

## OUR PRESENT PORTION.

It is but little our souls enjoy of what is their present portion. But it is always a blessed relief to know that we are not straitened in Him, but in ourselves. We are not straitened, either in His Word or His Spirit. For in the one we have exceeding great and precious promises; in the other an Unction, an Earnest, a Witness, a Comforter, and an Intercessor,

These descriptions, both of the Word and the indwelling Spirit, tell us, that we are surely, even for the present, not straitened in God. But this straitness is all in ourselves, in our faith and affections. And though this may be our shame and grief; yet it is our relief and blessing also. For if we were straitened in Him, our wretchedness would be without cure; but as it is in ourselves, and we find it to be there, we get relief and a cure, by taking it in confession to the God of all grace.

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“NO CROSS NO CROWN.”

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“No cross no crown” is often heard from those who appear to think that if they do certain painful duties—and the more painful to the flesh the better their prospects—they will in some way come off conquerors and win heaven. It is to be feared such persons altogether mistake the cross, and know nothing of “the fellowship of Christ’s sufferings,” and will know nothing of the glory of those “who suffer with Him.”

They also make a mistake who think their cross only some painful self denial—though their mistake may not be so dangerous—

or the rod with which their Father chastises them, for He chastises them for the very object that they may know their cross better, for our cross is laid upon us and involved in our oneness with Christ our separation unto Him in a world that is continually rejecting Him.

In so far as we fail to apprehend what Christ’s cross has done for us, we fail to understand our own cross. By this cross “the world has been crucified unto us, and we unto the world,” Gal. vi. 14. To accept our place of death to the world and of life in Christ, where His cross has put us, is to take up ours. If we are living on the worldly side of His cross, we are not bearing ours. If we are living on the heavenly side of His, while we feel the burden of ours, and at times sigh for release, we are sustained by His grace, we know the sweetness of His fellowship, and are partakers of His life, His peace, His joy, His love, His glory. “If we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him.”

If we live near to Christ, we cannot help loving Him: the heart that is near Jesus must be full of His love. But when we live days without real fellowship, how can we maintain love towards a stranger? He must be a friend, and we must stick close to Him, as He sticks close to us—closer than a brother; or else, we shall never keep our first love.

God’s blessings turn the heart away from Him, if their first effect is not to turn it to Him. That is the history of Israel, and a thousand times, alas, in the details of life, that of our own hearts. A pious heart acknowledges God Himself in the blessing before enjoying it. How is it with you, reader?