

# The Footsteps of Jesus

By John MacDuff, 1856

Things to be *sought*—and things to be *shunned*

## PREFACE

Whatever things were written aforetime in the sacred volume were written for our instruction and admonition. The *precepts* it inculcates, and the diversified *incidents* it records—were evidently intended for our *learning* on the one hand, and for our *warning* on the other. In the biographies of Scripture this particularly appears. When the things which are pure, and lovely, and of good report—are *exemplified* in the character of an individual, the practical application is, "Go—and do likewise." While in reference to those of an opposite nature, such as the daring stubbornness of Pharaoh, the ostentatious zeal of Jehu, the worldly-mindedness of Demas, and many others, the exhortation is, "Go—and do *otherwise*." Almost in every page, both of the Old Testament and the New, are we reminded of what we are to *seek*, and of what we are to *shun*—of what we are to *flee from*, and what we are to *follow after*.

We have a perfect exhibition of the various graces after which we should aspire, in "the man Christ Jesus," who has left us an example that we should follow His steps. In *thinking* as He thought, *feeling* as He felt, and *walking* as He walked—the whole of experimental and practical religion is embodied. But as the spirit which was in Him was largely transfused into, and not undimly reflected by, many of His faithful servants—it follows that while we are treading in their footsteps, we are at the same time treading in His.

It is lamentable to think that of those who bear the name of Christ, there are so few who can truly say, "But we have the mind of Christ." The former, however, will be of no avail without the latter. And while a mere nominal profession is worthless to the individual himself—its effects cannot fail to be injurious upon others. Let the reader, then, allow the word of exhortation. To quote from a work recently published, "We beseech you to cultivate the temper that was in Jesus Christ. Is he like a follower of the Lamb, who is raging like a roaring lion? Is he like a pardoned criminal, who sits moping with a cloud upon his brow? Is he like an heir of heaven, who is vexed and fretted with some petty loss? Is he like one in whose bosom the Dove of heaven is nestling, who is full of all manner of malice and bitterness? A kind, compassionate, gentle, loving temper, presents one of the most winning features of religion; and by its silent and softening influence you will do more real service to Christianity, than by the loudest professions, or by the exhibition of a cold and heartless orthodoxy." "Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of malicious behavior. Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you." Ephesians 4:31-32.

May the perusal of the following earnest pages be blessed for the promotion of such a temper! May He, to whom the Spirit was not given by measure, impart to the reader out of His inexhaustible fullness, even grace for grace; and thus cause him to abound more and more in all those fruits of righteousness, which are for his own personal well being—for the honor of the Christian cause—and the praise and glory of God.

### **Contentment—Covetousness**

"Good when He gives, supremely good,  
Nor less when He denies;  
Even *crosses* from His sovereign hand  
Are *blessings* in disguise!"

"A man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things which he possesses." Luke 12:15.

"Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said— Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." Heb. 13:5.

"I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength." Philippians 4:11-13

The apostle Paul exhorts us to be followers of Him; even as he also was of Christ. In the character of that distinguished saint there is much that deserves our imitation; and among other particulars, the feelings he cherished in reference to his *outward circumstances* are especially worthy of our consideration. His temporal condition was, in general, anything but desirable; and yet he was far from being dissatisfied with it. "Not that I speak," he says, "in respect of need; for I have learned in whatever state I am, therewith to be content." In him contentment had its perfect work, so that he was, in this respect, perfect and entire, lacking nothing.

Covetousness and contentment are diametrically opposed to each other; and where the one is—the other cannot be. Let me then take heed, and beware of the former, and earnestly aspire after the latter. "He who loves silver, shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he who loves abundance with increase." The worldling never says, "It is enough." Like the daughters of the horse-leach, his constant cry is, "Give, give!" To the question, What is enough? The reply was once given, "It is a little more than a man has." Alas! this "little more,"—what weary days and anxious nights has it occasioned!

It is from the *state of our minds* that contentment arises, and not from the *amount of our possessions*. If we are not content with those things which we have, we are not likely to be content, if we succeeded in attaining all that we desire. The desires of the soul are unbounded. Expectations of greater happiness are constantly entertained; but how seldom are they realized! The possession of all the good we may think it desirable or even possible to attain, would still leave an aching void—there would still be "a cruel something" unpossessed. But when the mind and the present condition are brought to meet, then, and then only, will true contentment be found. If our heart is brought to our condition, our condition will then be according to our heart.

The consideration that our earthly lot is appointed by God—that it is He who fixes the bounds of our habitation—is eminently calculated to promote the spirit of which we are speaking. We are to remember that He is not merely the *Creator*—but the *Governor* of the world; and that every circumstance which transpires is under His superintendence and control. And hence we find the people of God, in every age, passing by merely second causes, until they came to the First Great Cause of all. They heard His voice, and saw His hand, in whatever befell them.

There are some who think that it is beneath the notice of God to regard such trivial events as those which make up our common everyday history. They would allow Him to interfere in the affairs of mighty empires; but for Him to regard insignificant individuals, and all the little circumstances of which their days are composed, does not comport, they suppose, with His greatness and majesty. But such people should be reminded that in the Divine estimation, the distinctions of great and small, of vast and minute, are altogether unknown. It is not a greater act of condescension in God to number the hairs of our head, than it is for Him to number the stars of heaven; the one being as near to His immensity as the other. Such is His infinite greatness, that in comparison with it—the mightiest world is on a

level with the smallest atom. This doctrine is clearly taught in the volume of inspiration, and is likewise confirmed by every dictate of reason. He who rules in the armies of heaven—who commissions angels and flaming seraphs that stand before His throne, saying to one, "Come!" and he comes, and to another, "Go!" and he goes—who wheels in their appointed courses the innumerable worlds which are scattered through the immensity of space—this great, adorable, incomprehensible Being, regards with tender compassion the poor little sparrow which falls unheeded to the ground, and clothes the lowliest flower with its tints of beauty. Of His care, we are warranted in saying that nothing is too **great** to be above it—and that nothing, on the other hand, is too **minute** to be beneath it.

Were the doctrine of "chance" a doctrine of God's Word, there might then be some reason in our murmuring, and some grounds perhaps for it. But if it is He who makes poor and who makes rich—who brings low and lifts up; if whatever befalls us is by *His* appointment or permission, whom we profess to love and honor—then, surely, *contentment with our lot* must be a reasonable duty indeed.

"In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing." Job 1:22. This commendation refers to the spirit with which he bore the unexampled trials which befell him—when he was hurled down, in a single day, from the highest summit of prosperity to the lowest depths of adversity! He saw *the hand of God* in all that took place. It was not to the invasion of the Sabeans and Chaldeans—that he traced the loss of his property. It was not to the fury of "mother nature"—that he traced the death of his children. No! He looked farther and higher! Prostrate in adoration at the Divine footstool, he exclaimed, "I came naked from my mother's womb, and I will be stripped of everything when I die. The Lord gave me everything I had, and *the Lord has taken it away*. Praise the name of the Lord!" And then it is added, "In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing."

Now, how important it is, that the same mind which was in him should be in us also. To *murmur* under the Divine dispensations—to be dissatisfied with the lot which has been appointed to us—to be always complaining of one circumstance or another—what is this, in effect—but to charge God with wrongdoing? Is it not practically to attribute *folly* to Him who is the only wise God, and whose knowledge and understanding are infinite? O let us beware then of a discontented spirit, remembering that **God orders all our affairs**. Whatever He *gives* us—let us thankfully receive it. Whatever He *denies* us—let us be satisfied without it. Whatever He *takes* from us—let us uncomplainingly part with it. Whatever *trial* He lays on us—let us endeavor patiently to bear it. We shall thus be still, and know that He is God; and we shall honor and magnify His blessed name.

Were we fully to believe, and rightly to enter into this truth—that our lot in life, with all its attendant circumstances, is chosen of God—we would, doubtless, be disposed to join with Peter, "Lord, it is good for us to be here." Wherever our lot might be cast, such would be our language. Let the sun of prosperity shine—let the clouds of adversity lower; let our path be smooth—or let it be rugged; we would be disposed to say, "It is good for us to be here." We may be often oppressed, being called to eat the *bread of trouble*, and drink the *waters of affliction*—but let us not rest until we can utter these words. We may not be able now to see *how* it is good; but let us think of the wisdom and love of Him who placed us there, and can we doubt it, whether we understand it or not? He is too **wise** to err--too **good** to be unkind! Oh that we might then honor Him, by trusting and praising Him for evermore.

Among the many faithful sayings which are worthy of all acceptance, this is one, that "*godliness with contentment is great gain.*" The two blessings are like the pillars Jachin and Boaz in the temple—the one with which it was founded, the other wherein there was strength. O my soul, exercise yourself unto *godliness* in the first place, and then unto

*contentment* as one of the most lovely and important of its fruits. If I am blessed with the former, I ought surely to exemplify the latter. The possession of godliness secures to me all those spiritual treasures which are in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. I can then be addressed, as was the church of Smyrna of old, "I know your poverty—but you are *rich*,"—rich indeed—"for all things are yours, whether the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours!" Others may mourn when some part of their *earthly good* is taken away; for, miserable creatures! their only portion is in this life. But if I am a child of God, the consideration of what I have in *hand*, and of what I have in *hope*, should keep me from complaining, even in the midst of the greatest temporal privations!

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### **Steadfastness—Instability**

"Be faithful unto death, nor fear  
A few short days of strife;  
Behold the crown you soon shall wear,  
A crown of endless life!"

"Your loyalty is like the morning mist and like the early dew that vanishes." Hosea 6:4.

"But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of those who believe, to the saving of the soul." Heb. 10:39.

The religious feelings of many, however lively and promising, have been only of brief duration. The Scriptures abound with instances of this description; and if we would shun such a spirit of instability—if we would go, not and do "likewise," but "otherwise," let us consider what is recorded of such characters, lest we be led away, and fall from our own steadfastness.

In the history of God's ancient people, this spirit of instability appears with marked prominence. Never

was a nation favored as they were. All the ordinances of nature were again and again suspended for their sakes. For them rivers and seas were divided, and the sun and moon stood still. The heavens were opened, and angels' food fell in abundance at their feet. "He turned the desert into pools of water, and the parched ground into flowing springs." For forty years God led them through the wilderness; in the day by the *pillar of cloud*, and in the night by a *pillar of fire*. He rebuked kings, He scattered and slew mighty armies, He turned whole nations upside down—for their preservation and deliverance. In all His dealings towards them, He made it evident that He was, not merely excellent in counsel—but mighty in working.

