

THE SOWER.

REALITY.

What is the worth of profession,
Coming not forth from the heart ;
What is the good of confession,
Which us from our sins does not part.

What though we say we have Jesus,
If we nurse evil within ;
And permit Satan to please us,
With the enjoyments of sin

God is the God of true knowledge,
Actions by Him are all weighed ;
Fig trees with nothing but foliage
Low in the dust will be laid.

God is the God of reality ;
'Fore Him all hearts are unlocked ;
Fruit He will judge by its quality ;
Think not that He can be mocked.

Oh ! that these truths realising,
We on the heavenly road,
Should from our slumbers arising,
Walk in the presence of God.

WHICH DO YOU PUT IN FRONT, THE BUGGY OR THE HORSE?

ONE day—the end of March—about five years ago, I was returning from visiting some friends who lived between two and three miles outside the town of D—. It had been a beautiful day overhead, but the roads were in a very dirty state from melting snow and mud. As I was walking along a man came out from one of the fields and turned in the same direction in which I was going. He asked me the time, which I told him. Then I offered him a Gospel tract which he declined, so I knew pretty well what he belonged to. I made some remark to the effect that it was only a simple Gospel tract I had offered him, telling of God's love to this poor world. He replied, "Oh! you're one of those people that don't believe in good works."

"Yes I do," was my answer.

"No," said he, "you're a Protestant and do not believe in good works."

"I can assure you my friend that I believe in good works as sincerely as any Roman Catholic."

He looked at me very doubtfully.

I then said "I do really believe in good works, but I don't wish to deceive you. I do not think you and I put them in the same place. Now if you and I had a horse and buggy here it would be very convenient, but if you persisted in putting the buggy in front of

the horse you would not make much headway would you?"

"No" he replied.

"Well, God says in His word, 'By *grace* are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of *works*, lest any man should boast. For we (speaking of believers) are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus *unto good works*.' (Ephes. ii, 8-10). Now let me try and illustrate it to you. Suppose I had fallen into a river and could not get out. I had sunk twice and was just going down the third time, my strength gone, and it was all up with me, as far as any effort of mine could go. You come along and at great risk to yourself jump in and save my life. Now tell me, don't you think there would be a personal link between you and me ever after? Would I not have a deep feeling of gratitude in my heart towards you?"

"I suppose you would," said he.

"Don't you think I would do everything that I could to avoid displeasing you?"

"Yes."

"And don't you think I would do everything that I could to please you?"

"Well, I suppose you would."

"Would it be to get you to save me or because you had saved me?"

"Oh! because I had saved you."

"Well, dear friend it is just the same with salvation. I was a poor lost sinner and the blessed Lord Jesus came down from the glory, became a man, and went to

Calvary's Cross, bearing the judgment of God and shedding His precious blood which God says 'cleanseth from all sin,' (I, Jno. i, 7), and I believe it. I see what it cost that blessed One to redeem my soul and the wondrous love He has shown in doing so, and now that love of His toward me has linked my heart to Him, and I try to avoid what displeases Him and to do what pleases Him, and that's how good works come in ; not to get Him to save me but out of deep gratitude of heart for what He has done—as God's word says, 'The love of Christ constraineth us ; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead ; and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again.'" (II Cor. v, 15).

We had just come close to the town and where the road divided. Here we parted company after I tried to press home the question of the salvation of his soul. Reader, which are you putting in front, the buggy or the horse ?

And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away ; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God ; and the books were opened ; and another book was opened, which is the book of life ; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. (Rev. xx, 11-12).

TAKEN AT HIS WORD.

A MAN in Toronto during the month of February of the present year was spoken to by another about his health, he had had a slight attack of bronchitis, his reply was, "O, I'm going to hell! and I'm going this month." On the day before the last day of the month, the 27th day of February, he dropped dead on the street.

An infidel lecturer dared to defy God—as so many of them do—in a public hall at Liverpool some time since. Taking out his watch he said, "It is now one minute to nine o'clock, if there is a God I defy Him to strike me dead before that minute is passed." He held his watch in his hand; had probably under similar circumstances often gone through the same proceeding; the audience quietly waited the result. Presently he was seen to stagger; a man rushed to his assistance, but he was dead; the minute had not expired and he found that there is a God.

