

THE SOWER.

“ Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, HATH everlasting life, and shall NOT come into condemnation : but is passed from death unto life.” (Jno. v. 24).

“ Verily, verily,” Jesus, Lord,
Were Thine own words when here ;
The soul that hearkens to thy word
Need never doubt nor fear.

All who believe in simple faith,
From God that Thou art sent,
“ Life everlasting,” surely “ hath,”
For which thine own was spent.

To condemnation ne'er shall come,
For Thou hast borne it all ;
The perfect work that Thou hast done,
Can never change or fall.

Passed they are from death to life,
Before the throne of God ;
And all that can against them rise,
Atoned for by Thy blood.

Then make each seeking anxious heart
Bow low before thy word :
And, by Thy Holy Spirit taught,
Own Thee as Saviour, Lord !

ROCK OF AGES.

STRONG and well, earning good weekly wages for his wife and children—one day; lying crushed and mangled, scarcely able to speak or to bear his wife passing the damp sponge across his poor face, only waiting the few hours that must pass before his soul quitted the agonized, bruised frame—the next!—An evening or two before, two young railway porters were listening to the precious gospel of salvation—one accepted Christ, the other lingered. Soon afterward a sudden rush, some fatal mistake, and the one who had cast himself and his sins upon the great Heart that still throbs as tenderly over us as when He wept over the city, saying, “If thou hadst known in this thy day the things that belong to thy peace,” passed into eternity knowing the joy of sins forgiven, and peace made; the other carried home crushed, and broken, to lie in agony for some little time, watched and tended by those who could scarcely alleviate his sufferings. Cannot we see God’s long-suffering love in sparing him who was slow of heart “to believe?” One thing alone he asked for, one thing alone he seemed to want—some one to sing “Rock of Ages” to him. We went and sang in the little cottage room where he lay motionless, some thought unconscious; but after the hymn I stepped to the bedside and spoke to him. The tears were coming fast and thick from the closed eyes, and coursing down the dying face, and though he could

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scarcely speak, one felt sure from the few broken words, that now at least, his feet were on the Rock of Ages, and the soul had found its anchor in the Heart of Christ. And that night he passed away. No one but God knows what passed in his soul during the time he lay there, nothing but a helpless mass, with the waves of death circling and closing round him, but he *felt for a Rock for his feet*. Dear one, have you ever felt for a Rock? Something and someone that can never fail you? Health, money, happiness can fly at a single touch. Friends change, even the deepest human love has something of selfishness in it, for every heart has its own needs, and when you and I lie down to die perhaps some one will think of the change it will make to them. What will be your Rock then? What are you going to do when the cold billows of death close about you? Can you tread the waters? Kings and princes, who could have scattered wealth like dust to save their lives, have gone down beneath them. Are you stronger than they? Aye, *but there is a Rock*. Hell has beat against it in vain, and in vain death has lashed it. Death when spoken of in the Psalms in connection with Christ is said to be always in the plural. In the xxii Psalm in which the Spirit of Christ anticipated His sufferings on the Cross it says, "Thou hast brought Me into the dust of death." In Psalm xviii it speaks of the "snares of death," and the "sorrows of death." See too the lxi Psalm—There are the "deep waters" and the "waterflood" to "overflow" *Him*, but they lashed in vain; in vain their fury

spent itself. *He* was the Rock, and out of Him the life-giving waters flow. Moses struck the rock in the desert and the waters flowed out. He was to speak to it the second time but he failed in obedience. The first was a type of Christ in humiliation. Christ has been smitten. God smote Him for our sins. "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him," and the living waters flowed out. Now in resurrection you and I can speak to the Rock. He has passed through death and come up out of it unscathed, and now He stands in resurrection glory. What will *you* say to Him?

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee,"

As the poor dying one lay there he must have gone over what he had heard at the mission room so shortly before, when he listened to that hymn, little dreaming of what lay before him e'er he should hide himself in the cleft of that Rock.

"Let the water and the blood,
From Thy riven side, which flowed
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleansing from its guilt and power."

Not only for death, but for life, dear reader. "They drank of that Spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. (1 Cor. x. 4). A Rock for life, and a Rock for death. A living Man in the glory, who is looking down upon you as you read these lines. For your sins, for your sorrows, your trials, difficulties and cares, take Him, and spend a life pointing others to Him. A blessed, glorious life, bringing others to His feet. He is "Jesus Christ, the same, yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

DEAD AND RISEN.

