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I N D E X.

	PAGE
A Princess's Conversion	P. S. M. 197
A Righteous Plummet	M. M. 281
A Warning to Neglecters	J. T. M. 320
“An Out-and-Out Sinner”	J. J. W. 29
Are You Happy?	P. W. 225
Christ Crucified	W. S. F. 125
Eternity	E. A. 264
“Every Man a Penny”	W. T. P. W. 211
Fragment	W. T. P. W. 162
Fragment	Anon. 196
Fragment—“Just Reverse it”	Anon. 56
“Going About”	J. W. S. 132
God Sowing, not Seeking	W. T. P. W. 71
Have You a Pass?	E. H. C. 14
Hearing Ears; or, The Elder's Discovery	J. M. 178
How the Heart is Won!	J. W. S. 67
“I do not believe in a Future”	Art. C. 86
“I have God's Testimony for that”	E. A. 81
“I will go myself”	E. E. N. 27
“I'll never yield”	W. R. C. 164
“I'm doing the Best I can”	E. E. N. 229
Jesus and the Resurrection	W. S. F. 200
Joy in Heaven; or, Lost, Sought, and Found	W. S. F. 141
Left Behind	Anon. 305
Life and Death	A. J. P. 219
Lost in the Australian Bush	J. N. 46
Mephibosheth	E. G. 312
Often Reproved—Suddenly Destroyed	E. E. N. 267
“Perhaps To-Day”	T. R. D. 249
Poetry—Faith's Musings	M. S. S. 162
„ God Waits	M. S. S. 55
„ Sweet Memories	M. S. S. 188
„ The Precious Saviour	M. S. S. 85
„ Welcome! Wanderer, Welcome	H. BONAR. 308

	PAGE
Salt	R. W. 137
Take	T. R. D. 259
Taking it Easy	A. C. 256
The Blood and its Effects	W. T. P. W. 36
The Danger of Neglect	J. W. S. 208
The Deserter ; or, The Power of Pardoning Grace	C. K. 309
The Dying Vicar's Message	E. E. N. 1
The Exaltation of Christ	J. E. B. 190
The Gospel of the Grace of God	J. N. D. 150
The Hundred Pence ; or, Do I Forgive?	W. T. P. W. 169
The Marriage of the King's Son	W. T. P. W. 288
The Sinner's Seat	J. M. 57
The Soul and its Future	J. W. S. 285
The Storm and the Calm	E. A. 215
The Ten Virgins, and the Bridegroom's Return	W. T. P. W. 322
The Treasure, the Pearl, and the Net	W. T. P. W. 113
The Two Great Wages Question	J. N. 78
The Value of a Bible	Anon. 123
The Vineyard and the Husbandmen	W. T. P. W. 270
The Wages of Sin, and the Gift of God	W. S. F. 298
The War	J. W. S. 185
“ The War of 1897 ”	J. W. S. 11
The Wheat and the Tares	W. T. P. W. 104
“ Their Latter End ”	J. W. S. 253
“ They made Light of it ”	E. H. C. 49
Three Classes of Persons	E. A. 23
Three Deathbeds	A. H. 19
Two Great Necessities	W. T. P. W. 3
“ Wash, and be Clean ”	E. H. C. 90
“ Yet there is room ”	A. J. P. 97
You do not like it	J. B—D. 231

The Gospel Messenger.

THE DYING VICAR'S MESSAGE.



HE merry bells had rung out the old year, and announced the coming in of the new, *as the old vicar lay upon his bed dying.* He had listened to their peal, and his heart was yearning over his parishioners, who, light-hearted and gay, thought little of the tale that those old bells told afresh, that man's days are like a shadow that declineth, and that the years come and go, rapidly bearing each one onward to eternity.

From his dying bed the old vicar sent a message to his parishioners, which was read in the church on the afternoon and evening of the same day. The words reach us now as a voice from the dead. May you, dear unsaved friend, give heed to their solemn and weighty exhortations.

"I wish to send you a few words as from the gate of heaven. I am deeply touched with your affectionate interest, and very grateful for your many kind inquiries. I would beseech you on this New Year's Day to turn to God. . . .

“ My one great desire ever since I came among you has been to bring souls to Christ. But since I have been laid on this bed of sickness, I have realised more than ever I did before the *fulness, beauty, glory, and grace* of the gospel. Oh! how I want you to embrace it; never to rest till you know you are safe in Christ—one with Him by the power of the Holy Ghost.

“ As the bells rang out the old year, this one thought (so precious to the believer) was very present with me, ‘ *All the past is covered, the blood of Jesus has washed away every sin.*’ And now my desire is so strong that God would this day use these few words to bring some to Himself. Oh, do not be afraid to trust the Lord Jesus. He is waiting to receive you—waiting to bless you!”

Dear reader, can you say, as you enter upon another year, “ *All the past is covered*”? No matter how dark and sinful it may have been, all covered with the precious blood of Christ. If not, trust in Him to-day, and know that “the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” And then this will be truly a bright New Year’s Day for you.

“ Nothing but the precious blood
 Can give lasting peace with God
 For the heart so dark, so stained with sin and guilt;
 There is nothing can atone
 But the blood of Christ alone,
 Blood which Christ in love for guilty sinners spilt.”

TWO GREAT NECESSITIES.



EW birth is an indispensable necessity for every soul of man ere he can see, or enter into the kingdom of God. Redemption by blood is also indispensable. I must be new born, and redeemed, in order to enter the glory of God.

You too, my reader, must also possess these blessings if you are to be saved. You will go to the lake of fire, unless you are born again—"born of water, and of the Spirit," as the Lord puts it in John iii. Baptism is not new birth. I value baptism greatly; it is an integral part of the faith of my soul; but it will not convey to you or to me a new and vital principle of existence before God, and that is what we need. You and I need a new life, and nature, to put us in a state in which we can know and enjoy God, and we need to be redeemed out of our old state.

It is the Word of God used by the Spirit of God that is the means of the new birth. I do not exclude faith; no doubt faith has its place. There is faith in the soul with regard to the Word; but you will find that souls are always born by the Word of God. The proof of this necessity lies in this fact—"That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Educate it, it is but educated flesh; make it religious, it is religious flesh; improve it, reform it, it is still flesh. Another has well said: "You

may sublimate the flesh as you like, you will never distil spirit out of it." Why? Because "that which is born of the flesh is flesh." It partakes of the nature of its source.

"*Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again,*" are the Lord's words. Let me press on you, with the greatest earnestness, that Christ says to you, and to me, as well as to Nicodemus, "Ye must be born again." That is what I call an inexorable "must"—viz., the necessity of man's nature as a ruined sinner before God, and the question raised by God for you is this—*Have you been born again?*

If you inquire the mode and manner of the new birth, Scripture supplies the answer, for there is no limit to God's grace.

"The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." This brings in a new life and nature altogether. You and I have been born according to the laws of natural generation; we are children of Adam; but we have in us the flesh. Will it ever do for God? It will not. We have a nature with all the faculties and capabilities necessary for man's existence here on earth, but that does not fit us for relationship with God, because it is corrupted by the flesh. Hence man must have a new nature altogether; he must be born of water, and of the Spirit.

"The wind bloweth where it listeth." God is

sovereign, but He always uses the Word, and He can use a very feeble instrument to bring His Word to a soul. He may even use a dumb creature as an instrument of His grace, as in a case of which I know. You may think it a strange thing if I say that a cow was the means of a man's conversion. An infidel was out walking one Sunday evening—and you know Sunday is always rather a dismal day for a man who is not a Christian—and was wishing the day was over. He went into his park, on the other side of which grazed his cow. The cow came across the park when she saw her master, to whom she was attached, and licked his hand, which was on the railing. He suddenly recollected a scripture which he had learned when a child: "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider" (Isa. i. 3). (Parents, teach your children the Scriptures.) As this scripture flashed upon his mind, the poor infidel exclaimed, "Upon my word, after all the Word of God is true; that beast knows me, and I do not know God." And he was converted, thank God! Conversion is always by God's Word, and He uses that Word as the means of blessing to souls, perhaps years and years after the Word has been heard.

More than a century ago there was a boy listening to a preacher in a church in the town of Dartmouth, about four miles distant from the spot where I was born in Devonshire. That boy

became a man, and lived to a great age. He lived to be a hundred years old in the backwoods of America. One day, when he was still able to do a little work in the woods, he sat down, and began thinking. "This is my birthday," he said to himself; "to-day I am a hundred years old;" and he turned back upon his past life. Back and back he went till he remembered when, as a boy of about seventeen, he sat in Dartmouth parish church and heard John Fletcher preach from this text: "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema-Maranatha"—cursed when He comes (1 Cor. xvi. 22). The preaching and the text came up in his mind after eighty-three years, and the old man said to himself, "I do not love the Lord Jesus Christ; I shall be lost." He was a convicted sinner, and soon believed in the Lord, and was saved. That scripture, heard eighty-three years before, was the means of his conversion. Thank God!

Ah! my friend, God's Word is quick and powerful, and He often sends strange parts of it to awaken a man, for "the wind bloweth where it listeth." What do you suppose was the scripture used of God to my conversion? It was this: "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe and tremble" (Jas. ii. 19). That scripture was quoted to me thirty-six years ago, and I saw the truth, that I had no more real faith than a damned devil in hell. I am not ashamed to say that I saw my company, and fled.

I was awakened, and said to myself, "I had better turn to God at once"; and I did, praised be His name. My friend, give heed to the Word of God, and if you have never yet turned to God, will you not turn to Him just now?

Remember that the very fact of God having sent His Son as Saviour is a proof that you and I are lost. But people will not have this; they do not like to hear it. If a preacher talks of judgment to come, or of sinners going to hell, they will not listen to it. "Surely we are all facing for heaven," people say. No, no. Do not deceive yourself. If you are not redeemed, if you are not under the shelter of the blood of Christ, God's Lamb, your face is not heavenward, but toward the lake of fire. You will have to meet the judgment of God yourself, unless you get under the shelter of the blood of Him who bore that judgment as your substitute.

There is one great foundation truth, running all through Scripture, viz., that the only basis of relationship between man and God, since man has fallen, is founded on death; relationship with Him must be established by blood. I know that nowadays people do not like to hear of the blood; I know that the blood of Christ is trampled under foot; but be assured there is only one way in which you and I, as sinners, can meet God, in righteousness, and that is the blood-stained pathway of the cross. The new and living way to God is through the death of Christ, not His birth.

His birth was necessary, of course, for, if He had not been born, He could not have died; He became a man in order to die.

The difference between the death of Christ and the death of one of us is vital. You and I die because we are sinful men, whereas Christ became a man in order that He might die. You and I had to die; He had not. On Him death had no claim whatever. He could say, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me" (John xiv. 30). There was no seed of death in Christ. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separated from sinners. It was not only that the Father could say, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"; but His very foes had to confess His excellence and spotlessness.

My friend, get hold of this; that you and I were sinners under sentence of death, but, in grace, the Lord Jesus Christ has stepped in, and died in the room and stead of those who were guilty and lost.

The sentence of God upon man for sin is death; that is sin's wages; but, if a man die for himself, how can he redeem himself? That is the difficulty. Psalm xlix. declares that "none can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him." Therefore we are shut up to the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, redemption through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, God's own Son, who has died and "once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God" (1 Pet. iii. 18).

Redemption has two sides. Redemption by *blood* meets the claims of God's nature, whereas redemption by *power* meets the necessity of our condition, as under Satan's yoke. Observe, too, that God marks out redemption as 'the commencement of an entirely new history for His people: "*This month shall be to you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you*" (Exod. xii. 2).

May I now ask you, Are you saved yet? Have you begun to live unto God? You have not, unless you have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. I saw an old man the other day, every hair of whose head was snow white, and his face wrinkled and furrowed with age, and I asked him, "How old are you?" The old man answered with a smile, "Just four years old." I knew what he meant. For eighty years he had been in the service of the devil, and on the road to hell, but four years before God had opened his eyes, and his ears, to the beauty and sweetness of the gospel; he had fled to Jesus, and Jesus had saved him. It was the commencement of a new history for him, and he could therefore say truly that his age was just four years.

How old are you, my friend? Well, I daresay many could tell the year, the month, the day, perhaps the very hour of their conversion. I could give you, I might almost say, the very tick of the clock when I was converted, on the 16th December 1860. But the point is, Have you got

under the shelter of the blood of the Lamb? Have you begun this new history? Can you from the bottom of your soul, with an honest and true heart, say, "Lord, I have got under the shelter of the blood of the atoning Lamb; I have begun to live to God"? If you have never yet done so, let me urge you to begin now.

Trust simply in the Lord Jesus Christ and then you will understand and rejoice in the words: "In whom *we have redemption* through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace" (Eph. i. 7). Having thus received Christ as your Saviour, you will be prepared also to apprehend the following precious instruction: "And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear; forasmuch as *ye know* that ye were not REDEEMED with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with *the precious blood of Christ*, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. . . . Being BORN AGAIN, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Pet. i. 17-23).

Friend, if you have never yet known the Lord, may the opening hours of 1897 find you bowing to, and believing in Him. Could you have a better moment? Never! The past is gone. To delay may be fatal. Now is your moment. Let it be "the first month of the year" unto thee.

"THE WAR OF 1897."



WHILE waiting for a train at a certain railway station a few evenings ago I overheard a conversation between three young gentlemen, evidently officers, who had spent the day in the hunting field, and were now returning home. One of them said to the others, "Have you read 'The War of 1897'?" (That is a book so-named). "No," replied the others. "It is all imagination," said the first; "but it supposes this country to be attacked by a foreign army, and everything going wrong with us. The book consists of about four hundred pages, but I was so deeply interested in it that I could not lay it down till I had read it through."

Well, I, too, have heard of that book, and that it is very interesting in its way. So it may be; nor is it wholly impossible that such a war might break out, or that things might go all wrong with this country. We certainly live in strange times. Things run rapidly ahead nowadays—a crisis of some kind is undoubtedly approaching; and, without alarming, it is well to warn. We read of a time when men shall say "peace and safety"—these words shall be on their tongues, as the result of confidence in able statesmen, strong governments, mighty fleets, and huge armaments—but at that very moment "sudden destruction cometh"!

Now, whether this imaginary war of 1897 will take place as supposed in the above-mentioned book, I cannot, of course, affirm. Whether this year shall witness the bursting of the long-smouldering volcano, and the collision of these vast European hosts of war, I cannot say—perhaps, alas, it may be so—but certain it is that this convulsive state of things cannot continue much longer. The speed is far too great. The wheel revolves far too quickly. A collapse must come. The idea of the gradual supervention of a peaceful millennium, apart from a fearful political and national break-up, is utterly vain. Such a period will indeed come, but only after the flow of torrents of blood, and the execution of direful judgments.

True, material prosperity abounds. None would deny the growth of intelligence, science, comfort, and the like. But what does that prove? Really nothing to the point. Man is still the same. His fallen nature remains intact. Civilisation may ameliorate, and Christianity may teach, but the root of failure in man, as such, flourishes in its native soil, as of old!

The days that preceded the Flood were marked by a vast amount of material progress. But sin existed, and the Flood came! So again will it be, only another kind of judgment.

No, it is not against an imaginary war of 1897 that I seek to warn you, my reader. Be that as it may. Another calamity on a guilty world

approaches, and of that we can speak with absolute certainty. It is no curious hypothesis, no thrilling supposition. 1897 is a whole year nearer *the coming of the Lord*—each year brings that event so much the nearer. It "draweth nigh"!

The coming of the Lord, so plainly foretold in Scripture, is the hope and expectation of the Church—for, when He comes, all His saints will be caught up to meet Him, and to be for ever with Him (see 1 Thess. iv. 15-17).

But, that done, the door of mercy is closed on all who have refused the call to salvation, and closed on them for ever! Their doom is fixed. God shut in Noah, and, by the same act, He shut out the world of the ungodly. The flood destroyed them all.

And this shutting of the door is the knell of hope, and the beginning of sorrows. The seven-sealed Book of Revelation vi. is gradually unfolded in successive, and ever-intensified forms of judgment, until at the opening of the sixth seal we hear a universal wail, as the wrath of the Lamb is justly anticipated.

This is no dream, no idle tale, no clever imagination! God must deal with sin, and He knows how awful are the sins of the day!

His judgment is the thing to fear. Reader, are you never to be ready? If the country should wisely forearm against an imaginary war, should not you, the sinner, prepare for a certain judgment?

You ask, how prepare? Well, St Augustine said, "*If you would flee from God—flee to God*"! Good indeed! To-day He is revealed as the God of all grace, and the Giver of His Son—the Lover of guilty man—to whom any are welcome; but to-morrow He will be the God of judgment, taking vengeance on the ungodly. To-day! yes, to-day! Ah! let the dawn of 1897 find you, my reader, acting like the prudent man of Proverbs xxvii. 12, who foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself. Look ahead, be warned, be blest, be saved, and let 1897 be spent for that God, who has made you His own, through faith in the blood of His dear Son.

J. W. S.

HAVE YOU A PASS?



SOME few months ago, having occasion to visit, with another, some Christians in Russian Poland, we found upon inquiry it was absolutely necessary to procure a passport to cross the frontier. Having duly furnished ourselves, we started on our journey, and arrived in the early morning at the first railway station on Russian territory. The train pulled up, and an official in uniform immediately demanded all passports. After a critical examination, as the hour for the train to start approached, each one's pass was handed back to

him again, and we were allowed to proceed without hindrance to our destination. If any one had failed to produce a pass, or if in any way it had not been in order, he would have been sent back again into Germany; or if the pass had been a false one, punished. It was absolutely necessary to have a pass in due order, in conformity with the Russian law, and signed by the Russian consul.

One has often thought since how strikingly this illustrates the necessity of a passport to enter the glory of God! It is absolutely necessary, and must be according to the divine order. What is the passport? God's own testimony concerning *His Son*. The plain declaration of His Word is, that whosoever believes on the Son, his sins are remitted in His Name, and he has a title in His precious blood to enter glory. Anything short of this is utterly useless. Tens of thousands, instead of following the plain direction of God's own Word, seek to enter according to their own thoughts. One thinks he will get through on account of his morality, a second on account of his religion, a third on account of his harmlessness, a fourth on account of God's mercy; and so on. Alas, every one who trusts to one or all of these together will find, when it is too late, that his pass was not in accordance with the divine order. There is no title to enter the glory of God but *Christ Himself*. He and He alone is the sure passport to eternal bliss.

To attempt to pass the Russian border without

a pass, or with one that was not according to the emperor's order, were folly. We might have hoped, and buoyed each other up all the way to the frontier, only to find our hopes grievously disappointed as soon as we arrived. A young German, who tried to pass without one, was kept in ward till the return train, and then summarily despatched back again. A pass in order, or no entrance to Russia, is the inexorable law, and admits no infringement. And a pass, according to the divine order, to enter, and dwell in the presence of God, is an absolute necessity; the only alternative is eternal banishment in the lake of fire (Rev. xx. 15). Have you a pass?

Do you reply, like thousands, *I hope so*. Your hope is vain. You *have* or you *have not*. At any moment you may be called from time into eternity; at any moment you may be put to the test as to whether your pass is in order or not. It is one thing or the other. You are either a true believer on the Son of God, and your sins are blotted out by His most precious blood, or they are not. You may be highly respectable, moral, and religious: your virtues may surpass those of thousands around you; but all these things are no pass for heaven.

We might have pleaded to the Russian officials that we were highly respectable Englishmen, and produced no end of testimonials to our moral and religious character, only to receive the reply, that all that might be perfectly true, but that was not the question. The Russian law is not, that if highly

respectable citizens of another country arrive, they shall enter, but *whosoever has a passport*, according to the law, and signed by a Russian consul. This *we had*, and hence *we passed*. If we had not had one, we should have been *turned back*. So also, *if you have the true pass, a present interest in Christ and His precious blood*, according to the Word of God, eternally settled in heaven, should the Lord return, or death come, your title will be good, and eternal glory with Christ be your blessed portion.

But without it, or anything short of it, or any other title whatever that you may imagine, *there is no entrance there*. You must receive Christ *by faith* in your soul, you must be washed from your sins in His precious blood, you must bow to the written Word of God, or be eternally excluded from the glory. It is *Christ and glory*, or *without Christ and hell*; one or the other. There is no middle ground, and every human device is utterly worthless. Satan will do all in his power to blind you to this absolute necessity. It matters not to him what you trust in, so long as it is *not Christ*. If he can palm a *false pass* off on you, he will. If he can lead you to trust in yourself, your works, your good life, your religion, your prayers, your church or chapel going, your baptism, your confirmation, your sacrament-taking, in short, anything else but Christ, he will. You may carry any pass you please, so long as it is not the right one. He knows what will pass, and what

will not. Blessed be God, it is not too late for you to cast the false pass away, and to obtain a new one according to the divine order. But, alas, how hard it is to persuade people of the necessity of it. Reader, your passport must be *Christ Jesus only*; the time to secure Him is *now*.

And what perfect peace is the portion of the one whose passport is in order! As soon as we had procured ours from the British consul at Berlin, and had them counter signed by the Russian consul, we were at peace. We did not merely hope to pass the Russian border, *we knew we should*. We knew they were in accordance with the Russian law, and we carried them in our pockets *in the full assurance that we had a just title to enter*, and we were not disappointed.

Now, have *you* a pass? Is it in order? Can you say from the heart, through grace, I have seen the folly of trusting to anything short of what God says; I rest upon His word; Christ is my Saviour, He died for me, His blood has cleansed me, my title is clear, I am at peace, I know I shall be with Him for ever in the glory of God? How happy the soul that can speak thus! What utter folly, with the clear testimony of God in His own Word in our hands, to follow the thoughts and devices of our own hearts. Persist in so doing, and you will surely reap the fruit of your folly in everlasting despair. The only passport to glory is *Christ Himself*. Have *you* received God's pass?

THREE DEATHBEDS.

THE RICH MAN'S.



ROUND his bed the saddened mourners
stand,

And near by, the doctor, with watch in
hand.

With strength born of despair, the dying
man

Leans upon his elbow, around the room to scan
The luxury, purchased by the riches he had sought
(His soul for wealth the devil long had bought),
But now grim death—sin's wage—the day had
won ;

In spite of all his gold, the rich man's race was
run.

Then flashed across his weary, aching brain,
To beg from death a respite—'twere in vain.

"Nought to this world I brought, nought I take
away ;

Oh, why, *why* this taunting thought at my *last*
day ?

(Ah, Satan, cruel, *cruel* foe, 'tis ever thy delight,
To taunt one whom thy chains have bound so
tight.)

Oh, for one brief hour my thousands I would
give—

Oh, one, *one* brief hour, oh, doctor, *make* me live.
Speak, man !"—"I cannot," comes the low reply ;
"In less than that, sir, you must prepare to die."

Prepare, *prepare*, PREPARE, it echoes round the room ;

Prepare—an echo seemed to say—prepare to meet thy doom.

“No, no, oh, no, I must not die : I *am not yet prepared* :

God’s warnings I’ve unheeded, tho’ so often heard.”

Back on his pillow—a shudder—then ’tis o’er ;
A painful silence—then the doctor speaks, “He is no more !”

THE SCEPTIC’S.

“DRAW up the blind, ’tis getting awfully dark ;
’Tis strange such little things now give me quite a start.

Say, Jack, I’m only young, it seems so hard to die
Away from home and friends”—he heaved a sigh.
“Supposing, Jack, *our* thoughts of God, of heaven,
and of hell

Are wrong—they bring no peace, *that* know I all too well.

I’ve boasted long, *I’d chance it*, that’s when I was strong ;

But *now* I’ve got to chance it, I begin to fear we’re wrong.

Oh, that I were sure—but there’s something here within

That tells me I *must* pay the penalty of sin.”

“Oh, nonsense, Jim ; the Bible might have done for years ago ;

We've proved how it contradicts itself, you know.
 "Yes, Jack, we *thought* we did, and then it seemed quite clear,
But things wear a different aspect when death's so very near.

I feel like stepping, blind, into the blackest, darkest night;
 There's a dreadful horror over me, and not a gleam of light.
 I've known the way quite well, but would not enter in;
 It's too late now, and I must perish in my sin."

The sceptic dies, no peace fills his poor heart;
 Without God or hope he lives in this life, and the next.

THE CHRISTIAN'S—A LAST INTERVIEW.

SADLY altered was the poor, worn-out body, pillowed in an easy-chair, but his spirit rejoicing in his much-loved Lord. He said: "Two months ago, when I felt this sickness was unto death, I asked Him to reveal Himself to me in increased loveliness and nearness. *He did; He filled me with Himself—I know the blood has done its blessed, blessed work for my soul; it is His love, His beauty, His perfection, that fills my heart and vision.*" He then spoke of feeling a little better that day. "But, ah! that is no pleasure to me."

Then, clasping his dear, thin hands together, he

said, while tears flowed down his face: "My precious Lord Jesus, *Thou knowest* how fully I can say with Paul, 'To depart and be with thee is far better!' Oh, how far better! I do long for it! They come and talk to me of a crown of glory—I bid them cease; of the glory of heaven—I bid them stop. I am not wanting crowns—I have HIMSELF! HIMSELF! I am going to be with HIMSELF! Ah! with the Man of Sychar: with Him who stayed to call Zaccheus: with the Man of the eighth of John; with the Man who hung upon the cross; with the Man who died! Oh to be with Him before the glories, the crowns, or the kingdom appear! It's wonderful—wonderful!—with the Man of Sychar alone; the Man of the gate of the city of Nain; and I am going to be with Him for ever—exchange this sad, sad scene, which cast Him out, for His presence. Oh! the Man of Sychar!"

Dear reader, will you be entreated to seriously consider where *you* will spend eternity; it is perfect folly to put the question from you. You know well death is gaining fast upon you; every tick of your watch, or the clock on your mantelshelf brings you nearer, and nearer, eternity. Are you going to cross the line unprepared? You may be rich in this world's goods, or poor as regards them, but neither your riches or your poverty *need* keep you from Christ. "Him that cometh to me I will in *no wise* cast out" (John

vi. 37). If you are a sceptic, yet perhaps at one time were a professor, or a Sunday school teacher, and have been tempted to read infidel books, and your mind has been poisoned — bring your *hard* questions to Christ, as the Queen of Sheba did to Solomon (1 Kings x.). He will solve them all. Again, remember He says, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." A. H.

THREE CLASSES OF PERSONS.



HERE are three classes to be found everywhere; almost in every congregation you will find them.

The first class are those who are saved, and who know it. Yes, thank God, *who are saved, and who know it.*

Saved is a marvellous word. It describes the condition of one who has discovered from God's Word that he is lost, and who has fled to the Saviour of the lost, and put his whole trust in Him who "came to seek, and to save, that which was lost" (Luke xix. 10).

When the woman of the seventh of Luke came to Jesus, and trusted Him, she got *pardon* for her sins, *salvation* for her soul, and *peace*. And what was true of her is true of every sinner that has come to Him, and trusted Him.

Remember, it is not your worthiness, but the

blood of Jesus; not your doings, but His finished work, that saves.

When He said on the cross, "It is finished," heaven rejoiced, and the infernal world groaned. Now, God is not "straitened," but is righteously free to proclaim pardon, and offer salvation to *all*.

"God hath saved us" (2 Tim. i. 9). Blessed words!

A dear man who, after three years of exercise of soul, got saved, said to the writer, "I know I am saved, and accepted through the blood of Christ; I have the testimony of God for that." Blessed knowledge! Would that all possessed it.

Yes, the first class are those who are saved, and who know it from God's Word.

Reader, are you of that class?

The second class are those who want to be saved, but do not know the way. There is a work of God in their souls; they have felt the awful load of sin, but as yet they do not know what puts sin away. They are on the ground of works for salvation. They have tried morality, and it has failed them; they have tried religiousness, and they are no better off; they have tried self-betterment, but they only the more discover the hidden depths of evil found there; they have gone under the baptismal waters, and partaken of the Lord's Supper, but their case remains unaltered. Such need to look out from self altogether to Christ—to "behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John i. 29). *He accomplished*

the work that saves. His crimson blood flowed to atone for the soul. He bowed His head, and died, "the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God" (1 Pet. iii. 18).

The Word of God, who cannot lie, assures you that on trusting Him you are saved.

Thus the work that saves was done outside of you, and the word which assures the believer that he is saved, is outside of him also.

"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" (1 John v. 13).

Mark those words, dear reader!

It is the *work of Christ* that saves, and it is the *Word of God* that assures us that we are saved.

The third class are those who are so much in love with their sins that they totally ignore the question. But if they ignore the question, the question will not ignore them. It follows them, and will follow them to the judgment throne, if they refuse to give it their attention now; and at the bar of the eternal God, the Judge of all the earth, they will have to render an account. "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Eccles. xii. 14).

If you belong to this third class, look that verse in the face; play the man, and not the fool. Let not the satanic charmer attract you from so momentous a consideration. Let not "the pleasures of sin, which are for a season," drown the

voice of conscience within you. Let not, I beseech you, the boastfulness of man displace the authority of God's Word in your soul. That Word shall stand for ever (1 Pet. i. 25). Heaven and earth will pass away, but that will remain.

You would not ignore any great financial question that would affect your fortune, nor would you ignore any great political question, the proper settlement of which would save your country from the horrors of civil war; nor would you ignore any great calamity with which your own family might be threatened. Then why ignore a question so momentous as that which involves your relation to God, and whether you will spend eternity in heaven or hell? Why so wise when it is a question of the things of time, and so foolish when it is a question of eternity?

In conclusion, let me sound in your ear the word of the prophet Amos, "*Prepare to meet thy God.*" Your meeting God is both inevitable and compulsory. "Every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. xiv. 12).

The way of salvation is by the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for such as *you*. Why not go to Him, trust Him, and confess Him both Lord and Saviour?

"To-day, if you will, hear his voice, harden not your heart" (Heb. iii. 7, 8).

I WILL GO MYSELF.



E often hear stories of self-sacrifice, and of life endangered on the behalf of others, which touch the heart, and call forth a note of praise on the behalf of those who risk their own lives for that of their fellows.

The following story reminds us of the wonderful grace of Him, "who, though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich."

In the year 1796, during the month of January, a transport ship went ashore in Plymouth Sound, thereby endangering the lives of between five and six hundred precious souls.

The commander of His Majesty's ship "Indefatigable," on hearing of the disaster, ran down to the beach, and found that most of the officers had left their post of duty, and abandoned the ship. He urged them to return, and, in vain, offered pilot-men and others rewards if only they would board the wreck, and seek to save some of the drowning men, but all refused, thinking the task too hazardous to be attempted. Seeing that none would go to the rescue, the brave commander said—

"I WILL GO MYSELF!"

There was but a single rope, with which the officers had come ashore, whereby communication

with the ill-fated vessel could be made, but by means of this he was hauled through the surf on board. He at once assumed command, although he had received an injury in the back which kept him in bed for many weeks afterward. Through his promptness and energy he was instrumental in saving the lives of all on board, and faithful to his charge, he stayed there until all were safely off the doomed vessel, and a few minutes after he had left her she went to pieces.

We rightly admire the bravery of the gallant commander. But how shall we sing the praises of the Lord Jesus, who, beholding us in our lost condition, doomed to an everlasting hell, with no one to come to our rescue, laid aside His glory, stooped so low even to the death of the cross, enduring there its shame and agony, and undergoing the wrath of God against sin, that by the giving up of Himself He might save us from the wrath to come, and have us with Himself in glory. Upon the throne of God He now sits, His mighty work all done. And from that throne of glory the good news of salvation is sent to thee—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

"I gave My life for thee,
My precious blood I shed,
That thou might'st ransomed be
And rescued from the dead ;
I gave My life for thee,
What hast thou given for Me?"

"AN OUT-AND-OUT SINNER."



T was a sultry afternoon—I had taken my seat in an already crowded carriage on the south line from Adelaide, S.A. The bell had rung, and the usual examination of tickets was completed, when a tall, well-dressed, good-looking man passed down the platform, but recognising some person or persons in our carriage, he turned back and came in. He had scarcely taken his seat when some one attracted his attention outside. Putting his head out at the window, he addressed the individual thus—

“Hallo, Bill, where have you been all this blessed time? What are you doing now? We’re just about to start, so come and shake hands with the devil.”

The person whom he addressed answered his queries in as few words as possible, and shook hands with him while the train was in motion.

My first thoughts were, surely the man must have been drinking, but this thought was soon banished as we proceeded on our journey. He was a powerful talker, and it was not to be wondered at that few in the compartment cared to involve themselves in a lengthy conversation.

I took out my Bible and commenced to read, but it seemed impossible to do so, for almost con-

stantly kept ringing in my ears those terrible words—

“SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DEVIL.”

Closing the book, I besought the Lord to give me A WORD for this poor blinded fellow-creature.

Several times I tried to speak, but I could not get out the words, and was again and again cast upon the Lord, until I thought Hosea iv. 17 would have to be obeyed—“Let him alone.” At last an opportunity presented itself. We had just passed through a tunnel, where we got a rather unusual quantity of smoke, which aided to make those who want to be very comfortable “under the sun” a little more uncomfortable.

He looked me full in the face, and with a sarcastic smile, which I understood, said, “It’s not very enjoyable being here, is it?”

I met his gaze in the full assurance that God had now given me an opportunity of speaking, and replied, “It’s much more comfortable than I anticipated when leaving Adelaide station.”

Catching my meaning in an instant, he continued, “Oh, I suppose you are one of those religious folks who think no one else is right except those who go to chapel, read the Bible, &c.!”

Every book in the compartment was closed, and every eye turned upon us.

“Then you are mistaken,” I said, “for I am not a religious man, and further, I believe religion without Christ is one of the devil’s best inventions

for deceiving souls; and as for chapel-goers and Bible-readers, there will be thousands of such in hell." He looked at me a little embarrassed, and then went on: "I'm not a hypocrite, I'm just what — what you see me. I belong to the devil, and while I remain in his service I mean to serve him to the best of my ability."

I could not help liking his out-and-out expressions, and told him so. The most detestable man to have anything to do with is one who assents to all you say, and at the same time has his own opinion, but here I found myself confronted by a man who was all he professed to be.

It would occupy too much space, and perhaps weary my reader, to detail all our conversation, but I feel bound, for the sake of any who may be on the same road, to follow my fellow-passenger a little further. In this strong man's heart there was at least one tender chord. He had had a Christian mother, who was gone to be with the Lord Jesus. He could accurately quote scriptures which she had taught him when a boy; but, alas, such truth had no charm for him. After a brief outline of his life, in which he gave me to know his name and place of abode, I interrupted him by asking, "Would you not like to see your dear mother again?" to which he replied, at the same time pointing with his finger to the cutting we were passing through, "My heart is as hard as those rocks, and you don't know what an out-and-out sinner I have been."

“Thank God if you really believe what you say, for, if you do, I have good news for you,” I said. Like Philip (Acts viii. 35), I “preached unto him JESUS!” the scriptures most on my heart at the time being 1 Timothy i. 15; Luke xv. 2. He listened with marked attention, and the time passed so quickly, that almost before we were aware of it the train stopped at the station where he was to get out. I pressed him for an answer to the words, “What think ye of Christ?”—a moment’s pause, and then came the very unsatisfactory reply—

“I really do mean to become a Christian some day, but while I belong to the devil, I will serve him faithfully.”

As he rose to leave I gave him two gospel books—one entitled, “Where will you spend Eternity?”—and asked him to read them.

Taking from his pocket a handful of papers, he said, “Some of these are orders which I must despatch to-morrow; I will put these books with them, so that they may not get overlooked, and will read them without fail,” adding, a little to my surprise, “if I get saved through reading them, or otherwise, I shall be sure to let you know.”

Before proceeding with my story, I would like to recall my reader’s attention to the words which stand at the head of this paper, or rather to the last words of my fellow-passenger to his companion on the railway platform.

Let me apply them to you, beloved reader, in order:—

“HALLO!”

It reminds me of Isaiah lv. 1, “Ho, every one.” It is an appeal to the ear, or, in other words, simply, I want your attention. “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. Then follows—

“WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN.”

Oh, how like Genesis iii. 9. Poor Adam hid behind the trees of the garden, but God can see behind the trees: He made us, and He knows all about us, so there is not a bit of good in trying to hide anything from Him. Hence, if you are not born again, beloved reader, I would ask you, as you read this paper, in the words before repeated, Where have you been

“ALL THIS BLESSED TIME?”

Never in the history of the world was there a time like the present—not the time of conscience or law, but the day of grace. God’s dear Son has been down in this scene, and though your heart and mind are revealed by the driving of those nails into His precious hands, and raising Him upon a cross of wood between two thieves on the hill Calvary, yet, by the work which He finished there, He has not only accomplished eternal redemption for the believer, but He has taken every barrier out of the way for you, poor sinner.

“‘It is finished,’ all is over ;

Yes, the cup of wrath is drained ;

’Tis a victory—

None but Jesus could have gained.”

Glorious time! "The acceptable year of the Lord" (Isa. lxi. 2). Let me again put the question to yourself, "Where have you been all this blessed time?" And

"WHAT ARE YOU DOING NOW?"

How often, when people are asked about their eternal security, they reply, I am doing the best I can. If my reader is one of such, I would plead with you to let go your rotten prop, and "escape for thy life." The work is done, and the best thing you do, while working for salvation, is a slight upon the blood of Christ, and a dishonour to God. Works will *follow* salvation, but if you are still working *for* salvation it is a sure proof that you are not satisfied with what Christ has done.

"WE'RE JUST ABOUT TO START."

And, dear unsaved one, do you know that the children of God are getting ready to leave earth for heaven? We are looking for the day long promised, when Jesus will come into the air with a shout, and take all His own to Himself. We're just about to start, for His coming draws very nigh; but you, if unsaved, will then be *left behind*—left for death, judgment, and eternal damnation!

"COME——"

I will not finish this sentence, my heart recoils from it. Alas! alas! for those who continue to shake hands with the devil, until the solemn

messenger of death proclaims, "Time shall be no longer."

Dear reader, don't believe the devil. He was a liar from the beginning. He will promise fair, but pays badly. Just one word more, *not* about the devil's "come," or man's "come," but God's "Come." It is found in the last chapter in the Bible, and is the last gospel invitation: "Whosoever will, let him come."

It means this: everything is complete, the door is wide open; and not only so, but Christ is waiting to receive you.

I would like to draw a curtain over the terrible end of the one whose words now seem to sound in my ear from the dead, but I cannot.

A few weeks after our conversation in the train, his dead body was found near his own house—the gun lying beside him, which he had employed to send himself into eternity.

He really intended to become a Christian some day, but we have not the slightest grounds for believing that that day ever came.

Some one has wisely said, "To-morrow is only found in the calendar of the fool." Do not delay, beloved one. Do not procrastinate, come now to Jesus, as you are.

"Return, O wanderer, to thy home—
 'Tis madness to delay;
 There is no pardon *in the tomb*,
 And *brief* is Mercy's day."

J. J. W.

THE BLOOD AND ITS EFFECTS.*

(Read Exodus xii.)



It is of the last importance to see that nothing could deliver us from Satan's power, nothing could clear us of guilt, and bring us to God, but the atoning sufferings—the sacrifice—the death and blood-shedding—the propitiatory offering of the blessed Saviour, the Lamb of God. Christ was made sin for us when He sustained the judgment the sinner deserved. God forsook Him on the cross—when His soul was made an offering for sin—and therein is where and how propitiation was effected.

Atonement has two sides—propitiation, and substitution; one Godward, the other manward. Propitiation is Godward, glorifying Him about sin; substitution is manward, delivering him from his sins and their consequences. Propitiation is the meeting of the claims of God's nature, His holiness, His majesty, His truth and righteousness, and all these claims have been perfectly and divinely met in the atonement which the Lord Jesus Christ rendered when He died on Calvary's tree, having there borne the judgment of God, His forsaking, and the hiding of His face, the darkness and the smiting, and all the suffering that the bearing of

* From "Night Scenes of Scripture,"—"A Night in Egypt."

sin must entail. Remember that sin and God can only meet for judgment, either at the cross, where the blessed Saviour bore the judgment of God in respect to sin, that the one believing in Him might never bear it; or else at the great white throne, where the sinner will be judged himself. My sin must meet God's judgment; my sin must have expended against it the holy righteous indignation of God's nature, and there are but two places where the judgment of God is expressed and borne—the cross, where the Son of God suffered in the room and stead of the sinner, or the lake of fire, where the sinner suffers for himself. You will have to make your choice, you cannot escape it.

You may dream about God being merciful, and good, and loving, and kind, by which you mean you hope that God will make light of sin. People say, Of course I know I am a sinner, but God is good, and in the day of judgment will He not have mercy upon me? No, He will not; simply because it will then be a day of judgment, not of grace. When people talk about knowing they are sinners, but that God is good, and will be merciful, it simply means that they think very lightly of their sins, and they hope God does the same. They are mistaken. God thinks so much about your sins and mine that His own Son had to suffer death and judgment, in order that those sins, borne by Him, and suffered for on the cross, might not be suffered for by us. That is substitution.

When God was delivering Israel from Egypt the

Paschal Lamb illustrated all this. "Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof," was the significant order to Israel, and it speaks to us also. The soul is to take in the beauty and excellence and perfection of Christ in His life, and then to feed upon His death. It is quite true that the will and wickedness of man were expressed in putting the blessed Lord upon the cross, but, forget it not, that Christ "must needs suffer"; there was the necessity of love on His side, as well as the fact of sin on our side.

Now what have I to do in order to obtain salvation? Christ has died and risen again—is not that all that I have to believe, and is not that enough? No. There was something that every household in Israel had to do that night in Egypt, in order to escape the judgment of God. The Lord declares distinctly, "I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the first-born in the land of Egypt." Why the first-born? Because the first-born expresses what man is in nature. The judgment of God is upon man *as man*. It matters not whether he be learned or ignorant, religious or irreligious; man is a sinner under sentence of death, and he must meet it. The first-born is the one in whom all hopes are centred, in whom all expectations are wrapped up, and he must die. How can he be delivered? Only by the sweet and precious truth of substitution, another must die in his stead, if he is to be delivered.

"I will execute judgment," saith the Lord; but He adds, "*The blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt*" (ver. 13). Here they have God's promise. Observe at this point they only hear what God wanted, and how they are to be saved. They are not yet saved, they are not yet under the shelter of the blood in this verse. It is like the preaching of the gospel, so to speak. The Lord is here preaching the gospel to Israel, and He tells them, You must kill the lamb, you must take its blood and sprinkle the lintel, and the two side posts of the doors of your houses. And why not on the threshold also? Ah, that is reserved for the unbelief of this learned, educated, cultured, highly scientific nineteenth century. It is reserved for the last decade of this century, above all years, to bring out cold, scathing, heartless criticism of the atonement, and to do worse—to trample the blood of Christ beneath the feet. God said, Put the blood upon the lintel, and the two side posts, and that is where faith puts it, above me, and around me; but where does scientific criticism put it to-day? I will tell you. Our latter-day critics put it on the threshold; they trample the blood of Christ beneath their feet.

