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## "SEEK YE THE LORD WHILE HE MAY BE FOUND."

A SERMON BY THE REV. THOMAS GUTHRIE, D. D.\*

"Seek ye the Lord while he may be found."—ISAIAH LV. 6.

It may be said that many, at least some people, seek the Lord long before they find him, and some people find him who never sought him. Saul sought his father's asses, and he found a crown. Borne on his couch to Jesus, a man sought cure of his palsy, and he got the pardon of his sins. Perched among the branches of the leafy sycamore, the little publican sought a sight of the despised Nazarene, whose name filled the whole land; he climbed the tree to gratify his curiosity, and came down from the tree to have his house saved.

Now, as it was then, so it is still.—People sometimes find what they never sought; and in the church to which they come—from early custom, to gain a decent church-going name, to gratify, it may be, an idle curiosity, to see, like Zaccheus, or to be seen, like others—they find what they never sought and never expected, they find a Saviour! In the temple, where the anxious mother sought a son, she embraced her son—and in the temple, where some careless sinner never sought a Saviour, he finds one; or rather, I would speak more correctly were I to say, he is found of a Saviour, and the word is fulfilled, "I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not." Were it not for this, we would often come with great discouragement to the pulpit; and it is only from the knowledge that such cases have happened, and do still happen, that we take courage to preach to the most unwilling and most unpromising audience. It is on this ground, so to speak, that I take my stand, and lift up my voice and preach in a valley of dry bones; because I know, though the bones be dry, and very dry, God can give them life! It may be true, some dream not of conversion, while others care not; and I can imagine some coming to the house of God, actually determined not to be converted. Ah! if God were to determine otherwise, your determination,

poor sinner, would soon give way. He could roll you and huddle you in the dust, and kindle within your heart such a hell, that you would give the world for a cup of the water of life to quench it. He could make you look on your best beloved sins with such an eye that they would appear to you like a serpent, to be cast from you with horror. What are all the walls of sin before the power of God? Walls stronger than those of Jericho he could cast down and strew in the dust! And hearts harder than stone he could melt like ice before the fire! But I pray you to bear in mind that the promise is given to the seeker. I say the promise. God can find those who do not seek him; but God does not promise to be found of any but those who do. And I pray you to bear in mind, also, that more cheering, comforting, encouraging truth does not exist than this, that, while it is a matter of black uncertainty if any man in this assembly who does not seek God shall ever find him, it is a matter of Bible certainty, and blessed certainty, that there is not a man now present but if he seeks God, he shall find him.

There are just two qualifications of this truth (if, indeed, they can be called qualifications) to which we pray your attention. The first of these we shall simply touch—the last we shall for a little dwell on.

We say there is no man but shall find God if he does seek him, provided, in the first place, that he seeks him in a right way; and in the second place, that he seeks him in a right season.

Now, first, as to the way. Let there be no mistake as to the way. And we will tell you the reason why. It lies in this. It matters little if I mistake my way to this city, because if I mistake the way by one road, I can reach it by another; but it matters a great deal if I mistake my way to heaven, because there is but one way by which I can reach it. To heaven there is no road but one. We say, there

fore, let there be no mistake as to *the way*.

Before the dissolving breath of spring, the snow melts on the mountain. The shepherd drives his sheep to the hill, and he finds a dead body; there are no marks of violence on the body—no appearance of the man having died of hunger. Why, then, did the man die? because he *mistook the way*.

The night comes down in storm and tempest—a vessel is seen making her way for the harbour-mouth—she reels, she rises, and rides upon the billows. By and by, darkness closes the scene—signals of danger—gun after gun flashes through the gloom—at last the morning breaks, and there she lies with her back broken on the rocks—masts, and bulwarks, and crew all swept away. And why! Because by one single hand's-breadth she *mistook the channel*.

And if it is a matter of great danger often to the *body* for a man to mistake the way, we say it is a matter of still greater danger to the *soul* to mistake the way, and of greater importance to *know* the right way to the Lord—the right way to that Saviour who shed his blood for us—to that mercy we need to pardon, and that grace we need to help. There are many ways to hell, and many doors to the pit. There are as many ways and doors to hell as there are sins; and these are very many. One man is a drunkard, and he goes reeling to hell; another man takes the way of covetousness, and he goes to hell heaping up gold; one man takes one way, and one another. But we repeat it, and we would wish to grave it on your minds, and burn it into your memories; there is but *one way to heaven*.

Now, what is that way? There are some people who think that they can go to heaven by their charity; some think they can go to heaven by their prayers; some think they can work their own way to heaven. But surely no man ever wrought his way to heaven—no man ever bought his way to heaven—no man ever prayed his way to heaven—and no minister ever preached his way to heaven. There is but *one way*; and *who* is that way?—"I," says Christ, "I am the way." He does not say, "I am a way;" he does not say, "I am one way," or "one of many ways;" he does not say, I am the most

pleasant, or the most sure, or the easiest, or sweetest, or shortest of all ways; but he says, "I am *the way*"—the only way—the single way—the way besides which there is no other way.

We read the other day, what brought out and set forth this very strikingly, an account of a dream which John Bunyan had, and which afterwards resulted in his conversion. He thought he saw a sunny mountain, whose trees bore the sweetest fruits, and whose glades were enamelled with the fairest flowers, and where he saw a holy, happy, shining, singing, walking in its flowery paths, and sitting under its pleasant arbours. He desired to join the company. But how was he to reach them? For round that mountain's base there was a wall, both high and great; and he looked and longed and saw no opening, until at last, to his joy, he discovered a very narrow breach in the wall; he made up to it, he pressed, he strove, and at last he passed through. And what he did in his dreaming hour he shortly afterwards, by God's grace, did in reality, when, through the breach that Christ has made, he passed through into the city of God. As he says in his dream, "That opening was Christ?"

We say, Jesus has set before you an open door. *That* is the way we would point your attention to; and if there is any man here who is trying to get to the Lord by any other way, he will find his mistake when it is too late. If there had been another way possible, Christ had never died. If the sands of the Red Sea had been open for the Israelites, or had there been a fleet ready to carry them across the waters, God had never divided the rising ocean. And had there been any other way to God but through the death and sacrifice of the Saviour, God had never given up his Son to insult and suffering. If any one ask me, How am I to go to the Lord? I say, *by Christ*. You are not to work out or pay out your own salvation, but to *believe* it out: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." The way is made to your feet. Christ *made* the way, and you have but to *take* the way. It is a God-honouring way, a man-humbling way, a self-crucifying way, but ah! it is a sure way; and no

one who ever took that way, ever yet failed to reach the kingdom of heaven.

But without dwelling further on this part of the subject, we now turn to the *second* qualification we spoke of. We said there was not a man here who would not find the Lord, provided he would seek him by the *right way*—we say also, provided he seek him in the *right season*.—This, indeed, is the main object of the passage before us; for observe, the text says, “Seek ye the Lord *while* he may be found.” Seek him *until* he be found, and you are *sure* to find him. What we would now speak to is the *right season*.—We know you all *intend* to seek the Lord; probably there is no one in all this assembly but intends to seek the Lord some time or other; and surely it is of the utmost consequence that you and I should understand each other with regard to the best time for seeking him. And we say,—

First, That the best season for seeking the Lord is *not in eternity*. God is *not* to be found in eternity. Eternity is that state into which the soul is ushered by death. It is a very solemn thing to die, not only because of the change which comes over the body, but, still more, because of the change that comes over the soul—not a change of *character*, but a change of *state*. There is no change of *character*. A man dies the very same as he was the moment before he died, and will be the very same for all eternity; and it is the knowledge of that fact that gives a peculiar solemnity to death. What is it which gives its peculiar solemnity to the last quiver of the dying lip—to the last long shivering sigh, that tells us all is over? What makes it worth the while to look the clock, and mark the very hour, the very moment the man expires? It is this:—at that very moment the eternal, everlasting destiny of that being is fixed. And before you have time to draw a sigh, before the body is laid out, and before you have moved from its very side, the soul has entered on its eternal destiny. Lay the body out on its last bed; you leave it; when you visit it in the morning, it is lying as you left it. Lay the body out in the coffin—the skeleton will lie as the body was laid. And this is not more true of the *body* than of the *soul*. The dead man never shifts his *position*, and the dead soul

never shifts its *character*. We grant you we would be very much inclined, sometimes, to believe otherwise if we could.—When David was saying, “O Absalom, my son, my son! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son!” David would have given crown and kingdom, and all the world beside, if he could have believed that after death a soul could be saved, or *one* offer of mercy given—if he could have believed that a man who left this world unpardoned could be pardoned in another. But there is no truth of the Bible more sure and certain than this, that as a man dies, so he remains throughout eternity—that as the tree falls, so the tree lies: “They that are filthy are filthy still; they that are righteous are righteous still.”—We have no need, then, to tell you that you must not wait till eternity to seek the Lord. When eternity arrives—when the cry is heard, “The Bridegroom is coming”—when the lamps are lighted and the doors shut—it will be a sad time to many a man at whose door Christ had stood for days and years, and knocked and knocked, and he would not open to him. Ah! that man shall stand in his turn at Christ’s door, and knock and knock, with prayers such as he never put up before, “Lord, Lord, open to us;” but Christ shall not open to him; “I know you not,” says the Lord; “the door is shut.”

Among all the changes death makes—and these are many and hideous enough, as far as the body is concerned—God never changes, and Christ never changes; but their conduct to the sinner is changed. The moment a man dies, the God who would have heard him before, will refuse to hear him then; and the Saviour who shed his blood for the very chief of sinners, will refuse even a drop of water to cool a burning tongue in hell. Now, that is a fearful and terrible truth, but it is a most solemn, and important, and instructive truth. Jesus is now on a throne of grace; and we ask every sinner in this place. Will you wait for him till he comes to a throne of judgment? Jesus is in this assembly now. He is now waiting and willing to be your Saviour; and will you wait till your impenitence compels him to turn away? “*Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might.*” Do it *now*—this hour—do it before you

leave this house; for when you go from this, that grave may be ready for you where there is "neither work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom to be found."

In the *second* place, the season when the Lord is to be found is not likely to be a *death-bed season*. Yet this is the very season when many people intend to seek the Lord; and most strange it is! I do not wonder so much at young people, at those who know nothing of death, who never witnessed a death-scene, coming to such a resolution as this; but I am confounded and astonished that any man who ever looked upon a dying bed, could be fool enough to come to such a resolution. They *intend*, forsooth, to read the Bible with a dying eye, to pray with a dying voice, to listen with a dying ear, and on a dying bed, to the words of that man whom for years they rejected in the house of God. Why, of all the delusions that ever entered the heart of man, this is the greatest; and ready as men are to be deceived, I wonder that even Satan can persuade any man, who possesses one glimmering of common sense, to adopt such a resolution. What is there about this plan that makes people resort to it? Is it a plan honouring to God! We cannot conceive any plan more *dishonouring* to God. It in fact just says this: I will turn to God when I can do no better. I will let in Christ when I think he has given the last knock, and not till then. I will give my strength, my spring, my summer, my vigour, my all to Satan; and to the God that loved me, and to the Saviour that died for me, I will offer the dregs of my existence, the few worthless, wretched hours that terminate man's life! Why, brethren, can you say that this is not most dishonouring to God, and most dishonouring to Jesus Christ? "If ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame or sick, is it not evil? Offer it now unto thy governor? Will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person?" saith the Lord of hosts. "A son honour-eth his father, and a servant his master.—If, then, I be a father, says God, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear?"

