

**THIS E-BOOK HAS BEEN
EDITED AND PREPARED BY**

THE BIBLE TRUTH FORUM

<http://www.bibletruthforum.com>

The Bible Truth Forum is Thankful to Present

EARS FROM HARVESTED SHEAVES; OR,

DAILY PORTIONS

By Joseph C Philpot (1802 – 1869)

SELECTED FROM THE WORKS OF J. C. PHILPOT BY HIS
DAUGHTERS

*The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the
masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd.—*
Ecclesiastes 12:11

*A word spoken in due season, how good is it!—*Proverbs 15:23

PREFACE

With deep feelings of pleasure we have responded to a call for a second edition of this work, and would add to our gratitude for the blessing so graciously vouchsafed to many on its perusal, the heartfelt desire and prayer that our ever-loving Saviour, who is able to do for His people exceeding abundantly above all they ask or even think, will continue to make the book useful, not only to the godly into whose hands it may fall, but also to a generation yet to come, and to his name be all the praise.

S. & D. M. PHILPOT
Croydon, 1896.

"The soul's best, truest safeguard is love. Men fall into error because they never really loved the truth which they profess. Once love the truth, and error never more can have a place in your heart."

.....

April 1

"That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ." Philippians 1:10

If divine light has enlightened your mind, divine life quickened your heart, and you love the Lord and his people, you must approve of the things that are excellent. For they are so commended to your conscience that you can no more do otherwise than you can tell a deliberate lie or call black white. And as you approve of them, you will disapprove of everything which is contrary to, or falls short of this excellency. Now this is what distinguishes us from the world and the spirit of it, and from all whose eyes are blinded by the god of this world—that whilst they approve of the things God abhors, we approve of the things that God loves. Here is the mind of Christ; here is the teaching of the Spirit giving us in some measure to see as Christ sees, to feel as Christ feels, to love as Christ loves, and to approve as Christ approves. We shall never go far wrong so long as we are approving the things that are excellent, and seeking, as the Lord may enable, to know the will of God and do it. But directly we lose sight of this spiritual standard and set up the opinion of men, then our eyes get blinded, our hearts hardened, our consciences benumbed, and instead of approving the things that are excellent, we may gradually and insensibly drift into the very spirit of ungodliness.

April 2

"I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction." Isaiah 48:10

According to God's own testimony, it is "through much tribulation" that we are to enter into the kingdom; and therefore there is no entering into the kingdom of grace here or the kingdom of glory hereafter without it. But let this be ever borne in mind, that whatever affliction befall the saints, it is laid upon them by the hand of God, and that for the express purpose of putting them into a situation and of making them capable of receiving those comforts which God only can bestow. None but Jesus himself and the Father can comfort a truly afflicted heart. And he can and does from time to time comfort his dear people by a sense of his presence; by a word of power from his gracious lips;

by the light of his countenance; by the balm of his atoning blood and dying love; and by the work and witness of the Spirit within. And as they receive this consolation from the mouth of God, their hearts are comforted. How good the Lord is of his own free grace to bestow such blessings upon his redeemed family! May he give us much of them! And may he wherever he has bestowed upon any of us everlasting consolation, or even a good hope through grace, comfort our hearts as we journey through this vale of tears, and may our consolations be neither few nor small.

April 3

"Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Hebrews 12:14

To possess this holiness is a necessary and indispensable meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light; but this meetness must be wrought in us by the power of God's grace, for I am sure that in ourselves of it we have none. But see its necessity. What happiness could there be in the courts of bliss unless we had a nature to enjoy it? Unless we were made capable of seeing Christ as he is, and enjoying his presence for evermore, heaven would be no heaven to us. Nothing unclean or unholy can enter there. Sanctification therefore must be wrought in us by the power of God, to make us meet for the heavenly inheritance, and he therefore communicates of his Spirit and grace to give us heavenly affections, holy desires, gracious thoughts, tender feelings; and above all that love whereby he is loved as the altogether lovely. By the sanctifying operations of his Spirit, he separates us from everything evil, plants his fear deep in the heart, that it may be a fountain of life to depart from the snares of death; and works in us a conformity to his suffering image here that we may be conformed to his glorified image hereafter. Thus there is a perfect and an imperfect sanctification—perfect by imputation, imperfect in its present operations. But the one is the pledge of the other; so that as surely as Christ now represents his people in heaven as their holy Head, so will he eventually bring them to be for ever with him in those abodes of perfect holiness and perfect happiness which are prepared for them as mansions of eternal light and love.

