

THE SOWER.

—•••—
“WHO LOVED ME?”

Gal. ii, 20.

—
THREE little sunbeams, gilding all I see,
Three little chords, each full of melody,
Three little leaves, balm for my agony.

“WHO”

He loved me, the Father's only Son,
He gave Himself, the precious, spotless One,
He shed His blood, and thus the work was done.

“LOVED”

He loved—not merely pitied. Here I rest,
Sorrow may come—I to His heart am pressed,
What should I fear while sheltered on His breast?

“ME.”

Wonder of wonders, Jesus loved *me* ;
A wretch—lost, ruined, sunk in misery
He sought me, found me, raised me, set me free.

My soul, the order of the words approve,
Christ first, me last, nothing between but LOVE,
Lord, keep *me* always *down*, *Thyself* *above*.

Trusting to Thee, not struggling restlessly,
So shall I gain the victory,
“I—yet not I”—but Christ—“Who loved me.”

THE MARRIAGE FEAST.

(Matt. xxii.)

“**T**HEN saith he to his servants : The wedding is ready ; but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage.”

There is the indiscriminate dealing with any and every soul under the gospel. “So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all, as many as they found, both bad and good : and the wedding was furnished with guests.”

The gospel goes out to men as they are and produces by grace, wherever received, that which is according to God, instead of demanding it. Hence all are welcome, bad and good, a dying thief, or a woman that was a sinner, a Lydia or a Cornelius. The question was not their character, but the feast for the king's son ; and to this they were freely called. Grace, far from asking or finding, gives fitness to stand before Him in peace.

Yes, there is produced a necessary indispensable fitness. A wedding-garment is due to the wedding-feast. This the king, of his own magnificent bounty, provided, and it was for each guest to wear it. Who that honored the king and the occasion, would not ? The servants did not look for such garments outside ; they were not worn on the highways, but within at the wedding. Nor was it the point for the guests to appear in *their* best. It was the king's affair to

give. Come who might, there was enough and to spare, "all things were ready."

This is the great essential truth of the gospel. So far from looking for anything in man agreeable to God, the glad tidings come on His part on the express ground that all is ruined, wretched, guilty on the sinner's part. "Let him that is athirst come; yea, whosoever will."

But where the heart is not right with God, it never submits to His righteousness; man, in this case prefers to stand on his own foundation. Either he thinks he can raise a claim on God by being or doing something, or he ventures within, careless both of himself and God. Such was the man who was found by the king without the wedding garment. It was to despise the holiness as well as the grace of God, and proved that he was an utter stranger to the feast. What did he think of, or care for, the feelings of the king bent upon the glorifying of his son? For this is the true and real secret: God lavishes mercy on sinners for the sake of His Son. Opportunity is thus given to put honour on His name. Does my soul bow to it and Him? It is salvation. The heart may go through much exercise, but the only key to His astonishing goodness to us is God's feeling towards His Son. Because of the infinite value of the cross, God loves to put honour on Christ, and if a soul do but plead His name, it becomes a question of God's righteousness justifying him freely of His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

How strikingly was the truth shown by the king's dealing with the Christ-despising intruder! "And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment." At once this was the ground of action. No question was started of what the man had been or done. The servants were warranted to bring in bad as well as good. "Such were some of you," says the apostle. Indeed, this man may have been the most correct, moral, and religious of the company, like the young ruler who left the Lord in sorrow. But whether he were a hardened sinner, or a self-righteous soul, one thing we know for certain, he had not on a wedding garment. This at once arrested the king's eye. He looked at the simple fact, had the guest on a wedding garment? This man had not. What was its meaning? It told a tale the most damning possible; it was setting at nought the king's grace, it was openly dishonoring his son.

The wedding garment is Christ. This guest, therefore, came before the king without Christ. He did not put on Christ. There might be ever so sincere efforts to be holy and righteous, but it was all and only himself, not Christ, and that is everlasting ruin and condemnation to a sinner. Whereas, if we suppose the very chief of sinners justifying God by accepting Christ as the sole means for a lost soul to stand before Him, this is what exalts God and His grace. It is as if a man were broken down enough in his thoughts of himself by God's revelation of what He is in Christ, to look up and say, I cannot trust

myself, I cannot trust what I have been, nor even what I desire to be, to Thee, but I can trust fully what Thou art to me in the gift of Thy Son. Such confidence in God produces deep loathing of self, real uprightness of soul, as well as diligence of heart, and desire to do the will of God. There is nothing so humbling, and strengthening withal, as the heart's rest in God's grace towards us in Christ.