We have another question to put with regard to this plan: Is it a *suitable* period to seek the Lord, even if it were not dis-

honouring to him? We don't say it would be so very unsuitable a period, if he whom they call the "king of terrors," like other kings, always sent out intimation of his approach, that there might be preparations made to receive him. But that which, among other things, makes death the "king of terrors," is, that he is *not* like other kings; he often sends no notice of his coming. Does death always send a warning? What says Christ? "Behold I come as a thief in the night!" And how does a thief in the night come? Does he send intimation of his coming? No. He breaks stealthily into the house, he steals softly into the chamber of the sleeper, he stands by the bed-side, and before the man can arrest his arm, he plunges the knife into his heart? And can any man in this world of graves, say it will not be so with him? We defy him to take up the public prints, and not read of some sudden death, or something that rings a warning in his ears. Did you ever see Death? We are really tempted to ask the question of any one who thinks a death-bed a suitable season for turning to the Lord. Did you ever see Death? I have seen the king of terrors on many occasions, and in many characters, and many shapes; and I am sure I speak God's truth when I say there never was a man,—he may have resolved in the church, in the haunts of pleasure, when a flash of conscience came across him,—he may have resolved at such times that he would turn to the Lord on his deathbed; but no man in his sober senses ever stood by a dying bed and made that resolution *then*. Did any man ever say *then*, I will seek God when my mind is wandering as wildly, when my body is tossing as restlessly, when I cannot read a line of the Bible, when compelled, on the minister asking me, Can you follow a prayer? to say, I cannot do it? We say there never was a man, in his sound and sober senses, who formed such a resolution in such a place; and if so, surely a *death-bed season* is not a suitable period to seek the Lord.

We have another question to ask, and that exhausts this part of the subject, Is it a *successful* period? What does the Bible and what does experience say? Is a deathbed time a time when you are likely to succeed? We read in the Bible of many

who are now in heaven; but do you believe that there are many among these who never sought the Lord till they were on a dying bed? Do you believe that there are many there who resolved to seek God *only* when they came to be on their dying bed? Do you believe there are few in hell who resolved to seek God *only* on their dying bed? You know as well as I do, that the reverse of this is the case.— You know that there are *few* in heaven who ever put off to a dying hour, and *many* in hell who did so. It has been well said, and it is well worth remembering, “Hell is paved with good resolutions.” There are many names in that Bible of those now in heaven; and how many of them put off seeking the Lord to a dying hour? Are they the most?— No. Are they many? No. Are they few? No. There is *one*. God be thanked there *is* one, else we should stand in speechless despair by the side of many a dying sinner. God be thanked there *is* one; but ah! be mindful there *is but one!* *one*, as it has been said, that no man may despair; and *but one*, that no man may presume! Oh that you were wise, and considered this in the day of your merciful visitation!

We have just one other remark to make. We have said that the Lord *is* not to be found in *eternity*—that *is certain*. Our second remark was, that the Lord was not *likely* to be found on a deathbed; and we gave three reasons for that—first, because it is not a suitable period; and third, because the Bible and experience tell us of only one case that can be called a successful case of deathbed repentance. This instance is often brought forward. But, after all, what evidence have you that the thief on the cross had resolved to put off till a dying hour? There is not a word in the narrative to prove this. It is one thing for a man to be called *in* a dying hour, and it is another thing for a man to be saved who has deliberately put off repentance *till* a dying hour.

Our last remark is, that the Lord is never so likely to be found as he is *now*, by us, by those of us who have not yet found him. Happy are they who have found the Lord. I have not been speaking to them at this time, but to others who have more need of it; and I am sure their

prayers will go along with mine for those who have not found him. And I say to *them*, you are never so likely to find the Lord as *now*, at this very moment. We know where we are now, brethren, but we know not where we may be to-morrow.— I am wrong. We *do* know where we *may* be to-morrow. I ought to have said, we don't know where we *shall* be. I know where we *may* be to-morrow—that is, in eternity. This may be the last Sabbath sun that shall ever shine upon us. There may be some here who are now looking round for the last time on a Christian church, and hearing for the last time of Christ, as I desire to hold him up in this assembly, as the Saviour of the very chief of sinners. Before another such Sabbath meeting as this comes round, there may be some of us for whom a grave has been opened, and by whom a grave has been filled! And if we go away from this place unconverted this day, we may never come back to be converted. Christ may be giving the last knock. God may be saying from the throne of heaven, “Let him alone, my Spirit shall not always strive with that man.” That is very true brethren; but I know what Satan may be saying to it. He says, It is not true; he says, It is not very likely. Satan says, It is much more probable that to-morrow shall be like this day, as this day is like yesterday. Well, admit it to be so. Suppose we shall be all back here on another Sabbath. Will we come back as likely to be converted as we are now? Our situation will be very different. And why?— Because a man going on in sin is like a man going down a hill, every step he takes makes his ascent more difficult, and his return less likely. Sin is like a *fire*. If you allow a fire to burn for a day, do you think it will be as likely to be quenched *then* as it is *now*? Sin is like a river, the farther from the fountainhead, the mightier becomes its power, and the more restless its career. It is like a tree, the longer it grows, it strikes its roots the deeper, and lifts its head the higher, till the sapling that might be bent by an infant's arm, laughs at the hurricane, and defies the storm. You cannot continue in sin without the heart growing harder, and the conscience becoming more seared, and the distance between God and you daily

growing greater. And the sinner goes down into hell as a rock loosened from its summit goes down a hill,—the longer it rolls, it bounds and dashes and whirls along with more rapid and resistless force.

How tender is conscience in childhood, for instance, compared with that of the grey-headed sinner? We have seen a child with few sins on its head, and few spots on its heart, tremble at the thought of eternity; and we have stood by the death-bed of the grey-haired man, and we have thundered in his ears the terrors of the law, and held before his eye the light of Calvary; and never a tear ran down his furrowed cheeks, nor muttered prayer moved the lips whose curses were recorded in the book of judgment. I know there is no heart so hard but God can break it, and there is no man so far gone in sin but God can bring him back. But, as was once said to a man who asked, when speaking of the perseverance of the saints, "How long may I sin, and yet be saved?" I say to you as was said to him, "*Don't try the experiment.*" It is a dangerous experiment. We know God's patience to be *lasting*, but it is not *everlasting*. O! he prevailed on to "seek the Lord while he may be found, to call upon him while he is nigh."

#### THE STRUGGLES OF LIFE.

Look at the world! What a scene of disquiet and disorder! What a succession of struggles, which may begin at the cradle and leave not but at the grave! With poverty, or hard toil, or disease, or domestic trials, or unavoidable misfortunes, or, in some cases, all these together, many have to battle their whole way through life—they rise up early, and lie down late, and eat the bread of sorrow. How does ambition, not confined to any class, spur on the eager competitors in the race for honour and riches! What a struggle there is amongst the different members of society to get uppermost, and while some are straining every nerve to improve their position, it needs the utmost endeavours of others to keep theirs. How like this world often seems to a rock at sea, on which, eager to escape the jaws of death, more drowning men seek standing room than it offers; and when those whose gain has been others' loss, when the few, that have risen on the shoulders of the many that sink, have possessed themselves, in wealth, or power, or pleasure, of their ambition, they have only reached a bare, black, unsheltered rock, on

which, at some future day, a giant wave rises roaring to sweep them from their slippery footing. Let no man deceive himself. Even this world is not to be got without fighting; and compared with the nobler struggles and prizes of the faith, though its rewards be laurel or even golden crowns, it presents a scene of no more real dignity than a nursery quarrel—children fighting for some gilded toy—the street where ragged boys struggle, and tear and roll over each other for a few copper coins. I admit that it has its pleasures; but its sweetest enjoyments perish in the using.—I admit that it has *re-ces*; but they are beset with thorns, and the hand that plucks them bleeds. Nor are any of these to be obtained without a struggle. The few prizes for which, among many blanks, the world offers a host of competitors, are won only by the hard work, hard struggling, hard fighting, without which you gain no topmost place in any profession, no heaps of money, no niche in the temple of fame. Its pearls are not to be picked up off the shore; he who would possess must seek them in a sea where sharks are swimming and storms rage.—*Dr Guthrie.*

#### THE GREAT GUILT OF UNBELIEF.

That is the boldest and most provoking affront that a sinful creature can give to God not to believe his word. To call God weak is blasphemy; to call him foolish, is blasphemy; to deny him, his eternal power and Godhead, all these are blasphemy; but to deny his truth, is something above these. See how it is among poor silly men. There is many a man will think it no great affront to be called poor; another will think it no great affront to be called weak and foolish, a man of small parts to be called shallow; but to call a man that hath anything of a principle of honesty in him a liar, this is not well to be endured. A man that hath a great many other infirmities, yet may be one that makes conscience of what he says (Rom. iii. 4). Now, shall the pride of man rise so readily against reflections of lying cast upon him by his fellow-creatures, and yet shall he cast this unsufferable affront upon the God of truth? The grand transgression is to disbelieve God; and all that do not believe do so. Unbelief hath this in it, that it is the most certain, the most sure and dreadful way of ruin to men: it brings destruction upon men with a special vengeance. "If ye believe not that I am he," says our Lord, "ye shall die in your sins" (John viii. 24.). "If I had not come, and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin" (John xv. 22).—*Trull.*

## MINISTERIAL POWER.

Right methods of labour would further aid you to redeem time for needful rest.—The golden rule is that of Solomon: 'Whatsoever thine hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.' That is, do the next thing, *do it*, do it at once; throw all your soul into it, and when you have done it, leave it.

Sir E. B. Lytton, in a recent lecture, has reported from his own experience how much a student working in this way can accomplish in a short time, and of course how much time may be thus secured for other purposes:—'Since I began really and earnestly to study, *which was not till I had left college*, and was actually in the world, I may perhaps say that I have gone through as large a course of general reading as most men of my time. I have travelled much, and I have seen much; I have mixed much in politics, and the various business of life; and in addition to all this, I have published somewhere about sixty volumes, some upon subjects requiring much research. And what time do you think as a general rule, I have devoted to study—reading and writing? Not more than *three hours a day*; and when Parliament is sitting, not always that. But then, during those hours, *I have given my whole attention to what I was about*.

Owing to a wrong way of working, much of what has all the firing effect of labour is not labour in reality. On the fair analysis of a day which seems to have been spent in unbroken toil, without the possibility of an interval for recreation, we should often convict ourselves of having lost much time; and if we could recover and bring into continuity all the disconnected moments that yielded nothing to the actual day's work; moments of inattention or indecision; moments of aimless, waste emotion, or of languidly flickering fancy; moments taken up by thoughts without sequence, without reason, without profit; moments lost by want of system, punctuality, or promptitude; we should say we might have done more than the work that we have really accomplished, and yet have had leisure left to renew our strength; 'a time to laugh,' 'a time to plant,' 'a time to gather stones, and a time to cast them away again.'—Labour itself is not an evil. It is a cause

of power. Divine love has placed us in a world where it is necessary to keep us alive. It is only its irregularity or excess that we have reason to fear. Regulate and moderate it; let labour and rest, working days and holidays, be in due proportion, and you will be adopting a course through which, with God's permission, each man may hope to say, in his last grateful review of life, 'My root was spread out by the waters, and the dew lay all night upon my branch; my glory was fresh in me, and my bow was renewed in my hand.'

Abide in your first sphere of pastoral service, so long as you can do so with usefulness and hopefulness. Cultivate it to the utmost; do your best for it; while you have the love of the people let no trifles shake your stability, but with steady fervour and even power look forward and labour on until there, at least, your work is plainly done. Let me respectfully urge you not to accept a charge with the reserved intention of finding a better when you can. Allow no visions of greater emolument and advantage elsewhere to allure you away. Leave your post from no premature discouragement. You may be discouraged by the withdrawal from your congregation of certain persons who complain that they derive no profit from your ministry; this may be true, and yet be neither your fault nor theirs. We have 'gifts differing,' and every minister is not sent for every man. You may be discouraged by the withdrawal of others in consequence of disaffection; and yet perhaps you should regard the trial only as one form of success, and the first step to prosperity. You may be discouraged by dull delay; but clearing ground of thorns, or sowing seed which you may never live to see ripen, may be a work as useful in its season as the work of reaping the harvest. You may be discouraged because no large assembly at once gathers round you; but usefulness to souls is not to be measured by a coarse numerical test. We see wealth attract numbers; the popular errors and faults of a preacher attract numbers; numbers attract numbers; while in other instances the faithful preaching of the Gospel only attracts a few. The highest usefulness now reveals, now hides itself in endless and ever-shifting ways. It is often indirect, it is sometimes slow in its



unfolding, and late in its appearance. A reporter of spiritual statistics would have probably omitted to set down in his journal the obscure service of Andrew in bringing Peter to Christ, but its usefulness was not fully visible at that first moment; it only began to be shown to the world when under the preaching of Andrew's convert three thousand men were pricked to the heart, and its effects, which are still increasing, will thrill through all the world and last for ever. 'Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labour will not be in vain in the Lord.'

