

THE SOWER.

THE BIDDEN GUESTS.

“ But they made light of it.” (Matt. xxii. 1-14).

Ye are slighting the King's command !
Despising His servant's call !
Has He spread the feast with His royal hand,
And ye care not to come at all ?
Are you going your wilful ways ?
Shall nothing your heart alarm ?
Ah me, 'tis a pitiful crop you'll raise,
Poor slaves of the mart and farm.

O, come as a wedding guest,
Poor desolate child of sin !
Go quickly, ye servants, and call the rest,
Compel them to enter in !
Their robe shall be pure and fair,
In the blood of the Lamb made white ;
The sinner, the outcast, is welcome there,
Arayed in that vesture bright.

Dare ye tarry till it is too late ?
The feast must be largely shared—
Oh, hasten ye in at the narrow gate,
The banquet is all prepared.
The return of the Bridegroom's near,
The trumpet will shortly sound,
The voice of His coming ye soon shall hear,
Where, where will ye then be found ?

DELIVERED FROM BONDAGE.

MRS. J—— was *trying* to do right. She felt that she must meet God, and she knew she was not ready. Being in a poor state of health, the thought of death pressed itself often upon her and caused much shrinking and uneasiness. About this time she attended a Bible reading and there heard that Jesus was coming again: that He was coming with a shout to call all His redeemed ones up to meet Him in the air. Her attention was arrested. How blessed it would be, she thought, to go to meet the Lord without having to pass through death—death with all its grim terrors: but she could not take the place of being one of His own.

She was not easy; she was not happy, but, like many an earnest soul, she was striving *to do what she could*, not knowing that the work which would set her free, had *all been done* by Another. She was thoroughly under the law, and her aim and desire was to keep the commandments. She thought if she attained to this she could meet God. She had been led to believe that Saturday must be kept in holiness as it was the seventh day—the Sabbath: she would not, therefore, do any work on that day and was grieved when her sister would allude to work.

But all this effort to live according to what she thought, did not bring *peace*. Sometimes she would break one of the commandments: often she would have to acknowledge to herself, failure here and

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failure there, and all this would cast her down and cause distress. If she should die there was no hope for her. Thus under bondage and, at times, miserable, she went on, alternating between hope and fear, for weeks and months. But God had His eye upon her and He was about to draw her to Himself. A darling little girl, an only child except an adopted boy, was taken from her after a very short and severe illness. This was a crushing blow and with it all courage was gone. Days and weeks of sorrow followed. At length her sister, with great longing to see her brought to the knowledge of the truth, pleaded with her to attend a little afternoon Bible reading. She went, but greatly to her sister's disappointment, instead of manifesting any interest, she only sat and wept. It seemed as if her mind had not been diverted from her sorrow and her sister was almost regretting that she had taken her there, thinking she would not wish to go again since she had not become interested. But not so: when the day came for another Bible reading, Mrs. J—— was ready to go with her sister; yet it was again with the same apparent result. God, however, was working to bring about His own blessed purposes, for her heart was being touched by the truth, and, tender already with sorrow, the tears were but the expression of what was going on within.

The readings were from the Old Testament. God's mercy and His redeeming love to His people of old, were being dwelt upon. Egypt had oppressed God's people, and God's judgment had come upon her. Stroke after stroke was dealt, and wail after wail of

sorrow had gone forth until that fearful night when the judgment culminated in *death*—the death of “all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast.” Not a house could be found where there was not one dead in it. The grim messenger had entered even the courts of the king; and the captive in the dungeon was not exempt. A truly dismal heart-rending scene it was and it caused “a great cry in Egypt.” Death in all its terror was there and it was *felt*. And why this swift and terrible visitation? The answer is found only when we learn God’s character and His thought of sin. God is holy, and He cannot have *sin* in His presence; He abhors sin and can but punish it with *death*. “The wages of sin is death.” Egypt had sinned and they were now being made to feel God’s just judgment against sin.

But Israel, too, had sinned, and why were they not smitten down?

Ah! they were *sheltered by blood*. The lamb had been slain, and its blood sprinkled upon the door posts, and on the lintel over the door, and this was proof that *death was already there*: and now, screened by that sheltering blood from God’s wrath and judgment, the destroying angel passes over them and they are safe.

And how is it with the sinner, for God has shown us that *all* are sinners, that the *whole world* is guilty before God! What can the poor, guilty sinner do with the sentence of death hanging over him! He may try to be good, and by his good works to save himself. That is what thousands and tens of thous-

ands have done, and are doing ; and Satan has, alas ! succeeded in alluring too many of them into hell with this false hope. But what value does God put upon man's good works ? Listen to *His* voice. He says, "*Not by works of righteousness* which we have done, but *according to His mercy*, He saved us." (Titus. iii, 5). Notwithstanding this plain word, man continues his efforts to be good, falsely thinking thus to merit God's favor, and refuses to cast himself absolutely on God's mercy, in other words, he tries to save himself in his own way and will not accept God's way of salvation. As we have seen, God tells us it is *not* by the good works we have done, but according to *His mercy* that He saves us.