"God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not." (Job xxxiii, 14).

Man, a mere creature dares thus to brave his Creator, and if in patience and long suffering mercy this is borne with in order that the goodness of God may lead men to repentance yet there comes to us from holy writ the solemn word, "he that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." (Prov. xxix, 1).

WRITTEN IN HEAVEN.

“REMARKABLE name that of yours?” said a gentleman to the proprietor of a shop on Yonge Street some time since.

“Yes,” was the reply, “but I can tell you something more remarkable; that name is written in heaven.”

Bless the Lord for the assurance of salvation; the knowledge of the forgiveness of sins; setting poor burdened souls free from the anxiety and distress of the weight of condemnation, and bringing them into the liberty of the glory of children of God.

O, but says one it is presumption to say you know you are saved, no one can know that until the judgment day. But when God says in His word He has written certain things unto us that we may *know* we have eternal life is it not presumption to question His word instead of believing it. One often hears it said that Paul was afraid he might become a castaway but he says nothing of the kind, on the contrary he says, he “runs not as uncertainly,” he fights “not as one that beateth the air,” (I. Cor. ix, 26), but if he does not keep under his body and bring it into subjection, he might, although preaching to others, be himself a castaway, a reprobate. Dear soul believe in the finished work of Christ, He not only bore the sins of the believer “in His own body on the tree,” (I Pet. ii, 24), but “He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin.” (2 Cor. v, 21). He was

not only delivered for our offences, but the very nature that could commit these offences was judged in the Person of God's own dear Son, so that the believer being dead with Christ, has passed out of the old place into a new ; born again : sealed by the Holy Spirit ; joined to the Head in heaven ; and rejoicing in the thought of being a child of God.

How blessed the condition of one who is resting in the finished work of Christ as compared with him who passes his life in fear lest his works should not at the last be altogether sufficient. It is said in Eph. i, 13, "after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise," but many who have been quickened go on for years in a joyless life, until seeing more fully what has been wrought at the cross there is belief and the "second blessing."

O that souls could see this, could accept the testimony of God's word, could be assured that their names are written in heaven, and go on through life in the happy sense of being children of God, loved as Christ is loved and knowing Him in all the blessed relationships the Holy Spirit delights to place before us in the word.

By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. (Heb. x, 14).

See, from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down :
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet
Or thorns compose so rich a crown ?

GOD'S WORK IN THE SOUL.

THERE are various ways in which the Spirit of God works in the soul; in some cases He produces a deep sense of guilt; in others, a dread of wrath; in others, a sense of the utter vanity and instability of all human things; while others are melted at the wonderful love which led God to give His Son. He works according to His own sovereign will, but it is of the last importance that there should be no resistance to that will, that the work may be deep and solid, the soul being grounded in a true sense of the love of God and the preciousness of Christ. There is a vast amount of mere evangelical profession abroad, and souls are in great danger of mistaking the mere assent of the *mind* to certain gospel truths, for that living faith of the *heart* which, being divine, connects the soul with God, and exerts a purifying influence over the whole life and character.

It is invariably found that those who go through the deepest ploughings at the first, make the most solid Christians afterwards. A mere lip profession—an intellectual faith—a mere surface work is to be dreaded.

“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.” (I. Peter iii, 18).

What marvellous grace! what soul subduing love! what amazing mercy!

Oh! how it should melt these hearts of ours! think deeply of this love, this grace, this mercy. Dwell upon it until thy whole soul is absorbed in the contemplation of it.

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RECONCILED.

THE testimony of Scripture is as distinct as possible—it never speaks of God's being reconciled to us, but "when we were enemies, we *were reconciled* to God by the death of His Son." (Rom. v, 10). The death of Christ was essential to the reconciliation; but man was the enemy of God and needed to be reconciled. So we read in Colossians i, 21, "and *you*, that were sometime alienated and *enemies* in your mind by wicked works, yet now *hath he reconciled.*" The ground of this is stated in the previous verse, to be "the blood of His cross." So also in Corinthians v, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." It does not say "reconciling Himself to the world."

