

Monergism



THE CHRISTIAN

THE BASICS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

WILLIAM S. PLUMER

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by William S. Plumer

Table of Contents

[1. The Christian Name](#)

[2. The Christian Profession](#)

[3. The Christian Life](#)

[4. The Christian Doctrine](#)

[5. The Christian Character—an Example](#)

[6. The Christian Simplicity](#)

[7. The Christian's Way](#)

[8. The Christian's Temptations](#)

[9. The Christian's Victory over Temptations](#)

[10. The Christian's Views of Sin](#)

[11. The Christian's Besetting Sins](#)

[12. The Christian's Sense of Responsibility](#)

- [13. The Christian's Faith](#)
- [14. Why Do I Rest Confidently in Christ?](#)
- [15. The Christian's Hope](#)
- [16. The Christian's Trust](#)
- [17. A Christian's Good Resolutions](#)
- [18. The Christian Lives by Rule](#)
- [19. The Christian's Enemies](#)
- [20. The Christian's Shepherd](#)
- [21. The Christian's Advocate](#)
- [22. The Christian's Earnest](#)
- [23. The Christian's Joy](#)
- [24. The Christian's Sorrow](#)
- [25. The Christian's Sorrow—more about it](#)
- [26. The Christian's Hatred of Error](#)
- [27. The Christian's Glorious Riches](#)
- [28. Some Musings of an Old Christian](#)
- [29. What Can I Do?](#)
- [30. Posthumous Usefulness](#)

1. THE CHRISTIAN NAME

The word 'Christian' is found but three times in all the Scriptures. The places where it occurs are Acts 11:26; Acts 26:28; and 1 Peter 4:16. These read as follows: "And the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch." "Then Agrippa said unto Paul—you almost persuade me to be a Christian." "Yet if any man suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf."

The chronology of some of the events recorded in the Acts is not entirely certain, but it seems pretty clear that the followers of our Lord were not called Christians until ten or twelve years after our Savior's ascension to heaven.

I once heard a sermon on Acts 11:26, in which it was assumed that the name Christian, like that of Puritan or Methodist, was first given in reproach, and by enemies; and was afterward adopted by the disciples of our Lord, as a name which they were willing to bear. And it cannot be denied that in every age odious epithets have been heaped upon the godly. It is also certain from the history of the trial and martyrdom of Polycarp, that for a long time the enemies of the Cross employed the term to revile and accuse. But this does not prove that bad men first gave the name.

These things seem to be clear:

1. Christian is a very fit name for all the followers of Christ. They are in Christ. They love and adore Christ. They are ready to die for Christ. He is their Savior and Redeemer. They are not ashamed of Him, and He is not ashamed of them. They are the friends, followers, and redeemed of Jesus Christ. He is all in all to them. They are precious to Him. He says so (Isa. 43:4).
2. Christian is a very appropriate name. It well designates God's people, and in itself sums up the whole matter. Other names are given to God's people, and some of them are very appropriate, but none is more fitting than this.

3. It was foretold by the evangelical prophet that in the latter days the Church should receive a new appellation: "The Gentiles shall see your righteousness, and all kings your glory: and you shall be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name" (Isa. 62:2). This passage no doubt indicates the great blessing arising from the altered state and prospects of the Gospel Church. But may it not also be interpreted as having been literally fulfilled in the bestowment of the name Christian? Many have so thought.

4. Nor were there lacking in the primitive Church, people by whom the Lord could fitly change the name of His people; for in immediate connection with the historic statement that "the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch," it is added, "prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and predicted by the Spirit that there would be a severe famine throughout the Roman world. This took place during the time of Claudius" (Acts 11:26-28). There were inspired men who were able to make known the mind of God and to speak by His authority.

5. The people of God have ever since, and without hesitation, borne the name of Christians. The inspired historian, Luke, says nothing against it. Peter speaks of it approvingly. Evidently godly men have long accepted it as if it were from the Lord.

Someone may ask, WHAT IS IN A NAME? The answer is, that there is a great deal in a name; and in giving a name, one exercises high authority. It is recorded as one of the acts of the intelligence and authority of Adam that he gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field (Gen. 2:20). Jehovah Himself asserts His prerogative in giving and changing names as He pleases. Thus He changed the names of Abraham, Jacob, and Sarah. Thus He directed that the name of His incarnate Son should be called Jesus. Names are things when properly applied. They are indeed often borne unworthily, often misapplied. But it would shock our pious feelings if the ancient Church had received her names from Cain, or Canaan, or Korah, or any notoriously bad man, instead of being

called Jacob, Israel, Joseph, Abraham's seed, and spoken of in other like terms indicative of glory and virtue.

In the Christian name is so much that is precious, that nothing could persuade godly men to give it up. Even bad men love to have the epithet 'Christian' bestowed upon their loved ones who have left this world.

Reader, are you a Christian; a real, living, firm, consistent Christian? You have the name, but are you worthy of it? Is your union with Christ close and vital? Do you live in Him? Do you live for Him? Do you live to Him? Do you wish to live and reign with Him? Have you duly considered the import of the name you bear? It means much more than being born in a Christian land. Worthily to bear the name of a Christian, is the greatest honor and the greatest happiness ever attained on earth.

A Christian is the highest style of man.

2. THE CHRISTIAN PROFESSION

In the New Testament the same Greek verb is rendered both confess and profess. In these places it is rendered confess, namely, Matt. 10:32; Luke 12:8; John 1:20; 9:22; 12:42; Acts 23:8; 24:14; Rom. 10:9; Heb. 11:13; 1 John 1:9; 4:2-3, 15; and 2 John 7. In the following places the same verb is rendered profess, namely, Matt. 7:23; 1 Tim. 6:12; Titus 1:16. In like manner the noun is sometimes rendered profession, as in 1 Tim. 6:12; and in the very next verse it is rendered confession.

If there is any difference between a confession and a profession, it is that the former is made in the face of danger, while the latter is a mere setting forth of our belief and practice. Each is an avowal of one's convictions or of one's belief. Each is a declaration of what is supposed to be truth.

A Christian profession is called for—

1. By the very nature of the case, Christ's kingdom is both spiritual and voluntary. If men consent not to serve Him, they are His enemies. If they bow to His yoke, how can they more fitly declare that fact than by avowing their love to Him? If none of Christ's friends declare for Him, He will soon have no friends in this world.

2. A proper and becoming profession of love to Christ is useful to others. It emboldens timid disciples. It confirms the faltering. It awakes the dull and inattentive. It makes men feel that there is a reality in religion. Very few things are more potent for good, than a solemn profession of Christ's religion. Many a man has been stout and hardened until he saw his wife, or child, or brother, standing up to take upon them the Christian profession. It was proof of desperate wickedness in the chief priests and elders that when even the publicans and harlots believed John, and these officials saw it, they repented not afterward that they might believe (Matt. 21:32).

3. A Christian profession is commended in the Word of God. It is called "a good profession" (1 Tim. 6:12). It is in itself right, lovely, beautiful, excellent, as the Greek word signifies.

4. A Christian profession is commanded by Him who has all authority in the case. His word and providence unite in saying: Who is on the Lord's side? Come out from among them. Be separate, says the Lord. Choose you this day whom you will serve.

5. Very glorious promises are annexed to a right Christian profession, and very awful threatenings are uttered against those who refuse to own the Redeemer. Hear the Savior, who shall be our final Judge: "Whoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 10:32-33). Compare Luke 12:8-9; Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26; Rom.10:9-10.

But what is implied in a Christian profession? It is plainly to own the whole truth of God as made known to us. To profess any error or falsehood cannot but be dishonoring to God. A good profession clearly implies an adherence to the truth of God. And no lie is of the truth. It is also a declaration of a purpose to observe all God's statutes and ordinances. There is no piety where there is no keeping of the Commandments. A good profession is always followed by walking in the ways of the Lord, following His example, and framing our doings to please Him and serve His people. And all this is with humble subjection to Christ in all things.

A Christian profession must be—

1. Sincere and hearty. Not only must it not be basely hypocritical, but in it there must not be even self-deception. It must be honestly made. In it must be no reserves, no relentings. A profession of love without love is offensive to every right mind.

2. It must be humble, not vainglorious and ostentatious. Jehu called on men to witness his zeal for the Lord. He was a poor, vain creature.

3. A Christian profession must be open and public. Christ made no secret of His love to us. Why should we make a secret of our love to Him? "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16).

4. Our profession should also be bold and fearless. We should not seem to be asking pardon for being followers of Jesus Christ. Paul says: "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes" (Rom. 1:16). There is an apologetic way of avowing truth which seems to provoke opposition. We must stand up for Jesus, cost what it may. The life of the truth is more important than the life of any man upon earth. We must resist even unto the shedding of blood, if necessary.

5. A Christian profession is permanent—until death. In this war there is no discharge. "If any man draws back, My soul shall have no

pleasure in him," says God (Heb. 10:38). In this work we have great encouragement. "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for He who promised is faithful." (Heb. 10:23). How faithful He is, the saints of all ages can testify. His faithfulness never fails. It reaches to the heavens. It is unto all generations.

3. THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

When we speak of the Christian life, we may refer either to the gracious principle implanted in the heart of the regenerate, or to the ordinary methods of its manifestation. Let us look at both.

The life of God in the soul of a believer is a great mystery. In any case life is somewhat unknown to us. But the life of a child of God is very far removed from the cognizance of the careless. Believers themselves are God's hidden ones. They are fed and nourished by the hidden manna. The secret of the Lord is with them. He shows them His covenant. Their life is hid with Christ in God. True, when Christ, who is their life, shall appear, then shall they also appear with Him in glory. But now they are unknown to the world, except as their light shines in the darkness.

The Christian life is supernatural. It is something far above the powers of the carnal man. That the blind should see, the deaf hear, the lame man leap as a deer, and the dead live—can be accounted for only on the ground that it is the work of God. We are all dead in trespasses and sins, until Divine grace makes us new creatures. Over our mind, dense clouds of smoke and thick darkness from the bottomless pit have settled. We have eyes, but we see not. Our imaginations are vain. Our memories are polluted. Our ingenuity devises mischief and foolish evasions and excuses. Our wills are perverse and stubborn. Our daring in sin is frightful. To think of our state might well make one to shudder. Our enmity to God is mortal. If such are changed from hatred to love, from sin to holiness—it must be by God's power, His mighty power.

This Christian life is the gift of the Holy Spirit, and no man knows the way of the Spirit. "The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it comes nor where it goes; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit." It is but vanity and presumption for us poor worms to claim to comprehend the ways of God.

The Christian life is to the soul that experiences it, a new life. Old things have passed away. All things are become new. Like all new life, it is full of wonders. Everything pertaining to it is fresh and suited to rejoice the heart.

And so it is a happy life. The joy of the Lord has great strength in it. The buoyancy of the soul that is stayed on God is often amazing, and always mighty.

This life is also abiding. It is not always equally strong, but it is fed by new supplies of strength until the last.

Of course the Christian life is a great mercy. So says the apostle of the circumcision: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to His abundant mercy, has begotten us again unto a lively hope," etc. So says the apostle of the Gentiles: "God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, has quickened us together with Christ," etc. The Christian life manifests itself—

1. By healthful and regular pulsations. The child of God has a heart, and its throbbings are not spasmodic and occasional. Because Christ lives in them, the life of Christians is constant.
2. The Christian life manifests itself by cries—cries that enter the ears of the Lord Almighty. As soon as Paul was renewed, it was said of him, "Behold, he prays." No Christian lives without prayer.
3. The Christian life manifests itself by a relish for suitable food. Even the newborn babe desires the sincere milk of the Word that it

may grow thereby. After a while, the strong meat of God's Word is required, and it is relished also.

4. Wondrously, too, does the child of grace enjoy the pure and heavenly atmosphere of the Church and ordinances of God's house, and the sweet moments of the communion of saints in prayer and praise, in supplication and thanksgiving.

5. Such Christians will grow—will grow up into more and more stability, heavenly-mindedness, constancy, courage, love, faith, and hope. Of some, Paul says their faith grew exceedingly.

6. The Christian life will show itself by activity. There will sooner or later be motion where there is life. In due time the renewed man will walk, and leap, and praise God. When one said to an ancient philosopher, "There is no such thing as motion," the sage said not a word, but arose and walked across the room. That was answer enough. So if any say there is no Christian life in the world, let us, by walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blamelessly, prove that they are mistaken.

There is a reality, there is a power in heartfelt piety. On this earth nothing is more powerful. But for true piety, the world would soon come to an end—the cries of its wickedness perpetually calling for vengeance. But as ten righteous men would have saved the cities of the plain, so for the elect's sakes the day of vengeance is shortened and the day of grace prolonged.

4. THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

The word doctrine is found more than fifty times in the Scriptures. It has shades of meaning, but it commonly has the idea of knowledge, instruction, teaching. Our present business is with Christian doctrine.

The prophets, Christ, and His Apostles did teach something coherent and harmonious. There is a system of truth. It differs from Paganism, Mohammedanism, Deism, Judaism. Christian doctrine embraces the truths of the Gospel. In general it consists in the instruction given us in all God's Word. In particular it is made up of those great principles urged by Christ and His Apostles as expository of the Old Testament, and as declaring the mind and will of God.

There is such a thing as Christian doctrine in opposition to anti-Christian error. Truth is opposed to falsehood. Both Solomon and Paul speak of "good doctrine." Four times does Paul speak of "sound doctrine," which is the same as good doctrine. All true and sound doctrine is good whether it pleases or offends men. In Scripture it is called "the doctrine of God," "the doctrine of the Lord," "the doctrine of God our Savior," "the doctrine of Jesus," "the doctrine of Christ," "the doctrine of the Apostles," "the doctrine which is according to godliness." In Scripture it is synonymous with "truth," "the truth in Christ," "the truth as it is in Jesus," "the truth of God," and "the word of truth." It is elsewhere called the "form of sound words," and "sound speech that cannot be condemned."

Christian doctrine is just the opposite of what the Bible calls "strange doctrines," "the doctrines and commandments of men," "philosophy and vain deceit," "the doctrines of devils," "the traditions of men," "damnable heresies."

So that it cannot be denied that there is such a thing as sound doctrine, just as there is unsound doctrine; there is good doctrine, and there is evil doctrine; there is doctrine according to godliness, and there is doctrine contrary to piety; there is a word that nourishes men up in faith, and there is a word that eats as a canker. Christian doctrine is always good, safe, edifying.

We are bound to discriminate between Christian doctrine and all its opposites. The Word of God requires us to prove all things, and to hold fast that which is good; to try the spirits, and not to believe

every spirit; to judge of religious teachers by their doctrines. This can be done. Many have done it. We can know the truth. "The doctrine of the Pharisees" and "the doctrine of the Sadducees" never did accord with the doctrine of Christ. "The doctrine of Balaam" and "the doctrine of the Nicolaitans" always were at war with truth and righteousness, always were abhorred by godly men, and always did subvert those who lent a willing ear to them. Light and darkness are not more opposite than truth and error. Arsenic and flour look very much alike; but one kills while the other nourishes. All are bound to distinguish between Christian doctrine and opposing errors.

Christian doctrine is not the product of earth. Man is not its author. All saving truth is heaven-born. Christ so taught: "My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me." The consent of all men cannot transmute a lie or a fable, into the truth. Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. If God says anything, it is true. If He says it not, it is either not true, or it concerns not our salvation.