The learned Jeremy Marsden, an ejected minister, who nearly two centuries ago was invited to become a pastor of this church, wrote 'godly meditations on his *twenty-second* removal. We have no stern trouble, like those of his day, to drive us from place to place, but many of our ministers change their stations with disastrous frequency. Not long since, not far away, in a certain Association, embracing eighteen churches, fifteen of the number dissolved their pastoral connections within less than five years, and four of them changed twice within the same period. Six vacancies occurred during four months; and only three ministers remained undisturbed amid the general perturbation.

This may be an extreme case, but all who have an extensive acquaintance with ministers will be forced to admit that too many of them enter upon the sphere to which they are invited without taking in the idea of permanence, and that many of them, either on account of ambition or of discouragement, never continue in one stay. Besides the harm done to the churches by his evil, it must have a pernicious effect on the ministers themselves.

The Chinese have a method of rearing an oak from an acorn, so that it may never be more than a few inches in size. At intervals the tiny seedlings are transplanted from place to place, tried in a variety of soils, and receive scientifically a succession of checks to their growth, so that in the end they may become trees in miniature, interesting curiosities of littleness. The mind may, after its nature, be brought under the action of a similar process, and suffer a corresponding fate. No unsettled

life can thrive. Let a minister's life answer to that of a tree which is time after time plucked up and planted again, and his power will never grow. All the more harm will come to him, because he is not the mere victim of the experiment, but its agent, bringing it about by his own restless folly and busy contrivance. The neglected study, the divided heart, the self-centred thought, the petty feelings, the broken time, the temptation to repeat from each new pulpit the same old sermons, the habit of looking upon the pastoral relation as one that may lightly come and lightly go, the facility felt in the transference of pastoral affections, the force exhausted by the labour of setting all kinds of machinery in motion, in order to reach some more advantageous rectoral charge—such are the frequent consequences of the disposition for change against which you are warned; it is therefore easy to see that this disposition in a minister will arrest the development of his influence, if not of his working capacity; and that a man who is under the dominion of what Bernard calls 'a vagabond and unstable heart,' never can be great or strong.

'The Egyptians,' we are told, 'made the children of Israel to serve with rigour, and they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field; and the task-masters hastened them, saying, Fulfil your works, your daily tasks. . . . Go therefore now, and work; for there shall no straw be given you, yet shall ye deliver the tale of bricks.' This address has not been delivered in the old Egyptian spirit, although I almost fear you are beginning to think so. Understand that we have only been professing to look at instrumentality from its merely human side, and our attention has been drawn to man's part rather than to God's part in it. It is right that we should give these questions a place in our thoughts—it has been right to consider them on this occasion; but if, without glancing at anything else, I closed my message now, you would have reason to complain of one-sidedness, to cry, 'Who is sufficient for these things?' and to say, 'Give us something more evangelical than cold, hard rules; something more inspiring than appeals that seem only intended to lash and storm the mind onward to greater exertions, and to a more constant striving of

the will after sublime impossibilities.'—Brethren, you are not asked to work in your own strength. 'Our sufficiency is of God,' 'work . . . for it is God that worketh in you to will and to do of His good pleasure.' This encouragement applies to every exertion He requires of us; and be assured that if you work prayerfully, you will soon find that you are not working alone. It will ever be true that you have a great work to do, and the happiest man amongst you must pass through some hours of trial, when his spirit will have to bow and tremble beneath a heavy cross. Yet through the help that comes by faith, each one will be qualified for his appointed service, and will not be permitted to faint because his strength is small. Trust to the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and it will be sufficient for you. His recollected presence, the light of His smiling face, and the serene power that flows into the soul from His gracious Spirit, will compose you for study, nerve you for toil, and heighten all your faculties for service. It will ensure many happy seasons in your future ministry when your labour will seem like rest; when, forgetting the surrounding of life, earth will seem almost like heaven, and when your preaching will seem to be not so much an effort as a manifestation—a calm, strong shining from the central glow within you—a burst of animated and audible thought and love.

Even now, in obedience to the requirements of my plan, I have only spoken of *instrumentality*, and of the way to make it and keep it strong. I have only been speaking of that, for that is the only thing within our province, the only thing for which we are responsible, the only thing to cultivate which you are at college. I have only been speaking of the bow, but the bow is not the archer. A power, distinct from its own must hold it in mastery, and use it for service. No power but that of its Lord can use it; and if He leave it untouched, whatever its materials of strength, whatever its adaptations to its purpose, it must remain a dead and useless thing. We read in classic story that when a mighty chief returned to his palace after long wanderings in many lands, none recognised him, until, taking up his own well-remembered bow, he bent it, and then followed the instant flash of

recognition, for it was known that only one strong hand could ever bend that bow.—Do we, before our poor instrumentality, see men 'pricked to the heart,' hear the cry, 'What must we do? and have good proof that the truth has sped to its mark? Then we are sure that the 'hand of the Lord' is with us. Only His hand could make the bow effective; no power but that of Him 'who wounds to heal, who strikes to bless,' could achieve these victories and miracles of love. One stands amongst us whom the world knows not, and whom even we long refused to own. It is the King! we know Him now, and our souls burn with the spirit of the ancient prayer, 'Gird Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O most Mighty, with Thy glory and majesty; and in Thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth, and meekness, and righteousness; and Thy right hand shall teach Thee terrible things. Thine arrows are sharp in the hearts of the King's enemies, whereby the people fall under them. If you vehemently long for the salvation of men, if you give back to God your best powers, cultivated to the utmost, and beseech Him to employ you as His instruments for the furtherance of His merciful designs; if you have an intense impression of the truth that 'without Him you can do nothing;' if with unflinching faith, and the largest expectations of blessing, you ask for the influence of His Holy Spirit to make the word effectual; then, sure as His own existence will be your success—He will take you with Him as He 'travels in the greatness of His strength, mighty to save,' and by your means will condescend to reveal His glory.

#### FORTY YEARS' EXPERIENCE OF FAMILY PRAYER.

From the day that myself and wife were installed in our own house as a family, now nearly forty years since, God has had an altar in our dwelling, and upon that altar the morning and evening sacrifice of prayer has been offered. This I have ever considered as an imperative duty, and a delightful privilege.—Perhaps no religious exercise in which a family can engage conduces more to its peace, its order, or its happiness. Perhaps the head of a family never appears so dignified or so honourable as when leading the devotions of his household. Perhaps no other service exerts so happy an influence on the temper, affection, and conduct of those to whom he acts as a

priest unto God. Aside from the spiritual good to which it directly and powerfully conduces, its bearing upon the temporal welfare of a family should secure its faithful observance. With these sentiments I was early impressed by the precepts, but more by the example of my father, who daily led his family to the throne of grace. And I early decided, that if ever I became the head of a household, I would adopt a practice so reasonable, and fraught, as I believed, with present and lasting blessings.

I was aware of an objection often brought against this service by those whose cares and business are multiform, and thought it quite possible that, in respect to myself, it might sometimes interfere with the plans and purposes of the day. But it has not proved so.—And now, at the expiration of nearly forty years, I can aver in all truth that we have seldom, if ever, wanted for time. Very seldom, indeed, has any circumstance or providence occurred to prevent our assembling morning and evening “to call upon the name of the Lord.” I have known some of my neighbours to be a little earlier at their business, but never yet have I known the instance, or ever thought it existed, when my worldly interests suffered from attending to the duties of family devotion—not one instance in nearly forty years. But the beneficial influence has all been the other way. I do not mean to intimate that God has wrought miracles for us; and yet interpositions have been so unexpected and so kind, anticipated obstacles so remarkably removed, difficulties so smoothed, and our pathway so clearly indicated, that it has seemed sometimes little less than miraculous. The reading of the holy oracles, its precepts, warnings, promises, encouragements, followed by humble, fervent, importunate prayer, has better fitted us for the duties of the day. I firmly believe that the mind has been less disturbed by the crosses and vexations common to us all. We have felt stronger under the burdens of life, and derived assurance of the Divine guidance, and blessing—remembering what God has said, “Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will answer thee; and thou shalt glorify me.” Thus prepared, we have in comparative quiet passed on in the journey of life; our anchor has been cast on safe ground, and if our bark has sometimes rocked, as storms will sometimes blow and waves rise, our anchor has not dragged, nor our vessel been submerged.

In the course of years, sons and daughters were born to us. These events added new incentives to call upon God, and invested the privilege with new and increasing interest.—These little dependent beings, who could sustain them—who safely conduct them through the perils and infirmities of childhood? We

felt that God alone in his wise providence could do this. And as we had the daily conviction that they were immortal beings, and confided to our care, we felt the need of Divine wisdom and instruction to aid us in fulfilling this most important trust. With all our watchfulness, we well knew that we should be unable to direct them safely over the stormy passage of life. We could not be present with them at all times. Often we could not know where they were; nor could we foresee the temptations and trials which would overtake them. These considerations greatly enhanced the value of prayer.

In process of time, these children advanced to manhood and womanhood. In the natural order of things, they left us. Some of them embarked in business. Some were married, and have children growing up around them.—Under these circumstances, we find family prayer as great a privilege now as formerly, perhaps even greater. We have more to pray for, and even greater solicitude on their account. When our children were young, and the cold wintry storm howled around our dwelling, their mother, on the setting-in of night, was able to conduct them to their little rooms, and see them quietly and snugly in their beds; each one being able to say, as Cowper so beautifully said of his mother,

“Thou nightly visits to my chamber made,  
That thou might see me safe and warmly laid.”

And now, as some of them are men of business, and often travelling about, either in the whirling car, or in the tossing ship, exposed to varied dangers, why should we not the more frequently and the more fervently commend them to God? Our prayers have indeed been laid up for them, and we trust that God will be faithful to his gracious engagements; we cannot distrust him. Every day brings its desire to kneel down and commend ourselves and them again and again to the God of all our mercies. It is a privilege which I think—yes, I dare aver—that I would not surrender for all the gold which will ever be gathered from the mines of California. What good would all that gold do us, if at the same time we were excluded from the privilege of calling upon our heavenly Father—if we must forego his love and communion? The whole world would not make amends for our loss.

“Were I possessor of the earth,  
And called the stars my own,  
Without thy graces, and thyself,  
I were a wretch undone.”

In praying for blessings upon myself and family, I have always guarded on one or two points. I have never asked for great temporal prosperity, nor that we might become rich in this world's goods. He that accumulates riches increases responsibility. Wealth is apt to

lendeth to the Lord." "Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days." His heart responded, "I will trust the Lord." He took a dollar, from his purse, went back, and desired the woman to take it, and as soon as possible procure for herself a Bible. She promised to do so, saying, that she knew where one could be obtained.

He again took his leave, and set off.—As there were then but few taverns on the road, he asked for a lodging at a private house, near which he found himself when night overtook him. He had yet a few pieces of change in his pocket; but as a journey of two more days was before him, he proposed to make his supper on a cold morsel which he had with him. But when the family came round their table to take their evening repast, the master of the house very urgently invited the stranger to join with them; not only so, but to crave God's blessing on their meal. He now began to feel himself among friends, and at liberty to speak freely on divine things. The family appeared gratified in listening to his discourse till a late hour: it was a season of refreshing to their thirsty souls. In the morning, the traveller was urged to tarry till breakfast, but declined, the distance he had to travel requiring him to set off early. His host would take no compensation; and he departed, giving him many thanks. He travelled on till late in the morning, when, finding no public-house, he stopped again at a private one for refreshment. While waiting, he lost no time to recommend Christ and him crucified to the family. When ready to depart, he offered to pay the mistress of the house, who had waited upon him very kindly, for his repast, and the oats for his horse; but she would receive nothing.—Thus he went on, asking for refreshment as often as he needed it, and recommending religion wherever he called, and always offering, as another traveller would do, to pay his expenses; but no one would accept his money, although it was not known that his stock was so low, for he told them not, and his appearance was respectable: at home he was a man of wealth. "What," thought he, "does this mean? I was never treated in this manner on a journey before." The dollar given to the destitute woman recurred to his mind, and con-

science replied, "I have been well paid. It is, indeed, safe lending to the Lord."—On the second day after he left the cottage in the wilderness, he arrived safely at home, and still had money for the poor, having been at no cost whatever.

