

# THE SOWER.

## THE CROSS AND ITS STORY.

**H**OW strange that poor sinners  
So wretched and dreary,  
And living in scenes of confusion and strife;  
Will not come to Jesus, who helpeth the weary,  
And giveth them rest with salvation and life.

The Lord in His mercy has done all that's needed  
To put away sin and to open the way;  
Shall the message of mercy go longer unheeded,  
He waits to be gracious, why longer delay.

Men tell us the future is hid by a curtain,  
Enveloped in mystery, darkness, and doubt;  
But scripture declares it most solemnly certain,  
That man is a leper within and without.

He exhibits it too by his word and behaviour,  
The sin of his nature can nothing erase,  
But the work, and the blood, of a crucified  
Saviour;  
A Saviour whom God has sent down in His grace.

This world will soon pass with its beauty and  
fashion,  
With no one its grandeur or might to record;  
But those who have tasted God's love and  
compassion,  
Will find themselves safely at home with their  
Lord.

The Lord in His mercy, has met our condition,  
 By giving up Jesus the Son of His love;  
 And Jesus came down from His lofty position,  
 To pick up companions for glory above.

He found them in bondage, in sin, and in  
 darkness;

Not one having strength, from his captor to  
 part;

So He gave up Himself, in His pity and kindness,  
 To rescue and ransom the beloved of His heart.

And now He's in heaven, by glory surrounded;  
 And hosts without number His praises declare,  
 And I through the grace that is ever abounding,  
 Am one with that glorified Jesus up there.

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**S**INNER, troubled about your unforgiven sins,  
 occupy your soul with Christ as meeting  
 every requirement of the just and the sin-  
 hating God! Fix your gaze upon Christ, and  
 His sin-bearing alone can relieve you of your  
 guilt; unrelieved by Him you perish. His  
 person alone could fulfil the claims of divine  
 holiness, and seeing His glory as a sin-bearer  
 you shall obtain peace.

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“**N**OW to him that worketh is the reward  
 not reckoned of grace, but of debt.  
 But to him that worketh not, but  
 believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his  
 faith is counted for righteousness.” (Rom. iv, 4-5).

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## FORGIVENESS OF SINS.

TO one familiar with the teaching of the word of God, nothing could be plainer than the fact that there is present, absolute and eternal forgiveness of sins *assured* to everyone who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ. It is one of the fundamental truths of the gospel; and the *knowledge* of forgiveness, instead of being an attainment of advanced christians, reached after many and varied experiences of christian life, and high attainments in christian holiness, lies at the threshold of christianity. Forgiveness of sins, associated with the communication of divine life, is the first act of grace on the part of God toward a sinner who believes the gospel. And when God bestows this favor, He does not withhold the *knowledge* of it, but *assures* it to the one who simply believes what He says. And if there are believers who are *not* sure, it is because they have sought evidences within themselves, in their own experience, or because they have been taught that it was humility to doubt, instead of simply believing God. How terrible to think that we are not simply to believe God, as if He could deceive us, or tell us lies! Alas! how many have, unwittingly, been making God a liar, by not taking Him at His word, without question, or by waiting, to make His word true by their own experience, a thing they can never do! (I John

v. 10) "God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent; hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" "Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar." (Numb. xxiii. 19; Rom. iii. 4.) We may indeed doubt our own wretched and deceitful hearts; and we may well distrust our own experiences; but why should we for a single moment doubt the veracity of "God who cannot lie? (Titus i. 2.)

Let us, then, with unhesitating reliance on His word look at some scriptures in which He speaks to us about forgiveness of sins. And may He grant to every one who reads, to lay to heart the blessed truth, and to enjoy also the riches of His grace revealed in the good news.

We may first look at two scriptures (Luke v. 17-26; viii. 36-50) in which we see forgiveness of sins administered by the Lord Jesus, *while He was here on earth.*

#### THE PALSIED MAN FORGIVEN.

Jesus was in the house teaching, and His power was present to heal. Pharisees and doctors of the law were present from every town of Galilee, and Judea and Jerusalem, and the multitude thronged the house, and barred the way of entrance from without. Four men (Mark ii. 3) arrive, bringing on a bed a man taken with the palsy. They have faith in the Lord's power to heal, but find no way of placing the man before Jesus, because of the press. But

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they had faith, and faith ever overcomes difficulties. They carried the man to the top of the house, and let him down through the tiling of the roof, with his couch "into the midst before Jesus." This was the proof of their faith. They believed Jesus had *power* to heal; they believed He was *willing* to heal; and they acted according to their faith. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said unto him,

"MAN, THY SINS ARE FORGIVEN THEE."