Christian doctrine must be known, loved, and embraced. It is essential to right views of God's nature, government, and worship. Before one believes that he needs a Savior, he must believe that he is a sinner. Men reject the truth from pride, or prejudice, or the lack of right affections. The Scripture warrants us in saying that men hold false doctrine because they have "not received the love of the truth," and that proves a wicked state of mind. All but ungodly men love the truth. Our salvation depends upon our receiving the Christian verity. "He who believes not is condemned already." "If you believe not that I am He, you shall die in your sins." "Sanctify them through Your truth; Your word is truth." These are a few specimens of what God's Word says, to teach us how essential a hearty reception of the very doctrines of Scripture is to our securing eternal life. Error may lead to bigotry, blasphemy, or superstition—but never to holiness.

False doctrine dishonors God at every step. It defiles the conscience, corrupts the heart, blinds the mind, and makes vain our imaginations. On the other hand, truth leads to godliness. When

inspired men would stir up God's people to courage, constancy, humility, benevolence, adoration, and holiness, they never present old wives' fables, but the great truths of Scripture. Nor are God's friends at liberty to hold back any portion of the truth. The rejection of some of the doctrines of God will bring utter ruin on the soul. To believe a lie in religion is a very alarming symptom. "But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!" (Gal. 1:8).

We must not only hold the Christian doctrine, but we must hold it to the rejection of opposite errors. The Pharisees held considerable truth, but they made it all vain by their traditions.

And we must hold the Christian doctrine at all cost and at all hazards. "Buy the truth, and sell it not." Myriads have laid down their lives for the testimony of Jesus; and they acted wisely in so doing. By thus losing their lives, they made sure eternal life. It would not be difficult to show that all the truths of religion, and all the civil and religious liberty on earth, are the fruit of the sufferings of men, who hazarded their lives for Christian doctrine.

5. THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER— AN EXAMPLE

The word character is often taken in the sense of reputation; but when used more precisely, it refers to the principles and affections which control a man. It is the stamp on the mind, the impress on the heart, the sum of the effects produced on the soul by all the influences brought to bear upon it.

There is such a thing as Christian character. Otherwise there is no difference between Christians and unbelievers. Even infidels have confessed the difference between Christian servants and the profane in their employment.

The epithets bestowed on men in the Word of God clearly show that there is a radical difference between them. Some are called wise, and others foolish; some are just, and others unjust; some are righteous, and others unrighteous; some are godly, and others ungodly; some are the friends of God, and others are His enemies; some are the servants of God, and others are the servants of sin; some are the children of God, and others are the children of the Devil. Christians are strangers and pilgrims, and others are men of the world. There is a radical difference between men's characters. The Bible says so. All this is very reasonable, for—

1. God's grace has done much more for some men than for others. See what a difference it made between Paul and Nero, both bloody persecutors; between Zaccheus and the young ruler whom Jesus loved, both greedy worldlings; between the two thieves on the Cross, both deserving death for their crimes. Every Christian has received of the Lord pardon for all his sins, acceptance in the Beloved, the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. He has also been renewed in the spirit of his mind by the power of the Holy Spirit. He has received a new heart. The law of God has been written upon his heart. He has been made a new creature. It would be monstrous for such a one to be, to live, and to act like one who had never been thus blessed.

2. The Christian has seen more than the wicked. He has had his eyes opened to behold wondrous things out of God's law. Christ has been revealed in him, and to him. He has by faith seen Him, who is invisible. He has caught amazing glimpses of the glorious character of the incorruptible God. How can such a one be, live, or behave like the poor, blinded sinner, who cannot see afar off?

3. The Christian has heard more than the wicked. His ears have been circumcised. He has so heard that he has lived. Like Lazarus in the grave, he has heard the Son of God saying, "Come forth," and he has had strength to obey. He has heard the voice of Love. He has heard

the tender calls of bleeding mercy. Surely such a man will be different from those who are strangers to such things.

4. The Christian has felt more than the sinner. His heart has been circumcised. His soul has been filled with pleasure at things which the wicked care not for. Many a time his heart has burned within him at things which never moved the wicked. The Lord has opened his heart to attend unto the things which concern salvation. In his heart he thinks far differently from what he ever thought before.

5. The Christian has sincerely and devoutly promised to live unto God, and not unto himself. The vows of God are upon him. He has sworn that he would keep the statutes of the Lord. The man of the world has never heartily made any such engagements. Whatever promises he has made, if not grossly hypocritical, were at least without any gracious purpose to glorify God. Ease soon revokes vows made under terrors of conscience, the pangs of affliction, or the apprehension of death. It would be marvelous if the Christian, with all his good intentions, solemn vows, and settled purposes—had not a character quite decided and vastly different from that of the sinner. He may be slow to engage in some good things, but his hand once put to the plow, he looks not back.

6. The Christian really and earnestly expects more and greater things than all the sinners in the world. They have transient and vain expectations, based on their own self-righteousness, and on mistaken views of the character of God. But the Christian is warranted in every hope he indulges, built upon the Word of God. All his expectations are awakened by truth and the spirit of truth. None of his hopes shall perish. His supports in future conflicts and in the last struggle shall be greater than he had been able to think. The crown of life shall be more glorious than he ever anticipated. It therefore cannot be otherwise than that he shall be a peculiar manner of person in all holy living and godliness, looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God. He perfects holiness in the fear of God. He lives soberly, righteously, and godly in this

present evil world. His character is different from that of all the enemies of God. The wicked take knowledge of him—that he has been with Jesus. His brethren in the Lord are drawn to him. He lives before God. His very death is precious in the sight of the Lord.

AN EXAMPLE IN REV. WM. PRESTON, D.D.

About the beginning of this century there was born in Connecticut a child, which grew and waxed strong, and in due time reached a vigorous manhood. After careful preparation he was inducted into the sacred office. His ecclesiastical relations were with the Protestant Episcopal Church. He twice served the Master as pastor of the flock in Columbus, Ohio, and twice, and for a longer period, he labored in Pittsburgh, Pa. In this latter field he spent in all about thirty of the best years of his life. Like many other people of God whom I have known, he left this world on Sabbath morning. It was the 25th of April. When the churches he had served, and the thousands of Israel were assembling in houses built with hands, he was for the first time joining in the hallelujahs of the temple on high. When Christian and Hopeful entered the heavenly city, Bunyan says: "Then I heard in my dream that all the bells in the city rang again for joy, and that it was said unto them, 'Enter into the joy of your Lord.'"

The day of his death was the greatest Sabbath ever enjoyed by Dr. Preston. To all such as he the day of one's death is better than the day of one's birth. He entered this world with a cry as of distress. He entered heaven with a shout of "Salvation unto God and the Lamb!" Here he had tears and sorrows, known only to his Savior and himself; but in the Church above he shall sorrow no more, for there the Lord God wipes away all tears from off all faces.

Dr. Preston was a lovely man. He was naturally amiable, and grace had sweetened all his nature. Who ever heard him say a hard or harsh thing of a fellow creature? He loved God's people of every name. His soul was warmed with charity that hoped and believed and endured all that godly men are commonly called to hope and

believe and endure. Neither by nature, nor in principle, nor in practice was Dr. Preston a bigot. He abhorred those narrow views and feelings which believed moral excellence was found chiefly in his own denomination. Often did he walk to the house of God in company with brethren of other churches, and mingle his voice with theirs in prayer and praise. I have never heard more tender or evangelical extemporaneous prayers in large assemblies than I have heard from him, when he was the only Episcopalian perhaps in all the congregation.

Dr. Preston greatly loved the doctrines of grace. He was a firm believer in those doctrines as taught by Paul, by Augustine, by Calvin, and by the best English reformers. On these subjects his trumpet gave no uncertain sound. His faith was grounded and settled. He never attempted nor pretended to make any new discoveries in theology. He took good heed to the Word of the Lord as given by the prophet Jeremiah, "Stand in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and you shall find rest for your souls."

One truly says of him: "The ministers and Christian people of this city, indeed the whole community, mourn the death of a devoted servant of Christ, a pastor of stainless reputation, and a warm-hearted gentleman and Christian friend." This witness is true.

The friendship between Dr. Preston and myself was of more than twenty years' standing. I found him always as kind as a woman, as firm as a rock, as fearless as a lion, and as true as steel. We had often communed together of the things of the kingdom. I never heard from him a doubtful sentiment. I never knew him to quail under clamor. He was valiant for the truth. He hated every false way.

The death of such men as Dr. Preston has a real power in making us willing to die. The society of which he is now a member is composed of the elite of the universe. Every choice spirit that has passed away from earth belongs to that blessed company who worship before the

throne in a world where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest. Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.

6. THE CHRISTIAN'S SIMPLICITY

In our English Bible and in common parlance, to be simple is often the same as to be stupid, silly, credulous, easily deceived by appearances. In this case it is the opposite of wisdom. Thus: "A prudent man foresees the evil and hides himself: but the simple pass on and are punished" (Prov. 22:3). "Ephraim is like a silly dove without heart" (Hos. 7:11), describes a like character. It is a bad thing to be a natural fool. It is worse to be made a fool by wicked men and wicked inclinations. Such simplicity is never commended. This is the worst kind of simplicity, because it is both the fruit and the cause of wickedness.

Sometimes a simple man is one who is weak, uninstructed, perhaps deceived, but honest, a seeker of truth. Thus to the great feast prepared by wisdom the invitation is sent forth: "Whoever is simple, let him turn in hither" (Prov. 9:4).

One of the words rendered simplicity often denotes health, soundness, freedom from disease. Thus a single eye is a good eye, giving clear vision (Matt 6:22; Luke 11:34). The noun is rendered singleness of heart in Eph. 6:5 and Col. 3:22, where it means soundness or integrity of heart.

Again, simplicity is the opposite of penuriousness, stinginess—and so implies goodness, gentleness, liberality. Thus, in Rom. 12:8, "He who gives—let him do it with simplicity." In 2 Cor. 8:2 the same word is rendered liberality, and in 2 Cor. 9:11, bountifulness.

Lastly, to be simple is to be inoffensive, free from bad intention, inexpert in wickedness, harmless—as where Paul says, "I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil" (Rom.

16:19). The same word is used by our Lord when He says, "Be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves;" and by Paul, when he says, "Do all things without murmurings and disputings: that you may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke."

What is it, then, to be simple concerning evil? It is something wholly consistent with being wise unto that which is good. It is not natural foolishness. Yet to carnal men it often looks like folly, because it readily incurs natural evils rather than run into sinful ways. The arts of wicked men are not known to such. They are "so wise as not to be deceived, and yet so simple as not to be deceivers." In malice they are children, in understanding they are men. It is no credit to any godly man to be an adept in the arts and chicanery of the deceitful world. It was by one of the ancients pronounced a reproach to a king or philosopher to dance well. So it is a shame for a Christian to be expert in the devices of carnal men for gaining influence and promoting selfish or base designs.

The simplicity of the Gospel is near of kin to godly sincerity (2 Cor. 1:12). It abhors duplicity. It carries its heart in its hand. It has no crooked ways. "It is fair, it is candid, it is honest, it is upright in all things."

And it is as loving as it is fair. It bears no malice. Its tongue is not defiled with slander, nor its hands with wrong. Its steps are not stained with blood. It curses not, but it blesses largely. It is manly, not cowardly. It is humble, but not servile. It is bold, but not fierce. It devises liberal things, but loves to do good unseen. It is not boastful nor ostentatious, and yet it refuses not to do good for fear it might be found out.

Call on one possessed of this excellent quality to deny himself, and nothing seems easier. Present to him the temptations which master most men and they seem powerless. Their chief effect is to drive him nearer to God, closer to the mercy-seat, quite into the bosom of the Good Shepherd. This quality is gracious. It should be cultivated. It

may be much strengthened by prayer, by the Word of God, by practice, by hating every false way, by associating with men of pure minds and simple hearts. In nothing is example more potent than in learning lessons of simplicity.

Because great attainments in this excellence are not often made, we ought the more earnestly to labor and pray for it. The more we are tempted to any course inconsistent with this simplicity, the more should we resist the devil, that he may flee from us.

For a pattern we have One that excels all others—our Lord Jesus Christ. Often He declined to commit Himself to others, for He knew what was in man. But never did any put themselves in His power or under His control, but to be blessed thereby. When He gave, it was with all bountifulness. When He reproved, it was with all gentleness. When He invited, it was with superhuman kindness. His eye was single. His heart was single and sincere and loving. His mind was pure and upright. Oh, be like Jesus Christ!

7. THE CHRISTIAN'S WAY

"For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked leads to ruin." Psalm 1:6

Every man has his way. Conduct is an index to character. Manners make the man. Behavior before God and man tells where one is going.

The way of sinners is evil, is false, is hard, is wicked, is dangerous, is ruinous. It leads to hell. It leads nowhere else. In the end it will cause the bitterest lamentations ever heard. There is no madness equal to that of sinning against God.

But the Christian has his way too. Indeed, believers are more than once called men of the way. In Acts 9:2, we translate it "any of this way." But scholars know that it should be any of the way. So also in

Acts 19:9, it is said some "spoke evil of that way." It means they spoke evil of the way, that is, the way of God, the way of godly men. In the Old Testament the word way sometimes has the same general import.

In an important sense Christ Himself is the way of believers. So He teaches: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man comes unto the Father but by Me" (John 14:6). The soul enters on its upward and glorious career through Christ alone (John 10:1, 7). In the same manner it continues its heavenly course. As men have received Christ the Lord, so do they walk in Him. Paul's great wish was that he might be "found in Christ." The same is true of all who are clearly on their way to glory and honor.

The Christian's way is the way of truth. Inspired men so call it (2 Pet. 2:2). It is the true way. There is no mistake in it. It deceives no one. It disappoints no one. It is not built on fables and fictions. It is built on truth, more lasting than the mountains.

There is no foolishness in it. It is wise. It is often called the way of understanding. No man acts wisely until he walks in it. No man has any wisdom above this. To forsake this way is to choose death.

The Christian's path is the way of righteousness (2 Peter 2:21). It is the way of justifying righteousness. Only thus is any man pardoned. Only thus is any man accepted as righteous. It is the way of personal righteousness. It is the good and the right way (1 Sam. 12:23). It is the way of holiness. So the evangelical prophet spoke of it: "An highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein" (Isa. 35:8).

No marvel, then, that the course of the Christian is called the way of God (Acts 18:26); and the way of the Lord (Ps. 27:11). It is the way God chooses, appoints, and loves. He honors it with His presence

and His smiles. He who walks in it, walks with God. God is his friend, his guide, his shepherd, his father, his exceeding joy.

No wonder, then, that Zacharias, when filled with the Holy Spirit, called it the way of peace (Lk. 1:79). It brings peace to the heart and the conscience. It secures peace with God, and leads to peace with just men. It inspires pure and friendly sentiments to all.

It is also the way of life, and of salvation (Prov. 6:23; 15:24; Jer. 21:8; Acts 16:17). All who walk not in this way are dead in trespasses and in sins. They are out of the right way. They are stalking to ruin. But they who are in this way shall, in the highest sense, live. They belong to Christ. Because He lives, they shall live also. They are even here delivered from the curse and displeasure of God. In the best and highest sense of the term, they have salvation.

This way is strait, narrow, difficult (Matt. 7:14). Men cannot walk in it carelessly. They cannot carry with them their vices and lusts. They must learn and practice the laws of self-denial. They must not be restive. They must not rebel under powerful restraints. The righteous are scarcely saved.

