

## THE SINNER RECEIVED AND BLEST.

LUKE VII. 37-50.

“*I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*”—*Matt. ix. 13.*

In search of Jesus, lo! *she* came  
 Who only had the sinner's claim  
 Upon the Saviour's heart;  
 And well she knew that He whose grace  
 Was opening wide a hiding-place,  
 Would never say, “Depart.”

’Twas *hers* the mercy-seat to touch;  
 ’Twas *hers* to weep and love Him much,  
 And all His words to store;  
 ’Twas *His* to bid her go in peace,  
 To give her sin-bound soul release,  
 And life for evermore,

Oh, what a heavenly note is here,  
 But only falling on the ear  
 Of *sinner*s such as she,  
 And none but such in truth are found  
 Giving their welcome to the sound  
 Of life and liberty!

The virtue of His grace, denied  
 And scorned by Pharisaic pride,  
 Is sweetly known to some;  
 For when its fragrancy invites,  
 And presses souls to its delights,  
 The broken-hearted come.

These know His blessed person theirs;  
 For love unscrupulously dares  
 To take the nearest place;

E'en on His bosom they have lain,  
 Who once were fouled with deepest stain,  
 And plunged in sin's disgrace.

While others frigidly perform  
 The cold servilities of form,  
 'Tis theirs in heart to serve ;  
 To pour the ointment on His head,  
 And all the sweets of love to shed  
 With grateful unreserve.

Such precious fruits we're brought to bear,  
 The more we know how vile we were  
 When strangers to His love ;  
 And by-and-by the happy boast,  
 That we have been forgiven most,  
 Shall swell our songs above.



## THE MANNER OF THE GRACE OF JESUS.

MATT. IX. ; MARK II. ; LUKE V.

God was shewing His rich and various mercy in the old times ; but this was done after a peculiar manner. He forgave sin, He healed disease, He fed His people. But all this was done after a peculiar manner. There was a certain distance and reserve, as it were, a remaining still in His own sanctuary—still in the heavens, though He was thus gracious. He met the need of a sinner ; but He was in the temple, withdrawn to the holiest place, and the sinner had to come through a consecrated path to get the virtue of the mercy-seat.

He met the need of His camp in the desert ; but it was by remaining still in heaven, and sending from thence the angels' food, the mighty's meat, and giving them water, after His mystic rod had opened the rock. He met the disease of a poor leper ; but it was after such a leper had been separated outside the camp, every eye and hand—all interference and inspection of man—withdrawn and removed. There He was God, acting in His own due love and power ; but there was a style in the action that bespoke distance from the object of His love and goodness. Whether He pardoned, fed, or healed, this manner was preserved.

The Lord Jesus, God manifest in the flesh, is seen doing the same works of divine love and power. He pardons, feeds, and heals ; and He does so in full assertion of His divine right or glory, thinking it no robbery to be equal with God. But there is altogether another style in those same actions when in His hand. The reserve, the distance is gone. It is God we see, not withdrawn into the holiest, but abroad in the prisons, the hospitals, and the poorhouses, of this ruined world. He pardons ; but He stands beside the sinner to do this, saying, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," or "Neither do I condemn thee." He feeds ; but He is at the very table with the fed. He heals ; but He puts forth His hand in the crowd on as many as were diseased, or stands at their sick beds. He thus comes down to the needy ones—with pardon, food and healing. He

goes among them, letting them know and see that He is supplied with various virtue to be used by them without reserve. And there is in this a glory that excelleth; so that the former has no glory by reason of it.

How should we bless Him for this display of Himself! It is the same God of love and power in both; but He has increased in the brightness of His manifestations.

The religious rulers found this way of Jesus to interfere with them. Their interest was to keep God and the people separate; for then they had hopes of being used themselves. Thus they were angry when the Lord said to the man, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." It was a great interference with them. It trespassed on their places. "Who can forgive sins but God only?"—and God was in heaven. The Son of man forgiving sins *on earth* was a sad disturbance of that by which they lived in credit and plenty in the world. But whether they received it or not, this was the way of the Son on earth. He dealt with our necessities in such wise as encouraged the happy, near and confident approach of all needy ones to Him. He did all to shew that He was a cheerful giver—nay more—that He gave Himself with His gift. For with His own hand, as we have seen, He brought the blessing home to every man's door.

