in the precious blood of Jesus, that you are bound for the lake of fire. I said this to a man lately who sent for me. It was the old story. His heated face, and dirty tongue, told me that long and deep potations of whisky had brought him once more to his bed. I said: "You have only just to go on as you are going to land in hell for ever. You do not need to move an eyelid, just go on as you are going."

"I do not want to go there," he replied. Probably

you do not want to go there either, but it is well that you should know that you do not need to sin extraordinarily, or commit some terrible evil to find yourself there. You are perhaps a moral, respectable, outwardly religious, Bible-reading man or woman, but if you are not converted, if you are not born of God, you need have no doubt whatever that you are on the direct road thither. You must go through the new birth to escape it. The Scripture dissolves every doubt on that point: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

The man who dissolves doubts is now before the king, who offers him all manner of rewards, saying, "Now, if thou canst read the writing, and make known to me the interpretation thereof, thou shalt be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about thy neck, and shalt be the third ruler in the kingdom." Daniel replies as becomes the occasion: "Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; yet I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation." But before doing so he gives the king a most solemn and bitter admonition, as he briefly recounts Nebuchadnezzar's history, and God's dealings with him, and then charges home on his conscience the gravity of his own indifference on the one hand, and his reckless insults against God on the other.

He says to Belshazzar: "O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honour:

and for the majesty that he gave him, all people, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slew; and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up; and whom he would he put down" (thus God gave your grandfather universal power). "But when his heart was lifted up" (that is always the way when men get power, their hearts are lifted up), "and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him" (chap. iv. of this book tells us of the incident where his reason, clearly for the time being, is taken away): "And he was driven from the sons of men; and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild asses: they fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that he appointeth over it whomsoever he will" (verses 18-21). Nebuchadnezzar had to take his place amongst the beasts of the field. They have no idea of God. Man has, for he has a conscience in him. The great difference between a man and a beast is that the former recognises God, the latter does not, but "man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish" (Ps. xlix. 20). The unconverted man does not know Him; be he ever so learned or intelligent, he has no true knowledge of God. Nebuchadnezzar, as his term of judgment expires, lifts up his eyes to heaven. His intelligence is returning. A beast looks down, never up, in a

moral sense. Man, if conscious of his relationship to God, as a creature looks up to the One from whom he derives all. By the painful process of abasement Nebuchadnezzar learned to know the most high God. He got to know His supremacy.

And you too, my friend, have to learn the supremacy of the most high God, and woe betide the man that sets himself up against God. He will yet learn by bitter experience that the most high God rules in the kingdom of men. Belshazzar knew all that, and what effect had it upon him? "And thou his son, O Belshazzar, *hast not humbled thine heart*, though thou knewest all this; but hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou, and thy lords, thy wives and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified" (vers. 22, 23).

What a solemn indictment! And possibly you exclaim, What a fool was this besotted monarch to be thus guilty of such open impiety, as regards God, and to be given up to idolatry. Yes, he was worshipping gods who neither saw nor knew; but whom do you worship? You say, I go to church. Granted, but whom do you worship? Who is your God? I should not wonder if bank-notes were among the gods which you worship. They govern

you, and whatever governs a man is really his god. Not forty-eight hours ago, at a dispensary, a young man told me that he was a "bookmaker." "A poor business," I remarked. "Do you make money?" "Sometimes." "And when you do not, you work, I suppose." "Oh! no, I go to drink." "And you are very happy?" Happy! His face was a picture of misery. No! he was wretched. "Have you a mother?" "Yes!" "Have you seen her lately?" "Not for over two years." "Have you written to her?" "No." "Broken her heart?" "Yes! I believe I have." "Man," said I, "get to the Lord, get your soul saved, and then go and bind up your mother's broken heart."

Do you think money-making means happiness? Never! Money was this youth's god. And it may be yours—gods of gold—or silver even. Perhaps yours is a pleasure-god. Others with their whole heart and soul live for music. They have a musical god. Possibly whisky is your god. God save you from it. Ah! Belshazzar was not the only man that bowed down to idols.

Now, mark, behind all these varied idols stands he who is the god of this world—Satan. The man who is doing his own will is simply doing Satan's, and is in his service. Liberty, without God, is only to do the devil's will, and his work, and in the contempt which you in your way, and Belshazzar in his, have shown for God, the working not of your mind but of Satan's is manifest. But the king had willingly yielded himself to be the devil's tool, so

that a controversy between him and God existed, hence he hears from Daniel's lips, "And the God in whose hand thy breath is" (mark that), "and whose are all thy ways, *hast thou not glorified.*" A solemn, a grave charge, but absolutely true. My friend, is this true of you too? Take care. God gives you your warning to-night. It may be your last one. "Thy breath" too is in His hand. The little string of life has but to be broken, and you pass from time into eternity. I repeat, God is warning you, and giving you an opportunity to-night to get right with Him. Embrace it.

There was a man who sat in this hall once, twice, and thrice, hearing the gospel. On the first occasion I happened to meet him at the door, as he left, and spoke to him about his soul's salvation. He replied, "I am not going in for this sort of thing just yet." I met him another night, and he said, "It will be all right, let me go, do not be put about on my account; I do not mind hearing you preach," and he departed. I saw him the third night. He came each time with a godly coachman whom I knew. Again I asked him if he were decided for Christ, but he said, "It will be all right yet; good-night, sir." I did not see him again, and some months after, meeting the coachman who had brought him, I asked if he were yet unsaved. "Have you not heard what happened to him?" was the reply. "No!" I said. "What has happened?" "Do you not remember he was here one Sunday, and you spoke to him? Well, the next

day while driving his master, the horses slipped, and pulled him off the driving box. He fell, striking his head on the curb stone, was stunned, and carried to the Infirmary. He never spoke again, and died within forty-eight hours." God had given that man his warning. I fear he heeded it not. Be wiser than he, for "the God in whose hand thy breath is" may cut you off as suddenly. You had better bow at once, and let Jesus save you.

But what about this writing that king Belshazzar saw? Daniel now says to the king, "Then was the part of the hand sent from him; and this writing was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN." And what did these words mean? They were only four Chaldean words, and at least one was repeated twice. MENE, meant numbered. The king knew the word meant numbered, and that TEKEL meant weighed, and UPHARSIN divided. Yes, numbered, weighed, and divided. What has that to do with me? the king might have said. He was soon told. "This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it." Your history is over. You have got to the full length of your tether. God has numbered thy kingdom on earth, and finished it. Belshazzar heard this, but I do not think he believed it.

"TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting." That was true of Belshazzar, and it is true of you and me too, my friend. It is true of every one. Only One there is of whom it

was not true, and that was the blessed Lord Jesus Christ. He was put into God's balances and was found full weight. The Holy One—the true One—the devoted One—the One, who loved God with His whole heart, and soul, and mind, the man Christ Jesus, has been put in the balances, and has been found full measure. You and I have been found wanting. Everything that we ought to have done, we have left undone, and everything we ought not to have done, we have done. That is man.

If that be the case—and you have found it out—what is to be done? You will need to repudiate your own work and rest on Christ. I have found a substitute—the blessed Saviour, who died for me—who gave Himself for my sins. What a wonderful thing it is to know Christ as your Saviour, and find all you need in Him.

Last of all, Belshazzar hears this: "PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians." At that very moment the Medes and the Persians were besieging Babylon. History lets us know that for a very long time they had been beleaguering the city, which rested in its fancied security. The king thought it could not be taken. But God had prophesied its fall, and now announces the fact. And what takes place? Does Belshazzar bow down in repentance? Alas, no! When he hears the interpretation of the writing, we read, "Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold about

his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom" (ver. 29). He has been saying that my kingdom is coming to an end, says the king, but I do not believe it. I do not believe my kingdom is over. Blow the trumpet, and put a gold chain round Daniel's neck, and proclaim that I determine that he shall be the next man to me in the kingdom—my kingdom is still to go on. So thought he, and therefore so he acted. But we read, "In that night was Belshazzar king of the Chaldeans slain" (ver. 30). Did I not say that I judged he was not converted? I did. The man was clearly infidel, spite of the plain warning he had, and the testimony of God in the writing on the wall. And how many men are infidel in this hall to-night? The proof of his infidelity was this. He proclaimed that Daniel was to be the third ruler in the kingdom, though he had just heard that his kingdom was finished. He did not believe it. But it came true. How did it come about?

History tells us that Babylon's walls had at intervals lofty towers to the number of two hundred and fifty, whence the Chaldeans could watch their foe, and from these towers they saw no evidence of danger. The foe outside, however, had done a very simple thing. The river Euphrates, as we have already seen, ran right through the centre of the city, guarded by great brazen gates, so that no one could get into it by water. It was a very simple little artifice that Cyrus, the Persian leader,

adopted. The Euphrates makes a bend near Babylon, so Cyrus cut a new bed for the waters a few miles up, and diverted their course. He made an immense canal forming the chord of the bend. When darkness had come on the sluices were opened, and the river turned into this new direction. As a consequence the bed of the river was practically dry as far as regards Babylon. The Persian troops marched quietly along that bed, and under the brazen gates, and got possession of the city. Then was fulfilled what Jeremiah has told us, a messenger ran "to show the king of Babylon that his city is taken at one end" (Jer. li. 31). In the midst of this feast, which was the object of admiration of everybody who was careless and heedless, the hosts of the foe came in, and the news reached the king that his city was taken, and immediately the feast was broken up. "In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain." His bloody corpse on the very floor of the banquetting house should be a warning note to every sinner in this hall to-night not to despise the message of God.