This way is also straight. It is not crooked. Sin is always tortuous. But a godly man hates every false way. He is not double-tongued, nor double-minded. He means what he says, and he says what he means. He speaks the truth in his heart. He walks in uprightness.

This is also a living way (Heb. 10:20). It is not dead and dull; but lively, and full of animation. It inspires the best hopes, on the most solid grounds.

Though in a sense it is difficult, requiring the utmost care and sobriety, yet it is pleasant (Prov. 3:17). By Divine grace it is made easy. It is the way of transgressors that is hard. They are under cruel bondage. But the righteous serve a good Master. He carries the heavy end of every cross. His yoke is easy, and His burden light.

The way of the Christian is often hidden. His resources are secret, and his motives are not seen. His heart is the best part of him. If he could have his way, he would be done with sin and temptation forever. Often calumny, prejudice, poverty, or tribulation covers him. Yet his way is not hidden from the Lord, nor his judgment passed over from his God. In due time Jehovah will bring forth His righteousness as the light, and His judgment as the noonday.

This way is also plain. An honest heart under Divine teaching never misses it. God reveals its glorious mysteries to babes and sucklings. Simple folk with honest hearts are sure to find the truth.

This is no new way. This path has been trodden by the saints of all ages. In it were found Abel, and Enoch, and Job, and Daniel, and Paul, and John, and all the martyrs and confessors. One of the sins and follies of every age, is an attempt to show, or to find some new way. But God reproves such a spirit. Hear Him: "Thus says the Lord, Stand in the ways and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and you shall find rest for your souls" (Jer. 6:16).

The way of the saints is one, and not many. No one need perplex himself on account of seeming diversities. For there are not many ways of salvation. In the very place where God promises one heart to His people, He also promises them one way (Jer. 32:39).

The whole way of the Christian is marked out in God's Word, and is called the way of His precepts, the way of His commandments, the way of His statutes, the way of His judgments (Ps. 119:27, 32-33; Isa. 26:8). Sad indeed is the case of those whose fear toward God is taught by the precepts of men (Isa. 29:13).

The way of the Christian often seems long, but let him not repine. Life's toils and sorrows will soon be over—over forever.

The way of godly men habitually increases in radiance. It shines more and more unto the perfect day (Prov. 4:18). The reason is, it is

the only perfect way (Ps. 101:2). This is the course which the Psalmist calls the way everlasting. It shall not be broken up.

8. THE CHRISTIAN'S TEMPTATIONS

The words tempt and temptation have in Scripture different meanings according to the connection in which they are found.

1. When it is said God did tempt Abraham (Gen. 22:1), the meaning is that God did test and prove Abraham. He has and He exercises His right thus to evince the real principles of His creatures. He subjected angels to probation. God does not thus seek to inform Himself, for He knows men perfectly; but He thus shows to His people, and even to His foes, the power of holy principles in the heart (Job 1:8; 1 Pet. 1:6-7). In Scripture, saints are called upon to count it all joy when they fall into such trials (James 1:2-3). God can and will carry His servants through such trials, and thus strengthen their good habits and principles. They shall come out as gold (Job 23:10).

2. Men are said to tempt, try, or prove God when they unbelievably call upon Him to manifest His presence, power, or kindness. This is a freak of wicked caprice. In this sense the Israelites tempted, proved, and provoked God in the desert (Ex. 17:2-7; Ps. 95:8-9; Heb. 3:9). When God is doing for us all we really need, we have no right to call upon Him to do more; nor may we prescribe to Him when or how He shall deliver us. Men also tempt God when they presume on a miraculous preservation, and rush unbidden into dangers (Matt. 4:6-7). They also tempt Him, that is, they unwarrantably prove Him, when, casting His cords asunder, they sin without stint, as if to see whether He will punish them or bring on them threatened evils (Mal. 3:15).

3. Satan tempts men, and men tempt one another, by endeavoring to seduce them from truth, from right, from piety to error, pride, or

wickedness. In this sense God tempts no man (James 1:13). God abhors iniquity. He seduces no one, and is seduced by no one.

4. Sometimes temptation means a successful seduction. "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed" (James 1:14). Thus men are tempted, when in them there is somewhat congenial to the seduction, and they yield to it.

In no sense are godly men compelled to sin. God always provides a way of escape. That way may be through a burning fiery furnace, through a lion's den, through a shower of stones, through death itself; but it is still a way of escape. It is not wicked to die. In his design to prove Job a hypocrite, Satan was entirely baffled. In his attempt to bring to naught the work of redemption, he wholly failed. The Son of God was more than a match for him. The three great means of preserving us from falling under the power of any temptation are these:

1) A deep sense of our own weakness. No part of the Lord's Prayer suits our case better than this: "Lead us not into temptation." The meaning is, Let us not be tempted beyond our strength, and when tempted, let us not fall into the snare of the wicked one. Blessed is the man that fears always. Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. Consider yourself, lest you also be tempted.

2) It is a great thing to have the Word of God ready for every occasion. In sophistry the enemy often exceeds our power of reasoning; but the Word of God is too keen for him. When tempted, our Savior did not moralize or philosophize on the matter. He simply quoted Scripture, saying: "It is written, it is written, it is written."

3) Watchfulness and prayer must be constantly used. I unite them because the Scripture unites them, and because, when genuine and holy, they are never separated. Our Lord said: "Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation." Compare Matt. 26:41; Mark 13:33; 14:38; Col. 4:2.

The great deliverer from temptation is God Himself (2 Pet. 2:9). The apostle says: "The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations." This is as if he had said, God's resources are infinite. He is never at a loss for wisdom, love, or power. He has often and marvelously rescued His saints. He never fails when He undertakes their cause.

To the tempted people of God the sympathy and intercession of our Lord Jesus Christ are held forth for their encouragement. "In that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to help those who are tempted." "We have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not." No wonder the saints triumph. Their Lord triumphed before them. By Him they can do all things. He is mighty to save.

Are these things so? Then let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. Let us be of good courage. Distrust is a great foe to peace and victory. Omnipotence never labors, and is never baffled.

9. THE CHRISTIAN'S VICTORY OVER TEMPTATIONS

It almost startles one to hear the apostle James saying, "My brethren, count it all joy [regard it as matter of very great joy] when you fall into divers temptations. . . . Blessed is the man that endures [patiently endures, with constancy bears up under] temptation." But when we search God's Word, we find the doctrine abundantly supported and illustrated.

Take the case of our Blessed Lord. He was long and sorely tempted of the devil—tempted as no man ever was. Yet see the happy

consequences immediately following: "Behold, angels came and ministered unto Him." While His temptation lasted, they stood at a distance to let it appear that Christ could conquer by His own power and holiness. But when the battle was fought and the victory won, they rejoiced in such a Lord; they brought Him food; they comforted Him, as they often strengthen and comfort His tempted people. If Satan was allowed to assail Him, angels were sent to adore Him, and serve Him. Thus, He was prepared and encouraged to go boldly on in His great work of destroying the works of the devil and in setting up the kingdom of God.

A like result is reached when the saints endure temptation. The trying of their faith works patience, constancy, heavenly heroism; and patience works experience; and experience hope; and hope makes not ashamed: because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who is given unto us. So uniformly and so wonderfully does the Lord bless temptation to the edification of His people, that the great and good Luther said: "One Christian well tempted is worth a thousand." Another of his sayings was: "Three things make a good theologian—meditation, temptation, and prayer."

Like testimonies have been borne by others. Fenelon said: "Temptations, as a file, rub off much of the rust of our self-confidence." Dr. Samuel Clarke says: "Bearing up against temptations and prevailing over them is the very thing wherein the whole life of piety consists. It is the trial which God puts upon us in this world, by which we are to make evidence of our love and obedience to Him, and of our fitness to be made members of His kingdom."

How ill-prepared would David have been for the conflicts of his riper years had he not fought with the lion and the bear and the giant of Gath when young! Oh, it is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. It makes a man of him. "Let him sit alone in silence, for the Lord has laid it on him. Let him bury his face in the dust—there

may yet be hope." Lamentations 3:28-29. All great characters are formed more or less in the school of trial—even sharp trial.

The difference between Daniel going into Babylon—and Daniel beholding the fall of the Chaldean monarchy—was as great as could well be imagined. Hardly any two pious men were less alike than were the young Israelite—who later became the old prophet pronouncing sentence of death on Lucifer (the son of the morning) when he was about to be cast down to hell.

Compare the young Saul of Tarsus, crying, "Lord, what will You have me to do?" with such an one as Paul the aged. How great the contrast! What made the difference? Chiefly his experience in trials and afflictions and temptations.

The little child Moses in the rushes—and the old man Moses, with his eye undimmed and his natural force unabated at the age of one hundred and twenty years, were not so unlike in appearance of body as they were in strength and excellence of character.

Everlasting bliss will bear a proportion to what men have endured for Christ and His cause on earth. Mordecai once wore a crown of gold; and our Savior once wore a crown of thorns; but in the world to come, the saints shall wear different crowns. "Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord has prepared for those who love Him." So spoke James. Paul says: "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight. I have finished my course. I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness." Peter says: "When the Chief Shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory that fades not away." Oh, what a crowning that will be: life, righteousness, glory all in one day—all for nothing—all by grace—and all for eternity!

10. THE CHRISTIAN'S VIEWS OF SIN

Moral evil is the worst of all evils. Nothing can compare with it. It is worse than the plague. It is unspeakably hateful. God calls sin, horrible and abominable. Godly men in every age lament it—lament it much in others, most in themselves. The worst thing that can be said of sin is—not that it digs every grave and wrings out every sigh and wail from earth and hell—but that it is "exceeding sinful."

A man's views of sin give a complexion to all his character. If he regards it as a trifle, he will laugh at it, when he should weep over it. He will make a mock of it. He will dally with it. He will take his fill of it. He will have low thoughts of God, and low estimates of salvation. He will despise Jesus Christ.

If, on the other hand, he considers sin as very dreadful and very hateful, he will hate every false way. He will long for holiness. He will hunger and thirst after righteousness. He will not walk in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of the scornful. He will loathe and abhor himself on account of sin. He will be filled with horror because of the wicked, who keep not God's law. He will have exalted thoughts of the being, perfections, word, and government of God. To him Christ will be most precious, the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely.

Some ask, How far does a sense of sin enter into a genuine Christian experience? To some extent, and in some minds, this is a difficult question. The difficulty may arise in part from the fact that some make all religious experience to refer to the earlier exercises of a newborn soul. But the truth is, that first religious views and feelings are but a small part of what the child of God practically learns. In all the three accounts of the conversion of Paul in the Acts of the Apostles, not a word is said of his sense of sin at that time in anything but in opposing Christ's cause. But the work of grace in his heart only then began. In Romans 7:7-9, he tells us of subsequent experiences: "I would not have known sin if it were not for the law. For example, I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, Do not covet. And sin, seizing an opportunity through

the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind. For apart from the law sin is dead. Once I was alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died."

The meaning of the Apostle seems to be this: "I would never have understood the real nature of sin, the enormity of my guilt, or the number of my transgressions but for the Ten Commandments." If one would know the uncleanness of a neglected apartment, he must let in the light. Dr. Watts notices the growing sense of sin in Paul once saying, "I am not fit to be called an Apostle." Later in life he says, "I am less than the least of all saints." In one of his later epistles, he says, "I am the chief of sinners." Evidently he had to the last a growing sense of sin.

Sometimes when we speak of a sense of sin, men think we are speaking of great terror of conscience or horror of mind. These things may indeed accompany a sense of sin; but they are wholly diverse from it, and are in nowise essential to it. Paul never had less terror than when he was near the end of his life, and had a very deep sense of sin.

But such a sense of sin as makes the Gospel good news to the sinner, would seem to be required by many things in the Scriptures. Our Lord said, "those who are whole need not a physician, but those who are sick." One of the darkest signs in the state of the Church at Laodicea was that she said she was rich and increased with goods, and had need of nothing—but knew not that she was wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked (Rev. 3:17).

Job's sense of sin was vastly increased by the great discoveries he had of God's majesty and glory: "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Increased views of God's glory had the same effect on Isaiah, and made him cry out, "Woe is me! for I am undone" (Job 42:5-6; Isa. 6:5).

The deeper one's sense of sin is, the livelier is his gratitude for pardon and saving mercy. So taught our Lord: "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little" (Luke 7:47).

In like manner the deeper one's sense of sin, the profounder will be his humility; and humility is the King's highway to holiness and happiness and heaven.

If these things are so, then he is a good preacher, and that is a good book that increases our just sense of sin. One of the best books John Owen ever wrote was on "Indwelling Sin." It is well suited to show men the fountain of iniquity that is in their hearts. For the same reason we may safely commend Flavel's "Keeping the Heart," Guthrie's "Trial of a Saving Interest in Christ," and many of the Puritan writings of the seventeenth century.

But above all, "By the law is the knowledge of sin." Luther said that if for a day he failed to compare his heart with the Ten Commandments, he was sensible of a decline in his pious feelings. One of the best manuals of self-examination is the Westminster Assembly's exposition of the law of God. Let any serious man honestly read the answers there given to the question, What are the sins forbidden? in each of the precepts; and if he is not blind and stupid, his self-abhorrence must be increased.

But any view of ourselves that leads us to despair, is injurious. The true and fair inference from a sense of sickness, is that one needs a physician. A proper sense of sin should lead us more and more to look to Jesus, and to pray that He may be made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption. Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.

It is, therefore, common for Christians to admit that there is no little sin. It is easy for men to perplex themselves, and talk foolishly concerning that which is infinite. But to us all that is illimitable,

immeasurable, fathomless, endless, may safely be styled infinite. Is sin, then, an infinite evil?

If sin be not an infinite evil, it must be because God's majesty, glory, and authority are not infinite, for against these is all sin committed.

If sin be not an infinite evil, it could not require an infinite atonement; a limited satisfaction is all that could be fairly required for a finite offense; a measurable compensation is all that can be justly demanded for a crime that can be fully estimated. If sin be not an infinite evil, can it be proven to be any evil at all? God has all claims, all rights, all sovereignty, or He has none at all. Our obligations to Him are boundless, interminable, infinite, or they are not real. If He is such a One as we are, He is no God at all. The reason why false gods may and should be treated with contempt, is because they are vanities. They are matters of ridicule.

God's presence is infinite; His power is infinite; His nature is infinite; His existence is infinite; and so to sin against Him must be an infinite insult and wrong. If sin is not an infinite evil, we must yet admit that the punishment threatened against it is, in at least one sense, infinite—it is boundless in duration; yes, it is shoreless, fathomless, and terrible as hell.

More than once does God call sin "horrible." It is that abominable thing which He hates. It cannot be shown that God hates toads, serpents, hyenas, or anything that He has made. But He hates sin with infinite loathing.

It is bad when one can truly say of an act that it is unprofitable, dangerous, or vile; but sin is the perfection of vileness; it is more perilous than the flights of the aeronaut; it is so unprofitable that when one commits it, he sows the wind to reap the whirlwind; he loves death.

God's Word acknowledges that sin is great, because God is great. "If a man sins against his neighbor, the judge shall judge him; but if a

man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him?"

Francis Spira said: "Man knows the beginnings of sin, but who can tell the bounds thereof?"

"Sin, when it is finished, brings forth death."

"The wages of sin is death."

11. THE CHRISTIAN'S BESETTING SINS

Sins are variously classified. We speak of original sin and of actual sin; of sins of omission and sins of commission; of secret sins and open sins, sins of infirmity, presumptuous sins, unnatural sins, and besetting sins.