And the great things which God did for them produced, as they could not fail to produce, a lively impression upon their minds. But, alas! it was *transient* in the extreme. This is affectingly shown in the 106th Psalm. "Both we and our ancestors have sinned. We have done wrong! We have acted wickedly! Our ancestors in Egypt were not impressed by the Lord's miracles. They soon forgot his many acts of kindness to them. Instead, they rebelled against him at the Red Sea. Even so, he saved them— to defend the honor of his name and to demonstrate his mighty power. He commanded the Red Sea to divide, and a dry path appeared. He led Israel across the sea bottom that was as dry as a desert. So he rescued them from their enemies and redeemed them from their foes. Then the water returned and covered their enemies; not one of them survived. Then at last his people believed his promises. Then they finally sang his praise." Psalm

Such was the impression which His mercies produced. With glowing ardor they sang, "Who is like unto You, O Lord; glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders!" They sounded the timbrel, and joined in the dance. High and low, men and maidens, all united in celebrating His marvelous loving-kindness, and in extolling His wondrous works. But what is man? When most highly favored, what is he? "Then at last his people believed his promises. Then they finally sang



his praise," and continued to do so all their journey through? Alas! not so! "But they soon forgot what he had done and did not wait for his counsel." Their gratitude speedily evaporated! Their delightful frames and feelings soon passed away! And they went on still in their trespasses—murmuring and rebelling against Him, as if He had never rescued them, and as if they had never acknowledged His deliverance on their behalf.

A similar view is given in the 78th Psalm. God's wonderful works are there declared, that they might be held in constant remembrance, and that their record might be transmitted from sire to son, through successive generations. "That the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands. They would not be like their forefathers—a stubborn and rebellious generation, whose hearts were not loyal to God, whose spirits were not faithful to him." Psalm 78:6-8. Such was their character. There was nothing stable about them. When any *extraordinary mercies* were conferred on them, they were melted just for the moment; or when any *visitations of vengeance* were brought upon them, they were filled with fear and trembling. But the *rejoicing* on the one hand, and the *alarm* on the other—were alike evanescent. "All that the Lord has spoken, will we do!" was their language, while the terrors of the Almighty surrounded them—as when He proclaimed His law, in dread majesty, from the summit of Sinai. But no sooner had the lightnings ceased to glitter, and the thunderclaps to roar—than they set up a golden calf, before which they bowed, and to which they ascribed their deliverance!

In the time of Christ, the same spirit frequently appeared, as it has in all subsequent ages. In the parable of the sower He divides the hearers of the gospel into four classes, and one, the stony ground hearers, represents the class we are now considering. They receive with joy the word preached to them. In

a transport of admiration they exclaim, "How sublime, how wonderful, how clear, how convincing! We were never so charmed in all our days—never so moved, and so melted" But the great Teacher—He who knew what was in man—who was never deceived by any outward appearances—He testified that it would all come to nothing. They had no root in them, and therefore they could not endure. "When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away."

Not a few have we known whose histories have verified this representation. They were at one time truly promising characters. They appeared to be inflamed with a holy ambition to win the heavenly crown. We saw them commence the journey, and we thought they *started* well. But where are they now? Where? The tears of their friends—the sighs of their ministers—the triumphs of the enemy, answer the question! From the way of truth—they have turned aside. According to the true proverb it has happened to them, "A dog returns to its vomit, and a sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mire." Miserable men! it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.

How striking is the figure which the prophet employs in representing such characters. They are compared to the *morning mist*, and the *early dew*, which quickly fades away. These are emblems of whatever is brief and transitory. Look at the morning mist—it may be now dark and lowering; but look, again, and it is gone—not the least trace of it appears! And so with the early dew. There it is in countless drops, shining like so many glittering gems; but as the sun comes forth from his eastern chamber, and begins careering his majestic way, pouring forth the fullness of his beams on every hand—then how speedily does the morning dew vanish! And so with the people we have described. Their loyalty disappears in like manner.

Believer, dread the thought of ever forsaking Him by whose worthy name you are called. "Will you also go away?" "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." Let your motto ever be, Onward! Though *faint*, be still *pursuing*. Hold fast the profession of your faith without wavering, for He is faithful who promised. He will not forsake those who put their trust in Him. Deeply conscious are you, doubtless, of your own weakness, and of the *backsliding tendency* of your wayward and deceitful heart; but there is One who is greater than your heart, and your safety consists in looking daily to Him for that upholding and persevering grace which He has promised to His people.

If the reader is a young disciple, let him endeavor to count the cost, and thus seek to be prepared for all that may await him. Had one and another of Bunyan's pilgrims done is, they would not have been so likely to turn back, nor be discouraged by the difficulties, nor frightened at the dangers, to which they were exposed. To you we would say then, Reckon upon meeting with much to oppose and dishearten you. Through the Slough of Despond you will have to pass. By Beelzebub's Castle, with the archers aiming to level their darts at you, you will have to pass. Over the Hill Difficulty, and by the roaring lions, and through the Valley of Humiliation, haunted with its frightful demons, you will have to pass. And so with Doubting Castle, and Giant Despair, and pits, and snares innumerable. But, after all, be not discouraged. To have that one promise fulfilled, "My grace is sufficient for you, and My strength shall be made perfect in your weakness," and you will be able to surmount them all, and thus hold on until your pilgrimage is finished, and an entrance be granted to you into the Shining City above.

O You endured such contradiction of sinners, help us to consider You, and to call continually upon You, lest we become weary and faint in our minds. Inspire us with a spirit of increasing steadfastness. Help us to attend with all diligence to every means which will be likely to promote this great object. May we so run the

race that is set before us, that at length we may receive the end of our faith, even the full and final salvation of our souls.

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### **Humility—Pride**

"The saint that wears heaven's brightest crown,  
In deepest adoration bends—  
The weight of glory bows him down  
The most when most his soul ascends:  
Nearest the throne itself must be  
The footstool of humility."

"Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." Proverbs 16:18

"Be clothed with humility." 1 Peter 5:5

Humility may be defined as consisting in profound self-abasement before God, arising from a deep sense of our sinfulness, and in a low estimation of ourselves, as we stand related to our fellow creatures, whatever be the extent of our attainments, or the importance of the station we occupy. It is described by the apostle as a disposition which leads us, not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think—but to think soberly, according as God has dealt to every man the measure of faith.

Upon this subject too much stress cannot be laid, for without humility, true religion cannot possibly exist. A proud Christian is a contradiction in terms. We might as well speak of a wise fool, of a wicked saint, of a sober drunkard, or of a chaste harlot—as of a proud Christian. We may as soon expect *delicate flowers* to flourish in the frozen and barren regions of Siberia—as that true piety should grow in the heart that is proud and haughty. A vine might as well thrive when a worm is gnawing at its root—as that the soul should prosper and be in health, when its arrogance and pride are not subdued.

One of the Fathers of the Church, when asked which was the first principle in religion, replied, *Humility*. When asked which was the second, he said, *Humility*. And when asked which was the third, he again answered, *Humility*. So important was this grace in his estimation that he regarded it as the beginning, the middle, and the end of true godliness. And we may truly say that where humility is absent, everything else in religion, is in vain. A person may possess the most splendid talents—he may have the gift of miracles, and the knowledge of all mysteries—but without true humility he is, in the sight of God, nothing but sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.

Without a spirit of humility no happiness could be enjoyed in heaven. The proud man, were he admitted there, could feel no real or lasting enjoyment. The outward glory of the place might dazzle his eyes for a time—but he could not relish the society and employments of that blessed state. The honors conferred upon patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and martyrs, would be likely to excite his envy, and before long he would attempt to sow the seeds of discord among the heavenly hosts.

Reader, if you would enjoy true happiness, both here and hereafter, cultivate a humble spirit—for without humility, you will never know true happiness. "O that lovely *valley of humiliation*," said the venerable Rowland Hill, when writing to a friend, "the safest, the most fertile spot between the city of destruction and heaven. May you get into it, make your constant abode in it, and never get out of it, until from thence you shall be called to glory. O! I could say a thousand things in praise of this valley. The air is so healthy; the ground so fertile; the fruit so wholesome; while from the branches of every tree the voices of prayer and praise are heard in delightful concert. While living in it no weapon that is formed against us shall prosper, since the enemy of souls cannot shoot low enough to reach us to our hurt. Take this hint from a very old man, who is just putting off his harness." "True humility," said Matthew Wilks, "is a lovely ornament; it is the only befitting dress for a saved

sinner." O let us seek then to be clothed in this robe, that we may be brought to lie low at the footstool of our Maker and Redeemer; and that in all our fellowship with each other, we may look at our *superiors* without envy, and upon our *inferiors* without contempt.

In the saints of old this grace appeared with marked prominence; and in following them as patterns for our imitation, let us endeavor to be like-minded with them in this important particular. There was **Abraham**, the father of the faithful and the friend of God. How great was his humility! how profound his self-abasement! "I have ventured to speak to the Lord—even though I am nothing but dust and ashes." He was filled with a consciousness of his absolute nothingness in the presence of the Great Eternal. There was **David** also, who speaks of himself as "a worm and no man." **Job** cried out, "Behold, I am vile!" In the apostle **Paul**, again, what a striking exemplification have we of this grace. If self-delight were ever allowable in any individual, it would be in him; for such a laborious, self-denying, unselfish character, has, doubtless, not yet appeared—the man Christ Jesus alone and always excepted. But what were his views and feelings in reference to himself? On one occasion we hear him saying that he was not worthy to be called an apostle. At another time he says he was less than the least of all saints. And when penning one of his last epistles, he designates himself the very chief of sinners. He was brought to know himself—a knowledge, we are told, in which all wisdom centers. If we knew ourselves as he did—pride and self-delight would find no room within us.

But, above all, let us consider Him who said, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of Me—for I am meek and lowly in heart." The heaven of heavens could not contain Him; all the fullness of the Eternal Godhead dwelt in Him; devils trembled at His rebuke, and flew from His presence to the abodes of misery; yet how meek, how lowly! Reader, aspire after conformity to Christ in His humility. In the words of the Apostle we would say, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain

conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus."

Against the proud, the displeasure of heaven has been manifested in all ages. Think of **Pharaoh**. The language of that proud monarch was, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey Him?" But the Divine Majesty could not bear to be thus insulted; hence the puny worm with all his legions were destroyed; they sank as *lead* in the mighty waters. Think of **Nebuchadnezzar**. Hear his boasting exclamation, "Is not this great Babylon that *I* have built, by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?" But God resisted him, and he was turned from the society of men—to eat grass with the beasts of the field! Think of **Herod**. With what delight did he receive the applause of the people, when they cried, "It is the voice of a god, and not the voice of man." But the angel of the Lord smote him, and he was eaten with worms.