Unconverted one, could Belshazzar speak to-day, I know what he would say: "Men and women of the world, do not trifle with God. Sinner, do not disregard the warning of God. I did. I was a fool for my pains. He warned me. I believed Him not, nor heeded Him; and I died that night in my unbelief." I believe he was damned. I believe you will be too, if you do not turn to God.

God is giving you your warning, my friend. Let me implore you to accept it, and turn to the Lord now, for "he, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy" (Prov. xxix. 1).

W. T. P. W.

"ONLY THINK OF THAT!"



THESE words were uttered in my hearing a few years ago, whilst I was staying for a short time in the little town of Deal. I was asked by a friend to visit a young fisherman who was dangerously ill, and having been shown into his room, I found lying upon the bed a fine young man of about twenty-five, apparently in the last stage of consumption. He fixed his bright eyes with a suspicious gaze upon me, and after a brief inquiry as to his health, answered by him in a constrained manner, he said abruptly, "I believe in Jesus; I s'pose you believe in Christ."

Surprised at such ignorance in a place where the gospel was known, intellectually at least, to so many, I explained that these were two names of the same blessed Person—the Son of God. Upon further conversation I found that he could not read, and had never in his life had the gospel, in its divine simplicity, placed before him. He had

been visited by some who had prayed with him, he said, and he had prayed for himself. "And I know," he continued, "that God will hear my prayers, and save my soul, for I prayed for more breath last night, and He heard my prayers, and sent me some."

A blessed sign it is that God's Spirit is working when it can be said of any one, as the Lord said of Saul of Tarsus, "Behold, he prayeth." But God's way of saving is by *faith*, and so, in answer to prayer, He sent a messenger to this young man, as of old He had sent Ananias to Saul of Tarsus (Acts ix. 11, 12).

This divine way of salvation, through *faith* (Rom. x. 8-10), I endeavoured to explain to the young fisherman, repeating to him several passages which set forth this gospel, and on my reading to him 1st Timothy i. 15, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief," he exclaimed, in terms of wonderment which I cannot forget, "Only think of that! Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners! Only think of that!"

As I went on to tell him of the finished work of that One of whom he was so ignorant, he listened attentively, drinking in the truth, and resting his soul for time and eternity on that One who is willing to save *you* too, reader, if you will trust Him.

The next time I called a change was apparent in the young fisherman. His very face reflected

the joy which filled his heart, and he told me he was longing to be with the One who was now his Saviour. My stay at Deal was ended, so we had to say farewell, to meet no more till Jesus comes; but I had news informing me that he died soon after, very happy, and rejoicing in his Saviour.

Often since then have I thought of the words of that young man on hearing for the first time the simple gospel—"Only think of that!" How different to the answer one often gets, "Oh, we know all that!" Reader! careless, thoughtless of anything save the passing pleasures of the moment, I pray that these words, "Only think of that!" may ring in your ears till you have accepted the gospel message. Alas! how few "think of that." How many are like a man who told me once of a clock in his room which he never noticed, however loudly it ticked, until it stopped? What a picture of a thoughtless sinner, who has become so used to the sound of the gospel, that he is heedless of its oft-repeated calls until *one day* the sound ceases, and he awakes to the fact that the day of grace is over, and there is nothing then for him but *judgment*. Reader, God grant that may not be your experience, but, may you now accept Jesus as your Saviour.

"Haste! haste! haste!

To-morrow too late may be;

Oh, wherefore the moments in madness waste,

When Jesus is calling *thee*."

Or perhaps, my reader, you think, as the young fisherman thought, that the way to be saved is to pray. Now prayer is *asking*, but Revelation xxii 17, says, "Whosoever will, let him TAKE the water of life freely." What a difference between your way and God's way of salvation. But you may say, Do we not read, "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Yes, but these words were addressed to *disciples* (Matt. v. 1, 2, vii. 7), and encourage believers to seek blessings for themselves and others; but the gospel to the *sinner* is thus described by Paul in 2nd Corinthians v. 20, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though *God* did *beseech* you by us; we *pray* you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." So you see it is God asking the *sinner*; and so also in Revelation iii. 20, it is *Christ* knocking. Will you not then, dear reader, *take* instead of asking? and an eternal salvation is yours. "The wages of sin is death, but the *gift* of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. vi. 23).

"To God be the glory, great things He hath done!
 So loved He the world, that He gave us His Son,
 Who yielded His life an atonement for sin,
 And opened the Life-gate that all may go in.
 Praise the Lord! praise the Lord! let the earth hear
 His voice;
 Praise the Lord! praise the Lord! let the people rejoice:
 Oh, come to the Father, through Jesus the Son,
 And give Him the glory, great things He hath done!"

MAN'S WAY AND GOD'S WAY.



WE are told in Prov. xvi. 25 that "there is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." But on the face of it, a way that only "seemeth to be right" cannot afford any assurance that it is right, especially when connected with it are the solemn words, "but the end thereof are the ways of death."

Many are travelling a way that to them "seemeth to be right," but who have never inquired of God's Word whether it is right or not. Sad it is to see the multitude going on in such a "way," when nothing but death and judgment are at the end of it.

The way of the Unitarian to him seems to be right. Seeking to judge by human reason, instead of accepting in faith the great mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God, he becomes the ready dupe of Satan, and is led into the awful sin of denying the Son of God, and therefore the glorious truth of the atonement, and thereby shuts himself out from all blessing, and shuts himself up to the eternal judgment of God, who will know how to reward those who so daringly insult His blessed Son, of whom it is written, "This is the true God and eternal life" (1 John v. 20).

The way of the mere religionist to him seems to

be right. Like his predecessor Cain, he brings his sacrifice, and places it, with the feeling of satisfaction, down before God, and thinks that that will propitiate the offended majesty of God.

But in a matter involving so much, and which is of such stupendous importance, it will not do to be satisfied with a "seemeth to be right." We must have an absolute assurance from God Himself that the way we are treading is of Himself, and therefore right.

Now as to any round of works for salvation, be they what they may, there is nothing in them that can remove our sin out of the sight of God, or enable Him in righteousness to clear us of all charge of sin. Nothing short of this will do for God. And nothing short of this will give us settled solid peace in the prospect of meeting Him.

Long ago this way, which only "seemeth to be right," was exposed by Isaiah, a prophet of Jehovah. He said by the Spirit of God, "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away" (Isa. lxiv. 6).

Such a way as this can only end in death and judgment, because it is the open denial of the solemn truth that man is lost and guilty, and is without strength to do anything; and more than this, it is the rejection of the truth of God that redemption and cleansing are only by the precious blood of Christ, and not by anything that man can do.

The way of the infidel to him seems to be right, but that does not make it right. God, to him, is the unknown, and the unknowable, and therefore it were impossible for Him to communicate His mind to His creatures. He is shut up in the darkness, for ever to be unknown, while we (and this is what the devil would like us to believe) are left to the dreary waste of our own darkened understandings.

What an infinite calamity, if it were true! God never to be known, the blessedness of sins forgiven never experienced, the joy of known relationship to Him as children never possessed, but left in a greater than Egyptian darkness, to pick and choose of the endless theories of men, as much in the dark as ourselves, and then just having to grope like blind men in a way which only "seemeth to be right." What perfection of misery! And this is the best that they, or their master (Satan) can give us. Thank God, we have something infinitely better, because we have a way that is infinitely sure, and infinitely blessed! "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have, this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us" (2 Cor. iv. 6, 7).

These are incomparably blessed words. God hath shone into our hearts, and the light that has shone there has given "the knowledge of the glory

of God," as displayed in that blessed Man at His right hand, in whom God was and is displayed. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (John i. 18).

Apart from Him no one can know God, or be brought into that relationship of children to Him, whose blessed privilege it is to cry, Abba Father.

On this the Word of God could not be plainer. "All things are delivered unto Me of my Father; and no man knoweth the Son but the Father; and no man knoweth the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him" (Matt. xi. 27).

It may be asked, "Who is it to whom the Son reveals the Father?" The next verse gives the blessed answer. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Ah, yes, all who are wearied of man's wisdom, and human religiousness, and really desire to know God, and get the forgiveness of sins, such are invited to the Saviour. By coming to Him they get the blessed knowledge of the Father, and the burden of their sins rolls away for ever, and they obtain rest.

Thus it is that the lost sinner recovers the knowledge of God, and gets to know the Father, and to this the words of the Saviour agree, where He says, "*I am the way, the Truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me*" (John xiv. 6).

Beloved reader, there is no "seemeth to be right"

here ; all is divinely simple, and divinely real ; and instead of "the end thereof are the ways of death," it is "For whom he (God) did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren" (Rom. viii. 29).

Friend, ere you lay this paper down, tell me, which way are you treading : the way that only "seemeth to be right," or the way which is absolutely right because it is God's way ?

"The love of God is righteous love,
Inscribed upon Golgotha's tree ;
Love that exacts the sinner's debt,
Yet, in exacting, sets him free.

Love that condemns the sinner's sin,
Yet, in condemning, pardon seals ;
That saves from righteous wrath, and yet,
In saving, righteousness reveals.