Sins are besetting from various causes. Some are constitutional. Many people are irritable, contentious, addicted to levity or despondency from their natural temperament.

Some sins prevail in the land where men live and so beset everybody. Thus, for hundreds of years—from the days of Epimenides to the time of Paul—the Cretans were terribly fierce, gluttonous, and given to lying. Then sometimes a tidal wave of iniquity rolls over a people, and it seems as if all were beset with the same sins. An old prophet describes such a state of things when he says of his people: "The best of them is a brier—the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge" (Micah 7:4).

Other sins are besetting from education. Thus, gossiping is taught by example to whole families. The same is true of many sins of the tongue. Official station leads some to sins to which they were formerly but little inclined. Office is apt to beget imperious tempers. Many fall into sins from prejudices which were strong and unreasonable. I have known a man to commit more folly from a

dislike to seeing apple dumplings on a dinner table than from any other cause.

Besetting sins are many—as various as human character and occupation. They gain strength by habit, just as do all the vices. Sometimes one person has several of them. Sins live in families. Seldom, if ever, is a sin found alone.

How may we put away besetting sins? This is a very weighty question. It deserves the most serious attention. Without exhausting the subject, the following suggestions are offered:

1. Obtain and retain a deep and just sense of sin, as an evil and bitter thing, terribly offensive to God, very hateful in itself, and utterly ruinous to the soul. No man ever excessively hated or dreaded sin. The worst thing ever said of sin was, that it is "exceeding sinful."

2. Learn what your besetting sins are. This will not be easily done. Yet it is possible to gain some clear knowledge of them. Sometimes your friends give you good hints. They say, perhaps very tenderly, that it is a fault in your character that you are harsh, or severe, or vain, or proud, or worldly-minded. Are they not right? Perhaps your enemies speak more plainly, and tell you in unpleasant tones that you are obstinate, self-conceited, covetous, unkind, or ungenerous. Is there any truth in what they say? What does Nathan the prophet (your minister) say in preaching that touches conscience? What is it that comes up in such power when you are melancholy, when you are in affliction? What causes failure in so many of your attempts to do good and get good?

3. Remember that sin, like the serpent, dies hard. This is true of all sin, especially of a besetting sin. Therefore make a business of exterminating sin. It will kill you if you do not kill it. Your eternal well-being is at stake. Use every means in your power. Some sins go out only by fasting and prayer. Try those means. If your besetting sin is love of the world, see what you can do in mastering it by some

noble secret act of charity, or of contribution to the spread of the Gospel. If you are inclined to carry grudges, daily pray that the same mercies may descend on those you dislike as on yourself, and early embrace or create an opportunity to do them a service.

Never shun the cross. If you find it lying in your way, take it up and bear it with constancy. "Despise not little duties; they have been to many a saved man an excellent discipline of humility. Despise not little trials; rightly met they have often nerved the character for some fiery trial. And despise not little crosses; for when taken up and lovingly accepted at the Lord's hand, they have made men fit for a great crown, even the crown of righteousness and life, which the Lord has promised to them that love Him."

4. Put a high estimate on holiness. It is moral excellence. It is very beautiful. It makes one to be like God. Nothing unholy will stand the test of perfect holiness in the fear of God. This is the will of God concerning you, even your sanctification. "Be holy, for I am holy, says the Lord."

5. In subduing corruptions, some have found it well to devote special attention for a while to some one besetting sin. In some cases this may be well. But let us not forget that one sin always argues the presence of others sins, and that while we are watching one thief, others may be close behind us.

6. Watch against occasions of indulging in your besetting sin. If in speaking you are likely to exaggerate, or to adorn the story with a fabrication, then do not often or needlessly tell stories. If in trading you are apt to cry up what you have for sale, or to cry down what you buy, then make as few bargains and with as few words as possible.

7. When you gain an advantage against a corruption, follow it up. Sin dies not except under many lusty blows. And when you think it dead, it is perhaps only asleep. Do your work thoroughly.

8. Seek the constant aid of the Holy Spirit. He searches all things. He hates iniquity. He loves all purity. His indwelling will do more than a guard of angels in driving out sin. He is the Spirit of holiness. He is its author. "It is not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord."

9. Think much of Christ. Highly prize His honor. Let His name be an ointment poured forth. Walk in Him, walk with Him, live unto Him, die for Him. Draw strength and motives from His teachings, His example, His death, His resurrection, His ascension to heaven, His sitting at God's right hand, and His everlasting kingdom.

12. THE CHRISTIAN'S SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY

God is independent and sovereign. Man is dependent and responsible. Every sane man knows he must give account to God. Man's nature and relations to God make it fit that he should act under moral law, and be judged accordingly.

It is not possible for any man to entertain too solemn views of the fact that he must at last stand or fall, according to the deeds done in the body. Every man is every day doing things which will affect his destiny to all eternity.

Man has immortal rationality, and of course he will ever be responsible. Suffering will not end it. Happiness will not destroy it. In God's government there is no statute of limitation. Nor has man or angel the power of returning to non-existence. Some have denied that responsibility will be endless.

But if responsibility be not everlasting, then the relations of God and man may cease or change. They cannot cease, because God cannot deny Himself. They cannot change, because whether man shall be under law is not a question submitted to his choice or decision.

Neither can the relations of God and man change. A change must be for the better or for the worse. If they could change for the better, they would not now be perfectly right and holy. If they should change for the worse, they would cease to be perfectly right and holy.

If responsibility be not everlasting, then an intelligent creature may sin away his obligations and accountability.

If responsibility be not everlasting, then sin works its own cure, at least so far as not to be any longer punishable. It would lose its guilt by its enormity or inveteracy.

If responsibility be not everlasting, then there is a world or a state where God may be insulted with impunity. If this is so, retribution in any case is wholly arbitrary, and is not required by righteousness.

If retribution be not everlasting, then sin is either an evil which in the long run becomes unmanageable, and God at length connives at it, because He does not know how to deal with old transgressors; or else the evil now declared to belong to unrighteousness is an exaggeration, and who will dare to say that?

If responsibility be not everlasting, then it will not be so bad to offer insults to God in some other worlds or states as it is in this world, or in the present state.

If responsibility be not everlasting, it must be that God's moral government shall by and by be impaired or fail in some respects.

If responsibility be not everlasting, then by parity of reasoning the fact that one lie is justly punishable does not show that many lies shall be punished.

If responsibility be not everlasting, then righteousness may cease to be righteousness, both in the Judge of all the earth and in some of His creatures, especially those who offend atrociously.

There is no such thing as a creature being rounded out in good or evil in any sense that renders further growth impossible. Where is there any ground for such belief? It is not found in God's Word. Give us chapter and verse. They cannot be found. The reverse is taught in the oracles of God: "They proceed from evil to evil;" "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse." When the Scriptures speak of our being held accountable for the deeds done in the body, they warn us that our responsibility is begun in this life. We are now acting under law. We are now under moral government. So that it is a solemn thing to live. But God's Word no where says or hints that our obligations to God, or our accountability to Him, will terminate when we leave this world and pass to another. Is not moral government in its very nature universal and endless, because it is righteous, and because God changes not? His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion is without end. Is not this sound speech that cannot be condemned? Let God be glorified; let man be abased.

13. THE CHRISTIAN'S FAITH

The Word of God says: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." That seems to be a very simple way—this way of faith in the Redeemer. It well suits my case. I am foolish and ignorant; Christ is the wisdom of God. I am very sinful and guilty; Christ is the Lord our Righteousness. He is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes. I am very weak; I am without strength; Christ is the power of God unto salvation. I have no cloak for my sin. But the merits of Christ are the linen white and clean with which my poor soul may be beautifully arrayed. My tears cannot wash away my sins; but the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin. In Him sinners boast the possession of greater blessings than angels have—even redeeming love and redeeming grace!

I am not required to bring any price in my hand. By the Gospel, salvation is without money and without price. It is well for me that I am not required to pay for salvation. If I were, I would be forever

lost. I am a poor sinner—as poor as my sins can make me. I have nothing to commend me to a just and holy God. I deserve all the eternal punishment He has denounced against me. I am guilty. I am all unworthiness; but Jesus is worthy! I rely on Jesus. I take Jesus for my Savior. He is all my desire and all my salvation. He has borne all my curse. He has died, the just for the unjust, the innocent for the guilty. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. By His stripes we are healed.

One said: "I am no scholar, sir; I have taught myself the last fifteen years, and now I can read a good bit of the Bible; but I can't make out all the big words, you know, sir. Ah! sir, that word 'believe,' that is a great word with me: it is everything to me; and, as far as I can make out, there is no other way of getting to Jesus. He says: 'Come unto Me;' and, thank God, I am very happy in coming to Him, by believing on Him."

Oh, yes! no one can rely on Christ too much. He bids us do that great work—that work of God—believing on the Lord Jesus. To believe on Him with the heart is always unto righteousness. It is to look unto Him. It is to come unto Him. It is to receive Him to all the ends and purposes of a complete salvation. It is to reject all other plans and accept the Gospel plan. It is to refuse all other physicians and accept the one great Physician.

Nor is there any danger of being rejected if we come to Christ. He says so: "Him who comes unto Me, I will never cast out." Ever since men began in faith to call upon Him, He has never spurned any from His presence. The penitent thief, the trembling jailer, and millions on millions have looked to Him and were saved. In all the annals of time can be found no record of a sinner believing with the heart, and then perishing in his sins.

Moreover, Christ's atonement is enough. He has satisfied. He has done enough. He has suffered enough. He has shed enough blood.

His undertaking is a glorious undertaking; and it will appear more and more glorious to all eternity. His merits are all-sufficient.

"If all the sin that men have done
In will, in word, in thought, in deed,
Since worlds were made, and time begun,
Were laid on one poor sinner's head;
The blood of Jesus Christ alone
Could for this mass of sin atone,
And sweep it all away!"

Who dare say there is any limit to the sufficiency of Christ's atonement? I have never seen nor heard of any godly man attempting so presumptuous a sin.

Then the door is so open: "Behold, I have set before you an open door." And every needed preparation is made: "Behold, all things are ready." And the Lord is so earnest: "As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but [I have pleasure] that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn, turn you from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?" And I am in such need of help, of just such help as is offered me in Christ Jesus. "Look unto Me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." Of God, Jesus is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. He is all and in all. It is only by faith in Christ that we enter into rest—a blessed rest, that shall last forever.

"Rest, weary soul;
The penalty is borne, the ransom paid,
For all your sins full satisfaction made.
Strive not yourself to do what Christ has done.
Take the free gift, and make the joy your own.
No more by pangs of guilt and fear distressed,
Rest, sweetly rest."

Such is the faith of the weak believer; such is the faith of the strong believer. Its essence is reliance on the person and work of the Redeemer. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.

14. WHY DO I REST CONFIDENTLY IN CHRIST?

This question has been sent me by a friend. I willingly answer it. I begin by saying that if we repose any confidence in Christ at all, the more firmly we do it, the better. Weak faith may be both genuine and saving; but the stronger our faith is, the more is God glorified, and the greater is our peace.

Boasting in an arm of flesh, or relying on an arm of flesh, is very foolish. But we never act so wisely as when we make our boast in the Lord. To glory in the Cross of Christ is lawful, yes, praiseworthy. A strong confidence in the Son of God removes mountains of sorrow and difficulty. Faith cannot be too strong. Confidence becomes presumption only when it is not warranted by Scripture. The more fully and unhesitatingly I credit every word that God has spoken, the more do I act in accordance with sound wisdom. Here are some reasons:

1. Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He is God over all—blessed forever. All the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Him bodily. He is the true God and eternal life. He has all the perfections of Jehovah. He knows all my wants and weaknesses, all my sin and misery. He knows the malice of my enemies, and the foolishness of my heart. He is of power to subdue my whole nature to Himself, and to defeat the wiles and machinations of my foes. His grace is all-sufficient. His love is infinite. His wisdom cannot be defeated, nor His power resisted. He is God. I cannot trust Him excessively. I rest confidently in Him because He is God, and is fitly adored in heaven and on earth.

2. I rest confidently in Christ because He is man. He has my whole nature, sin only excepted. He has the heart of a brother. He has a feeling of my infirmity. He drank the cup of sorrow to the dregs. He tasted the bitterness of death. He knows what it is to be rejected of men and deserted by God. I have no sorrow to which He is a stranger. He sympathizes with me in all my innocent joys and tastes, as well as in my sufferings and temptations. "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin." Hebrews 4:15

3. I rest confidently in Christ because God the Father approves Him and trusts Him. He prepared Him a body. He gloriously anointed Him, and set Him apart to His work. Twice by an audible voice He declared: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." He stood by Him in all His undertaking. He raised Him from the dead. He set Him at His own right hand. He has committed all judgment to His Son. He is the delight of His Father. It cannot but be safe and wise in me to rest in Him, in whom His Father confides.

4. I rest confidently in Christ because He has never failed to save and support any and everyone that has fled to Him for salvation. Of all who have come short of the heavenly rest, not one put his trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. The men who tire and faint and turn away from the holy commandment, never saw the real glory that is in Christ Jesus. To them He never was the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. They may have said that all their desire and all their hope were in Christ, but they were deceived. Hear the beloved disciple on such people: "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us" (1 John 2:19).

5. I rest confidently in Christ because He has given me every assurance that I can desire. By word and by deed, by His painful death, and by His present glorious life, I am persuaded He will do all

that is for the good of His believing people. Hear Him: "Because I live, you shall live also" (John 14:19). Hear Paul: "He who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32). The promises are great and precious, and almost countless. I know no man who has ever numbered them. "For every one of God's promises is "Yes" in Him." Nor are they burdened with impracticable conditions. To every humble soul He says: "I will never leave you, nor forsake you."

6. I rest confidently in Christ because I have had a blessed experience of His grace and compassion. Once I was a poor lost sinner, ready to perish. My guilt was fearful. He passed by and said, "Live, for I have ransomed you!" I found pardon and acceptance in His blood and righteousness. I was all defiled, and had an evil heart of unbelief. He took away the heart of stone, and gave me a heart of flesh. I was blind. I saw no beauty in holiness or in Jesus Christ. He anointed my eyes, and I saw His glory, full of grace and truth. I once was afraid of the Almighty, but Christ has given me His spirit, so that I cry, Abba, Father. I once loved sin, some forms of it very much; but by His grace I hate vain thoughts and every false way. I abhor that which is evil. Left to myself I was weak as water. I had no might to do good. But by His grace I can do all things, because He strengthens me. My experience surprises me and delights me.

7. I rest confidently in Christ Jesus because He could not reject any that came to Him without refusing the only reward ever promised Him for all His work and sufferings. That reward was seeing poor lost sinners returning from their sins and wanderings to the Great Shepherd and Bishop of souls. The Scripture clearly teaches that Christ's reward should be that "He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hands;" that "the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads;" and that for all His sufferings God "will divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong." Surely I ought to be ready to rely on a Redeemer who has done and suffered all required of Him

for my salvation. Having loved His own, He loved them to the end. Will He now cast away the souls He has bought at so great a price? I think not.

8. I rest confidently in Christ, because He is King on the holy hill of Zion, wields a scepter of righteousness, has many crowns upon His head, is actually subduing all His enemies, and is Lord of all to the glory of God the Father; because He is still the Great Prophet, and the way of life, saying: "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly;" and because He is my Great High Priest, who ever lives to make intercession for me. Him the Father hears always. And so He is able to save them to the uttermost, all who come unto God by Him.