About a year and a half after this, a stranger called at the house of Mr. M—— for some refreshment. In the course of conversation, he observed that he lived on the other side of the mountain, near Connecticut River. Mr. M—— inquired about some gentlemen there with whom he was acquainted, and was pleased to find that the stranger knew well. He then asked him whether the people in that vicinity paid much attention to religion. The traveller replied, "Not much; but in a town twenty or thirty miles beyond the river, with which I am acquainted, there has been a powerful revival. The first person that was awakened and brought to repentance was a poor woman, who lived in a very retired place. She told her friends and neighbours that a stranger was driven into her house by a thunder-storm, and talked to her so seriously, that she began, while listening to his discourse to feel concerned about her soul.

The gentleman was much affected when he found that she had no Bible, and after he had left the house to go on his journey, returned again, and gave her a dollar to buy one, and charged her to get it soon and read it diligently. She did so; and it had been the means, as she believed, of bringing her from darkness into light—from a state of stupidity and sin, to delight in the truth and ways of God. The name of this pious man, or the place of his residence, she knew not. But she believed it was the Lord that sent him. At this relation, and the great change which was obvious in the woman, her neighbour wondered much. They were induced to meditate on the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, displayed in this singular event of his providence. They were led to think of the importance of attending more to the Bible themselves, and were finally awakened to a deep concern for the salvation of their souls. As many as thirty or forty are already hopefully converted, and rejoicing in God their Saviour." Mr. M——, who had listened to this relation with a heart swelling more and more

engender pride; it tends to harden the heart. It is better to confine ourselves to asking for a competency. This is desirable. This we may seek for with propriety. Beyond this there is danger. Nor have I sought an exemption from the common calamities of life. We do not wish it. We never pray so.—Some trials are best. They are needed. I never yet knew an instance in which mere prosperity ever brought an impenitent man to repentance; so I have seldom known the influx of wealth add to the spiritual thrift and elevation of the Christian. But as to conformity to God, submission to the Divine will, and growth in Christian grace, I know nothing to forbid the largest desires, and the most importunate pleadings. For such blessings I have sought, such as I have expected, such I have found, and I think *because* I have sought them.

I could add much more of the Divine faithfulness, of temporal favors, of spiritual mercies; but as in reading a portion of Scripture prior to prayer I have studied brevity—and brevity as to prayer itself, not, however, disregarding circumstances, and especially pertinency—so, in relating my experience, I am brief. My great object is to commend the practice to those who are commencing the family state. No service seems more dutiful, no privilege seems greater, no reward is more sure.

Were I going to live my life over again, I would begin as I began. The very first thing that I would do would be to erect an altar to God. That I did. I have never for a single moment regretted it. But one thing in all truth I can say: if I were to embark on a similar voyage I would make one grand emendation. I would study to be more faithful in the performance of the duty. I would pray more earnestly, more sincerely, more importunately, more confidently. And now, for the remainder of my pilgrimage, I hope to do all this; “so help me God.”

### BREAD CAST UPON THE WATERS FOUND AGAIN.

About the year 1797, Mr. M.—— was travelling from a town on the western border of Vermont, to another town on the western side of the same state. Passing over the mountainous part of the country between the Connecticut and Onion rivers, he perceived the heavens to be gathering blackness; the sound of distant thunder was heard, and a heavy shower of rain was seen to be fast approaching. The traveller was then in a forest; no place of shelter appeared, and he hastened on until he arrived at a small cottage on the extreme

border of the woods. The rain just then began to rush down with great violence. He sprang from his horse, pulled off his saddle, and without ceremony went into the house. Surprised to see no family but a female with an infant child, he began to apologize for his sudden appearance, and hoped she would not be alarmed, but permitted him to tarry till the rain had abated. She replied that she was glad he had happened to come in, for she was always much terrified by thunder.

“But why, madam,” asked he, “should you be afraid of thunder? It is the voice of God, and will do no harm to those who love him and commit themselves to his care.”

After conversing with her for a while on this topic, he inquired if she had any neighbours who were religious. She told him she had neighbours about two miles off, but whether they were religious or not she did not know; only she had heard that some man was in the habit of coming there to preach once a fortnight. Her husband went once, but she had never been to their meeting. In regard to everything of a religious kind, she appeared to be profoundly ignorant.

The rain had now passed over, and the face of nature smiled. The pious traveller, about to depart, expressed to the woman his thanks for her hospitality, and his earnest desire for the salvation of her soul.—He earnestly besought her to read her Bible daily, and to give good heed to it as to “a light shining in a dark place.” She, with tears in her eyes, confessed that she had no Bible. They had never been able to buy one.

“Could you read one, if you had it?”

“Yes, sir, and would be glad to do so.”

“Poor woman,” said he, “I do heartily pity you! Farewell!”

He was preparing to pursue his journey. But he reflected; “This woman is in very great need of a Bible. Oh that I had one to give her! But I have not. As for money to buy one, I have none to spare; I have no more than will be absolutely necessary for my expenses home. I must go; but if I leave this woman without the means to procure the word of God, she may perish for lack of knowledge. What shall I do?” He recollected the Scriptures, “He that hath pity on the poor

with wonder, gratitude, and joy, could refrain no longer, but with hands and eyes upraised to heaven, exclaimed, "My God thou hast paid me again!"

### THREE TIMES CONVERTED.

BY S. SPENCER, D. D.

A young woman, who was a member of my church, came to me with the urgent request that I would visit her sister, who was in a very anxious state of mind, and would be glad to see me. Learning that her sister had been a communicant in another denomination, and very seldom attended our church, I declined going, as I was unwilling even to appear of a proselytising spirit. But she was so urgent that I finally consented.

She lived in a neighborhood some miles distant, where most of the people belonged to another denomination. I immediately rode to her house. She entered the room where I was; and her sister after introducing her to me, left us alone, that she might speak freely to me. I perceived she was very much agitated, trembling and sighing. I said to her, "You seem to be very much troubled; what is it distresses you?"

Says she, "I have been converted three times, and I feel as if I needed it again."

"Take care," said I, "that you do not get converted again in the same way.—All that has done you no good, has it?"

"No," says she, "not at all."

"Then do not get converted so again. You want a religion that shall last—a religion to die with; and I advise you to get an entirely new kind."

I conversed with her for some time, aiming to teach her the nature of religion, and to quell the excitement of her mind; which appeared to me to arise more from an agitation of her sensibilities than from real conviction of sin. Her affections, more than her understanding and conscience, were excited. I visited her afterwards; and for some time her impressions appeared to me to become more scriptural and deep, and to promise a good result.—But she was drawn away again among her old associates, at an exciting assembly in the evening, where she

professed to have become converted again. She was as joyful and happy as she had been before, and her religion lasted this time about six months.

The heart that has once been drunk with fanaticism is ever afterwards exposed to the same evil. It will mistake excitement, any fancy, for true religion. Fanaticism is not faith.

When the affections, or mere sensibilities of the heart, are excited, and the understanding and conscience are but little employed, there is a sad preparation for false hope—for some wild delusion, or fanatical faith. The judgment and conscience should take the lead of the affections but when the affections take the lead, they will be apt to monopolize the whole soul. Judgment and conscience will be overpowered, or flung into the background; and then the deluded mortal will have a religion of mere impressions—more feeling than truth, more sensitiveness than faith, more fancy and fanaticism than holiness. Emotions, agitations, or sensibilities of any sort, which do not arise from clear and conscientious perception of truth will be likely to be pernicious. The most clear perception of truth, the deepest conviction, is seldom accompanied by any great excitement of the sensibilities. Under such conviction, feeling may be deep and strong; but will not be fitful, capricious, and blind. To a religion of mere impressions one may be "converted three times," or three times three; to a religion of truth, one conversion will suffice. In my opinion, my young friend was all along misled by the idea that religion consisted very much in a wave of feeling.—Her instructors ought to have taught her better.

BLESSEDNESS OF A LOWLY MIND.—The greater the submission, the more the grace. If there be one hollow in the valley lower than another, thither do the waters gather. The more lowly we are in our own eyes, the more lovely we are in the sight of God. When to ourselves we are despicable, to him through Christ, we are accepted. We are unworthy, let us be lowly. Job was coming near to the blessing when he said, "I am vile; what shall I answer thee?"—*Ed. Young, 1655.*

# THE GOOD NEWS.

MARCH 15th, 1863.

## TRUST IN GOD.

There is no truth more generally received among Christians, more frequently inculcated by ministers, more often tendered as consolation in times of affliction and perplexity, than the duty of trust in God. And yet, how little is it practically realised, how little is the abundant comfort it might bring, appropriated and enjoyed.—Men, even truly Christian men, go about their worldly callings with anxious brow, and care-laden hearts, as if beyond the blue sky that arches over them, there were no over-ruling God, infinitely wise and faithful, caring for them, and all that concerns them, and directing the “accidents” of commerce, and the destinies of every individual man, as surely as the histories of nations and the courses of the stars. How much anxious troubled thought do we expend on some cherished hope or undertaking, that might be spared us if we were but content to leave it in simple faith and trust, with that God who directs the fallen leaf, and clothes the lilies of the field. Are not we of more value than many sparrows? It is true God may not see it for our eternal good to give us this desire of our heart, but if He does not, He will abundantly make up for it from the riches of His grace, if we are only content to give Him the trust and confidence He asks. And in times of deepest distress, when the dark shadow of approaching bereavement is drawing nearer, and we shrink dismayed from the thick darkness that seems before us, even *then*, if we listen to His word, “Fear not, only believe,”—a light will arise in the dark place, and leaning upon His unfailling strength we shall be able to go through all

He appoints us, for He knows our frame, and will never lay upon us more than we can bear. How often do the dark clouds we so dreaded as they advanced “break in blessings on our heads,”—and we find in what we thought would be only darkness, and bitterness of soul, a light and joy, a peace and a sweet consolation, which we would not exchange for the restoration of temporal blessings which, perhaps, stood between us and the light of God’s presence. Why can we not believe in reality, what we all profess to do in theory; that the Father of our spirits, who Himself created every need and every faculty, can also Himself fill those spirits with the highest and purest enjoyment of which they are capable, independently of those temporal blessings, which He may sometimes give and sometimes take away.

Can we, indeed, let ourselves be oppressed with over-much care or sorrow when we recall the words of our Elder Brother, our exemplar in all things, whose own life in this world was one constant exercise of faith, as it was of love, and who speaks to the weary, storm-tossed, anxious souls, throughout all time. “Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let it be afraid; ye believe in God, believe also in Me!”

ONOMA.

## COOLING DRAUGHTS FOR THE WORLD’S FEVER.

And the same John was clothed with camel’s hair and a leathern girdle about his loins, and his meat was locusts and wild honey.—Matt. III. 4.

This was in the days of his pilgrimage on earth. Now how changed has he become! Like his Saviour, he is clothed in white raiment, bright and shining, girt about with a golden girdle, and crowned with glory and honour and eternal life.—Doth he sorrow now, think you, that he was content with his humble dress and rough fare? Oh no! Like the martyrs

gracious countenance, that feeding on thy hidden manna and being clothed in thy righteousness, we may not only endure, but rejoice as did the apostle of old in the ever recurring trials and privations of

## THIS TRANSITORY WORLD.

'Tis but a place to wait in,  
To tarry for a night,  
And then away to Jesus  
We take our upward flight.

'Tis but a place to wait in,  
And then we fly away,  
An ante-room, where we prepare,  
For bright eternal day.

'Tis but a place to wait in,  
To hope and to endure;  
A time to work for Jesus,  
And make our calling sure.

