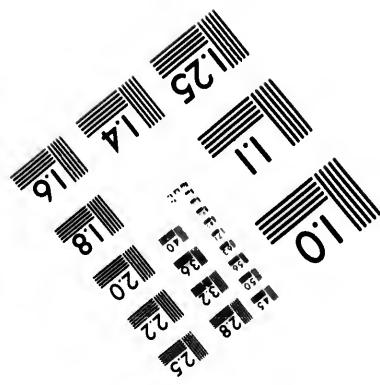
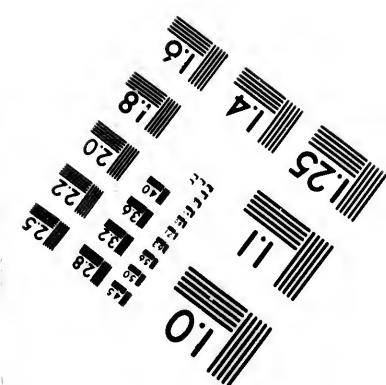
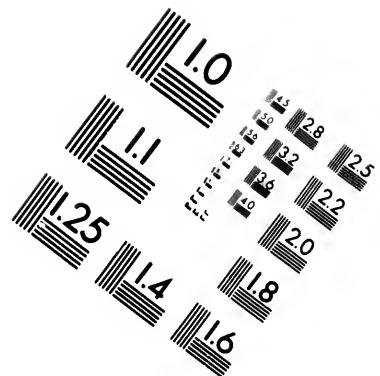
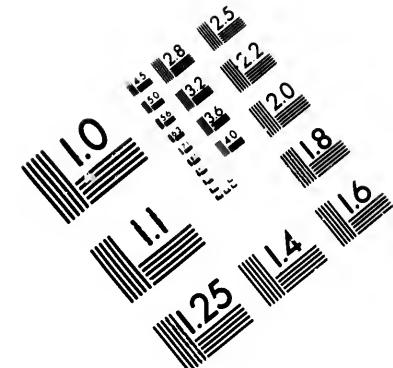
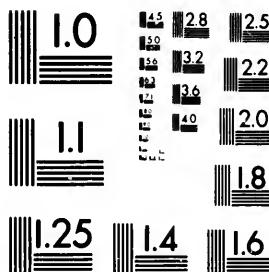


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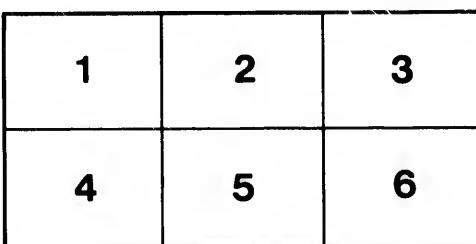
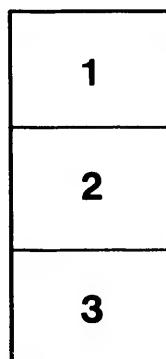
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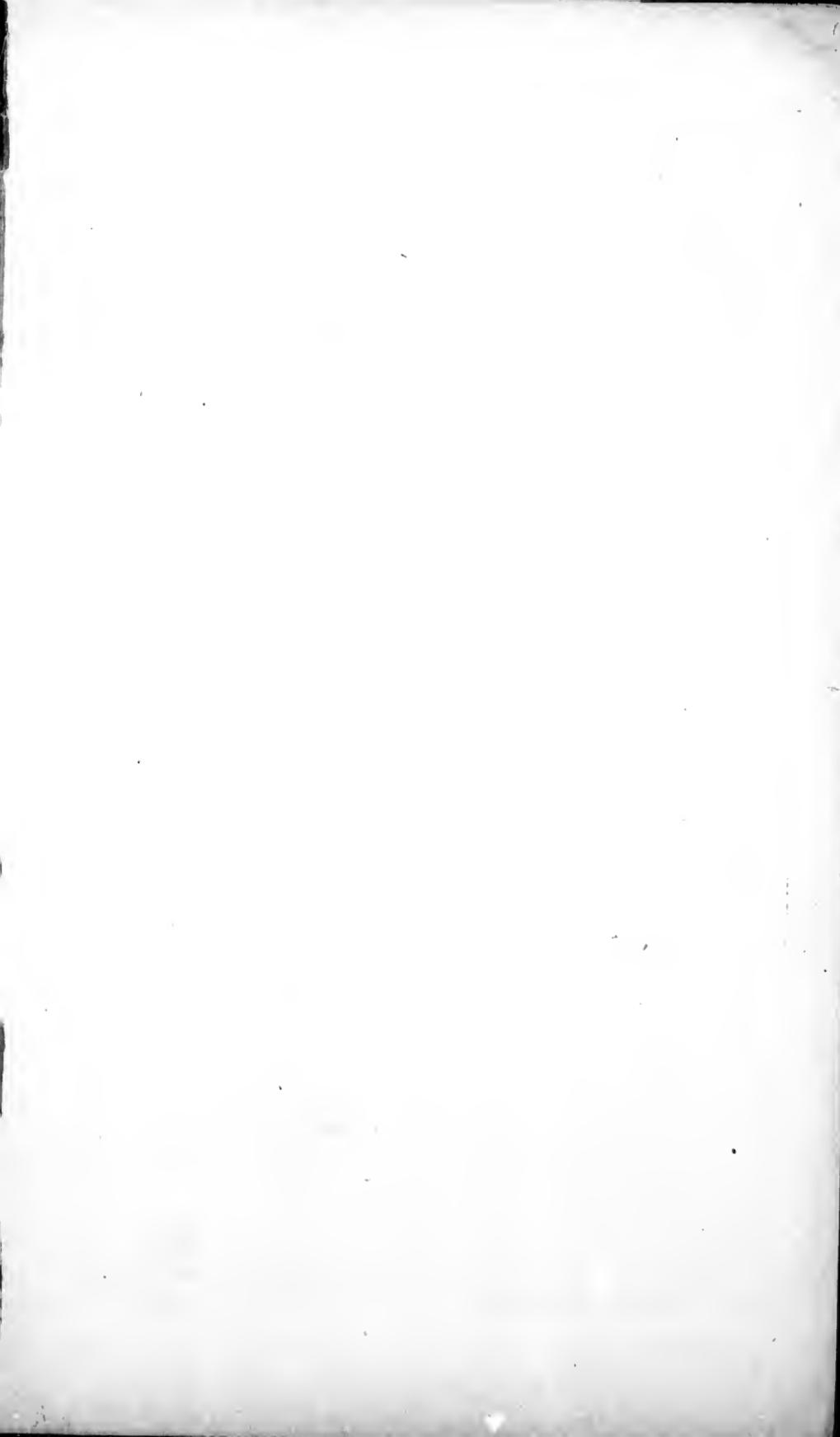
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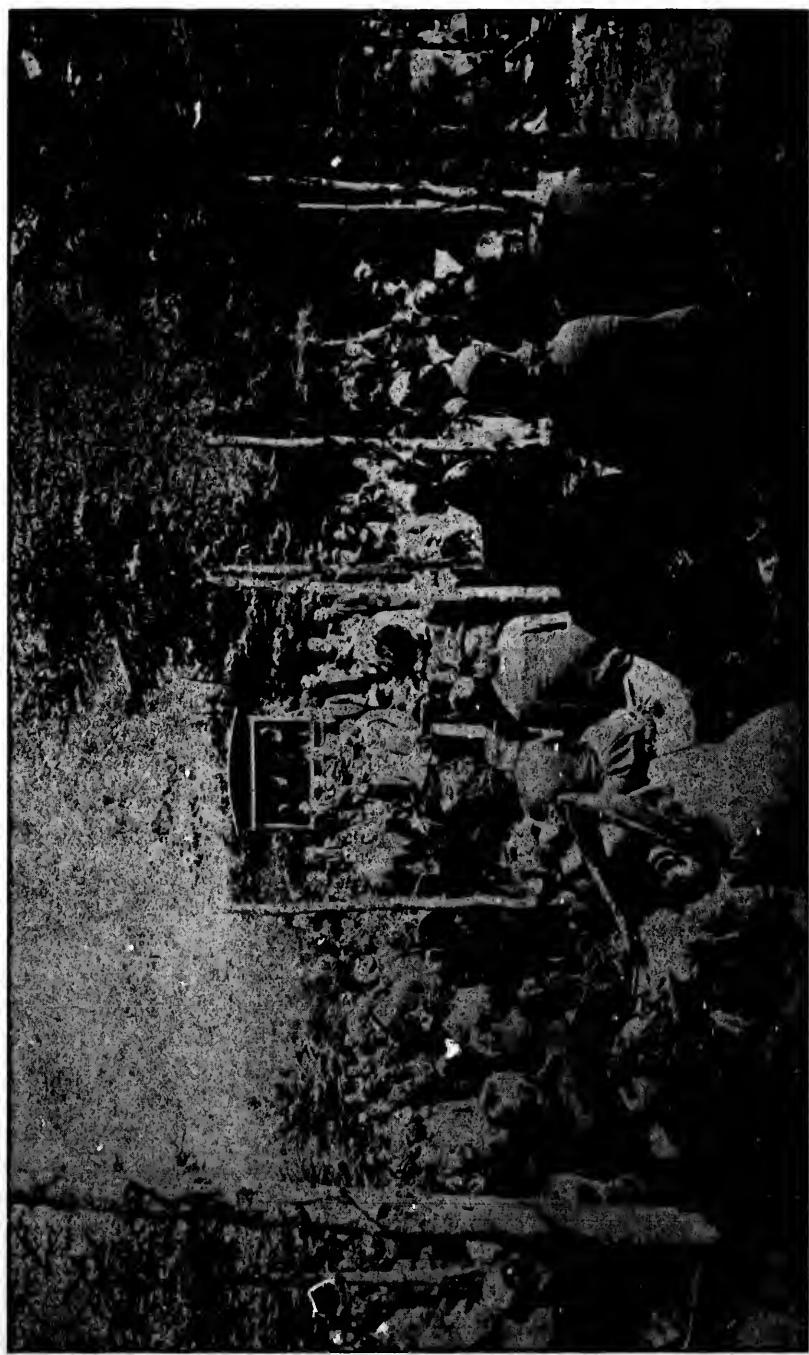
THE
Seven Sacred Sayings
ON THE CROSS.

Calder.





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COMMUNION SERVICE AT MIRA, CAPE BRETON.

COMMUNION MEMORIES.

THE SEVEN SAYINGS

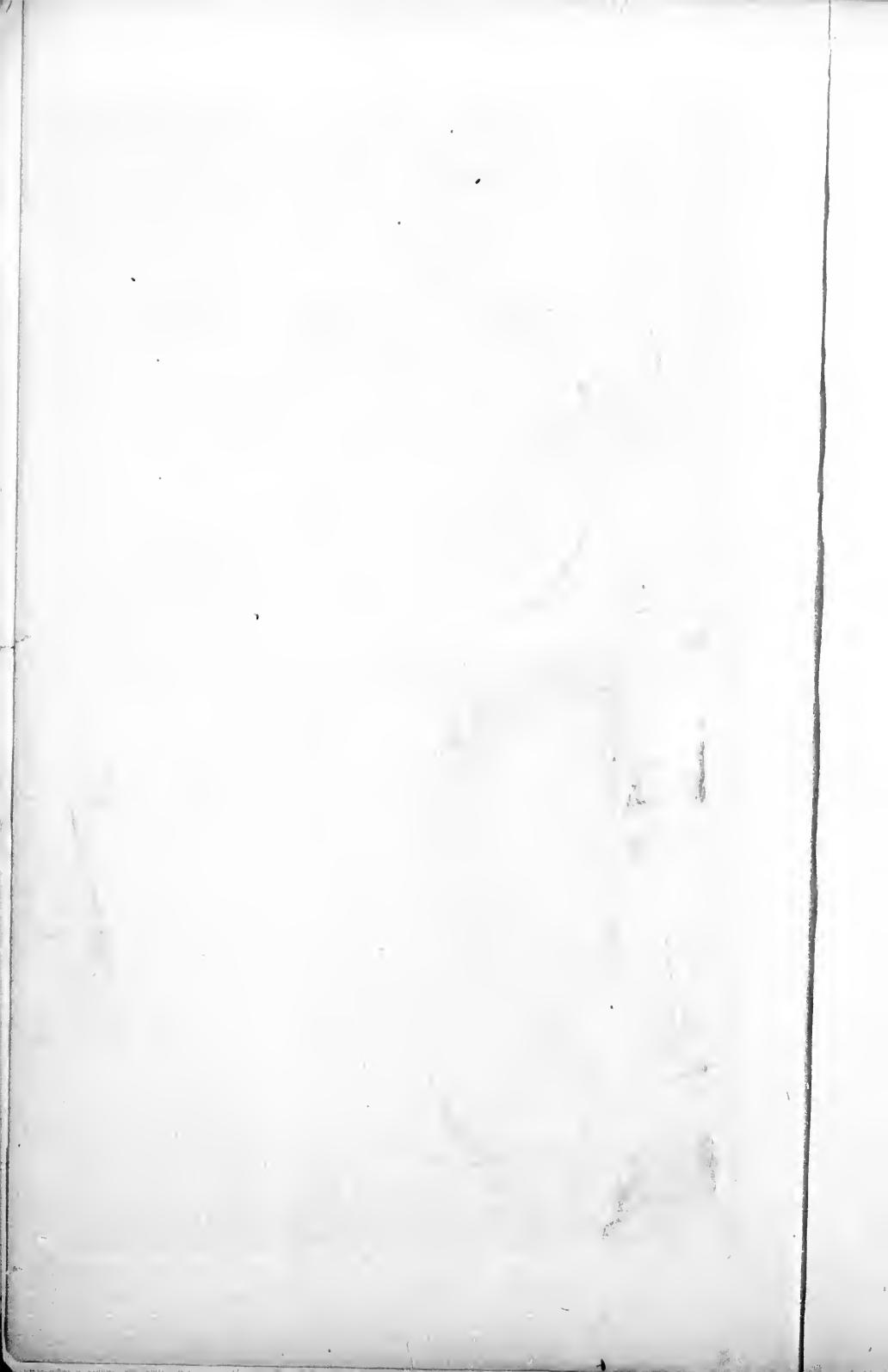
ON THE

CROSS.