It was therefore only the happy confidence of faith which fully met and refreshed His spirit—that faith which knew the title of a needy one to

come right up to Him, the faith of a Bartimæus which was not to be silenced by the mistaken scrupulousness even of disciples. And little children are to be in His arms, though the same mistake would forbid them.

This was His mind : He came into the world to be used by sick and needy sinners ; and the faith that understood and used Him accordingly was its due answer. Such answers we see recorded by the Evangelists here in the action of the faithful little band, who, breaking up the roof, let down the bed whereon the sick of the palsy lay "into the midst before Jesus." There was no ceremoniousness in this, nothing of the ancient reserve of the temple, no waiting for introduction. This little company felt their necessity, knew the virtues of the Son of God, and believed that these suited each other—nay, that the Lord carried the one, because necessitous sinners were bearing the other. It was a strong expression of faith, and I believe the strength of it was according to the mind of Jesus ; so that, on seeing their faith, as we read, without further to do or more words, His heart and the grace that it carried uttered itself in an expression as full and strong : "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee."

Here was sympathy. Jesus was rending all veils between God and sinners ; and so was the faith of this happy little company. His blood was soon to rend from top to bottom the veil of the temple, which kept God from poor sinners ; and

now their faith was rending that which kept them from Jesus. This surely was meeting and entertaining the Son of God in character; and His spirit deeply owns it: "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee."

Happy faith which can thus break down partition walls! O this faith which takes knowledge of Jesus, the Saviour of the world, as the mighty render of all veils! "Join thou, my soul, for thou canst tell," etc. In the lively happy impression of this truth through the Spirit, the soul tastes something of heaven. What blessedness to know that this is the way of God our Saviour! Grace and glory are both brought to us: we have not to ascend to heaven to seek them there, nor to descend to the depths to search after them there. "Behold I come: and my reward is with me," will Jesus say when He brings the glory; as we have already seen Him with His grace standing at the door, or by the bedside, or in the crowd of needy sinners.

This is of God indeed. It is only divine love that can account for it. But the rulers did not like it. Their interest and credit in the world would keep the forgiveness of sins still in the hand of Him who was in heaven; for then, as the consecrated path, they hoped and judged that they themselves would still be used.

And so it is to this day. Forgiveness is brought near and sure to the soul—the word of faith to the heart and to the mouth. This shortens the path;

but it does not suit those who transact (as themselves and others judge) the interests of the soul.

Nothing appears more simple than all this on the principles of nature. The Pharisees, in the Lord's time, represented it. They were the religious rulers; and the more God was kept in the distance, reserve being thus maintained between Him and the people, the more they were likely to be venerated, used, and enriched. Jesus, God in flesh, the Son of man forgiving sins *on the earth*, was a sad trespasser on their place and plan of action. How, alas! is this principle still alive, still dominant, and the "people love to have it so;" it suits the religiousness of man's nature too well to be lightly refused. The simplicity that is in Christ is sadly thus "corrupted;" and our souls, beloved, should be grieved, deeply grieved, because of it.

But we may also say that much occasion, in our day, has been given for this principle to live and act as vigorously as it seems to be doing. For there has not been the meeting of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, this pardoning, feeding, healing, love and power of Him who has come down to walk amid our ruins, in the spirit which alone was due to it. There has been the assertion of grace, and the denial that God in this dispensation is to be sought for as at a distance, under the hiding of ceremonies or within the cloisters of temples. There has been the producing of the blessed Saviour, and giving Him to walk abroad among our necessities

according to the place He has Himself taken in the Gospels. There has been the presenting of the marvellous condescending grace of the dispensation ; but those who have asserted it have not carried themselves towards it, and in the presence of it, with that reverence, that holiness of confidence, which alone became them. And this has given man's religiousness (which would keep God still in heaven) occasion to revive and be listened to, and learnt again.

But is this religiousness the due corrective of abused grace? Is this the divine remedy?—is this God's way of rectifying evil?—or is it not simple human reaction? Many are doing what they can do to withdraw the Lord to that place which He has most advisedly and for ever abandoned. They are making Him appear to build again the things which He had destroyed. They are putting Him back into the holiest place, there to be sought unto by the old aisles and vistas of the "worldly sanctuary"—to cover Him with veils and cast up the long consecrated path by which of old the sinner came to Him. It were well to be righteously angry at Jesus and His grace being treated with so indelicate and untender a hand ; but these correct the error by a worse. While they would protect the holiness of Christ, they obscure His grace. They are seeking to do a service for Him that grieves Him the most deeply. They are teaching man that He is an austere Master ; they withdraw Him to the place



where it is felt to be a fearful thing to plant one's foot.