For these and many similar reasons I rest confidently in Christ. Nor shall I be disappointed. I look to Him alone. Angels cannot save me. My brother cannot pay to God a ransom for me. I cannot save myself. To whom can I go but to Jesus only? He has the words of eternal life. I will rest in Him only. I will rest in Him confidently and forever, and in Him my rest shall be glorious.

Of course such a one wholly renounces self-righteousness.

I was riding across the State of New Jersey on the old Camden and Amboy Railroad. Just before reaching the eastern terminus we were detained some minutes on a part of the route where the land is very sterile. I had no friend with me. Most of the passengers seemed to be without companions. Various remarks were made as if for the ears of all. At length one gentleman, looking out on the white sands, said, "How is this land like self-righteousness?" Someone replied, "Because the more of it one has, the poorer he is." I thought the riddle good, and the answer excellent. The more self-righteousness one has, the poorer he is.

It strikes me as true, that the poorer one is in moral good, the more self-righteousness he has. In other words, the farther one goes in sin, the harder it is to lead him to a right view of his sins. For more than

fifty years I have, as I had opportunity, visited prisons, and conversed freely with their inhabitants. I have attended several unhappy men to their public execution. In all this time I have never heard one frank and full confession of crime. One man admitted that he had killed his wife; but he seemed to excuse himself by saying that he was drunk when he did it. I have never seen a convict who admitted the fairness of his trial, the veracity of the witnesses, and the impartiality of the judge. This is an amazing record. I am greatly surprised at it. Like the lawyer mentioned in Luke 10:29, everyone was "willing to justify himself."

How is this? It may be safely answered that crimes against both person and property terribly harden the heart. But it is also true that the more men sin—the less sense of sin have they, unless God's Spirit very much quickens the conscience. The more men sin, the blinder they are. The farther a man goes into a dark cave, the more dim are his perceptions.

15 THE CHRISTIAN'S HOPE

"Hope in God." Why should I not? I need just such a friend. He has all power and strength, and I am very weak. I cannot even think a good thought of myself. Nor do I know how to pray as I ought. If the Lord does not help my infirmities, I shall do nothing aright. But I can do all things if He will gird me with strength. I will hope in God.

He has, too, all the knowledge to understand my whole case, and all the wisdom necessary to direct everything concerning me. He makes no mistakes. He is never deceived. He is never outsmarted. He knows all things. He knows my weaknesses. He knows my sorrows. He knows my heart. And He is so wise that He takes the cunning in their own craftiness. His wisdom never fails. He is never confounded or perplexed.

He has as much mercy and kindness as I need. His loving-kindness is so great that human belief has never seen to the top or the bottom, to the length or the breadth of it. The ocean of the Divine love is boundless and inexhaustible. God's love is strong. It passes the love of women. It is infinite. It produces the most amazing results. It fills all pious hearts with joy. It fills heaven with hallelujahs. Oh, I will hope in God.

Nor could I desire more truth and faithfulness than are found in God. They are unchangeable and immeasurable. They reach unto the clouds, yes, above the heavens. They are unto all generations. God is not a man that He should lie, neither the son of man that He should repent. Has He said, and shall He not do it? He has never broken covenant with any of His creatures. His mercies are rich and free. That is a blessed truth, but it would be powerless if we could not also say that His mercies are sure. Oh, I must and will hope in God.

If I hope not in God, I will be apt to look to myself—and I am a fool and a sinner, a worm and blind, crushed before the moth, and unworthy of the very least of God's mercies. Who has at any time trusted in himself that he was righteous, or wise, or strong, and has not come to shame? I dare not lean to my own understanding, nor rely on my own wisdom, nor put any hope in my own righteousness. Lord God Almighty—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, give me grace to hope in You.

Nor dare I look to any man for help. All bad men are fools and sinners; all godly men have said that they are not worthy of any weighty trust. The best of them cry, out, "I am undone," "I am a sinful man," "Oh, wretched man that I am." I dare not look to such for any effectual aid. I must hope in God.

Nor dare I make angels the objects of my hope. They have no wisdom, goodness, or power, except what they derive from the Lord. Left to themselves, they would utterly fail. They are not clean in God's sight, and He charges them with folly. As God's servants they

may minister to me, and by His power and at His command help me. But it is of the Lord's mercies, not of the mercies of angels, that we are saved. I cannot worship angels. I hope in God.

I would hope confidently. My heart is in this matter. I would not falter here. I am ashamed that I am so slow to cast my anchor here and nowhere else. I will set my hope in God.

Hoping in God—I shall never be disappointed. All will come out right in the end. Mercies may be long delayed, but they will come at the very nick of time, the very best time, the time chosen by infinite wisdom and goodness. Look at the generations of old and see if any did ever trust in the Lord and were disappointed. All the saints in glory are unanimous in saying that God fulfilled to them all the engagements He ever made. I will hope in His truth, His mercy, and His power.

Nor is it presumptuous in me to hope in God. He has bidden me to do it. It is always safe and right to obey the will of the Lord and to hearken to His commands. This is in itself a very pleasant duty enjoined on me. If I were bidden to despair of help from God, the very thought of such a thing would freeze my soul with horror. I may lawfully come to God with boldness. I may come even to His mercy seat. I may fill my mouth with arguments. I may call Him my God, my Father, my Shepherd, my Rock, my Friend, my Portion, my exceeding Joy, my everlasting All. Oh, I will hope in God, if He will but help me to do so.

HOPE ON, HOPE EVER!

"God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

"Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill,

He treasures up His bright designs,
And works His sovereign will.

"You fearful saints, fresh courage take:
The clouds you so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.

"Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.

"His purposes will ripen fast
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.

"Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan His works in vain;
God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain."

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy, has begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."—Peter.

"Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit."—Paul.

"It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord."—Jeremiah.

"Remember the word unto Your servant, upon which You have caused me to hope. Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in You. I have hoped for Your salvation and done Your commandments."—David.

16. THE CHRISTIAN'S TRUST

In his darkest days, Job said: "Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him." That was a noble purpose, a blessed resolution.

1. It was called for. There was need of it. Job's circumstances were trying, and demanded that he should take his stand firmly on right ground. It met his case exactly. He knew not what might come; but come what might, He would cleave to the Lord.

2. It was prompt. In it was nothing dilatory. He did not require time and argument to work him up to the good purpose. He uttered it as soon as it was called for. He delayed not, but made haste to flee to God.

3. He had doubtless often said as much before. It is of the very nature of piety to cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart. As one said at a later day, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." There is no piety without hearty confidence in God.

4. It was unfeigned. Job meant what he said; and he said what he meant. He was sincere. No hypocrite under like circumstances would have used such language, but would have given up in despair—would have cursed (or renounced) God and died.

5. It was a wise resolution. We never act so foolishly as when we withdraw our confidence from God. "The fearful" are in Scripture said to have their portion with "the abominable, and murderers, and all liars" (Rev. 21:8). The reason why men do not trust God is because they are wicked. They do not know Him, nor love Him. They hate Him. We never act so wisely as when we cast our burden on the Lord.

6. It is true, the man of Uz acted strangely. God's people are a peculiar people. They are not of this world. They savor the things that are of God and not of men. They are born from above. They are taught of God. There was something quite unusual in Job's conduct. Not many of his contemporaries, nor many of any past age, have imitated Job. It is not commonly regarded as wise to risk life and all things on one's faith—one's faith in God.

7. So Job's purpose must have been gracious. By the grace of God he said what he did. In himself Job was as weak as other men. He abhorred himself and repented in dust and ashes. But the Lord was with him and enabled him to witness a good confession. He had help from heaven. It was not by might, nor by power, but by God's Spirit that he chose his ground.

8. His resolution was kept. From it he never swerved. Though he said some things that did not befit him, yet he never drew back from God. The best resolutions, if broken, are good for nothing. To the last Job denied the charge of a base hypocrisy. To the last he stuck to the Lord his God.

9. His purpose and action on it turned out well. The Lord approved in the main Job's conduct. He said to his three friends: "You have not spoken of Me the thing that is right, as My servant Job has." "The Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning." He did not trust in vain. All ended well. "You have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy."

10. The darker our way, the more we should trust. God does sometimes slay His people. He kills and He makes alive. He has the keys of death and of hell. Job thought the Lord would probably cut him off with pining sickness. But yet he could not and would not forsake the Rock of his salvation.

Reader, will you follow Job's example? You cannot do better. To go backward from the Almighty is ruin. To distrust Him is excessive folly. There is not one virtuous feeling involved in departing from the living God. To renounce Jehovah is death. If you trust Him, let no other trust intrude. Renounce all else. Some make gold their confidence; some trust in chariots and some in horses; some in bows and some in some in swords; some in native powers and some in acquirements. But wise and godly men trust only in the Lord their God (Job 31:24; Ps. 20:7; Ps. 44:6; Isa. 40:30-31).

And all should trust in the Lord—even the widow, the fatherless, the friendless, and the man that is ready to perish (Ps. 22:9; Jer. 49:11; Ps. 65:5; 1 Tim. 4:10).

The benefits of such trust are many.

a. This is the only way to great spiritual prosperity. "He who puts his trust in the Lord shall be made fat" (Prov. 28:25). Compare Ps. 31:19.

b. This is the great cure of that fear which brings the soul into bondage. "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid" (Isa. 12:2). Compare Isa. 50:10.

c. If we trust not in the Lord, we cannot expect any fixedness of joy or stability of character. "Those who trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abides forever." "The heart of the upright is fixed, trusting in the Lord" (Ps. 125:1; 112:7).

d. Safety is found in no other way than in pious confidence. "He is a shield to all those who trust in Him;" "Whoever puts his trust in the Lord shall be safe" (Ps. 18:30; Prov. 29:25). Compare Dan. 3:28.

e. Our usefulness and comfort depend on our confidence in Jehovah. "Trust in the Lord and do good; so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed" (Ps. 37:3).

f. Trust in God is the great solace of old age. So the Psalmist found it. "You are my hope, O Lord God; You are my trust from my youth Now also when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not" (Ps. 71:5, 18).

Oh, "it is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes." When will men so learn and so practice?

17. A CHRISTIAN'S GOOD RESOLUTIONS

"The road to hell is paved with good resolutions." I know not who first uttered this alarming sentence. But it contains a fearful truth. Vast numbers of men go to an undone eternity, who not only never had any purpose of so doing, but they actually purposed the contrary. Yet their good resolutions failed. Their resolutions were not as solemn as they ought to have been. They were also made in human strength. The poor sinner, who made them, did not know that he had a deceitful heart, a wicked world, and a great adversary to contend with. He did not know that he had in himself no might to do good, that he was not sufficient as of himself to think anything, and that he could not even pray aright, except as the Holy Spirit enabled him. Thus his resolutions were not humble, nor did they make lowly him who made them. On the contrary, they filled his mind and heart with folly and vanity. He foolishly supposed that he was better for having made them. Consequently he broke them. The road to hell is paved with good resolutions that are broken, not kept.

The road to heaven is paved with good resolutions, with fixed purposes, and holy determinations of mind, formed under a deep sense of weakness and unworthiness, with a pious confidence in the promised aid of Divine grace, and with a holy fear and jealousy over one's own heart. I can remember when it was boldly and unwisely proclaimed that regeneration was nothing but a change of the governing purpose. This was a great practical error. It filled many

churches with unworthy members. It begat a very superficial class of professors. Very few are found maintaining this position in our day. In opposing this error, some, perhaps, used unguarded expressions, making the impression that piety grew and flourished without any fixed purposes in the heart. This was as dangerous as the error it opposed. Where or when did ever a wise man undertake or accomplish any great or good work without a settled and deliberate purpose to do so? Whoever would become a scholar, make a crop, or build a house, will naturally first form and fix his plan, and then carry it out. Life without a purpose is vague and vain. Aim at something and then do your best to accomplish it. Look at a few things in the Scripture.

"And Abram took Sarai, his wife, and Lot, his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and those they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan—and into the land of Canaan they came." If you do not go forth to do a thing, you will hardly do it. Set a practicable object before you, and by God's blessing you may accomplish it. Hear the prodigal: "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before you, and am no more worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired servants." This resolution was the result of sad experience and sound reflection. It was humble. It was honest, for it is added, "And he arose and came to his father." If he had remained much longer in that land of famine, he would have perished. It is not according to wisdom to do anything without purposing to do it.

Read the writings of David, and see how often and how solemnly he resolves to love, and pray, and praise, and obey the Lord. Could he have been so eminent a servant of the Lord, if he had not been so fully purposed in his mind? So far as reason and Scripture speak on this subject, they distinctly require—

1. That our good resolutions be not hastily or hurriedly taken, but that they be well weighed. It is foolish for a man to make inquiry,

after he vows. God abhors all false pretenses, all hollow professions. Think, think solemnly and deliberately before you set your hand to a promise even with men. But where the transaction is with God, we cannot be too jealous of our own hearts. He has no pleasure in fools.

2. Any purpose to serve God should be sincere, not hypocritical; cheerful, not reluctant; hearty, not formal. God loves a cheerful giver. The prodigal had a great sense of shame, but no reluctance to return. He took blame to himself, but his hope was that he would at least be allowed the place of a hired servant, which was more than he deserved, and far better than his present condition.

3. Beware of limiting your resolutions of consecration to God. Some are ready to engage to give Him lip-service. Others seem ready to serve Him secretly; but they are not ready to witness a good confession before many witnesses. Some would be willing to engage for a time, but they are not ready to serve God all their lives, yes, to all eternity. Others wish such or such a sin spared. They say it is a little matter. That is not the way.

Reader, deal not so with God. Give Him all; for after all, it is but little that you can do for Him, who has done so much for you.

4. In all your resolutions, keep your eye on the person, work, grace, example, sufferings, righteousness, power, and intercession of Christ. Without Him you can do nothing. His blood can cleanse, but nothing else can wash away the stain of sin. His priestly offering can avail for remission, but your tears cannot purge away a single sin. He is mighty to save, and you need an Almighty Savior. He is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. He is Alpha and Omega. Look to Jesus.

5. Never forget your dependence upon the power and indwelling of God's Spirit. He is the holy anointing oil, with which humble souls are made kings and priests unto God. We are blind, but the Holy Spirit is the eye-salve to open the blind eyes. We are dumb in God's

praises, but under His power the tongue of the stammerers shall speak plainly. We are sad and despondent in good things, but He is the oil of gladness to all the saints.

The words in which our resolutions are formed may be very few, but they should be very explicit. Some have recommended a covenant fully drawn up and in express terms. This may be well in many cases. The danger is that the words will not be well chosen, and so in the end will entangle the conscience. But an upright mind will hardly be perplexed with a resolution simple like that of Joshua, or like that in one of our hymns:

"Here, Lord, I give myself away,
'Tis all that I can do."

As a man thinks in his heart, so is he. What do you purpose in your heart? What are your good resolutions? Are you living up to those you have made?

18. THE CHRISTIAN LIVES BY RULE

A great man of the last century said, "He who lives not by rule, lives not at all." Perhaps there is more truth in that assertion than some are at first disposed to admit. Life is very short. A very great work is to be done—or we shall be forever undone. Confusion is very bad. It greatly hinders all good things. There is no example of success without a plan. Method is essential to a good habit, and good habit imparts vigor to character.

