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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."

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November 1

"Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." John 17:24

Nothing short of the revelation and communication of this glory could satisfy the heart of God; and nothing short of the partaking of this glory can satisfy the heart of man. Heaven short of this would be no heaven to his soul. Not to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; to have no view of the glory of an incarnate God; not to be conformed to his glorious image, so as to be perfectly holy both in body and soul—were these things denied, there would be no heaven at all for the redeemed among the children of men. But God, in giving the saints heaven as their happy home, gave them with it an eternal weight of glory. He has designed that all whom he has chosen unto salvation should reach the heavenly shore; that none should suffer shipwreck by the way; that sin should not be their ruin; that Satan should not succeed in any of his devices against their eternal safety; but that every member of the mystical body of Christ should be for ever with their glorious Head in the realms of bliss, to behold and to be partakers of the glory which shall be revealed when he comes and all his saints with him. It is the prospect of this glory which animates the Christian in all his battles against sin, and encourages him never to quit the field until victory crown the strife. It nerves his heart in all the troubles and trials of this mortal state, still to press forward to win this immortal prize, that he may safely reach that land where tears are wiped from off all faces, and where the glory of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost will be seen and enjoyed through the glorified humanity of Jesus without a cloud to dim its rays, or intercept its eternal lustre.

November 2

"I will cry unto God most High; unto God that performeth all things for me." Psalm 57:2

In the word "most High," there is something to my mind very expressive. It is to "God most High" that prayers go up from broken hearts, in all parts of the world where the Lord has a quickened people. "Unto God most High" every eye is pointed, every heart is fixed, and every breath of living prayer flows. Jesus sits in glory as "God most High," hearing the sighs and cries of his broken-hearted family, where they dwell in the utmost corners of the earth; and he is not only sitting on high to hear their cries, but also to bestow upon them the blessings which he sees suitable to their case and state. Now when shall we thus come "unto God most High?" When we are pleased and satisfied in self? when the world smiles? when all things are easy without and within? when we are in circumstances for which our own wisdom, strength, and righteousness are amply sufficient? We may, under such circumstances, appease our conscience by prayer, or rather its form; but there is no cry "unto God most High." Before there is a real, spiritual cry raised up, we must be brought to that spot, "Refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul" (Psalm 142:4). Here all the saints of old were brought; Job upon his dunghill, Hezekiah upon his bed, Hannah by the temple gate. All were hopeless, helpless, houseless, refugeless, before they cried "unto God most High." And we must be equally refugeless and houseless before we can utter the same cry, or our prayers find entrance into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. "Unto God that performeth *all* things for me." If God did not perform something for us; nay more, if God did not perform *all* things for us, it would be a mockery, a delusion to pray to him at all. "The Hope of Israel" would then be to us a dumb idol, like Ashtaroath or Baal, who could not hear the cries of his lancet-cutting worshippers, because he was hunting or asleep, and needed to be awakened. But the God of Israel is not like these dumb idols, these dunghill gods, the work of men's hands, the figments of superstition and ignorance; but the eternal Jehovah, who ever lives to hear and answer the prayers that his people offer up.

November 3

"O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee?" Hosea 6:4

Most of the Lord's people have some peculiar thing that they want to have granted. Most living souls have some peculiar temptation from which they want to be delivered. If some of the Lord's family

could sum up all their desires in one petition, it would be to *have the pardon of their sins sealed upon the conscience*. If others of God's people could crowd up in one sentence all the wants of their soul, it would be to be brought into the enjoyment of gospel liberty. If others could condense in one short prayer the chief desire of their heart, it would be *to be delivered from some powerful temptation, or be preserved from some peculiar besetment*. And if others could get into one request the longings that heave in their bosom, it would be *to be relieved from some special trial or trouble* that at times seems as though it would weigh them down to the dust. When the Lord, then, does but enable them to come before him and tell him what is working in their hearts, it is as though he said, 'Be not afraid to tell me: I know it already: I have the power to grant thy request: I have the will to bestow the desired answer. "What shall I do unto thee?" Tell me what it is!' The Lord encourages and enables every one that he thus draws near to himself to tell him what he most needs; and when he is enabled to lay it before his throne, it is half answered. The needed blessing is on its way: like Gabriel, it has left the palace, and is speeding its course to the soul.

November 4

"He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory." 2 Samuel 2:8

A man can never reach heaven unless he travel heavenwards, Zionwards, in the way that God has marked out for his people to walk in. It is a delusion to think that we are going to heaven unless we know something of divine teaching in the soul. But if we know anything of divine teaching, we know what it is to be poor and needy, we know what it is, more or less, to have our mouth in the dust. But many people do so mistake the way to heaven. The ordinary way is to set up a ladder to reach from earth to heaven, and progressively clambering up the different rounds, at last to climb up into the abode of God. But that is not the way of God's people. They have to go down, down, down, that they may be raised up. It is not with them first "up, up, up," to scale the battlements of heaven. Every such step upwards in self is in reality only a step downwards; but, on the other hand, every step downwards in self, downwards into the depths of poverty,

downwards into felt misery, downwards into soul-trouble and the real groanings of a broken heart—every such step downwards in self is, in fact, a step upwards in Christ. Until we get to the very bottom there is no promise. "He raiseth up the poor *out of* the dust." But how? He does it in a moment. The Lord does not raise up his people round by round, enabling them to clamber and crawl with their hands and feet to him. But, when he lifts up the poor out of the dust, he gives them a smile which reaches, so to speak, to the very bottom of their hearts; and that smile has such a miraculous power, such a drawing efficacy, that it lifts them in a moment out of the dust into the very bosom of God. When, therefore, the Lord raises up the poor out of the dust, he does not lift them up by a gradual process, step by step as they went clown. They were, perhaps, many years going down; but they are raised up in a moment. The God of all grace, by one word, or by one smile, lifts them up in a moment out of the lowest depths of felt degradation, "sets them among princes, and makes them inherit the throne of glory."

