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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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September 1

"This is his name whereby he shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness." Jeremiah 23:6

What a sweet view does this give of Jesus! We look sometimes at Christ's righteousness as distinct from Christ. Shall I use a figure? We look at the garment as distinct from the maker and wearer of the garment. We look at the righteousness so much, that we scarcely look at him who wrought out that righteousness. Now, we must not separate Jesus from his righteousness. We must not look merely at the garment, the imputed robe, and forget him that wrought it out, that puts it on, and that keeps it to this day in firm possession. But when we can see, that not only the obedience of Christ, but Christ himself—all that Jesus is—all that Jesus has, as head of his Church, as the risen Mediator, as the great High Priest over the house of God—when we can see that this God-man, Immanuel, is made unto his people righteousness, how it expands the prospect! Then we look, not merely at the robe itself, beautiful, comely, and glorious; we look farther—we look at Him that made it. We do not look merely at the robe as distinct from him. We look at him who made that robe what it is—Jesus, who ever lives at the right hand of the Father to make intercession for us. This, to my mind, is a sweet view. If I sink down into creature sinfulness, shame, and guilt, and see Jesus made of God unto me righteousness, what need I more? Has God made him so? Who can unmake him so? Has God made the Son of his love righteousness to my soul, that I may stand in him without spot, speck, or blemish? Who is to alter it? Can sin alter it? That is atoned for. Can the devil alter it? He is chained down unto the judgment of the great day. Can the world alter it? They cannot stretch forth their finger to touch one thread of that robe, to touch one lineament of the Redeemer's countenance. If he is made unto me righteousness, what more do I want? If I can find a shield, a shelter, and a refuge in him as my righteousness, what more can I want to preserve me from the charge of men or devils?

September 2

"Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober." 1 Thessalonians 5:6

Here sobriety is opposed to sleepiness, and is connected with walking in the light and in the day, as sleepiness and its frequent cause, drunkenness, are connected with darkness and night. One of the greatest curses God can send on a people and its rulers, its prophets and seers, is a spirit of deep sleep, as the prophet speaks: "For the Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes; the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered." But to be sober is to be awaked out of this sleep, and, as a consequence, to walk not only wakefully but watchfully. It implies, therefore, that careful, circumspect walking, that daily living, moving, speaking, and acting in the fear of God, whereby alone we can be kept from the snares spread for our feet at every step of the way. How many have fallen into outward evil and open disgrace from want of walking watchfully and circumspectly, and taking heed to their steps. Instead of watching the first movements of sin and against, as the Lord speaks, "the entering into temptation," they rather dally with it until they are drawn away and enticed of their own lust which, as unchecked, goes on to conceive and bring forth sin, which, when it is finished or carried out and accomplished in positive action, bringeth forth death.

September 3

"Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord, etc., I also have heard thee." 2 Kings 22:19

This tenderness of heart was a mark in Josiah, on which the Lord, so to speak, put his finger; it was a special token for good which God selected from all the rest, as a testimony in his favour. The heart is always tender which God has touched with his finger; this tenderness being the fruit of the impression of the Lord's hand upon the conscience. You may know the difference between a natural conscience and a heart tender in God's fear by this, that the natural conscience is always superstitious and uncertain; as the Lord says, it "strains out a gnat, and swallows a camel." It is exceedingly observant of self-inflicted austerities, and very fearful of breaking through self-imposed rules; and whilst it will commit sin which a man who has the fear of God in his heart would not do for the world, it will stumble at mere unimportant trifles at which an enlightened soul would not feel the least scruple. But here is

the mark of a heart tender in God's fear; it moves as God the Spirit works upon it. It is like the mariner's compass, which having been once touched by the magnet, always turns toward the north; it may indeed oscillate and tremble backwards and forwards, but still it will return to the pole, and ultimately remain fixed at the point whence it was temporarily disturbed. So when the heart has been touched by the Spirit, and has been made tender in God's fear, it may for a time waver to the right hand or to the left, but it is always trembling and fluctuating till it points towards God, as the only and eternal centre of its happiness and holiness.

September 4

"I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight." Isaiah 42:16

What is the mind of man—of any man—of your mind, my mind, under affliction? Let him be tried with pain of body, poverty of circumstances, sickness in his family, guilt of conscience, hard bondage in his own soul, without any beam of divine light upon his path, and what is he? A murmuring, rebellious wretch, without a grain of resignation, without a particle of contentment or submission to the will of God. But let the glory of the Lord be revealed; let him have a view by faith of a suffering Jesus; let some ray of light shine upon his path; let there be some breaking in of the exceeding weight of glory that is to be manifested at Christ's appearing; where are all his crooked things now? All made straight. But how? By his crooked will—crooked because it did not lie level with the Lord's—being made to harmonise with the promise and precept, the footsteps and example of the blessed Jesus. The crook is not taken out of the lot, but straightened in the lot; the cross is not removed from the shoulder, but strength—that strength which is "made perfect in weakness"—is given to bear it. So it was with Christ himself in the garden and on the cross; so it is with the believing followers of the crucified One.