No, not the love without the blood ;
That were to me no love at all :
It could not reach my sinful soul,
Nor hush the fears that me appal.

I need the love, I need the blood ;
I need the grace, the cross, the grave ;
I need the resurrection power,
A soul like mine to purge and save.

This is the love that stills my fears,
That soothes each conscious pang within,
That pacifies my troubled heart,
And frees me from the power of sin."

BUILDING AT PITHOM.



T was the eve of the battle of Tel-el-Kebir. Great lines of earthworks, bristling with artillery, screened the forces of Arabi Pasha; and the British, supporting the authority of the Khedive Tewfik, were encamped at Kassassin. The sun had withdrawn his powerful rays, and the moon withheld her gentle beams, so the two armies, left in darkness, lay down to rest on the sand. Many eyes had gazed wistfully on the dying orb of day, and wondered if the sun of their lives would sink on the morrow. And if it did, what then? Ah! solemn thought, which one and all do well to ponder. The dangers of the battlefield come to comparatively few: the uncertainty of life is over all.

Paramount in the breast of Trumpeter M——, of the —— Cavalry, were serious thoughts of eternal realities. A strange foreboding possessed him that death would be his fate on the morrow, and he was not ready to die. Worse to bear than the hot stifling air, more troublesome than the numerous insects that preyed on him, was the still small voice within that continually asked, "How will you meet God?" And with it came the memory of the many times he had turned a deaf ear to the glad tidings of salvation; of how often he had listened to the melting story of the Saviour's dying love, and the only emotion it

stirred within him was an ill-suppressed wish that the preacher would soon stop. How he yearned that some one would explain the way of peace to him now, and he would no longer be disobedient. Was there no one? Some chaplains had arrived from England—there were Scripture-readers with the Scotch regiments—could he not find one of them? But no, it was too late.

Sir Garnet Wolseley meant the darkness of that night to conceal from the Egyptians his march toward them, and his orders were strict: no conversation was to be allowed—no light struck—no one was to move about. "Too late to be saved now," inwardly moaned this convicted sinner, "my day of grace is past."

Take care, dear friend, that a similar wail does not come from your lips some day, when, after years of gospel-hearing there dawns upon your soul the fact, that the harvest is past, the summer is ended, and that you are not saved.

By half-past one on the following morning Kassassin was left, and silently through the darkness the British force marched along the Wadi Tumilat, the officers guiding their course by the stars. The faint streaks of dawning day were lightening the eastern sky as they reached the scene of conflict. The first and second entrenchments, with their strong redoubts, were stormed by the infantry at the point of the bayonet; then the cavalry, sweeping round on either flank, meted out death with unsparing hand.

The Arab steed M—— rode became maddened by the fearful sights and sounds around, and setting bit and bridle at defiance plunged head-long forward. The clouds of sand and smoke lifted slightly, and he knew by the white tunics and scarlet tarbooshes worn by the men around him, that he had ridden alone right into the midst of the enemy. It was a supreme moment, yet he remained calm, for difficulty and danger oftentimes beget a power unfelt on other occasions. Each instant he expected to feel the ping of a bullet, or the slash of a sabre, and from the very depths of his soul was wrung out the prayer, "Lord, save me, I perish."

It was for the salvation of his soul he prayed: that he should escape alive from that battle-plain seemed beyond the bounds of possibility. He had vainly tried to lay hold on Christ the night before, but all was blurred and indistinct. Now, one look at the crucified One, one short prayer of faith, and the burden of guilt vanished, and over the heart of the young soldier stole the sweet joy of pardon, and the calm assurance of forgiveness.

The smoke and sand clouds once more deepened, concealing his nationality from the Egyptians, and his furious charger turned and bore him backward to the ranks of the British—saved—body and soul, for the masses of Arabi at this juncture wavered, and soon sought refuge in flight.

Doubtless many who had often listened with unmoved hearts to the gospel fell on that bloody field, but this incident may afford a little crumb of comfort to some praying mother's heart. Had death been M——'s portion then no one would ever have known that he died a believer in Jesus. God is not willing that any should perish, and it may be that others there, ere their souls quitted their mortal frame, cried, and did not cry in vain, to God for mercy. At the same time, we would earnestly warn any procrastinating ones of the danger of delay. Salvation is offered to-day, *not* to-morrow.

"And did this young convert live happily ever after?" you ask. Oh, no! the accuser of the brethren is much too active for that.

October found the British army at Cairo, and a miserable time M—— had then. "You need not call yourself a Christian, it was nothing but the fear of death made you pray at Tel-el-Kebir. *If* you were really converted, you would never have an unholy thought, and you would be different altogether from what you are." He did not know these were the whisperings of that old serpent which is the devil. Yet such they were. Satan, chagrined that one of his former dupes, had received the gift of eternal life, and knowing full well that that life is hid with Christ in God—a place where neither man nor fiend can touch it—exerted himself to mar the newly-born soul's enjoyment of it. He succeeded all too well. Each

day the young man's doubts were renewed, and every night his uncertainty as to whether he were a Christian or not increased. Seated one day among some shrubs on the outskirts of Cairo, he gave way to despair. "Why did I not die on the battlefield?" he asked. "I was happy then, I would have gone to glory then, but now"—his hand touched his pistol, and with the touch came the terrible thought, "Why may I not die now? It would be so easy, and the weary struggle would be ended." Surely the arch-enemy had gained the victory then. But no, God was watching over His sorely tempted child. A party approached, and hastily starting up, M—— returned the deadly weapon to its case, and walked off, thoroughly ashamed of himself. Down the streets of Cairo he stumbled. He noticed some soldiers enter a meeting-room, and he followed them. What a change! The atmosphere felt heavenly. How soothing were the hymns! How the prayers revived him! Then an elderly gentleman addressed them. His message was for young Christians. Some, he said, after conversion went on happily for a time, but soon a crop of doubts appeared. They did not feel as they used to feel, they did not always act as they knew they should act. They wondered if they had repented enough, and were not sure they had believed aright. A little later they questioned if they could be Christians at all when such fears oppressed them. The soldiers there had recently fought a great

battle near the ruins of Pithom,* that ancient treasure-city which the Israelites built for Pharaoh. They were not happy then, for their bondage was cruel. But God wrought a great deliverance for them, and with an high hand brought them out of Egypt. All was well at first, but when the Red Sea lay before them, the mountains around them, and Pharaoh's host behind them, were they happy? He did not think so. But that did not alter the fact that they had all been sheltered by the blood of the slain lamb. Some there might be whose faith in God was firm, who kept before them the mighty way God had wrought on their behalf, but the multitude were sore afraid, and wished they had stayed in Egypt, building at Pithom. Some now on being freed by the blood of Christ from the thralldom of Satan, of whom Pharaoh is a type, go straight on, strong in faith, but the majority reach a point where a sea of fears lies before, mountains of perplexities rise up around, and Satan with a host of fiery darts presses on behind. What is to be done then? What did Israel do? "*The Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians.*" The power that has saved us is the power that will keep us, will save to the uttermost—the very end—those who have come to Him. Difficulties do but serve to show the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe. The Christian's

* The ruins of Pithom (Exodus i. 11) lie westward of Tel-el-Kebir.

safety does not rest on his feelings, but on the grand fact that his sins have been borne by Jesus ; and sin, the root, God has condemned, and in the death of Christ has destroyed the body of sin.

Now if we commit sin, we have an advocate with the Father, and when we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Every word came as a message from God to M——, but we need give no further details, our Christian friends will easily picture the sequel. The gail of uncertainty was exchanged for the freedom of deliverance, and under the nurture of the preacher, with whom he soon got acquainted, he was led to see there remained much land to be possessed, depths of truth and a fulness of blessing he had never dreamt of.

Dear friend, has not Satan made your life bitter with hard bondage ? Do not you think you have built long enough at Pithom ? long enough laboured to advance the kingdom of Satan ? Will you not be persuaded to exchange such a hard taskmaster for a place in the kingdom of God's dear Son ?

*" No need now to labour, the work has been done ;
To be in God's favour, believe on the Son.
Christ's death has secured salvation so free ;
The cross He endured for you and for me."*

M. M.

"GOD IS LOVE."

1 JOHN iv. 8.



HE heart of God is the fountain-head of blessing!

He has been pleased to reveal Himself in His Son—our Lord Jesus Christ; and to know Him consciously, as thus revealed, is to us the height of joy and blessing.

He is made known now as a Saviour-God; indeed we learn that judgment is to fall on them who know not God, and who obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thess. i. 8). This is serious!

No doubt we are told by some that God cannot be known, that He is so infinitely beyond our reach that no measure of human learning or investigation can find Him out.

This is indeed the case, for Scripture itself asks the question, "Canst thou by searching find out God?" (Job xi. 7), and it states that "the world by wisdom knew not God" (1 Cor. i. 21); nevertheless God has been pleased to reveal Himself to faith, and therefore, whilst the natural mind of man has to admit total incompetence, the weakest believer possesses this wonderful knowledge. He knows God.

Notice, dear reader, that everything hinges on *faith*. Just as science and reason are correlative,

so are revelation and faith. Reason may grapple with things within the boundaries of sight and sense; faith is needed for the apprehension of things unseen and eternal.