BY

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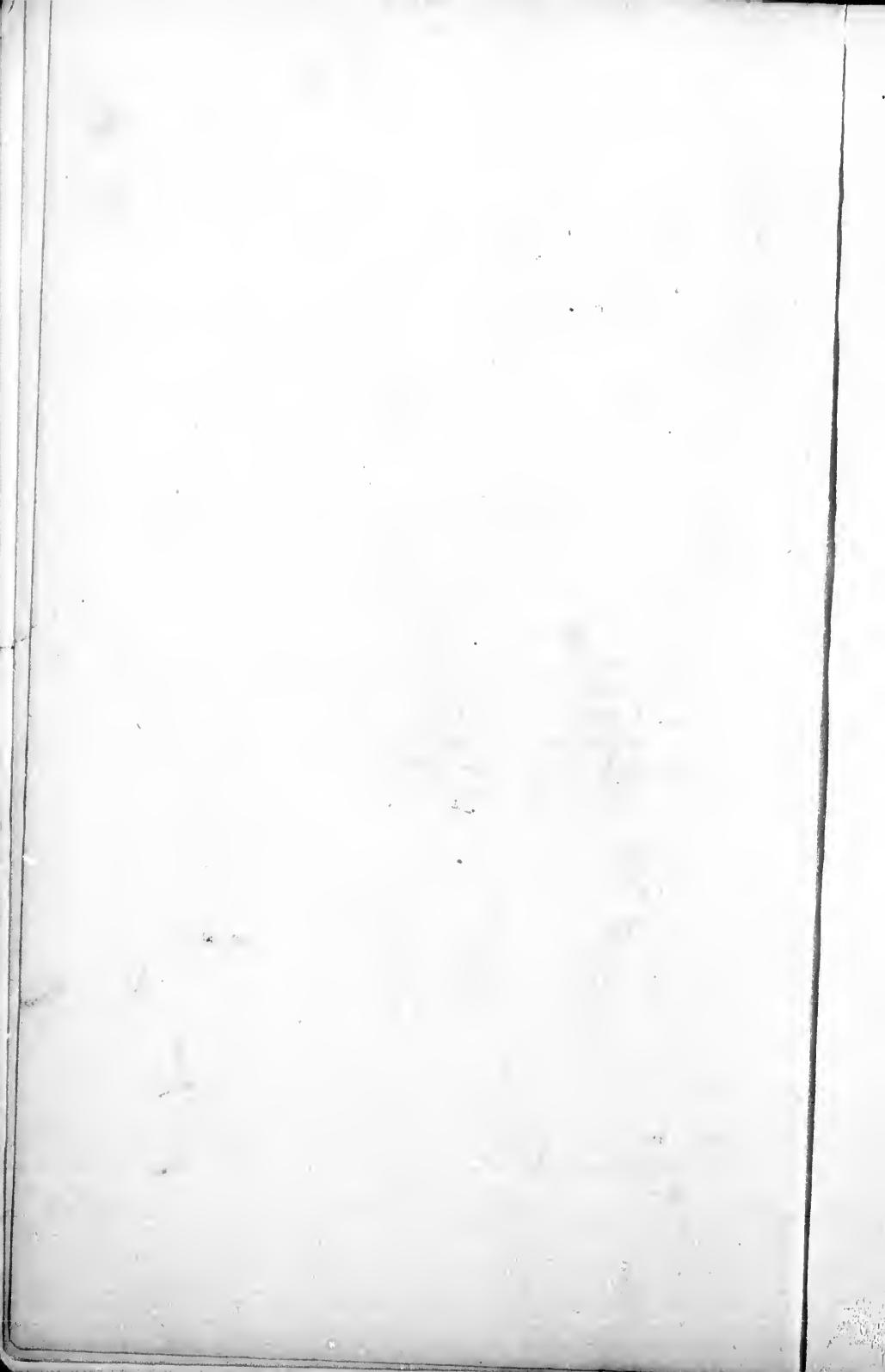
NOTE.

A MIDST the multiplicity of duties demanded by a congregation of about four hundred families, the following sermons were prepared. They were not intended for the press, but at the urgent request of not a few they are now given, with but little change since delivered, for publication ;—hence the reader will kindly overlook not a few defects.

They cover the first six years of my ministry, and most of them were delivered in the open air to congregations averaging from two to four thousand. They are memorials indeed ! And it is with deep gratitude to the praise of the grace of Almighty God that we would remember these blessed communion seasons—"these times of refreshing."

THE AUTHOR.

MIRA, CAPE BRETON,
}
January, 1894. }



FIRST SAYING ON THE CROSS.

"Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."—(Luke xxiii, 34).

THIS is the first of the seven sayings on Calvary. And it is very probable that Jesus uttered these words when He was being nailed to the cross. They are the fulfilment of prophecy, as we read, in Isa. liii, 12 : "Because He hath poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bare the sins of many ; and made intercession for the transgressors." Amidst all the uproar, the blasphemies, the confusion and strife of tongues that morning at Calvary, we hear in accents soft and low : "Father, forgive them ; for they know not what they do."

These heavenly words bring before us the state of Jesus' mind, and a practical demonstration of what He taught :— "Love your enemies."

Let us this morning, depending on the Spirit of God, proceed to notice :—

- I. The Crime ;
- II. The Forgiveness, and
- III. The Plea. "For they know not what they do."

I.—THE CRIME.

It is the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Let us notice, first, those sins which were more immediately connected with the Saviour's death. No doubt He died for the sins of all His people ; all the sins of all believers led to His death. "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," (Isa. liii, 5). But there were sins that more immediately led up to the crucifixion. Jealousy, love of money, slander and man-pleasing were glaringly prominent. All these combined to bring about this great crime. We read that Pilate "knew that the chief

priests had delivered Him from envy." And of Judas, who had the bag, we find that he "went unto the chief priests, and said unto them, what will ye give me and I will deliver Him unto them?" And as for slander,—"The whole multitude of them arose and led Him to Pilate. And they began to accuse Him, saying, we found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying that He Himself is Christ, a king," (Luke xxiii, 1, 2. Then Pilate, who protested again and again as to Christ's innocence, "willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged Him, to be crucified," (Mark xv, 15). Now these very sins are prominent in our midst to-day. In all their ugliness and cruelty they lurk and crawl, polluting the face of the earth. To-day, as then, they hinder the spread of the gospel of Christ. They are a curse to society, to our homes and to our hearts. May God grant that we be free from their fetters and power as we draw near to commemorate the dying love of our Saviour on this Sabbath day. But think again of the crime! Crucifying the Lord of Glory; putting to death the human nature of Christ, which was inseparably and eternally united to Divinity in the person of the Son of God. It was the rejection of Christ in the most terrible and cruel manner. Think how heinous this crime appears in the light of the glory of the Son of God; in the light of His life of innocence, of self-denial, and of love! Even in light of His patience, and meekness, and sympathy, how inexcusable, how fiendish does the crime appear!

But let us not think that the Jews and Roman soldiers alone are guilty of crucifying the Saviour. The Spirit of God tells us of those under the gospel "who crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh and put Him to an open shame," (Heb. vi, 6); of those "who hath trodden under foot the Son of God," (Heb. x, 29). Are there not many in this large congregation to-day who are guilty of this crime? O how often have you despised and rejected Jesus Christ? Who can tell how often you have "trodden under foot" the Son of God? Then when the Saviour came to you in His love and grace,

your cry was ; "Away with Him. Away with Him." What is your decision to be to-day ? For Christ or against Him ? Are you determined to go down to eternity guilty of the blood of Jesus, and of your own soul ? Remember you are only doing in your own way what the Jerusalem sinners did in their way. Pause and think. You are committing the greatest of all crimes ; a crime of which even the very devils cannot be guilty. Will you persist ? Others of you can look back to the time of which you must sorrowfully say : " We esteemed Him not." But to-day, praise forever be to the grace of God, Jesus is all to you. He is all your desire ; and with Paul, you joyfully proclaim : " This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners ; of whom I am chief," (I Tim. i, 15). You can not forget those days and years during which you lived in sin, despising and rejecting the Son of God, and putting him to an open shame. You remember with what persistent determination you thrust Jesus away from your door. He often stood there saying ; " Open to me for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night," (Song v. 2). But your only answer was : " No, Jesus, I will have none of Thee." " Away with Thee Jesus." " Away with this man, and release unto me Barabbas." You once scorned Him who loved you with an everlasting love. You cared not for His blood or His crown. The whole man was in arms against Jesus. You mocked, despised and rejected Him ; and the deep anguish which he suffered for sinners was to you as a foolish tale. O what a crime ! What guilt ! And yet, to-day, it is yours to rejoice in the blessedness of forgiveness. " Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." (Ps. lii. 1).

II.—THE FORGIVENESS : " FATHER FORGIVE THEM."

Jesus asks His Father for the dismissal of their guilt in putting Himself to death. You will perceive that the crucifixion does not constitute the unforgiven sin. The word of God in a most significant manner informs us of the man who

" hath never forgiveness" (Mark iii, 29). We read also that, "if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment," (Heb. x, 26, 27). But this prayer indicates forgiveness even for those whose hands were literally red with the Saviour's blood. This unforgiven sin, then, must be committed in some other way. We are indeed told that it is committed against the Holy Ghost, and we apprehend that it is so by the out and out rejection of a once crucified, but now exalted and glorified Redeemer.

But forgiveness for those who crucified the Saviour certainly brings before us the sufficiency of the blood to take away "all manner of sin and blasphemy," (Matt. xii, 31). If such wretches could be forgiven; if Christ lifted up his voice for such, who need despair? There may be some poor sinner within our hearing who is sorely tempted to conclude that there is no forgiveness for him. Dear friend, Satan has tried that device with very many; it is an old temptation of his, but do not believe him for the blood of Christ "cleanseth us from all sins." It is told of Luther that Satan once approached him with a long list of his sins. "Do you see that," said Satan, "how can you expect to find mercy?" "But are there no more sins to add to that black list?" asked Luther. On hearing this, the enemy of souls went away and returned with another list far longer than the first. "But is that all?" said the Reformer. Once more Satan went away and soon returned with a scroll so long that it would reach around the world. "But is that all?" said Luther. "And is it not enough?" replied Satan. Yes, said the man of God, it is enough, and I plead guilty to all, but now take your pen and write at the bottom; "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin. (I John i, 7).

Again we find in this passage *instant forgiveness*. While these men of Calvary have their hands red with the Saviour's blood, and while they are in a most fiendish manner torturing and rejecting Him, He interposes in their behalf. There is immediate intercession before there would be immediate destruction. "Father forgive them."

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Dear friends, we know not what the sins are of which you are guilty. We know not at what stage you have arrived in your downward course. But this we do know, and proclaim to you in the name of the Lord, that there is full and instant forgiveness for you. "Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Many of you have allowed precious opportunities to pass and now you may be like the tree in the vineyard on your last trial. "Cut it down," said the master, "why cumbereth it the ground?" But the vinedresser, "answering said to him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it; and if it bear fruit well; and if not then, after that, thou shalt cut it down." (Luke xiii. 6). This may be your last opportunity to secure your eternal interests. The sword of Divine Justice may be about to descend. What will you do? God is ready. The Saviour is waiting with outstretched arms inviting you, "Come unto me." You are invited just as you are, with all your guilt and in the midst of all your crimes. O that it were with many of you as with Zacchæus of old to whom Jesus said: "Make haste and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house. And he made haste and came down and received him joyfully." (Luke xix. 5).

But some of you may find yourselves criminals in another way. Children of God you are indeed, but alas! your story is a sad one—you have gone astray. You have been in a state of backsliding. You do not know how you can look up. You do not know how you can approach the Lord's table. But there is instant forgiveness for you. The master of the table has sent you this blessed invitation: "O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. I will heal their backslidings, I will love them freely; for mine anger is turned away from him." (Hosea xiv. 1).

III.—NOTICE THE PLEA. "FOR THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO."

Christ approaches God with this plea on the ground of the eternal relation existing between Himself and the Father. He appeals on the ground of the mystery of eternal genera-

tion and the co-equality of His nature and Being with God. In other words He appeals to the fulness of the Fathers' love to Himself on behalf of those criminals. And what an appeal is this! Pause and consider, the Son of God as such bringing before His Father those whose hands were actually red with His own blood, so that they might be forgiven. "I am thy Son; Thou lovest me, therefore: "Father forgive, for they know not what they do." Jesus does not forgive them Himself as in other cases, but asks the Father to do so. But why did He do this? Just because the crime was peculiarly committed against the Father in the person of His Son. For the Son came to reveal the Father, and this revelation men were rejecting when they were rejecting Christ. But the plea itself was the ignorance of the criminals. Now in the Old Testament we have reference made (Lev. iv.) to, "a soul," "the priest," "the whole congregation," "a ruler," or "any one of the common people" sinning, "through ignorance." We have also the Divine arrangement made for the forgiveness of such sins through sacrifice. Peter, in Acts iii., refers to the same. "And now brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers repent ye therefore and be converted that your sins may be blotted out." Paul also tells of himself; "Who was before a blasphemer and a persecutor and injurious, but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief." It must not be supposed that ignorance is innocence, or that it atones for sin, or is an excuse for it. This is true, and yet, it is the plea that Christ advances in His prayer. In what sense then is it used as a plea? The meaning evidently is that because they were ignorant of what was involved in their capital crime their pardon was possible. They knew not the extent of the offence given to God, nor the person through whom it was given; they were not aware of the nature of the crime they were perpetrating, nor the wrath they were treasuring up for themselves, and so they are within the pale of mercy. Satan in sinning knew what he was doing, his knowledge of what he did was too clear to make his pardon possible, and so he is shut up in the chains of eternal despair, But sinners do not fully know what they do when they reject

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Christ and thus their ignorance makes their forgiveness possible. Some one says: "He who rejects Christ has committed a mistake at once irreparable and has been guilty of an infatuation whiclr it will take eternity to deplore and comprehend." Christian friends what cause of thanksgiving have you that God graciously, in a day of His favour, brought you to know, something at least of the extent of His favour! You were convinced to such an extent that your cry ever since has been: "God be merciful to me a sinner." You saw in the death of Christ something of the terribleness of sin; and to-day in commemorating that blessed death let your tears of penitence mingle with your songs of joy. Christless sinners your forgiveness is yet possible. Come then without delay before the Lord, and with the Psalmist say: "So foolish was I and ignorant, I was as a beast before Thee." We pray you do not put off the great matter of your soul's salvation until sickness and death come. We cannot trust to a death-bed repentance. It is a remarkable fact that though Christ's death and dying sayings are so prominent, for either could not be otherwise, that in the whole Bible the dying words of only five or six of God's people are alluded to; and that the dying sayings of only three (Israel, Moses and Stephen) are given. The fact is significant in view of the importance men are apt to attach to death bed sayings and repentance. After all, it is not how one dies, but how one lives. One good Christian writes: "I pay more attention to people's lives than to their deaths. In all the visits I have paid to the sick during the course of a long ministry, I never met with one who was not previously serious, that ever recovered from what he supposed the brink of death, who afterwards performed his vows and became religious, notwithstanding the very great appearance there was in their favour when they thought they could not recover." A christian physician states that he had a hundred or more persons in his practice, who, in prospect of death, had been apparently converted, but had subsequently been restored to health. Out of them all he did not think of more than three who gave any evidence of genuine conversion.