While, however, God resists the proud, He has promised to give grace unto the humble. The lowly are the objects of His special regard. What He declared concerning Zion, He says in reference to every humble heart, "This is my rest forever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it." "For thus says the high and lofty One, that inhabits eternity, whose name is holy; I dwell in the high and holy place;" that is one of the palaces of the Great King, where the throne of His glory is erected—where the countless armies of cherubim and seraphim are stationed, and where perfected saints reside. But He has another place of habitation: "with him also, who is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."

"Thus says the high and lofty One,  
I sit upon My holy throne;  
My name is God, I dwell on high,  
Dwell in My own eternity.

But I descend to worlds below;  
On earth I have a mansion too;  
The humble spirit and contrite  
Is an abode of My delight.

The humble soul My words revive,  
I bid the mourning sinner live,  
Heal all the broken hearts I find,  
And ease the sorrows of the mind."

You, O Lord, are high, being exalted above all  
blessing and praise; yet, notwithstanding Your  
unspeakable greatness, You have respect unto the  
lowly; but the proud You know afar off. O subdue the  
pride of my heart; and help me to manifest, by my  
whole demeanor, that meekness of spirit which is in  
Your sight of great price.

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### **Companionship of the Good—Counsel of the Ungodly**

"Depart from me, you wicked race,  
Whose hands and hearts are ill;  
I love my God, I love His ways,  
And must obey His will."

"He who walks with wise men shall be wise; but a  
companion of fools shall be destroyed." Proverbs  
13:20

"I said to the Lord, "You are my Lord; I have no good  
besides You." As for the holy people who are in the  
land, they are the noble ones in whom is all my  
delight." Psalm 16:2-3

Man is a social being. Wherever he is found, whether  
in a savage or civilized state, this trait more or less  
appears. Nor is it by man alone that this propensity is  
manifested. It is seen in the lower departments of the  
animal creation. Fish swim in schools, and insects  
move in swarms. Thus man and beast possess this  
instinct in common, as they do many others.



The social principles of our nature may become, like all other principles, the source either of good or of evil. If rightly improved, and properly directed—of good; if perverted and abused—of evil. How anxious then should we be to shun the latter, and to realize the former! And that such may be the case, what care should we exercise in the choice of those with whom we associate!

Reader, are you a follower of Christ? If so, select your companions from among His people. How solemn and decisive are the apostle's words, "You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God." In the book of Proverbs we have line upon line, and precept upon precept, calling upon us to shun the fellowship of the ungodly. Into their path we are not to enter; we are to avoid it, to turn from it, and to pass away. And what was the resolution of the Psalmist? "Depart from me, you evil doers; for I will keep the commandments of my God."

In the history of God's people we have this duty prominently exemplified. In the experience of **David**, whose words we have just quoted, this was especially the case. There were three things to which he was pre-eminently attached. The first was the *word* of God. O how highly did he prize that sacred treasure! It was his daily Counselor and guide. The second was the *house* of God. "I have loved the habitation of Your house; and the place where Your honor dwells." And in his banishment, when deprived of the high privilege of treading its threshold, and joining in its hallowed exercises of prayer and praise, he envied even the birds that built their nests against its walls. "Even the sparrow finds a home there, and the swallow builds her nest and raises her young—at a place near your altar, O Lord Almighty, my King and my God!" But in addition to the word and house of God, he ardently loved the *people* of God. "I am a companion of all those who fear You, and of those who keep Your precepts." He speaks of the saints that were upon the earth, and the excellent, as those

in whom was all his delight. And God appears to have blessed him with not a few of such to delight himself in. He had Nathan, so faithful and true; he had Barzillai, the Gileadite, a brother born for adversity; he had Abiathar the priest, and Zadoc the scribe; and he once had Jonathan, whom he loved as his own soul; and many more, with whom he took sweet counsel, and walked to the house of God in company.

How interesting, again, is the account given of what took place in the time of the prophet Malachi. It appears to have been a season when iniquity and infidelity greatly abounded. The avowal was unblushingly made, that it was vain to serve God, and that there was no profit in keeping His ordinances. But even then there were some who were found faithful among the faithless. And among other things they were especially distinguished by the particular we are considering, namely, their love to and their fellowship with each other. "Then those who feared the Lord talked with each other, and the Lord listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the Lord and honored his name." And as He always honors those who honor Him, it is added, "They will be mine," says the Lord Almighty, "in the day when I make up my treasured possession!" Having come out from among the ungodly, God received them; He looked down with special approbation upon them; and promised that He would at length gloriously reward them.

And so with the early Christians. "Being let go," it is said, "they went to their own company:" a declaration that gives us a clear insight into their character as far as their fellowship with each other was concerned. They were, though a persecuted, yet a happy, loving, united family. They had to mix with the ungodly—but it was their own company they loved.

There is something highly reasonable in the duty we are endeavoring to enforce. "Like loves like," says the proverb, "all the world over." One individual is drawn to another, and one class of men to another class, where a oneness of views, of tastes, of feelings, and

of efforts, are found to exist. Whether it be in literary and political pursuits, or in the degrading pleasures of sin, we have abundant illustrations of this truth. And if such associate together, how much more should the followers of Christ do so, who are united to each other by far higher bonds—bonds heavenly in their source, and deathless in their duration!

The feelings with which we regard the people of God are a decisive proof of our spiritual condition. "By their fruits," said the Savior, "you shall know them." And the fruits to which the Scriptures refer, are exceedingly simple and palpable. Nothing brilliant or imposing is required in order to evidence that we are the disciples of Christ. The possession of splendid talents; the distribution of ample charities; the endurance of martyrdom; none of these things are represented as proofs of our discipleship. Had such been the case, only some favored few could evince their attachment to the Lord Jesus, and manifest that they were His true friends and followers. But the requirements of the Gospel are such as may be practiced by individuals in every condition; they are tests which may be applied to people of every rank and station.

How desirable a thing is it for us to be brought to know that we have passed from death to life—that that great and glorious change has taken place, in virtue of which we are made children of God and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven! Well, it may be known. The thing is not impossible. But in what way? Not by conferring with prophet or angel, gifted with the revelation of hidden things. Not by reading our names in the book of life, that mystic volume which is chained to the eternal throne, with all the fates of men. Not by receiving from God any direct intimation of the fact, such as proclaiming from the excellent glory that we are His beloved and accepted children, in whom He is well pleased. No, not so. It is not by ascending to heaven above, nor by descending to the depths below; but it is by means of that revealed Word which is near us. And what is its testimony? "We know that we have passed from death unto life,

*because we love the brethren.* "Brotherly affection—a cordial feeling of attachment to all who possess the mind, and manifest the spirit of Christ, is what the apostle John fixes upon as an indubitable evidence of our personal salvation.

The question then is one of the greatest importance, "Do I love the brethren? And does my love to them lead me to delight in fellowship with them?" If we are strangers to such feelings we have every reason to doubt our spiritual condition. "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples—*if you love one another.*" And the converse will hold equally true—By this shall all men know that you are not my disciples—if such a spirit is not possessed and manifested by you.

Once more, if we make the people of God our companions, we are likely to derive benefits of the most important kind from fellowship with them. "Come with us," is their invitation, "and we will do you good." They will cheer, and warn, and direct us; they will sympathize with us in our sorrows, and bring down the blessing of heaven upon us by their prayers.

Reader, beware of sinful companions. Ask the wretched youth who, with a ruined character, is now an inmate of yonder prison, what brought him to such a place—and he will tell you that it was wicked companions. Ask the poor creature who is about to terminate his miserable career on the gallows, what led him to so disastrous an end, and he will answer—wicked companions. No mind but His who comprehends the universe in its vast survey, can tell what multitudes have been ruined, ruined for both worlds, by the influence of wicked companions. Young man, shun the society of the ungodly. Flee from them as you would from a venomous viper. Dread their abode as you would a place infected with the most malignant pestilence. O, if sinners entice you, consent not. Dare to be singular; learn to be decided. And whatever others may do, be it yours to aspire after the blessedness which is pronounced

upon those who walk not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of the scornful; but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditate therein day and night.

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### **Selfishness—Unselfish Love**

"Am I my brother's keeper?" Genesis 4:9

"To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some." 1 Corinthians 9:22

"Mankind," says one, "are fallen from God into a great gulf of sinful selfishness." "Pleasure, profit, and honor," says another, "are the natural man's trinity; and his carnal self is this trinity in unity." With most of our fellow-creatures, self is Alpha, and self is Omega—it is first and last, middle and end.

And there is too much of this selfishness in the Christian Church. "All men," says the apostle, when referring to certain religionists of his day, "seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." Even those who have been brought to realize somewhat of the value of spiritual blessings, often manifest too exclusive a regard for their own personal well-being. It is to be feared that many in attending the means of grace are only solicitous about their own edification and comfort. And there are some, of very high pretensions, who can tolerate no preaching but that which is addressed to believers invariably. O, have such never read of the faithful shepherd, who left the ninety-nine sheep that were safe and secure, in order to traverse the wilderness in search of the one wanderer? They would have the ninety—nine wanderers neglected, that undivided attention might be given to the one or the few folded sheep. To be personally comforted is their great concern. Let others perish; it matters but little—so long as they

themselves are pampered and fed. But let us be well assured that there is something radically wrong where such a feeling exists. It is a sure sign, not of spiritual health but of spiritual sickness, if not of spiritual unsoundness. Even were there no wandering ones to be reclaimed, this undue, inordinate panting after what is merely comforting, ought not by any means to be encouraged. It is as if we were always taking stimulants and cordials, which, though they may for the time revive the spirits, would yet be secretly—but surely, undermining the strength.

It is quite natural for the people of God to be concerned about obtaining a blessing for their own souls. But the thing to be shunned is being concerned for that alone. When the believer treads the threshold of the sanctuary, it is very proper for his cry to be, "O You who speak peace to Your people and to Your saints, speak peace to my waiting soul. I beseech You to show me Your glory; reveal Your smiling face, and make me joyful in Your house of prayer." But let him not forget to add, "Save now, I beseech you, O Lord; quicken the dead; alarm the careless; break the sinner's heart; open his blind eyes; and work mightily by Your truth upon the consciences of those who have never felt its saving power."

And so in reference to those practical efforts which we are called upon to make with the view of reclaiming those who are ignorant and lost. Alas! that the interest taken in the welfare of such, should be so languid, and that the exertions put forth on their behalf should be so few.