November 5

"Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." John 14:23

There are two grand vital points that every Christian should seek to be established in. The first is,—Is he a believer in Christ? Has the blessed Spirit made Christ known to his soul? Has he embraced Jesus in the arms of living faith? The second point which he should seek to have established in his soul is,—Does he abide in Christ? This he may know by having some testimony that Christ abides in him, and produces the fruits that flow out of this inward abiding. If Christ abide in him, his heart will not be like the nether mill-stone. He cannot rush greedily into sin; he will not love the world, and the things of time and sense; he cannot happily love idols, or do those things which ungodly professors do without one check or pang. Jesus in the soul is a guest that will make himself known; yea, abiding there, he is King therein. He is Ruler in Zion, and when he comes into the heart, he comes as King. Being, therefore, its rightful Sovereign, he sways the faculties of the soul, and makes it obedient to his sceptre; for "thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power" (Psalm 110:3). "O

Lord our God, other lords beside thee have had dominion over us; but by thee only will we make mention of thy name" (Isaiah 26:13)

November 6

"Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy." Micah 7:18

God delighteth in mercy. It is not drawn from him unwillingly; it is not forced out of him even by importunity; it is not dragged out of his heart by the cries of his family; but he delights in it as being his darling attribute, the very pleasure of God being in shewing mercy to the miserable. How hard it is for us to believe this until mercy visits the soul and a sweet sense of it is felt in the conscience. How we represent to ourselves God in his anger, in his justice, in his terrible displeasure against sin and sinners; how unable to believe that there is mercy for us, and that he delights in manifesting mercy to poor miserable, penitent sinners. Whoever would have thought of mercy unless it had first been in the bosom of God? Who could have ventured to entertain or suggest such a thought, that "there is forgiveness with God;" that he can "pardon iniquity, and transgression, and sin;" that he can cast all our sins behind his back, and blot them out as a cloud, yea, as a thick cloud? This is what God has revealed of himself in his word, but it is only as mercy visits the troubled breast, and God displays his goodness and love in the revelation of his dear Son, that we can rise up into any sweet apprehension of what his mercy really is, and rejoice in it not only as suitable but as saving.

November 7

"For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." 1 John 3:8

There will be no thorough destruction of sin within until the body drops into the grave, and the soul mounts aloft to be with the Lord; nor a full destruction of its effects in the body until the resurrection morn, when the body shall be raised from the

sleeping dust and changed into the glorious image of the body of the Son of God, meet companion for the immortal soul. Then will the victory be complete; then will Christ appear, shining forth with the lustre of a million suns; then will be the glorious manifestation of the Son of God, and the works of the devil thoroughly destroyed. The burden of heaven's anthem, the grand theme of eternal adoration, will be the manifestation of the Son of God to destroy the works of the devil. The redeemed will look down from the battlements of heaven and see what works have been executed by the devil; they will see millions of fellow-beings consigned to eternal misery, weltering in hell, whilst they view themselves safe in the arms of eternal love. They will see the Son of God, without a veil between, manifested to their eyes in such heart-ravishing glory as the three disciples had but a feeble, dim view of on the Mount of Transfiguration. It will be their joy to see him as he is. He will always wear his human nature; he will never lay that aside. That will always shine resplendent with all the glory of Godhead; that will be the object of eternal admiration and love; and to that glory of the God-man all the saints in bliss will be for ever looking and for ever adoring, for sin will no longer have a being in them, but they will be conformed to the glorified image of the Son of God, and be celebrating for ever the grand triumph of the cross.

November 8

"Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place." Isaiah 28:17

Wherever God the Holy Ghost begins and carries on a work of grace in the heart, he will weigh up, and mete out, from time to time, all a man's religion and try every inch of the way whether it lies straight and level with the word and will of God. Depend upon it the Lord who "weigheth the spirits" (Prov. 16:2), and by whom "actions are weighed" (1 Sam. 2:3), will put into his righteous and unerring scales both nature and grace, both human and divine teaching, and make us know which is full weight in heaven's court. The religion of the present day is too much to confuse everything of an experimental nature; to cover and obscure the work of grace in the heart. But there can be no question that God will never suffer our religion, if, indeed, he has mercifully taken

us in hand, to be huddled up in this confused way; but he will measure it all by his standard, and refine it in his crucible. It is in this way that we learn the reality and genuineness of his work. Thus, if he give faith, he will bring that faith to the touchstone, and prove it with heavy trials. It is in grace as in nature. When we would ascertain the exact weight of a thing, we put it into one scale, and a standard weight into the other, till the scales are even. So when the Lord puts faith in one scale, he puts a burden in the other to try whether it is standard weight. And the greater the faith the heavier the trial. The father of the faithful had to slay his own son. If he communicate a measure of hope, there will be many things that cause despondency to be put into the opposite scale, that despondency and hope may be well balanced. If the love of God be shed abroad in the soul, there will be trials and temptations to prove it. Thus the child of God learns the meaning of the words—"The work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope" (1 Thess. 1:3). Every token for good, every sip of mercy, every manifestation of love is examined and searched into, weighed up and balanced in the court of conscience, to know whether it is full weight or not. And in this nice and accurate scrutiny not only is religion weighed up, but also that which is not religion. Sins, open and secret, backslidings, idolatrous affections, covetous desires, presumptuous confidences, rotten hopes, and vain props—all are weighed up in the balances of the sanctuary. And as that which is received from God, when put into the balances, will be found sterling and genuine; so all that did not come from God, all that sprang from nature and the flesh, all vain confidence, bold claims, and presumptuous notions, when put into the scales, will have *tekel* stamped upon them—"Weighed in the balances, and found wanting."

