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## BARTIMEUS

## AN EXPOSITION ON LUKE V. 46-52, IN TWO PARTS.

BY THE REV. P. D. MUIR, KINGSTON, C.W.

## PART I.—TRUE EARNESTNESS.

If there is one mark more than another which characterizes the miracles of our Lord and distinguishes them from all the lying wonders by which men have gone about to deceive, it is the manifest absence of contrivance or previous arrangement which prevents in every case the suspicion of collusion or deceit. The occasion of every miracle is so manifestly forced on him not sought out by him, they are so public and at the same time so evidently (if we may so say) of accidental occurrence that all supposition of confederacy is at once excluded and each stands forth an unequivocal manifestation of the mighty power of God. But while all idea of contrivance as between man and man is thus excluded, it is impossible to overlook the evidence of contrivance of a higher order and springing evidently from a higher source by which the character and effect of the miracles is determined, and, ceasing to be mere signs and wonders, they become most beautiful and touching parables, speaking to us of man and his wants, of God and his mercy, of the Saviour and his offices, and richly suggestive of higher and more spiritual aspects of these than the miracles themselves do, or indeed could directly and immediately present. That the miracles do possess this character cannot be doubted by any attentive and devout reader of the narratives, but it may be thought that this is sufficiently accounted for by the fact that our Saviour, sternly repudiating the demand for mere wonders, chose to exercise the mighty powers with which he was invested in the way of alleviating human suffering, and solacing human woes. While, however, all due weight is given to this circumstance, it is impossible

to avoid observing that there is generally a something about the subject of the miracles and the incidents connected with them, which is so eminently suggestive of those higher spiritual truths which it is the object of revelation to inculcate, that it is hardly possible to avoid the conclusion that we have here a manifestation of that contrivance and arrangement with which an overruling Providence has encircled all things. It is here as in the case of those great analogies which exist between the physical and spiritual creations, between the phenomena of life and death in both for instance, or between salt and sanctity, heaven and living principle. In observing the use which is made of these in Scripture, we cannot bring ourselves to look upon them as mere afterthoughts so to speak of inspiration, but feel constrained to view these after applications as one at least of the manifold designs of the original arrangements of creation. So in tracing the narratives of these miracles and observing how the circumstances and incidents of them impressively and almost irresistibly suggest the higher and more spiritual aspects of man's position and relations to his Saviour, we feel that it would be as absurd as it would be unphilosophical to suppose that these, so obvious and so instructive, analogies are the creatures of accident, or that, in following them out, we are following the light of our own fancy, rather than the direction of the finger of God. Unscriptural and unwise as it would be to attempt, by a process of what has been called spiritualizing, to gild the fine gold of Scripture by covering it over with fanciful and wise drawn analogies, and still more to rest on these the proof of dogmatic truth; not

less absurd is it to turn away our eyes from obvious and natural suggestions calling up to our minds and presenting in new and it may be more impressive aspects, truths which Scripture has elsewhere plainly and directly substantiated. And the effort to link in these suggestions indissolubly with the Word so that ever as it is read, they will arise in the mind of the reader is surely not unworthy of the Christian teacher, and may fairly be considered as only following out the mind of the Spirit.

It needs no quick and lively fancy for instance, to make the first picture presented to us in this narrative call up the circumstances of man's fallen estate. A poor blind beggar sitting by the wayside, how naturally does this suggest our position by nature, blind to the manifested glory of God, helpless by reason of this very blindness, and dependent for our support, for that which we can neither earn nor merit, but must receive as alms from the hand of merest pity. Every beneficent miracle that our Saviour wrought, reminds of some different aspect of this same sad fact.— The leprosy he healed remind us of moral pollution, the palsies he cured of moral impotency, the fevers he allayed of raging lusts. The hungry fed suggest a deeper inner want, the demoniacs relieved, a sadder spiritual despotism, the dead he raised a deadlier inward death. But of all the emblems which these inward and outward woes suggest, none seems to go more thoroughly to the root of the matter than this of blindness. Itself merely negative, it embraces within itself or brings in its train all positive evil. The blind man travels along life's rough highway to knock his foot against every stone without being able to see the beauty, or estimate the value of earth's most flashing jewels.— Thorns he feels, but he sees no rose. Chill winds blow upon him, but he knows not that they bring up a rich canopy of sun-gilded clouds, big with blessings and ready

to drop down fatness on the earth. The rains beat on him, but he cannot see how the grass grows green and the little hills rejoice. In short, he is alive to all the miseries, and insensible to most of the benignancies of nature. So it is with the spiritually blind. Sensitive to the miseries and blind to the mercies of God's wise and holy government, they grope their darkened way through a world full of God's goodness, finding only evil where in truth all is good, finding only misery where every thing is redolent of mercy; and all because the light of the glory of God has not shined into their hearts, because the eyes of their understanding are not enlightened, that they may know what is the hope of his calling and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints. Ah, yes! the central evil of the fall is spiritual blindness and the central blessedness of redemption spiritual enlightenment, that we may know with all saints what is the height and depth, and length and breadth of the love of God that passeth knowledge.

But, while every instance of blindness cured reminds of this, the case before us has its own peculiar lesson in the state of apathy and passive contentment in which the blind man is first of all presented, contrasted as it is with the manifestation of eager and earnest anxieties, which take place on the near approach of Jesus. We see that such apathy is a common characteristic of the blind, and we can easily account for it. By the very completeness of their deprivation they are shut out from everything that can remind them by contrast of what they are and what they might have been, and thus speedily become oblivious of the great evil of their lot, and are troubled only about those secondary evils of which it is the occasion. So also with him who is spiritually blind, oblivious of the glory and blessedness from which he is shut out, he is assiduous only in seeking to obviate the present inconveniences

of his darkened state by such helps as the blind man's dog of natural reason, or the blind man's staff of worldly prudence. But it is observed that there is one thing and perhaps only one thing that will break up the apathy of the blind and substitute for their passive and inert contentment, the anguish of a keen and torturing anxiety. And that one thing is the prospect, above all the near prospect of the restoration of their sight. It is thus with Bartimeus, when he understands that Jesus of Nazareth is passing by, and it is thus also with the sinner when he is made to understand the truth and meaning of that statement with which our Saviour was wont to close his addresses, and which, with admirable wisdom He put into the mouth of his Evangelist, "Notwithstanding be ye assured of this, that the kingdom of heaven is come nigh unto you." Bartimeus sitting by the wayside, and begging for charity in the drawing monotony of an ever repeated whine, is not more different from Bartimeus roused and animated and struggling with all the impetuosity of a heartfelt earnestness to gain the attention of the Saviour, than the sinner sitting under that proclamation of the gospel which conveys to him the notion of a dim distant and barely possible salvation from the misery of a present deliverance from the misery and mischief of sin and restoration to the friendship and favour of God is made to dawn upon his mind. Hence it has always been found that that Gospel is most potent in rousing sinners which preaches most definitely a present salvation. And when, to such preaching, there is added the confirmatory evidence of living witnesses testifying by look and life that the Gospel believed, has carried them from death to life, from darkness into God's marvellous light, from the kingdom and power of Satan into the kingdom of God's dear son, then the apathy of which we complain in the

hearers of the Gospel, gives way in a general awakening; and listless indifference is replaced by deep convictions and earnest inquiry. And here a lesson, an important lesson comes home to both preachers and hearers, what the one ought specially to hold forth and the other to inquire after, is a present Saviour, a Saviour near and ready to help, and a present salvation, what Jesus is willing to do now for our deliverance, what he is presently and immediately able and willing to bestow out of the rich treasures of his fulness. The thought of this, the expectation of this will, if any thing will, quicken us from our apathy and stir us up to an energetic effort to lay hold of the great salvation.

In Bartimeus, aroused and pleading, we have a beautiful picture of earnestness, a quality which, consisting as it does of keen feeling and vigorous purpose, has ever, see it where we may, a strong hold on human sympathy—may we not say of divine sympathy also—seeing that to all appearance we are, in this respect, only made after the image of God. However that may be, we know that it had ever a strong hold on the sympathy of Jesus, who was man as well as God; and has still, for see we not that, seated on the throne of the universe and swaying all things by his sceptre, he ever gives most success to the men of earnest minds, to the men who feel keenly and act vigorously. Of them he still seems to say, as he said of one earnest minded servant of old, "Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubabel thou shalt become a plain." Who can doubt, as we see the man of strong and earnest purpose cleaving his way through obstacles, and dashing them aside like a strong swimmer battling with an opposing flood, until he has changed impossibilities into realities, and stamped what men called his fancies in enduring characters on the hard rock of material fact—who can doubt, who witnesses the all but omnipotence with which

genuine earnestness is clothed, that it is an omnipotence which dwells, not in the inherent force of the quality itself, great as that undoubtedly is, but which flows to it from the sympathy and co-operation of the great Ruler of the universe, who was and is himself emphatically in earnest. O, if we would secure the sympathy of Jesus, and the co-operation of his power, if we would accomplish anything good and great, or good and little, if such a thing can be, if we would win salvation for ourselves or others, let us be earnest. Let us be earnest or leave the matter alone. For in proportion to his sympathy with earnestness, is his detestation of the opposite. "I would," says he to the men of Laodicea, "I would ye were either cold or hot. So, then, because ye are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue you out of my mouth."

The characteristics of earnestness are here beautifully pictured. It needs little to encourage it, and yet lays vigorous hold of every encouragement. It meets with much to discourage, but is not easily hindered. It never seeks to accomplish, by the help of others, what itself can do. It does what it can, when it cannot do all it would. It goes direct to the best means, and uses instinctively the best pleas. And usually it manifests itself in a way which the easy and indifferent think neither decorous nor becoming, neither reasonable nor right. How does the conduct of Bartimeus in these respects compare with that of those, alas! too many, who profess to be seeking salvation without furnishing us with the smallest symptom on which we might hang a proof, either of reality in their profession, or earnestness in their hearts. He had neither promises nor pledges, but based his hopes on the mere report of Jesus' character and past doings; they have promises and pledges and undertakings manifold; and yet he presses forward amid repeated discouragements, still hoping, still believing: they draw back discouraged and de-

sponding. He knew not that Christ would listen to him, and, if the opinion which has been based on a comparison of the various narratives be correct, had failed the previous evening to attract his notice, yet he redoubles his cry. They have assurance that his ear is ever open, yet their mouth is dumb. When we see this poor man, who could not go and cast himself at the feet of Jesus, wasting no time in vain entreaties for the help of others, but raising his own voice in earnest outcry, how it rebukes the inertness of those who go about with whining complaints of their spirit's deadness and their soul's barrenness, or leaning helplessly on the prayers of the pious, while their Bibles are unstudied and their closets neglected. Or what are we to think of men who know that they have souls to be saved, and that Jesus is set forth as a propitiation for our sins, and yet complain that they cannot and know not how to pray, when we see this poor man guided by the instincts of a soul on fire concentrating the essence of all Old Testament prophecies into one pithy and powerful petition, "Jesus of Nazareth, thou Son of David, have mercy on me." And how does the conduct of him who, when rebuked and charged to hold his peace, cried the more a great deal, and succeeded in his purpose, rebuke the folly of those who stifle deep convictions, as if ashamed or afraid to let them be known, and to their soul's ruin.