'Tis but a place to wait in,  
To wipe sad tears away,  
To help the desolate, and be  
The helpless orphan's stay.

'Tis but a place to wait in,  
To tell of Jesus' love,  
Then join the Hallelujah  
Of happy hearts above.

But unto the wicked God saith, what hast thou to do, that thou takest my covenant in thy mouth? seeing thou *hatest instruction*, and castest my words behind thee." "Now consider this ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver." "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near." For hath not Christ come to guide our feet in the way of peace.

## A SWEET PROMISE.

BY REV. D. FRASER, A. M.

"Those that seek me early shall find me.—Prov. viii. 17.

"Will you give me a Picture-book on my birth-day, Papa?" said a little boy one evening to his father.

"Perhaps I will," was the answer.

"Perhaps," said the little fellow, "is not enough—PROMISE that you will, dear Papa?"

And when his father said—"Well then,

I promise you I will," the boy laughed for joy, and said—"Thank you"—for he felt quite sure that he would get what was promised.

So every child knows what it is to rely on a promise.

I want to talk to you about a promise made by the Lord Jesus Christ. He is better than father and mother. He is the Holy One of God. He is the loving Saviour of men. He is the merciful friend of children. He never changes His mind. He never forgets what he has said. He is faithful to all His promises. It is with His Word you should begin the New Year.

The promise made by the Lord Jesus, is that He will bestow on such as seek Him early, not a gift merely but Himself.—Nothing could be better than this.—There is no portion so rich as the Lord's favour, no blessing so sweet as His love.

## SEEK JESUS EARLY.

You have no promise that you will find the Saviour, unless you seek Him. You know what it is to seek an object you desire. Every one seeks what he likes best. Children seek play. Students seek books. Some men seek power. Others seek money. If a report came into the town where you live that jewels and lumps of yellow gold had been found on some hill hard by, or in the bed of some watercourse, what crowds of people, young and old, would wish to go there, and go early, to seek so great treasure! On the high hill of Cairngorm, not very far from Inverness, men will spend long summer days in digging and searching for the chance of finding some of these precious bright pebbles that are used so much in Highland jewelry.—Surely we should be as much, and much more, in earnest in seeking Jesus, not for the mere chance, but with the sure promise of finding Him. All the jewels in the world are poor if set over against that one "Pearl of great price." Heavenly wisdom is "more precious than rubies, and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared with her."

You need not go a long journey, or climb high hills, to seek and find the Saviour. He is very near. Seek Him in your Bible. Seek Him at Church. Seek Him in your Sabbath School. Seek Him



of old, who wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, of whom the world was not worthy, he has forgotten these things as the waters that pass away. His clothing is now more glorious than the robes of Kings and Emperors. Be not cast down O poor disciple of thy lowly Lord and Master, thou shalt shine forth in the Kingdom of his glory, be thy garb never so poor and mean, nay heed it not thou art a prince in disguise, and the greatest potentate on earth may envy thee thine inheritance. It is an estate which can never be taken from thee, neither shalt thou leave it to all eternity. Is thy fare hard poor saint, while thy neighbours live sumptuously every day? John the Baptist's Locusts and wild honey would not, methinks content thee better. The first thou wouldst turn from with disgust and loathing, and the second would soon clog thine appetite by its repetition. Lazarus who had Angels for his body guard, eat but the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table; broken bread and picked bones; dog's fare you may think, yet it nourished him sufficiently while awaiting his happy transition to a better country, even a Heavenly.

"There doth he drink full draughts of bliss  
And pluck new life from Heavenly trees."

And where was John's dwelling? In the desert, where he lay down in dens and caves of the earth, as Elijah his great predecessor did and many holy martyrs both before and since. The poorest of us here have a house to cover us, bread to eat and water to drink, let it suffice us if it be the Lord's will to call us to endure such poverty for his dear sake. What does Christ say of his people? Speaking to his Father in Heaven he says "As thou hast sent me into the world, so have I also sent them into the world. And how was that, was it not to suffer and if need be die for the world? Thou wilt say this is an

hard saying, who will bear it? He that can receive it let him receive it. But such deprivation as John had to endure are by no means confined to the poor. In the midst of abundance some are restricted for years by disease, to a morsel of coarse bread, and drink even a draught of cold water with trembling. Never shall I forget the eager hungry look of a poor invalid, stricken by famine in the midst of plenty. She did not keep her bed, but walked in and out among the people a lamentable spectacle of hunger and suffering, more to be pitied perhaps than the beggar in the street, for none could give relief to her. To swallow the smallest quantity of meat would throw her into the most violent spasms: a few morsels of coarse bread in the day was all she could endure. Hers was indeed *Apparently* a hard lot. She and a younger sister had been left orphans in their girlhood; for more than thirty years they had worked early and late to acquire a home and a farm, sufficient to sustain them in their old age. They attained their wish, but alas! for the vanity of worldly possessions, she was almost immediately seized with the terrible malady, was brought face to face with that starvation, which she had fondly imagined had been warded off forever. This was the result doubtless of over-exertion and a sedentary life. *Surely man walketh* in a vain shew; surely he is disguised in vain; he heapeth up riches and knoweth not who shall gather them. My soul wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him. Blessed Jesus, let not the veil of an earthly mind come between thee and me. But why should a christian utter this prayer for himself alone? Are not all thy people one in thee? Endure us, O Lord, with that holy dependence upon thee for carnal things and that ardent desire after the things above, that nothing can suffice us here but the continual sunshine of thy

when you are alone, praying. While you are on your knees, He will show himself gracious. "Ask and it shall be given you: seek and ye shall find."

But be sure to seek Him EARLY. If I promise my boy a gift to-morrow morning on condition that he comes to me for it so soon as he is dressed, I don't expect him to come to me in the afternoon, or at bedtime; and if he does, I am not bound by my promise to give him anything. So, when the Lord Jesus bids you seek Him early, you must observe the time He appoints. There is no promise to those that are late, such as there is to those who are early, in seeking the blessed Saviour.

#### EARLY SEEKERS SHALL FIND JESUS.

This is what I have called "A Sweet Promise," "Those that seek Me early shall find Me." The Saviour does not walk away, or hide His face from you. He is seeking you. His eye is bright with mercy. His ear is quick to hear your cry. His hand is strong to help. He shows you the love of God. He wants to bring you back to God. His voice is—"Come."—"To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." He is willing to cover you with His own worthiness and beauty, and to put His Holy Spirit within you.—Would you see Jesus? See him in the Gospel with open arms, saying—"Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God." There is always room for little children in the arms of Jesus. Do not doubt it. Come and see!

You will find Him precious as the Saviour and the Shepherd of your soul.

YOUR SAVIOUR; one who rescues from sin and misery.

A boy slept alone in a little garret of his mother's house, and she was a widow. At night the house took fire, and the widow waking in a fright, ran screaming into the street. Neighbours gathered, but none could go up the narrow stairs to awake the little boy, for the stairs were already on fire. The sleeping boy felt uneasy, as if he were choking, for the room was full of smoke. Suddenly he woke, jumped out of bed, and tried to escape. It was impossible. The stairs were in a blaze, and on the roof the thatch had taken fire, and flames began to curl in at the window.—

The smoke thickened, and there was a fearful heat, so that the boy ran hither and thither, and cried for help; not knowing what to do. His mother wrung her hands in the street, and she too cried, that her child was lost. At that moment a strong man pressed through the gaping crowd, placed a ladder against the wall of the house, climbed it quickly; and leaped through the flaming window into the room. It was the work of a moment to wrap the child in a thick blanket taken from the bed, to protect him from fire and smoke, then to lift the child with one strong arm, leaving another free to hold the ladder—and so to carry the boy safely out of the burning house, and restore him to his mother. This man was a saviour from the fire. And you may be sure that the boy who was saved kissed the scarred, scorched face of that saviour, because scarred and scorched in saving him. He would never forget that good man's name, or hear that any one should speak ill of him. He thought that he never could do enough for one who had saved his life. There is a more awful fire that already girds the sinful soul. No one can quench its fury. And when one tries to make a way of escape for himself, he cannot, for the fire is round about. Lo! a strong Saviour makes haste to help.—When you cry, He is at your side, lifts you with His arm—plucks you as a brand out of the fire. When Jesus thus finds you—and you thus find Him—He is gracious to you, and you never can forget Him, or do enough to show your thankfulness.

#### THE CRAB-APPLE TREE.

In one corner of our old garden there was a fine-looking apple-tree. The branches grew over the fence, and many a boy, when the apples were ripe, used to risk a fall, or a finding out, to get some of the fruit.—But one bite was enough. It was the crabbiest apple that ever grew. The poor fellows spit it out quick enough, made wry faces, and threw the apples as far as they could see. It was a common trick upon any strange boy to give him one of our crab-apples. Why father kept the tree, I could never guess.

I went from home, and was gone several years. How delightful it was to return

one more! How many changes and improvements around the old place!

"How fares the crab-apple tree?" I asked, as George was showing me round the garden; "I hope that it is cut down. "I'll show it to you," he said; and as we went along and looked under the trees, he took up an apple from the grass and offered it to me. "Try that," he said. It certainly looked tempting; and, oh, it tasted so good! "Just as the apples used to taste when you were a boy, I suppose," said George. "A thousand times better; father had no apples like that when I was a boy." "You like it then?" said my brother. "The finest fruit I ever tasted." "It grew on the crab-apple tree," said George, laughing.—For an instant I was tempted to throw it down; on second thought, I took another bite instead.

"Crab-apple tree! our crab-apple tree!" I exclaimed, crunching the juicy mouthful; "it has wonderfully changed its character: what converted it from a crab-apple to a Ribston pippin? How's that, George?" "Exactly so," he said; "grafting has done the business." And he took me to the tree, the very same tree; for I knew it by the way the large branches shot from the trunk—the very crab-apple tree hung all over with Ribston pippins—"one of the most valuable trees in the garden;" and he went on to tell me the number of bushels it yielded. "When father died, I was determined to cut it down; but my man said it was sound and healthy, and would make excellent grafted fruit. We lopped off the branches, and put in some of these beautiful grafts, and you see what it is."

"Completely changed its nature; given a new character to it," said I. "All the culture in the world could not have done this, I suppose?"

"No," answered George; "it could only be done by putting in a wholly new and better stalk; grafting is a great business."

This always seems to me a striking illustration of our own nature—crab at the root, crab in the trunk, crab in the branches, and crab in the fruit—sinful, all of it; often good enough outside, making a fair show, but sour to the taste, and really good for nothing—the original stalk bad.

Yet our case is not hopeless, though all the cultivation in the world cannot change our nature. But a new and better stalk can

be grafted in, and so a great change produced in us. Jesus Christ, the great Husbandman, can insert a heavenly graft, a living branch, which shall bear good fruit, pleasant to the eye and sweet to the taste—fruit worth possessing, and worth gathering in the great harvest-time.

What is conversion but spiritual grafting? Like almost everything spiritual, it has its type and resemblance in the world around us. As the graft, when inserted, imparts its nature to the tree, and causes it to produce new fruits; so when the grace of God converts a soul, implants new principles, new thoughts, new feelings, and these spring forth into new actions and efforts to glorify God.—*Pleasant Fruits.*

### JESUS: GOD'S GIFT TO SINNERS.

Jesus is ours already, to be used by you for the remission of your sins, even although you never have believed it or acted upon it.

He is yours in the gift of God, "for God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son;" He is yours in the offer of the gospel, for "through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins;" and, as He said, "the Son of man is come to seek that which was lost," and as "the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world," the only qualification necessary to warn you in taking Him, as He is held forth by God, "the propitiation of our sins," is being a lost one belonging to this fallen world; for, says the apostle, "He is a propitiation for the whole world." Wherefore, you may use "Jesus-Christ the Righteous One," as the propitiation for your sins as confidently as if you had perfectly obeyed and suffered all He did.