Dear fellow sinner, the present is your opportunity. By all that is dear to you live not a moment longer without Christ. "Behold now is the accepted time."

Christian Brethren again we are privileged to commemorate our Saviour's death in the wilderness. Come then, let us draw near the cross. Let us dwell at Calvary. Let us behold the dying Saviour. Let us listen to this prayer : "Father forgive, for they know not what they do," till our souls be filled with joy, and our spirits magnify the Lord. When a veteran French soldier lay wounded on the field of battle, and the surgeon was probing among the shattered ribs to find the bullet, the man exclaimed ; "Deeper ! deeper ! and you will find the Emperor !" O let the presence of Jesus fill our hearts to-day ! Deepen then the love of home; deepen then all the delights of life; deepen then life itself let the name and love of Jesus be in our hearts. Come my friends, let nothing interpose between us and Jesus. Come and let this Sabbath and this communion be to us a foretaste of the great Sabbath of eternity, where our communion shall never be broken, where our joys shall never end. May it be to us to-day as it was to the church in other days when she said : "As the apple trees among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste." "Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be Thou like a roe, or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether." Amen.

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SECOND SAYING ON THE CROSS.

Now there stood by the cross of Jesus, His mother and His mother's sister, Mary, the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple standing by whom He loved, He saith unto His mother, Woman, behold thy son ! Then saith He to the disciple, Behold thy mother ! and from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.—(Luke xix, 25-27).

ADVERSITY proves the reality of friendship, the depth of one's christianity and the strength of one's courage. During the time of prosperity Jesus had many professed friends and followers ; the multitudes flocked to hear Him, but now, in His dreary, dark hours of suffering and sorrow, He is left alone and almost without a friend. The popular applause has ceased, and the multitudes have either gone to their homes or joined the enemy. Even the disciples have forsaken Him and vanished from the scene. Surely we can see here the fulfilment of that prophecy : " I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with me," (Isa. lxiii, 3).

But there were a few who could not stay away from Calvary ; nothing could prevent them from coming to the cross. Their love was crucified there, and so they must come. The mother of Jesus, the wife of Cleophas, Mary Magdalene, and John the beloved disciple " stood by the cross." May God help us in our meditations this day, to approach this sacred and solemn scene. Consider :—

- I. Christ here revealing His supremacy, His sympathy, and the interest He takes in His own people.
- II. That christians take their stand by Christ crucified.

I. Christ revealing His Supremacy.—We find, at least on the surface of these words, the idea that He alone is the only Mediator between God and man. None must intrude into this particular sphere of His. Even His mother cannot be tolerated here. Let us look into this for a little. There

are three times on record in which Jesus spake to His mother, and on each occasion she is rejected from His special sphere as the servant of the Father. The first time was when He, at the age of twelve, stayed behind in the temple. When found by His parents, His mother remonstrated with Him, saying: "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us?" But His simple answer was: "How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luke ii, 49). Although Mary called Him son; He does not call her mother, and plainly intimates that He has no excuse to offer for having stayed behind on His "Father's business"; and that she has no right whatever to interfere in the affairs of His heavenly kingdom.

The next recorded saying was spoken at Cana, at the marriage. Mary came to Jesus, no doubt with an air of pride, and told Him that they had no wine. It is plain that her intention was that He should do some miracle and make His power known. "They have no wine," said she. Jesus answered: "Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come," (John ii, 3). Notice it is "woman," not "mother" He uses. Evidently here again Jesus repels her from venturing to interfere in His work. This is His sphere, and His only. Here all must bow to His supreme control.

Next comes the words in our text. Jesus is dying, and yet, He does not address Mary as "mother," but as "woman." If there was ever an occasion in which the Saviour would speak to her as His mother, surely that moment had now come. He sees and knows her grief; and yet, in addressing her it is "woman." It is so because Jesus is dying,—not as Mary's son,—but as the substitute for sinners, and even she must henceforward look to Him, not as her son, but as Her Lord and Saviour. And further, in leaving her upon the care of John, He does not say: "Behold *my* mother," but "Behold *thy* mother"; nor does He order John to worship her as the mother of God, but to provide for her. Away then with the idea that the Virgin Mary has any influence whatever with God on behalf of sinners. For, "there is one

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God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus," (I Tim. ii, 5). " Neither is there salvation in any other; for, there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved," (Acts iv, 12). God invites us to come to Himself, and He offers us directly from His own hands all the blessings of salvation. " Look unto me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is none else," (Isa. lxv, 22).

Again we have revealed to us the *sympathy* of the man Christ Jesus. Humanity without sympathy must be imperfect and undeveloped. In the Saviour we have perfect humanity with full and perfect sympathy. And who can in any measure understand the pain arising to the Saviour out of His perfect sympathy with all for whom He was dying? When Jesus saw, he was moved with compassion. In one place we read: " When Jesus called His disciples unto Him, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat," (Math. xv, 32). And in another place: " But when He saw the multitude He was moved with compassion," (Math. ix, 36). He wept at the grave of Lazarus, and shed tears over the city of Jerusalem. He turned to the weeping ones who followed Him to Calvary, saying: " Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children." In the passage before us, a look followed with words, convey the dying Saviour's sympathy to a weeping mother and a weeping disciple.

But we must not confine this sympathy to the few who stood before him at Calvary, for He had then before His mind's eye a redeemed world. In the few upon which His natural eye rested, He saw but the first fruits of the great harvest of men and women who would through all ages stand by His cross; and His sympathy included all these within its infinite grasp. Let us think with wonder of the dying Saviour extending His sympathy in all its fulness to all those for whom He was suffering. A man suffering extreme pain is not supposed to have thoughts beyond himself; but here, we see the " Man of Sorrows; who, though envel-

oped in a flame of mental and bodily suffering, is graciously considering those loved ones. He looked upon them as they stood by Him, in the midst of that seething ocean of fury and rage. Truly we may say with the Church: "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was tempted in all things like as we are."

My friends, let us come near to the cross, and let us look up from the cross of shame and suffering to the throne on high where the Redeemer sits, having all power and sympathy with His afflicted and tried people. Jesus looked on those who stood near him in those dark hours. But who can picture that look? What sympathy and love does it manifest? What an encouragement it gives to-day to every poor, weak, burdened and trembling sinner! Listen to it: "I am thy Saviour! I am thy strength! My hands and feet were pierced for thee! Look! I shed my blood for thee! Go! in this thy might. Go! and tell thy friends how great are the things which thy Lord has done for thee. Go! for lo! I am with thee to protect thee, and I will bring thee at last to my kingdom."

Again we have before us Christ's care for His own. He could not die without making provision for His bereaved mother. But you will notice that while He does so, He forbids an idle life on her part; for while John is to act as a dutiful son to her, she is to discharge the duties of a mother for him. "He saith unto His mother, Woman behold thy son!" and, "to the disciple, Behold thy mother!" He who provided for Hagar in the wilderness, and for the prophet at the brook Cherith, and for Israel during their forty years in the wilderness, could not leave this poor weeping woman unprovided for. "The young lions do lack and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good." But why did Jesus leave the arrangement of this provision to the last? No doubt one reason was that, he did not wish to hurt His mother's feelings sooner than it was necessary; and again to teach her, that although she was no longer to look to Him as her son, but as her Sovereign Lord, yet that she was to live under His reign and on His kingly bounty. It was sorrow

for Mary to part with her son ; but it would be joy henceforth to live in communion with her Lord. Her son could no longer provide for her ; but her Lord's provision was most ample. This arrangement at Calvary is a pledge to the Church of Christ's continued care concerning it. May God help us on this Communion Sabbath to feel the sweet contentment which arises from leaving ourselves and all that concerneth us, altogether in the hands of our Saviour. "Therefore, I say unto you, take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink ; nor yet for your body what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment ? Behold the fowls of the air ; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns ; yet your Heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they ?" (Math. vi, 25, 26). "Be ye careful for nothing," (Phil. iv, 6). "Casting all your care upon Him ; for He careth for you," (I Pet. v, 7).

But why did Jesus leave His mother on *John's* care ? Why did He not place her under the care of some of His own relations ? Because John was, so far as we can learn, in better worldly circumstances than they ; but more especially, we believe, because there was a very marked similarity between the experience of John the beloved disciple, and the highly favored Mary. He, who found a resting place in the Saviour's bosom, could sympathize more deeply and speak more soothingly to the weeping mother. Intercourse and fellowship with all christians is desirable, but more especially with those whose conversation and experience give us the greater strength and comfort in the christian life. But in thus providing for His mother outside the circle of her relatives, Jesus reminds us of higher life. We are reminded of a union which is far higher and far deeper than that formed by mere ties of flesh and blood. There is pointed out to us the union formed between christians by the life of God in them. Mere natural ties will be broken ; separation will take place ; but this higher life knows no separation. "So we being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another," (Rom. xii. 15). "For as the body is one and hath many

members so is Christ. But now are they many members yet but one body," (I Cor. xii. 12-20). And this manner of providing for His mother reminds us that it is Christ's will that His people should care for one another, and that they should help one another amidst the duties and trials of life. Those who are able and strong must help the poor and the weak in the family. Obadiah could say to Elijah ; "But I, thy servant, fear the Lord from my youth up ; was it not told my lord what I did when Jezebel slew the prophets of the Lord, how I hid an hundred men of the Lord's prophets in a cave, and fed them with bread, and water," (I Kings xviii. 12). "Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ," (Gal. vi. 2). As we are gathered round the Lord's table to-day let us feel that we belong to one family, to one flock, to one Lord. Let us love one another and encourage one another as those who hope forever to live together in the bliss of our Father's home. Let us feel that our God cares for us and provides for us and that, "no good thing will he withhold from those that walk uprightly."

II.—Consider that Christians take their stand by Christ crucified.—This is the place where all the people of God take their position. To them this is a place of sorrow. Who can conceive the bitterness felt by those mentioned in our text ! Think of the terrible pangs of Mary's heart as her eyes rested on the suffering Jesus ! A mother would unhesitatingly rush upon the levelled lances to relieve and clasp her suffering child ; but Mary, with bleeding heart, can only stand and gaze at her son dying a cruel, a cursed and a shameful death. She must not soothe Him. She may not embrace even His bleeding feet. There must be no alleviation whatever of His pains ; Jesus must suffer ; and Mary can only weep. O what tears of holy sorrow have been shed by the people of God at Calvary as they looked up and beheld Jesus their substitute dying in their stead. Yes, when they beheld him all torn and bleeding they could only say with David ; "Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned." What weeping when they felt that their sins nailed Him to the tree ; when they saw that those scars on His blessed body ; those wounds in His hands.

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and feet ; that frightful gash in His side and those awful agonies of soul, were all for them. O how they poured out their souls in penitent sorrow before heaven ! O may we know something of this sorrow to-day. Is it not our prayer that the Lord would fulfil to us the promise He gave long ago to the Church : " And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplications : and they shall look upon Him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Hin, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him as one that is in bitterness for his first born," (Zech. xii. 10).

The stand these took at Calvary was a profession of their attachment to Christ. The first great matter is decision for Christ. It is told of Rowland Hill that as he was once preaching in the open air to a large assembly, Lady Ann Erskine happened to come to the place. The eye of the preacher at once noticed that she belonged to royalty. He quietly ascertained who she was, and then went on with his sermon for some time. Suddenly he stopped and said : " My friends I have here something for sale." Every eye was startled at this strange intimation, but the preacher went on. " I am going to sell it by auction, and it is worth more than the crowns of all Europe ; it is the soul of Lady Ann Erskine. Will anyone bid for the soul ? Hark ! Methinks I hear a bid. Who bids ? Satan bids. What will you give ? I will give riches, honor, and pleasure ; yea, I will give the whole world for her soul. Hark ! I hear another bid for this soul. Who bids ? The Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus what will you give for this soul ? I will give peace and joy and comfort ; yea, I will give eternal life for her soul." Then turning to Lady Ann Erskine, the preacher said :— " You have heard the two bidders for your soul—which shall have it ? " At once she ordered the footman to open the door of her carriage, and pushing her way through the crowd she said : " The Lord Jesus Christ will have it if he will accept it." Following decision for Christ you see there is profession. " He," said Jesus, " that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me," (Math. viii. 37).

"Go home to thy friends and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee," (Mark v. 19). True Christians must profess Christ at all hazards. Luther took his stand against Europe saying; "Here I stand, I can do no other, God help me." The marching orders of heaven to all Christians are; "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee the crown of life."

But standing by the cross of Christ is a place of *strength*. You will notice that in the face of that frowning furious mob the individuals mentioned in our text "stood." Even Mary did not faint or fail. The people and the church of God through all the ages, found the cross of Calvary to be the safest standing place, as well as the greatest source of strength. Is it not so to us. Is not Jesus crucified not the great tower of our strength. In view of duty and trial; in view of opposition and persecution; amidst the clash of arms and the confusion of worlds, is not the cross of Calvary the foundation of our eternal strength. Whether preaching in the pulpit or teaching in the Sabbath School; ministering to the sick, or busy as artizans, husbandmen or mechanics; like Hannah making a coat for a prophet, or like Deborah rousing the courage of some despondent Barak, let us ever find our help at the cross. Here let us sing, "God is our refuge and our strength." "The Lord of Hosts is with us."