A DEAD and risen Christ is the groundwork of salvation. "He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification." (Rom. iv. 25.) To see Jesus by the eye of faith nailed to the cross, now seated on the throne, must give solid peace to the conscience, and perfect liberty to the heart. We can look into the tomb and see it empty; we can look up to the throne and see it occupied, and go on our way rejoicing. The Lord Jesus settled everything on the cross on behalf of His people; and the proof of this settlement is that He is now at the right hand of God. A risen Christ is the eternal proof of an accomplished redemption; and if redemption is an accomplished fact, the believer's peace is a settled reality. We did not make peace, and never could make it; indeed, any effort on our part could only tend more fully to manifest us as *peace-breakers*. But Christ, having made peace by the blood of His cross, has taken His seat on high, triumphant over every enemy. By Him God preaches peace. The word of the gospel conveys this peace; and the soul that believes the gospel has peace—settled peace before God; for Christ is His peace. (See Acts x. 36; Rom. v. 1; Eph. ii. 14; Col. i. 20.) In this way God has not only satisfied His own claims, but in so doing He has found out a divinely-righteous way through which His boundless love may flow down to the guiltiest of Adam's guilty progeny.

PEACE BY JESUS CHRIST.

ACTS X.

IN this chapter we have the foundation truth of the reception of the Gentiles into the church. And one thing very marked in the narrative is, how very present a thing salvation is. Cornelius was an officer, a devout man, who gave alms, &c. God was working graciously in his heart; yet still he had one thing to learn; and that was salvation. I do not say that in God's sight he was not saved, but he had to learn his relation with God as a present thing. So with the jailor, his heart was touched, yet he says, "What must I do to be saved?" Now when God begins thus to work, He finishes what he begins. Here we have the full bringing out of known salvation in order that there may be the enjoyment of God. A father may have forgiven a repenting child in his heart, yet if this forgiveness is not made known, the child cannot be happy.

Here then we have the first case of the Gentiles being brought into the full knowledge of salvation. This is not simply conviction—a man's being born again so as to desire to have peace with God. There must be that, but the gospel is the *answer* of God to all these desires of the heart. The poor woman in Luke vii. was evidently renewed in heart when she went to Jesus. She felt such an attraction in Jesus

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as drew her to Him, but she had not the answer of Jesus, "Thy sins be forgiven thee, go in peace." You are saved. That answer is the foundation of all the hopes and joys of the believer. The thing which characterizes a Christian arises from the knowledge of present salvation. It is not a desire after righteousness and a fear that if I do not attain to it, God will be against me as a Judge. It is salvation brought to me, not merely as a possible attainment, but as God's answer to all this felt need of the soul.

Peter speaks to Cornelius "the word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ." Mark, the apostle at once speaks peace. Peace is a wonderful word. It is a far greater thing than joy. It excludes everything that would disturb. I may have joy, but then I think of this trial or the other and my joy is damped. But it is not so in peace. If I have sorrow, joy coming into my presence will but embitter my sorrow. But in peace there is the absence of everything that would disturb. God is never called the God of joy, but He is the God of peace.

Peter does not say, keep on and you will get to peace, but he brings peace with him. He brings God's answer to all the need of this man's soul.

There may be peace in providence, but this peace goes a great deal further. It is peace with God. There are two things in this peace; but first let me say, it is with God that this peace is. The soul when awakened wants to have a perfect, thorough satisfaction that God has nothing against it. When the soul

comes to know God at all, it is with God it wants peace. We are content naturally to have it without God, but now it cannot have peace without God. We may try to distract the mind, but let the thought of God come in, and all our peace is gone. Now it must have peace with God, conscience must be perfectly satisfied that God is satisfied. It may be labouring to satisfy God itself, for a time under law, but when really awakened and in earnest it soon finds that this it cannot do, and yet it feels that He must be satisfied. Do you think that if I have offended a father I can be happy without the certainty of his being satisfied? The conscience takes satisfying God as the measure of right and wrong. There is no peace till then. Then all is peace. Then it does not care though all the world is against it. It does not care for character. It is conscience the soul cares for. Now it can be honest about itself and acknowledge itself to be what it is. There is also a quiet sense of being in favour. There is the heart's assurance of having perfect peace with God. Now there is not a cloud on my soul before God, for conscience has been cleansed in the fountain opened. I have been there alone with God and all has been opened up and the whole thing has been settled. His love I know, and know just where I most needed to know it—about my sins—and that is peace. It is not trying to get on the best way I can and hoping that God will overlook the rest; no, it is with the knowledge of good and evil and with it peace in God's presence. It is not a negative thing merely, but something positive,

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something which God can delight in. He not only sees no spot, but He sees what gives Him delight. Now the conscience and the heart are both satisfied. Bring in the light and it only brings out the value of the blood which has cleansed me from all sin. Now if my conscience knows God as love, I cannot but wish Him to love me. When I know that God loves me as God only knows how to love, I am not only in the light but in the warmth and sunshine of His love. There is peace. Conscience in the light, and not having one thing with which to reproach me, and feeling conscious of this, and on the other hand the heart in the perfect consciousness of His perfect love resting on me. Where that is not known there cannot be peace.