This is a solemn indictment, but you know that what I say is true, and that men boldly set aside the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. God's Word

declares, "Without shedding of blood there is no remission" (Heb. ix.). And what, by-and-by, will be the song of the redeemed in glory, addressed to the Lamb? "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by"—what? Is it by Thy life, by Thy example, by helping us to follow, and walk in Thy steps? No, it is by "*thy blood.*"

The instructions to Israel were plain and simple: they were to take a lamb, kill it, pour its blood into a basin, and put it on the lintel, and two side posts, and then God declared, "*The blood shall be to you for a token . . . and when I see the blood (mark that), I will pass over you, and the plague (death) shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt*" (ver. 13). Then I ask, What can shelter me from the plague, what can shelter me from God's judgment? The blood, and nothing but the blood: the blood of Jesus, the blood of God's own dear Son, the blood of the Lamb of God. Tell me, are you sheltered, have you that blood between you and God? Well, if never before, let it be there for the future.

It is when God sees the blood *sprinkled* that He passes over, and judgment is stayed. The shedding of the blood was the rendering to God of that which His holiness demanded, and which His word enjoined, but when the life of the lamb was taken, and the blood *sprinkled* on the lintel, and the two doorposts, we get what Scripture speaks of as "the

obedience of faith." How is a man saved? By faith in Christ, bowing to the testimony of God to the work of His dear Son. True, it is Christ Himself in whom we trust, but the testimony of God is this, that while we trust in His Person—in what He is in Himself—the soul that believes in Him comes under the benefit of all the work He has wrought. No doubt the expression is used, "Through faith in his blood" (Rom. iii. 25), but, generally speaking, what we have in Scripture is this: My faith rests in a Person, the eternal Son of God, who came down here that as man He might die for me, and rise again; He wins the confidence of the heart, and then, when I trust in Him, I get the full benefit of the work He has accomplished.

The directions as to the sprinkling of the blood are very significant, and we should weigh them well, and see if we have acted similarly. "Ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that is in the basin; and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning. For the Lord will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the Lord will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you" (ver. xxii. 23). It is when He sees the *blood* that God passes over, not when He sees your faith, or your repentance, or your prayers, or anything else but the blood.

But observe the importance of this last instruction. "Take a bunch of hyssop." I am persuaded that there are many of my readers whose hands have never grasped the bunch of hyssop. I do not doubt that you believe in the fact of the death of Jesus, but, I ask you, Have you taken the bunch of hyssop, and sprinkled the blood on the lintel? If you had passed down a street in Egypt that night, you would have seen some houses where the blood was on the lintel—*outside*, not *inside*—but you might have come to a house where no blood was to be seen. And yet that man was an Israelite, and had heard God's instructions. You ask the man, How is it there is no sprinkled blood, have you no lamb? "Yes, I have a lamb." Is it killed? "Yes, and roasted too." But I see no blood. "Oh no, the blood is in the basin." But why is it not outside where God can see it? "Well, I do not see much importance in having the blood there, so long as the lamb has been killed, and the blood shed: I do not like to have the blood on my house, and to put myself up for observation in that way. Surely it cannot make much difference where the blood is when it has been shed," is his reply. The person who believes merely that Jesus has died, is just like the man who has never sprinkled the blood. He has accepted the truth of the atonement, but it has never been applied to his own soul. What does the bunch of hyssop mean? I believe it signifies the sense, always wrought in the soul when the gospel reaches it, of what I am

as a sinner: it is repentance, self-judgment: I am brought low in my own eyes, I am brought to the sense that I am a lost man, and I turn to the cross, and shelter myself beneath the blood of the Lamb.

The hyssop has a very distinct place in Scripture. Solomon "spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon, even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall" (1 Kings iv. 33), *i.e.*, the greatest and the least of the products of the vegetable kingdom. The hyssop was a little shrub that did not even take root in the ground, but came out between two stones in the wall. Have I any part in my own redemption? Yes. What is it? My sins, that is all. And of course, if I have a real sense of what my sins are, I shall be bowed before God in repentance, and self-judgment, and the acknowledgment of those sins. And I believe the bunch of hyssop expresses what goes on in the soul of the convicted sinner, contrition before God, in the sense of my sins, and of what I am. My sins would have brought me into death and judgment before God, and nothing but the blood of the Substitute can meet the necessity of my case, so, in faith, and in the sense of my need, I put that blood between my soul and God, and I am safe.

When midnight came in the land of Egypt, and God came out to judge, what was the event? Where there was no sprinkled blood there was no salvation, no shelter. And so with us, where there is no blood sprinkled, there is no salvation. You say, Oh, but I believe the blood of Christ was shed.

True, but is it sprinkled? Have you in real, simple faith, fled to the Saviour, and put your guilty, godless soul under the shelter of His precious blood? If not, heed the Word of God, I beseech you: take hold of the bunch of hyssop just now, and get down before the Lord, in the acknowledgment of your sins, and say, Lord Jesus, Saviour, I trust in Thee, and in Thy precious blood. He would love to hear you say—

“Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bid'st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come.”

Where the blood was sprinkled, salvation was the result; and where no blood was seen, the plague fell. God passed through the land that night in judgment, and “there was not a house where there was not one dead” (ver. 30). In the houses of Israel there was one dead—the lamb, the victim, the substitute. In the houses of Egypt there was one dead—the first-born. In the houses of Israel the lamb had died in the room and stead of the first-born, and that brought peace to many a household that night. So now the poor sinner can say, Jesus has died in my room and stead, and I am free.

You might have gone up to a young man in one of the households of Israel, who was the first-born, and asked him, How is it with you to-night? Have you peace? “Perfect peace!” How do you *feel*? “I do not rest on my feelings, but on the word of

Jehovah. The blood is upon the lintel. It was father's work to put it there, but I assure you I took good care to see that it was done; I was too much interested in the matter not to see to it; my life would go this night if the blood were not there. But the blood is there, and Jehovah has said, 'When I see the blood, I will pass over you.'" And are you at rest? "At perfect rest. *The blood is the basis of my peace, not what I feel.*"

Peace is not a feeling, it is not an emotion, it is not an experience, it is a *settled fact*, based on the knowledge that the claims of God have been all met by the Lamb of God, and God respects His precious blood. As one has said, The blood of Jesus has reached, and touched the very memory of God, for we read in Hebrews x., "Your sins and your iniquities *I will remember no more.*" The blood of bulls and goats could not take away sins, but the blood of Jesus does. Its value God alone knows. You and I do not know the value of the blood of Christ. We do value it surely, but our value of it is very poor and inadequate. God knows its value perfectly, He esteems its worth fully, and He says to you and me, Trust that blood; get under its shelter. If your soul and mine can each answer, "Lord, I trust it," then God says, I shall treat you according to My estimate of the value of that blood, not according to yours. And that is wherein peace lies. It does not rest on your estimate, or mine, of the blood of Christ, but on God's estimate of it. And what is God's estimate of it? He estimates it

so highly, that there is nothing too great for Him to do on the ground of it. He delivers you from judgment, and brings you to glory, on the ground of the shed blood of His own dear Son. That blood, and that blood only, can give you peace and confidence of heart towards God. W. T. P. W.

LOST IN THE AUSTRALIAN BUSH.



SEVERAL years ago a gentleman, residing in a fashionable part of London, sent out his son, a youth of eighteen years, to join a cattle farm in Australia.

When he landed in that colony he had to tramp over hundreds of miles to reach his destination. He knew nothing of the road nor the country. In due time, however, he arrived at the farm, where he was informed that he was to be stationed at a solitary spot some twelve miles off, a cottage which was occupied by two Chinamen.

A ticket-of-leave man was the guide to show him the way through the heart of the Bush. He, after setting him well on the road, told him that the rest was straight forward, and left him. Hitherto the road was clear enough, but soon, to his dismay, the track became more and more indistinct, so overgrown by grass and weeds that in time he became conscious of having lost it alto-

gether. He was still several miles from the destined place, and had no idea of which way to go, and a slight turn either to the right or to the left would have thrown him quite out of his course. As a matter of fact, he was *lost* for the first time in his life, and he felt it! When in that lonely Bush he thought of home, and home training, where he had often "*said* his prayers" in the nursery near the Marble Arch, Hyde Park, but now he knelt down on the grass and prayed his "first prayer," short but real and earnest, and that prayer was, "Lord, show me the way!"

He continued his journey without any indication as to direction, until his eye fell on something in the midst of a clump of trees. It was a tiny column of smoke, but it meant everything to him, knowing there could be no other house or hut near. It was indeed the spot he had been sent to, and which God, no doubt, in answer to his simple prayer, had guided him to. This circumstance was used of God, in His grace, to awaken in that youth a sense of real *soul need*; to see himself, in God's light, lost and ruined, needing a Saviour. And, in that repentant state, he believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, to the eternal salvation of his priceless soul. That once young man, who has now attained his three-score years (and is a bright and joyous Christian), recently related to the writer these brief particulars, which may be relied on as strictly true.

God, who is Sovereign, is pleased to use various

means to awaken souls to their true moral condition in His sight. With many it is through dreams, some by sickness, or bereavement, and others by loss of money and the like, but with all the Spirit, through God's Word, always directs the soul to Christ, the risen and exalted Saviour in glory, the object of faith, who gives "peace to the conscience, and joy to the heart." Our reader may never have known what it is to have been *lost*, either geographically, or morally. On the former we need not dwell, though it pleased God to use it in soul-blessing to that young man, but as to the latter, it is still true that Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners*, yea, to seek and to save the *lost*.

He is seeking and finding such to-day, and will continue to do so till the day of grace closes, which to you may be at any hour. But, mark, He seeks the LOST and none others, and only finds the *lost* ones. He always saves and satisfies them for time and eternity, no matter how far away they have wandered over the dark mountains of sin. He never overlooks one who is truly *lost* and feels it. Impossible! So if that be your condition, dear unsaved friend, why not be found, saved, and satisfied for ever? We earnestly press you not to put it off till this blessed Seeker, Finder, Saviour, and Satisfier closes the door of mercy, when you will be *lost* for ever, and be beyond the reach of rescue. Think of the distance He came, think of the love He displayed on the cross of Calvary, and the suffering He there endured, to deliver the lost

ones from endless judgment, and to have them one with Himself in His own eternal glory. God grant that you may believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and be found, saved, and satisfied for His ever worthy Name's sake! "

J. N.

"THEY MADE LIGHT OF IT."



ALL things are ready; come unto the marriage" (Matt. xxii. 4). Have you come? Have you responded to God's invitation to partake of His grace in honour of His Son? The Jews, already bidden, *would not*, when called.

Again invited, after the death of Christ, they *made light of it*. Alas, how many are like them to-day! *Will* was at work then, and *will* is at work now. Men love their own wills and their own ways better than God's will and God's way. Self-will is sin, and to go my own way is sin too.

Now, the grace of God has prepared everything our souls need. Pardon, justification, reconciliation, salvation, everything is provided and as free as God can make it. But men are occupied with other things. The Jews made light of His invitation, "and went their ways—one to his farm, another to his merchandise. And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and

slew them" (Matt. xxii. 5, 6). It is the same to-day. The countryman is occupied with the land, and the townsman with commerce. Men's hearts and minds are engrossed in their varied callings and occupations, and with the mass there is no time or room for God and His Christ. A bare hour or two may be spared by some for a little bit of religion once a week, but, alas, only too often for the sake of the respectability of the thing. But where is *the heart*? All the while wrapt up in things temporal; and the subject of conversation with many the moment they are outside the Church door, consists of criticisms of the sermon, congratulations one to another, Consols, crops, and other chit-chat—in short, anything but *Christ*. Is it not true?

Satan is very busy. He has many webs for his victims, and no mercy. Thousands of his dupes, whilst shunning gross evil, respectable moralists and religionists, are travelling swiftly down the broad road, their hearts and minds wholly engrossed with the lawful pursuits of this life. There is no wrong in attending to the farm and to the merchandise, but there is very great wrong in doing your own will and going your own way without God. Man has a duty to perform, business of some kind to attend to, a responsibility to fulfil, a family to sustain. All true, perfectly true. But it is all for this life, for time. How about the future, *eternity*? You are not going to sow and reap, and buy and sell, for ever. There will be a day, when

you can no longer attend the market, or go on "Change," when you will no longer go *your way*. Sooner or later (it might be to-day), you *must* give your ways up. Landlords, farmers, crofters, farm-labourers, die. Professional men, merchants, shop-keepers, workmen, die. Emperors, kings, lords, ministers, die. You will die too in the ordinary course of things. Well, you have looked after your interests here, we suppose; made your will, too, very likely, *in case you should* die, and thus thought of other people; but how about your interests for eternity? Have you seriously considered *them*, or have you made light of them? We expect you like to be considered as a wise person, and to be credited with care and foresight, and yet you have never given a serious half-hour to the matter, which is more important than all the rest put together! Rather short-sighted wisdom that. To make light of God, and the claims of His Son, and your own eternal interest, is to reap a harvest of folly in an eternal hell. And you will *never get out*.

Now, there are many ways of making light of God's gracious invitations. If you despise them, His Word says, "Behold ye despisers, and wonder, and perish," &c. (Acts xiii. 41). If you reject them, the Lord says, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him" (John xii. 48). If you neglect them, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation." If you simply go your own way, engrossed with

the things of time, you will surely rue your folly eternally!

Friend, take care! You have already made light of this too long. If death were to overtake you this moment, would you really be at the marriage? Have you received the grace of God? May be, you look at death as a long way off, and think there is no need to be troubled. Not so far off, perhaps, as you may think. The writer was recently in a little town to preach the gospel, where one after another were taken away, several without a moment's warning. The clergyman (a sporting gentleman) had just died. Mrs — had just fallen into a fit, and died in a few hours. Another had dropped dead on her hearth-rug. Mr —, a well-known townsman, went to the funeral. Next day, standing behind his counter, talking to another, he dropped down dead too. Another labourer in the gospel who came to visit us, said: "A very sad death has just occurred where I have been preaching. A young woman was going to a ball with her sister at eleven o'clock at night, when she suddenly fell ill. Seeking aid in a neighbouring house, before daybreak she had exchanged her ball-dress for a death-shroud!" Two days later, going to a small village to preach the gospel, almost the first thing we heard was, "A miner went to his work as usual this morning, and, when he returned for his breakfast, found his wife dead in her bed!"

Sinner, arouse thee! Trifle no longer with the love and the longsuffering of God. *Your* life hangs

as it were on a thread. Death, stern, inexorable death is here, and bid it begone you cannot. It may mark you for its victim next. Beware. You are sporting, unsaved one, on the brink of eternal woe. Take care, lest God in the midst of your vanity and pleasure-seeking should cut you down. You may make light of His grace, but be ye sure of this, your sin will find you out. Eternal issues are at stake!

We press upon you, therefore, dear reader, the importance of *present decision*. God spreads the feast of grace in honour of His Son; the invitation to-day is world-wide. Both His heart, His hand, and His door are wide open. To take your place you need a wedding garment, *Christ*. In oriental countries the giver of the feast provides this necessary robe. So now, our God in His rich grace has provided a robe for any and every sinner who comes, suited both for His own presence and for us. It is *Christ Himself*. In Him alone can you remain before Him, and enjoy His grace both now and for ever. Thousands, yea, tens of thousands, alas, make light of grace, some even now entreating God's servants spitefully. What are *you* doing? Ere long the doors will be closed. Come *now*, while you may. Would you come; seek no righteousness of your own, but submit to God's. Christ is God's righteousness, and the only One who can meet your case. Come as you are, a sinner, undeserving, guilty, lost, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, His Son, and God will account you righteous,

and see you henceforth in Him. Christ is the One your soul needs. His blood was shed for sinners, and cleanses from all sin. Whiter than snow you must be to meet His eye, *whiter than snow you are the moment you trust in Christ's precious blood.* Perfect and complete you must be to dwell in the glory of God, *perfect and complete in Christ you are, the moment you bow your whole soul to God's testimony concerning Him in simple faith.* Henceforth you are clothed by God Himself in the wedding garment of His providing, a sinner saved by grace, to enjoy grace now, and for ever, in His glorious presence.

How awful the alternative! "Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Sinner, dare you any longer trifle with God, and make light of the invitation of His grace? Christless professor, dare you any longer run the risk of meeting God without a wedding garment? The reckoning moment is at hand. Without Christ you will be bound hand and foot, so that you can neither deliver yourself nor flee; taken away, and cast out of the light of His holy presence into the outer darkness, the blackness of darkness (Matt. xxii. 13; Jude 13), there to weep in utter misery, and to grind your teeth in utter despair, a Christless soul for eternity.

Sinner, will you not have Christ now?

GOD WAITS.

2 PET. iii. 9-15.



OD waits, in patient grace He waits,
 His wrath He's long restrained
 Toward a guilty rebel world,
 With blood of Christ deep stained.

His suffering-long salvation is
 Towards Adam's guilty race ;
 In every sinner gathered in
 We trace His patient grace.

The blessed Son of God doth wait,
 His deep desire is this,
 To have His blood-bought Bride with Him
 In glory where He is.

The Holy Ghost, the Spirit waits
 In patient grace as well ;
 When Jesus took His place on high
 He came on earth to dwell.

The Church, Christ's Bride, doth wait for Him
 To take her to His home ;
 His promise cheers her on her way,
 " Behold, I quickly come."

The whole creation waits and groans,
 And longeth to be free
 From Satan's thraldom and his sway,
 To be at liberty.

Come, Jesus, then, nor tarry long,
 Responsive to each call ;
 Come, Saviour, take Thy power supreme,
 And reign, the Lord of all. M. S. S.

FRAGMENT.

"JUST REVERSE IT."

"Captain ——, how do you expect to get to heaven?" asked a Christian passenger on board a steamer, one day.

"Why, by praying to God, and believing on Jesus Christ."

"That is not God's way," said the gentleman ;
 "just reverse it, captain, and you have it."

"Just reverse it?" said the captain. "I see it. Believe in Christ *first—then* pray to God."

"Just reverse it," reader, if you are seeking to obtain peace with God by prayers.

"The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. vi. 23).

"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).

"As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John i. 12).

"The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. xx. 17.) ANON.

THE SINNER'S SEAT.



“ WOULD you kindly come nearer the front, please, and not sit there on the sinners' seat.”

These words were addressed by an aged Christian to a young man and woman, who had just seated themselves in a back seat of a hall where the gospel was preached every Lord's Day night.

The young woman was well known to the speaker as a Christian who had come regularly to the meetings for some time, and he naturally concluded her companion would be a Christian also.

To understand his strange remark, however, it is necessary to explain, that when unconverted strangers came to these meetings, they almost invariably tried to get a back seat; and if these were filled up, they would sometimes rather walk out than go too near the preacher. To prevent an occurrence of this kind, those who undertook the work of getting people seated, always endeavoured to get those, whom they knew to be Christians to fill up the front seats, so as to leave as much room as possible in the back for those who had a special desire to sit there.

If the young man had been a Christian, as was thought, he would, no doubt, have complied with the request, but the old saint had mistaken his

man: for not only was he unsaved, but was one who had a deep-seated hatred to all who professed conversion, and the above injudicious, though well-intentioned remark, instead of helping to remove the hatred, only intensified it.

He had come that night as the result of the incessant pleadings of his converted sister, then sitting at his side. Before he consented to come, however, he made her promise to take him into a seat near the door, which accounted for her being in the so-called "sinner's seat" that night. Fain would she have gone forward if her brother had gone with her, but not a peg would he move.

The remark, too, had so filled him with indignation, that he could think of nothing else during the whole meeting—of course, he put the worst possible construction upon it. "What do they think they are?" he said to himself. "Surely they consider themselves awfully good and holy, that they cannot sit on the same seat as sinners, who are as good, if not better, than a lot of hypocrites like them. The sinner's seat! the sinner's seat!" he kept repeating to himself. "It will be a long time before they get me back to their meeting again to sit on their sinner's seat." What he said to himself inside he repeated with a vengeance to his sister when he got out. Neither did he fail to carry out his threat, for never again did he occupy the "sinner's seat" in that hall.

A year or two after, however, he resolved to go and hear an evangelist from London, who was

having great meetings in a large public hall, taken for the occasion of his visit to the town. In this instance he went along with a godless companion, and, true to his old plan, he made sure of a seat near the door—the “sinner’s seat” again.

Deeply earnest and soul-stirring as the preacher was, all his labour was spent in vain on R—— M—— and his Christless associate. As soon as they got to the door, they made fun of what they had heard, repeating the solemn statements, and going through the gesticulations of the preacher for the amusement of each other. In this state R—— M—— remained for a few years, during which time he could not be persuaded to go to another gospel meeting.

The day of reckoning, however, must come sooner or later for every one, when that which has been the sport of the unregenerate heart becomes the bitterest gall to the awakened soul. If that day of reckoning takes place in “*TIME*,” it results in *salvation*. If it is deferred till the “day of judgment,” it issues in *ETERNAL DAMNATION*.

Has this day of reckoning taken place with you, dear reader? Perhaps you say, “What do you mean by the day of reckoning in *TIME*? I thought there could be no day of reckoning for any one till the ‘great judgment day.’” Ah! my dear friend, you make a great mistake. The work of God’s Spirit *NOW* is to convict man of sin, and *SHOW HIM UP* under the *EYE* of a *HOLY GOD*, that

he may see his SINS and his own *sinful self* in the LIGHT of the future "judgment seat of Christ," and thus be made *manifest* unto God, and to his own awakened conscience NOW, so that he and God may be at one about his *sins* and his hopeless state as a sinner.

This, then, is the day of reckoning that takes place NOW with all who get saved. This is REPENTANCE in its true form, which is taking sides with God *against yourself*. Those who do so NOW, God pardons. Those who refuse to do so till they stand at the bar of God's judgment seat, He will condemn, and have to send to an eternal hell.

Thank God! the day of reckoning came to R—— M—— in "TIME," so that he need have no fear for the one that is still to take place in "eternity" (2 Cor. v. 10; 1 John iv. 17).

His devoted sister had not ceased to pray for him, and seek opportunities to speak to him about his soul during these years of utter indifference as to God's claims upon him.

She got him to promise to go and hear a Mr M——, a well-known evangelist, who was expected to visit the city in a few weeks to hold a series of gospel meetings in a newly-built hall.

He wanted a special favour from his sister—one which he knew would be difficult to get. She showed great unwillingness to grant it for a time, then, taking advantage of his intense desire for it, she proposed to give it to him on one condition,

viz., that he would *promise* to go and hear Mr M—— when he came. Without any intention of fulfilling his promise, he at once assented, and got his deeply desired favour.

When Mr M—— came, he was accordingly reminded of his promise, but he managed, however, to find excuses night after night, till one Lord's Day night his sister pressed him hard, and was also assisted in her effort by the mother, who urged him to be *a man of his word* and fulfil his promise. This brought him to the point, as he could see no way of getting out of it with honour. But if he went, he must have everything his own way. He would lay down his conditions, and his sister would have to *promise* that they were carried out to the *very letter*. The conditions were these—she would go with him into the *back seat*—the “sinner's seat” again—and rise and come out with him as soon as the first meeting was over; and that nobody was to speak to him about his soul, at the door, as he was leaving. She promised that as far as lay in her power his instructions would be attended to, and off they went in good time—to get a *back seat*.

The hall was packed. The preacher chose for his subject three parties in Scripture who went in search of blessing, but were “TOO LATE.” The impotent man in John v. was always too late to get healed after the angel troubled the waters. The Ethiopian eunuch (Acts viii.) was “too late” to get blessing at Jerusalem in connection with

its Jewish temple and worship, as the leaders of that religious system had just cast out and murdered God's Son, thus leaving the whole nation, with its religion, under the threatening clouds of divine judgment. The third "too late" was the case of the five foolish virgins in Matthew xxv.

The first two, though "too late" for blessing where they sought it, got it in a more blessed way from Him who is the source of *eternal* blessing for poor, helpless, and seeking sinners—the "Christ of God"—the "sinner's Saviour." The third were "too late" for everything, and had the door of blessing *shut against them for ever*.

When dwelling on the last "too late," the preacher was deeply solemn. He showed that the five foolish virgins were not "heathens" who never heard the gospel. They were those who went to church, chapel, and gospel meetings, but had never been converted. There had never been a work of God's Spirit in their souls producing "*new birth*" (John iii. 7). They had thus "no oil in their vessels," though they had the lamp of Christian profession to show they were neither heathens nor infidels. Then applying his solemn subject to his hearers, he said, "If the Lord were to come *just now*, that 'old man sitting there, who has been a member of a church for fifty years, and has sat down at the communion table hundreds of times, if he is not **CONVERTED**, would be left out for judgment." Then pointing his

finger to the back of the hall, said, "Also that young man, who has heard the gospel before now, and gone away MOCKING, would be 'too late,' and would therefore be left behind for eternal DAMNATION." And many others of his hearers did he picture out as those represented by the foolish virgins, who would have the gates of heaven *shut against them* when Christ came to take His own to Himself.

A deep solemnity prevailed while these dread realities were brought before that assembly. It was felt, both by the preacher and the Christians present, that God's Spirit was dealing with souls in the meeting.

At the finish, the usual invitation for anxious souls to remain to a second meeting was given. R—— M——'s sister, true to her promise, rose to go out with him; but to her glad surprise, he kept his seat, and would not go, till the question of his soul's salvation was settled.

His own words to the writer some time afterwards will best describe how the Lord dealt with him that night.

"I cannot remember one word the preacher said that night, except those, when he pointed to where I was sitting—'*That unconverted YOUNG MAN sitting on that seat, who has heard the gospel preached before now, and gone away MOCKING, would be "TOO LATE," and therefore left behind for eternal DAMNATION.*'

"These words came home to my soul in such a

way that I trembled from head to foot. It looked as if God had told him all about my mockery on a former occasion. When the meeting was over, I tried to rise and go with my sister, but felt powerless to move from my seat. All this made me conclude that God wanted me saved that night, or I might never get another chance. A Christian, who helped in the second or anxious meeting, came and asked if I would like to be saved, and on being assured I would, he sat down beside me, and pointed me to several passages of God's Word; but not until Romans x. 9 was turned to did I find peace for my trembling soul. Those words, '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,' made the way of salvation so simple, that there and then I confessed Him as MY Lord and Saviour, believing also that God had raised Him from the dead *for my justification* (Rom. iv. 25). At once the awful dread of God and judgment was dispelled from my heart by the joy and peace that now filled it; thus did the rich mercy and grace of God meet me and save me, in all my vileness, on that back, or 'sinner's seat,' that never-to-be-forgotten night. Next day I felt greatly tested at work. I knew I should *confess* the Lord to my fellow-workmen, but somehow the devil deterred me, which made me very unhappy. That night, however, I got some printed notices for the meetings to give away, and the

Lord gave me courage to give them to my comrades the day following, which soon brought out that *I was converted*. This at first surprised them. Then they began to laugh at me. All this, however, only made me the happier, as God gave me the grace to bear it, and speak more freely to them of my precious Saviour."

Now, my dear reader, bear with me while I affectionately ask you a plain question. You, no doubt, have been at a meeting where the gospel was preached. Now, what seat did you occupy? Was it the "sinner's" or the "saint's"? The one or the other you must fill, as there are no middle-class seats. Don't misunderstand my question. I don't ask if you occupy a "back" or "front" seat. You may be one of those who go right to the front, and sit under the very gaze of the preacher, and yet occupy the "*sinner's seat*." To speak in plain language, if you have never been "born again," never been truly "converted," and therefore SAVED, you cannot have sat on any other than the "sinner's seat." Perhaps you have sat hundreds of times at the "communion table," and partaken, as a *professed* believer in Christ, of those sacred memorials of His broken body and shed blood—yea, you may be one of those ordained church officials, who receive these emblems from the hand of the officiating clergyman to give to his flock—more, the reader may be even a minister, a priest, or the highest religious dignitary in all the wide range of Christendom—yet your elevated

seat of religious power is nothing more than the "SINNER'S SEAT," if you, its occupant, are still *unconverted* (John iii. 6, 7; Matt. xviii. 3; Mark xvi. 15, 16; Rom. iii. 19, 20; Matt. xxii. 11-14).

Not only do such occupy the "sinner's seat" *now*, but to die in that state will ensure a place in the SINNER'S HELL for all eternity.

If, on the other hand, the reader be one who has, like R—— M——, discovered that he has been but a sitter on the "sinner's seat," but fled to the Saviour of sinners for refuge, then, thank God! you no longer occupy the "sinner's seat," but the "saint's." No matter whether you have only trusted Him to-day, or fifty years ago, the saint's seat is yours *now*, and the day may be near when the blessed Lord Himself shall come, and give you a seat along with Himself and all His redeemed ones in His everlasting kingdom (Eph. ii. 6; Rev. iii. 21).

"What soul is more happy than I,
 Who am for eternity saved?
 Made nigh to my God,
 Through Christ's precious blood,
 In whom, through His grace, I've believed.

In Christ, then, I stand all complete,
 Whose name be for ever adored;
 And now, while I live,
 All glory I'll give
 To Jesus my Saviour and Lord."

HOW THE HEART IS WON!



HERE are three of God's favours which unwary man is prone to overlook, if not to despise; and these are, first, His goodness; second, His forbearance; and last, His long-suffering.

And yet every one of us is the object of all three!

Now, God's goodness is His kindness; and that is a lovely word—the kindness of God! We read in Luke vi. 35 that He is kind to the unthankful and to the evil! How true!

We are kind, generally, to our friends, sometimes to our needy neighbours, but kindness to an enemy is, amongst men, unknown: it would be a contradiction in terms; it would mean that enmity was thereby overcome and reconciliation effected.

Man knows nothing of this, but God, blessed be His name, is kind to those who hate and disobey Him. His kindness is therefore peculiar. He hates sin; He will judge all evil; but He is kind to the sinner whilst his day of grace continues.

Hence the natural idea that God is "hard reaping where he has not sown, and gathering where he has not strawed," is absolutely wrong. The reverse is the case. Alas, that we should think and feel otherwise,

“God is love,” and the certain outcome of this is His kindness, His forbearance, and His long-suffering!

Think, first, dear reader, how kind God has been to you. In a thousand ways He has shown you kindness, and if you would attempt to number His benefits you could not do so.

Think, secondly, how He has forborne with you—He has warded off a thousand ills that might have come to you. His love is thus not only positive in the bestowal of kindness, but negative in screening you from many a sorrow.

And, thirdly, think how long He has suffered your ways! Year after year tells its tale of provocation on your part, and of patience on His—such patience! Sins committed, mercies slighted, warnings disregarded, calls rejected, and yet patience waiting!

If you would but form these three words into a mirror, and gaze upon them, you would see sufficient in your own heart to produce self-loathing.

“For,” notice, “it is the goodness of God that leadeth thee to repentance” (see Rom. ii. 4).

This is the great secret. God’s wonderful goodness—His kindness—leads to repentance. It melts; it breaks down; it wins; it keeps.

As limestone is slaked by water, so the hard and flinty heart is subdued by love.

Long ago, when I wished to collect an outside audience, at a time, I think, when men seemed to listen more eagerly than now to the story of God’s

salvation, I was fond of singing this verse of a hymn—

“Shall I tell you what induced me
For the better land to start—
’Twas the Saviour’s loving-kindness
Overcame and won my heart.”

The hymn is old, but worthy of preservation, and that verse formed a good text for the truth I desired to present.

And many a crowd it gathered who afterwards heard of the loving-kindness that proved itself in death, unto the saving of a poor vile sinner, and the winning of his heart for heaven! A Saviour’s loving-kindness! How lovely!

Ah, friend, there’s nothing like love, and it is just what we need. It is a rare quality here. Plenty of hatred and strife and bitterness, but little deep, genuine, lasting love!

No, but there is plenty of it where least expected.

“Nobody ever told me,” said the dying gipsy boy, on hearing, for the first time, that “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).

He had never been told, and certainly he would never have thought of it; but it is divinely true that God loved and gave—so that we may believe and have! How simple, how glorious!

Now, I know quite well that man can and will turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, and pervert His kindness and forbearance until he

thinks that God's long-suffering is indifference, and that sin is nothing to Him. He shall yet learn otherwise; but I am persuaded that the grand truth to be proclaimed is the love of God in the gift of His Son. His kindness leads to repentance and His love attracts the heart. But can the heart thus be won? Most certainly!

Is there aught in the sinner that responds to God? Not a particle! He hates God in the innermost recess of his being.

Then, why address him? Simply because the divine command is to "preach the good news to every creature." "To you is the word of this salvation sent," said Paul in Acts xiii. 26. He preached, like Ezekiel, to bones that were very dry, and left the life-giving power with God, to whom alone that prerogative belonged.

And life was given, and hearts were won, and souls were saved, and the God of grace glorified.

"So we preach, and so ye believed" (1 Cor. xv. 11).

We may well shut our eyes to man, and go in the full assurance of God's love for, and interest in the sinner, and count on His Spirit working, and His goodness leading men to repentance.

Hence, friend, despise not His goodness and forbearance and long-suffering! You could be guilty of no greater sin!

J. W. S.

GOD SOWING, NOT SEEKING.

(Read MATT. xiii. 1-23.)



HE Gospel of Matthew, written for the Jews, presents the Lord Jesus as their King—alas for them—refused. Let us glance briefly over the first twelve chapters. We see in the first chapter the genealogy of the King. His right to the throne by birth is incontestably proved. In the second the circumstances connected with the birth of the King are recorded, and Gentiles come to see Him who is King of the Jews but whom the Jewish nation know nothing of—not even that He is born. The third chapter relates the proclamation of His kingdom by John the Baptist. The fourth chapter gives the temptation in the wilderness, and the moral overthrow of the usurper—Satan. In chapters v.-vii., the so-called Sermon on the Mount, we find enunciated the laws, the rules, and the moral principles of the kingdom of which this Blessed One is the King. In chapters viii. and ix. the powers of the kingdom are described. Every possible miracle that Messiah could perform is there found, a complete testimony to the glory of the King. In the tenth He sends His disciples out to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom largely, and also to show its powers—miraculous healing. In the eleventh, we find that even John the Baptist began to doubt if Jesus

were the Messiah, and the cities, in which most of His mighty works were done, refuse to believe Him. In chapter xii. not only do the rulers of the nation refuse to believe Him, but they attribute to Satanic power that which was the activity of grace in the power of the Holy Ghost. What He was doing in the grace and power of God, and thereby fulfilling Scripture, they said, was the work of a man filled with the devil. As a nation the Jews definitively, when tested, reject their King. That nation's history is over.

As a result of this, Christ breaks the links that exist between Him and Israel, He refuses to own them, as connected with Him in the flesh. But some He does own, for "he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother" (xii. 49, 50). The only way in which we can manifest that we are in touch with Christ is by doing His will. You and I did our own will, just because it is the nature of the unregenerate heart so to act, irrespective of God's will. Sin is the will of the creature in activity.

Let us now ponder the scene presented in Matthew xiii. The Lord's action is significant as He pushed off in the boat. (Compare Luke v. 3.) God was going to bring in a totally new kind of ministry. Till now God had been seeking something from man. He was responsible to give God his duty,

his love, his service, but he had totally failed to do so. The owner was looking for fruit in the vineyard, but he found none: nothing but leaves. Until now man was under law, and the law was the declaration of what the creature ought to be. That law he had not kept. He had broken it in every point, was therefore guilty and lost, but when the Lord Jesus comes, in grace, to save him, He is not wanted. This shows that man was absolutely under Satan's power. Nothing was to be got *out* of man, so God begins a new kind of ministry with him, and that work is, that He wants to put something *into* him. The Lord sows the seed to produce fruit. He is not looking for something from us. God is not now a claimer, nor a receiver, but He is a giving God. He gave His Son, He has given us His Spirit, what better could He give? The fruit will come in due time if only we receive and retain the seed. Grace works now by sowing the seed—the Word of God—in the heart, and the Lord is the sower. If you have not received the Word of God, there is no link between your soul and God. The effect of its reception is to produce new life. How is a man born again? It is all the work of God, though His Word and His Spirit. When the Word of God gets down into a man's conscience, he bows before God, and owns everything; and I do not think any one is ever really blessed in any other way.

Now note well that the sower is the Son of Man (ver. 37), "the seed is the word of God" (Luke

viii. 11), and the soil is the heart of man. This soil is presented to us in four different ways.

1. "Some seeds fell by the wayside, and the fowls came and devoured them up" (ver. 4). "Those by the wayside are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved" (Luke viii. 12). To hear and believe is God's way of salvation. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts xvi. 31). The jailer at Philippi was saved this way. Christ is the only way. Jesus saith, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John xiv. 6).

Man is a poor, undone, helpless sinner, but salvation is offered to him by God. Salvation, freer than the air you breathe, is offered to you in the name of the Lord Jesus. "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts x. 43). I should like you to know who is the most out-and-out believer in sudden conversions. Well, it is the devil. Mark that. The devil has a great deal more confidence in the gospel than most men that preach it. He knows the gospel converts a man where he sits, therefore, he says, "I must take away the word *immediately*, lest he believe, and be saved." Hearing, believing, and being saved, is God's order.

The gospel, my friend, can save you just where you read this. If the arrow of conviction got into your soul there would be a wonderful change in

you. But if you are only a "wayside" hearer, Satan takes away the seed—the word—which in sinful carelessness and hardness of heart you do not believe, and you are left, untouched and unsaved.

2. But we read that "some fell upon stony places." These are they "which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away." When tribulation or persecution comes, they give it up. There is no root. Oh! if only God's Word got really down into you, it would take root downward, and bear fruit upward. The "stony-place" hearer receives the Word for the joy of it, and gives it up for the trouble. I believe that this class is mostly found among the young. It is both a blessed thing to be a Christian, and a joyful thing. But the gospel does not make a man cheery all at once. It makes him serious at first, because he sees his sins, and has to face God about them. When believing and pardoned then comes the joy. To cleave to Jesus, and Jesus only, is joy unspeakable.

3. But, thirdly, "some fell among thorns." Who does this represent? Our Lord explains. "He also that received seed among the thorns, is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful" (ver. 22). True indeed is the word, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God" (Mark x.

23). Judas loved money, and sold Christ for it. Balaam "loved the wages of unrighteousness." Do not imitate these men. They both loved money, and thought little of Christ. This thorny-ground class is perhaps the largest of all. If you are still of it, may the Lord, in His mercy, arouse you ere it be too late. You will find this class of hearers of the Word everywhere. They are as thick as the leaves of the forest. Time is too short, and eternity is too long for you to trifle with God's Christ, and His salvation any longer. Let not "cares," "riches," or "the lust of other things" rob you of God's salvation. The devil will use anything to effect this, anything under the sun just to keep Christ out of your heart. You have eternity before you; would to God that you realised it. Where will you spend eternity? Face this reality, I pray you.

4. But the fourth class is cheering to look at. "He that received seed into the good ground, is he that *heareth* the word, and *understandeth* it; which also beareth fruit and bringeth forth some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty." Everything turns on understanding the Word. I can understand no word in Scripture without divine apprehension. The object of the book of Proverbs is "to perceive the words of understanding" (i. 2) as well as "to know wisdom and instruction." Again, "A man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels" (i. 5). Again, "With all thy getting get understanding" (v. 7). Are you resting on

anything but Christ? If so, you have no understanding. Of the real Christian it is written, "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ" (i. John v. 20). I wonder whether you have got this yet, my friend.

In Luke viii. we read that the seed which fell "on the good ground are they which, in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience." Do you know what God says about the heart? "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jer. xvii. 9). An honest heart is a heart that knows the truth about itself, viz., that it is utterly *dishonest*. A good heart is a heart that knows it is *bad to the core*. My dear friend, you need not be afraid to know what you are. When you have learned the truth as to yourself, you will find that God comes out and shows what He is, a living, loving, blessed Saviour. The Word tells you of your own ruin and guilt, on the one hand, and the love of God, and of Christ on the other hand. The gospel—the seed, the Word of life—shows how God has come out to meet the state and condition of the soul through the death of His own beloved Son. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,"—"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our

Lord" (Rom. vi. 23). When this is really believed the Word is kept, and the believer brings forth fruit with patience.

W. T. P. W.

THE TWO GREAT WAGES QUESTIONS.



E are not aware that any question more widely engages men's minds all over the world, nor about which there is keener agitation and anxiety to-day, than regarding what is so well known as "*The Great Wages Question*," i.e.,

the due relation between capital and labour.

This question of wages, which lies between man and *man*, is no doubt very important in its way, but is not within the sphere of these pages to enter upon, except to compare it briefly with the infinitely *greater wages question* which is between man and *God*, and respecting which we fear there is far too little concern amongst men.

The first-named question has chiefly to do with *time*, but the second is connected with *eternity* and *God*, with whom we all have to do.

All like to have their due, and every one will readily admit that if a man perform a day's work he is entitled to receive a day's wages, and that it would be unrighteous to withhold such wages, or any part of them.

Now, do you suppose for a moment that *God* is less righteous than *man*? By no means. We learn from God's Word that "the wages of sin is death," and "after this the judgment," i.e., "the lake of fire, which is the second death."

God, who cannot lie, also tells us that "*all* have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

So you see that ALL, without exception, have earned their wages—*death and judgment!* It is clear enough, therefore, in common righteousness, that those well-earned wages must not only be *paid* but be *received*.

For you, therefore, my reader, if unsaved, the awfully solemn question is—What about the receiving of the wages for *your* sins? For as surely as you have earned them, they must be received either by yourself or by your Substitute, and we earnestly ask, which of the two is it to be? We beseech you not to thrust away from you this solemn question as though it were of no moment! Death and judgment lie straight before you as your just due, and must ere long be your sad portion, unless you accept in this day of grace the Lord Jesus as your Saviour, and Wages Receiver, "who suffered, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." Do not go on unmoved till you reap "the due reward of your deeds"—namely, an unending duration of misery in receiving your *wages* in the lake of fire!

The God of love and the God of all grace, who is withal absolutely holy, has come forward with a

release, and with blessing for all who own they have really earned what is their due, and who, warned of God, by faith accept His Beloved Son as their gracious Substitute and Soul-Blessor. All such are "justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins . . . that he might be just and the justifier of *him who believeth in Jesus*. . . . That as *sin* hath reigned unto death, even so might *grace* reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. iii. 25, 26, v. 21).

Dear reader, I implore you not to be like Balaam, the son of Bosor, "who loved the wages of unrighteousness; but was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbad the madness of the prophet." And mark, that same Balaam said, "I shall see him, but *not now*: I shall behold him, but *not nigh!*" (Num. xxiv. 17).

Oh, be wise to-day, while God is long-suffering, and not only make sure of being clear of the great eterna pay-day, but take care that you secure present blessing and an eternal home in the glory, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

"We thank Thee for the blood,
The blood of Christ Thy Son;
The blood by which our peace is made,
Our victory is won."

"I HAVE GOD'S TESTIMONY FOR THAT."



CERTAINTY as to our salvation can only be obtained by a full, unreserved acceptance of God's testimony concerning those who believe on His Son. "He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true" (John iii. 33). "He that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son" (1 John v. 10).

So it is a question of believing God, or making Him a liar. Which are you doing, reader?

You say: "I am a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, and I would not give up my hope for anything, but I have not that certainty that you speak of. I do not wish to make God a liar, but I do not feel that I am saved."

Let me answer you by the words of another. After he got saved, he said to the writer, "*I can say, I am accepted, and saved through the blood of Christ. I have God's testimony for that.*"

Mark those words: "I have God's testimony for that."

You say, "Did he not feel himself to be saved?"

No doubt he had deep and real feeling, for he had been on the way, as a convicted sinner, for three long years; but it was God's testimony,

and his "*setting to his seal that God was true,*" that gave him the blessed certainty of being saved.

Hence it was not a mere *hope*, nor was it based upon his ever-changing *feelings*, but a divine certainty, because it rested on *God's testimony* concerning Christ and His precious blood.