November 9

"Accepted in the Beloved." Ephesians 1:6

We are ever looking for something in self to make ourselves acceptable to God, and are often sadly cast down and discouraged when we cannot find that holiness, that obedience, that calm submission to the will of God, that serenity of soul, that spirituality and heavenly-mindedness which we believe to be acceptable in his sight. Our crooked tempers, fretful, peevish minds, rebellious thoughts, coldness, barrenness and death, our

alienation from good, and headlong proneness to ill, with the daily feeling that we get no better but rather worse, make us think that God views us just as we view ourselves. And this brings on great darkness of mind and bondage of spirit, till we seem to lose sight of our acceptance in Christ, and get into the miserable dregs of self, almost ready to quarrel with God because we are so vile, and only get worse as we get older. Now the more we get into these dregs of self, and the more we keep looking at the dreadful scenes of wreck and ruin which our heart presents to daily view, the farther do we get from the grace of the gospel, and the more do we lose sight of the only ground of our acceptance with God. It is "in the Beloved" that we are accepted, and not for any good words, or good works, good thoughts, good hearts, or good intentions of our own. And a saving knowledge of our acceptance "in the Beloved," independent of everything in us good or bad, is a firm foundation for our faith and hope, and will keep us from sinking altogether into despair.

November 10

"Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." 1 Peter 2:5

God's people require many severe afflictions, harassing temptations, and many powerful exercises to hew them into anything like shape, to chisel them into any conformity to Christ's image. For they are not like the passive marble under the hands of the sculptor, which will submit without murmuring, and indeed without feeling, to have this corner chipped off, and that projecting angle rounded by the chisel; but God's people are living stones, and, therefore, feel every stroke. We are so tender-skinned that we cannot bear a thread of trouble to lie upon us, we shrink from even the touch of the probe. To be hewed, then, and squared, and chiselled by the hand of God into such shapes and forms as please him, O what painful work it is! But could the pillar know, could it tell what the sculptor was doing, would it not see that not a single stroke was made in vain? The sculptor, we know, must not make a single hair's breadth too little or too much in some parts of the marble, or he will spoil the statue. He knows perfectly well where to place the chisel, and in what direction, and with what force to strike it with the mallet. And does not God,

who fixes the spiritual pillars each in its destined spot, that they may be "as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace" (Ps. 144:12), know where to inflict the stroke, what carnal projection to chip off, and how to chisel the whole column, from the base to the capital, so that it shall wear the very shape and the very same proportion which he designs that it should wear? If the Lord, then, is at work upon our souls, we have not had, we are not now having, we shall never have, one stroke too much, one stroke too little, one stroke in the wrong direction, but there shall be just sufficient to work in us that which is pleasing in God's sight, and to make us that which he would have us to be. What a great deal of trouble should we be spared if we could only patiently submit to the Lord's afflicting stroke and know no will but his.

November 11

"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."
John 3:3

True religion begins with an entrance into the soul of supernatural light and supernatural life. How or why it comes the soul knows not; for "the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth, so is every one that is born of the Spirit." The wind itself is not seen, but its effects are felt. The sound of a going is heard in the tops of the mulberry trees, where God himself is not seen. The voice of the Lord, powerful and full of majesty, was heard by those who saw no similitude (Deut. 4:12). Thus effects are felt, though causes are unknown. Streams flow into the heart from a hidden source; rays of light beam into the soul from an unrisen sun; and kindlings of life awake in us a new existence out of an unseen fountain. The new-born babe feels life in all its limbs, though it knows not yet the earthly father whence that natural life sprang. And thus new-born souls are conscious of feelings hitherto unpossessed, and are sensible of a tide of life, mysterious and incomprehensible, ebbing and flowing in their heart, though "Abba, Father," has not yet burst from their lips. A man's body is alive to every feeling, from a pin's scratch to a mortal wound, from a passing ache to an incurable disease. The heart cannot flutter or intermit for a single second its wonted stroke, without a peculiar sensation that accompanies it, notices it, and registers it. Shall feelings, then, be the mark and evidence of natural life, and

not of spiritual? Shall our ignoble part, the creature of a day, our perishing body, our dust of dust, have sensations to register every pain and every pleasure, and be tremblingly alive to every change without and every change within; and shall not our immortal souls be equally endowed with a similar barometer to fluctuate up and down the scale of spiritual life? We must lay it down, then, at the very threshold of vital godliness, that if a man has not been conscious of new feelings, and cannot point out, with more or less precision, some particular period, some never-to-be-forgotten season, when these feelings came unbidden into his heart, he has not yet passed from death unto life. He is not in Christ, if he is not a new creature (2 Cor.5:17).