God also shows us that if He *calls* a poor sinner it is not because he has been doing good works : these good works might be great, according to man's estimate, or they might be little ; they might be many or they might be few ; and one man might stand a very much better chance than another man if weighed in this scale. But God weighs the sinner in His own scales. And what is His estimate ? Does His holy eye discover that which will meet His favor and approval ? No ! In the very best sinner in the world the moral, upright man, to whom man, it may be, can take no exception, in such an one He sees a depraved heart, a heart at enmity against Himself, and He pronounces him *guilty* and *lost*. He may have come up to the standard of his fellow man, but God declares that He is *not righteous*, that he has "come short of the glory of God ;" moreover, He tells us that *without*

faith it is *impossible* to please Him. Now the sinner is without *faith* and *cannot* therefore by his good works please God: so God tells us, "Who hath saved us and *called* us with an holy calling, *not according to our works* but according to *His own purpose* and *grace*." (II Tim. i-9).

Again a very common thought in the heart of man is, that he will atone for some of his bad deeds by doing something good; he will wipe out the sins of the past by abounding in future good works and thus justify himself before God. Will this be acceptable with God? Hear what He says: "knowing that a man is *not* justified by the works of the law, but *by the faith* of Jesus Christ." (Gal. ii. 16). If such a thing *were* possible as man saving himself by his good works, he would be sure to boast; but God takes away all possibility of this and tells us "not of works, lest any man should boast." (Eph. ii. 9). By these and other scriptures is shown that man cannot by his good works save himself. By nothing he has done or can do, will he merit favor with God; he must meet Him on other ground than that.

This leads us back to the point from which we started: man is a *sinner* and as a *sinner* he deserves *death* at God's hand, and *death there must be*, either his own, or that of another. Thanks be to God, *Another* has *taken our place*, and we who believe are redeemed "with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Sheltered under that blood *we are secure*. The fire of God's wrath has swept over His soul on account of our sins

and now we are "in Him:" we are *where the fire has been* and it cannot touch us. Our sins were laid upon Christ: He drank the awful cup of God's judgment on account of them. And not only did He bear our sins in His own body on the tree but He put them forever out of God's sight. *God is satisfied:* and He has given the proof of it, in that He raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead and seated Him at His own right hand. Here our souls have rest. All our tears, all our resolutions, all our good works could not wipe out *one sin* or cleanse us from one stain, but the precious blood of Jesus, has met *all* our sins and cleansed us from *every stain of guilt*, if we have believed in Him.

As this line of truth was being gone over at the readings, Mrs. J—'s heart was opened of God to receive it. She was led to see the folly of trying to save herself by her good works, and to cease to trust in her own doings. And as the gentle showers watering the earth cause it to "bring forth and bud," so God's word was finding entrance into her soul and causing it to sing for joy and gladness. Her gaze rested upon the One who was lifted up for her sins, and the burden was gone! No longer the dull, hopeless task of trying to meet God's requirements by good works and a blameless life, no longer the dread of meeting an offended God. No! all was now peace and great was the deliverance that God had wrought: it was from darkness to light, from the bondage of sin into the blessed liberty wherewith Christ had made her free.

It was not long until she wanted to see and converse with the one who had been instrumental in putting the truth before her. To this one she told out of a glad heart, what the Lord had done for her; how sore the bondage had been, how great the darkness. She said it seemed as though there was a cloud lifted and she could see right into heaven, she saw things so differently from what she did before. It seemed to her as though she had been asleep all her past life and had just awaked. And truly it was the beginning of life to her, that life of known relationship with God the Father.

One of the first thoughts that arrested her attention and touched her heart was that Jesus was *forsaken*—yea, *forsaken* of *God*. Perfectly familiar was she with the oft-told story of the sufferings and death of Jesus but never before had it been a *reality* to her soul. Now the Spirit of God was carrying it home; and thus will it ever be where God is working: the Spirit of God applies the word to heart and conscience. "Except a man be born of water (the word) and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

Deeply touched with the thought that He was forsaken of God and occupied with that thought, she had failed to take in the *reason* of His being forsaken, and now this became the all absorbing question, *why* was Jesus *forsaken*: why did God abandon His own beloved Son. But she was not to be left in doubt long. Soon was she led to see that the blessed Lord took the sinner's place and bore all the weight of God's wrath and judgment against sin in order that

He might deliver him from unending punishment and give Him a place with Himself: and it was *because He took our place*, and was *bearing our sins*, that God forsook Him. SIN was in question and sin is so abhorrent to God that He cannot, in the holiness of His nature pass it lightly by. His own beloved Son must be forsaken, yea, He must drink the bitter cup of God's wrath to the very dregs, *when He takes the sinner's place*. God's hatred of sin, and God's boundless, unspeakable love, are told out at the cross in a most wonderful way.