Oh! what words. How they must have thrilled the heart of that poor, helpless invalid, and the hearts, too, of the four who brought him! What an answer of faith!

But there were others there in whom there was no faith—scribes and pharisees, who "began to reason, saying, Who is this that speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?" Here was "reason" instead of "faith." And was not their reasoning true? Who could forgive sins, but God only? None. So far their reasoning was true. But had "faith" been there it would have discerned that God was there—"God was manifest in the flesh," (I Tim. iii. 16)—and then could they have said, "Who is this which speaketh blasphemies?" Their reason led them to reject the Son of God; and all the wondrous grace revealed in Him, and in the blessed words of the Lord Jesus, produced no thrill of joy in their cold and dead hearts.

But the blessed Lord would have them know, that, whether they believed or not, He knew every wicked thought that was passing through their unbelieving hearts; and He would give proof, at least to the waiting multitude, that He, "the Son of man," had "power on earth to forgive sins." He perceived their unbelieving thoughts, and said to them: "What reason ye in your hearts? Whether is it easier, to say Thy sins are forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk."

There lay before them a helpless creature, powerless to move a limb. Could any of the doctors there cure him? None. Could any man among them speak with authority, and say, "Rise up and walk?" Could any of them put power into that impotent flesh, so that in answer to their command, he would rise up before them all, and give proof of *man's* power to heal? None. This was confessedly beyond the power of man. But in order that they might have proof that Jesus was God, and know that He, the Son of man, had power on earth to forgive sins, He said to the palsied man: "Arise, and take up thy couch, and go to thy house." What was the result? "Immediately, he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God."

"Glorifying God!" Ah! yes, God was there. The man had felt the power of *His word* thrill

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through his whole being. It was God who had said, "Man thy sins are forgiven thee." The One who could say, "Arise," could say the other also; and instead of its being "blasphemies," it was the heart of a gracious and forgiving God speaking to man in a scene of sin, where he was both guilty and helpless. The man glorified God, and so did the multitude, "amazed" and "filled with fear," saying: "We have seen strange things to-day." Never had they seen the like till Jesus came, and they were "amazed." They felt the presence and power of God there; and they were "filled with fear." And grace was there—grace towards the guilty and helpless—grace forgiving sins. And Oh! this was so different from all the thoughts of man. "We have seen strange things to-day." Yes, strange to those who would judge God by unbelieving reason; but it was God acting in grace out of the fulness of love in His own heart, when otherwise man's case was utterly hopeless. Blessed God! blessed Jesus! wondrous grace! The man believed, and he "glorified God." The four men, too, saw the blessed answer to their faith. Have *you* believed? Have you trusted that heart, and believed that word, and given glory to Him who has thus spoken in Jesus? Oh! be not like the "doctors" and "pharisees" who *reasoned* themselves out of all the blessing, and knew not when God was there; but only *believe*, and give glory to God.

## NOT DISCOURAGED.

A YOUNG woman who had been alarmed as to her lost condition through attending gospel services, was visited by the preacher who quite thought she would soon be brought into peace with God. She seemed to realise her sinful state; that the word of God utterly condemned her; that she was dependent upon sovereign grace; and that she ought to turn to Christ. The preacher left her with the words of the text: "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

A day or two after he saw her again, but her whole appearance was changed. The seriousness and anxiety had departed. She met him with a smile that surprised and pained him, and at once, contrary to the previous interviews, began to speak of some ordinary matters.

He said:

"Have you given your heart to Christ, Mary?"

"Oh no, not yet," she said; "but I don't feel so bad as I did."

"Why not?" he asked. "What reason have you to feel any better?"

She replied; "I don't know as you would think I have any reason; but I hope I shall be a christian by and by. I don't feel in so much haste as I did; and I am not so much afraid God will cast me off. Besides, the sinfulness of my heart does not trouble me so much."