November 12

"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Romans 8:32

I have thought sometimes of the sweet figure of Solomon, as a type of Christ, in his royal munificence to the queen of Sheba. We read of him that he "gave unto the queen of Sheba all her desire, whatsoever she asked, beside that which Solomon gave her of his royal bounty." So our Royal Benefactor gives more to the sons of men than is in their heart to ask for. And what he gives, he gives freely, out of his royal bounty. As freely as the rain drops from the sky; as freely as the sun casts forth his glorious beams and ripens the fruits of the field; as freely as the wind courses over the earth; as freely as the dew drops upon the morning grass; so free are the gifts of God to his Church and people. Indeed, in giving Christ, God gave everything. The Apostle declares, he "hath blessed us with *all* spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." We must never look upon spiritual blessings as broken fragments of the love of God, mere shreds and patches, scattered crumbs, waifs and strays, like floating pieces of some shipwrecked vessel; but we must look on the blessings of the gospel as all stored up in Christ our covenant Head. Whatever is given, is given out of Christ, in whom it hath pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell; and it is by virtue of union to him, and out of his fulness, that all these blessings are received. How can we lift up our thoughts—how raise up our hearts—adequately to conceive of the gift of God's only-begotten Son—his eternal Son—the Son of the

Father in truth and love—given out of the bosom of God that he might become incarnate, suffer, bleed, and die; and by a suffering life and meritorious death offer a sacrifice acceptable to God, a sacrifice whereby the sins of God's people were for ever put away? The grand source of all the admiration and adoration and the eternal blessedness of the saints, will be the holy enjoyment of the mystery of an incarnate God. The eternal Son of the eternal Father—his taking human nature into union with his own divine Person—will be the mystery that will ravish the hearts and fill the lips of God's saints with an endless theme of admiration and joy through the countless ages of eternity.

November 13

"Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens."
Psalm 123:1

O how simple, suitable, complete, and blessed a remedy is this for all our distresses, when the Lord is pleased to open our eyes, and fix them on himself. He must do it all. If the eyes are to be upon him, he must first give us eyes; if lifted upon him, he must raise them upwards; if kept upon him, he must hold them waking. It is good to be in this spot. There are times and seasons, perhaps, when we seem to have no religion whatever; when we look, and look, and look, and cannot find a grain. Where is our spirituality? where our heavenly affections? where our prayerfulness of spirit? where our tenderness of conscience? where our godly fear? where our meditations upon God's word? We look, and look, and look—they seem gone. Now, perhaps, in the midst of this uncertainty we are brought into some painful exercise, some affliction, some temptation, some apprehension, something that lies with weight and power upon the soul. Now is the time we want our religion. But it is gone, it is gone, leaving us empty, needy, naked, and bare; religion, as regards its blessedness and comfort, we seem to have none. This is emptying work; this is stripping the soul as it were to the very bone. But what a preparation to receive the religion which is from above! How the vessel must be emptied of the dirty water of creature religion, well rinsed, and washed out, to have the pure water of heavenly religion communicated from the divine fountain. God never mingles the pure stream of heavenly religion with the dirty, filthy water of our own creature religion. We must be emptied of every drop, so to speak, of our natural religion, to

have the holy and spiritual religion, which is from above, poured into the soul. But to look, and look, and look, and find nothing but emptiness, nakedness, barrenness, and destitution—to have a "great company" of enemies all coming against us, and we as weak as water—what an emptying for divine filling, what a stripping for divine clothing, and what a bringing down of self for the raising up of Christ. True religion consists mainly in two points—to be emptied, stripped, made naked and bare; and then to be clothed and filled out of Christ's fulness.

November 14

"And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables." Mark 4:11

By "the kingdom of God" is meant the same thing as "the kingdom of heaven," that is, the internal kingdom set up in the heart by the power of the Spirit—that kingdom which shall stand for ever and ever, and last when time shall be no more. This the Lord calls a mystery. And if it is a mystery, it will have these three marks; it will be beyond nature, sense, and reason, will be hidden from the wise and prudent, and will be revealed unto babes. Let us see if we can find these marks belonging to the kingdom of heaven set up in the heart. It certainly is above nature, sense, and reason, that God should dwell in a man's heart, as the Apostle says, "Christ in you, the hope of glory;" and again, "Ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them" (2 Cor. 6:16). That God should take up his abode in a man's heart; that Christ should be in a man; and the Holy Ghost should make the body of his saints his temple; how can nature, sense, and reason understand such a mystery as this? When one of the ancient martyrs, I think it was Polycarp, was brought before Trajan, when the Emperor asked him his name, he answered, "I am Polycarp, the God-bearer, for I carry God in me!" At this answer the Emperor laughed, and said, "Let him be thrown to the wild beasts." That was the only answer a persecuting tyrant could give. That a man frail and feeble, whom a lion could tear to pieces in a few moments, carried God in his bosom!—how could the wise and prudent Trajan believe a thing so unheard of? Yet it is a mystery revealed to babes; for they

receive it in the love of it under divine teaching, as one of the mysteries that God the Spirit makes known in the heart.

November 15

"But the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him into the ark." Genesis 8:9

What a restless being is a tempted child of God! How unable he often is even to rest locally, to take his chair, and sit quietly by his fire-side! Like Noah's dove, he can find no rest for the sole of his foot on the floating carcasses of a ruined world. It is recorded of the prisoners, who in the first French revolution were awaiting in their dungeons the summons to the dread tribunal of blood, that some passed nearly the whole of their time in walking up and down their cells. So sometimes under trials and temptations, we pace up and down the room as if we sought to dissipate the exercise of our minds by the exercise of our bodies; or rush into the streets and fields to pour the heart out in sighs and groans, the restless mind acting and reacting upon the body. And as an exercised child of God often cannot rest locally, so cannot he rest spiritually. He cannot rest in his own righteousness, nor in a sound creed, nor in a form of godliness, nor in the opinions of men, nor in anything that springs from or centres in the creature. There is always something uneasy, either in himself or in the ground on which he would repose. Sometimes it is strewn with thorns and briars; sometimes beset with sharp and rugged rocks. And yet, but for these restless, uneasy feelings, how many even of the Lord's own family would settle down short of gospel rest! Some would settle down in false religion; others in the world; some would make a god of their own righteousness; and others, like the foolish virgins, would securely sleep whilst their lamp was burning out. But there is that restless, painful exercise where the life and grace of God are, that the soul cannot, if it would, settle down in any rest but that of God's own providing. "There remaineth, therefore, a rest to the people of God." That rest is Christ; the blood, righteousness, love, and grace of the Lamb of God.

