Luke - Commentaries by Hugh Henry Snell

Streams of Refreshing From the Fountain of Life, Jesus in Company With a Religious Man and a Sinner

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And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner. And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also? And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace (Luke 7:36-50).

In this brief narrative, we have recorded the ways of Jesus when in company with a sinner, a religious man (Simon the Pharisee), and others that sat at meat with Him.

The circumstances were very simple. The Pharisee, like religious people in our day, had a certain respect for one who had the reputation of being a prophet, or a teacher sent from God. Jesus was therefore an object of interest to him, though he knew Him not as the Son of God, the Savior of sinners. It is lamentable how many seem to make the Lord, or even the Bible, a matter of interest, instead of being a matter of salvation. The Pharisee had invited the Lord to eat with him, and as He came, not to judge the world, but to save, He accordingly went. While there, a notoriously wicked woman came into the house, and, among all the guests, her heart singled out the Lord as the one who alone could meet her need; she cast herself down at His feet behind Him, and it was evident that her soul-distress was very considerable. This fact was enough to appeal loudly to the conscience of the religious Pharisee. He was surprised at his guest allowing a woman of that character to touch Him, so that he really began to suspect whether he had not been estimating Him too highly in thinking Him to be a prophet. This opened the way for the Lord of glory to pour forth, in the presence of them all, the blessed testimony of divine grace — the grace of God which bringeth salvation — and to manifest the fact that He came, not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Simon little thought that his guest was the Son of God. Little either did he suspect that his heart and conscience were laid bare to the eyes of Him whom he had desired to eat with him. The Pharisee feared to tell out his thoughts; but

he spake within himself, saying this man, if He were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth Him: for she is a sinner (Luke 7:39).

Yes, he spake within himself; but the Lord searches the heart. He can read the inmost thought. All is naked to His eye; and He declares that every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart is only evil, and that continually (Gen. 6:5). Such is man before the eye of God — only and continually evil. But Simon, like many others, thought himself righteous, and therefore he despised this sinful woman; he was evidently grieved to see her in his house, and was astonished that his guest should have allowed such a person to touch Him. He marvelled how Jesus could welcome such a sinner; and it is a wonder to unbelieving hearts still, because they think that it is religious or good people that Christ embraces; and they do not believe the blessed fact, that Christ died for the ungodly, and that He saves sinners — guilty, hell-deserving sinners.

How does the Lord meet these unbelieving and self-righteous thoughts of the blind Pharisee? In perfect wisdom, gentleness, and kindness, He says,

Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on (Luke 7:40).

And then, if I mistake not, He draws a portrait of both the sinner and the Pharisee as an appeal to this self-righteous conscience.

A certain creditor had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both (Luke 7:41, 42).

As much as to say, Suppose, then, that it be true that this woman is an open transgressor of God's laws, and that her flagrant sins are manifest, so that she is considered ten times as great a violater of right principles as some others, and call her a five hundred pence debtor; and then suppose that little can be said of Simon as to outward misconduct; suppose even that his transgressions against outward morality are few, and seldom repeated, so that he is only a fifty pence debtor; still, the fact is, that whether the debt be little or much, both are so thoroughly bankrupt, as to have nothing whatever to pay their creditor's demand. This is most important; because it is not now a question of a person being a great sinner, or a little sinner; the question is, Are your sins forgiven? How can you meet God on the judgment of your sins? for you are in debt, and cannot pay. The answer is, that God is the God of all grace, and, frankly, unasked, proclaims forgiveness in pity and mercy, because you cannot liquidate any portion of the debt yourself. This is grace — God in rich mercy forgiving sins,

and justly so too, on the ground of the atoning death of His beloved Son.

Christ died for the ungodly (Rom. 5:6).

He suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God (see 1 Pet. 3:18).

Then the Lord appeals to Simon as to which would love the forgiving creditor most; for the prostrate woman was lavishing, as it were, her grateful heart over the sacred feet of her newly-found Savior. To this question he answered,

I suppose that he to whom he forgave most (Luke 7:43).

This is clear enough: hence the Savior said,

Thou hast rightly judged (Luke 7:43).

The principles of divine grace and truth being thus laid down, the application follows; and the Lord having drawn a portrait, bringing each guilty and undone before God, alike in need, alike dependent on the free mercy of God, now shows the difference between a soul that apprehends Him as the Savior of sinners, and one, however religious, who knows Him not. How wonderfully skillful was this perfect Preacher in using the truth; for Simon needed to be awakened to a sense of his guilt, and the hollowness of his religious pretensions; the woman needed to be comforted, and filled with that joy and peace which the Savior brought for broken-hearted, sin-convicted people.

He turns then to the woman, but still addresses the Pharisee. Directing Simon's attention to the woman, He says,

I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet (Luke 7:44):

that is, you have not even shown me a common mark of respect and attention:

but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss

— did not salute me with an ordinary mark of affection:

but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment (Luke 7:44, 46).

Thus the blessed Lord shows Simon how much there was in the ways of this despised, sinful woman superior to himself, and, as He afterwards teaches, the spring of all is love — the fruit of a heart moved with gratitude to the Lord. Because of deep-felt need, she clung to Him as the alone Savior, and knew that He only could make her crimson sins white as wool. She had found Him. Her soul had been longing after personal dealing with this Friend of sinners, and now she had found Him, she counted Him worthy of the costliest service. The alabaster box was broken, His feet anointed, after being bathed with tears of grateful love, and wiped with the hairs of her head. Her love was the fruit of forgiveness of her many sins. She therefore loved much. Hence Jesus added,

Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little (Luke 7:47).

But further. The Lord thus far has only addressed Himself to Simon. The woman seems to be all this time lying at His feet. She must be comforted, and learn from the Lord Himself that her filthiness is cleansed, her iniquity pardoned. Therefore Jesus said unto her,

Thy sins are forgiven (Luke 7:48).

Nor is this all; He again addresses Himself to her —

Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace (Luke 7:50).

We have here three present blessings of eternal importance. Present forgiveness of sins, present salvation, present peace. If we had met this woman the next day, and said to her, "Are your sins forgiven? are you saved?" what would have been her reply? "Yes, I have forgiveness; I am saved." And then, if asked, "Are you quite sure that your sins are forgiven?" would she not have said, "Yes, quite sure, because the Savior told me so; and His word can never fail!"

It is present peace, present forgiveness, present salvation, that so many are denying in our day. They say that we cannot know these things till we come to die. But we have seen what the Lord taught; and there are many more Scripture testimonies to the same effect; and the Scripture cannot be broken. The Lord certainly gave this woman the fullest warrant for taking her stand as a saved person, and that, too, in the way of faith.

Thy faith hath saved thee (Luke 7:50).

It was not her tears, the ointment, or anything else that saved, blessed fruits as they were; but Jesus alone is the Savior, and those who accept Him are perfectly secure. It was not doctrines about Christ, or religious duties, or prayers, or anything else, but Christ Himself to whom she had clung, and known as her very own Savior. It was Himself, the Son which came forth from the Father, whom she had made her refuge, and in whom alone her confidence rested. Blessed sample of simple faith! Blessed testimony, too, of the reality of present forgiveness of sins, present salvation, and present peace, leaving no room for fear or doubt, or a moment's misgiving, as to the security of that soul whose simple trust is in the Lord Jesus, the Savior of lost, guilty sinners.

But those who sat at meat could no longer be silent. Man hates grace. He cannot bear the free, unmerited love of God.

Who is this,

they said,

that forgiveth sins also?(Luke 7:49).

Yes, who is this? That has always been the question, and so it is still.

Who is this?

He was in the world, the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not.

The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth (John 1:14).

He said,

I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father (John 16:28).

He died upon the cross to save sinners, and having finished the work, God raised Him from the dead, and exalted Him to His own right hand in heaven.

After He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God: from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool (Heb. 10:12, 13).

Death of the Cross, Death of the Cross: No. 2

"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Luke 23:34

That Jesus would make " intercession for the transgressors," was prophesied by Isaiah seven hundred years before its actual fulfillment; as also that He would be so despised and rejected as to be "'numbered with the transgressors/' when He " poured out his soul unto death." His perfect patience and unfailing meekness were also foretold; for of Him, on whom Jehovah had laid the iniquity of us all, it was said, " He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." Nor was the prophetic testimony silent as to His trial at the judgment-seat of Pilate, His death, and burial; for it is written, " He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death." Men who preferred a robber, like Barabbas, to Jesus, so that they all cried out, " Not this man, but Barabbas," treated the Son of God as if He were a wicked man in crucifying Him between two thieves, and taking Him down from the cross, and burying Him that day, putting Him into " his grave with the wicked;" yet the body of Jesus was laid in the sepulcher of " a rich man," Joseph of Arimathea, an honorable counselor, and a good man and a just.

Not only was it foretold that the Son of man should be crucified, that His hands and His feet should be pierced, but it was also declared that not one of His bones should be broken; though He would say, "all my bones are out of joint." (Psalm 22:14.) And so exactly did the fulfillment agree with the prophetic word, that, though the legs of the thieves were broken according to the customary mode, they did it not to Jesus. When they came to Him they found that He was dead already; and this was the reason assigned for not breaking His legs. But God was above all. His purpose must be exactly carried out. His word had gone forth fifteen hundred years before that it should not be, and it was not; though men have no idea that in what they did, or in what they did not, the word of God was being fulfilled. When God declared His mind by Moses about the paschal lamb, which we know was a striking type of the Lamb of God, He said, "Neither shall ye break a bone thereof." (Exod. 12:46; Numb. 9:12.) Therefore it could not be, for the scripture cannot be broken. The exact fulfillment is thus recorded in John's gospel. The Jews "besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs; but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.... For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken; and again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced." (Chap. 19:31-37.)

Moses also wrote concerning His burial, and that He would be taken down from the tree on the same day as His crucifixion. Having been made a curse for us, " for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree/' it was ordered that the body should be buried that same day; which we know was in the case of our Lord literally fulfilled: though the reason assigned for so doing was the preparation of the sabbath, and that sabbath being an high day. The prophet said, " If a man.... be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree: his body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day." (Deut. 21:22, 23.) John, in his gospel, referring to this, says, "The Jews, therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day (for that sabbath day was an high day), besought Pilate.... After this Joseph of Arimathea.... besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore and took the body of Jesus.....Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulcher, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus, therefore, because of the Jews' preparation day." (John 19:31-42.)

It would be most interesting and profitable, did our limits admit of it, to trace in scripture the prophecies concerning our Lord's person—the Virgin's Child, Immanuel; His birth at Bethlehem; His life of sorrow and grief; His miracles; His rejection—the Stone which the builders refused; His betrayal for thirty pieces of silver by one who had eaten bread with Him; His death by crucifixion, with transgressors, but He as an offering for sin; His burial the same day, and laid in a rich man's grave; His resurrection on the first day of the week, "the morrow after the sabbath;" His glorification and session on the right hand of Jehovah; His priestly service; His coming again in judgment, to restore Israel as His own nation, and His reigning on David's throne, when u the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." (Isa. 11:9.) A consideration of scripture on these points certainly shows how much it abounds with instruction concerning Christ; and the observation of the accuracy with which much has been already fulfilled, warrants us to expect that what remains will have its accomplishment with equal accuracy.

In reference, however, to what is now more immediately before us, " the death of the cross," we shall find that the more we search the written word prayerfully, and in dependence on the teaching of the Holy Ghost, the more we shall be struck with the minute details it gives us. For instance, in Psalm 22, it was predicted that the people, who would treat Messiah with scorn and mockery when hanging on the tree, would say, " He trusted on Jehovah that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him." (Ver. 8.) And in the narration in the gospel of the facts which occurred a thousand years after, we read that those who were beholding Him on the cross, and mocked Him said, "He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him, for he said, I am the Son of God." (Matt, 27: 43.) How truly scripture is divine truth!

It is well to notice how the perfect fulfillment of what had been written concerning Jesus occupied His heart, notwithstanding all the intensity of the suffering and sorrow of the death of the cross. A verse in Psalm 69 remained to have its accomplishment. We read therefore, " After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar; and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth." This seems to complete the accomplishment of what had been written concerning Him, for we are then told, " When Jesus, therefore, had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and bowed his head, and gave up the ghost." (John 19:28-30.)

Again, as we have before observed, He who was "numbered with the transgressors," and bare the sins of many, was to make " intercession for the transgressors." Turning then to the gospel by Luke, we read, "and when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. Then said Jesus, Father forgive them, for they know not what they do!" (Chap, 23:33, 34.) No doubt this was partly answered in the gospel being used for the saving of so many Jews at Pentecost, and afterward; but we look for its full answer when "Israel [as a nation] shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit." (Isa. 27:6.)

In the death of the cross, the love of God was manifested. Types had faintly foreshadowed this love; prophets had alluded to it; Jesus Himself had preached it; but, in the death of the cross, divine love to us came out in all its profound reality. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (1 John 4:9, 10,) God's love to the world was thus manifested. He was no longer confining His dealing with the people of Israel, but bringing in that which would have a world-wide significance; and in virtue of the work of propitiation, enable God to proclaim it to everyone and to save anyone through grace who has availed himself of the Savior's death as the ground of being reconciled. The love of Christ to the church was also manifested in all its suitability and perfectness; for "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." Divine love thus came out; so that now "God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. 5:8.) Happy indeed are those who have known and believed the love that God hath to us.

How strange that any one, in the face of such a marvelous work as the death of the cross, should contend for doing something of his own to make peace with God. How sad, too, notwithstanding the clear testimony of the word of God to the infinite value of Christ's sin-atoning work, that men should imagine that they must add their own duties and religiousness to what Christ has done, in order to make their salvation more secure! If any of our readers talk of doing for salvation, we can only say, that good works are the fruits of saving faith, and bring before them the word of God's truth—" By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." (Eph. 2:8, 9.)

Things New and Old: Volume 25, Gethsemane and Calvary

The darkness of night had set in, and the hour was at hand. The Supper (never to be forgotten) was ended, and a psalm had been sung. It was a profoundly awful moment, and all nature seemed breathless and silent. The betrayer in whom Satan had entered was near. The trampling of the feet of the multitude armed with swords and staves, headed by the traitor, to take the Lord, might almost be heard in the distance, while the light of their lanterns and torches might well-nigh be discerned; for that which had long been written concerning sacrifice and offering must soon be fulfilled.

The passover which Jesus had so lovingly desired to eat with His disciples had been kept, so that “the suffering of death “for which He had come into the world had been most pointedly before His tender heart. His deeply-felt utterance had been, “with desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer.” It must have been a most affecting time, for He knew that He Himself was the paschal Lamb, the Redeemer of His people Israel. And yet, after fulfilling the scripture in eating the passover, His death, “even the death of the cross,” was still more strikingly set forth in the institution of His own supper. How touching is the divine record! “The Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake it and said, Take, eat: this is my body which is for you: this do in remembrance of me.” Yes, those very hands which were so soon to be cruelly nailed to the tree by wicked men, took the loaf and brake it, to set forth the symbol of His own body which in a few hours would be actually offered to God as a sacrifice for sin. “After the same manner also, he took the cup when he had supped [after supper], saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.” For this, Jesus, the Lamb of God, was about to offer Himself, and His blood would be shed for many for the remission of sins. How vividly and affectingly must this have brought before the Holy Sufferer the unutterable sorrow and pain so immediately before Him, when He would once suffer for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God! But what lessons of infinite love all this reads to our hearts!