But here also is a place of great *love*. What an exhibition of Divine love is to be seen here! The greatest gift of the greatest love given up into the death. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." It is at the cross men see the great love of God streaming down to the hearts and lives of sinful men. Mary stood where her love was crucified. Let us stand here. O let us stand here to-day, beholding till the deepest love of our hearts will flow forth like mighty river to the crucified One. O that we were enabled to say from the very depths of our being: "we love Him because He first loved us." When the Scottish chiefs wanted an army, they sent the fiery cross through the land, and the men at the sight of it hastened from hill and dale to the standard. Dear fellow-sinners, we take our stand to-day

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by the cross of Christ ; a cross all aflame with suffering, with glory, with eternal life, with everlasting love, and we ask you, "What think ye of Christ ?" What think ye of the bleeding victim who died there that ye might enjoy eternal life ? To-day we invite you to the cleansing blood, to the grace and peace and love of Jesus. O will you not come ? Why refuse such a feast to your souls ? Why will you perish ?

Once more this is a place of *freedom*. It is here the chains of the prisoner are snapped asunder, and the slaves of sin and Satan forever set free. Their thralldom is here ended, and they become the freemen of the Lord,—the sons and daughters of the Almighty. The unattractive chrysalis develops into the beautiful butterfly, and the uncomely ragged eaglet in the mountain nest, will after a season mount majestically on the wing ; so christian friends, it is at Calvary's cross you will be enabled to "lay aside every weight," and to ascend on the wings of faith and hope to bask in the great light of the Sun of Eternal Righteousness. You will be enabled, free from the fetters of earth, to ascend and dwell on the mountains of the eternal mysteries of Emanuel's Kingdom. And what rapturous flights these are to the place where Jesus dwells, to the home of many mansions, the land of the blessed and the free !

Standing by the cross behold the nations gathering to the standard :—

" From Greenland's icy mountains,
From India's coral strand,
Where Afric's sunny fountains
Roll down their golden sand,"

they come to take their places. This is and has been the rallying point of patriarchs and prophets, of priests and apostles, of all the godly ministers, office-bearers and members of the Church of Christ in all the ages. Hear their song :—

" In the cross of Christ I glory,
Towering o'er the wrecks of time ;
All the light of sacred story.
Gathers round its head sublime."

" God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Christian friends, it is here you expect

to take your stand at death. When you come to the brink of the deep and dark river, and find your body like a broken craft passing away from you on the face of the waters, you will be enabled to say: "If this be called dying, 'tis pleasant to die." It is here we expect to meet at last. When the mountains shall be removed from their foundations, and the rocks crumble unto dust; when the ocean shall be swept out of existence; when the sun shall cease to give its light, and when the moon and stars shall be turned into blackness, even then we expect to meet and join hands around the glories and wonders of Calvary's cross. There we shall meet to part no more, and our one song shall be: "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood" But hush! And the heavens departed as a scroll when it is rolled together, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains and the mighty men, and every bondman and every freeman, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks fall on us, and hide as from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; For the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand." (Rev. vi, 14-17).

Dear fellow-sinners flee from destruction. Quicker than the birds on their autumnal flight, swifter than the shadows over the plain, swifter than the eagle to its prey, flee to Christ crucified. O that our preaching this day would be to you, not as a mere lullaby, but as a mighty battle cry from heaven.

May God bless us all for His Son's sake.—Amen.

THIRD SAYING ON THE CROSS.

The Thief and the Cross.—Luke xxiii. vs. 42, 43, 44.

In this chapter we have an account of one of the most wonderful events that ever came to pass on this earth; an event that was purposed in the past eternity—an event that was looked for in this world since the fall—an event that was accomplished in the fulness of time, and that will be remembered throughout the endless ages of the eternity that is to come; we mean the death of Christ.

In close connection with this death, we have in the words of our text, that which we may call one of the most triumphant acts of our Lord's earthly sojourn. For, just as the rays of the setting sun exceed in loveliness all its mid-day splendor, so in this dying act of our Lord's, His mercy and His grace, His love and His truth, His divinity and His humility, shine forth with the richest lustre.

In considering the passage before us, we shall, depending on the aid of the Holy Spirit, notice (1) The person who prayed to Christ; (2) The prayer he offered, and (3) The answer he got.

I. Then he who prayed. Who was he and what was he? We read that he was a thief; in other words, a highwayman, a robber, a breaker of the laws of God and of man; and here he is now on the verge of the world of spirits—God-condemned man-condemned and self-condemned. A "thief," a justly condemned thief; better than this could not be said of him now—nay, better than this he ventured not to think or say of himself. Harken to his words, "we indeed justly for we receive the due rewards of our deeds." Oh my brethren! what a position to occupy on the brink of eternity! When he looked to the past he saw nothing but his own evil deeds setting themselves in fearful array against him; and when he peers into the future into which he is soon to be launched, he sees nothing for him but the blackness of darkness forever.

and ever. If he receives such just punishment in this life at the hands of men, what can he expect in yonder world when the Judge of all the earth shall deal justly? How fearful a thing must it be to fall into the hands of the living God! But though this picture is so dark, so very dark; yet blessed be God, it has a bright side; for he who was nailed to yonder cross, a child of Satan, and an heir of eternal destruction, before his dead body was taken down to the earth, his soul was with Christ in paradise. O wonderful divine grace! a condemned sinner on the brink of eternity, in one day—yes, during the space of a few hours, justified, sanctified, and glorified. In one day in three kingdoms; we find him in the kingdom of nature, we see him a forgiven sinner in the kingdom of grace, and we leave him with Christ in the kingdom of glory. Ere the sun of that day did set behind yon western hills—he, that malefactor, saved by grace was with Jesus where the sun of eternity never sets. It is not revealed to us what means the Spirit of God used for bringing about this man's conversion, although there are several things to be noticed in this chapter that might be used as a means; for instance, the Spirit might use as an instrument for this end Christ's demeanour: He was mocked, He was smitten, He was spat upon, He was scourged and hardly dealt with in every conceivable way, yet He maintains through it all a divine calm; He is quiet and meek and gentle; "He openeth not His mouth."

Or the Spirit might employ Christ's words to the daughters of Jerusalem: "Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and your children." Who is this that can in the midst of such deep suffering forget Himself and manifest such care and sympathy for a few weeping women? And if He can manifest such for them, may he not be ready to extend to me, who is to suffer with Him, something of the same? But further, the Spirit might use as a means for this man's conversion the prayer Jesus offered up at Calvary: "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." The manner and the matter of the prayer were quite sufficient to impress the malefactor, and call forth his whole attention and his whole soul to that victim (Jesus) that was hanging by his side.

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"Father," nay more, "Father forgive them," yes "forgive them for they know not what they do." But whatever means the Spirit of God used, we are sure of this—that the malefactor in question underwent a great, and a gracious, and a glorious change.

In support of this let us adduce a few important considerations. First, this man was convinced of sin: "in the same condemnation;" said he, "and we indeed justly, for we receive the due rewards of our deeds." He had thought little about it, and it had concerned him not much: Ah ! but how different now ! He sees sin in its true light; he feels it to be that which has ruined his soul, his body, and his character, and which is now bringing him down to eternal destruction. With how many, brethren has this been the case ! They spent perhaps the whole of life without considering the evil of sin or the end to which it was bringing them ; it was but a trifling thing for them to sin ; but, alas ! when death came—when the closing moments of life came without the chief end of life attained, how fearful was it to face the grave, the judgment seat, and eternity ! Let us seek the convincing power of the spirit ; so that we, too, may be led, like this dying malefactor, to Him who has come to seek and save the lost.

Secondly, there is another consideration in support of the gracious change under which this man passed ; namely, his acknowledgment of the justice of his punishment. "We indeed justly ;" though racked in extreme pain—though exposed to the utmost shame—though bleeding at every pore, yet he thought it nothing but just, "We indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds." With the Psalmist he could say,

" Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned,
In Thy sight done this ill,
That when Thou speakest Thou may'st be just,
And clear in judging still."

Thirdly, notice this man's faith. The whole nation looked upon Christ as a traitor and deceiver, and hence, they put him to death. His own disciples and friends, filled with fear and apprehension, have forsaken their master, and are scattered abroad ; but this man believes in Jesus as the

Messiah that was to come—the Saviour of lost sinners. He believes in Christ as the God-man. When he speaks of Him he says, "this man," and when he prays to Him, he says "Lord;" true God and real man. He believes in Him also as the King—the King of Zion. "When," said he, "Thou comest to Thy Kingdom." He knew that Jesus had a kingdom beyond this world, beyond death and the grave. As sure was he of this as, although like Stephen, he had seen the heavens opened and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. Further, this malefactor believes in this dying Messiah, as the Saviour who was both able and willing to save to the very uttermost; the Saviour who was able and willing to save such a low, miserable, guilty, hell-deserving wretch as he was; able to save me—yes, willing to save me: and then he exclaims, "Lord remember me when Thou comest to Thy Kingdom." Remember me in such a way as that Thou wilt save me from the awful misery that is now staring me in the face, and in such a way as that I will find a place in Thy favour and in Thy Kingdom. It is sweet to die with Thee; but Lord how surpassing sweet would it be to live with Thee in Thy Kingdom. Here we see the fruits of true repentance; a man convinced of sin—acknowledging the justice of the punishment of sin—a man turning with sorrow and hatred from sin and casting himself on Jesus the Saviour.

Fourthly, another point that bears testimony to the gracious change through which this man passed, we find in the testimony he bears to Christ's innocence. "This man has done nothing amiss." Christ is now condemned as a traitor. Hell and earth are enraged against Him. The chief priests and the scribes, the pharisees and the soldiers mock Him; the great crowd cry out against Him; they wag the head saying, "if Thou be the King of the Jews save Thyself." Jesus Himself is quite silent; and who is there to speak one word in His behalf? John, the loved disciple, will not; Peter the brave warrior has laid down his arms and he too is silent. Who is there that will fearlessly lift up his voice in behalf of the Messiah's innocence? It is none else than that malefactor—that miserable wretch saved by grace—"this man has done nothing amiss." Against hell and earth; against chief priests

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and scribes, rulers and soldiers, and an enraged mob, the dying thief bears this definite, this decided, this glorious testimony. Such then, is the view that believing faith will always take of the dying Saviour. The Just One suffering for the unjust, the innocent for the guilty.

Again, fifthly, he reproves and rebukes sin. The other malefactor joins with the crowd in deriding Christ. He manifests levity of spirit, hardness of heart, and bitter enmity against Christ. But the penitent thief reproves him saying, "Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?" "And we indeed justly." Fain would he see him, with whom probably he sinned, was condemned, and with whom he was now dying, turn with him to the same and one Saviour of sinners.

"Reprove, rebuke, exhort," writes the Apostle, and so ought all Christians. Their religion ought to be practical ; their daily walk through life and their conversation ought to bear testimony against sin, as sure as it ought to bear testimony in behalf of Jesus Christ the Saviour.

But sixthly, and lastly, this man prayed. This was the token God Himself gave of Saul's conversion. He said unto Ananias, "Arise and go into the street which is called Straight and enquire in the house of Judas for one, Saul of Tarsus ; for behold he prayeth." As where natural life is, there is breath, so, where the spiritual life of God is in the soul, there is prayer. Prayer is the Christian's vital breath. Thus then, putting all these points together, along with Christ's answer to the prayer offered, we have the strongest and clearest evidence that this penitent thief passed from a state of sin to a state of grace and from a state of grace to a state of glory.

Now my friends, let me ask you, is your Christianity—is your profession of religion supported by such evidences as these? Do you hate sin? Do you cleave to Christ? Do you pray to Heaven?

II. In the second place notice the prayer offered by this penitent thief. It is, "Lord remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." This is a short but comprehensive prayer. It is a prayer without a single trace of doubt, from beginning to end. It is the prayer of faith and it is the

prayer of faith heard and answered. We notice in the first place that the prayer is not for any worldly blessing. Oh ! how wonderful that the man who had hitherto spent his life in hoarding the world together, at all hazards does not now offer even one petition for any earthly blessing. What is the world to him now ? What is the whole world to him ? For what shall it profit a man though he gain the whole world and lose his own soul ? Truly it is in the light of a dying hour—in the light of a judgment seat and of a coming eternity, that we can properly estimate the worth and value of all things temporal and earthly.

Observe in the second place, this man does not even pray to be delivered from the shame to which he was exposed or from the pain he was enduring. His bodily sufferings were no doubt great, but there is not a single word in his prayer concerning them ; and why ? just because the pain arising from a consciousness of guilt was far greater. The pangs of a guilty conscience far exceeded the pain of his tortured body. Its iron grasp in which he was held prisoner, its words of fire that pierced his soul to the very core, brought from his lips the prayer in our text. Ah ! what an awful thing must it be to go to meet death and eternity with a guilty conscience—the worm that will never die—that will never cease to give unutterable pain to its victims !

In the third place we notice the true modesty as well as the faith manifested in this prayer. All that he asks is a place in his Lord's memory. How different from the two who came with the request that one of them might sit on Christ's right hand and the other on His left hand in His kingdom ; for all that the poor malefactor asks is a place in the Lord's memory. "Remember me." He knew that it would be well with him if he got but a place in Christ's memory. If Jesus would but think of him it must fare well with him at last. Again he leaves his case wholly at the disposal of the sovereign will of his Lord. He does not say, Remember me now—remember me to-day ; no but, Remember me "when." He was willing to be forgotten in his sufferings, if he got the pledge of being remembered at the time, whenever that time came, that his Lord and Saviour came to His kingdom.

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In the fourth place, we see that all the hopes, the expectations and the desires manifested in this prayer are for eternity. The penitent one's desire is to have Christ's favour, and that he cannot have apart from the forgiveness of his sins. He prays that his Lord may think favourably of him so that it may be well with him. And you notice, when he got the pledge he sought, we do not read that he opened his mouth again on earth, and likely not till he opened it singing the new song of Moses and the Lamb—not on earth, but in heaven.