November 16

"They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in." Psalm 107:4

"They wandered in the wilderness *in a solitary way*;"—a way not tracked; a path in which each has to walk alone; a road where no company cheers him, and without landmarks to direct his course. This is a mark peculiar to the child of God—that the path by which he travels is, in his own feelings, a solitary way. This much increases his exercises, that they appear peculiar to himself. His perplexities are such as he cannot believe any living soul is exercised with; the fiery darts which are cast into his mind by the wicked one are such as he thinks no child of God has ever experienced; the darkness of his soul, the unbelief and infidelity of his heart, and the workings of his powerful corruptions, are such as he supposes none ever knew but himself. To be without any comfort except what God gives, without any guidance but what the Lord affords, without any support but what springs from the everlasting arms laid underneath; in a word, to be in that state where the Lord alone must appear, and where he alone can deliver, is very painful. But it is the very painful nature of the path that makes it so profitable. We need to be cut off from resting upon an arm of flesh; to be completely divorced from all props to support our souls, except that Almighty prop which cannot fail. And the Lord will take care that his people shall deal only with himself; that they shall have no real comfort but that which springs from his presence, and no solid testimonies but those which are breathed into their conscience from his own lips. His object is to draw us away from the creature; to take us off from leaning on human pity and compassion; and to bring us to trust implicitly on himself, "whose compassions fail not,"—to lean wholly and solely upon him, who is "very pitiful, and of tender mercy."

November 17

"Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses." Psalm 107:5, 6

Until they wandered in the wilderness—until they felt it to be a solitary way, until they found no city to dwell in, until hungry and

thirsty their soul fainted in them—there was no cry. There might have been prayer, a desire, a feeble wish, and now and then a sigh or a groan. But this was not enough. Something more was wanted to draw forth lovingkindness out of the bosom of the compassionate Head of the Church. A cry was wanted,—a cry of distress, a cry of soul trouble, a cry forced out of their hearts by heavy burdens. And a *cry* implies necessity, urgent want, a perishing without an answer to the cry. It is the breath of a soul bent upon having eternal realities brought into the conscience, or perishing without them. It is this solemn feeling in the heart that there is no other refuge but God. The Lord brings all his people here—to have no other refuge but himself. Friends, counsellors, acquaintance—these may sympathise, but they cannot afford relief. There is no refuge, nor shelter, nor harbour, nor home into which they can fly, except the Lord. Thus troubles bring us to deal with God in a personal manner. They chase away that halfhearted religion of which we have so much; and they drive out that notional experience and dry profession that we are so often satisfied with. They chase them away as a strong north wind chases away the mists; and they bring a man to this solemn spot that he must have communications from God to support him under, and bring him out of his trouble; and if a man is not brought to this point by his troubles, they have done him no good. But what a mercy it is when there is a cry! and when the Lord sends a cry in the trouble, he is sure in his own time and way to send deliverance out of it.

November 18

"And he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation." Psalm 107:7

"He led them forth." Forth out of the world—forth out of sin—forth out of a profession—forth out of a name to live—forth out of everything hateful to his holy and pure eyes.

"To go to a city of habitation." They had no city to dwell in here below; but they were journeying to a city of habitation above, whose walls and bulwarks are salvation, and whose gates are praise; where there are eternal realities to be enjoyed by the soul; where there is something stable and eternal; something to satisfy all the wants of a capacious and immortal spirit, and give it that

rest which it never could find while wandering here below. If we have a city here, we want no city above; and if we have a city above, we want no city here.

This then must be our state and case; either to be pilgrims, journeying onwards, through troubles, to things above, or taking up our abode below; seeking heaven here, or heaven hereafter; resting upon the world, or resting upon the Lord; panting after the things of time, or panting after the things of eternity; satisfied in self, or satisfied only in Christ. One of the two must be our state and case. The Lord decide it clearly in the hearts of his people that they are on his side; and give us to know and feel that our very restlessness and inability to find food and shelter in the things of time and sense, are leading us more earnestly and believingly to seek after the things that have reality in them; that finding no city to dwell in here below, we may press forward to be manifestly enjoying testimonies of being citizens of that city which is above, "which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God!"

November 19

"Underneath are the everlasting arms." Deuteronomy 33:27

The "everlasting arms" of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the divine Jehovah, are "underneath" every one of his people, and, being underneath them, they can neither fall through them nor out of them; but they are borne, and supported, and carried along by them until they are brought to the eternal enjoyment of a Three-One God. Now, if these "everlasting arms" were not underneath a man, so deceitful is his heart, so desperately wicked is his corrupt nature, such awful stratagems does Satan lay for his feet, and such numerous perils encompass every step, that he must infallibly perish. But what we want to *feel* is, that these arms *are* underneath us. What good will the doctrine do us? The doctrine of the "everlasting arms" being underneath us will not satisfy our souls, if we feel that we are sinking fathoms. If we keep sinking, sinking, sinking, and are afraid, at times, that we shall sink at last into hell, the bare doctrine that the "everlasting arms" are underneath God's people will not satisfy us; but we want to *feel them under us*, so that we can rest upon them, and enjoy a blessed support in them and coming out of them. How secure the babe lies

in its mother's arms as long as it can *feel* the arms touching and supporting its body; but let the mother withdraw the arm, the babe is in fear; it cries out in alarm; but so long as it feels the pressure of the mother's arms, it sleeps on calm and secure. So with living souls; if they cannot find the "everlasting arms" underneath them, they cannot rest in the mere doctrine of God's upholding the Church; but when they can feel a support given; when in trouble, in affliction, in sorrow, in temptation, there is a sensible leaning upon the everlasting arms, and a sensible support communicated by them, then they can rest calmly and contentedly upon them.