The reader may recollect the language which the Jewish elders addressed to Judas, when, with compunction and remorse, he returned to them the thirty pieces of silver—the sum for which he had sold the Son of God. Did they endeavor to nourish the contrition which he seemed to manifest, when he cried, "I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood?" No; but with an indifference that must have chilled him, they replied, "What is that to us? See to that yourself." Now this is in effect the

language of all who are unconcerned about the well-being of their fellow-creatures. Tell them of the misery that abounds; tell them of the temporal and spiritual destitution of hundreds and thousands around them; tell them of the teeming millions who are sitting in darkness and the shadow of death, strangers to happiness and strangers to God—and their practical reply is, "What is that to us?" Ah! there is a day coming when they will see that it is something to them; and that were they guilty of no other crime than that of indifference to the wants and woes of their fellow-men, they will be consigned, with the unprofitable servant, to the place where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.

In seeking to do good to others—we are likely to get good ourselves. "The liberal soul," says the wise man, "shall be made fat, and he who waters shall be watered also himself." Relieve the distressed; clothe the naked; feed the hungry; instruct the ignorant. Thus the blessing of those who are ready to perish will come upon you; you will enjoy the approving testimony of a peaceful conscience, that testimony which is "the soul's sweet sunshine and the heart-felt joy;" and in the performance of such acts you will be materially benefited yourself.

There is an old proverb which says, "Everyone for himself, and God for all." We trust that the sentiment it expresses is one with which we have no sympathy.

Be it ours to nourish "another spirit," even the spirit of the Lord Jesus, who pleased not Himself. Had it been "everyone for himself" with Him, the throne of His glory would never have been left; He would not have appeared as a humble babe in Bethlehem; there would have been no groaning in the garden; no bleeding on the accursed tree. Had it been "everyone for himself" with Him, the violated law must have taken its dreadful course; the vials of divine wrath would have been poured out upon our guilty heads; and ruin, unmixed, unaltered, unending ruin would have been our portion. But let us rejoice that He espoused our cause, and that He died the sinless for

the sinful to bring us to God. And may the contemplation of His unexampled love, shame us out of that spirit of selfishness in which we are so prone to indulge; and constrain us to live, not to ourselves—but to Him.

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### **Pleasing Men—Pleasing God**

"Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ." Galatians 1:10

"Enoch was commended as one who pleased God." Hebrews 11:5

It is recorded in one of the gospel narratives, that certain of the Jews besought the Savior's interposition in the case of the Centurion, whose servant was at the point of death; and the plea they urged was, "That he was worthy for whom he should do this; for he loves our nation, and has built us a synagogue." He had thus won, Gentile though he was, their good opinion; and in order to testify their approbation, they came forward on this occasion, not merely to express their sympathy—but to exert their influence on his behalf.

To enjoy the favor of our fellow-creatures is, doubtless, a blessing not to be despised. The Centurion could not be otherwise than gratified by finding that he stood so high in the estimation of those among whom he dwelt; and the contemplation of the incident, simple though it is—is refreshing to every mind.

But those who make it their *chief* aim to please men are evidently under the influence of a feeling which cannot be too strongly condemned. If this be the regulating principle of our lives; if we shape our whole course and conduct with the view of attaining



this object, we cannot, as the apostle states, be the servants of Christ. The true Christian acts from other and higher motives; his actions are to be ever regulated by the will of God—whether men are pleased or not! With the apostles, when summoned before the Jewish rulers, our language should be, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God—you judge."

To seek to please men is in general—a very hopeless task. Many a minister of the gospel especially, has found it to be so by painful experience. He would be of all men most miserable, if his only end was to secure the approval of those among whom he labors. As one remarks, "If **the preacher** is *faithful*—he is said to be too personal. If he is *cheerful*—he is trifling. If he is *serious*—he is dull. If he is *practical*—he is legal. If he preaches *grace*—he is an enemy to good works. If he is *social*—he is worldly. If he is very *studious*—he is reserved. If he is *forgiving* when misrepresented—he is guilty, or he would resent it. If he pleads for his *rights*—he is self-serving. If he is *passive*—he is weak. If he is *courteous*—he is afraid of man. If he is *courageous*—he is crude. If his language be *piercing*—he is coarse. If he is *plain*—he is illiterate. If he is *elevated*—he is too high in his style."

But let us turn to a more congenial and important theme, that of **pleasing God**. And in order to attain this blessed privilege it is indispensable that we be brought into a state of personal acceptance with Him. "Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God." Romans 8:5-8. There is something fearfully emphatic in the above representation. It shows not merely that men are enemies to God—but that their carnal minds are enmity itself—enmity in

the abstract. *Enemies* may be reconciled—but *enmity* cannot. A wicked *man* may become virtuous—but *vice* never can. Indeed, the only way to reconcile enemies is by destroying the enmity that exists between them. "We," says the apostle elsewhere, "who were once enemies, are reconciled to God by the death of his Son;" but he speaks of enmity as having been consumed or destroyed. Having "*abolished* in his flesh the enmity"—and having "*slain* the enmity thereby." The conclusion drawn from all this is inevitable, that those who are in the flesh—in their natural condition of enmity and alienation—cannot please God.

It is, however, cheering to know that if our state by nature is such that we cannot please God while we remain in it; yet that there is a state of grace in which we can, and that there is a way of translation from the one to the other. We are naturally guilty and depraved; and before anything we can do will be well-pleasing in God's sight, we must, as guilty creatures, be pardoned; and as depraved and polluted, we must be renewed. We are spiritually—to employ a familiar comparison—in the situation of a poor criminal in *prison*, who has been sentenced to death, and who is at the same time *infected* with some fatal disease. Now if such an one is only pardoned, he will soon die of the disease; and, on the other hand, if he is only cured of the disease, he must soon be executed. It is evident that he needs both—he must be *pardoned* and *cured*. And so with us. We require a double cure—we must be justified and sanctified; we must be freed from sin in its guilt, and from sin in its reigning power. Now the Savior does both. "This is He who came by water and blood;" by water to wash us from our impurities, and by blood to remove, by its sacrificial efficacy, the condemnation we have deserved. Now these two blessings should never be separated; what God has joined together let not man put asunder. "True religion," says John Newton, "stands upon two pillars—what Christ did *for* us, and what the Holy Spirit does *in* us. Most errors," he adds, "arise from an attempt to separate these two." Before, then, we can please God, our guilty

persons must be accepted, and our sinful hearts must be renewed.

Various things may be specified, with the possession and exercise of which God is declared to be well pleased. Of these one of the most prominent is **faith**. "But without faith it is impossible to please Him; for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." No state of mind can possibly be more offensive to God than that of unbelief. "Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because he has not believed the testimony God has given about his Son." Unbelief is a spirit which casts the foulest indignity upon the divine character. It is a spirit which would tarnish all the glory of His infinite perfections. It is a spirit which would rob every gem which decks His crown. It is a spirit which would pluck away every pillar that supports His throne. It is a spirit which would, not merely change the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things; but into the likeness of the great apostate spirit himself, of whom it is emphatically said that he is a *liar*, and the father of it. Unbelief, then, must be a spirit which God abhors; and faith, on the contrary, or implicit confidence in Him, is a spirit which He cannot but regard with approbation and delight.

Another particular we may mention is **gratitude**. "Whoever offers praise glorifies me;" it must therefore be pleasing to Him. "I will praise the name of God," says David, "with a song, and will magnify Him with thanksgiving. This also shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock that has horns and hoofs." Let us then present unto God thanksgiving, and pay our vows unto the Most High. Let our resolve be,

"I'll praise my Maker with my breath,  
And when my voice is lost in death,  
Praise shall employ my nobler powers;  
My days of praise shall ne'er be past,

While life, and thought, and being last,  
Or immortality endures."

A life of **holiness** is another thing that may be specified. "Whatever we ask," says John, "we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things which are pleasing in His sight." "We beseech you," says Paul, "and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as you have received of us how you ought to walk and to please God, so you would abound more and more." "The fruits of holiness," it has been strikingly observed, "which appear in God's people on earth, imperfect as they are, are on some accounts more pleasing to Him than those produced by the angels in heaven. Holiness in heaven is like flowers in spring, or like fruit in autumn, when they are expected; but holiness in a world so depraved as this, is like flowers and fruit in the depth of winter—or like the blossoms and almonds of Aaron's rod, which proceeded from a dead and sapless branch! When the delicious fruits of southern climates can be made by the gardener's skill to flourish in our northern regions, they are far more admired and praised than while growing in rich abundance in their native soil. Just so, when holiness, whose native land is heaven, is found in the comparatively frozen and barren soil of this world, which lies in wickedness, it is viewed by celestial beings with peculiar pleasure and surprise."

We see from this subject what should be the constant aim of every believer—it is to please God. Reader, study to show yourself approved unto Him. His favor is life; His loving-kindness is better than life. And may He whose approbation outweighs a world of censure, and which transcends a whole universe of applause, say to you, after this chequered scene is over, "Well done, good and faithful servant! Enter into the joy of your Lord!"

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**Unity—Divisions**

"Let party names no more  
The Christian world o'erspread;  
Gentile and Jew, and bond and free,  
Are one in Christ their Head."

"Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the  
bond of peace." Ephesians 4:3

"You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and  
quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you  
not acting like mere men?" 1 Corinthians 3:3

The Church of Christ is one. It is one family, one  
flock, one army, one vineyard, one body, one bride.  
Her God is one. Jesus, her husband and head, is one.  
Her privileges, her interests, her objects, her  
destination, are one. "There is one body, and one  
spirit, even as you are called in one hope of your  
calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God  
and Father of all, who is above all, and through all,  
and in you all."

And if the Universal Church is one, should not each of  
its separate branches be one? But are they one? To  
ask the question is a taunt and mockery. Oh! if tears  
could bedim those eyes which gaze on the glories of  
the beatific vision, would not the heavenly multitudes  
weep and wail at the sad spectacle of the mystical  
body of Christ—torn and mangled as it now is! And  
while Heaven might weep, hell might well rejoice, as  
she doubtless does, with fiendish triumph, at the  
sight! Her fallen legions are fully conscious that the  
Savior's purposes will be thwarted, as long as such a  
state of things shall continue; for He appeared "in the  
fullness of times, that He might gather together in  
one all things in Himself, both which are in heaven  
and which are on earth." The world which now lies in  
wickedness will continue to lie therein, until a divided  
Church is made one—one in spirit and affection at  
least, even if its members be not fully joined in the  
same mind and the same judgment.

Satan is well aware that the conversion of the world is  
suspended upon the unity of the Church; and hence

he leaves no means untried which are likely to embitter its various sections one against the other, that his reign might be thereby prolonged. And were Christians as fully aware of the same fact, would they not be likely to come closer together? Would they not be disposed to forget their trifling differences? Would they not be willing to lose them in the indulgence of a heavenly charity—in the noble oblivion of love? We might then hope; yes, we might entertain the assured conviction, that the set time to favor Zion had come—the time when God, even our own God, would abundantly bless her, and when all the ends of the earth would be brought to fear Him.