April 4

"And when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples." Mark 4:34

What is the exact meaning of the word disciple? It means properly a learner, one who is under a teacher, whose submissive and devoted pupil he has become, and from whom he receives continual instruction. And thus a disciple of Christ is one who is admitted by the Lord Jesus into his school, whom he himself condescends personally to instruct, and who therefore learns of him to be meek and lowly of heart. A disciple of Jesus is one who sits meekly at the Redeemer's feet, receiving into his heart the gracious words which fall from his lips. This was Mary's happy posture, whom the Lord commended for choosing the better part. Such is also the posture of all the saints of God, according to the ancient declaration, "Yea, he loved the people; all his saints are in thy hand; and they sat down at thy feet, every one shall receive of thy words" (Deut. 33:3). But a true and sincere disciple not only listens to his Master's instructions, but acts as he bids. So a disciple of Jesus is one who copies his Master's example, and is conformed to his Master's image. A sincere disciple is also characterized by the love which he bears to his Master; so a disciple of Jesus is one who treasures up the words of Christ in his heart, ponders over his precious promises, and delights in his glorious Person, love, and blood. A disciple of Jesus is one who bears some reflection to the image of his heavenly Master; he carries it about with him wherever he goes, that men may take knowledge of him that he has been with Jesus; and as when Moses came down from the mount his face shone from the reflection of the heavenly glory which had streamed upon his countenance, so does the true disciple shine before men with some sparkles of the glory of the Son of God. To have some of these divine features stamped upon the heart, lip, and life, is to be a disciple of Jesus. To be much with Jesus is to be made like unto Jesus; to sit at Jesus' feet is to drink in Jesus' words; to lean upon Jesus' breast is to feel the warm heart of Jesus pulsating with love; and to feel this pulsation, causes the heart of the disciple to beat in tender and affectionate unison; to look up to Jesus, is to see a face more marred than the sons of men, yet a face beaming with heavenly beauty, dignity, and glory. To be a disciple, then, of Jesus, is to copy his example; to do the things pleasing in his sight; and to avoid the things which he abhors. To be a disciple of Jesus, is to be meek as he was; humble as he was; lowly as he was; self-denying

as he was; separate from the world as he was; living a life of communion with God, as he lived when he walked here below. To take a worm of the earth and make him a disciple of Jesus is the greatest privilege God can bestow upon man. To select an obstinate, ungodly, perverse rebel, and place him in the school of Christ and at the feet of Jesus, is the highest favour God can bestow upon any child of the dust. How unsurpassingly great must be that kindness whereby the Lord condescends to bestow his grace on an alien and an enemy, and to soften and meeken him by his Spirit, and thus cause him to grow up into the image and likeness of his own dear Son. What are earthly honours and titles when compared with the favour thus conferred upon those whose foundation is in the dust? Compared with this high privilege, all earthly honours, stars and garters, titles and robes, sink into utter insignificance.

April 5

"To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna."

Revelation 2:17

How often God's word is to you a sealed book; how often you hear from the pulpit the most encouraging preaching, yet get no encouragement from it; how often you hear Christ held forth in his Person, blood and righteousness, and go away as you came, without any sensible relief. What is the reason? Because you are overcome. Unbelief, bondage, darkness of mind, insensibility rest upon your spirit, and all these keep you from feeding upon the manna. But sometimes a gracious word comes over all these hills and mountains of unbelief, bondage, doubt and fear, and as this word drops into your heart, you begin to shout victory over all your foes and fears. Then the word of God begins to open itself up in its sweetness and blessedness. The Lord of the house brings out the hidden manna, and the word of God is made sweet and precious to the soul. Sometimes you read the word of God as a dry and barren task to satisfy conscience. When is that? When you are shut up in unbelief and bondage. But at other times the word of God is read with pleasure, and it is to you the joy and rejoicing of your heart. This is when you can believe it; and thus faith turns the word of God into manna. But if you are barren, then the word of God is barren; if dead, the word is dead; if cold and lifeless, the word is so too. But when the scene changes, when the clouds are dispersed, then you see light in God's light. Then it is a blessed

Bible, a precious book, full of sweet promises and encouraging invitations. It is in this way the manna is given to the overcomer.

April 6

"And I will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it."

Revelation 2:17

In ancient times they used to decide cases by white and black stones. The judges (for they were rather judges than jury) did not give their verdict upon the prisoner by oral testimony, "guilty," or "not guilty," as in our country, but by dropping into an urn a white stone to express their opinion that the prisoner was innocent, or a black stone to declare their judgment that the prisoner was guilty. The Lord has made use of this figure. He says, "To him that overcometh I will give a white stone;" that is, I will give into his conscience a sentence of acquittal. As the white stone was dropped into the urn, so peace and pardon are dropped into the sinner's bosom; and just as the judge, when he deposited the white stone in the urn, declared thereby the prisoner's innocence; so when the Lord is pleased to speak peace to the soul, he drops into the heart a white stone, to proclaim him discharged from the law's accusations, and interested in his love and blood.