Mark again the words of this dear soul, "*I can say, that I am accepted, and saved through the blood of Christ. I have God's testimony for that.*"

Goodness, he had found out, he had none; righteousness, he had the testimony of God that he had none. "There is none righteous; no, not one" (Rom. iii.).

With him now it was neither his goodness nor his righteousness, but, "I can say I am accepted, and saved through the blood of Christ."

"The blood of Christ." What priceless value there is for God in the blood of Christ! In its infinite value it has met the claims of a just and righteous God in respect to our sins. In the same precious blood we find our need as guilty sinners met, and that it is the ground of our every blessing.

It is not a hope. It might have been that before the Son of God died for us, but *now* it is an *accomplished fact*. Peace has been made by the blood of His cross (Col. i. 20). Redemption is accomplished by the same precious blood. "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 for us" (Heb. ix. 12).

As to our feelings, they could never bear an adequate testimony to the precious blood of Christ, nor be to us the assurance of our salvation. God has borne witness to the infinite efficacy of the blood of His Son, by raising Him from the dead and giving Him glory; and it is His testimony that removes all uncertainty from the mind of the believer, and gives him the peaceful assurance that he is saved for ever. "And this is the record (or witness), that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life: and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (1 John v. 11, 12).

Wonderful words! As simple as they are assuring. Have I the Son of God? Can I claim Him as my own very Saviour, the One who died for me? Then I can be assured that I have eternal life. "He that hath the Son hath life." "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life" (John iii. 36).

How good it is of God to give us *words* which place the matter beyond all question, and that fill the soul with gratitude and praise, and the heart too with an intense desire to serve Him, who loved us and gave Himself for us!

True praise and service are the outcome of a soul consciously saved. It is no legal performance of so much duty to get saved, or to keep one's self

saved; but the spontaneous desire of a soul that knows itself saved, and that can say, "*I have God's testimony for that.*" It blesses God; it seeks by the Word to walk in paths of holiness, and in deep concern it reaches out after others, earnestly desiring their salvation.

An anxious soul once said, "Oh that God would write it in the skies that He loves me!" Thank God, we have something even better than that. It might be said that is a mere illusion, but when, by the Word of God, we are taken back to Calvary, and as we read the wondrous tale of divine love, all uncertainty leaves us, and we are assured by the agony and blood of the Saviour there that God loves us. And when we again read in the Word of our God, "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*" (1 John v. 13), we are assured that we are saved.

In conclusion, dear reader, can you affirm, as the expression of your own faith, "*I can say, I am accepted, and saved through the blood of Christ; I have God's testimony for that*"? If so, bless His holy name continually, for you can rightly sing:—

"But when I saw the blood,
 And looked on Him who shed it,
 My right to peace was seen at once,
 And I with transport read it;
 I found myself to God brought nigh,
 And 'Victory!' became my cry."

THE PRECIOUS SAVIOUR.

"Unto you therefore which believe he is precious."

—1 PETER ii. 7.

7.6.



H, Christ to us is precious,
 He died our souls to save,
 And we in Him believing
 Eternal life now have—
 Communion with the Father,
 And with His blessed Son,
 The risen Man in glory,
 The Father's Holy One.


No longer of the darkness,
 But children of the light,
 As strangers here and pilgrims
 We walk by faith, not sight.
 As Christ is now in glory,
 In favour, so are we,
 Accepted and beloved,
 From condemnation free.

And though our path be dreary,
 And trials round us close,
 We joy in God our Father,
 We in His love repose.
 Through Him who hath so loved us
 We more than conquerors are ;
 Nought can from Him divide us,
 And nought our peace can mar.

O Jesus, Saviour, keep us
 Abiding in Thy love ;
 May we its depth and fulness
 Each day more fully prove.
 We would be ever looking
 For that most blessed day,
 When Thou wilt come from heaven,
 And take Thy saints away.

M. S. S.

“I DO NOT BELIEVE IN A FUTURE.”

“ HERE is no truth in what those preachers say about eternity. I do not believe in a future.” Such was the proud boast of a fashionable worldly lady to her Christian maid, who had ventured to speak to her about her eternal welfare.

She was a favourite of society, and had moved in a gay and pleasure-seeking circle all her days, but at the comparatively early age of fifty-six she was somewhat suddenly called away from the scene of her gaities.

Early in March last year she complained of feeling unwell, but insisted on fulfilling her theatre engagements at an afternoon performance. She went, and that night was taken ill.

It was Tuesday, but she refused to see a doctor till Thursday. When he came he said: “It is only

influenza, but IT IS TOO LATE! She has gone too far!"

Soon after she sank into unconsciousness, and remained thus for two or three short days. Suddenly emerging from that state, she turned to one by her side, and said, "I wish everybody in the house to come into my room."

A few minutes found doctor, son and daughter, brother and servants round her bed. Drawing herself up, she said in hushed tones: "I wanted to see you all together, and to tell you I have had an awful vision! I have never before believed in a future, *but I do now*. I have seen God, and He has told me I am entering upon *my first week in hell!*"

The doctor raised his hand as though to check her, *but, with those awful words upon her lips*, she gasped her last, and was gone, but where?

The shock of this God-given vision woke her to the fact of *the stern reality of eternity*, and that hell lies at the end of the slippery, downward path of the pleasure-hunting, sin-loving, Christ-rejecting worldling.

A few short sentences can sum up the life and death of such an one, but what tongue can utter, what pen describe—

"The horrors that roll o'er the godless soul,
Waked up from its death-like sleep,
Of all hope bereft and to judgment left,
For ever to wail and to weep."

Scoffing scepticism and callous indifference are very short-lived.

Fifty-six years sufficed to span *sin's pleasures* for this poor lady, but only eternity can measure *sin's wages*.

Be assured, dear reader, that *sin's fleeting pleasures* for a lifetime will certainly be followed by **SIN'S BITTER WAGES** for eternity!

God has inseparably linked together this world's joys with this world's judgment. "*Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth; . . . but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment*" (Eccles. xi. 9).

My dear unsaved friend, remember time is with swift wing speeding thee on to eternity. Yes, the moment is surely coming, whether slowly or speedily, when *you must enter upon your first week in eternity!* And rest assured of this, your eternal weal or woe will then be fixed for ever.

Dying in your sins will mean dying without hope of mercy.

"There are no pardons in the tomb,
And brief is mercy's day."

The star of hope never casts its genial rays beyond the horizon of time, can never lighten the gloomy regions of the lost, and is never needed in heaven's eternal sunshine.

It shines brightly for thee now, poor sinner, through the thickening moral darkness of this poor world.

"A door of hope" has been thrown wide open by

the death of Christ for those who are lying under the judgment of God.

"It is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul" (Lev. xvii. 11). "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John i. 7).

God's holiness demanded it, divine love provided it, and simple faith appropriates it.

Trust it, and you trust that which has met every claim of divine justice and holiness, and shelters the feeblest believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Despise it, and you despise your only means of fitness for His holy presence.

"Precious, precious blood that shelters
From the wrath to come,
Gives the sinner right to enter
That bright home."

Unknown reader, art thou sheltered by this precious blood? If not, *delay no longer*. "Escape for thy life!" "Flee from the wrath to come!" "Behold, *now* is the accepted time; behold, *now* is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. vi. 2). "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts xvi. 31).

"Blest are they who, lost, undone,
Rest by faith on God's dear Son;
Blest who take, through precious blood,
Refuge in the eternal God;
They by truth are thus made free,
Rock of Ages! hid in thee."

“WASH, AND BE CLEAN.”

(2 Kings v.)



NAAMAN the Syrian held an exalted position in this world, but one thing marred all his enjoyment of it—he was a leper. He was the victim of a loathsome malady, which, so far as the skill of man was concerned, was incurable. That spoilt everything. But he was an object of the grace and mercy of God. A little captive maid, and a poor, lonely, and despised man of God were His chosen instruments in bringing about the healing of Syria's mighty captain. Two messages came to him through them, to say how he could be recovered, but Naaman was slow to believe either of them. Brimful of himself and his own glory and importance, he was very slow to avail himself of God's way of healing. It made nothing of the mighty Naaman, and that was very humiliating for that honourable man's valorous flesh. The prophet Elisha's message was unmistakably plain, “Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean.” And until Naaman bowed to it, believed it, and acted upon it, he remained unclean—a leper.

As with Naaman physically, so is it with us all morally, in the natural state. Naaman was a leper; each one of us is a sinner before God. We

are all without exception suffering from a malady which no human instrumentality can eradicate or heal. We are hopeless incurables. Every soul of man, from the highest to the lowest, is stricken with the same disease. "The most renowned and the most obscure are alike sinners, guilty, under judgment, lost. But God is working in grace. And the message of grace to us all, and therefore, my reader, to you to-day, is, "*Wash, and be clean.*" You have not to travel to Jordan's river, but you can be cleansed now on the spot.

But very likely the message of the gospel to-day finds you, like Naaman, unprepared to receive it. Instead of believing it simply, and getting the eternal benefit of it, you are filled with your own thoughts and ideas. Your poor heart has conceived some other plan, which you consider equally as good, or better. When Naaman received the prophet's message, instead of rejoicing, *he was wroth, and went away.* "Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them and be clean? So he turned, and went away in a rage" (2 Kings v. 11, 12). But he went away *with his leprosy.* "*I thought.*" Poor Naaman, you thought wrong. It was *your thought*, and *not God's.* Are not Abana and Pharpar better than all the waters of Israel? Oh, yes, no doubt

in your eyes, but you do not see as God sees. How strikingly this illustrates the reasonings of men to-day as to God's salvation. *I thought.* Here is where thousands go astray. They will not allow God to think for them. *Your* thoughts are all wrong. God hates thoughts (Ps. cxix. 113). His thoughts are not as ours. The state of Christendom to-day is the fruit of "*I thought.*" It is surely very far away from God's thoughts in His Word. Abanas and Pharpars abound, splendid rivers, no doubt, in men's eyes, but no healing waters are found there.

The human heart dearly loves to plan its own way to heaven. Millions would arrive in glory, if God had said, *Travel the way you like.* But as He has said otherwise, alas, men who trust in their Abana-and-Pharpar-gospel will surely be grievously disappointed. God has spoken, sinner, and His word is truth. The word to Naaman was, Wash in Jordan, and you shall be clean. And the word to you is, Trust in the precious blood of Christ, shed on Calvary's cross, and you shall be clean. Ah, you rebel against that. Your proud flesh cannot brook it. It is so humiliating. It makes nothing of you. Yes, friend, that is just it, it does make nothing, *absolutely nothing of you, and everything of Christ.* And to that you must come, or in your sins you must remain. You may turn, and go off in a rage, like Naaman, but you will carry the leprosy of sin with you. You may repair to an Abana, or a Pharpar, but no

human remedy ever put a single sin away from a guilty soul, or ever will. Christ's death and bloodshedding alone can meet your case. Will you wash then, and be clean? The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin (1 John i. 7). "Without shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb. ix. 22).

Now Naaman's servants were wiser than he. They came near, and spoke unto him, and said, "My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?" (ver. 13.) That was sound counsel, and it touched Naaman. His conscience told him it was true. Yes, if the prophet had told this great man to do some great thing that would add to his credit and renown in doing it, he would gladly have set to work. But (as another has illustrated the work of God in the soul), if this great man is in for blessing, *the great man must collapse*. He must take the low place. *And so must you*. "I thought" must go. Are not Abana and Pharpar better? must go too. Self must go. Naaman must dip in the waters of death. So must you in principle. The way to healing and life is through death.

The gospel does not bid you do some great thing, but a very little thing. No doubt if it pleased God to send an angel this day to men, bidding them do some great thing for salvation that the world had never yet heard of, tens of

thousands would set to work at once, as it would make something of them, and maybe you would be one of them. But when God says, so to speak, Give yourself up, take your place before Me as a guilty lost one, and believe on My Son, and His precious blood shall wash you whiter than snow; man's proud heart rebels, and he prefers to go on with his ordinances, and observances, and ritual, and what not, in all of which there is no Christ and no salvation. How terrible will be the awakening day! Sinner, hear while you may, come *now* to the Saviour, trust *now* in His all-cleansing blood.

"Then went he down and dipped himself seven times in Jordan" (ver. 14). Wise Naaman. He gave up his thoughts, his plans, his better way, and bowed to God. He acted "*according to the saying of the man of God.*" He went down and dipped. And what was the consequence? His flesh *came again* like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean. Of course he was. How could it be otherwise? He believed God's own word through His servant. He was healed through faith. And so may you be. Away with your own thoughts and plans and notions for ever; believe God. He has spoken; take Him at His word. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," &c. "Christ died for us; much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him" (Rom. v. 9).

Unquestionably, it was a severe test for Naaman. What if it should not be true? Dip seven times. One can picture the scene, the great captain of Syria's victorious host standing in the bed of Jordan's river, with the eyes of all his staff, his soldiers (for there was a company with him—ver. 15), and possibly a number of the inhabitants round drawn together by so strange a sight, all fastened upon him. How humiliating if it should prove a hoax. Why, he would be the laughing stock of all Israel and Syria! One can well imagine, as he looked upon himself after the sixth dip, and saw no change, not even the removal of a single speck of leprosy, the hesitancy that might arise in his heart, ere he ventured the seventh time. But the prophet said, *seven*. Six were no good. It must be a perfect dipping, so to speak. Well, it may be true, and if so, what joy to be clear of the leprosy, what joy for himself, his wife, his family, the king, the army, the whole nation! Well, there will be nothing lost, if nothing is gained, so now for it. Every bystander is on the tiptoe of expectation, every eye strains, as for a moment Naaman the leper disappears beneath the wave. Up he comes. Ah, where is the leprosy? Gone. Clean every whit. Clean as a little child. Clean as God by divine power and grace could make him. Naaman believed the word, and he *was clean*.

Reader, how is it with your soul? Will you believe God? Again, we press it upon you,

hesitate no longer, trust now simply and only in the precious blood, and you shall be now clear and clean before God, we do not hesitate to say it, *as Christ Himself*. It could not be otherwise, for it is *His blood* that will cleanse you, and *in Him* that you will henceforth be found before God for ever.

“Clean every whit, Thou saidst it, Lord,
 Shall one suspicion lurk?
 Thine surely is a faithful word,
 And Thine a finished work.”

Naaman returned home cleansed and happy. If you read on, you will find he became a worshipper of the true God, the God of Israel. He said he knew that there was no other (ver. 15). The truth immediately tested him (vers. 17, 18), but the prophet said, “Go in peace” (ver. 19). Now, before we cease, how are you going to put down this paper? Why not decide? It will be a grand moment for you. Christ is worth having, friend. Every true Christian has proved that. If you die without an interest in His blood, you will surely be eternally damned; but if you trust that precious blood now, you can go on your way rejoicing and in peace, owning a Saviour God, delighting in His Son till you behold and dwell with Him for ever. May it be your blessed portion now to sing:—

“O gracious Saviour, Thou hast given
 My trembling soul to know
 That, trusting in Thy precious blood,
 I'm washed as white as snow.”

“YET THERE IS ROOM.”



FRIEND and I were walking along the streets of Dublin, when he suddenly pulled me up and said, “Do you see the spouting on the side of that building?”

I looked where his finger indicated.

“Yes,” he continued, “that piece of spouting is connected with my history in a very remarkable way.”

He then told me that years ago a well-known evangelist was preaching in the building—the celebrated Rotunda Hall. His Christian brother had earnestly invited him to attend one of the services. An easily framed excuse readily came to his lips. He was reading hard for an examination, and could not spare the time.

But happening to pass the building they noted the immense crowd standing at the door unable to get into the already densely crowded hall. This fired my friend with a strong desire to gain admittance, where others were shut out. At the risk of his neck he climbed up the water-spout over the portico, and clambered in at an opened window, only too gladly followed by his brother.

What a sight met the gaze of these two young men, as their legs dangled over the window-sill, just above the preacher’s head,—a sight angels would have rejoiced over,—the earnest hundreds hanging upon the lips of heaven’s eloquent preacher, as if

life or death depended on his words—as indeed they did!

Friend, if so far thou hast been slumbering upon the brink of an endless hell, may God awake thee by this printed page. Awake thou wilt one day. Oh the awful awakening that does take place, when the soul shivers out of the disease-stricken body, and finds that all the breath of man's reason has not succeeded in blowing out the flames of hell! *They* have been lit by the hand of God in everlasting righteousness. Look then your eternity in the face. You *cannot* refuse to die. And oh! how terribly near *your* dying day may be! And remember, "*After death, THE JUDGMENT.*" Thou mayest talk glibly to-day, but canst not brow-beat thy God in eternity.

To return to our narrative.

In that strange pew my friend heard earnest, stirring words. But the unexpected sight of hundreds upon hundreds of eager faces so awfully impressed him, that he remembered nothing the preacher said, but climbed down miserable and unhappy, and determined not to rest till he was a child of God. Through grace he soon decided for Christ, found peace, and followed the Lord devotedly for many a year, and not long since entered peacefully into glory.

Was it a mere coincidence, or something more, that prompted him some years after his conversion to take down his pen from the rack and write these solemn lines?—

“God’s house is filling fast,
 ‘ Yet there is room ;
 Some guest will be the last,
 ‘ Yet there is room.’
 Yes ! Soon salvation’s day
 To you will pass away,
 Then grace no more will say
 ‘ Yet there is room.’”

Reader, *still* thou mayest enter. Strange thou dost require such a pressing invitation. It may be the great Servant—the Holy Ghost—is seeking for *one* guest more, and then the great house will be filled and the door for ever shut ! It may be you are receiving by this printed page your *last* loving invitation to God’s feast.

Oh ! by the shame and sorrow and suffering of Calvary’s cross, by the death and blood-shedding of Jesus, heaven’s tables have been spread with choicest viands—the doors have been swung open by the hand of God Himself—eternity’s music has begun—the vilest and the most wretched, pleading the name of Jesus alone, may pass in unchallenged, nay, welcomed with rapturous joy—the cup of everlasting bliss pressed into their willing hands ! As it has been well remarked, “The tables have been spread, the chairs are now being filled.”

But oh, friend, what will it matter to thee how untold the joys of that festal board may be, if *thou* art not there ? What will it matter how sweet and rapturous the song may be, if *thou* art wailing in the outer darkness ? Soon life’s little day will be past, and say, What about eternity for thee ?

For once be profoundly in earnest and intensely selfish. "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark viii. 36.) Forget the gains of this life, and think of that awful loss—YOUR SOUL—which, once incurred, can never be repaired.

Let it be your downright honest cry, "What must I do to be saved?"

The majority of people ask this question at some time or other of their lives, and it all depends upon the amount of their anxiety how they answer it.

Many are content with saying, "If I do the best I can, God Almighty will have mercy upon me." Probably their best is a very easy best—more in their thoughts than their conduct. Remember, "God requireth that which is PAST" (Eccles. iii. 15). "Without shedding of blood is NO REMISSION" (Heb. ix. 22). That easy, careless way of putting the matter off will not avail in the day of judgment.

Others think that the waters of holy baptism make them children of God. This notion is sacerdotal, and entirely without foundation in God's Word. They also think that confirmation imparts the gift of the Holy Spirit of God, and that the sacrament sustains the life imparted through baptism. This, again, is wholly unsustained by Scripture.

It is not for us in the brief compass of this article to prove these doctrines false. It is for those who lean on them for salvation to prove that they

are true from the Word of God, else they are building blindfold upon a sandy foundation.

Ritualism, thou hast thousands upon thousands of thy slain in hell to-day. Unsuspecting honest men do not see that tho' art the hand-maiden of the devil. Did not the noble Luther in Germany, Wycliffe in England, Knox in Scotland, strike thee a well-aimed blow? Thou art full of genuflexions, and forms, and ceremonies, of which the Scriptures are innocent. The magnificent gorgeous ritual of Judaism, in its sacrifices and rites has found for ever its glorious anti-type in the person and work of Jesus. To revive them, is to obscure His person, and becloud and belittle His work.

But you may say, "But, sir, *I am sincere.*"

Well, friend, sincerity will not save you. Out in the howling storm the captain has lost his reckonings. In the darkness he may steer his vessel *most sincerely* straight for the rocky coast. Will *his* sincerity save him?

"But has all my tract-distributing, alms-giving, sacrament-taking, prayer-saying, Bible-reading, to go for nothing in the question of my soul's salvation?" my reader may anxiously inquire.

It has. The Bible says, "*All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags*" (Isa. lxiv. 6). "To him that *worketh* NOT, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Rom. iv. 5). Again, "*Not of works, lest any man should boast*" (Eph. ii. 9).

"Well, then," you may say, "tell me plainly

and concisely from God's Word what is the way of salvation?"

I will, but let me ask you, Are you ready to take salvation as a free gift without works? Are you ready to give God all the glory, and be content, as that dear old bishop who said on his dying bed, "I take all my bad works, and all my good works, and throw them overboard, and I sail to heaven on the plank of free grace"?

"I am," you say.

Turn then to Acts xvi. 31, and read, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." How simple and concise the Word of God puts it! Is that enough for you?

Perhaps it will help you, if I relate how my friend found peace with God. He left the Rotunda Hall that memorable evening, and for fourteen days and nights spent an anxious, miserable time.

Tossing one night on his bed, after being on his knees twice at his bed-side, and finding no relief, but the darkness settling upon him without one ray of light, he determined to give it all up, and have his fling in the world.

The determination was no sooner formed, than, like Job of old, he felt he *might* forget his sorrows, but still he would have to face his sins, and God, and eternity.

In his deep anguish of spirit he cried out, "I know I shall perish; but if I do, I will perish at *His* feet." There and then he cast himself at the feet of Jesus.

This brought relief, but not peace. Then that precious verse came flashing into his mind, as if spoken by some one, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to *save* SINNERS" (1 Tim. i. 15). He laid hold of the word "sinners," and cried out, "Thank God, that is just what I want; I'm a sinner, and Christ Jesus came to save *such*." Faith's precious reasoning! He was full to overflowing. After lying awake praising God for hours, he fell into the first sweet refreshing sleep he had had since that memorable night.

Rising early the next morning to tell his brother the good news, the thought struck him, "What shall I tell him?" Looking in to find the peace and joy of the night before, he found it immediately gone, and at once he was miserable. Then he thought, "What was it that gave me peace last night?" He remembered it was that blessed verse in Tim. i. and *it* was just the same, though *he* had changed.

Oh, the solid peace and joy of resting, not upon fleeting fickle feelings, but upon God's written testimony! He simply trusted the Word of God, and, with a full heart, sweetly confessed Christ to his brother.

Come then, dear unknown friend, and trusting that same Jesus, you will have the same unchangeable Word of God as the resting-place of your assurance, and a living, glorified Saviour at God's right hand as the object of your heart. May God grant it, for His name's sake.

THE WHEAT AND THE TARES.

(MATT. xiii. 24-43.)



NY careful reader of the thirteenth of Matthew will notice that there is a remarkable difference between the parable of the sower who went out to sow, and the six parables which follow. These latter are said to be similitudes of the kingdom of heaven.

In the parable of the sower we see that God is not seeking anything from man, but is bringing something to man. The word which He will put into the heart will produce fruit of its own kind, and it is the individual soul—responsible for what it hears—that is before us. The six parables which follow, present what is collective, or seen in the aggregate; and you will easily see that the first three differ very largely from the second three. The first three were spoken by the Lord from the boat. Thereafter He leaves the boat, comes into the house, describes what He means by the wheat and tares, and then goes on to unfold the last three parables.

Some of His hearers were greatly struck, and they could not rest till they knew what the parables meant. I wonder, my friend, if you have been so struck? If not, I hope God's Spirit will so strike you, that you will really go to Christ, to get the meaning of His words. All who had "ears

to hear" could not rest till they understood the meaning of the parable of the wheat and the tares. There is no necessity for anybody to be in difficulty as to its meaning. The most feeble intelligence can understand it, because the Lord expounds it.

The first three parables—the wheat and tares, the mustard seed, and the leaven hid in the meal—present the kingdom of heaven under three figures, which give the external aspect of that kingdom as a scene of profession, and responsibility. The other three give us the internal aspect of affairs, viewed as God's work, and the carrying out of His purposes in grace, albeit we still have a view of the kingdom of heaven. Any one who listens to God will see what these figures mean, although an unconverted man would not understand the last three, since they bring out the secret purposes and thoughts of God, and are only apprehended by faith.

But you may say, "What do you mean by the similitude of the kingdom of heaven?" In Matthew's Gospel—where the expression "kingdom of heaven" alone is found, and never said to be nearer than "at hand"—Jesus is the King, but His people would not have Him, they refused Him, and He retired to heaven. The world cast Him out, and to-day He is the rejected Christ, and the rejected King. Hence you do not see much sign of the kingdom of Christ. You *see* the kingdom of the devil, and the kingdom of the flesh. But in this

scripture the Lord, so to speak, says, "I will show you what this world will be during the time of My absence, till I come back again." The kingdom exists now. It commenced, in that sense, when He went back to heaven.

Instead of God bringing retributive judgment upon the world that has cast His Son out, He is doing a wonderful work: He is saving men and women, and calling out a company to share Christ's glory, and kingdom. While man is showing what he is, and what is in him, God has His own purposes of grace, and He is carrying them out. The field, spoken of in this parable, is the world. It is not the Church; if it were the Church you would have a great mixture of believers and unbelievers together, which should not be. God's work was that of sowing "good seed"—really His own children, but "while men slept, his enemy came, and sowed tares among the wheat." How easily we can go to sleep! The easiest thing for you and me to do, is to go to sleep, my fellow-Christian. All sinners are dead, and many Christians are sleeping, and need rousing up. Sleep is the thing with which the devil paralyses the Church. Hence we read, "Therefore let us not sleep as do others" (1 Thess. v. 6).

What is the sphere of God's work to-day? It is the whole world. There the name of Christ is proclaimed, but, while God's work was going on men slept, for everything committed to man in responsibility fails, and the devil sowed his tares

among the wheat, and went his way. A first-class worker is the devil. He does his work, goes his way, and tells no one about it. We might learn a lesson from this. Many a good work of God has been spoiled by talking about it. In the eighth of Acts we see Satan introducing tares. Simon the sorcerer was baptized with the rest, and put on the name of Christ, though evidently unconverted, for Peter said unto him, "Thy money perish with thee; . . . thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God" (Acts viii. 20, 21). He got into the kingdom of heaven by profession of Christ, and baptism, but all the while he was an unreal man.

Now you must understand that "the kingdom of heaven" is not heaven. The Lord gave Peter "the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. xvi. 19), but I hope you do not think Peter had the keys of heaven? No, no, he never had. Why? Because the keys of heaven are in the hands of Christ. As a servant on earth, Peter had the "keys of the kingdom of heaven" committed to his care. He used them first when, in the second of Acts, he opened the door to the Jews, and three thousand were converted on the day of Pentecost, and, being baptized, entered that kingdom. In the tenth of Acts he went down to Cæsarea, and there opened the door to the Gentiles. Painters depict Peter with keys at his girdle, and sheep all round him, and some are deluded thereby, and think Peter can let them into heaven, or keep them out.

Profound mistake! Keys are for opening a door, not feeding sheep. You do not feed sheep with keys, but with turnips and the like.

The Lord here shows what would be during His absence. There would be a mass of mixed profession in the world. The wheat sprung up, then likewise the tares. The Lord expounds this parable to His disciples inside the house. We are told that He that sows the seed is "the Son of Man." The blessed Lord Jesus is doing God's work. "The good seed are the children of the kingdom." Do you think that you are good seed? "The tares are the children of the wicked one." Do you know that wheat is valuable? Wherever there is a work of grace in the souls of men and women they are like wheat. Thus every child of God is as wheat. Oh, how dear to the heart of Christ is every one born of God.

The Lord Jesus said to Peter once, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat" (Luke xxii. 31). Now Simon was a saint, a believer: he was wheat, with a good deal of chaff existing also, and God let Satan sift him to get rid of the chaff. Do you know, my unconverted reader, why Satan does not sift you? He leaves you alone, because you are all chaff. He never troubles his own. "His goods are in peace" (Luke xi. 21). The peace is false, and Satan is too wise to disturb it. Unsaved sinners he regards as his own, his goods. He does not worry sinners, but he worries saints. He is

often permitted of God to put them through the sieve. If you were not wheat he would not sift you, dear fellow-believer, so do not be discouraged if you are tempted, tried, and sifted. He whispers to his own: "You are very decent, you can keep your mind easy; you are as good as most, better than many; God is good, and merciful, and a nice, respectable, well-behaved person like you is sure to be all right in the end. Do not let the preachers of 'judgment to come' trouble you. You believe in Christ, go to church regularly, and make a proper profession—not too loud—what more can you do?"

Thus does the wicked one beguile mere professors. They never get any trouble from him because they are tares. The devil, I repeat, never torments his own. It is the children of God he torments. He will torment them to the end. He tempts from first to last. He had the audacity to tempt the blessed Lord Himself. Christian, remember that with every temptation God makes a way of escape for you. You look to the Lord, and He will carry you through.

What an awful thing it is to be a tare! The tares are not heathens, but the baptized professors of Christ that people Christendom to-day. They are professors of Christ outwardly, but not members of Christ's real Church. The Church is composed of wheat. Where is wheat found? It always grows around the stem. Christ is the stem. He was the one solitary sinless man, the true corn

of wheat, and all His people spring from, and derive from Him, as risen from the dead. He has borne the sins of His people, and every one that believes in Him is united to Him. If you are connected with Christ, He is your life, and your righteousness. Every corn of wheat will get to the garner, not one will be lost. If you have never yet been born of God, and washed in the blood of Jesus, do not dream that you are of the wheat, for "the good seed are the children of the kingdom," *i.e.*, those that are born of God.

Are you a child of the kingdom yet? You say, "I do not know." Why do you not know? I know, and I am acquainted with a great many who can tell me that they know. If you have not been converted, yet it is high time you were. A new-born soul always likes the company of the Lord's people. So you can easily find out if you are the Lord's.

Have you found out that you are but a tare in the wheat-field, and do you want to be real? "God be merciful to me a sinner," should be your cry. How is it that you have a pew among God's people? I will tell you. The devil would have you there; he puts you there, just to ensure your eternal damnation by the crowning sin of a false, hollow profession.

But stop, my friend, and look ahead a bit; the harvest day is nearing apace. "The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels." This mixture of the living among the dead, the

real and the unreal side by side, will go on in the world till the end. Then the wheat will be gathered into the garner, the saints all transferred to, and shining as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father, while the tares will be "cast into a furnace of fire." The servants wanted to destroy them, to "gather them up" now, but the householder said, "Nay, lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them." Rome, forgetful of this command of the Lord, and desirous of getting rid of what she counted tares—in reality God's wheat—has rooted them up by thousands.

Hear what the Lord Christ says: "Let them both grow together until the harvest; and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn." Men are being bound in bundles now. Confederation is the cry of this day, and paves the way for Christendom's final judgment. The Lord is coming for His saints, and then will the Church be taken to glory. "Gather the wheat into my barn," means, take them home. The present day of God's long-suffering grace will soon close, the last gospel message have gone out, and the end of the age come the Son of Man will send forth His angels to deal with all those who do iniquity. There is the final judgment of the unblest. People do not like the solemn story of judgment to come. Just you listen to the Lord here. "They shall

gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity." And what becomes of such? The angels "shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. If, my reader, you who have heard the gospel, are of that sad company, you will then say, Fool, fool that I was not to believe.

Believe the truth, and come to Christ now. He will receive, and save you. You shall be His, and He shall be yours for ever. Do not look for things to get better down here; the world is not getting better, nor can do so. It is getting worse daily, and ripening for judgment. We, beloved fellow-Christians, have just to wait for the coming of the Lord Jesus. Then we shall go home to our Father's house, see our blessed Saviour face to face, and be with Him, and like Him for ever. What a prospect! I trust no one will lay aside this paper, and put his head on his pillow to-night, until he can say, "Thank God, I know that I am wheat; and I am waiting just to go on high." Surely it is better to spend eternity in the Father's kingdom than in a furnace of fire. Friend, which word describes you—"wheat" or "tares"?

"Sowing the seed with an aching heart,
Sowing the seed while the tear-drops start;
Sowing the seed till the reapers come
Gladly to gather the harvest home:
Oh, what shall the harvest be?"

THE TREASURE; THE PEARL; AND THE NET.

(Read Matt. xiii. 44-53.)



SHOULD like to press upon you, my reader, that these words fell from the lips of the blessed Lord Jesus, the eternal Son of God, become a man, and found in this scene, that He might reveal the love of God to man, and bring man to the knowledge and enjoyment of God. The truth which He brings out here in parabolic form is most precious and wonderful.

In the first two parables—the treasure hid in the field, and the pearl of great price—He brings out the action on His own side, in order to unfold God's eternal thoughts, purposes, and counsels. God had counsels and purposes of blessing for poor sinful men upon this earth, and these have come out in the Person, and above all in the death of His beloved Son. What the Lord unfolds here is something absolutely new, the like of which never was before. We are permitted to find ourselves the objects of perfect and eternal love. What a wonderful thing it is when a man finds himself to be the object of love deeper and stronger than death! I know many a person will say, "But I do not love God, although I try to." My friend, do not try it. The activity of His love, really discovered, will soon make you return it. Believers

praise and love Him simply because they cannot help it, when the love of His heart fills theirs. Oh, let us give all thanks and praise to Him!

Turn now to this scripture and see what God is doing. What a refreshing thing it is to turn aside from the responsibility of man, and look at what God is doing. Here was Jesus Himself at this moment the full revelation of God. The disciples got near Him in the house, and He says, I will let you see some of the secrets of my Father's heart. "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth the field." You may say to me, "Well, I suppose that is a sinner seeking the gospel." Impossible! I am quite sure that is not its meaning. The interpreter of this parable had not got the mind of the Lord when he told you that.

You talk of a sinner selling all that he hath. What can a sinner sell? What have you got to sell? All that a sinner has is his sins, and they can only bring him into judgment, not blessing. Salvation, moreover, cannot be purchased. Money cannot buy it. The scripture says, "Ye know ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, . . . but with the precious blood of Christ" (1 Pet. i. 18). It is the Saviour—the heavenly merchant man—who sells "all that he hath," not the sinner. The field is the world, and what has Christ found in the world? A treasure.

Well may you say, Then who are the treasure? What an amazing thing when a man finds out that he is part of the treasure. Here in the field, owned and governed by Satan, and full of sinners in their sins, walking under his power, we now discover a heavenly Stranger, intent on His Father's business, and this is the One, whose eye, in the midst of all the world's confusion, detects a treasure in that world. His own are His treasure, and you will never make Christ your treasure until you find out that you are His treasure. Are you His? It is He who bought you; it is He who died for you. I am His treasure, that I know. He had the deep conviction that the treasure was in the field somewhere. It filled His heart with joy, and He gave up all to possess it.

Oh, there will be a glow in your heart that will never die out, when you learn that you are His treasure.

But the Lord bought the field for the sake of the treasure. Do you know that this world belongs to Him? There is a Man at the right hand of God, at this moment, in Glory, and the world belongs to Him, and He is yet going to possess the world, because He bought it.

His wonderful death in obedience, and grace, has given Him title over everything, hence He could say, "Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him" (John xvii. 2). That "many" is the treasure hid in the field, and for

that He gave up all. There are two sides to that which He had to give up, in order to get the treasure—His Church. Then the point is this, What did He give up? That treasure had got such a claim upon Him—such a hold on His heart—that He gave up everything for it. If you get saved, your Saviour will be far more joyful than you. Do you not know that it is written of Him, “Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame”? (Heb. xii. 2.) Do you ever think of the joy that the Lord Jesus has in the salvation of the lost? Who but He could or would have acted as He has?

He was the eternal Son of the Father, and ever dwelt in the bosom of the Father, but He wanted our hearts to enjoy what He enjoyed, and to share His Glory, so He stooped to death, to lift us into life, as it is written, “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich” (2 Cor. viii. 9). His leaving of His first estate—Godhead glory—and stooping to manhood and death was His perfection. Adam left his first estate in an endeavour to “be as gods, knowing good and evil” (Gen. iii. 5). What was apostasy in the first man, was the perfection of the second man, the last Adam. He was God, but He became a man. He laid aside His Godhead glory, and He, who was the Word, was made flesh (John i. 14). He had also earthly rights as a man, and as King of the Jews, but He laid them all aside,

gave all up, and went down into death to take you and me out of it. Praise His name for ever! Hallelujah! what a Saviour!

Christ's treasure consists of a great many poor, wretched, lost, undone, and hell-deserving sinners, all saved because He Himself has come down and done a work in virtue whereof they can be blessed. Selling all—includes the sufferings of the cross, and all that the blessed Lord Jesus went through as a voluntary victim. God cannot save at the expense of His character. If He save, He must save righteously. The revelation of the light shows me that I am a guilty sinner; but God, in the love of His heart, sent His Son into this world, and He drank the cup of judgment, due to us, so that now God can come out and save righteously, and, if you let Him have His way with you, He will bring you into association with His own Son. He went back to heaven as man—as the man who had glorified God. He had borne sins, not for Himself, but for others. Do you know how many sins He had on Him? No tongue can tell. He says, "Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me. . . . They are more than the hairs of my head" (Ps. xl. 12). Again, "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed" (1 Pet. ii. 24). By His sufferings and death He bought the treasure. Tell me, are you part of the treasure? My friend, have you never got that question settled yet? Have

you never learned, and said, "Jesus has died for sinners, therefore He died for me." If so, my fellow-believer, you are of the treasure.

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly (or beautiful) pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it" (ver. 45). This merchant man is indeed a man in very serious earnest. He did not want pearls merely, he must have beautiful ones. He had discrimination; he knew exactly what he wanted. The Father did not want His Son to be alone, and therefore, just as Abraham sent to seek a bride for Isaac in the far country, so this blessed Son of God comes to seek His bride. The pearl of great price manifestly is not Christ, but His bride, His Church, looked at in her united state. The "treasure" presents the individual side, the "pearl" the unity and beauty, to His eye, of the Church. To win it He will endure anything and everything, and for her "sold all that He had."

Oh, think of His agony in the garden, and what came from His lips: "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not as I will; but as thou wilt." If this parable is to be wrought out to fruition, He must drink that cup; and He must know what it is to be forsaken of God. Oh, think of all the billows and waves that passed over His holy and gracious soul (see Isa. liii.). He could have moved away, escaped all, and saved Himself;

but how then could the Scriptures be fulfilled, and His people be saved? To save them He surrenders all that was dearest to His heart. He will even give up communion with His God and Father, and He it was who did ever those things which pleased God. He would even bear that God should turn from Him, turn His face away, so that His people might be saved and redeemed. Such was the penalty of sin-bearing; and if He bear not their sins, and all the judgment due to them, they could not be saved. But He will bear all. Such is His love—"the love of Christ which passeth knowledge" (Eph. iii. 10).

Great, indeed, is the price the Saviour has paid. Did you ever think of it? Think of Jesus: think of all He passed through, and your heart will be melted. May God, by the Holy Ghost, lead your soul to ponder these wondrous realities.

But perhaps you ask—Does He love me? Ah, have you never learned that He loves you? How do I know that He loves me? Scripture simply assures me, and I believe it. It must be personal. It is no use in the world for you to know that He loves me, if you do not know that He loves you. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John xv. 13). He was more than man, He was God here in human form, and "God commends his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, *Christ died for us*" (Rom. v. 8). I know He loves me, because He died for me. Would He have died for you if He

did not love you? When it says, "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us," I say that includes me then, for I am a sinner, and I can say with Paul, "He loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. ii. 20). He and me. And what is between? Love. Thank God for it. That will do, I want no more. The soul rests in this, He has loved me, and given Himself for me.

Again, "Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour" (Eph. v. 2). Again, "Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish" (Eph. v. 25-27). Here we have three aspects of Christ's love. Past—He gave Himself. Present—sanctifying and cleansing. Future—presenting to Himself the Church spotless. He has died to save us. That is love. How often now He gives the very word that helps and brings blessing to the soul? That is love. It is the Lord, in His love, from the glory, who ministers the very word you need, and by it He washes you. In the future He will present you to Himself without a spot.

He is going to present us to His Father, by-and-by, in His own likeness. Do you know, beloved fellow-Christian, that you and I are going to be ~~exactly~~ like Jesus in glory by-and-by? Oh, you

say, that will be glorious. You are right. Love suggested and carried all this out.

It was the late Dr Hawker, I think, who quaintly said, that the Father showed the Church to Jesus in the looking-glass of eternity, and she was so beautiful that He said, I will give up everything and die for her, to make her My own for ever. He did not mean man's church—mere profession—but that which really belongs to Jesus, and He will have her home by-and-by.

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things? They say unto him, Yea, Lord” (Matt. xiii. 47-51). The net is the gospel going out to the many—its aspect is towards multitudes of people. Every kind are in the net. When it was full the fishermen drew it, and separated its contents. They did their work in a very deliberate manner. They sat down, and “gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away.” We have no business to put the bad into vessels. And what do you mean by the good? The good are those who belong to Christ. Put them together. What

about the unconverted? Leave them alone: do not put them with the good in vessels. They should be made to feel what, and whose they are. To-day God is doing this: the Spirit of God is getting the good fish out of the meshes, and putting them together. Happy is it for all believers who have enough energy to come out boldly for Christ. The saints are to walk with each other as such. Whether worship or work be in question, the unconverted have no part in either.

When the Lord comes the action is reversed; then the angels will separate "the wicked from among the just." When I talk about the wicked I mean the unsaved. To-day we are to put the saved together—excluding the godless, that they may feel their condition. If they do not, their day is coming—a day of judgment. Your day is coming, sinner, mark that, when the angels shall come forth, and, touching only the wicked, "shall cast them into the furnace of fire." Unsaved reader, get hold of this clearly. You are nothing but a wicked sinner on your road to hell. May God save you ere it be too late. Oh, may God in His grace so use His Word that the sense may be awakened in many souls as to what is due to Christ! I fervently invite you to come to that Saviour now, and taste His love. Slight that love, and you will surely taste His judgment. Which then shall it be—love or judgment?

"CHOOSE YE THIS DAY."

THE VALUE OF A BIBLE.



NOT long since, two little boys, the eldest appearing about thirteen, and the youngest eleven years of age, called at the lodging-house for vagrants in the town of Warrington for a night's lodging. The keeper of the house very properly took them to the vagrant office to be examined, and if proper objects, to be relieved. The account they gave of themselves was extremely affecting, and no doubt was entertained of its truth.

It appeared that but a few weeks had elapsed since these poor little wanderers had resided with their parents in London. Typhus fever, however, in one day carried off both father and mother, leaving them orphans; in a wide world, without a home, and without friends!

Immediately after the last mournful tribute had been paid to their parents' memory, having an uncle in Liverpool, poor and destitute as they were, they resolved to go and throw themselves upon his protection. Tired, therefore, and faint, they arrived at Warrington on their way.

Two bundles contained their all. In the youngest boy's was found, neatly covered and carefully preserved, a Bible. The keeper of the lodging-house, addressing the little boy, said: "You have neither money nor meat, will you sell me the Bible? I will give you five shillings for it."

"No!" exclaimed he, the tears rolling down his youthful cheeks, "I'll starve first." The man then said, "There are plenty of books to be bought besides this, why do you love the Bible so much?"

"No book has stood my friend so much as my Bible."

