

# THE SOWER.

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## “THE MISTAKEN PRAYER” AND ITS RECTIFICATION.

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WITH conscious guilt oppressed,  
Of God and hell afraid,  
I smote upon my breast,  
I grieved, I wept and prayed.  
I treasured up my tears,  
And deem'd the precious drops  
Might calm my risen fears,  
And raise my sunken hopes.  
Thus I began to count  
My sad transgressions o'er  
To own the full amount,  
And shun them evermore.  
Amongst my duties, too,  
I patiently did plod,  
For thus I doubted not  
To please an angry God ;  
Yet all was sad constraint,  
My heart was not above,  
I had become a saint  
From fear and not from love.  
I wished my sins forgiven,  
And yet I loved them well :  
I sought for heaven only  
Because I dreaded hell.  
With dark, reluctant mind  
My knees were daily bent,

And sadly disinclined  
     I labored to repent ;  
 To read God's holy word,  
     To say a lengthened prayer—  
 All this I tried to do,  
     But did but beat the air.  
 For, verily, I thought  
     That this must all be done  
 To gain the heaven I sought,  
     The wrath of God to shun ;  
 To weave a little dress  
     And wrap it round my breast,  
 And then a skirt of His  
     Would cover all the rest.  
 And thus to raise myself  
     In part to heaven,  
 Instead of all the praise  
     To Jesus Christ be given.

ITS RECTIFICATION.

And thus I plodded on,  
     And would have plodded still,  
 If I had not been shown  
     The heights of Sinai's hill—  
 Beheld its dreadful flame  
     And heard its thunders roll,  
 Till doubt and fear and shame  
     Laid hold upon my soul—  
 The throne of God appeared  
     Above that awful place,  
 His justice spoke aloud  
     And cursed me to my face.  
 I plead good works,

But, ah ! an awful voice replied  
No flesh by deeds of law  
Can e'er be justified  
To mercy next I fled,  
But justice frowned again,  
Demanding to be paid—  
A debt of endless pain.  
Distracted and ashamed,  
I groaned beneath my load ;  
When, lo ! a voice proclaimed,  
" Behold the Lamb of God."'  
I raised my weeping eyes  
To see the bleeding One.  
O, what a wondrous sight—  
'Twas God's beloved Son ;  
O, what a marvel this,  
And dying thus for me—  
'Twas fearful, yet 'twas bliss  
The spectacle to see.  
Now ransomed and forgiven,  
I keep the law divine ;  
But not to purchase heaven--  
No, that's already mine ;--  
My thoughts are now above,  
My soul is bounding free,  
For, O, it is the love of Christ  
That now constraineth me.  
Yes, all I have or do,  
My own I nothing call ;  
For I am Christ's, and O 'tis true  
That Christ's my all in all.

## "THAT BLESSED BOOK."

ONLY an old, tattered flower-woman! Withered and weather-beaten, ragged and wrinkled! How fair and sweet looked the flowers carried by the brown, horny hands! A kindly smile lit up the rugged face, and there was a hearty ring in the words she so repeatedly emphasized, and the old body had still a thought for others and their needs. "Look here, ma'am, *you gave* me some of them little books the other day. There's a poor old man near me and he says, 'Ask that lady if she hasn't something for a *dying man* to read.' That's just what he says, lady." So I fetched a little testament out of the book-case, and turned the leaf down at the 3rd and 10th of St. John's Gospel, and told her to give it to him.

Some days passed away, and then the old body came again. "Oh! that *blessed* book," she exclaimed, directly she saw me, "he's been a-reading it, and he says '*he's got the peace*, and if *ever* he gets out of his bed he's *a-coming to see* you.'" The withered old face looked quite radiant, as she nodded and emphasized. "He gets up in his bed to pray for you, he does, and he says *that book* has told him *all he wants*."

Aye! sometimes it tells us more than we want to know. It tells us of the sin so dark, so heinous, that it shuts out from God's heaven, and God's rest. But, if you will listen, it tells us also of the Days-man, the Substitute—the One whose precious blood blots out all sin, until not a spot remains and the soul is whiter than the driven snow.

“Perfect through *my* comeliness, which *I* had put upon thee,” God says (Ezekiel xvi-14), “Our Redeemer; Thy name is from everlasting” (Isa. lxiii. 16), and covered by that precious blood, the Father looks upon us not only as complete in Him, but with delight, for “The Father *Himself loveth* you, because ye have loved Me, and have believed that I came out from God.”