***"And in the stone a new name written."* What is this new name? Is it not a new heart, a new nature—Christ in the soul the hope of glory? This is the "new name which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." New thoughts of Jesus, new openings up of Scripture, new meltings of heart, new softenings of spirit, everything made new by him who renews us "in the renewing of our mind"—no man knows these things saving he who receives them. It is all betwixt the Lord and the soul, it is all betwixt a pardoning God and a pardoned sinner; it is all mercy, all grace, all love, from first to last. Grace began, grace carries on, and grace finishes it; grace must have all the glory, and grace must crown the work with eternal victory.**

April 7

***"I will be as the dew unto Israel."* Hosea 14:5**

Sometimes the Lord, without applying his word with any very great and distinguishing power to the heart, makes *his truth to drop* with a measure of sweetness into the soul. This is as rain or dew, according to his own gracious declaration, "My doctrine shall drop as the rain; my speech shall distil as the dew" (Deut. 32:2). The dropping, then, of his doctrine, or, as the word means, his "teaching," as rain, and the distilling of his gracious speech as dew, kindle in the soul a love of the truth, and wherever this is felt there is salvation, for we read of those who perish that "they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved" (2 Thess. 2:10). There is a receiving of the truth, and a receiving of the love of the truth. These two things widely differ. To receive the truth will not necessarily save; for many receive the truth who never receive the love of the truth. Professors by thousands receive the truth into their judgment, and adopt the plan of salvation as their creed; but are neither saved nor sanctified thereby. But to receive the love of the truth by the truth as it is in Jesus being made sweet and precious to the soul, is to receive salvation itself. It is in this way that the gospel is made the power of God unto salvation; and therefore the Apostle, speaking of "the preaching of the cross," says that "it is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved it is the power of God." Now it is impossible that this power should be felt without its having an alluring effect upon the soul, whereby it comes out from every evil thing and cleaves to the Lord with purpose of heart.

April 8

"If ye were of the world, the world would love his own but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." John 15:19

If you walk in the fear of God, and follow in the footsteps of a persecuted and despised Jesus, the world will hate and despise you as it hated and despised him, as he himself declares, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you." God himself has put enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent (Gen. 3:15); and nothing will secure you from the manifestation of this enmity if you are on Christ's side. Neither rank, nor property, nor learning, nor education, nor amiability, nor the profusest deeds of liberality, nor the greatest

uprightness of conduct, will stave off the scorn of men, if you are a sincere follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, and carry out in practice what you hold in principle. If you are not conformed to Jesus here in his suffering image, you will most certainly not be conformed to Jesus hereafter in his glorified likeness. But if by living for and unto Jesus and his cross, your name be cast out as evil, wear it as your distinguishing badge, as adorning the breast of a Christian warrior. If men misrepresent your motives or actions, and seek to hunt you down with every calumny that the basest malignity can invent, do not heed it as long as you are innocent. They cannot find you a better or more honourable crown, if indeed your godly life provoke the cruel lie. It is a crown that your Master bore before you when they crowned his head with thorns. If you feel as I have felt, you will at times count yourself even unworthy to suffer persecution for his name's sake.

April 9

"Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for thou art my praise." Jeremiah 17:14

If we feel that we have ruined our own souls, that no human arm can save us, that we cannot bring salvation into our own consciences, nor of ourselves see any beauty, glory, sweetness, or suitability in the Lord Jesus Christ, and yet are striving with prayer and supplication to touch the hem of his garment, to taste the sweetness of his dying love, to feel the efficacy of his atoning blood, to be wrapped up in his glorious robe of righteousness, and to know him in the sweet manifestations of his grace, we too can say, "Save me, and I shall be saved." Here is this sin! save me from it: here is this snare! break it to pieces; here is this lust! Lord, subdue it; here is this temptation! deliver me out of it; here is my proud heart! Lord, humble it; my unbelieving heart! take it away, and give me faith; give me submission to thy mind and will; take me as I am with all my sin and shame and work in me everything well-pleasing in thy sight, for "Thou art my praise." If ever I have blessed thee, it has been for thy goodness to my soul; if ever my heart has been tuned to thy praise, if ever my lips have thanked thee, it has been for the riches of thy grace, and the manifestations of thy mercy. I am nothing, and never shall be anything but a poor guilty sinner in thy eyes; but I have to praise

thee for all that is past, and to hope in thee for all that is to come; "for thou," and thou alone, O Lord, "art my praise."

April 10

"I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. "
Habakkuk 3:18

If ever, as we pass through this wilderness, we feel one drop of solid joy, of true happiness, it must flow, it can flow only from one source—the manifestation of Christ to our souls. This joy may be very transient: we may have to look upon it through a vista of many years; and doubts and fears may becloud the mind whether we ever rejoiced truly in Christ, or whether our joy might not have been "the joy of the hypocrite" that perisheth. And yet we are brought to this point—we can find joy and peace in Him alone. Sin, the world, the things of time and sense, business, amusement, pleasure so called, afford now no joy; there is an aching void, a feeling of dreariness and misery connected with everything short of communications of mercy, favour, and love. So that though we may not be enabled to say, 'we greatly rejoice at all times, in all places, at all seasons, in the Lord;' yet we can come to this point—we can rejoice in no other; we can take real pleasure in nothing else. One smile from the Lord, one word from his lips, one gracious breaking in of the light of his countenance does, while it lasts, communicate joy; and from no other quarter, from no other source can a moment's joy be drawn.