The bread provided for the starving operatives in Lancashire, by the money contributed by us, is as truly theirs as if they had worked for it, and had bought it, because it is made theirs by our gift; even so, Jesus is freely set forth before mankind sinners, as "a propitiation through His blood;" and if you have "faith in His blood," then you have got hold of that which answers your soul's craving for righteousness and forgiveness, and you will, thereby, have "no more conscience of sins." "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."—*The Great Change By the Editor.*

## PLEADING THE ATONEMENT.

There can be no doubt that many find it exceedingly difficult to make a practical use of the great doctrine of the atonement. They understand so far the nature of Christ's death. They see clearly that while we have reason to be thankful for the birth, life, and teaching of Jesus, we have yet higher grounds for remembering with gratitude his Cross and Passion. But yet with all that, the fact that the sacrifice on the virtue of which they are to rely for the removal of their sins, has been already offered more than eighteen centuries ago, prevents them from easily feeling a close and personal relation to it, and thus keeps them from receiving the comfort from it, which it is so well fitted to supply.

In one respect the Jews of old had an advantage over us, in that the way which the sin burdened among them were to seek relief, was so plain that no one could mistake it. In whatever part of Canaan a man might live, he could always learn in a moment what road led to Jerusalem; and nothing could be easier than for him to take to that place an ox or a lamb, and present himself with it to the Priest in the Temple. In our case there is no one definite spot to which we can go with the certainty of meeting with God—no visible altar on which we can lay our offering—no appointed sacrifice which we can literally carry in our hands and present as our atonement. So far then the course prescribed for us, is more difficult to take than that prescribed for them;—and as most of us are, at the best, very dull and unspiritual, we must bear with those who are troubled with the difficulty. Let us see if we cannot explain in a sentence or two, wherein lies the difference between the *sight-walk* of the Jew, and the *faith-walk* of the Christian, in regard to this matter.

The original relations of both Jew and Gentile to God are, of course, the same. We are all sinners, or, in other words, *debtors*. In order to stand right with him, then, we must pay him what we owe, and in one aspect of them, all the sacrifices which have been offered up since the fall, have just represented so many efforts made by men to meet their obligations to the

Great Creditor. Well, so far as the Jews were concerned, these paying processes were very simple and very easily attended to. There was no doubt either as to what they were to take in their hands, or where they were to take it to. But here was the drawback. *These payments effected nothing in themselves towards reducing the debt*; and, so far as they were concerned, they might have been repeated daily, and without effect, to the end of the world. When Christ was offered up, however—the great sacrifice—the case was very different. He by his one offering perfected for ever them that are sanctified;—so far as his people's debts were concerned, the discharge of them was complete—and the repetition of the atonement, in these circumstances, would be not merely needless but unjust!

Now, let the reader consider what light these facts throw upon the character of our position under the Gospel. If we have come unto God through Christ, we are entitled at all times to do as a discharged debtor does when old claims that have been long settled, are brought up anew against him. Such a man, if he were to be thrown into prison by an old creditor on the ground of having left obligations unmet, how would he get free? By paying his debt over again? That would not be necessary. He would be set free, simply by *pleading that the debt had been paid already*. And no matter how often the process might be repeated—no matter though he were to be laid hold of week after week for years—the same remedy would be always found equally efficacious. Let him but plead his discharged accounts, and the law will protect him in the enjoyment of his liberty. In like manner, if we are willing to be saved on the gospel terms, all that we have to do is to come before God in faith, and *plead the atonement*. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect—*Christ has died!*" By that one offering he has discharged wholly and for ever his people's debts, and when they contract fresh guilt and bring a new burden on their souls, what they have to do is not to look about for fresh and fruitless sacrifices, but to turn their eye back again to the Cross, where the blood of an infinitely

worthy victim was shed once for all for the remission of their iniquities.

I will praise thee every day—  
Now thine anger's turned away;  
Comfortable thoughts arise  
From the bleeding sacrifice.

### THE MENDICANT.

A story was told of a beggar, who during the day, limped about on crutches, pretending to be lame and impotent, and begging for alms with a mournful voice; but who, in the evening, at his quarters, and in the midst of his comrades, cast his crutches away, took part in the carouse, and showed by dancing the perfect soundness of his limbs. Many expressed their surprise at this, and called the fellow, impostor, thief, and vagabond.

But *Gotthold* observed: My friends, he is not the first, and just as little will he be the last, to practise falsehood for the sake of money. Do you suppose that he has not many a match, even among those who go about arrayed in silk and satin? How many try to cheat, not merely men, but God! How many deceive themselves, as this beggar does his fellow-men! Only reflect what takes place in church. We demean ourselves devoutly during worship, penitently at confession, and decently and temperately at the season of communion. Our words then are: Ah me! I am a poor sinner; heartily do I deplore my transgressions; I cast myself upon the divine mercy; I will be glad to mend my ways. O how grieved the beggar then is! and how afflicted he pretends to be! But only observe him when he has quitted the church, laid aside his assumed devotion and fictitious piety, is left to himself, and returns to his wanton associates. In a moment, sin, repentance, good resolutions, heaven and hell, are all forgotten. Devotion is drowned, conscience cast away, and the poor sinner no longer sorrowful, sick, wretched, but bold, reckless, haughty, and ungovernable. We wonder, and with good reason, that, under the Papacy, people believe that they can promote their salvation by purchasing a monk's hood and wearing it in the grave. We are not, however, aware that we ourselves have only chosen the hood of a hypocrite in

preference to that of a monk. This is the disguise which many (so called) Christians wear, and in which they also die: they seem to think that to become a *new creature* in Christ is a very poor affair.

Alas, Lord Jesus! of all deceptions in the world, none is so common as self-deception. Looking into the mirror of self-love, men fancy that, if they please themselves, they must also be pleasing to thee; whereas the very opposite is the case. O let thy Holy Spirit guide me into all truth, and keep me from imposing upon myself.

### FRUIT BY THE WAY-SIDE.

Mary C—had lately parted from her only sister, who had married and gone to India. Very dreary and lonely she felt, as, one bright, sunny morning, she sat down (because she had “nothing else to do”) to prepare her next Sunday's lesson.

She began to read her notes, but her thoughts wandered, and gradually discouraging feelings (connected with her class) got such hold of her, that she was closing her lesson paper with a bitter sigh, when a servant entered with a note. Mary quickly opened it:—

“My dear Mary,—Will you oblige me by going in my place to see and read to a poor sick girl? I feel so unwell this morning that I cannot leave the house, and the poor child has sent to me. I can think of no one but you to supply my place.—Your affectionate aunt,  
Ellen F.—”

“There is no fear of infection. The address is 9 Willan'g Square, Wellington Street.”

One of the most disagreeable streets in the town; but Mary did not think of that, her thought was—“Why did aunt send for me? I am sure I cannot talk to the child!”

But she went, and was rewarded.

“I must have seen you before somewhere; I seem to know your face.”

A bright flush answered her, and a timid voice replied:—

“You saw me at Fenchurch Sunday-school, ma'am. I came with Sarah Foster one day.”

And instantly Mary remembered the tall awkward girl she had been half vexed with “Sarah Foster” for bringing. She was so much “too big for her teaching.”

"What shall I read to you?" said Mary, as she listlessly turned over the leaves of her little Bible.

Again the bright flush, and the stammering, hesitating voice:—

"Please, ma'am, would you read what you taught us about that day?"

"What was it, dear? Let me see—I forget."

The voice grew braver:—

"Oh, ma'am! it was so nice. It was about Jesus; and—and—when I got so ill, I thought, and thought, about it, and wished He loved me; and—"

Go on, dear; and what?"

Mary's heart smote her for the little love she had had for her Saviour's children.—That heart was softening now.

"I've tried to ask Him, as you said, and it makes me glad to do that; for sometimes I think He hears, but I am not sure, and—I'm so big, and I don't know *anything*," she added with a sigh.

Mary's eyes were full enough now. A sudden rush of feeling came over her—her selfish, way-ward heart; her want of love for Christ and his little ones; her yielding disposition when Satan tempted her to discouragement. But she turned from all these thoughts now, for, plain enough, there was active duty before her.

"I will teach you something, poor girl."

And she read some of her Saviour's own words of love to the longing soul; and returned home to wait herself upon Him, who could "renew her strength," and enable her "to walk and not faint."

And is it not enough for us to hope that from some young heart in our classes, we have removed, by God's permission, the veil that hid from it the lights of "Home," and have taught it the sweet "Hosanna" which it will one day delight to chant within the courts of heaven?

True, our way is often in the dark, but let us take firm hold of the promise—  
"According to your faith, be it unto you."

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### THE STRAIT GATE.

The misunderstanding of a passage of the Word of God very often proves a stumbling-block in the way of many who are seriously seeking the salvation of their souls. So, also, when the same is not clearly understood by the preacher or the commentator, to whom

the inquirer looks for instruction, the difficulty is only increased. And thus it is that many, being discouraged, give up in despair. Perhaps few texts of Scripture have been more discouraging to the serious seeker than the memorable words of our Lord:—"Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able" (Luke xiii. 24). The embarrassment is found in the two words "strive" and "seek," it being supposed that they denote two radically different states of mind. We are told that to strive means to agonise, for that the Greek word expresses that intensest of mental exercises; and hence, unless we agonise, we cannot succeed. So we are told that to seek means only to wish and to desire, but does not include any intensity of emotion. From these statements it is thus argued—They seek, wish, and desire, but they do not strive; therefore, because they do not agonise, they cannot enter. This interpretation throws the success or failure alone on the amount of physical and mental exertion the sinner may put forth.—But who can graduate these exertions, and say precisely how much will insure success? How many a seriously-minded sinner, though conscious of his lost condition, and of his absolute dependence upon atoning blood, still feels that his conviction of sin is not as intense as it might be, and that his state of mind is not that of agony; and hence concludes that, as he is only a seeker, there can be no hope for him, and thus he uses the words of Christ to confirm him in despondency! But let us turn to other words of our Lord. Did he not say (Matt. vi. 33), "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness?" Did he not again say (Matt. vii. 7), "Seek and ye shall find;" and still again (verse 8), "For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth?" In each of these texts our Lord uses the very same Greek word that he employed when he said, "Many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." If, in Luke xiii. 24, the man cannot enter simply because he only *seeks*, then, how is it that, in Matt. vi. 33, he is only directed to seek, and, in Matt. vii. 7 and 8, he is assured of success if he will seek, the same Greek word being used in each? If to seek necessarily implies a want of intensity, then the words of our Lord would not be reliable. But this cannot for a moment be admitted; hence we must find some other interpretation of Luke xiii. 24. The Greek word *zeleo*, translated "seek" is a generic word, and therefore expresses all degrees of emotion, from the least unto the greatest. That it usually expresses less than the word *agonizo*, translated "strive," all are ready to admit; but that it may denote as intense an emotion is obvious from the following passages:—Matt. xii. 45, "A merchant man, seeking goodly pearls" (Luke

rv. 8): the woman seeking the lost silver; and Luke ii. 45, "And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him." Here was a mother—the mother of Christ—seeking for her lost child. What emotion is more intense than this, or calls forth more resolute and determined exertion? When she found her child, she said, "I have sought thee sorrowing." Then, how are we to understand the words of the Saviour, in Luke xiii. 24? Read the whole passage, and all will be plain. In verse 23, "One said unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able, when once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door." "And he said unto them, Strive."—Why strive? Why put forth the utmost determination? Because the door is now open, and exertion has the power of hope, to quicken and encourage it. When shall many seek to enter in, and not be able? The blessed Lord has told us. It is "when the master of the house has risen up, and hath shut the door." Then it is too late; then no amount of agonising will avail, because the time of probation is ended. "And ye begin to stand without and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity."

This text, when properly interpreted, so far from depressing or discouraging any one, is calculated to encourage and to quicken.—"The door is now open, and you may enter. Be in earnest, therefore; remember what I have said—'Seek ye first the kingdom of God. Make it the one chief object on which all your energies are concentrated; for I have promised, 'Seek, and ye shall find,' 'and he that seeketh findeth,' because the door is now open. But when the door is once shut then all seeking—all determined effort—will be utterly and forever unavailing." How these words of Christ crowd upon the sinner, to make the most of the present moment! How they encourage him to be decided now, because now there is hope! Now the door is open; but at any moment, the hand of death may shut that door forever. Strive now.