September 5

"Bow down thine ear, O Lord, hear me: for I am poor and needy."
Psalm 86:1

Whatever deliverance a man may have experienced, let him have been delivered from the lowest hell, and have had his feet placed upon a rock, yet all his life long he will have this experience wrought in him by the Holy Ghost,—to be "poor and needy." And only so far as he is poor and needy, will he want to know anything experimentally of the riches of Jesus Christ, or to taste the consolations which the Spirit of God alone can communicate to the parched and thirsty soul. How many we find in our day, who are "rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing," and yet they are always speaking and boasting of the riches of Christ. But what can they know of Christ's riches? His riches are for "the poor and needy;" his blood is for the guilty; his righteousness is for the naked; his perfect work and finished salvation is for those who continually stand in need of his powerful arm to save them from the lowest hell. And, therefore, whatever notions men may have about Christ's riches, and Christ's blood and righteousness, and Christ's glorious salvation; there are none that prize it, that pant with unutterable longings after it, that really desire to live upon it as the very food of their heart, that are crying unto God continually for the sweet manifestations of it, that are restless and uneasy and dissatisfied without the sweet enjoyment of it, there are none that thus breathe and thus feel, except those who are spiritually "poor and needy," being stripped and emptied and despoiled of everything that the flesh can boast of, and everything that nature can exalt itself with.

September 6

"Exercise thyself unto godliness." 1 Timothy 4:7

"The Lord trieth the righteous" (Ps. 11:5). In fact, a righteous life is for the most part a tried life. There is not a child of God, whose graces are lively and active, that is not tried in his soul. I have no more belief that the soul can live without exercise than that the body can. The more the soul is exercised, the healthier it will be. Trial is one main source of exercise. If you are tried as to your standing; tried as to your state; tried as to the reality of the work of grace upon your soul; tried as to your experience; tried as to

your manifestations, deliverances, and evidences; tried by your sins; tried by Satan; tried by professors; tried by profane; and above all tried by your own heart, and that continually—it will keep your soul in exercise. And this is "exercise *unto* godliness." If these exercises are *unto* godliness, they lead to godliness, they take you on your way to godliness, they bring you near to godliness, they bring you into godliness; and, above all things, they bring godliness into your soul. And thus, there is an exercise of the soul *unto* godliness. Does not your heart at times seem without a grain of it? You see what godliness is in its nature, in its branches, in its fruits, in its graces, in what a Christian should be, practically, experimentally, and really—outwardly and inwardly—in the church, and in the world. You say, "I a Christian! I a godly man or woman! Let me compare myself with godliness. Am I godly? Is there grace in my heart? Do I live? do I speak? do I think? do I act? do I walk? do I suffer as becomes a Christian? Is my life, my profession, my conduct—in the family, in the world—in the business, in the church—at home, abroad—openly, secretly—privately, publicly—is it such that I can take it and lay it down, step by step, with vital, real, experimental, scriptural godliness? "O," say you, "I shrink back from the test. There are many things in me, inwardly and outwardly, which will not bear to be weighed up with godliness as revealed in the Scriptures of truth." Well, your mind is exercised, I suppose, when you have these workings. Now, what is the result? It is an "exercise *unto* godliness." You want it; you strive for it; you cry for it; you press after it; you know that none but the Lord can work it in your soul; you feel needy, naked, and destitute; you know that without it you can neither happily live nor die; yet have it you must, or perish body and soul for ever.

September 7

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit." Philemon 25

It is the regenerating breath of the Lord Jesus Christ which makes the soul alive unto himself. This is manifest from his own language: "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life" (John 6:63). Then for the first time "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is with our spirit." For you will observe that

the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is not with our carnal mind: that ever remains the same, a body of sin and death, flesh, corrupt flesh, "in which dwelleth no good thing," and therefore not the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. His grace is with our spirit, that "new man" of which we read that "it is after God, [that is, after the image of God] created in righteousness and true holiness." This is called our "spirit," because it is born of the Spirit, as the Lord himself unfolded the solemn mystery to Nicodemus: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." This is no subtle, wire-drawn distinction, but a very important truth; for unless we see the difference between the two natures, the spirit and the flesh, the law in the members and the law of the mind, we shall always be in bondage, as looking for holiness in the flesh. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ being thus with our spirit, it breathes from time to time upon that spirit, moves and acts in it and upon it; for there is what I may call a gracious or spiritual union between the two. Thus we can no more live without the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ than the earth can live without the sun. He must shine, or we have no light; he must revive, or we have no warmth; and he must fertilise, or we bring forth no fruit. Thence time after time there is an outgoing of the single desire of the soul to the Lord Jesus Christ that his grace would be with our spirit; that this grace may be ever flowing forth into us, so as to make us new creatures, dispel all doubt and fear, break to pieces all bonds and fetters, fill us with love and humility, conform us to his suffering image, produce in us every fruit that shall redound to his praise, be with us in life and death, and land us safe in eternity.

September 8

"For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." Hebrews 2:10

When, with believing eyes, we can view God the Son as the eternal salvation of all whom the Father gave unto him; when we can see him, by the eye of faith, coming down into this lower world, taking our nature into union with his own Divine Person; when, by faith, we can accompany the Man of Sorrows into the gloomy garden of Gethsemane, or behold him groaning, bleeding, and dying on the cross, an object of ignominy and shame, and believe

that in this way, and this alone, salvation could be wrought out, O, what a view it gives us of the demerit and awful nature of sin, that nothing short of the incarnation of God's only begotten Son, nothing short of such a tremendous sacrifice could put away sin, and bring the elect back unto God! On the one hand, as we take a glance at the suffering and dying Lamb of God, how it shews us the awful and abominable nature of sin; and, on the other hand, when we can see by the eye of faith what that work is, by whom that work was wrought out, and how glorious and efficacious that work must be which the Son of God, equal with the Father in glory and majesty, undertook and went through to the uttermost,—how it exalts salvation in our eyes! Thus a believing sight of the Lord Jesus hanging upon Calvary's tree, not only, on the one hand, shews us the awful nature of sin, but, on the other, how full, how complete, how glorious, and how effectual must that salvation be, of which the expiring Son of God could say, "It is finished!"