April 11

"Hold fast that which is good." 1 Thessalonians 5:21

There are two things especially which every saint of God is called upon to hold fast: these are, first, *the beginning of God's work* upon his soul; and, secondly, his *deliverance*. Any manifestation too that you have had of the Lord Jesus Christ; any application of his atoning blood; any discovery of his glorious Person or shedding abroad of his love; hold that fast, for it is good. And so I may say, hold fast any promise you have ever had applied; any answer to prayer you have ever received; any felt blessing that

may have been wrought in your heart by a divine power. All this is good. It comes from a good God; it works in a good way; it leads to a good end; it will make a good deathbed, and will land you in a most blessed eternity. Therefore "hold fast that which is good." Everything which is commended to your conscience as really good; every good man; every good minister; every child of God with whom you feel union or communion; every good precept, word, and work; in short, whatever is fully commended to your conscience as spiritual and divine, hold that fast, and you will find the benefit of it. Discard and reject everything bad, unbecoming, inconsistent, ungodly, erroneous, or heretical; discard them all—shew them no mercy. In heart but not in hand, hew them down, as Samuel hewed down Agag in Gilgal.

April 12

"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." Psalm 91:1

What is "the secret place of the most High?" It is the same spot, of which Asaph speaks in the seventy-third Psalm—"Until I went into the sanctuary of God, then understood I their end." It is the spot, of which the Lord speaks in Ezekiel—"I will be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come." Then this "secret place" is the secret bosom of God. It is an entrance by faith into Jehovah, by a spiritual manifestation of him, leading us into a spiritual acquaintance with him. "The secret place of the most High" is that solemn spot, where Jehovah meets with the sinner in Christ, and where he opens up to him the riches of his mercy, and leads him into his bosom, so as to read the secrets of his loving heart. It is called a "secret" place, as only known to the persons to whom it is especially communicated. It is called a "secret" place, because none can get into it,—no, nor desire to get into it,—except the Lord himself, with his own mysterious hand, opens up to them a part in it, sets them down in it, and sweetly blesses them in it. Then to be in "the secret place of the most High" is to be brought into something like fellowship and acquaintance with God,—something like communion, spiritual worship, divine intercourse; so as to know something of him experimentally, and "run into" him, as "a strong tower," and there feel solemn safety.

April 13

"But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept; for since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead; for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." 1 Corinthians 15:20, 21, 22

Christ risen is the firstfruits of that mighty crop of buried dead whose remains still sleep in the silent dust, and who will be joined by successive ranks of those who die in him, till all are together wakened up in the resurrection morn. The figure is that of the sheaf of the firstfruits which was waved before the Lord before the harvest was allowed to be reaped (Lev. 23:10, 11). This offering of the wave sheaf was the consecration and dedication of the whole crop in the field to the Lord, as well as the manifest pledge that the harvest was fully ripe for the reaper's sickle. The firstfruits represented the whole of the crop, as Christ is the representative of his saints; the offering of them sanctified what was still unreaped in the field, as Christ sanctified or consecrated unto God the yet unreaped harvest of the buried dead; and the carrying them into the tabernacle was the first introduction therein of the crop, as Christ entering heaven as the firstfruits secures thereby the entrance of the bodies of the saints into the mansions prepared for them before the foundation of the world. Thus Christ rising from the dead presented himself before the Lord as the firstfruits of the grand harvest of the resurrection yet unreaped, and by doing so consecrated and dedicated the whole crop unto God. As, then, he rose from the dead, so shall all the sleeping saints rise from the dead at the last day, for his resurrection is the firstfruits, the pledge, and the earnest of theirs.

April 14

"As having nothing, and yet possessing all things." 2 Corinthians 6:10

How do we possess all things? In possessing Christ who is heir of all things. If we possess Christ, what have we not in him? We have wisdom to teach us, righteousness to justify us, sanctification to make us holy, and redemption to deliver us from sin, death, and

hell. If we have him, we have the favour and love of God; we have the pardon of our sins, the reconciliation of our persons, the casting behind God's back of all our backslidings, and a title to a heavenly crown. If we have him, we have everything in him, for Christ is ours, and Christ is God's. Therefore in him we possess all things. We shall have in providence things sufficient to carry us to the grave. He will give us everything that is for our good, and keep back nothing that is for our benefit. If we possess him, what have we not in him? Now the world, when death comes, what has it? Nothing to look to but the anger of God, and a fearful judgment. But the saint of God, when death comes to him, what has he to look to? A crown of life, a mansion in the skies, a smiling God, and a blessed assurance that he shall sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb. Thus though the saints of God have nothing, yet they possess all things; and possessing a heavenly crown, what can God give them more?

