# Matthew - Commentaries by Hugh Henry Snell

Crumbs for the Lord's Little Ones: Volume 5 (1857), Serving the Lord in Secret.

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Matt. 6:1-8.

IT is enough for him who walks with God to know that God rewardeth those who diligently seek Him. To such the praise of men is of no account. It was everything to the Pharisee and hypocrite to be seen of men. They took no higher ground than this in all their religious performances, which have their miserable reward. The Lord's tempters were obliged to say that He cared for no man, nor regarded the person of men. Of Himself He could say, "I receive not honor from men." Such an One, therefore, could well say, "How can ye believe which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor which cometh from God only?" "Tell no man," was the constant word of Jesus to those whom He healed and blessed. He spoke not of Himself, nor did He desire others to do so either. But His fame could not be hid. When the people would make Him king, He withdrew to the mountain apart, that He might, in the secret of His Father's presence, enjoy all the honor He sought. When the Father glorified Him on the holy mount, still His word was, "tell no man." In a word, "He made Himself of no reputation." This was the Father's business, and not His.

His brethren did not understand such secrecy, when they thus addressed Him, "Depart hence, and go into Judea, that Thy disciples also may see the works that Thou doest. For there is no man that doeth anything in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If Thou do these things, show Thyself to the world."

Jesus did go up, but not with His vain-counseling brethren, nor yet openly, but "as it were in secret;" and only then when His time of service came. How important it is before any service is entered upon, that the soul should first find the refreshing of the Father's presence, then would service be with power and unction. How important to come out of one's sacred hiding-place before we have to do with others. Moses came down full of glory, though "he wist it not," but others felt the power.

The earliest ministry of Christ was to expose the vain glory, and trumpet-sounding publicity of the Pharisee. So strictly private would the Lord have our alms to be, that He warns us against letting the left, hand know what the right hand doeth. Prayer is to be in the secret of the closet; fasting is to be with anointed head and washed face, so as not to appear to men to fast.

All this is hard work for the vanity of our hearts, that, butterfly-like, would ever float upon the sunbeam of human admiration.

He who walks with God has the constant sunshine of His presence; to him gifts shall flow in their needed measure. No work that is done to God shall be in vain. True love seeks not its own praise, but the weal of its object. It condescends not to make its gift a tribute to self. "Ye have done it unto Me" is its motive, and with such sacrifices God is well pleased. The widow's mite and Nathaniel's prayer, are those precious fruits of the Spirit, which are as incense before the Father; whilst all these noisy and ostentatious exhibitions of self are as though we had offered strange incense in His courts.

Much of the weakness attending on the saints in these days may be traced to the spirit of the Pharisee, through lack of private self-examination, and faithful dealing with one's self in secret, beneath the eye of God. Much more might be said, but I desire briefly to suggest these few thoughts to the attention of brethren, and conclude with this beautiful and appropriate scripture, which opens out what God delights in (Is. 58:7, 8, 10): "Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; and the glory of the Lord shall be thy rereward.... Then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon-day."

Crumbs for the Lord's Little Ones: Volume 2 (1854), Our Daily Bread.

Matthew 6:19-34; Luke 12:15-34.

[Please to read these Scriptures, before you read what your brother desires to say on them.]

HERE our blessed God and Father speaks to us His dear children, by His Son, concerning our present creature necessities. For though we are now new creatures in Christ Jesus, and children and heirs of God, yet we are still creatures according to the first creation, and have our creature wants.

With what authority, and love, and wisdom, does our Father here speak to us of these matters. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth." "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on." "Behold the fowls of the air ... Consider the lilies of the field." "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things." "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

Is it not plain that our heavenly Father would take on Himself the care of our creature necessities, and have us care for His Kingdom and His righteousness? He would have our hearts fixed on the things that are pure, and purifying, and eternal—things suited to our high and holy calling as new creatures, and as His beloved children and heirs.

Oh! how blessed to have my Father's kingdom, where His children shall shine as the sun, ever before me; and to be seeking to walk now "as in the day" —as an obedient child—hungering and thirsting after that righteousness which pleases and honors Him. As the blessed First-born said, "I do always those things that please Him!" To have ever in the heart that prayer— "Our Father; who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name: Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven!" Then the pilgrim-child will add— "Give us this day our daily bread!" For this very asking our Father for each day's supply, tells that we really feel the care of these our needs is with Him. And He delights to be inquired of, to do it for us.

How opposite is all this to the anxious, covetous, world around, out of which His grace has brought us. The Gentiles seek after these earthly things. They are the objects for which they live. They are without God! They walk by sparks of their own kindling! To us the word is— "Walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." "But ye have not so learned Christ."

He tells us to trust our Father with all these matters, to be subject to Him about them—for He knows them all, and will not forget to consider and care for them all, though this will be in His own way; and He calls us into fellowship with Himself in His own purposes and counsels, for His own glory by Christ Jesus our Lord.

How blessed is this, beloved in the Lard! How sweet to know that He who spreads open before us His own kingdom of holiness, and peace, and glory, is watching our pilgrim-needs—He who feeds the fowls, and clothes the lilies of the field!

Let this mind be in us, beloved! Let us press along the line for the prim of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Never let us fall under those searching, melting words, in verse 18 and 19 of Phil. 3—to be wept over as those "who mind earthly things." Rather let us follow him who could say, "This one thing I do," (vs. 13,) and, "My God shall supply all your need."

And He does! He cannot fail. See the lilies. See the birds. See all who trust in Him according to His Word.

But there is divine wisdom, as well as holiness and love, in this plan of our blessed Father's. He would exercise faith, and weaken sense. He would draw out love, and dry up selfishness. He would increase prayer, and silence murmurings. He would cultivate obedience, and mortify self-will. In a word, He would make us like Jesus, and unlike the Gentiles.

Let us admire and ponder His wisdom who thus gives us a pure, unmingled, ever-blessed object, and takes the mixed and complicated one into His own hands. For how are fleshly-lusts and creature-needs confused and mingled together! Food, drink, clothing, a dwelling, furniture, are needs. But the fallen creature has made all these objects for its lusts. Now none but God can supply the needs and teach us to mortify the lusts, and when we seek our supplies at His hand, and wholly according to His will, we shall find Him so dealing with us as both to supply our necessities and to famish our lusts. And as faith worketh by love, so when He bestows more than our own needs require, we feel that we are stewards of His bounty, and we are "ready to distribute." Yet in this distribution we shall remember still that needs, not lusts, are to be cared for (2 Cor. 8:20, 21).

