

Daniel. That never struck me; but I see it as plainly as you do now; and I am sure we should all be badly off, if we had only as much mercy in return for the trust we put in God.

Philip. Al, Dan, it is very easy when times are good, food cheap, and wife and children all well, to say, "God is very good to us; I thank Him for it; I will put my trust in Him:" but there is another time to say it, and feel it also, when work is slack, and bread dear, and sickness comes into the house; it was then I was just thinking, did I put trust in God? I fear I began to think God had forgotten me, because his mercy did not shine as bright as I thought it might do; but I was wrong, Dan; we are all wrong when we think God loses sight of us for a moment, we may feel sure there is mercy meant, however hard it may press on us for a time: we ought to be able to say with Job, "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." "O Lord, let thy mercy be showed upon us, as we do put our trust in thee."

Daniel. I don't think I shall again pass over those sentences in the Litany so quickly as not to attend to their sense; we do engage to do a great deal when we ask God to show us his mercy; it is as much as to say, "Lord, do not show me any mercy unless I put my trust in thee."

Philip. Ah! Daniel, there is no one thing that we ought to be more thankful for, than the knowledge that we are not to trust alone to our own merits, or our own prayers. "We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." But though we do not trust to our prayers alone for God's never-failing mercies, still we must show by the earnestness of our prayers that we trust in Christ's power to grant our petitions—that, whether we are in trouble or in joy, we ought to have a due sense of all his mercies, giving "no thought for the morrow," but, casting all our care on Him," so that when the minister says, "O Lord, let thy mercy be show upon us," we may answer with a humble yet confident hope, "As we do put our trust in thee."

GOD'S PROVIDENCE OBSERVED IN THE PROVISION OF COAL.

Of all the various mercies supplied to us by the God of nature, none seems to strike my mind more, as a plain and certain proof of a superintending and gracious Providence, than the gift of that fuel which cheers and sweetens so remarkably this inclement and suffering period of the year. How astonishing, how plenteous a provision is made to supply us with the means of enduring the winter's cold, when the forests could no longer afford us a sufficiency, and we should have been perishing without it!

So long as wood was abundant, the arts of life had not advanced, and nothing else was discovered; but when the forests had been partly consumed, and the want of fuel was becoming alarming, a remedy is provided for us at the most seasonable moment, and the nature of the supply itself strikes us with another and greater astonishment. The new fuel is dug out of the bowels of the earth; it consists of a hard, solid, and heavy kind of stone, seemingly very unlikely to give heat or light, but really producing both much better than any other known substance. Then it lies in very large and deep beds; so vast in extent as to seem inexhaustible, although they should still be worked for hundreds of years; and so thick that a very small space of ground is enough to supply a whole town with its winter's provision. Besides this, the beds of coal come in many places very near the surface of the ground, and are worked at very little expense; others are deeper, but then they are generally richer, as if to reward the greater labour of searching for it. The method by which the beds have been brought near the top, and made to appear in different places (as if on purpose for our use), is too difficult to describe now; but it plainly shows the interference of a Divine Giver. Besides this, it is found not in one place only but in many,—in a great many of our English counties, not only near the sea, but inland too; so that it becomes moderately cheap to all our countrymen. And it seems remarkable, that the richest and finest coal-mines are near the sea-coast; for instance, Durham and Northumberland, from whence all the coal for London and most of the coast of England is readily conveyed by ships, and at much smaller expense than it could have been by land.

It is as yet a mystery how coal was formed, and what was its original material; but there is reason to think that it was wood, and that it became what it is by being buried in the earth for an incalculable period of time, and subject to particular changes. These changes have made it a much better and more durable fuel than it was in its former state: a load of wood would be of very little value compared with a load of coal. All this could not be by accident; but must certainly testify the overruling power and wisdom of a merciful Creator.

Let us learn to be contented if God has placed us in humble life, seeing that high places are often very slippery places.—*Matthew Henry.*

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