Soon after this, Jesus and His disciples crossed the brook Cedron, and entered into the quiet garden of Gethsemane. This place was well known to Judas, for Jesus had ofttimes resorted thither with His disciples. There, after saying to them, “Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder,” He took Peter, and James, and John aside, and in sore amazement and trouble, saith unto them, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; tarry ye here, and watch with me.” Then withdrawing from them about a stone’s cast, “He fell on His face, and prayed, saying, my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me! nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.” Again, He said, “ my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.’’ Again, He prayed “the third time, saying the same words.”

What human language could possibly portray the exceeding solemnity of this scene! When we think that this blessed One could have prayed to His Father, and He would have presently given Him twelve legions of angels, how it bows our hearts in worship, when, instead of asking

deliverance for Himself, we hear Him saying, “Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour. But for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name!” And yet, with this most blessed and complete surrender of Himself to the Father’s will, what unutterable sorrow and agony pressed upon His heart! As man, which is the view Luke specially takes of our Lord, so terrible was the distress, that we are told “there appeared unto him an angel from heaven strengthening him. 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.” Can we conceive trouble and anguish more terrible, for the heart to be so sorrowful as to be connected with such effects? And yet, though the cup was before the Holy Sufferer, it was not to be drunk there. We find from the eighteenth chapter of John’s gospel that it was after the terrible conflict in the garden was over, after His betrayers and murderers had come upon Him, after Peter had cut off the ear of the high priests servant, that He had not then drunk the cup, for He said, “The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?” If Luke’s line is to look at Jesus as man, John certainly speaks of Him especially as a divine Person, and therefore does not bring before us the Savior’s prayer and conflict in the garden.

But let us contemplate a little further this astounding scene in Gethsemane, in that dark and memorable night. Why is the Holy One prostrate on the ground? Why such agony? Why that sweat as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground? Why those earnest prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears? Why the thrice repeated cry to the Father? Why such bitter grief? for neither the hand of God nor of man was upon Him. Was not Satan there? Was not the cup there presented to Him? What a cup! Who can describe its unmixed bitterness! And why did Jesus so dread the drinking of that cup? How could it be otherwise? Did not the Savior say to the cruel multitude, “This is your hour, and the power of darkness?” Yes, it was their hour; for those who had hated Jesus without a cause, and had sought to destroy Him, should no longer be restrained, but, according to the divine counsel, He would be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and the prince of this world, who had the power of death, would put forth his power against Him. In this way, Jesus, by wicked hands, would be crucified and slain. Again, it may be asked, Was not Satan there? Did not this wicked one seek to devour the man-child, soon after His birth in Bethlehem, through Herod’s sword? Afterward, did he not endeavor by repeated temptation to overcome, if possible, the blessed Lord on His entrance on His public ministry? And did not our Savior say almost immediately before He entered Gethsemane, “The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me”? No doubt he came, and pressed the weight and terror of death upon Him, but found in Him calm submission and perfect obedience to the Father’s will. As another has said, “For Him obedience, however terrible the sufferings, was the joy and breathing of His soul.” How the contemplation of Him bows our hearts in adoration! Did not the cup clearly set forth that the righteous Sufferer must be given into the hands of His betrayers; that He must bear our sins in His own body on the tree, and be made sin for us; that death, as Satan’s power, and God’s just judgment of sin, must be suffered by Him,—and, more than all, as suffering for our sins, He must be forsaken of God? Thus to be betrayed by one apostle, thrice denied by another, forsaken of all; to be the Sin-bearer, and made sin for us, to be forsaken of God, and given up to the death of the cross, were immediately before Him. Could it be otherwise then that He who was perfect in love, in holiness, and in every sensibility of purity and truth, should have earnestly cried, “ my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me! nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt”? According to the divine counsels and ways of grace to us, and the glory of God, it was not possible; we therefore, after the thrice repeated prayer, see Him rising up in perfect submission to the Father’s will, and looking away from secondary causes He goes forth in obedience to take the cup out of His Father’s hand, and at Calvary finish the work which the Father gave Him to do. He said, “Rise, let us be going, behold he is at hand that doth betray me. And while he yet spake, “Judas, one of the twelve came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people.” Soon the traitor’s kiss with Satanic foulness was imprinted on the Savior’s cheek (how hateful and distressing to Jesus!), for the betrayer’s sign was, “Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; hold him fast!” How thoroughly Satanic is this work!

Thus we see the sufferings of the loving Savior in Gethsemane were great beyond the largest powers of our comprehension; but the sufferings there were not atoning. Jesus was not there bearing sins, consequently there was not suffering divine judgment for sin; He was not then forsaken of God, there was no death in the garden, the cup was not drunk then; how could there be therefore atonement? No doubt Gethsemane’s sufferings, though unutterably great, were from the anticipation of what He must so soon pass through. In the garden, instead of being forsaken of God, He was in uninterrupted communion with the Father; instead of having to say, “Lover and friend hast thou put far from me,” He had disciples with Him, and He said unto them, “Watch with me.” True, instead of watching, they slept; but they were companions with Him in the suffering. When on the cross making atonement for sins, He was alone, He did “by himself” purge our sins; but in the garden, in testimony of His perfect purity before God, an angel was sent to strengthen Him. The contrast, then, between the Savior’s sufferings in the garden and on the cross is very striking.

Among other precious lessons which we may learn from the contemplation of our Savior in Gethsemane, we may observe—1St. If the anticipation of the sufferings of Jesus in the garden produced such unutterable distress, what must have been the magnitude and the reality of His suffering on the cross, when He was bruised and put to grief, and His soul was made an offering for sin?

2nd. When we consider for a moment what drinking the cup involved, it becomes evident that only a person with divine capacities could have drunk it, and have risen triumphantly out of it all to the eternal praise and glory of God.

3rd. In the garden, as well as elsewhere, He has “left us an example that we should follow his steps.” And although He only could drink that cup, yet we may learn that earnest cryings and prayers, and supplications, and repeated, too, in time of trouble, are perfectly consistent with entire submission to our Fathers will, and desire for His glory. “Being in an agony he prayed more earnestly.” “Though he were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered.” (Heb. 5:8.)

4th. That in time of distress and sorrow, whether, instrumentally, it come to us from Satan or man, or both, it becomes us to be so satisfied that it is His will, as to take the distress, whatever it may be, from His hands. Though Satan’s and man’s hatred, sin, the grave, death under judgment of sin, and forsaking, were involved in our Savior’s drinking the cup, yet He so discerned His Fathers will, as to rise above all secondary causes, and say, “The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it? “To see God in everything is surely the activity of a divinely-wrought faith; but can this be till the soul has taken the ground before Him of “nevertheless, not what I will, but as thou wilt?”

5th. It is scarcely possible for us to meditate on the cup of unmingled sorrow which He drank for us, without a lively sense in our souls of divine grace, and the amazing contrast of it with the cup of perfect love and peace which He bids us drink in remembrance of Him.

6th. The more our spirits are in company with our adorable Lord in Gethsemane, the more the work of the cross will stand pre-eminently before our souls in its perfectness; the more, too, will the magnitude and value of the finished work take hold on us, and we shall enter increasingly into the solid and immoveable basis in divine righteousness on which all our hopes and blessings are eternally founded. . H. S.

"Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?.... thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God." (Acts 5:3, 4.)

At a Bible-reading, some time ago, the question was asked, " Where is the Devil?" Someone immediately replied, " In hell;" and when another question was asked, " Where is the Holy Spirit?" the answer given was, " In heaven." Now it need scarcely be said that neither of these answers were correct. The fact is that persons, even Christians, are so accustomed to think and speak about spiritual things without considering what the real truth is as revealed by God in His word, that the most un-scriptural and extraordinary notions are widely circulated in Christendom which are not only wrong, but sometimes dead against the truth of God. As to Satan, he is not yet shut up, but he will be. Instead of being under confinement, he is "going to and fro in the earth;" he is not omnipresent, "but walking up and down in it." Peter says, " Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." Yes, he is still "the accuser of our brethren," "which deceiveth the whole world," and " the wolf which catcheth.... and scattereth the sheep." And as to the Holy Spirit, though He be a divine Person and therefore everywhere present, yet nothing is more clearly revealed in scripture than that He came down and took up His abode in God's people on earth, on the day of Pentecost, to abide with us forever. And the more we search the scriptures on the subject, the more we shall be assured that the gift of the Holy Spirit consequent upon an accomplished redemption is the characteristic truth of Christianity.

Is it any wonder then that it should be so perverted and denied by our subtle adversary? Is it not most distressing to hear of some denying that He is God; of others praying that He may be sent down; others pleading for a greater measure of the Spirit, a fresh baptism, and a pentecostal blessing? All these points, and many more concerning the Godhead, personality, indwelling, and operations of the Holy Spirit we hope briefly to consider; but we are assured that most of the other errors arise from not knowing Him as a divine Person, co-equal with the Father and the Son.

In the text at the head of this paper He is distinctly and unmistakably called God, and a Person capable of being lied to. Hence He is sometimes called "the Spirit of God;" and the things of God knoweth no man but " the Spirit of God." He has then eternal attributes, for He is "the eternal Spirit." Before the earth and the heavens were formed, the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the chaotic waters; and we are told that "by his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens." (Job 26:13.) Who could be truthfully said to be " eternal" but " the high and holy one which inhabiteth eternity?

Is not eternal one of the attributes of Godhead? In truest harmony with His Godhead qualities, and coequal with, and acting together with the Father and the Son, He is called " the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father," and also "the Spirit of his Son." (John 15:26; Gal. 4:6.) Besides, the Spirit is so constantly called " Holy" which is a term emphatically applied to God. " I am holy."

Again, we read in Peter concerning the Old Testament scriptures that " holy men of God spake as they were moved "by the Holy Spirit" Paul also declared, " Well spake the Holy Spirit by Esaias the prophet," and yet we are told that it was " the Lord God of Israel" who " spake by the mouth of his holy prophets;" and Isaiah in this same scripture says it was the Lord (Adonahy, Lord in plurality of persons) who gave him the word to say. (2 Pet. 1; Acts 28:25; Luke 1:68; and Isa. 6:8, 9.) Is it possible to have clearer testimony to the Godhead of the Holy Spirit?

We read too of His omnipresence, " whither shall I go from thy Spirit; or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell (hades), behold thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me." (Psalm 139:7-10.) His omnipresence is further shown by His dwelling in every child of God all over the earth, and giving to each, in every part of the globe, access unto the Father through the Son. " Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son unto your hearts, crying Abba Father.'' " For through him we both [believing Jews and Gentiles] have access by one Spirit unto the Father." (Gal. 4:6; Eph. 2:18.)

His omniscience is also clearly set forth in scripture where we are told that " he searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." (1 Cor. 2:10.) Who but a divine Person could search the deep things of God? Again, who would be competent to teach all things, unless he knew all things?

His omnipotence is constantly witnessed in raising sinners, dead in trespasses and sins, into spiritual life; as it will be by-and-by, when " he that raiseth up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." (Rom. 8:2, 11.) Who but One who is Almighty could take of the things of Christ and show to every child of God, and help and minister the truth by every gifted servant of the Lord continually? Who but one of Godhead qualities could be said to abide with us forever to guide into all the truth, bring all things to our remembrance whatsoever Jesus had said? And of whom could it be said but of One acting in conjunction with the Father and the Son? " All things that the Father hath are mine; therefore said I, that he shall take of mine and shall show it unto you." (John 14; 16)

Sovereign actings are further characteristics of "the only wise God," who acts according to the good pleasure of His will. It was the Holy Spirit who said, " Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.... So they being sent forth by the Holy Spirit departed." Again, " They were forbidden of the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia.... They assayed to go into Bithynia; but the Spirit suffered them not." And further in relation to certain spiritual gifts, they are distributed by the Spirit's sovereignty. To one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit".... " But now hath God set the members everyone of them in the body as it hath pleased him." (See Acts 13:2, 3; 16:6, 7 Cor. 12:8-18.)

We trust that enough scripture testimony has been brought forward to show the Godhead of the Holy Spirit; so that we can easily understand why those who had connected themselves with God's assembly and had said what was false, were spoken of as having lied not to men but to God. Ere this the Holy Spirit had come down, and the assembly was the habitation of God through the Spirit.

. H. S.

Streams of Refreshing From the Fountain of Life, Make Haste

Make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house (Luke 19:5).

The speaker here is the Lord Jesus. The person addressed is a sinner among the publicans. The subject is of vital importance. The words are few, but earnest and decided. The Lord knew the value of one soul, and the profitless character of everything else in comparison with it. He could fully enter into the frailty of human life, the countless ages of eternity, the ceaseless torments of the lost, and the everlasting joy and glory of the saved. He felt the eternal importance of the soul's salvation; hence His ministry was most urgent. At one time He would say,

Fear Him which is able to destroy both body and soul in hell (Matt. 10:28);

on another occasion,

Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish (Luke 13:3, 5);

and here it was,

Make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house (Luke 19:5).

Zacchæus was a tax-gatherer, or publican, a chief man among them too, and seemed to have made money by his profession, for he was rich. Publicans were not considered honest persons, and therefore were not much respected; and Zacchæus's allusion to taking things by false accusation seems to imply that he had not been blameless in this respect. He had, however, heard of Jesus, His mighty miracles, and wonderful works and words, and had a great desire to see Him. But the crowd around the Lord was great, which operated as a hindrance to his seeing Jesus, unless he ran before, outstripped the multitude, and got upon some elevated place. Though a rich man, his purpose was so decided, that he would not allow anything to hinder his seeing Jesus; he therefore ran before, and climbed up a sycamore tree, in the direction he knew that the Lord would pass. There might have been more than mere curiosity working in his heart; for he neither allowed the press of the crowd, nor anything else, to hinder his desire being gratified; we see, also, that he was enabled to obey the Lord immediately that he was

called (see Luke 19:5).

But, be that as it may, it is clear that Jesus was the great object of attraction to him —

he sought to see Jesus (Luke 19:3).

Nothing less than Christ Himself would satisfy him; so he went where he knew that the Lord would pass. But he little thought, while he was occupied in seeking the Lord, that the Lord was seeking him. Many a seeker says, "I am trying to find the Savior"; but the truth is, that He who came to seek and save the lost is seeking them. They would not have desires after Christ, longings for an interest in His salvation, and heartfelt cries after Him, if He had not commenced a work of grace in their souls. When the women were seeking the Lord after His resurrection, the bright angel said to them,

Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified (Matt. 28:5).

Oh! my reader, if Christ Jesus who was crucified for sinners is the One you are really seeking, be encouraged, and fear not! In meditating on the Scripture before us, we may notice,

1. The gracious posture of the Son of God.

2. His urgent appeal.

3. The blessedness of receiving Jesus, and its results.

1. THE POSTURE OF THE SON OF GOD. We are told that

When Jesus came to the place, He looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchæus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house (Luke 19:5).

What amazing condescension, for the Lord of glory thus to look up and speak to sinful man! What love! But such is the character of the heart of Jesus. Though bright angelic hosts surround the throne of heaven, we are told that

His delights were with the sons of men (see Prov. 8:31).

Yes, man, who was created in the image of God, always had a place in His heart; and when fallen into degradation and ruin, through sin and rebellion against his Creator, Jesus still loved man; and his fallen, undone state only served the more to make manifest the vast resources of Divine love and mercy. The Son of God, who is in the bosom of the Father, left the bright glory and happiness of the throne of heaven, condescended to be made of a woman, and came forth

in the likeness of sinful flesh (Rom. 8:3),

that as Man, by the death of the cross, He might redeem man from all iniquity, and bring many sons to glory. This is Divine love. Though He was God manifest in the flesh, He emptied Himself, and took upon Him the form of a servant. He did all Jehovah's righteous will, obeyed every jot and tittle of the law, and humbled Himself unto death, even the death of the cross, that by such depths of humiliation, pain, and death under the judgment of God as Sin-bearer, He might glorify the Father, and redeem us from the utter destruction and eternal despair to which, as sinners, we were justly exposed. It was the same loving-hearted Jesus, who afterward died on the cross, that came where Zacchæus was, and said,

make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house (Luke 19:5).