I once knew a man who had been an atheist. He wrote a pamphlet in order to prove that there is no God. On reading his production, before it went to the printer, it struck him that, whilst he had effectively met every objection that *reason* could present, he had not dealt with *faith*. But there was his difficulty. How could he dispose of faith?

He saw no way but to fall on his knees, and in prayer ask God, if indeed He was, to reveal Himself to him through His Son.

He did so—he asked God to grant him this revelation, and a merciful answer was speedily granted him.

He learned his folly; he discovered not only that "God is," but that He is the God of all grace and love.

He destroyed his miserable pamphlet, and his after-life for many years declared, before thousands of witnesses, the verity and blessedness of this God-given knowledge.

But, it may be asked, why is faith the only channel? Why should God not deign to demonstrate Himself to the senses, or to work some miracle, so that He might be heard or seen?

Well, let us ever remember that He has been here—heard, seen, touched, contemplated. The eternal

Son became man, and was in our midst in lowly human form—tempted in all points like ourselves, apart from sin. “In him is no sin.”

Thus man was given the fullest opportunity, at that wondrous time, of getting a perfect knowledge of God. Miracles were wrought, sick were healed, lepers cleansed, dead raised, sins forgiven, words of truth spoken, the Father declared; but withal He was rejected and crucified.

No doubt man did not know who He was in their midst, but why the ignorance? His testimony was sufficient. Demons owned Him; disease and death fled at His presence. He was raised from the dead. This witness was ample, but man was utterly blinded by sin.

Again, it is faith that leads the soul to take its true place before God. Faith repents. It admits sin and guilt, and it acknowledges God's right of judgment. It cries, “I have sinned.” Conscience is thus exercised and brought into play. Conviction by God's own Spirit leads the troubled and sin-burdened heart to turn to Him. Then the soul is fitted for this blessed revelation. Guilty, it cries for pardon; lost, it seeks salvation; hell-deserving, it craves for deliverance; vile, it pleads for cleansing; undone, friendless, forlorn, it yearns for a friend, a Saviour, a God of mercy!

This and much more is revealed in the written Word, and is to be received by faith as God's revelation of Himself.

Hence faith is the sole and perfect means. And

so we read in Romans i. 17 that "the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, The just shall live by faith."

And what is faith? It is that God-given disposition or quality which enables the soul to take God at His word. "He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true" (John iii. 33). It receives God's testimony and rests on His truth. It bows to His word, and as a certain consequence, it is assured of His blessing. It drinks in the revelation of His love, as told in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, whom God in love gave for a guilty world, and finds therein each question settled, each difficulty removed, and each doubt dissolved.

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. v. 1).

Thank God for the gospel—the good news of His love. But for it all were dark and hopeless. Creation witnesses His power—the Law proclaims His holiness; but in the one He is beyond me, and in the other He is against me, and I am thereby doubly undone. In the gospel I learn all His heart, how that the very God against whom I had sinned is He who, spite of all, loves me and seeks my everlasting weal. What a God!

Dear reader, allow not Satan or your own evil heart to misrepresent to you the true character of God.

"God is love" (1 John iv. 8). So proclaims

His Word, and although perhaps your earthly path may not have been strewn with roses, or exempted from thorns, yet Calvary declares, in letters unmistakable and exquisite, that God the Father and God the Son have done all that love could do to assure you of compassion and pardon and welcome.

May His Holy Spirit lead you, dear friend, and hundreds besides who may read this little paper, to obtain this blessed knowledge of God through faith in His dear Son.

"This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent" (John xvii. 3).

J. W. S.

JACOB, AND HIS PRESENT.*

GEN. xxxii.



IN the last book of the Old Testament you find this remarkable expression: "Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord; yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau" (Mal. i. 2, 3). I have no doubt that Esau was a much finer natural character than Jacob, and the wonderful thing is that God loved the man that clearly had not a fine natural character. I say "Thank God" as I see that, for there is hope for me; and you may say

* From "Night Scenes of Scripture,"—"A Night of Wrestling."

from the bottom of your heart, "Thank God, there is hope for me." Yes, my friend, there is hope for you, whoever and whatever you may be.

I do not think many of us would like to have all our history told out in public. Would you? I should not. You would not like to have your life written, except some discriminative and gentle biographer would write to order, just putting in the nice bits—the good qualities, the amiable traits, the benevolent deeds, and the moral virtues that would please your friends, and that would please you, too; and leaving out all the unattractive side of your life. You would not like your whole history written, would you? No, you say, I should not.

Now, God is a great biographer, and with Him is no respect of persons, so He has written the history of Jacob as he was, and although his history was not at all a creditable one as a son, a brother, or a nephew, if we think of man, nor as a saint, if we think of God, yet before the tale ends I find God saying, "Yet I loved Jacob." Thank God for these words, they are a great comfort to my heart.

In the chapter before us you will notice that when Jacob gets down on his knees, and turns to the Lord in prayer, he says, "O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac." He does not use the expression "My God." He does not like to use it. He feels so ashamed of himself, I think, and yet the title that God uses so plentifully in Scripture is—"The God of Jacob." Read

the Psalms, read the Old Testament, and you will be surprised at the number of times it occurs.

Jacob was a man whose heart was in the earth, yet a man on whom God had His eye for blessing. What a wonderful thing that God has His eye upon you for blessing, yet I daresay you have been able to manage like Jacob, and you have hitherto escaped His blessing. But this chapter takes us to the point, where all Jacob's management came to naught—though there never was a finer manager in this scene than Jacob—and when he found himself a poor cripple, helpless, and needing to be sustained, he had his name changed, received the blessing of the Lord, who overcame his opposition, and then he got to know God.

The sovereignty of God, exercised in grace, is a grand thing. I know people object to it. I know sinners kick at it. They think God is very arbitrary. Well, supposing you were let alone to go your own way, friend, and supposing I had gone the whole length of my way, what would the end be? I will tell you. As far as I am concerned—and I may say the same about you—the path would have ended in hell, and eternal judgment would have been our portion. What then has happened? God has come in and arrested us. God has come in, put His hand upon us, and converted many of us. I believe if I were asking every converted man and woman in this hall to lift their arm, as a token that they were saved, I should get a good number lifted up, and if I said, Tell us

how it was that you were turned to the Lord? every one here would reply: "It was sovereign grace that laid hold of me. I owe all to the Lord's grace!"

But you might turn to me and say, What about the very scripture you have quoted, "I loved Jacob and I hated Esau"—is not that very arbitrary? No, the ninth of Romans makes this plain. There I read: "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth: it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid" (vers. 11-14). People often make a great outcry against God about this. But did you ever ponder it, or find out where this statement as to God's love was written? It is found, as we have already seen, in the last book of the Old Testament—Malachi. God does not record these words until thirteen hundred years after the men named had passed out of the scene. The Lord then lets out the secret why He blessed Jacob, and it was—because He loved him.

Why then did He hate Esau? If you follow the history of Esau—though he was a nice, natural man—you will find this, that he and his descendants were at heart deeply, and perseveringly opposed to God. I do not doubt that Jacob was

opposed to God in the beginning. So was I. So was every believer in this hall to-night. But there came a moment when God broke him thoroughly down—the night on which he was alone with God. From that time Jacob was a changed man; and though, in his life, he was not what we could call a bright and shining light, as a saint, still he died in faith very triumphantly, and went out of the scene very beautifully.

The inspired record of Jacob's departure runs thus: "By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff" (Heb. xi. 21). And why did he lean on the top of his staff? Because he could not hold himself up without support, he had learned to be dependent. He went off the scene worshipping, and his death was bright, if his life was not. We should all take a lesson from this, and seek to live brightly for Christ, and then, should the Lord call us away, we shall pretty surely die brightly. People sometimes say, "How did he die?" But I want to know, "How did he live?"

Jacob's life up to this point in Genesis xxxii. was a sorrowful one. God had purposed to bless him before he was born, as you read in a previous chapter, where the Lord said unto Rebekah, "Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and *the one* people shall be stronger than *the other* people; and the elder shall serve the younger" (Gen. xxv. 23). That is to say, God purposed to

bless Jacob beyond Esau. In the end of that chapter, you recollect, Esau sells his birthright for a mess of lentil pottage. Esau was a worldly man, and he sells his birthright—that which belonged to him as the first-born. He comes in faint from the chase, and finds Jacob making pottage. Esau desires it, and Jacob says, “Sell me this day thy birthright”; and Esau replies, “Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me? And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he swore unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and rose up and went his way. Thus Esau *despised his birthright*” (xxv. 31-34).

Esau starts his worldly history by flinging lightly back in the face of God that which His goodness had given him. No wonder his end was so bad, or that God calls him a “profane person” (Heb. xii. 16). Do not forget this—that every sinner has, in a certain sense, a birthright. You have been born into a world to which the Saviour has come, and that Saviour came to save sinners, and if you do not receive that Saviour, but hold on in the ways of the world, deluded by Satan, and caring only for the things of this life, you simply follow the footsteps of Esau, and despise your birthright for a mess of pottage—that is, for the things that minister to the body, and give you comfort while you go through this world, from which you will have shortly to pass away. “Thus

Esau despised his birthright," is God's comment, and the Holy Ghost bids us in our day beware, "lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright" (Heb. xii. 16). Since that day many a soul has passed into eternity, who has sold his birthright for a mess of pottage. And what is that? A little bit of the world!