November 20

"The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations." 2 Peter 2:9

Few will sincerely and spiritually go to the Lord, and cry from their hearts to be delivered from the power of a temptation, until it presses so weightily upon their conscience, and lies so heavy a burden upon their soul, that none but God can remove it. But when we really feel the burden of a temptation; when, though our flesh may love it, our spirit hates it; when, though there may be in our carnal mind a cleaving to it, our conscience bleeds under it, and we are brought spiritually to loathe it and to loathe ourselves for it; when we are enabled to go to the Lord in real sincerity of soul and honesty of heart, beseeching him to deliver us from it, I believe, that the Lord will, sooner or later, either remove that temptation entirely in his providence or by his grace, or so weaken its power that it shall cease to be what it was before, drawing our feet into paths of darkness and evil. As long, however, as we are in that state of which the prophet speaks, "Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty" (Hosea 10:2); as long as we are in that carnal, wavering mind, which James describes, "A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways;" as long as we are hankering after the temptation, casting longing, lingering side glances after it, rolling it as a sweet morsel under our tongue, and though conscience may testify against it, yet not willing to have it taken away, there is no hearty cry, nor sigh, nor spiritual breathing of our soul, that God would remove it from us. But when we are brought, as in the presence of a heart-searching God, to hate the evil to which we are tempted, and cry

to him that he would, for his honour and for our soul's good, take the temptation away, or dull and deaden its power; sooner or later the Lord will hear the cry of those who groan to be delivered from those temptations, which are so powerfully pressing them down to the dust.

November 21

"That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life." Luke 1:74, 75

Holiness consists mainly of two points: 1. being made a partaker of the spirit of holiness whereby, as born of God, we are made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; set our affections on things above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God; have our conversation in heaven; put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him which created him; live a life of faith in the Son of God, and beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. To be thus spiritually-minded, to be thus brought near unto God through his dear Son, to walk before him in the light of his countenance, and to know something of spiritual communion with the Lord of life and glory as sitting on his mercy-seat in the fulness of his risen power, and in the heights, depths, lengths, and breadths of his dying love—this to taste, to handle, to experience, and to enjoy is to be made a partaker of true holiness, and to be sanctified by the Spirit of God as an indwelling Teacher, Guide, Advocate, and Comforter. And if we know nothing of these things, at least in some small measure, or are not looking after and longing for them to be brought into our heart by a divine power, we give but little evidence that the grace of God has reached our heart and renewed us in the spirit of our mind.

2. The second branch of holiness is a life, conduct, and conversation agreeable to the precepts of the gospel; and the one springs out of the other. "Make the tree good," said our blessed Lord, "and his fruit good, for the tree is known by his fruit." Gospel fruit must grow upon a gospel tree, and thus the fruits of a holy and godly life must spring out of those divine operations of the Holy Ghost upon the heart of which we have just spoken.

Thus to speak, live, and act is to be "holy in all manner of conversation," that is in our daily walk; and is a fulfilling of the precept which God gave of old to his typical people Israel, and quoted in the New Testament to shew that it is spiritually fulfilled in that peculiar people whom he calls by his distinguishing grace under the gospel.

November 22

"By his knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down the dew." Proverbs 3:20

When the Lord said, "Let there be light," instantly there was light. So when the Lord says, "Let the earth open," the heart immediately opens, the conscience is made tender, and the soul hears and receives what God speaks. And what follows this opening? The heart receives the dews and showers of God's grace that fall into it; and these dews and showers of God's grace communicate to it softness, fertility, and productiveness. O how we have to learn this by painful experience! Is not our heart as hard sometimes as the nether millstone; and to our feelings, utterly destitute of light, life and power, without one grain of brokenness, contrition, godly sorrow, spiritual desire, or fervent breathing after the Lord? This painful experience the Lord's people have to pass through perpetually, that they may know that "in them, that is, in their flesh dwelleth no good thing," and that "power belongeth unto God." Could I make my own heart soft, should I want the Lord to do it for me? Could I communicate fertility to my own soul, should I ever pant after the dews and showers of the Holy Ghost? Could I bring pardon and peace into my own conscience, should I need the Lord himself to speak with power? Could I believe, hope, rejoice, and have at my own command every gracious and blessed feeling that I desire to experience, there would be no pleading the Lord's own promises, no wrestling in importunate prayer, no taking the kingdom of God by violence, no longing and panting for the Lord to appear in our souls. The Lord therefore sees fit that we should walk in these paths, that we may know, "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy."

November 23

"Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law." Psalm 94:12

We may observe in the words before us, that the Lord puts *chastening* before *teaching*. Is there not something remarkable in this? Why should chastening precede teaching? For this reason. We have no ear to hear except so far as we are chastened. It was so with the prodigal. Until he was brought to his right mind by strokes of hunger, he did not think of his father's house; he had no heart to return; but a mighty famine sent him home. So it is with God's children; as long as they are allowed to wander in their backslidings, they have no heart to return. But let the rod come; let them be driven home by stripes; then they have an ear to listen, while God teaches them to profit, instructs them by his blessed Spirit, and speaks into their heart those lessons which are for their eternal good.

"And teachest him out of thy law." "The law" in the Scriptures has a very wide signification; it means, in the original, *instruction*. The word is *Torah*, which signifies "teaching," or "direction." Thus the word "law" is not confined to the law of Moses given in thunder and lightning upon Mount Sinai; but it includes also the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ—"the perfect law of liberty;" "the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus;" that law which was in the heart of the Redeemer, when he said, "I come to do thy will, O God; yea, thy law is within my heart."