III. We will now consider the answer to this prayer. "And Jesus said unto him, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Here we have, first, a prompt and complete answer. There was a necessity for this, because eternity was close at hand and the penitent one required to have all his doubts and fears swept away, so that he might have peace, and rest in hope as to the future. Secondly, we have this answer conveying to the praying malefactor more than he asks. It undoubtedly conveyed to him forgiveness, peace and hope. Methinks I see Jesus turning to him and saying, Yes, thou art a sinner; a vile unworthy sinner; yet all thine iniquities I forgive, all my grace I bestow upon thee, and a place I promise thee "to-day," not only in my memory but in my kingdom. The malefactor does not specify any set time; he says "when" but Jesus answers and says "to-day;" not another sun will set, not another day will pass, till thou be with Me in paradise. To-day thou shalt pass from the cross of shame and suffering to yonder paradise of bliss and eternal joy. May we not pause here and ask where then is purgatory?

But again, the penitent one asks only a place in the Lord's memory. Here again Christ tells him that he will have more: "to-day shalt thou be with me," "with me," yes "with me in paradise." Oh what is this? Christ passing from yonder cross to the throne with a robber, saved by grace at His side. What is this? A dying malefactor passing from the shame and the pain of the cross to the joys and the glories of paradise; passing from praying to Christ on the cross to praising Him on the throne. He was with Jesus on the cross in shame and suffering, but ere the sun of that day did set he was with Jesus amidst the glories of the Father's house; and

how loud would he sing "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood!" "In paradise." Sufficient to say that this is the place where Jesus dwells, where the angels and the redeemed dwell together, where pure and satisfying rest remaineth for the people of God, and where unmixed joy and eternal bliss shall be given them as their portion. Oh! (says one) to be like the malefactor, saved by grace, and with him at last in the paradise above, adoring our one blessed Saviour and singing the songs of His love forever and ever! Friend, raise your cry to the Saviour and keep your eye upon Him and all shall be well.

Now we pass in conclusion to consider a few practical lessons this subject brings before us.

(1.) Notice here the free exercise of the sovereign grace of God. There are two malefactors, the one is taken and saved, the other is left. Again and again we are brought face to face with this doctrine in the Word of God. In Matthew we read: "Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken and the other left." This doctrine is indeed as solemn as it is true, but let us not forget in connection with it, to settle another question namely, which of the robbers was taken and saved, and which was left and lost? The penitent, praying one, was taken; the rejecting scorner was left. God is sovereign. He is also gracious; and as such, His words to every sinner are, "Turn ye, turn ye for why will ye die?" "Look unto Me and be ye saved." "Come unto me and I will give you rest." God lays the duty on our shoulders, and every time we endeavour to make light of it or to dispose of it, we but make stronger the chains that bind us to eternal damnation.

(2.) Learn from this subject that as a man may be very low in sin and yet be saved, so also, a man may be very near Christ and yet be lost. As the one malefactor went up to paradise, snatched from the very brink of hell, the other went down to destruction from the very side of the Saviour.

(3.) We see here that Christ is both able and willing to save to the uttermost. In the midst of His deepest distress, He heard yon penitent wretch cry; He heard and He saved. If he did so then, how much more will He do so now, being

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exalted to the right hand of God, a Prince and a Saviour. Now He is not on the cross, but on the throne; having all authority and power in heaven and in earth in His hands.

Oh fainting, trembling one, fear not! Behold He liveth! Seeking one—anxious one—why need you fear? He is the same Jesus, still full of pity and compassion, and whosoever cometh unto Him, He will in no wise cast out.

(4.) And lastly let us learn from this subject, not to delay the salvation of our souls to a dying hour. Many put this all-important matter aside for the present, and look forward to a sick bed and a dying hour, as a more convenient season. They will do as did the thief on the cross. But has God promised you a sick bed? How many of our fellow-creatures are daily hurried into eternity without a moment's warning? and what then of a sick bed repentance? And supposing you come to a sick bed; may not all your faculties be so paralyzed that you will be disabled to utter one cry or groan to heaven? And above all, remember that the thief on the cross is the only case you have in the Bible of a soul saved at the eleventh hour. And do you ask why have we this case? I answer that we have this instance to show that while there is life there is hope; but we have this instance only, to show us and to impress us with the truth that "behold now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation."

"And he said unto Jesus; Lord remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, verily I say unto thee, to-day thou shalt be with Me in paradise."

Dear fellow-sinners, you are invited to-day and now to be saved by Christ, and to get a full right to all the bliss of the paradise above.

Can you reject the offer? For why will you die saith the Lord.

Christian friend; soon it will be yours, like the malefactor, to leave the pain and the shame and the cross behind, and to pass up to be with your Lord in His kingdom. Hope on, and pray on; for it is only "a moment" and then you shall sing on forever and ever "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood; and hath made us kings and priests unto God His Father. To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen!"

FOURTH SAYING ON THE CROSS.

"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"—(Matt. xxvii. 46.)

Once again, this vast multitude in the good providence of God has gathered on this hill side to commemorate the death of the Saviour of sinners. To-day, in course, we have arrived at the fourth cry from the cross. This is one of the most mysterious passages of Holy Scripture, and it brings before us the most mysterious part of our Lord's suffering—a species of suffering that never was and never will be felt again. Let us endeavour, then, to approach the passage with solemn tread, and as we do so, may the Holy Spirit of God guide and bless us.

We will consider :—

- I.—The cry, in connection with the darkness ;
- II.—The cry itself, and
- III.—What lessons we may learn from this.

I.—*The cry, in connection with the darkness.*—We read that from the sixth to the ninth hour : "There was darkness over all the land." Jesus was nailed to the cross about nine o'clock of our time, and for three hours He suffered in broad daylight. But from twelve to three o'clock darkness covered the land. He was hid from human eyes. Now it was when the darkness was at its height and had begun to dispel that the Saviour uttered the words of our text. This was no ordinary darkness, and science cannot explain it. It could not have been an eclipse of the sun, for this takes place only at new moon ; but now, it was the full moon of the passover. The darkness was extraordinary and in keeping with what was taking place in the Saviour's experience—with that awful darkness which hovered round His Spirit. No wonder that nature put on her mourning garments and that the sun withdrew its light. Nature could not bear the light when the Lord and God of Nature was in darkness. Darkness

renders things mysterious and who can measure the mysterious depths of the sufferings of Calvary ? Who can come near to all that took place during those dread hours between the Father as judge and Jesus, the Son, as substitute. My friends, we can scarcely grasp anything of all that there is in this verse. O let our souls be in rapturous contemplation : Let us be filled with the eternal wonder presented to us in these words ! May God help us to grasp something and to find a resting place somewhere in these words.

II.—*The cry itself.*—It is *arrestive*. It calls the attention of the Father to the condition of the son, “ My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me.” There is surely an invitation here to angels, and especially to the sons of men to consider the Son of God in His sufferings. We are called upon to consider why Jesus was forsaken by God the Father. Why it was that His sufferings were so deep and terrible. O let us be arrested by these words to-day. Let us be drawn nearer to the suffering Saviour. Let it be ours to have a clearer and a deeper insight into the sufferings on Calvary. Let us pause to admire and wonder ; to be humbled and satisfied with the eternal wonder of our text. Let none in this vast congregation to-day pass heedlessly by this scene of Calvary. Let there be no recklessness of spirit in light of the sufferings of Jesus.

Again this cry expresses *confidence*. You will notice that in His first cry on the cross He uses “ Father ” for He had not then descended into the depths of His suffering. Again in His last words it was “ Father ” for the worst was then past ; but now, in the interval it is only, “ My God.” Down in the depths He uses a more distant term. Yet you will note the assured confidence ; for twice He claims Jehovah as His own. Dark and awful were the moments but clear and strong the trust. It is an expression of infinite confidence and repose in His Father’s will. Christian believers learn from this to have more trust in God. When you are surrounded by sorrow and darkness, and things appear to be all against you then—even then, “ Trust in the Lord and do good ; delight thyself also in the Lord ; . . . Commit thy way unto the

Lord . . . Trust also in Him. . . . Rest in the Lord." (Ps. xxxvii).

But here we find the Saviour's felt sense of *weakness*. The face of His strength is hid and a deep experience of weakness follows. Solemnly and beautifully have we this brought before us in the twenty-second Psalm. But I am a worm . . . I am poured out like water, . . . and all my bones are out of joint, my heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws." This weakness showed itself first in the garden, when we find the Saviour in such agony that; "His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground;" and where "there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven strengthening Him." Jesus went down to the depths of weakness that we might ascend to the fountain head of strength. He felt the human weakness in coming near to God as judge—in coming near to endure as the substitute of sinners. He needed divine help.

This cry also tells us of the *extreme pain* endured by Jesus. It was the pain of sorrow. "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow." He pours His grief stricken soul out in words. What sorrow, indeed, this must have been arising as it did, from feeling the mystery of sin bearing, and from knowing the offence which the Father had received from the sins for which He was suffering! He alone knew the full extent of that offence; and who can imagine the pain that this knowledge brought to the Saviour? Add to this the fact that He knew how the father as judge had to deal with Him as the substitute. My friends, can we remain unmoved, untouched under the light of these solemn realities? O that all this would beget in us a passion and a sorrow which can only be taken away when we are delivered by the grace of God from that which caused such pain, and such sorrow to the man Christ Jesus. All Christ's human nature was in pain. All the faculties of His soul and body cried out in the deepest sorrow after the light of the Father's countenance. And who can conceive of the pain arising from the withdrawal of a

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countenance never before hid, and from the suspense before an answer came! Does the daughter of Zion say; "The Lord hath forsaken me, and my God hath forgotten me."? Are there any with us to-day whose pain this is? "Fret not thyself, wait patiently for the Lord." Hear His words to thee: "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea they may forget, yet will I not forget thee." (Isa. xlix. 15).

But this was indeed the pain of death. Separation from God is death; and Jesus has now come to the climax of what He began to feel in Gethsemane, when He said; "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death." What my brethren must it be to be separated from God forever! Who here to-day is willing to meet the unending woe? Fellow sinners all the pains of eternal death are ahead and you are hurrying along to this awful doom. Will you not to-day turn to the Lord ere you plunge into everlasting destruction? "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain lest thou be consumed." (Gen. xix. 17.).

This cry of grief tells us what Christ's bitterest sufferings were. The agony arising from the scourging, the blasphemies of men, and the cruel nailing to the cross must have been unspeakably terrible; and yet, all these were as nothing in comparison with the anguish He endured when the light of the Father's countenance was withdrawn. During those dreary hours of darkness it was this which constituted the greatest sufferings of the Saviour. Who of us can lightly pass by this awful wonder of Calvary? O to what heights and depths of infinite wonders and mysteries do these words lead us! Let us dwell on the words by which Jesus presents to us the sum of all He endured for His people. "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

But in this cry we have a cry of Victory: and it is the victory of innocence. Jesus was consciously innocent. The Great Judge found nothing in Him worthy of such dealing and yet, it "pleased" the Father "thus to bruise Him"—"to put Him to grief." But is there not here a holy demand that

He should know all the cause of His suffering to the utmost ? And is there not in this cry, after all, a triumphant willingness arising from conscious ability, to endure all till the cause of desertion on His Father's part be forever removed ? " My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me ? " Paul, I think, gives us an answer. For He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Cor. v. 21).

Christians under chastisement may know, or may not know, why the Lord is dealing so with them ; but, in either case, let them learn under the shadow of the cross, in the strength of grace, to willingly submit to the Lord's dealing. Let the bitter cry be at the same time a willing and hearty submission. O what peace and happiness are to be found in such a state of mind under such circumstances ! Never surrender your trust in God. The point at which Satan chiefly aims is your trust in and love toward Christ. Yield these and all else goes. But O ! never surrender. Look at Job, under all he could say : " Blessed be the name of the Lord." Although his body was diseased, his tongue remained pure. Although his bitter cry was : " O that I knew where I might find Him," he could proclaim ; " for I know that my Redeemer liveth."

" Why art thou cast down my soul ?
 What should discourage thee ?
 And why with vexing thoughts art thou
 Disquieted in me ?
 Still trust in God ! for Him to praise
 Good cause I yet shall have ;
 He of my countenance is the health,
 My God that doth me save. (Ps. xlvi. 5.).

III. What lessons may we learn from this ?—We are directed to the nature of Christ's deepest sufferings. Of all He endured there was nothing equal to His being forsaken by His Father. But in considering this, we must never begin to think that there was any weakening of the union between the Divine and the human nature, or that the Father's love was in any measure withdrawn from the son ; but we must endeavour to realize that it was the man-Christ, the substitute, who was forsaken by Jehovah the Father as judge. But

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what does this forsaking mean ? Who can tell ? But does it not imply that God, as judge, had handed Christ over into the hands of all His enemies, that He was at their disposal, that He withdrew from Jesus' experience a sense of His pleasure in Him, and that He poured out on Him all the vials of His wrath against a sinful world ; so that, while there was a total eclipse of the Father's countenance, Jesus felt nothing but wrath ? " Being made a curse for us ; for it is written cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." (Gal. iii. 13). " For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Cor. v. 21). " Awake O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow ; smite the shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered." (Zech. xiii. 7). Jesus thus felt the bitterness of all that His people should endure throughout the endless ages of eternity. But we cannot approach to think of ever grasping anything of the infinite extent of what Jesus endured under the hiding of the Father's face. Who can conceive what these words mean : " being made a curse for us."—" for He hath made Him to be sin for us."—" Smite the shepherd." O that the Lord would deeply solemnize us to-day in the presence of such awful truths ! One writes :— " His Father was with Him in the midst of the darkness as much as during the Transfiguration ; but the gathering clouds and gloom of these last awful hours made it seem, for an instant, as if His face were hidden. The shadows of death passed for a moment in blackness and horror over His spirit, and His mental anguish relieved itself by a great cry of distress. The language we have heard from our mother's lips may be laid aside in after years for another : and Jesus, doubtless, in these last years, had often had to use the Greek of city communities instead of His own simple Galilæan. But now, the sounds of infancy always nearest the heart, and sure to come to our lips in our deepest emotions, returned in His anguish ; and in words which He had learned at His mothers knee His heart uttered its last wail : ' Eloi ! Eloi ! lama sabachthani ? '

In light of this solemn truth we can learn something of the effect and nature of sin. There is no place like Calvary

to enlighten us on this and there is nothing like contemplating the sufferings of Christ to deepen our hatred against all sin. Sin separates from God. It has fixed a great gulf between sinful man and a holy God. Jesus felt the bitterness of this separation ; but nothing less would do to bring God and man together. Jehovah saw no sin in the humanity of His son—no guilt lay on the conscience of Jesus ; and yet, the Father could not spare Him. The Saviour had to suffer to the uttermost. O people of God, in light of this scene of Calvary what shamefacedness and broken-heartedness ought to be ours this day ! How low ought we to prostrate ourselves in the dust before the cross ! What desires for holiness ought to arise to heaven from our hearts ! I doubt not but some of you are crying with Paul : "O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?" (Rom. vii. 24). You are longing for complete holiness ; well, this will come, this joyful time shall yet be yours for ; "when He shall appear, we shall be like Him ; for we shall see Him as He is," (1 John iii. 2.).