September 9

"For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty." Isaiah 44:3

Thirst, as a feeling of the soul, in a spiritual sense, is certainly indicative of divine life. It is as impossible, spiritually viewed, for a man dead in sin to thirst after a living God, as for a corpse in the graveyard to thirst after a draught of cold water from the well. I know for myself that such a feeling as thirsting after God had no place in my bosom until the Lord was pleased to quicken my soul into spiritual life. I had heard of God by the hearing of the ear. I had seen him in creation, in the starry sky, in the roaring sea, in the teeming earth; I had read of him in the Bible; I had learnt his existence by education and tradition; and I had some apprehensions of his holiness in my natural conscience; but as to any spiritual thirsting after him, any earnest desire to fear him, know him, believe in him, or love him,—no such experience or feeling, I can say for myself, ever dwelt in my bosom. I loved the world too dearly to look to him who made it, and myself too warmly and affectionately to seek him who would bid me crucify and mortify it. A man, therefore, I am well convinced, must be made alive unto God by spiritual regeneration before he can experience any such sensation as is here conveyed by the figure "thirst," or know anything of the Psalmist's feelings when he

cried, "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God" (Psalm 42:1, 2). Now wherever God has raised up in the soul this spiritual thirst after himself, he certainly will answer that desire, "the desire of the righteous shall be granted" (Prov. 10:24). His own invitation is, "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters" (Isaiah 55:1); and Jesus himself says with his own blessed lips, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink" (John 7:37). Nay, he opened his ministry by pronouncing a blessing on such, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled."

September 10

"And floods upon the dry ground." Isaiah 44:3

How often does the soul, born and taught of God, feel that it is this "dry ground!" It would fain be fruitful in every good word and work; it would be adorned with every grace of the Spirit within, and with every good and godly fruit without. Let no one think that the child of God is careless or indifferent either as to inward or outward fruit. There is nothing too holy, too heavenly, too spiritual, or too gracious which the child of grace would not desire inwardly to experience and outwardly produce. But he feels that he cannot by any exertion of his own produce this fruitfulness after which he sighs. As well might a barren field convert itself into a fruitful garden without being tilled by human hand or without rain from the sky, as a soul that feels and knows its own barrenness produce by its own exertions a crop of the fruits of righteousness. But the Lord that knows the desire of the heart, and its inward mourning over its own barrenness, has given in the text a sweet and gracious promise, "I will pour floods upon the dry ground." A partial shower would not be enough. The dry ground would soon absorb a few drops of summer rain. Floods must come, either from the skies or from the streams of that river which makes glad the city of God, to produce this mighty change. These "floods" are the promises poured into the soul, the love of God shed abroad in the heart, the manifestations of Christ and of his atoning blood, the inflowings of grace as superabounding over all the abounding of sin, and the flowing of peace as a river into the contrite spirit.

September 11

"I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring." Isaiah 44:3

In pouring out his Spirit upon Zion's seed, God pours out therewith every spiritual blessing that there is in his heart or hands to bestow. Whatever earthly good you may enjoy, without the blessing of God it will but prove a curse; whatever afflictions fall to your earthly lot, if God bless, they must all eventually be made a blessing. Nor is this blessing niggardly given, for the Lord has here promised that he will pour it out! It shall be given as profusely and as abundantly as the Spirit himself. Nor shall Zion doubt either the blessing itself or the source whence it comes, for it carries its own evidence, shines in the light of its own testimony, and manifests itself by its own effects. And does not the contrast between the dry ground and the promised showers of blessing enhance it all the more? Your very barrenness and sterility make the promise all the more suitable, and therefore all the more sweet. If you look into yourself, a barren wilderness meets your view. If you look up, you see the clouds of blessing floating in the pure sky. You see that the Lord has promised to "pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground." You beg of him to fulfil that promise to your soul. You have no other plea but his own word of promise, no other recommendation but your own miserable barrenness. He enables you to cry to him. He listens to that cry, and in his own time pours water upon your thirsty soul, and floods upon your dry and parched heart. O may a sense of our poverty and destitution be ever a means, in his sacred hand, of leading us to seek that blessing which he alone can bestow!

September 12

"A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself; but the simple pass on, and are punished." Proverbs 22:3

Noah, warned of God, prepared an ark to the saving of his house. Lot, admonished by the angels, fled out of Sodom. So there is a fleeing from the wrath to come. How careless, how secure, and

unconcerned are we till quickened with spiritual life! Solomon speaks of those who sleep on the top of a mast, where one jerk of the wave, or one turn of the sleeper may precipitate him into the boiling ocean. God's anger is gathering against a wicked world. Who will escape this fearful storm of eternal, unmitigated wrath? Those who flee to Jesus. Who flee to Jesus? Those only who feel their need of him. How are they made to feel their need of him? By the flashes of God's anger. Whence issue these flashes? Out of the thunder-cloud of God's holy law—the revelation which he has made of his anger against transgressors. How necessary then to feel the application of the law to the conscience, to experience what Job calls, "the terrors of God," that Jesus Christ, who is a "covert from the tempest," may be seen and fled unto! It is like the warning given in Egypt of the grievous hail: "He that feared the word of the Lord among the servants of Pharaoh made his servants and his cattle flee into the houses: and he that regarded not the word of the Lord left his servants and his cattle in the field" (Exodus 9:20, 21). Faith credits what unbelief derides. As is their nature and operation, so is their end. Faith ends in salvation; unbelief in perdition.