Farther on in the narrative we have another illustration of the same spirit, also with its own peculiar lessons, and it is to be feared, its own peculiar rebukes. When, chained by his infirmity, Bartimeus could do nothing else but cry, he cried loud and earnestly, and refused to be silenced; but no sooner does he receive the encouragement of Christ's invitation, and the helping hand of Christ's messengers, than he promptly takes advantages of both. His cries are silenced, and the earnest spirit within him turned to action; he dashes

aside every incumbrance and hurries to the feet of his deliverer. It is not difficult to see to what class the instruction and rebuke here conveyed is most appropriately tendered, and by what class it is most energetically required. It is that, alas! too numerous class of gospel hearers, who, with some anxiety for their soul's salvation, have heard the gospel invitation, "Come to Jesus," and have the hand of Christian sympathy and help continually held out to them, and yet linger in conscious thralldom of sin, and at a conscious distance from the feet of the Saviour. O, my brother, my brother, face the fact and know it. You are not in earnest; you do not really and sincerely wish to be saved. If you did you would not need to be twice told to "arise and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord." You do not wish to be saved, and who will save you in such a case as that? Will even the blessed and ever-merciful Jesus? Not he; he will pity but he will not help. Never, in the whole records of his wondrous love, will you find a case of his bestowing a blessing not first earnestly desired, the want of which was not first keenly and deeply felt. If your hands were covered with blood, if your souls were raging with foul and angry passions, if your heart were obdurate and rebellious and hard as the nether millstone, yet if the arrows of the Lord were drinking up your vitals, if the terrors of the Lord were compassing you about, if alarmed, uneasy and restless, if, anxious and earnest, you were looking about for safety, my soul would rejoice over you as a probable heir of glory, as one likely soon to be made partaker of the grace that is in Christ Jesus: for I could lead you and you would come to one who would wash away your sins in his own blood: would say to the storms within, "Peace, be still:" would take away the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. But you, my poor forlorn brother,

hoping, fearing, and still remaining in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity, what shall I say to you? Jesus will not come to you, and you will not come to Jesus. I would bring him to you if I could, but he will not come. It is not proper, it seems, that he should. Infinite wisdom has decreed that it is not, or infinite love would leap over all barriers, and pluck even you a brand from the burning. He will not come therefore, and I dare not ask him. I can only beseech the Father for his sake to send his spirit into your heart to quicken you to a true apprehension of your danger, that you may be in earnest. I can only pray, "Lord, show this man what he is and where he is, lest the avenger of blood overtake him, and there be no escape.

But the example of Bartimeus has still farther instruction. The casting away of the garments is a highly expressive, we had almost said a symbolic act. Let us consider it. A beggar's mantle was not a thing of much value in itself; but relatively to him, it had all worth of indispensable necessity. Beggars are not apt to be burdened with superfluity of clothing, and without his garment how was he to provide for either comfort or decency. Yet he risks all that, rather than be hindered in going to Jesus, abandons his clothing to the mercies of the crowd, careless if he shall ever recover it, or recovering, find it fit to wear. Or take another point of view. The distance of Jesus was not great; the time consumed in reaching him would be short, even at the slowest; the difference between going with or without the cloak of little consequence. And doubtless Christ would wait, would give him time to reach him, without the necessity of sacrificing his dress. But real earnestness never stops to make such calculations, can admit in its eagerness only one consideration—the speediest attainment of its end; and every incumbrance is thrown aside, without stopping

to count the cost. Alas! how different from this the conduct of so many, who seem more anxious to carry as much as possible with them into the ark than to get in themselves, more anxious to carry all they can from Sodom than to escape with their lives. That man of much business and many gains, in whom the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches are choking the word—is he in earnest about his salvation, who cannot let even one opportunity of a bargain slip, but is ever plotting how he may increase a business that already threatens to bury him in perdition? Or that Martha, careful and troubled about many things, has she learned that one thing is needful, who is ever finding something yet to do, and then she will have leisure to sit at the feet of Jesus? Or the followers of some questionable business, against which their own conscience speaks, shall they be allowed to plead necessity, and not be held to the confession that they are by no means in earnest about salvation. Or the votaries of fashion, the victims of worldly conformity and worldly connections, the slaves of some darling pleasure or favourite pursuit, of which they are sensible that it comes between them and their Saviour, comes between them and their Bibles, comes between them and the throne of grace, comes between them and the life that is in Christ Jesus, but who, instead of dashing these things from them, breaking through and away from all to run to and after Christ, are stopping to consider whether they cannot be Christians without all this sacrifice and self-denial, stopping to see whether they cannot find an instance of some one who was a Christian, or seemed to be a Christian, and lived as they live, and did as they do. Now, is it possible that they can hope to persuade either us or themselves that they are at all in earnest, or really desirous to be saved.

I know not a thing worth buying but heaven.

## THE DEATH OF AN INFANT.

I heard the angels singing  
As they went up through the sky,  
A sweet infant's spirit bringing  
To its Father's house on high!  
"Happy thou, so soon ascended,  
With thy shining raiment on!  
Happy thou, whose race is ended  
With a crown so quickly won!

"Hushed is now thy lamentation,  
And the first words to thee given  
Will be words of adoration,  
In the blessed speech of Heaven:  
For the blood thou might'st have slighted  
Hath now made thee pure within,  
And the evil seed is blighted  
That had ripened into sin.

"We will lead thee by a river  
Where the flowers are blooming fair;  
We will sing to thee for ever  
For no night may darken there,  
Thou shalt walk in robes of glory,  
Thou shalt wear a golden crown,  
Thou shalt sing redemption's story  
With the saints around the throne.

"Thou shalt see that better country  
Where a teardrop never fell,  
Where a foe made never entry  
And a friend ne'er said farewell;\*  
Where upon the radiant faces  
That will shine on thee alway,  
Thou shalt never see the traces  
Of estrangement or decay.

"Thee we bear, a lily blossom,  
To a summer clime above;  
There to lay thee in a bosom  
Warm with more than mother's love.  
Happy thou, so timely gathered,  
From a region cold and bare,  
To bloom on, a flower unwithered,  
Through an endless summer there!"

Through the night that dragged so slowly  
Watched a mother by a bed;  
Weeping wildly, kneeling lowly,  
She would not be comforted.  
To her lost one she was clinging,  
Raining tears upon a shroud;  
And those angel-voices singing  
Could not reach her through the cloud.

J. D. BURNS, Vision of Prophecy.

\* "Days without night, joys without sorrow,  
sanctity without sin, charity without stain, pos-  
session without fear, society without envying,  
communication of joys without lessening; and  
they shall dwell in a blessed country, where an  
enemy never entered, and from whence a friend  
never went away."—JAMES TAYLOR.

## TEN MINUTES' WARNING.

BY THOMAS GUTHRIE, D. D.

The substance of this Address was delivered two days after the calamity in Edinburgh to which it refers.

You must all have heard of that sudden and awful calamity which lately filled Edinburgh with gloom—and which was God's voice speaking in a striking way to the whole community. "The lion hath roared, who will not fear?" When, bending his shaggy neck, with his mouth laid close to the ground, and eyes on fire, the king of the forest gives forth his roar, that voice as it rolls along the ground and reverberates from the mountains, is followed by the deepest silence; all other creatures are struck dumb with terror; and such is the stillness, that a withered leaf might be heard dropping from a tree. Now when God speaketh—and never spake He to my ear in providence as He has spoken now—who should not attend, and hear, and learn the solemn lesson?

We were all surprised and shocked on going into church on Sabbath morning to be told that a house had fallen between John Knox's house and the North Bridge, on the north side of the High Street, and that a number of people were killed—buried in the ruins. I could not go then, but I went at the close of service, in the afternoon; and here was that spacious, lofty, noble street crowded with people thick as swarming bees. Knowing some of the officers of police, I got through the dense throng on to the pavement opposite where this house had been; and there saw a most frightful and shocking spectacle.—The whole front wall had fallen, leaving the east and west gable standing, and the north wall. The workmen had already dug out some twelve or fourteen dead bodies; and it was not considered safe for them to work any longer. They had begun at two o'clock in the afternoon, and they were afraid to work longer—first, because darkness was coming on; and second, because the storm was rising; the wind was soon blowing "great guns," as they say; and many expected every moment that the enormous pile of building, eighty feet high, would topple over, and bury in death those who were attempting to rescue any who might still be living—and there was little hope of life now, since all were found dead who had been dug out after six o'clock in the morning; and it was now past four in the afternoon. How touching and impressive was the scene before me! It was an awful thing to see, in the fading light of day, and on the walls, four, five, six storeys high, the dresses hanging which had been thrown off by the

inhabitants before they retired to rest; and the building sunk, that carried men, women, and children—sleeping, waking, sinning, praying, however they were engaged—down into one grave in an instant of time. In consequence of the floors giving way and carrying the doors with them, the wardrobes stood exposed on the walls; and it was a horrid thing to look up there and see three or four gowns shaking, and moving, and waving ghastly-like in the wind of night; and think that right down below, those that had put them off some few hours before, in perfect health, were now lying begrimed, and mangled, and blackened corpses. I was struck with a staff that was hanging high up on the rent wall; and which its owner had hung there, little thinking that that staff was never to be in his hands again! It appeared to me to say that life's journey was ended, and that the pilgrim had laid by his staff. Would to God we knew that that man's pilgrimage had ended in the rest that remaineth for the people of God! Looking glasses where woman had admired her beauty and attired herself, hung here and there on the shattered walls, flickering in the evening twilight. Two dumb clocks, still fixed on the ruins, about sixty feet high, told the hour the catastrophe had happened; they seemed emblems of their owners who lay below, and in whom death had stopped life's pendulum.—The finger of one pointed to half-past, that of the other to five-and-twenty minutes past one—the fatal moment when the crash came, and the mighty mass, seven storeys high, sunk to the ground as if it had been rocked by an earthquake.

Next day, as early as possible, I returned to the scene of the calamity. It was a hideous spectacle. The three walls, though rent and shaken to their foundations and severely tried by the storm that roared and raved all Sunday night, were still standing. The clothes of the dead still hung on them; bright tinued vessels were glancing in the light; children's playthings were there—cupboards, with the crockery ware neatly arranged, stood gaping open; kettles sat on cold grates, where the fires continued to burn for hours after the hands that kindled them were cold and stiff in death—and, besides these, there were many other indications showing that the people—as shall be at the Lord's coming, and like those before the flood—never dreamed of the calamity, and had made all their arrangements for "to-morrow." Having seen the building, I was asked to go and see the bodies; and went, not to gratify a vulgar curiosity, but for the sake of its salutary impressions. I have seen many dead—I have seen no fewer than forty bodies laid out in a dissecting room—and a very shocking sight it was—but then they had each died "a fair



little creatures thus, in God's good providence plucked from the jaws of death.

That infant was right about the length of time which elapsed between the warning and the catastrophe. I see in the newspapers that other parties also speak of ten minutes given to flee. How much turned on these ten minutes! Some, taking the warning, fled; and are still living—ten minutes saved them!—Some, neglecting it, went to bed—and are dead! Ten minutes ruined them! Ten minutes may do the same with you! The lives of those in that building turned on the use of ten minutes—and so may your salvation. Ten minutes' prayer may save a man—the thief didn't pray so long; but ten minutes' neglect of prayer may damn a man for ever! Take warning; flee to the cross; throw your arms around it; cry, "Save me, Lord Jesus, I perish!" and go to heaven. Neglect the warning; reject salvation; and you go down to hell.

There was one family, of the name of Baxter, living on the fourth storey, none of the members of which perished. The head of this house was a flesher—and many of these men in our large towns are hard put to it to get through with their work on Saturday night, and get home by Sunday morning. It was the Sabbath when he reached his home. His wife and children were gone to bed. She rose and made him some supper, and after that returned to bed; but just as she was falling asleep, she heard a tremendous crack and rumble as of stones, and from a superstitious feeling, cried out, "There's a warning!" He laughed at her fears; but ere the laughter was ended, from the next room, where a grown-up daughter slept with other three, there came a piercing cry—"Oh! father, father! mother, mother!" He sprung to the door, burst it open; and fancy his astonishment and horror, when he saw the bed on which his four daughters lay split in two. The sinking of the room had already begun! With energy and promptness, he pulled the inmates out of the apartment, and rousing the whole of his family, hurried them to the door—wife and nine children. She, with a woman's modesty, wanted to dress before rushing out; but, with the decision of one who knew how precious was every instant, he pushed her before him.—Away ran the children, the wife and her husband, fleeing for their lives. It happened that the stair belonging to the falling tenement communicated with a landing in a house that stood there in safety: but ere the father, who brought up the rear, had stepped on the landing, the house was bending to its fall. There lay a gulf between him and them—a horrid chasm that was yawning wider and

wider. Summoning up all his energy, a bold, prompt man, he made one bound and cleared it—and by that leap saved his life. He lives.