Indeed this is a service He did not ask for. "Who hath required this at your hands," is, I am assured in my soul, the voice of the Son of God to those who would withdraw Him from the nearest and most assured approach of the poor sinner. They have been doing what they could to change HIS place and attitudes, instead of MAN'S. Correction was needed surely. It is ever needed. Man will be spoiling and abusing everything. There has been an intellectual arrogance and carnal freedom with Christ and His truth, which may well have grieved the righteous. But it was man that ought to have been challenged to change his place and bearing, not the Lord. He has not repented of having come on earth to forgive sins, of having visited the poor Samaritan at the well, or Levi or Zacchæus in their houses, or Peter's wife's mother on her bed of sickness. He is still the same Lord, and He purposes to be so. He has not retired within the veil again, nor bound up that which was rent from top to bottom. He has not built again that which He had destroyed. It is not a worldly sanctuary that He fills and furnishes again, nor ceremonies and observances, and rites and practices, under which He is again concealing Himself. He has descended from heaven to earth; He is abroad among men, in the ministry of His precious gospel and by His Spirit, beseeching sinners to be reconciled.

What then, alas ! is the character of that effort that would force Him back to the thick darkness ? (2 Chron. vi. 43). It is an attempt made in the strength and with the subtlety of the devil upon the Son of God, as of old. It is a taking Him, as it were, to the pinnacle of the temple, to some withdrawn and proud elevation, where the multitude may gaze at Him. But His purpose is, blessed be His name, to stand in the midst of them, that they may use Him.

We should change our place ; that is equally true. We should learn to pass and repass with the unshod foot before this gracious, blessed, Son of man. It is for us to change our attitude, and not to seek to make Him change His.

We have still to see Him in all the grace of this dispensation ; we have to read " the gospel of the blessed God " (1 Tim. i.), as they read it of old who knew and felt that the Son of man had power on earth to forgive sins. But we have to read all this more in their spirit also. We are to wonder at the strange sight, as they did—to tell Jesus, with the centurion, that we are not worthy that He should come under our roof, while we still use His immediate presence and grace—to stand before Him like Zacchæus, and call Him " Lord," though, like him, receiving Him to our house ; and to follow Him in the way with adoring thankful gaze, though having refused, as Bartimæus, to be put at a distance by the vain religious scruples of even His own disciples.

Ah ! this is what should have been done. This would have been the divine corrective of the mischief that has come in. But this was not so easy ; for this would have been spiritual ; the thing that has been done is carnal. Elements of the world are revived and multiplied. Jesus has been forced back at a distance from the sinner. He has been put into "the thick darkness," under cover of fleshly observances and rites, and at the end of a long path through the aisles of a sanctuary, where He waits to receive the homage of a fearing and a bondaged people. This is the place and attitude which many teachers (who are daily rising in the esteem of the people) make the blessed Saviour to fill and take.

The Lord Jesus is kept at a distance ; religious observances are brought near ; and the people (for they have ever been so minded) like the feelings that come from all that which is acted before them. Their eye and ear are engaged, a certain sacred sense of God is awakened ; but the precious immediate confidence of the heart and conscience is refused. Ah ! shall any one who loves the Lord thus sink down again into man, when the Spirit would have him up with Christ ?

"O, foolish Galatians ; who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ had been evidently set forth, crucified among you ? . . . Are ye so foolish ? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh ? . . . Ye observe days, and

months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain." (Gal. iii. iv.)

Thus speaks the aggrieved Spirit in the apostle over those who once had been eminently his joy but were now his sorrow, because they were turning again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto they were desiring again to be in bondage. Indeed they were deserting faith for religiousness, "the simplicity that is in Christ" and in which the "virgin" or "uncorrupted" mind ever walks, for the ceremonies and observances of "a worldly sanctuary."

But religiousness is neither faith nor righteousness. With the Pharisees it was adopted as a relief for a bad conscience, or a cover for evil; in them it was, therefore, opposed to faith. The Galatians cannot properly be said to have been Pharisees, it is true; but the Spirit of God had a serious question with both.

And I may just further observe, that in our passages) Matt. ix. 6; Mark ii. 10, 11; Luke v. 24) the Lord seeks to lead man away from his own reasonings and calculations to Himself and His works. He perceived that the Scribes were "reasoning among themselves," and then proposed to them what He was doing—"that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins (He said unto the sick of the palsy), I say unto thee, Arise and take up thy couch, and go into thine house."