Many question that book, but it is the only book that can show us what *we are* and what *God is*, what *we are*, and what *Christ is*. Moses, the law-giver, can fail; and Jacob, “My servant,” deceive; and Job, “the upright,” vaunt his righteousness; and David, the man after God’s own heart, dishonor His name; and the children of Israel make the golden calf as a sequel to their cry of “All that Thou sayest we will do”; for the heart of man is laid bare, *as it is*, and only the spotless Son of God could walk in this defiling world and do “always those things which please Him.” If man had penned any of those records, much would never have been told, or handed down to posterity. If men had written of the Son of God from their own imaginings, there would have been no thirty years at Nazareth, no long nights in prayer, no touching the lepers, no homeless days and penniless weeks. Not long ago, some missionaries were translating the gospels into a heathen tongue, and they got some of the native students to look through them for correction; they did so, and arranged the verse in Mark x., “He took the children up in His arms and blessed them,” thus: “And being

angry he chased them from Him." They could not understand that He could do anything else! If man blots out one record of that marvellous book, he blots out all. Accept it all, or reject it all. It is a great whole: not a link can be laid aside or the whole chain is broken. If there was no Leviticus nor Deuteronomy, there were no children of Israel. If the old testament is untrue, so is the account of the Saviour who quoted it; and if the whole must be rejected, there is no account of creation, or redemption, or of the people of Israel who still people the earth, a standing witness of God's words fulfilled, "Ye shall be scattered and peeled, a by-word and a hissing among all nations." History has proved it true, the dust and stones of distant ages have proved it true, and the individual lives of all since it was written—whether saved or unsaved, whether Dives or Lazarus,—have proved it true. Satan can no more prove it false than he can pluck Christ out of heaven. *It proves itself.*

A few days passed away, and the old flower-woman came again. "He's gone," she said. "He went at three o'clock this morning, and he says, '*Tell that lady I'm going to glory, and I shall meet her there. You keep that blessed book,*' he says, '*and get her to write your name and mine in it. I'm full of peace and joy, and I'm going to glory.*' Those were his *very words, lady, and it was all through that blessed book.*" The weather-stained, old gipsy flower-woman had been the means of placing in those dying hands the bread of life. God had spoken, and he had listened.

and the heart had seen Jesus as the Saviour for sinners, and he had passed through death without a cloud, and without a spot. Can human eloquence give a soul facing death peace? Can music, or art, or science prepare a living soul to meet a holy God? Can possessions or crowns and kingdoms cause a spirit to pass out from everything here into eternity, not only calmly, but with joy? We know they cannot. Only the Word made flesh who dwelt among men, and still speaks; a living, risen Man in the glory; only the crucified Lord who "died for the ungodly;" can set the sinking feet upon a rock, and give a soul life.

Oh! that each dear reader who hears Him say, "Believest thou this?" might truly cry, "Lord, *I believe*; help Thou mine unbelief."

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Father, mother, just lift that dear little son or daughter up on your knees and tell them some of the wonders Jesus did when He was here. Tell them often about His great love—about His miracles—about His death—His precious blood that cleanses from all sin—His resurrection, and His going home to the glory—and His coming again to take His own there. Do you love the little dears? Oh, yes, you say as you fondly kiss them and nestle them in your bosom. If so then don't neglect their souls. Bring them to Jesus in the arms of faith, and look at His face of love, and ask Him as you sow His incorruptible word in their hearts to make it the power of God to their salvation.

## THE BANISHED ONE'S RETURN.

HE was the king's son, and had been guilty of murdering his brother. He had fled to a neighboring king, where he remained three years, self-banished on account of his sin, and not daring to return to his father and his home. What a picture of a sinner, lashed by a guilty conscience, and fleeing from God's face, instead of confessing his sin, and falling upon His mercy!

But so it was with this young man. He dared not return home. He dared not meet his father, the king. Conscious that he was guilty of murder, and that he had deceived the king in beguiling his unhappy brother to the place of his death; and knowing his father's uprightness of heart in the maintenance of a righteous government, he sought shelter outside his father's dominions. But there was one thing he did not know, nor understand—a father's *heart*, a father's *love*. "David mourned for his son every day." "And the soul of king David longed to go forth unto Absalom" (2 Sam. xiii. 37-39). "Every day" for "three years"! Truly here was deep and unflagging affection. And yet no effort to bring the banished outcast back again. It was love yearning helplessly after that poor, wicked, guilty son, but unable to bring him back in the face of stern justice which required that the murderer should yield life for life. Thus the struggle went on between love and righteousness, love desiring, and righteousness forbidding.