And so soon as he had got across, what was the first thing he did? what we shall do in the day of judgment. And what is that? When you and I rise from our graves, if we are God's people, we will begin to count and see if our children are all there—this son, that daughter—if all are there—that we may go up to our blessed Saviour and say, "Here am I, and the children that thou hast given me." Baxter had had nine children, and but eight stood there. One was amissing. God forbid that on the great day, and by the right hand of the throne, alas! there should be one of our children missing! If one of you has an unconverted son or daughter who is going to ruin and to the bad, oh! pray for them now—that, before the chasm grow wider, they may leap, get across it, and be saved. He began, as I have said, to count, and there was one awaiting—and just as a Christian father or mother will think more, and pray more, and plead more with, and be more anxious about, an ill-doing than about a well-doing child, so this father and mother forgot almost everything else in their anxiety about the missing lamb. Had it been overlooked, lost in the wild confusion—left to perish? No, thank God! Jane was found awaiting; yet, by God's mercy, saved. The young creature suddenly awakened out of sleep, amid the tremendous excitement of the midnight danger, the roar of the falling building, the air dark and choking with a cloud of dust, the confusion, the cries, the screams, the groans of the perishing, had rushed to the bottom of the stairs, where a benevolent gentleman found her weeping, and took her to his own home. The lost was found. Next morning she was restored to her parents' happy arms. Ours be the deeper joy of one day saying over every now careless and ungodly child, "This my son, my daughter, that was dead, is alive again; that was lost, is found!" Pray for that!

How many great and solemn lessons should this circumstance teach us! Look at that of the warning! The doors hadn't been working aright for months; one man states that the door of his room, in opening and shutting, had so pressed upon the floor that the mark of it was worn into the wood to the fourth of an inch—they had warning in this; there were cracks in the roof—they had warning in this; the floors were sinking—they had warning in this; the plaster was peeling off—they had warning in this; the pillars were swaying off the plumb—they had warning in this; warnings many that the house was tumbling, and about to come down. Well, I was just thinking how many warnings men have, and yet they live

just as careless and as reckless. The hair turns grey, and drops off the head; the teeth fall and leave empty jaws; the light and power of vision fail from the eyes; man's step and breath grow short; he finds it difficult to climb a hill; he cannot do the work of brain or hand he once did; the keepers of the house are trembling—all these prognosticate that this frail, clay tabernacle is sinking to its fall. "Ah!" you say, as I have heard many do, "Well, I wonder how on earth these people did not take warning!" But how on earth, I ask, does many a man not take warning that he is dying, and should make ready for the inevitable hour when he shall go to the bar of judgment, and have sentence pronounced on him, not for time but for eternity? Now, would it not be a grand and blessed thing if God by my voice here this night were to warn any of you? How I would have rejoiced to have plucked one of these children from the ruins! But were it not even a better joy to rescue some sinful souls out of the wreck and ruins of a fallen world—bringing them to Christ, that they might be saved for ever!—My friends, go home this night to take the warning. Put it not away. Don't say, "It's all very well for others, but it don't apply to me—I shall see to-morrow—next week—another year—many other years!" You don't know that; and suppose you did, if you see to-morrow in your present state of sin, I tell you there is far less likelihood of your being saved then than there is now—to-night. See these people, dead, buried in an instant among that mass of rubbish—and take timely warning. Delay not a moment. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might."

Live for God—live for Jesus—live not only for your own salvation, but for others' good—for dying souls! How nobly did the men of Edinburgh turn out to work all night long to save the perishing—those who lay bruised and buried in the ruins! "Ah!" you say, "so would I had I been there! No more than they would I have lain in bed—composed myself to sleep—clung to my pillow—spared any exertion to help my fellow-creatures in their hour of need? The cries of the wounded and mangled and buried in my ear, I would have worked with these hands till they were covered with blood." Well, there are at your door, perhaps in your family, certainly among your acquaintances, those who, living careless and in sin, it is as much your duty to try, and try instantly, to save. They lie buried in the ruins of the Fall. Unless they are dug out, received into the arms of Christ, renewed and revived by His Spirit, they must by and bye, may to-morrow, nay, may this night be for ever lost. For our own good or

that of others, there is no time to waste. The judge is at the door. The voice of Christ, as of old, is sounding loud in the ears of a drowsy world. Watch, therefore, lest coming suddenly, He find you sleeping. When I stood in the fading light of Sabbath even by that shattered pile, and saw the staff hanging on the riven wall which was to be no more needed—and women's robes waving in the wind, which were to be no more worn—and mirrors glittering in the last lights of day, which should no more reflect the living face—and the fires quenched on their lofty hearths—and the clocks that stood still, each with silent finger pointing to the hour of doom—and when I thought of the dead who lay below, summoned at the midnight hour so suddenly and unexpectedly into the presence of God, the wind as it moaned among these ghastly ruins not only seemed to mourn over the dead, but to fashion its voice into the words of this solemn warning—"BE YE ALSO READY, FOR YE KNOW NEITHER THE DAY NOR THE HOUR WHEN THE SON OF MAN COMETH."

#### THE IDLE CHRISTIAN.

To be idle is to be—not like Christ. "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"

To be idle is to neglect to glorify God. "In this is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit."

To be idle is to be false to the Church. She needs help; she is entitled to the service of all her sons. "Here am I; send me."

To be idle is to be cruel to dying souls—as cruel as one who would leave a wounded man to perish by the way-side when he might save him. "He which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death."

To be idle is to hinder a blessing. "Bring all the tithes into the store-house."

To be idle is to be weak. "But exercise thyself rather unto godliness."

Idleness has no promise. "So run that you may obtain." "Let no man take your crown."

Idleness brings a curse. "Curse ye Meross" curse bitterly; because they came not up to the help of the Lord against the mighty."

The idle are liable to a disastrous end. "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness."

Oh, that the young would be good betimes, that so they may have the greater harvest of joy when they come to be old! It is sad to be sowing seed, when you should be reaping your harvest. It is best to gather the summer of youth against the winter of old age.

## THE MANIAC'S SERMON.

A WORD FOR YOUNG MEN.

After the hymn had been sung the minister offered up a brief prayer, and then resumed his seat. He had taken the Bible on his knee, and was searching for his text, when he and the whole congregation were startled by the appearance of the maniac Smith.

The young lunatic, who was known to nearly all present, ascended the pulpit with folded arms, bowed head, and slow and steady pace. Facing the immense congregation, he gazed carefully around, and amid breathless silence, spread forth his hands, and in the most thrilling manner said:

"Your music is the music of Heaven. The birds in yonder treetops are bearing it with their songs to the lips of angels above, who will convey it as sweet incense to the Omnipotent Throne of God. Joy is thine, O Israel. You possess the living soul, that rejoices in the light of reason, that laves in the waters of purest love, and rejoices in the glory of immortality. My soul is dead! A cherished child of piety, I became recreant to the God who gave me being, and sold my life, my happiness, my immortality to the Prince of Darkness. Like the traveller who has a well-trodden path before him, but is attracted to dangerous places by the gaudy show of some poisonous flower, I have wandered to my death! My feet were placed in the straight and narrow way, were covered with the sandals of piety, and the Christian staff was placed in my hands, and yet, O God! I wandered to my death. The gaudy baubles of vice, the showy, yet thorny flowers of wickedness drew me aside. I felt the smooth surface, and ascended to mountains of trouble, and yet I gained not the object of my pursuit. On I dashed, reckless and indifferent to my fate. The wicked one, who sought my destruction, led me on, and I, cursed with remorse, followed. I knew I was plunging into ruin, but, with a soul already accursed, what cared I? Voluntarily I had sought death and it came. It was one night, and oh! a fearful night it was to me. Exhausted, doomed, and accursed, I was still clambering up the mountain of sin. I came to a chasm, deep and fearful. The lightnings of Heaven flashed about me, and the thunder of Omnipotence pealed in my ears. I felt myself moving towards that fearful chasm! Death, eternal death, stared me in the face, and I screamed piteously for help. No one came to aid me. My companions in vice listened not to my cries, and he to whom I had sold my soul, derided me in mockery! I was moved on, nearer and nearer to the precipice. Frantically I grasped each shrub and rocky prominence which lay in my way, but they crumbled in my hands. I reached the edge of the precipice! I glanced into the deep abyss of death! Oh! terror, terror!

I pleaded Heaven for mercy, but, great God, it was too late!

"My sin-covered soul trembled with the agony it suffered, and was piteous in its appeals. But the thunder told me, 'Too late.' The lightning told me, 'Too late;' and, gracious Heavens, my own cowardly soul told me, 'Too late!' I felt myself going over the precipice. I clung with tenacity to every thing within my reach, but nothing could save me. I shrieked! I groaned! *Down to perdition went my soul!*"

Here the maniac paused. His vivid portraiture of his career had startled the whole congregation, some of whom shrieked outright as he represented his soul's frightful descent into perdition. He paused a minute only. Then calm again, he softly said:

"I am living without a soul! You people of God may sing your praises, for it is as sweet incense to your souls. But you sinners must repent this day, or your souls will go after mine over that deep, dark, fearful abyss into hell! Will you repent, or go with me into eternal perdition?"

The effect of this was more than terrific. Screams and groans arose from the gay and giddy in the congregation.

A year or two before, this young man was brought home one evening, insensibly drunk. The next morning found him the victim of a terrible fever, brought on by his sensual indulgences and extravagant course of life.—Of that fever he was, after many fearful days, and much tender care by his relatives, cured, but it left him a raving maniac. So fearful were his mad efforts, it became necessary to confine him in a Lunatic Asylum, to keep him from perpetrating mischief on himself and others. He remained there until within a few weeks of the camp meeting, when he became sufficiently restored to be returned to the custody of his family. He was still insane, but he was mild and obedient, and under those circumstances he was taken with the family to the camp meeting, the utmost vigilance being exercised over him.

Young men! beware of the cup, the destroyer of the body, and still worse, the destroyer of the soul!—*Christian treasury.*

## WORTHLESS FAITH.

BY THE REV. WILLIAM LEASK, D. D.

It would be strange if there were not the spurious as well as the true in faith, as in most other things. The dead faith defined and censured by the apostle James is this spurious and evil thing; and if we say at once, without any circumlocution, that it is one of the most terrible enemies of the

human race, and of the Church of Jesus Christ, we shall only express an undeniable truth. It professes to believe in God, but with the recognition of this fundamental truth it stops.

The faith that works by love, and purifies the heart, is clearly something very different from this; the faith that bears fruit to the Divine glory, and earnestly desires conformity to Christ as the sublime end of redemption, is the only faith that the gospel recognises, or that gives vitality and beauty to character. But, alas! how many are there in all our churches who come lamentably short of this—mere professors, steady, sober, respectable people; but who have no spiritual sympathy with the holy works of the Saviour; no passionate yearning for that spotless purity which is the glorious prospect of all who see in Christ not only the Saviour of sinners, but also the model for saints; and no self-denying eagerness to sacrifice all for Him who gave Himself a sacrifice for us. These men are the practical Antinomians of the Church. They say, and do not. They call Jesus, "Lord Lord," but do not the things He requires of all His servants. They do not realise the privilege and joy of being under law to Him. The service of freedom; the motive of obedience which finds its strong roots in the love of the delivered to the great Deliverer; and the profound thought clothed in the words "Ye are not your own," are things to which they are total strangers. And yet it is clear that these things are among the very essentials of the true Christian life.

If Christianity consisted in the mere assent of the understanding to certain propositions or doctrines, we should be, in fact, what we often foolishly call ourselves, a "Christian nation," for such assent is almost universal in these islands; but, happily, for us, Christianity is something more than that meagre, barren, dead abstraction; hence the man who—through the instrumentality of its wonderful truths, and by the power of the Holy Spirit—has been translated from darkness to light, can say something more than, "I believe;" he can add,—his heart bounding with gratitude as he does so,—"I LIVE; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son

of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." That is something for a man to say! But, beyond controversy, that is precisely *the something* which all who "profess and call themselves Christians" should be able to say, otherwise their profession is vain, their so-called faith is worthless.