A little deaf and dumb girl was once asked by a lady, who wrote the question on a slate, "What is prayer?" The little girl took her pencil and wrote the reply, "*Prayer is the wish of the heart.*" And so it is. All fine words and beautiful verses said to God do not make real prayer, without the sincere wish of the heart.—*St. S. Mass.*

## A SCRAP FROM GOUGH.

I was lecturing in a small town once, and when the lecture was over, many persons came up to sign the pledge. A number of young ladies were standing by, and were looking at the signatures with interest. Directly one of them came to me. 'Mr. Gough, go out there at the door and get Joe to sign the pledge.' 'Why, I don't know Joe.' 'Why he is standing out by the door.' Out I went, and standing there was a poor fellow, with an old tattered cap on his head, torn shirt, dirty clothes, old boots, and a woe begone look. Says I to myself this must be Joe. 'How do you do Joe?' said I. 'How do you do, Sir?' 'Joe I want you to sign the pledge.' 'What for?' 'Why, Joe, those ladies sent me after you.'—'What, who? why I didn't think I had a friend in the world.' 'Come on, Joe, come on,' said I. He stopped, and said, Look here, some fellows told me to bring a bottle of liquor in the meeting to-night, and get up and say, here's to your health! They said they would give me fifty cents if I did. Them's 'em all along the gallery up there; there they are. I ain't going to do it. He went to the door, and we heard him break it on the steps. He came in and went up to the table and commenced to write his name, but he could not do it; so he braced himself and caught hold of his arm, but he could not do it. Says he, 'look here, that's my mark.'

Then the ladies came up and shook hands with him, but he pulled his cap over his eyes, and now and then wiped a tear away. 'Stick to it, Joe,' says one. 'All right, Joe, all right.' Some three years after I was in the same place, I saw a gentleman walking along dressed in a good suit—nice black hat, boots cleaned, and a nice shirt collar, with a lady on his arm. I knew it was Joe. Says I, 'You stuck to it, didn't you?' 'Yes sir, I stuck to that pledge, and the girls have stuck to me ever since.'

Some people think that when they have persuaded a drunkard to sign the pledge they have done with him. It's a mistake, it's then he wants your help. He is at the bottom of the hill, lower than the common level: he must climb; it's hard work; he commences tremulously, feebly, doubtfully; he raises his feet, he gets a little way, and becomes faint: you see he is about to give way; run up and put a little peg under his feet; there, see he rests, he's tired, he starts again, fearing as he goes higher, he gazes around him and looks wearied; he has worked hard and stops; put another peg under his feet; he rests; help him up; peg him right up; and when he gets up, he'll look and see those little pegs all along, and he will not forget them, but bless and remember you.

## Sabbath School Lessons.

March 22nd 1863.

## CHRIST DISCOURSETH IN THE SYNAGOGUE.—Jno. vi. 22-65.

## I THE PEOPLE COME TO JESUS.

They sought him not for food to their souls but for food to their bodies; ver. 26. *The Father sealed*—by the Holy Spirit and by the miracles which he wrought. *The work of God.* The people naturally supposed that to gain so great an object as their souls' salvation, some correspondingly great work would be required of them. Jesus tells them that the only work which God required was that they should believe in Christ—accept of him as their Saviour—renounce their own righteousness and receive his. *What sign shewest thou.*—It is wonderful that the people, after all that they had seen and heard, should ask a further sign, such as they alleged God had given when he sent the manna.

## 2. CHRIST THE BREAD OF LIFE.

Christ assures them that Moses had only given that which nourished the body, and that only for a time—the people died at last, ver. 49; but the Father now by the gift of his Son had bestowed that which was fitted to nourish the soul. *Shall come to Me.*—Coming to Christ is a figurative and exceedingly beautiful way of expressing belief in him. What encouragement we have to come to Jesus! ver. 37. In any worldly business, we are never certain of success; but if we come to Jesus we shall certainly be received. *Except ye eat the flesh.*—This was a hard saying to many of the disciples, ver. 60. Like Nicodemus, Jno. iii. 4, they probably put a carnal construction upon our Saviour's words. They were used however in a spiritual acceptance, ver. 63. As bread satisfies the body so does Christ satisfy the soul, hungering and thirsting after righteousness. His people thus *spiritually*, by faith, "feed upon him and all his benefits to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace."

Learn 1. *That we cannot deceive God.*

Jesus knew from what motive the people sought him; ver. 26. Many, it is to be feared, even at the present day, seem very zealous in seeking after Christ, only for the sake of mere worldly advantage. Let us beware of such hypocrisy.

2. *That we should seek Christ and not the things of this world.* The things of this world perish in the using; either they are taken from us, or which is the same thing, we are soon, by death, taken from them. But Christ is a sure and abiding portion, a solace

in every sorrow—a source of joy unspeakable even in this world, 1 Cor. ii. 9, and of infinite glory hereafter, 1 John iii. 2.

3. *That all who come to Christ by faith shall be saved.* Nothing shall harm them. Their souls at death shall immediately enter into glory, and their bodies shall be raised at the last day, ver. 40.

4. *That man's salvation is of God.* All that have come to Christ have been influenced to do so by the Spirit of God, ver. 44. With grateful and loving hearts they, therefore ascribe all the glory of their salvation to God; Ps. xl. 2; Tit. iii. 5. But there is no one saved contrary to his will; Jno. 5. 40. All who come to Christ, come willingly; Ps. ex. 3.

March 29th.

## MIRIAM AND AARON REBEL.

NUMB. XII, 1-16.

## 1. MIRIAM AND AARON MURMUR.

Miriam was older than either Moses or Aaron. She watched the ark of bulrushes and managed so that Moses' mother should nurse him. She led the triumphal song at the Red Sea but now together with Aaron she rebelled against Moses. *The Ethiopian woman*—probably Zipporah who had lately come to the camp, Exod. 18-5. Miriam and Aaron were not only jealous of her influence with Moses, but they claimed an equality with him. *Moses was very meek*, humility made him so. Though he was exceedingly zealous as in the case of the golden calf about God's honor, yet when he himself was insulted he kept silence—he left his cause with him who judges righteously. Verse third is probably an interpolation by another inspired writer; Moses would not have praised himself.

## 2. THE LORD REBUKES THEM.

*My servant*—The Lord immediately, vindicated the honor of his servant, and he will thus, on the great judgment day, openly acquit all his servants. *The anger of the Lord was kindle.*—his own authority had been called in question.

## 3. MIRIAM PUNISHED.

*The cloud departed*—an emblem of God's displeasure. *Miriam became leprous*—her flesh became dead, bloodless. She only was punished because she was the most guilty of the two. Leprosy was often the punishment of some specific sin. Uzziah, 2 Chron 26 18. Though Moses' prayer for her restoration was granted, she was seven days excluded from the camp, as a salutary chastisement on herself and a warning to others.

Learn 1. *That God's people have often their greatest trials in their own families.* Joseph was persecuted by his brothers; so David also



was contemned by his brethren, and troubled by his undutiful son. Our Saviour's own brethren believed not in him, John 7, 5, and he tells his disciples that "Their foes shall be they of their own household." Matt. 10. 36.

2. *That we should be meek.* We are nothing of ourselves. Whatever be our gifts or graces, we owe them to God. These considerations should make us humble, and forbearing towards those who oppose us. The best means of subduing our enemies is to treat them with kindness, and like Moses, to pray for them.

3. *That we are not fit to be Christ's servants till we have learned to deny ourselves.* The world's heroes seek their own honor and glory: Christ's heroes seek those of their Master.

4. *That we should not envy others.* Envy like leprosy is rottenness to the bones. It brings its own punishment, for the envions are always miserable. Instead of murmuring at the benefits conferred upon others, we should be thankful for those we ourselves enjoy and should endeavor to fulfil our duty in the situation the Lord has assigned us, however humble it may be; Psa. 84. 10.

April 5th.

MANY DISCIPLES TURN BACK.—JOHN.  
VI. 66. 71.

1. MANY GO BACK.

From that time—How many for similar reasons forsake Christ at the present day.—For a time they follow him gladly, but as soon as they hear a doctrine enunciated which is beyond their comprehension, or which is humbling to their natural pride, they return to the world.

2. THE TWELVE REMAIN WITH JESUS.

We are not informed how many at this time deserted the Lord. But doubtless the thousands whom he had miraculously fed, and many others attracted by their wonderful story, would have resorted to him. In the desertion of this vast multitude, the apostles remained with their master. He was their spiritual sun—the source of their every hope, their every comfort—to leave him would be, like a planet forsaking its orbit, to wander in the blackness of darkness for ever.

3. ONE OF THE TWELVE A DEVIL.

One of you is a devil—How startling must this communication have been to the disciples. Its effect was doubtless to cause each of them to be watchful of himself, for they do not seem to have had the least suspicion of Judas. Judas was probably a very plausible hypocrite. Covetousness seems to have been the main cause of his following

Jesus, John, 12. 6. Nor is it improbable that he may sometimes have received the word with gladness, and have been the subject of religious impressions, Heb. 10. 29.

Learn. 1 *That we should be careful not to be offended against the truth.* The truth is very offensive to us while in our natural state.—We dislike to have our characters exposed in all their blackness, as they appear to God. The doctrine of the cross is very humbling, and is therefore often rejected. 1 Cor. 1. 23. Proud man does not like to hear of his own nothingness and that the glory of the sinner's salvation is due to God alone.

2. *That Christ's words are the words of eternal life.* They are so to his true followers.—They derive from his words the sweetest comfort. Christ's doctrines and promises are to believers "the savour of life unto life."

3. *That we should confess Christ.* This Peter did. This all will do who love Jesus, according to their opportunities, by their actions as well as by their words.

4. *That we should examine well the grounds of our profession.* Christ had one false follower even among the twelve. This fact should make us, not suspicious of others, but jealous of ourselves; Cor. 12. 5.

BE NOT CONFORMED TO THIS  
WORLD.

"As I grow older as a parent," says Dr. W. Alexander, "my views are changing fast as to the degree of conformity to the world which we should allow to our children. I am horror-struck to count up the profligate children of pious persons and even ministers. The door at which those influences enter will countervail parental instruction, and example, I am persuaded, is yielding to the ways of good society.—By dress, books, and amusements, an atmosphere is formed which is not that of Christianity. More than ever do I feel that our families must stand in a kind but determined opposition to the habits of the world, breasting the waves like the Eddy-stone Lighthouse. And I have found nothing yet which requires more courage and independence than to rise even a little, but decidedly, above the par of the religious world around us. Surely, the way in which we commonly go on is not that way of self-denial, and sacrifice, and cross-bearing which the New Testament talks of. Then is the offence of the cross ceased. Our slender influences on the circle of our friends is often to be traced to our leaving so little difference between us."

**AN APPEAL.**

BY A MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL.

**Come** arouse ye, arouse ye, ye Servants of Christ;  
 Seize the truth, and to labour away!  
 While sinners are dying, and life wastes apace,  
 The time it is flying and short is your race,  
**Come** arouse ye, arouse ye, ye Servants of Christ;  
 Seize the truth, and to labour away.

**Come** arouse ye, arouse ye, ye Soldiers of Christ,  
 And gird on your weapons of war;  
 With truth, and with love, and persuasion and prayer,  
 Expect that the hand of the Lord will be there.

**Come!** arouse ye, arouse ye, ye Soldiers of Christ,  
 And return with the trophies of war:

**Come!** arouse ye, arouse ye, ye Stewards of God,  
 Bring forth of the best of your store,  
 As free as to you, your great Master has lent,  
 Both things new and old, to the needy present,

**Come!** arouse ye, arouse ye, ye Stewards of God,  
 And bring forth the best of your store.

**Come!** arouse ye, arouse ye, ye Shepherds of Christ,  
 And seek out the sheep that have strayed,  
 The Lion is roaring the prey to devour,  
 The Wolf too, is prowling in danger's fell hour,

**Come!** arouse ye, arouse ye, ye Shepherds of Christ,  
 And bring back the sheep that have strayed.

**Come!** arouse ye, arouse ye, ye Sowers of truth  
 And scatter the seed of the word;  
 The seed-time is passing, the harvest is come,  
 When bearing your sheaves, He will welcome you home,  
**Come** arouse ye, arouse ye, ye Sowers of truth,  
 And scatter the seed of the Word.