Living by rule does not consist in gathering and remembering many notions, though it does presuppose some acquaintance with good maxims. So men who are renewed in heart are correct in life to some extent, before they know all the rules that should govern human conduct. Still, maxims are good and should be studied. Some of the rules of God's Word are prudential. Such are many things in the

Book of Proverbs. Some are devotional, as in the Sermon on the Mount, and in many epistles; some are practical, as in the twelfth chapter of Romans; some are experimental, as in the Psalms. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable in some way to advance the Divine life in the soul. The following rules would be very helpful to many:

1. Set the Lord always before you. Live as seeing Him, who is invisible. Often say—God, You see me. To God we must give account. In Him we live and move and have our being. From Him is our fruit found. He is our Rock, our Refuge, our High Tower, our Strength. Blessed is he who frames his doings to please his Maker. Some professed Christians live very much as if they thought there was no God.

2. Know, believe, and practice the whole Word of God. Indulge no prejudices against any portion of the Bible. All of it is truth—all of it is precious truth. The part of Scripture which you slight, probably contains the very truth most needful for the correction of some of your faults. The threatenings warn, the precepts guide, the promises encourage, the doctrines instruct, the examples draw, the histories illustrate, the poems delight. "The law of Your mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver." "I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food."

3. Adopt the pure Gospel scheme of doctrine. Begin not in the Spirit, and then hope to be made perfect by the flesh. It is very sad to see men turning away from the glorious Gospel of the blessed God to fables, however cunningly they may be devised. Whereunto you have attained in evangelical knowledge, hold fast. Never yield first principles; never be beguiled into any form of unsound words. What is the chaff to the wheat? As long as Christ is all in all to you, you are safe; but when you delight in any other way of life, you are guilty of spiritual harlotry. In no way can we more offend God than by slighting His Son.

4. Put a just estimate on both time and eternity. On time, because it is so short, because its earthly pursuits are so vain, because on the right use of it depend everlasting consequences. On eternity, because it is eternity—it has no bounds, it is more vast than the sea. Eternity gives to hell its most impenetrable gloom; and to heaven the unfailing fixedness of its joys.

5. Do whatever is incumbent each moment as it passes. Gape and gaze not after the duties of a future which may never arrive. Waste not life in idle regrets over a past which cannot be reclaimed. Just do present duty. Stand in your lot. Be at your post. Watch and pray. Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might. No one has or gives so good assurance that in the future he will be found faithful, as he who is now steadfast with God and righteous in all his ways.

6. Do good to all men as you have opportunity. Deal out kindnesses and favors with an unsparing hand. Make others happy, and see if that does not make you truly blessed. I saw a little child asked to share its apple with its playmate. It refused, and at once frowned and looked miserable. I saw another child asked to do the same thing, and with a benignant smile that told of inward joy, it called on its mother to divide the luscious fruit. All the malevolent passions are self-tormentors; all the benevolent affections conduce to happiness.

7. Another good rule to live by is this: Never make a mock at sin and never jest with sacred things. Let holiness to the Lord be written on His day, His word, His worship, His name, His cause.

8. Never attempt to find out how near you can come to sin without sinning. He who loves danger shall perish therein. Sam Patch made many a foolish leap, but it was only the last that was fatal. In abhorring evil and in cleaving to that which is good, there is no danger of excess.

9. Never expect great things from sloth, nor regard carelessness as the parent of any good. Feeble efforts cannot produce powerful

results. It is the hand of the diligent that makes rich.

10. Steadfastly set your face against needless delays in doing any work for the honor of your Master, for the good of your fellow men, or for your own edification. A dilatory spirit is one of the most delusive of all the temptations of the Great Destroyer. It proposes merely to postpone, perhaps, for an hour or a day. It would shudder at the thought of final and utter neglect of what it thus defers. Do this very day and hour the duties which this hour and day demand.

19. THE CHRISTIAN'S ENEMIES

That was a good prayer of David, "Lead me in a plain path, because of my enemies" (Ps. 27:11). A similar is that in Ps. 5:8: "Lead me, O Lord, in Your righteousness, because of my enemies." Divine guidance is in every respect a blessing. When surrounded by foes we must fall, unless God leads and protects us. At such a time it is a great mercy to be kept from perplexity respecting duty. "A plain path," a smooth, clear, open way is of the Lord. The reasons are obvious.

Our enemies are numerous. "Many are my persecutors and my enemies." How the dogs do surround some godly men. Packs of them pursue some all their days. One man often contends against a thousand enemies.

Our enemies often have power, and wealth, and influence on their side. They are also lively (Ps. 38:19). They sleep not except they do some mischief; nor do they measure their hostility. They are like wild beasts. They roar (Ps. 74:4). They make a tumult (Ps. 83:2). They are very violent.

Indeed they are often deadly. Since the days of Pharaoh, their great model, each cries: "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the

spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them, I will draw my sword; mine hands shall destroy them."

Nothing is more noticeable than the merriment of the wicked over sacred things and innocent people. "Our enemies laugh among themselves" (Ps. 80:6). So we still have in the world "cruel mockings," even where "scourgings" and "imprisonments" are unlawful. They love to cry—Aha! aha!

Oftentimes our enemies are so allied to us that we have no more peace at home than abroad (Mic. 7:6). When this is the case, they are a smoke in the eyes, a thorn in the flesh.

Very often they are full of treachery. "The kisses of an enemy are deceitful." Judas was neither the first nor the last who pretended friendship with the basest hypocrisy.

Some men's enmity has no holidays. It never wanes. It never cools. "And Saul became David's enemy continually" (1 Sam. 18:29). Such enemies often produce a deep impression on others, persuading them that we are evil. No small part of Saul's subjects really believed that David was a bad man, so that he says: "Because of all my enemies, I am the utter contempt of my neighbors; I am a dread to my friends—those who see me on the street flee from me. I am forgotten by them as though I were dead; I have become like broken pottery."

Even godly men may be often greatly distressed by such hatred. David says: "My eye is consumed because of grief; it waxes old because of all my enemies." Read the Book of Lamentations, and see how Jeremiah sighed and wept under the raging of his foes.

It is no small part of wisdom to know how to treat our foes. God gave Solomon a great blessing because he had "not asked the life of his enemies" (1 Kings 3:11-12; 2 Chron. 1:11-12). We must love our enemies (Matt. 5:44; Luke 6:27-35). We must pray for them at all

times, feed them when hungry, clothe them when naked, lend to them when needy.

God always takes sides with the just against all their wicked foes. His promise is: "I will be an enemy unto your enemies, and an adversary unto your adversaries" (Ex. 23:22). The godly man will God never "deliver unto the will of his enemies."

And it is very easy for God to defeat and overthrow all our enemies. He says: "I will send a faintness into their hearts; and the sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them; and they shall flee, as fleeing from a sword; and they shall fall when none pursues" (Lev. 26:36). See also Ex. 23:27.

Under the shadow of God's wings His people are safe from all their adversaries. He stills the enemy and the avenger. "You have been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy" (Ps. 61:3). God can make our worst enemies to be at peace with us (Prov. 16:7). God can convert foes into friends: "Verily I will cause the enemy to entreat you well in the time of evil and in the time of affliction" (Jer. 15:11). God's power can subdue any will, change any heart.

Every child of God may therefore address every foe, as did the Church of old: "Do not rejoice over me, my enemy! Though I have fallen, I will stand up; though I sit in darkness, the Lord will be my light. Because I have sinned against Him, I must endure the Lord's rage until He argues my case and establishes justice for me. He will bring me into the light; I will see His salvation. Then my enemy will see, and she will be covered with shame, the one who said to me, "Where is the Lord your God?" My eyes will look at her in triumph; at that time she will be trampled like mud in the streets." Micah 7:8-10

Oh, how sweet will be the rest of heaven. There the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary are at rest, and the righteous have everlasting deliverance from all their enemies.

A late writer gives this good practical advice: "Have you enemies? Go straight on and mind them not. If they block up your path, walk around them, and do your duty regardless of their spite. A man who has no enemies is seldom good for anything—he is made of that kind of material which is so easily worked that everyone has a hand in it. A sterling character—one who thinks for himself, and speaks what he thinks—is always sure to have enemies. They are as necessary to him as fresh air; they keep him alive and active. A celebrated character, who was surrounded with enemies, used to remark: 'They are sparks which, if you do not blow, will go out of themselves.' Let this be your feeling while endeavoring to live down the scandal of those who are bitter against you. If you stop to dispute, you do but as they desire, and open the way for more abuse. Let the poor fellows talk; there will be a reaction if you perform but your duty, and hundreds who were once alienated from you will flock to you and acknowledge their error."

20. THE CHRISTIAN'S SHEPHERD

"The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I lack. He lets me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters." Psalm 23:1-2

He leads me.—I certainly need someone to lead me. I am so poor, so blind, so weak, so foolish that, if left to myself, I must fatally err. For a long time I required the help of nurses and the guidance of parents and teachers; and when I ceased to have these, I needed God's help as much as ever. It is not in man that walks to direct his steps. We have in our language hardly any form of speech that expresses a sadder state than when we say of a man, "He is awfully left to himself." Lord, never leave me nor forsake me, lest I be undone.

Then He leads me so gently. Even when all around is uproar and confusion, I am carried along almost as if there was no commotion in the world. When God gives peace, who can make disturbance? The

Lord is more true in His friendship than a brother, more pitiful than a father, more loving than a mother, more gentle than a woman. He does not afflict willingly. Nor does the Lord ever lead me otherwise than wisely. He makes no mistakes. He knows the way I ought to go. He knows how much sweet and how much bitter are best for me. He understands me fully. He knows my spirit would fail before Him if I were dealt with severely. Oh, how He mingles mercy with judgment!

True, He leads me often in a mysterious way. I see not the end from the beginning. I cannot see afar off. If I perfectly comprehended all God's ways, I think I would be capable of guiding myself, at least to some extent. When all His waves and billows go over me, how can I tell anything? Would Jacob, or Joseph, or Bunyan, or Rogers have chosen the way the Lord led them? Have not the saints long been crying, "O Lord, how long?" His footsteps are in the sea; clouds and darkness are round about Him. He gives account of none of His matters. His judgments are a great deep. But He never does wrong. He leads me in the paths of righteousness. Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne. In review of all the past I can truly say, "You have dealt well with Your servant, O Lord. I know that in faithfulness You have afflicted me."

He leads me always—in prosperity and in adversity; in joy and in sorrow; when alone and when surrounded by others. If He left me even for an hour I would be undone. When I sleep, You, Lord, keep vigil over me. When I awake, I am still with You. On the land and on the sea I am kept by the mighty power of God.

He leads me, and I will trust Him. He deserves my entire confidence. It is my sin and my folly that I am so slow of heart to repose confidence in Him. I will try to do better. Lord, give me the heritage of those who seek shelter under the shadow of Your wings. You are my Shield, my Refuge, my Strong Rock, my God and Savior.

He leads me, and I will follow Him. I will put my hand in His, and go wherever His prudence shall direct. Never yet has He brought me

into needless trouble. When affliction has gained its end, relief, in some form, has come. I will mark His footsteps, and go right forward. He will guide me by His counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. Oh, well, if glory is to follow sorrow and anguish, I will say no more:

"The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
Leads to the land where sorrows are unknown."

I must be content that He should have His way. My will is the will of a worm, a fool, a sinner. "Not my will, but Yours be done, O God." I care not what comes if the end be eternal life—everlasting repose in the bosom of God. Guide me on and up and through, O Lord. Be on my right hand and on my left by day and by night. Strengthen me with strength in my soul.

21. THE CHRISTIAN'S ADVOCATE

Who needs an Advocate? The accused. And are we accused? Yes; and we are rightly charged with many offences. Sin has ruined us. Iniquities have sadly prevailed against us. They have brought us into disgrace before God, and angels, and men. Our own consciences indict and convict us. We cannot answer for one of a thousand of our transgressions. In the court of Heaven our names are worthless. God often reminds us of this, telling us that if He shows mercy or spares us—it is not for our sakes. It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed.

And is there any Advocate for such transgressors? Yes. Is it a sinful man like ourselves? No. Such a one could not answer for himself. Is it some holy angel? No. If such an one were to hear the whole story of our guilt, he would throw out our cause from disgust at such baseness and ingratitude. It is Jesus Christ. He pleads and manages our cause before His Father. We have an Advocate. Thanks be to God for that.

Our Advocate can lay His hand upon our offended Judge. He counts it not robbery to be equal with God. In Him the Father is well pleased. In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. All the multitudes in heaven worship Him. To Him the Father has committed all judgment and all authority. We are required to honor the Son as we honor the Father. God has given Him a name that is above every name. He is full of power, as He is of truth and grace. There is none like Him. He is over all, God blessed forever.

And He has our nature also. He was once a weeping babe, a friendless stranger, and sorely tempted of the Devil. He is bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. He has a brother's heart. He knows by experience every kind of sorrow which it was possible for innocence to endure. Above all others was He a man of sorrows. He wept; He sweat blood; He hungered; He thirsted; He expired on the cross; He bore God's wrath.

And He was without sin. He knew no sin. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. Pilate found no fault in Him. Infidelity has detected no flaw in His character. Omniscient purity declared Him sinless, faultless. Now we may glory in Him. If we sin, we have an Advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, THE RIGHTEOUS. Our hope springs from His worthiness and His merits; in no sense from anything in us. He is THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. That is His name.

Then He is a tried Friend of sinners. God has tried Him and found Him faithful as an Advocate for men. Many penitents have tried Him and found Him gracious. He has never undertaken a cause and lost it. He is mighty to save. His advocacy cannot but succeed. The Father hears Him always. All the redeemed in glory are monuments of the efficacy of His intercession.

All this is right. He gave Himself for us as an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor. He poured out His soul unto death. The Lord made His soul an offering for sin. He redeems not

with silver and gold, but with His most precious blood. The ransom He paid was of infinite value. There is no limit to its sufficiency.

"Dear dying Lamb, Your precious blood
Shall never lose its power
Until all the ransomed Church of God
Be saved to sin no more."

Those blessed hands which were pierced for us on Calvary are the hands which are lifted up for us before the eternal and glorious throne above.

Of the manner of His advocacy we know but little, except that it is very glorious, full of dignity, and full of power. He appears for us. That is enough. Dr. Doddridge represents Him as introducing His chosen to the Father, admitting that they are worthy of death, but pleading that He has died for them.

Of the substance of His advocacy we need entertain no doubt. It is pretty fully explained in His great intercessory prayer recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John. Now, does any humble soul wish for a sure ground of hope? He has it in Christ's pleading his cause. "Simon, Simon, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for you—that your faith fail not" (Luke 22:31-32). And it did not fail—his faith recalled him and made him weep bitterly.

In availing ourselves of Christ's advocacy, let us know what our case is; let us attempt no concealment; let us tell Him all, and let us commit to Him the whole matter. None is able to destroy, if He protects. None can condemn those whom He justifies.

Nor need we be deterred from seeking His mercy by the greatness of our guilt. He saves the chief of sinners as readily as the least of sinners. He is able to save to the uttermost, all who come to God by Him. Reader! you may think your case very bad—and so it is. But you are not worse than the chief of sinners. You may be the uttermost;

but you are not beyond the uttermost. Hope in His mercy. Oh, give Him your confidence. Lean on His almighty arm. Take Him as your Advocate.