The above considerations are abundantly confirmed by the memorable prayer which the Savior offered on the night in which He was betrayed. Among the petitions which He then addressed to His Heavenly Father, this was one: "I do not pray for these alone—but for them also who shall believe on Me through their word; that they all might be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be one in Us—that *the world may believe that You have sent Me.*" The world will not believe before then. The one must precede the other. It is heaven's own plan; and to imagine that it will be otherwise, is to expect that the Savior's prayer will be frustrated, and that out of mere indulgence to our perverseness, to our cold carnalities and unhallowed bigotries.

How desirable is it, in order to hasten this blissful consummation, that Christians should have a deep and realizing impression of the spiritual relationship which exists between the whole body of the faithful. They are all children of the same Father, members of the same Son, habitations of the same Spirit. It is the same *mercy* that pitied them, the same *blood* that bought them, the same *grace* that sanctifies them, the same blessed *hope* that animates them! Are they not all walking by the same Scriptural *rule*, all pressing toward the same heavenly *mark*, all engaged in the same earthly *warfare*, all hated by the same vile *foes*? Is not the same blood now coursing through their veins, and are they not hereafter to spend

unending ages in the same heaven, surrounding the same throne, and singing the same song! How is it then that they keep so far apart from each other now? Whence those divisions and alienations which are, alas! so common? The poet asks,

"Is Christ divided? What can part  
The members from the Head?  
O how should those be one in heart,  
For whom one Savior bled.

Bound to one Lord by common vow,  
In one great enterprise;  
One faith, one hope, one center now,  
Our common home the skies.

O let us undivided be:  
Let party contests cease;  
Nor break the Spirit's unity,  
Nor burst the bond of peace.

Then shall the wondering world again,  
Admire how Christian's love,  
And know we do not bear in vain  
His name who pleads above.

We would further say, let us not give undue prominence to those minor points on which we differ. What are they, when compared with those great points on which we are agreed? They bear no more proportion to each other than did the mint, and anise, and cummin of old, to the weightier matters of the law. Need we ask, What is it that sanctifies and saves? What is it that cheers and supports when guilt presses down upon the conscience, or when care is corroding the heart, or when sorrow drives sleep from the eyes, or when death robs us of the friends we love, or when he is likely to lay his cold hand upon ourselves? Are they not those blessed truths in reference to which all who love the Savior are agreed? O, should there be more in matters of church government, and outward forms—to keep Christians apart; than there is in their common adoption, their

common justification, their common hopes and anticipations—to bring them together!

Reader, seek to promote in every way a spirit of greater love and unity among the followers of Christ. Mark those who cause divisions, and avoid them. Guard especially against every unhallowed propensity in your own breast, which may have the least tendency to produce the evils over which we mourn. "Lay aside all malice, and all deceit, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings," on the one hand: and "follow after the things which make for peace," on the other hand.

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### **Things of Earth—Things of Heaven**

"O what folly, O what madness!  
That my thoughts should go astray,  
After toys and empty pleasures—  
Pleasures only of a day!

This vain world, with all its trifles,  
Soon, alas! will be no more;  
There's no object worth admiring  
But the God whom I adore!"

"If you then are risen with Christ—seek those things which are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God." Col. 3:1.

"Whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who mind earthly things." Phil. 3:19.

The history of six thousand years has given indisputable evidence of the insufficiency of all earthly objects to yield true and satisfying enjoyment. Man has *needs* which no earthly riches can supply; he has *diseases* which no human skill can cure; he has *fears* which no mortal courage can quell; he has *debts* which no finite resources can discharge; and he has *miseries* which no earth-born sagacity can console.



In **earthly** things, to whatever extent they may be possessed, there is a lack of adaptation to yield real happiness. It is recorded of Caesar, that he exclaimed, when in possession of universal empire, "Is this all?" This clearly showed that his expectations were not answered. In the distance, it seemed something great and enviable for mighty nations to acknowledge his sway, and submit to his scepter; but when it was actually attained, his language was, "Is this all?" Reader, have you not often felt something similar to this? You may have set your heart upon some distant object; and oh! what were you not ready to give for its attainment! What sacrifices you made! What self-denial did you undergo! At length, perhaps, the desire of your heart was granted you. But was it what you expected? Were you not, on the contrary, led to exclaim, in the language of the disappointed emperor, "Is this all?"

So true is it—that the things of earth cannot satisfy the cravings of our immortal nature. Wealth, fame, learning, pleasure, domestic happiness—none of these things can do it. "Whoever drinks of these waters shall thirst again," as the Savior declared to the Samaritan woman; "but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst—but it shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life!"

But the things of earth, besides being **unsatisfying in their nature**, are, at best, **transitory in their duration**. What are riches? *Uncertain* is the epithet which the pen of inspiration employs in describing them. "Will you set your eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven." What is pleasure? Something that is only for a season. What is wisdom? More precious than rubies, if it is the wisdom which comes from above; but if it the wisdom of this world, it also is vanity, and will soon pass away. What is fame? Often a bubble, no sooner blown—than it bursts! Yes, the earth itself is only temporary.

With the things of **heaven**, however, it is far otherwise. The true believer is "begotten again unto a living hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an incorruptible and undefiled inheritance, which never fades away." Such was not the inheritance of many of the *angels*—they kept not their first estate—but left their own habitation. Such was not the inheritance of our first *parents* in Paradise; from their bowers, and happy walks and shades, they were banished, and that by God Himself, because of their disobedience to His just command. Such was not the inheritance of the *Jews* in Canaan, for the glory of all lands was made a desolation, and its guilty tribes have had to wander over the wide wide world, without a country or a home. Such is not the inheritance of the *man* of this world; his portion is in the present life; and that, as we have seen, will soon vanish away. But looking upward to yon glorious spheres, we can say,

"O you blessed scenes of *permanent* delight!  
Full above measure! lasting beyond bound!  
A perpetuity of bliss is bliss.  
Could you, so rich in rapture, fear an end,  
That ghastly thought would drink up all your joy,  
And quite unparadise the realms of light."

A Roman general, on one occasion, when elated by the splendors of a triumphal entrance into the imperial city, which had been awarded to him in honor of the victories he had won, exclaimed, "Ah, that it would continue!" But, alas! it did not continue. All the glittering pomp soon vanished. It floated away like a departing dream. And so with all earthly bliss, its reproach is, that it will not, and can not, continue. Had earthly things a character of abiding permanence belonging to them, men might with some semblance of reason make them the first and last objects of their desires and pursuits. Such a character, however, they do not possess. The fashion of this world passes away.

But, O blessed world! and O blessed beings! who, through much tribulation have reached it, never will

you have mournfully to say, "Ah, that it would continue!" This fullness of joy—this unclouded vision of God and the Lamb—this sweet fellowship with saints and angels—this *day* without a night—this *sky* without a cloud—this *sea* without a ruffle—these ravishing *melodies*—this seraphic transport and exulting *joy*—"Ah, that they would continue!" Well, continue they will, you blessed ones! and that forever. Eternal ages as they roll their everlasting rounds, will find you in full, yes, in constantly augmenting possession of all you now inherit. "Your sun shall no more go down, neither shall your moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be your everlasting light, and the days of your mourning shall be ended."

In a certain town, some few years ago, at a time of great commercial distress, two friends were one day conversing on what kind of property was safest at so critical a period. One of them said that he had not much confidence in the oils, nor did he much like bank-stock, and he expressed his doubts in reference to other investments. Having done so, he asked his friend, what kind he thought best? That friend was a Christian, and his reply showed where his treasure was, and where his heart was also. In the words of the apostle, already quoted, he answered, "an incorruptible and undefiled inheritance, which never fades away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." O secure, O lasting treasure! a treasure in the confident expectation of which the early Christians took joyfully the confiscation of their earthly all, knowing that they had this better and enduring substance. Reader, may their portion be yours! And then, whatever disasters may come, you will have nothing to fear.

"Set your affection then on things above, not on things on the earth." The prophet's expostulates, "Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfies not?" "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth," is the exhortation of Christ, "where moth and rust corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal."

O make not those things which *perish in the using*, the objects of your exclusive and supreme attention. Be assured that they build too low—who build *below* the skies! There are *durable* riches to be obtained, and that freely. All the blessings of the Gospel are everlasting. The salvation which the Lord Jesus procured shall be forever, and the righteousness which He wrought out shall not be abolished.

But, alas! how many are there who mind earthly things. With the great majority of our fellow creatures, such things are first and last, they are middle and end. The curse pronounced upon the serpent is fully verified in their case—"Upon their belly they go, and dust they eat all the days of their lives." It was over such characters that the apostle wept. He saw that they were enemies of the cross of Christ, inasmuch as its great object was unaccomplished in them; for they were not crucified to the world, nor the world crucified to them. The Lord Jesus "gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father." And unless we are thus delivered, His sufferings and death, as far as we are concerned, have been in vain!

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### **Timidity—Courage**

"Now we must fight if we would reign;  
Increase our courage, Lord!  
We'll bear the toil, endure the pain,  
Supported by Your word.

Must we be carried to the skies  
On flowery beds of ease;  
While others fought to win the prize,  
And swam through bloody seas?"

"The wicked flee when no man pursues; but the righteous are as bold as a lion." Proverbs 28:1.

"Only be strong, and very courageous." Joshua 1:7.

The Scriptures abound with instances of great moral courage. We have a memorable exhibition of this spirit in the case of *Daniel*. He was one who courted not the smiles, and who feared not the frowns of men. When he knew that the writing was signed, with a serenity and undauntedness of soul befitting a saint of the Most High God, he went to his prayer chamber as usual. In the prospect of a terrific death, his purpose continued unchanged; he did not attempt to conceal his devotions; he did not endeavor to resist or elude his enemies. A den of roaring lions could not damp his courage, nor cause him to swerve from the path of rectitude.

Think again of his *three young Hebrew companions*. When the impious and haughty monarch told them that if they worshiped not the image which he had set up they should be cast into a burning fiery furnace; what was their reply? "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king." Think of *Paul*, singing with his companion the high praises of God at midnight, in his gloomy dungeon, not knowing but that his life might be demanded the very next day. Think of *Luther* in after ages. When summoned to appear before the Diet of Worms, where it was likely that he would be exposed to the greatest danger, and when besought with the most urgent importunity by his friends to refrain from going, his well known language was, "I am called in the name of God to go, and go I would though there were as many devils in the place, as there are tiles upon the houses!" Think of the noble army of *martyrs*; see them standing undismayed, while the flames were kindling around them. Hear one of their number, a helpless female, exclaiming, "I cannot *dispute* for Christ; but I can *die* for Him!"—and into the flames she rushed. Here was courage of the noblest and sublimest kind—courage compared with which that of the warrior at the cannon's mouth deserves not to be mentioned for a moment.