Thus to any one who bows to scripture, the truth is as clear as can be, "God so *loved the world* that He gave His only begotten Son." "It pleased Jehovah to bruise Him." It is of the utmost importance to maintain the true aspect of God's nature and character in the presentation of the Gospel. To say that "Christ died to reconcile the Father to us" is to falsify the divine character as seen in the mission and death of His Son. God was not man's enemy but his friend. True, sin had to be condemned; God's truth, holiness and majesty had to be vindicated. All this was done, in a divine way, in the cross, where we read, at once, God's hatred of sin, and His love to the sinner. Atonement is the necessary basis of reconciliation; but it is of the very last importance

to see that it is God who reconciles us to Himself. This He does, blessed be His name, at no less a cost than "the death of His Son." Such was His love to man—His kindness—His goodness—His deep compassion, that when there was no other way possible, sin being in question, in which man, the guilty enemy and rebel could be reconciled to Him, He gave His Son from His bosom, and bruised Him on Calvary's cursed tree. Eternal and universal praise to His name.

STRIVE TO ENTER IN.

(LUKE XIII, 24.)

THERE are two sides to every question; and hence, while it is blessedly true that salvation is free to all, and the righteousness of God is to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly (see Rom. iv, 5; and Titus ii, 11); yet is the sinner most solemnly responsible to flee from the wrath to come, and strive to enter by the strait gate—the open door. To make use of the fullness of God's grace, and of the gift of righteousness, in order to set aside man's responsibility, and the need of intense earnestness in the matter of the soul's salvation, is a fatal mistake. Hence the exceeding value of this scripture in Luke. In it we have the Lord's reply to a *curious* inquirer whom He would fain make *anxious*.

Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins. (Acts xiii, 38).

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“HE THAT HATH EARS TO HEAR
LET HIM HEAR.”

(LUKE XIV, 35).

THESE words preface a wondrous unfolding of the unselfish activities of God Himself in a world of sinners. For oh! My soul! mark it well. Who is it who thus speaks “as having authority”—“who forgiveth sins also?”

Who but He, who came down from heaven, the sent One of the Father, come to seek and to save that which was lost. Yea, “this is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” And sure we are that if we, as did all the publicans and sinners, draw near unto Him to hear Him as He speaketh the words of God, we will as hungry ones be filled with good things.

Behold then the scene spread out before our eyes by the Holy Ghost!

The central object, the Christ of God, the revealer of the Father.

Those attracted to that object, and hanging upon the utterances of His blessed lips, all the publicans and sinners.

Standing apart from them with murmurings, the Pharisees and Scribes.

Feeling keenly the taunts of the latter, (although they declared His mission in spite of themselves). He proceeds to fill the hearing ear with Heaven’s melody, even God’s joy. The need of man is touched

upon; *lost*, as in the case of the sheep, (soul have you learnt it); *dead*, an inanimate thing, as shewn in the lost piece of silver—and both these conditions, *lost* and *dead*, proclaimed as the past history of the one enfolded in the Father's embrace. But the need of man is in no wise the prominent thing here presented to us. True, the sheep was lost and needed that the shepherd should go after that which is lost until he find it, the lost piece of silver never would have come into the light itself, and it was absolutely necessary that for it the light should shine and diligent search be made. And is not such your state dear soul, *lost* and *dark* and *dead*! If you have in any measure learnt it, you may feel inclined to cry out in earnest longing. "Oh, what joy would be mine could I but speak of being eternally secure, my sins forever gone, could I but sing Jesus is mine." Truly, like another you would go on your way rejoicing. But listen to what our chapter tells out, and this will minister what shall meet eternally your deepest heart cravings. Have you never remarked that *not one word* is said as to the joy of the prodigal in that scene of mirth? Nor is mention made of the joy of the sheep at finding itself, no longer wandering far away upon the mountains but in a place of security, not gained by its own efforts but "*when he hath found it he layeth it on his shoulders rejoicing,*" and surely it is needless to add that we hear nothing of the joy of the piece of silver.

What then my soul! is the theme of the three-in-one, parable of Luke xv? Ah! what but the joy of God

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Himself, (the three-in one) as He puts Himself to infinite cost to give to Himself the joy of which we speak.