The man was not blamed for not bringing a new robe, no matter how splendid, of his own. On the contrary, what made his case so hopelessly evil was his indifference to the munificent provision of the king. Why should not his own robe do as well as the king's? He knew not, believed not, that nothing from earth suits His divine presence, only what is purchased by the precious blood of Jesus. He had no sense of the grace which invited him, nor of the holiness that befits the presence of God. The king accordingly says to him, "Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless." He may have been ever so well attired, he may have liked the feast and the guests, but he thought nothing of the king nor his son, and had not a word to say when the solemn challenge came. He was in spirit, and before God, entirely outside the feast; else he would have felt the absolute need of an array in keeping with the king's joy and the son's bridal. And judgment cast him out of that scene for which he had no heart, where the unbelieving, if it be in the hopeless wretchedness of remorse and self-reproach, must honour the Son. It is not merely governmental

vengeance such as that which providentially slew the murderers and fired their city; but full, final judgment on him who abused grace, by presuming to draw near to God without putting on Christ. "Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." This man showed manifestly that he had no part or lot in the matter; and by and by judgment will simply execute by power what is according to the truth now. "Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

“**M**OREOVER, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I PREACHED unto you, which also YE HAVE RECEIVED AND WHEREIN YE STAND if ye KEEP IN MEMORY what I preached unto you unless ye have believed in vain.” (1 Cor. xv, 1, 2.) The gospel Paul preached, the Corinthians RECEIVED—they STOOD in it—they were SAVED by it, if kept in memory by them, unless indeed they had BELIEVED IN VAIN, that is, rested their souls upon one who was still holden of death; “for if Christ be not risen then is our preaching vain and your FAITH IS ALSO VAIN,” they had believed for nothing. What is this gospel which Paul delivered having first received it himself? “For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.” (1 Cor. xv, 3, 4.)

WORDS OF A DYING SOLDIER.

TWO or three times in my life God in His mercy touched my heart. Twice before my conversion I was under deep conviction.

I was a surgeon in the Union army during the war, and after the battle of Gettysburg I had twenty-seven or twenty-eight soldiers in my hospital, who had been wounded in the battle and required amputation—some their legs and some their arms.

Among these was a young man, who refused to have the chloroform administered. When the steward told him it was the doctor's orders, he said: "Send the doctor to me."

When I came up to his bedside he took my hand in his, and looking me in the face, he said: "Doctor, I have a Saviour whom I trust. He is my stimulant, and He will support me while you are taking off my leg."

At that hour I hated Jesus, but I respected the boy; and when I saw him loving and trusting his Saviour to the last, there was something touched my heart, and I did what I had never done before for any soldier. I said: "Charley, do you want to see your chaplain?" "O yes, sir!" he answered. I sent for chaplain R., and when he came he knew the boy. Those chaplains know all the Christian boys.

Taking the soldier's hand, the chaplain asked: "Well, Charley how is it?" "I am all right sir. The doctor wanted to give me chloroform. I declined that. Then he wanted to give me brandy. I de-

clined ; and now I can go to Jesus with my full senses."

During the time that I was cutting through the flesh Charley never groaned, but when I took the saw to separate the bone, he took the corner of the pillow in his mouth, and all I could hear him utter, was, "O, Jesus ! Blessed Jesus ! Loving Jesus !" but he never groaned.

I handed the leg to the steward, and told him to place two wardmasters beside the bed, and anything Charley wanted to give it to him ; and if he called for me, no matter what time of night, to let me know.

I passed through the hospital at two o'clock that night. Charley was sleeping sweetly.

Five days after he sent for me. I saw that he was going fast. "Doctor," he said, "I am going to my Saviour ; but before I go I want to thank you for your kindness to me. You have been very kind, and now I want you to stay and see me die. You are a Jew, and do not love my Jesus ; but while you were cutting off my leg I prayed to the Lord to convert your soul."

O how these words went to my heart : "While you were cutting off my leg I prayed to the Lord to convert your soul !" But I could not stay to see him die. I had not the courage to stay and see a Christian boy die, rejoicing in the love of Jesus, whom I had been taught to hate. I left him, and Charley died.