Now, are we willing, beloved, to put these matters into our Father's hands? Are we willing to learn of Jesus concerning them? To say—not our will, but Thine be done? Or do we wish some indulgence— "a little one,"—in food—in clothing—in our houses; for our children? If so, we cannot have it of our Father, except it be in judgment. For He may give us our lust, that so we may learn that "he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption."

There is one indeed ever waiting on us to serve, not our needs, but our lusts. There is a shepherd for the flesh—an "idol shepherd" —who has "the world" as his storehouse! But shall we traffic with him; or be fed at his hand?

Is it not through our natural necessities that that old serpent, the devil, constantly entices us to paths of self-will, and worldly policy? Let but self-will be set at work in the provision for our real wants, and self-will will soon over step that boundary, and be making provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof! All the enemy wants is to get self-will into action. Let him only succeed in this and his victory is won. It may be about real, and even pressing needs—and the way to meet them may be so ready, so easy, so close at hand. And if the heart be not upward waiting for the Father's word—weighing the suggested plan, or step, in His presence-we shall surely be ensnared. "He that believeth shall not make haste." "They waited not for His counsel."

See the "Beloved Son" in the wilderness. What was the enemy's first temptation? Was it not to an independent exercise of His own powers, to provide for His pressing bodily need? But, no! He could hunger, but He could not act without His Father's word! That word He loved more than His necessary food! He waited only on God! Powers He indeed had—but He would use them only in subjection to His Father! This, beloved, is the excellency of all the excellencies of Jesus. He was obedient! Obedient not unto hunger only, but unto death, even the death of the cross!

Oh! for that Spirit which makes us "of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord!" This is the Spirit of Christ Jesus—the well-beloved Son.

Self-will in the provision for our necessities is then the first snare of our enemy, beloved. Then will follow self-will in the provision for our lusts. And then the tempter spreads the world and its glory before us—a wide field indeed! They only consult to cast us down from our excellency—they delight in lies; they bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly (Psa. 62. read it throughout). For, is not our excellency to wait only upon God?

Beloved, let us watch and pray, lest we enter into temptation. For our enemy will approach us through very fair and loving instruments. The partner of our bosom, the child of our body, the friend of our youth—the amiable, the moral, the prudent, the wise—may all be used by him. Necessity, duty, advantage, example, the sanction of many a good name, will all be urged, and dark pictures will be drawn of the consequences of refusal. But, "My soul, wait thou only upon God!" "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God."

Even those who are one with us in Christ may not clearly see the Father's will, and the Beloved Son's example in this matter, and may even help the enemy; but let us, in childlike meekness and faith, be subject only to God. "He that doeth the will of God abideth forever."

And in a day of such lawlessness as this, when men, (and, alas! the Church too!) are gone so far into the way of their own heart, what would more surely mark out a "peculiar people" than this simple subjection to the Lord, and prayerful dependence on Him, in all our pilgrim-needs. We should, then, be content with such things as we have; knowing that He has said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. We should be

“without carefulness.” We should not be choked with the cares of this life. Casting aside every weight-instead of multiplying them by unbelieving self-will—we should run with patience the race set before us, looking unto Jesus, and, like Him, our hearts would be filled with the joy set before us. The kingdom which cannot be moved—our Father’s kingdom—would be ever before us, and in us; and we should hasten forward to the day of God!

True, our God and Father may exercise our faith and patience. He may keep us waiting for His word, and His supply. And this will give the enemy a time and a place for his acts and his instruments. But His end in this is that patience may have her perfect work—that we may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. That we may wait, and pray, and watch, and fight, and overcome. That we may grow from “little children” to “young men:” those who are strong, and who have the word of God abiding in us, and who have overcome the wicked one (1 John 2).

Oh! to what rich account may these creature-needs be turned, if only we will listen to our Father’s counsel about them; and sit at the feet, and follow the steps of Jesus, whom He has sent to teach us in His ways!

Let us ponder, then, these precious Scriptures, beloved in Christ. Let us pray to our Father that they may do their proper work in our hearts. And to Him shall be the glory, by Christ Jesus, forever and ever. Amen!

Crumbs for the Lord's Little Ones: Volume 3 (1855), "The Closet."

Matt. 6:6

WHILST there is a very broad line, which all seem to recognize, between the holiness which becometh the house of the Lord, and the careless laxity of worldly morality; there is, nevertheless, much difficulty in following on “the narrow path which leadeth unto life.” The farther we advance the narrower apparently it becomes. “See that ye walk circumspectly—not as fools, but as wise —redeeming the time because the days are evil. Wherefore, be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.” Such precept as this shows that there is difficulty, even in the very bosom of the Church, to walk before God unto all well-pleasing.

When one is brought to the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, there is an easy and natural severance from old associations, quite enough to make the world mark the change, and to “think it strange that they run not with them to the same excess of riot.” But this cannot satisfy the renewed soul; it has its cravings, and finds these cravings in measure answered by the new association into which it is brought the Church of the living God calls forth its sympathies and interests. But even here there is danger, lest we only change one association for another, and do not recognize that, blessed as the fellowship of Christians is, it becomes degraded and spoilt if it be not taken as secondary to secret “fellowship with the Father sad His Son Jesus Christ.” There is a very strong social element in the Church of God, but in order happily to maintain it, there must be the “holding the Head” individually. It is by this means that “all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God” (Col. 2:19). If there be not this individual “holding the Head,” the danger is lest we bring the natural social element into the Church of the living God, and degrade the Church into a mere human association. But there is another difficulty, and that is the maintenance of the domestic relationships of the private household, whilst we cultivate the maintenance of the relationships of the household of faith. Truth is necessarily divisive; “three of a house may be divided against two, and two against three, and a man’s foes be those of his own household.” And how very delicate is the line between that which truth strongly necessitates, and that which will may choose. “God has called us unto peace,” and there must be in the Christian a long training in the school of meekness ere he can be well assured that he is really taking the yoke of Christ, instead of casting off a yoke which may press severely, but which nevertheless “it is good for a man to bear in his youth.” It is the perfect One who said, “Whit ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” and then immediately went down to Nazareth, and was “subject” to Mary and Joseph.