It was the same Jesus who said to sinful Israel by His prophet in days of old,

Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool (Isa. 1:18).

It was the same blessed Savior who said to His apostles after His resurrection,

Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned (Mark 16:15, 16).

It was the same Jesus who said,

If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink (John 7:37);

and who still says,

Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely (Rev. 22:17).

Such is the love of Christ, and such is the gracious posture He still takes towards sinful man. He delighteth in mercy. He waiteth to be gracious. He saves to the uttermost. He welcomes every sinner that comes to Him for salvation. He calls loudly by His gospel, His servants, and His providence —

Make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house (Luke 19:5).

Still, with long-suffering kindness, He proclaims salvation for the lost, saying,

I will have mercy, and not sacrifice (Matt. 19:13; 12:7).

In wondrous grace He died for man’s redemption, and in the same boundless love He says,

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest (Matt. 11:28).

2. LET US NOW CONSIDER THE LORD’S URGENT APPEAL.

Make haste, and come down (Luke 19:5).

We are all naturally lifted up with self-esteem. Men live and speak as if they were not fallen creatures; but all true Christians have experienced what it is to

come down

to receive salvation. All must

come down

if they would be saved from the wrath to come; for all have sinned, and the blood of Christ alone gives remission. The gospel is preached that men may

come down

to the Savior; for He calls the high-minded to

come down

and receive forgiveness of sins. Oh that proud men would

come down

and receive Christ!

The Lord killeth, and the Lord maketh alive: . . . He bringeth low, and He lifteth up (1 Sam. 2:6, 7).

The Holy Ghost convinces of sin before He gives peace to the soul through Christ. The way of God the Father is, to bring the lofty mind of man down to the Savior’s feet; for Jesus said,

Every man therefore that hath heard and hath learned of the Father cometh unto me (John 6:45).

Some persons are especially Pharisaic in their views. They seem inflated with self-righteous notions. They think themselves better than their neighbors. They boast of a well-spent life, and highly prize their good intentions. They flatter themselves in their own eyes, and when conscience accuses, they at once take refuge in their outward sanctity, creature-merit, religious ordinances, alms- deeds, &c., as a compensation. With self-complacent feelings they look down upon the passing crowd, and resolve to pursue their lofty course with increased zeal. Such, however, must

come down,

if they would know God’s salvation. Self-righteousness must be brought low, creature-merit must be disowned, and high thoughts must be laid aside; they must

come down

as lost, undone, unclean sinners to the Savior's outstretched arms, if they would know His great salvation; for He came not to call the righteous, but to bring sinners to repentance.

There are also persons who, in pride of heart, cry out, like Pharaoh,

Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice (Ex. 5:2)?

They despise the truth, stifle conviction of conscience, persecute God's people, harden themselves against the gospel message, and say in their heart,

We will not have the man Christ Jesus to reign over us (see Luke 19:14).

I have lately met one of these, to whom I kindly said, "Have you ever felt that you are a sinner in the sight of God?" His reply was, "I never talk on that subject." The wondrous love of God to sinful man, that fills all heaven with praise and glory, was a subject too mean and trifling to be worthy of the contemplation of such a great mind as he thought he possessed. Such, however, must

make haste and comedown (Luke 19:5)

to the Savior of sinners, if they would escape the fiery wrath and eternal indignation that is so quickly coming upon the impenitent and unbelieving.

There is another class of persons very different from these, but who equally need to

come down.

Their curiosity is excited in religious matters, but they have neither a guilty conscience nor a

broken heart (Psa. 34:18),

and are, personally, strangers to the joy of Christ's salvation. They like to hear this man and that — go here and there — make what they call religious acquaintances, and take pleasure in understanding every thing that is doing in the so-called religious world. Their minds are more or less exercised about the merits or demerits of various doctrines and outward rites, and the prosperity or failure, the orthodox or erroneous views, of those around them. They know well the difference between Judaism, Mohammedanism, Popery, and Christianity; and, giving preference to the last on this list, they watch with interest some of its outward operations and results. They are acquainted with the letter of Scripture, and bow to the claims of morality and benevolence; but, alas! the conscience has not been exercised before God; they are strangers to the tears of a contrite heart, and know nothing about the new birth. As some persons manifest curiosity in investigating the different branches of science, and take deep interest in watching the various actions of cause and effect, so these people carry the same spirit of curiosity and intellectual gratification in matters of religion as they call it; and, comparing themselves with some others, take pride in their measure of intelligence, instead of taking the place of

shame and confusion of face (see Ezra 9:7, Psa. 44:15),

on account of their iniquity, transgression, and sin against God. But curiosity is to be dreaded as much as self-righteousness, or proud infidelity; all must

come down,

if such would be partakers of Christ's salvation, and realize peace with God through the blood of the cross.

A sense of absolute necessity compels souls to

come down

to receive the Savior. We take refuge in Him; because He is the only hope. We fly to His outstretched arms, knowing we must perish for ever without Him. With self-abasement we renounce our filthy rags of self-righteousness, and gladly welcome the

best robe (Luke 15:22).

All, therefore, that have truly found salvation, have experienced what it is to

come down;

to lay aside creature-merit and fancied goodness in every form, and receive salvation as lost and undone, as the free gift of God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

But our Lord commanded Zacchæus to

How important this is! How many there are who in heart say,

Not yet (see Acts 24:25)!

Like Felix, they sometimes tremble under the word preached, but postpone the further consideration of it to

a more convenient season (Acts 24:25);

yet it is to be feared that with some

a more convenient season

never comes. There are others who, like Agrippa, are almost persuaded to be Christians, but are never altogether so, because they continually put off the personal application of the truth. When my family is grown up and settled, says one; when my business matters are over, says another; when I am free from present occupation, says a third; then I will attend to the state of my soul. Thus they reject Christ and His salvation. The farm, the merchandise, family duties, social obligations, and necessary occupations, are all cleverly pleaded by man's desperately wicked and deceitful heart, as reasons for rejecting Christ and His great salvation. Still, however, the loving Savior cries,

Make haste!

it is, therefore positive disobedience to delay.

Compel them to come in (Luke 14:23)!

He says; it is therefore rebellion to object.

Come unto the marriage (Matt. 22:4)!

He proclaims by His servants; is it not, therefore, despising Him and His message still to linger without? How very solemn this is! How few persons seem to be sensible of the vast responsibility connected with the preaching of the gospel of God! How little men think when they hear, and they do not

make haste and come down,

that they reject the gospel of the grace of God, and thus close the only door of escape from eternal burning, and the only way of admission into glory! Oh that my readers would ponder again our Lord's declaration,

He that believeth not shall be damned (Mark 16:16)!

How important it is that men should

make haste and come down

to the Savior's feet. Who knows of whom it will be next said,

This night thy soul shall be required of thee (Luke 12:20)?

How very soon the divine mandate may go forth,

Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live (2 Kings 20:1).

How sad, then, to put off the solemn consideration of the soul's salvation! How perilous to say, "It is time enough yet," when we do not know what a day may bring forth! To-day is the day of salvation; but we do not know what to-morrow will be.

Choose you this day,

said Joshua,

whom ye will serve (Josh. 24:15).

And the Psalmist exclaimed,

To day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts (Heb. 3:7, 8; 3:15; 4:7).

To day I must abide at thy house (Luke 19:5),

said our Lord to Zacchæus.

To day shalt thou be with me in paradise (Luke 23:43),

said the Savior to the believing malefactor. Now the gospel is preached. Now the Savior welcomes returning prodigals. Now He commands all men everywhere to repent. Now He says,

Make haste and come down.

But soon He will come forth in glory to put all enemies under His feet. How eternally important it is, then, that persons should now receive the Savior whom God hath sent?

3. THE BLESSEDNESS OF RECEIVING JESUS, AND ITS RESULTS. We are told that Zacchæus

made haste, and came down, and received Him joyfully (Luke 19:6).

This is very simple, yet touching. The Savior always means what He says; He is always as good as His word. He told the sinful publican that He must abide at his house that day, and He did so; and the reason the Lord gave for being the guest of such a sinful man as this wealthy son of Abraham was, that He came to

seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10).

Zacchæus then received Jesus — not peculiar views, or rites, or ordinances, but the Lord Himself. He believed that the Lord of glory loved him, and had come from heaven to save such a sinful and unworthy creature. This marvelous grace not only comforted him, but humbled him into a spirit of self-judgment and confession, and also constrained him to serve and follow Christ.

No one can receive Jesus without being happy. Zacchæus

received Him joyfully.

Present as well as eternal blessing is the portion of those who received the Lord Jesus:

As many as received Him, to them gave He power (or privilege) to become the sons of God (John 1:12).

To know the love of God in Christ His Son to us, as sinful and ungodly, in eternal deliverance from condemnation, and the fullness of its unchanging perfectness, fills the soul with joy and peace.

Salvation is immediately the portion of those who receive the Lord Jesus.

This day is salvation come to this house (Luke 19:9).

Man's thought naturally is, that he must worship and serve God now, and risk being eventually saved; but God's way is to give us salvation at once, and to receive our service and worship, because we are saved. Paul taught the Corinthian saints this doctrine. He says,

But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified

. . . Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's (1 Cor. 6:11, 19, 20).

But how wonderful is the blessing of present salvation, the knowledge that Christ Himself is now our life and righteousness, and that because He lives, we shall live also!

"More happy, but not more secure, The souls of the blessed in heaven."

The believer is also brought into fellowship with the Son of God. Eating together is a mark, not only of friendship, but of love and equality. David showed the kindness of God to Mephibosheth, by commanding that he should eat bread with him at his table continually, as one of the king's sons. Jesus might have saved Zacchæus without becoming his guest; but the love of Christ not only saves, but calls us into fellowship with Himself, and brings us into the Father's presence, as sons of God and brethren of Christ; loved by the Father as the Father loved Christ. This is unutterable love; but so it is, and it is our privilege to enjoy it.

But further. Zacchæus was exercised about godly walk, and commending himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God. This must always be the result of knowing salvation by Christ. We then feel that we are not only God's creatures, but God's children; and we serve Him not only from duty, but from choice. We fear not, then, Divine wrath, but fear lest we grieve One who so perfectly loves us.

Not my will, but thine, be done (Luke 22:42),

must be, more or less, the utterance of all believers, and this brings exercise of heart and conscience concerning our daily walk and circumstances. Remembering how much we have been forgiven makes it easy to forgive others; and a sense of the Divine kindness and mercy we have received constrains us to take pleasure in loving and serving others. The knowledge that the world has crucified the holy, loving Son of God, and that it is hastening on to its fearful judgment, makes us feel thankful that we are not of the world, but are rescued out of it, in wondrous grace, by the atoning death of Christ; and the blessed hope, that when Christ shall appear we shall be like Him, directs our souls upward and onward to the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. Thus we see that present happiness, salvation, fellowship, and godly walk, are at once connected with receiving the Lord Jesus.

But what an awful doom awaits those who do not

make haste, and come down

and receive the Savior! Jesus said,

If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins (John 8:24).

Thus we see that those who do not now

make haste

to come to the Lord Jesus for salvation are making haste on the broad road to destruction; and those who do not now

come down

at the bidding of the Savior's gospel, will be cast down into outer darkness at the command of the Judge of all. Then eternity, eternity, must for ever shut out all hope and mercy; for weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, in darkness and despair, must be the unchanging portion of those who obey not the Savior's call.

Once more, dear reader, let me say,

Make haste,

delay not, hesitate no longer, linger no more, at once decide, and

come down

to the loving arms of the Savior, whose blood cleanseth from all sin; and salvation, with all its present and eternal blessings, will be your portion for ever. May the Holy Spirit enable you to do so!

Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted (Luke 18:10-14).

The Lord knew what was in man. His words were powerful and heart-searching. He always distinguished between the lip-service of outward formality, and the inward exercise of the conscience before God. In that day, like the present, many erred because they knew not the Scriptures, nor the power of God; they believed not the truth of man's total ruin and depravity; consequently they were constantly thinking of doing something to secure the favour of God, or of bringing something of creature-merit for acceptance, instead of confessing themselves to be lost, undone sinners, and justly deserving His eternal wrath. The people, therefore, could not understand Jesus; they saw no beauty in Him; they were continually mistaking His words, and perceived not that He was exactly suited to do them good, because He came to seek and to save that which was lost.

In the chapter before us, our blessed Lord was addressing the Pharisees. The subject of His discourse was prayer. He exposed their hypocritical way of approaching God, and showed the amazing difference between saying prayers and true prayer. Their prayers might have general approval among men, but what were they in the sight of God? He had just spoken of the ungodliness that would characterize the world when the Son of man is revealed so destitute would it be of vital reality, that it could only be compared to the days before the flood, and the days of Lot. He then set before them the parable of the

unjust judge (Luke 18:6),

teaching them that

men ought always to pray, and not to faint (Luke 18:1);

assuring them also that God is the hearer of prayer, and cannot but avenge His own elect in answer to their cries; and asked the most solemn question,

When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth? (Luke 18:8)

But while thus giving expression to the doctrine, that

men ought always to pray,

He set before them, in the parable of the Pharisee and publican, the great contrast between formal lip-service and true prayer.

This must have been a powerful appeal to the consciences of the self-righteous. Most men acknowledge that they should pray. Not to pray is an omission that people generally would condemn; indeed, it is almost a law among all nations, that everybody should pray. Idolaters invoke their gods. Mohammedans have fixed hours for saying their prayers. Socinians own that people should pray. Jews say prayers. Roman Catholics repeat prayers. Pharisees make long prayers for a pretence; and Saul of Tarsus excelled in this religion; but after he had seen the Lord Jesus, it was said of him,

Behold, he prayeth (Acts 9:11)!

A prayerless soul is in a sadly infidel state; for surely it is the duty of every intelligent creature to acknowledge the goodness of the Creator. But there is a difference between a prayerless man, and a man who owns God as his Creator and Benefactor; yet both may be dead in trespasses and sins. The former is infidel, not owning God more than the unintelligent brute; the latter acknowledges God in his ways of creation and providence, yet, failing to own God's grace in redemption, he is still unpardoned and uusaved. Many will speak of the kindness of God in providence, who believe not the glorious gospel of Christ for salvation, and are, therefore, still in their sins — condemned already.

For this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil (see John 3:19).

He that believeth on THE SON hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not THE SON shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him (John 3:19, 36).

The parable of the Pharisee and publican presents to us a most striking sketch of the two classes of persons which are spread over a large portion of the globe; namely, those who make prayers, and those who really pray, and is accompanied with the Divine estimate of both.

Outwardly, there was a great similarity between the Pharisee and the publican. The Gentile idolater might have seen both wending their way to the same temple; they both went to pray; they both began their prayers with "God"; in the eyes of men they were both pursuing the same object; unlike those who were without, they were inner-court worshipers. Like the mere formalist and real Christian now, there is often outwardly little difference, but, in God's esteem, how very wide the contrast!