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“ Oh ! Mary,” he said, with pain and astonishment, “ how is this ? I expected something different ! Evidently your seriousness has gone, and you care less for salvation than you did. What has altered your feelings since I last saw you ? ”

“ Why, when you left me the last time you were here after pressing upon me the urgency of salvation ; I was dreadfully troubled ; I felt that my heart was opposing God ; and I was afraid to think of living without Christ another hour—your last words “ *to-day, to-day,* ” rung in my ears, I could not get rid of them. But Miss S—— came in about an hour after you had left, and I told her my feelings, but she told me not to be discouraged, only to keep on seeking the Lord. She said I was doing very well and ought not to feel so badly, and if I did not get discouraged, I should soon find religion.”

“ And you believed her ? ” “ Yes, I believed her, and I have felt better ever since—a great deal better.”

“ Felt better Mary !—you are resting on a lie ! You are miserably deceived ! Doing well ! How can you be doing well, while an impenitent sinner, rejecting Christ, and exposed every moment to the wrath of God forever ? Your friend, as you call her, has been doing the work of the great deceiver ! She did not talk to you as the bible does, ‘ *TO-DAY* if ye will hear His voice.’ ”

He tried to arouse her but all in vain. Her anxiety had departed. Her eyes were turned away from the Lord, and in a short time she was as careless and as wordly as ever.

How great the responsibility of those who check the work of the Holy Spirit in a soul. No doubt God's purposes of grace cannot be frustrated, yet it is none the less a serious matter for the one, who to an aroused soul says, Peace, peace, when there is no peace.

Besides, salvation is not awarded as a sort of payment for meritorious conduct on the part of the seeker, such as repenting and praying, but is the free gift of God, accepted by faith through the work of the Lord Jesus on the cross. His goodness leads to repentance, and the needs of the soul lead to prayer; but redemption is of grace, a free undeserved favor, in order that none may boast.

Will you have God's free gift, you who so much need it? You who now read these lines, whose downward course in the broad and easy way can only lead to destruction.

**T**HE very perfections of Christ render intolerable to divine justice every effort to gain God's favor but in Him. No other altar is there for the sinner but the cross; no judgment freeing him from hell save Calvary. Poor prisoner, dragged down to dungeons of despair, behold your judgment borne, and God glorified on your account by Jesus!

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## “HE WAS DROWNED,—I WAS SAVED.”

THE magnificent steamship, *Cyprian*, left Liverpool on the 13th of October, 1881, bound for the Mediterranean. It was blowing half a gale at starting, but it takes a good deal to hinder one of those huge vessels from starting at her appointed time. However, in but a few hours the wind increased to a hurricane, and the decks began to be swept by huge seas. Disaster followed: first the fore-steering gear gave way; then a tube in one of the boilers burst, putting out the fire it was over; again, the aft wheel-house was smashed in, and the remaining steering apparatus rendered useless; more of the boiler tubes gave way, and in a disabled state the vessel labored heavily until early next morning.

Heavy seas now swept the decks, wave after wave broke into the engine room, until the last of her fires was extinguished. Powerless, rudderless, and unmanageable, the fine steamer was now at the mercy of storm and waves. These proved foes indeed, for she was drifted swiftly towards the Welsh coast. Captain and crew had done their best to save the ship, but all hope was past; the black rocks were soon reached, and they were driven with violence on to them. Summoning all on the bridge, the skipper told them it was now a case of every one for himself.

It happened that a runaway youth had secreted himself on board as a stowaway, unknown to any,

before the ship left Liverpool. Such passengers are rarely treated with favor by either master or mate.

This wretched young waif had got on board in the dock unseen, and had cleverly concealed himself until the ship was at sea; indeed, until the storm had brought him from his hiding-place. All were too busy and anxious about their own safety to notice the lad. He stood with white face on the deck, terrified at the gale and watching the grand but solemn scene, when the ship struck upon the rocks and the billows truly spent their foaming fury upon her, until at last one crash spoke out her utter ruin.

"*Every one for himself!*" again shouted the captain. Seizing life-belts, oars, barrels, spars, one after another the crew were obliged to leap from the deck and cast themselves overboard; many with but faint hope of reaching the shore.

At last there remained upon the wreck but the captain and the stowaway. The former had just finished putting on his life-belt, and was about to jump into the sea as the others had done, when he espied near by the white face of the terror-stricken boy, that "little sinner of a stowaway," but a human being to be saved if possible.