I soon forgot all about my Christian soldier ; but last year, while at a prayer meeting, an old lady

arose to testify for Jesus. At the close of her testimony she said: "O, I have a soldier in heaven! He was wounded at the battle of Gettysburg, and a Jewish doctor wanted to give him chloroform while he took off his leg. And my dear Charley was a soldier for Christ. He begged the doctor to let him go to Christ without any stimulants. And the chaplain wrote me that my boy prayed to God to convert the Jewish doctor."

When I heard that I could not sit still. I took the lady's hand in mine, and said: "God bless you, my dear sister, your boy's prayer has been answered. I am that Jewish doctor, and the Lord has converted me."

IT may be you are ready to say, What meaneth this stir? and are apt to wonder why I follow you with such earnestness; still ringing one lesson in your ears, that you should "repent and believe the gospel." Were it a matter of indifference, I would never keep up so much ado; might you be saved as you are. I would gladly let you alone; but would you not have me solicitous for you, when I see you ready to perish? As the Lord liveth, before whom I am, I have not the least hopes to see one of your faces in heaven except you be converted. Hath not the Lord said, "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John iii, 3.) Never did any, nor shall any, enter into heaven by any other way but this.

THY HEART IS NOT RIGHT BEFORE GOD.

YOUNG X—— left his birth-place to earn his living in a large city. His parents had brought him up under a strict moral and religious training. From his early childhood he had been accustomed to read a chapter in the Bible each day, and promising his mother that he would continue to do so, and to say his prayers, he would have thought it very wrong to neglect either of these duties.

He was quite persuaded that thus, all was right. His conscience had never been awakened; he feared neither the holiness nor the righteousness of God, and he did not know either His love or His grace.

He was not yet sixteen years of age when he found himself without support or protection, exposed to all the temptations which present themselves in a large city. The passing "pleasures of sin" (Heb. xi, 25), and its "deceitfulness" (Heb. iii, 13), exercised their power over him, and soon he was drawn into the vortex of evil. What grief it would have been to his father with his austere morality if he had seen his young son entering into, and walking in, the path of corruption! The religious instruction which he had received soon lost all its value in his eyes, although he still continued to read his chapter in the Bible.

But the eye of God, and His love followed this young man. His ear had heard the prayer of his dying mother, interceding for the eternal salvation

of her child. God, who is light and who is love, was occupied with this soul in its wanderings in order to lead it out of "the power of darkness, into the kingdom of His dear Son." (Col. i, 13).

One day the chapter the young man had to read was the eighth of Acts. He came to the 21st verse "Thou has neither part nor lot in this matter, for *thy heart is not right in the sight of God.*" The Holy Spirit applied this word to his conscience. It penetrated his soul as aforetime when Nathan said to David, "Thou art the man," the heart of the king was pierced.

"*Thy heart is not right in the sight of God.*" Our young friend knew very well that this was his case and the fear of the judgment of God seized him. He turned from his sinful ways, and believed that he would be able, by a serious watchfulness over himself; by an honorable conduct; by more prayers and religious exercises; to acquire peace for his soul and finally attain heaven. During two long months he persevered in his efforts, but in vain. He was not happy, the same words pursued him everywhere and filled him with agony. "*Thy heart is not right in the sight of God.*" He was almost driven to despair.

In his daily reading he came upon the 53rd chapter of Isaiah. He read the sixth verse: "All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

"That is also true of me," he said. "I have gone astray. I have turned to my own way." But immediately his mind was arrested by that magnifi-

cent and precious declaration, "*The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.*" The happy message coming from God by the mouth of the prophet brought peace to his soul, *peace with God.* By faith he laid hold of the fact that Jesus in dying on the cross had been his substitute before God and had borne for him the judgment due to his sins. (Read I Pet. ii, 24; iii, 18; Acts x. 43.)

What a marvellous change the good news of grace produced in this young man? He no longer looked at his own heart in the vain hope of making it, little by little, right before God, seeing that constantly new fruits of sin which was so deeply rooted in his heart manifested themselves. Now, on the contrary, he was able, for the salvation and joy of his soul, to cast a profound look at the heart of God whose love for sinners had been so great as to give up His Son to death for them. He had peace with God, that peace which is founded on nothing less than the righteousness of God. He was reconciled to God by the death of His Son (Rom. v, 10), and has now the joy of announcing to others that it is not by our own merits that we are saved, but only by the work of Christ upon the cross.

Reader have you comprehended how our friend came to possess peace and the assurance of the forgiveness of his sins? He read the word of God and *he believed.* Abraham *believed* God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." (Rom. iv, 3.)