How simple, how precious ! And on this hangs the grand distinction between faith and religiousness of which I have just been speaking. Religiousness, or man's religion, gives the soul many a serious thought about itself, and many a devout thought about God. But faith, or God's religion, gives the soul Jesus, and the works and words of Jesus.

And yet it is faith, and faith only, secures the end which is valued of God. Faith "worketh by love"; faith "overcometh the world;" faith "purifieth the heart." By faith "the elders obtained a good report." Religiousness does not this. It ever "works" by fear, not by love. It does not "overcome the world," but oftentimes takes it within to some recess or hiding-place. It does not "purify the heart," by giving it an object to detach it from self, but keeps self in a religious attire ever before it, and leaves the conscience unpurged. And in God's record it gets no "good report." From the beginning to the end of that record, it is the people of religion, the devout observers of carnal ceremonies, those who would not "defile themselves" with a judgment-hall, that have stood most cruel in the resistance of the truth. But it is the men of faith, the lovers of the truth, the poor broken-hearted believers who have found their relief in Jesus "forgiving sins," who have stood and laboured and conquered ; and they have their happy memorial with Him and in the records of Him whom they trusted, in whom by faith they found eternal life and their sure and full salvation.

**“HE THAT LOVETH HIS LIFE SHALL  
LOSE IT.”**

Bessie W. was a young girl in a fashionable millinery establishment in D., and was, with others, invited to attend a Bible class specially intended for young persons engaged in business. She was gay and thoughtless, fond of dress and worldly amusement. She came at times to the class, but was more frequently absent. Having gone to the house where she was employed, to inquire for her, after a longer absence than usual, the visitor heard that she was ill, and called at her mother's house to see her. Poor Bessie was not pleased, and asked if she was supposed to be worse than other young people that it was thought necessary to visit and speak seriously to her. However, a few kind words, and an assurance that the visit was not from any idea that she was worse than others soothed her, and she listened quietly while a few verses were read from the word of God.

She recovered so far as to be able to return to business for a time, but did not come to the class, as she was not well enough to be out late. She was visited from time to time, and though she no longer objected, it was evidently more from civility than enjoyment. Her health again gave way, and soon it became evident that consumption was rapidly doing its fatal work. Still there was no evidence that her conscience had been reached by

the word, and those who watched for her soul became doubly anxious.

The first evidence of interest she showed was one day when Romans iv. was being read to her, and the reader paused at verse 3, and repeated slowly: "Abraham *believed* God, and it was *counted unto him for righteousness.*" With startling earnestness Bessie suddenly asked, "Where is that?" She said nothing more, but her visitor felt assured that a ray of light from God had reached her, and this assurance was confirmed when, at the next visit, the same subject being before them, it was remarked that Abraham had nothing but God's word to rest on, he was shut up to faith; apart from that, all was hopeless impossibility. The speaker glanced up at the girl's face, as she lay back with closed eyes, and as she looked, two great tears forced themselves from beneath the tightly-compressed lids and rolled silently down the wasted cheeks, while a deep, though silent, thanksgiving went up to God from the visitor's heart. After this, the reserve which Bessie had hitherto maintained gradually gave way, and she gladly welcomed any who came to speak to her of the Lord. She was always ready for the word of God, and soon was rejoicing in Jesus as her Saviour. Never afterwards, with one exception, did her joy seem to be interrupted for a moment.

That exception, and her countenance and manner at the time, after-years could never efface

from the heart of the young Christian who witnessed the exercise through which her soul was passing. Going into her room one day, the contrast to the usually happy, peaceful face and bright greeting was too apparent not to be noticed, and her visitor asked, "What is the matter, Bessie, has Satan been tempting you to doubt the Lord?" "No, no," she replied, "I have neither doubt nor fear; it is not that." "And what is it, then? Something is wrong." She had not hitherto raised her eyes, but now lifting them, she said, with a never-to-be-forgotten look, and a tone of the deepest sadness, "O, Miss ——, I have lost my life!"