But there was a wise man in David's kingdom, even if not over-scrupulous as to righteousness. This was Joab. Joab knew how the king's heart was toward his guilty son. And he knew, too, of "a wise woman" at Tekoa, for whom he sent, and into whose mouth he put a parable, and sent her to the king. The parable of this widow and her two sons who had striven together, one of whom was slain in the struggle, was in substance the case of the king and his two sons, Amnon and Absalom, but in the case of the widow's son who remained alive, he was the heir, and her whole family had risen up against her, demanding his life, and thus her "coal" was about to be "quenched" and her dead husband left without a "name" or "remainder on the earth." It was an appeal to the king's heart, an appeal for help, an appeal to exercise his royal prerogative of extending pardon to the guilty, and delivering a helpless widow and her son from distress and impending ruin. To the tender, gracious heart of David the king, this appeal was irresistible, the point was gained. "As the Lord liveth, there shall not one hair of thy son fall to the earth" (chap. xiv. 11). Such was the king's gracious decision, but in giving such a decision he had done so as one that was "faulty." Why did not the king "fetch home again his banished"? "For we must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground which cannot be gathered up again; and God has not taken away his life, but devises means that the banished one be not expelled from him" (verse 14.

N.T.) It was enough. The banished Absalom was brought back again to Jerusalem ; but he must still feel that his crime had put something between him and his father. The love that had gone out after him, and which had brought him back to his own country and city, could not remove the awful stigma that rested upon his character and name. He must still feel that he was a murderer. " And the king said, let him turn to his own house, and let him not see my face. So Absalom returned to his own house, and saw not the king's face." He " dwelt two full years in Jerusalem, and saw not the king's face " (verses 24. 28).

The king with all his affection and love for his guilty, wayward son, could find no righteous ground on which he could pardon, so as to restore him to the place he had forfeited. And thus beautifully as the outgoing of David's heart toward the guilty one illustrates the outgoing of God's heart toward the sinner, the incident and parable utterly failed in other respects. While David's love was strong and tender it was accompanied by weakness and failure and lack of resource. It is not so with God. God exceeds every way, and that infinitely. In the presence of His love, and the glory of His grace, and His boundless resources, David and his love were but as a little taper in the presence of the effulgence and glory of the Son. Yes, God has devised means that the banished one should not be expelled from Him. Nor did He need any " wise woman " with a parable in her mouth, to appeal to Him, to bring back His

banished ones. No! no! The plan was His—His own devising—and the resources were His, too—and all founded on absolute righteousness. A sacrifice was needed—a sacrifice of infinite worth—and He has provided that; the Son of His love. In virtue of the blood-shedding and death of Jesus, God's Lamb, God is righteous in receiving and justifying every guilty sinner that returns to Him. And instead of appeals to Him being necessary, all the appeals come from Him—appeals that might well break the heart of every poor banished one, and fill it with confidence in God and His love. “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (John iv. 10).

“O Love divine, Thou vast abyss!

“Our sins are swallowed up in Thee;

“Covered in our unrighteousness;

“From condemnation we are free:

“In Jesus' blood our hearts can trace

“The boundless riches of Thy Grace.”

Will you take, as the free gift of God, the salvation which He has purchased in righteousness, and brought to you in grace? “The gift of God is eternal life,” and “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.” John 3, 36.

Reader, remember the solemn warning: “If the word spoken by angels was steadfast, . . . how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation.” Heb. ii. 2, 3.

## WHAT IS REVEALED IN THE GOSPEL?

Luke x.

THIS is unfolded with uncommon beauty and power, in the touching parable of "the good Samaritan." The lawyer, like all legalists, "willing to justify himself," sought to ascertain who was his neighbour; and in reply, our blessed Lord draws a picture in which is most vividly presented the true condition of every sinner, be he lawyer or else. "A certain man *went down* from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which *stripped* him of his raiment, and *wounded* him, and departed, leaving him *half dead*." What a picture of man's career and man's condition! "A certain man"—the writer or the reader of these lines, "*went down*." How true! Reader, is it not so? Has not thy course ever been a downward one? Hast thou ever, when left to thyself, taken a step upward—a step in the right direction? There is no use in generalizing, what we want is to bring the matter home to ourselves, and say, each for himself, "*I am the 'certain man' of this singularly beautiful parable; it is my own very figure that appears in the foreground of this masterly picture; my course has been a downward one; I have gone down from the innocency of childhood, to the folly of youth, and from the folly of youth to the matured wickedness of manhood, and here I am, 'stripped' of every shred in which I might wrap myself; 'wounded' in every region of my moral being; and having the painful consciousness that death has already begun its terrible work in me.*"

Such is the career, such the condition of every sinner—his career, downward—his condition death. What is to be done? Can he keep the law? Alas! he is not able to move. Can the "priest" do aught for him? Alas! he has no sacrifice, and no ability to rise and get one. Can the "Levite" not help him? Alas! he is so polluted with his wounds and bruises that neither Levite nor priest could touch him. In a word, neither law nor ordinances can meet his case. He is utterly ruined. He has destroyed himself. The law has flung him overboard as a defiled, good-for-nothing, condemned thing. It is useless talking to him about the law, or asking him will he take it as a means of justification, a rule of life, or the power of sanctification. It has cursed, condemned, and set him aside altogether.