But there are private households where the heads are believers, and whose responsibility is to make their households answer to the perfect pattern of the household of God, as it is presented to us in the Scripture, every one in direct responsibility to the Head, and yet at the same time mutually dependent on one another, and mutually helpful the one to the other. “Piety at home” is far more difficult than piety in the Church or is the world. There are restraints both in the world And in the Church, which are not felt in the private household. There is room in the private household for the heads to act “after their own pleasure.” Hence it is we have need to get even from the privacy of the household to the retirement of the closet. When the Perfect Teacher is leading His disciples to the closet, He is strongly contrasting what one may do to satisfy the expectations of men, with that which is real before God, and comes out without effort before men.

“When thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.” Fluency in utterance is not prayer; it may commend us to men, but not to God. Well says the wise man, “Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God; for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few. For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool’s voice is known by the multitude of words” (Eccles. 5:2, 3). As men generally distrust a great talker, so “in the multitude of words there wanteth not sin” (Prov. 10:19).

The closet is the place of secrecy and confidence. There are dealings of God with the soul there, and instruction imparted there as it is nowhere else. “That which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops” (Luke 2:3). The Lord Jesus sought to His closet; “In the morning, thing up a great while before day, He went out, egad departed into a solitary place, and there prayed” (Mark 1:35). Saul the Pharisee, shut up in the house of Judas, with his eyes deprived of sight, was in his closet— “for, behold he prayeth” (Acts 9:11)—when Ananias. was sent to him, and he received sight in his eyes, and liberty in his soul. Peter was in his closet on the housetop, at Joppa, when he had the wondrous vision, which made him understand that God was about to justify through faith in Jesus “sinners of the Gentiles.” (Acts 10). If there be the desire in the heart, there will be no difficulty in finding a place for our closet.

But let us come to particulars. The closet is the place where we find ourselves more immediately in His presence, “with whom we have to do,” before whom “all things are naked and open.” We are not hypocrites in the closet—we dare not (even if the very place did not of itself hinder it) act a pert. “Thou, God, seest me,” is the truthful expression of the soul in the closet. The thought of comparison with others is shut out in

the thought, “Thou, God, seest me.” There may indeed be the transient feeling, as in the heart of Jacob in his solitariness, “How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.” But the reverential sense of God’s presence made Bethel the place of hallowed remembrance, and dread was turned into confidence. “God Almighty appeared unto me at Luis, in the land of Canaan, and blessed me” (Gen. 48:3). The sanctuary was Israel’s privileged place of meeting with God, yet not without a certain sense of distance in approaching unto Him. There were many things which appeared to obscure the moral government of God in the world, which could only be solved by going into the sanctuary. (See Ps. 73). But the closet was not fully made known until the time came for the publication of the name of “the Father,” which One. only could reveal, even “the Son.” We carry all the reverence of the sanctuary into the closet, but it is the Father with whom we have to do there. We are there in the secret place of the Most High, yet in all the confidence of children, These are exercises of soul which need the pity of the Father, and there they find their expression and relief. There are little and homely things which perplex, which need secrecy to mention, for which “the closet” is peculiarly suited. There are difficulties in the path of every Christian, for which he shrinks from asking the sympathy of others, which press heavily notwithstanding; but the “Father seeth in secret.” It may be when the time of revelation comes, and we shall know even as we are known, that we shall discover that there have been more powerful secret, than prominent actors, in any great manifested blessing. For the Father who seeth in secret, rewardeth openly. David, in all his glory, was for three months without the highest blessing which his soul craved—for “the ark of the Lord continued in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite three months; and the Lord blessed Obed-Edom, and all his household” (2 Sam. 6:11). The private house of Obed-Edom was more blessed than the royal house of David. David knew that, and sought for the private household blessing, as that from which all other blessings should flow.

Justly may we mourn over the common declension of Christians. There is a great deal publicly said and publicly done, yet the line between real and nominal Christians is very indistinct. The light has Become darkness; “the salt has lost its savor;” so that there is very general tolerance of all opinions, but no power of truth forcing itself on the consciences of men: This may doubtlessly, in a large measure, be traced to the lack of such boldness in testimony to the truth, which: makes the gospel and those who preach it to be “a savor of life unto life,” and “of death unto death.” But, assuredly, the lack of a practical bearing on the consciences of men by real Christians is, in a larger measure, to be traced to their neglect of the closet. The world, in its charity, readily gives credit for sin entity to the rear Christian, expecting the like charity in return, as if there was no such thing as truth: Christians help on each other in self-complacency by reason of party spirit— “measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves,” instead of “considering one another to provoke unto love and good works.” We want the reality, the singleness of purpose, thy readiness of turning every thing to account, which mark the sagacious “children of this generation.” It is in the closet that we are real, stripped, nuked, and know for ourselves individually that Christ aunt be our covering, our beauty, our only confidence, and only plea. It is there, in the presence of the Father, that we learn His preciousness to the Father, and can in our measure have fellowship with the Father in His delight in the Son. It is there that we justify God in His counselled wisdom in the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. It is there that we learn our constant need, and constant dependence on His grace, and that He who is “our God is the God of salvation.” God is continually a Saviour-God; and, happy for us, “Jesus Christ is the mine yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” He is a God who “hath delivered, doth deliver, and will deliver.” It is in the closet that we find the needs-be of living by faith. Vague generalities will not suit the closet; there we are as individuals, and learn to say with the apostle, “The life I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.” We cannot forget in the closet, that we are sinners saved by grace alone through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. We could not say there, “God, I thank thee I am not as other men are;” for, in the sacred enclosure of the closet, there is none to compare ourselves with save Hun in whose presence we are. But especially in the closet with the Father who seeth in secret, the exercised soul learns the blessedness of the hope set before it—for the hope is personal. It is not the vague thought of being exempt from trial, nor the equally vague thought of being in glory; but the thought of being with Jesus, seeing Him as He is, delighting in Him as well as adoring Him, without any hindrance or interruption. It is “looking for the blessed hope, even the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.”