September 13

"For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." 1 Thessalonians 1:5

The Holy Ghost never comes into any poor sinner's soul, except through the medium of the gospel of the grace of God. Have you ever considered that point? You are praying, perhaps, that the Holy Spirit would teach you, and be in you a Spirit of revelation, a Remembrancer, a Comforter, Instructor, and Teacher. You pray for his gifts, and graces, and sanctifying operations; but have you ever viewed these graces in connection with the gospel of Jesus Christ? Now, if you want the Holy Spirit to come into your soul, you must keep firm hold of the gospel; you must not run away from it to the law or to self; but keep firm, fast hold of it, so far as you have felt its power, and have a living faith in it. If, then, you are tried, still hold the gospel. If Satan get you into his sieve, still hold the gospel; if in the furnace of affliction, still hold the gospel; if called on to wade through floods of sorrow, still hold fast the gospel. Let not Satan, if ever you have felt the power and the

preciousness of the gospel, baffle you out of it, and drive you from it; but hold to the gospel, for it is your life. Indeed, where else will you find anything to suit your case if you are a poor, tempted, tried sinner? Will you go to the law, which can only curse and condemn you? Will you go to yourself? What is self? A heap of ruins. Where, then, will you go? After all, you must come to the gospel, if your soul is to be saved and blessed, and if you are to experience the consolations of the Holy Ghost, who alone can bless and comfort you. I want, with God's blessing, to impress this vital truth upon your conscience, that you may not be looking away from the gospel, and as Berridge says, "squint and peep another way," but that you may keep your eyes firmly fixed on the gospel; for if you believe it, it can and will save your soul. Does not the Apostle say it is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth," so that there is neither power nor salvation in anything else? Never, therefore, expect power, salvation, or comfort, but in, and by, and through the Holy Ghost preaching the gospel into your heart.

September 14

"Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death." Psalm 107:10
God's people are here represented not as sitting in death; were they sitting there, they would be dead altogether; but they are sitting *in the shadow of death*. Observe, death has lost its reality to them; it now can only cast a shadow, often a gloomy shadow, over their souls; but there is no substance. The quickening of the Spirit of God in them has destroyed the substance of death spiritually; and the death and resurrection of Jesus have destroyed the substance of death naturally. Yet, though the gloomy monster, deadness of soul, and that ghastly king of terrors, the death of the body, have been disarmed and destroyed by "Immanuel, God with us;" yet each of them casts at times a gloomy, darkling shadow over the souls of those that fear God. Is not your soul, poor child of God, exercised from time to time with this inward death? Deadness in prayer, deadness in reading the word, deadness in hearing the truth, deadness in desires after the Lord, deadness to everything holy, spiritual, heavenly, and divine? How it benumbs and paralyses every breathing of our soul Godward! Yet it is but a *shadow*. Write not bitter things against yourself, poor, tempted, exercised child of God, because you feel such deathliness and coldness from time to time in your heart. It will

not destroy you; nay, it is life in your soul that makes it felt; and the more the life of God has been felt in your conscience, the more painfully the deathliness of your carnal mind is experienced. Do you expect that your carnal mind will ever be lively in the things of God? What is it but a lump of death, a huge mass of ungodliness, which, like some Behemoth, upheaves its broad flanks continually in the heart? Yet the people of God are very often troubled in their minds by the gloomy shadow that this death casts over their souls. But this trouble is a mark of life. If I were dead, could I feel it? The worst symptom of the dead in sin is, that they do not feel it. But, whilst we feel it, whilst we sigh on account of it, whilst we hate it, and hate ourselves on account of it, though it may pain and grieve, it never can destroy. It has lost its substance, though it casts its gloomy shadow.

September 15

"Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise in thy latter end." Proverbs 19:20

What lessons we need day by day to teach us anything aright, and how it is for the most part "line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little." O what slow learners, what dull, forgetful scholars, what ignoramuses, what stupid blockheads, what stubborn pupils! Surely no scholar at a school, old or young, could learn so little of natural things as we seem to have learnt of spiritual things after so many years' instruction, so many chapters read, so many sermons heard, so many prayers put up, so much talking about religion. How small, how weak is the amount of grace compared with all we have read and heard and talked about. But it is a mercy that the Lord saves whom he will save, and that we are saved by free grace, and free grace alone, through the blood and righteousness of the Son of God. "He of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption;" so that if we have him we have everything, and if we have him not we have nothing. Where these things are felt they will cause exercise of soul, with many prayers and supplications to the God of all our mercies; and all this will strip and empty us of that light, superficial, and flimsy profession which seems so current in our day.

September 16

"For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us." Ephesians 2:14

"He is our peace." This necessarily springs from being reconciled and brought nigh by the blood of Christ. Sin has not only made us enemies to God, but made God an enemy to us. What peace, then, can there be between us whilst thus mutual enemies? Peace is between friends, not between foes. During this state of hostility and warfare, as there is no real, so there can be no felt or enjoyed peace. But the removal of the cause of the war brings about peace, first really and then experimentally. Christ has made peace through the blood of his cross (Col. 1:20). There is now no enmity on the part of God, for it was a law enmity. God always loved his people in Christ; and as he is unchanging and unchangeable, he never could or did hate them. But as a judge is an enemy to a criminal, even were that criminal his own son, so, as Judge and Lawgiver, God was an enemy to his own elect, viewed as law-breakers. But when the law was fulfilled, and all the breaches of it atoned for by the obedience and death of his dear Son, then this law enmity was removed, and the anger of God against sin and the sinner pacified. Sin, therefore, being put away, the whole cause of that law enmity is removed; and when we believe in the Son of God, and receive the atonement by his precious blood, then there is no enmity on our side; for the goodness, mercy, and love of God melt the heart into the sweetest humility, affection, and love to and before him.