"Why, what has your Bible done for you?" The lad answered: "When I was a little boy, about seven years of age, I became a Sunday scholar in London. Through the kind attention of my master, I soon learned to read my Bible. This Bible, young as I was, showed me that I was a sinner, and a great one too. It also pointed to a Saviour; and I thank God that I have found mercy at the hands of Christ, and am not ashamed to confess Him before the world."

To try him still further, six shillings were then offered him for his Bible. "No," said he, "for it has been my support all the way from London. Hungry and weary, often have I sat down by the wayside to read my Bible, and have found refreshment from it."

Thus did he experience the consolations of the Psalmist when he said, "In the multitude of the sorrows that I had in my heart, thy comforts have refreshed my soul."

He was then asked, "What will you do when you get to Liverpool, should your uncle refuse to take you in?" His reply may excite a blush in many established Christians: "My Bible tells me,"

said he, "that 'when my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.'"

The man could go on no further; tears closed his utterance, and they both wept together. The boys had in their pockets, tickets, as rewards for their good conduct, from the school to which they belonged; and thankfulness and humility were visible in all their deportment. At night, these two little orphans, bending their knees by the side of their beds, committed themselves to the care of their heavenly Father—to Him whose ears are ever open to the poor and destitute—to Him who has said, "Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me."

The next morning, these refreshed little wanderers arose early, and set out for the town of Liverpool.

ANON.

CHRIST CRUCIFIED.

(1 COR. i. 23.)



CORINTH was a place of great renown in its day. On account of its commerce, its science, its temples, and its schools, the prince of Roman orators called it "the light of all Greece." But its elegance was even surpassed by its vice, so much so that, in the language of those times, the appellation of "a Corinthian" signified the loss

of all that was moral, and chaste, and virtuous. Into this scene of iniquity the chosen Apostle of the Gentiles entered, his great heart bursting, as it were, with love for the salvation of souls. But how did he begin with this dissolute people? Was it by descanting to them on the deformities of vice, or by reading lectures to them in praise of virtue? Nay. Whether Paul stood amid the elegancies of Corinth, the classic beauties of Athens, or the towering grandeur of Rome, it was the same oft-repeated story of the cross of Christ.

When the Jew on the one hand sought a sign, and the Greek on the other asked for wisdom, he replied to both: "We preach Christ crucified." He used no novel methods, tried no experiments, and made no digressions; and what was the result? The "foolishness of preaching," unadorned by the wisdom of the philosopher, or the eloquence of the orator, but accompanied by a power they could neither understand nor resist, as it fell on the ears of his hearers, produced an effect so marvellous that the beauty of their temples and their statues—in spite of the fascinations which mythology was calculated to exert on the inhabitants of that city of refined tastes and vicious habits—lost all attraction, and multitudes, to whom the cross must have been otherwise repulsive, actually embraced with ecstasy "Christ crucified" as the Saviour of their souls, and, like their Thessalonian fellow-pagans, "turned to God from idols,

to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven."

But let me inquire has the message of redeeming love lost its efficacy now? Is not the gospel still the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth? It is. That there is life in a look at the crucified One is as true as ever it was. Christ held up to sinful man, polished or rude, civilised or savage, is the salvation of God at this moment, like bread to the hungry, or like water to the thirsty, just as much now as then. The provision is made and offered fully and freely. Why not, dear soul, avail thyself of it? How often has it been pressed upon thy acceptance? If not yours, what is the reason? "Ye would not." Oh, the folly of refusing! But what, beloved reader, does Christ crucified mean? At the very least it means that

CHRIST DIED.

It speaks of His death. You say, We all know that. Yes, you receive it as a matter of course, because you have heard it so often. But is it not a wonderful statement, especially when you ask, Who died? It was the Lord of glory who died. Think of the Prince of Life dying! It was by the grace of God He tasted death for every man. There was nothing inherent in His holy, stainless humanity to render death a necessity, like yours or mine. No man could have taken His life from Him, yet He died. He came to die,

not to teach men the arts and the sciences, or instruct them in letters, He never would have left heaven for any such purpose, but to die. What man needed was not teaching, but a new life, and for this the Son of Man must be lifted up. This sight once beheld by faith's transpiercing eye puts all else into the shade. The death of God's beloved Son, what is there like it? The One who is God's gift of infinite love to a world of sinners. There is nothing to compare with it. What needs to be apprehended is the fact itself. There is divine power in that stupendous fact. Christ crucified, when heard for the first time; arrests the careless and indifferent, melts the hearts of the weary and heavy laden, and, believed and trusted in, gives rest and forgiveness.

Go forth and tell sinners that Jesus died, and tear drops glisten in eyes unused to weep, souls become stirred to their depths, and countenances beam with a new found joy, according to the simple principle of faith that grasps what is unseen more really than the seen and more surely makes it its own. And what is faith? It is taking God at His word. It is giving Him credit for speaking the truth.

But notice, "Christ crucified" means more, my dear unsaved friend, than that He died, it also means

CHRIST DIED ON THE CROSS.

It intimates the manner of His death—the kind of death He died. Scripture, after it has conducted

us to the "place that is called Calvary," declares with inimitable simplicity and force what transpired in these words, "There they crucified him." It was no ordinary death. Crucifixion was at once the most agonising and the most ignominious of deaths. The very sting of Cicero's indictment, in his impassioned oration against the Prætor Verres, was that he had dared to *crucify* a Roman citizen. And didst Thou, O Blessed Christ, Image of the invisible God, humble Thyself to become obedient unto death, even the death of the *cross*? There is nothing like the cross. It stands alone, and in the suffering proper to the cross He was alone. There God was shown to be above sin, perfect love to the sinner, but absolute righteousness against the sin. There Christ was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

While to-day the cross is being despised as a Jewish barbarity, and considered unfit for this enlightened age, it is ours to take our stand by the side of Paul, and say, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ," that cross which is to fill eternity with the development of its wonders, and be the song of the redeemed for ever. Dear sinner, on your treatment of the cross rest the untold glories of salvation, or the inexpressible miseries of damnation. To draw thee was the Saviour lifted up. Through His cross, forgiveness, peace, and everlasting glory are freely offered, and you are earnestly urged to

accept them as the gift of His grace. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."

Nor is this all, Christ crucified means not only His death, and His death on the cross, but that

CHRIST DIED FOR OUR SINS.

It was sacrificial death, it was atoning death. It was as the substitute He died. It was the taking of our place in death and judgment on that cross that we might have His place now in life and glory where He is. It was to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself He died. He died for our sins, according to the Scriptures. He bore our sins, "Yes, his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree." It was on the cross God dealt with Him about the question of sin. Thick darkness surrounded Him. Out of the darkness came that awful cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" My reader, did you ever stop to think what could be the meaning of such a cry wrung from the lips of God's beloved Son? Did God not love His Son? Then why has He forsaken Him? Because there was sin on Him, and God had to turn away His face even from His own Son. But had He any sin of His own? No, He "did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth." Whose sin lay on Him when He cried that terrible cry? It was ours—yours and mine, dear reader,

for "all we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Behold, how completely He took our place and stood in our stead! Martyrs have gone singing to the stake, but Jesus was forsaken in the hour of His death. Why? Because He died there as the *bearer of sin*, yours, my reader, and mine. Have you made this your own? I have long since, and, believing, I rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Why have not you?

How blessedly and perfectly the atoning work of Christ shines out in the cross! *Without* the atonement the fact of the crucifixion is a dark, unintelligible, inexplicable enigma connecting nothing, supporting nothing, explaining nothing. *With* it the cross is the imperishable foundation of all our hopes, the security of all our joys, and the certainty of all our blessing for time and eternity.

"We preach Christ crucified." The cross was to Him the midnight of sorrow as there He drank that bitter cup to the dregs. To us it is the noon-tide of love. Never did love display itself as then. What is it that melts hard and frozen hearts? The love that beams from the cross. There is no attraction like it. Nothing so captivating. It is the exhibition of unparalleled love. Think not then, dear sinner, that God can only look upon you to condemn you. He loves you, loves you as you are, and, as its incontrovertible and eternal proof, He spared not His own Son, but freely

delivered Him up to the death for us all. He wants your confidence. Will you refuse it? Remember the Saviour's tears as He laments, "How often would I have gathered, . . . and ye would not!"

"There is life in a look at the crucified One,
There is life at this moment for thee."

W. S. F.

"GOING ABOUT."



SCRIPTURE presents three instances of those who "*went about*" the performance of different objects. And by "*going about*" we must understand an intensity and an energy of pursuit. They sought *the accomplishment of their purpose by the use of very diligent means*. First, there were those who, "being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God" (Rom. x. 3). This is a large class, and a very diligent one.

The passage refers primarily to "Israel, who had not attained to the law of righteousness," but it includes multitudes besides. It embraces all from Cain, who presumed to present himself to God on the ground of a bloodless sacrifice, to those who, standing before the glory of the King, have the temerity to say to Him, "Lord, when saw we thee

an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister to thee?" It takes in all who, be their circumstances what they may, stand before God on the ground of their own merit. They are guilty of the sin of *self-righteousness*, and marvellous it is what a darling sin is that! See how Paul had learned to loathe it when in Philippians iii. 9 he said, "that I may be found in him, not having mine own righteousness." He had learned to repudiate it.

It sticks to the saint, who at the same time hates it; it is hugged by the mere religionist, who loves it as his only fig-leaf of hope. Such an one *goes about* (vain effort) to establish his own righteousness, till, like Job, he says, "I hold it fast." Oh! think of a sinful man (any one of us) daring to say, "I am not sinful." What a clean denial of our very nature! It is no question of an enormous sin—or of a small one either—but of the character of that "flesh" which is in us all. To assert my own righteousness in a mere whisper were folly; to *go about* in order to establish it were worse than madness. Yet it is done! And there is more hope for the publican and the harlot than there is for such. It is full-blown Phariseism.

Second, we read in 1 Peter v. 8, "Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil walketh about seeking whom he may devour." Observe, he is called your adversary. He is the constant enemy of God and man. His one object is to oppose the welfare of the Christian, and if possible to devour

him. The plans he may adopt may be varied. These may be persecution and outward injury, as in days of old, or they may be the more subtle and dangerous snares of the present day, but his object is ever the same.

The devil hates Christ, and therefore hates His people. He *walketh about* seeking whom he may devour.

His power is no imagination, nor is his actual existence a mere idea. There is a veritable impersonation of evil, though in power and knowledge limited, who is called in Scripture the devil.

He it was who assailed our Lord in the wilderness, using the very temptations that had proved successful in Eden, only to find in Him One who lived "by every word of God," and in whom there was no sin, nor capability, therefore, of yielding to him.

He it is who is spoken of as the "prince of the power of the air," whose sphere of malicious activity is the "heavenly places" (Eph. vi.), who accuses the saints before the throne of God (Rev. xii. 10), but whose end is to be "the lake of fire"—not as king of regions infernal—but as the hopeless and miserable victim of "torment day and night for ever and ever!" (Rev. xx. 10). This is the judgment written, and small marvel that Satan should hate the Bible! That faithful record describes his fall, his character, and his final doom. No wonder that he should seek to impugn its veracity, and darken its light. "Yea, hath God said," is now

called higher criticism! Should it not be called *lower*? It comes from hell and from "your adversary the devil."

He it is who is "the father of lies," and to call in question what God has said, under the euphemistic term of "higher criticism," is certainly a clever way of devouring, and destroying the sheep of Christ.

"Yea, hath God said," is the voice of Satan. "It is written" is the language of Christ. What has been written will stand every test and strain. On that faith has always built, and has never been disappointed. What is needed is that we should be vigilant and sober, dependent and obedient. Thus is the adversary resisted.

Lastly, in bright and beautiful contrast with the adversary who walketh about seeking whom he may devour, we read in Acts x. 38 of One "who *went about* doing good, and healing all that were oppressed with the devil, for God was with him."

How refreshing! how grandly peculiar! how different to the career of all besides!

Of man we read "there is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Rom. iii. 12). Jew and Gentile are alike involved in the charge of guilt; and then, when we come to the saints, we read that "in many things we offend all" (Jas. iii. 2), but here is One who not only did good, but whose habit it was to *go about* in the performance of it.

The whole of those three and a half years of patient and faithful ministry was signalled by

this. See the record given by Mark, how unwearyed were His labours. Some forty times in that gospel we have the word *immediately*, one event following another in His service to man.

Late at night and early in the morning we find Him in prayer; and as call after call presses on Him, we find a willing response. Wherever need urged its claim, He kindly replied. No wonder that "his fame was spread abroad." Multitudes were fed miraculously; diseases were healed; lepers were cleansed; the blind received sight; the dead were raised! In our midst was one of truest sympathy. "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." He made God known.

Yet they spat upon and crucified Him! and why? Had He not done among them works that no other man had done? Certainly! Then could any convince Him of sin? None!

There appears, therefore, this awful moral contradiction that One who was innocent of all evil, and infinitely kind in all His actions, was set at nought and crucified!

But He was not crucified for His kindness. Man could surely appreciate benevolence; but what he failed to appreciate, and what he hated, was that, beneath all the lovely outward display of grace, there was the absolute holiness of One who, though a Man amongst men, was at the same time God. Man hates God, and hates Him in spite of His love. That is the awful contradiction. Then what must the nature of man be?

Thank God, love did not end when He who is love was crucified. Nay, it was just then that He said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Love survived death itself, and—

*"The very spear that pierced His side
Drew forth the blood to save."*

What a victorious lover! How His patient grace wins the heart. He is just what He was, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." May His unwearying love win many a heart still. There is none like Christ—the Christ of the Gospels—now seated on His Father's throne. J. W. S.

S A L T.



FATHER said to his daughter she was "not worth her salt." The next day the daughter told the cook not to put any salt in anything—to send the dinner in without salt, and put no salt on the table. So dinner time came, but all was saltless, and hence tasteless. Its value was found out by its absence. "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men" (Matt. v. 13).

The *little maid* in Naaman's house was the one

that made God and His prophet known, and her master was saved by the word dropped to her mistress. Like salt, it might seem a poor thing, but it had its effect.

"Bring a *new cruse* and *put salt therein*," said Elisha to the men of Jericho, when they spoke of the situation of their city being pleasant, but had to confess the water was naught, and the ground barren. Like this world, the pleasures of sin are for a season, but all ends in death.

There has to be a *new* beginning. Every one must be "born again," or "*born anew*," as the blessed Lord said to the great teacher in Israel in John iii. "If any man be in Christ, there is a new creation." "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." "Henceforth we know no man after the flesh." The old bottle of Judaism will not do for the new wine of sovereign grace. It was a *new cruse* the salt was to be put in. Truth apart from the work of God in the soul is like putting *salt* on bad fish or meat—it will never make it better.

Salt keeps a good article. When the *salt out of the new cruse* was cast into the springs of water, they were healed. Death and barrenness simply declare man's condition in nature.

If you will read 1 Peter i. 18-25, you will see how the new cruse is found—"Ye must be born again"—or never enter heaven, for only new-born, and blood-washed ones are there. 2 Peter i. tells us how the salt out of the new cruse affects

the springs of water—"For if *these things* be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

I have just been trying to spell *salt* in connection with salvation—

"S-alvation is of the Lord" (Jonah ii. 9).

"A-ccount the long-suffering of our Lord salvation" (2 Pet. iii. 15).

"L-ook unto me, and be ye saved" (Isa. xlv. 22).

"T-ake the cup of salvation" (Ps. cxvi. 13).

It is said of Timothy, that from a child he knew the Scriptures, "which are able to make thee wise unto salvation"; but notice *how* one gets it, *where* salvation is "through *faith which is in Christ Jesus.*" Jonah had to confess "salvation is of the Lord," and at once he was on the dry ground, saved. He tells us all he passed through, down at the bottom of the sea, with weeds about his head. But he fainted, and, when his strength was gone, He trusted another.

Now is the time to get this salvation. Judgment is near, as we see in 2 Peter iii. Repentance is what God looks for from you. "God is long-suffering, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance," and we are so to account God keeping back the judgment, and meantime He delights in mercy. Hence He says, "Look unto me, and be saved," *i.e.*, take salvation from me. The gospel not only shows what you escape, and are saved from; but "the *cup* of

salvation" tells us of something to take in, something to drink in, even fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore. The believing soul says, "*I will take the cup of salvation,*" and call on the name of the Lord.

But if through indifference and unbelief you do not take that cup, of another cup, you will yet have to drink. "Upon the wicked he shall rain quick burning coals (*margin*), fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup" (Ps. xi. 6). "Remember Lot's wife." She looked back, and "became a *pillar of salt.*" "And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with *salt*" (Mark ix. 47-49).

"Salvation! Oh, salvation!

Endearing, precious sound!

Shout, shout the word 'Salvation!'

To earth's remotest bound:

Salvation for the guilty,

Salvation for the lost,

Salvation for the wretched,

The sad, and sorrow-tossed.

This good gift unto us

Is sent from heaven above;

Then praise the Lord! O praise the Lord!

For all His love."

JOY IN HEAVEN; OR, LOST, SOUGHT, AND FOUND.

“I say unto you, That likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth.” . . . Likewise, I say unto you, There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.”—LUKE xv. 7-10.



BOY living at a favourite seaside resort had gone into the water to bathe. Unknown to him, a strong back-going current was running, by no means easy to stem. Long and hard the brave lad struggled, but he was unable to overcome the ebbing tide, and in spite of his arduous exertions, was carried some distance out to sea. A vessel bound for another port happened to be passing. The man on the look-out caught sight of an object in the water. A boat was instantly lowered, and pulled to his assistance, just in time to save him. Thus the boy, who had narrowly escaped drowning, was picked up, and taken on board the ship. The sailors were very kind to him, one supplying him with one article of clothing, another fetching another, till he was rigged out in a rather odd-looking, though not uncomfortable sort of attire.

That evening a gentleman, walking along the beach near where the boy had undressed, found his clothes lying on the shore. He looked here, and sought there, but all in vain. No appearance of

the boy was anywhere to be seen, nor could any tidings of him whatever be obtained. In the pocket of his coat, however, was discovered a piece of paper which revealed who the owner was, and where he resided. With a heavy heart the finder went to break the sad news to the fond parents. He said to the father he was sorry to have to tell him, he had found those clothes on the shore, but had been unable to get any trace of the lad to whom they belonged, and almost feared he had been drowned. The father was speechless with grief, the mother well-nigh frantic with sorrow. They repaired to the spot. They searched and searched again, up and down, backwards and forwards, but to no purpose. They called and called, but only to be mocked by the echo of their own voices. It was long and late before the loving mother, always the last to give in, lost hope, and was obliged to resign herself to the inevitable. For alas! neither sight, nor sign, nor sound of their darling boy rewarded their persevering efforts. The mother spent her time in crying, the father's heart was crushed, the other children wept for their missing brother, and everything was ordered for the house to go into mourning.

On the arrival of the vessel at its destination, another was about to start on the return voyage. The lad was transhipped, and taken back to his native place. No sooner had he put his foot on land than off he set towards his father's house. He did not like to be seen in the strange cap,

jacket, and shoes given him by the crew, and took the least frequented way. At last the hall door was reached. He both rang and knocked. The servant opened, and seeing who it was, screamed out with joy, "Here is Master Fred!" The father rushed out, and with tears of delight embraced his son whom he had given up for lost, covering him with kisses. The mother fainted—it was too much for her; but on recovery her joy knew no bounds. Who can describe the happiness of that family circle? or the delightful evening they all spent—parents and children—together! The ordered mourning arrived, but was never used. It was a never-to-be-forgotten scene of unmingled rejoicing.

But wonderful as all this is, what is it, my reader, to the joy in heaven over the return of a sinner? What is it to the Father exclaiming, "And let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead, and is alive again, was lost, and is found"? Oh, think of God saying that! For this is God's own joy, and He will have His joy in spite of all the murmurings of Scribes, Pharisees, or elder brothers, in welcoming back the wanderer, even kissing him in his rags, and there is not another that would not have thought of the rags before he kissed him but his father. Nothing could exceed the perfection of the grace that is here manifested without stint, without reproach, and without reserve. All is pictured in this heaven-breathed parable of Divine love—the departure, the search, and the reception—the sad

leaving, the patient seeking, and the joyous home-coming.

But what a tale it tells of the real condition of every sinner, high or low, rich or poor, educated or illiterate, who has departed from God. And what is that condition? One word suffices—

LOST.

The lips of eternal truth have left no doubt on that subject. Every figure chosen by the blessed Saviour emphasises the same solemn fact. Three times over it is here stated with unmistakable clearness. The comparisons are—a lost sheep—a lost piece of silver—a lost son. Lost! lost!! lost!!!

Friend, your state is serious. It is not a temporary injury that has befallen you—not some slight breach which you can repair—not some lapse out of which you can recover yourself—not a simple wound which you or your fellow-man can heal. You are lost. You may be amiable and polite, but you are lost. You may be beautiful and idolised, but you are lost. You may be intelligent and learned, but you are lost. You may be affectionate and benevolent, but you are lost. You may be moral, yea, even religious, like the Pharisees, but you are lost. Do you say, "I do not mean to be lost." Christless reader, according to the words of the Saviour of the lost, you *are* lost *now*. Do you ask, "Is there no hope"? Yes, but not from *you*. There is not only hope but *salvation*, thank the Lord! Still, though, *for*

you, it is not *from* you. Your condition is such that nothing but the death of Christ could meet it. The Shepherd had to give His life. It was He who said, "The good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep," and, as you know, that He did on the cross. Now do you acknowledge in His presence that you are lost, and honestly take that place before God? If so, I have something else to tell you. You are

SOUGHT.

Just because you are lost, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit are seeking for you. The very object of this tripartite parable is to let you know the blessed activity of the quenchless love that goes after the lost, a quest too, wonderful to say, that engages every Person of the Godhead. Is this not contrary to all your vain imaginings? You reply, "Indeed it is, for I always thought God could only look upon me to condemn me, and I dreaded to think of Him." Quite so, it is the lie of the enemy, whose device is to keep you at a distance from your only real Friend, for you are not even your own friend.

But you ask, "Do you mean to say that God loves me, a sinner, and wants me as I am?" That is what I do mean, and most positively affirm. What saith the Scripture? "For God commendeth his love towards us, that while we were yet *sinners*, Christ died for us," and the "Son of Man is come to *seek*" as well as to "save that which was *lost*"; and remember, the "Scriptures cannot be broken."

Is not "lost" just what you are? Well, then, God commendeth His love toward you. Think of the feelings of the parents towards that lost boy! How they yearned over him! How they sought for him! How they mourned his loss! That is earthly love. But what is it to God's love? God is love, and being God, He will be love. Why remain away from Him? God vindicates Himself in being good to sinners. If a shepherd seeks a lost sheep, and a woman a lost piece of silver, has He not a right to seek the lost? He has, and, blessed be His name, He does, yea, finds His very joy in doing so, because He loves the sinner. Neither the lost sheep nor the lost piece of money could do anything. The losers were the seekers, and God seeks the lost. But, strange to say, the natural heart objects to Him seeking sinners. Yet, had He only sought the righteous, what would have become of us? Because "the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all," it is the grace that *imputes nothing*, which enables the soul to tell itself out unreservedly, when it knows there is forgiveness, not blame, for all that is discovered. Come, then, as you are to the seeking God; not to be judged, but to be justified; not to be condemned, but to be blessed; not to be cast out, but to be saved; for I have something still to tell. Not only are you lost and sought, but you may be

FOUND.

The shepherd said, "Rejoice with me, for I have

found my sheep which was lost." The woman said, "Rejoice with me, for I have *found* the piece which I had lost." And the father said, "It was meet that we should make merry and be glad, for this thy brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is *found*." You ask me, "Is that God?" I answer, Yes, that is God, the whole Trinity, so to speak, mirrored in the shepherd, the woman, and the father. Do you not realise the depth of His interest in you? Would you be afraid to be blessed by Him? How can you keep at a distance? The wonder is you can remain away a moment longer. Is it possible you can refrain from saying, "I will arise and go to my Father?" Have you arisen? He sees you, even "a great way off." Oh, those eyes of love! And when you have said not only "I will arise," but determined to say, "Father, I have sinned, and am no more worthy," what will you find? That the next instant He is on your neck, reproaching you? No, but *kissing* you. The very first *conscious* dealing with God is a kiss, whatever the previous workings in the soul may have been. And what is a kiss? It is an intimation of affection on the part of one who gives it. A kiss is an expression of endearment. It is a token of love. "But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion on him, and ran, and fell on his neck and kissed him." You ask me: "Is that prodigal I? Does he represent me?" I reply, Yes, *you*, you or any other "one sinner that repenteth."

You ask again, "Is that father, God?" I answer, Emphatically so, that is God, and God is love. Not only eyes of love that *saw*, but heart of love that had *compassion*, feet of love that *ran*, embrace of love that fell on *his neck*, and lips of love that *kissed*. Oh, the untold meaning of that reconciliation kiss! No sooner has the Father heard the wanderer's confession of sin and unworthiness, than He calls for the "best robe," the "ring," and the "shoes." It is no question of the worthiness of the erring child, but, what is worthy of the Father. "But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet." Now, observe, this is not what is done *in* him, important as that is in its place. All this is put *on* him, and the Spirit takes pains to state it so. What is wrought within gives the capacity to *enjoy* all this, but it is not that in which I *appear* there.

This is the Father's provision for the returned confessed, forgiven, and reconciled sinner in the Son of His love; so that he can be with the Father in His house as grand as anybody there. Like the thief on the cross of whom the Saviour said, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." The "best robe" is Christ Himself, or "accepted in the beloved." The "ring" is the emblem of everlasting love that has neither beginning nor end. And the "shoes" are the badge of sonship, for no servant in that country was allowed into the master's presence with sandals on, that being the sole privi-

lege of his own children. A "hired servant" might suit the prodigal, but not the heart of the father. He must have him there as a son. Then, through what was *for* him "in Christ," entitling him to be in God's presence according to God's very nature, *immediately* the Father has made him suitable for His own eye, he is *inside* the house, and what follows? Not now "bring forth," but "bring *hither* the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat and be merry." He had been already kissed, robed, ringed, and sandalled, now he is *feasted*. And what a scene of festivity, mirth, and gladness it is! It passes description.

A wonderful time of joy most surely it was when the missing lad presented himself at his father's house, but God's reception of the sinner through Christ puts all human welcomes into the shade. If this is being found, would you, my reader, not like to be found? Come back, then, thou erring one! O wanderer, return. What a joy to be found! True, but the joy of God, the Finder, exceeds everything. This is grace. This is the gospel, and it is for you.

"Love was the spring of all,
 Love triumphed o'er our fall,—
 The love of God!
 My soul, this love adore,
 And praise for ever more;
 Yea, sound from shore to shore
 The love of God!"

THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD.



DELOVED reader, the solemn and important question brought before you in the following paper is of the salvation of your soul. You are a sinner; I am a sinner. We are defiled by sin; we are guilty, for we have sinned against God, and against a God of love. Now sin must be put away, and we must be cleansed, if we are to dwell with a holy God, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and cannot look at sin.

He may look on us in compassion, sinners as we are; but He cannot allow uncleanness to abide in His presence, and you (unless you are already washed in the blood of the Lamb) are unclean—you know you are. You are guilty—you know you are. You would not like to hazard your salvation upon the judgment God ought to form of you. I know well our proud rebellious hearts may rise up against God, and reason against Him; but your conscience knows you have sinned against Him, and that if He be a holy God, He cannot, ought not to allow of sin, and let it into His presence. Yet there alone you can be really happy; and there, whether you will or not, you must come. It is not your reasonings about it which will prevent it. When there, reasonings will cease: your conscience will speak (as Adam's did when he sought to hide himself in the trees of the garden),

and louder too; he had broken God's commandment, but he had not yet despised God's goodness and grace to a sinner. May *you* be kept by grace from doing so!

Now I have no desire to weaken—God forbid!—the thought that God is love. It is my only hope, for I also am a poor sinner. My only hope is in God's free and perfect love. But then, that you may enjoy that love, you must have your sin put away, you must be cleansed. You could not be happy in God's presence were it not put away; you could not, if your conscience always told you, You are unclean in the presence of this holy God, and He sees it. Would your child be happy with you if he had a bad conscience, be you ever so loving a father? Would it be true love if you were to allow him in the evil, and pass it over as no matter?

Now God tells us this plainly in order to act upon our consciences; He tells us He is light, and that darkness can have no communion with Him; that nothing defiled can enter into the heavenly Jerusalem, as it is called. He warns us that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness. He says there is oppression and wrong, but encourages the Christian to the patience which Christ Himself showed. And how? By the solemn word, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord" (Rom. xii. 19). He is a righteous Judge, as well as a God of love.

He takes notice of good and evil, and hence necessarily judges. Yet we are sinners, and, as regards such, what can righteousness do? But He is love. Does His love destroy his judgment against sin? does it put an end to His righteousness? No; that would not be grace and love, but indifference to evil; and would lead our hearts, alas! to be indifferent to it too. Why should not we be, if God were? But it would be a real curse to us, and He would not be really the true and holy God.

How then, if He be righteous, and judges sin, can He exercise love to us in all its fulness—towards us who are sinners? Now here it is the death and atonement of Christ come in. The blessed Lord willingly undertook this task, to glorify God perfectly, and prove infinite love to us, and yet maintain God's perfect righteousness. He bore our sins—was made sin for us. He drank the bitter cup of death and judgment which our sins had filled. He gave Himself for us, and was bruised for our iniquities, and wounded for our transgressions. Was not this love? Oh! reader, was it not? Yet there God's righteous judgment against sin was fully maintained, so that what I see there was not the least allowance of it. What could show it like the death of the Son of God when He was made sin for us? Could He not be spared? How then can any, persevering in rejecting mercy through Him? Was it possible this cup could pass unless He drank it? It could not. For whom then shall it, if not drunk by Him?

And see how the notion of mere dying under the hands of wicked men destroys all the glory of the cross. I read, Christ gave Himself, offered up Himself. Here I find the holy perfectness of His own soul in a way that nothing else shows. What love! What devotedness! What giving Himself up to the Father's glory! "No man taketh it from me," says He, "but I lay it down of myself" (John x. 18). "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me; but that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father hath given me commandment, even so I do" (John. xiv. 30, 31). You will say, How could this glorify the Father—to give Himself up to a cruel death and wrath? Because of your sins; they made it necessary. If love was to be shown to you, it must be in this way. God's holiness must be maintained—the impossibility of allowing sin. You (if indeed through grace you believe) are not to be taken away from before Him, because of your sins and defilement. Instead of that, as they could not be allowed, they were taken away, that you might be in peace before Him and know this God of love. "God commendeth *his* love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. v. 8).

And see how the cross glorifies God in everything, if I look at it as a sacrifice for sin, as Christ giving Himself up, that God may be fully glorified. And how glorious Christ Himself is there by His doing it! for remember, if it was

indeed a bitter cup, yet Christ never was so glorified as there. Never was His glorious perfection so shown out; so that, though it may seem a hard task to impose on Him, yet it really was, as to His work, His greatest glory. As He says, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him" (John xiii. 31). For it was a glorious thing to Him who accomplished it, that, so to speak, God should be debtor for His glory to Him who thus gave Himself. For indeed it was a common counsel between the Father and the Son. God's will was He should come, and His will was to come. "Lo, I come to do thy will" (Heb. x. 9).

But see how He was glorified in it. Is God righteous in judgment against sin? The cross has fully shown it forth. Is God perfect love to the poor sinner? The cross has shown it forth. Did the majesty of God require that it should be vindicated against rebellious man? The cross has done it; yet the sinner is spared. Is God truth, and has said that death should follow sin, the devil saying, as he yet does, it should not? Where such a witness that it *must*, as when the blessed Son of God died as man on the cross? yet He has obtained for us life by it, beyond all the power of death and judgment. Were our sins pressing upon us, so that we did not dare look up? They are gone. I can see God in the light without fear: He has nothing to impute to me; He has proved His love, and I can enjoy His love. And just

when man showed his hatred to God in slaying His Son, God has shown His love to man in giving Him to put away the sin shown in slaying Him. Where was obedience shown as on the cross? He was "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. ii. 8). Where love to us? Where the desire to glorify His Father? Thus the Son of man was glorified, and God, in every part of His nature, glorified in Him: His love, His righteousness, His truth, His majesty, all displayed.

And what is the consequence? The power and fear of death is gone to the believer. It is but the entrance into paradise for him. The sins that He feared as bringing judgment are taken away and blotted out. He knows God loves him—so loves him that He has not spared His own Son to save him; he knows that He has nothing to impute to him, for Christ has borne all. God is righteous and just to forgive him his sins.

And yet, is sin a light thing to one who has this perfect peace with the God of love? It has cost the death of the Son of God. True, it is put away; he is justified; he has perfect peace with God. But how? By that which makes sin the most frightful thing to his soul that possibly could be, and knits his heart to Jesus, who was willing to suffer thus to put it away.

Whether we think of God's glory or Christ's glory, or the practical effect on our hearts, it is Christ's cross, as being a real sacrifice for sin, that

is really efficacious. It glorifies God, infinitely honours Christ, and perfectly blesses man; telling him he is the object of God's infinite love, and yet maintaining righteousness in his heart. Jesus was God manifest in the flesh; and, as to His person, supremely glorious in dignity. This indeed enabled Him to do such a work; but never, as to His work and service, was He so glorious as He was upon the cross. I speak to you feebly, beloved reader; but is it not the truth?—words, as Paul says, of truth and soberness. And this thing was not done in a corner.

And now mark too the blessed efficacy of it for me, a poor sinner. There stood sin, death, judgment, just wrath, in my way. My conscience told me it was so, and God's Word plainly declares it. Satan's power bound it down, so to speak, upon my soul; while his temptations encouraged me to go on in what led to it. God's law even did but make the matter worse for me, if I pretended to meddle with it, for its holiness condemned my transgressions. And now for him that believes all is taken out of the way. Sin gone, death gone as the terrible thing I awaited (Christ has turned it into a gain)—I shall be with Christ; judgment, Christ has borne it; wrath, there is none for me: I am assured of perfect love. Christ, in making me partaker of the efficacy of His death, has set me beyond all these things in the light, as God is in the light (having loved me, and washed me from my sins in His own blood, and made me a

king and a priest to God and His Father). In rising He has shown me this new place into which He has brought me, though as yet, of course, I have it only by faith and participation in that life, in the power of which He has risen. Yes, dear reader, the believer is saved, he has eternal life, he is justified; he waits, no doubt, to be glorified, but he knows Him who has obtained it all for Him, and that He is able to keep that which He has committed unto Him until that day.

There is a judgment (terrible it will be to them that have despised mercy and rejected the Saviour); but to those who, as poor sinners, have submitted to God's righteousness, believing in His love, "Christ will appear the second time, without sin unto salvation" (Heb. ix. 28). That is, having quite put sin away for them the first time, He will come the second time without having anything to say to it as to them, for their full possession of the glorious result. As He said Himself, "I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am, there ye may be also" (John xiv. 2, 3). That is a judgment, if such you will call it, which shall be the everlasting and infinite joy of them that share in it.

Weigh that passage I quoted just now. Christ has appeared "once in the end of the world . . . to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; and as it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment"—there is the natural portion of

the sinner—"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" (Heb. ix. 26-28). The first time He came, He bore the sins; the second, He comes apart from that for the full salvation of them that look for Him.

Reader, are you prepared to give up all this for the notion that He fell a victim to self-seeking men who put Him to a violent death? Did He not offer Himself up as a sacrifice to put away sin? Did not the Lord bruise Him? Did He not say, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. xxvii. 46.) Does not your soul need to have sin put away? Is not the love of God shown in the way you need it by Christ's being thus given? Has He not glorified God in it? Has He not been glorified in it and by it, bitter as it was? Is it not peace to know He has done it, and put away sin for us by it? Does not the word so present it to us? The Lord give you to believe it in truth. It has given me peace, perfect yet increasing peace, these five-and-twenty years, while He has all the glory; and I know God is love, who has purged my conscience from sin. May you, dear reader, be enabled so to know it, and with as much joy! If you do, you know what I say is true. May the grace of God make Him, who has wrought it for us, more precious to us both! It is a blessing and a joy to think we shall have an eternity in which to praise Him for it.

Even if I think of the way good and evil were brought out by it, there is nothing like the cross. Everything moral is there brought to a glorious centre, from which it flows down on every poor believing heart, in the proof that evil has been met and put away, and that good has triumphed. Where has death been shown in its terrible power as in the cross? Where has sin, in all its terrible character and effects? Where do I see man's hatred against goodness itself, and the Son of God bearing sin before God, yet where was eternal life obtained for us, such as death can never touch? Where were goodness and love displayed as there? Where were righteousness and obedience accomplished in spite of all? Where was sin brought so immediately under God's eye and punished as there? Yet where was it put away, and His perfect delight in absolute obedience at all cost, so drawn out? Where was the bowing in weakness under death shown as in Him whose soul was melted like wax in the midst of His bowels? yet where the divine strength which carried through all that weakness, death, man's hatred, Satan's power, and God's wrath, could accumulate on His head who drank that bitter cup? All this is told us in Scripture. "He was crucified through weakness" (2 Cor. xiii. 4). "This is your hour and the power of darkness," said the Lord (Luke xxii. 53). "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death" (Matt. xxvi. 38). "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. xxvii. 46).

In a word, would I know what sin is? I look there; righteousness? I look there; hatred without a cause? I look there; love without bounds? I look there; judgment and condemnation of sin? I look there; deliverance and peace? I look there; divine wrath against evil? I look there; perfect divine favour and delight in what infinitely glorified God? I look there. Weakness and death, though willingly bowing under it, it is there; strength, divine strength, which has met and removed evil, it is there; peace and wrath, it is there also: the world under Satan's power rising up, to get finally rid of a God of love; and God, by this very act, delivering the world and making peace by the blood of His own Son. As it is said, "That through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. ii. 14, 15). As I have said, good and evil in all their extremes and forms meet there for the triumph of love in once suffering the evil, that good may have its full force.

Do you ask, reader, why then are we in such a world still? I will tell you. Scripture tells us, God in grace is still leading souls to profit by and enjoy this. It is a world of misery, and sorrow, and oppression. Did God interfere to change it, He must come in judgment and close the time of mercy; and that He does not do, while yet any have ears to hear. He allows, therefore, the evil

which He will judge to go on meanwhile. And we, though we may thus have to suffer awhile in the world, ought in this sense to rejoice that it is yet allowed; because it is still a time of mercy extended to others. The end will be everlasting joy in a much better world. Christ is gone to prepare a place for us, and He will come again and take us to Himself, that where He is, there we may be also. Thus Peter says, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. iii. 9).

Finally, my reader, you may not have, in peace of soul, been able to contemplate all the glory of the cross. You have a blessed portion yet before you; but remember, it is presented to you just as you are, for your need, in all the grace of it towards a poor sinner. It meets you in your sins, if it infinitely glorifies God. A Jesus dying on the cross for the vilest meets the wants and the burdens of the vilest—comes home through grace to his heart. If his sins are a burden to him, he may see Christ bearing them, that he may be free and have peace. "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). "And by him, all that believe are justified from all things" (Acts xiii. 39). Were his "sins as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow" (Isa. i. 18). If you are heavy laden, come

to Him who came in love to give you rest, and has died in love for you.

The Lord's peace be with you, dear reader—be with you, whoever you may be. May you be washed in that blood which cleanses from all sin, and the Lord will preserve you for His heavenly kingdom. Your affectionate servant in Christ,

J. N. D.

FAITH'S MUSINGS.



ESUS, Lamb of Calvary,
 Who didst die to set us free;
 Saviour, gathered to Thy name,
 We Thy promised presence claim.

Here these peaceful walls within,
 Free from fear and care and sin,
 We would muse on Thy great love,
 Every other love above.

Love which brought Thee down to earth,
 Bethlehem's Babe of lowly birth;
 God's dear Son in manhood's guise,
 Known to none but opened eyes.

Thou, the Holy One of God,
 His delight, by heaven adored;
 Thou didst lay Thy glory by,
 Stoop to earth to bleed and die.

Thine those words of agony,
 "Why hast Thou forsaken me?"
 Bowed beneath sin's heavy load,
 Thus to make us nigh to God.

As we muse on all Thy grace
 To our ruined rebel race,
 Deep desire doth fill each heart
 To behold Thee as Thou art.

As Thou art in glory now,
 Many crowns upon Thy brow;
 Highest name on earth, in heaven,
 By Thy Father to Thee given.

Jesus, Lord, we Thee adore,
 At Thy feet our praises pour;
 Passing knowledge is Thy love,
 Every other theme above.

M. S. S.

THERE is no need, if you are a Christian, that you should die at all. I do not say I shall not die. All I say is, I am not expecting to. Death *may* come, not must. The Lord *will* come. God's blessed tidings is this, that Christ has gone into death for us, and has come up out of it; and therefore, those who belong to Him, redeemed with His blood, are brought to God, and stand before Him, on the ground of the work Jesus has accomplished.

W. T. P. W.

"I'LL NEVER YIELD."



N my early days I was acquainted with one a few years my senior. He was of an intellectual turn of mind, and of great determination of character. He lost his father when quite young: his mother knew the Lord, and was anxious for her son's conversion. At the time I now speak of he was nearing manhood. His mother showed signs of consumption, and thinking her time here would be short, her anxiety about him increased, and she spoke frequently to him about his soul, which he resented.

One day, as she was urging him to yield to Jesus, he said, "Mother, I'll *never* yield." He told me this himself at the time, and judging by his manner, he evidently meant what he said. I was passing through exercise of soul then, which he knew, and he strongly advised me not to give way to it, but put on a bold front. Not long after he removed to a distant town, where he spent the remainder of his life. His mother soon after died. I saw him once more a few years later, being on a visit to the town where he lived, but there seemed to be no change in him then.

More than thirty years elapsed before I heard anything definite about him, and I had often wondered whether he had repented of those words uttered in rashness so long ago.

Many a time during that long interval I had shuddered to think of them, oh! if God should leave him to his own choice! But God had purposes of mercy towards him.

A few years ago I was delighted to hear that the Lord had dealt with him ere He called him hence. For some time previous he had been earnestly seeking the Lord. A severe attack of influenza prostrated him, but he recovered a little strength.

One day he said to his wife, "I want to go to C——," naming the place he came from.

"Oh, no, dear," she said, "you are not able to go." So the matter dropped for a day or two, when he again broached the subject, expressing a strong desire to go. She told him again it was out of the question, as he had not sufficient strength for such a long journey.

With great emphasis he said, "I *must* go, or else I shall go mad." The poor wife was alarmed, and consulted his doctor, who said, "Well, you must let him go."

His son and daughter accompanied him, but he was very exhausted when he reached the house, where his two sisters lived, and the very house, I believe, where he spoke so "unadvisedly with his lips."

He was glad to go to bed at once, and seemed to think he was in the right place, being quite contented in spirit.

After he had lain there a few days, he suddenly

called out to one of his sisters to come upstairs at once. She thought he was taken worse. The moment she entered the room, he joyfully said, "It's all settled!"

"What do you mean, D——?" she said.

Instinctively guessing his meaning, she then asked, "Do you mean—

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

"Yes, that's it," he responded.

Thank God, he had at last yielded himself to his Saviour and Lord, and on the very spot where he said he *never* would, and after such a long lapse of time too.

How true it is that the Lord is "long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

"He might have left us to endure,
The wrath we seemed to brave,
Our case would then admit no cure,
For who but He could save?"