22. THE CHRISTIAN'S EARNEST

Inspired writers are exceedingly intent on impressing their thoughts on others. They seize on anything that will aid them in their work. They speak of breaking up fallow ground, of sowing and reaping, of building and journeying, when by these things they can unfold or explain what they mean. Paul sees an altar inscribed "To the Unknown God". He immediately proposes to tell them of that very God. Sometimes buying and selling with their various terms and usages serve their turn. Nor do they care whether a usage or idea is heathen or Jewish, so that it is pertinent to the matter in hand. Paul often refers to racing, wrestling, and fighting to elucidate his meaning. So, also, Paul borrows a word from trade among the Phoenicians, Arrabon, to teach a very important truth.

This word Arrabon is always rendered earnest, in the sense of a pledge, a token of something yet to come. It occurs thrice in the New Testament, and only in the writings of Paul: "Now, He who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, is God; who has also sealed us, and given us the EARNEST of the Spirit in our hearts." "Now He who has wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also has given us the EARNEST of the Spirit." "In whom also, after you believed, you were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the EARNEST of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory" (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:13-14).

In many ways does God comfort His people. Sometimes it is by sacraments, which are signs and seals of His covenant. Sometimes it is by promises and oaths, that by these two immutable things His saints might have strong consolation. Sometimes it is by tokens for

good, some visible evidence of Divine regard such as is noticed in Ps. 41:11: "By this I know that You favor me." Compare Ps. 86:17. Sometimes it is by giving us an EARNEST.

But what is an earnest? Brown defines it as "Something given in hand to give assurance that what more is promised shall be given in due time. It differs from a pledge, as it is not taken back when full payment is made." Burrill says that "An earnest is part of the price paid for property or goods sold, or money given in token that a bargain is ratified, or to bind a contract; often called earnest money." It seems that the merchants of Phoenicia either first or most extensively resorted to the arrabon, the earnest. One who disregarded the solemnity or obligations of the earnest, would have been infamous.

Now the earnest God gives His people is the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, Sanctifier, and Guide of His redeemed people. Peace of conscience, assured to us by the Blessed Spirit of God, is a sure forerunner of life and peace beyond the grave. He who has the fruits of the Spirit, has the Spirit himself. And he who has the Spirit of God, is the temple of God, and is thus devoted, consecrated, and marked out as one belonging to the Most High. His spot is the spot of God's people. His light is not darkness. His heart is the home of all that can ennoble human character. As David's first anointing by the command of God gave a sure pledge that he should yet reign over Israel, so the anointing of the Christian by the Holy Spirit infallibly betokens his coming greatness, his everlasting bliss. The graces of God's Spirit in our hearts, infallibly assure the people of God that in due time their rest shall be glorious.

The title of believers is found in the righteousness of Christ. The faith of believers surely appropriates the merits of the Redeemer. Faith is the fruit of the Spirit, the gift of God—a gift never bestowed on any who remain in the bond of iniquity or in the gall of bitterness.

And he who has living faith, has all the other graces of the Spirit—love, hope, joy, patience, meekness, gentleness, courage, charity, brotherly kindness, and perseverance. In the new birth there are no monstrous productions. Fear without hope, or hope without fear, would present to us a very sad character. Confidence without reverence, or joy without humility, is not the type of a soul born from above.

In this way a beautiful symmetry of character is secured. The people of God are an honor to God. They adorn the doctrines of God their Savior. They are His witnesses in this wicked world. They are god-like just so far as they are godly. They know whom they have believed. They are known of God, and men take knowledge of them—that they have been with Jesus.

In due time, and by God's favor, such prove that the effect of righteousness is quietness and assurance forever. They see that nothing can harm them, because they are followers of that which is good. They know that they are of the truth, and shall assure their hearts before Him.

The admission of such into glory is indeed a great event. Yet they had a right to expect it. Having on the wedding garments, it is right that they should go into the marriage supper. They walked with God on earth—and so they walk with Him in glory!

23. THE CHRISTIAN'S JOY

The Scriptures as frequently and as urgently call on the righteous to rejoice, as they call on the wicked to weep and mourn. "Let all who put their trust in You, rejoice." "Let Mount Zion rejoice, let Judah be glad." "Let the righteous be glad, let them rejoice before God; yes, let them exceedingly rejoice." "Rejoice evermore." These are mere samples of what may be found in both the Old and the New Testaments.

Nor is the joy of the righteous vain and empty. He has good cause for the very highest exultations in which he ever indulges. Jehovah himself is a never-failing fountain of gladness to the humble. The Psalmist calls God his "exceeding joy." The darkest gulf into which the human mind ever looks, is the gulf of atheism. A world without a sun would be dismal, but a world without a God would be horrible. No wonder that the pious so exult in the Divine existence, and in all the Divine perfections. "Hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigns!" is a song sung wherever holy beings are found.

The salvation of God is a matter of perpetual gladness to the saints in heaven and on earth. The plan, the Author, the cost, the nature, and the end of redemption—fill the soul with pious wonder, and with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

In like manner the godly have joy in every good thing, in all the common bounties of Providence. They know that everything is sent in love. They even rejoice in tribulation. The martyrs have exultingly washed their hands in the flames which consumed them, and sung the praises of Immanuel until their voices sunk in death.

It does not diminish, but rather increases, and gives permanency to this joy—that it is made sober by trembling, that is, by a holy caution, a beneficial fear. "Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall," is a wholesome caution, and makes no godly man despondent. Godly fear is closely allied to pious joy. It was when the prophet had such a glorious vision of God that he trembled, and his lips quivered, and rottenness entered into his bones, and he trembled in himself, that he exultingly exclaimed: "Even though the fig trees have no blossoms, and there are no grapes on the vine; even though the olive crop fails, and the fields lie empty and barren; even though the flocks die in the fields, and the cattle barns are empty, yet I will rejoice in the Lord! I will be joyful in the God of my salvation" (Hab. 3:17-18). So we see how by fear joy works, and by fear is made perfect. For the saints serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling (Ps. 2:11).

The Christian has great joy when the kingdom of Heaven is first set up in his own heart. No day is more memorable than the day of one's espousal to Christ. How could it be otherwise? The poor soul, long oppressed by the Devil, having all its noble faculties loaded with the chains of ignorance, guilt, depravity, and misery, and made to serve base lusts—is at that time delivered from its cruel taskmasters, and experiences the glorious liberty of the sons of God. "If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed."

Oftentimes in its pilgrimage the soul is allowed to have glorious views of the mystery of God and of Christ. If not taken to the Mount of Transfiguration, it at least ascends the mount of ordinances, and there it is satisfied, as with marrow and fatness. Then it is made like the chariots of Amminadab. It holds sweet fellowship with Heaven. Its fellowship is truly with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ.

At the close of his great work on the glory of Christ, John Owen has a chapter on the way and means of the recovery of spiritual decays, and of obtaining fresh springs of grace. He says: "There are two things which those who, after a long profession of the Gospel, are entering into the confines of eternity, do long for and desire. The one is, that all their breaches may be repaired, their decays recovered, their backslidings healed. The other is, that they may have fresh springs of spiritual life, and vigorous actings of all Divine graces, in spiritual mindedness, holiness, and fruitfulness unto the praise of God, the honor of the Gospel, and the increase of their own peace and joy. These things they value more than all the world, and all that is in it." To such in a very pleasing degree God grants their desire. He has said that He would. Hear Him: "I will be your God throughout your lifetime—until your hair is white with age. I made you, and I will care for you. I will carry you along and save you" (Isa. 46:4). Again He says: "Even in old age they will still produce fruit; they will remain vital and green" (Ps. 92:14). Because God is faithful, He gives increase of peace and joy to His aged servants. I have met many such in my lifetime.

I have met some such the last year. They tell me that they are just waiting, that they have no tormenting fears, that the joy of the Lord is their strength, and that their hearts are where their treasure is—even in heaven. Blessed are such. Their joys bear them quite above their trials and their sorrows.

A young orchard full of blooms is a goodly sight. But a matured orchard in autumn, laden with the richest fruit, is still more charming. The last is the reality; the first was but the promise. The end of sowing is reaping. The end of a life of piety is comfort and joy in the Holy Spirit. He who says there is no solid nor abounding joy to the Christian, is a stranger to vital godliness. The joy of the Lord is his strength.

24. THE CHRISTIANS SORROW

"God had one Son on earth without sin—but never a son on earth without affliction." This has long been regarded as one of the best sayings of Augustine. It is very true and quite coincides with Scripture. It is fully borne out by that saying of the prophet David: "Many are the afflictions of the righteous." Blessed Paul says, "Whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives." And sixty years after His ascension to glory, Jesus Himself said: "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten."

All this, when rightly considered, is seen to be fair and fitting. For if the Savior suffered, it is right the saved should suffer also. It is a great thing to be conformed to Christ in temper or suffering. "If we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him." "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for you, and I am completing in my flesh what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for His body, that is, the church." As Christ's sufferings prepared Him to be the Captain of our salvation and our sympathizing Friend, so our sufferings make us mindful of the sorrows of our Lord and increase our sympathy with Him in all His undertaking for us.

There is a "need be" for all the trials of God's children on earth. Their pangs promote their purity. God puts them into the furnace that He may consume their dross, take away all their sin, and bring them out as pure gold. "He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." He has no pleasure in seeing His chosen suffer, but He delights to see His image on their hearts perfected. He chastens them for their profit, that they may be partakers of His holiness. He is a wise and good Father, and all His people on earth are more or less wayward. Blessed be His name. He will not cease to chastise them until their wills submit to His and rejoice in tribulation. Thereby the Lord is honored and their salvation promoted.

Future glory will be somewhat in proportion to what Christ's people suffer for Him here. The crown of martyrdom is exceedingly bright. The glorious throng which John saw was made up of those who came out of great tribulation and had washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. How sweet will be rest after turmoil, peace after war, a quiet home after a long and perilous journey.

Where is the experienced minister who has not often seen one year of suffering, do more for the glory of Christ than five years of service?

N. D. was a small man whose speech sounded very unusual. He was not popular. He lived in considerable retirement. He had but little worldly goods, yet no one accused him of stinginess. For one in his circumstances he gave liberally. He was a great student of the Word of God. He saw in men much that he could not approve. Nor did he keep silence at such times. He was very punctual in attending the house of God. He maintained family worship with great regularity. No one saw any flaws in his morals. But he could not express himself well on any subject. His manners were stiff and awkward.

When he had been a professor of religion for about twenty-five years, he became a great sufferer. A complication of diseases came upon him. No such case of bodily disease had ever been seen in his neighborhood. He could not sleep for as much as six weeks at a time.

He was in constant and excruciating pain. No one could see him without feeling great pain at his bodily distress. He wore away rapidly. He could not walk at all. He could not turn himself in bed. In this sharp trial his piety shined forth with great clearness. Not a murmur escaped his lips. He showed no impatience. His meekness and mildness were very striking. He was full of thankfulness to God and man. Of the least favor done him he would make some respectful and grateful mention. His whole character seemed to be changed.

Yet he did not profess to be recently converted. On the contrary, he still believed that he had met with a saving change of heart long before. He spoke with delight of many pleasant days he had in youth when alone or when publicly worshiping God. He seemed to remember with accuracy and to quote with aptness considerable portions of God's Word. He was a wonder unto many. Yes, he was a wonder to himself. He expressed his views as candidly as ever, but with the greatest gentleness and charitableness. His case was much spoken of. Many a Christian went miles to see him. The feeling of everyone seemed to be much like that of the prophet when he saw the bush in the midst of the flame unconsumed, "I will turn aside and see this great sight." And, truly, it was good to see how grace could bear one up, and bear him on, and bear him through, when his body was wracked with exquisite tortures.

N. D. lived several years after this season of violent suffering, but he never ceased to be an invalid, nearly helpless, and often full of pain. His faith seemed to grow exceedingly. His end was peace. This little narrative should teach us—

1. Not to judge of character by mere voice or manners. Some godly men have no manners at all—and some very godly men have very bad manners.
2. Yet we ought to study to commend to others our religion by those ways which are pleasant, lovely, and of good report. Piety is no foe to the civilities of life.

3. No man knows what he can do and what he can bear—until he is tried and receives new supplies of grace. N. D. considered himself a wonder of mercy.

4. Let no man judge his brother. "The weak brother shall be held up, for God is able to make him stand." He who is most humble is best prepared to stand severe tests.

5. We greatly err when we lightly esteem the least of Christ's disciples, the poorest of the saints. On trial they may quite outshine us.

6. It is certain that neither N. D. nor any other godly man who has left this world regrets any sufferings he ever endured on earth. All is well that ends in glory.

7. Amazing is the distinguishing love of God which often takes men who are naturally neither attractive nor amiable—and makes them the monuments of redeeming mercy."I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure." Matthew 11:25-26

The following "Song of a Tired Servant" has recently been printed in several journals:

"One more day's work for Jesus,
One less of life for me!
But heaven is nearer,
And Christ is dearer
Than yesterday, to me.
His love and light
Fill all my soul tonight.
One more day's work for Jesus:
How glorious is my King;
'Tis joy, not duty,
To speak His beauty;

My soul mounts on the wing
At the mere thought
How Christ its life has bought.
One more day's work for Jesus,
Sweet, sweet the work has been,
To tell this story,
To show the glory,
Where Christ's flock enter in.
How did it shine
In this poor heart of mine!
One more day's work for Jesus.
In hope, in faith, in prayer,
His word I've spoken,
His bread I've broken
To souls faint with despair;
And bade them flee
To Him who has saved me.
One more day's work for Jesus.
Yes, and a weary day.
But heaven shines clearer,
And rest comes nearer.
At each step of the way.
And Christ is all;
Before His face I fall.
O blessed work for Jesus;
O rest at Jesus' feet!
There toil seems pleasure,
My wants are treasure,
And for Him looks sweet.
Lord, if I may, I'll serve
You more another day."

25. THE CHRISTIAN'S SORROW— Continued

It is not sinful to be sad. Blessed be God for that! Jesus wept. Tears have often been the food and drink of God's people day and night. Sorrow is natural to men. It may become sinful, but it is not necessarily sinful. In fact, it is often a blessing, and does more good than gladness itself. Hear the wise man: "Sorrow is better than laughter; for by the sadness of the countenance, the heart is made better. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth." The day of desperate sorrow seems to be reserved to the wicked (Isa. 17:11). To saints, no night is without its morning. Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning. Blessed is he who has the hope of salvation to cheer him along!

David sometimes complains that his sorrow is daily, and sometimes that it is continual. Grief is often great, and dries up the blood and spirits. Job says: "My eyes have grown dim from grief, and my whole body has become but a shadow." We ought never to allow our sorrow to become turbulent, leading us to behave like the bullock unaccustomed to the yoke. This seems to have been one of the errors into which the man of Uz once fell (Job 6:8-11).

Frequently sorrow is incurable. When it is felt to be so, we are in danger of sinking into sullenness, or of making our hearts like a stone—both very dangerous states of mind. A much better way, the right way, is in meekness to bear it, uttering no foolish words against God or man. "It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. He sits alone, and keeps silence, because he has borne it upon him." Let the sorrowful commit their ways to the Lord. "All the days of my appointed time will I wait, until my change comes," was one of Job's wise sayings.

Stoicism is not a virtue. When God calls us to weeping, we ought to weep. Insensibility is never pleasing to God—hardness of heart under judgments is very vile. "The Lord, the Lord Almighty, called you on that day to weep and to wail, to tear out your hair and put on

sackcloth. But see, there is joy and revelry!" (Isa. 22:12-13). To despise the chastening of the Lord is to despise the Lord Himself.