Mrs. J— saw that He was bruised for her, and she knew that she was healed. And now that she knew Christ as her Saviour, she longed to go out into the street and tell everybody she met, how full was the forgiveness of sins to be found through *believing in Jesus*. Her countenance, fairly beaming with joy, gave force to the words she was speaking. The sorrowful, despondent look her face had so long worn, was now replaced by a most happy and joyous expression. It was not the momentary expression of a passing feeling, but the beaming countenance of one whose heart had been filled with a deep seated abiding joy and peace. Her life has since been consistent and godly and there has been true devotedness manifested for the One who has redeemed her.

May any of my readers who are groaning under bondage find this same blessed deliverance; not by the hopeless task of working out their own righteousness, but simply by believing in Him who died for them and is become righteousness to every one who believes in Him.

“But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”

PREACHING PEACE BY JESUS CHRIST.

IT may be that you who are reading this paper are seeking peace with God and seeking it by repentance, let me ask you now if such a result were possible would it not lead to self-satisfaction, and could this be right. Scripture tells us that Christ has made peace by the blood of His cross and God preaches peace by Jesus Christ. It is not repentance, though surely repentance has its place, but a peace based on repentance would be a false peace. Thanks be to God the believer's peace rests on no such rotten foundation. The Apostle does not say "Having repented enough we have peace with God." No; but "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." The believer's peace rests on a divine foundation. It is based on the glorious truth that God is not only satisfied as to the entire question of our sins; but that He is actually glorified in respect to it. He has reaped a richer harvest in the matter of the putting away of our sins than ever He could have reaped in the fields of an unfallen creation. Nothing has ever glorified God like the death of Christ. The hearty belief of this must give peace to the soul. It is not the work wrought *in* us, whether repentance or aught else, that gives peace, but the work wrought *for* us. Look away then to Jesus dear friend: when you realise His grace, His love, His goodness, His mercy; your heart will be won and your conscience aroused, but your peace will be by faith in Him.

THE INSENSIBILITY OF SIN.

HOW little estimate most people have of what sin is in God's sight. You will hear people talk of being sinners in a general way, little thinking what a tremendous thing sin is before Him—how difficult it was to put it away! So difficult that none but God could put it away—and that only by the death of His Son! You will hear it said that an evil conception is not sin, unless it is carried into action. Mere natural conscience is shocked by an evil act; but men do not ask themselves, why Christ had to die? Why God gave a law to forbid the evil that was there in their hearts? Thus they do not believe they are sinful and away from God. When man did go away from God—when God drove him out from the garden—He took care that man should carry a conscience with him. A terrible companion it is too, if it is violated; but still in reality a great mercy, because God works in it to bring him to a sense of his state. This is a mercy.

Paul was a blameless man in a natural conscience, till that light shone down into his soul; then the enmity of his heart to God was exposed. Yet the light that exposed his heart shone from the face of Him who had borne the judgment of God which was upon that heart.

You hear people say, too, that they expect to go to heaven; they take it for granted they will go; but they don't care about heaven at all. It is easy to say

you expect to go, when in reality you don't care about Christ. If I tell you a man has got an estate in Russia, you say; well! But if I were to say, *you* have one, see how anxious you will be to make your title and possession of it sure. Is there anything that marks the insensibility of souls more than the carelessness they evince about their state before God; or anything that shows how far they are from God, than the utter indifference they manifest to the things of heaven and Christ? Adam gave up all that God was to him for the sake of eating a fruit; and this is what sinners are doing every day. They are giving up God for the things of the world continually. A ribbon—an amusement—has more power over them than all God's beseeching love—than all the grace of Christ! Like the young man, with the great possessions, they go "away sorrowful" when they hear of the reality of their state; but still they "go away." This brings out the utter ruin of your heart—that there is not one atom for God there!

The Holy Ghost is pleading with sinners, "Be ye reconciled to God," and sinners don't care. But when God is revealed to my soul, I discover that there is sin there, which must in itself shut me out from God forever! But when (then)? I discover that that is the very thing for which Jesus gave Himself—for which He bore the wrath and died; thus accomplishing for me, and revealing to my heart the unsought love of God! God has come in in mercy and dealt with the very sins and state which troubled me—in His own Son in righteousness—in order that He might be free to ex-

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press His love—to deal with me in grace! He has dealt in holiness against my sin, and that before the day of judgment! so that I can say I have peace with God!