To come forth from the closet into the private household, would, without effort, exercise a wholesome influence there. Surely, the principle laid down by the apostle, that the believing husband sanctifies the unbelieving wife, may be extended more widely. And the private household would afford a sphere for manifesting that “to live is Christ;” that every act of a believer is, in popular language, a religious act. “Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” “Piety at home” will ensure the behaviour which becomes the “house of God, the Church of the living God.” It is the same principle in the one and the other, subjection and mutual dependence. And according to this order, the end proposed by the apostle might be reached. “Do all things without murmurings and disputings; that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life” (Phil. 2:14-16).

If our aim reach no farther than to meet the expectations of men of the world, or even of real Christians, we may “have our reward,” but we are not approved to the Father who seeth in secret. He requires truth in the inward parts; and if the essence of Pharisaism is to appear before men, what we are not before God, the essence of a Christian is that he is of the truth, a doer of truth, one in whose spirit there is no guile, who learns in the closet the two most opposite things, the depth of his degradation and hopelessness of his condition as a sinner before God, and yet the height of his exaltation as well as the security of salvation in Christ. He will’ there learn that he is nothing, and there alone learn to be content that others should esteem him to be nothing, because God has made him all that he can desire to be in Christ. The Christian who is most familiar with the security, life, and honor which he has in Christ, will find humility to be his most fitting garb. He will be “clothed with humility.”

One special privilege of the closet is, that it is open to all, so that all stand on equally privileged ground when there; the weakest believer is there on an equal footing with the moat honored apostle. The apostles felt their need of the closet when they made provision for others “to serve tables,” that they might give themselves “to the word of God and to prayer.” And it is well for those who publicly minister to see that “the study” does not lead them to neglect “the closet.” But the closet is the place of effectual service to others, for those who are not called into publicity in the Church. Surely, if those who esteem themselves the meanest and weakest Christians were more in their closets, praying to the Father who seeth in secret, there would be many an open answer to their prayers in manifested blessing. The apostle Paul knew the value of the closet, when he spoke to the Ephesian Christians, not only of their defensive armor, but of their offensive weapons, “praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel.”

It is indeed truly comforting to our souls to know that we have the sympathy of others in their prayers for us. And if the Apostle could tell the Philippians, that they were constantly remembered by him in his prayers, was there no recompense, no return of prayer for him on their part, that he might be assured of their sympathy?

The corruption of the great professing body is marked in this very respect. They have sanctioned an official class to pray for them, and then gone another step downward to look to this class to pray instead of them. What is the remedy? Let each member of the body of Christ know that he is of use to his fellow-members of the same body; and know that the most honored sphere of service is that in which be realizes his highest relationship. “But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou halt shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.”

Streams of Refreshing From the Fountain of Life, Birth of Jesus, The

Where is he that is born King of the Jews? (Matt. 2:2).

The birth of Jesus was an event as full of love as it was deep in wisdom and humiliation; but it was what Jehovah had ages before promised, and patriarchs had long looked for. When man disobeyed his Maker, and fell under Satan’s power, God, in boundless grace, lighted up the dark and hopeless scene with the most merciful declaration, that the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head; thus announcing a Redeemer for fallen man, and that He should be born of a woman. Afterward, the Lord taught Abraham that the promised Seed should be through him and his much-loved son Isaac.

In Isaac shall thy seed be called (Gen. 21:12).

After this, it was revealed to David that the promised Seed should be of the fruit of his loins, and also that after His death and resurrection He should sit upon Israel’s throne. At a later period, the prophet Isaiah was moved by the Holy Ghost to predict that the Savior would be a virgin’s son:

Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel (Isa. 7:14).

And more than this, for he also spake of the Godhead of Christ, as well as His reigning in power, as the King of the Jews, on the throne of His father David, saying,

Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this (Isa. 9:6, 7).

Still later, the prophet Micah was instructed to inform God’s people of the locality where Jesus should be born:

But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting (Micah 5:2).

From these Scriptures we see that the Messiah would be born of a woman — God and man in one person — a virgin’s son — born in Bethlehem — of the seed of Abraham — of the lineage of David — whose goings forth have been from everlasting — that He shall sit on the throne of His father David, and of His kingdom there shall be no end.

We can thus enter a little into the question of the wise men,

Where is He that is born King of the Jews? (Matt. 2:2)

In the last dispensation many were looking forward to the coming of Messiah to reign in glory. They expected the fulfilment of the prophetic Scriptures concerning His kingdom, and overlooked the path of humiliation, suffering, blood-shedding, and death, as Messiah’s way to David’s throne. They did not see that God’s only way of setting man in blessing before Him was through death and resurrection. There were, however, a few that

looked for redemption in Jerusalem (Luke 2:38).

In this chapter we find three classes of character brought before us:

1. Herod;

2. The chief priests and scribes;

3. The wise men;

— which, by the Lord’s help, it may be profitable for us to consider.

1. HEROD. Herod was king at Jerusalem; he was, therefore, exceedingly moved at the announcement that the King of the Jews was born. It touched him very closely; for he knew that if the true Messiah were come, he could no longer be king himself. Besides, the sound of God’s King having come was enough to alarm the conscience, and awaken fear and dread. Others felt the same. We are therefore told that,

when Herod the king heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him (Matt. 2:3).

There were no thunderings or lightnings — no threatenings — no sound of alarm; yet they were troubled. Angels had sung,

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men (Luke 2:14).

A believing man afterwards exclaimed,

Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace: . . . for mine eyes have seen thy salvation (Luke 2:29, 30).

Yet

Herod and all Jerusalem were troubled (see Matt. 2:3).

The king's troubled state of mind led him to make inquiry. He first gathered those together whom he judged best able to give him information, and demanded of them where Christ should be born. But though their reply was correct, it did not relieve his trouble. He then made diligent inquiry of the wise men, but their reply must have only tended to confirm the fact that Messiah was really come. What could Herod do? His perplexity was great; fear and sorrow were experienced by him; but with all the amount of unquestionable evidence before him, he did not think the Messiah worth seeking. He therefore dismissed the wise men, that they should seek the young child; but it was not in the king's heart to go a step on such an errand.