I do not admire the way in which Jacob got the birthright; nevertheless he prized what Esau despised. God meant him to have it; but Jacob schemed and bargained for it in an unworthy and unbrotherly way; and next you find in the twenty-seventh chapter that he schemes to get the blessing. God had already purposed that the blessing was to be his; but Jacob was not content to wait upon God for it; so he and his mother planned a scheme to attain it. The twenty-seventh chapter of Genesis presents a very humiliating spectacle, since it shows to what a low ebb of moral degradation even a saint may fall. Isaac loved "savoury meat," and bade Esau get him some, adding, "that my soul may bless thee before I die." Rebekah prepares some before Esau could return, and then Jacob—the supplanter—for that is the meaning of his name—goes in and takes the venison that has been made ready, and surreptitiously, and with untruth on his lips, gets the blessing. Isaac pronounces over his head the blessing that God had designed for him, but Jacob did not get it in the right way, and we do well to note what is the result. What follows

shows that where there is a wrong action it always brings its own reward even in this world.

Jacob never has earthly happiness from that day forth. He has to leave his home, and becomes a wanderer from that time. He has to fly in order to escape from Esau's fury. He gets alongside of his uncle in a far-off land. His uncle deals hardly with him, and cheats him, as he had cheated everybody else. He is paid back in his own coin absolutely. The next thing is that he has to get away from Laban clandestinely, and then you find that his daughter is ruined, his sons become murderers, his old nurse dies, then Rachel his wife dies, and he comes home to find that his mother is dead. The next thing is, his own sons deceive him, and he has to mourn, for the supposed death of Joseph, for many, many years. At length he is obliged by famine to go into Egypt, and there he dies. That is what I call the natural side of the man's history, and a striking illustration it is of the truth of the principle in Scripture, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. vi. 7).

God gives us the history of Jacob thus fully in order to show how His grace could meet a man of that kind, rise above all his failures, and bless him; and therein, I repeat, is the value of Scripture biography as compared with every other biography. If you take up the biographies of to-day you find all that is nice, and amiable, and kind about a man related in them. The biographer, however, throws the mantle of charity over those weaknesses, sins,

and downfalls of his subject, of which he may be aware, and of course can say nothing of many more of which he is ignorant. What is the result? You have not the real man before you. The consequence of it is that many a young person takes up a book of this sort, reads the history—say—of some good, earnest, devoted Christian man, and then puts it down in despair, saying, "It is no use my trying to be a Christian, for I could not be like that. It is very doubtful if I am one at all." Let me cheer you by just saying, That is not the man at all—it is only a bit of him; and what you are finding in yourself was most likely in him, only the uncomely bits of his life have been omitted. Now the Bible gives you the man as he is in absolute fact, and then tells you what God's grace can do for such.

In the thirty-second chapter of Genesis we reach the moment in his history when this planning and scheming man Jacob is on his way back to his father's house. As he goes back, with his family, and all that he has gathered in the land of Padan-aram, the angels of God meet him. That was a good thing. They meet him, but carry him no message. He is, I think, uneasy, although he says, "This is God's host." The Lord's eyes are upon him evidently, and he knows it. Whether God will support and sustain him is the question in his mind, for he has to meet Esau. He sends messengers to Esau, who are to say, "*My Lord Esau; thy servant Jacob saith,*" &c. (ver. 45). What a message to his *brother*! Esau, "*My Lord*"; and

Jacob "*thy servant.*" Sin always brings its fruit, and wrong its recompense. The man is perfectly conscious of what ill he has done to Esau. He knows that full well, and now his conscience begins to work. It is a fine thing when the conscience begins to work, friend. Has your conscience begun to work before God about the evil of your life? Has your conscience yet got uneasy about your own conduct in the presence of God? Jacob's was evidently very uneasy, for the messengers are told to go to Esau, and say, "*Thy servant Jacob says*" to "*my Lord Esau.*" Fancy this to his own brother. But what the English bard says, "*Conscience doth make cowards of us all,*" is perfectly true. Thank God for it. Do not stifle it! Take care that the devil does not sear yours with a hot iron, for we read of some "*having a conscience seared with a hot iron*" (1 Tim. iv. 2). What does that mean? That you have resisted the pricks of conscience till it has ceased altogether to act. It is numb—lifeless. You have had a bad history. At first you were perfectly ashamed of it in the presence of God, and in the presence of man; but you got so "*hardened through the deceitfulness of sin*" (Heb. iii. 13), and continuance in it, spite of the pricks of conscience that by-and-by—will, lust, and sin having got the upper hand entirely—conscience altogether ceased to act, being by the devil "*seared with a hot iron.*" Awful state! I pity the man that has got his conscience seared with a hot iron.

Jacob's conscience, though dull enough for many

a year, had not ceased to act. It is working now, you see, and is not in any sense relieved when the messengers return, saying: "We came to thy brother Esau, and also he cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him. Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed." If your conscience is working before God, and you are greatly afraid and distressed, all I can say to you is, I am thankful. It is better for a man to be in that state, having his conscience exercised and in distress about his sins, than to wake up in eternity, and then to find that his whole life has been a huge mistake.

But now when "greatly afraid and distressed," what does Jacob do? Ah! he is Jacob still; trying to make the best of things. So again he makes his plans. To meet a supposedly angry brother coming with four hundred men, eager to avenge their master's wrongs, is a terrible affair for Jacob. What can he do? He divides his company into two, next goes to prayer, and then sends a present to appease Esau. I have to meet him, is his thought, but how shall I do so? First, I think I had better put my party into two companies, so that if he smites the one, then the other will escape. Do you know what really happened when he met his offended brother? "Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him; and they wept" (chap. xxxiii. 4). Poor silly Jacob, he just illustrates the action of the guilty sinner.

Are you afraid to meet God, and are you trying to "*appease him with a present*"? What a mistake! "Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him!" Just as we read of the father in Luke xv., who, when he saw the returning prodigal "a great way off"—"ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." Do you suppose that anything you could bring would affect the feelings of God towards you? Impossible! Understand clearly that nothing you can do—nothing you can bring—no present you may send, will touch the feelings of God towards you, my friend. Do you know what His feeling is towards you? Love! "God is love," and He has proved it in the gift of His Son. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John iii. 16). Again: "The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world" (1 John iv. 14). Further: "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John iv. 9, 10).

"Cease of fitness to be thinking ;
Do not longer try to feel ;
It is *trusting*, and not *feeling* ;
That will bring the Spirit's seal."

A NINETEENTH-CENTURY HYPOCRITE.



OW completely all idea of worshipping God has been separated in the minds of many who attend a so-called place of worship, is exemplified in a remarkable degree in an incident which some time back came under the observation of a Christian from England, travelling on business in America.

A fellow-traveller commenced narrating his experiences with great satisfaction amongst some friends in ——. He stated that a friend of his in that city paid one thousand dollars per annum for a pew in a certain fashionable place of worship. The other remarking that the sum was a large one, he replied, "Yes, it does seem so, but when you consider what he gets for it, you will readily agree with me that he is amply repaid. In the first place the minister is a man who is well known, as an orator of the first rank, and the addresses he gives are simply splendid, and as a literary treat could not be excelled. Then, again, some of the finest singers of the city are in the choir, and the music, both instrumental and vocal, is not to be equalled by any concert. Well, you see, my friend may take his family there, and have all the advantages of high class music, without the disadvantage of bringing them in contact with less cultivated society, by attending lectures and concerts," &c.

Upon the other remarking how completely such a thought was at variance with the scriptural idea of worshipping God, he replied that he thought his friend was fully justified in doing so, both for his own and his family's sake.

Inquiring whether this gentleman took the ground of being a *Christian*, the reply was that he did.

"Then, in my judgment, if this be the view he takes in attending his so-called place of worship, he is a consummate hypocrite." And then, asking his loquacious fellow-traveller simply whether he were converted, he was completely disconcerted, and dropped into silence.

Now, whilst it may not be the common practice in this country to pay a large amount for a sitting in a church, or to express so openly what this traveller in America said, it is much to be feared that with very many who attend so-called places of worship, the æsthetics are the important factors, and that there is very little apprehension of what the true worship of God is. And, alas, in how many instances, the preacher panders to the tastes of his hearers by giving them literary matter, instead of preaching Christ. It is evident on all hands that we are in the midst of the days of 2 Timothy iv. 3, when men heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears, and turn away their ears from the truth, and turn unto fables.

Dear reader, what are *your* motives in assembling with others week by week? God reads the

deep secret thoughts and intents of every heart. He is a Spirit, and *must* be worshipped in spirit and in truth (John iv. 24). Is it to worship Him, or to minister to your own pleasure, by listening to pleasant words and sounds? Mind you, God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap (Gal. vi. 7). The reckoning day is at hand. None can worship God without conversion, and the gift of the Spirit. Are *you* converted? Have you been brought through grace to see yourself as a guilty lost one before Him, and to believe on His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ? If not, there is no time to be lost. If you have been seeking to persuade yourself that all is right with you, when all is wrong, and professing to worship and serve God, with your heart far from Him, occupied with self-pleasing,—what is that but hypocrisy in His sight? Be honest with Him and with yourself. No longer deceive yourself, but face His all-searching Word, and come out in your true colours, whilst it is still the day of grace. Delays are dangerous. God will cast empty professors and hypocrites into the lake of fire, as well as all kinds of sinners. Face facts then now. Unless converted, whatever the character of your profession, it is nothing worth. But bow before God in self-judgment, and believe His blessed testimony concerning His Son, and His finished work, and you shall be saved. A full pardon, and the gift of the Spirit, are the blessed portion of every true believer. Then; and

not till then, can you truly worship God, and by the Spirit you will learn the utter vanity and grievous evil of turning holy things into self-pleasing. Beware of the terrible hypocrisy of the nineteenth century!

