

## THE MYSTERIES OF PROVIDENCE AND OF GRACE

The mysterious dispensation of our heavenly Father towards his children may be viewed. —

I see a man of great intelligence and skill take a great number of stones, and I ask him, "What are you going to do with those stones?" The answer given to me is, "Wait and see." I then behold him making a furnace as hot as ever Nebuchadnezzar's was, both under the stones and above them, and I ask, "What is that for?" The answer, as before, "Wait and see." By-and-by I see a caldron filled with liquid extracted from these stones, and I ask "What in all the world have you got here?" The same answer, is made me again. In my cogitations, I am almost ready to impute folly to him, for taking so much pains for nothing at all.

But on being again admitted to his presence, I see him put in the caldron a tube, and take a little of the melted product out of it and blow it, and then I see him put that little brown portion into a furnace, made on purpose for it, and blow it again, and repeat that process five or six times afterwards, and then transform this little portion of melted stuff to a vast globe; and then I see him whirl that globe round with such velocity as was calculated, in my judgment, to scatter it in ten thousand pieces far and wide; but, behold, he only brings this globe into a flat surface, and then, with a gentle stroke, he separates it from the tube, and leaves it to become cool gradually. And at last I see my own church adorned with it, and all my audience protected from weather, and the service of God advanced and God glorified: and beholding all this, I say that man knew what he was about from the beginning, and his final object was in his mind all the time; and I will neither doubt his wisdom in future nor be impatient to unravel all his counsels, but expect assuredly that, whether I understand the process or not, I shall, in a very short time, not only approve, but admire every one of his proceedings; and then, as the improvement of it all, I say, "If man's ways be so wise, what must God's be?"

Two things, though oft neglected, demand serious thought: "the sin of our nature," and "the nature of sin."

## EXPECT AN ANSWER TO PRAYER.

"My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him."—Psalm lxxiii. 5.

You must not only come to God to seek—you should come with the expectation of finding. The spirit and life of prayer in faith liveth more in expectation than in mere asking; unwise Christians let out the life blood and vital spirits of prayer, when they let their expectations languish. Here is a common but unregarded error in the Christian's exercise. When they set their face to pray, they make some conscience of searching out their wants; they labour to improve that sight to the raising of fervent desires for a supply of them; if they yet go thither, to take in a sense of the fulness and freeness of that grace where their help is; yet how rarely are they careful to raise up expectations of that helping grace!

What means Christ's frequent answer to men, "As thou hast believed so be it done unto thee."—"According to your faith so be it done unto you?" (Matt. viii. 13; xix. 29). Is it not to tell us that he measures out his bounty to men according to their believing expectations from him? "Jesus saith unto Martha, Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?"—(John xi. 40). Our way is, if we could see the glory of God then we would believe. Christ's way is just the contrary—we must first believe, and then we shall see the glory of God. We say, if the Lord would glorify himself in performing his promises, and in hearing our prayers, then we would believe strongly. But this is inverting Christ's order. Martha was a believer in Christ, and expressed faith several ways. It appears in the joint message she and her sister sent to Christ, "Behold, he whom thou lovest is sick." "Now Jesus," it is said, "loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." A blessed family, and few like it; all loved of Christ, and doubtless lovers of Christ. But they built more on his love to them, than on their love to him, like humble and wise believers.—"Martha said unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." Her sister Mary said the very same. It