Now, it is when a man is really brought to this that he is in a position to see the moral grandeur of the gospel. It is when he has discovered his own guilt, misery, and ruin, and also his entire inability to meet the just and holy claims of the law, or profit, in any wise, by the appliances of the legal system in its most attractive forms, that he is prepared to appreciate the ample provisions of the grace of God. This is most strikingly illustrated in the scene before us. When the poor man had got down from Jerusalem to Jericho, from the city of God to the city of the curse; (Josh. vi. 26; 1 Kings xvi. 33, 34,) when he lay stripped, wounded, and half-dead; when both priest and Levite had turned from him and gone their way; it was just then that he was in a position to

prove the grace of the good Samaritan who, assuredly is none other than the blessed Lord Jesus Himself, who blessed for ever be His balmy, precious name ! here appears in the form of a Samaritan\* only to enhance the grace that breathes forth upon our souls in this lovely scene. "The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans," and, hence, had the Jew in this parable had sufficient strength, he would not, we may safely aver, have suffered the stranger to touch him. But he was so far gone, so powerless, so under the power of death, that the gracious Samaritan had it all his own way. And oh ! what a tender way it was !

"But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, *came where he was* : and when he saw him, he *had compassion on him*, and *went to him*, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him."

Here, then, is what is revealed in the gospel. Man has ruined himself. He has gone down from God. He has fallen under the power of the enemy. He is the victim of Satan, the slave of sin, the subject of death. His case is hopeless, so far as he is concerned. But, blessed be God, the true Samaritan has come down into all the ruin. The Son of God left His Father's bosom, His eternal dwelling-place, came down into this world, to remedy our ruin, to bear our guilt, to endure the wrath of God in our stead. All this he did, beloved reader, as the expression of His own tender compassion and love.

The page of inspiration does not present a more touching picture than that which the Master's pencil has drawn for us in "The good Samaritan." It is perfectly beautiful, and beautifully perfect. It is divine. Every expression is fraught with exquisite moral loveliness. "He came *where he was*"—not half-way, nor nine-tenths of the way, but all the way. "And *when he saw him*," what then? Did he turn away in disgust at his appearance, and despair of his condition? Ah! no; "*He had compassion on him.*" His tender heart yearning over him. He cared not what he was or who he was, Jew or Gentile, it mattered not; the streams of tender compassion came gushing up from the deep fountains of a heart that found its own delight in ministering to every form of human need. "*He went to him.*" For what? To meet his every need, and not to leave him until he had placed him in a position of security, rest, and blessing.

Finally, as if to complete the picture, he says, "*when I come again.*" He awakens in the heart, by these last words, "the blessed hope" of seeing him again. What a lovely picture! And yet it is all a divine reality. It is the simple story of our blessed Jesus who, in His tender compassion, looked upon us in our low and utterly hopeless condition, left His eternal dwelling-place of light and love, took upon Him the likeness of sinful flesh, was made of a woman, made under the law, lived a spotless life, and fulfilled a perfect ministry down here for three and thirty years, and finally, died on the cross as a

perfect atonement for sin, in order that God might be just and the Justifier of any poor, ungodly, convicted sinner that simply trusts in Jesus.

Yes, dear reader, whoever you are, high or low, rich or poor, learned or ignorant, Jesus has done all this; and He is now at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. The One who was nailed to the cross for us, is now on the throne. Eternal Justice has wreathed His sacred brow with the chaplet of victory, and that, be it remembered, on our behalf. Nor is this all. He has said, "*I will come again.*" Precious words! Say, wouldst thou be glad to see Him? Dost thou know Him as the good Samaritan? Hast thou felt His loving hand binding up thy spiritual wounds? Hast thou known the healing virtues of His oil, and the restoring, invigorating, and cheering influence of His wine! Hast thou heard Him speak those thrilling words, "*Take care of him?*" If so, then, surely, thou wilt be glad to see His face: thou wilt cherish in thine heart's tender affections the blessed hope of seeing Him as He is, and of being like Him and with Him for ever. The Lord grant it may be so with thee, beloved reader, and then thou wilt be able to appreciate the immense difference between the Law and the Gospel—between what we ought to do for God, and what God has done for us—between what we are to Him, and what He is to us—between "do and live," and "live and do"—between "the righteousness of the law," and "the righteousness of faith."