But sorrow may be excessive. It is right to mourn when God calls us thereto; but it is wicked to faint when we are rebuked by Him. Our moderation should be as clearly known in grief as in joy. God's people may not mourn the death of even great and godly men, as those who have no hope, or as the heathen do (Lev. 19:28; Deut. 14:1; 1 Thess. 4:13). We should pray that we may not have "overmuch sorrow," "sorrow upon sorrow," or "sorrow without hope," as the Bible uses those phrases.

Nor are we any more at liberty to let our sorrow become excessive, than we are at liberty to indulge mirth to wildness. The tendency of sorrow is to break the spirit (Prov. 15:13). But we must encourage ourselves in the Lord our God. When our sorrow is excessive, it is the sorrow of the world. Yet who can stand when God dispenses sorrow in anger? (Job 41:10).

It is only by the Gospel that sorrow and sighing are effectually made to flee away. Only by faith can men in this life enter into rest. Believers, and only they, can be sorrowful, yet always rejoicing (2 Cor. 6:10). To such God is indeed a stay and a friend. Hear Him: "I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul" (Jer. 31:25). By faith He, who was the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, becomes our solace and our stay. Oh, consider Him! (Heb. 12:3; 2 Tim. 2:11-13).

Our great resort in times of sorrow must be the throne of grace. Is any afflicted? let him pray. David found this the best way (Ps. 116:3-4).

Reader, are you tender and pitiful to the children of sorrow? You ought to be. "To him who is afflicted, pity should be showed from his friend" (Job 6:14). Oh, be tender, and avoid all harshness in dealing with the sorrowful.

26. THE CHRISTIAN'S HATRED OF ERROR

Truth is light. It makes manifest. It is one. It is harmonious. No truth contradicts any other truth. Truth has in it no jars, no discords, no contradictions. Like its Author, it is simple, eternal, and immutable. It came from God, who cannot lie, cannot deceive, cannot be mistaken, cannot be outwitted. Sin and holiness never were the same, and to all eternity they shall be different. Right and wrong cannot agree, because one is conformity to truth and the other is at war with truth. One is from above; the other is from beneath. Truth is the opposite of fiction, fable, falsehood.

All truth is equally true, but all truth is not equally important. The axioms of geometry are as true as the first principles of the Gospel, yet a man may be happy, holy, and saved without knowing any mathematical truth whatever; but eternal life depends on our knowing God and Jesus Christ, whom He has sent. In the arts and sciences a truth may be of great value to one man, while to him whose calling or profession is different, it is of no considerable value. But all Christian truth is of great price to every man. On it depends his eternal well-being. We cannot give too much for it. "Buy the truth and sell it not." The wise men of the East took a long journey to see Him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life; and they gained their object. They went on no fool's errand. It was with a great sum that the chief captain obtained the freedom of a Roman citizen. It was a grant worth having; but it reached not beyond this life. Many who had it not, lived virtuously and piously, and were happy beyond the grave. But he who has the truth is blessed forever and ever.

No deficiency is so appalling as to be left destitute of God's mercy and truth. All else is bearable. This is intolerable misery. Hezekiah justly thought it would be well with him if peace and truth were in his days. When the Messiah rides prosperously, it is because of truth and meekness and righteousness. When God would pronounce a blessing

on philanthropists and benefactors, He says: "Mercy and truth shall be to those who devise good." Nor is there ever a sadder state of things in a community, than when truth is fallen in the streets, for then justice stands afar off and equity cannot enter.

On the other hand, a lie is the opposite of truth. It misleads, deceives, and beguiles, just as far as it is received. It is the progeny of the wicked one. When men delight in lies they curse inwardly. The sentence of God is, "He who speaks lies shall perish." If any doubt God's abhorrence of lies, in the shape of falsehood to men, let them read the awful history of Gehazi. And if any doubt God's abhorrence of lies uttered to Himself, let him read the appalling story of Ananias and Sapphira.

Lies, in the shape of religious error, are greatly displeasing to God. False teachers cause the people to err by their lies. By the same means they make the heart of godly men sad. They thus afflict whom God would comfort. When men speak lies in hypocrisy, you may know that their conscience is seared with a hot iron. Just as sure as a man loves God's word—he hates and abhors lying. Nothing is more offensive to God than false doctrine. It is a slander on the Almighty. It is a deadly poison. It eats like a cancer.

It is astonishing how bitter is the malignity of men against all who are grieved by their false doctrines. "A lying tongue hates those that are afflicted by it." The basest passions were indulged against all the prophets and apostles and intrepid friends of truth by all the fautors of wicked dogmas.

"No lie is of the truth." That is, no lie is a part of the truth. No false doctrine is any part of Christianity. Pool: "Any part of false doctrine does so ill match and square with the frame of Divine truth, that judicious Christians may discern they are not of a piece."

Remarks.

1. It is a solemn duty to be valiant for the truth. Men whose profession, office, or station calls them to be so, and are not—are justly condemned of the Lord, and are put down among the greatest enemies of God and man (Jer. 9:3). Over a people in such a state the bitterest tears may be justly poured out. If they cannot be changed, they are utterly undone.

2. God's peace and God's truth go together. We cannot have the former without the latter. Holy writers often unite them. Why should we foolishly try to separate them? They are closely united in all good governments, in all happy families, in all virtuous people.

3. No lie has any sanctifying power. It comes from wickedness. It leads to wickedness. God may save us notwithstanding some errors, but He will not save us by means of our errors. "Sanctify them through Your truth; Your word is truth."

4. True liberty is by the power of truth in the hands of the Holy Spirit. "The truth shall make you free." All error is wicked. It enslaves. It degrades. It debases. It opposes the God of truth and the Spirit of truth.

5. The truth may be held in unrighteousness. Many have done so. It is bad not to know the truth. It is ruinous to know the truth and not obey it. Practice is the very life of piety. "Everyone that is of the truth hears My voice," says Christ. "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."

27. THE CHRISTIAN'S GLORIOUS RICHES

"Known, yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything" (2 Cor. 6:9-10). The Christian is a paradox. Because he has Christ, he has the

unsearchable riches of Christ. Four times does Paul speak of "the riches of His glory." It is a Hebrew form of expression, equivalent to "His glorious riches." In Romans 9:23, the apostle states it was God's plan to "make known the riches of His glory on objects of mercy that He prepared beforehand for glory." In Eph. 1:18, he prays that the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, they "may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." In Eph. 3:16, he prays that God "would grant them, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man." And in Col. 1:27, we read of "the saints, to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." It is therefore clear that all implied in this phrase shall be made manifest in the saints, shall be known by them, shall strengthen them, and shall secure to them the blessings of a glorious eternity.

What, then, are these "glorious riches"? Who but God can fully answer that question? Sometimes He speaks to us concerning them. By one apostle He tells us of "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Gal. 5:22-23). By another He tells us of "faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity" (2 Pet. 1:5-7). What a beautiful constellation of virtues is here! They are the graces of the Holy Spirit. He who has these—has glorious riches. Nothing shall ever harm him.

In another place God says, "All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come: all are yours" (1 Cor. 3:21-22). Are not these riches of glory? This world and the next, with all the real blessings in both, belong to the people of the Most High God. This is very much the way in which Christ personally stated the matter: "Verily I say unto you, There is no man that has left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come

life everlasting" (Luke 18:29-30). In like manner, Paul says that godliness has the "promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Tim. 4:8).

We may, then, sum up these riches of glory thus: Believers have full and free forgiveness of all their sins; they are fully accepted in the Beloved; they are clothed in Christ's spotless righteousness; they are adopted into the family of God; their title to heaven through Christ is perfect; they are regenerated; they have increase of grace; their sanctification is secured; they have peace in believing; they are sure of victory over sins, the world, the flesh, the devil, all sorrow, death, hell, and the grave; they have the elements and principles of all virtues, and shall infallibly have them all perfected; they have God for their Father, Christ for their Savior, the Holy Spirit for their Comforter, hope in God for their anchor, and heaven for their home; they shall have boldness in the day of judgment; they shall be like Christ and with Christ forever; they shall inherit all things.

Oh, who would not be a Christian?

28. SOME MUSINGS OF AN OLD CHRISTIAN

Long-continued and sore trials would drown the people of God in sorrow, but that the Lord gives them blessed cordials and puts underneath them the everlasting arms. Sad indeed is the case of a man when Divine mercy cannot effect its object without his overthrow. God never withdrew His tender mercies from any, until sin had made its dreadful mark.

As God is the Father of the fatherless, so is He also the Helper of the helpless.

He who so fears as not to love, and he who so loves as not to fear his Maker—are alike destitute of true piety.

He who trusts in great men is as foolish as he who trusts in base men.

God's condescension is equal to His majesty.

Man's knowledge is soon exhausted.

Inanimate creation and brutes glorify God. Why should man expect to be left to do as he pleased, and honor or dishonor God, as he might choose?

Our circumstances are never so depressed that the Almighty cannot give us effectual aid.

The worst maladies are sinful passions.

Neither men nor angels are ever better employed than in obeying God's commandments.

It is sad that so many boast of justification or cry for pardon—who never speak of sanctification nor pray for purity.

Having learned to sing God's praises here—we shall not lose the heavenly art by passing over Jordan.

"Every creature is to us what God makes it to be—a friend or an enemy."

Let all who have unusual prosperity remember that their condition has temptations not a whit less severe, than those of abject wretchedness.

The early Christians, who had been converted from heathenism, often write almost as if they had just escaped from the precincts of perdition.

Those who have honestly and heartily received the righteousness of Christ—will be sure to mark His footsteps and walk as He walked.

All the sufferings and perplexities of man can be fairly traced to his apostasy from his Maker.

Through the wonders of Divine grace, the natural evils which befall godly men are the means not only of checking, but also of eradicating, the evils of their hearts and preparing them for glory.

The heart of Christ and the heart of His people, agree on all vital matters.

If the Lord sufficiently helps His people along under trials, He shows Himself as kind as in granting deliverance.

As the whole scheme of salvation had its origin in Jehovah's mercy, goodness, and loving-kindness; and as He changes not, so we may rest assured He will perfect all the work He has begun.

The most glorious thing in salvation, is the perfect consistency of its rich grace with inflexible justice.

There are wonders enough in the constitution of the person of the Mediator, and in His amazing history while on earth, to fill the wisest and best of men with adoring admiration until they are admitted within the veil to behold the King in His glory.

God is so determined on having our warm affections enlisted in all our approaches to Him, that if this point be not gained, nothing will please Him.

Nothing is more necessary than the help of God's Spirit. Without wind, sails will not carry a vessel onward. Without fire from heaven, Elijah's sacrifice would have been no better than that offered to Baal. Without the spirit the body is dead.

It would be a mystery amounting to a contradiction, if the salvation of God produced no controlling, delightful emotions in the souls of His true children.

The nine lepers who returned not to give glory to God, were as well pleased with their cure as their companion, the tenth; but they cared nothing for the author of so great a mercy.

It is sad to see teachers flattering their pupils, and pastors their people; but all that would be harmless if men did not flatter themselves and refuse to receive evidence against themselves.

29. WHAT CAN I DO

"What can I do?" asked one, "I am a poor, feeble, erring creature. I know nothing aright until I am taught of God. I find my strength to be perfect weakness. My wisdom is folly. I make many mistakes. When I would do good, evil is present with me."

Now, dear sir, let me say a few plain things for your guidance and encouragement. It is true that, if you are left to yourself, you are as weak as water. Think as little of yourself as the truth will allow, and yet say, "Surely, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength." Look away from yourself. You have, no doubt, often trusted in yourself in a foolish and sinful way, forgetting that "even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fail, but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint." We cannot be too much emptied of self; we cannot too confidently trust in the Lord.

A just sense of your weakness, therefore, so far from being a disqualification for usefulness, is really a preparation for it. "When I am weak, then am I strong," is true of the people of God in all their ways and duties. Let me advise you never to put yourself in a state either of indifference or of hostility to any good work or plan. It is impossible for every man to give effective aid in every enterprise. But let him not discourage or hinder others who can push it forward.

Be careful, too, lest while you are doing nothing good, you are doing something wrong. Some professing people do a world of mischief.

They display such carnal affections, are so much like men of the world, practice so little prudence, so often allow their good to be evil spoken of, and manifest such lack of tenderness of conscience—that they give great occasion to the enemy to speak reproachfully.

If you would be useful on a large scale, take these hints:

1. Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might. Pursue no good thing with languor. Feeble exertions court opposition and create embarrassments.

2. Believe assuredly that God can and will bestow a blessing on right plans rightly conducted. Be not faithless. Take God at His word. It is never relied on in vain.

3. Be patient and not fretful and restless. The farmer has great patience and waits for the precious fruits of the earth. Many a scheme cannot be executed in a day or a month. If a man would raise a forest of oaks, he must not expect to see his desires fully accomplished in even one long lifetime. Let us sow seed. Let us plant acorns.

4. Do not try to control Providence, but find out and conform yourself to its plans. Men may sometimes dream of making water run up stream. But they never really succeed. "Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate."

5. Be not easily discouraged. Hope on. Hope ever. A very experienced laborer says that he has frequently seen the happiest results flowing from labors performed under the greatest discouragements. Many have said as much. Look not much at discouragements.

6. Pray much. "To pray frequently is to pray fervently." Pitch your tent close by the mercy-seat. Pray without ceasing. Never be at ease in Zion. "The voice that rolls the stars along spoke all the promises." Plead them before God. Adopt the language of one of old: "I will not let You go except You bless me."

7. Enlist, so far as you can, the prayers and cooperation of others, especially of humble godly people. Waiting on the great for help and patronage is very tedious and discouraging. Hardly anything is more so. People of good sense and ardent piety, in the middle walks of life, are commonly, the best helpers.

8. Having done your best, cast yourself and your endeavors wholly on God's great mercy in Christ Jesus. Seek to have yourself and your labors washed in atoning blood. Freely admit that you are nothing, that you deserve nothing, and that all you dare to hope to be and to obtain—is wholly through God's sovereign grace. Be humble.

30. POSTHUMOUS USEFULNESS

Dr. Doddridge has a chapter showing that we ought to glorify God in our death. And reason would show that we should try so to live as to be useful even after death. The Scriptures say of Abel: "He, being dead, yet speaks." This was said of a man nearly four thousand years after his time. This should encourage us to zeal in our Master's service. Such cases are not rare, nor are they confined to olden times.

God shall never cease to own His people and their pious labors. Their prayers, examples, sayings, and writings exert an influence long after they bid farewell to earth. However long ago genuine supplications and intercessions for the cause of Christ may have been offered, they are still sweet odors before God. Many have suggested that Saul of Tarsus was probably converted and saved in answer to the last prayer of the first martyr, Stephen. There is as sweet a savor in the prayer of the psalmist, "O send out Your light and Your truth," as in the day it was first offered. And a good life, how does God delight in it. He never forgets it. In His book of remembrance it is all delineated, even down to the giving of a cup of cold water. So a good song, or saying, or book may be blessed long after its pious author has slept the sleep of death. Their virtue ever depended on the truth they taught, and the spirit they breathed—and not at all on the natural life of him who wrote them. Blessed be God for all the bright hopes which His people

are warranted to cherish for usefulness in this world after death, as well as for the glory, honor and immortality in the world that is to come.

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ePub, .mobi & .pdf Editions August 2021. Requests for information should be addressed to: Monergism Books, PO Box 491, West Linn Or 97068