1. Let us consider the PHARISEE. I think I see him with his broad phylactery, hastening through the crowded streets, often gratified by salutations of "Rabbi"; stopping now and then at the corner to repeat his accustomed prayer, and out-stripping many a broken- hearted publican. At length he approaches the holy temple. How boldly he enters! How unhesitatingly he walks straight up to the innermost part of the holy place! How erect he stands! How often his eye glances on the gazing multitude, to be sure that he has secured their admiration and esteem! and how scornfully he views the weeping sinners that surround him! Then begins his prayer,

God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess (Luke 18:11, 12).

Such is the Pharisee's prayer. We are told that he

prayed thus with himself (Luke 18:11);

all the resources of self are therefore called to his aid: hence his prayer is full of self — self-exaltation, self-love, self-righteousness. He says,

I thank thee — I am not as other men — I fast — I give – I — possess.

All through his prayer "I" stands most prominent. Self, whatever form it may assume, can never rise above self. He thanks God that he is better than others. How is it that he is better than other men? Is it not that his fasting and alms-giving have accomplished this? Then why thank God? Is it not like Cain's offering of those fruits of the ground that his own hand had cultivated, and which had been matured by Divine aid? Yes, this is the delusion of Pharisaism. It is the cultivation of self, but professedly by Divine help. It is not salvation; it is not the cleansing of the guilty conscience; but the outward trimming of the corrupt tree which cannot bring forth good fruit, and sets at nought the gospel declaration, that

except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God (John 3:3).

The Pharisee thanks God he is not as other men. God declares that all have sinned, all have gone astray, all are guilty before Him, and that

as face answereth to face in water, so doth the heart of man to man (see Prov. 27:19).

It is quite possible that the Pharisee might have been preserved from the outward sins which the publican had so long pursued, and which many around him were frequently reveling in; but he little thought that

God seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart (see 1 Sam. 16:7).

The Pharisee knew not the sin of honoring God with his lips, while his heart was far from Him. What was the state of the Pharisee's heart? He spoke as if he were righteous, and had never sinned. This was not true; for the Scripture saith,

There is none righteous, no, not one (Rom. 3:10),

and that we are all as an unclean thing, conceived in sin, and shapen in iniquity. His thought, like that of many now, was, that it was only outward things that defiled the man; whereas our Lord said that it was the evil things from within that defiled the man:

For out of the heart of men proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and they defile the man (see Mark 7:21-23).

Was not the Pharisee, then, an "extortioner" in heart? Had he not, times without number, desired and obtained God's providential mercies, under the pretense of honoring God, when it had really been for self-exaltation in the sight of men? Was he not "unjust" not to credit the testimony of the holy and true Son of God? Was he not an "adulterer" in heart, in pretending affection for God, calling the living and true God his God, while he was wholly set on exalting and adoring self? Oh deluded Pharisee! Oh unregenerate, unpardoned, sinful man! how hath Satan blinded thine eyes! how hath thine own evil heart deceived thee! Well hath the Lord said of thee,

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity (Matt. 23:27, 28).

Such is the Pharisee's prayer. There was no sense of need expressed; no expectation of receiving any thing from God; no felt unworthiness; no repentance; no confession of sin. His thought was that God required something from him, and he flattered himself that he was competent to meet it. He knew not the truth, that

God is not worshipped with men's hands, as though He needed any thing, seeing He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; — and, commandeth all men everywhere to repent (Acts 17:25; 29).

2. Now look at THE PUBLICAN. Here you see a man exercised, not about what he is in the sight of men, but what he is before God; and this is always the way of the Holy Spirit in the soul. The publican knows it is to God, from whom no secrets are hid, that he must give an account. With a trembling step and an aching heart he enters the temple. He feels deep contrition, and is bowed down under a sense of unworthiness of the least of God's mercies, and

standing afar off (Luke 18:13),

the question with him is, How can I approach God? for

He knows that he is

a sinner (Luke 18:13),

that he has actually transgressed against God's laws. He is self- convicted, and therefore self-abased. His past acts of covetousness and extortion stare him in the face, and he is conscious that all sin is really "against God."

Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight (Psa. 51:4),

is the utterance of his heart. He feels he cannot look up, not even

lift up so much as his eyes to heaven (Luke 18:13);

for he knows God is holy and just, that He will by no means clear the guilty, and has power to destroy both body and soul in hell, and he is deeply conscious of having broken His commands. But, more than this, He traces sin to its source. He laid his trembling hand upon his heart,

he smote upon his breast (see Luke 18:13),

as much as to say, What horrid thoughts, vile desires, and abominable suggestions, lurk within this breast! O wretched man that I am! O foul transgressor! ungrateful enemy to God! What mercies have been vouchsafed to me! what a kind Benefactor! yet how rebellious and disobedient have I been, to have wasted my time, health, strength, and every other talent in selfish objects; yea, even using the Almighty's gifts to seek happiness and glory, apart from the Giver. What ungodliness! what sin! But language fails to describe these workings of the Spirit in the conscience.

The question, then, in the publican's heart is, Can such a sinner be saved? Is there any hope of salvation for one so deserving God's wrath? If there be, he is convinced it can only be in God Himself; for the experience he has had of his own weakness and vileness excludes all hope from himself. The only possibility is in Divine mercy. Can God, will God, be merciful to such a sinner? He has heard that God is merciful, and he feels that mercy only can meet his need; but he cries —

This is his anxious inquiry. He, however, ventures; he casts himself on free, unmerited love; his cry is,

God, be merciful to me a sinner (Luke 18:13)!

Mark the character of this prayer:

lst, His supplication is to "God."

2nd, He acknowledges his guilt as "a sinner."

3rd, His only ground of expectation is in Divine mercy — "be merciful."

4th, His deep, heartfelt personal necessity —

be merciful to me (Luke 18:13).

He brings nothing but a load of sin to be removed, a conscience oppressed with guilt to be cleansed, an agonizing breast to be comforted, a needy soul to be filled. He presents no creature-merit to God, and he expects everything from God. He feels, if God does not save him, he is lost for ever:

God be merciful to me a sinner (Luke 18:13)!

How widely different are the two prayers! The self-exalting Pharisee needs nothing, the self-abased publican needs everything; the one is ensnared in the trammels of dead formality, the other is under the influence of spiritual life.

3. THE DIVINE VERDICT. Having set before us a sample of these two wide-spread classes of persons which have been in the world ever since the days of Cain, our blessed Lord then tells us that the publican

went down to his house JUSTIFIED (Luke 18:14).

This is clearly the meaning of the passage. It is not that the Pharisee was in any degree justified; but comparing the two persons, the publican could be spoken of as JUSTIFIED. How blessed! What a glorious unfolding of the riches of the grace of God! A self-condemned sinner, thus casting himself on the free, sovereign mercy of God, JUSTIFIED! And surely this has always been God's way. In the days of Job, Elihu was instructed by the Spirit to say of the Almighty,

He looketh upon men; and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not, He

will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light (Job 33:27, 28).

But to be justified means not only forgiven, but to be accounted righteous — to be just before God. To this end Christ died and rose again.

He who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him (see 2 Cor. 5:21).

Thus Jesus, by His finished work, has not only delivered His people from guilt, but fitted them for glory; hence the Colossian believers were enjoined to

give thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son: in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins (Col. 1:12-14).

This is the work that Jesus came forth from the Father to accomplish,

that He might present to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing (Eph. 5:27).

This is the mercy of God to sinful man. He justifies the ungodly that believe; and this He is able to do consistently with His own holiness and justice, through the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The only sacrifice for sin had not been offered when Jesus put forth this parable. He tells us on another occasion that He was

straitened,

that is, that He was unable fully to tell out the grace and peace of God to lost, sinful man, until His death had actually taken place. He said,

I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished (Luke 12:50).

But God's purposes and thoughts of redeeming mercy have always been the same. He could account Abel, Noah, Abraham, righteous by faith, by looking forward to the cross, as much as He now justifies a sinner who looks back on Christ's already accomplished work. By Christ, all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses (Acts 13:39). But further. Our Lord adds to this parable the Divine statute, that

every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted (Luke 18:14).

On two other occasions our Lord put forth the same solemn declaration; but both were in reference to seeking honor and distinction among men. Here, however, He sets it before His hearers as a doctrine of eternal importance. Every one that exalteth himself, by professing to stand on the ground of carnal confidence, self-righteousness, and self-importance, can only be judged by God as worthy of eternal banishment from His presence. To stand before God without the wedding garment, without that spotless and infinitely perfect righteousness that Christ is to every one that believeth, is to be exposed to the just indignation of the King of kings, who must abase such, and whose sentence must be,

Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 22:13).

How deep, how eternally full of bitter anguish will that abasing be! On the other hand,

He that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

Such do not contend for their own opinion about the things of God; they boast not of their own abilities or attainments; they believe that

God is greater than man (Job 33:12);

they lay aside their own thoughts; they give God His due place; they incline their ear to Him, and hearken to His word. Taught by His Spirit, and enlightened by the word of truth, they acknowledge that all their righteousnesses are as filthy rags, and confess that they are unclean and undone. Such God will exalt; for

He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory (1 Sam. 2:8).

In this present life, they receive a garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, and the oil of joy for mourning; they are consciously exalted from the degraded gratifications of carnal lusts to the enjoyment of fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ; even now they are exalted from the slavery of Satan's bondage to liberty and sonship in the presence of God; and when the Lord Jesus shall come again, while many are left behind for His terribly abasing judgments, they shall be exalted to share His throne of glory. They shall see His face, be like Him, and share His glory for ever. How high, how holy, how perfect, and unchangeably happy will this exaltation be!

Now, dear reader, let me affectionately ask you solemnly to ponder these things. Are you a prayerless soul? Do you eat, and drink, and enjoy the bounties of God in nature and providence, without ever bowing your knees to Him in acknowledgment of His mercies? Is it really so? Then wherein do you differ from the poor heathen, or from

the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth? (Eccl. 3:21).

You say, I make no profession! What! God blesses you day by day with such providential mercies, and, far beyond all that, has sent His only-begotten Son to die for sinners, and save them from the wrath to come, by shedding His own precious blood, and yet you make no profession! as if such wondrous love and grace were beneath your dignity to notice! Fie! fie! my reader! Repent at once, turn to God, and accept pardon for thine ingratitude and sin, through the atoning death, the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But perhaps my reader may say, "I am not a prayerless person. I could not lie down at night, or get up in the morning, without saying my accustomed prayers. I never commence a meal without repeating grace, and I must own that God has greatly blessed me in my family, business, and property." Ah, my dear reader, all this may be quite true; but about your soul — your soul — your undying soul! Are you not resting in your accustomed religious duties, and owning God in His dealings with you in providence, but not owning the mercy of God in saving sinners by the death of His Son, thus neglecting your soul's salvation? Oh! what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? You may acknowledge God, but do you believe in His Son Jesus Christ, as a lost sinner, for the salvation of your soul? This is the all- important question.

But some of my readers may say, "Neither of these describes my case. I try to pray, and cannot. I am often afraid to sleep at night, lest I should awake in hell; and when sometimes I see the lightning flash, and hear the thunder roar, I fear it may be Christ coming in judgment to cut me off. I had serious impressions when a child; but they passed away, and I lived in sin for many years. Others speak of happiness, but I spend weeks and months in sorrow. Sometimes I feel better, and then again sin and guilt are fastened deeper than ever upon my conscience. I have been advised to attach myself to some church (as it is called); but knowing that a profession without the power of godliness is abominable in the sight of God, and feeling that it is inward peace, a sense of forgiveness of sins and acceptance with God, that I need, I have always declined."

My reader! if this be thy experience, the Holy Spirit hath been working in thy heart. He proclaims in the gospel the free mercy of God, full forgiveness of sins, everlasting righteousness, and salvation to the uttermost, to every sinner that cometh to God through Christ.

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved (Acts 16:31).

Take thy stand at Calvary's cross; there read in the shedding of His blood the unutterable mercy of God to sinners. Doubt no more. Lift thy soul to heaven's throne of grace where Jesus is. Confess thyself to be a lost sinner, take the living God at His word, rely only upon the Savior's death for acceptance and peace, and thy groans will soon be turned to praise, and thy burdened heart be filled with songs of joy.

Once more! Remember that Jesus Christ came into the world to SAVE — who? Not righteous persons, but SINNERS!

“They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.” (Luke 16:29.)

In our Lord’s words concerning the rich man and Lazarus, He brings before us most solemn pictures of great realities both before death and after death. With regard to the present time before death, there are three things to be particularly noted—the man of the world, the believer, and the word of God.

The sketch given of the man of the world is not that of an immoral or malicious person, but of one who has the best he can get to eat and drink and also to put on. More than these things the world cannot give, and his aim is to have the best that it affords for the gratification of his desires. “He was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day.” Self is the object of his heart, not God; yea, he is “without God in the world.” But all his comforts are bounded by time and sense. At length the chilly hand of death lays him prostrate, and all his good things are gone, and gone forever. He dies, and is buried. What is often called “a respectable funeral” is the finishing stroke in the history in time of a man of the world. “ The rich man died, and was buried.” To such death is awfully serious, but what must it be after death? How searching are the Savior’s questions! “What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or, what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”

The man of faith, however, though in the world, is little known or noticed by it. His heart’s interests lie far beyond what is seen and temporal. Not only does he find nothing here for his soul, but he proves that everything of the world is adverse to it. He is a stranger here. His path is solitary; his sorrows not a few. The waste of those surrounding him, only makes him feel more keenly the poverty and trials of his lot as to this life. But he finds that God is with him, and can turn everything to good account in the most unthought of ways, so that even dogs may give relief by licking his long-neglected sores. He has also learned that it is given unto him in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake. (Phil. 1:29.)

Besides the man of present good things and the man of faith, the Lord speaks of the third thing, the possession of the holy scriptures— they have Moses and the prophets. Thus the three leading features of what is found in this present world are: the unbeliever with his “good things,” the believer with his “evil things,” and the word of God, which speaks of eternal things. The Bible is the condemnation and death-warrant of the unbeliever, and the comfort and stay of the believer.

The Lord then lifts the curtain, and shows the amazing contrast in the state of these two men after death. The needy and dependent man of faith no sooner quits his suffering body, and a heartless world, than he is carried by the angels into the bosom of the father of the faithful. He joyfully proves the truth of scripture that “they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.” Sweet resting-place. He is now where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary arc at rest. He is where righteous Abraham and all departed believers are. How vast the change! Yesterday in suffering at a rich man’s gate, worn out with the pain of his many sores, and thankful to have his wounds licked by a passing dog; but to-day his spirit is with the father of the faithful, where all is peace and love. And has it not been truly said that it is far better to depart and be with Christ?

And where is the rich man with all his boasted elegance and luxury, whose burial was only yesterday with such pomp and ceremony? We are told that in hell (or hades—the place of departed spirits), he lifts up his eyes being in torments. No sooner is he there, than he sees the beggar that had sat outside his gate now a long way off, but shut in with Abraham in blessing and rest. How wide the contrast of the state of these souls now; the one in bliss unspeakable, the other in anguish unutterable! Both in hades, the place of departed spirits; but one, like the thief, in paradise with the Lord, while the other is miserable beyond description. How very solemn, and yet how real the picture! We know that if a believer dies, or rather falls asleep in Jesus, he departs to be with Christ—to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

But the unbeliever, alas! is in a very different compartment of the place of departed spirits. On quitting the body, he is at once conscious of being shut out from the presence of God, so that his misery is great. His being spoken of as parched with thirst shows the depth of his anguish. How he envies the man now who was once a poor beggar at his gate! Observe, there is no idea of purgatory here. No: it is exactly opposite, and the most perfect exposure of the utter falseness of the doctrine of purgatorial fire. Every one after death tastes misery or blessing. Let the reader carefully note that this is not the eternal state, for then all will have bodies; and that the Lord here contemplates a people on earth still unsaved with the word of God in their hands. Besides, we know from other scriptures, that the wicked will be brought from hades before the great white throne for the sentence of their eternal banishment from the presence of God, and to be deservedly cast (with death and hades) into the lake of fire. Let not the reader fail also to note there is no annihilation here, and no possibility of ever getting from the place of misery to the place of blessing. When the lost soul prays, as he never did before, saying, “Father Abraham have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame; Abraham said... “Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us that would come from thence.” No language could more clearly show the impassable distance between the saved and lost after death, or the utter impossibility of one who dies in his sins ever being where Christ is. What remains for such is to be brought up at “the great white throne” at the close of the millennium, when the heavens and the earth will have fled away, and receive the final judgment, and their sentence of banishment to the lake of fire. All that appear there for judgment must be forever lost, because, having refused salvation by grace, they will be “judged every man according to their works.”