Many of you, on the other hand, are to-day living in sin. You are under the reign and rule of sin ; you love sin and hate Christ. What is to become of you ? How will you meet the anger of Almighty God ? How can you stand as guilty criminals at the bar of God, after refusing and despising Jesus Christ ? O to be lost ! O to go down to the endless woe of an undone eternity ! Are you prepared for this ? Turn to the Lord ; cry mightily to the living God ere it be too late, and you be caught in the gloom of eternal despair and in the flames of everlasting wrath.

But further, does not the light of Divine love burst upon us here ? God's love towards us was the prime cause for all this. And what a revelation and pledge of Divine love towards sinners do we here find before us ! "He that spared not *His own Son*." God's love moved Him to give "*His only begotten Son*." We must think of the Father's love to sinners in giving, as well as in bruising His Beloved. The Father gave Him who was equal with Himself. He saw in Him His

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own infinite Being. He was "His own Son," His "only begotten Son;" and co-eternal with Himself. We must consider what the Father was to the Son, and what the Son was to the Father, if we are ever to grasp anything of the Divine love towards sinners, as manifested in the sufferings of Jesus. O what infinite love ! O that we could say with Jeremiah : "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love ; therefore, with loving kindness have I drawn thee," (Jer. xxxi, 3). And surely there is none in this vast assembly to-day, but will join in the psalmist's prayer :—

" Remember me Lord with that love,
Which Thou to Thine dost bear."—(Ps. cxi, 4).

Again, we learn from this what the true resting place of humanity is. Jesus in this cry uses the Syriac word for God, "Eloi." Now "El" means strength ; so that the cry really was, "My Strength," "My Strength." The human nature of Jesus clings to the God-Head. There only it finds rest. Behold here, then, Christ opening up a way for, and taking possession of God-Head for His Redeemed. There is no safety, no resting-place for man but in God. "Your life is hid with Christ in God." Nothing on this side of God will satisfy the believing soul. O to dwell this day in the life, the rest and the sweet calm that is here, and to be able from our own experience to sing with the church : "For this God is our God forever and ever. He will be our guide even unto death," (Ps. xlvi, 14).

Dear people of God, there is enough for you here. In view of the wilderness journey with all its difficulties ; in view of all your sins and enemies, there is eternal rest and peace for you in God. Come then and hide deep in this eternal rock. It is only a moment, "and there shall be no more curse ; but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it ; and His servants shall serve Him, and they shall see His face ; and His name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there for the Lord God giveth them light ; and they shall reign forever and ever," (Rev. xxii, 3).

But are there any here to-day who prefer to take sides with the mockers of Calvary ? Are you prepared to reject Christ again, and mockingly to turn your back on your soul's eternal interests ? You may ; alas you may ! But hearken. Thus saith the Lord : "Behold I have called and ye refused I also will laugh at your calamity : I will mock when your fear cometh," (Prov. i, 24). O may it be yours to decide for Jesus Christ this very day ! May the heavens and the earth rejoice over you as a penitent soul at Jesus' feet ! May your voice be heard with others of old saying :—" Father I have sinned against heaven and before thee." " We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you." (Zach. viii, 23). Amen.

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FIFTH SAYING ON THE CROSS.

“ *I thirst.*”—John xix, 28.

THIS is the shortest of the seven sacred cries. In the original it is one word—Διψα, yet it has its place as one of the sacred sayings of Calvary. It must have its own solemn importance; it must have something to teach us concerning the suffering Saviour. As we stand and listen at the cross, this word faintly uttered, falls upon our ears. We will notice :—

I. *Why it was uttered by His blessed lips.*—Was it simply to express the fact that He was thirsty; that He desired something to quench this excruciating pain? We answer, No. No doubt it expressed this; but it meant far more. Let us read the verse :—“ After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, (all things except this one), that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saith ‘ I thirst.’ ” The special prophetic passages requiring fulfilment we have in Psalms xxii and xl ix : “ My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws.” “ They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.”

I wish to call your attention to two facts: First, that Jesus *knew* all that was done, and all that remained to be done. And, secondly, *His care* with regard to holy scripture.

It has become fashionable now-a-days in some quarters, to talk in a most flippant manner about the Word of God. It was not so with our Lord. He never did; His great care was to honor all Scripture. You will excuse a slight digression. There are not a few now-a-days, who will tell you of difficulties they have with regard to their full acceptance of Scripture; and more especially with regard to their full acceptance of the Old Testament. But at the same time they say that they find these difficulties are merely on the surface of the sacred record. It is the *form*, not the *substance*, that they quarrel with. We pray you do not be misled by such plausible statements. The question is, What does the Divine Master say on the subject? Has He anything to say? Hear His words :—“ Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or

one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled," (Matt. v, 17, 18). What does Christ mean? Does He mean the substance or the law, or both? We answer, He means, both. The "jot" is the smallest of all the letters in the Hebrew alphabet. The "tittle" is one of those little strokes by which some of the letters are distinguished from others like them. Now surely this means the form as well as the substance. But let us take one example: "Turn to Levit. xviii, 21, and you find the words: "Thou shalt not *profane* the name of thy God." Now you could change this verse to read: "Thou shalt not *praise* the name of thy God," by simply leaving a small aperture in the first radical (\aleph) of the verb. A *small* opening it is true, a very slight change in the form, but you see it changes the whole substance. Surely then, my brethren, we must regard Christ's language as asserting the integrity and genuineness of the form, as well as of the substance; the necessity of the form to the preservation of the substance. "After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, "I thirst." One word, one action,—yes, but heaven and earth would sooner pass than that these should remain unfulfilled. Let us not trifle with the eternal rock of Scripture. "The words of the Lord are pure words; as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times," (Ps. xii, 6).

II. *This simple statement proclaims in unmistakeable language the reality of Christ's humanity.*—In John's day, there arose men who went grievously astray on this very point. Whilst they held that Jesus was God,—"the same yesterday, to-day and forever"—they also maintained that it was out of the question to think that the great God came in the flesh. They said, that Christ had no real human nature; that He was man in appearance only; that what was thought a body was only an optical illusion. But only that which comes in the flesh can thirst. John had therefore these men before his mind's eye; and if you turn to his first Epistle iv. 3., you will find these words: "And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God." From the cross Jesus proclaims His humanity in the words of our text. He tells us that the first promise given in Eden is being fulfilled to the utmost. "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise its heel." (Gen. iii. 15). Again and again Jesus proclaims Himself as the Son of Man. He seemed to have taken a peculiar delight in the fact; and as the Son of Man He speaks of Himself as

all be fulfilled? Does He answer, He writes letters in those little spaces left from the margin as well as from the body of the page? "Turn to me and thou shalt not change this name of thy God,"—radical (N) of all change in language. Surely language as well as form, as well as the preserving of all that we might be, are, yes, but these should be the eternal rock of words; as even times,"

amistakeable John's day, in this very—"the same maintained that at God came man nature; was thought that which were these men at Epistle iv. it that conslish is not of vanity in the nise given in I put enmity seed and her use his heel." Hisself as peculiar delight of Himself as

taking the place of His people. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down His life for his friends. Ye are my friends" . . . (John xv. 15.) It was only by becoming incarnate that He could become surety. Only in human nature could all be done that was required in order to man's salvation. "In all things it behoved Him to be like unto His brethren that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." Brethren, if we should to-day glance back over the centuries many mighty names would claim our reverence and gratitude; and we like to commune with the spirits of the illustrious dead. But what a claim is between us and the best of them! Here, however, is the Man—the Brother—bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh—and we stretch our hands over the silent centuries and we touch the warm throbbing heart of Jesus—the brother born for Adversity. But, the Man Christ, who hung on the cross in shame and suffering is now glorified on the throne. And is it not sweet and precious to know that He who felt all that man can feel, "bends on earth a brother's eye."

III. These words further indicate Christ's extreme suffering.—You will notice that these are the only words spoken from the cross that speak to us of Christ's physical sufferings. This is remarkable. Let us remember that the Saviour's bodily sufferings were in no way to be compared to those of His soul. It was the sufferings of His soul that formed the very heart of His sufferings. It was these that brought forth the bloody sweat in the garden, (blood which is more strange, in a sense, than that of Calvary, it having flowed from a body as yet untouched by the cruel hands of man). It was the mental struggle that brought the awful cry from the Saviour's lips; "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" In fact, it was the inward, the unseen sufferings which brought about the physical cause—the rupture of the heart—of Christ's death. And it was just when the worst of these were past, when the light was returning after the awful darkness that He uttered the only words which tell us of His bodily sufferings. The body of man suffered as well as the soul and, therefore, it must suffer in the person of the substitute. And what were these sufferings? O how deep and terrible! Just think of it:—Water everywhere and yet the Lord of Glory, the Jesus who walked on the sea and calmed the raging waves the Lord "who sits on the floods" exclaiming, "I thirst." This expression, methinks, brings before us suffering in its extreme sense, in its full measure. Thirst is the very fury of pain. No one

craving has so fierce a sting or so imperious an urgency. The rich man in the place of woe expressed the sum of his sufferings when he cried for water: "Father Abraham have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame." (Luke xvi. 24). "With Jesus," says John Stevenson, "inflammation must have commenced early and violently in the wounded parts, this being quickly imparted to those that were strained and hence tormented in a high degree of feverish burning over the whole body. The animal juices would be thus dried up, and the watery particles of the blood absorbed. The skin parched by the scorching sun-light till mid-day would be unable to supply or imbibe any moisture. The loss of blood at the hands and feet would hasten the desiccation. Hence our Lord says; 'My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws.' The fever would devour the small remaining strength; and thirst, that most intolerable of all privations must have been overpowering." Jesus was "poured out like water." His whole being was poured out in sacrifice. The substance of His body went forth from it, so that He found Himself like an earthen vessel, dried in the fire till every particle of moisture departs. His very heart was like wax melted in the heat. O my brethren how do we feel to-day in light of all the pain and anguish exhibited to us by our text? Come near and, "behold the man." Behold Him in the wine press of Jehovah's wrath! Behold Him all crushed and bruised! O how overwhelming is this sight!

Friend, you put the crown of thorns on His head; the nails into His hands and your sins helped to crush down to the "dust of death" the person of Jesus until He exclaimed; "I thirst." You did all this and yet He loved you, and loves you still. He loved you with love everlasting and unchangeable. He loved you and yet it is yours to confess, "we esteemed him not." You cared not for His blood or His cross; for His love or His crown. But to-day you would fain cherish the hope that it is otherwise. You would fain be like Mary at His blessed feet pondering well His person and drinking deep of His love; or like Thomas with your finger stretched forth to His hands and your hand thrust into His side exclaiming; "My Lord and my God."

We cannot fail to learn from this the total corruption of man. As we look at the torn and lacerated body of the Redeemer we learn how terribly sin has ruined us. How awfully deep it has penetrated into the constitution; how it

has permeated and mutilated the whole being so that in man by nature there is nothing good, O how low we ought to lie this day before the Lord exclaiming with his people of old; "Behold we are before Thee in our trespasses." (Ez. ix. 15). Nor can we fail to learn from this the complete change through which man must pass ere he can be admitted into fellowship with God. Truly, he "must be born again"; he, "must become a new creature in Christ Jesus." When we attain to perfection how wonderful and how glorious will the change be! And as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." (1 Cor. xv. 49). "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality," (I Cor. xv. 53). The hope of the Church is in Him, "who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body," (Phil. iii, 21).

IV. What may these words teach further? With regard to Jesus Himself may they not suggest that He was able and willing to endure all. The worst of His sufferings were now over, but nevertheless, He is not exhausted; He is able to go on. "I thirst." If there was more wrath against the Church, He thirsted to drink it all; if there was anything more to accomplish, 'ie thirsted to finish it. "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it," (John xviii, 11).

But may not these words indicate to us a longing on Christ's part for the moment when He would present Himself to the Father? In the great intercessory prayer, we hear Him speaking in this way: "O Father the hour is come, glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee." "And now, O Father glorify Thou Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." With His eye on the Divine glory, and with His mind and will in perfect harmony with the Divine will, He longs for the moment when He could say, "It is finished"; for the time when His Spirit would ascend before the eternal throne of His Father, as proof of His death, and carrying there all the merit of His atoning sacrifice. "I thirst." Did He not with eager expectation look for the calm of eternity; the sunshine of His Father's face; the place that is at the right hand of God and the glory of the heavenly throne? You remember in another place, that He told His disciples: "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished," (Luke xii, 50).