Do thou also believe the word of God; *believe* God; believe what He has said: "*Hear, and your soul shall live.*"

THE POWER OF THE WORD OF GOD.

“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance.”

THE celebrated preacher, C. H. Spurgeon, was invited some thirty years ago to preach the gospel in the Crystal Palace at London. It is a vast edifice which is used for expositions of the arts and industries, but also for large meetings of various kinds.

Spurgeon accepted the invitation, but desiring to assure himself beforehand that his voice had sufficient power to be heard throughout the vast hall, he ascended the platform and pronounced in a loud voice this passage from 1 Tim. i, 15: “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”

As soon as he had uttered these words he was convinced that, without great effort, he would be able to be heard and understood in all parts of the hall. He again repeated the same text in a lower voice and then returned home.

About twenty-five years after this, a brother of Spurgeon's, who was also a preacher in London, was called to visit a dying workman. “Are you ready to meet God?” asked the minister. “Yes, thanks be to Him,” replied the dying man with confidence, and he recounted what follows:

“I am by trade a tinsmith. One day, many years ago, I was doing some work on the cupola of the

Crystal Palace, and I thought of nothing but what I was doing. During all my life I had never been troubled about God. I did not believe in Him, or if I believed that there was a God, I had no idea that He gave Himself any thought about me. As I was thus at work I suddenly heard a voice as if from heaven saying: 'This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.' I at once stopped my work and heard again the same words. God, of whom I had not thought, struck me by these words as with a hammer, and broke the hardness of my heart. God spoke to me at that moment offering me salvation in His Son Jesus Christ. It was a single issue, I accepted salvation, and he saved me, me a poor sinner, and made me happy; since then I have served Him.'"

Reader, how many times has not God spoken to you? Reflect on what you have done in turning away from Him "who speaks from heaven." (Heb. xii. 25.) How shall you escape if you "neglect so great salvation?" (Heb. ii, 3.) "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Heb. x, 31.) The God who to-day again offers thee in Jesus the fullness of His grace and pardon, and to-day if you hear His voice—perhaps for the last time in this day of salvation—harden not your heart.

Bless'd Lord, what heavenly wonders dwell
In Thine atoning blood,
By it are sinners saved from hell,
And rebels brought to God

AN IMPORTANT QUESTION.

A POOR old woman had reached the age of seventy years without having had any anxiety as to her soul. One day she was invited to attend a gospel meeting, and when there, as she heard the word, it pleased the Lord by the power of the Holy Spirit, to show her her lost and sinful state, and she was led to receive Jesus as the Saviour who had suffered and died for her.

This revelation of the love of the Lord made her truly happy and whenever in her lowly position she had the opportunity, she gave her testimony as to what He had done for her soul.

One morning having gone into a druggist's shop to get some medicine, the young man who served her said, in a light sort of way: "You are already an old woman and may well expect to be sick. Do you think you are going to live for ever?"

"Yes, blessed be the Lord," she replied, "for I have eternal life." The young man, disconcerted by this unexpected response, regarded her attentively, but he saw only a feeble old woman, poorly clad.

"Well," he continued, "tell me how you obtained it?"

"How I obtained it! It is the gift of the Lord Jesus; it is He who has given it to me. He has made me hear His voice, I was lost and He has saved me. Young man have you eternal life?" she asked, looking him straight in the face. "It is true that I am old, feeble and tottering, but you may die .

first, you know. Where will you go if you do not know Jesus as the Saviour of your soul?"

He avoided the question, busied himself with something else, and she left the shop.

Some weeks after, a fatal disaster overtook the young man. I do not know whether before dying he was able to confess like the old woman: "Bless the Lord I have eternal life, I am saved!" But you reader, who are still in this life, but for how long no one can say but God, *have you eternal life?* It is to give you it, if you believe in Him, that God, in His love, sent down here His beloved Son.

“**H**OW shall we escape if we neglect so GREAT SALVATION?” Heb. ii 3.

The great sin in this day of wide-spread profession is NEGLECT. *Neglect* is the God, and Christ, and Holy Ghost dishonouring sin; the heaven-forfeiting, hell-filling, and soul-damning sin of this privileged moment in which we are living. And whilst you remain in this guilty state of indifference and neglect, there is *no way of escape*. You may look forward, and backward; on the right and on the left of you, but the words, NO ESCAPE, will stare you in the face; and most certainly there is *no way of escape in ETERNITY*, for there is no blood in hell! No Saviour pleads with souls there, and no salvation is offered there!