

A debtor alike to providence and grace, brought unto "the bonds of the covenant," and animated by ardent gratitude, she lived a life of unselfishness, glorifying God her Saviour, and abounding in alms-deeds and gifts for the benefit of the bodies and souls of men. Here was indeed one of those "righteous ones" whom the Psalmist describes as "planted in the house of the Lord, and growing up in the courts of our God." And as a tree of righteousness she brought forth fruit unto old age, and was spiritually flourishing to the last, to the honour of a covenant-keeping God.

THE CONSOLATIONS OF GOD.

ANY persons live in a state of unhappiness. They are sad. They grieve sorely. Tears are their meat day and night. Waters of a full cup are wrung out to them.

If your consolations are small, the cause is not found in any want of words of comfort from God. The Bible is full of sayings which are sweeter than honey and the honey-comb. The promises are exceedingly great and precious.

Nor is there any want of assurance that God will make good all He has promised. His truth and faithfulness stand pledged before heaven and earth. Yea, "God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us."

Nor is there wanting a Spirit of consolation. The Holy Ghost is by office the Comforter. He is promised to all who believe and obey. Christ said, "I will not leave you comfortless;" "I will come unto you;" "I will send you the Comforter." That blessed Spirit can fill any soul with joy. He is a fountain of living waters, a most plentiful well-spring of Divine supports and consolations.

Nor are all the saints left with feeble comforts. In some joy unspeakable abounds. Their cup runneth over. They obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing flee away. They lift up their voice, and shout aloud for joy. Their heads are anointed with the oil of gladness.

But a low state of consolation probably proceeds from a low state of piety. We are often straitened in ourselves. Faith is weak. Love loses its ardour. Penitence is not deep. Zeal is languid. Self-denial is avoided. In this case it is a mercy to make us know our misery, and to show us that it is an evil and a bitter thing to depart from the living God.

Or, perhaps, spiritual comforts are withheld from us because we do not highly prize them and carefully seek after them. God does not commonly grant great spiritual mercies to those who lightly esteem them. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."

Or, having obtained some Divine consolations, we do not walk softly before the Lord, but allow ourselves to be unduly elated. Pride mars everything good. God never dwells with the lofty, but always with the lowly.

Then let every man search his heart and ways, and turn to the Lord. He is mighty to embolden and deliver. His mercy reaches to the heavens. We all err by not coming out of ourselves. We may look at our hearts till a horror of great darkness shall cover us. Let us look to Jesus. He is a sun, and has healing in His wings. His grace is amazing. He knows our frame. He pities like a God. If the consolations of God are small with us the fault is all our own.

And let them be no longer small. Cry after them. Lift up your voice for them. Plead with God for His name's sake. Never rest satisfied till Christ fills your soul with peace and joy.

THE SABBATH DAY.

MARK ii. 23-28; iii. 1-5.



THERE was no harm in walking through the cornfields on the Sabbath day, and no harm in plucking the ears of corn as they went, to satisfy their hunger. The Pharisees complained of the disciples; but our Lord defended them.

May we then work and take our pleasure on the Lord's day? No. The Christian Lord's day, like the Jewish Sabbath, is God's holy day, a day of rest. As such it is given, and as such it is to be kept. But food must be had; and some moving about there must be.

We cannot even go to the house of God without this. And a quiet walk, if the Lord of the day be uppermost in our thoughts, is not wrong. But how different is this from Sunday travelling, and excursions, and feastings! What is necessary may be done with a safe conscience, but not more.

The shewbread was by the law of Moses for the priests alone; yet when David was hard pressed, and in real need of food, he took of the bread and shared it with his followers; and he did no wrong. Both the shewbread and the Sabbath were of God's appointment; and the same rule applied to both.

Our Lord Himself settled this. And He had power to settle it; for He is Lord of the Sabbath. Man has no power to alter what God has appointed, or to say how God's own day is to be kept; but the Son of God has absolute power. He had then, and He has now. And it was in our nature, as "the Son of man,"