Again, our text suggests to us Christ's longing for sinners. To the sinful woman of Samaria, He said: "Give me to drink," (John iv, 7). And, "in the last day, that great day

of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, if any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink," (John vii, 37). Now when He uttered these words at Calvary, we read : " And they filled a sponge with vinegar . . . and put it to His mouth." Or, as it is in Matthew : " And straightway one of them ran and took a sponge and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed and gave Him to drink." " The rest said, let be " . . . (Matt. xxvii, 48, 49) The first drink offered Christ at Calvary was myrrh, prepared by the women of Jerusalem in order to stupefy. Of this Jesus would not take. The second drink was offered by the soldiers at the hour of their mid-day meal. It was wine and it was offered in mockery. They had already crowned Him and put the kingly sceptre into His hand, and now they offer as it were the royal cup. But Jesus would have none of it. Now of this third drink offered in response to His cry we read : " When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, He said, 'It is finished.' " We do not know by whom this drink was given, but does it not look to us like the response of true penitence ? Jesus longs for the salvation of sinners. Hear His words to you to-day : " Look unto Me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth," (Isaiah xlvi, 22). If " any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink." Who of you will respond to-day ? What are your excuses for not coming to Jesus ? Some time ago I read of an artist who desired to paint a picture of the prodigal son. He searched prisons and mad-houses to find one wretched looking enough to represent him, but failed. One day he suddenly met a wretched beggar on the street whom he thought would do. He told the miserable creature to go to his studio for his portrait on a certain day, and promised to pay him well if he would come. The hour arrived and a man presented himself. He said to the artist ! " Sir, you made an appointment with me." The artist looked at him and replied : " I never saw you before ; I made no appointment with you." " Yes," answered the man, " I agreed to come here to-day at ten o'clock." " Surely you must be mistaken," replied the artist, " it must have been some other painter, for I was only to meet a beggar here at that hour." " Well, I am he," replied the stranger, " but I thought I would dress myself somewhat before coming." " Then," said the artist, " I do not want you ; I wanted you to come *as you were* ; now you are no good to me." And dear brethren, it is just as you are that Jesus invites you to come to Himself ; just as you are with all your crimes and guilt, with all your pollution and unworthiness. Remember, He will have you in no other way. " Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord ;

though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool," (Isa. i, 18).

Again, and lastly, may not our text suggest to us Christ's wish with regard to the home bringing of all His people? In John xviii, 24, we read: "Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory which Thou hast given Me; for thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world." This, Christian friends, is the consummation Jesus looks for and longs for; an' into this desire—this, "I thirst"—He throws His divine energy. O what comfort is here then for all believers! Jesus longs to have you, His blood-bought ones, with Himself on high. And the time will not be long. You may have some nights, and you may have to face some storms; there may be some difficulties and weariness yet ahead, but it is only a little—just "a moment." The mists will soon roll away, the storms will very soon be over, and then you will be with Jesus in the eternal home. From this vast assembly, from this green hill side, look up to the glorious mansions prepared for you. Be encouraged, your "redemption draweth nigh," (Luke xxi, 28). And now, my brethren, as we surround this table of our Lord, some of us likely for the last time, we beseech you to come near to the bleeding Jesus. Come near with your sins and fears. Come with your weakness and sorrows. Come near to His person, His fulness, His love. Come to His feast. Come, He thirsts for you, for your love, your fellowship, your confidence, your praise. Eat, O friends, drink, yea drink abundantly, O beloved. O may this be a day of days, a day of heaven to our souls!

Like as the hart for water brooks
In thirst doth pant and Bray;
So pants my longing soul, O God,
That come to Thee I may.—(Ps. xlvi, 1).

AMEN.

SIXTH SAYING ON THE CROSS.

It is finished.—John xix. 30.

THESE words were uttered in a loud voice. Matthew tells us that : "Jesus, when He had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost." (Matt. xxvii. 50). And it is evident that the words uttered by our Saviour when "He cried" were those of our text. The awful battle is over; the mists and confusion, the bitterness and strife have cleared from the scene, and the mighty conqueror proclaims the result to the worlds. In the days of His prime and strength He walked on the sea and raised the dead ; He healed the sick and cast out devils but it was reserved for the time of His weakness, when He hung on the borders of dissolution to accomplish the great work of redemption. This is the cry of the triumphant Saviour ; His farewell to the battle field and the pledge of secured redemption. At once these words fix our attention on the death of the Saviour, and the work He accomplished. May God the Holy Spirit help us to approach the subject. It is indeed far beyond our reach, but may we not hope that even at a far off distance a blessing may come to us.

We would like to consider these words to-day ;

- I. In their relation to Christ ;
- II. In their relation to The Father ;
- III. In their relation to the Spirit ;
- IV. In their relation to Christians, and
- V. In their relation to the World.

I. *Consider them in their relation to Christ.*—His life is finished. He lived in this world about thirty-three years and a half, and now it is all over. The life of the Man Christ is forever beyond comparison. It has no parallel. It was originated by the power of the Holy Ghost. It was lived, "not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God;" and in the end it was handed over in sacrifice to the Father. It is common to review the lives of the great ones of the earth ; but what tongue or pen can give anything approaching a description of the life of Jesus. Let us pause this morning and dwell in thought on the life which Jesus, in our nature, finished on Calvary. "The word was made flesh and dwelt among us." Think of that, humanity.

which was united to Divinity in the person of the Son of God, passing through all the various changes and phases of life. He took our nature upon Him and was "born." He was born a child ; and appeared in all the feebleness of humanity. His intellectual and physical development were gradual,—"He grew in wisdom and in stature." But His wisdom was perfect at each stage ; so also was His body. He lived every moment in perfect harmony with His Father's will. His life was the light of the world, exhibiting the grace, love and glory of the God-head, and all the graces that adorn humanity bearing the image of God. He adorned humanity and shed an everlasting lustre of honour on all the various duties of life. He consecrated infancy, manhood, poverty, bereavement and suffering. His life overflowed with good works, miracles, instruction, love and compassion. But we must not think of Christ as living thus for Himself. No. He was thus but giving His life away at every stage to His Father, for His people. Yet we must always think of this life as under the complete control of Christ. "Therefore," He tells us, "doth my Father love Me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself, I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again." (John x. 17, 18). And, brethren, as we glance along the days and years which Jesus spent in this world, how perfectly lovely and ineffably glorious does He appear. Truly we must exclaim ; "Thou art fairer than the children of men." But now, behold this life is finished. The great life has accomplished its great ends. The monuments raised shall endure forever. The wonders revealed shall be the eternal admiration of the ages. The foot prints this life left on the sands of time shall be the guiding marks of the church to the end. The life is finished indeed ; but what a harvest ! "Verily ! verily ! I say unto you, except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone ; but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit." (John xii. 24). Well may we examine our lives, and the lives of our fellow-men, in the light of the life of the Man of Nazareth. How have we been spending the days and years of our sojourn in this wilderness ? To us the end will soon come, but what of the harvest ? A great German poet, long the pride of his country, was engaged on his last work. But death stopped him ere he had finished. The unfinished manuscript was placed in his coffin and buried with him in the grave. We have read of a certain queen of fashion who died exclaiming ; "O, my God, is it over ? I have come to the end of it ! the end !! the end !!! To have

only one life—and to have done with it—to lie here!" Our lives here are at best but broken fragments—unfinished pictures. But the end will come, and the question that ought to press itself home to us is; shall our lives be simply ended, or will they be finished? Shall we attain to the great object of life or shall we be swept away as lost, broken wrecks into the darkness of an undone eternity?

Christ knew that types, promises and prophecy were fulfilled,—were finished. "After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saith 'I thirst.' And having received the vinegar, he said it is finished." The law indeed had a shadow of good things to come, behold now the sum and substance! All that priest, sacrifice and altar meant was now finished. That to which the ceremonial law pointed was now fully come. "When," says Dr. Bonar, "Our Lord on the cross saw the sponge held up to Him on a stalk of hyssop, or like the scarlet wool, perhaps, along with the hyssop branch, it would call to mind the shadows and ceremonies of the law. His eye was on the shadow when He cried, 'it is finished.' All promises and prophecies are sure in every particular. These truths concerning the Messiah, that formed as it were the life blood of the Church through the ages, have now received their full meaning. The quick succession in which these were fulfilled during the last twenty-four hours, is worthy of our especial notice. Some of them apparently very insignificant—a look—a word—a drop of vinegar,—and yet they were fulfilled to the very letter. Fulfilled; for it had been written: 'Verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled.' (Matt. v, 7).

Christ we may say finished His obedience to God. But why was such obedience required? Because by disobedience man had lost his right to life. "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous," (Rom. v, 19). In order to secure eternal life, perfect obedience of infinite merit must be rendered to God's law. Jesus alone could do this; and this He did. The Lord, the Great Lawgiver obeyed. What a truth of infinite wonder! And the fulfilment of the law was in no wise inconsistent with His greatness, for in sovereignty He is absolute. O let us discover His sovereignty in thus humbling Himself. If we draw near to the Saviour in His soul struggle in Gethsemane's garden, we will discover the perfect surrender of perfect obedience to His Father's

will. "Father if Thou be willing, remove this cup from me; Nevertheless, not My will but Thine be done," (Luke xxii, 42). And this obedience was unto death, for having bowed His head, He surrendered His spirit into His Father's hand. "It is finished." Who of you to-day will lay hold of this eternal life secured by Christ's obedience? to enjoy the blessedness of being no longer under the law as a covenant of works; but having it as our rule of life and be enabled to say: "O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day," (Ps. cxix, 97).

Christ's sufferings are finished. But why did He suffer? He suffered to pay the penalty of the broken law, and to render perfect satisfaction to Divine justice. Man was exposed to the curse, but Christ endured it for him to the very utmost. All His life the curse was taking effect on Him. And as the surety, He occupied such a relation to God on the one hand and to man on the other, that the most intense sufferings could not be avoided. His eternal Godhead was no defence against such suffering, it rather made it possible that He could suffer as none other could; and the perfect holiness of His body made Him more keenly sensitive to all that was endured. Dear brethren, let us think of the curse that rested upon Him. Let us think of all He suffered from men. All that He saw of sin in the world brought Him the utmost pain and agony of soul; and all the pain that he endured from the malice and bitter enmity of men until He was nailed to the cross, penetrated to the very depths of His holy being. He was assaulted by the powers of darkness. From the beginning to the end they assailed Him. The very nearness of such hosts gave agony to the "Man of Sorrows"; and how can we conceive of the agony of soul caused Him by actual conflict with these powers? Towards the end we hear Him say: "But this is your hour and the power of darkness," (Luke xxii, 53). "For the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me," (John xiv, 30). All the wrath, and furious malice, and all the enmity that the powers of hell could command, confronted Christ at Calvary. Above all this, He suffered the wrath of God. Think of it. Christ endured to the utmost all the wrath that was in God against a sinful world. There was nothing arising out of all that He was as the eternal God that could interpose between Him and the penalty due; neither could the love arising out of the eternal relation of sonship, in any way interpose to modify the sentence. Nothing did interpose between His perfect consciousness and the full outpouring of all the Divine wrath.

upon Him. "It is finished." All sufferings are now ended ; and this finishing of the Saviour's sufferings is the security we have that there is no wrath in God against those who believe in Jesus. He endured it all.

In a word, Christ's work is finished. "Mercy and truth are met together ; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." (Ps. lxxxv. 10). All the conditions of the covenant of grace are fulfilled and all its blessings are secured. Atonement is made for sin ; and reconciliation is effected between God and sinful man. "It is finished" means not only ended but fulfilled, accomplished. Hitherto Christ had a terrible sense of weakness and of wrath. In Gethsemane His cry was ; "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death." (Matt. xxvi. 38) ; and a little ago it was : "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me ?" But now it is done ; the day breaks ; the smoke of battle clears away ; He soars up from the depths, and in the light of the great Sun of Eternity exclaims, "It is finished." Oh how these words thundered through the abode of the lost ! And when they were heard, what a thrill of unspeakable joy passed through the unnumbered myriads of angels and redeemed souls ! The proclamation was caught up by the church militant, and ever since, it has been sounded down through the ages scattering life and joy, peace and happiness among the children of men.

II. *Consider these words in their relation to the Father.* "It is finished."—Brethren, let us think, if we can, of the Father's eye resting on the Son at this moment. In connection with each act of His obedience and each pang of His sufferings the Father beheld the infinite dignity of the sufferer, the surety. He saw with infinite delight the perfect obedience, and the suffering of infinite merit "finished." His eye, as judge, saw in the light of His own glory, and in the light of all the infinite love He had to Himself, the work which the son undertook from all eternity finished. But O ! with what ineffable delight did He see in the obedience and death of the Saviour the brightest exhibition of the Divine attributes and the clearest manifestation of the Father's heart love to sinners ? "It is finished." "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son." And now the Father sees the channel opened for the forth going of all His favour to His chosen. "I have laid help upon One that is mighty." May God help us to contemplate this wondrous truth. "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him freely give us all

things." He with-held not His Son, surely then He will withhold no good thing from them that are His. What a pledge of Divine love in all its fulness and unchangeableness, and what a security for the supply of all the wants of a redeemed world.

III. Consider these words in their relation to the Holy Ghost—Many are, with regard to the Spirit, very much like the men at Ephesus who said to Paul; "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." The eminent and godly Dr. Andrew Bonar says of himself: "At the time when first I was enabled to say 'Christ is mine' I recollect I had some mistaken ideas about the Holy Ghost. I had a secret feeling that I could not count so much upon His kindness as upon the Father's kindness or the Son's." Now, my brethren, our text to-day should direct our minds to the work of the Spirit. It points us back to His work through the ages. Christ's work actually began when He was born into this world, but the Spirit was carrying on His gracious work from the beginning all down through the ages. Since the time when, "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" He dwelt with the children of men. The greatest work of the Spirit was the humanity in which the work of redemption was finished; but let us not forget that the Spirit's work from first to last in connection with the finished work of Calvary, and that the clearest and fullest revelation of His personality and work was given after Jesus said: "It is finished." Christ's work provides the materials for salvation, and the Spirit's work is to apply savingly this provision to the souls of men. This was indicated to the disciples by Jesus when He said; "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away the comforter will not come unto you, but if I will depart I will send Him unto you. And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment" (John xvi. 7-9). Again; "He shall glorify me; for He shall receive of mine and shall shew it unto you." (John xvi. 14). How wonderfully was this exhibited on the day of Pentecost. He bidden to Peter; "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost He hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear." (Acts ii. 32, 33).

"It is finished." Let us then look for the outpouring of the Spirit; let us plead for the power of Him who is equal

in power and glory with the Father and the Son, and who brings to all His work the power of omnipotence, the wisdom of God and all the infinite bounty and unchangeableness of Divine love. Let us seek Him because, "it is finished."