E. H. C.

THE WORLD GETTING BETTER.



Y^e eye one day caught sight of a paper, and an article headed "The World Getting Better" attracted my attention. What, thought I, the world getting better? Oh! what a delusion. How can any one say so,

when the Word of God is so plain, and tells us that "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" (2 Tim. iii. 13)? So I read on, and the writer went on to compare the state of things now with what they were many years ago in the county asylums, prisons, &c., showing the good works and improvements that have been made, and mentioning that many of them were due to the labours of certain men whom I knew to be Christians. Ah! thought I, that is it. The Holy Spirit through these men has counteracted the working of evil, but man's heart is just the same, and remains un-mendably bad; but for people to think that the world is getting better because the working of evil

is restrained is quite a mistake, for we read in 2nd Thessalonians ii. 7, "The mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he that now letteth (or hindereth) will let, until he be taken out of the way." So that, dear reader, the world and man's heart is no better now than when they cruelly put the Lord Jesus to death upon the cross.

The article finished by saying that any one to look around, and examine these things, could not deny that "*the human race was steadily progressing, and that after all the world was really getting better.*" But be assured, dear reader, from God's Word, that the cross of Christ was the end of this world's progress. Jesus said at that time, "Now is the judgment of this world" (John xii. 31). So there we see that all hope of man's improvement was at an end, and that man needs to have implanted within him a new nature, for God has judged man's heart to be corrupt, and not fit for himself. Just look in Romans iii. for a picture of man. There we see that all are concluded to be guilty before God, and that nothing will avail but being justified freely through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (Rom. iii. 24). No doubt a deal has been done in the shape of sanitary improvements and inventions, but let it not be forgotten that these things in no way alter what God has said, and that still even now in this nineteenth century "all the world stands guilty before God." Nevertheless God's invitation to the sinner is still going forth, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. xxii. 17).

G. S.

“THIS THY DAY.”



HE knell of another year is sounding ; its sands are sinking ; its curtain falls ; and with plaintive earnestness do its echoes play upon the ear. Harken, reader, to its dying note ! You may recall many a golden opportunity, many a rich and rare privilege. You have, perhaps, stood by the side of death. You have heard, it may be, of one you loved as having been savingly blessed. You have witnessed sorrow and joy ; you have read of disaster on sea and land ; you may have felt the pinch of poverty ; or you may have enjoyed the smile of favour. The parting year carries away a thousand diverse memories ; and, by its close, reminds you of a multitude of mercies.

You are alive to-day ! Others have been cut off, but you remain. Their day of grace is over ; yours lingers still ! One moment of weal or woe is for ever beyond their recall ; and, alas ! crowds there doubtless are who would give countless worlds could they only buy back an hour of time !

That hour is yours !

They have crossed the bourne ; they have entered eternity ; their tree lies unalterable ; their state is fixed for ever ! Yours is not yet so !

Time, unknown and irrevocable to them, is still with you. They had their share, you have yours ! Oh ! the value of time ! Present now, past in a

moment. Its march is silent and imperceptible, but awfully sure and fleet; and its very silence renders us unconscious of the rapidity of its flight! How suicidal to allow its days and years to glide on while the soul's salvation is persistently neglected! How long?

Eyes of sorrow, and dimmed by tears, are resting on Jerusalem, and behind those tender eyes is a heart of love! He who could have crushed that rebel city, stands outside it a mourner, a friend, a lover! "He beheld the city, and wept over it" (Luke xix. 41).

Alas! its favoured hour was past, for the things that belonged to its peace had been madly thrust aside—a hand stretched out in mercy had been coldly spurned! "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day," said that royal but rejected Weeper, "the things that belong to thy peace, but now are they hid from thine eyes."

"Hidden now"! Yes, all is over! A Messiah deliberately and definitely rejected means a Jerusalem as certainly doomed. A Christ—a loving, living Saviour—refused and neglected means a sinner finally damned!

Awful fact! but such is the judgment written and nought but woe eternal awaits the impenitent trifler with a Saviour's proffered grace!

"This thy day," if not taken advantage of, must give place to a place hidden from thine eyes! One or other. A golden day of salvation, or that salvation hidden in everlasting night. Favoured reader, pause and think!

This is thy day, it lingers still; but thy night is coming. Oh, haste thee! Ten thousand voices chide thy delay, and beckon thee onward, homeward, heavenward!

Thy soul is precious; thy time is passing; thy little day will soon be over; thy present opportunity gone; the Master rises to shut to the door. *Now, Now, NOW* is the accepted time, and now the day (thy day) of salvation!

Reader, come to Jesus now. His blood can cleanse from all sin, and He declares that "him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." Only come to Him now!

J. W. S.

NOT THE RIGHTEOUS.



O doubt it is a very great thing for any man while here in the body to be able truthfully to say that he is saved and ready for heaven. I would give a very great deal to be able to say that."

"You need not give anything. It is not by *giving* but by *taking* you get your soul saved."

"Can you tell me how I am to have this certainty?"

"Whom am I speaking to? Am I speaking to a *good* man or to a *bad* man?"

"I hope I am not a *bad* man; though I do not for a moment fancy I am perfect."

"You do not deserve damnation?"

"No, I trust not."

"Do you believe God is just?"

"Most surely."

"Would a just God send a man to hell who did not deserve to be sent there?"

"I am certain He would not."

"Therefore, as you do not deserve hell, there is no fear of Him sending you there. Will you tell me now what you want to be saved from?"

"I want to be saved from my sins."

"Have you got sins?"

"Yes, I have got sins. Every one has got sins. There is no one perfect."

"You are not a *bad* man, and yet you have sinned against God. That is a paradox. But tell me, what takes people to hell?"

"Their sins, the Bible tells us."

"And your sins are taking you to hell?"

"I hope not."

"Are they taking you to heaven?"

"My sins will not take me there."

"Nor to hell either?"

"I do not know."

"But you tell me the sins of other people take them to hell?"

"I hope I have never done anything to take me there."

"Are your sins nothing?"

"There is many a greater sinner than I."

"Whom have they sinned against?"

"God."

"And whom have you sinned against?"

"We have all sinned against the same Person."

"But He does not think so badly of *your* sins as He does of the sins of others."

"I have never done anything very wicked."

"That is for God to say. He declares you have never done good."

"Where does He say that?"

"It is the testimony of the Scriptures. But will you look with me at the third chapter of Romans? Read verses 10 to 12—'*There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, NO, NOT ONE.*'"

"Well, I think I have done a great deal of good, though I admit I may also have done a few wrong things."

"In that case you had better take your pen and write on the margin of your Bible, '*This testimony is false,*' and thus, to use a common expression, nail the lie to the counter."

"Oh, I do not say it is a lie."

"What then? The Word of God says of all who are on the ground of works for salvation, there is none that doeth good, no, not one, and you say there *is* one, for you yourself have done a great deal of good. You make God a liar."

"Well, it is strange if I have never done good."

"Do you think the devil does any good?"

"No, there is no good in him."

"Exactly. He is a fallen creature, an apostate from God, so also are you, and all mankind by nature. 'They are *all* gone out of the way' (Rom. iii. 12). And 'the carnal mind is enmity against God' (viii. 7). You are also God's enemy: think of that."

"I am not His enemy."

"Are you His friend?"

"I trust I am."

"That is an honourable distinction in this world: Abraham was called the friend of God."

"The devil may be, and I am certain is, God's enemy, but I most surely am not."

"Well, the devil's great object from the beginning has been to call the Word of God in question, and make Him a liar. You and he seem to be running on the same lines. God affirms of man in his natural state that there is none that doeth good, and you flatly contradict Him."

"Perhaps the things I may have thought good have not been good in His judgment."

"Is His judgment wrong? Will you condemn Him that you may be just?"

"No, His judgment must be right."

"Then yours is wrong."

"I do not see how all this puzzling can be any help to me. I am as ignorant as ever as to the way of salvation."

"*Salvation from what?* In your judgment you are not a bad sort of person; you have never done

anything wicked; you have no dread of coming into judgment with God; He cannot justly condemn you. What the law says to them who are under it, "There is not one that doeth good," has no application to you; in short, righteously you cannot be sent to hell, and yet you want to know the way of salvation, and would give anything to know you were saved. Again, let me ask you, what you want with salvation? You do not need to be saved from the wrath to come, for you do not merit it, nor from hell, for you are not going there. You would be horrified to think that a good, respectable, well-behaved religious man like you could deserve the damnation of the lake of fire. Let me tell you what the Saviour of sinners declared when here upon earth. 'They that are whole have no need of the physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but *sinner*s to repentance.' If I accept your character as given by yourself, you could have neither part nor lot in Christ nor in the salvation of God. 'Christ died for the *ungodly* . . . when we were yet *sinner*s Christ died for us . . . when we were *enemies* we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.'