Truly this was a brand plucked from the burning. Had God said Amen to those reckless words of his, how awfully solemn it would have been! But the Lord spared him, that He might bring him to Himself and make him a trophy of divine grace to His own eternal praise. A few days after he passed away to be with the Lord.

And now, dear reader, I would fain ask you, How is it with *you*? Have *you* yielded? Had my friend been left to himself and his own choice, eternal perdition would have been his portion. You would hesitate perhaps, yea, be afraid to use such defiant language as he used, but if up to the present moment you have refused to come to the Saviour, you have been *practically* telling Him you will not yield.

Oh! beware, lest He take you at your word! Should He one of these days do so, could you reasonably blame Him? You perhaps have sometimes felt almost disposed to give in, to give up your puny contest with God, whose Spirit has so long striven with you. Do not forget that there are myriads now finally lost, whose last chance they sinned away, and who once were in a similar condition to you, on the very verge of decision, but the world's charms were too much for them, and they have now lost both the world and their own precious souls. Oh, what would they give could they have one more chance such as you now possess! Do you think they would misuse it? No, no. They would utilise the brief moment granted, lest another should be denied them.

Will you then madly throw away these golden opportunities at your disposal, of being saved?—saved from the guilt of your sins, from the coming wrath, and the pit of woe? Oh, if you do, it will be a deliberate act of soul-suicide! You may not think so now, but the time is fast coming when

you will see it all in the light of a lost eternity, and your grief will know no bounds. May you be led to say—

“Lord, Thou hast won, at length I yield ;
 My heart, by mighty grace compelled,
 Surrenders all to Thee ;
 Against Thy terrors long I strove,
 But who can stand against Thy love ?
 Love conquers even me.

All that a wretch could do I tried,
 Thy patience scorned, Thy power defied,
 And trampled on Thy laws ;
 Scarcely Thy martyrs at the stake
 Could stand more steadfast for Thy sake
 Than I in Satan's cause.

But since Thou hast Thy love revealed,
 And shown my soul a pardon sealed,
 I can resist no more ;
 Couldst Thou for such a sinner bleed ?
 Canst Thou for such a rebel plead ?
 I wonder and adore.

If Thou hadst bid Thy thunders roll
 And lightnings' flash to blast my soul,
 I still had stubborn been ;
 But mercy has my heart subdued,
 A bleeding Saviour I have viewed,
 And now I hate my sin.

Now, Lord, I would be Thine alone ;
 Come, take possession of Thine own,
 For Thou hast set me free ;
 My hands, my eyes, my ears, my tongue,
 Have Satan's servants been too long,
 But now they shall be Thine.”

THE HUNDRED PENCE; OR, DO I FORGIVE?

“Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven. Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants, which owed him an hundred pence: and laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellow-servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.”—MATT. xviii. 21-35.



It is a great thing to see that the dealings of God with man to-day are in absolute grace, upon the ground of righteousness—grace reigning through righteousness unto eternal life. There is no limit to God's forgiveness of a guilty sinner. Peter, having heard what the Lord has preached, says, “Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against

me, and I forgive him? till seven times?" I have no doubt that Peter thought he had done uncommonly well when he forgave seven times. The Lord replies, "I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven." You ought to show in your ways with others how absolutely boundless is My grace. Forgive, not seven times, but seventy times seven.

It is a very important principle which the Lord brings out here, viz.:—You will have to do with others as I have done with you, if you are to enjoy My grace. What has the gospel done? It tells you, if believing in Jesus, that God has forgiven you. You are a forgiven man. The man that knows the gospel has the happy sense in his soul that the Son of God has come, and that the work of redemption is accomplished, and hence he knows that he is saved. Yes, "The Son of Man is come to *seek*, and to *save* that which was lost" (Luke xix. 10). All are lost, but the Son of Man has come to save.

Now Peter was a converted man, and so are all who believe, they are on the same footing as Peter—eternally forgiven. We have received God's pardon on the ground of His Son's death, for the gospel comes out now upon the basis of the work of the Lord Jesus, by which God has been glorified, and all His claims fully met. Thus God is able to reveal His heart, and to come out to a world full of sinners, like you and me, and He can do it righteously. To lay this righteous basis, the Son

of Man was judged by God. It cost the Lord Jesus His life; He had to give up everything. God comes out on that ground, and proclaims to the whole world the sweet news of the forgiveness of sins. I quite admit that an erring or backsliding Christian cannot get his sins forgiven till he confesses them; but grace anticipates this action in the case of a sinner, and proclaims pardon to him just where he is. Until touched by God's Spirit a sinner does not confess, because he does not know what grace is. What changes the whole moral being is the discovery that God is able righteously to forgive all your sins. He comes and whispers, "Thy sins be forgiven thee" (Matt. ix. 2). The Lord Jesus commanded, "That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem," the worst spot of all (Luke xxiv. 46, 47).

The heart of the Lord yearns over you, my unsaved reader, and I am free to tell 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). We have all sinned against God, sinned deeply against Him; but before the day in which He has to judge that sin, He comes out in the activity of His grace, His Son dies for the sinner and his sins, atonement is made, and thus God is able by the Holy Ghost to proclaim the sweet news of pardon. The man that finds out this is arrested, and his heart is charmed to learn that God can forgive him. He finds then that all

Christians are his brethren, and he has to walk in relationship to them, in the same spirit of grace which God has shown to him, otherwise he cannot enjoy that grace. It is this point which the parable before us illustrates.

“Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants.” One owed him ten thousand talents. He could not pay his lord, so his wife and children and all that he had were to be sold. It was an immense sum, and how could he pay it? It was something like two million pounds in our money. The parable has a meaning. I do not doubt that the servant, who owed the ten thousand talents, was the Jewish nation. They had broken the law, persecuted God’s prophets, slain the Messiah’s forerunner—John the Baptist,—and they were plotting to murder the Messiah, Himself. Oh, the fearfulness of their guilt! Could God forgive a nation as guilty as the Jew was? Yes, He could. You know what the prayer of the Lord Jesus was, when on the cross, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” That prayer converted the thief, I doubt not. But what was the answer of God to it? I believe the second and third chapters of Acts give us the answer. In chapter two, Peter says, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (ver. 38), and, again, “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out”

(iii. 19). He calls on them as a nation to repent. To the Jew first, and then to the Gentile, is God's order, but the Jew would have neither. There was a provisional pardon presented to the nation through the preaching of Peter. It was a national pardon. It was really the forgiving of the servant that owed the ten thousand talents. When Peter preached the nation had consummated their guilt by slaying Jesus, their Messiah and King, whom God raised up, but they would not have Him. The apostles are put into prison in the fourth of Acts for preaching Christ, and the Jews sum up all their sins by slaying Stephen, and in his person resisting the Holy Ghost. All was over with Israel, and their future history is an interpretation of the parable.

No sooner has the forgiven debtor got outside than he meets one of his fellow-servants who owed him "a hundred pence." "Pay me that thou owest," is his urgent demand. His cry for patience is unheeded, and the luckless debtor is cast into prison till he should pay the debt. On hearing this his lord was wroth, and delivered the unfeeling servant to the tormentors, "till he should pay all that was due unto him." What is the meaning of that? You know the Gentiles had treated the Jews very badly, but what was the treatment that the Jews had got at the hand of the Gentiles compared with the treatment that the blessed Son of God had received at the hand of the Jew. God had sent His own blessed Son,

and they slew Him. The Gentile had opposed the Jew, but the Jew opposed God. "Pay me that thou owest" is what the Jews practically said to the Gentiles after God had provisionally forgiven them. The Jews would not have grace themselves, and would not let the Gentiles have it.

When Paul was converted it was specially to the Gentiles that he was sent (Acts xxii. 21). When he was telling the Jews about his conversion, and his commission to the Gentiles, they cried, "Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live" (ver. 22). The Jews would neither have the gospel themselves, nor would they let Paul carry it out to the Gentiles. This is really the wicked servant taking his fellow by the throat. Paul describes their actions fully in 1 Thessalonians ii. 14-16: "For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews: who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost."

The lord accosts the hard-hearted and unfeeling debtor as "Thou wicked servant," and pronounces his sentence. Where is the Jew to-day? Cast off by God; cast out of Palestine. They have murdered

their Messiah, and refused grace in every shape. As a consequence they have been cast off by God "till they pay all." Will all be paid? Read Isaiah xl. 1-2. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." That is a very striking scripture. By and by the Jews will wake up to find who has paid their debt, the blessed Lord Jesus Christ Himself. They have received double from God's hand in chastisement, and then Christ becomes their Saviour, because He has borne the sins of His people. He bore their iniquity. The Scripture is exceedingly plain. God has been wroth with Israel and delivered them to the tormentors, till they should pay all that was due.

It is important to see that our Lord then passes on to say, "So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses." Now, beloved friend, I believe this to be a principle of immense importance. I frequently find souls that have not peace, and people that say they are anxious to be saved, yet they never seem to get on. What is the reason of it? I believe there is some hidden root that has never been laid bare before God. Some secret sin, or personal feeling. If this is the case, that soul never really knows the Lord's forgiveness. I find many Christians who

are not happy. They do not enjoy the Father's love. Why? Somebody hurt them, and they have a grudge against that one. Such souls will never enjoy the Lord's forgiveness. To enjoy His forgiveness I must act similarly towards others. "And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any; that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses" (Mark xi. 25). It is a vital principle. If I have a grudge against another, I cannot get on. I am perfectly certain that the want of real peace and Holy Ghost joy among the people of the Lord often depends on this matter. The application to you and me is, I believe, more important than we have thought. How often must I forgive my brother? Till seventy times seven. How has the Lord forgiven us? Absolutely. We must act on the same lines to others if we would enjoy His grace.

But probably you say, How can I get forgiveness? Well, the gospel comes out to you and proclaims forgiveness through faith in Jesus' name. You receive that forgiveness, as a sinner in your sins, and start on your way to glory. But, you say, What about my sins day by day? There must be confession to the Father (see 1 John i. 9). There is where you start. If you through grace are led to believe in God's dear Son, you will come under the benefit of all the work that He has done, and He cleanses you from every sin. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John i. 8). A perfectionist says that, and

only shows that he is deceived. But, you say, I thought a Christian was a person who did not sin. Well, he ought not to sin, but he has the flesh in him. It is folly, in fact it is a delusion of the devil, to say we have no sin in us. The flesh is still in us, and it is nothing but sin. If we let the flesh act and thus sin, we have to confess to the Father. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (ver. 9). That is an erring Christian's resource. If as a child I find I have sinned, what must I do? Go to the Father, and simply confess my sin, and get forgiveness, not as a lost sinner, but as a child. He is faithful and just to the One who has died. All my sins were in the future when Christ died on the cross. If you are in a backsliding state owing to unjudged flesh, and consequent sins, you will never get right until you have confessed them. You will never get clear of the cloud your sin has brought in till you go to God and make a clean breast of all.

The Lord Jesus Christ made propitiation when He bore our sins, and now He is an advocate on high. Christ died to make me clean, and He lives to keep me clean. If I have sinned the Spirit will touch my conscience. When I have confessed, God forgives, communion is restored, and I again get the joy of the Father's love. To live in its enjoyment, however, I must forgive others, as I have been forgiven—yea, even "till seventy times seven."

HEARING EARS ; OR, THE ELDER'S
DISCOVERY.

LITTLE did the speaker think, as he was addressing a large company of children one Lord's Day, in simple, earnest language, suitable to his young hearers, that his words, however little they might be affecting the children, were

falling in mighty power upon the conscience of an elder, who had been drawn into the meeting, partly by the sound of the singing, and partly for shelter from the rain.

W—— had been quite an active member of a Presbyterian Church ever since he joined it. His zeal soon attracted and won the admiration of minister, elders, deacons, and the members in general, which secured for him rapid promotion. A prominent place was assigned him in the Sunday School and in the Young Men's Sunday Morning Fellowship Meeting, and, when yet a young man, he was solemnly ordained an elder. So zealous was he in his high office, that he soon found himself the acknowledged guiding star of his fellow church officials. The business of the church could not be rightly done without his good advice. His knowledge, too, of a member being ill generally brought him to the sick-room, to minister the word of comfort he thought could *only* be given by one in his official position—save, of course, the minister.

The above was a good record, but far from a complete one, for much more might be said to his credit as a *religious man "in the flesh."* With all his religious activity, however, there was "ONE thing" he had *not*, which he had heard some young men in the church say *they possessed*, viz., "*assurance of salvation.*" He, no doubt, would have liked it, but good as his life was he did not feel warranted to ASSURE *himself* he was saved. This lack of assurance, however, in no way troubled him, as he believed the *possession* or *lack* of it in *religious* men could be attributed to the difference of people's temperament—some being more "sanguine" than others. There was one thing he felt *perfectly SURE* of; that was, he had as many *good works*, and was every bit as *religious* as any of them, and what more could be done by anybody? Besides this, he had his own conviction at times that it might after all be *safest* and *wisest* not to be *too sure* about being saved until we heard God's verdict in the "day of judgment."

Business called him one week-end from his home in the north of England to make some purchases in a wholesale house in Glasgow. That he might profit religiously as well as commercially by his visit, he resolved to stay over Lord's Day, and hear one or more of the crack preachers of the city. He set out from his hotel in good time on Sunday morning to take a walk through the principal parts of the town, on the look-out for high spires, and otherwise imposing ecclesiastical structures,

but to his inquiries as to whether the ministers of the most attractive churches he saw were considered good preachers no one to whom he spoke appeared able to inform him. This fruitless inquiry went on till the service had commenced in all the churches. Somewhat disappointed he kept moving on, now hoping to learn of a popular preacher he might yet hear in the afternoon or evening service. Rain began to fall very heavily, and as the fine morning drew him out without an umbrella, he exposed himself to it all in his eagerness to gain his object. But he plodded and inquired in vain. He did not get any satisfaction about the *abilities* of any minister.

It was well on in the afternoon when he came to a large *plain* structure, which he would have passed had he not been attracted by the voices of children singing hymns. As he was now wet to the skin, he resolved to go in and shelter from the rain. Besides, he would see how children's services were conducted in Glasgow, and if there was anything worth copying, his own church Sunday school might profit by his visit.

The speaker took for his subject "Ears." He dwelt chiefly on "hearing ears" and "deaf ears." When speaking of the former, he said, "There were *two distinct marks* about all those who had 'open' or 'hearing' ears—viz., they *knew* they were *lost sinners* in themselves and could *do nothing* to save themselves. But they also knew that Jesus, God's Son, had died for them, and having believed on

Him as their Saviour they had got all their sins forgiven, and were therefore saved, and KNEW it." Then, applying his subject in a practical way, he said, "Come now, let us see how many of you have 'hearing ears.' All those who *know* they are lost sinners in themselves hold up their hands." A good many responded. "Now that is one mark, but another is needed, or it cannot be said your 'ears' are *truly* 'open.' All who have *heard* Jesus say, 'Come unto me,' and have come to Him, and got all their sins forgiven, and *know* they are SAVED, hold up your hands." A fair number of hands went up, but not so many as before. In conclusion, he urged them to make sure they had "open ears," for only those who had, had *spiritual life* in their souls. All who were in their natural state were in a condition of *spiritual death*. But the Son of God had been *speaking* from heaven in love for eighteen hundred years, and all who have *heard His voice* have *lived*. But all who refuse to hear Him and believe in Him are still "dead," and if they pass into eternity in that state they "shall not see life; but the wrath of God will abide on them *for ever*" (John iii. 36, v. 24, 25).

This plain, pointed speaking, in simple language, suitable to the juvenile hearers, had an effect upon the soul of the highly esteemed elder which all the eloquent sermons that he had ever heard never produced. He felt as if God, for the first time, was calling him to account by making him apply the "two marks" of "opened ears" to his own case,

and on doing so he was *forced*, though reluctantly, to the conclusion that both marks were *wanting*.

Instead of his *owning* his place before a "holy God" as a lost sinner, unable to do one thing to save himself, he had ignored God's just verdict about his state, and was vainly trying *his best* to please God by his *supposed* good works—the fruit of his fallen, sinful nature (Rom. iii. 12, vii. 18, viii. 8; John iii. 6, 7). Here, clearly, the first true mark of "open ears" was lacking. Then, as to the second mark, there could be no mistake it was wanting also, for he neither knew his sins were forgiven nor did he KNOW he was SAVED (see Heb. x. 17, 18; Eph. ii. 8).

The fact that there were boys and girls in that meeting with *both* "marks" of "open ears," while he, an active elder of the church, had neither, was a deeply humbling *discovery*. And then, how could he take the place of a sinner *now*, after taking such a prominent place as a Christian? To have done so before he joined the Church he now felt would have been comparatively easy, but to do so *now* was humbling in the extreme. How could he go and tell his minister and fellow-elders, and others, that he was *no Christian at all*, that he had only been a hypocrite? Then, on the other hand, how could he go on with his religious activity in the Church when he knew he was not right?

This was the exercise his soul was passing through when he left the meeting for his hotel. A real work of God had begun in his soul, which

deepened daily till he actually *loathed* himself. This spoilt him for the next six months in his religious energy as a member and elder of the Church. He could take little or no interest in its business or its members. All his thoughts were concentrated on *himself* as a *lost sinner*, whose case, he felt, had only been aggravated by *his* religious life, which had been nothing else than a show in *the flesh*, thereby deceiving both himself and others—passing off as a *real* Christian while he was only a *counterfeit*—a hypocrite.

But if all this *self-boasting* of the once *self-esteemed* elder was an experience deeply depressing to the soul, it was nevertheless the *sure* and *necessary* harbinger of a joy and blessedness that would last to all eternity. As he was now anxious to be saved, he was glad to learn that arrangements had been made for a series of gospel meetings in his own Church by an evangelist from Glasgow. He had made up his mind he would not let the occasion pass without getting saved, if God could possibly meet a case like his. He was present at the first meeting, and, strange to say, the preacher was the *same person* he had heard at the children's meeting where he got stripped of his self-righteousness; and at this meeting it pleased God to use the same instrument to make his soul free and happy by John v. 24, "He that HEARETH *my words*, and believeth on him that sent me, HATH everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." His joy was so full,

that he went straight up to the preacher at the end of the first meeting, and told him he had got saved while he was quoting the above verse during his address. He told him also how he had become convicted at his children's meeting six months previously. After telling this to the preacher, he next told the company then in the church the way the Lord had dealt with him.

This was a happy start for the meetings, but only a start, for night after night sinners were brought to the feet of the blessed Saviour to hear from His own lips, by faith, the peace-giving words that first fell on the "opened ears" of the "sinner of the city" in the Pharisee's house, "Thy sins are forgiven. . . . Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace" (Luke vii. 48-50).

Have your EARS, dear reader, been *opened* to HEAR these precious words addressed to *you*? Do not rest, we beseech you, until you have *heard* and *received* God's message of love and *forgiveness*. We conclude by asking you if the *two* "marks" of "*open ears*" are found with you—viz., that you KNOW you are a *sinner* in *yourself*, but as such have taken Christ as *your* Saviour, and now *know* for CERTAIN you ARE SAVED? If these two marks are *wanting* you may safely conclude, as the elder did, that your EARS are yet *closed* to "the voice of the Son of God," and therefore that you are yet *outside* the circle of Christian *blessedness*.

THE WAR.

“Glory to God in the Highest, peace upon earth and goodwill toward men.”—LUKE ii. 14.



PEACE upon earth! How can this be true when, to-day, we see two nations in the throes of war, and all others armed to the teeth prepared for the bugle call to action?

How can the above angelic proclamation be correct under such circumstances? Nineteen centuries have run their course since these words were uttered, and, whatever glory may have been given to God in the highest, or whatever goodwill may have been shown to men, yet none can truthfully say that peace has spread her welcome wings over the nations of earth, or caused the sword to be turned into a ploughshare.

War is the passion of the day, and any effort to obtain arbitration, other than that of battle, seems futile.

Then what of the heavenly announcement? Was it only a beautiful sentiment—only a kindly expression designed to indicate the feelings of Heaven, but having no place in the stern struggle for life and liberty here below?

Can these words and their meaning be explained? Certainly!

First, let it be clearly understood that Christianity was never intended by its blessed Author

to *convert* the world! Ponder that statement. It is of immense importance.

I must repeat—it never was God's design to *convert* to Himself the nations of the earth by the sound of the gospel as now preached. He has graciously sent that gospel everywhere, in order that souls should, through faith, be saved; but that is a very different thing from *national conversion*.

The infidel of to-day tauntingly upbraids us by saying that Christianity, *as a peace-producer*, is a total failure. He can see no improvement in war-like inclinations since the heavenly heralds declared "Peace upon earth." He sees the opposite; and believes that his point is gained. But, if Christianity never undertook to produce peace on earth, then his charge falls to the ground. His supposition is false, and his accusation groundless.

The peace that Christianity did undertake to bring is of a wholly different kind. It is "peace with God" instead of national harmony. Since the proclamation of the angels, myriads of souls, out of all nations, have been led to the comfortable enjoyment of *peace with God* through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and have given brilliant evidence of it in blameless life and triumphant death. But, withal, that is not universal national tranquillity. Far otherwise.

Christianity has not failed and will not fail of its glorious object. Souls have been, are being, and will be brought thus to God, as the trophies of

redeeming love, out of every nation, kindred, and tongue, to form the Church of God and the Bride of the Lamb, whose favoured companion they are in His continued rejection by the world at large, and partner of His coming heavenly glories.

Blessed portion indeed! but, reader, is it yours?

Meanwhile the nations go on in pursuit of their separate and selfish interests—the stronger crowding out the weaker, or else arming in such a way as to hold their own against their rivals.

These are facts, all too patent, and will remain facts until another order of dealing on God's part shall take place—an order, notice, that is to be ushered in by oceans of blood and indescribable sorrows. (Read, for instance, Matthew xxiv.)

Then, and not till then, shall “they learn war no more.” The study of war shall cease—its art shall be forgotten—then shall the thousand years (the millennium) run its blessed course, and then shall be fulfilled the angelic announcement of “Glory to God in the highest, peace upon earth and good-will toward men.”

Yes, that announcement shall certainly be accomplished. All that God has said must be fulfilled. To-day we have war on earth and “*peace in heaven*” (Luke xix. 38). By-and-by the sword shall be sheathed, and, thank God, there shall be peace upon earth too. Therefore let no one imagine that Christianity has failed of her mission. She has come, like her Author, to win souls not kingdoms—to conquer hearts and not crowns.

She has come, in patient grace, to call sinners to salvation, and to deliver from the certain horrors of eternal judgment by presenting to them a God of love who gave His Son for us.

The moment is of priceless value. Get to see its wondrous meaning. Soon the door must close, and mercy take her flight. The one thing of supreme importance to you, dear unsaved reader, is the salvation of your soul. See to it that whatever else you lose, you suffer not the loss of your soul.

“Peace is proclaimed from heaven’s bright courts of love ;
The Victor takes His seat, and from above
The gladsome message sounds in weary ears
That Christ binds broken hearts and stays their tears.

Peace is possessed by those who simply hide
In Christ alone, and in His word confide ;
Read clear their pardon, written full and plain
By God Himself, who sees them without stain.”

J. W. S.

SWEET MEMORIES.

“My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord.”—Ps. civ. 34.



GIVE us sweet memories, O God,
Of Thy beloved Son,
In whom Thou ever didst delight,
Thy Christ, Thy Holy One!

Mem'ries of Him who came in grace,
Thy counsels to fulfil ;

Whose meat and drink it ever was
To do His Father's will.

Sweet memories of Jesus Christ,
Who "went 'bout doing good ;"
Healing the sick, the halt, the maimed,
Giving the hungry food.

Mem'ries of His most gracious ways
To all who sought Him here ;
Ever to sorrow, grief, and pain
Lending a willing ear.

How He the broken-hearted healed,
The captive sad released ;
God's lowly, well-beloved Son,
In whom He was well pleased.

Mem'ries of that most bitter hour,
When He our Surety stood,
Dying, the just for the unjust,
To bring us back to God.

No more "the Man of Sorrows" He,
Now He's the Man of Joy ;
Thou hast exalted Him, O God,
To Thy right hand on high.

THE EXALTATION OF CHRIST.



WE hear of great rejoicings on every hand, throughout England just now, because of the long reign of Queen Victoria. Now, no one for a moment will doubt that we have all enjoyed many mercies and blessings during her reign; we have been able to live a quiet and peaceable life; have also had religious liberty, with protection, and many other privileges which under a less gracious Sovereign we might not have enjoyed.

The Christian is able to thank God for all these things. He ordained the powers that be, and in His providence for the good of mankind, He has given us all these blessings, perhaps more fully than any other country in the world.

Now, while we would rejoice and be glad for these favours, we would draw your attention to One who has a far greater and more exalted position than even the Queen upon the throne, and from whom far greater blessings flow.

It is the Lord Jesus Christ who is exalted to the right hand of God. Blessed fact! Oh wondrous truth! The One whom the world has rejected, the heavens have received.

Look away from the world and all its vain glory, and cast your eye upward through those open heavens, and behold Jesus crowned with glory and

honour. See also the marks in His hands, His feet, and His side, showing the treatment this world gave Him when here. Yes, the world is guilty of crucifying the Lord of Glory. And "God has appointed a day in the which He will judge this world" (Acts xvii. 31).

Though man gave Him the lowest place here, God has given Him the highest place there, saying, "Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool" (Acts ii. 34, 35). "God hath made this same Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts ii. 36).

There are two truths brought before us in the Scriptures, in connection with His exaltation, to which we would call your special attention.

The first is found in Acts v. 31: "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." He is exalted a Prince—that is, one having power. We read in Revelation i. 5, that "Jesus Christ is the Prince of the kings of the earth." Put all the kings of earth in array, and Christ ruleth over all, and ere long will exercise His power as "King of kings, and Lord of lords."

But the blessed fact is, that in this day of God's grace, He is exercising His power in saving lost, perishing souls.

He is exalted a Prince and a *Saviour*. Before He had that place of exaltation at the right hand of God, He first took the low place in humiliation, in order to work out a way whereby in righteous-

ness He could save. It is written, "Without shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb. ix. 22). And redemption's price must be paid, that sinners might be redeemed to God.

And, oh ! glorious news, all has been accomplished. "It is finished." Christ's precious blood has been shed. Jesus has died. God has been glorified in all that Jesus has done, so much so, that He has raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand. All power is His, in heaven and on earth ; and as the exalted, living, loving Saviour, He delights to dispense blessings, rich eternal blessings, far and wide, to the needy, the lost, and the hell-deserving.

" And now exalted high ;
 A Prince and Saviour He,
 That sinners might draw nigh
 And drink of mercy free—
 Of mercy now so richly shed,
 For Jesus liveth who was dead."

Now all have sinned, therefore all need forgiveness ; and be assured of this, my reader, if one sin shut Adam out of the presence of God from the garden of Eden, the many sins of your lifetime, if unforgiven, will sink you into an eternal hell for ever.

But Jesus is exalted a Saviour to give repentance and forgiveness of sins. "Be it known unto you that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins" (Acts xiii. 38). "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts x. 43).

And let me say that, apart from the "forgiveness of sins," no soul will ever enter heaven; and no one will ever know what real happiness is. Scripture says, "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered" (Rom. iv. 7).

Now, the difficulty is that so many people resort to other means, instead of accepting God's way. No, my reader, not all your religiousness, your good works, or the best life you could live, could ever atone for one single sin. "It is the blood that maketh atonement for the soul." Trust your whole soul upon the blood of Christ, we beseech you, which cleanseth from all sin. Rest in child-like faith upon His finished work. You are asked to do nothing, but simply to take your true place in repentance before God, and the remedy is within your reach, even at your very door. Again we say, Trust the Blood, and trust it now.

Now let us turn to the second truth in connection with the exaltation of Christ. "Jesus humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow; of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. ii. 8-11).

What a solemn truth for those whose hearts are hardened against these things, and whose backs are turned upon God and the exalted Christ.

Is the reader such an one? If so, let me say, however you may ignore and scoff at God's word, the truth remains, and though heaven and earth shall pass away, God's word never will.

The Queen has her subjects who own her authority, and bow to what she says; and if one dares to ignore or set aside her word, they suffer. Then we say, how much more will the one suffer who manifests indifference to the authority of the Lord, and sets aside God's word.

Ah! reader, bow you must, sooner or later. To bow in this day of grace is salvation; but to be made bow in the day of judgment will be damnation. "As I live, saith the Lord, every knee *shall* bow to me, and every tongue *shall* confess to God" (Rom. xiv. 11).

The saints in heaven will delight, with all the angelic hosts, to bow and confess the worthiness of Jesus; while those on earth will have to bow and confess Jesus as Lord; and the devil, with all the infernal beings, will be made to bow and confess Him too.

Has it ever crossed your mind, reader, that after all this may be true, and then? Yes! what then? You will have to bow and confess in judgment, when mercy is gone for ever.

Oh! be wise, face the matter of your eternal destiny now, and get right with God; you will get the good of it now and to all eternity.

Many and great have been the blessings that have flowed from the throne of England during Her

Majesty's reign. But the blessings that flow from the exalted Christ on the throne of heaven to-day, far surpass.

Out of that throne proceeds a river of living waters. "Let him that is athirst come." "And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." They are indeed rich eternal blessings.

Soon the Lord Jesus Christ will take His place and reign, and those who side with Him in this day during His rejection, shall be with Him in the day of His manifestation, when He shall come forth with power and great glory, putting all His enemies under His feet; destroying the wicked one with the brightness of His coming. Then those who obey not the gospel He will punish with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of His power. (2 Thess. i. 8, 9.)

If we think of all the greatest monarchs of the world, with all their glory, it all falls into nothingness, when we think of the Lord's greatness, power, and glory, as King of kings, and Lord of lords.

And now, my reader, with all that bids fair to you in this poor sin-stricken world, what are your prospects for eternity? Is it the everlasting joy of heaven, with Christ in glory; or will it be the eternal miseries of the lake of fire, in the blackness of darkness for ever? Choose you this day.

Oh! decide for Christ. And then you will see that this world with all its glory is but a glittering show, which passes away, leaving you unblest, unsatisfied. If converted, you can afford to wait

with patience to share the glory of Christ when He shall reign. "If we suffer we shall also reign with him" (2 Tim. ii. 12).

"O God, Thou now hast glorified
 Thy holy, blest, eternal Son ;
 The Nazarene, the Crucified,
 Now sits exalted on Thy throne !
 To Him in faith we cry aloud,
 Worthy art Thou, O Lamb of God !
 Father, Thy holy name we bless ;
 Gracious and just Thy wise decree,
 That every tongue shall soon confess
 Jesus the Lord of all to be !
 But oh ! Thy grace has taught us now
 Before that Lord the knee to bow.
 Him as our Lord we gladly own ;
 To Him alone we now would live,
 Who bowed our hearts before Thy throne,
 And gave us all that love could give :
 Our willing voices cry aloud,
 Worthy art Thou, O Lamb of God !"

J. E. B.

FRAGMENT.

I ONCE asked a little blind boy the question, "Do you love Jesus?" Turning his sightless eyes to heaven, he answered: "Ye dinna ken how I love Him! *The right word* ha'sna been made yet to tell o' half my love; but I'm just waitin'—waitin' till I ha'e the 'New Song' put into my mouth, and then I'll gang awa' and *tell it to Himsel'.*"

ANON.

A PRINCESS'S CONVERSION.



EARLY in the present century, a Christian gentleman, named Pinkerton, was engaged by the late Princess Sophia of Russia to teach her children the English language. Fearing he might teach them something she disapproved, the

Princess made a point of being present at lesson time; and her haughtiness was such that she invariably sat on a raised seat, with a canopy over her head.

One day the book that Mr Pinkerton introduced happened to be "The Dairyman's Daughter."* He saw that the Princess listened with marked attention, and on the conclusion of the lesson, she descended from her seat, dismissed the children, took a seat by their tutor, and said: "I sent for you to instruct my children, but you have taught me such a lesson this day as I hope I shall never forget. Henceforth consider me your friend."

When Mr Pinkerton returned from Russia, during the vacation, he mentioned this circumstance to a Christian lady in Ireland, who felt so drawn towards the Princess, that she wrote to her as a fellow-believer, and sent her some books. The following is a copy of the Princess's prompt reply:—

* "The Dairyman's Daughter," by Legh Richmond. London: Religious Tract Society.

" ———, 1812.

"MADAM,—I had the pleasure of receiving your kind letter a month ago, so that I should begin mine with an apology for having been so long without answering it, and thanking you both for the friendly address and valuable present. One reason of my silence can excuse me in your sight—it is Mr Pinkerton's return. I see in the dear letter that you are well acquainted with him; so that you may well know that every other excuse vanished before the joy of seeing this beloved friend again. The word friend, however, does not express fully what he is to me. Add to it what Paul was to the jailer, what Peter and John were to the lame man, sitting at the gate of the temple called Beautiful; what Philip was to the man of Ethiopia, reading Isaiah without understanding it; in a word, what in many instances the apostles of our Saviour were to the poor lost sinners, when they taught that 'whosoever called upon the name of the Lord should be saved.' Oh, dear madam, when in your letter you mentioned my high rank, you did not think it was a rank of this wicked world, in which the higher we are the more we are surrounded with corruption, and in some respects the more courted and attacked by the enemy of our souls. My high attainments in human science, &c., were nothing but sinful, idle, and useless worldly wisdom, which the apostle styles 'enmity to God.' And now every hour of my life is employed in blessing my heavenly Father, who,

through my friend, showed me that, alas ! I knew nothing.

Yes, madam, I was ignorant of my own sinful, lost, helpless state ; ignorant of the only way of salvation ; ignorant of my Creator and Redeemer. These were my attainments, and this was my wisdom. Now, dear madam, instead of noticing dazzling qualities, let your charity cover my multitude of sins ; but He who has begun the work will not leave it imperfect, and will accept and bring me to the throne of His Father, cleansed in His precious blood, and saved by His almighty atonement and sacrifice. I have no other claim, no other hope, and I believe you are of the same mind. Pray for me that we may one day meet in heaven, and there join in singing praises in the song of Moses and the Lamb. Marvellous are His works ; indeed, every day we have instances thereof.

How marvellous are His ways with the proud sinner, whom He seeks out, calls back, and brings at last to confess his guilty state ! How marvellous are His ways with His faithful servants, who, like our worthy friend, Pinkerton, travel far from their friends to become instruments of grace to so many different places and people ! Mr P.'s health, which was so weak in our sight, proved strong in the strength of our Lord. Then let us always, and in all times, depend upon Him alone, and submit in resignation to Him in our hardest trials, believing all is done for our good by a God of mercy and love. But I must stop here, lest my

letter become too long. Excuse me if I write and speak too freely. Your friendly letter has opened my heart and mind. I hope we meet daily in prayer and spirit, and that we shall know one another when we stand before the throne of our Lord in glory. Oh! pray for me that I may be in the end acknowledged by you as a sister in Christ, and a redeemed child of God.

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you and your amiable family. May His grace never depart from you. This is the earnest prayer of your sincere friend,

P. S. M.

“PETERSBURGH.”

JESUS AND THE RESURRECTION.

(ACTS xvii. 18.)



PMPELLED by the terror of the Lord and constrained by the love of Christ, behold Paul at Athens. Think of the matchless splendour which burst upon his view as he rolled his eye round the enchanting outlook that encircled Mars Hill. Standing on its summit, there was spread out before him, on one hand, a lovely prospect of mountains, islands, seas, and skies; on the other, lay, within range of his vision, the plain of Marathon bristling with historic associations. Behind him towered the lofty Acropolis, crowned with the

pride of Grecian architecture. There, in the zenith of their glory and the perfection of their beauty, stood those peerless temples, the very fragments of which are regarded by modern travellers with an idolatry almost equal to that which reared them. Stretched along the plain below him, and reclining her head on the slope of the neighbouring hills, was Athens, mother of the arts and sciences. The Porch, the Lyceum, and the Grove, with the statues of departed sages, and the forms of their living disciples, were all within the sweep of the apostle's eye. How admirers of classic lore would have envied his position and gloried in the entrancing scenery! But there stood Paul, as insensible to all this grandeur as if nothing was before him but the treeless, turfless desert. A light above the brightness of the sun at noon had eclipsed all that for him. A zeal of a different kind filled his breast. The situation had no charms for him. He felt none of its fascinations. Nay, a pang went through his very soul, and his spirit was stirred to its depths when he saw "the city wholly given to idolatry." The Athenians might be at the height of civilisation and literature, but he saw them as they really were, in the very depth of misery, having no hope, and without God in the world.

The great apostle of the Gentiles here actually bewailed a city of *philosophers* with more intense grief than any of us ever did a horde of *savages*. In spite of all the pomp of earthly magnificence with which he was surrounded, to him it seemed

nothing but a ghastly scene of death, where men lay dead in trespasses and in sins, and all that the dim light of philosophy could afford only served as the lamp of the sepulchre. And what was Paul's antidote for that state of things?

JESUS AND THE RESURRECTION.

Such is God's provision for the rich and the poor, the wise and the ignorant. How many in this advanced age appear to think that, with civilisation, education, and culture, nothing more is needed. They seem to forget that an educated sinner requires salvation quite as much as an illiterate one, that what a man dead in sins needs is life not letters, and what a man alive in sins must have is justification from all things and peace with God, not scholastic information, however extensive. No class is more difficult to reach than this. They are well-nigh unapproachable. Divine things are kept at arm's-length, and as for Jesus, that name, sweet as it sounds in a believer's ear, never passes their lips. Yet they have a claim upon us. Their souls are precious, and they are part of the very world that God so loved as to give His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.

Has it ever occurred to you, my dear cultured friend, how thoroughly what Paul preached to the Athenian philosophers of old meets your case? "He preached unto them Jesus and the resurrec-

tion." In other words, he offered them a Saviour, and this same Jesus is a Saviour for you. His very name implies it. "He was called Jesus," "for he shall save his people from their sins," and on the cross He died for our sins according to the Scriptures, He was buried and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. Paul accordingly proclaimed "Jesus," but did not stop there. It was Jesus *and* the resurrection. He is a Saviour surely, but not that only. He is a Saviour *mighty* to save. He was triumphant over death. Alone He went into the fight for us, but the issue of the conflict was neither doubtful nor uncertain. The foe was crushed, and the victory decisive and complete all along the line. He abolished death, rose a Conqueror, and brought life and incorruptibility to light.

This is something outside the sphere of all science. It is the demonstration of a power entirely above and beyond natural law. It is Divine power. Resurrection does not follow the ordinary sequence of nature. It is the supernatural intervention of a power that is paramount to death. Moreover it is a fact which is past debate and admits of no contradiction. That God should become a man, that the Son should be revealed as man on earth, that He should die as man on the cross, that He should rise from the dead, that He should ascend as man in a spiritual and glorified body to heaven, assuring those who believed on Him that they would be with Him, and like Him — these are facts which no science can ever give, and no philo-

sophy can ever teach you. Indeed, the fatal defect in both these is that each starts with the assumption that man is a being in his normal state going on from one excelsior stage of progress to another, instead of a fallen creature, who has departed from God, and must either return to Him or be judged if he refuses. But, thank God, in the midst of man's ruin He has provided a remedy that more than covers it. Paul boldly announced it in the ears of instructed men at Athens—"Jesus and the resurrection;" and it is indispensable for learned and unlearned in our day if they are ever to be eternally blessed.

You may ask, however, What does Jesus and the resurrection mean? How does it apply to the salvation of a man's soul? Let me tell you how it was brought home to a young man of singular intellectual attainments, and with an exceptionally promising future. His university career was crowned with success, but in the too eager pursuit of his studies, and incessant application to books, the strain had been too much for his health. Examined by his medical adviser, he was immediately ordered a bracing climate and complete rest from mental work. It came like a shock on the family circle. The anxiety of a fond parent lost no time in getting him away as advised, hopeful that the thoroughness of the change might restore him to his wonted vigour. But alas! matters did not improve. His strength, on the contrary, was fast failing, and his life was ebbing away. Unable

to leave his room, it was, to one of his accomplishments, a bitter disappointment, as he lay on his bed, to think of this early blighting of his brilliant prospects, and the utter collapse of all his well-laid plans for this life. Still nothing now remained but to face the worst. A devoted labourer for God happened to be there, though the young gentleman was rather averse to be spoken to about spiritual things, but something he had heard concerning this particular servant of the Lord induced him to desire that his father should invite him to come and see him. He was soon by his bedside, only to find that he had covered his head with the bed-clothes. He quietly took out his Bible, and opening it at the tenth chapter of Romans, began to read, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved." A brief pause ensued, and then raising his voice, he said, "Young man, that is my desire for you, take down the bed-clothes."

He instantly relaxed and tremblingly uncovered, when a pale, anxious face was revealed, looking imploringly at the visitor who had thus in so kind a manner broken down his reserve, and continuing, inquired—

"What is your trouble?"

The reply was—"My sins, my sins. I have been leaving God out. I have been forgetting Christ."

"Well, then," said the Lord's servant, "hearken to what I am about to read. These people were not saved. What was it that prevented them from

being saved?" He read slowly and distinctly: "For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish a righteousness of their own, have *not submitted* themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to *every one that believeth.*" Proceeding, he said, "Now you see there is a way *not* to be saved as well as a way to *be* saved."

"Yes," answered the young man, "that seems clear."

"What, then, is the way *not* to be saved? Hear while I read: 'For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the *law*, That the man that doeth those things shall live by them.' But no one ever *lived* by them, because he could not *do* them, and he that offendeth in one point is guilty of all. Hence if you have offended in one point, the law can only curse instead of bless. There is no hope, then, on the principle of doing. But what is the way to be saved?" and then with a pathos which went to the young man's heart, he said, "Listen, as for your very life, while I tell you the way to be saved." This was the decisive moment. He read feelingly: "But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is *nigh*

thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that 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.*"

He followed every word with intense interest, a new light broke into the dying young man's soul, and grasping the hand of the visitor he breathed out, "Saved, saved." It was a solemn but an eventful time. His distress was gone, a calm peace filled his breast, and a glory seemed to light up his countenance. His regrets were over. He had found satisfaction in Christ.

The true significance, my friend, ought to be evident now of what Paul meant by "Jesus and the resurrection," and the connection between that and salvation. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord *Jesus*, and believe in thine heart that God hath *raised him from the dead*, thou shalt *be saved.*"

On calling next day, the young man said, "I am now going to meet God, I shall soon be in His presence, but having already met Him in Christ, and now resting in His word that cannot lie, 'thou shalt be saved,' it is going home, not death."

Soon after he went to be with Christ, which is far better. Can you, dear reader, say, "Christ for me"? Can you say, "Jesus is mine"?

THE DANGER OF NEGLECT.

“How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?”—HEB. ii. 3.

(NOTES OF AN OPEN-AIR ADDRESS.)



HERE is no neglect so terrible as a neglected salvation! It is fatal.

If you neglect to take your daily food you will probably starve—if you neglect to take the medicine prescribed for your malady you will, in all likelihood, die; but, if you neglect God's salvation, you must certainly be damned.

Now, it is a wonderful and blessed fact that salvation is made possible. God has graciously made it known, and has placed it within the reach of all. “The word is nigh thee!” Like your daily food, “it is in thy mouth and in thy heart, the word of faith which we preach” (Rom. x.). It could not be nearer or more accessible; so much so, that woe to the man who fails to make it his own. To neglect it is to place yourself beyond escape from judgment.