How startling are the following words; "Thou believest that there is one God! thou doest well; the devils also believe and tremble." So far as belief in the unity of Deity, in the one living and true God, is concerned, you do well; that is a grand truth, the foundation truth of religion; but the belief of that, by itself, is not the faith whose end is salvation, for devils believe it as firmly as you do, nay, realise it far more vividly, for they believe it and tremble, and yet remain devils still! Well might the apostle add, with characteristic earnestness, "But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?"

We are justified by faith in Christ Jesus without the works of the law; but in every case after the sinner is thus fully justified the fruits and evidences of his justification are seen in the works of the gospel, in which, as a saved man and a new creature in Christ he takes delight. That God has graciously saved him through His beloved Son is seen in the fact of his new obedience! He works now, right gladly and gratefully, not that he may be saved, but because he is saved. Before he did any thing from the right motive, God saw that he fell at the feet of Jesus absolutely and consciously helpless, and He saved him; for that is just the way that He saves sinners. That is one side of the question. So far as men are concerned, the whole transaction was invisible. But now that man brings forth the fruits of righteousness to the glory of God. This is the other side of the question. That fruit is the visible result; *we see it*; and conclude, without hesitation, that the man is justified. His professed faith is not worthless; it is a reality, whose evidences are seen in his consecration of himself and all he has to his adorable and glorious Lord.

Dear reader! test thyself by these remarks. Bring them home to thy personal consciousness.

WARE, Dec. 1861.

## WHO ARE BLIND.

BY HENRY WARD BEECHER.

All that live without the sight or thought of immortality; all that live without a vision of the eternal blessedness of that land that endureth; all that live without seeking those blessed ones that are gone out from us; all that have no sight of Jesus; all that live as though the terraqueous globe were all there was of substance, and this fleeting life all there was of experience; before whom pass in perpetual silence all the wonders of the spiritual world, and they see it not—they are blind! They are blind! Would that there were some touch that would lay open their eyes, that they might see a Heaven, a Judgment seat, a coming doom, or coming reward. Whose convictions follow my words and say: "I am that blind?" Are there none that have drifted so far from their real convictions and faith that they seem to them almost like memories of a foreign shore? Are there none that remember the days when their mother took them on the knee, folded their little hands in prayer—and often they would have laughed if the thoughts of that mother had not come upon them?

Are there not those who remember the village church: the Sabbath day—does it not sometimes rise in stately memory, and do you not hear that stately bell that rings still in the village where you were brought up; that rings over the turf where you laid your father, mother, brother, sister—rings out for you the memory of the past? Are there not those who walk in the ways of the deceived, that were children of venerable and Christian parents; and do you not struggle with your conscience and go on from bad to worse, going down towards—not blindness—but the blackness of darkness forever? Are there not blind here that begin to feel their blindness? I believe there are rays of light that strike through spiritual darkness, by which they may see their misfortune. I believe there are in the worst men luminous days in which they yearn for deliverance. I preach to every such one that Jesus that walks up and down the ways of life; that He passes every village, and in all His passes is going about to cleanse and restore.

Jesus, whose mission is to give sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf; whose mission is to give to the dead heart life, to bring out of the sepulchre of man's weak nature a blessed resurrection their spiritual selves—I preach that Jesus to you, ten thousand times more anxious to give you spiritual sight. Now stand on your feet. Call for help if you feel you need it. Call, not once, nor twice. If

checked, if hindered, if exceedingly thrust away, call again, and get your heart and soul into it. Go to Jesus, and if he says, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?"—say with him of old, "Lord, that I might receive my sight," and not only to see what you are, what your nature is, what your character is, but to see the sweet face of Jesus reconciling God and your souls; to see the blessed joys held in reserve for "those who by faith and patience inherit the promises." There is seeing for every one that will. Ho! ye blind—let me call for you. Jesus is not far from many here. Perhaps He calls you that will not call to Him.

## Absence of Mind in Prayer.

I know not how strong others may be in spirit, but I confess that I cannot be as holy as some profess to be; for whenever I do not bear in mind the word of God, I feel no Christ, no spirit and joy. But, if I meditate on any portion of Holy Writ, it shines and burns in my heart, so that I obtain good courage and another mind. The cause is this: we all discover that our minds and thoughts are so unsteady, that, though we desire to pray earnestly, or meditate on God without His word, our thoughts scatter in a thousand forms ere we are aware of it. Let any one try how long he can rest on one idea he proposed himself, or take one hour, and avow that he will tell me all his thoughts. I am sure he will be ashamed before himself, and afraid to say what ideas have passed through the head, lest he should be taken for a mad dog, and be chained. This is my case, though engaged in serious thoughts. But I must explain myself by an example.

St. Bernard once complained to a friend that he found it very difficult to pray aright, and could not even pronounce the Lord's Prayer once without a host of strange thoughts. His friend was astonished, and gave it as his opinion that he could fix his thoughts on his prayer without any difficulty. Bernard offered him the wager of a fine horse, on condition he should commence forthwith. The friend commenced, "Our Father," &c.; but before he had finished the first petition, it occurred to him, if he should gain the horse, whether he would also receive saddle and bridle. In short, he was so entangled in his own thoughts, that he had to quit and give up the prize. This I state in order to show how necessary it is to keep guard over our hearts, that they may not become distracted, but may cleave to the letter as a guide. On the other side, beware also against the danger of falling into formality, but let the heart commence; then lips, words, and external position will naturally follow.—*Luther.*

# THE GOOD NEWS.

March 15th, 1862.

## THE GOSPEL HISTORY.

BY THE REV. W. B. CLARK, QUEBEC.

*Luke* II. 1-12.

When the birth-time of Jesus drew nigh, God made Augustus Cæsar, the mighty emperor of Rome, the unconscious instrument of bringing Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem, that the prophecy of Micah might be fulfilled: "And thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto me, that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting." It was before hinted, that the representatives of the royal family of David had, probably from prudential motives, retired to the remote and obscure town of Nazareth, that being away from the notice, they might avoid the suspicions, of the cruel and unscrupulous Herod.

A decree had been issued by authority of Augustus, that a census should be taken of the whole Roman Empire, including not only the provinces, but the tributary and dependant kingdoms. And a Roman census, be it remembered, was not, as with us, a mere enumeration of the inhabitants; it included also a valuation of their property, with a view to the imposition of taxes. From the fact of no particular notice being taken of this census, by the more popular Roman historians, it was long doubted whether it was general; and many eminent interpreters were of opinion, that this census extended only to Galilee and Judea. It is certain that the Greek phrase, corresponding to "all the world," might be translated the whole land;—an expression which might very well be employed to denote the whole of the holy land, including Galilee, Samaria, and Judea, properly so called. With a view to establish this interpretation, it has been pleaded that, a little before this time, Herod had given deadly offence to Augustus, by an incursion which he made into Arabia, the evils of which had been exaggerated, and the design probably misrepresented to the emperor, by Herod's enemies. The consequence of this was,

that he seems to have formed the purpose of dethroning Herod, and wrote to him a severe letter, stating that, whereas he had before treated him as a friend, he would now treat him as a subject. It has been thought by many, that the census alluded to in the text arose out of this circumstance, and that it was made preparatory to the reduction of Judea into the form of a province. Herod found means of propitiating Augustus, and averting his threatened design, so that no practical consequences resulted immediately from the census which was at this time taken.

We do not question the accuracy of these historical facts concerning Herod; but the minute enquiries of more recent writers have now established the fact, that a general census had been decreed by Augustus a short time before the birth of Christ, and must have been going forward at that period. I am inclined, therefore, to take the words, as we find them in our own version, as denoting the whole Roman empire, or Roman world, as they vainly called it, throughout which, it may now be regarded as an ascertained fact, that a general census was at this time in progress. What comfort to the believer, and what stability may it give to the unsettled enquirer, that historical facts recorded in Scripture, on which doubts had been cast by superficial criticism, have been fully established by more accurate and extensive erudition, and that even disintomb'd cities, whose very sites had become doubtful, have given forth, in their ancient monuments, the most irresistible evidence of the historic accuracy of Scripture.

The second verse is obviously a parenthesis, designed to disqualify the statement contained in the first, and just means, that this enrolment, or the taxing itself, first took effect, *i. e.*, was practically carried out, in the levying of taxes, when Cyrenius was governor of Syria. Few verses have more puzzled commentators than this; for if the translation in the authorized version be correct, then Luke's statement would be inconsistent with the well-known history of the period; for we know that Cyrenius, or, as the Roman writers call him, Quirinius, was not governor of Syria, till about 11 years after the birth of Christ. In order to obviate this difficulty, the verse has been translated by some, "This was the first

census of Cyrenius, governor of Syria;" not that Cyrenius was governor at the time when this first census was taken; but Luke terms him here governor, as the title by which he was best known;—a mode of speech this, which is sanctioned by universal usage. From the expression, *first*, if it is to be considered as an adjective, it is obvious that more than one census had been taken. It is extremely probable that Cyrenius was the person employed in superintending the census in Syria, and that having executed this trust well, he was afterwards sent out as governor of that province, when a second census was taken, and carried into effect. These statements are very probable; but I prefer interpreting the passage as before indicated, viz., to this effect:—This enrolment, or census, first took effect when Cyrenius was governor of Syria. About the period of Christ's birth, we know that a general census was made throughout the Roman empire; but it was not then acted upon in Judea: and it was not carried into effect till after Archelaus, Herod's son and successor, was deposed from the throne of Judah, and the country annexed to the Roman province of Syria. This latter is the taxing to which Gamaliel alludes, Acts v. 37, which gave occasion to the insurrection of Judas of Galilee, which was the beginning of those disturbances which terminated in the destruction of Jerusalem.

The whole passage, then, should be thus read: And it came to pass, in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be enrolled (the enrolment itself *first* took effect when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) Thus, by a proper translation of the words, all difficulty is removed, perfect harmony restored, and the most satisfactory light thrown on an obscure portion of Jewish and Roman history.

It would seem that, when a census was made among the Jews, all residing in the Holy Land, if living out of the bounds of their respective tribes, were required to repair to them, and to the principal city of the family to which they belonged. And thus Joseph, being of the tribe of Judah and family of David, had to travel all the way from Nazareth to Bethlehem, which was the city of David, and the original inheritance of the family, that he might be

enrolled there. It is generally believed that, in ordinary cases, the law did not require women to appear personally on such occasions, the personal appearance and statement of the husband or head of the family on oath, being held sufficient evidence with regard to the number, condition and property of him-self and family. It becomes a question then, why should Mary, in the peculiar circumstances in which she was placed, have undertaken a hazardous journey of some 60 or 70 miles, at such a time? It is supposed by some that Mary was the only child of her father Heli, and, as such, probably the heiress of some small property in the neighbourhood of Bethlehem, and that, in consequence, the forms of law required her personal appearance. This might be the case, but I think it more likely that Mary, being fully aware of the importance of clearly proving her own descent from David, in order to the establishment of her son's claim to the Messiahship, and of having the infant himself registered in David's city, as of David's line, resolved, in humble confidence on the Divine protection and care, to brave all personal hardship, and repair to the city of David, where the registers of her family were kept.