Now Peter does not preach a quantity of things in us, which, if we manage to get, we may have hope; but he comes and tells these needy awakened sinners, "Here is peace for you, a made peace." It is made, and perfectly accomplished and now preached through Jesus Christ. Well, now the Lord says you are not at peace with God. He comes and says, "I am come to give you peace." He does not say, "Make your peace with God," for He Himself, has made it. We are preaching a thing that is, not a thing that is not. What was working in the cross? God's holiness. There peace was brought by the blood of the cross. The thing was settled by God and the Lamb alone, and about our sins too, when and where we could have no part. There righteousness was dealing with Christ about my sins, and the result I see in resurrection.

“He shall convince the world of righteousness because I go to the Father.” If I own the sins through grace for which Christ suffered, believing in Him I am set in Him before God for He has borne the sins. I own these sins in the presence of God. I deserved that cross, but now I am in His presence in Christ, and righteousness which He is made unto me gives peace to the conscience.

I wish to get peace in the heart. Well, where is there love as in the cross? The best thing God had, given for the worst thing I had done. Will my sins hinder! Why they are the very things which have manifested God’s love to me. I take Jesus as the measure of all the love of my Father. He gave Jesus for me. There my heart has peace—peace unspeakable. If a man knows God he wants Him as his all. The desires are now infinite, in object at least, the heart having been touched with the love of God. If we want love it is in God—joy, it is in God. And of course all this will manifest itself in life.*

Upon the perfect remission of sin comes in another thing, the perfect peace of enjoyment. As long as a man is trying to make terms for himself, he will resist the simplicity of grace. If I have anything to do in it I must pretend to satisfy God as to my part in it, and if I am trying to do this I shall never know God. No, it is by faith that I come to know God—faith which teaches me that it is done. I have but to believe—Christ thus gets all the glory, and I all the good. “Whosoever believeth *in Him* shall receive remission of sins.” Not, whosoever believes in the

remission of sins. It is a joyous thing to know the remission of sins, but the soul will soon get weak if thinking of that. "Whosoever believeth in Him," turns the soul to God. I look to Jesus, and that is what gives me joy, and changes me into His image.

Now, when Cornelius believes in Christ, as preached for the remission of sins, the Holy Ghost comes—in a peculiar manner it is true then, because God was showing that He would receive the Gentiles. So it is not merely the knowledge of remission, but the love which was proved in the death of Christ. The Holy Ghost sheds it abroad in my heart and peace flows as a river. He gives the apprehension of God's love, the spring of joy and the living power of glorifying Christ. The moment Peter says, "Through His name, whosoever believeth in Him, shall receive the remission of sins,"—and we know the words went into Cornelius's heart—the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. Thus we have first peace, then the ground of it, God's love and Christ's work; and then the power of enjoyment, the Holy Ghost.

Are you labouring to get peace? If so I am glad, in one sense, for you will know your need, but you will never get it so. Do you think that God would have bruised Christ to make peace, if you could make it for yourself, or even with the help of the Spirit? "To him that worketh not but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." The heart's intercourse with God is with the *God of Peace*.

"IT IS FINISHED.

"I T."—What! The atoning work—the propitiatory sacrifice—the perfect work of the Son of God. *That* by which alone, God can save from wrath—the work for sin, for guilt, for ruin, for cleansing. That which makes nigh—which brings to God—which makes peace—which gives a divine title to heaven—which perfects the conscience—which reconciles to God—on which every blessing is founded—which has satisfied the claims of the throne of God—which has glorified God by the settlement of the question of sin.

"IS."—Not "will be"—not "may be"—not "may possibly take place"—not in the *future*—not even in the *present*; but in the *past*. It was true 1800 years ago; and leaves no room for a present work to be wrought, or ought in the future to be performed. It "*is*" done once, and forever.

"FINISHED."—Complete—accomplished—perfected—nothing to be added—nothing to be made up—no tear to be shed—no sighs to be heaved—no feelings or experiences essential. The work is finished; all is settled; claims all met; debt all paid; God glorified; sin atoned for; justice satisfied.