September 17

"The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant." Psalm 25:14

"The secret of the Lord" (that is, *present* possession) "*is* with them that fear him; and he *will* shew them" (that is, something *future*) "his covenant." This shews, that while all the people of God, who fear his name, have the secret with them, that is, a measure of the secret, yet all the people of God have not the covenant revealed to them at the same time with the secret. The

"secret" is in the present tense; the "shewing of the covenant" is in the future. It is very sweet to see how the Holy Ghost has discriminated between these blessings. If, for instance, it had run thus, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he shews to them his covenant," some doubting, desponding child of God might say, "How can I be one of those that fear God? for it says, God shews to them his covenant, and he has not shewn it to me yet." But being put in the future tense, "he *will* shew to them his covenant," it takes the form of a promise, and so is just adapted and sweetly suited to their wants. This covenant is the covenant that "stands fast for evermore;" the everlasting covenant of grace, which stands in the Person, love, blood, and work of the Son of God; the covenant made by a Triune Jehovah, on behalf of the elect, before the world was. What a suitable foundation for a poor tottering heart! The Lord in shewing this covenant unto them that fear him, shews them that it is all of grace, and therefore meets all their unworthiness and superabounds over all the aboundings of their sin; that it is more than a match for their aggravated iniquities, and will land them safe in glory, because God has determined to bring them there. Nothing but a covenant of grace can suit a poor exercised soul, who knows his helplessness and worthlessness; and the Lord shews this to them that fear him.

September 18

"That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." 2 Timothy 3:17

What perfection does the Holy Ghost speak of here? Certainly not perfection in the flesh; that is but a wild dream of free-will and Arminianism. But perfection here and elsewhere means a being well-established and grounded in the faith, as we find the Apostle speaking (Heb. 5:14), "Strong meat belongeth to them that are *of full age*" (literally, as we read in the margin, "perfect"), "even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." Christian perfection does not then consist in perfection in the flesh, but in having arrived at maturity in the divine life, in being what I may call a Christian adult, or what the Apostle terms "a man in Christ." When Paul therefore says, "Let us therefore, as many as be *perfect*," he means "being no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of

doctrine," but favoured with a measure of Christian wisdom and strength. It is this Christian maturity which is called in Scripture, "perfection," and it is only obtained by suffering. It is only in the furnace that the tin and dross of pharisaic righteousness is purged away; and the soul comes out of the furnace "a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the Master's use." The Lord of life and glory was made "perfect by suffering;" and there is no other way whereby his followers are made spiritually perfect. Until a man is led into suffering, he does not know the truth in its sweetness. We are full of free-will, pride, presumption, and self-righteousness. But when the soul is baptised into suffering, it is in a measure established in the truth, strengthened in the things of God, and conformed to the image of Christ.

September 19

"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Luke 19:10

"The Son of man is come." What a blessed coming! The Lord Jesus seems to have taken to himself, with the tenderest condescension to our wants, that gracious title, "the Son of man." He was the Son of God, and that from all eternity; but he delights to call himself the Son of man. We want one like ourselves, wearing the same nature; carrying in his bosom the same human heart; one who has been, "in all points, tempted like as we are, yet without sin;" and therefore able to sympathise with and to succour those that are tempted. A sinner like man, when made sensible of his pollution and guilt, cannot draw near unto God in his intrinsic, essential majesty and holiness. Viewed as the great and glorious Being that fills eternity, Jehovah is too great, too transcendently holy, too awfully perfect for him to approach. He must therefore have a Mediator; and that Mediator one who is a Mediator indeed, a God-man, "Immanuel, God with us." The depth of this mystery eternity itself will not fathom. But the tender mercy of God in appointing such a Mediator, and the wondrous condescension of the Son of God in becoming "the Son of man," are matters of faith, not of reason; are to be believed, not understood. When thus received, the humanity of the Son of God becomes a way of access unto the Father. We can talk to, we can approach, we can pour out our hearts before "the Son of man." His tender bosom, his sympathising heart, seem to draw forth the

feelings and desires of our own. God, in his wrathful majesty, we dare not approach; he is a "consuming fire;" and the soul trembles before him. But when Jesus appears in the gospel as "the Mediator between God and man," and "a Daysman," as Job speaks, "to lay his hand upon us both" (Job 9:33), how this seems to penetrate into the depths of the human heart! How this opens a way for the poor, guilty, filthy, condemned, and ruined sinner to draw near to that great God with whom he has to do! How this, when experimentally realised, draws forth faith to look unto him, hope to anchor in him, and love tenderly and affectionately to embrace him!