We are not called upon, through gracious Providence, to give our bodies to be burned; to seal our testimony with our blood is an ordeal through which we, in this land of liberty, are not likely to pass. But it is still true that all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution. The *offence of the cross* has not yet ceased even among us. The gospel is now that peculiar thing which it was at the beginning; and its professors ought to be as much separated from a world lying in wickedness, as were the early believers. But let them be thus separated, and misrepresentation and ridicule are likely to be their portion. To the persecution of physical violence, none in this country are exposed; but the persecution of reproach and invective is not unknown—a species of persecution that is more appalling to some minds than the former. To be scoffed and *sneered at* is a very trying thing to many.

Not a few, especially among the young, are kept from following Christ by the fear of man—that fear which brings a snare. But should it be so? Where is the courage and dignity of such conduct? Reader, should the wit of the profane, the jest of the railer, cause you to disown the Savior, and make light of His salvation? "Who are you, that you should be afraid of a man that shall die, and forget the Lord your Maker?" What will the frowns of your companions be to you at the judgment bar? Will not the approbation of the Judge, then, be an ample compensation for their displeasure now? Fear not the reproach of men, neither be afraid of their revilings. Be not afraid of those who kill the body, even were their opposition to be carried thus far; for after that they have no more that they can do. But we will forewarn you whom you should fear; fear Him who power to destroy both soul and body in hell! Yes, we say unto you, fear Him!

Let the Christian especially aspire after such a spirit. Let the declaration of Solomon, "that the righteous is bold as a lion," be practically exemplified in the whole of his conduct. O, to be decided for God and for His cause! Let us fear Him—and let us fear none but Him. Let the approbation of *men* be a small thing with us;

but let the approbation of God be a great thing—yes, everything in our estimation. With good old Baxter, let us learn to say:

"Careless, myself a dying man,  
Of dying men's esteem;  
Happy, if you, O God, approve,  
Though all beside condemn."

And for the encouragement of His people, God has promised to be with them; and having Him on our side, we may well be unmoved, untterrified, of all that men or evil spirits can do unto us. This was the feeling of the Psalmist when he said, "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?" Almost innumerable are the exhortations given to the believer to fear not. In all ages, and under all circumstances, God has bidden him to be of good courage. O Lord, help me to trust You, and not be afraid. Say to my soul in the hour of distress, when perils may be surrounding me, when my enemies may be rising up against me, "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you; yes, I will help you; yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of my righteousness."

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### **Fruits of the Spirit—Works of the Flesh**

"Happy the heart where graces reign,  
Where love inspires the breast;  
Love is the brightest of the train.  
And strengthens all the rest."

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law." Gal. 5:22, 23.

"Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." 1 Peter 2:11.

Among the fruits of which the Apostle specifies is love; a grace that cannot be too earnestly sought, as its value cannot be too highly estimated. Its importance may be shown by several considerations. One is, that the Savior expressed His will on the subject in the form of a new and express law. "A new commandment I give unto you—That you love one another." As the great Head of the Church, possessing all authority in heaven and on earth, the Lord Jesus was empowered to enact whatever laws He pleased; it is, however, worthy of remark, that in the exercise of that high function, the only subject on which He chose formally to legislate was the one under consideration. But it may be said, was not a command given of old testament to the same effect? Was not the second table of the moral law included in the saying, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself?" How then could it be called a *new* commandment? To this we reply, that it is evident that the love which Christ inculcated was of a *different kind* of love to that which the law of Moses required. The love prescribed by the old law was that of *benevolence*, while the love prescribed by the new law is that of *delight*. The one was loving-kindness—that is, the love of the kind, or the love of man as man; the other is the love of man as a follower of Christ. And not merely are they different in their nature—but also as regards the considerations by which they are enforced; the great Legislator Himself, in the latter case, proposing His own example as the motive to, and the model of, obedience. "A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another; *as I have loved you*, that you also love one another."

Again, the importance of love appears from the pre-eminence given to it above all other gifts and graces. "And now abides faith, hope, love—these three; but the greatest of these is love." It is here shown that



*love is the richest gem which sparkles in the Christian's crown.*

Love is greater than either faith or hope in several respects. It is so, in the first place, **as it is the end for which the other two are bestowed**. The great design of the gospel is to re-stamp upon man the moral image of God; and if that image consists in one thing more than another, it is in love, for "God is love." Now, the salvation of the gospel is applied by faith, and to look for its completion is the work of hope; but love is the completion itself, it is that state of mind which it is the design of God in all His dispensations to produce. A building cannot be erected without scaffolding—but the building is of more importance than the scaffolding, being the end for which it was put up; and when the building is finished, the scaffolding is removed.

This leads us to observe, secondly, that love is greater than the other graces in point of **duration**. "Love never fails; but whether there are prophecies, they shall fail; whether there are tongues, they shall cease; whether there is knowledge, it shall vanish away." The shield of *faith* will be laid aside in heaven, for seeing and knowing will have succeeded to believing. And as faith will be turned to sight, so *hope* will be lost in full fruition. There will be no *submission* there, for the days of trial and mourning will be ended. There will be no *self-denial*, for there will be no cross to take up, and no burden to be borne. There will be no *watchfulness*, for there will be no enemy near; there will be no Canaanite left in the land; over the massive walls of the eternal city—no thief can ever climb, and through its adamantine gates no foe can ever enter. There will be no *prayer* there, for every need will have been supplied, every sorrow soothed, and every sin forgiven. But if these graces will be absent, *love* will be there; and not faint and feeble as here on earth—but in full vigor and maturity: it will be there, beaming in every eye, and burning in every breast, forever and ever. It is thus a grace that will be unending in its duration. If we

possess it here, it will ascend with us above the skies, to be the temper of our souls to all eternity.

There is another sense in which the pre-eminence of love appears. Faith and hope are comparatively selfish graces. We believe and hope for ourselves; but in the exercise of love we regard **the well-being of others**. Faith and hope are the channels by which the streams of joy and peace flow from God to us; but by love, we dispense of those streams to others. In the one case we are made the recipients of happiness; in the other we become its distributors. By the former we are made the heirs of salvation, to whom the angels of God minister; but by the latter we become ministering spirits ourselves, hushing the groans of creation, wiping away the tears of humanity, alleviating sorrow, and mitigating care on every hand, and leaving a blessing behind us wherever we go.

We may observe, once more, that the importance of this grace appears from the fact, that in the epistles addressed to the early churches, there is something about love, especially about brotherly love, in them all. Addressing the Romans, the apostle says, "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love;" and again, "Owe no man anything—but to love one another." If we turn to his first epistle to the Corinthians, we have one chapter entirely taken up with this topic, where its nature is explained, and its influence strikingly represented; and in the second epistle we find many affectionate appeals on the same subject. In the epistle to the Galatians, in addition to what is stated of the fruits of the Spirit, it is said, "For, brethren, you have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh—but by love serve one another." Addressing the Ephesians, he says, "Be followers of God, as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also has loved us, and has given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor." To the Philippians His language is, "For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the affections of Jesus Christ: and this I pray, that your love may

abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment." To the Colossians again, "We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which you have to all the saints." In the epistle to the Thessalonians, we have the emphatic words, "But as touching brotherly love, you need not that I write unto you; for you yourselves are taught of God to love one another." Among the many things which Timothy was exhorted to follow after, one of the first was love. Just so with the believing Hebrews—the apostle was for provoking them, and for their provoking each other to love; and in closing the epistle he says, "Let brotherly love continue." In perfect harmony with these exhortations of Paul, are those of Peter. "Seeing," is his language, "you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto sincere love of the brethren, see that you love one another with a pure heart fervently." To refer to the epistles of John would be needless. There is nothing but love there. With an affection worthy of him who leaned on the bosom of incarnate love and compassion, he beseeches us, with the overflowings of tender importunity, as little children, to love one another. Now from all this there is but one conclusion at which we can arrive, namely, that that which is thus so prominently exhibited, and so repeatedly enjoined, must be important in the highest possible degree.

True religion, in a word, is love, and love is true religion. It is because love prevails in heaven, that religion prevails there. It is because there is no love in hell, that there is no religion in hell. And it is in proportion as love prevails in this world, that true religion prevails.

But the fruits of the Spirit enumerated by the apostle are numerous and diversified. We may, however, in accordance with the above observations, regard each and all of the graces subsequently specified as so many modifications of the one we have been considering. What is joy—but love exulting! What is peace—but love reposing! What is long-suffering—but

love enduring! That it "suffers long, and is kind," the apostle, in another place, expressly declares. And in "gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance," we have what may be described as the amiability, the beneficence, the fidelity, the unostentatiousness, and the controlling influence of the same great principle. Or should it be thought that this representation is somewhat fanciful; no one can deny that if these several qualities are not actual modifications of love, yet that they are the inseparable adjuncts of it, and that where love abounds they cannot be absent.

With the fruits of the Spirit the apostle contrasts the fruits of the flesh. "This I say then," is his language, "walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." These evil passions and propensities we are to shun as resolutely as we are to seek the virtues, so lovely and of such good report, to which we have just referred. And how many are the considerations which should induce us to guard against those fleshly lusts which war against the soul! If we live after the flesh—if we yield our members as servants to uncleanness and to iniquity, the certain consequence will be death—a death which never dies. The word is gone forth and shall not return, "that the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars—shall have their part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone; which is the second death." May God, in His infinite mercy, deliver the reader from such a doom!

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## Murmuring—Submission

"Peace, all our angry passions, then,  
Let each rebellious sigh  
Be silent at His sovereign will,  
And every murmur die."

"Why does a living man complain?" Lam. 3:39.

"It is the Lord; let Him do what seems good to Him."  
1 Sam. 3:18.

Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards. And what we are born to as *men*, we are born again to as *Christians*. We are not therefore to think that any strange thing has happened to us, if sorrow, in any of its multifarious forms, befalls us here below, since the same afflictions are accomplished in our brethren that are in the world.

"If you endure chastening," says the apostle, "God deals with you as with sons." But how should we endure it? It should be done in an *inquiring* spirit. We ought to be anxious to know the cause of the visitation. With the patriarch of old, our language should be, "Show me why You contend with me?" It should be done also in a *prayerful* spirit: for, "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray." And it should be done especially in a *submissive* spirit. We should not merely hear the rod—but kiss it. Instead of cherishing any feelings of murmuring and rebellion, under the afflictive dispensations of God's providence, we should humble ourselves under His mighty hand, that He may exalt us in due time.