But another most affecting part in this appalling scene after death, is, that the lost one thinks of his relatives still living on the earth. He implores Abraham to send Lazarus to his father’s house, “for,” said he, “I have five brethren, that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.” The infidel sometimes taunts the Christian, by saying, “We know nothing about what is after death, because no one has ever come back to tell us.” But the Savior, who knew all things, has told us. And one thing is clearly made known—that there will be no infidels after death—all will be real then. Purple and fine linen are of no value there; even the lost will realize then the priceless worth of souls. If there will be one longing in such after death, it will be that their sinful relations on earth might hear the gospel, believe, and not “come into this place of torment.” But they have the gospel. They possess the Bible which contains it. “They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them.”

Observe, it does not say, they have religious teachers, or religious privileges, or duties—but they have God’s word, and their responsibility is to hearken to it. As saith the prophet, “Hear [not do, but hear”], and your soul shall live.” As the Savior also said, “He that heareth [not feeleth

or giveth, or doeth, but heareth] my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath everlasting life."

They are to hear Moses and the prophets. But says the lost one, "if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent." And Abraham said unto him, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." How very solemn! But so it is. For faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. No, not even seeing a man rise out of his grave would convert a soul; it must be by hearkening to, and receiving into the heart, the word of God. "They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them."

Now what does Moses say? Does he not by types and shadows, and also by the plainest statements, show that salvation is alone by Christ, and through His precious blood? Does he not plainly say, u It is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul?" Was not the blood of the lamb the only shelter from the judgment of the destroying angel throughout the land of Egypt? Did not Aaron make atonement for the sins of the people by carrying in the blood of the sacrifice, with burning incense, inside the veil? Did not Abel's sacrifice of the firstlings of the flock so plainly set forth the sacrifice of Christ, that we are told that the Lord had respect to Abel and to his offering? And was not Cain rejected because his offering did not set forth the sacrifice of Christ—a life laid down for others? Again, was not the leper pronounced clean when sprinkled with the blood? We might multiply quotations to show the constant testimony to the infinite value of the one offering of Christ from the books of Moses. Now let us look for a moment at some of the prophets. Hearken to Isaiah, who says, "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities.... and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all.....He hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." And to show the sin-cleansing efficacy of the blood of Christ, the prophet says, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white a& snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Again, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins." Now what figure could more completely show the thorough blotting out of sin, as gone forever, than that of the cloud; for where is the dark cloud we saw yesterday? Is it not gone, and gone forever? You will never see it again. As the prophet Jeremiah plainly states, "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." (Jer. 31:34.) Again, we hear Isaiah saying, "I, I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." Hezekiah also said, "Thou hast, in love to my soul, delivered it from the pit of corruption; for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back." (Isa. 38:17; 43:25; 44:22; 53:5-12.) Another prophet says, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." (Psalm 103)

In this brief glance we see how clearly and fully Moses and the prophets point out the only way of salvation. It is no marvel, then, that it was said, "They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them!"

And now, dear reader, you have not only Moses and the prophets, but the testimony of our Lord Himself also, and of His apostles. You know, too, that One has risen from the dead, has been seen alive again by many infallible proofs, and has commanded that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations. And what effect, dear reader, has all this had on you? Has the word of God, which speaks of the finished work of Christ, persuaded you? Have you heard God's word? "Hear, and your soul shall live!" God speaks, and Christ has declared that the scripture cannot be broken. You have not wonderful things to see, or marvelous experiences to pass through, or many things to do, in order to be saved; no, "Jesus did it, did it all, long, long ago."

Then hearken to Him who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification. Let His infallible word, which will never pass away, have its due weight upon your soul! Listen attentively to Him who said that His blood was shed for many for the remission of sins. Oh think of His sinner-loving heart, who, with open arms, could most touchingly say, "Come unto me, all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest!" Come then and be saved!

Thank God, dear reader, that you are this side of death, where God's word of forgiveness of sins by Christ sounds on all sides! Thank God you are not where that rich man was crying out for one drop of water to cool his parched tongue! What deep mercy has spared you to the present moment! Do think of this; and also consider what an immeasurable distance there is now between you, a sinner in your sins, and the infinitely holy, sin-hating God. Still His word is that He delighteth in mercy, that He saves sinners to the praise of the glory of His grace. Listen, then, not to your own thoughts, or to the doctrines of men, but to the word of the living and true God. "Hear, and your soul shall live."

. H. S

The Evangelist: Volume 4 (1870), Dead Alive and the Lost Found, The

LUKE 15:1-24

THIS chapter, from the fourth verse, gives us our Lord's reply to the charge brought against Him by the Pharisees and Scribes—"This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them;" which becomes the occasion of His setting forth the unutterable depths of divine grace.

In this threefold parable, observe that it is only on one sheep, one piece of silver, one son, that there is such joy in heaven. If a whole city were moved to repentance, we can well understand how such an extensive work might be connected with rejoicing; but here it is one sinful, lost sinner over whom there is such gladness. This is a marvelous thought. Each too was lost—a lost sheep, a lost piece of silver, a lost son. So Scripture testifies that God now looks upon man as lost. Hence we read that "the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." There is all the difference between having wandered a little out of the way and being lost, between being an occasional offender toward God and being dead in sins—utterly unclean, irremediably bad—lost. Men and women, however refined or educated, never of themselves find their way back to God. No, they are lost! therefore in the riches of divine mercy Jesus came to seek and to save the LOST!

In this parable, we see the outgoing of the loving heart of the Good Shepherd, the gracious actings of the Holy Spirit, and the marvelous love of the Father toward the lost. In the simplest, and yet the most telling way, the blessed Lord thus proclaims the love of God—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—to sinners.

He first tells out the Shepherd's love in seeking and saving one lost sheep. "What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, cloth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?" This is what Christ is still doing. He

is going after the lost, in the publication of the gospel, till He find it. Do you know, dear friends, that you are lost? Do you see that you can never get back to God by any deeds of your own? that" by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in His sight "? Do think of this precious fact, that Jesus is still calling the lost, seeking and saving the lost. It is not a question of what you are doing, or desiring, or intending—it is one of being lost or saved. If you are not saved, you are lost! You cannot be safe till your heart's trust is in the Lord Jesus, till you are in the loving arms of the Good Shepherd. Have you heard His voice, turned to Him, and fallen into His open arms of perfect love?

Notice Christ's joy in saving, and that He keeps to the end those whom He finds. "When He hath found it, He layeth it on His shoulders, rejoicing." How safe then is the sinner who takes refuge in Christ, and gives Him all the glory of saving him! None can phi& out of His hand. "He layeth it on His shoulders, rejoicing." It does not say that the angels rejoice, though they may; but what we have here is the deep joy of Christ in finding a lost sheep. When He saved the wicked Samaritan woman, He could say, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." How precious this is! And further, "When He cometh home." Oh yes, Christ will never let the sinner go that touches the hem of His garment, until he is landed securely in the glory: He will carry him safe home. And then what endless joy! All the intelligences of heaven will rejoice with Him when we reach home) He will present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.

(The second part of the parable is about a lost piece of silver. It is lost. We have here a woman taking a lighted candle, and sweeping the house diligently. Her heart is set on finding the lost piece. She may see a thousand things like it; but the moment the light shines upon the lost piece, it is found; and then, oh what joy! Evangelists sweep the world for the lost pieces. May we sweep diligently! If we took the bright light of divine truth in the power of the Spirit, and swept diligently, should we not be more successful in finding? Oh, to be more diligent seekers of lost souls! Here again we are told of the joy there is in heaven over one sinner that repenteth.

But some may ask, What is repentance? Is it not sorrow for sin? While no doubt those who repent before God are sorrowful at the thought of their having sinned, 'yet many are sorry for sin who do not repent toward God. We find that Judas "repented himself," and threw down the pieces of silver; but we are not told that he repented toward God. Repentance then is not simply sorrow for sin, but a change of mind toward God. Such grieve at the very thoughts they have had of God, and of their wrong conduct toward Him, who in such amazing love gave His only begotten Son to die for them. True repentance, then, toward God is always connected with faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. It is this that fills heaven with such joy.

The third part of the parable opens out to us the heart of God the Father toward a poor, lost, filthy, guilty sinner. It blessedly illustrates the exceeding riches of divine grace. The self-willed man, following the desires of the flesh and of the mind, wandered far away: he was glad of the gifts, but cared nothing for the Giver. To gratify his own lusts was the absorbing object. He went further and further from God. This is where man's will and desires always lead him. He went " into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living." It is a true picture of man every man. He gladly receives God's gifts, but how does he use them? Is it not to please himself? It may be the pleasures of the world, the religiousness or irreligiousness of the world; but gratifying himself is the object, and not God. Nothing can be worse. It is man doing his own will, not God's. It is man pleasing himself, and not caring to please God.

Dear friends, let me affectionately ask, What are you doing? How are you spending your time, your talents, and all the blessings God has entrusted you with? Are you squandering them about yourself in the far country, or have you repented and turned to God? Do lay these searching questions to heart.

The prodigal went on step by step until he "spent all," and "began to be in want." His resources were limited, and came to an end. All his means of self-pleasing were exhausted. What could he do then?

What does man always do when in distress, but turn to his fellow-man? He first of all made man his refuge, not his father. No; man will do anything rather than turn to God. And what did he find? He found that citizens of this world have self for their object. To feed swine was the only use men could make of him for their own profit. And there this once wealthy, jovial, pleasure-seeking wanderer into the far country found himself, in poverty, and hunger, and filth. He found all resources gone, and an aching void occupying his soul. He looked at men around, and no heart throbbed with pity and compassion—"no man gave unto him." The "husks" of this world were all the resources at his command, and poverty and want were painfully pinching him. At last he discovers that he is perishing. What a striking picture of man who is without God, and having no hope. In helplessness and despondency he is forced to the conclusion—"I perish with hunger!”

What a solemn conclusion, " I perish” Does not this shew us that men have got so far away from God, and are so sunken and depraved, that they go on seeking to please self and fulfill the lusts of the flesh, until it may be they come to the end of these things, and find themselves perishing with hunger. And, dear friends, if some of you were to die to-night, or the Lord Jesus should come, do you not know that you would forever be banished from God's happy presence? A thousand ages might roll on, and still there would be the blackness of darlings forever. Do you say, " I am not a great sinner” I reply, what can be worse, what sin can be blacker, than living all your days, seeking happiness apart from God and Christ-using the very blessings God in His providence has blessed you with, to lead your heart and energies further and further from Him? What can be worse than this? You have been living in the rejection of Christ, saying in your heart, He shall not reign over me?' Can anything be more sinful? Oh, my friends, God is a just God; but He is now a Savior, and His message to you is, that "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, hut have everlasting life." Do you say, I have sinned and shall perish forever? Then God says to you, "'Believe on my Son, who died for sinners, and you shall not perish, but have everlasting life." What love! The Lord Jesus not only made peace by the blood of the Cross as to sins, but, in that work, He so infinitely glorified God, that because of the infinite merit of that work, God is just in justifying the sinner that believes.

The prodigal's thought was to escape from perishing. "I perish with hunger." His need led him to think of the Father. We are told that he "came to himself," and what then? He thought of the father's home, and that the servants there were far better off than he. "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare." His mind, resting on the father's home, and love, and resources, not only shewed him more and more his own poverty and wretchedness, but so attracted his heart, until he exclaimed, "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants." Surely this, was the only true and honest place he could take. The whole question now was, how the father would meet this sinful one in his ruin and degradation. Does He receive such sinners? Ah, that is the question. And are we not taught that the need and misery of this ungodly one served to draw forth the rich mercy which was deep down in the father's heart? And so God loves sinners, though he hates sin. He delights in mercy. His whole heart pours forth its richest, warmest love to the utterly unclean and helpless. For we are told that when

he did actually arise to come to his father, while he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and (without one upbraiding word) fell on his neck, and kissed him. I Can anything exceed the depth and perfectness of such love? God only could so love. It needs an unworthy object on which to manifest itself. It indeed passes knowledge. We think of it, taste and enjoy it, and adore and worship, but we lack capacity to measure its divine and infinite depths. The father saw him in his filth, had compassion on him in his ruined state, kissed him in his rags, and when under the sense of his guilty, perishing condition, the son said, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son," it only brought out yet more of the deep resources of grace that were in the father's heart. It strikingly tells us that it is worthy of God to love, to save, and bless lost and ruined sinners. “The father said unto his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him," The father did not point to his rags and say, I must have them mended; no, God can use nothing of the flesh, with its affections and lusts.

God's way is not to mend up the flesh, but to give a new nature, and bring the sinner into a new standing and position before Him. He could not use any part of the old, filthy, worn-out, tattered garment, but he adorned him with the best robe. The richest blessings that God has to give are lovingly bestowed upon repentant sinners. We are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. "Put a ring on his hand," in token of the everlasting love and relationship subsisting between the Father and the repentant one, on whose face he had printed the kiss of reconciliation. Put also "shoes on his feet," and thus fit him for the path of service which he may have to tread; and then, that he might feel happy and at home in his father's presence, it is further said, " Bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat, and be merry." Let us eat—the father and the son—for" our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." “Let us eat, and be merry." What a wondrous place of blessing! Can anything exceed it? The lost one brought back into the Father's presence, fitted for it by the Father himself, and there called to share the Father's thoughts and joy, in the infinite worth and finished work of the slain Lamb.

Thus, through divine mercy, the believer in Jesus is redeemed to God, made nigh, and has liberty now to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus; he has peace with God, rest in God, joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Ghost makes this known to our hearts. What a wondrous salvation—"made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." What rest and joy this gives us! How it puts us at once on the ground of thanksgiving and worship, especially when we enter into the Father's delight to have us near Himself, and in the enjoyment of His own love. "Let us eat and be merry, for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." It is added, "and they began to be merry." Yes, it was only the beginning of the joy; for ages upon ages may roll on, and this wondrous joy will be in no degree lessened. In God's presence there is fullness of joy, and at His right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

It is surely, dear friends, not a light thing to hear the glad tidings of this marvelous love of God. How few seem to think of the eternal consequences of it. We are told that it is to God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish. But O how very solemn! to the one we are a savor of death unto death, and to the other of life unto life.

Have you, dear friends, believed God's message, and received the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior? Can you, do you now, look up to Him at God's right hand, and praise Him for having saved you by His death upon the cross? Is He precious to you? Do you know the blessedness of the Father's presence, and of holy joy with Him about Jesus the slain Lamb? Soon He will come forth, and every knee will bow to Him, every tongue confess that He is Lord. Can you, dear friends, look forward to His glorious appearing to judge the living and the dead in peacefulness of spirit, knowing full well that before that you will hear His voice, be changed, and caught up to meet Him in the air? The true friends of Jesus cannot but rejoice at His being manifested as "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords," for they know how worthy He is that everything should be put under His feet.