How dreadful then, in the face of all this, to find a sinner going on with sin; that for which Christ had been delivered—that which caused the death of the Son of God! Think of being the cause of Christ's death! and yet if I was, which is true, He died to put my sins away! Wonderful for a sinner to be able to say, I believe that this blessed One *did* drink the cup of wrath and died; and that so surely as He drank it, He is at God's right hand, my Saviour! "This is what brings the heart back to confidence in God—the very thing that Adam lost. What he wants you, sinners, to believe is His love. Did He spare a poor apple from a tree for you? *He spared not His Son!* That Son gave Himself that you might be with Himself for ever! This perfect grace takes the guile out of the heart: there is no need for any concealment of your state—no need for guile. You can rest in Divine and perfect favour, and know God better than yourself; and the way you will know yourself best will be to look at God. Can you not then say, I believe unfeignedly that He gave His Son for me; and I am at peace with God, and rejoicing in the hope of His glory. Then I can boast in God—joy in Him through our Lord Jesus. This gives full christian character!

Oh, what a God we have to do with! One who commends His own love to us as sinners—His un-

sought love, makes us feel we need that love, and that He desires we should enjoy it, and be at peace with God. One who sheds His love abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given to us. It is peaceful joy to the heart to think of what He is to us—poor, lost, self-ruined sinners. Rising in the triumph of grace above our wretchedness. 'Tis thus the Holy Ghost ever reasons—downward from what God is in His goodness, to us who are in ourselves nothing but evil. Blessed for those who find in truth that the cross of Christ has answered every claim of God upon them, as it has also answered to all His glory! Solemn the state of those who are satisfied to sit in darkness, and the unbelief and insensibility of sin,

JUST AS I AM.

THE moment a sinner takes his true place, as one thoroughly lost, guilty and undone—as one who is so bad, that he cannot possibly be worse, there is an immediate, a divine settlement of the entire question of sin. The grace of God deals with sinners, and He knows himself to be one whom Christ came to save. The more clearly anyone can prove him to be a sinner, the more clearly is established his title to the love of God, and the work of Christ. "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." (I Pet. iii. 18). Now if he is "unjust," he is one of these very people for whom Christ died, and he is entitled to all the benefit of His death by faith in Him. "There is not a just man upon earth;" and inasmuch as he is "upon earth," it is plain he is "unjust;" and it is equally plain that Christ died for him—that He suffered for his sins. Since therefore Christ died for him it is his happy privilege to enter into the immediate enjoyment of the fruit of His sacrifice.

THE SAVIOUR'S APPEAL.

“DOST thou believe on the Son of God?”

How direct, how pointed, how personal is the Lord's appeal to the heart in these words. Not, do we, or they, but dost thou? The answer too, must be direct and personal. A Yes, or a No. Hesitation, indecision, silence, means *no*, so far at least as man is concerned. “For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” (Rom. x). The *righteousness* which is by faith of Jesus Christ is for God; the *confession* of the mouth is for man. Christ is preached for the simplest to believe on Him with the heart, and to confess Him with the mouth. “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” Here confession is put first; not because it is the more important, for without the heart it would be good for nothing, but because it leads both angels and men to celebrate the praise of Jesus.

Again, dear reader, we would press this deeply solemn question, “Dost thou,” for thyself, of thyself, “believe on the Son of God?” Thy eternal interests—the joys of heaven, or the miseries of hell, hang on thy *yes* or *no*. Thou must answer for thyself, and answer to the Saviour. Surely there is wondrous love in this appeal. The blessed Jesus, as it were,

looks straight in thy face, stands before thee, reveals Himself to thee, and says, "Dost thou believe on Me? Wilt thou give thine heart to Me? Wilt thou take up thy cross and follow Me?" What then, dear reader, wilt thou say, or hast thou said? Canst thou adopt the language of the man to whom Christ had given sight? "Lord, I believe;" and so saying, fell at His feet, and worshipped Him. The Lord in mercy grant that this may be thy happy place, thy blessed portion, thy eternal joy. How simple it all is! only believe and praise the Lord; and still praise Him. But thou knowest the direful consequences of unbelief—no Saviour, no salvation, no heaven, no happiness, but banishment from the presence of God and the Lamb, from the holy and the good, and doomed to dwell in the depths of despair within the barred gates of hell forever and forever—May the Holy Spirit now lead thee from the heart to say, "Lord I believe;" and worship Jesus as Saviour and Lord.

He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not. Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He *was* wounded for our transgressions, *He was* bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace *was* upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. Is. lii. 3, 4, 5.