It is not a thing to be sought for in heaven or in the depths, it is not the result of tears or prayers or contrition. It is to be received by faith, here and now, in God's free and kindly gift. It is for present enjoyment and experience. If repentance is necessary, as it surely is, yet it is not a purchase price, nor a reason why the soul should be saved.

I am not saved because I repent, though I could never be saved without it; but the same faith that leads me to accept God's great gift causes me, at the same time, to judge myself, and hate the sins from whose condemnation God's salvation delivers me.

No, my friends, salvation is full and free. It claims no particle of merit on our part. It views us as we are, sinners, lost and undone! It meets us while on that ground, and in that condition! It comes there to save us. It is like food for the starving; medicine for the sick; a Saviour for the lost!

"While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. v.). Think of that! We never asked Him to die; never dreamt of such a way of salvation, and certainly never gave Him a reason why He should thus die for us!

No, no! that reason lay in the full, flowing fountain of His own infinite love. There we find the spring and glorious secret of all His salvation. "God is love." He has "commended His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners (mark the truth), yet sinners, Christ died for us." Yes, "He first loved us." His love takes the initiative and the priority. And, if we Christians love Him in return, it is but the response, the reflection of His first love to us.

Oh! but it is grand, glorious, divine. It is just like God—the God of all grace—to act as He has done!

Salvation is great, because it springs from the heart of God. It is great because it was accomplished by His Son in the darkness and agony of Calvary. It is great because it is communicated in the power of God's Spirit. It is great because it saves great, very great sinners; and it is great because it saves them for ever. It is God's salvation.

It is a gift, and therefore free! To neglect it is to be damned! Alas, there are myriads of souls in hell to-day whose greatest torment is the recollection that they might have been saved while on earth, but that, whatever other sins they committed, this was their most condemnatory — they just neglected salvation!

Ah! my friends, take solemn warning to-day. Heaven's greatest boon is, thank God, within your reach; make it yours at once.

"I would give £40,000," said a wealthy man, who died recently in the South of England, "if I could only be young again." But money can neither redeem your time nor your soul. Time is sweeping us on to eternity! To heaven or to hell! Which, my friends, which? The redemption-price is paid in the blood of the Lamb. It can cleanse from all sin. It alone! Let me plead with you to be wise in time. "Now is the accepted time."

You are thrice-welcome! Love constrains, conscience pleads, Scripture warns. How, yes, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation? May God draw souls to Himself for their blessing and His glory.

"EVERY MAN A PENNY."

"For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive. So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house, saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good? So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen."—MATT. xx. 1-16.



WE have here something that is very instructive. The Lord has been saying in the previous chapter how difficult it is for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. In fact, He says, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (ver. 26), *i.e.*, you cannot save yourself, but God can save you. Peter,

struck by this, says, "Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?" Then Jesus said: "Verily I say unto you . . . Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life. But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first" (vers. 27-29). If you follow Jesus, you will have your reward. It is not only the twelve apostles to whom this applies. He will reward every one that has followed Him.

Now, alas! our hearts are very self-righteous, and He has to correct every bit of self-righteousness that springs up in our hearts. Peter was rather well pleased with his devotedness, so the Lord says, as it were, You have done very well by it, Peter. Do you, my reader, think of what you have given up for Christ? The rather think on what you have got from Christ, for all we have is but the result of sovereign grace, and no thanks to us. That is the point of the parable which follows.

"The kingdom of heaven is like," &c. The point of this parable is this, there is no limit to God's sovereignty in grace. God is sovereign. If you get eternal life, you get it by sovereign grace, and confidence in the grace of the Master of the vineyard is the point. "Whatsoever is right I will give you." He wants men in His vineyard, but their call and their reward depend entirely on His grace. All is on the principle of grace, and of God's sovereignty.

Have you ever begun to work in the Lord's vineyard yet? He is a wonderful master, so full of grace, and goodness, and encouragement. There is nothing to compare with the love of Christ, and the service of Christ. Look at the ceaseless activity of Christ which leads Him out to seek servants in this parable. The penny is what His grace will give you by-and-by. He goes out "early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard"; then "about the third hour"; again "about the sixth and ninth hour"; and once more "about the eleventh hour." Only think of the earnestness and activity on His side. If His grace call, and save you, my reader, happy for you, for by-and-by He will reward you. Do not despise His call. Better far to serve Christ than Satan!

But the day closed; and when even was come, the Lord said, "Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first." It will be a grand day when this roll-call is heard! and each receives his reward. Are you a labourer? "I do not think I am a preacher," say you. It is not a question about being a preacher. It is this, Are you for Him, and are you in His service? All His servants got a penny, and who gave them the penny? Christ. The first thought they should have received more than the last. That was a huge mistake. We are going to heaven, thank God, but we can only go in by sovereign grace, and the call of God. Oh! the blessedness of the sovereignty of God. He might have let you and

me alone. Many are called, but few chosen. Are you chosen? Well, you say, I do not know. Thank God, I know. I could not rest if I did not know. Sovereign grace called me, and in that I rest. Grace takes us all in. The heart that knows what grace is, is delighted that you should taste it too.

Observe here what the Master says with regard to giving each a penny—even those who came in last: "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?" (ver. 15.) Certainly! If in His grace He put the one called at the eleventh hour on the same footing as those called "early in the morning," the latter should have rejoiced. The first got what was justice, the last enjoyed grace. It is sovereign grace that carries us on, and sovereign grace will carry us in; and it is the effect of grace, that what you enjoy yourself, you are very anxious that others should enjoy too. If delighting in Christ yourself, you have such enjoyment in your soul that you desire that others should enjoy what you enjoy. You have lost nothing, although somebody else shares what fills your heart. And that is the way the gospel spreads. A wonderful thing indeed is grace, for it takes in the vilest and most guilty; and when you come to know the Lord, you want others to share what you are enjoying." May the Lord give you, my friend, to taste His rich and infinite goodness just now, and then fill your heart with deep longings for the blessing of others.

THE STORM AND THE CALM.



IT is the entrance of God's Word that gives light, as we read in Psalm cxix. It dispels the darkness, and gives what the soul has longed for, for so long. "He satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness" (Ps. cvii. 10).

Many souls have been awakened to a sense of sin and guilt, and are longing for peace and rest. Everything is tried, but they find not rest. Self-improvement, religious zeal, benevolence, and many other things are tried, but no peace.

And why is this? Because God would have them to learn that *self* is utterly bad, and all that flows from it utterly corrupt, and that they must fully recognise, like Jonah in the fish's belly, that "salvation is of the Lord" (Jonah ii. 9).

It is a great moment when a soul has learnt this, and looks out and up to God, as faith always does, and says, as a deep reality learnt in the soul, "Salvation is of the Lord."

Then, and not till then, does calm succeed the storm, and all produced by the precious Word of God. "And he arose and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm" (Mark iv. 39).

Thus it is in the history of a soul that is tempest-tossed about sin, and the prospect of eternal judgment. What can quell the raging tempest within

but the sovereign Word of God! "But say in a word, and my servant shall be healed," said the centurion to Christ in Luke vii. 7.

A young woman was in great conflict of soul, and tossed about upon the waves, like the ship on the Sea of Galilee. She was tempest-tossed indeed. Waves of trouble swept over her soul. Satan plied her with every form of evil thoughts. But the gracious eye of God was upon her, and His word was about to quell the storm.

She was told to read the hymn, a verse of which runs thus :

"Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor of fitness fondly dream ;
All the fitness He requireth,
Is to feel your need of Him.
This He gives you,
'Tis the Spirit's rising beam."

Coming to this verse, she inquired, "What is conscience?" This led to a lengthened conversation between her and the Christian that was talking with her. Many scriptures were turned to in her Swedish Bible, and the sinner's need and God's salvation pointed out. It was the beginning of the quelling of the storm that had raged in her soul for so long. The Word of God was about to assert its sovereign power and make it felt.

At last they turned to Ephesians ii. 8, 9, "By grace are ye saved, through faith ; and that not of yourselves ; it is the gift of God ; not of works, lest any man should boast." As this dear soul read

these words, God helped her to comprehend them, and the darkness fled away before the light-giving power of the Word of God. The tempest in her soul abated, the howling wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

"I now can say that I am saved," said she, as she believed the Word of God; for that Word had communicated to her the knowledge of salvation.

"I learnt those words when I was confirmed," she said, "but I did not know their meaning then."

Another, who had gone through soul conflict about sin and guilt, though not so deep or long, was reading in her room the third chapter of John. When she came to the 16th verse, it was the word that quelled the storm in her soul, and gave her peace, and the blessed knowledge that she was saved. Glorious verse it is, let it be written out in full: "*God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*"

Another in soul distress was pointed to Isaiah liii. 6: "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." This was the verse that turned her distress into peace and joy. She reached the knowledge of salvation in that lovely verse.

Another, who had often cried to God, was reading Acts ii. in the solitude of his own room, and on reaching verse 21, "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord,

shall be saved," he got saved. God was revealed to him as a Saviour God. He believed His word, and was saved.

Another, who had for long been in soul distress, and at times utterly discouraged, was listening to her mother reading Isaiah xliii., when she reached the words: "Fear not; for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine." Her conflict ceased, and she obtained peace.

It is well when awakened souls turn for themselves to the Word of God. One line from Holy Scripture is worth infinitely more for the soul in distress than all the reasonings of men. "Say in a word" (Luke vii. 7). "Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read" (Isa. xxxiv. 16). "He that is of God, heareth God's words" (John viii. 47). "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater" (John v. 9).

"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may KNOW that ye have eternal life" (John v. 13).

"When the Saviour said 'Tis finished!"

Everything was fully done:

Done, as God Himself would have it—

Christ the vict'ry fully won.

All the *doing* is completed;

Now, 'tis *look, believe, and live*:

None can purchase His salvation,

Life's a gift that God doth *give*."

LIFE AND DEATH.



WHAT is life? Can the scientists tell us? At best their definitions are but negative, and are so beggarly that by reason of their very poverty they proclaim on the housetops their utter ignorance of the subject. Says one of the greatest of popular scientific writers, "Life is the sum total of the forces that resist death."

What is death? That stage of the decay of nature when animation is suspended. The debt of nature, as many poetically term it. Such explanations are a mere juggling with words, and add not one iota to the knowledge of the meanest peasant. What is life? What is death? *Apart from revelation nothing is known about either.* True, a man lives, and we know he lives, for he thinks and acts. True, man dies, for who has not seen the outward signs of the awful mystery of the soul leaving the body. Between the feeblest expression of life and death there is a great gulf fixed. I have seen a woman dying, with just a spark of life fluttering around that great citadel of the human constitution—the heart. A few hours later I beheld her dead. What a mighty change! What is life? What is death? Life is communicated by God. Death is the wages of sin.

Yet not always is death feared. Look at this picture. An aged man lying in a Roman prison,

chained to soldier gaolers, forsaken by friends, with the executioner's axe gleaming before his eyes. He had laboured hard and long in God's service. He had toiled night and day—now, making tents, at another time tossed to and fro on an angry sea; enrapt in inky darkness, comforting the hearts of many, as he spoke of God and His providential care; standing on Mars Hill proclaiming in trumpet tones the gospel to the learned and the curious; beaten and thrown into an inner prison in Philippi; founding churches; travelling in missionary enterprise with his life in his hand. And now he draws near, aged and infirm, to the end of his rough pilgrimage, and the roughest bit is yet to come, and he knows it.

As he looks backward and forward has he any regrets? Has he grown cynical as to the world and its ways? Is he pessimistic as he thinks of his abounding labours, and their apparent failure? In a Roman prison, alone and unbefriended, looking forward to death under the cruellest of the Roman emperors—that living monster, Nero—is his faith in God weakened? Nay, his end is a magnificent triumph of the power of Christianity.

See! He puts pen to paper, and sends a message to his beloved Philippian Church. Is there a regret in it? A weak note? Despair? Disappointment? Nay, his heart palpitates with joy, and throbs with ardent hope.

To one sentence alone would I call your attention—*"To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."*

Here is the mystery of life and death solved. Not from a scientific point indeed, but in deep true reality. Life was one glorious piece of living, for it was Christ. Did his back smart as he lay dungeon-bound in Philippi? True, but he *sings* and praises God. 'Tis a scene of holy triumph. The noisome prison is a holy spot, for the presence of the Master is there, just as long centuries before a form like unto the Son of God walked with the three Hebrew witnesses for God in the furnace heated seven times. Better far walk on a bed of burning cinders with Jesus, than lie on a bed of down without Him; better far be in Philippi's gaol with smarting back with Him, than sleep the gaoler's sleep of callous indifference.

Christ! CHRIST!! CHRIST!!! was the motto of the great apostle's *life*, and *death* was GAIN; though it came by the way of the executioner's axe or sword.

Said a poor dying woman with kindling face to me the other day, her voice barely a whisper: "People ask me, if I am ready to die. I tell them, I am ready to live. 'Tis life, not death, that awaits me. True, my soul will shortly leave this poor, weak body, but it is life." Another triumph of Christianity in that lonely cottage overlooking the Gulf of Mexico. The sea and sky outside that cottage door are lovely, the palm trees gracefully bow before the gentle breeze, nature is in her kindest mood, yet the dying saint's heart is beyond and above it all. Ah, Christ has been her solace in life, and will be her gain in death.

The great apostle could say, "*For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*" Reader, fill in your life, and tell me your prospect in death. The drunkard, with bleared eye, and blotched face, and twitching nerve, and befuddled brain, and thick voice, proclaims by his miserable life, "For me to live is *drink.*" Is that not so, drunkard? And to die? What? Answer! Hell. Yes, hell lies at the end of the drunkard's life. "*No drunkard shall inherit the kingdom of heaven.*"

Ask that giddy, gay, empty-headed, pleasure-loving young lady, the question, What is life? Hear her answer. She may blush as she replies, but at any rate she is honest, "For me to live is *pleasure.*" Said a young lady at the close of a gospel meeting to a trained nurse by her side, "Nurse, I couldn't give up the theatre—I would die if I had no theatre." Poor slave of pleasure! And to such to die? What? Answer! Hell. 'Tis an awful word. Said a young lady in surprise to a preacher, "Why, I thought it was only young men, who have sown their wild oats, that go to hell." Ah, Christless, pleasure-loving young ladies are journeying thither. The *pleasures* of sin—and we do not deny there is pleasure in it—are inseparably and irrevocably linked up with the *wages* of sin—DEATH. *Pleasure* now, *death* by-and-by.

Ask that man of business what life is for him. Why is he chained to the desk from early morning till late at night? Why does he refuse a holiday,

and grudge the national ones, grumbling that they throw business out of gear? Why does he toil for money, *money*, MONEY, as if this life were all, and there was no soul, and no hereafter? "Actions speak louder than words," says the proverb. If this be so, and it is, his loud, constant cry is, "For me to live is *business!*"

A business man submitted himself to examination at the hands of a medical expert. "You must take a prolonged holiday, a long nerve and brain rest, absolute quiet, and you may recover your tone," was the physician's advice.

"I cannot," said the business-slave; "business could not go on without me."

But it did. He continued to toil at the office, and ere long the overstrained constitution gave way. He took ill and died. And then? What? Hell, a money-lover's, idol-worshipper's hell. Mammon was his god, but it could not save him.

We turn to a lady, and inquire, "What is your life, madam?" She promptly and proudly replies, "For me to live is *religion!*" The answer *sounds* well enough, but it is the most awful we have received yet. There are more going to hell by way of the cushioned pew and the chancel rails than through sin, or pleasure, or business. Many to-day put the church before Christ, creed before salvation. Such are awfully deceived; for self-deception is the most terrible of all deceptions.

I have travelled over a few hundred miles in the United States of late, and have asked many the

reason of the hope that is within them. Almost without exception they have replied to my question, Are you saved? by the miserable reply, "I belong to the church." Yes; they belong to a church, but not to Christ; have turned over new leaves, but have never turned to God; have been baptized, but have never been converted; take the sacrament, but have never taken Christ.

Oh, Christless professor, beware! Is that *all* you can say, "For me to live is *religion*"? "And to die?" Answer that. Face it. *Hell*, not heaven, lies before you—loss, not gain, awaits you; and what a loss! The loss of your one precious immortal soul for ever! To be for ever in hell is an awful eternity! Drunkard, pleasure-lover, business-slave, empty religionist, come to Christ. And then through grace you will be able in measure to re-echo the marvellous words of Paul, and say, "*For me to live is CHRIST, and to die is GAIN!*"

"*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.*"

"When the day of salvation is drawing to a close,
 When thy guilt shall weigh thee to the ground;
 When thy heart throbs in terror before eternal woes,
 Oh! *then* no Saviour can be found.
 Now there's One—resource for the guilty—
 Jesus! Jesus saith, "Come unto Me";
 Still mercy's bloodstained lintel thy door of hope
 may be!
 O sinner! Jesus died for thee."

ARE YOU HAPPY?



It was said recently by one of the most notable statesmen in Europe that, "In my long life I have rarely been happy; if I were to figure the total of the rare moments of happiness that I have ever enjoyed I would find, perhaps, in all twenty-four hours."

It was a bad but an honest confession from one who has created an empire, and whose words were listened to with awe and pleasure. What an awful critique on all that men set their hearts upon, and that they seem to prize most dearly!

Think of this, my reader, coming from the lips of one who had almost scaled the very highest rung of the ladder of earthly ambition and worldly fame. He was like Joseph in Egypt, to whom the king said, "Only in the throne shall I be greater than thou." It is another proof amongst the many to the utter vanity of all that is here, and of the total incompetency of anything in this world to yield solid peace or lasting satisfaction.

When the celebrated Irish orator, Edmund Burke, was nearing his end, and feeling the hollowness of everything in this world, he exclaimed, "What shadows we are, and what shadows we pursue!"

Common experience teaches us, however much some may try to discard or gloss over the fact,

that this world can yield no comfort in life, and no happiness in death. Alas! on a death-bed how many, to judge by the expressions that have come from their lips, seem as if they were goaded with goads, or as if the fire of scorpions were burning in their breasts, as they traverse their past history. A celebrated poet is said to have died of wretchedness, yet it is said he

“Drank every cup of joy, heard every trump
Of fame, drank early, deeply drank, drank draughts
That common millions might have quenched ; then
Died of thirst, because there was no more to drink.”

Honest reader, have you not found that there is a sting in the very mirth of this world? Haven't you found that when you put forth your hand to grasp some apparent prize which carried joy in prospect that when you gained the prize it was like a bubble: it burst the moment you put your hand to it? Have you never returned home after a night of frolic or festivity, and when you retired into the quietness of your bedroom, or awoke in the early hours of the morning, and reflected on all that you had passed through, have you not felt unsatisfied and dejected, and longed for something more satisfying than anything this world can afford? Ah! how true the poet's words are—

“There's nothing true but heaven.”

Forgive if I ask you, *Are you happy?* Can you be happy if you are still pursuing the vanities of this world? Can you be happy if you know not

your sins forgiven, and if the fear of death is upon you? Can you be happy with the mountain of God's wrath above you, and a yawning hell beneath you? Can you be happy if your soul is not in the enjoyment of God's favour in Christ?

If you are not happy, you may be. The gospel of God's grace proposes to make you happy *here*; not only hereafter, but here, in this world. It proposes to satisfy your heart supremely *now*. It proposes to make you independent of everything that men seek to quench thirst at. It proposes to fill your soul with true, deep, lasting, and divine happiness, so that you will be not only rendered perfectly independent of every creature stream, but that you yourself will be able in the power of what you receive to make others happy. "Out of his belly (inward parts) shall flow rivers of living water" (John vii. 38).

What could surpass such a proposal! No society or no other religion ever held out such an offer. True Christianity, which is simply Christ filling the heart, emancipates, ennobles, enriches, and elevates the human character as nothing else can.

Now, to be happy in this world there are two things which every one needs, and without them no one can be happy. Men require their conscience cleared from all sense of guilt, so that they can enter God's presence without fear, and their heart to be thoroughly satisfied with an object outside themselves so that they can afford to smile on anything this world might offer them.

The work of Christ can do the one, and the person of Christ the other. Christ, by His finished work, perfectly and eternally glorified God about the whole question of sin. "He was made sin for us." By His death and blood-shedding He has made a full and sufficient atonement for all our sins. Justice asks no more. The evidence of God's full satisfaction is that He raised Christ from amongst the dead and set Him at His own right hand. He lives now to show His work complete. By that finished work alone, without deeds or merit on our part, the conscience of the repentant sinner is purged, and the one who believes is justified from all charge of guilt. "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin." "And by Him (Jesus) all that believe are justified from all things."

How blessed to know also that the One through whom we are justified lives in heaven for God's boundless satisfaction. All fulness dwells in Him. God is now finding His supreme delight and joy in the Son of His love. He has called us who believe to share His own deep joy in Him. In giving us His Son He has given us all things in Him. The father's joy in our reception is greater than anything we can ever know. The thought of this ought to enhance our joy. "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace *in believing.*"

"I'M DOING THE BEST I CAN."



ALLING one day at a house to leave a little gospel book with the occupant, we learned that she had been very sick, and was just recovering from a severe illness. Seeking to learn how matters stood between her and God, we inquired

after her soul's welfare. All she could tell us, after speaking of the goodness of the Almighty, was, "I'm doing the best I can."

She was but a sample of thousands on every hand, who like her, are deceived and duped by the devil into the belief that doing the best they can will do for God. Never was there a more fatal delusion. If infidelity has slain its thousands, *doing your best* is damning its tens of thousands.

"*Do your best*" is the devil's delusion. It is the false light which leads the unwary on to the rocks of eternal woe. Ever since Cain, the founder of human religion, took that way, thousands of poor deluded souls have been found to follow in his steps.

Suppose we visit a murderer in the condemned cell, as he waits there the execution of the sentence which has been passed upon him. We speak to him of his guilt, and the judgment that awaits him, and that his only way of escape is by obtaining a free pardon from Her Majesty the Queen. He listens to all we have to say, and then calmly

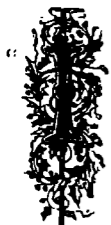
answers, "I'm doing the best I can." What folly! What could doing his best procure? Could it undo the guilty past, undo the awful crime he is guilty of, and cleanse his hands, which are stained with the blood of a fellow-creature? Never!

And yet there are hundreds, and may be *you* are among the number, who stand charged with the terrible offence, an offence against God—that of sin, and the rejection of His Son.

Under this just condemnation you are now lying, with the sentence soon to be put into execution, and yet you lightly talk of doing your best. Oh, be wise and take the sinner's place, renouncing all doing of your own, and trust the finished work of Christ which has been wrought for sinners, and still avails for all who rest their souls upon it. You cannot blot out one sin, nor with your sin-stained hands put your guilt away. "Without shedding of blood is no remission." Alas! you have done your worst, and not your best; for God has gone into the matter, and He has said, "There is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Rom. iii. 12). So you see your statement and God's Word do not agree. Let God be true, and every man a liar.

"'It is finished!' sinners hear it,
 'Tis the dying Victor's cry;
 'It is finished!' angels, bear it,
 Bear the joyful truth on high!
 'It is finished!'
 Tell it through the earth and sky."

YOU DO NOT LIKE IT.



AM not at war with any creed. I do not know that I particularly object to the peculiar belief of any human being, provided it does not endanger the peace of his neighbour. I do not see that what men call Providence, has any

respect for a special form of worship. The bolt of fire from the thunder-cloud knows no distinction between church, synagogue, mosque, or theatre: neither is a stray bullet a sectarian; and the microbe of influenza, smallpox, or cholera, will settle as comfortably in the blood of a Christian, as in that of a Mohammedan or Jew.

“Death! Yes, all die; white, black, yellow, red man, bird, beast, reptile; tree, flower, grass; animal vegetable. In this world everything decays. The strongest machine wears out in time. The fire goes out for want of fuel. The sun itself may one day become a cold black cinder. Spring, summer, autumn, winter; childhood, manhood, old age—and death winds up everything.

“What is *after death* can no man tell. It is a cheerless, comfortless outlook, I am free to confess. We do not seem to get accustomed to the funeral procession. Familiarity has not in this case bred contempt, neither has it reconciled us to it. It is at once the most natural, and the most unnatural thing in the world. It is as frequent as birth,

more than twice as frequent as marriage, but there is joy at both, at death hopeless woe. It is *king of terrors*, and gloom deeper than midnight walls up its kingdom from the gaze of all living. No luminary has as yet been able to fling one radiant beam across the grave. There is plenty of speculation, but we may as well listen to the babbling of a fool as to the dreams of a philosopher. *We have no light.*"

"We have a revelation from God, the Holy Scriptures."

"Who can put confidence in them? The writers themselves were not of one mind."

"This may be only want of understanding on your part. There are two things to which united testimony is borne, and that is '*without shedding of blood is no remission of sin.*'"

"Oh, I hate the blood."

"And that the Lord Jesus Christ is the only Saviour."

"I believe I can do very well without Him."

"You hate the blood, and have no need of the One who shed it. I now understand why you object to the Scriptures."

"If the Scriptures are the word of God, let it only be proven, and when it is proven, I shall not only believe, but I shall use such time, strength, and means as are at my disposal in publishing the truth everywhere."

"You have unbounded confidence in yourself. You evidently think it would be a great acquisition,

on the part of God, to secure a man like you, and that you would be conferring a great favour upon Him by believing His book. Let me tell you something you seem to have quite overlooked, and that is, that if I succeeded in convincing your mind of the truth of Scripture (a thing I am not at all anxious to do), a very troublesome question would be raised, which it would be found necessary to have settled, before you could become the great missionary your imagination has pictured. And so great a question does it appear to me to be, that if I could make clear to you, in an argument of ten minutes' duration, the divine origin of the Bible, I do not think I would undertake the task. God's converts are not made in this way. When the Bible would be proven to be of God, what would come to light would be this, you would be seen to be at variance with God. God has given a revelation of Himself, and you are disgusted with that revelation. His ways in Christ have shocked your moral sensibilities. The blood, the ground of His righteousness in forgiving a poor sinner, is to you obnoxious. He has been declared in Christ, and He is not such an One as you would admire. If you could find a flaw in that revelation, you would use it as an excuse for rejecting the whole. But if He be the true God, what do you think of yourself? You have read the Bible, and you are shocked at the Being presented in it as the true God. If you found Him to be your Creator and your Judge, what then? You could never be in

agreement with Him. What would be the use of proving to you that the Scriptures are by inspiration of God, and the expression of His mind, or that Christ was God manifest in the flesh? You do not wish it to be so. You could never be a worshipper of such a Being. It is not merely the enlightenment of your mind which is wanted, it is the setting right of your heart. God is not according to your ideas.

"Therefore you would like to treat the whole subject as a mere matter of opinion, and pretend that if you were only certain of the truth, you would be at once on a friendly footing with God. You seem to have remarkable control over your affections. There is no beauty in Christ that you should desire Him. But if you made the discovery that He is the true God, how would this cause you to love Him? How would it change your heart's affections? This attitude of yours could not deceive any one but yourself.

"Every true Christian believes the Bible; but more than this, *he loves it*. If proofs could be advanced, which so far as my poor reason goes, would seem to disprove its testimony, and which would overpower every argument which my feeble mind could adduce in its support, and which would be so overwhelming, that I dare not allow myself any more to hold it as the truth, I should be convinced utterly contrary to my inclination; my *mind* might lose the assurance of the truth, but my *heart* would retain the impression for ever.

“I say this that you may come to a proper understanding of your true position, in regard to that which professes to be a revelation from God. Do not flatter yourself, that because you are willing to admit that there are many good things in the Bible, there is no animus in your mind with regard to it. This would be to terribly deceive yourself. You do not like the idea of the blood, and as to Christ, you could do with some little of His teaching, but a Saviour! no, He is quite unnecessary. Take away the Saviour, and the sacrifice from the Scriptures, and what you have left is a bundle of rags, with the fire of divine judgment ready to devour all; for everything else is man and his iniquity.

“This is how the matter stands: True or false, I love the Bible; true or false, you hate it, and would be glad to be rid of it altogether. If it be true, I see in you a creature who is dissatisfied with his Creator. You will tell me, that if false, I have loved a lie. I admit it. I have already staked my eternal happiness upon the fact, that *‘it is the blood that maketh atonement for the soul, and that Jesus is Jehovah the Saviour.’* You think it is a tremendous venture. Thank God, I can say ‘I know whom I have believed.’

“This world would be to me, without the Bible, what it is to you, a perfect puzzle. The Bible throws a flood of light upon the whole scene, and I see all according to God—sin and righteousness, good and evil, love and hatred, God and man.

“You are not satisfied with the state of this world. Servants are not satisfied with their masters, nor masters with their servants; nor parents with their children, nor children with their parents. No man will buy or sell in the dark for fear of being cheated. People lock their doors at night, and the strong arm of law is constantly stretched out, that men may be awed into something like good behaviour. And the principle upon which all men go is, that no man can be fully trusted. You are not satisfied with your neighbour, and, if you had your neighbour's candid opinion, you would find he is far from being satisfied with you; yet you expect God to be satisfied with everything and everybody. You may be an Atheist, a Theist, a Theosophist, a Spiritualist, a Socialist, an Anarchist, Freethinker, Agnostic, Pharisee, Sadducee, or adopt any other mad profession you like, but if this is how you stand with God, you are simply hurrying along with all other God-hating sinners, to judgment.

“You may place the Son of God on a level with Buddha, Mohammed, Confucius, Homer, or Shakespeare, and put the four Gospels on an equality with ‘King Lear,’ or the mythology of the ancients; but when those few ounces of brains, which fill you with empty conceit, are making a dish for the worms, your spirit shall have learned how horribly you have been duped by the devil. You may tell me how little God regards what creed a man may profess, and in a certain sense, I might agree, but

the word that Christ has spoken must save you NOW, or judge you IN THE LAST DAY. Christ crucified you cannot do with. It is too humbling to your pride to accept that, in His cross, God has set forth your true place as a sinner under His judgment. To me He is the power of God, and the wisdom of God. The world at large will agree with you; you will find yourself among the majority. You may rank among the wise, the great, the learned, the cultured, the noble, the philosophic, but will this compensate you for the loss of your soul?

“And because I tell you the naked truth, you will most likely call me a monster. One man tells you that after death, if you have not been virtuous, your spirit will inhabit the body of a toad, and you say that it is his opinion. Another tells you that when you are dead, you are done with, and you think it quite possible. I tell you that if you believe not the gospel you will get the Christ-rejecter’s hell, and you could tear me in pieces.

“The Bible is like no other book, Christ is like no other man. ‘If any man LOVE NOT THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, let him be Anathema Maranatha!’ God has come out in Christ to attract you to Himself, and you have found no attraction in Him. He has expressed Himself on behalf of man in the death of His Son, and the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven witnesses to it in the gospel, and you spurn the sacrifice, despise the Saviour, and insult the Spirit of grace; and your plea is, that you have

no certainty that all this is true. Why, man, you do not like it.

“To the Christian Christ is ‘the true God, and eternal life.’ The world, rich and poor, good and bad, Jew and Gentile, condemned Him to a gibbet as a malefactor. I stake my soul’s eternal welfare that this man hath done nothing amiss. I have given to him the affections of my heart. If He be not the true God, I have idolised an impostor, and robbed God of the love that was due to Him alone. To this it may be replied that I was simply mistaken. Yes, but it has not been a mere mistake, for I have not believed in Him, simply because I have found a book which says He ought to be believed in. His life is the admiration of my soul. His words have entered into me, and stirred my heart to its depths. It is unaccountable, but in His company, I find myself in company with the living God. ‘Never man spake like this man.’ My whole soul has risen up in me, and gone out to Him, who has entirely captivated me, with the deep glory of His own infinite holy loveliness and blessedness, and I have cried out from the innermost depths of my spiritual being, ‘MY LORD AND MY GOD.’

“What object can be shown me, to win my heart from such a Person. Put the fairest in the universe beside this glorious One, and I would turn from the rival, with the deepest loathing. As I look upon Him, I abhor myself. But He does not repel me. I am attracted to Him. He is the very opposite of what I by nature am, but yet there is no one suits

me like Him. He entirely satisfies the deep fathomless need of my soul, with His heavenly grace, radiant beauty, and the unutterable sweetness of His eternal, changeless love. It is not dry proofs, the accuracy of Scripture, the fulfilment of prophecy, and the like : this glorious One has carried me away with Him altogether. In His presence I am beside myself, and well I may ; in Him I have reached perfection, and the very heart of the living God. If there were a hundred contradictions in Scripture for every one there is supposed to be, this blessed Person would not be one whit less to me than He is. He is no invention of the mind of fallen man. Now if all this were a myth, then the believer in Christ would be the most hopeless being in the universe. He is entirely beyond recovery. But if it be true, where are you who despise Him ?

“There are dark spots on the sun’s disc. Possibly. I neither know nor care. There may be one spot, or one million. Prove it, and pile up the proofs heaven high. It was the sun before these were discovered. It is the same sun still. Its glory is as great as ever. I enjoy the light, and warmth, and comfort, no less for your discoveries. And as some one else has said, such is the Bible to me.

“These spiritual astronomers, darkening with their devilish wisdom all they touch, would seek to cast the fog and blight of death upon the page of eternal truth ; and would put the Holy Scriptures upon the same footing as the dreams of poets, and they are all good books together. It is a foul lie

from the bottomless abyss. The Scriptures are the only revelation of God, which has been given to men, or the most abominable lie that ever soiled parchment, and the man who believes in Christ, is either the most blessed being under heaven, or the most deluded.

“The cool way in which the religious leaders of the present day throw overboard the Bible, and disgorge into the public ear the profane glut of their degraded, infidel minds, and the eagerness with which such profanity is received, is fearfully appalling. The deluded multitude, as they listen to these tools of Satan, think that the gods have come down to them in the likeness of men; but one cannot help feeling horrified at the prospect of that terrible moment, when these willing dupes shall discover, in the throes of the second death, that they have imbibed, not the nectar of immortal wisdom, but the slaver of demons.

“You may try to make yourself believe that on earth all things are according to God. You will not be successful. The state of this world does not satisfy any one in it, and how can you flatter yourself that it is according to God? You may have made progress in some things. You can traverse the distance between London and York in four hours. Less than one hundred years ago it took four days. But the driver of the mail coach may have been quite as honest, and as good a servant, husband, or father as the driver of the express train. Look at things morally, and you

will not be carried away by the present apparent prosperity of this age.

“ You would like to think that even if there is to be a future state there is to be no day of reckoning. Let me tell you that, unless you have clean lost your reason, or given yourself over to believe what you must know to be a deception, you cannot get rid of the idea of a day of judgment. Violence and corruption have run riot ever since sin came into the world, and any one can see that *here* there is no recompense. There is no adjustment of things under the sun, and shall I be told that the cries of the victims of men’s cruelty have entered into no ear, that there is to be no redress, no avenger of blood? I do not believe it, neither does any other sane man, unless greatly helped by the devil. I believe God is righteous. He who made man’s eye cannot Himself be without sight, and He who made man’s ear cannot be deaf, and if He has implanted that in man, which will cause him to shudder at, and condemn the atrocities of his neighbour, I am not fool enough to believe that He Himself is indifferent. If your blood has boiled at the oppressors’ wrong-doing, I ask you how you think God has felt?

“ If I have the knowledge of good and evil, and if, though under the power of evil myself, I condemn it in my neighbour, then I am certain of this, that it must be infinitely more hateful to God, and that He must one day visit the evildoer with the punishment he deserves, if not in time,

then in eternity. If not, I would be more just and pure than my Maker. Judgment may be, and is, His strange work, a work in which He has no pleasure, but a work to which sin has compelled Him, and He must execute it.

“But if there is to be a day of judgment, of necessity there must also be a resurrection. The deeds were done in the body, and in the body man must receive for what he has done. Men may reason about resurrection as much as ever they like, but resurrection must come to pass if there is to be a day of judgment, and there must be a day of judgment if God is righteous, and that God is righteous my conscience bears witness.

“The deeds of cold-blooded wickedness and heartless cruelty, which have been constantly perpetrated by the strong upon the weak in all ages, have caused one eternal, piercing shriek of anguish to be rung in the ear of Heaven ever since sin entered the world, and am I to be told that the Governor of the universe is as insensible to all as a statue of marble? And yet He has put different feelings into me, and feelings, which to be without, I would call brutish! Let no man deceive himself, *‘After this the judgment.’*

“I say, If I have the knowledge of good and evil, so that I know evil to be evil, and good to be good, and if my conscience approves the good, and accuses me when I have done the evil, then I know good as something I have lost, and evil as that which has power over me, and the knowledge of this causes

death to be to me the king of terrors, because it is upon me as the judgment of God. I may seek comfort by comparing myself with others, but this would be profitless work. I may not be so black as my neighbour, but his blackness does not make me white. Man is at present under sin and death, resurrection and judgment are before him—what beyond?

“Do not begin to tell me if a man leads a moral life he has nothing to fear. Is there a God who takes account of my actions? *Will ever the BOOKS be opened?* If not, I have nothing to fear, no matter what life I lead. Has a toad to give account of the deeds done in the body? Has a tiger, a chimpanzee, or a crocodile? Have these creatures anything to fear from a righteous Judge? Have I? Have you? Why tell me if I lead a moral life I have nothing to fear? Why talk of morality and virtue? If there be no God *you are a beast*; and if there be a God, and you are evolved from the lower (?) creation, you are still a beast, and you may do as beasts do, let loose your passions; ‘let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die!’ Go and preach morality to an ape, and if your ancestors were apes you are one, if you were prime minister of this nation; and you have no moral accountability at all. If you trespass upon the well-being of the community, you may be driven out of the society of those of your own species, or put to death by them, as is the custom with most gregarious brutes, but what of that?

Death will take you out of much misery, and you have nothing to fear from a Creator.

“Give up the thought of God, or the first two chapters of Genesis, and turn round and view this vast zoological garden, lit up by the glory of the sun by day, and by the pale moon and silver stars at night, and what have we? Birds, quadrupeds, bipeds, creeping things, dogs, swine, men, monkeys revelling together on raven and corruption. And from whence came to the beast man the idea of accountability to God, and the feeling of shame which causes him to cover his nakedness and hide the hideousness of his moral degradation from his own eyes? You poor, miserable, blinded, degraded dupe of the devil, see how low you are willing to bring yourself to get rid of responsibility to God.

“Have I read what these learned critics say of the Bible? I *have* read what the Bible says of these learned critics: ‘*Woe unto them, for they have gone in the way of Cain.*’ I have no hope of these men, and my whole soul revolts from them. God and His truth they have abhorred, and He has given them over to believe their own filthy dreams. They rank among professing Christians, but they are children of the devil. They are the Sadducees of the present day, and I read of Pharisees, scribes, lawyers, priests, pagans becoming obedient to the faith, but no Sadducee. They have given God up, and He has given up them. They have rejected His truth for their wretched reasonings, and thus their wisdom has been

their folly. One feels compassion for a feeble soul who wanders for a moment into error, but the way of those men provokes righteous indignation. If they would throw off the cloak of Christianity and declare themselves, one would feel it to be more honest, but this would not suit their master.

"It need not be told me they are only searching after truth. It is false. Under this pretence, I admit, they carry on their soul-destroying operations, but I see beneath this mask a devilish antagonism to all that is of God. They have rejected the only revelation which man has got from God, and with feverish eagerness search its pages with the continual hope in their hearts that it will one day turn out to be a lie. With the aid of science they gather their proofs together from the bowels of the earth, and out of the starry vault of heaven, and by these they lay siege to the eternal truth of the eternal God. The thought of every one of them is, '*It cannot be of God; we won't have it. God must be something else than what we see in Scripture, a very different Person to the Being declared by Christ.*' Yes, they profess to search after truth, but one is bound to ask the question, 'Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart for it?' Light they do not desire, or they would not reject it when it is brought to them.

"But I will close this paper. It will be told me that Christianity has been a complete failure. Not CHRISTIANITY. The failure has been in the rejec-

tion of it. I admit it will spoil a man for this world, but this world is not of God, nor the man who loves it. The true Christian glories in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is both the end of the world for him and the end of him for the world. You may say there are not many true Christians. That only proves the state of enmity in which man is, and that what is of God is always rejected. But CHRIST has been no failure. The first man has been, and all his race. Lawlessness has marked him from the beginning, and that is the principle of sin. Man prefers his own will to the will of God. A man may be refined, educated, moral, amiable, benevolent, but he likes his own way. He does not like restraint. But I know only one Person in the universe who has a right to a will, and that is God. In every well-ordered family there is only one will allowed. Where will asserts itself in opposition to the master of the house it is punished. Yet in this world the will of God is set aside. Men are in open rebellion and apostasy, and men find it sweet to please themselves. But though God may bear long with it He will one day assert his authority, and rebellion will cease for ever in the destruction of the rebellious.

“No, Christ has been no failure. He pleased not Himself. He loved righteousness and hated lawlessness, and having set forth in His holy life upon earth what the perfect man was according to God, He went to the cross in obedience, that in the death of the cross might be set forth the place

of the man after the flesh in the judgment of God. So if you would see the only man that will do for God, behold him in Christ. That is the Perfect Man. You will see how short you have come. And if you want to see your true place as a sinner under the judgment of God, behold it in His cross. A man upon a gibbet, in the sight of the universe, abandoned by God, crying to God but not heard, shut out from God's presence, made a curse, for he who hangeth upon a tree is accursed of God. This is your true place set forth in the Righteous One that God may be able to justify the believing sinner.

"But in that cross God has been glorified. And He has glorified the One who glorified Him, and through this Man and through faith in His blood you must be saved, or be damned for eternity to the lake of fire as a despiser.

"Christ a failure! No, He has not failed God; neither has He ever failed any poor sinner who put trust in Him. Everything else is a failure. Your scepticism will fail you, terribly fail you, and that when you most need something to sustain you, when the chilling presence of death draws close to you, when the deep throat of hell yawns to receive your immortal spirit, and the grave waits to close upon the corruptible body and hold it till the voice of the Son of God calls forth to judgment. Then you will want something better than these wretched dreams to sustain you in that awful moment. In that hour, if you are Christless, death will have the victory, and its envenomed sting will be felt by

you in the very centre of your soul. Then you will regret your folly.

“But it shall not be so with the believer in Christ. What saint of God passing from this world of sorrow into the presence of Christ was ever heard to lament a life spent in the service of his Lord? If there has been a regret, has it not rather been that Christ had not been more truly served? On the other hand, what sceptic has not been horrified at the prospect of meeting the Being whom he had defied and insulted?

“Awake from your miserable dreaming! Thank God you have not yet reached the pit. In His goodness and long-suffering He has seen fit to spare you. This is your opportunity. Close your ears upon the scoffing of a Christ-rejecting world, and in the confession of your deep sin against God put your whole trust in the Lord Jesus. You will find Him gracious. He will receive you, for ‘all manner of sin shall be forgiven unto the sons of men.’ Your sin has been great, but not greater than the grace of God. ‘To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.’”

“When you own your sin and guilt,
Vain the hopes which you have built;
When you see your depth of shame,
Nought to offer, nought to claim,—
Then, and not till then, you'll know
What the grace God can bestow.”

"PERHAPS TO-DAY."

"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."—1 THESS. iv. 16-18.

"For yet a little while, and he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry."—HEB. x. 37.

"I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."—JOHN xiv. 3.

"He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen, even so, come, Lord Jesus."—REV. xxii. 20.