April 15

"And so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish." Esther 4:16

When we are in darkness, under distress of conscience, or when guilt lies hard and heavy upon the soul, these things do, and must until removed, keep us back from the Lord. But are we ever to give heed to these enemies of our soul's peace? Are we never to press through the crowd? How was it with the man who was paralyzed for so many years? He might for ever have lain helpless upon his bed, had he not been brought into the presence of Jesus. How with the woman with the issue of blood? She might for ever have tarried on the skirts of the crowd, a poor, polluted, self-condemned wretch. But she pressed through the crowd, and got to touch the hem of Jesus' garment. So with us. Shall we ever dwell in the outskirts—in the outer court of the temple? Shall we merely walk round Zion's bulwarks and tarry at her doors, or shall we venture into the holiest itself? Shall we, driven out by fear, act like Cain, and go out from the presence of the Lord? Or shall we, with all our sins and discouragements, still draw near? The Apostle encourages us to come with holy boldness to the throne of grace, and to venture into the presence of the King of kings. Esther would have ruined herself and all her nation had she given way to the weakness of the flesh; but she said, "I will go in unto the king;

and if I perish, I perish." She went in with that resolution. The king held forth the sceptre; Esther touched it, and she and the people were saved. So in grace. Shall we ever keep away through guilt, and sin, and shame? Now the Holy Ghost not only in the word of truth, encourages, but he himself from time to time enables us to draw near. And when we draw near under his divine operations, we feel the blessedness of so doing. Liberty is given, access, holy freedom, a spirit of prayer, power to take hold of God, to wrestle for the blessing, and sometimes to agonize with earnest sighs and groans and the energy of one of old: "I will not let thee go except thou bless me."

April 16

"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."
Hebrews 13:8

The eye of our faith must be ever fixed on Jesus, for the Person of Christ is the grand object of faith, and to lose sight of him is to lose sight of the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Is he not the same Jesus now that he was on earth? He is exalted, it is true, to an inconceivable height of glory, so that when John saw him, even as if in some measure veiled, he fell at his feet as dead. But he is the same Jesus now as when he was the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as he wears the same human body, so he has the same tender, compassionate heart. All that he was upon earth as Jesus, he is in heaven still. All that tenderness and gentleness, all that pity to poor sensible sinners, all that compassion on the ignorant and on those that are out of the way, all that grace and truth which came by him and were manifest in him, all that bleeding, dying love, all that sympathy with the afflicted and tempted, all that power to heal by a word all manner of sickness and disease, all that surpassing beauty and blessedness whereby he is to those who have seen him the chiefest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely, he not only retains in the highest heavens, but is, so to speak, endowed with greater capacity to use them, for all power is given to him in heaven and earth, and all things are put under his feet, and that not only for his own sake, but that he might be the Head over all things to the Church.

April 17

"Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." 2 Timothy 2:3

We often get into states and frames of mind, where we need something else besides consolation. A child would not grow, if it were always fed upon sweetmeats. It must have exercise, and be exposed to the weather, and have the cold winds blow upon its face, and be hardened, so as to enable it to bear the chill winter and the nipping frosts. So the child of God is not always petted, and fed upon love-tokens. He is not always carried in the warm bosom, or sucking the breasts of consolation, but he has to learn lessons to fit him to be a soldier. The soldier, we know, has to endure hardships. He has to lie all night upon the wet grass; to be pinched with hunger, parched with thirst, and nipped with cold; to make harassing marches; to hear the roar of the cannon and the whistling of the bullets, "the thunder of the captains and the shouting;" to see the flash of the sabre uplifted to cut him down, and the glitter of the bayonet at his breast, eye, and to feel painful and dangerous wounds. So with the spiritual soldier in God's camp. He has to hunger and thirst, to suffer cold, nakedness, and hard privations, to be shot at by the arrows of calumny and the fiery darts of Satan, to make harassing marches through an enemy's country, to suffer painful wounds, and by these very exercises learn to be a soldier. Only so far as he is thus exercised spiritually can he learn the art of war, can he know how to fight and make effectual battle under the banners of the Lord against the enemies of his salvation.

April 18

"But the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord: he is their strength in the time of trouble." Psalm 37:39

Times of trouble try the saint of God, and they are meant to do so; that is the very purpose why they are sent, for "the Lord trieth the righteous." Still the promise holds good: "he is *their strength* in the time of trouble." When he breaks up the fountains of the great deep of sin and iniquity, he strengthens his people that they may not be carried away by the flood. When he hides his face, he

strengthens them to say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." When temptation besets them sore, when they are put into the furnace, the Lord is with them there, as he was with the three men whom Nebuchadnezzar cast in. The Son of God is there with them, so that not a hair of their head is singed, nor does the smell of fire pass upon them (Dan. 3:27). In all their afflictions he is afflicted, and by sharing it with them supports them under it. He is thus their strength; for he strengthens them with strength in their soul. He enables them to bear the weighty cross—to sustain the heavy load of trial and affliction—to put their mouth in the dust as needing and deserving his chastising strokes, and submit to his righteous dispensations and dealings as plainly sent by a gracious and loving hand. And ever and anon he drops in a sustaining word, gives an encouraging look, bestows a soft and healing touch, and thus helps them to wait in faith and hope until in due time he sends full deliverance. Thus he helps and delivers, and will do so in every time of trouble down to their dying-bed, when he will give them their full and final deliverance from the body of sin and death and a world full of iniquity and sorrow.