And how many considerations are there which should induce and promote such a spirit! If we compare our *sufferings* with our *deserts*, shall we not find abundant reason to banish every complaint, and hush into silence every murmur? Should we complain of light and momentary trouble—when we deserve to be tormented in hell forever? Should we complain of the chastisements of a gracious Father—when we have rendered ourselves obnoxious to the sentence of an

angry Judge? Should we complain that God sits by us as a refiner to *purify*—when He might be a consuming fire to *destroy*? Should we complain that we have to pass under the rod of His love—when we might have been set up as a mark for the arrows of His indignation, the poison whereof might drink up our spirits? Could we look into the lake of fire, and have a sight of the wretched beings who are there writhing in deathless agonies—we should thank God for the most miserable condition on earth, if it were only sweetened with the hope of escaping that place of torment.

Let us think, again, of the many mercies of which we have been, and still continue to be, the subjects. "And shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" not moral evil, for that cannot come from Him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; but what our old writers call *penal* evil, or the corrections with which He visits the children of men. It is recorded that a slave, on one occasion, was presented by his master with a bitter melon, which was immediately eaten by him. Seeing this the master asked how he could eat so nauseous a fruit? He replied, "I have received so many favors from you that it is no wonder that I should, for once in my life, eat a bitter melon from your hand." This answer, so striking and generous, affected the master deeply—so much so, that he gave him his liberty as a reward for the noble spirit he displayed. And is there not a lesson for us to learn from this? Should we not receive our afflictions from the Divine hand with similar feelings? Should we forget our blessings, which are so many—and dwell upon our crosses, which are so few?

It would be well also for us to compare our sufferings with what others have had to endure. The people of God have been, in all ages, a suffering people; and one and another of them could say with special emphasis, "I am the man that has seen affliction." There was *Job*. So pre-eminent was his character that it was said of him by God Himself, that there was none like him in all the earth; and yet in a single day he was cast down from the highest pinnacle of

prosperity to the lowest depths of adversity. In the morning he was the richest man in all the East. With patriarchal dignity he looked round upon the joyous circle of seven sons and three daughters; but in the evening he found himself without flock, or herd, or child. In the morning he flourished like a stately cedar, with its verdant branches spread around but in the evening, as if struck by the lightning's flash, his spreading honors are all scattered to the winds, and he stands like a withered trunk, solitary, and bare, and blasted. O what are *our* troubles compared with *his*? And did he murmur? No, he adored the hand that smote him; prostrate in the dust he exclaimed, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord!"

Take the apostle *Paul* again. O what had he to pass through! Bonds and imprisonments everywhere awaited him. Perils and privations of every kind he had to endure. But none of these things moved him, neither did he count his life dear to himself, so that he might finish his course with joy.

But let us turn from the servant to the *Master*, and consider Him. What was His condition during His earthly sojourn? He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, notwithstanding His infinite dignity and unsullied purity. "We suffer justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing amiss." Our sufferings are only partial; but He suffered in every way. Ours are only occasional; for hours and days of pain—we have weeks and months of pleasure. But His sufferings were uninterrupted—they accompanied Him from the manger to the cross. What He endured, especially during the closing scenes of His memorable career, passes all comprehension. Hear His heart-rending cry, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." "And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly, and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground."

O shall we compare our sufferings with His? To do so would be to weigh a mote against a mountain. Well may we say—

"Now let our pains be all forgot,  
Our hearts no more repine;  
Our sufferings are not worth a thought,  
When, Lord, compared with Thine."

Let us think much, then, of what the Savior endured, if we are for bearing our trials with submission. We should consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest we be wearied and faint in our minds. The disciple, we must remember, is not above his Master, nor the servant above his Lord. And would you, Christian, wish to fare better than Him? Can the common soldier complain when he sees the commander enduring the same privations? Jesus Christ was a man of sorrows, and are you not to taste the bitter cup? He was acquainted with grief, and are you to be a stranger to it? Would you wish for the friendship of that world, whose malice He had to bear continually? Would you have nothing but *ease*—where He had nothing but trouble? Would you have nothing *honor*—where He had nothing but disgrace? Would you *reign* with Him hereafter—and not suffer with Him here? O say, then, with Him, "The cup which My Father has given Me—shall I not drink it?" And as you drink yours, O, think of His.

"How bitter that cup, no heart can conceive,  
Which He drank quite up, that sinners might live;  
His way was much rougher and darker than mine,  
Did Jesus thus suffer—and shall I repine?"

Another consideration that should produce a spirit of submission is, that **our sorrows are not to last forever**. "For surely," says the wise man, "there is an end; and your expectation shall not be cut off." That end is certain. Many a mariner has been ready to hail a desired haven which he never reached; and many a warrior has reckoned with confidence upon a victory which he never obtained. "We looked," said the Jews, "for light, and behold darkness; for peace, and behold



trouble." But, O you suffering saint—it will not be so with you! Your deliverance from sorrow is as sure as the purpose, the promise, the covenant, the oath of God can render it. And not merely is it certain—but it is near. "For yet a little while, and He who shall come will come, and will not tarry." A few weeks, or months, or years more, and all will be peace and quietness and assurance forever. And, it must be added, that that end will be unspeakably glorious. "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." There will be no shattered frame—no emaciated countenance—no furrowed cheek—no faltering voice in those blessed regions. There every eye shall sparkle with delight—every countenance will beam with ineffable satisfaction—every pulse will beat high with immortality—and every frame will be able to sustain without weariness an eternal weight of glory.

O child of sorrow, think of these things. Be anxious to feel their hallowing influence, that resignation may have her perfect work, and that no murmuring spirit may be indulged in, even for a moment. In the sweet strains of the poet, we would say,

"Whate'er your lot, whoe'er you be,  
Confess your folly, kiss the rod;  
And in your chastening sorrows see  
The hand of God.

A bruised reed He will not break;  
Afflictions all His children feel;  
He wounds them for his mercy's sake,  
He wounds to heal.

Humbled beneath His mighty hand,  
Prostrate His providence adore;  
'Tis done! arise—He bids you stand,  
To fall no more."

### Lukewarmness—Zeal

"Dear Lord, and shall we ever live  
At this poor dying rate?  
Our love so faint, so cold to You,  
And Yours to us so great?"

"For you are bought with a price; therefore glorify  
God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."  
1 Cor. 6:20.

"I would that you were cold or hot; so then because  
you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will  
spue you out of My mouth." Rev. 3:15,16.

It is an undoubted—but mournful truth, that God is not served with diligence and zeal by the great mass of His professing people. There are many who are at ease in Zion; they are settled on their lees, like Moab of old. What if such were to keep a diary of their doings—what if they were to write down every day what they have done for God and His cause! What a record, we have reason to fear, would it be! What awful blanks would be presented on one page after another! Concerning how many *days* would there have to be written, "Nothing!" Concerning how many weeks, "Nothing!" Concerning how many *months*, "Nothing!" And alas! in instances which are far from being rare, concerning how many *years*, "Nothing!" Nothing to any purpose, nothing done with full resolvedness and devotedness of heart. O how solemn the thought! And it is still more solemn to think that such a register *is* kept—and that by One who knows our negligences and shortcomings far better than we do ourselves!

There are many considerations which should constrain us to devote ourselves unreservedly to the service of God; but the chief is the obligations we are under for redeeming love and mercy. "You are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's," "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His

poverty might be rich." "He who spared not His own Son—but delivered Him up for us all; how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" With equal propriety the apostle might have drawn another inference—an inference to which the Christian, when his heart is in a right state, cannot fail to respond. If He spared not His own Son—but delivered Him up for us all; *how should we not for Him also, freely give Him all things—wealth, labor, talents, yes, life itself?* While we turn aside to see that great sight—while gazing, in the exercise of faith, on that spectacle of matchless love and grace which was exhibited on Calvary—has not our language been—

"See, from His head, His hands, His feet,  
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!  
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,  
Or thorns compose so rich a crown!"

And then, moved and melted by the amazing scene,  
have we not been compelled to add—

"Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were a present far too small;  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all."

Our reasonable service it is, truly, to make such a surrender; but while we are ready to acknowledge our obligations, how feebly in general do we fulfill them!

In the apostles and early Christians, we have a striking specimen of the manner in which we ought to serve the Lord Christ. O what labors were theirs! What sacrifices! What sleepless vigilance! What overwhelming, all-consuming zeal! And has the Savior done less for us—than He did for them? Were the sufferings He bore for us less ignominious, His pangs less piercing, His blood of less value? Are the blessings He bestows upon us less precious—the salvation He offers us less glorious? Is the heaven He opens to our view less attractive, its rest less sweet, its joys less ravishing, its music less melodious? All that He did for

them—He has done for us; the blessings He bestowed upon them—He is willing to bestow upon us. The love He bears towards us and the blissful prospects He sets before us, are the same. Must there not be then the same obligations in both cases; and should there not therefore be a similar consecration?

And how powerful an argument for devotedness to the service of God, does the *brevity of life* supply! Should not the words of the great Master be ever sounding in our ears, "Work while it is day, for the night comes when no man can work." Should not the exhortation of the wise man be practically exemplified in our whole course and conduct, "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave where you go."

That was a noble reply that was once made by a Mohammedan hero on the field of battle. Although greatly fatigued by over-exertion, and well near fainting from loss of blood, occasioned by the wounds he had received, he was yet about securing other means for rushing into the thickest of the fight. A friend who stood by, perceiving the state he was in, earnestly entreated him to retire, and permit someone else to occupy his post. The veteran stood for a moment, and, pointing with his sword to the ground, he exclaimed, "This is the place for labor;" then lifting up his hand towards his imaginary paradise above, he added, "And there is the place for rest!" How beautiful an answer! How sublime a sentiment! Reader, adopt the words as your motto. Ever remember that *this* is the place for labor, and that *there* is the place for rest. Be assured that as you live for God here, so will you secure, not on the ground of personal merit—but on that of His free and gracious promise—endless repose hereafter.

It has been remarked, and the assertion is doubtless true, although it sounds somewhat startling, that there is one privilege enjoyed by the people of God on earth that the saints in heaven do not possess. It is that of being instrumental in doing good to their

fellow-creatures. The mighty warriors of the cross, who have reached their everlasting home, will not be favored any more in this way. Luther cannot now lift up his voice against the abominations of Popery. Whitefield cannot cross the Atlantic to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ. Howard cannot dive into the depths of dungeons, nor plunge into the infection of hospitals. All the ranks of the glorified rest from their labors; their work is done. It is true that they serve God in His temple; but the service in which they are engaged appears to be that of worship, adoration, and praise. Does not this consideration loudly call upon us to make the most diligent use of all the opportunities we enjoy of doing good while we possess them. In a short time they will be gone forever.