THESE sayings are faithful and true. Centuries have elapsed since they were uttered by "the Lord himself" and "the Spirit of truth," but He most surely will fulfil His promise, and give effect to it too, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." The return of the long-absent Lord and Bridegroom may well be the brightest expectation of His much-loved and dearly-purchased Church—a company of sinners loved with His infinite love, and redeemed by such a priceless sacrifice—a company destined to bear His glorious likeness through the ages to come, caught up from the grave and the earth; changed by His almighty life-giving power, at His coming again; ushered into the long-looked-for delight—"for ever with the Lord." Hallelujah!

Perhaps, unbeliever, you may be tempted to say—in heart if not by lips—that this is all a fair illu-

sion, an ill-founded dream, or the phantom of some crack-brained theologian. Nay; "the time is at hand." The return of the world-scorned Christ depends not upon your infidelity or your credulity, but upon the faithfulness of Him who hath said, "Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he *cometh* shall find watching." What will be supreme happiness and salvation for His own which are in the world will be supreme misery and damnation for those who know and love not our Lord Jesus Christ.

To know the Lover and Saviour of sinners is to love Him; and "if any man *love not* the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha"—given up to judgment—for the Lord *cometh*. "When?" you may ask. "Perhaps to-day." The words heading this exhortation are most suggestive.

Many years since I heard a servant of Christ say that upon a wall in a house in Otley there could be seen two words in a frame—"Perhaps to-day." For those who believe that the long-absent Redeemer will soon return, they are very sweet, comforting, invigorating, soul-stirring, love-quicken- ing, and holiness-producing words. So did they lay hold upon my heart that I had them reproduced, and hung in my house. Year after year they spoke to faith and love, stirring up to watchfulness and activity. The words got smoked, fly-blown, and soiled, but I could not destroy the speaking card, so gave it away to a dear loving sister, who loved

and cherished a family of poor orphan children. Year after year these words spoke from their blue setting, “Perhaps to-day.” Faith and love were produced in hearts. What they meant was clearly taught, and God owned the expressive watchword. And may He “fasten it like a nail in a sure place” in your soul this very hour.

Long after the orphan-lover had entered her rest, her daughter told me of the power of these words over one of noble birth, who loved the Lord, and who spoke of Him in the room where these beautiful words hung—“Perhaps to-day.” He had gone into company; his heart had got cold, not heeding the Master’s word, “What I say unto you I say unto you all, Watch”; he had let “things seen and temporal” dim his faith to “things not seen and eternal.” Walking along the busy street of the world’s largest city, all in a moment, as though a voice had spoken in his ear, the words on the card in the humble orphanage pealed into his soul—“Perhaps to-day.” “What,” thought he, “am I thus dishonouring my Lord? Oh! how ashamed I should feel should He come and find me thus backslidden in heart from Him.” It was a word in season (and how good it is), leading him to self-judgment and humiliation.

In conclusion, let me, dear reader, say to you that the event involved in the fulfilment of these words is of grave importance, because if unsaved, unwashed, unregenerate, and unconverted, it would *fix your doom*. It would be equivalent to the solemn state-

ment in the parable: "The *bridegroom* came: and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage; and the *door was shut*."

Yes, oh!—salvation neglecter,—Christ rejecter, gospel-hardened, Christless professor, and no-oil possessor, you will be outside, and *never enter in*. Ah! ye who have never really prayed will pray then; but all to no purpose. Like the privileged multitudes to whom Jesus spoke when here below, but who trusted Him not, He will say of you, Ye "shall seek to enter in, and *shall not be able*. For when once the master of the house is risen up, and hath *shut to the door*, and ye begin to stand *without*, and to *knock at the door*, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know ye not whence ye are. Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunken in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." "Be ye therefore *ready* also." "The Lord is *ready* to pardon" (Neh. ix. 17).

"The heavenly Bridegroom soon will come,
To claim His bride, and take her home
To dwell with Him on high.

'Trim your lamps and be ready!'
Is the midnight cry."

"THEIR LATTER END."



O you never think of the future?" was the question put to a bright and intellectual young lady who had just left school, and "gone out" to the world.

"Never," she replied.

"But the end must come, and you must meet God."

At this statement, which must have sounded most unpleasant, she tossed her young head and capered away. She was not going to give up the world for many a day, nor allow its brightness to be clouded by dull thoughts of death, and God and eternity.

Yes, the world (whatever it may mean) can and does present vast attractions to the heart. How it can win and command both young and old! How it is able to vary its charms to the different tastes of all. It has pleasure for some, money for others, then fame, position, dignity, and so forth, just as the mind is bent. It is a veritable "Vanity Fair." And how easily we are caught in its toils!

Then when that special part of the world may have been won, is the heart satisfied?

Most assuredly not. You never yet met a man, from Solomon downwards, who succeeded in getting satisfaction out of the world—never.

That wealthy monarch of Israel said that all was "vanity and vexation of spirit," which latter clause may be translated, with equal accuracy, "pursuit of the wind"! That was all it was to him. And that is really all it is to any one else. "He that drinketh of this water shall thirst again."

Such is the world in all its ten thousand shapes and phases,—and thirst unslaked is the portion of all its votaries.

And the end must come!

Now, just think, a sinful life of a few brief years spent in nothing better than pursuit of a passing breeze, for that is the worth of any earthly object, and then the end!

At the head of my paper I have given but three words of a verse in Deuteronomy xxxii. 29, which I will now quote in full:—

"O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!"

The first desire for them is, "that they were wise."

What greater folly than living for time alone, and not for eternity. True wisdom consists in making time subserve eternity.

The second desire is, "that they understood this." "With all thy getting, get understanding," say the Proverbs.

Understanding signifies a clear and certain grasp of a subject. And thus to grasp the meaning of life on earth—its brevity, its privilege, what should engage its activities—is truest wisdom.

The third desire is, "that they would consider their latter end."

All leads up to this—the latter end. But such consideration is, alas, just the universal lack—the one thing wanting. "My people doth not consider."

No, you will provide for everything but the *end*. That which demands by far the most attention is neglected, and made to give place to what is at best but secondary. You secure the middle—you neglect the end! You arrange for life, you omit the claims of death! You provide for time, you ignore eternity!

Are you ever asked to go to the deathbed of a worldling? Perhaps not. Personally I would rather go anywhere else. It is always an awful experience—so absolutely hopeless, cheerless, and perhaps infinitely worse. The *end* has not been considered, and now the effect is seen!

For the end of time is the dawn of eternity, and to be absent from man is to be present before God.

The end must come, and you must meet God!

Should you never meet God till then, you will meet Him in judgment, eternal judgment. But you may meet Him now, and that in grace, and saving power.

If He be a *just God*, He is also a "*Saviour*" (see Isa. xlv. 21). He is such to-day—a Saviour God! What a title! He seeks your blessing, and the unspeakable gift of His Son is the proof thereof. What love! Oh, friend, believe in Him.

Then your *end* will be glorious, and instead of


losing joy and gladness, why, your whole life, whether long or short, will be a perfect sunbeam of truest pleasure, if only you follow Jesus.

“He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John viii. 12).

Therefore, friend, *consider!*

J. W. S.

TAKING IT EASY.



TRAIN stopped at one of the small stations between Edinburgh and Leith. We had just taken our seat, and the train was about to start again, when three young ladies came rushing into the station and got into the same compartment. They were just in time. A few seconds more, and they would have been too late.

After they had recovered breath a little, they began to chat about having so nearly missed the train. They were talking in a very frivolous manner, and yet the words of one of them struck me forcibly. They were these: “We were taking it so easy, too, we never thought it was so near the time.”

I could not help thinking that that will be the substance of the wail of many a soul in a never-ending hell. They never meant to be there. They meant to be saved some day; but they took it easy. They never thought it was so near the time, till

God cut them off in their sins, when they woke up, to find that they were for ever too late. What a wail will burst from their lips when they first realise that they have trifled away so many opportunities of having salvation, and now their last chance is gone for ever.

Dear reader, in love we say to you, Be warned. You are not too late yet, but you will soon be. It is very near the time when the last call of mercy will sound in your ears. If these ladies had missed their train it would have inconvenienced them a little, and no doubt they would have been disappointed, although in half an hour they would have got another; but if you wait until the master of the house has risen up and shut to the door, there will be no after-train to Glory for you; you will be for ever too late for God's salvation.

Seeing, then, that you run such a great risk in waiting, we would advise you, dear unsaved reader, to have the question of your soul's eternal salvation settled now. You may only be like these ladies, "just in time." God has said, "Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. vi. 2).

He has said again: "Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth" (Prov. xxvii. 1).

Why reject or neglect the Saviour any longer? He is worthy of your trust. Surely it is not too much that you, a sinner on the road to an eternal hell, should bow before God and own that you

are a sinner. He knows it already better than you do, but He wants you to take your true place before Him. He will do all the rest. He will save you; for "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim. i. 15). He will cleanse you, for "the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John i. 7). He will keep you as you pass through this scene, where, if you are out-and-out for the Lord, everything will certainly be against you, for the testimony of the Holy Ghost in 1 Samuel ii. 9 is, "He will keep the feet of His saints"; and, better even than being kept here by Him, in a little while, we know not how soon, it may be even as you read this, "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. iv. 16, 17).

If you wish to share the blessedness of that moment, dear reader,

"You had better come to Jesus,
And that just now."

TAKE.



LIKE such beautiful words as Come, Look, Hear, and Believe, which run like a thread of gold all through the "scriptures of truth," "Take" stands out brightly in its manifold connections. Let us briefly meditate upon five of these gracious texts which the Spirit of God has written for the profit of His creatures.

THE "TAKE" OF INVITATION.

"Whosoever will, let him *take* the water of life freely" (Rev. xxii. 17). Just as God is about to close the book of His communications, showing His *servants the things that must shortly be done*, and after describing graphically all the fearful judgments about to descend upon the professing Church and the world of the ungodly, He utters a last and loving appeal to "him that is athirst," and "whosoever will" to come, and take the water of life freely. Just analyse this simple declaration of the heart of God, break it up, and examine it in detail, perfect as a whole. It is perfect in every part, and adapted to *you* if still you have not drunk of the fountain of the water of life freely.

"WHOSOEVER" — means any or every one, irrespective of rank, young or old, rich or poor.

“WILL”—Who have an honest desire for life and everlasting salvation.

“LET HIM TAKE”—Accept, receive, appropriate, stoop down and drink and live.

“THE WATER OF LIFE”—The vivifying, purifying, satisfying Spirit of the living God, bringing life by the Word of God, which by the gospel is preached unto you.

“FREELY”—For nothing, gratuitously, without money and without price. “Hear, and your soul shall live.”

THE “TAKE” OF ADVICE.

“Take with you words, and turn to the Lord” (Hos. xiv. 2). The prophet, in unfeigned love for those who had fallen by their iniquity, spoke faithfully, like a true physician not mitigating their disease, but bringing all to the light, so as to be healed in a divine way. Let us analyse this advice. “Take with you words;” mark well “words,” not “works.” Works before “repentance unto life” are “dead works,” worthless before God, yea, an insult to His “work” of grace. He says to every son of Adam, “Thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.” Being “fallen,” and that “by iniquity,” how can you, O guilty soul, for a moment think of bringing any of your works to the God who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity? But let us see what the “words” are which the Lord will accept. Say unto Him, “Take away all our iniquity.” Beautiful request, fitting indeed for guilty, helpless wanderers.

“Take away.” He only can, and will do it through the blood of His Christ, shed for many, for the remission of sins. “Receive us graciously.” What a request! Even of old He has showed Himself a God ready to pardon, oh, so graciously. A pardoned people, a people received graciously, like returning prodigals, are sure to become a praising people. “So will we render the calves (or fruit) of our lips.” They are, moreover, a humbled, confessing people, as the context shows. But what answers the Lord to the confession? “I will heal their backsliding, I will love them *freely*, for mine anger is turned away from him.” What encouragement for the backslider in heart is here! Turn ye to-day.

THE “TAKE” OF REST.

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Matt. xi. 29). This world is full of turmoil. Sin is the cause of all the dissatisfaction and unrest seen everywhere. “There is no rest, saith my God, to the wicked,” none on earth, none in hell. What an awful future for your guilty sin-burdened soul. No rest in hell. Listen, what is the doom of the victim of Satan: “The smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever; and they have no rest, day nor night” (Rev. xiv. 11). What a contrast is offered by the Son of God, who still says, “Come unto me, *all* ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you *rest*. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of

me, and ye shall find rest for your souls." The divine Saviour is the resting-place of faith, in Him is sweet repose from sin's weary drudgery, and guilt's fearful smart. As to taking His yoke, it becomes real rest to give up one's own will for His. His love is rest indeed, and His service perfect liberty. He only can transform His followers into being "meek and lowly" like Himself. Even His people sometimes fail to bear the blessed yoke He gives by fretting themselves, instead of walking in His gracious company.

THE "TAKE" OF WISDOM.

"Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life" (Prov. iv. 13). "Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom." Wisdom is personified in Scripture as a female, because the woman at the beginning was made "help-meet" for the man. Wisdom is a choice, chaste, life-companion, worthy of man's choice, a guide unerring to holiness and true happiness. God's Word is the law of wisdom, God's Christ the personification of wisdom, and God's Spirit is the spirit of wisdom. To shun either is to perish, to refuse wisdom is to remain a fool. To be an infidel is to be a fool, for "fools despise wisdom and instruction." Let us hear the exhortation, "Take fast hold of instruction." Plants get nourishment by taking hold of the soil by their roots. The mill-wheel turns by reason of taking hold of the water. The spider taketh hold with

her hands. Faith taketh fast hold of instruction, and does not let her depart, but keeps her. "If a man love me, he will keep my words." "She is thy life." "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."

Lastly, let me recall the words of the Lord Jesus when He said to His own, "Take, eat: this is my body" (Matt. xxvi. 26), this is

THE "TAKE" OF INFINITE LOVE.

How hard is the heart which is unmoved by such proof of ineffable love! "Hereby perceive we the love, because he laid down his life for us." Love untold, yet told in blood. Love emptying itself, that it might soften and fill ten thousand times ten thousand once wayward but now believing hearts, bowing them at Jesus' feet in everlasting adoration. Death is your necessity, it was the Son's choice. He died, bearing away once for all God's awful judgment. But if you would be saved, you must appropriate His death as yours. This is the meaning of the scripture in John vi.: "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." No life apart from His death. "Take"—accept it. Eat—appropriate Him as dying for you. He alone is life and the food of life. To Him be glory now and for ever.

E T E R N I T Y !



E are hastening on to eternity. No one can stay the course of time; it is flying past us, and we sweep on with the human race to eternity.

It is said that a certain Queen, when dying, said, "A million of money for a moment of time." Nay, that could not be. On she went into eternity, where queens and subjects appear in the presence of Him who is no respecter of persons. As well might you stay Niagara's torrent with a straw, or the lightning's flash with your word, as stop the flight of time. The onward flow has been from Adam down to this, and from this to the end the human race will flow on into eternity. Kings, queens, princes, and subjects of every grade, press on, in inexorable destiny, into eternity.

You and I, reader, ere long will step from the waves of time on to the shores of eternity. Nothing could be more solemn or soul-arresting than this. A few more steps along the path of life; a few more hours, days, months, and at most years, and we shall be there.

May the shadow of that awful word **E T E R N I T Y** fling itself across your path if still unsaved; may it arrest, convict, and awaken you, and lead to the solemn inquiry, "*Where am I to spend eternity?*"

Foolish is the thought that time will end all. Man's evil heart may wish it, but that cannot be; God, who created man, and endowed him with immortality, has decreed otherwise. To God, then, let us turn, and own His decree, and from Himself obtain light, so that our eternity may be an eternity of bliss and not of woe.

Satan and his fallen associates will live on for ever, "and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Rev. xx. 10). Their faith in God, and the infallibility of His word, is strong, for we read, "*The devils believe and tremble*" (Jas. ii. 19). There is not "a higher critic" among them. Every one of them believes in God, His word from Genesis to Revelation they know to be true, and they tremble in the presence of the inexorable justice of their irrevocable doom.

Would that men were as wise and believing as they! Would that the fallen sons of Adam believed His word as firmly as they, and fled their company and service, to find at the feet of the blessed Saviour of sinners pardon and salvation. Think for a moment of your associates in eternity if in your sins you die. Die Christless, and you remain Christless for ever! Die in the service of sin and Satan and his associates, and excluded from heaven you must be for ever.

You would not be associated with the drunkard and seducer here, but there—where eternal ages roll—your associations will be with the arch-seducer himself, who is a liar and a murderer, and

with all those who have rejected Christ of every class and every grade.

Oh, young man, young woman, think of this! Let it sink down into your inmost soul. Associated for ever with the "fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars"—yea, appalling thought, close associates of such, as the objects of divine judgment for ever!

Think of the "outer darkness," the distance between you and heaven's scenes of light and purity, the undying worm, and the unquenchable fire; reflect upon it, until your very being is filled with an intense desire to flee from the wrath to come, and from such unbearable associations.

Remember that to save you Jesus died, suffered for our sins, drank the deep and awful cup of wrath, was forsaken of God, poured out His life's blood. You can claim Him as your own Saviour; for He died for sinners, and you are a sinner. He will receive you, for "*this man receiveth sinners and eateth with them*" (Luke xv. 2). Oh, flee to Him at once; let not one precious moment be wasted. See, "the sands of time are sinking," and your feet ere long will tread the eternal shore!

"*Now*" is the word—"Now is the accepted time; *now* is the day of salvation." "To-morrow is only found in the calendar of fools." Act then upon God's "*now*," and prove your wisdom. God says "*now*"; the Holy Ghost says "*to-day*"; Jesus says, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out" (John vi. 37).

If lost, because of your refusal to come, how sad and bitter will be the discovery that the Jesus you have rejected as Saviour will sit upon the throne of judgment, "for all judgment is committed unto the Son" (John v. 22). And the Lamb, who died for sinners on Calvary, will execute the wrath of God Almighty.

Hesitate no longer; cast unbelief away; come to the Saviour; trust Him who is so worthy of your trust; get saved; and thus love, adore, and serve Him; and at His coming you will be caught up to meet Him, be made like Him, and then throughout eternity's unending ages you will be with Him.

E. A.

OFTEN REPROVED . . . SUDDENLY
DESTROYED.



"E, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that *without remedy*" (Prov. xxix. 1).

A solemn instance of the truth of these words took place the other day in one of the islands of the West Indies. Two young men, by name E. J — and R. B —, started out one Sunday morning, in company with some of their companions, to spend a holiday in the country. One of them on leaving home was

told by his mother that she had an impression that she should never see him alive again ; but he only made light of it. The mother, too, of his companion, had often spoken to her wayward son of his ways, and had often written letters to him beseeching him to turn from his evil course, but her warnings, together with those of other Christians, were heeded not.

On the day of which we have spoken they had been gambling and drinking until the afternoon, when one of their number proposed a bath, so they threw down the cards and repaired to the beach. E. J — was the first to undress and enter the water. He had not swum out far when those who were on the shore were surprised to hear him call out for help. Several of them hastened to his assistance, only to find themselves being carried off their legs by the strong current that was setting out from the shore. A black man who was standing on the beach made a desperate effort to save the drowning man. He had just succeeded in reaching him when a wave came rolling in which separated them, and he was obliged to return to shore half dead from exhaustion. His friend R. B — had witnessed the fruitless effort of the man who had attempted to save him, and he next jumped into the water, determined that his friend should not perish if he could prevent it. Having swam out some distance he reached a place where the current diverged, and those on the shore had the horror of seeing him carried helplessly along

the coast in the opposite direction to his friend, his struggles only helping to exhaust him.

Those on the beach were horrified at seeing them drowning before their eyes, while they were powerless to save them; and now and then above the noise of the breakers could be heard a faint cry for help.

Some fishermen who had been attracted to the spot by the shouting, found they had come just *too late*; and the current having by this time turned, their lifeless bodies were being borne back to the shore by the ruthless waves, and they were taken up almost at the same spot where they had started out from. But oh! what a change! A few moments before they were in time, now they are in eternity. *Then* they were in this world, where God's free grace is so freely flowing to the guilty sons of men, but *now* they were past the mercy of God, with nothing before them but the blackness of darkness for ever.

Young men, beware! Trifle not with your souls, and the precious opportunities God gives you. *To-morrow*, you cannot, you dare not call your own. Behold Now is the accepted time; behold Now is the day of salvation. *To-day* the blood of Christ avails to cleanse from all sin. *To-morrow* you may be for ever beyond the reach of mercy. Then harden not your neck lest you be suddenly destroyed, and that *without remedy*.

THE VINEYARD AND THE HUSBANDMEN.

MATT. xxi. 33-46.



BEFORE examining this remarkable parable, which the Lord Jesus propounds to His hearers that day, I will ask you, my reader, to glance briefly over the early part of this chapter. You will there notice that the context flings into

the most wonderful relief the striking and solemn truths the parable contains. This was the last day of our Lord's ministry. We have reached the last week of His life, and in this chapter I believe we have reached the Wednesday of the week in which He died on the Friday.

That day the whole nation of Israel were gathered together before Him, as they supposed to judge Him, but really that they might receive from His lips their own judgement.

He had come into Jerusalem seated on an ass, and thus had presented Himself as Israel's Messiah, fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah (chap. xi. 9). When He came in, "all the city was moved, saying, Who is this?" There was an immense stir. God put His hand on the people of that guilty city, because He could not allow His Son to enter, and pass out of it, without receiving at least some

testimony as to who He was. From end to end that big city was moved, so that they have to say, "Who is this?" It was a wonderful moment as they spread their garments before Him, and cut down branches. His entry thus meant the fulfilment of Scripture, and as the true Son of David entered the city that day, and the multitudes, mightily moved, said, "This is Jesus, the Prophet of Nazareth of Galilee," it looked for a moment as if Israel knew her King. Alas! she did not.

May I ask you, my reader, has your heart ever yet been moved in the presence of Jesus, the Lord Jesus, the eternal Son of God? If not, do not forget that you are on trial now in that respect, and that if you miss the present moment of getting blessing from Him, as a Saviour, you will pass before Him when He sits upon a bench for judgment. That day will soon arrive of which Scripture says, "God hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts xvii. 31).

In the scene before us, the Lord judges morally as He cleanses the temple, while withal He shows Himself to be the Son of David as He healed "the blind and the lame." When David, the son of Jesse, wanted to get hold of Jerusalem, the lame and the blind were hated of David's soul (see 2 Sam. v. 6-8). Here is the true David, however, and what does He do? He heals the lame and the

blind. What a Saviour Jesus is, full of tender grace, and love, and goodness!

The next thing here is that as He returns to Jerusalem in the morning, he sees a fig tree. He looks for fruit, but finds "nothing thereon, but leaves only." He curses that tree, and, as the disciples look at it, it withers away. Oh, what a picture of a Christless professor. "Nothing but leaves." Is that your case? God knows. If you are born of God there will be fruit. The fig tree was always the symbol of Israel as a nation, and it is very striking that the Lord blights that tree as a sign of what was coming. He had shaken the city, opened the eyes of the blind, and had judged the fig tree; and then these self-constituted judges come and say to Him, "Who gave thee this authority?" By way of reply the Lord puts a question to them—"The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men?" (ver. 25.) Now you see they are being judged. They were afraid to say from heaven lest He should ask why they had not believed John; and they were afraid to say from men because of the people. Aye, you will find that even the leaders of religious thought may have people like slaves under them, but they themselves are afraid of them. Hence they cannot tell. That was indeed a confession of their state, they did not know from whence John's ministry was—a wonderful ministry that shook the land from end to end.

Then the Lord unfolds the parable of the two

sons. "A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to-day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went" (vers. 28, 29). When the Lord first speaks to us, we generally say, "I will not." Of this son we read he "afterward repented, and went." It is a happy thing if you have repented; but if you have never been brought to bow to Jesus, I pray God you will be led to repentance now. May Jesus' voice reach you. That voice of the Son of God has reached to the ends of the earth. And do you know what he says from heaven?—"Repent!" God has commanded all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day for judgment. When will that day be? I do not know, but it is nearer than you expect. If the Lord came for His people to-night, to-morrow the judgment would begin. It is a wonderful thing when a man repents towards God; it is always the moment of blessing.

But we read on—"And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not." You have here easy-going profession, lip confession. "I go, sir," is easily said, but what did he do? He went not. Have you ever been born of God? If not, you are of this class. Who were they who said, "I go," and went not? They were before the Lord at that moment. Who were they who said, "I will not"? The publicans and the harlots. They knew they were sinners, for they said, "I will not." But grace changed their attitude,

for God can meet sinners of the deepest dye, and the publicans got into the kingdom of God. Many of them were converted, and blessed of God. Why? Because they repented. Not so was it with the leaders of religious thought the Lord was addressing, hence He says, "John came unto you, in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not" (ver. 32). They were a very religious people He was talking to. John's clarion voice, pressing repentance, had rung through the land. It went to the conscience of many a publican and harlot, and they got into God's kingdom. But what about those who had merely said, "I go, sir, and went not"? They believed not John's testimony, and this, you see, the Lord charges on the leaders of the nation—the scribes and Pharisees. He shows where they were.

Religion never saved a man yet, nor ever can. Christ, and only Christ, can save sinners like you and me. Ritual is all external. The work of God's Spirit is all internal. The first is man's doing, the latter God's. When you have the conscious sense that you are a lost sinner, then it is you repent, so I ask you again, Have you ever repented? Profession without possession is valueless, nay, even positively dangerous. There might be at first open rebellion, but, if grace leads to repentance, God blesses that soul. My friend, it is a wonderful thing to get out of the devil's grip. May God save you now; but mark you this, it is not often that a religious man gets hold of

God's salvation. I have very little hope of a downright religious man. He does not know, and refuses to know that he is, what he is, a lost sinner. The devil will whisper to him; You are not the man that needs salvation, that preacher does not mean you; he means publicans and harlots. Ah, he blinds your eye. And by-and-by you will learn this, that your religious history has been a religious sham.

It is this solemn exposure of man's heart that introduces the striking parable of the Householder. You may say to me, What is the meaning of that parable? Turn to the fifth chapter of Isaiah, for Scripture always explains itself. "The vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant" (ver. 2). This is the explanation of the parable before us. The thing is perfectly plain. You have the first man upon trial. Man is seen in responsibility, and he absolutely and utterly fails before God. He is an utterly lost sinner. In our parable you have the whole of the history of Israel in responsibility. Put man under law and what does he do? He breaks it. Is there fruit for God? No. The Lord here, before the whole nation, brings out this solemn truth, that what God justly may look for from [man, He does not get. When the Owner of the vineyard looked for grapes, He found wild grapes.

Then you may say, How can I be saved? Not by law. You may be saved by grace, but not by

law-keeping. Grace only can save you. It takes a man perhaps a good long time ere he reaches what the apostle Paul unfolds in the Epistle to the Galatians: "We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid. For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God; for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain" (chap. ii. 15-21).

What does the Gospel bring out? That man cannot do anything but sin. There comes in the need of the Saviour. What we have exposed here is the total ruin of man. They had the Word of God; they had the testimony, but it produced no fruit. "When the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir: come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his

inheritance." That is the way the world treated the Son of God. The Son of God was here, love incarnate, and the husbandmen said, Let us kill Him. They effected their purpose, for "they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him." That is perhaps what you call bygone history. I ask you, Do you think that God has taken no account of this? Will not God take account of the murder of His Son? Yes, He will. Of this the Lord's hearers were assured, for when He propounded the query, "When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men." They had a perfectly right judgment of what the lord of the vineyard should do.

Is it not a wonderful thing that God has put up with the murder of His Son for eighteen centuries, and that He is waiting yet to win souls? Thank God that the Lord did not come back at once to execute judgment.

If you are wise you will see that there is a terrible breach between God and the world, and you will take your side with the One who has thus been cast out by the world, your heart will turn round to that rejected Saviour, and you will own Him as your Lord ere the day of God's retribution arrive. It will come, for "Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner" (ver. 42). God has exalted

the despised Jesus. This is a quotation from the 118th Psalm. What is the stone? Have you any idea who the stone is that the builders rejected? Read Acts iv. 10, 11, if you have a doubt. The prophecy of the Psalmist is now explained by the Holy Ghost. These Jewish builders had no room for Christ. What about you, in your life's history? What is your relation to Christ? Is He the foundation stone? Is He the corner stone? Ah! you say, I have not had much thought about that yet. Then, in your case too, Christ is the stone set at nought. Yours is a very serious case, for the charge of the Holy Ghost against you is that you prefer anything and everything to Christ. Friend, that is a very serious charge to have lying at your door.

Oh, look up, and see that exalted Man at God's right hand. It is only due to Him that He should be there, and as seated there, He can save and bless you, for the Lord informs the Jews, "Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof"—*i.e.*, God gave up the Jews, and sent out the Gospel to the Gentiles. Alas! among them, too, as a whole, Christ is not believed. Here and there hearts have been won, but apart from the working of grace, the Gentiles have in no sense behaved differently from the Jews.

But we read further: "And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever

it shall fall, it will grind him to powder." All must bow to Jesus. I tell you what bowed my heart—it was the love of Christ that broke me down. Who fell over the stone? The Jews fell over it. They looked for a grand and glorious Messiah. When they saw Jesus come in lowly grace, Jerusalem knew not the day of her visitation. "What shall I do then with Jesus, which is called Christ?" said Pilate. "They all say unto him, Let him be crucified," was the awful answer (Matt. xxvii. 22). They stumbled over Him, and the nation was broken. The murder of the Messiah was followed soon after by the destruction of Jerusalem. That is the fulfilment of the first half of verse 44; but what means "on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder"? That is you, my friend, if you are unconverted. Terrible as was the judgment that fell upon the Jews for rejecting their Messiah when seen here on earth, far more terrible will be the judgment of the Gentiles, who have refused a glorified Saviour.

There is a terrible judgment before the man who has heard about Jesus and has not believed on Him. Are you that man? God forbid. No, my friend, if you are wise you will hear what Peter says: "This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. 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. 11, 12).

You may be saved just now, where you are. Oh, hear the voice of Jesus. Seek His face. You are welcome; you may get God's salvation, without money and without price. Salvation like a shining river is flowing through this dark scene of sin. Jesus is a Saviour who eternally saves His people from their sins and all their consequences, and you have just simply to believe in Him who died and rose again. Do you know what will then happen? Jesus will take you in and save you on the spot.

When you come to the Lord, you see what the world has done to Him; it has refused Him, and you cannot be on the world's side and Christ's side too. You will be like the Ethiopian eunuch we read of in the eighth of Acts. Philip preached Jesus unto him, and he believed, and then said, "What doth hinder me to be baptized." He had heard the news that the life of Jesus was taken from the earth (Isa. liii.), and he wished to be identified with Him. The whole truth of the Gospel was opened up to that seeking soul, and he saw the blessed truth that Jesus had gone into glory, and his heart followed him there. Friend, if you are simple, you will say, I should like to take my place seriously and really with the One whom the world has cast out. Shall it be so? God help you from this moment to say, "Lord, I believe."

A RIGHTEOUS PLUMMET.



HE short winter's day was over, and round a cheerful fire we formed a happy family circle. The younger children learned the morrow's lessons, the elder deftly handled crochet or knitting needles, my mother busied herself with her household sewing, while my father read aloud, from some standard book, words well calculated to build up youthful minds.

"Old Annie B—— is lying ill," said one.

A little while afterwards my mother rose and went to the pantry. She returned and handed me a small basket into which she had put some edibles, and a jug of milk.

"You might take these to old Annie," she said; "she must be feeling lonely, and may not have much in her cupboard. Sit beside her a little, and do anything you can for her."

To be my mother's almoner was at all times a most agreeable occupation to me. I put on a wrap, and went cheerfully out into the moonless night. Subsequent years of city life make it appear strange that a young girl should go out alone on an unlit road. Outside lamps were unknown in our village, and when occasion took any of us abroad after nightfall my father told us to be brave. "Only cowards and evil-doers fear the darkness," he used to say. I did not wish to be included in either category, but, on reaching a

point where a thorn-hedge separated the roadway from a clump of trees, I quickened my steps to an abnormal pace. I found Annie lying alone in one of the much-written-against box-beds, and after talking a little to her, set myself to do the needful in her little home. I replenished the fire, tidied the hearth, swept the floor, and made her a cup of tea. Her somewhat hard features relaxed as she sipped the tea, and she said she was grateful to my mother for sending me, as she had been alone all day, only occasionally getting out of bed to put some fuel on the fire. I noticed, as I sat, the corner of a book peeping out below her pillow. Seeing my look, she drew it out. It was a large old-fashioned Bible. "I was reading it," said Annie, "as long as I could see, but somehow I don't seem to get the good out of it I would like."

I longed to tell her how I loved the precious book, but I seemed to have become dumb, and helplessly turned over the leaves. She handed me her empty cup, and looking straight in my face in a manner that frightened me, she asked, "Are you converted?" Then was my tongue loosed, and I told her that two years before the Lord sent a messenger to me, one among a thousand, who called on me to repent and be converted, that my sins might be blotted out. I believed the message. I owned myself a lost guilty sinner, and cried to God for pardon. I found the Lord did not deal with me after my sins, but was merciful and gracious, and plenteous in mercy

The stern visage softened as I talked, and when I finished, she said, "I am glad to hear how you got converted, but it was easy for you to be saved, your sins were not so bad as mine."

I knew that rumour spoke of dark smirches on her maiden fame, that she had drunk of the murky waters of earth's pleasures, and instead of satisfying her, they had left her worn out and desolate, shunned by her neighbours, and unloved by her friends. Great sighs came from the bottom of her heart, as I read to her of Jesus winning the heart, and reaching the conscience, of the outcast woman at the well of Samaria (John iv. 1-42). I prayed with her, and left her.

Often afterwards did we talk together on this all-important subject, and my faith became more firmly established as I sought to enlighten her.

"Wait until you are old," she said one day, "and you will not think sins can be blotted out so easily."

For answer I read the wonderful entreaty in Isaiah i. 18: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

"But my sins are black," she said. It was true. She had sinned with a cart rope, and the odour of her offences, committed in her youth, still lingered in the neighbourhood. I turned to Romans iii.: "There is no difference: for *all* have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." God did not

own degrees in sin. None had attained to His standard, therefore *all* were alike guilty, *all* were included in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon *all*.

Annie liked me to read those passages in the gospels that told of the Lord's gracious way with the outcasts; how the publicans and sinners *drew near* Him to hear Him. His spotless presence did not repel them, but attracted them to Himself. He "frankly forgave" alike the fifty-pence, and the five-hundred-pence debtors, and allowed a woman that was a sinner to kiss His feet.

Much did Annie grieve over the iniquities of by-gone days, nor do we think that any one can ever feel too deeply the exceeding sinfulness of sin. The only righteous plummet by which sin can be measured is the cross of Christ. If you can fathom the depths of ignominy and shame the blessed Son of God endured while hanging on the accursed tree—suffering the Just for the unjust—bearing the judgment of God for sin—then you will know what sin is. But no finite mind can grasp that which could only be accomplished by the infinite; yet may we, in our feeble capacities, set to our seal that God is true, by accepting with unwavering faith the testimony He has given us of the atoning death of His Son, and rest, as did Annie, on this glorious truth—"The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from *all* sin."

On what do you trust, dear reader? Any bed of your own construction on which you may rest

for salvation will be found shorter than that you can stretch yourself on it, and the covering narrower than that you can wrap yourself in. Confusion of face must be yours when the Lord stretches His plumb-line over you, when He wipes you as a man wipeth a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down. Will you not rather accept the righteous basis by which God can be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus? M. M.

THE SOUL AND ITS FUTURE.



HIS is no trifle! no laughing matter! nor one to be despised!

It is a question of your eternal future—not one year, nor a thousand! but for ever!

Can you face such a thought? No, the bare idea of eternity must overwhelm the mind, and yet man, all men—you and I—must live eternally.

Annihilation is a dream! Immortality is a fact; and, though man is mortal as to his body, his spirit returns to God, and after death is the judgment. Be not deceived!

“Every one of us,” we read, “shall give account of himself to God.” “We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ,” escape from that tribunal is impossible!

To meet God unprepared is to be damned, and that for ever! The gulf is fixed!

To meet God, saved, is to be in bliss for all eternity! There remaineth a rest for His people.

In either case the thought is overwhelming—full of terror to the first! full of joy unspeakable to the other!

FRIEND, ARE YOU SAVED?

If not, why not?

You may reply, "Can any one know that he is saved?"

Yes, thank God he can. The apostles knew, and the early Christians knew, and why should not we, to whom the Word of God has come?

Many of us do know.

You may ask *how*?

Well, first, convinced of sin by His Spirit we owned our guilt, like the prodigal or the publican; then second, we learned that the Saviour died in our stead, in order that, by faith in His precious blood, we might be cleansed and forgiven; and, third, we rested on the Word of God which says that "by him all that believe are justified from all things" (Acts xiii. 39).

That is, by taking God at His word, we know for certain, first, our guilt! and, second, our salvation! Blessed knowledge! Then notice, the grace that brings salvation teaches a godly life, and if this be absent the profession is a mere delusion.

If then you are not saved, *why not*?

It must be the allowance of sin. You are prac-

tising that which denies repentance. You love the thing that hinders blessing.

Lay the blame of your present condition at your own door.

“Ye will not come to me that ye might have life,” said the blessed Lord. That is the trouble! you will not come to Jesus; and you cannot be saved till you do. Your state for eternity hinges on your estimation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

“‘What think ye of Christ?’ is the test
To try both your thought and your scheme,
You cannot be right in the rest
Unless you think rightly of Him?”

Hence we read: “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John iii. 36).

This settles the whole question. Your relation to the Son, if in faith, is everlasting life; if in unbelief, is the wrath of God.

In which clause of the verse do you stand?

God thinks everything of His Son; and, having raised Him from the dead, has given Him highest honours, as man, at His right hand on high, pointing Him out, there, as the only but perfect Saviour of sinners.

Hence, friend, turn now to Him in faith for the present salvation of your soul.

J. W. S.

THE MARRIAGE OF THE KING'S SON.

(MATT. xxii. 1-14.)



HE parable which closes Matthew xxi. shows that there was a time when God drew near to man to claim from him that which was his duty to give to God. That was the responsibility of the creature to the Creator. But, when God sent His Son, man slew Him, and cast Him out. Terrible picture of what man is as man. In that parable we have undoubtedly the bygone history of Israel.

The parable which opens chapter xxii. is a divine sequence of the story of the husbandmen. It unfolds a totally different truth. God comes out to let us know that, spite of man's sin, He has got something in His heart for man. He has a thought, a purpose, connected with His Son. He has a Son, and His Son is to be married: there is to be a feast worthy of His Son, and He seeks guests.

What God wanted was hearts that would delight in honouring His Son. "He sent forth servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding feast; and they would not come." Again He sent messengers, but "they made light of it," and slew the servants who bade them come. What sin! what audacity!

Now mark, God has authority, for God is God, but He also has long patience. Bless the Lord

for His long-suffering. But God has authority, and if He make a feast for His Son He is going to have Him honoured. Better honour Him now, in the day of grace, than have to acknowledge Him in the day of judgment, when His exercised power will dismiss you from the presence of His glory. You are going to honour Him yet, careless sinner. The day is coming when you must honour Him. God will have it. His mills grind slowly, but surely. His purpose never fails.

God gave the Jew the first chance when Christ was on earth, but they would not own Him. Then—in the second call—you come a stage further. "Again He sent forth servants," to tell them that the Lord was risen from the dead, that the work of redemption was done. This you get historically in Peter's preaching in Acts ii., iii. His preaching was based really on the work of atonement, a work by which God had been glorified about sin. The death of Christ was indeed a wonderful moment, marked off by its own peculiarity from every other moment before or since. Then the holy spotless Son of God took up the question of the guilt of the whole world, doing a work which alone could meet the mind and thoughts of God, meet all the claims of His throne, break the power of Satan, and save vile sinners, like you and me, righteously.

Note well the patience of God with the Jew—"Again, he sent forth other servants" . . . (ver. 4). That took place in the early part of the Acts,

undoubtedly in the ministry of Peter and his fellow-apostles. You will remember that when the fig-tree (see Luke xiii. 6-9) had no fruit for the owner, though he had sought it three years—the duration of the Lord's ministry among the Jews—he said, "Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?" The dresser pleaded: "Let it alone this year also." Give it another year of grace. This second mission by the lips of the servants of the Lord in Acts ii, v., was the year of grace to the guilty nation of Israel. They had murdered His Son, but God was not, and never is in a hurry to judge. He lingered in love over a nation that had murdered His Son, and He lingers over you, man, just now.

Everything was ready, but alas! they would not come. Not only was there a feast, but a garment that fitted the guest for the feast. Remember that. You have not to think, How can I be suitable? The point is this, Would you like to be there? Do you respond to the call that God gives? "They made light of it." Oh, you say, that was the guilty Jew. But, my dear friend, are you sure that sentence does not fit you? God's message of invitation came, and "they made light of it." Mark, unbelieving, unconverted sinner, you are the man. What an awful thing! When ages have rolled by, and you are outside God's feast for ever, my friend, I tell you what you will recollect, that the gospel would have saved you from the eternal judgment of the lake of fire, but that you "made light of it." It is not the question of your having

done some great sin. No, no. This is the point, you have made light of God's gospel, God's Christ, God's invitation. Ah, friend, if you have been of that company till this hour, may God arrest you. You are opposing God, you are slighting His grace; He is bidding you to turn to His Son, and you are making light of Him. Anything and everything, but God's wedding feast for you. They "went their ways." That describes you exactly. One man was buried in his farm; another man was engrossed in his merchandise. Where was the harm of that? These things engrossed their hearts, controlled their lives. The Holy Ghost describes their actions by the solemn words, "they made light of it." Oh, you say, they must have been awful sinners. So saying, thou condemnest thyself. God's chief thought is Christ, whereas your chief thought is your pleasure, your farm, your earthly occupation, which leads you simply to make light of what God thinks everything of.

Now do not shut your eyes to the solemn fact that the man who makes light of Christ must taste the wrath of God. Although they made light of Christ, God had patience with Israel for some forty years after the death of His Son. Then the determined opposition of that people brought condign judgment upon them. Morally their end was come in the death of Christ, and as a nation they were dead before God. God keeps a sexton to bury His dead, and He let the Roman army play

the sexton's part. The nation was swept off the face of the earth, and Jerusalem in ruins is the standing witness of God's judgment upon the opposers of His grace. The point then is this, Are you among those who make light of God's offers of mercy and grace now?

Nothing that man can do can chill the warmth of the love of God. He says, so to speak, If the Jew will not have my grace, I shall turn round to the poor Gentile. "Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find bid to the wedding feast. So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all, as many as they found, both bad and good; and the wedding was furnished with guests" (verses 5, 6). That is sweet news for you and me. Paul was selected by the Lord as the chosen vessel, to carry out the news to the Gentiles, and he brought the gospel over to Europe (see Acts xvi.). He got up from Asia in three days. When God is bringing the gospel to Europe, He gives His servant a quick passage. The first man to be converted in Europe was a downright "bad" one. Paul met a "good" one when he met Lydia, and when he met the jailer he met a pretty "bad" one. There is an outward difference in the lives of people. Thank God, His grace meets everybody, no matter what the sinner has been.

The gospel is the most gracious service that mortal man can be employed in. Do you know what I have got for you? Thank God, I have the

privilege of telling there is a feast for you, and God bids you come to it. Listen, you are invited. See that you do not "make light" of the invitation.