Bring me word again,

said the king,

that I may come and worship Him also (Matt. 2:8).

If I find so-and-so, then I'll worship," thought Herod. He had no higher thought, and this was his only relief for a troubled mind. Poor Herod! The real state of his soul was afterwards made manifest: pride kindled into a flame the enmity against God and against His Christ which dwelt in his unregenerate heart; he became

exceeding wroth (Matt. 2:16),

and could only vent his rage by commanding that every young child in Bethlehem, and all the coasts thereof, should be put to death; thus expecting to get rid of his troubles by killing Him who was born King of the Jews. Such is man. Such has been, and still is, the enmity of the carnal mind to the blessed Christ of God. Men hear the faithful saying, that

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners (1 Tim. 1:15);

they are exercised about the report for a while, fears lay hold on them, and they are troubled. They make inquiry — they hear the Scriptures read and expounded — they turn to God's servants, and listen to their statements on these matters — they hear them say that it is their chiefest joy to contemplate and adoringly worship the Savior of sinners, and they seek to quiet their troubled spirits by promising to themselves to worship also at some future time. But, as in Herod's case, that time never comes. Like him, their convictions are not deep, being more from the force of circumstances and the influence of others, than from personal exercise before God; they therefore think of nothing higher than worshiping before men. There is no earnest desire for forgiveness of sins — no longing for the removal of guilt — no consideration of how matters really are between their own souls and the living God; they have no concern beyond some vague ideas of worship, places of worship, forms of worship, and the like. However, this state of mind having been brought about by circumstances, it is only for circumstances to change, and they change also. Like the early dew, such superficial impressions quickly pass away; the natural enmity to Christ easily manifests itself, and they soon cry out in spirit, with the Christless crowd around,

Not this man, but Barabbas (John 18:40)!

My reader, may I ask if you have ever been troubled when you have heard the gospel of God? If so, may I also affectionately ask you to examine into the cause of your trouble? Has it arisen from fear of change in your outward circumstances? or has it been from a deep conscientious sense of your having sinned against God, and therefore being justly exposed to His eternal condemnation? The last is the godly sorrow, that worketh repentance unto salvation not to be repented of; and if such be your experience, you will not be content that others should seek the Savior, and bring you word again, but you will seek Him for yourself. Your need will compel you. Your heartfelt cry will be,

Lord, save, or I perish (see Matt. 8:25)!

You will take refuge in the Lord Jesus Christ to save you. You will not be satisfied at merely outwardly mingling with others in worship; you will not rest till you know the forgiveness of your sins and peace with God.

Oh, my reader, beware of hypocrisy! Remember Herod. Beware of anything less than coming to Christ to save you. Do not be content at feeling a little troubled, or with a little inquiry into Scripture, or of resting in some good intentions, or any well-meant promises as to the future; yea, I repeat, beware of anything short of coming to Jesus for the salvation of your soul. Then, and then only, will you be safe; for He said,

Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out (John 6:37).

2. THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES. There was neither trouble, nor inquiry, nor wrath, manifested by these persons. Quiet and unconcerned, with Scripture ready upon their lips, they cared no more about the Messiah than they did about Herod. Yet they had a remarkable knowledge of Scripture. They could tell where Christ should be born. They heard the solemn announcement that the Messiah was come. They listened to the wise men's testimony, that the God of heaven and earth had commanded a star to move out of its accustomed sphere to guide them, and yet they were unmoved and unconcerned. Their knowledge of the letter of Scripture had puffed them up. In their folly they thought themselves wise, and knew not that they were miserable, blind, and naked: One might have thought that such a momentous matter as the birth of Christ would have stirred up the hardest hearts; but no! man's motto is, "Present gratification, without reference to the eternal future." These scribes were accredited by men, honored by the king; they felt that they held the key of knowledge, were masters in Israel, were greeted by the people's "Rabbi," and this was enough; for they sought only "present gratification," and cared not for "the eternal future."

It is to be feared that there are many of this class in the present day. They possess some knowledge of Scripture, can answer many questions even about the Savior, and are quiet and unconcerned when others around them are much troubled. They know not their real need. They

compare themselves with the ignorant idolater, and think themselves wise. They flatter themselves that they have been born in a Christian country, had Christian forefathers, have received a religious education, and attend an orthodox ministry; and therefore are not ignorant of spiritual matters. But with all their fancied knowledge,

they are ignorant of God's righteousness (see Rom. 10:3).

They know not that, if weighed in God's balance, they must be found wanting. They are ignorant of the fact, that all their best performances are only splendid sins. They are not aware that they must be born again. They know not the gift of God. They are ignorant that the thrice Holy God cannot accept any excuse for sin, and can accredit no other standard of righteousness than His own unsullied holiness. They therefore go about to establish their own righteousness, and do not submit to the righteousness of God, even CHRIST, who is

the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth (Rom. 10:4).

Oh, my reader, flee from all these snares of the great deceiver. Listen to the word of the living God that will never pass away. Remember there is salvation in none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the only way. There is no other entrance to glory. The question of such eternal importance is not what you know, or what people think of you, but what you think of CHRIST. Oh, ponder the decisive words of the apostle,

If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed (see 1 Cor. 16:22)!

3. THE WISE MEN. Whatever were the peculiar characteristics of these men, they were in the best sense wise men. They were guided by Divine light and wisdom. They had to do with God. When they saw the star move, they were assured that God was leading them; and they happily experienced that He led them to the Savior. They sought for Jesus. Nothing could hinder them. Christ Himself was the one object of their souls, and they found Him. They owned Him as the mighty God. They worshipped Him. They served Him with their substance as well as their hearts. It was to Christ they presented their gold, frankincense, and myrrh. We may also notice another thing in these wise men, they obeyed God rather than man; for being warned of God that they should not return to Herod (as he commanded), they departed into their own country another way. The account of these wise men is very simple and brief, but their ways stand in remarkable contrast with the other classes of character that are here clustered together.