Now Christ is saving to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him. Still His loving arms are wide open, and the gracious utterance of His heart to lost and ruined sinners is, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out;" that is, He will receive and keep secure those who come to Him. May this love attract your hearts, dear friends, and draw you into the open arms of divine, saving mercy.

Streams of Refreshing From the Fountain of Life, Strive

Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are: depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out (Luke 13:23-28).

Some persons seem constantly occupied with religious questions. Their enquiry is not, “Am I saved?” but, “Are others saved?” Sometimes we find a fond parent solicitous about the future state of a dying child, a kind master anxious about his afflicted servant’s spiritual condition, and others manifesting concern for the ignorant and poor around them, without laying to heart what their own state before God really is. It was so in the days of our Lord.

One said unto Him, Lord, are there few that be saved? (Luke 13:23)

to which Jesus replied,

Strive to enter in at the strait gate (Luke 13:24).

Thus He sought to lead him away from the consideration of others, to ponder the all-important question of his own soul’s salvation; and exposed the folly of appearing concerned for others, while he himself was in the broad road to destruction. So weighty, so essential, is the point, and so fatal would a mistake be, that He commands them to

strive (or agonize) to enter in at the strait gate.

We do well to observe, that the instruction here is not that they were to do a great many things, or even one thing, to make themselves fit for God; or that they were to wander through a long, tedious labyrinth to find blessing and safety. No; it is simply a

gate

that is presented to them as the alone way of escape; and their security and blessing depended on their entering in at the gate. The condition of all outside is most perilous; but there is a way of escape; and judgment and condemnation must overtake those who do not accept the only way of deliverance by entering in at the strait gate.

1. WHAT IS THE STRAIT GATE? There could have been no way of escape for sinners from the wrath to come, had not Jesus died upon the cross.

Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit (John 12:24).

It is the cross of Christ that speaks to us of sin put away, redemption accomplished, and of the sinner's only way to God. Christ crucified, then, is the

strait gate.

Jesus lifted up on the cross is the door of access.

I am the door,

said He:

by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved (John 10:9).

The cross of Christ, therefore, becomes the point of separation between the saved and lost. Not to enter into God's presence through this gate is still to tarry in the place of death and judgment; but to enter into the Father's presence through the atoning work of His dear Son is present peace and eternal salvation. The gospel thus presents to us a door of escape, and it is still wide open; it welcomes all guilty sinners that

enter in

by faith, thus sheltering them for ever from the wrath of God, and shutting them into the peace-speaking presence of the Father of mercies, and God of all comfort.

2. IT IS A STRAIT GATE. True Christianity is an individual thing. The gate is so strait, so narrow, that all who enter go in one by one. Many long to take others with them, but each person is accountable to God for himself; every one must be exercised before God on account of his own sin. The gospel appeals to the individual conscience.

He that believeth on the Son (John 3:36),

He that hath the Son (1 John 5:12),

He that believeth and is baptized, &c. (Mark 16:16).

Paul said,

I know whom I have believed (2 Tim. 1:12),

I obtained mercy (1 Tim. 1:13, 16),

Christ

loved me (Gal. 2:20).

This is very weighty, and shows us the deep necessity of each one asking the all-important question, "Am I saved?" We may be members of religious bodies, and outwardly appear consistent; but those only who have entered in at the strait gate are saved.

3. ENTER IN. There is no promise of safety to any who do not

enter in (Luke 13:24)

at the strait gate. We are not to think about the gate merely, but to

enter in.

It is one thing to know there is a Savior, and another to find salvation through His blood. It is to be feared that many who say they know the way of salvation have not availed themselves of it. We enter in at the strait gate by faith. In the death and resurrection of Christ, we see that the God of grace has opened a door of salvation for sinners, and by faith in the efficacy of that redemption-work we enter into God's presence, and know Him as a sin-pardoning God. It is not my knowing the fact that Christ is a Savior that saves me, but believing on Him for the salvation of my soul; and thus I enter into the presence of the God of peace by Him. In Israel's time, it was the manslayer who had entered into the city of refuge that was safe. In the days of Noah, those only who actually entered into the ark were saved. Many might be just outside, trying to lay hold on the boards, with the water gurgling in their throats; but they were as unsaved as those who were the farthest from it. And so in the case of the crowd that surrounded our Lord: it was only the one who came and touched the hem of His garment that was made whole. There must, then, be the receiving of Christ, trusting in Him, believing in Him, taking refuge in Him, resting on His finished work, entering in by Him for life and salvation.

4. STRIVE TO ENTER IN. This solemn subject calls for earnestness. The eternal importance of the work of Christ demands it. God cannot bear indifference. Embracing views merely is a poor thing. Learning a few religious ways and phrases will not do for God. All the world are guilty before Him. Judgment is quickly coming. The wrath of God is soon coming, and fall it must upon all Christless souls. His almighty arm and perfect love have made a door of escape, and His gracious voice exclaims to sinners,

Strive, or agonize, to enter in at the strait gate!

Do not be content at having serious impressions, or good desires. Rest not till you have entered in at the strait gate. Be in real earnest. Let not formal duties suffice; let not a little concern satisfy you; let not the credit of being religious among men be enough for you. Oh, no! Have real concern, for eternity is at hand. Your life is short; many will miss the strait gate; many will be deceived; many will find out their mistake when it is too late. Strive, then, agonize to enter in at the strait gate; escape for thy life, flee from the pit, turn to the Savior; on no account miss His great salvation.

5. THERE ARE MANY HINDRANCES TO PERSONS ENTERING IN AT THE STRAIT GATE.

(I). The carnal mind. We all naturally like to live and act as if there were no God, and as if we were not needing salvation. We all strive to be happy apart from God and the Savior. We are of the world which lieth in the wicked one. We constantly stray farther from God, doing, as far as possible, our own will, and having our own way. The mind is carnally opposed to God, and not subject to Him; it seeks rest any where rather than in God.

All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way (Isa. 53:6).

The heart, therefore, is naturally opposed to striving to enter in at the strait gate.

(2). Satan is a great hinderer — he specially tries to keep persons from taking refuge in Christ for salvation. He blinds the eye, lest the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. Formerly he tried to suppress the mention of the name of Jesus altogether. Now he can no longer effect this; but he diligently seeks to hinder the testimony to the value of His death. He has not so much objection to people thinking of the strait gate; but he still opposes with all his might their entering in. He knows that persons may be acquainted with the history of Christ's ways and miracles, and still be unsaved; but it is coming, through Christ crucified, to God for salvation, — to the risen and ascended Savior for righteousness and glory, that he so opposes.

(3). The world also says, Do not enter in at the strait gate. It promises its gains and emoluments, its favours and advancements, its luxuries and gratifications; it presents a glare of tinsel to try to satisfy the human heart, and blind the eye. Its changing fashions, moving scenes, and untiring promises of improvement, occupy the mind; and so it seeks to lull the awakened conscience to find repose in its adulterous bosom. All these elements tend to keep the soul from entering in at the strait gate, and to linger still in the place of condemnation and judgment, where the Lord is coming to put all enemies under His feet.

(4). Relations and acquaintances are sometimes mighty enemies in trying to keep souls, if possible, from entering in at the strait gate. Loss of worldly position or business, the expected scorning of friends, and many other such things, are presented as powerful reasons for disobeying Him who said,

Strive to enter in at the strait gate;

while the certain knowledge of present salvation is talked of as presumption, and present forgiveness of sins through the blood of Christ put down for enthusiasm. Thus there are terrible obstacles, both within and around, to persons coming to Christ crucified and risen for salvation.

(5). THE EXPERIENCE OF THOSE WHO "STRIVE." They agonize, or strive to enter in at the strait gate, because they know they are sinners, justly deserving God's eternal condemnation; they are assured that there is no other way of escape, and that

They are conscious there is a principle of pride in them naturally, to induce them to put confidence in themselves instead of the atoning work of Christ; therefore, under the guidance and power of the Spirit of God, they inwardly strive against such thoughts. They feel that their proud, carnal minds try to hinder, but they

strive.

They hear the alluring cries of the great deceiver, but they

strive.

They behold the world's glare, but they

strive

to enter in at the strait gate. They agonize to rest simply on the finished work of Christ, and know there is no other entrance for the sinner into God's happy presence but through the finished work of Jesus. They are not satisfied at merely reading the Scriptures, or knowing a little about Christ, or at being considered religious by others, or at statedly hearing gospel truths proclaimed. No. They feel that they need salvation, and nothing less than salvation can satisfy them, nothing short of peace with God, against whom they are conscious of having so sinned, will do for them. They know the gate is still open, and they do not know how soon it may he shut. They are conscious that they must perish for ever, if they do not enter in. They perceive that God has opened the gate; that the Savior says,

Enter in (Luke 13:24);

that the Scriptures declare it is the only way; that God's servants urgently proclaim its eternal importance, and thousands around declare they have experienced the blessedness of it; therefore they

enter in at the strait gate.

They come as guilty, worthless, naked sinners, and they find in Calvary's cross that God Himself is the source of pardon, peace, righteousness, and glory, for all that come unto Him through Christ.

Knowing that Christless souls must enter into the pit of eternal destruction, they could not rest till they fled for refuge to the hope set before them in the gospel, and knew that they were saved. By faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, they experience that they have exchanged a guilty for a purged conscience — have been rescued from an evil world for the presence of the God of grace and peace; they feel themselves new creatures; they know that they have passed from death unto life, and they rejoice in pardoning love.

But our Lord gave four reasons why they should strive to enter in at the strait gate.

l. Many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.

2. The door will be shut.

3. Many professors will be shut out.

4. The eternal torment of the lost.

1. Many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. The time will come when it will be too late. Some will knock, and get no admittance. Now the Savior's language is,

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest (Matt. 11:28);

and,

Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely (Rev. 22:17).

But the time is coming when God must deal with men righteously, instead of in grace, as He now does; for God

hath appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness (Acts 17:31).

Now, God is preaching to guilty sinners

peace by Jesus Christ (Acts 10:36),

then He will judge men according to their works. Now, many will not enter in at the strait gate; then, many will knock, saying,

Lord, Lord, open unto us (Luke 13:25)!

Now, sinners hide in the Savior's arms, and are saved; then, sinners will seek salvation, and will not find it. Now, they will not come to God to cover their sins with the Redeemer's blood; but by and by they will cry to the rocks and mountains, saying,

Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb (Rev. 6:16).

Those who do not know the Savior now will find that He will ere long say,

I know you not (Luke 13:25).

How important, then, that persons should at once

enter in at the strait gate!

2. The door will be shut.

When once the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door (Luke 13:25).

The gospel is not always going to be preached. God will not always send forth the message of peace. He is the God of judgment as well as the God of peace, and Christ is a Judge as well as a Savior. He is now seated on the right hand of God, but He will ere long rise up and shut to the door. The preaching of the cross will then cease; the seeker will not find, the knocker will be disappointed, the asker will be refused; the gospel testimony will close, the church be removed to glory, and the hypocrite and unbeliever left for judgment. Men will discover their mistake then. The folly of putting off salvation will be made manifest. The door will be shut, and man's doom eternally settled.

He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still (Rev. 22:11).

How imperative, then, is the necessity to

strive to enter in at the strait gate.

3. Many professors will be shut out. In the parable of the ten virgins we are told that, after the door is shut, many will come knocking, saying,

Lord, Lord, open to us (Matt. 25:11);

and here, also, our Lord says,

Many

will say,

We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets; but He shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity (Luke 13:26, 27).

On another occasion our Lord speaks of these persons as saying in that day,

Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you (Matt. 7:22, 23)!

These things clearly show us that many who have professed to be servants of Christ, and who may have accomplished great things in His name, never knew the value of His sin-atoning work for their own souls, never entered into the strait gate for their own salvation. How very awful this is! They may have striven to accomplish wonderful works in His name, but never knew what it was to strive to enter in at the strait gate.

What a solemn warning this presents to any who have not yet trusted in the atoning work of Christ for the salvation of their souls!

4. The eternal torment of the lost.

He that believeth not shall be damned (Mark 16:16),

and

He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him (John 3:36),

are words of the God of truth which must have their fulfilment. Not to

enter in at the strait gate

for salvation, is not to believe in that Savior whom God hath sent, but to be a

worker of iniquity (see Luke 13:27),

living in rebellion against the God of love and peace.

There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Luke 13:28).

They will have the consciousness that others are saved, but themselves for ever lost; they will know that others are for ever happy through the redemption-work of Christ, and they themselves cast into the lake of fire, into everlasting punishment; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. How powerful were the Savior's appeals! How simple, yet how thrilling, were the reasons He assigned why persons should

strive to enter in at the strait gate!

Many will hear these things, and yet not seek the way of escape. Some will not submit to the righteousness of God, but go about to establish their own righteousness; their thoughts rise not higher than their own fancied goodness. Others openly reject the joyful sound of salvation through the death of Christ; they scorn the truth of the Lord's return from heaven, and scoffingly exclaim —

Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation (2 Pet. 3:4).

Others hear the truth, will distinguish between the doctrines of grace and many of the religious dogmas of the day, and show some respect for ordinances and outward sanctity; but their hearts have never yielded to be saved wholly by the finished work of Christ. Their inward thought is,

We will not have this man to reign over us (Luke 19:14);

while the Scripture too plainly draws the awful picture of others professing to go out with lamps to meet the bridegroom while being destitute of oil in their lamps; or of attempting to be guests of the marriage supper without having on a wedding garment. In short, while the Scripture plainly shows us that salvation is only to those who

enter in at the strait gate,

we find many warnings presented therein of man risking his soul's eternal welfare on almost every conceivable pretense; thus, while God says there is no other way, and no other name, whereby man can be saved, but the name of Jesus, man in self-confidence assumes that there are other names and other ways.

Happy those who do not presume to argue and contend with the Almighty, but feel that God is greater than man, and the only fountain of light, and love, and truth. The first sign often manifest of spiritual life is the willingness to lay aside human thoughts, and be ready to submit to God's thoughts; for naturally our thoughts are not as His thoughts, neither are our ways His ways. It is well when a soul is made willing to receive God's truth. Such turn to the Scriptures to know the mind and will of God. From the Bible they learn, under the Spirit's teaching, that fallen man is a corrupt tree that cannot bring forth good fruit; that without union with Christ risen and glorified, there can be no fruit brought forth to God. They are instructed also by the Spirit, through the word of the Lord, that the world is under sentence of condemnation, and that the only way of salvation from the wrath to come is by faith in the Son of God. Thus the awakened soul, that begins to submit to God's thoughts, is led to submit also to God's righteousness and redemption in Christ, and to rejoice in being justified by faith, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Oh, my reader! hast thou entered in at the strait gate? Have the iron sinews of thy knees yet bowed in adoring gratitude to the Savior of sinners? Has thy hard, stony heart been broken by the truth of God, and melted by the Savior's love? Have the tears and groans, the agony and bloody sweat, the suffering and death of the Son of God, been matters of the deepest concern to thee? If not before, may the language of thy soul now be, —

Ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord.

... Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching." Luke 12:36, 37.

Our Lord would have us "watch" as well as "wait" for His coming. Both imply spiritual activity. Waiting souls are certainly not sleeping; for waiting according to o u r Lord's mind must be with girded loins, diligence in His service, and lights burning, thus bearing clear testimony to Him in the power of the Holy Spirit during the darkness of the night.