**Come!** arouse ye, arouse ye, ye People of God,  
 By your prayers bring the fire from above,  
 The mind to enlighten, the conscience to move,  
 The will to subdue, and the heart fill with love,  
**Come!** arouse ye, arouse ye, ye People of God,  
 Bring repentance and fath from above.

**Come!** arouse ye, arouse ye, ye Sinners arouse,  
 Your sleep is the sleep of the dead,  
 Your bright day is flying—the darkness is near,  
 The voice of the dying now sounds in your ear,  
**Come!** arouse ye, arouse ye, ye Sinners arouse,  
 Ere vengeance be poured on your head.

**Come!** let us arouse, with our hearts all as one,  
 To urge on the Chariot of Love,  
 While Preachers are striving the heart to persuade,  
 Let Saints all uniting be crying for aid,  
 Thus let us arouse, with our hearts all as one,  
 To urge on the Chariot of Love.

SENEX.

**PICTURES FOR THE CHILDREN.**

**THE ISRAELITES GETTING THEIR ARMOUR.**

Behold Pharaoh's brick makers, now on the farther shore of the Red Sea.—The men shout, and sing for joy, while their wives sit nursing their little ones beyond tide mark, with Egypt's jewels in their ears. It is not shells, but shields, and spears, and bows, and quivers full of arrows that the once enslaved are gathering, as the breakers dash them ashore.—Israel's sons are equipping themselves with Egypt's armour. Moses fled from an Egyptian corpse once, now he sings with Pharaoh and Pharaoh's horsemen at his feet—a prey to the creatures of the deep. The Israelites are pulling the dead ashore, not to bury, but to plunder them. Little did Egypt's warriors think when they left the pyramids in their pride, and

wheeled their chariots across the Isthmus, that not even the glory of falling on a battle field awaited them. Foolish were they, with that ominous cloud of darkness turned toward them, to venture in between walls of water. But alas! what will man not do when the devil leads him on.

X. Y. Z.

### I WISH I WERE IN HEAVEN.

"I wish I were in heaven," said Dorothy resting her tired head upon her hand, and sighing deeply. She was a bent, prematurely old creature, toiling amid cares and perplexities, with no earthly light around her, toiling hopelessly, thanklessly, and to no purpose. One has said that there are some natures which seem to have wings, and fly lightly over all the rough places in the world. Dorothy did not have such a nature; she felt keenly all her sorrows and hardships; life had been a weary journey to her thus far, and when she thought of all the suffering that must come, she wished she was in heaven. Like David, she said "Oh that I had wings like a dove for then would I fly away and be at rest."

Willie's black eyes grew larger with thoughtfulness, and while he made fantastic figures on his slate in some embarrassment as to the delicacy of the question—he asked, "You would not want to go to heaven before they wanted you there, would you?"

That was a view of the subject which Dorothy had not taken, and she began to reflect thereupon, looking into the fire.—Willie was still as a mouse, the old cat purred softly on the hearth rug, the clock ticked dreamily in the corner, and Dorothy seemed to look forward again, in the dim future, to that toiling figure which bore her features, and which she recognized as herself.

Suddenly the future became the present. She felt the heavy cross upon her shoulders, she wiped the sweat from her brow, and groaned, unmindful of that grace which might be sufficient for her—"I wish I were in heaven." The cross fell from her shoulders, and she felt herself borne upward on swift pinions through an atmosphere of purple light to heaven. She listened to celestial music. Every song

was one of triumph, of victory over sin and Satan, of those who have been conquerors in much tribulation—"through the dear might of him who walked the waves" of earth's troubled sea. She could not join that choir. No angel hands were outstretched to welcome her, no voice proclaimed, "Well done, good and faithful servant!"

And one with the print of the nails in his hands and feet, met her with a sad smile, and directed her gaze earthward.—She saw, like a shining path, the road where she had travelled, and the cross she had laid down, her work half done. She saw too, where that path lay in the future. There were tears to be wiped away, lonely hearts to be cheered, suffering hearts to be cheered, suffering want to be relieved, wanderers to be led into the right way.—There was one soul whom none but she might save. His path crossed hers and mingled with it. Already he had plunged into depths of wickedness, and was straying amid mazes of error and doubt. It would have been her work to lead him aright. She turned to the Master; "Let me go back and finish my work," she said pleadingly; "let me save this soul, and minister to those other needy hearts."—She felt herself borne down to the earth again. Chanting in unison with angels, "My times are in thy hand."

"Did you know you had been asleep, Dorothy?" said Willie.

"No—no! I don't wish I were in heaven," she said with tears in her eyes; "I will do my work first."

"And can you sing—"

"There is sweet rest in heaven."

and be thinking of it all the time," said Willie, as he seized his cap and rushed out of doors, unable to keep still longer.

We may often say like Dorothy, "I wish I were in heaven," when sorrows and trials are many, and the burdens of life are heavy, and hands that once clasped ours are beckoning us upward; we may pant to see that Jesus, but let us have patience to wait for those glories, as well as faith to behold them, remembering that though pilgrims, we are laborers in God's vineyard, and that our hands may bind some little sheaf for the Master which else were left, ungarnered.—Christie Pearl.

## CHEERFULNESS.

I would not be understood as speaking one word, no not a syllable, against cheerfulness, a sober and well regulated mirth; for it is not only allowed by God, which is enough to prove its lawfulness, but also commanded, which renders it a duty.— Eat thy bread with a merry heart, rejoice with the wife of thy youth, yea and of thy age too. And Paul doubles the precept, 'Rejoice evermore; and again I say, Rejoice;' and the Psalmist tells us, 'Praise is comely for the upright.' Not complaints, but songs; not always prayer, but praise. The garment of praise is the beautiful garment which sits most neatly upon a saint's back; and with this they shall be invested when taken up to glory, and admitted into the joy of their lord.— And this I desire them to consider who please themselves in a dejected, melancholic temper, and who think they never look well and as becomes them, unless it be when they have a cloud upon their countenances and tears trickling down their cheeks; and if ever they would speak properly, it must be in sighs. I wonder who told them so; it must be no other than the devil, who is an inveterate and implacable enemy as to their holiness, so their peace and comfort. Sure I am that alacrity and cheerfulness is your friend, and promotes the health of your bodies, and furthers the lively, vigorous motions of your souls in their most noble employments. It is health to your navels, and marrow to your bones, and oil to your wheels.

And this is also sure, that cheerfulness doth *become you*. It is most becoming, because more proper for you; most suitable to that God who is your Father—to that Jesus who is your Head and Husband—to that covenant upon which you have laid hold—to those promises in which you are interested—to those hopes under which you are planted—and to that safe, sweet, blessed state into which you by grace are brought. And that it doth become you is evident from hence, because it doth belong to you. Light is sown for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart; and it is fit you should reap that which Heaven's hand hath sown for you. There are no persons in the world that have such a right and title to joy as be-

lievers have; wicked men, indeed, have none at all; no, though they be rich, yet they are commanded 'to weep and howl for the miseries that shall come upon them;' (James v. 1). For a temporal heaven they shall have an eternal hell.

And further it is sure that cheerfulness is one way to *commend religion to others*. The world is mistaken about it, and hath taken up a wrong notion of it, which it holds fast,—namely, that it is a dull, heavy, morose, and melancholic thing; that it is morose and ill natured, an enemy to manners and mirth; but that is a false notion, a grand mistake. It doth not forbid cheerfulness, but directs and orders it. It teacheth men to be merry and wise; and I do heartily wish all that cheerfulness were quite banished which is inconsistent with the rules and principles of our religion. They would be far better without it. What need is there of that laughter which Solomon called *madness*, or what good comes of it? Away with all that jesting which the Scripture calls *vain*. It is a sad thing for men to love jesting and after that go to hell in earnest. You will find it best to be merry and religious. *Res severa est verum gaudium*.—True joy is a severe, grave, and serious thing; and let that measure your days. Let there be lightness, but nothing of lightness; solidity, but no froth. Let your families be witnesses of your integrity, and see nothing in your conversation that is below understanding men, nothing unworthy of gracious Christians.—(Slater, 1694.)

## THE POWER OF A WORD.

One day a boy was tormenting a kitten when his little sister said to him, with tearful eyes, "Oh, Philip, don't do that; it is God's kitten." The words of the little one were not lost; they were set upon wheels. Many serious thoughts were awakened in his mind regarding the creature he had before considered his own property "God's kitten—God's creature—for He made it." It was a new idea. The next day, on his way to school, he met one of his companions, beating unmercifully a poor starved looking dog. "Don't do that," said Philip, using almost unconsciously his sister's words; "It is God's creature." The boy looked ashamed, and explained that the

dog had stolen his breakfast. "Never mind," said Philip, "I will give you mine which I have in my basket;" and sitting together the little boy's anger was soon forgotten. Again had a word unconsciously been set upon wheels. Two passers by heard Philip's words—one a young man in prosperous business in the neighbouring town; the other a dirty, ragged being, who in consequence of his intemperate habits, had been dismissed by his employer, and was now going home sullen and despairing. "God's creature," said the poor forlorn man, and it was a new idea to him also; "if I, too, belong to God, He will take care of me, though no one else will." Just then he came to a public-house where he had been in the habit of drowning his miseries, and then staggering home to inflict new ones on his wife and children. He stopped; the temptation was strong, but the new idea was stronger—"I am God's creature;" and he passed on. His wife was astonished to see him sober, and still more when he burst into tears, declared that he was a ruined man, but that he was determined to give up drinking, and trust in God.—At that moment a knock was heard at the door, and the gentleman came in to whom we have before alluded. He, too, had been rebuked by the boy's words for the scorn and loathing which he had felt to the miserable object before him. "God's creature," therefore entitled to help and pity." He had gone to help the poor man; and all this the result of a little girl's words to her brother.—Miss Brewster.

#### MORNING MEDITATIONS.

Let your morning meditation be affectionate and practical. Meditation should excite a spiritual delight in God, as it did in the psalmist (Psalm civ. 34); and a divine delight would keep up good thoughts, and keep out impertinences. A bare speculation will tire the soul, and without application, and pressing upon the will and affections, will rather chill than warm devotion. It is only by this means that we shall have the efficacy of truth in our wills, and the sweetness in our affections, as well as the notion of it in our understandings. The more operative any truth is in this man-

ner upon us, the less power will other thoughts have to interrupt, and the more disdainfully will the heart look upon them, if they dare be impudent. Never, therefore, leave thinking of a spiritual subject, till your heart be affected with it. If you think of the evil of sin, leave not till your heart loath it; if of God, cease not till it mount up in admiration of him. If you think of mercy, melt for abusing it; if of his sovereignty, awe your heart into obedient resolutions; if of his presence, double your watch over yourself. If you meditate on Christ, make no end till your hearts love him; if of his death, plead the value of it for the justification of your persons, and apply the virtue of it for the sanctification of your natures. Without this practical stamp upon our affections, we shall have light spirits, while we have opportunity to converse with the most serious objects. We often hear foolish thoughts breathing out themselves in a house of mourning, in the midst of coffins and trophies of death, as if men were confident they should never die; whereas none are so ridiculous as to assert they shall live for ever. By this instance in a truth so certainly assented to, we may judge of the necessity of this direction in truths more doubtfully believed.—*Charnock.*

#### HINTS FOR DOING GOOD.

A little boy, or a little girl, calling once a day at some poor widow's cottage, where the aged inmate is unable to get about, simply to say, "Widow Jones, my father desires me to ask, Can I do anything for you to-day?" The answer, perhaps, would be, "Yes, my child, you may fetch me a little can of fresh water from the spring;" or some other little service might be required, little in itself, but tending greatly to promote the feeble creature's comfort. Small as the benefit might be, the receiver and the doer would both be gainers; for a generous action blesses him that gives as well as those that receive, and the widow might be cheered in her lonely life by thinking that there were some persons in the world who wished to do her service.