At once her friend understood what she meant; it was not that she was dying, it was not that she was being cut down in her youth; no, it was that the brief life with which she had been entrusted had been spent for her own pleasure, and now it was over, it was *a lost life*. There was silence; no word was spoken between those two—one with the wilderness path stretched out before her still to be trodden, the other about to be called away just as she had entered it. It was a solemn moment. God was exercising each heart, and she who seemed likely to have many years still before her, thought—If one only just converted feels like this when dying, how must it be with those who have long known the Lord as their Saviour, and have lived for themselves and not for Him who laid down His life to save them. The cloud



passed away ; not so the impression it had made ; and it may be that "the God of all grace" permitted that cloud for the accomplishing of His own will, and that dear Bessie's has not been altogether a lost life.

As the disease progressed, her sufferings increased, and were at times intense : her mother said she had lost other children in consumption, but their sufferings were as nothing compared with Bessie's. But she bore all with quiet patience, seldom spoke of what she suffered, and her peace was undisturbed.

One day, when her friend entered the room she was almost startled by the radiancy of her face, and asking how she was, the answer came slowly and with difficulty, for she was hardly able to speak : "Oh, Miss ——, I can hardly feel the pain, I'm so happy !" A few days more and the pain was over for ever, and she was "present with the Lord." Bessie's one deep anxiety from the time she had peace herself was for the conversion of her mother, and her own happy death-bed was, it is believed, the means of her mother's conversion.

Dear reader remember (if you are the Lord's) "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body."

"And He died for all, that *they which live* should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again" (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20 ; 2 Cor. v. 15).

## GOD'S REST.

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### HEB. IV.

The heart of man naturally seeks rest, and seeks it here. Now there is no rest to be found here for the saint; but it is written, "There *remaineth* therefore a rest to the people of God" (v. 9). To know this is both full of blessing and full of sorrow—sorrow to the flesh, because, as it is always seeking its rest here, it has always to be disappointed—blessing to the spirit, because the spirit being born of God, can only rest in God's own rest, as it is said, "If they shall enter into my rest" (vs. 3, 5).

God cannot rest in the corruption of sin. He can only rest in that which is perfectly holy. And because He who thus rests is "Love," and loves us, He makes us understand that He will bring us into His own rest, into His own delight.

Now let the soul once know what this rest of God is, let the heart once be set upon it, there will be joy unspeakable in understanding that God's love can rest in nothing short of bringing us into His own delight. There will then also be the full, settled consciousness that we cannot find rest elsewhere. There are indeed joys by the way, but the moment we rest in them they become as the quails of Israel (Numbers xi.)—poison.

Whenever the soul loses practically the knowledge that its rest is in God's rest, the moment the

eye is off that which "remaineth," we begin to seek a rest here, and consequently get uneasy, restless and dissatisfied. Every time we find something on which we attempt to settle, that very thing proves but a new source of trouble and conflict to us—a new source of exercise and weariness of heart. *God loves us too well to let us rest here.*

Are you content, dear reader, to have or seek your rest nowhere save in God's rest ?

What is the secret of the unhappiness and restlessness of many a saint? A hankering after rest here. God is therefore obliged to discipline and exercise that soul; to allow, it may be, some circumstance to detect the real state of the heart by touching that about which the will is concerned. Circumstances would not trouble if they did not find something in us contrary to God; they would rustle by as the wind. God deals with that in us which hinders communion, and prevents our seeking rest in Him alone. His discipline is the continual and unwearied exercise of love, which rests not now in order that we may enter into His rest. If He destroys our rest here—if He turns our meat into poison—it is only that He may bring us into His own rest, that we may have that which satisfies His desires, not ours. "He will rest in His love."

"For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his works, as God did from His

own" \* (v. 10). This is not a question about justification or rest of conscience as to judgment, that is all settled. "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous" (Rom. v. 19). There we rest, and there God rests. Again, "By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Heb. x. 14). The believer has already and altogether come to rest on Christ's work as to that. He has peace through the blood of Christ.

The point is one which concerns those who are justified, whom God has brought into His family. God is training such, and bringing them up into the full enjoyment of His own blessedness and rest. If I, being a parent, enjoy anything, it is impossible, if I really love my child, not to wish him to enjoy it with me. And if we, who are evil, do this, how much more our heavenly Father! What God desires for us, as we have seen, and He delights to do it, is to bring us into the enjoyment of all that which He Himself enjoys. He has made us partakers of the divine nature that we may enjoy it. The Hebrews were continually liable to sink into the seeking a rest here; in short, not to live a life of faith. The great point on which the apostle insists is, that God has not His rest here—that while there was that which hindered the comfort of His love He could not rest.

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\* Such is the true force,