Oh, my reader! while I warn you against the pernicious ways of Herod and the scribes, I entreat you solemnly to consider whether you are like these wise men. They submitted to God's teaching; have you? They sought and found the Savior; have you? They worshipped Him, and served Him with their costliest goods; have you? When they found that man commanded one thing and God another, they obeyed God rather than man; have you?

Hitherto we have only looked at the King of the Jews in reference to His birth; but grand and glorious as that event was, we afterwards see Him in a position far more blessed for our contemplation than even that. I refer to Calvary's cross. Yes, it is the cross of Christ that is the happy meeting-place between God and man. No death of the cross, there could have been no triumph over death. No death of the cross, there could have been no salvation from hell. No death of the cross, this world would have been without one cheering ray as to the future. No death of the cross, not one sinner could have ever reached the mansions of glory. But the blessed gospel declares that Christ has died. The Scriptures most prominently set forth the eternal value of Christ's death, and our Lord taught the same thing. He said,

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).

The believer's peace with God is only through the atoning work of Christ. We are justified by His blood, sanctified by His blood; we have access into God's presence, where our High Priest is, by His blood. It is in the death of Jesus we see God's wondrous love to man so abundantly manifested. There we see that Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it. There we see that the King of the Jews died for that nation. There we see that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. There we see God's infinite hatred of sin, and His amazing love to sinners. There Jesus bare our sins in His own body. There He was made sin for us. There His soul was made an offering for sin. There He once suffered under God's wrath, that we might receive eternal peace and blessing.

The King of the Jews was put to death on the accursed tree; for

it was expedient that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not . . . and not for that nation only, but that He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad (see John 11:49, 52).

On that solemn occasion cruel Pilate appeared to be conscious that Jesus was the King of the Jews; for he not only asked the blessed Lord if He were the King of the Jews, but just before he delivered Him to be crucified, he turned to the people, saying,

Behold your King! (John 19:14)

Shall I crucify your King? (John 19:15)

Pilate also wrote a title, and put it on the cross, in the three leading languages of the world, and the writing was,

JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS (John 19:19);

and so steadfast was Pilate in His purpose, that when the chief priests said unto him,

Write not, The King of the Jews; but that He said, I am King of the Jews (John 19:21),

he replied,

What I have written I have written (John 19:22).

God, doubtless, had a purpose in all this; and though the nation of Israel refused to own their King then, it will yet be their joy, at Christ's second coming, to know that they have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace (See Rom. 11:27).

But where is the King of the Jews now? He was in Bethlehem’s stable, wrapped in swaddling clothes, and worshipped by the wise men. He was recognized by a guileless Israelite as

the Son of God and the King of Israel (see John 1:49).

As the meek and lowly King, riding on an ass over the Mount of Olives, He was worshipped as

the King that cometh in the name of the Lord (Luke 19:38).

He was covered with a purple robe, and mocked with a crown of thorns. He was publicly crucified with malefactors, outside the gate of Jerusalem, as

Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews (John 19:19).

But where, I ask, is the King of the Jews now? He is no longer on the cross, no longer in the sepulcher; but though crucified in weakness, He rose from the dead by almighty power, spoiled principalities and powers, and, in risen beauty and glory, amid the ceaseless rejoicings of the unnumbered dazzling hosts of heaven, the King of the Jews was welcomed to the throne of the Majesty of the heavens, and crowned with glory and honor. Israel’s rejected King, then, is risen — raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, and exalted to the highest heavens. But the Jews, as yet, know it not. They are still in blindness and unbelief, fulfilling the prophecy of Hosea:

For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image (pillar), and without an ephod, and without teraphim (Hos. 3:4).

They are still scattered among the Gentiles, while their holy city is in heaps because of their sin; they are

broken off because of unbelief (see Rom. 11:20).

But we are told that God is able to graft them in again. Yes, God is able to cause the scales to fall from their eyes, so that a nation may be born at once. He is able to gather the outcasts of Israel, and bring them into their own land.

Afterward,

saith Hosea in the next verse,

shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days (Hos. 3:5).

Then the Jews will be joyful in their king, who will

reign . . . before His ancients gloriously (Isa. 24:23);

will be caught up to meet Him in the air. He will appear in glory, and His saints with Him. As King of the Jews, He will reign over the house of Jacob. As the last Adam, creation shall be manifestly in subjection to Him, being delivered from the bondage of corruption; and as King over all the earth, all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before Him; for with flaming fire and vengeance He shall put all enemies under His feet. Happy are those who can now sincerely say,

Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly (see Rev. 22:20).

Now, dear reader, He saves to the uttermost, and He will save you, if you come to Him. Oh, may the language of your heart be —

and

Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit (Isa. 27:6).

But then it will not be on carnal grounds, but in free, sovereign grace, through the redemption-work of Him who died for that nation. They will then know Christ crucified to be their sacrifice, Christ risen to be their lawgiver, Christ exalted to be their High Priest, Christ glorified to be their King. They will then experience the blessings of the new covenant, spoken of by Jeremiah the prophet:

After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. . . . They shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more (Jer. 31:33, 34).

Now, while the Lord Jesus is rejected by the nation of the Jews, God is sending His gospel into all the world, to gather out of the Gentiles a people for His name. A Jew here and there receives the gospel, as many have before; so that the Church of God is formed both of Jews and Gentiles, united in one body in Christ — one new man — made nigh to God in Christ and by His blood.

The reign of Christ was spoken of by the angel to Mary in connection with His birth:

Behold, thou shalt conconceive in thy womb, and bring forth a Son, and shalt call His name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end (Luke 1:31-33).

We can therefore understand why Peter referred to the Lord’s appearing, when addressing the people at Jerusalem, saying,

He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began (Acts 3:20).

To these times of restitution we are rapidly hastening. The Lord will soon descend from heaven. His Church, His beloved bride,

The Evangelist: Volume 4 (1870), Behold, the Bridegroom Cometh; Go Ye Out to Meet Him

Read Matt. 25:1-13

“For yet a little while, and He that Anil come will come, and will not tarry." (Heb. 10:37.)

Crumbs for the Lord's Little Ones: Volume 4 (1856), Matthew 11:27 through 30.

“Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”—Matt. 11:28.

IT is the blessed work of the Holy Ghost to bring Jesus before us—to make Him everything. “He shall glorify Me, for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you.” “All things that the Father hath are Mine; therefore, said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you.” To this end, it was expedient that Jesus should go away.

The spiritual condition of our souls depends upon the views we have of Christ. Our communion with the Father and the Son, our joy and peace, the firmness and boldness of our faith, our strength for service, and willingness to suffer and endure for His name sake, depend entirely upon the character of experience we have in relation to Him.

It has ever been the work of Satan to lower the Person, Work, and Character of the Lord Jesus, that he might damage our souls, and make way against us. In Jesus we see the Father—His words, and works, are in Him revealed. To understand the one clearly, is to know the other also. (See John 14) It is very striking in this chapter, indeed throughout John’s gospel, how closely Jesus connects Himself with the Father; whilst He draws us to Himself, He draws us to the Father also.

We must, however, keep distinct in our minds, the Son in relation to His union with the Father as the sharer of all Divine fullness in His essential Godhead, and His rights as the anointed and risen Man. Ere Jesus commanded His Apostles to disciple all nations, He told them that all power in heaven and in earth was given unto Him. In the assurance of this, they were to make their way into all parts of the earth, to preach His name and gospel. The blessedness and fullness of this truth was to sustain their hearts in the midst of all the difficulties of the way. In time of danger and opposition they were to fall back upon it. The power thus delegated to Christ is a given power; He gets all in resurrection as the risen Man. Ere this He had a glory with the Father before the world was. (John 17) The glories of eternity, and of time, find in Him their common center.

There is a most striking and deeply interesting connection between these verses in Matthew 11, which I thus divide: —

“All things are delivered unto Me of My Father.”

“Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and He to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him.”

“Come unto Me, all ye that labor.”

“Take My yoke upon you.”

Jesus invites us to come to Him, and to take His yoke, on the ground that all things were delivered unto Him of His Father. In the blessed assurance of this, all who labor and are heavy laden are invited to come, with this gracious promise, that He will give rest. What meaning, therefore, there is in the invitation to come—come unto One who possesses everything, and that, too, by the gift of the Father. The source of all fullness and blessing is now in Him. Paradise is lost. The land of Canaan is dissolved; the world under the curse is bringing forth its daily share of thorns and thistles; ruin and devastation everywhere abound. In the world we shall have sorrow and tribulation; but, blessed exception! in Jesus we have peace. “All things are delivered unto Me of My Father.” Wondrous words! Well may we say with the disciples, “Lord, to whom should we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.” All that the soul needs for refreshment and security are now to be found in Jesus, and only there. Floods of human anger may now prevail, and Satan roar on his prey like a lion; darkness may cover all the earth, and desolation spread everywhere; yet these words of Jesus, “In Me ye might have peace,” make the storm a calm; and so it shall be, till we reach the haven where we would be. No man knows the Father, and no man knows the Son, yet the believer knows both the Father and the Son. For the Father reveals the Son (Matt. 16:17), and the Son reveals the Father. (Matt. 11:27.) In the secret and power of this blessed mystery of the Father and the Bon, the believer comes to Jesus, and is at peace, is safe, and is at home.

To come to Jesus is not to indulge in lawlessness, nor indifference, in relation to the things that concern His interests. We are called to bear His yoke, to serve Him daily, and the believer finds His service to be perfect freedom. He who puts the yoke upon us is meek and lowly in heart, therefore His yoke is easy, and His burden light, whilst all other yokes are oppressive and burdensome. He asks us to do nothing against our heat interests, and He sustains us in any service He is pleased to honor us with. Many seem to make their religion serve only their own ends; to escape hell, and to find a place hereafter in heaven, is all that Jesus and His cross are to them. Such seek to hold as much of the world as they can stretch their consciences to admit. They forget that if they are saved by Christ’s Cross, they have a daily one to take up, or else they cannot be His disciples. To follow Jesus fully, all for Him must be forsaken. The hatred of the world must be borne; it is enough for the servant to be as his Master. Christianity is the opposite of selfishness, “For (says the apostle) none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord’s.” (Rev. 14:7, 8.) Jesus is the perfect sample of this as He is of every grace. “He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.” The Holy Ghost’s record of the glorified family is, “His servants shall serve Him” (Rev. 22:3); but of many it might now be fairly said, His servants do not serve Him. As in the days of Paul, so, alas! it is now, men are looking on their own things, and not on the things of others. I doubt whether peace of soul can be long maintained where service to Jesus is not the reigning motive of one’s life. It is said of those who put on His yoke, “ye shall find rest unto your souls.” I believe it will be found a matter of general experience, that those who refuse Christ’s yoke sin against their own souls. Not unfrequently when this first step in declension is taken, open sin follows.

Happiness is not within the compass of human will and ability; it must come in God’s way and time. It is in the hands of Jesus, and He is pleased to bless His yoke-bearers with rest of soul. Nothing can make up for the loss of this. Jesus was a Son, yet He was a Servant also. His delight was to do His Father’s will; He went about doing good, and God was with Him.

Thus we have linked together, all things being delivered to Jesus of the Father, and the statement that the Father is revealed to the believer by the Son. Then the invitation, based upon these truths, to come to Him, being weary and heavy laden (as all believers are), and that He will give rest. All is wound up with the Lord’s loving command, to take His yoke and learn of Him, “and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” Those who know the fullness that dwells in Him, will come to Him in every time of need, knowing that they shall not be disappointed. Those in whose hearts His love has engendered obedience take His yoke. Such only know what true rest of soul means. They find it in times of need and sorrow, and in the path of service, whilst all others hew out cisterns that can hold no water.

The Evangelist: Volume 4 (1870), Have You Found Rest in the Lord Jesus?

AN EXTRACT

“Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."—Matt. 11:28.

HEAR the gracious words of the Son of God—of the only One who could use such language without falsehood or presumption—of the One who can use it because "all things are committed to Him in heaven and in earth." The words are addressed to all who are conscious of the burden of sin, and who are laboring to get rid of it. If they are not addressed to all mankind, it is because some do not need the rest spoken of; through divine mercy they have already found it—they have got rest in the Lord Jesus—they have found peace in believing.