IV. Consider these words in their relation to Christians.—They bring consolation to the souls of the poor and needy. They tell you, dear brethren in Christ, that there is no more wrath in God for you. Jesus drank the cup of wrath that you might drink the cup of salvation. They proclaim that life eternal is yours. You cannot die because Christ died,— "Ye shall never see death." You now may truly say with David: "Although my house be not so with God; yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure." (2 Sam. xxiii. 5). It is finished, your place is secured in the father's favour, and in the everlasting kingdom. Your defence is on high; "He shall dwell on high, his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks." (Isa. xxiii. 16). This is your security that all your wants shall be graciously supplied, all your sins taken away, and that nothing shall interpose to hinder you from entering, at last, on the full enjoyment of all the glories of the Father's house. But we cannot prolong our meditations.

V. Consider these words in their relation to the world.—As we look at them we cannot but think of all that is to take place in connection with them in this world. What a change will come over creation when, "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God, as the waters cover the sea." (Hab. ii. 4). When from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same all "men shall be blessed in Him and all nations shall call Him blessed." "The mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands." (Isa. iv. 12). Fain would we see those glorious days, but long years may have to roll past ere the fulfilment of these things, and the words appropriate to us may be; "But go thou thy way till the end be, for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days." (Dan. xii. 13).

We must not close without making a personal and practical use of our text. There are many of you in this large assembly to-day who know not the Lord. To you the story of the crucified one is a mere tale. Again and again you have gone on your way past the solemn realities of Calvary's cross as if they were none of yours. You have neglected your soul's

salvation. Dear brethren, we plead with you to pause and think for you are treading the road that leads to death. Do you not value your souls? Are you so bewitched that you care not where you are to take up your abode through the endless ages of eternity? Will you listen to the old story and turn to the Lord? Come with your wounds and your doubts; your sins and your fears; your helplessness and unbelief and cry mightily to God, for lo! "it is finished." "For when we were yet without strength in due time Christ died for the ungodly. But God commendeth His love toward us in that which we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. v. 6-8).

"It is finished." Salvation for all. None will be rejected. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on Him." (John iii. 36). Amen.

SEVENTH SAYING ON THE CROSS.

"Father unto thy hands I commend my Spirit."—(Luke xxiii. 46).

THESE are the last words of Jesus ere His soul was separated from His body. The words, "It is finished" are immediately followed by those before us. The former tell that the end of the old dispensation has come; the latter that the beginning of the new has arrived. The former bid farewell to the earth; and the latter welcome the entrance into the glory above. To-day, then, we have before us Christ's action in dying. The last struggle and pain is past; the last jeer and taunt given, the last contemptuous laugh has just died away, and Jesus gives Himself up to death and to His Father's hands in death. The clash of arms has ended; the confusion and strife of tongues have ceased and in joyful triumph He has at last attained to His Father's hands.

Let us consider:—

I. *What Jesus hands over to the Father.*—It is His Spirit. "My Spirit," it was His own; and yet, by delivering it thus back at the appointed time, He acknowledges, that it was His, only as from the Father by the Holy Ghost. It was His with a body for a certain purpose, and now, that purpose having been accomplished, He passes it over into His Father's hands. This was a High Priestly action on Christ's part. He gave Himself thus up for His people, and He passed both Himself and them over into the Father's hands. Let us keep this precious truth in view. Let us behold Jesus in this act placing Himself as the grand sacrifice in Jehovah the Father's hands; and along with sacrifice, and on the ground of its infinite merit, placing His redeemed also within the same blessed grasp. Is it not precious to view the Redeemer and the redeemed, with all their interests thus placed in such hands; so that God the Father may have an opportunity for the fulfilment of all covenant engagements towards both. Just think of it—the believer with all that concerns him forever secured with Jesus in the very hands of the Eternal; secured with Christ on the ground of His merit in the hands of the Eternal. O what a home! Let us pause and dwell in thought on this truth. Let us dwell on it in the very

ecstasy of joy. It would be well for us in our exercises on this communion Sabbath to follow the example of Jesus ; to commit ourselves altogether into the hands of Jehovah ; to place ourselves without reserve at His disposal ; to allow the Holy Spirit to take charge of us, to guide us and to control us in all things. Those of you, who by the grace of God have been enabled to hand over to the Lord Jesus Christ the keeping of your immortal souls, remember your first approach to Him. You came trembling, your souls all guilty and polluted, your very being utterly corrupt but He received you. Other days and hours may mingle with their fellows and be forgotten ; but this day and these hours can never be effaced from your memory. And often since then, in your life's journey, when assaulted by the powers of hell and sin, and when sorely tried by temptation, you could testify how unspeakably precious was the opportunity of looking up to Jesus and committing your souls to God. Others of you can tell how it fared with you in sore affliction ; when the days were dark and dreary ; when the waters arose and swelled around your vessel of clay how you could even then, say with the man of God : "I poured out my complaint before Him ; I showed before Him my trouble. When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then Thou knewest my way

. . . . I looked on my right hand and behold there was no man that would know me, refuge failed me ; no man cared for my soul. I cried unto Thee O Lord, I said, Thou art my refuge, and my portion in the land of the living." Let us see to it then, this morning, as we "draw near to God," that we do so committing ourselves wholly unto His hands. By His words from yonder cross Jesus has placed His people already there. And O may it be ours in experience, by faith, to find this as our dwelling place—the place of our life and rest.

Time presses ; but how can we pass on ? How, when so many of you are at the disposal of the malice of your enemies ? Men and women are here to-day altogether in the hands of the enemy, who will bring them down to everlasting destruction. Can you be at peace ? Will you sleep on till you open your eyes amidst the awful howlings of the lost, thus to be chained a prisoner forever more amidst the everlasting waves of God's vengeance ? O sinner, look to the Lord for mercy ! Let nothing hinder you ! Delay not one moment longer ! Cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner." With all the earnestness of your being turn to the Lord. Give yourself up to Him so that you may in very truth be enabled to say : "Into thine hands I commit my spirit."

II. Consider into whose hands Jesus commends His Spirit.—It was unto His Father's. It was at Jehovah, the Father's, invitation that He poured out His soul unto death; but we must not in our thoughts sever the Father from the Judge, for He, "committed Himself to' Him that judgeth righteously." (1 Peter ii. 23). But does not this action bring before us the Saviour's sense of weakness in our nature and His dependence on His Father for aid and support? Observe He was willing to deny Himself the independent use of the infinite resources He had in His own Person, because it was necessary that He should feel the utter weakness of humanity. But although He felt His complete dependence upon the Father, He, at the same time, enjoyed perfect confidence in the promises of the everlasting covenant. You will notice that at Calvary Jesus uses the term Father twice, at the beginning of His sufferings, before they had come to their worst, and at the end when matters were past their worst. "Father forgive them." "Father unto Thy hands." But during the interval of about six hours He does not use the name "Father," but "God." "My God, My God,"—a more distant term. How was this? Because during these hours, Jesus had entered the depth of His sufferings and the Father's face was mysteriously hid; there was a total eclipse of the felt sense of Jehovah's presence. But the dark night is now over; the vessels of wrath have all been emptied on the head of the surety, and the smile of Jehovah's face shines on the Saviour. Then Jesus can look up and say "Father." Let us learn from this that the great gulf which existed between God and sinners is now bridged over by the Person and Work of Jesus, so that those who were strangers and enemies may now become sons and daughters. Come now draw near, brethren, to this well of love. Come and drink of these living waters. "He shall cry unto me, Thou art my Father, and the rock of my salvation. Also, I will make Him my first born higher than the Kings of the earth." (Ps. lxxxix. 26-27).

There may be some of you who are indeed children, but alas! you are in a state of backsliding, you are ashamed to look up. God is pleading with you, will you not hear Him? "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto Me, My Father, Thou art the guide of my youth." (Jer. iii. 4). Will your response not be: "But now, O Lord, Thou art our Father; we are the clay and Thou our potter, and we are the work of Thy hand. Be not wroth very sore O Lord, behold, see, we beseech Thee, we are all Thy people." (Isa. lxiv. 8, 9). We commend ourselves into Thy hands.

But, there is implied in this action that Jesus placed Himself at the disposal of His Father and within the circle of His pity, His tenderness and His everlasting love. A little ago Jesus was in the hands of God, as judge. He was left in the hands of His enemies to do their worst; but now, all this is past and He enters into the repose and rest of His Father's arms. But in doing this, Jesus takes possession of His Father's bosom for His people and He places through Himself a redeemed world within the compass of almighty power and within the embrace of the infinite pity and love of God. Surely, indeed, "O Israel of God, the eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath thee are the everlasting arms . . . Israel then shall dwell in safety alone; the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine, also the heavens shall drop down dew. Happy art thou O Israel; who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help." (Deut. xxxiii. 27.)

III. *Let us think of the manner in which Christ commends His Spirit into the Father's hands*—We must think of the disembodied spirit passed into the Father's hands as a testimony to the work finished and the death accomplished. Christ here gives Himself up to God as an atoning sacrifice. Let us think, if we can, of that spirit passing up before the eternal throne bearing the merits of all that was done and suffered, and presenting all this before the everlasting Father. For let us remember, that it was while "under the power of death," when His body lay in the grave, that His spirit went up before the throne, and He, in His eternal God-head, presented Himself in human nature as a slain sacrifice to God. "Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it." (Eph. v. 25). "As Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us, for an offering and a sweet smelling savour."

But, further, Christ willingly surrendered up His Spirit. His death was voluntary. "As the Father knoweth Me even know I the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep." Therefore doth the Father love Me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again. No man taketh it from Me but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." (John x. 15, 17, 18). Let this fact enhance, (if it be possible) in our estimation the death which we to-day commemorate. Let it have the effect of drawing forth each of us in a stronger allegiance to Christ so that our admiration, our praise and our love may flow forth like mighty rivers.

Think how unreservedly Jesus places Himself in His Father's hands. What instruction is here for us this morning ? Some of you may be overpowered by the thought of your unfitness to sit down at your Lord's table ; some of you may keenly feel your unfitness to fulfil your Redeemer's last command ; "This do in remembrance of Me." Others of you know that the state of your mind is not such as it ought to be in drawing near to God : fain would you have a better state of things within. Will you not commit yourselves to God just as you are so that He may fit you ? It is his work not yours. And see that you do so unreservedly. Place yourselves in the hands of God and let Him take your life, your thoughts and your words and mould them by His grace so that you may be enabled to say with the Church : "He brought me to the banqueting house, and His banner over me was love." (Song ii. 4). With all the weight of old age, with all the freshness and follies of youth, with all the vigor and strength of manhood, with all your sins and waywardness, with all your weaknesses and cares place yourselves in God's hands.

We cannot but think of the satisfaction with which Jesus offered up His Spirit. He surrendered it with satisfaction because it pleased the Father ; and because He Himself was to pass from the cross of shame and suffering to the eternal calm of the Father's hands ; to pass up from the awful sufferings of Calvary to dwell forever in the rest that is within the circle of Omnipotence. Jesus, knowing that the Divine glory was fully exhibited in the work ; that God's will was perfectly met and that the salvation of a redeemed world was secured, approached His Father with perfect confidence to deliver up His Spirit. Surely in that very act the promise was fulfilled to Him ; "He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied" (Isa. liii. 2). For was this itself not a glorious fruit of the "travail" when he landed Himself and His people forever within the Father's keeping.

But do we not also see here Jesus as the Mighty Conqueror emerging triumphantly out of all His sufferings and passing up to the glory of His Father ? "He will swallow up death in victory and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces." (Isa. xxv. 8). "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory ?" (Luke xxiv. 26).

But we must bring our meditations to a close ; and we do so by calling your attention : (1) to the fact that we are called again to-day to surrender ourselves anew to the Lord. O let

us come near ,and do so as Jesus did, willingly, completely and forever. With sinful Israel let our words be ; "Ashur shall not save us we will not ride upon horses ; neither will we say any more to the work of our hands ; ye are our Gods ; for in Thee the fatherless findeth mercy." Let us renew our covenant engagement before heaven and earth, (2) Let us again to-day place ourselves completely at God's disposal. Let our words be with one of old : "Lord what wilt Thou have me to do ?" (Acts ix. 16). Let God choose our way and our work for us, our trials and our duties. What wilt Thou have me to do ? To work or to suffer ? Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him and He shall bring it to pass." (3) Let us learn from this our need of more consecration ; more nearness to God so that we may be more like Him ; more completely in the hands of Jehovah so that, in our various spheres, we may do more for the glory of our Master. Let it be ours to-day to seek, with all earnestness, more holiness of heart and life. Let us strive by a concentration of all the powers and passions of our souls on the person of Christ to attain the highest conceivable state of holiness and spirituality. Let our highest aspirations be absorption into Christ ; to lose ourselves in the glories of God through Jesus Christ.

Christian friends, how precious is the thought that you are in the hands of God ; that the everlasting arms are around you and that it is yours to say with the Church ; "Thou art my God ; My times are in Thy hand," (Ps. xxxi. 14). How sweet to have Jesus near you with the promise : "And they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." Amidst the various changes of life, think of where you are and of your relation—sons and daughters to the Almighty. When things seem dark and apparently against you, then cling hard to God. You are here only for a moment. The end will soon come, and then, like Stephen you will "see the heavens opened and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God ;" you will be enabled to deliver up your soul into the hands of your Saviour saying : "Lord Jesus receive my spirit." Then you shall ascend to God's right hand to dwell forever in the light, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. Your communion seasons on earth shall be over and you will take your place at the table above, where there are joys and pleasures forevermore. Look up—your redemption draweth nigh. Only a few more tears and sighs ; only a few more struggles and weary steps and you shall be with God.

But dear fellow sinners which of you who still continue to mock Christ. O how will you deliver up your spirits to the woe of an undone eternity ? We plead with you to-day to turn to the Lord. Why will you perish ? O give yourselves up to Christ. " And in that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise Thee. Though Thou wast angry with me Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comforted'st me." (Isa. xii. 1).

" I am my Beloved's,
And my Beloved's mine ;
He brings a poor vile sinner
Into His house of wine."

And at the last it will be yours to say with Paul ; " I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith : Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only but unto all them also that love His appearing." (2 Tim. iv. 7). Amen.



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