"UNGODLY! SINNERS! ENEMIES! Every true Christian will admit that by nature he was all three. You see how simple it would be for you to be saved if you were in any of these three classes, because Jesus died for such, and His blood cleanses from all sin. By your efforts at self-justification you cut yourself off from any hope in Christ, and

'the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.'

"Go down in the dust before Him, lest He take you away with His stroke. You have offended Him more by your attempts to justify yourself than by all your other sins put together. Accept His verdict about your guilty life. Your wisdom is to put your hand on your mouth, and lay both in the dust, and say, 'I have sinned.'"

"I suppose it is. God help me. If He has decided against me, I may well lay my hand upon my mouth. It is all over with me. I cannot force Him to change His mind. I cannot contend against Him, and who dare say they will enlighten Him? It is acceptance with Him I want, and if He refuses me, what will I gain by self-justification? I have been sitting on the judge's seat when I ought to have been in the dock. His verdict has been given. I cannot ask Him to reconsider it. I dare not. I am appalled when I see with whom I have been at strife. I was trying to constitute myself judge of my own case. I can only say, God be merciful to me a sinner."

"Thank God, you have been brought to this. You are now for the first time in your true place, and in your right mind. Like the wilful son in the gospel, you have come to yourself. The truth is, there is no good in you; and if the fountain is bitter, the waters cannot be sweet; if the tree is corrupt, the fruit must be corrupt also. The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately

wicked, and out of that cesspool of evil are all the issues of life. But how good of God to let His light shine in upon your state, that you might see yourself to be vile in His sight, and that the revelation of His grace might be good news to you. No person but the one who sees himself a sinner will appreciate the Saviour. He will be despised by every other. Indeed, no one has a right to the Saviour but the sinner. Cold water is not welcome to any but the thirsty, nor is bread desired by any but the hungry. The full soul loatheth an honeycomb, and so Jesus is despised by the self-righteous.

"You will now be glad to hear of the salvation of God. He has taken upon Himself the whole settlement of the question of sin. He has taken upon Him to put right what man put wrong. He sent His Son. No one else could have accomplished this mighty work. He came to do the will of God. To glorify Him in the place where He has been dishonoured, to crush the power of Satan, to abolish and destroy death, to cleanse the universe from the taint of sin, to present everything to God in perfect order, to bring in a universe of bliss where God can dwell amongst men in a city built of living stones, where all His brightness shall be displayed, where God shall be known in His nature and delighted in.

"This could only be accomplished through the death of Christ. He is the Second Man. The first man would do only his own will. You and I know

something of him ; we were poor, good-for-nothing, self-willed things. The Second Man came to do the will of God. He has suffered the judgment due to sin. By the sacrifice of Himself He has taken it out of the way of man's blessing. It stands no longer in God's path of blessing man. By dying He has broken the power of death, and He has crushed the whole power of the devil.

‘ He hell in hell laid low ;
Made sin, He sin o'erthrew ;
Bowed to the grave, destroyed it so,
And death by dying slew.’

God has raised Him from the dead and glorified Him. God has found His perfect delight and satisfaction in Christ. He does not want anything from you and me. To every creature He sends forgiveness in the name of Jesus. There is no salvation in any other. To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth on Him shall receive remission of sins.

“ But He is also appointed as Judge of living and dead. Those who refuse Him as He is preached in the gospel as Saviour must have to do with Him as Judge. God will make His enemies His footstool. He must reign till He has put all His enemies under His feet. ” ‘ Now is the day of salvation.’ ‘ It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.’ Not the *righteous*—SINNERS Jesus came to call.”

J. B—D.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS IS INDEED THE TRUTH.



HIS fact, dear reader, compels me to take you by the hand and to look into your eyes, exactly as if I were your brother. Come now, my dear one, fear not, I mean you well, from the depth of my heart, you can believe me. Tell me now, openly and honestly, would you like to be saved? Do not beat about the bush, don't let my hand go, look at me with confidence. I know that a voice speaks down deep in your heart, "Yes, yes, I would." And if you seek to keep that voice back, saying, "Silence! do not be a fool!" and if you keep your mouth fast and closed, yet you cannot silence it. And if you can only groan and sigh, still it speaks, if only ever so low, "Yes, I would like to be saved."

Good! Now let me read you a passage out of the Bible. "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain, whom God hath raised up, &c." (Acts ii. 22, 23). These words were slung by a simple fisherman right in the face of many thousands in the open street, seven weeks after Christ's death and resurrection. Yes, you say,

what does that matter to me? Now, gently, dear friend, it matters a great deal to you. In that these words of that fisherman are taken up in the Bible, and are held out to the whole world to read; God will say thereby to the world, "Oh, you wicked perverse world, don't you run away with the thought that the Jews only nailed My Son to the cross. No, no, you all did it, for you all come from Adam. Your accursed sins, they cost My beloved Son His life. And what would have become of you, if I had not sent Him, and if He had not died for you? You must all of you together have been cast into the fiery pool of hell." See now, my friend, this word of the apostle Peter stands before you, exactly as it stands before me, and is a very decided accuser against our sins, and a very earnest exhorter that we should repent, you just as much as I. Now then, come, and let this word go right into your heart; make no ado, don't be stubborn, like the godless King Pharaoh in Egypt, no, on no account. But come, repent, judge yourself in the presence of God!

And now, just listen with all attention, and hear what follows. See, when this single text has entered your soul, you cannot get rid of it; you are exactly like a fish that has swallowed a hook. It may struggle and spring ever so, it is no good, the hook holds. And so it will be also with all the sayings of the Bible, which take you by the neck and toss and shake you, saying, "Sinner that you are, wake up! wake up!" Read now just a little in

the Bible. Hear now, and you will certainly say: The Bible is right. Now you must not think that the Bible is only a double-edged sword, which pierces between bone and marrow, and nothing more than a judge of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb. iv. 12). If the Bible were only that, then it would be a terrible book. Ah, no! When the Bible has brought a soul to the ground, so that the poor thing now lies there groaning, moaning, and sighing, "What shall I do?" then it comes in a wonderful way to set up and to comfort like a friend, turning the poor despairing soul to Him who died on the cross, the Son of God, Jesus Christ, saying, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world, and also thine, even thine!"

Think of that vast crowd, standing around the poor fisherman, the apostle Peter. Into the hearts of thousands went that fearful word. And when they were frightened to death, and said, "What shall we do?" then the apostle exhorted them to judge themselves, and believe that the precious Saviour had died for them. Then they were cast down, and confessed their great misdeeds. And having yielded their hearts to the crucified One, and believed that He had redeemed them from sin and death, the devil and hell, then were they joyful and made happy by God, you little know how deeply.

And now see, dear friend, when *you do the same* then you will find it is just the same for you.

When you have once received the crucified Son of God into the heart, no power in the world and no devil can rob you of this truth, but you will always say, "Here, here it is in the Bible—my Saviour has redeemed me, now come what will; even if my head is cut off, *I stand by that.*"

FR. GN.

"THEY THAT ARE CHRIST'S AT HIS COMING."

(1 COR. xv. 23.)



WHAT a scene of indescribable glory, that will be when the Lord Himself shall descend to gather His redeemed to the home He has prepared for them! What a moment of unsullied delight when at the shout, the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, His sleeping saints, raised, and living saints, changed, "shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and so they shall be ever with the Lord." All the hosts of the redeemed shall be marshalled there in bodies of glory, instinct with divine life—the saints of old, who on the faith of a promise were worshippers, pilgrims, soldiers, those to whose faith dens and caves bore witness, "of whom the world was not worthy;" the elders and just men who "died in faith, not having received the promise," shall be

there; "Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob;" "Noah, Daniel, and Job;" "Moses and Elias," shall be there; Abel, and the long line of martyrs; Aaron, and the Lord's priests; Samuel, and the Lord's prophets; David, and the men of faith who sat on his throne; all God's renowned ones, the perfected just, shall stand in that scene for which they in faith waited. "The Church of the first-born," too, as the bride prepared for her Lord, shall take her place there—all down to the last re-born soul, who shall form the completion of the mystery. She, too, will recount her worthies in that morning; the many who have stood forth in other days, and who stand forth in our own day, as the witnesses of God's truth, and the heralds of God's salvation—all shall ascend together, and swell the countless multitude of *Christ's own*—shall take their place, too, in their respective glories, "every man in his own order"—star differing from star in glory, and each reflecting the image of Jesus. There will be seats, too, in the kingdom; thrones for rulership over the tribes of Israel; mansions in the Father's house; thrones around the throne of God—all shall be occupied by the redeemed, each invested with the insignia sovereign love has assigned to him. All will "know even as they are known"—each known to each—all known to all.

What a season of unutterable joy, of holy intercourse, of uninterrupted communion! But the rapturous thought of each one of this innumerable company will be, *they are Christ's*: "I am my be-

loved's, and his desire is toward me." To be Christ's own will be a source of deep unmixed pleasure *then* (should it not be *now*?). The absorbing object of their heaven-inspired vision will be CHRIST; to be for ever with Him; to behold Him; to cast their crowns at His feet, paying the heart's deep homage to Him in one united utterance of "Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." The power of Christ's resurrection will be applied to the bodies of His saints; they will be raised because He has been raised, by virtue of having His life, and being indwelt by His Spirit; they will be presented in the perfection of that life, in its full triumph over death, and Him who had the power of death; they are raised, not for judgment, that to them is passed—Christ bore it for them—but because they are Christ's; Christ's resurrection was the first-fruits, and the pledge of that abundant ingathering. He was the first sheaf presented to the Lord, the sample and earnest of the harvest that shall be then gathered into the garner of God; they will be raised up, and presented in the glory with Him. He is the expression of the glory, and they stand in Him. The reunited dust shall be reanimated and vivified with divine life; the weakness shall be transformed into power, corruption into incorruption, dishonour into glory, the natural body into a spiritual body; it will bear the impress (image) of the heavenly, even as it has borne the image of the earthy. Where is the sting of death?