September 20

"Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long. For surely there is an end; and thine expectation shall not be cut off." Proverbs 23:17, 18

The Lord is here addressing himself to a soul labouring under temptation, and passing through peculiar exercises; and this is the exhortation that he gives it: "Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long;" watching his hand, submitting to his will, committing everything into his care and keeping; not hardening your heart against him, but looking up to him, and worshipping him with godly fear; "for surely there is an end." You may be tempted, exercised, and surrounded with difficulties, and see no outlet; but "surely there is an end;" and, when the end comes, it will make all plain and clear. This quiet submission, this watching and waiting, a man can never be brought to unless he has seen an end to all perfection; an end of his own strength, wisdom, and righteousness. To sit still is the hardest thing a man can do. To lie passive at God's footstool when all things seem to be against us; to have a rough path to walk in, to be surrounded with difficulties, and yet to be in the fear of the Lord all the day long, watching his hand, desiring to submit to his will, seeking only that wisdom which cometh from above, and trusting that he will make the way straight; not putting our hand to the work, but leaving it all to the Lord—how strange, how mysterious a path! And yet it is the only one that brings solid peace to a Christian; "for surely there is an end." Whatever sorrows and troubles a man may have to wade through, there will surely be an end of them. If we try to get ourselves out of perplexities, we are like a person trying to

unravel a tangled skein of silk by pulling it forcibly; the more it is pulled, the more entangled it gets, and the faster the knots become. So if we are plunged into any trial, providential or spiritual, and we attempt to extricate ourselves by main force, by kicking and rebelling, we only get more entangled. The Lord, then, to encourage us to wait patiently upon him till he shall appear, says, "Surely there is an end." This is the universal testimony of the Scripture, that the Lord appears and delivers, when there is none shut up or left; and the experience of the saints agrees with the testimony of the written word: "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end."

September 21

"For we are strangers before thee and sojourners, as were all our fathers; our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding." 1 Chronicles 29:15

If you possess the faith of Abraham, Isaac, and, Jacob, you, like them, confess that you are a stranger; and your confession springs out of a believing heart and a feeling experience. You feel yourself a stranger in this ungodly world; it is not your element, it is not your home. You are in it during God's appointed time, but you wander up and down this world a stranger to its company, a stranger to its maxims, a stranger to its fashions, a stranger to its principles, a stranger to its motives, a stranger to its lusts, its inclinations, and all in which this world moves as in its native element. Grace has separated you by God's distinguishing power, that though you are in the world, you are not of it. I can tell you plainly, if you are at home in the world; if the things of time and sense be your element; if you feel one with the company of the world, the maxims of the world, the fashions of the world, and the principles of the world, grace has not reached your heart, the faith of God's elect does not dwell in your bosom. The first effect of grace is to separate. It was so in the case of Abraham. He was called by grace to leave the land of his fathers, and go out into a land that God would shew him. And so God's own word to his people is now, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." Separation, separation,

separation from the world is the grand distinguishing mark of vital godliness. There may be indeed separation of body where there is no separation of heart. But what I mean is, separation of heart, separation of principle, separation of affection, separation of spirit. And if grace has touched your heart, and you are a partaker of the faith of God's elect, you are a stranger in the world, and will make it manifest by your life and conduct that you are such.

September 22

"The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power." 1 Corinthians 4:20

It is through the word of God in the hands of the Spirit, that this kingdom is set up in the soul. All God's people are agreed on this point, that they have no more religion than they have inward power. And all the living family are sighing, each according to his measure and season, after the manifestation of this divine power in their souls. Those that are under the law, and toiling under heavy burdens, are sighing after relief, and for that relief to come in divine power—power that shall cast all their sins into the depth of the sea. Those who having tasted that the Lord is gracious have lost their first love, are at times breathing out their inmost desire after power to revive their souls. Those who are beset with powerful temptations, and struggling, often ineffectually, with base lusts, are crying after power to deliver their feet from the fowler's snares. Those who are hard, need power to soften; those who are doubting and fearing, need power to give them faith; the backsliding need power to return, and the sinking need power to swim. By power I understand something solid, real, substantial, heavenly, supernatural. How do we measure the capabilities of a steam engine? We say that it has so many horse-power. But who in his senses would construct a steam engine of two hundred horse-power to break sticks and pick up straws? We measure power by its effects. We proportion the one to the other. Now the Holy Ghost, the God of all power and might, would not put forth his mighty and efficacious hand to break sticks and pick up straws in the soul. No. His work is worthy of a God; a "work of faith with power," because springing from a God of power. The God of Israel is not a Baal that is sleeping and needs to be awakened, or gone a journey and therefore too far off to come

when needed, but "a very present help in time of trouble." By this secret power false hopes are swept away, rotten props removed, creature righteousness brought to an end, and the soul is helped and enabled to lean upon the Lord. This power is not noise and rant; but the still, small voice of Jesus in the soul. The people of God want no outward voice, but they are seeking after that secret voice of atoning blood in their conscience, that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel. The inward whisper of heavenly love sounding in their soul—not the earthquake of terror, not the fire of divine wrath, but the still, small voice of pardon and peace—makes them bow themselves before the Lord, and wrap their faces in their mantle. The Queen of England need not shout aloud in her palace, to give her commands effect. Where the word of a king is, there is power, whether from an earthly monarch or from the King of Zion. We want therefore no noise, bustle, and excitement, no raving and ranting about religion; but we want inward feeling, the very kingdom of God set up in the heart.

September 23

"I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."
Revelation 1:18

O what a mercy that he who was dead lives at God's right hand! that he lives as a risen head; that he is not a dead Saviour; but a Saviour that lives for evermore; that can and does bless; that can and does comfort; that can and does bring the soul safely through all. He is not a Saviour that stands as it were upon the brink of a river, and pulls us out when we have swum half way out ourselves; he is not a Saviour that will take us half way to heaven, and then, as Rutherford says, let us "fend" or shift for ourselves. He must take us to heaven throughout. We are nothing, we have nothing without him. He must be, as he is, our "all in all." We value him in his death, nothing but his death could reconcile us to God; we value him in his life, nothing but his life can save. We want salvation now; salvation in the heart; a spiritual salvation revealed in and unto the soul; a salvation worthy of the name, wholly, fully, completely, finally, and everlastingly to the praise of superabounding grace; a salvation indefeasible, never to be lost; worthy of God, worthy of the God-man; adapted to every want of

the soul, coming into every trial of the heart, and able to save the vilest and the worst, "without money and without price."