There seems, however, to be something more earnest and definite in watching than in waiting, though all who are watching are also waiting for Him. We can understand three persons having heard that a well-known friend is expected to land at a certain seaport. One of them seems much interested at the thought, but it does not produce any alteration in his walk and ways. He knows his friend is coming, and is satisfied with the knowledge of it. The second man is so affected by the sure tidings of his friend's return, that he goes to meet him. He soon finds his way to the seaport, and determines there to remain till his friend comes. He is waiting. Day after day passes, and the friend has not come. Still he waits. Though he is often seen occupying his time and means in self-pleasing, he waits on day by day thinking often of his friend, and his interests. But the third man not only goes to the seaport and awaits the arrival of his coming friend, but he looks over the sea many times a day, makes inquiry as to every vessel, and carefully inspects the passengers to see if his friend is among them. This one is watching.

Our Lord would have the hope of His coming so real in us that it should stir our hearts to go out to meet Him -to be watching as well as waiting, and that not on special occasions merely, but as the posture of our souls continually, thus giving a color, unconsciously perhaps, yet nevertheless really, to all our ways. Nothing can be more practical or more eminently sanctifying—"Every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." 1 John 3:3. This is more than knowledge of doctrine, for it is divine truth received into the heart in faith, so that the heart goes out after the Lord Himself with longing desire and expectation of seeing Him; it is the "blessed hope" of our souls, and He would have us "abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." This "hope," then, when it is a reality in our hearts, "purifieth" even as He is pure. It purifies not according to the low standard of Christendom's estimate of Christianity, but owns no standard of purity but Christ—"as He is pure." It teaches us to separate ourselves from everything, whether men call it good or bad, that is unsuited to His mind who is the "holy" and the "true." May He graciously strengthen this hope in us!

Those who are able to go back fifty years1 or more in marking the ways of God, cannot have forgotten the striking effects of the preaching of the Lord's coming at that time. Those who announced the midnight cry, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him," carried conviction to the hearers by their walk and ways, that they were themselves getting ready to meet Him. It was the coming of the Lord Himself they had before them. Then it was not so much a question of doctrine, but of meeting Him. One and another saw it plainly taught in the Word as the blessed hope of the Church, and marveled that it had been lost so long. Many received the truth in faith, and therefore acted on it. Like the Thessalonian believers, they waited for God's Son from heaven. The Lord Himself was their hope and expectation. So plainly and solemnly was He set forth as quickly coming, both in preaching and teaching, that sinners were aroused in conscience, and cried out, "What must I do to be saved?" and believers almost everywhere were aroused from slumber.

Wherever the testimony went forth, there was almost always an awakening, though it was resisted by some of the wise of this world, and ridiculed by others. Many believers were so stirred in heart and conscience as to desire in all their ways to be "found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless" (2 Pet. 3:14). It was to them truly a purifying hope. At whatever cost to themselves, they felt the perceptive teaching of Scripture to "do all to the glory of God" must be carried out; so that a deep, heart-searching inquiry was awakened in souls in many places as to whether they were ready, not merely as to title, but as to walk and service, to meet the Bridegroom. It was not death they looked for, not judgment, but the Lord Himself, their loving Bridegroom, to take His loved ones to be forever with Himself.

The effects were such as might have been expected. Many felt they were in positions and circumstances which were not for the glory of God, and gave them up.

Nor is it remarkable that the hope of our Lord's coming thus solemnly dawning on a heart fresh and fervent toward Him should produce such results; for how could it be otherwise? Again and again we have seen the same thing, when souls have rightly had the possibility of the Lord's coming at any time before them. It must be so as long as the imperishable truth of God declares, "Every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." Thank God the reality of this has not wholly died out. His Spirit still works, and His Word is as authoritative and unalterable as ever. But, alas! instead of some now, who accept the doctrine of our Lord's coming, taking up their cross to suffer with Christ and for Christ in this time of His rejection by the world, they appear to be on good terms with the world, are gratified at their own progress in it, and long to see their children advanced positionally beyond themselves in it, and yet talk not a little about the Lord's coming. May God graciously arouse us all not only to truly hold the doctrine, but to be lovingly watching and waiting for Him who says, "Surely I come quickly"!

The Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit, The: No. 2

What an infinitely blessed work must Jesus have accomplished so that the Holy Spirit could come down from heaven, and act and dwell here, in a way He had never done before, as the other Comforter!

We are told that in order to His thus coming, Jesus must be first "glorified." Then those who believed on Him would receive the Holy Spirit; "for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified." The coming of the Holy Spirit then is the witness of two things: first, of the eternal efficacy of the blood of His cross, and secondly, of the Son of man being glorified. As to the former, the Holy Spirit is a witness to us by the word of God saying "Their sins and iniquities I will remember no more;" and, concerning the latter, His presence here proves that He who is at the right hand of God received the promise of the Father, and shed it forth at the time appointed—Pentecost. It was then the Holy Spirit came. He was sent down from heaven. Christ having suffered for our sins, risen out of death and gone into heaven as Man, the Holy Spirit could come down and indwell those who had been washed from their sins in the Savior's blood. (John 7:39; Acts 2:33.)

Prior to this there were true believers who had been born again, had their sins forgiven, were children of God, to whom Jesus could say, " My Father and your Father, My God and your God," and they also had risen life breathed into them by the risen Savior; but they were not sealed, not anointed, not in liberty, and not members of the body of Christ. The contrast is strikingly seen between the state of these saints in the first of Acts, and their state a few days after in the second of Acts. What an amazing change the gift of the Holy Spirit produced! And when you consider who the Holy Spirit is, is it surprising that it should be so?

It is not only that the Son of God has come, but that the Holy Spirit has come. But when the Son came, He took flesh, and was found here in fashion as a man. Not so, however, the Holy Spirit. He did not take flesh; He is not seen and known as Jesus was, and this is why the unconverted know nothing of Him—" Whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." (John 14:17.) But the importance of the Holy Spirit being here, and given of God to all them that obey Him, can scarcely be over-estimated. This is why, after the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, you do not find in scripture such an idea as the Lords people praying for the Spirit. Such a thought as " Come Holy Spirit, Heavenly dove," has no place there; because He has come. Before He came it was right enough to pray for the Spirit, for our Lord had said, " how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him (Luke 11:13); and He commanded His disciples to tarry in Jerusalem until they were " endued with power from on high;" they were to wait for the promise of the Father. That the Spirit when He came taught them to cry " Come, Lord Jesus," in the consciousness of having redemption in Christ and through His blood, and the earnest of the Spirit, is quite true; but for such to be praying for the Spirit, after He had come, would surely be subversive of the foundation principles of Christianity. Hence the uncertainty and confusion of mind of many believers in our days.

But what was the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost? Was it the coming of a divine Person, or of an emanation from God, or of a measure of the Spirit, or of an influence, or what? Scripture, as we have seen, speaks of Him as a Person, having personal qualities and personal actings. Some of His sovereign actings we have already noticed. But though the Holy Spirit be a divine Person, yet He is not the Son, for the Son took flesh and died for us, and the Holy Spirit did neither. Nor is He the Father, for He was "the promise of the Father," and was sent by the Father, as Jesus said, " whom the Father will send in my name." And yet He is a Person.

The personal qualities and actings of the Holy Spirit are largely set forth in scripture. He is described as speaking, leading, guiding, teaching, bearing witness, showing, searching, interceding, appointing to office, abiding with us forever, and yet, as we have seen, this holy Person is divine. Hence, too, there is that on earth, which is God's habitation through the Spirit—" the house of God."

The gift of the Holy Spirit, then, is not merely an influence, though He does influence, not an emanation from God, though He was sent by the Father and the Son; for Jesus said, " whom the Father will send," and " whom I will send;" but He is a Person who carries out His will, "dividing to every man severally as he will," and though not the Father, nor the Son, yet One in the mysteriously divine essence of One God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It was He who spake by the mouth of His holy prophets, which have been since the world began. It was He who " moved upon the face of the waters " before it was said; "Let there be light, and there was light." It was the same Spirit which strove with men before the flood. It was the same Spirit of God who filled and qualified Bezaleel with wisdom and understanding to make those things for the tabernacle which were types and shadows of Jesus. It was the same Spirit by which the holy scriptures were given by inspiration of God, so that the writers could say, " Thus saith the Lord/' " The word of the Lord came," " The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue;" for holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. It was the same Holy Spirit who came upon Mary when it pleased God to send His Son into the world born of a woman. It was the same Spirit who spake of Christ by Mary, Elizabeth, Zechariah, Simeon, and Anna. It was the same Spirit which John saw descending like a dove and remaining on the sacred, spotless Person of Jesus when He was baptized. It is of Him, too, it is said, u How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit: who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him." It was by the same eternal Spirit that He offered Himself without spot to God; and when He was raised from among the dead, we are told that He was " quickened by the Spirit." Again, we are told, that after His resurrection and going in and out among His disciples, it was through the Holy Spirit He gave commandments unto the apostles whom He had chosen: and bade them wait in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father, for they should be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence. And when He, as Man, was glorified at the right hand of God, He received the Holy Spirit and gave to His waiting saints on earth. " Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear." (Acts 2:33.) Then the Holy Spirit came, He was "sent down from heaven; " and, blessed be God, here He is still, and will abide with us forever.

It was not a measure of the Spirit, but the Person of the Holy Spirit. We read that " He giveth not the Spirit by measure." (John 3:34.) The idea is entirely subversive of the great truth of God the Holy Spirit being in us and with us. A moment's consideration of the thoughtful Christian is sufficient to make this clear. Then was the baptism of the Holy Spirit, for we read u By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles." (1 Cor. 12:13.) It was the formation of " one body " on earth, of which Christ is the Head in heaven. Wondrous work! Who but a divine Person could be sufficient to unite all believers on earth to Christ the Head in heaven, and to one another in " one body "? It was done by the coming of the Holy Spirit. Precious mystery of divine grace, and power, and wisdom! If, then, it be so, that the Holy Spirit Himself is here, and in us, and we have seen that He giveth not the Spirit by measure, how could we ask for a further measure of the Spirit? Impossible that an intelligent God-fearing soul could do so! And if the scripture teaching of the baptism of the Holy Spirit is the formation on earth of all believers into one body, how could we ask for a fresh baptism of the Spirit? Could the " one body" be formed by " one Spirit over and over again? Far be the thought! Could we, then, we ask with all solemnity, be approaching God with reverence and godly fear to express such a desire? This was the Pentecostal blessing, and when the body was formed by the baptism of the Holy Spirit, we know what wonderful power accompanied the gospel testimony, so that thousands were converted in one day.

Yes, the Holy Spirit is here on earth, and, blessed be God, those who have believed on the Son of God and received remission of sins, are indwelt by Him. We are sealed, anointed, have an unction of the Holy One, and the earnest of our inheritance, and all this until when? Let us not fail to mark " until the redemption of the purchased possession—"until the day of redemption," when we shall bodily enter into heavenly glory. Yes, to abide with us forever, as Jesus said, u I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever: the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him, for he dwelleth with you and shall be in you." (John 14:16, 17.)

We must be careful not to confound the work of the Spirit in us when we were brought as sinners to a Savior—born anew—and received eternal life, with the gift of the Holy Spirit, the other Comforter to take up His abode in us. They are two distinct lines of scripture teaching.

That a man must be born again to " see " or " enter into the kingdom of God," was clearly laid down by our Lord Himself. But when such have been born again, and have remission of sins, then the Holy Spirit is sent into our hearts. In Ephesians it is, " After that ye believed ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise; " and in Galatians it is said, " Because ye are sons [sons first] God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba Father." Thus we see the Spirit is given to believers, to children of God, not to• sinners in their sins, but to those who have remission of sins—" to them that obey him."

The promise of the gift of the Spirit formed a prominent point in the preaching of the apostles. On the day of Pentecost, Peter's reply to those Jews who were awakened with a deep sense of their guilt was, " Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts h. 38.1 Again, at Caesarea? when Peter addressed quickened Gentiles who were told by an angel that they would hear words of Peter whereby they would be saved, we can understand that the moment God's way of peace was proclaimed they would receive it. And so it was. Looking with intense interest at the apostle for the very words which would give them salvation, the moment he spoke of remission of sins the Holy Spirit was given to them, and they all spake with tongues, so that Peter's preaching was stopped. But it is important to see that in both these instances the gift of the Holy Spirit was connected with remission of sins; and Christ at the. right hand of God, who had been crucified, was presented to the hearers as the Object of faith.

As has often been remarked, the twofold testimony of the Baptist was that Jesus was " the Lamb of God" and the One which baptizeth with the Holy Spirit." This John knew Him to be by the Spirit descending and remaining on him." The Son was thus declared to be so spotless and pure that the Father could seal Him as man; the Holy Spirit could remain on Him and anoint Him in virtue of His own intrinsic excellencies. Not so us. Before the Spirit could seal and anoint us, we needed to be washed from our sins in the blood of Christ. Now dwelling in us, He makes us know that we are children of God, that we are in Christ and Christ in us, and the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts.

. H, S.

Crumbs for the Lord's Little Ones: Volume 2 (1854), He Good Samaritan.

Luke 10:25-37.

WHAT a picture does the parable of the good Samaritan present of the gracious way of the Son of God with poor sinners! His love in the gospel is perfect.

It is perfect, as the expression of the divine love; but in its varied multiform beauty and perfection, we may treat and regard it as the pattern or model of love of one’s neighbor also. The good Samaritan loved the poor way-laid man as Himself. He spent on him His sympathies and His property—the treasures of His heart and of His hand. He rendered him all kinds of service. As it were, He changed places or conditions with him. And all this was an unwearied unrepentant love; for He provided for the future, as well as for the present. He did as much for him, one may say, as He could have done for Himself.

He enlisted others to bestow their care and their substance on him, but all this, not at their cost, but at His.

What was wanting, beloved? Nothing. The necessity, deep as it was, had it been His own could not have been more thoroughly met and answered.

The parable, however, suggests another thought.

There are two ways in which I, a poor sinner, may have to do with this good Samaritan. I may be a debtor to Him, or an imitator of Him.

The lawyer who came with his question to Christ never thought of assuming the first of these attitudes. His thoughts were entirely on the law, and what he himself could do. The Saviour, in answer to that, can suggest nothing less than perfection, or the imitation of Himself. Had he approached the Lord with a broken heart, he would have been otherwise answered—in some way that would have preached to him the grace, and not the example of the good Samaritan.

But let us, beloved, take our place with the poor way-laid traveler, before we ever think of taking our place with his generous Benefactor. We will be debtors to Jesus, before we think of becoming imitators of Jesus.

And, sure I am, the more simply by faith we assume the first of these relationships to Him, the more really, and largely, and graciously, shall we act in the power of the second. It is only by the constraining’s of the love of Christ to ourselves, that we can act in concert or sympathy with that love to others.

The lawyer would have to find that he must become the way-laid man before he could become, in any true evangelic sense, the companion or imitator of the good Samaritan who befriended him.

And, it is strange in the ear of the moralist to say it, but so it is, the blessed God is more honored by my consenting to be a debtor to Him, than by all my efforts to be an imitator of Him. And that imitation at best, will ever be found, and confessed to be, but partial.

May we all know, more richly than we do, the precious power and presence of the Spirit, to give Jesus and Heaven more authority with our hearts!

Streams of Refreshing From the Fountain of Life, Good Samaritan, The

And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and

with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour? And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise (Luke 10:25-37).