Christians, I wonder, sometimes, that you do not preach the gospel more. Oh, you say, I have no gift. Had you not better say, I have got no heart for it? Be assured it is not merely a question of gift. It is not a question of preaching to companies.

"Go ye therefore into the highways, and as *many as ye shall find*, bid to the marriage," is our Lord's command to us all. To every sinner that crosses your path we should say, "I have an invitation for you. Yet there is room." While there is room we have not done our work yet. "Compel them to come in, that my house may be filled," is the Lord's injunction, and the servant's warrant for earnestness. His heart is so full and tender. He bids you come, He has spread a feast, and it is you He wants. Friend, thou art invited. Oh, hoary-headed reader, it may be the last time that God will give you an invitation.

There is no question of what you have been, or what you are. "As many as ye shall find, bid to the wedding feast," is the command. Thank God for that word. My beloved friend, God offers you a heavenly home, and heavenly association with His Son, with all the dignity and glory that is connected with His beloved Son. "All things are ready, come." Have you had a little difficulty as to whether the gospel suits you? Can I find a

sinner? I know it means that one, for I am instructed to invite as many as I can find. Have you any difficulty about the good ones? You and I are not of them. The "bad" ones just describes and suits me. Have you ever found out that you are among the bad ones? You had far better get the truth about yourself. Oh, you say, I am intelligent. But then, you are only an intelligent *sinner*, and "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. vi. 23). Do you know why it was that Jesus died? Not for His own sins, but for the sins of sinners. He died for sinners. Do not be afraid to come to the Lord on account of your sins, because Jesus "bare the sins of many" when He died. Redemption is accomplished, the veil is rent, and the way into the holiest of all is made manifest.

I have met a lot of people too good for Jesus. There are some souls far too good for Him. They would not like to take the place of being lost sinners. Would you like to come to the feast? Oh, of course I would, say you. Well, somebody got into the feast, and then got turned out. And you say to me, What does that mean, was he so bad? I am perfectly certain he was not a bad one that was put out, because the bad one said, If I come in, I must have a garment to suit the feast. If you find a man full of himself, and full of self-righteousness, he is too good for Jesus, and slights the garment, though he would go to the feast. Such will not take the ground of being lost and undone. They will not have it that they are lost.

Oh, you say, God is very good, and He is very gracious. True, and therefore you hope to be in heaven, because you think you are not so very bad after all. I hope God will help me to smash your hopes. My friend, you will be detected as a person who has been a mere false professor if you have not on God's wedding garment.

Let me repeat. There are none too bad for Jesus. There may be many too good for Jesus. Take the thief on the cross, a person who had lived a scandalous life, he was the first trophy of grace. The Lord brought that redeemed soul back to glory with Him. He was such a bad man the earth could not keep him. That was the first soul saved after Christ's death. He was being cast out from earth when the blessed Saviour put His arms beneath him, and said, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." And see the first man that goes into glory after the Saviour died. A man who was too bad to live on earth. Oh, you say, I am such a sinner. Thank God if you know it. It is the bad that are called. Come and confide in His name, and honour Him. There will not be an empty seat in heaven, remember that. If you decline to answer to the gracious call of the Lord, He will find some one who will respond, for God will have no empty seats in His house. A guest of God thou hast not been. A guest of God thou wilt not be, and yet for eternity, thou wilt be the guest of somebody. Whose? The world's! and "her guests are in the depths of hell"

(Prov. ix. 18.) I am going to be the guest of God on the ground that, though I am a poor hell-deserving sinner, I have been invited.

What about this man without the garment? There is another day of judgment coming. It is a day by-and-by, when all profession will pass beneath the eye of God. It does not say what he had on, it might have been a beautiful suit. It is well known that it is the custom of the East for the provider of the wedding feast to also provide garments suited for the feast. When God invites you thus, and in your heart there is found by grace a desire to belong to Christ, the Lord will provide you with everything. The servants brought out the best robe in the fifteenth chapter of Luke. The father kissed the son, and he learned that he was loved. What is the best robe? Christ. And what is the wedding garment here? Christ. You and I cannot stand before God save in Christ. When this man came to the door, I have no doubt that some servant was standing ready to put on him a garment. I think I see him. He says, "Thank you, I will do as I am, I do not think I need it." He had neither part nor lot in the matter.

He had no sense of what suited the honour and glory of the King's Son. You have very likely got on a robe of religiousness, that is not Christ. I was struck only last night in thinking of Rebekah (Gen. xxiv.). She hears from the servant the rapturous story of Abraham's son, and pre-

sently she says, "I will go." But she would think, I have no raiment fit for a house like Isaac's, and while she thus thought, the servant brought out jewels of silver (redemption), jewels of gold (righteousness), and raiment, and Rebecca took them. Do likewise now.

Yes, my friend, the gospel comes down, and saves you where you are, and remember, the garment that fits you for His feast God also presents to you. You trust in Christ, and you will find you have the wedding garment. "Friend, how camest thou in thither, not having a wedding garment?" was an awful question. The man was speechless. Unconverted professor, there is a day of the most speechless torture before your soul, with all your so-called Christian profession, just because it was Christless. "Then said the king to his servants, Bind him, hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Oh, is this going to be your case? With all affection let me ask you to possess Christ now. You are a stranger to Christ, you are a stranger in heart to God, and you must be a stranger to the wedding feast. Profession will not do; you must possess Christ. You can read your own history in this solemn parable. May God in His grace lead you to Christ. He wants you to be in His presence, clothed with Christ. Christ for your life, Christ for your all. If you believe in Him now, by-and-by you will have the everlasting company of that blessed Lord. Will you come in

now, and have the garment put on? God calls you to, and fits you for, the scene where His Son is to be eternally honoured. Do not "make light" of such grace.

W. T. P. W.

THE WAGES OF SIN, AND THE GIFT OF GOD.

(ROMANS vi. 23.)



ON a kind friend's pressing invitation, the wife of a working man was induced to attend some special gospel services that were being held in the neighbourhood. As she listened to the earnest pleadings of the evangelist, his stirring appeals

went, in the power of the Spirit, to her heart, with the encouraging result that she was brought to the Lord, and found rest and peace in Christ. Amid much tribulation and persecution she went on her way rejoicing; for alas! she was greatly tried by her unconverted husband, who was not only harsh and cruel, but said very bitter and cutting things, which were by no means easy for flesh and blood to stand. Nevertheless she was, through grace, enabled to manifest the Spirit of Christ, who, when He was reviled, reviled not again, and to exhibit a walk and conversation becoming His gospel. The consequence happily was that, in spite of himself, that ungodly man had to take knowledge of her that she had been with Jesus.

The change was evident, for he found that she prayed and read the Word of God, yet attended to all his wants, and looked after him with an unwearied care and consideration that left him nothing with which he could justly find fault. Still all this only seemed to exasperate him the more, and call forth volleys of unprovoked abuse, most hard for his wife to bear.

When going out one morning early to work he very emphatically declared that he would be home at a certain time, and vowed, if his dinner was not ready, he would do something too terrible to mention. Having completed the tidying of her house, and after having got through her work, she sat down to read a portion out of her now well-thumbed Bible, presuming, as she thought, that she had plenty of time to spare. While thus engaged in quiet meditation, to her great surprise she observed a figure pass the window, and could not help giving an involuntary shudder. It was her husband, and though he had returned much earlier than the hour agreed upon, she knew that would be no excuse, so she devoutly lifted up her heart to God for guidance and protection.

He called out, "Is my dinner ready?"

The soft reply was—"Sit down there for a minute or two, and it soon will be. I won't be long." He sat down on the very chair from which she had risen, and, remarkably enough, at the little table whereon lay the Bible which she in her haste had happened to leave open. His eye

caught the last verse of Romans vi., and he began to spell the words, for he could scarcely read, and the whole scene and circumstances became extremely interesting. He scanned "For the," and spelling w-a-g-e-s, asked, "Wife, what is that?"

She replied, "Wages."

He continued: "of," and then s-i-n, saying, "Wife, what is that?"

She answered, "Sin."

He tried once more: i-s "is"; then d-e-a-t-h, and again added, "Wife, what is that?"

She rejoined, "Death."

Then he read the sentence slowly over, "For the wages of sin is death," and after a solemn pause, he said with a deep sigh, "If that is true, I am a lost man." The arrow of conviction went straight to his conscience, and all at once he felt what a sinner he was. By this time the meal was prepared and served up, so he drew in his chair and partook of it in silence. When finished, he rose, troubled and distressed, and as it seemed just staggered along to his work. His fellow-labourers did not know what to make of him, his entire demeanour was so completely altered. His rough, profane, and unbecoming language had stopped, while his rude, boisterous manner had given place to subdued evident-concern. Nor could he find any pleasure in his former company and habits. Do what he would, and be where he might, the words, "For the wages of sin is death," kept ringing in his ears. He was haunted night and day.

This went on till he found himself wholly miserable, and thoroughly convinced of sin before God, so that on coming home one evening to tea, he no sooner entered the house than, he said, "Wife, I am going to the preaching with you to-night." She was, of course, delighted, for she had been crying to the Lord for him without ceasing. They went both of them together, and seated themselves in the meeting room. A hymn was given out and heartily sung. Prayer was then fervently offered up for a blessing on the message. The preacher gave out Romans vi. They both looked at each other, and wondered what was coming. To their astonishment he read, "For the wages of sin is death," which had by this time been burned into the man's very being. When, however, he came to the words, "But the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord," the husband seized hold of his wife's arm and audibly said—

"Ah, wife! you did not tell me that. That is the other side of the story."

He was just ripe for the next half of the verse, and there and then the Lord blessed it to the salvation of his soul. His load was removed. He got rid of his trouble. His burden rolled off. His distress was gone. He accepted the offer without delay. He had eternal life as a gift, and all in and through Christ as he sat on the seat. With breathless attention he followed every word uttered by the speaker as he told out with unction and power the old, old story of the gospel of God's grace.

That night they both returned to their humble cottage with their souls filled with joy, and their hearts overflowing with gratitude. Heirs together now of the same life and glory, their home was as happy as their hearth was cheerful, while they waited for God's Son from heaven, and looked for the blessed hope, Christ Himself.

THE WAGES OF SIN,

my reader, is a fact that cannot be gainsaid. But it is consequent on another equally undoubted fact, and what is that? Sin. Nor is it a question of what you or any one else think of it, but what God thinks of it. How does He estimate sin? Man may try to extenuate or excuse it, but it is all without avail as long as God cannot. He measures sin by the dignity of the person against whom it is committed, and that is infinite, hence the desert is infinite, and if you or any sinner got what he deserved it would be the pains of hell for ever. You cannot deny that you have sinned, for "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God," and having sinned, you have earned sin's wages. You may not have gone the length before men that the husband we have been referring to went, but what does that mean? Simply that you have not been in the circumstances to bring it out, but the sin in you would do just the same or worse, had it the opportunity. There is no doubt whatever that you are a sinner, and the "soul that sinneth it shall die."

But what, dear friend, let me ask in seriousness, is death? Does it mean ceasing to exist? Ah, no. Let not Satan deceive you by that lie. With respect to the *body*, it is dissolution, that is, the separation of the soul from the body, but that does not mean cessation of existence. We read of a certain rich man who "died and was buried, and in hell lift up his eyes being in torments," so that the death and burial of his body was not the end of him, no, nor of any other man or woman. Then, if we regard the *soul*, it is death spiritually, which means the separation of the soul from God, as it was said to Adam, "for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." It was spiritual death that took place that day. In respect of both soul *and* body eternally, it is separation and banishment from God for ever in the lake of fire, and is called in Scripture "the second death." How terrible the full wages of sin! Now, as a sinner, you have wrought for the wages, and thus rendered yourself liable to be paid the whole amount to the uttermost farthing. Indeed for this very reason the awful fact remains that the wrath of God abideth on you, nor can anything you could do avert it. One outside you alone can meet the case. You have destroyed yourself. Have you realised your lost and sinful condition? Do you see that you are undone? A sinner with nothing but the wages of sin before you? Then stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. He has blessing for you. Do you ask, What is it? And how is it to be got?

The divine answer is,

THE GIFT OF GOD.

But you say, "There must be some mistake." Excuse me, dear reader, God makes no mistakes. You reply: "I do not understand this reasoning. If the wages of *sin* be *death*, surely it follows that the wages of *righteousness*—my own righteousness—must be *life*." Such no doubt is the natural thought of every natural man, but it is just the opposite of the gospel. Eternal life is not the wages of anything. It is a *gift*; and a gift is a gift, not something that you work for, or pay for. You earned the wages of sin, but you could never earn this. Blessed be God, Another has taken the wages of your sin, and been made sin for you, One who knew no sin. Yes, Christ has taken your place. He was made a curse for you. He was forsaken of God in your room. He died in your stead. The judgment due to you as the wages of sin has fallen on His devoted head. The death has taken place, and now He lives for evermore. Hence salvation is a matter of *gift*. Eternal life is the gift of God. Nor can it be had in any other way. It is all a question of receiving, or not receiving, eternal life as God's free gift, and this is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life. That eternal life is in Christ Jesus our Lord, for He is the true God and eternal life. God presses His unspeakable gift on your immediate acceptance. He is the giver and you the receiver. The greatest

sin you ever could commit is to refuse. You may have it this moment. Will you *take* it, take it for *nothing*. It is God's unmerited favour for those who do not deserve it. Do not miss such a blessing.

Nor is this all. A gift is the receiver's for ever. If it is true that eternal life is God's *gift*, it is just as true that the gift is *eternal* life. It is given as a free undeserved present, and when given and accepted it is the taker's for ever and ever. God will never take it back. Christ says, "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish." He does not give as the world gives. He has a way of giving all His own. When the world gives anything, it gives it away. But when Christ gives, it is not merely clearing off all the old scores, which He does, but His way of giving is to bring you into association with Himself that you may enjoy all along with Him. Be sure the gift is yours, dear reader, I beseech you make no mistake about it.

W. S. F.

LEFT BEHIND.



AFTER Sir Colin Campbell's silent retreat from Lucknow, in the last Indian war, there was one man left behind, says Mr Rees, in his personal narrative of the siege. "Captain Waterman, having gone to his bed in a retired corner of the brigade mess-room, overslept himself, and was forgotten. At two o'clock in the morning he got

up, and found to his horror that we had already left. He hoped against hope as he visited every outpost; all was deserted and silent. To be the only man in an open intrenchment, and thousands of furious barbarians outside, was horrible indeed to contemplate; his situation alarmed him, and he took to his heels and ran—ran till he could scarcely breathe—and at length came up with the retiring rear-guard, mad with excitement, and breathless with fatigue." He was saved, but surely the agonising moment and merciful deliverance he will never forget.

Reader, there is a moment fast approaching when every one who has not Christ, the Son of God, as his own personal Saviour, will be found in a far more awful position than Captain Waterman was that morning. At the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God, all those who are Christ's, the dead ones raised, the living changed, shall be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess. iv. 16, 17). What a moment will that be for every soul "LEFT BEHIND"; every true believer in the Lord Jesus, indwelt by the Holy Ghost, by whatever name called by man, gone to be with Jesus for ever, and all who are not His LEFT BEHIND. In which company will you then be found? It will be too late to flee, there will be no escape, for God has said "they shall not escape" (1 Thess. v. 3); "The hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding places." LEFT BEHIND, not

for the passions of cruel barbarians, but for the awful power of that "wicked one," for the "strong delusion" (2 Thess. ii. 8), for the fearful woes of the "great tribulation" (Rev. vi.), for the ETERNAL horrors of the second death, "the lake of fire" (Rev. xx.).

Ah, reader! these are no cunningly devised fable; they are coming realities. Captain Waterman's was a temporal salvation—the gospel of God proclaims an eternal one, through "the precious blood of Christ." "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).

The way of escape is still open; the door of mercy not yet closed—the exalted Saviour is still seated on high, able and willing to save, waiting to be gracious. When He rises up to take His own people from earth to heaven, the door will be shut—shut by the hand of God, therefore, without a moment's delay, have to do with HIM who in wondrous love gave JESUS to die, whose "PRECIOUS BLOOD" is of such infinite value in God's sight that He can now be "JUST and the JUSTIFIER of him that believeth in JESUS" (Rom. iii.)

Reader, the Saviour God addresses you in His Word, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" "Now is the accepted time, NOW is the day of salvation," to-morrow may be too late. If Jesus comes to-day you will be LEFT BEHIND.

WELCOME! WANDERER, WELCOME!

(TUNE—*Christian Choir ; No. 9.*)

In the land of strangers,
 Whither thou art gone,
 Hear a far voice calling
 My son ! my son ! *

** Welcome, wand'rer, welcome !
 Welcome back to home !
 Thou hast wandered far away :
 Come home ! come home !*

From the land of hunger,
 Fainting, famished, lone,
 Come to love and gladness,
 My son ! my son ! *

Quit the haunts of riot,
 Wasted, woe-begone ;
 Sick at heart and weary,
 My son ! my son ! *

See the door still open !
 Thou art still my own ;
 Eyes of love are on thee,
 My son ! my son ! *

Far off thou hast wandered :
 Wilt thou further roam ?
 Come : and all is pardoned,
 My son ! my son ! *

See the well-spread table,
 Unforgotten one !
 Here is rest and plenty,
 My son ! my son ! *

Thou art friendless, homeless,
 Hopeless and undone ;
 Mine is love unchanging,
 My son ! my son ! *

THE DESERTER; OR, THE POWER OF PARDONING GRACE.



URING the early part of the American Civil War desertion from the Union ranks was of every-day occurrence. Few of the first offenders were executed when captured. No one seemed to realise, at the first, the gravity of the

situation into which the two opposing sections of the States had placed themselves. But when a few months had passed, and several hard battles had been fought without a settlement of affairs, the truth was forced upon the minds of both North and South that a fearful struggle was at hand, and that the war was real.

Discipline in the army then became most rigid. All deserters, when caught, were shot down without mercy, after a brief court-martial.

A soldier of the "stars and stripes" received word one day that his wife was sick, at the point of death, and desired to see him. He asked for a short furlough, but was denied it. The moment was critical, and not a man could be spared. He resolved upon desertion, and one dark night made off. Soon after he was apprehended. He did not betray the least sign of fear when captured. There was some delay in his trial, but when it ended, and he heard his doom pronounced, not a muscle of his features moved. When the hour of execution

came, he still wore the same hard set expression, though his cheeks were ashen pale. He was blindfolded, and a score of glittering musket barrels pointed at his breast. Still he stood rigid and without a quiver. Just as the word to fire was about to be given, a cry was heard, "Hold!" A courier had arrived from Washington. He bore a pardon for the condemned soldier from the President. Unknown and influential friends had been working for him at the capital. Lincoln was a man of tender heart, and the deserter's case was singular. Their pleas prevailed, and the only hand that had the right had signed the paper that was to save the culprit's life.

When he heard it, he was completely broken down. Tears gushed from his eyes, and utterly overcome, he sunk in a heap to the ground.

What was it that unnerved the man who had passed through capture, trial, and almost execution, without a tremor or betrayal of emotion? It was *grace*—*pardoning grace*!

And this is something like "the grace of God that brings salvation" to the guilty sinner. It breaks him down. Judgment, by itself, but seldom does.

How often does it happen that some mighty "son of thunder" preaches of God's judgment on the unbeliever in a manner truly awful, yet without effect. Perhaps he is another eloquent Apollos, "mighty in the scriptures." He, first of all, apprehends his man. His pointed, almost personal

remarks may give offence to some, but the guilty one must be hunted from his hiding-place. Once "captured," he is "tried." An overwhelming host of witnesses are marshalled—scripture after scripture is produced to prove him guilty. Then comes the verdict, "Guilty before God." "Condemned already" rings out. Then the fearful punishment deserved, and awaiting him, is described, until the audience are reminded of the men spoken of in the Revelation, out of whose mouths issued "fire, and smoke, and brimstone" (Rev. ix. 17).

All this while the sinner sits unmoved. The preacher looks in vain for penitential tears, more precious in the eyes of faith than glistening diamonds. The culprit's heart is hard, and weep he will not. He will not even "tremble," as did Felix once, and as do the demons now. He resembles more Manoah and his wife, who, when the angel "did wondrously," "looked on" astonished; that was all (Judges xiii. 19).

But, turning from his theme of terror, the preacher begins to speak of the mighty and amazing "grace of God." He tells in simple words of the "love of Christ," who died that the sinner might be pardoned, and set free. Now eyes are moistening, stony hearts are being stirred, and soon the once stout sinner sinks all prostrate at the Saviour's feet. It is the power of pardoning grace.

Reader, do you know it?

This deserter was condemned, and justly. So

are *you*. "He that believeth not is condemned already" (John iii. 18). Abraham Lincoln, the President of the United States, alone had power to pardon him and save his life. And through Christ *alone* you can be pardoned, and saved. Trust not those draped and shaven lying ministers of Satan who profess that they have power to pardon sins. "The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins" (Mark ii. 10). And He is the *only* One that ever had that power. The deserter's pardon was procured at Washington; there the work was done that saved him. And at Calvary pardon for the chief of sinners was procured. "It is finished" cried the dying Saviour when the work was done.

Unsaved, unknown reader, may such marvellous grace first *gain*, then *govern* you. May God give you *now* to know His pardoning grace, through Christ. Amen.

C. K.

MEPHIBOSHETH.

2 SAMUEL ix., xvi. 1-4, xix. 24-30.



E have in the Second Book of Samuel, chapter ix., a lovely picture of *grace*. God is graciously pleased to present again and again in the Old Testament delightful stories which picture very vividly New Testament truths.

This is one of them. Verse 1 finds David seated

upon the throne which God had established for him at Jerusalem. In the love of his heart, and with longing desire for the blessing and happiness of others, he looks around to see if he could bestow a favour upon one of the descendants of the fallen house of Saul, the first king of Israel. Saul in his lifetime had been a jealous and bitter enemy of David, and was continually plotting to take away his life. Now David is on the throne. He, instead of seeking to destroy the descendants of Saul, longs that they should be in the enjoyment of his favour.

He puts the question, "Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul?" The question is soon answered. A man, Ziba by name, was called into the presence of the king, and could readily inform him that there was a descendant of Saul, where he lived, and what was his name. Ziba was a hypocrite, as his after-history shows. His name implies "a plant" or "a statue." A statue may faithfully represent a person, but there is no life there; and a plant may have beautiful green leaves, and perfect-looking flowers, but may be only the work of man, never created by God—no life there. "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up" (Matt. xv. 13).

David questions Ziba, "Is there not yet any of the house of Saul that I may show the kindness of God unto him." Connected with the first verse, we get David's reason—"For Jonathan's sake." Jonathan had been David's friend—they had

intensely loved each other; and now David is in the place of power, he longs to show not human kindness, but the "kindness of God." Jonathan's name implies, "Whom Jehovah gave." How like God! God seated in heaven says, Is there yet any of the fallen house of Adam unto whom I can show kindness for My dear Son's sake? God has given Jesus, His blessed, His well-beloved Son, and His dear Son has so fully glorified Him that it is His great delight to bless a poor needy sinner.

Three things are said of Mephibosheth—who he was, what he was, and where he was. 1. Who was he? Saul's grandson: Saul, a type of man, according to the flesh, head and shoulders above every one else. Man's choice. One who had been placed in a position of testing, and had thoroughly broken down, and had played into the hand of the enemy. From this man Mephibosheth had descended, and he naturally carried in his heart wrong thoughts of David, and believed that David was his enemy rather than his friend. 2. What was he? Lame on both of his feet. Dropped by his nurse when five years old, he was lamed for life. An apt picture of you, my friend. Tried and tested by the five commands Godward, or five commands manward, you have been proved utterly incompetent, from want of power or ability to answer God's righteous demands, and you have failed in your duty, Godward or manward, and proved to be "without strength." 3. Where was he? In the house of Machir (sold) in Lodebar

(place of no pasture). What a picture of the sinner!

An enemy of God, ungodly, without strength, in his sins, and away from God, such are you, my friend, if you are unsaved. Like the young man in Luke xv. living in the far-off country, trying to make yourself happy at a distance from God, and seeking to satisfy the craving of your heart with husks in the place where there is no real pasture and no lasting satisfaction. Now, mark the action of David—he sends, he fetches. How like God! He sends from His loving heart, His blessed, His well-beloved Son, down into this world of wretchedness and misery, in order that He might seek the lost and the perishing sinner, and bring that poor, helpless sinner into His presence, that He might bless him for all eternity. What love, what grace! God delivered His Son up to death, and that the death of the cross, so that He might be able to save sinners from their sins and eternal judgment, and fit them for His blessed presence on high. His arm has wrought and brought salvation. He is “mighty to save” and “strong to deliver,” and He can save you.

Mark the effect! The moment Mephibosheth is brought into the presence of King David, see the attitude—“He fell on his face.” Contrition is felt. He realises what he is, and there is nothing that produces repentance like grace and love—

“Truly blessed is the station
Low below the Lord to lie.”

He realises in whose presence he is, and it produces uprightness of heart. He takes his true place, and puts David in his. So with the sinner, when the grace of God reaches the heart, there is immediate moral adjustment—the sinner takes his place in the dust, and gives God His place.

David calls him by name. How personal. There is in the case of the sinner striking personality. God knows you, sees you, and takes account of your actions; knows your long catalogue of sins, your sins of omission, and sins of commission. Everything is naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. Have you answered to your name, like Jacob of old? When God called him by name, he answered to it. What is the meaning of Jacob? Cheat, supplanter.

Mephibosheth answers to his name—"Behold thy servant." The grace of David had broken him down, and he was prepared to take a servant's place; but if David blesses, he must do it not according to Mephibosheth's desires, but according to his own thoughts. In the parallel scripture, Luke xv., the young man says, "I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am not worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants." It takes a long time to comprehend and enjoy grace. It is so foreign to the human heart. Man cannot conceive God blessing him apart from any deserving merit on his side, and he concludes that he can or must do something to deserve it.

David seeks to allay his troubled heart with the lovely gospel message, "Fear not." David desires to let the sunshine in to disperse every cloud of darkness that might becloud his soul—"For I will surely show thee kindness"—what assurance does the king's word give, and *surely* not a shadow of doubt—"for Jonathan's sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father." Man has lost this world by the fall—death is upon him—he has forfeited everything; and although he may use all his energy to gain the world at the risk of losing his soul, yet his pursuit is in vain—he has notice to quit this world. Thank God, His Christ is going to have this world very shortly—it is His by purchase; and when He has His rights, His own will share it with Him, and far and beyond that, for a believer is joint-heir with Christ in all that He comes into possession of. "And thou shalt eat bread at my table continually." Cared for, for the whole of his history, he is fed with daily grace, made partaker of David's bounty, and treated as one of the king's sons.

What a contrast between the far country (Lodebar), and seated at the king's table! Well might he humble himself, and take a lower place. What is a "dead dog" worth?

Not only does David in his grace elevate him, and seat him at his table, but he provides that Mephibosheth should have every care, every attention, and ample provision. How like God! He takes up the sinner, forgives him, justifies him,

blesses him for all eternity, and provides for every step of the journey heavenward.

Mephibosheth in himself was weak as before; his lameness had not left him, but instead of being occupied with his lameness or leanness, he is occupied with the person of David, partaking of his bounty, happy in his presence, and his heart going out to him, and his poor, weary, lame feet are out of sight.

In 2 Samuel xvi. 1-4, the scene changes. A usurper is on the throne. David is rejected for the moment, and leaves the country, and Mephibosheth has to learn what Jerusalem is without the presence of David. So with the Christian, his Lord and Saviour has been rejected by the world, cast out, spurned, and crucified. He is no longer here. This world is the scene of His sorrows and death; and the question is whether the Christian is prepared to take sides with a rejected Christ. Christendom professes to acknowledge His claims to own His authority and honour His name. But preach Christ in the concert-room, the theatre, the circus, the drawing-room, the shop, the counting house, or the railway carriage, and it will readily be seen that He is no more wanted now than He was eighteen hundred years ago. The religious world has no heart for Christ. Religion—plenty of it—but not Christ. Bring Him in, and it spoils everything. To the believer He is everything; He is the chiefest amongst ten thousand—altogether lovely; and he is prepared to take sides with Him, and

to separate from everything that savours not of Christ. Mephibosheth is belied by the arrant hypocrite Ziba. Mephibosheth had saddled his ass to accompany the king, but Ziba, with a professed show of devotedness, had followed David with the ass, with provisions, fruits, and wine, and sought to be credited, and poor Mephibosheth discredited. He professes to speak for Mephibosheth, that he was taking advantage of David's departure to reign in his stead.

When David returns in chapter xix. 24-30, the real fact is brought to light. Mephibosheth is seen as he really was. He had mourned David's absence. His manner of life, his dress, his behaviour all told of the deep sorrow of his heart.

Now David has returned, he has got everything. It was not David's gifts he wanted. It was just *himself*, nothing less surely. David filled the gaze of his vision—David was his all in all. So, with the believer, he mourns the absence of Christ, longs to see Him, whom not having seen, he loves—longs to be with Him; and as he looks on to that bright and blessed moment when he knows that he will see Him face to face, he can turn his back upon this worthless world, with all its pleasures, amusements, and vanities, knowing that there is a grand moment coming when he will be taken out of it to be for ever with the Lord.

A WARNING TO NEGLECTERS.



OLD and lifeless lay the corpse of one whom I had often spoken to. He was genial in disposition, and prosperous in business, but I fear he was a Christ rejecter. It was in a Canadian city.

We were holding gospel meetings. And the one of whom I write came, listened, and seemed to be impressed. I had a long talk with him, and sought to show him the danger of turning away from the *only Saviour for sinners*, but as we parted, he said, "It is all true, no doubt, but I can't take Christ now." I left that city, and returned to it again after a short absence. As I stepped from the railway car to the platform at the station, a friend met me, saying, "You won't have heard of poor B——; this morning at two o'clock he died." The first words that started to my lips were, "Was he saved?" and sad indeed did the answer of my friend make me: "No, we could not say that; he died apparently without hope."

That evening I stood beside the coffin, and gazed upon that face now still and dead, and sorrow surged through my heart. He might have been saved, but would not; he might have passed into realms of endless joy, but for aught we knew he had gone to woe, and darkness, and wailing. *Almost* had he decided for Christ — *almost* was he wrapped in the arms of the Saviour's love; but we

fear he had missed it, and that he had gone from earth's business, pleasure, and friends to eternal damnation.

I turned from gazing 'on that face to speak a word of comfort to the sorrowing young wife, but could not—the words would not come, though the tears did. I had to get away from that house of death, with the lump in my throat, and the sorrow "without hope" for him who had gone.

Oh! to die is solemn, deeply solemn, but to die without Christ, without hope, this is truly horrible—to miss heaven, and to land in hell, to be *almost* pressed to the bosom of the Saviour's love, and yet to be held in the grip of eternal darkness. This is woe, speechless, and eternally horrible. May this never be the portion of my reader.

Yet if still Christless, the danger is terrible. It may be that before to-morrow's light you may be cast from this world—rudely cast by death into the great FOR EVER to which you are travelling. Oh! say, how wilt thou do then? Look forward, my reader, into eternity, see the hell to which time is carrying you, and flee to Christ, the only Saviour, while yet you may. Will He receive you? Yes, thank God. Yes! He calls to such as thee, and eternal melodies are in His voice—"Come," He says, and "I will give you rest."

Let not the world hold you. Let not your friends keep you away from this Saviour. Take Him now, and you shall find Him able to bring you clear away from your danger. You shall

find His precious blood able to cleanse away your foulest sins. His love will fill your heart with joy, and upon your lips shall be placed the song of redemption. Believe now on Him once dead, but now alive for evermore.

“ Who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification ” (Rom. iv. 25).

J. T. M.

THE TEN VIRGINS, AND THE BRIDE- GROOM'S RETURN.

MATT. xxv. 1-13.



OUR Lord here shows us what took place at the beginning. There was a company who were expecting the Bridegroom. You must not confound the Bridegroom with the Judge; Jesus will be Judge on the great white throne: as the Bridegroom He will come for His bride first. The Lord Jesus, having gone on high, is now seated at God's right hand until the appointed moment comes, and then He will rise and will come for His own, to welcome them, and to be welcomed by those who know Him and love Him. These the wise virgins represent. They have been His witnesses. The foolish virgins were not witnesses; they had not any light.

The parable is very simple. The kingdom of heaven is likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bride-

groom. You must not suppose that in the ten virgins you have the Church as such, because they do not represent the Church as the body of Christ, but a history of profession, and the end thereof. We must not import into Scripture what is not in it. We very often make the great mistake of putting into Scripture what is not in it. The parable shows that some of the very people who went out to meet the bridegroom were the people who went into the marriage; yet every believer has passed away who went out at first. There is not one on the earth to-day that was here on the day of Pentecost. The point is, that the Lord's return is never the deferred hope of the believer, and reality must mark the professor of Christ. All that are real go in. Not what you profess, but what you possess, is the point. Not the ground you take, but the state of your soul, is the point. "They that were ready went in." Are you ready?

Will the whole world be converted and be ready for His return? The Lord here says, When I come back half of those who go out professing to wait for Me will be unprepared. You must have the indispensable necessity—the oil—if you are to be ready. It is not only the possession of a lamp, but what will feed the light and keep it going. The Holy Ghost alone can feed the light. Mark you, ten virgins went out. Five were wise and five were foolish. It is not the old and the young, the rich and the poor; it is the wise and the foolish. And mark, these are not the heathen;

they are professing Christians. You are doubtless a professing Christian. You are probably a church member. You are passing current as a Christian. I am not addressing the heathen, but I am addressing Christless professors of a Saviour of whom they are totally ignorant.

We must try and separate these two classes. Some were wise, and some were foolish. God begins with the fools. I do not call you a fool, but God does. What is a fool? A foolish person. And do you call me a fool? I do not, but the Lord Jesus says, "They that were foolish took their lamps and took NO oil with them." The reader without oil—not having the Holy Ghost—is among this class. "But the wise TOOK oil." Now observe the immense difference between the two. They all took lamps; they were all professors of Christ. It was night, and the night is the moment of the absence of Jesus. The lamp is the profession of the name of Christ, which of course abounds on the earth to-day, and in no place under the sun more than where the English language is spoken. I am serious. There is no place under the sun more favoured, and there is no doubt God has given us great privileges, with correspondingly grave responsibility.

Could anything be more serious than to be, not a heathen, but a baptized professor of a Christ you do not know. Had I met you last Sunday, and asked you, "Where are you going?" "I am going to worship," you would have replied. But,

I ask, Are your sins forgiven? Oh, I would not like to say that, you reply. An unconverted sinner going to worship? How can that be? Have you got the oil? What does that mean? What is the oil? You will find all through Scripture that the oil is the figure of the Holy Ghost. Have you received the Holy Ghost? You reply, perhaps, "I hope so." The wise virgins did not hope to have it. They *took* oil. But look at the foolish virgins, and see your own case. Little cared they about the oil, little dreamed they of the necessity of new birth, and the possession of the Holy Ghost. It was quite enough to look like others who were going out to meet the Bridegroom. It is nice to look like other people, and if they have a lamp, then a lamp let us each have. The devil has got a great many lamp factories to-day, and a great variety of lamps, too, all without oil. And perhaps, my friend, you have gone and taken a lamp. In one of the numberless sections of Christendom you have professed to follow Christ. I am going to clear myself of your blood. If you have an *oil-less* lamp you are going to be shut out. Do not misunderstand me. The Lord is coming. I have heard the cry, and I have gone out, through grace, to meet Him. Through infinite grace I have got the oil. Have you it? Have you the Holy Ghost? Listen, "the wise took oil." How did they get it? We are not told that here, but we are told that they were so wise that they would not budge one single step without it. That is the point.

Oh, a lamp will do for me, say you; wiser heads than mine let me into the professing church; I have been in the Sunday-school, in the Bible-Class, and have recently joined the church. I like the thought of carrying a lamp. But you have no oil. Oh, soul, God wake you up, the Lord wake you up ere it be too late. You must be converted, and receive the Holy Ghost, or you will be shut out.

Perhaps you will tell me that you do not believe in the necessity of conversion. You do not believe in the Spirit's work, that lays hold of a man, and makes him feel his danger? If He touch you He will open your eyes, and you will see that you are all wrong. Thank God, if you have passed through the new birth. Do you say that you would like to be converted? Thank God for the desire. If you are yet unblessed, you had better be in a hurry. Christ's coming will close the possibility of getting the oil. Will there be no preaching then? Plenty, and the seats will be half-filled with people. The wise will be gone. Shall I say, God have mercy on those that half-fill the seats? It will be too late. "I know you not," is the Lord's word to late-comers. If you wish to be saved, if you wish to join the ransomed company, and to go in with the Bridegroom, you must have the oil now. You must be converted. God save you, my friend. God convert you this very hour. If you die as you are this moment, you will spend your eternity in hell.

Ah, friend, you have sin on your conscience, and

sin in your heart. You are steeped in sin. Untouched by the Spirit of God, steeped in sin, and unblessed of God, what a sad case is yours, although a professor of Christ. Drop that unreality. Holding in your hand a lamp that has no oil, unconverted, not born again, and not possessing the Spirit, you are on your way to an eternal hell. Oh be aroused, I implore you. Gaze a moment at the wise. Do not tell me that they had not the knowledge of salvation, for, mark, they took oil. Where did they get it? They had got it. That is certain. I should like to get it. Thank God. Can I buy the oil? Yes. You can buy the oil, but it is without money, and without price (Isa. lv. 1). Do you know how a wicked woman once got it? A Stranger came to her and said, "Give me to drink" (John iv. 6-42). She did not give Him water, but He gave her the oil. Friend, you come to Jesus, and you will get it. You just turn to the Lord Jesus, that is the way the soul receives it. Turn to Jesus once on the cross for your sins, and now exalted at God's right hand in glory (Acts x. 43).

One great truth of Christianity is this, that when a sinner turns to the Saviour, he gets all his sins forgiven by God, on the ground of righteousness, because all His claims have been met by the death of His Son. There is more than that. The Holy Ghost now on the earth, the Spirit of God, loves to come and seal the faith of the soul that believes in God's dear Son. That is the oil. The

believer in Jesus is not only converted, but has received the Holy Ghost. You are not a Christian, if you have not received the Holy Ghost. It is very simple. I do not think there is anybody that has really bowed to Christ, but has the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost comes and dwells in the believer, immediately he has trusted the Saviour.

What leads a man to trust in Jesus. He sees he is lost, and he sees God must judge him; then he hears of Jesus and trusts Him. He hears the word of truth—that Christ is a Saviour; that every man is under the judgment of God; and that “the Son of man is come to seek, and to save that which was lost.” He finds out that Christ has been a substitute, and he says, I wonder whether He died for me? He is not quite sure, and then he realises that Christ died for sinners, and if for sinners, then for him. He can then say, “The Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

What is the gospel of salvation? That Christ has done a work, whereby God has been perfectly glorified. All the value of His work is put down to your credit, as believing in Him. When you learn that Jesus desires to save you, you will say, By the grace of God I shall trust Him. When a man believes in Jesus the Holy Ghost seals him. In the Old Testament you get the figure of the oil repeatedly. The blood was put upon the leper first, and then came the oil (see Lev. xiv.). I must be washed in the blood of Jesus before I can be sealed by the Holy Ghost. Redemption is one

thing, and the reception of the Holy Ghost is entirely a different thing. What is the mark of God's children? They have the Holy Ghost. It manifests them. They are marked off as being His. They say, "Abba, Father" (Gal. iv. 6).

The wise put the oil first, and the lamp last. They said, We are going to meet the Bridegroom, and therefore we must have the necessary qualification. They "*took oil*, in their vessels, with their lamps." That is a real Christian (Rom. v. 5). Every person that has the Holy Ghost is ready. I am either ready, or I am not ready. Thank God for the ready ones. The Lord is coming back for us. I believe that the cry, "Behold the Bridegroom! go ye out to meet him," has gone out. After the first fifty or sixty years of the Christian era, the hope of the Bridegroom's return for His people was completely lost sight of by the Church. You never hear a word about the coming of the Lord for His people in all the writings of "the Fathers." But the true hope of the Church, that is the Lord coming into the air, and our rising to meet Him there, is now animating the Church (Thess. iv.). For seventeen long centuries this hope was lost, but God's Spirit has revived it, and there is more testimony now than ever there was, in Scotland, and all over the world. The Lord is coming. I believe we are just at the last moment. Are you ready? Are you prepared?

I quite admit that there is a great deal of infidelity, but all the virgins arose and trimmed

their lamps, just before the Bridegroom came. There never was so much activity as now, no matter where you turn. Why? Because the Lord is coming, that is the reason. If the Lord come, and find you unconverted, and unwashed in His blood, you will join in the petition, "Give us of your oil." My friend, it will be too late then. Others cannot help you. You will have gone on in your sin till it be too late. Contemplate what it will be to be too late. "While they went to buy, the Bridegroom came." Unconverted professor, you that have long confessed His name, you will find He has come and you are left behind for judgment.

Do you really think anybody ever mistook you for a Christian, unconverted lamp-holder? You have lived for the world, and indulged in its lusts and pleasures; and though you may have donned its religion, you will be left for its judgment too. You will find out what a terrible reality is the judgment of God when it comes upon you. Oh, be wise! Come to the Lord now, turn to Him now, and get your guilty soul saved. Turn to Jesus now. He has not come yet, but He is coming. May God give you grace to turn now, and get among the "ready" ones. I am ready, and what made me ready? The Saviour's grace, and the Saviour's blood. The Saviour that saved me, can save you. Trust His heart, and be among the ready ones.

"They that were ready went in with him to the marriage; and the door was shut." That closed

door seals the doom of the unsaved, and then what a bitter cry will rise from many lips, for "afterward came also the other virgins," saying, "Lord, Lord, open to us." Ah! your lips have never been parted before in real prayer. They will be that day. Then your prayer must be denied, why not be ready *now*? The door is wide open now, why not obtain your title to pass in while it is so? A closed door is an awful thing for a too-late sinner. From within hear the Lord's voice—"But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not." Awful response, but it is the answer of righteousness, although uttered in the voice of sorrow. Another scripture says, "Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity." Friend, the most awful thing that could happen to you, is to be denied by Jesus in that day. Precious soul, as He now knocks at your heart, and says to you, Let me in, are you not going to let Him in, Jesus the Saviour? Turn, and say to Him, "Lord I have been hard, and unbelieving, but to-day I hear Thy gospel of salvation, and, Jesus, I will trust Thee." He would love to hear you say this. Let not 1897 close, and find you unready for the coming of the Lord.

Fellow-Christians, it is all peace, and joy, and gladness for us; we are going to be with Jesus for ever. Soon He will come. We are ready, through infinite grace. We have joined the company of the redeemed, the glory-bound band. Happy people! Ours is the glory for ever, and the Bridegroom's company.

Dear reader, I should like to know, are you among the wise or the foolish? Which? May God give you to be wise in time, for His name's sake. Amen.

“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?”

Many are choosing Christ to-day,
 Turning from all their sins away;
 Heaven shall their blessed portion be—
 Where will you spend eternity?
 Eternity! eternity!
 Where will you spend eternity?”

Leaving the strait and narrow way,
 Going the downward road to-day,
 What shall the final ending be—
 Where will you spend eternity?
 Eternity! eternity!
 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!”