"IT IS FINISHED."—Blessed words! The dying utterance of a dying Christ. "It is finished"; sinner, there is life for thee in these words. There is salvation for thee in these words. There is forgiveness and cleansing from sin for thee in these words.

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These three words contain fulness of redemption, fulness of blessing and future glory to be revealed. They are the expression of the completeness of the work, that forms the basis—the ground of all God's dealings toward thee. "It is finished," are words which contain the truth of what has made heaven sure to thee, with its joys, its glories, its pleasures. Ah! you will need an eternity to understand their deep and precious meaning. It will only be as you gaze upon the Lamb who was slain, and think of His decease which He accomplished at Jerusalem, that *that* divine utterance will unfold its depth the more to your wondering soul.

Reader, have you trusted your all upon this matchless work of grace and love?

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If you are labouring to meet a Judge it is simply madness. Men think they have to meet the God of judgment as responsible sinners, to answer for themselves. That is the way people are deluded. Do you think you could stand? It is madness to dream of such a thing. Have you peace?—perfect peace—Christ's own peace? If not, you have not got what Christ gives. You have not got what Christ wrought, and brought, and gives—a peace with the Father as He Himself has it.

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What a fear will all surprise,
When the Judge aloft in skies
Comes to hold His great assize.

THE MARRIAGE SUPPER.

MATT. XXII.

THE thing in this parable is, that the condemnation depended not on anything in the person, but in the rejection of the invitation that was given. Christ first sent to the Jews (His friends) to invite them to the kingdom. Then He dies and is raised from the dead. He sends again, saying, "All things are ready, come unto the marriage." They rejected the invitation; and as for the servants, they slew them. So now, if any are rejecting the gospel of Christ, it is the same thing as if they had crucified God's Son. God is saying to you, "All things are now ready." My dinner is ready; "my oxen and my fatlings are killed;"—Christ has died, and is risen again. There is not a thing to be done. All is ready; and yet it is shown that men prefer their five yoke of oxen to the gift of the only-begotten Son of God—God thus presses on the conscience of the men, "My oxen and my fatlings are killed; come unto the marriage." But they made light of it; and went their ways, one to his farm, and another to his merchandise, etc. God says by His servants, the supper is ready, all things are prepared—and then, not come on a certain day to supper; but, because Jesus is dead and risen, God has accomplished for Himself all things for His own glory in the perfect and finished

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work of Christ. The command is therefore, "Go ye into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage." He does not count how many; but only turns back to see one thing. The guests have sat down at the table: but have they on the wedding garment? Have *you* put on Christ? What a folly if you have not! He has sought you: have you on therefore the garment that suits the house? That suits the heart of the King who made the wedding? That suits the wedding-glory of the Lord Jesus? Unless He is met in this, He is met with insult in His own house. If the glory of God in Christ is not the thing in your heart, you have not understood what God is about. You have not got God's thoughts in bringing you there. It is for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ; and if you have not apprehended this, you have not apprehended the object of God, nor believed the truth of God in your soul. It is a wedding, and how have you forced yourself into God's house, not having God's thoughts, nor having put on the wedding-garment that God has provided for the marriage of His Son? But suppose you have not got on the garment. What is there you have not, which you may not get this moment—freely get in Christ?

Everyone that is at the marriage adds so much to the glory of the feast—so much more to the honour of Him who made the marriage for His Son. Has your pride been brought down, so that your soul has submitted to Christ? If so, you have submitted to an accomplished salvation.

PEACE

AT the birth of the Lord, the earth was saluted with words of peace. "Peace on earth," the angels proclaimed in the fields of Bethlehem.

This, however, was but salutation. It was not the authoritative pronouncement of peace. It was like the word which the Lord afterwards put into the lip^s of His twelve, or rather of the seventy, in Luke x., when sending them out, for He then told them, into whatsoever house they entered, first to say, "Peace be to this house." This was a salutation, a wishing well, the proclamation of a good-will towards the house, not an authoritative pronouncement of peace: *that* would rather follow on its being found, that the Son of peace was there.

Upon the resurrection of the Lord, however, we have the other thing. "Peace be unto you," the risen Saviour said to His disciples, thus returned to them—and when He said that, He showed them His hands and His side. He gave them to read their title to peace. Peace was now, not merely wished, but authoritatively pronounced, conveyed to them on a warrant of the cross. Jesus now gave peace to them, because he had already made it for them. And this the peace that we, who are in it, may testify to our fellow-sinners. We do not merely, like the commissioned seventy, say, "Peace be to this house," as saluting it, or wishing it well, but we proclaim to it the sure, settled, purchased peace, which sinners have title to, in the blood of the cross.