Christ came into the world to save sinners. He died for the ungodly. Prophets had repeatedly declared that

salvation is of the Lord (Jonah 2:9),

and had long spoken of Jehovah as

a just God and a Saviour (Isa. 45:21).

The gospel prominently sets this forth. He was called Jesus or Savior, because He would

save His people from their sins (Matt. 1:21);

and when the angel of the Lord announced His birth to the shepherds, he said,

Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord (Luke 2:11).

Jesus Himself taught His disciples that He came,

not to destroy men’s lives, but to save them (Luke 9:56);

and when a sin-convicted woman received Him as such, He pronounced her

saved (Luke 7:50);

and when another joyfully received Him, He declared,

This day is salvation come to this house (Luke 19:9).

Paul testified that the grace of God bringeth salvation, and He counted it

a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners (1 Tim. 1:15).

How blessed is the contemplation of the fact, that God still proclaims salvation for the chief of sinners, through the atoning death of Christ! Well may we sing —

It is the fact of God having provided a Savior for sinners that so richly manifests divine love, and when received into the heart by faith, the ruined and lost become attracted to the bosom of God. No one ever could have conceived that God had such love for sinful man as Jesus revealed. To condemn sin in His only-begotten Son, that He might bring us to glory, instead of eternally condemning us, as we so justly deserved, was such a deep thought of unutterable love as the cross of Christ alone could fully set forth.

No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him (John 4:18).

Man’s estimate of God generally is, that He is a hard master, demanding and expecting great things from him; hence, when he thinks of God at all, it is commonly associated with the idea of bringing something to God, instead of receiving from Him. Paul met this thought in the idolatrous Athenians, by telling them that

God is not worshipped with men’s hands, as though He needed any thing, seeing He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things (see Acts 17:25).

It is this proud thought of man’s ability that is such an impenetrable barrier to the entrance of the gospel into the heart, and it is this that the Spirit of God breaks down, by convincing men of their sinfulness and need of a Savior, and showing them that righteousness is to be had only by faith in Him, who is now at the right hand of God.

It is recorded that, on more than one occasion, persons came to Jesus in this erroneous condition of mind. Their enquiry was about doing something to entitle them to eternal life; which served, in the case before us, as a fit opportunity for our Lord to unfold the difference between law and gospel, and to show that He came, not to call the righteous, but to seek and to save that which was lost.

The touching parable of the good Samaritan was drawn forth by the lawyer’s self-righteous enquiry. In the darkness of deep ignorance and idle curiosity, he tempted the Lord with this question:

What shall I do to inherit eternal life? (Luke 10:25).

The point was about doing something to entitle to life; our Savior, therefore, could only refer him to what God had written in the law of Moses, in which it had been repeatedly declared, that the man that doeth these things shall live in them. The vain confidence of this enquirer was best met by thus directing him to God’s own standard of righteousness; for when men suppose that they are capable of doing that which will entitle them to eternal life, the just balance of God’s law and testimony can alone determine the question. Our Lord’s reply, therefore, was —

What is written in the law? how readest thou? (Luke 10:26)

The lawyer's response showed that, like many in the present day, he was acquainted with the letter of the law, while he knew nothing of its killing, condemning power, in laying bare the conscience, and exposing to his view the depravity of his own evil heart. He unhesitatingly answered,

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself (Luke 10:27);

to which our Lord replied,

Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live (Luke 10:28).

Thus the righteous balance of God's holy law was brought forth, and the only question was, whether the lawyer, if weighed, would be

found wanting (Dan. 5:27).

He drew forth the required standard himself, and the question was, Did it pronounce him righteous, and entitled to life? or did it prove him to

have sinned, and come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23)?

for the heart-searching demand of that law was, to

love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; and thy neighbour as thyself (Luke 10:27).

Thus perfection of devotedness to God, unceasing and unfailing in its continuance, with self-sacrifice for our neighbour's benefit, were involved in the law. Is it not strange that the lawyer did not fall down before such demands, pricked in his heart, and exclaim,

God be merciful to me a sinner (Luke 18:13)?

But he did not. So blind and ignorant is the natural man, that he perceives nothing spiritually, except the Holy Ghost enlighten his understanding and open his heart! The lawyer was still

willing to justify himself (Luke 10:29).

How great is the blindness of the human heart! But has it not always been the way of man to seek to excuse and justify himself? Do we not see multitudes around us, having the law of Moses on their lips, but so destitute of the sense of its perfect requirements as to attempt self-justification, by endeavouring to scrape together a righteousness by that very law which so thoroughly proves them to be transgressors, as to be to them a ministration of condemnation and death, so that

every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God (Rom. 3:19)?

Such is the law. Its demands are strict, its measure perfect, its standard unalterable, inflicting death on the transgressor, without any promise of mercy. Holy, just, and good in itself, but capable of showing man's sinfullness, without giving him life or righteousness; for the Scripture saith,

If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain (Gal. 2:21).

Who, then, can lay claim to life on the ground of the law? Who can say, I am clean, I am pure, I have never transgressed thy commands at any time? Blessed be God, there was One who could say,

I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do (John 17:4).

Yes,

He magnified the law, and made it honourable (see Isa. 42:21, especially New Trans., JND);

He loved the Lord His God with all His heart, and with all His soul, and with all His mind, and with all His strength; and He proved that He loved His neighbour as Himself, by redeeming him with His own precious blood.

Though the lawyer was so willing to

justify himself (Luke 10:29),

yet he failed to do so, for he was standing before the light of truth; and the proposed question,

Who is my neighbour? (Luke 10:29)

seems to imply that he had some misgiving about being able to meet this part of the law's demands; and when the Lord drew a picture of one loving a neighbour as himself, and added,

Go and do likewise (Luke 10:37),

the lawyer was unable to ask any more questions, for guilt of conscience, under the power of God's holy truth, stopped his mouth. If his heart were opened to receive the blessed instruction set before him, he could not have failed to feel self-condemned, in coming so far short of God's standard of righteousness, and would have perceived in the parable, that Christ had drawn a life-like portrait of himself in the fallen, naked, wounded, needy, half-dead traveller; and that He that was speaking to him was the neighbor ready to bind up his wounds, and pour peace and joy into his wounded conscience. Thus he would be taught the true secret of the gospel, that while he could not

inherit eternal life (Luke 10:25)

by doing, nevertheless it could be had without money and without price (Isa. 55:1), from the Savior of sinners, as the free gift of God. In contemplating the parable, we may notice:

l. Man’s fallen and helpless condition.

2. The inability of law or ordinances to meet his need.

3. The depth and suitability of the Savior’s love.

4. The security and prospects of the healed and rescued sinner.

1. MAN’S FALLEN AND HELPLESS CONDITION is most strikingly set before us in the wounded man.

A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead (Luke 10:30).

We are reminded here that man is a fallen creature. God made him upright, and pronounced him, with every other part of creation,

very good (Gen. 1:31).

He was a stranger to guilt, and knew nothing of death’s terrible sting; he was clothed with innocence, and no stain had ever soiled his pure mind. But the great enemy came to him, and he disobeyed God’s command. This is sin; and in this way he was stripped of his robe of spotless purity; he was sensible of his wickedness, he felt the deep wounds of fear and guilt, and knew that death claimed him, without having any prospect of deliverance. As the Scripture saith,

By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned (Rom. 5:12).

Thus man is a fallen creature, and he is also

without strength (Rom. 5:6);

he is gone astray from God, and sin reigns in him unto death. All mankind are alike in this respect, all are naked, wounded, helpless, needy sinners. It is very important to see this, because it withers up all thoughts of creature ability, makes us conscious of being outside Eden’s blessings, and lays us prostrate by the wayside, helpless, and sinking under the effects of the mortal wounds we have received. Our birth-condition, being a fallen one, teaches us the absolute necessity of being

born again (John 3:7),

and shows us the correctness of the Divine verdict, that

the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint (Isa. 1:5),

and that

from the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores (Isa. 1:6).

How humiliating to the proud, self-sufficient lawyer, could he have traced his own portrait in this picture of the traveler by the wayside, naked, fainting, gasping, lingering in helplessness and misery, without any resources for healing or comfort, and without a friend to help or sympathize, till the Savior of sinners came where he was. Ah! man may boast of his noble faculties, and vast capabilities, as if he were unfallen; but what is he in the sight of God? How does the pure light of heavenly truth manifest him? What is he when weighed in the balance of the sanctuary? What can be more humbling than the Lord’s concise description,

stripped, wounded,

and

half-dead (Luke 10:30)!

This is God’s verdict, and this, I am sure, every Spirit-taught conscience acknowledges as true and righteous altogether.

2. THE INABILITY OF LAW OR ORDINANCES TO MEET MAN’S NEED. Redemption by grace was an eternal purpose in the heart of God. The Lamb was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world; and when God pronounced the promise of redemption, there was no reference to the law. It was not until 400 years after the call of Abraham that the law was given, and the reason of its being given was to make sin manifest.

The law entered that the offence might abound (Rom. 5:20).

Hence we read;

By chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side (Luke 10:31).

This legal official had no remedy for the fallen and helpless, and he could only be a witness to the fact, that there was a

wounded, half-dead

traveler there. The man needed life, peace, healing, salvation, which the priest under the law was unable to minister; he therefore

passed by on the other side.

The Levite was equally unable to meet his need; for he had no healing balm for a sin-wounded conscience. His sacrifices only brought sin to remembrance, and could not give remission; —

for it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins (Heb. 10:4).

He therefore only

looked

on the dying sinner,

passed by on the other side (Luke 10:32),

and became another witness that man was

stripped, wounded,

and under sentence of death, needing remission of sins. Thus we see something of what man's real state before God is, and what a united testimony there is to his being a fallen and helpless sinner, and the inability of rites or ceremonies to meet his need. Sad indeed would it be, if the Divine record stopped here; but, blessed be God, it does not; for our deep necessity has been God's opportunity of displaying the riches of His grace in the perfect salvation of those who could not save themselves. He loved us while we were yet sinners. And —

3. This leads us to consider next, THE DEPTH AND SUITABILITY OF THE SAVIOR'S LOVE, so blessedly presented to us in His own ways and words; and standing in the widest contrast with the cold, heartless look of the Priest and Levite.

But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine (Luke 10:33, 34).

This is what the half-dead traveler needed. It suited such a helpless one. It exactly met his case. Nothing less would do.

Nothing more could be desired. What unutterable grace! How great, how free, how deep, the love of Christ to ruined sinners! Deep indeed, for He came down to us where we were, in our sins, guilt, and ruin. He had compassion, and brought healing and salvation. He saw the depth of our wounds, He beheld the misery and helplessness we were in, and His loving heart so flowed out with compassion, that when nothing less than the tremendous agony, suffering, and death of the cross would deliver us from wrath, He freely laid down His life for us, even when we were dead in sins. The Holy Savior was willingly made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him; and now, being raised from the dead, He lives at God's right hand, to be a Prince and a Savior, to give remission of sins. His blood has been shed for undone, guilty sinners, and His blood gives peace to the wounded conscience. His blood can heal the broken heart, and He is to us a better robe than unfallen man ever knew; even

the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe (Rom. 3:22).

This is what Jesus gives. The testimony of the God of truth to the value of Christ's death is the oil and wine that He pours into the troubled soul. When the Holy Spirit bears witness to the broken heart, of the law being fulfilled, its curse borne, sins purged, and death under the judgment of God endured by His Son for the sinner, so that now there is full liberty for those who believe to enter into the holiest of all by the blood of Jesus, this is like oil and wine poured into the sinking soul, filling it with joy and peace. What amazing kindness! What sovereign love! How deep! How suitable! But who can speak of its power and virtue, but the wounded that have been healed by the loving Savior?

4. THE SECURITY AND PROSPECTS OF THE HEALED AND RESCUED SINNER. Christ saves to the uttermost. He not only begins a good work, but He perfects it. He not only cleanses, but brings nigh to God, and by His Spirit unites us to Himself. He met us as beggars on the dunghill, and set us among princes. He quickened us when dead in sins, and raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ. We thus become His for ever. And so we read, that after the wounded man had been bound up, and oil and wine had been poured in,

he set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee (Luke 10:34, 35).

The security of the healed man was, that the Samaritan had exalted him from the wayside to his own seat —

set him on his own beast,

and undertook to care for him, making provision for the whole time of his absence from him; and the blessed prospect before him was the hope of his coming again. We might enlarge to show the responsibility of the Church, symbolized by the inn, to care for the lambs of the Lord's flock; but we can now simply refer to it. The Samaritan's care of the restored man is brought out, not only in the statement that he

took care of him,

but also in committing him to the ministration of others, on whom he had bestowed gifts for the service, saying,

Take care of him.

The knowledge that the kind friend, who had so mercifully rescued him from death, had made arrangements for the supply of all his present and future need must have been very consoling, and calculated to deliver from all fear and distrust; while the expectation of his coming again could not fail to be an object of the deepest interest. When the shepherd found the lost sheep, and laid him on his shoulders, the security of the sheep was, that he was borne up by the strong arm of the good shepherd. The security of Noah when he entered the ark was, that

God shut him in (Gen. 7:16).

The security of the children of Israel, when the destroying angel came in judgment, was the blood of the lamb sprinkled on their lintel and door-posts. And so now the security of the believer is, that he is in Christ, justified by His blood, upheld before God by the perfect love and almighty power of the great High Priest. Most blessed is it for every true believer in the Lord Jesus to know that

by one offering he is perfected for ever (see Heb. 10:14),

and that God hath made Christ to be unto him

wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption (1 Cor. 1:30).

In Christ he has life, righteousness, and completeness, and can never be separated from His love. Christ will care for him continually, help in difficulty, comfort in sorrow, restore when erring, and lead him into paths of righteousness, for His name's sake. Christ, who died for him, ever intercedes for him, and will come again for him. Christ dwells in him, and he dwells in Christ, and the love, wisdom, work, worth, and power of Christ are all for him.

"Once in Christ, in Christ for ever; Nothing from His love can sever."

Such is the believer's security, and the bright prospect of his soul is, that Jesus will come again, and receive him unto Himself. He knows that the same Jesus, who went into heaven, shall so come in like manner as the disciples saw Him go into heaven (Acts 1:11). He looks for the Savior, and loves His appearing. Then he knows that Christ will

see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied (Isa. 53:11);

and he says,

As for me, I will behold His face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness (see Psa. 17:15).

Time was when God's dear people were so living in the power of divine truth, that they

turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven (1 Thess. 1:9, 10).

Oh that we, who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, were so much in love with Christ, so rejoicing in His finished work, so sensibly affected by His amazing grace, as to be continually rejoicing in hope of His coming!

But perhaps my reader is a stranger to grace. You are, it may be, so far dead, as not to be sensible of your naked, wounded, perilous state. Is it so? Then let me ask you to consider how you will bear the light and terrors of the judgment-seat, and be judged according to your works? Death steals slowly but surely over you, and will quickly hurl you far from the reach of mercy, to stand before God. But, dear fellow-sinner, you are naked, wounded, and dying, though you think little of it. Do ponder these things. God pronounces all to be guilty before Him. And is not Jesus, the Good Samaritan, able to heal you? Did He not die for the chief of sinners? Does He not delight to pardon iniquity? Does He not now come where you are with the sweet balm of His blessed gospel? Does not His precious blood cleanse from all sin? Does He refuse one sinner, however vile, that comes to Him? Then why not believe on Him to save you, that He may bind up your wounds, pour joy and peace into your soul, and make you happy in the present enjoyment of His perfect and unchanging love, with the joyful prospect of being with Him in glory for ever.

May God grant His blessing. Amen.

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