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

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### **Purity of Heart—Nominal Profession**

"My dear Redeemer and my Lord,  
I read my duty in Your Word;  
But in Your life the law appears  
Drawn out in living characters.

O be my pattern, make me bear  
More of Your gracious image here;  
Then God the Judge shall own my name,  
Among the followers of the Lamb."

"Not everyone who says unto me, *Lord, Lord*, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven." Matthew 7:21.

"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." Hebrews 12:14.

The character given of our great High Priest is, that He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." By spotless, stainless purity, was He distinguished. In Him no spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing was found. As "the man Christ Jesus," the divine law was in His heart, and by His whole career, from the manger to the cross, did He magnify it and make it honorable. To all its requirements, He rendered uninterrupted and complete obedience. How ardently were His affections fixed upon His Heavenly Father; He had no other God before Him. No idol of wealth, or ambition, or vanity, had any ascendancy over Him. How exalted were His conceptions of the nature of God; the worship He paid Him was spiritual worship; He did not make any graven image, nor the likeness of anything in heaven above or the earth beneath. How did He reverence the name of God; it was a name dearer to Him than all other names; and the dishonor cast upon it by an ungodly world vexed His righteous soul, and filled it with holy indignation. How did He sanctify the day of sacred rest, delighting in its services, and consecrating its hours and moments to works of love and mercy. How did He honor His earthly parents as well as His Heavenly Father. Notwithstanding His exalted character, He cheerfully submitted Himself to them; and when in the agonies of death, He recognized and hallowed the earliest and dearest of nature's ties, and committed His mother to the charge of the beloved disciple. How full was His heart of love and tenderness to every human being! No one ever had so many enemies to encounter—but He never conceived a single purpose of hatred or ill-will against them. Although they were for killing Him, yet for their cruelty He returned nothing but kindness. How free was He from everything licentious, both in practice and in thought. No Bathsheba's beauty ever kindled an unchaste desire in Him. From the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes—He was entirely free. And as with the other precepts of the law—between Him and all injustice, and all falsehood, and all desires after the possessions of others, there was the farthest remove. Upon the tablet of His heart the whole of the ten commandments were engraved, and all were

embodied, in their spirit and in their letter, in His outward conduct.

As the Great Teacher come from God, He preached to the people the gospel of the kingdom; setting forth with matchless eloquence, the *doctrines* they were to believe, and the *virtues* they were to manifest. *His life was a living commentary upon the truths which He taught.* Every virtue that He preached—He practiced. Did He preach separation from the world? O how separate was He from it Himself. He lived above the world. Its forms and fashions, its pomps and pleasures had no influence over him. Did He preach humility? Never was one so humble as He. They were sincere words which He uttered, when He said, "I am meek and lowly in heart." Did he preach patience and forbearance? "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent—so He opened not His mouth." "When He was reviled, He reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not—but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously." Did He preach devotedness and zeal? It was His food and drink to do the will of His Father who was in Heaven. He went about—not for purposes of ease and enjoyment, not to admire the wonders of creation, or the treasures of art—but for the single object of doing good. Did He preach the necessity and importance of devotion?

"Cold mountains and the midnight air  
Witnessed the fervor of His prayer."

After spending the day with men in uninterrupted labors for their temporal and spiritual well-being, He often spent the night with God, seeking His face, and imploring His blessing. Did He preach love? Greater love than His was never shown. His tears, His agonies, His bloody sweat, His cross and passion, His life and death—all proclaim, "*Behold how He loved us!*" In every particular there was the fullest harmony between His *precepts* on the one hand, and His *practice* on the other.

Child of God! we call upon you to turn aside and see this great sight. A marvelous thing it is to see One in our nature "who did no sin, neither was any deceit found in His mouth." Gaze, then, with adoring wonder, upon Him. By the eye of faith behold Him as the Lamb of God—a Lamb without blemish and without spot.

"Looking unto Jesus" is one of the most important exhortations contained in the Word of God. And there are two aspects in which we are to regard Him, while so doing. We are, first, to look to Him as our *substitute* dying in our stead, giving Himself for us as an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor. And we are to look to Him, secondly, as our great *exemplar*, for He left us an example that we should follow His steps. But it is especially in His *purity* that we are to aspire after conformity to Him. Those who have hope in Him as their surety, are to purify themselves even as He is pure.

To be in Christ by a mere outward name will avail us nothing. We may carry the lamp of an outward profession—but if destitute of the oil of grace we shall never enter in to the marriage supper of the Lamb. Those only are savingly in Him—whose chief aim and object is to walk as He walked. If we are united to Him by a living faith, there is now, and there will be to us on the great day, no condemnation; but the practical proof that this blessedness is ours consists in walking, not after the flesh but after the Spirit.

What then, reader, should be your petition, and what should be your request? It should be, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." It should be, "Sanctify me wholly, and let my whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless, unto the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ." It is said of the King's highway, that it shall be called the way of holiness; and the truth cannot be too frequently reiterated, that we receive the grace of God in vain, unless we are made inwardly and outwardly holy.



All the truths and **doctrines** of the gospel have immediate reference to this great object. Think of those ancient purposes which were formed in the solitudes of eternity before men or angels were created. In many respects they transcend our loftiest conceptions; but, however mysterious in their nature, in their design they are exceedingly clear. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, *that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.*" With the purposes of God connect the gracious call of God: "For as He which has called you is holy, so be you holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be holy, for I am holy."

With the **promises** of God it is so likewise. They are given that we may thereby "perfect holiness in the fear of God." And so with the **afflictive dispensations** of His providence. *It is by affliction that God separates the sin which He hates—from the soul which He loves!* He chastens us for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. And with the preceding particulars we are especially to connect the death and sacrifice of the Redeemer. "He gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Thus all God's dispensations, both in providence and grace, have direct reference to the purification of His people.

"The desire of *happiness*" it has been said, "is natural; but the desire of *holiness* is supernatural"—it is not what man's carnal mind will aspire after. Have you, reader, any desires after holiness? If you have, cherish them more and more. Then existence is to be regarded as a token for good. We would say, for the encouragement of the weak and doubtful, that there may be holiness—even in the desire of holiness; that there may be grace—in the desire of grace; as, doubtless, there is sin in the desire of sin.

How delightful is the thought that heaven is a land of perfect holiness. The good work, begun in the day of conviction, will then be complete. The mournful cry, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death," will not be heard there; for over all the principles of indwelling corruption a final victory will be gained. To one, in the days of His flesh, and she a guilty one, the Savior said, "Go, and sin no more." But what will be His language to His people as they are received in through the gates into the eternal city? He will say, not "go, and sin no more"—but "come, and sin no more!" O blessed prospect! O transporting thought!—to sin no more—to be done forever with it—done with it in all its deceitful forms, and in all its woeful consequences!

"There we shall see His face,  
And never, never sin;  
There from the rivers of His grace,  
Drink endless pleasures in!"

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### **Life Everlasting—The Second Death**

"You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand there are pleasures for evermore!" Psalm 16:11.

"What fruit had you then in those things whereof you are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death." Romans 6:21.

Those who walk in the footsteps of Jesus in this world, have a prospect ineffably glorious awaiting them hereafter. They have now to pass, it may be, through much that is painful; but were those sufferings a thousand-fold greater than they are, they would not be worthy to be compared with that "eternal weight of glory" of which the apostle speaks. If the believer's condition were that of the most extreme distress and poverty; if not a single beam of light were to break in upon his gloomy dungeon; if

not a single drop of consolation were mingled with his bitter cup; if he had to travel through this waste wilderness amid perpetual assaults and alarms, without a moment's rest or safety—yet the *end* to which his manifold tribulations conduct him, will make ample amends for all.

The end of the Christian's toils and trials is variously represented; but one of the most frequent and emphatic expressions which the inspired writers employ, is "everlasting life." To attempt to unfold the full signification of this phrase would be a fruitless effort. Brief as it is, it has depths of meaning which baffle all our powers of conception. But it is evident—taking a mere negative view of the subject—that in the state of being referred to, death will be a thing altogether unknown. This is dying world. Here death reigns, and that with a sway so absolute and universal, that nothing can resist or stand before him. The *strength* of man cannot—the whole of his energies are vain; death stamps a cruel mockery on them all. The *art* of man cannot—the physician himself is a dying creature, and death may seize him in his iron grasp, even while attempting to preserve the life of others. The varied *conditions* of man cannot—on the high and low alike he inflicts an equal humiliation. Here the mightiest conqueror is vanquished, and the proudest of monarchs finds himself a slave. The tenderest *sympathies* of man cannot. The husband would gladly live to protect his wife from the crude assaults of an evil world; the parent would not leave his children orphans in a region where the law of kindness is so feebly felt. Death's command, however, is given—and it must be obeyed. But there is a world where "there shall be no more death!"

But there is more than the *exclusion of death* embodied in the expression. In heaven there will be not merely life—but *life of the highest kind*. Every element of bliss will it embrace. There will be perfect *knowledge*, and perfect *purity*, and perfect *peace*, and perfect *liberty*, and perfect *love*; and all these combined will constitute perfect *life!* And if, with its

glorious nature, we connect its boundless duration—unending ages, far from producing any symptoms of decrepitude and decay—but contributing to preserve and augment, as they roll their ceaseless rounds, the blooming freshness and vigor of perpetual youth and beauty—we shall then have some faint idea of the import of the apostle's words, when he said—"You have your fruit unto holiness, AND THE END EVERLASTING LIFE!"

In contrast with the final outcome of the Christian's career, we are reminded of the fearful termination of the course pursued by the ungodly. Many representations are given of sin—but they all point to one result—namely death. Is sin a *way*? It leads to death. Is it a *work*? Its wages is death. Is it a *conception*? It brings forth death. It is unprofitable in its nature here, and most fearful in its consequences hereafter, for "the end of those things is death!" Yes, thoughtless sinner, the things in which you indulge, and which you have been so often exhorted to abandon—their end is death! The end of gratifying your sinful passions—of loving this present evil world—of trifling with eternal realities—of rejecting the Savior, and despising the blessings of His grace—is death—a death which never dies!

But Jesus came to deliver us from the bitter pains of eternal death. And by believing in Him the vilest sinner may be saved. He is the resurrection and the life; and those who are made partakers of Him, however aggravated their offences, shall not die eternally.

*"I have set before you life and death,"* was the language of Moses, when addressing the children of Israel. Reader, the same things are now set before you, and that in a far clearer light, and with much more solemn sanctions than they were set before the assembled tribes of old. And why are they set before you? It is that you may be led earnestly and diligently to seek the one; and that you may as earnestly and diligently endeavor to, shun the other.