Now, as the Lord teaches his children "out of the law," strictly so called, so he teaches them "out of" the gospel; and to my mind, there is something exceedingly sweet and expressive in the words "*out of the law*." It seems to convey, not only that the law is a treasure-house of wrath, but that the gospel also is a treasure-house of mercy. And as those who know most of the law are only taught "out of the law," and not the whole of the law, only a few drops, as it were, out of the inexhaustible wrath of God; so out of the heavenly treasure-house of the gospel, "the perfect law of liberty," it is but a little of grace and mercy that in this life can be known. As Christ said to his disciples in promising the Spirit: "He shall take *of* mine, and shall shew it unto you." He cannot take "all," and shew it unto them; for none could live under the sight. The Spirit, therefore, takes *of* the things of Christ, and shews here a little, and there a little; some little blessedness here, and some little blessedness there; a suitable promise, a gracious testimony, a

comforting text, an encouraging word, a sight of atoning blood, a smile of his countenance, a view of his Person, a discovery of his righteousness, or a glimpse of his love. This is taking of the things of Christ, and revealing them to the soul. And thus, the man whom the Lord takes in hand, he teaches "out of" the gospel by making Christ experimentally known, and revealing his dying love. And thus he teaches each and all "out of his law"—both the law from Sinai, and the law from Zion.

November 24

"And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." Luke 10:18

It deserves our utmost attention and prayerful consideration to see, by the eye of faith, the display of wisdom and power shining forth in the way in which the all-wise God sent his dear Son "to destroy" or, as the word is in the original, to unloose "the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8). Satan had, so to speak, spun a ravelled knot when he cast the cords of sin round man's heart. This tangled and tight-drawn knot could not be cut through as by a sword of omnipotent power; but had by infinite wisdom and patience to be unravelled through its whole length. The work which Satan had done was to be undone. Disobedience had to be repaired by obedience—the voluntary obedience of the Son of God, and therefore of infinite value. Sin had to be atoned for by sacrifice—the sacrifice of the nature which had sinned, in union with the Person of the Son of God, and therefore deriving from it unspeakable efficacy. Death had to be destroyed by the ever-living Son of God submitting to die. The law must be magnified by being obeyed by him who by his divine Person is above law. The Law-giver must be the Law-fulfiller. He who is the ever-blessed One must be made a curse; and the holy One of Israel, who knew no sin, must be "made sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." "Who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle?" asked the Lord "I would go through them," is his answer (Isa. 27:4). So our blessed Lord went through these thorns and briers set against him in battle. He thoroughly went through all that he undertook; and by going through unravelled the work of Satan.

November 25

"Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace."
Romans 14:19

What a sweetness is contained in the word "peace." Bunyan well represents this in his *Pilgrim's Progress*, where he speaks of Christian, after having been entertained in the "house Beautiful," going to sleep in the chamber called "Peace." And what blessed sensations are couched in that word "Peace!" It was the legacy that Jesus left to his Church. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you;" and the Apostle says of it that it "passeth all understanding." Now many even of the Lord's people seem as if they wanted and were expecting raptures. There is, I believe, a vast deal of enthusiasm in the natural mind of man, as is evident from what I may call its religious history in all ages; and this leads many who, in other points, seem rightly taught to look for wonderful visions, ecstasies, and raptures, things which nature can imitate, or Satan, as an "angel of light," counterfeit to delude souls. But I believe Satan cannot speak gospel peace to the conscience; he cannot bring a holy calm into the soul. He could lash the waters of Gennesareth into a storm; but there was only One who could say to them, "Peace, be still." Satan may raise up a storm in our carnal mind, but he cannot allay it; he cannot pour oil upon the waves; nor calm the troubled breast, and enable it to rest upon God. Of all spiritual blessings, none seem preferable to peace; and I believe that it is what a child of God covets more than anything. For, O how much is implied in the word "peace!" Is not man by nature an enemy to God? Then to be saved he must be reconciled; and that implies peace. Is not his heart often troubled, as the Lord said, "Let not your heart be troubled?" Then he wants peace. And is not his mind often agitated and tossed up and down by conflicting emotions? Then he wants peace to calm it. And when he has to lie upon his dying bed, O, if he can but lie there in peace, peace with God through Jesus Christ, and a holy calm comes over his soul, flowing out of manifested mercy and felt reconciliation, it will beat all the raptures in the world! To be blessed with peace, through the blood of sprinkling, before the soul glides out of its earthly tabernacle to enter into the haven of peace above—this indeed will make a death-bed happy, this will extract every thorn from the dying pillow, and enable the departing believer to say,

with holy Simeon, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

November 26

"And they shall spring up as among the grass." Isaiah 44:4

The Lord's people are spoken of here as at once "springing up" under the influence of the water poured and of the floods given. We cannot mistake the spiritual meaning of the figure, as it is so clear and certain. In those burning regions where rain does not fall at all seasons from the skies, as in our dripping clime, the effect of copious showers falling upon the parched vegetation is almost miraculous. A few days completely reverse the scene, and on every side vegetation springs up as if it started with gigantic growth out of the bosom of the heated soil. To this the figure in the text alludes, "They shall spring up," that is, Zion's children, "as among the grass," with all that young and active growth which so clearly manifests the power and the blessing of God.