April 19

"The election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded." Romans 11:7

Those that are blinded by the god of this world, have no knowledge of what power and feeling and savour and dew are; they see not these things, they are blind to their reality, they are dead to their importance; but the living family of God, who are brought by his blessed Spirit into some apprehension of eternal realities, have eyes to see what power is, and hearts too, to desire to feel its manifestation. Nay, it is the very seeing what reality and power are which makes them desire to experience the savour of eternal things in their conscience; and because they do not feel them as they wish, it makes them often fear that they are blind altogether (Isaiah 59:10). But the very inquiry, the very anxious cry, the very groaning desire, the very fervent supplication to the Lord that he would not let them live and die without a testimony from himself, that he would lift up the light of his countenance and grant them the life of his favour—these very cries are a proof of life. Were you blind, you would not see these things; were you deaf, you would not spiritually hear these things; were you dead,

you would not feel these things. And, therefore, that which you seem to take as an evidence against you, is, in reality, an evidence for you; and the very sensations of trepidation, anxious inquiry, godly fear, and the crying out before the Lord that he would search and try you and really make your heart right in his sight—these very things are the symptoms of life, the evidences of a work of grace upon the heart, and are the spiritual breathings of the quickened soul, the Lord himself having communicated these feelings unto it.

April 20

"And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." Ephesians 1:22, 23

In the mind of God, and as chosen in Christ, the Church is a perfect body. It is, therefore, the fulness of Christ. Just as our head and members, in their union with each other, form one perfect harmonious body, so it is with Christ and the Church. As the natural head would be incomplete without the body, as the body would be incomplete without the head, so it is with Christ mystical, and his body the Church. Each lacks the other, and the union of both makes the whole complete. The Son of God, by becoming incarnate, needed a body of which he should be the Head. Without it, he would be as a bridegroom without the bride, a shepherd without the sheep, a foundation without the building, a vine without the branches. He did not need the Church as the Son of God, but he needed her as the Son of man. In her all his love is complete, his work complete, his grace complete, his glory complete; and when she is brought home to be for ever with him in glory, then all the purposes of God, all his eternal counsels of wisdom and grace, will be complete. In this sense we may understand the expression, "the fulness of him that filleth all in all." What a wonderful thought it is that he who, as the Son of God, filleth all in all—filleth all places with his omnipresence—should yet deign to have a relative fulness in his body the Church!

April 21

"And seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not."
Jeremiah 45:5

Whatever schemes and projects the Lord's people may devise that they may prosper and get on in the world, he rarely suffers their plans to thrive. He knows well to what consequences it would lead;—that this ivy creeping round the stem would, as it were, suffocate and strangle the tree. The more that worldly goods increase, the more the heart is fixed upon them; and the more the affections are set upon idols, the more is the heart drawn away from the Lord. He will not suffer his people to have their portion here below. He, therefore, says to them in his providence, as well as in his word, "Seek them not." But you will perhaps say, "What are we then to seek?" I will tell you in one word,—*Realities*. What are these great things that you are seeking after? say in religion. Could you see them in their right light, you would see that they are but shadows. You feel, for instance, your deficiency in gift in public when you are called upon to pray, or in private when you converse with those who possess readier speech, and you want what are commonly called *gifts*, such as a greater fluency of utterance, more ability to quote Scripture, and a more abundant variety of expressions, so as to make a deeper impression on the hearers—the real want being that you might stand higher in their estimation. But what would these gifts, if you had them to the fullest extent, so that men might almost worship you for them, do for you when you shall be called upon to lie upon a death-bed—when eternity is in view, and your soul has to deal with God only? You will want no gifts then. Grace will be the only thing which can do you any good.

April 22

"The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple." Psalm 119:130

The word "simple" means literally something which is not folded or twisted together. But owing to the treacherous and desperately deceitful heart of man, all, without exception, in a state of nature are the reverse of this. All their plots and contrivances for worldly profit or fleshly pleasure are tangled and complicated; and they are continually twisting together some thread or other of carnal policy. But when God the Holy Ghost begins the work of grace

upon the souls of the elect, he proceeds (if I may use the expression) to untwist them. He takes hold of that rope which Satan and their own hearts have been twisting together for years, and he untwists it throughout its whole length, so as to leave the strands not intertwined as before, but riven, separated, and torn from each other. The light that shines into the soul out of the fulness of Jesus discovers to a man the tortuousness, the crookedness, the complicated deceit and hypocrisy of which he is guilty. A man then is made "simple," when the folds and rumples of his heart are shaken out, and he is brought to see and feel that God looks into him; that his eye penetrates into every recess of his bosom; and that there is not a thought in his heart, nor "a word in his tongue, but the Lord knoweth it altogether" (Psalm 139:4). This character is aptly represented by Nathaniel. He had gone through this untwisting work in his soul. He had been under the fig-tree, and whilst kneeling and praying there, the eye of God looked into him, and just as a flash of lightning runs, in a moment, through a coil of wire, so, when the eye of God looked into Nathaniel's soul, that instantaneous flash unravelled and untwisted the devices of his heart, and made him a simple man before him—"an Israelite indeed, in whom there was no guile" (John 1:47).