It is impossible to ascertain what length of time the holy family remained at Bethlehem. It is pretty clear, however, from the sixth verse, that the child Jesus was not born (Mary's delivery did not take place) immediately upon their arrival in that place. It was while they were there that the days were accomplished that Mary should be delivered. It would appear that multitudes had arrived before them, and that, in the enrolment they must wait their turn. But in consequence of their late arrival, a greater inconvenience awaited them; there was no room for them in the inn. It was completely pre-occupied, so that they must betake themselves for shelter to a stable. An American or European reader naturally supposes that this was a stable in connexion with the inn, and such it possibly might be. In the East, at the present day, the better sort of caravansaries have stables separate from the lodging-rooms of the travellers; but in the humbler sort there is no such luxury, but only one vast apartment, in which travellers and their cattle lodge together, each providing for himself

as he best can. But it is quite unwarrantable to argue from the present state of caravansaries in the East, to what inns were in Palestine at the time of our Saviour's birth. I would much rather adopt the opinion held by all the fathers, without any exception, that when Joseph could find no accommodation in the inn, he retired with his wife to a cave in the outskirts of the town, which was used sometimes as a stable, and in which Mary brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger.

It is commonly supposed that it was from the poverty of Joseph and Mary, that they could not find accommodation in the inn at Bethlehem. This, however, is entirely opposed to the Scripture statement. It was because there was no room for them in the inn; because it was overcrowded with guests before they arrived. But though we have no reason to believe that they were in indigent, they were certainly not in affluent circumstances. Had they been, it is probable that room would have been made for them. They were, in all likelihood, not in circumstances to be able to induce any to give place to them, even if they had been disposed to make the attempt. But the bustle and confusion of an overcrowded Eastern inn, was certainly not the most desirable place for a woman in Mary's circumstances, who would naturally desire seclusion; and therefore she withdrew, as the most ancient fathers of the Church assert, to a natural cave, which seems to have been used occasionally as a stable, in whose calm retirement (with no other assistance, as it would seem, than that of her affectionate husband), she gave birth to that wondrous child, on whose shoulders the government of the world now rests; who, though born of a woman in these humble circumstances, was the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace.

But though Mary was thus poorly cared for by man, though none of the houses of Bethlehem were opened in hospitality to receive this daughter of David, now a stranger in the city of her fathers, God himself watched over her, and, in his providence, supplied her with all that was really needful. Like other eastern travellers, they probably carried all necessaries along with them, such as bedding, cooking utensils, and provisions, so that, in that

delightful climate, the cool recess of the cave would be every way better and more agreeable than any lodgings in the warm and overcrowded inn. There their pious meditations would have been distracted by the prevailing bustle, and their holy souls probably grieved by the profanity which they could not prevent; here, there was everything to favour devout contemplation, and nothing to hinder their fervent prayers, or interrupt the loud strain of thanksgiving and praise. It would seem that Mary had no female attendant, but she needed none. As this holy child, of all born of woman, was alone free from original guilt, so Mary alone of all the daughters of Eve, was on this occasion free from the curse—"In sorrow thou shalt bring forth children." She was able, therefore, without assistance herself to wrap this her first-born son in swaddling clothes, and lay him in a manger.

Wonderful mystery! that he, whose goings forth have been of old, even from everlasting; whom heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain, should have humbled himself to take our nature upon him. Truly great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh; but greater still, that he should have appeared in such circumstances of outward humility, that from the manger to the cross his life was one of privation, and labour, and ignominy and suffering. But in proportion as Jesus humbled himself, was he really exalted. And though men could see nothing in his birth in a stable, but what was humbling and repulsive, the heavenly host perceived, in all the circumstances of his birth, a grandeur and sublimity which would not have been dimmed by the splendours of a palace. There were none of earth's nobles present to witness, and welcome, and announce the arrival of this heavenly stranger, who was born king of the Jews; there was no earth-born minstrel to celebrate his birth in grateful and soul-gladdening strains; but there were more glorious witnesses of his birth than earth's mightiest nobles—the heavenly host, though invisible to the eye of sense, were the deeply-interested spectators of the sublime scene which took place in that lonely cave, and their leader announced it, not to the mighty ones of earth, but to the humble shepherds of Bethlehem. And presently that birth, of such unspeakable importance not only to

men, but to the universe, was celebrated by the heavenly host in the air above, as that which would bring glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will towards men.

There are two things worth noticing in connection with the announcement of Christ's birth to the shepherds of Bethlehem. 1st. It was made to plain men, when engaged in the honourable prosecution of their humble calling; from which we may conclude, that we are never more likely to receive favours from the Lord than when engaged, in a proper spirit, about our ordinary business. Christ appeared among the humbler class; he was a son of labour himself, and the honest man of humble industry doubtless often occupies a higher place, in the estimation of God, than many of exalted rank, whom men's sons delight to honour.

2ndly. From the fact of these shepherds being then abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night, we learn, from what we know of the management of sheep which then prevailed, that Christ's birth could not have taken place at mid-winter. "It was a custom among the Jews to send out their sheep to the deserts about the passover, and bring them home at the commencement of the first rains: during the time they were out, the shepherds watched them night and day.—(Adam Clarke.) Now, as the passover usually happened about the beginning of April, and the first rains generally commenced towards the end of October, Christ's birth must have taken place sometime in the interval between April and October. This, however, is all that we know with certainty regarding the birth-time of Christ. And the Holy Spirit has observed a profound silence regarding it, as if, by anticipation, condemning those scenes, which too often take place in connexion with the supposed birth-day of our Saviour.

It is remarkable that nothing occurs in the New Testament, which would justify us in attaching importance to days, or places, or outward forms. The religion there inculcated is the religion of the heart, love to God, faith in Jesus, holiness of life, purity of conduct, justice in our dealings, and kindness and benevolence to all. Its grand object is to bring before us the only way in which the sinner can be justified in the

sight of a holy God; to record the atonement that has been made through the blood of the Lamb, and to present overtures of mercy from God to the sinner; at the same time that it brings clearly before us the change of heart and renewal of nature which must be wrought out for us by the Spirit, and the sanctification of the whole man to which it inevitably leads, and directs us to the means by which all this may be attained. Dear brother, is this the character of your religion? Is it displayed in faith in Jesus, in love to God, and benevolence to man, in holiness of heart and blamelessness of life? Unless this be the character of your religion, ye but deceive yourselves with a name to live, whilst you are dead; and a mere dead faith in barren orthodoxy, and cold formality, will only aggravate your guilt and deepen your eternal misery.

### Look up, and look before you.

In passing some railway works in our neighbourhood, I had once occasion to cross a deep cutting by a very narrow plank. When about half way, I looked down and began to totter; probably I should have fallen had not my companion said, "Don't look down there, you will be sure to fall if you do: look up, and look before you." I did so, and crossed in safety. Ah! thought I, there was more in that advice than the warning of the moment; would that it may be spoken to me in the hour of affliction, and would that I might be made the Lord's messenger to some sorrowing brother or sister in Christ, saying to them, "Don't look down there: look up, and look before you." Christian mourner, will you receive the message?

It may be that you are now standing, as it were, over the deep chasm of temporal calamity; earthly hopes and confidences have been rent from beneath your feet; your means of subsistence have been suddenly cut off, your good name slandered; your best treasure has been snatched away; that dear being on whom your all of earthly joy rested has been removed; or perhaps sickness—hopeless, agonizing, wasting, and yet prolonged sickness—is the gulf below you? O, it is dark, dark, "down there!"

But it may be, you are standing over a yet deeper and darker abyss than any yet mentioned. Your heart may have been

opened to you; its depths of sinfulness unveiled, depths which seem fathomless, unsearchable; or you may be brought into such a condition of spiritual despondency as that you shall seem standing over the very bottomless pit itself. "The good that you would you do not; the evil that you would not, that you do;" your sins rise up and call for vengeance, your evidences are clouded, your apprehension of spiritual things is obscured, Satan seems waiting to catch you, and you are just ready to fall; but O, don't look down there: "*look up, and look before you.*" Remember, though over the chasm, you are not *in* it; there is yet a plank beneath your feet, and blessed be God that plank is firm, for it is your Father's love, "everlasting," unchangeable. But what shall keep you on it? Ah, your poor heart is asking this. What? why, his own right hand. You see it not, perhaps, but it is *there*; it upheld the saints in David's days, for he says, "Thy right hand hath holden me up;" it sustained the church in Isaiah's days, for hear the promise, "I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." David knew this by experience, for he alludes to this as the cause of his security; "I have set the Lord always before me; because he is on my right hand, I shall not be moved."

"*Look up*" then, Christian mourner, and "*look before you.*" What see you, or rather whom see you? Is it not Jesus, "the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely?" Is he not an object to rivet your most earnest gaze? O, "look unto Jesus;" behold him across the dark gulf, search into his perfections, gaze till you have fathomed them all; and how can you remember the abyss beneath you? Look at the depths of his love, are they not deeper than your sorrows? has he not unsearchable riches for you? has he not given you a name "better than precious ointment?" is he not a treasury of all "good things?" is not he your "friend who loveth at all times," your "elder brother" "born for adversity," your "mother" to comfort, your "father" to protect, your "husband," your "counsellor," your "all?" Has he not health for your sickness, healing for your wound, sympathy for your loneliness? O, look at him and forget your sorrows.

But "*look up,*" poor broken-hearted

sinner, and "*look before you.*" Who stands there? Is it not Jesus? And wherefore is his name "called Jesus? Because, he shall save his people from their sins." Gaze at his perfect righteousness, see him fulfilling "all righteousness" *for you*; see him the sinless, "made sin" *for you*; see him under the hidings of his Father's countenance, instead of *you*; see him enduring the vengeance for which *your* sins were calling; see him in conflict with Satan, and conquering *for you*; see him, in his mysterious oneness with his people, passing through even your darkness, your perplexity, your gloom: and say, can you withdraw your gaze? No, gaze on in steady faith till the last, the darkest, the deepest chasm, even death itself is past; and ere you are aware, you shall find that with it you have crossed every gulf, left behind you every sorrow, surmounted every sin, and thenceforth have only to cry, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Into these you will look throughout eternity: begin then *now*. Be this your motto, "Looking unto Jesus." "Let your eyes look right on, and let your eyelids look straight before thee." Thus shall you best ponder the path of your feet, and thus shall all your ways be established.

#### Sanctification of Christ's People.

"That they also might be sanctified."—John xvii. 19.

What is the purpose that is to be answered with respect to His people, by Christ's consecration of Himself for their sakes? Now we have been led, by an examination of several passages of Scripture, to assign a definite meaning to the term "sanctify;" in the first clause of this text; and we are clearly shut up to assigning the same signification, or one so nearly allied as the nature of the case will admit, to the same term in the second clause. When we remember who was the speaker, and think of the awful solemnity of the occasion on which He spoke, we cannot conceive the possibility of aught like what we call a play upon words in such a text as this. We therefore cannot avoid the conclusion, that the sanctification of the people of Christ, spoken of in the second clause, is essentially of the same character with the sanctification of Christ himself, spoken of in the first. Now, we have seen that this sanctification was the consecration or devotion of Himself, with all the attributes and faculties of His Divine and human

nature, to a special work or service assigned to Him by His Father; and we conclude that the object of this consecration was, that they for whose sakes it was effected, might be consecrated to God also, set apart and separated from the world to serve and glorify Him; the apostles, in the first instance, being doomed to drink of His own cup, and be baptized with His own baptism of blood; and all who should believe on Him through their word being required to account of themselves as called to be saints, separated from an ungodly world, and consecrated to the service of Him who calls them out of darkness into His own marvellous light. So far, then, as the exposition of the text has yet gone, it may be thus paraphrased:—"For the sake of those whom thou hast given unto me in covenant, and who have, by thy grace, been brought, or who shall, by thy grace, be brought to believe in me, I give myself up, in my Divinity and my humanity, with all the omnipotence of the one to do, and all the power of the other to suffer, in order that I may accomplish all that thou hast appointed me, and I have undertaken, to do and to suffer; and this to the end, that they all may be rendered a peculiar people unto thee, and in their measure may be set apart and consecrated for the accomplishment of all thy will, and for serving thee with all the faculties and powers wherewith they shall be endowed."