Gone! Where the grave's victory? Gone! Victory full, complete, eternal, is theirs—Satan bruised under their feet for ever.

The saints will stand before the tribunal of Christ to receive the rewards of the kingdom; but they will appear there as glorified saints. No stain of sin shall be there; the last trace of the curse shall have been removed; the reproach of Egypt clean and for ever rolled away. The death of the slain Lamb shall be learnt in the light of the glory and in the presence of God.

Earth may move on still in its course and projects, as it did when its light was set in the darkness of the cross; its religion may go on, too, quite compatible with its godless pursuits, until judgment break the spell of its delusion, and dissolve the dream, awaking men to the dread reality of "falling into the hands of the living God." The light, God's light, shall have been removed to its own proper sphere, there to reflect each its peculiar brightness, "shining as the brightness of the firmament," "as the sun in the kingdom of their Father," being with Him who is the sun and centre of that heavenly system, undimmed, unobscured by the clouds of unbelief or doubt. They are with Him as He moves on in the course of the counsels of God, whether relating to the heavens above or the heavens (earth?) beneath. In the presence of His glory they shall be presented faultless, "with exceeding joy." Will He "take his great power and reign," swaying the sceptre

of righteous supremacy over a judged and renovated earth? They will be with Him there! After the course of the kingdom shall be complete, and He shall have delivered up the kingdom to the Father, will He be tabernacled in the home, the dwelling-place of righteousness, in the new heavens and new earth? They that are His will still be with Him. They are Christ's present and eternal portion, and their place is to be "for ever with the Lord"—whether in the kingdom, or in the new heavens and new earth, they will enjoy the rest of God in its perfection, and bear witness to His glory in the exalted sphere in which grace has set them, and for which grace has adapted them. The hope for which we wait is not judgment, not the kingdom set up, not Israel's restoration, or the deliverance of creation from its present bondage—all true in its place—but God's Son from heaven! He is coming not to fulfil *prophecy*, but to fulfil *promise*—"I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." Judgment waits for this! the restoration of Israel, creation's deliverance—all waits suspended until the rapture of the saints—"they that are Christ's at his coming."

After the Lord Jesus has gathered His own to Himself in the heavens, He will make good the prophetic word in its bearing towards the earth, and deliver creation, bringing it into the liberty of redemption.

Well may the affections of the heart be moved

at the prospect! Well may the sound of that well-known scripture reverberate in the inner man, "Behold I come quickly!" Yes, He is coming to appropriate to Himself that which He has purchased at His own personal cost; to whom He can say, "I have redeemed thee; thou art mine!"—to surround Himself with the trophies of redeeming love. The Father's will will be fully accomplished in the resurrection and glorification of those who were the object of it. For this they were saved. Our necessities were not the first cause; God is glorified in the redemption He has wrought, and the objects of His love are prepared for the glory that awaits them. They shall stand in the clear, unclouded light of divine righteousness, and be *at home* there. The robe in which they are arrayed is divinely righteous, and meet for the occasion. God, resting in the complacency of omnipotent love, will welcome them to Himself. His own immediate presence will be their rest; His unclouded glory the sphere of their worship; God and the Lamb their light and their temple. He will dwell in their midst; they, His people—He, their God.

What a prospect! Even the anticipation of such a hope lifts our spirits above the clouds and mists of earth; but we need purified hearts to be prepared to allow the rays of that glory to reach within and shed its light abroad there; there should be nothing allowed discordant with that holy scene; it will darken the vision, and confuse

the affections. The Holy Spirit will be leading us within to look after the house, and rid it of its corruptions and intruders, instead of opening the windows of the heart to allow the light of a new heaven to fill and irradiate it with its illuminating glory.

Oh that our constant position may be, as those who are "turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God," "to wait for his Son from heaven," with the heart purified and the eye single, with staff and girdle, ready to welcome the shout in the air whenever it may be uttered—ready, with nothing to leave behind that would retard our upward flight—nothing that may clash with that oft-expressed desire, "Amen! even so come, Lord Jesus!"

ANON.

WHERE WILL YOU SPEND ETERNITY?



O question more important than this could ever fall on the ear. It is indeed all-important to be able to give a satisfactory, not a mere conjectural, reply. Eternity you must spend somewhere, and the *where* is the grave question. I

would raise with you, my dear reader.

That you cannot spend eternity on earth, in your present surroundings, is an acknowledged fact. Death is too keen and busy an archer to

omit to plant one of his eternity-fixing darts in your bosom sooner or later. Forget not that death, or the Lord's Second Coming,—now so near at hand,—will certainly fix your condition eternally. What shall that condition be, and where will you spend eternity?

It is quite possible that you may argue that I have no right to put such a question to you. That only argues that you are not prepared with a happy, and confident reply—in plain language that you are not clear as to your soul's salvation; if you were you would thankfully and triumphantly give a reply that would exalt and honour the Lord Jesus, the Saviour of sinners.

To retire from my question, and moodily seek to hide yourself in the mists of uncertainty,—saying, No one can answer that question,—betrays no wisdom, and a great amount of folly, for you may answer it as truly and happily as did a young lassie of fifteen just the other day. Lizzie —— had for over two years been battling with consumption. More than once had she been so ill, and the hæmorrhage from her lungs so severe, that recovery seemed hopeless, and her near departure anxiously feared by all save herself. Sitting by her bedside, a week or two since, I sang to the sick child this verse—

“Where will you spend eternity?
 This question comes to you and me;
 Tell me, what shall your answer be?
 Where will you spend eternity?
 Eternity, eternity.
 Where will you spend eternity?”

Turning to her I said, "What shall your answer be, Lizzie? "In heaven with Jesus!" was her immediate and joyous reply.

"And how long have you been sure of that?" was my next question.

"Two years on the — day of this month. Don't you remember speaking to me then, doctor? I came to Jesus that day, and He saved me, and I have had no doubts since."

A charming reply was this most surely, and as genuine, I know, as simple. Well did I recollect the day when, as she gasped for breath between the rapid flow of her life blood—and I thought she could scarcely survive the severe loss going on—I told her of Jesus and His love, of His atoning sacrifice, and giving up His life's blood to wash away the sins of sinners. Well, too, did I remember how the apparently dying girl of thirteen received, as a little child, the glad tidings of God's salvation, and made it her own by simple faith. Yes, she believed the gospel when she heard it, received it as God's message to her, till then, troubled soul, and found peace in believing.

Two years of bodily weakness had given time to test the reality of her conversion, and for the Spirit of God to confirm her faith. "In heaven with Jesus!" was the happy and assured reply of her soul, when asked where she would spend eternity. Happy child! Happy because simple and trustful.

Now, my reader, what say you in response to my query, "Where will you spend eternity?" It

must be spent "in heaven with Jesus," or in "everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. xxv. 41). You must make your choice *now* where you will spend eternity. To leave the matter unsettled is folly of the deepest dye. As the tree falls, so will it lie. If you fall as you are—die in your sins in plain language—you will not spend eternity "in heaven with Jesus." There are no sins there, so if you do not part company with your sins in time, they and their consequences will stick to you for eternity in "everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

Is it not strange that man should despise grace, slight Christ, and decline the mercy of Him who says, "I go to *prepare* a place for you," and choose rather the everlasting fire *prepared* (not for man but for) the devil and his angels." I do not suppose you or any other careless sinner would like to put your choice into words in this bald way, but "actions speak louder than words," we have heard, and that witness is true.

Friend, there yet is time to repent of your sins, and your fatal folly. Let not 1896 pass away only to witness against you that you preferred to spend eternity with Satan, rather than with Jesus. Permit me to plead with you. It is not yet too late. Soon it may be. Come to Jesus now. Trust Him. Believe that He is as good as He says He is. In tender love He yet lingers over you, and says, "Come unto me . . . and I will give you rest."

Let the time that is past suffice for the service of sin. From this hour yield yourself to the Lord. Your sins are no real barrier. They are many, but Jesus' blood can wash them all away. Trust it. Your heart is hard, but His love can soften it. Come to Him. Your guilt is deep. His grace is deeper, far, far deeper. There is no limit to the depth of His love to forgive you, to the power of His all-cleansing blood to remove those sins, and to the sufficiency of His grace to deliver you from Satan's thralldom, and bring you to God, redeemed and renewed. Only trust Him. Trust Him as you are, just now. Wait for no improvement or fancied fitness—

“All the fitness you require
Is to know your need of Him.”

“Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace; thereby shall good come unto thee.” He will save you, just as you are, and give you the assurance of forgiveness, and the possession of eternal life. Once more I ask, “Where will you spend eternity?”

“Turn, and believe this very hour,
Trust in the Saviour's grace and power,
Then shall your joyous answer be,
Saved through a long eternity.
Eternity, eternity.
Saved through a long eternity.”