April 23

"Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." 1 Peter 1:17

Our life here is but a vapour. We are but pilgrims and strangers on this earthly ball, mere sojourners, without fixed or settled habitation, and passing through this world as not our home or resting-place. The Apostle, therefore, bids us pass this time, whether long or short, of our earthly sojourn, under the influence and in the exercise of godly fear. We are surrounded with enemies, all seeking, as it were, our life, and therefore we are called upon to move with great caution, knowing how soon we may slip and fall, and thus wound our own consciences, grieve our friends, gratify our enemies, and bring upon ourselves a cloud of darkness which may long hover over our souls. Our life here below is not one of ease and quiet, but a warfare, a conflict, a race, a wrestling not with flesh and blood alone, but with principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places. We have to dread ourselves more than anything or anybody else, and to view

our flesh as our greatest enemy. This fear is not a slavish, legal fear, such as that which John speaks of, and of which he says that "it hath torment," but that holy, godly, and filial fear which is the firstfruit and mark of covenant grace, and is "a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death." How needful, then, is it to pass the time of our sojourning here in the exercise of this godly, reverential fear! And let no one think that this filial fear is inconsistent with faith even in its highest risings, or with love in its sweetest enjoyments.

April 24

"By the fear of the Lord men depart from evil." Proverbs 16:6

There is a very close and intimate connection between godly fear and being "holy in all manner of conversation." When do we drop into levity of conversation? When do light and frothy words fall from our lips? When do any of those hasty bursts of temper, or those fretful expressions, or that mere carnal, worldly talk to which we are naturally prone, hover upon our lips and break forth, more or less unguardedly, from our tongue? Is it not when this godly fear is not playing its streams as a fountain of life to well water the soul and soften it into humility and love, and is not springing up in wholesome checks and godly admonitions to keep the tongue as with a bridle and to rule that little member which, though so little, if untamed, defileth the whole body? But if this fear be in exercise, it will restrain that levity of speech which not only grieves and wounds our own conscience, but is often a stumbling-block to the world, a bad example to the family of God, and a weapon in the hands of Satan to bring death into their soul. We should do well to ponder over those words of the Apostle, and to carry them with us when we are brought into conversation with others in the daily walks of life: "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Eph. 4:29, 30).

April 25

"Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied." 1 Peter 1:2

Peter declares that we are "elect unto obedience." Election unto eternal life, unto salvation, unto the blood of sprinkling many gladly hear of, receive, and profess. This, they say, is sweet and precious doctrine. And so indeed it is. But do they find or feel any similar sweetness and preciousness in being chosen and ordained to know and do the will of God? Do they see and feel the blessedness of the precept being secured by divine decree, as well as the promise; and that there is a constraining power in the love of Christ under which they experience a holy and sacred pleasure in no longer living unto themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again, similar in kind, if not in degree, to the pleasure which they experience in knowing they were ordained unto eternal life? But until this obedience be rendered, until these good works be brought forth, half of the sweetness and blessedness of real religion and of salvation by grace is not felt or known, nor the liberty of the gospel thoroughly realised or enjoyed, for the gospel must be obeyed and lived, as well as received and believed, that its full, liberating, sanctifying influences may be experienced as sweetening the narrow and rugged path of doing and suffering the whole will of God.

April 26

"Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance." Psalm 90:8

Thus Moses the man of God testified, and so Job found it: "For thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth" (Job 13:26). But though the Lord sets his people's sins in the light of his countenance, and brings them to bear with weight and power upon their conscience, and thus for a time at least lets them sink and fall into distress and grief, he will support them under the heavy load, that they may not altogether be crushed by it. I do think, that if there is one single grace more overlooked than another in the Church of God at the present day, it is the grace of repentance. Though it lies at the very threshold of vital godliness, though it was one main element

in the gospel that Paul preached, for he "testified both to the Jews and also to the Greeks repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21), yet how it is passed by. Men speak of faith, hope, and love; but repentance, contrition, godly sorrow for sin, how much this part of God's work upon the soul is passed by. But the Lord will not pass it by. Books may pass it by; men may pass it by; ministers may pass it by; but the Lord will not pass it by. He will bring out these secret sins and set them in the light of his countenance; and when he lays them upon the sinner's conscience, he will make him feel what an evil and bitter thing it is to have sinned against the Lord.