Thus it appears to us that the text in the Bible which is most closely parallel to this that in the Epistle to Titus, in which the apostle speaks of "the great God, even our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." What the apostle calls the "giving of himself for us," seems to be precisely what our Lord calls "sanctifying himself," and the sanctifying of His people, which our Lord represents as the ultimate end of His sanctifying of Himself, appears to include all that the apostle describes under the twofold aspect of redeeming them from all iniquity, and purifying to Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. Thus we are led to give a larger and more comprehensive sense to the term *sanctify* in this text, than belongs to the technical and theological term sanctification, or than belongs to it in many other passages of Scripture. In fact, we must interpret the term here as including all that goes to render the people of Christ a peculiar people, all that constitutes the difference between them and unchristian men, whether in respect of condition or character. We must therefore regard it as not merely referring to their sanctification in the ordinary sense of the term, but as including also their justification on the ground and basis of their sanctification. This is the twofold difference, or the two

elements of the difference, which subsists between twixt believers and unbelievers, between the people of Christ, and the world which lieth in wickedness;—first of all that the world is guilty; and condemned, charged with the uncanceled guilt of its own innumerable sins, whereas those who believe in Christ are set free, at once and for ever, from all the guilt of the sins which they have committed. Justice has been fully satisfied, the claims of God's law have been fully met, a perfect righteousness has been wrought out, and given to them as a free gift; "there is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." And the second difference is, that they "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." They are, and day by day they are growing more and more, "a peculiar people, zealous of good works." The time past of their lives they account sufficient, and far more than sufficient, to have wrought the will of the flesh. They are no longer the servants of sin unto death, but of righteousness unto holiness.

Now, it was in order to the realization of both these distinctions, in all His people, that Jesus consecrated Himself. Both were contemplated and stipulated for in the eternal covenant. For this twofold end there flowed out from his pierced side both blood and water;—first the blood, to wash away the guilt of sin, as it is written, that "without the shedding of blood there is no remission;" but "the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanseth us from all sin." And after the blood, water, to purify from the pollution and defilement of sin, and to render the whole blood-ransomed Church, pure and holy and perfect as God himself. Behold, then, the completeness of the work of Christ. It had respect to men as at once guilty, or liable to punishment, and polluted, and in need of purification; and it was so ordained as to provide a remedy for these two evils. The justification of believers is more immediately connected with that life of obedience which He led upon the earth, and that death which He died as the great sin-bearer; while their sanctification is more specially dependent upon that life which He now lives; not the life which belonged to Him from all eternity, as the living, self-existent one; nor the life which He led upon the earth as the guilt-assuming and God-forsaken one; but the life which belongs to Him as having been dead, and which life He consecrates to their benefit, and lives "for their sakes," living for them, to intercede for them at His Father's right hand, and to rule over all things, and cause all to work together for their good; and living in them, working in them by His own Holy Spirit, so that the life that they now live in the flesh is a new life, which it is not so much they that live, as He that liveth in them.

—[Rev. F. Smith, A.M.]

### Poor Caleb the Collier: or, Provisions for the Winter.

Dr. Joseph Stennent resided in Wales several years, and preached to a congregation in Aberga'nny. There was a poor man, a regular attendant on his ministry, who was generally known by the name of Caleb; he was a collier, and lived among the hills between Aberga'nny and Hereford; he had a wife and several small children, and walked seven or eight miles every Lord's day to hear the Doctor. He was a very pious man; his knowledge and understanding were remarkable, considering his situation and circumstances.

Bad weather seldom kept Caleb from coming to the meetings; but there was a severe frost one winter, which lasted many weeks, and blocked up his way that he could not possibly pass without danger, neither could he work for the support of his family. The doctor and others were concerned lest they should perish for want; however, no sooner was the frost broken than Caleb appeared again. Dr. Stennent spied him, and as soon as the service was ended went to him and said, "Oh, Caleb, how glad I am to see you! How have you fared during the severity of the weather?" Caleb cheerfully answered, "Never better in my life. I not only had necessities, but lived upon dainties the whole of the time, and have some still remaining."

Caleb then told the doctor that one night, soon after the commencement of the frost, they had eaten up all their stock, and not one morsel was left for the morning, nor any human possibility of getting any; but he found his mind quite composed, relying on a provident God, who wanted neither power nor means to supply his wants.—He went to prayer with his family, and then to rest, and slept soundly till morning; before he was up he heard a knock at the door, he went and saw a man standing with a horse loaded, who asked if his name was Caleb; he answered in the affirmative, the man desired him to help him to take down the load. Caleb asked what it was. He said, Provisions. On his inquiring who sent it, the man said he believed God had sent it: no other answer could he obtain.

When he came to examine the contents, he was struck with amazement at the quantity and variety of the articles: bread,

flour, oatmeal, butter, cheese, salt meat, and fresh, &c., which served them through the frost, and some remaining to that present time. The doctor was much affected with the account, and afterwards mentioned it in hopes of finding out the benevolent donor; but in vain, till about two years afterwards he went to visit Dr. Talbot, a noted physician in the city of Hereford.

This Dr. Talbot was a man of good moral character and generous disposition, but an infidel in principle; his wife was a generous woman and a member of the church. Dr. Stennent used to go and visit her now and then; and Dr. Talbot, though a man of no religion himself, always received Dr. S. with great politeness. As they were conversing pleasantly one evening, Dr. S. thought it his duty to introduce something that was entertaining and profitable; he spoke of the great efficacy of prayer, and instanced the circumstance of poor Caleb. Dr. Talbot smiled and said, "Caleb! I shall not forget him as long as I live."—"What! do you know him?" said Dr. S.—"I had but very little knowledge of him," said Dr. T., "but I know he must be the same man you mean." Then Dr. T. related the following circumstance:—

The summer before the hard winter above mentioned, he was riding on horseback, as was his usual custom when he had a leisure hour, and generally chose to ride among the hills, it being more pleasant and rural. As he was riding along, he observed a number of people assembled in a barn; he rode up to the door to learn the cause, when he found, to his surprise, that there was a man preaching to a vast number of people; he stopped and observed that they were very attentive to what the preacher delivered. One poor man in particular attracted his attention, who had a little Bible in his hand, turning to every passage in Scripture the minister quoted.

He wondered to see how ready a man of his appearance was in turning to the places. When the service was over he walked his horse gently along, and the poor man whom he had so particularly noticed happened to walk by his side. The doctor asked him many questions concerning the meeting and minister, and found him very intelligent. He inquired also about himself, his employment, his family, and his name, which he said was Caleb.

After the doctor had satisfied his curiosity, he rode off, thought no more about him till the great frost came the following winter. He was one night in bed, he could not tell, for certain, whether he was asleep or awake, but thought he heard a voice say, "Send provisions to Caleb." He was a little startled at first, but concluding it to be a dream, he endeavoured to compose himself to sleep. It was not long before he heard the same words repeated, but louder and stronger; then he awoke his wife, and told her what he had heard, but she thought it could be no other than a dream, and she fell asleep again, but the doctor's mind was so impressed that he could not sleep; at last he heard the voice so powerfully saying, "Get up, and send provisions to Caleb," that he could resist no longer. He got up, and called his man, bid him bring his horse, and he went to his larder, and stuffed a pair of panniers as full as he could of whatever he could find, and having assisted the man to load the horse, he bid him take the provisions to Caleb. "Caleb, sir?" said the man, "who is Caleb?" "I know very little of him," said the doctor, "but his name is Caleb, he is a collier, and lives among the hills; let the horse go, and you will be sure to find him." The man seemed to be under the same influence as his master, which accounts for his telling Caleb. "God sent it, I believe."

### NO POVERTY THERE.

Millions of good men have left the earth poor. Lazarus, the moment he died, was a beggar at the gate; but a moment after his death, his estate had grown so fast that the haughty worldling, still surviving in all his affluence, in comparison with him was a penniless pauper. O poor believer! rejoice in prospect of your grand inheritance! It is incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away. It is really immense, inestimable, unspeakable. Has it not been your endeavor "to lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven?" Why not oftener think of rewards there? Fear not. There is good news from that far country. Unsuccessful as you may have seemed on earth, your heavenly schemes have all prospered. The treasury of God overflows with your wealth. And it is safe—perfectly safe.

Neither moth nor rust can corrupt it; nor can thieves break through and steal it. Moreover, it shall increase—forever increase. As long as you live on earth you may add to the principal, and its interest will multiply beyond all computation, to all eternity. Croesus was rich, Solomon was rich, Lucullus was rich, and the Rothschilds are rich, but the humblest heir of God is richer far than all. It may be that the stores you have already accumulated in heaven would buy this town, buy the district, buy the country, buy the world—and still be comparatively untouched. Nay, think not this extravagant! I would not barter the heritage of the most destitute of Christians for the whole globe and all its improvements. Lift up your heart; let it expand and overflow with bliss. At the close of the short journey through time, you will see eternity open before you, all radiant with the variety of your bloodless and endless possessions. Be not proud, indeed—alas for the folly of all pride!—but be grateful, thankful, hopeful, and happy.

### THE INFIDEL CONVINCED.

The celebrated astronomer Athanasius Kircher, having an acquaintance who denied the existence of a Supreme Being, took the following singular method to convince him of his error on his own principles. Expecting him one day upon a visit, he procured a large and very handsome globe of the starry heavens, which was placed in a corner of the room in which it could not escape his friend's observation. The latter seized the first opportunity to ask whence it came, and to whom it belonged. "What think you" said Kircher, ironically, "if I say that it does not belong to me—was never made by any one—but came here by mere chance?" "That," replied his sceptical friend, "is absolutely impossible; you surely jest." Kircher now took occasion to reason with his friend upon his own atheistical principle. "You will not," said he, "believe that this small body originated in mere chance; and yet you will contend that those heavenly bodies of which it is only a faint and diminutive resemblance, came into existence without order and design." Pursuing this chain of reasoning, his friend was at first confounded, and in the next place he was convinced, and ultimately he joined in a cordial acknowledgment of the absurdity of denying the existence of a God—a great 'first cause.'

## Flee From the Wrath to Come.

It is a great and good thing to be withheld from sin by whatsoever motive; it is a fine point from which to start in the pursuit of that holiness without which, we are told, no man shall see the Lord. Let me beseech of you again and again carefully to remember— I care not for repeating, if I can but make you remember—that the alone question, which is of real worth to an individual, has to do with his being or his not being a new creature; and this question is to be tried as a question which relates to an effect rather than as a question which relates to a cause. It is not, "What has changed me?" but, "Am I changed?" never mind when or where, or how. Go simply to the fact, "Am I changed?" And so long as you can find evidences of a spiritual change, evidences that "old things are passed away, and all things are becoming new," it cannot affect your safety, it ought not to affect your comfort, whether you began in religion by meditating the exceeding love of God, and feeling the heart soften at the sight of a dying Redeemer, or whether your first sentiment were one of horror at the prospect of hell, and your first impulse that of flying from your Maker as armed for your destruction. Oh, that you might all be stirred by a dread of the Almighty! Men, brethren, and our fathers, I announce to you the judgment to come: it shall break upon the earth, that day of wonder and of terror, when from the sea and the mountain and the desert shall swarm the buried families of human kind, and the dead, small and great, shall stand before their God; there shall be no shelter for the proud, no mark for the hypocrite, no standing-place for the presumptuous. Is there one amongst you who trembles at the thought of appearing before God; appearing as a sinner with the burden of his iniquities before a Being who is of purer eyes than to pass by transgression? Let that man listen; we seek to persuade him: God hath "found a ransom," God hath made "Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." There is the Sacrifice, there is the Substitute. O sinner, close at once with Christ as a Saviour, and thou shalt have no cause to fear Him as a Judge when He "shall come in the clouds of heaven in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels."—*Melville.*

Love cares not what it is nor what it does, so that it may but advance the Lord Jesus. It makes the soul willing to be a footstool for Christ; to be anything, to be nothing, that Christ may be all in all.

