

That Baptism and the Lord's Supper are necessary is plain from our Lord's own words:—"Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (S. John iii. 5). "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (S. Mark xvi. 16). "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath eternal life" (vi. 53, 54). In spite of these direct commands and warnings many so-called Christians neglect the Sacrament of Baptism; while very many more turn away from the Lord's Table without any hesitation, as if they thought it of no consequence at all. To neglect these Sacraments, then, when they may be had, is a most dangerous way of presuming on God's goodness and mercy; for, although He can save without them, He has never said that He will. Compare the Jewish rites of Circumcision and the Passover, which were generally necessary to the Jews. (Gen. xvii. 14; Num. ix. 13.)

II. MEANING OF THE WORD SACRAMENT.

It comes from the Latin *sacramentum*, meaning an oath or pledge, especially the oath of allegiance whereby a newly-enlisted soldier bound himself to obey his commander. Notice this idea of the young soldier swearing allegiance to his commander, in the Baptismal service:—"Manfully to fight under his banner . . . to continue Christ's faithful soldier," etc. The word also meant a *mystery*, and in that sense applies more particularly to the Lord's Supper, where we "duly receive holy mysteries." (*Prayer after Com.*)

III. NATURE OF THE SACRAMENTS.

They consist of two parts: (1) an outward sign, (2) an inward grace. The "outward sign" is a channel through which the "inward grace" flows from God to us, "a means whereby we receive the same"—inward grace. [*Illustration: By means of a water pipe we get water from a reservoir. The pipe would be of no use without the water, and the water can only be obtained through the pipe.*] In the same way, those who refuse to use the outward symbols, chosen by God, have no reason to expect that He will give them the inward grace.

Material things have often been used as means of grace. The Israelites, bitten by fiery serpents, were healed by looking at a serpent of brass (Num. xxi. 6-9). Naaman was cleansed by washing in Jordan (2 Kings v. 10-14). Christ healed a blind man by putting clay on his eyes (St. John ix. 1-7). Though the outward signs were weak and insignificant in themselves, they became powerful through God's command. No other signs would do, Naaman could not be healed by the waters of Abana and Pharpar (2 Kings v. 12). So the waters of Baptism, and the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper, are appointed by God; and when men dare, as they have sometimes done, to use other elements (as beer or milk) in order to show their contempt for the mere outward sign, they show their contempt for God's ordinance also.

With regard to the use of unfermented grape-juice, the question seems to be, Is it wine at all? Did our Lord use it or real wine? If He used wine and commanded the use of wine, have we any right to substitute another element? Are we wiser than He?

But the outward sign does not only convey to us the inward grace; it is also "a pledge to assure us thereof"—as the rainbow is a pledge to assure us that God will not again destroy the earth with a flood (Gen. ix. 12-17). So, if we faithfully receive the outward sign, it is a pledge that God, by means of it, gives us the inward grace. Compare the fleece, a pledge of victory to Gideon (Judg. vi. 36-40), and the return of the shadow, a pledge to Hezekiah (2 Kings xx. 8-11). If, then, by the faithful use of the two Sacraments, we may receive very great blessings, viz., forgiveness of sins (Acts ii. 38), and adoption (Gal. iii. 26, 27) through Baptism; communion with Christ and eternal life (St. John vi. 55, 54) through the Lord's Supper; is it not strange that anyone should refuse the gift so freely offered? "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" (Heb. ii. 3.)

IV. THE CHANNEL AND THE STREAM.

A river flows in a channel between two banks; although the channel is not the river, yet it is a

necessary part of it. If you want to alter the course of the river, you must make a new channel. The outward part of a Sacrament is like the channel of a river through which the stream, viz., the inward part, flows. So electricity, itself invisible, is carried along a visible wire. The Sacraments are like electric wires between Heaven and earth. Swift as the lightning, the messages flash along the wire, yet even swifter and more direct are God's communications to men (Isa. lxx. 24). Let us never allow the channel to be choked by cares or pleasures (S. Matt. xiii. 22) so that the stream cannot flow easily through it. Those who wilfully refuse the sacraments are like men dying of thirst who will not stoop to drink from the river at their feet (Isa. lv. 1); or like men in a besieged city who cut the telegraph wires which connect them with their king.

If any one thinks the outward signs which God has commanded too insignificant to be of any use, let him remember that Naaman thought the same. He nearly made the terrible mistake of rejecting the stream because the channel did not suit him (2 Kings v. 11, 12). The very simplicity of the means of grace prove that they are from God. If men had been allowed to choose their own outward signs, they would never have elevated the everyday washing with water, or eating and drinking, into the highest acts of worship. The religion of Christ can transform and ennoble the most commonplace actions.

"We need not leave for cloister'd cell,  
Our neighbour and our work farewell;  
Nor strive to wind ourselves too high  
For sinful man beneath the sky.  
The trivial round, the common task,  
Will furnish all we ought to ask:  
Room to deny ourselves; a road  
To bring us daily nearer God."

"Of Good Courage."