If anyone had a right to his own life-belt it was the captain; and if anyone deserved to go without, it would be the young rascal beside him. Without pausing to consider whether deserving

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or undeserving, the noble man unbuckled his belt and strapped it upon the urchin, and, bidding him save himself, he added, "*I can swim: you take this belt, my boy!*"

Overboard went the life-belted boy, and even through the heavy surf he was kept up, until at last, on the top of a high sea he was rolled over onto the rocks, badly bruised, but able to tell the story of his noble friend's heroism. *Saved! only just, but saved!*

But what about the captain? Did he reach the coast, too? *No, never!* He had struck out boldly, but the foaming surf was too much for him, and he sank—lost his life through saving another!

Every heart on shore was indeed moved as they heard the stowaway's account: "He gave himself for me! *He gave himself for me!*"

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (Jno. xv. 13).

"But," you say, "this ragamuffin was no friend of the noble captain: all he deserved was a rope's end, and yet the master died for him."

Such is the love of Jesus to *you*. No better than the stowaway, guilty, having sinned against the God of heaven, and yet "*Christ died for the ungodly, Christ has died for you*—"the just for the unjust," for *you*.

"Condemned already," well may you hide yourself; truly a runaway, ill-deserving and hell-

deserving, you will soon have to stand face to face with the offended Master. When life's voyage is nearly over and death's storm is about you, what will you do in that day without a life-belt ?

*He offers you one.* God, through Jesus Christ, has provided one for sinners like yourself ; only by it can you ever reach the eternal shore. May we not say that Christ has given Himself for stowaways, for He cast Himself into the sea of God's wrath when hanging on the cross He cried, " Why hast thou forsaken me ? " It was then He died for you ! Oh, will you not trust Him ?

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The wrath of God against sin, borne in the person of a sinful man, can have but one result—eternal punishment ; but directed against the sinless sin-bearer upon the cross it resulted only in glory. None, save He, could give what justice claimed ; but He has glorified God in the fire, He has exhausted the flames, and now God regards all who look by faith upon His Son, with perfect satisfaction.—Jesus has borne and ended the wrath of God against the sins of all who put their trust in Him. The fire of judgment is burnt out in His person ; the claims of God's holiness are met in Him upon Calvary. The security of the believer rests upon the excellence of the person and work of Christ.

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## YOU CAN'T GET BEYOND THAT.

JUST one year ago to-night, bending low down, with the ear close up to the one who was fast passing away, we caught these words, after two vain attempts to make us understand, we heard him say, "You can't get beyond that." O what we should have missed and what my reader would have missed had he not repeated it a third time, as his speech was so thick until then, his words could not be made out. But what was it this dying man meant, felt, realized, and was fully conscious of, as in quiet calmness and peace of mind, though on the very verge of eternity, just about to leave this scene forever, and to pass into the great beyond, from whence no traveller returns, where destiny is fixed by what preceded it? What was it he meant by saying, "You can't get beyond that"? Well, I'll tell you, and it may be God will bless it to your soul, for without this all is vain. The one who had stood near enough to catch the above words, had also previously to this repeated in his ear what is found in 1 Peter i., "Redeemed by the precious blood of Christ." Quickly, but with difficulty, the response came, "*You can't get beyond that.*" Ah, my reader have you got that far? And can you ever get "beyond that," the blood, the precious blood of Christ. One, never, never, never in eternity it will be; Christ, and that which tells of accomplished redemption; the marks in His

blessed hands and feet; the print in His spear-pierced side; all this will be plainly seen as in bodies of glory like His own we behold Him there, surrounding His adorable person throughout the ages of ages. But let me ask WILL MY READER BE THERE ?

Can we wonder then as death draws on apace, that with this dear soul there was no tossing anxious fear, but that quiet, calm, settled peace that told that all was well; the blood had done its blessed work in heart and conscience. "His blood can make the foulest clean, His blood atones for me." Can you say so ?

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A POOR blind man was sitting by the way-side reading these words, from God's word: "whosoever believeth." He passed his finger over the raised letters and said again and again, "whosoever, who-so-ever, what does it mean!" A boy was passing by, on his way to school, and the blind man said to him, "My boy, what does WHOSOEVER mean?" "Everybody, sir; you and I," said the boy. Then said the blind man to himself, "whosoever means me." "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (Jno. iii. 16).