September 24

"Abide in me, and I in you." John 15:4

The Lord did not use these words as though there were any power in the creature to abide in him. But he was pleased to use them that they might be blessed to his people when the Holy Spirit applied them to the heart; for he adds, "*And I in you.*" The one is the key to the other. If we abide in Christ, Christ abides in us. It is by Christ abiding in us, that we are enabled to abide in him. But how does Christ abide in us? By his Spirit. It is by his Spirit he makes the bodies of his saints his temple; it is by his Spirit that he comes and dwells in them. Though it is instrumentally by faith, as we read, "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith;" yet it is through the communication of his Spirit in the soul, and the visits of his most gracious presence. Thus he bids us, encourages us, and influences us to abide in him by his abiding in us. But his abiding in a child of God may be known by certain effects following. If he abide in you, he makes and keeps your *conscience tender*. It is sin that separates between you and him. Therefore, the Lord Jesus Christ, in order that he may abide in you and make you abide in him, makes and keeps your conscience tender in his fear. And this keeps you from those sins which separate between you and him. He may be known, then, to abide in you by the secret checks he gives you when temptation comes before your eyes, and you are all but gone; as one of old said, "My feet were almost gone; my steps had well-nigh slipped." He is pleased to give a secret internal check and admonition; so that your cry is, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" And if you go astray and turn from the Lord to your idols, as to our shame and sorrow we often do, he proves that he still abides in you by not giving you up to a reprobate mind, not suffering you to harden your heart against him; but by his reproofs, admonitions, and secret checks in your conscience—by the very lashings and scourgings which he inflicts upon you as a father upon his child, and his secret pleadings with you in the court of conscience—by all these things he makes it manifest that he still abides in you.

September 25

"Through the tender mercies of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us." Luke 1:78

By "day-spring" is meant the day-dawn, the herald of the rising sun, the change from darkness to light, the first approach of morn, in a word, the *spring of the day*. But what is this "day-spring" spiritually? It is the intimation of the rising of the Sun of righteousness. It is not the same thing as the Sun of righteousness; but it is the herald of his approach; the beams which the rising sun casts upon the benighted world, announcing the coming of Jesus, "the King in his beauty." This expression was singularly applicable in the mouth of Zacharias. The Lord of life and glory had not then appeared; he was still in the womb of the Virgin Mary. But his forerunner, John, had appeared as the precursor, the herald of his approach, and was sent to announce that the Sun of righteousness was about to arise. "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light" (John 1:6-8). All nations at that time lay in darkness. "Darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people." But when the Lord of life and glory was about to appear upon earth, when he had already taken the body which was prepared for him, the very flesh and blood of the children, which he was to offer as a propitiation for sin, "the dayspring from on high" had begun to dawn. God's mercy, in the face of his dear Son, was just visiting the benighted world.

But there is another, an experimental meaning, connected with these words. "The day-spring from on high" is not to be confined to the approach of the Son of God in the flesh; but it may be extended to signify the appearance of the Son of God in the heart. I cannot be benefited by the appearing of Jesus in the flesh eighteen hundred years ago, unless he come and dwell in my soul. "The day-spring from on high" which visited the benighted Jewish church will not profit us except that same day-spring visits our benighted heart. "The day-spring from on high" is the manifestation of God's mercy in the face of the Saviour. And when this "day-spring from on high" visits the soul, it is the first intimation, the dawning rays of the Sun of righteousness in the heart.

September 26

"To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death; to guide our feet into the way of peace." Luke 1:79

What was it that moved the divine Father to send his own Son into the world? Was it not the free mercy of God flowing forth from his bosom to his family? Then, what merit, what claim can his family ever have? Their misery is their claim. Their worthlessness, their sunken state, the depth of their fall—these things call forth God's compassion. It is not what I have done for the glory of God; not what I am doing, or trying to do; not my wisdom, my strength, my resolutions, my piety, my holiness. No; my misery, my helplessness, my worthlessness, my deeply sunken state, my fallen condition; which I feel only because of interest in the blood and love of the Lamb—this it is that makes me need God's mercy; and this it is that qualifies me to go to God through Jesus to receive mercy: for "he is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by him." Are you sitting in darkness and the shadow of death—far from the way of peace, troubled, perplexed, exercised, confused? You are the very characters for whom Jesus came. Are not unutterable mercies locked up in the bosom of God for you? What is to exclude you? Your sins? No; God has pardoned them. Your worthlessness? No; there is a robe of righteousness prepared for you. Your demerits? No; the merits of Jesus are upon your side. Your unholiness? No; "He of God is made to you sanctification." Your ignorance? No; "He of God is made to you wisdom." These are no barriers. I will tell you what is a barrier—self-righteousness, self-esteem, self-exaltation, pride, hypocrisy, presumption; a name to live, a form of godliness, being settled upon your lees, and at ease in Zion—these are barriers. But helplessness, hopelessness, worthlessness, misery—these are not barriers; they are qualifications; they shew, when felt, that your name is in the book of life, that the Lord of life and glory appeared in this world for you; and sooner or later, you will have the sweet enjoyment of it in your heart; and then be enabled to adore him for his grace, and admire and bless his name for glorifying his love and mercy in your free and full salvation.