But what may we understand by the expression "*grass?*" May we not interpret it as emblematic of the flesh, according to the words of the prophet, "All flesh is grass!" (Isa. 40:6.) All the pride, pomp, and beauty of the flesh are but as grass, for "all the glory of man is as the flower of grass" (1 Peter 1:24), which, when cut down by the scythe, soon withers, is gathered into heaps, and swept away out of the field. In this point of view we may consider the children of God to spring up amongst the sons of men as flowers among the grass, bedecking it with beauty—the only beautiful objects among the green blades. O how blessed it is to see children of God springing up here and there amongst the grass which everywhere so thickly covers the mead! Time may have been when you were hidden beneath the grass—when, though a flower in God's sight, your root was in the dust, and you lay undistinguished amidst the thick herbage. But being a flower, one of the Redeemer's own lilies, among whom he feeds (Song Sol. 6:3), when the rain of heaven dropped upon you, you sprang up amid the crowded blades which before hid you from view.

November 27

"As willows by the water courses." Isaiah 44:4

The willow, we know, cannot exist without water; it must be near the brook or river, or it withers and dies. Take a young willow and plant it upon a mountain top or in the sandy desert, and it soon droops and perishes. But take the barest twig off the willow, and plant it near a stream, so that the water may reach it, and it will soon shoot downwards and push a vigorous stem upwards. So it is with the child of grace: he must live by the river side; he must dip his roots into that "river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God," and by it he must be continually bathed, or he droops and dies. He cannot live in the world, away from Jesus, his word, ordinances, house, people, presence, Spirit, and grace, any more than a willow can live upon the mountain top; he cannot live among carnal men, cut off from union and communion with his great and glorious Head, any more than the willow can thrive and grow in the wilderness. How beautifully is this set forth by the prophet Jeremiah—"Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is: for he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit" (Jer. 17:7, 8). The saints of God, then, grow like "willows by the water courses."

How enduring, too, is the willow. What life in every branch! and even when pollarded, or cut down low, still reviving "through the scent of water" (Job 14:9), and shooting out its branches afresh. May we not see in this a fitting emblem of the child of God, and admire how, like the willow, he preserves life and vigour when the nobler trees of the forest are blown down by the storm or are cut down for fuel?

November 28

"So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God." Mark 16:19

The right hand of God means the right hand of power, of dominion, of authority, and of acceptance. When our blessed Lord went back to the courts of bliss, and the gates of heaven lifted up

their heads, and the everlasting doors were lifted up, and the King of glory went in, he sat down at once at the right hand of the Majesty on high. But what did this place of pre-eminence imply? It certified to principalities and powers, and the whole bright and glorious throng of angelic hosts, that God had accepted his work and given him for his reward that exalted place of power, of honour, and of dignity. For remember this, that our gracious Lord went up to heaven and sat down at the right hand of God in his human nature. He did not go up to heaven as he came down from heaven only as the Son of God. He went up to heaven as the Son of man as well as the Son of God. He went up to heaven in a human nature united to the divine, and therefore entered the courts of bliss as the God-man, Immanuel, God with us. It is a point of great importance, and to be ever borne in mind by every spiritual worshipper, and by every true believer in the Son of God, that our blessed Lord sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high in the same human body which he wore upon earth—glorified indeed beyond all thought or utterance, but the same pure, spotless, holy, and immortal humanity which he assumed in the womb of the Virgin, and which he offered as a sacrifice upon the cross. To this point the Apostle would specially direct our thoughts, and bring it before us as the object and food of our faith (Rom. 8:34). And what an object of faith it is, for, as viewing Jesus at the right hand of God, we see there a mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; we see an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; we see a brother, a friend, a husband enthroned in glory, there ever living, ever reigning, ever ruling, until God shall have put all enemies under his feet.

November 29

"O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock." Song of Solomon 2:14

Jesus is the hiding-place, the only hiding-place from sin and self. "Thou art my hiding-place," said David of old. This was shewn to Moses, in figure, when the Lord put him into the cleft of a rock, which Toplady has so beautifully versified, to paint the longing desires of his soul:

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,

Let me hide myself in thee!"

It is on this "Rock of Ages" that God has built his Church. As a rock, he is deep as well as high—so deep as to have under-bottomed the depths of the fall, so high as to be God's fellow, seated at his right hand. As a rock, too, he is broad as well as long—broad enough to bear millions of living stones built on him, and long enough to reach from eternity to eternity. The Apostle, therefore, prays that the Church at Ephesus may comprehend with all saints, "what is the breadth and length, and depth and height, and know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge."

November 30

"Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Hebrews 7:25

If the gracious Lord did not live to make intercession for us, he could hardly be said to save us to the uttermost. But as he ever lives at God's right hand and is ever interceding, ever presenting the perfume of his acceptable mediation, this gives us a certain pledge of his love, his pity, and his power. Is not this very encouraging to all who come unto God by him? and may we not say, "Such are we, O Lord; we do come, we daily come to thee by Jesus Christ?" And do we not need all the encouragement that God may give us out of it? for we often sink very low through temptation and trial and the manifold afflictions of the way. How blessed, then, it is if you can only trace this mark of grace in your soul when others seem almost lost out of sight. If you know anything of internal work, you know this—whether you have come, whether you are coming to God by Jesus Christ. It is very simple, yet very expressive. Have you come as an outcast? Have you come as ready to perish? for these are expressly spoken of as coming in that day when the great trumpet is blown, the great and glorious trumpet of the gospel, for its jubilee notes are sounded specially for them. Have you come in faith? have you come in hope? have you come in love? and have you found any measure of acceptance and approbation in your own bosom? "Yes," say some, "with all my doubts, fears, and questioning, I can answer your question with an honest heart and a firm front, that I have come to God by Jesus Christ, and have felt the blessedness of so

doing." Then you have known something or will know something about the uttermost; and the more you know about the uttermost, the more you will prize salvation by grace, the more you will cleave to the Son of God, the more you will hang upon his finished work, and the more you will look unto him who has so kindly said, "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else."