April 27

"That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Romans 8:4

A person may be "in the flesh," as indeed we all are, and yet not "walk after it." To walk after it implies, a setting it up as a pattern, and walking in accordance with it. But a person may be dragged after another, as we see sometimes a child is dragged unwillingly along by its mother, who does not willingly walk with her. The child is not walking after its mother, nor hand in hand with her, nor side by side; but is compelled against its will to go a road which it hates, as to go to school when it fain would go to play. So in a sense it often is with the child of grace; he is often dragged on by the flesh. He does not go after it willingly; he does not sin wilfully, but is entangled by the strength of the flesh, dragged on contrary to his best wishes, and sometimes in spite of his earnest cries, tears, groans, and desires. He does not walk after it as in Alpine countries tourists walk through the snow after a guide, setting his feet deliberately in every step which the flesh has made before him. The saint of God, therefore, though he is in the flesh, does not walk after the flesh; for if he so walked he could not fulfil the law of love, and therefore the righteousness of the law could not be fulfilled in him. But, as enabled by grace, he does from time to time walk after the Spirit, for as the Spirit leads, he follows; as the Spirit prompts, he obeys; and as the Spirit works, he performs. When the Spirit reveals Jesus, he loves him with a pure heart fervently; when the Spirit applies a promise, he believes it; and when he makes known the truth of God to his soul, he feeds upon and delights in it.

April 28

"My soul followeth hard after thee." Psalm 63:8

The Lord (we would speak with reverence) does not suffer himself at first to be overtaken. The more the soul follows after him, the more he seems to withdraw himself, and thus he draws it more earnestly on the pursuit. He means to be overtaken in the end: it is his own blessed work in the conscience to kindle earnest desires and longings after himself; and therefore he puts strength into the soul, and "makes the feet like hinds' feet" to run and continue the chase. But in order to whet the ardent desire, to kindle to greater intensity the rising eagerness, the Lord will not suffer himself to be overtaken till after a long and arduous pursuit. This is sweetly set forth in the Song of Solomon, 5:2-8. We find there the Lord coming to his bride; but she is unwilling to open to him till "he puts his hand in by the hole of the door." She would not rise at his first knocking, and therefore he is obliged to touch her heart. But "when she opened to her Beloved, he was gone;" and no sooner does he withdraw himself, than she pursues after him; but she cannot find him; he hides himself from her view, draws her round and round the walls of the city, until at length she overtakes, and finds Him whom her soul loveth. This sweetly sets forth how the Lord draws on the longing soul after himself. Could we immediately obtain the object of our pursuit, we should not half so much enjoy it when attained. Could we with a wish bring the Lord down into the soul, it would be but the lazy wish of the sluggard, who "desireth, and hath not." But when the Lord can only be obtained by an arduous pursuit, every faculty of the soul is engaged in panting after his manifested presence; and this was the experience of the Psalmist, when he cried, "My soul followeth hard after thee."

April 29

"Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord." Lamentations 3:39, 40

I believe in my conscience there are thousands of professors who have never known in the whole course of their religious profession what it is to have "searched and tried their ways;" to have been put into the balances and weighed in the scales of divine justice; or to have stood cast and condemned in their own feelings before God as the heart-searching Jehovah. From such a trying test, from such an unerring touchstone they have ever shrunk. And why? Because they have an inward consciousness that their religion will not bear a strict and scrutinizing examination. Like the deceitful tradesman, who allures his customers into a dark corner of his shop, in order to elude detection when he spreads his flimsy, made-up goods before them, so those who have an inward consciousness that their religion is not of heavenly origin, shun the light. As the Lord says, "Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd; but he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God." Now if you know nothing of having from time to time your ways searched and tried by God's word, or if you rise up with bitterness against an experimental, heart-searching ministry that would try them for you, it shews that there is some rotten spot in you—something that you dare not bring to the light. The candle of the Lord has not searched the hidden secrets of your heart; nor have you cried with David, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts. And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

April 30

"Lead me in thy truth, and teach me." Psalm 25:5

What wonderful things does God sometimes shew us in his word! How our eyes sometimes seem to be anointed with eye-salve "to behold wondrous things out of God's law!" (Psalm 119:18.) Sometimes in reading a chapter we see such beauty, such fulness, such sweetness, such glory in it, that it seems, as it were, to fill our very hearts. And what our souls want (I am sure my soul wants it, and it is my frequent cry to the Lord in secret that I may feel it) is to have this blessed truth taken out of the word of God, and applied to and sealed upon our hearts by the Spirit of God. I want no new revelation. Day by day I seem more satisfied of this, and more established in it—that all saving truth is in the word of God.

I seek no visions, I desire no dreams, I want no airy speculations; but when my heart is brought to lie at the footstool of mercy, this seems to be the panting and breathing of my soul—to know experimentally and spiritually the blessed truths that my eyes see in the word of God, to have them opened up to my understanding, brought into my heart, grafted into my soul, applied to my conscience, and revealed with such supernatural and heavenly power that the truth as it is in Jesus may be in me a solemn and saving reality, that it may bring with it such a divine blessing as to fill me with grace, enlarge my heart into the enjoyment of the gospel, gird up my loins with spiritual strength, give and increase faith, communicate and encourage hope, shed abroad and draw forth love, and fill me with joy and peace in believing.