God, the Son, introduced to us as a shepherd going after *one* lost sheep *until he find it*. Ah! how far the sheep had wandered, and right into that distance He went mid tears and agonies and blood, the good shepherd laying down His life for that one sheep, and He found it, and having found it He gives it a place of security. He layeth it on His shoulders—"I give unto them, 'my sheep,' eternal life") *rejoicing*. Mark! He gives the sheep that place to satisfy the longing of His own heart, and further He *carries it home*, He does not drop it by the way, ("they shall never perish,") and having brought it home, He calls for fellowship in His own joy. "*Rejoice with me for I have found my sheep which was lost.*"

Through the death of Christ the foundation is laid and now God the Holy Ghost works within the lost and dead one, illuminating the darkness, and having diligently sought and found the lost one, the call goes forth, "Rejoice with Me,"

And God the Father is revealed, for such was the mission of the Son to earth, and as the fruit of His death, I, the prodigal, the once lost, and dark, and dead, am brought to God.

Is this thy confession of faith dear soul? Unspeakably happy then art thou, but not in thine own blessing, not in thine own happiness, for thou hast thine as eyes and thine heart filled with the Father's joy, He seats thee at His board in suited apparel, and

everything of His own providing. Thou hast heard Him say to the servants, "Let us eat and be merry," and His mirth, His joy over thee is to thee like a vast ocean in which thine own joy is and ever shall be swallowed up.

One loves to linger over this wondrous scene. There sits the prodigal in the full unclouded enjoyment of the feast to which he has contributed what? *Absolutely nothing!* He is there simply and only as a receiver. The Father is acting from Himself simply and only as a giver, and oh! what a giver! The prodigal's misery was his only contribution to this scene, and in this his abject wretchedness, was found the fitting occasion for the display of the Father. His love displayed in enfolding him in His embrace, aye and in making haste, thus to encircle the perishing one in His arms, no demands made nor questions raised but His joy finding expression in the bringing forth from His house the best robe, (*which had never been produced before, nor worn by any, until the Father said of the prodigal "put it on him"*), hiding forever from view every trace of his past history, a ring for his hand, shoes for his feet, himself the object of the Father's delight, and perfectly suited, at the Father's cost throughout, for His presence and the communion of that presence, "Bring hither the fatted calf and kill it and let us eat and be merry."

Reader! what think you the heart of man as such (yea your heart, unless you, like the prodigal, have come to yourself) says to this affecting scene? "Thou

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never gavest *me* a kid." The heart of man is selfish to its core, and thinks ever of what shall minister to itself. The heart of God finds in me the prodigal, the sinner, an object upon which to satisfy itself in all its unselfishness. It was meet that we should make merry and be glad."

Ah! sinner! give ear whilst thou art *earnestly besought*, not to be found despising the riches of His goodness and forbearance and long suffering; *be entreated not to let thy hardness and impenitent heart lead thee to treasure up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, but now, even now this very moment*, if thou wilt but repent and turn to God, (for 'tis the goodness of God that leadeth thee to repentance), God's feast awaits thee, yea, *requires thy presence*, and as thou by His grace art made to partake of it, thou wilt never be done telling, now and throughout eternal ages, all the Father conveyed to thee as He hung upon thy long stubborn neck and covered thee with kisses.

"This the ransomed sinners' story,

All the Father's heart made known;

All His grace to me, the sinner

Told by judgment on His Son.

Told by Him from depths of anguish

All the Father's love for me;

By the curse, the cross, the darkness,

Measuring what that love must be."

THE CROSS.

I SEE how, in the cross, the whole question of good and evil was brought to an issue in every way. First, it was the complete display of man's enmity against God—the contemptuous rejection, alas! of God—come in love, for His love He had “hatred,” and in every detail, disciples, priests, Pilate, all bring out the evil that was in man. Then Satan's power is fully manifested, and that over men in their passions, and in one sense in death, at least in the sorrow of Christ's soul.

Next, I get the perfect Man as nowhere else, perfect love to the Father ; perfect, absolute, obedience ; and that in the very place of sin, and the cup it had filled. And this in human weakness, Satan's power (though above both, by looking to God), and the forsaking of God.

And then, God Himself, in perfect righteousness against sin, and sovereign, perfect, infinite love to the sinner, His majesty and truth, both made good.

Such is the cross! In the history of eternity it stands alone.

Man in God's glory is its blessed result.

In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace. (Eph. i, 7).