But there is another class not addressed in this passage, who are in a very different condition. They are in the enjoyment of a delusive rest—a false peace. They are rocked to lullaby in the arms of Satan; they are sleeping on the margin of the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. They are feasting themselves, like Job's family; in a house which is ready to fall upon them. They are eating and drinking and making merry, in a vessel which has sprung a leak, and is presently to sink. They are unconcerned for themselves, though angels are ready to weep over them. They feel no burden, and yet all the weight of their unpardoned sin rests upon them. The heavens appear bright above them; and yet the wrath of God, like a dark thunder-cloud hangs over them.

Those to whom the Lord's gracious invitation is addressed are conscious of their condition, and this consciousness makes them wretched. Like the pilgrim described by Bunyan, they carry a heavy burden, of which they are most anxious to be relieved. They are conscience-stricken. The sense of unpardoned sin is intolerable to them. It is true they have not as yet taken a right way to get rid of their burden; the course they are taking only aggravates their condition. It is bad enough to be heavy laden; but to labor beneath such a burden can only make matters worse. To do so can only increase the sense of it; and hence Satan often becomes the tormentor of those whom God has stricken. The voice of the Lord has awakened them from their perilous dream of safety. They no longer listen to the, cry of "Peace, peace, when there is no peace." They have discovered that they are sinners and amenable to the righteous judgment of God. The enemy, finding it vain to attempt any longer to blind their eyes to their sin and danger, comes and offers his services to help them off with their burden. For this end he sets them upon keeping the law—that law by which the sinner is convicted—that law by which "no man living can be justified"—that law which stops the sinner's mouth when he would plead innocence or extenuate his offence—that law "by which is the knowledge of sin"—that law which "entered that the offence might abound"—that law which curses all "who continue not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." Yet in spite of all that the word of God says, as to the hopelessness of the attempt, Satan succeeds in persuading untold numbers of convicted sinners to seek this mode of justification. To repeat the folly which ended in bitter disappointment in the case of Israel, of "going about to establish their own righteousness," instead of "submitting to the righteousness of God.”

And though many, through divine mercy, escape from this second snare of Satan, yet it is to be feared that myriads perish in the fruitless attempt to do what God, in so many parts of His blessed word, has pronounced impossible.

Heavy-laden sinner,—the first step, then, towards the rest of conscience, which Jesus offers to thee, and which thou so much desirest to obtain—the rest of conscience which proceeds from the knowledge of pardoned sin—is to give over working for it.

If thou doubtest the truth of what I say, listen to a few of the many statements of the word of God on the matter: “He that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His."(Heb. 4:10.)

“To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works."—(Rom. 4:5, 6.)

“For by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."—(Gal. 2:16.)

“But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident; for, The just shall live by faith."—(Gal. 3:11.)

These Scriptures, then, make it plain that thy labor—thy zealous but fruitless attempts to keep the law, are the very things which, instead of aiding thee in the attainment of the object of thy desires, hinder the success of thy efforts to obtain that righteousness of which "the effect is quietness and assurance for ever.”

It is said of a person unable to swim, and who has accidentally fallen into deep water, that if he would be quiet, the water would probably bear him up until succor came: that it is his struggles, in short, which render his `case desperate. Even so it is with thy vain efforts to be thine own Savior; they prevent thee from availing thyself of the kind and powerful aid of that great Deliverer who came from heaven to earth to rescue thee from sin and death. Jesus says, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest;" and in another place, "Him that cometh to me, I will in nowise cast out." But thou hast hitherto obeyed the promptings of "thy evil heart of unbelief," aided by the power of Satan, and refused to obey His call. Thy "dead works" are the witnesses of thy unbelief and disobedience. If thou couldst thus obtain a well-grounded peace, Christ would have died in vain. And thus thy effort is not only a hopeless one, but grossly dishonoring to the blessed God who "sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him," as well as to that gracious Savior "who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our

justification.”

Jesus says, "I will give you rest;" but thy works are the witnesses of the pride of thy heart, which would rather receive wages than a gift. They are an attempt to earn that which is offered to thee for nothing—to buy that which as "a Prince" Jesus has power and as "a Savior" has grace to bestow; having, as "the Holy and the Just One," earned the power to do so by the sacrifice of His own life.

Thy vain effort to "attain to the law of righteousness" "by the works of the law," is a proof of thy utter ignorance both of the holiness of God and of the evil of thine own heart. If it were not so, thou wouldst not think of purchasing that peace, which is the work of righteousness, by bringing to God the worthless produce of such a barren, yea, such an accursed soil. If thou hadst had right thoughts of God and of thy own nature, thou wouldst not have taken "the way of Cain," and offered to the Searcher of hearts the fruit of that on which the sentence of death has passed. If thou continuest this course, with thy back on the cross, and thine eyes turned in upon thyself, as thy work so will thy disappointment be, like that of him of whom it is recorded, that "he was very wrath, and his countenance fell," when God had not respect unto his offering.

Thou wilt never thus render thyself acceptable to God; thou wilt never thus obtain the "rest" which Jesus offers to the heavy-laden sinner. And if thou dolt not get rest in Jesus now, how canst thou hope for the rest that remaineth for the people of God?

Take, then, poor needy one, that rest which it rejoices the heart of the Savior to bestow. It is well for thee that that which He has purchased for thee with His own precious blood, He gives thee "without money and without price." Whatever thou mayest have heretofore supposed, thou hast, as we have just seen, "no money" that will not be found utterly base and worthless when tried in the fire of God's holiness, however it may pass current with short-sighted and sinful man.

Bankrupt as thou art by nature, yet "open thy mouth wide and God will fill it." He will enrich thee with "durable riches" out of His own treasury. "Beggar" as thou art, away from Christ, yet coming to Him thou shalt be "taken from the dunghill, thou shalt be set among princes, and made to inherit the throne of glory.”

Leave off thy fruitless and sinful labor, and come to Jesus, and thou shalt find that thy heavy load has fallen from off thy back; nay, that though thou Nast in thy blindness and unbelief thought it thine, it was borne by Him when on the cross, and left in His grave when "He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father.”

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