## THE PROGRESSIVE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

Our knowledge of Christ is somewhat like climbing one of our Welsh mountains. When you are at the base you see but little; the mountain itself appears to be but one half as high as it really is. Confined in a little valley, you discover scarcely anything but the rippling brooks as they descend into the stream at the base of the mountain. Climb the first rising knoll, and the valley lengthens and widens beneath your feet. Go up higher and higher still, till you stand upon the summit of one of the great roots that start out as spurs from the sides of the mountain, you see the country for some four or five miles round, and you are delighted with the widening prospect. But go onward, and onward, and onward, and how the scene enlarges, till at last, when you are on the summit, and look east, west, north, and south, you see almost all England lying before you. You see a forest in some distant county, perhaps two hundred miles away, and yonder the sea, and there a shining river and the smoking chimneys of a manufacturing town, or there the masts of the ships in some well-known port. All these things please and delight you, and you say, "I could not have imagined that so much could be seen at this elevation." Now, the Christian life is of the same order. When we first believe in Christ, we see but little of him. The higher we climb, the more we discover of his excellencies and his beauties. But who has ever gained the summit? Who has ever known all the fullness and breadths of the love of Christ which passeth knowledge? Paul, now grown old, sitting, gray-haired, shivering in a dungeon in Rome, he could say, with greater power than we can, "I know whom I have believed," for each experience had been like the climbing of a hill, each trial had been like the ascending to another summit, and his death seemed like the gaining of the very top of the mountain, from which he could see the whole of the faithfulness and the love of Him to whom he had committed his soul.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

## Sabbath School Lessons.

March 30th.

## JOSEPH ENTERTAINS HIS BRETHREN.—GEN. XLII. 1-34.

I. *Jacob urges his sons to go again into Egypt to buy corn.*

They had eaten up the corn which they had brought out of Egypt," v. 2. We should labour "not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life," Jno. vi. 27. Let us seek above all things to obtain the bread of life; "he that cometh to Jesus shall never hunger; and he that believeth on him shall never thirst," John vi. 35. Jacob as a prudent and affectionate parent took all proper means to provide his household with their daily bread: much more shall not our heavenly Father provide for all our wants.

II. *Judah reasons with his father on the necessity of sending Benjamin with them.*

He does so in a most respectful manner. It is quite right that inferiors should give advice to those that are set over them, if they do so in a proper spirit. Judah argues that it would be useless for them to journey into Egypt for corn, after the solemn protestation of the lord of the land.—"Ye shall not see my face except your brother be with you." It would be worse than useless, for having failed in their engagement, Chap. xlii. v. 19. 20., they could look for nothing but that they together with Simeon would be put to death as spies. To obviate as much as possible Jacob's reluctance to part with Benjamin, Judah undertakes to become surety for him. He was now sincerely penitent for his unnatural conduct towards Joseph, and would endeavour to make amends for it by the only means now in his power, by additional attention to his brother Benjamin. Some persons make great professions of contrition for failures in duty towards those friends who, in the providence of God, have been removed from them, but these professions are very doubtful, if it is seen that they who make them, do not re-double their attentions to the friends still left them.

III. *Jacob yields to the persuasions of Judah.*

So far from betraying a weak mind, to change our opinions when we see good and satisfactory reasons to do so, this course is often our highest wisdom. Infallibility of judgment belongs to God alone. Whilst a constant adherence to the views which we consider right is our duty, an obstinate refusal to listen to reason is sinful as well as contemptible. Jacob saw that if he refused to part with Benjamin, they would all perish, without a miraculous interposition of provi-

dence, which he had no right to expect, but by sending Benjamin with his brethren they might obtain food, and the lives of all be preserved. Jacob sends with them a conciliatory present, in this he manifested his characteristic prudence. We see his justice in that, he restored the money which was returned in their sacks; "peradventure," said he, "it was an oversight," v. 12. Many are glad to conceal the mistakes of others, when they can do so with advantage to themselves, not so with the patriarch, whether the money had been returned by mistake or on purpose in either case he felt himself equally bound to make restitution. His generosity is shown from his directing them to take double money in their hands, v. 12. In addition to all his precautions he commended them all to the mercy of God in prayer, v. 14. In a situation equally distressing, he had before experienced the efficacy of prayer; Chap. xxxii. 28.

IV. *The sons of Jacob obey his directions.*

On the sight of Benjamin, Joseph directed the ruler of his house to prepare a dinner for the men. This kindness of Joseph again excited the apprehensions of his brethren. As the best means of evincing their honesty and integrity they told all their story, how they had found the price they had previously paid for the corn in their sacks, and knew not how it had come there. They explained their circumstances to the steward, as they could converse more familiarly with him than with one in the exalted position of Joseph. The answer of the steward is observable; he calms their minds by answering them that he had their money, and consoles them by the thought that God, the God of their father, had given them the treasure in their sacks. This man then, though in a heathen country, possessed the knowledge of the true God. We thus learn that Joseph had been careful to instruct all the members of his family in the doctrines of true religion.

V. *Joseph's entertainment of his brethren.*

"And when Joseph came home," &c. v. 26. Compare this with the dreams related, ch. xxxvii, he piously prayed for Benjamin. God be gracious unto these my son. High though his position now was, Joseph knew that his favour would be of no importance to his brother without the blessing of God. Love for his brother, thoughts of all he had suffered since he had last seen him, compassion for his brethren, all these feelings caused such a commotion in his breast that he hastily entered his chamber and wept there. Having washed his face, he went out, and restraining his feelings, said 'set on bread,' v. 31. At the entertainment he kindly tolerated the national prejudices of the Egyptians, v. 32. His brethren sat at table before him in the order of their ages. This may have been their

usual custom, but it is probable that he arranged them thus himself, for it is said "the men marvelled one at another." Joseph not only entertained his brethren, he feasted them. How grateful must this have been to them in a time of famine. "They drank and were merry with him," v. 34. He showed his preference for his own brother Benjamin, by making the portion which he sent to him from his table five times greater than that of the others. Let us in accordance with the gracious invitation of our blessed Redeemer sit down, and, in an everlasting banquet partake of the rich spiritual blessings which he has provided for us.

Learn—1st. That we should never be ashamed to change our opinions when we see good reason to do so; Prov. xxvi. 12—Acts. xvii. 10. 11. 12.

2d. That in times of trial and danger we should use all necessary precautions, and with humble and prayerful reliance on the Almighty, leave with him the event, Neh. iv. 9.

3d. That where we fear evil there is often good in store for us. Ps. xxx. 11.

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April 6th.

### CHRIST'S NEAREST RELATIONS.

MATT. XII. 46-50.

#### 1. *The disrespect shown to Christ by his natural relations.*

"His mother and his brethren stood without." They cared not to come within to listen to his preaching. We are apt to despise our greatest privileges, on account of our familiarity with them. The fact, however, that we know not how soon the blessings which we enjoy may be taken from us, should make us more anxious to profit by them. The mother and brethren of the Lord conveyed to him, through the crowd, the message that they desired to speak with him; ver. 47. What their business was with him is uncertain. Most probably they were fearful that he was overtaxing his natural powers by his labours. This, however, was no excuse for their interruption. They should have considered that the blessed Jesus preferred his great work of salvation to ease, comfort, and even, as he afterwards proved, to life itself. His meat was to do the will of his Father who had sent him; John iv. 34. Zeal for his Father's work had led the Lord, when but yet a child, out of the circle of his relatives, and when discovered by his sorrowing parents, his reply to his mother was, "How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" Luke ii. 49. Though Mary is said to have kept these sayings in her heart, she now appears to have forgotten them. What need have we of constant watchfulness, to be able to recall and put in practice the truths

we have formerly learned! It may be that the friends of Jesus wished to consult with him on some subject pertaining to their temporal affairs. If so, their interruption was still less excusable. Not that we are not to take an interest in all that concerns our friends, but "to every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven;" Ec. iii. 1.

#### 2. *The dignity Christ confers on his disciples.*

He prefers his spiritual to his natural relatives—stretching forth his hand towards his disciples, he said, "Behold my mother and my brethren;" ver. 49. And this was not the peculiar privilege of his followers during his sojourn on earth, but "this honour have all his saints." What a delightful consolation is this to believers! However they may be despised and persecuted by man, Christ, the creator and preserver of the universe, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, is their elder brother. This fact is now concealed from the world, but yet a little while and it shall be made manifest before assembled men and angels. From this passage it is evident that the mother of Jesus was far from that sinless perfection claimed for her by Romanists. Her untimely and unreasonable interruption of our Lord, is a proof that she was but a weak and sinful woman—that she was but "a sinner saved by grace."

#### 3. *The qualification of Christ's disciples.*

No extent of mere knowledge is laid down as the proof of our discipleship. Knowledge may entitle a man to the name of astronomer, geologist, or chemist, but knowledge alone can never make him a true Christian. A man may have the most extensive knowledge of the deepest doctrines of Christianity, and may be able to talk on these momentous topics like an angel, yet without the faith that purifies the heart and worketh by love, he is none of Christ's; 1 Cor. xiii. 1, 2. No more does mere profession, however high-sounding it may be, give us a title to Christ and all his benefits; Matt. vii. 22. The true believer loves his gracious Saviour, and manifests his love by doing the will of God. In this obedience he is aided and supported by the Holy Spirit, and though in this life he is subject to many imperfections, these he mourns, and with humble dependence upon his God, "determines and endeavours after new obedience."

Learn—1st. That the believer, as well as his Lord, may be often opposed by the mistaken officiousness of his friends, in his efforts to do good.—Matt. v. 35, 36.

2nd. The high dignity and privileges of the disciple of Jesus.—Rom. viii. 17; 1 John iii. 1.

3rd. That good works are the fruits of the evidence of true faith.—James ii. 26; 1 John iii. 1, 2.

## THE FAULTLESS CONGREGATION.

“Whence do they come? They come from every part of the inhabitable globe. The African from his burning sands,—the Laplander from his everlasting snow shall be there,—the Arab from his wilds,—the Druse from his mountain fastnesses,—the Antediluvian,—the Patriarch of ancient days,—the children of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, that met first in the Ark, careering upon the waves of the deluge that laid waste the world, till they rested upon the summit of Ararat,—the children of these, the grey fathers of the human race, shall meet again; first in Christ, the true Ark, by faith, and lastly in heaven, the great antitype, of Ararat, no more to look forth upon a world depopulated and dismantled by the flood, but to bask amid the splendours of the beatific vision, and ‘to be for ever without fault before the throne of God.’ They come not only from various countries, but from various scenes of suffering—some from hunger, and cold, and nakedness, and peril—some from sick beds, and hospitals, and prisons, and inquisitions; some shall come from battle fields, from Marengo, from Austerlitz, and Waterloo, and some from the silent depths of the ocean—the slain of Camperdown, and Trafalgar, and the Nile,—and some from the strong Pyramids: and many whose winding sheets have been the sands of the desert, and whose requiem has been chaunted by the waves of the desert sea. No circumstance can conceal them whom God bids to rise. No distance can keep away those whom God summons. And they shall come, too, from various sections of the Church Universal. No sect has a monopoly of Christians, because no sect has a monopoly of the Gospel. The distinctions that are made between sect and sect are paper walls, that will be consumed by the flames of the last fire; these points and practices about which true Christians quarrel, will pass away like straw and stubble before the overwhelming flood of universal light, and universal love; and it will be found at that day, that those things about which Churchmen and Dissenters quarrel, were but microscopic points, and those things about which Churchmen and Dissenters agree, were majestic as the attributes, and enduring as the Throne of

Deity. I have often thought that the following incident, recorded of a good man, was a very beautiful one. A sceptic addressed him, and said, ‘What will become of all the sects into which you Christians split at the day of judgment of Christ? The ingenious, yet scriptural, answer was, ‘God will say to one, ‘What are you?’ I am an Independent.’ ‘Sit you there.’ To another, ‘What are you?’ ‘I am a Presbyterian.’ ‘Sit you there.’ Another will be asked, ‘What are you?’ ‘I am a Churchman.’ ‘Sit you there.’ And a fourth will be asked, ‘What are you? The answer will be, ‘A Christian.’ And the commission will be given him from God, ‘Walk about heaven in any place you like.’ For as it is true that one star differeth from another star in glory, so it is true that he that hath the most bigotry will have the least of heaven, and he that feels all things subordinate to Christ, and Him Crucified, will have the largest space to walk in. I believe, too, that those will be before the throne of every form of government. The stern republican will be there; the accomplished monarchist will be there also; no nation under heaven which will not contribute its quota; subjects of uncivilized government, and victims of cruel ones will be there. They will be a great multitude, greater than the Antinomian will allow, though fewer than the Universalist believes, singing, ‘Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb.’”

