

It is an expression like that of Jacob, when wrestling with the angel, "I will not let thee go, until thou bless me." While others may be enquiring, who will show us any good? God's people are praying, "Lord, lift thou upon us the light of thy countenance—thy favor is life and thy loving kindness is better than life." This desire they express, when from day to day they observe his ordinances and delight in doing his will, for well they know, that they need not expect his continued presence if they do not seek him in the means of his own appointing, or if they continue in a course dishonoring to him. If we sincerely respect and wish to gratify our friend, we will not thwart his well known wishes, that would be to insult him, we will not undermine his character, or injure his worldly interests,—that would be to repel him, much more will the people of God carefully avoid any thing that would grieve the Holy Spirit and drive him from them, and so carefully observe the well-known pleasure of the Lord. The poor mendicant often tells his wants before he has spoke a single word, his tattered garments and his haggard features plead significantly for him; but he is not satisfied with this, in plaintive tones he tells his story, and asks relief in words that melt another's heart and gain for him assistance. And so God's people are not content with appearing before the Lord, who beholds their defilement and guilt, but they cry to him for help, their daily prayer is, "abide with us. "O cast me not away from thy presence, take not thy Holy Spirit from me." The ancient Romans were wont to consult their oracles, before entering on any great enterprize, and they had their household gods, whose favor they might daily seek, and surely a Christian people shall not be outdone by pagans; they will not fail to acknowledge the hearer of prayer, "Acknowledge the Lord in all thy ways and he will direct thy steps." He has blessings in store, he has made ample provisions for all their wants, still he says, "For all this, I will yet be enquired of, by the house of Israel to do it for them."—And when God's people cherish this strong desire, they always find the good they seek—their prayer is as good as answered. In the nursery tales, there is a pleasing story about a wishing cap, whoever puts it on

procures whatever he is pleased to ask; in the christian religion, there is also a wishing cap, and the christian who wears it well, receive exceeding abundantly, above all that he asks or thinks; and these blessings are enjoyed so long as desired and enjoyed the more, the stronger they are desired.

#### IV. THE CHURCH'S GUARANTEE THAT THIS DESIRE WILL BE GRATIFIED.

My presence shall go with thee. How often does disappointment darken our sky—frequently our best laid schemes prove abortive—our fondest hopes dashed to the ground—warmest friends grow cold—nearest relatives are snatched from us—the merchant fails—the farmer's crops are blasted—the sailor is wrecked—the soldier is left on the battle-field—the politician is defeated—aye and the nation itself is brought into deep waters, but the Church is safe—the bush burns and is not consumed. God is with his people. His promise is sufficient guarantee. When our first parents dwelt in Eden, they were allured from the path of duty by a promise and who of all their offspring has not been allured in a similar way, but this was the promise of the father of lies. God is the faithful promise, has he said it and shall he not do it, has he promised and shall he not fulfill, heaven and earth shall pass away, but his word shall not pass away. He is able and he is ready to fulfil all his promises, and this one is oft repeated, sometimes in simplest language that the child may understand it, sentences in prophetic language to shew its absolute certainty. Where two or three are met together in my name there am I in their midst, lo, I am with you always even to the end of the world—no one shall pluck my people out of my hand—the gates of hell shall not prevail against my church.

Difficulties may arise; his people may be subjected to persecution; they may have to flee for lives or immured in the dungeon for their faith, and yet God is with them. When the covenanters were hunted like partridges over the mountains of Scotland, were they denied this promised presence? See them on the Sabbath morn as they meet together in the retired glen, with some limpid stream gurgling along as if delighted with their presence, or on the hill side, with the blue sky for their canopy and the blooming heather for their seats and