True as it is trite is the old saying that "nothing is so bad but it might be worse," and there are very many people in the world who might make their own lives and the lives of those around them a vast deal happier than they are, if they would only bear this fact in mind. However bad things may be, it is perfectly clear, when we come to think of it, that they might be a good deal worse. There is always a bright side, if we will but take the trouble to find it—and it isn't so very hard to find either. "Tis a long lane that has no turning," says the old proverb; and though we may be tempted sometimes to grumble with the old Scotchman that ours is "an unco' ane, then," there is still much consolation in the reflection that the longer the distance we have traversed, the nearer must be the turning. Fretting and repining never did any good, and never will; and though at times it may not be easy to keep a brave heart, still with God to help, it is possible, however sore our strait; and it is worth while, too.

It is an Englishman's privilege to grumble, we are told; and perhaps a good, old-fashioned British growl, indulged in as a luxury, may be more productive of good than harm. It may be to a system overstrained with anxiety and worry what a hearty laugh is to a man brimful of mirth and gaiety—a kind of safety-valve, or overflow, so to speak, a very real relief. But, in the same way that, when real illness comes, medicine does no good to one who is continually physicking himself with nostrums for fancied ailments, so a grumble is no relief at all to a man who is perpetually complaining. It must not be overlooked that there is a very wide difference between indulging in an occasional grumble and living in a state of chronic despondency. The former is pardonable, and may even be beneficial; the latter, except in rare cases of physical breakdown, most certainly is not. If you are a member of the Army of Chronic Grumblers, clear out with all possible speed, my friend. Accustom yourself to a more cheerful view of things—"Be of good courage."

Look at that man Tom Jackson, now. To my certain knowledge he has wasted a whole hour of precious time this morning—half an hour of his own, and what is infinitely worse, half an hour of his friend Sam Smith's—in bemoaning the hardness of his lot last winter, and predicting a similar state of affairs for the winter coming! Why, dear

Thomas, what sense or reason is there in borrowing trouble from the future? and what in the world have last winter's difficulties to do with you now? We all know you had a hard time of it, with work scarce, and the missus ailing, and one of the youngsters ill; but you got through it, and neither you nor Mrs. J. nor the youngsters are any the worse. Isn't there enough of current trouble, if one may call it so, in this sin-stricken old planet of ours, without your living over again what is past and done with? You must, it seems, be forever on the grumble; and if you cannot find anything to bewail as regards the present, you go groping into the future, or grubbing and poking into the past, bemoaning over what is for ever done with, or lamenting what may never happen. But that is just your way, Tom Jackson, and the way of a good many more who are like you. Of course, if you will persist in taking a permanent residence in Tribulation Valley—why, you will; but there is no earthly reason for your doing so, and you will find it a vast deal pleasanter living on top of Cheerful Hill.

Take a little advice from one who wishes you well, and don't be everlastingly in the dumps. It isn't healthy, and it isn't natural. God never intended His creatures to be for ever making moan, lamenting and wailing, and wasting tears that might very well be reserved till there is legitimate use for them. He rejoices in our happiness, and likes to see us glad, as He meant we should be. We all have trouble at some time or other, but the joys that are given us far outweigh the sorrows—we are bound to admit that the chiaroscuro of our lives shows very much more of light than shadow; and trouble surely serves but to enhance our joys by its very contrast.

Don't imagine that God is a taskmaster—how can He be, whose name is Love? Very true it is that "God never sends a sorrow without the healing balm"; and if we will persist in turning from the balm when it is offered to us, preferring to nurse and nourish our sorrow, whose fault is it? Our God is a merciful God, and were we only willing to trust Him enough to believe this sincerely, we should never doubt that He will never try us above that we are able, nor send us one whit more trouble than is necessary to the perfection of the design in which it is His pleasure that we should bear our part.

"Be of good courage," then. When trouble comes, whatever its form, don't sit down and start brooding over it, but face it as cheerfully and as manfully as you can. Never forget that God is indeed "a very present help in time of trouble." Go to Him with all your difficulties just as simply and trustfully as your child goes to you with the knotty problems of his little life. Look to your Father with the same absolute, confiding faith with which your child looks to you, and assuredly the sting of your adversity shall be taken away. Do your part, and trust God for doing His; remembering that "He is faithful that promised," and that what He has promised He will most surely perform.

Every testimonial regarding Hood's Sarsaparilla is an honest, unpurchased statement of what this medicine has actually done.

Never Give Up.

Never sit down and confess yourself beaten. If there are difficulties in the way, struggle with them like a man. Use all your resources, put forth all your strength, and "never say die." The case may seem hopeless, but there is generally a way out somehow. Are you bound and fettered by hurtful habits? Do not despair. You can't do much to help yourself, it is true, but there is One who never fails to strengthen the young man when he makes an honest attempt to overcome temptation and master evil passion. "He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings." That is the experience of thousands of fellows who have felt their feet slipping, who have begun to sink in the quicksands of sin, and have reached out a hand to accept the loving help of the strong and gentle Christ. While He lives and loves, no man need ever give up.

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