September 27

"But ye should say, Why persecute we him, seeing the root of the matter is found in me?" Job 19:28

In almost every plant it is at the root that disease begins. If ever you see even a plant in a flower-pot unhealthy, depend upon it there is something wrong at the root. It is overwatered or underwatered, or from some other cause the root has become diseased, and what is called "root-action is suspended or unhealthy. So it is in religion: if there is anything wrong with a man, it is almost sure to be something wrong at the root. "The root of the matter," Job said, "is found in me." Job could appeal unto God that the root of his religion was right. If "the root" had been wrong, "the matter" would not have been right; but as long as the root was sound, like "the teil tree" of which the prophet speaks, though "it cast its leaves, the substance would still be in it," to put forth in due time boughs like a plant (Isa. 6:13). If a man's religion has no root, or if the root be injured by disease, it will be sure to discover itself in his profession. He cannot have a prosperous soul—prosperous inwardly and prosperous outwardly—unless the root be deep in the soil, and unless it be full of active fibres, drawing up secret nourishment from that river the streams whereof make glad the city of God. Then 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. 17:8).

September 28

"But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city." Hebrews 11:16

In desiring a better country these ancient pilgrims wanted something heavenly, something that tasted of God, savoured of God, smelt of God, and was given of God; a heavenly religion, a spiritual faith, a gracious hope, and a love shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost; something which came from heaven and led to heaven; which gave heavenly feelings, heavenly sensations, heavenly delights, and heavenly joys, whereby the heart was

purified from the love of sin, carnality, and worldliness by having something sweeter to taste, better to love, and more holy to enjoy. It is these heavenly visitations, droppings in of the favour, goodness, and mercy of God, which keep the soul alive in its many deaths, sweeten it amidst its many bitters, hold it up amidst its many sinkings, and keep it from being drowned while conflicting with many waters. A carnal mind has no taste for heavenly things, no sweet delight in the word of God; no delight in the Lord Jesus as revealing himself in the word; no delight in closet duties, secret meditation, searching the Scriptures, communion with God, or even in the company of God's dear family. There must be a heavenly element in the soul to understand, realise, enjoy, and delight in heavenly things. The Holy Ghost must have wrought in us a new heart, a new nature, capable of understanding, enjoying, and delighting in heavenly realities, as containing in them that which is sweet and precious to the soul. They desired, therefore, a better country, that is, a heavenly, a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God; where pleasures are at God's right hand for evermore; where the pure river of the water of life ever flows; where the tree grows on which are found leaves for the healing of the nations; such a city as John describes in the book of Revelation, where all is happiness, harmony, and peace.

September 29

"Nevertheless, when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away." 2 Corinthians 3:16

The blessed Spirit, as a needful preparation for his own divine instruction, convinces us of our *ignorance*, of the veil of unbelief that is by nature spread over our heart, and of our utter inability to take it away. So great is this darkness, as a matter of personal inward experience, that like the darkness in Egypt, it may be "felt;" so deep this ignorance that all knowledge or capability of knowledge seems utterly gone; so strong, so desperate this unbelief that it seems as if thoroughly incurable. And yet amidst all this deep and dense cloud of ignorance, darkness and unbelief, rays and beams of light every now and then break through, which, though they seem at the time only to shew the darkness and make it deeper, yet really are a guiding light to the throne of God and the Lamb. There Jesus sits enthroned in glory, not only as an interceding High Priest to save, not only as an exalted King

to rule, but as a most gracious Prophet to teach. Thus, in soul experience, as the veil is felt to be thick and strong over the heart, there is a turning to the Lord with prayer and supplication that he would take it away; and as he, in answer to prayer, is pleased to do this, light is seen in his light, his truth drops with savour and sweetness into the soul, and the word of his grace sways and regulates the heart, lip, and life.

September 30

"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Hebrews 4:15, 16

What heart can conceive or tongue recount the daily, hourly triumphs of the Lord Jesus Christ's all-conquering grace? We see scarcely a millionth part of what he, as a King on his throne, is daily doing; and yet we see enough to know that he ever lives at God's right hand, and lives to save and bless. What a crowd of needy petitioners every moment surrounds his throne! What urgent wants and woes to redress; what cutting griefs and sorrows to assuage; what broken hearts to bind up; what wounded consciences to heal; what countless prayers to hear; what earnest petitions to grant; what stubborn foes to subdue; what guilty fears to quell! What clemency, what kindness, what longsuffering, what compassion, what mercy, what love, and yet what power and authority does this Almighty Sovereign display! No circumstance is too trifling; no petitioner too insignificant; no case too hard; no difficulty too great; no suer too importunate; no beggar too ragged; no bankrupt too penniless; no debtor too insolvent, for him not to notice and not to relieve. Sitting on his throne of grace, his all-seeing eye views all, his almighty hand grasps all, and his loving heart embraces all whom the Father gave him by covenant, whom he himself redeemed by his blood, and whom the blessed Spirit has quickened into life by his invincible power. The hopeless, the helpless; the outcasts whom no man careth for; the tossed with tempest and not comforted; the ready to perish; the mourners in Zion; the bereaved widow; the wailing orphan; the sick in body, and still more sick in heart; the racked with hourly pain; the fevered consumptive; the wrestler with death's last

struggle—O what crowds of pitiable objects surround his throne; and all needing a look from his eye, a word from his lips, a smile from his face, a touch from his hand! O could we but see what his grace is, what his grace has, what his grace does; and could we but feel more what it is doing in and for ourselves, we should have more exalted views of the reign of grace now exercised on high by Zion's enthroned King!