## A POSSIBLE COMBINATION.

I had come into the house after preaching one Lord's day; and, as we were engaged in conversation, I remarked that I thought the right way to preach the gospel was to depend upon the Holy Ghost, and “pray without ceasing” as one went on.

To this a clergyman who was present took exception. He said a preacher should pray before going to the pulpit, and after leaving it; but he could not understand how a man could at the same time both pray and preach.

I felt confounded at this remark, for I had always taken him for a converted man; and I thought, can it be possible that any truly converted servant of Jesus could be ignorant of how to mix praying with

preaching! As no good could have come of discussing such a subject, I merely remarked that, in my opinion, it could easily be done if a minister set himself to do it.

It, however, let me into the secret why some men preach so very unprofitably; they do it without prayer. And can they have a proper idea of what it is to preach Christ, if they can do it in a prayerless frame of mind? How could any holy servant of the Lord attempt to go on with the solemn work of preaching Christ Jesus without looking up for the promised Spirit, to give him strength to speak with unction, and to accompany his preaching with vital power? And this leaning attitude is itself *continuous prayer*. But there is no difficulty in lifting up the soul in *conscious and conceived prayer* as a man is addressing an audience, provided he is "in the Spirit;" and those who are ignorant of this Divine art need not wonder if their preaching is devoid of power to convert sinners, or to edify the Church of God. It can be done in other employments, and why not in that calling in which it is so essential to success?

An old author, Hales of Eton, has a few sentences to our purpose, which may be read with profit: "Let no man think it too much," says he, "to require at the hands of men, at one and the selfsame instant, both to attend their *vocation* and their *prayer*. For the mind of man is very agile and nimble, and it is wonderful to see to how many things it will, at one moment apply itself, without any confusion.

"Look but upon the musician; while he is in his practice, he tunes his voice, fingers his instrument, reads his music, makes the note, observes the time—all these things at one and the same instant, without any distraction or impediment. Thus should men do in case of devotion, and in the common acts of our vocation let prayer bear a part."

Dear reader, let us keep up a prayerful state of mind by keeping up a constant "inward recollection" of God; let us have our "eyes ever toward the Lord;" let us "walk in the Spirit and live in the Spirit," and wherever we are, and in whatever engaged, we shall thereby be enabled to obey the sweet command of our gracious Lord, and "PRAY WITHOUT CEASING."—[*British Herald*,

## THE IMPERFECT COPY.

BY "A. L. O. E."

"Always busy at your drawing, Edwin?" said his elder brother Henry, as he entered the schoolroom one morning.

Edwin looked up for a moment with a smile, and then went on tracing with evident pleasure the outline of a face. His brother came behind him, and looked over his shoulder. Edwin listened for his remarks, though without ceasing to draw.

"You are taking pains, I see," said Henry at last, in a kindly tone; "but I am afraid that you have to use your india-rubber here, and here: these lines, you may perceive, are not in good drawing."

"I don't see much wrong in them," replied Edwin, suspending his pencil, with something of vexation in his tone, for he had expected nothing but praise.

"If you compare them with your study, you will perceive that all this outline is incorrect."

"Where is the study?" continued Henry, looking in vain for it on the table.

"Oh, it's somewhere upstairs," said Edwin. "I remember very well what it is like, and can go on without looking at it every minute."

"Would you oblige me by bringing it?" said his brother, who perceived that as long as Edwin merely drew from memory, he would not see the faults in his sketch.

Edwin went upstairs rather unwillingly, and soon brought down a beautiful study, a face most perfect in form and expression.

Henry silently put the two pictures together. Edwin gazed with bitter disappointment on his own copy, which but a few minutes before he had thought so good. Not a feature was really like; the whole looked crooked and cramp; even his partial eye could not but see a thousand faults in his sketch.

"I shall never get it right!" Edwin exclaimed, in a burst of vexation; and snatching up the unfortunate drawing, he would have torn it asunder, had he not been prevented by his brother.

"My dear Edwin, you have doubly erred; first in being too easily satisfied, and then in being too easily discouraged."

"I shall never make it like that beautiful face!" cried the disheartened boy.

"You need patience, you need help, you need, above all, often to look at your copy. A perfect resemblance you never may have, but you may succeed in getting one which will do credit both to you and your master."

Edwin took up the pencil which he had flung down, and carefully and attentively studied the picture. He found very much in his copy to alter, very much to rub out; but at last he completed a very fair sketch, which he presented with a little hesitation to his brother.

"I shall have this framed, and hung up in my room," said Henry.

"Oh, it is not worth that!" exclaimed Edwin, colouring with pleasure and surprise.

"Not in itself, perhaps," replied Henry; "but it will serve often to remind us both of an important truth, which was suggested to me when I saw you labouring at your copy."

Edwin looked in surprise at his brother, who thus proceeded to explain his words:—

"We, dear Edwin, as Christians, have all one work set before us: to copy in our lives the example set us by a heavenly Master. It is in the Bible that we behold the features of a character perfect and pure. By how many of us choose rather to imagine to ourselves what a Christian should be like! We aim low; we are content with little progress; we perhaps please ourselves with the thought of our own wisdom and goodness, while every one but ourselves can see that our copy is wretched and worthless."

"What are we to do?" said Edwin.

"We must closely examine the study set in the Bible; we must compare our lives with God's law, and we shall then soon find enough of weakness and sin to make us humble ourselves before God. When we read of the meekness and gentleness of Christ, we shall be ashamed of our own passion and pride; when we find how holy was our great Example, we shall be grieved to think how unlike to Him we are."

"We can never make a good copy," sighed Edwin, "we may just give up the attempt at once."

"You judge as you did when you wished to tear up your picture in despair, as soon as you saw how imperfect it was. No, no, my dear boy, I say to you now as I said

to you then, you need *patience*, you need *help*—help from the good Spirit of God; and, above all, you need to look often at your study, to keep the character and work of your Lord ever before your eyes."

"But if I do my best I shall still fall so short!"

"I know it," said Henry, gravely; "but this feeling should not prevent your aiming at perfection. God will complete His work in the hearts of His servants, not on earth, but in heaven. There the copy, feebly commenced below, shall be made a likeness indeed! For what says the Word of God? '*We know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is!*'"

#### JESUS A FRIEND.

No man need ever think himself friendless while he has Jesus for a friend. My reader, is He your friend?

I. *You need Him.* You need one who can forgive your sins. You need one who can intercede for you with God. You need one who can give you a new heart—who can save your undying soul. Only one can do all these things for you.—Jesus is the friend you need.

II. *He will never disappoint you.* Of what earthly friend, living or dead, could you say this? Never was there a wife so affectionate that she did not sometimes exhibit petulance or seeming coldness. Never one so devoted but she was liable to be swayed occasionally by the secret loadstone of selfishness. A confiding girl gives heart and hand to him whom she looks on as her life-guide. But does she not too often find a "broken reed" that pierces her trusting soul with silent sorrow? The best and noblest husband is not perpetually good or noble. To-day his words are honey.—To-morrow there is the slightest drop of acid in them, that makes the delicate tissues of a wife's heart to smart. To-day his face was sunshine.—But to-morrow's clouded brow may cast a transient shadow o'er the household. In our spiritual experience, too, what disappointments! The pastor is not always faithful; the teacher is not always wise; the most consistent Christian often indeed deserves the tingling rebuke, "Could ye not watch with me one hour?"

But thanks and glory to Him who first loved me! In Him I find a friend that never deceived me and never disappoints me. In the first hours of my soul's distress under conviction of sin, I went to Him, and He gave ear at once to my cry. He heard my prayer. He realized all my necessities. He knew my certainty of punishment un-

less He made my cause His own. No fee was required to secure this all powerful advocate with God. He gave the precious services of His intercession without money and without price. I needed a righteousness. My filthy rags were not 'presentable' at His Father's court. He offered me a righteousness complete and gratuitous. I needed a surety, for I was without credit before God. He became my surety; pledging to me a grace that has proved all-sufficient for my sorest, sharpest hours of trial. I needed a new heart.—His converting power wrought the blessed change.

III. Jesus is the very friend for adversity.—Among men, prosperity makes friends; adversity tries them. Let the blaze of success flood me and mine, and there will be plenty of butterflies to flutter in the warmth. My house will not lack guests, or my table occupants. I shall be most readily recognized in the street—even by near-sighted people. But let the sudden drought of poverty parch away the herbage, and the hungry herd will decamp and leave me to the faithful few who care more for me than for my provender.—Prosperity fills the garden—not always with the choicest growths; adversity weeds it.

In blessed contrast with human treachery and inconstancy, stands the fidelity of our Redeemer, The darker my lot, the closer to me draweth my "Elder Brother," Let bereavement come; let persecution for the truth's sake, let reproach and honourable poverty come, and Christ is sure to come too. He is the "brother born for adversity." He can be toughed with the feeling of our infirmities, for He too was a man of sorrows. He knows what an aching heart and a weary head mean, for He had not where to lay His own blessed head during that long pilgrimage of love. He knows what unkindness means, for He too "came unto His own, and His own received Him not."—Who can comfort like Jesus? What oil so healing to the raw, open wound, which calamity inflicts, as the balm of Christ's consolation. And when in the damps of the valley of the death-shadow every flickering lamp of human philosophy has gone out, He walks by our side with the light that grows brighter as we near the dark river. "Lo! I am with you always!" is the sweet assurance that bushes our fears and puts to flight our anxieties. "Lo! I am with you," quiets us as the mother's lullaby quiets the frightened child in the cradle. We fall asleep with the blessed assurance in our ear; we wake up in heaven, and find ourselves for ever with the Lord! Our friend upon earth is our companion in eternity.

"For ever with the Lord!

Amen; so let it be,

Life from the dead is in that word;

'Tis immortality."

T. L. Cuyler.

For the Good News.

BE NOT AFRAID, ONLY BELIEVE.

Mark v. 36.

The simple truth of Jesus,  
O! trembling sinner hear;  
It is the truth that frees us,  
And quells desponding fear.  
Our sins are great, searched out and known  
But Christ is mighty to atone.  
*Be not afraid, only believe.*

His love on earth was boundless;  
In glory 'tis the same;  
The sinner's fears are groundless,  
While Jesus is his name.  
His darling attribute is love,  
It shineth high the rest above.  
*Be not afraid, only believe.*

His death was all availing  
To save and justify,  
His pleading's all prevailing,  
Before the throne on high,  
For sin he hung on Calvary's hill,  
For sinner's intercedeth still.  
*Be not afraid, only believe.*

The Righteous Branch was broken,  
The Rock of Ages cleft,  
An earnest, and a token  
Of ev'ry other gift.  
And now the call's to all that hear,  
Ho! ye that thirst! to God draw near.  
*Be not afraid, only believe.*

With golden fruit is bending  
The plant of God's reman, <sup>remains</sup>  
Heaven's manna is descending,  
Yea, now, 'tis coming down.  
Arise and feast, on Angel's food,  
Oh! taste and see that God is good.  
*Be not afraid, only believe.*

Why wring thy heart with anguish?  
Why drink the cup of gall?  
Why will ye sit and languish,  
While Jesus died for all?  
"Come" is the invitation still,  
"Come now, yea whosoever will,  
*Be not afraid, only believe.*

X. Y. Z.

Toronto, March, 1862.

Fly, sinner, fly! God help thee to fly!  
Hark hear the word of the Lord! <sup>See</sup>  
The world consumed, the Avenger at thy  
heels! Before to-morrow you may be  
damned for ever!—Whitfield.