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THROUGH BACA'S VALE; OR,

DAILY WORDS FOR ZION'S WAYFARERS

Joseph C Philpot (1802 – 1869)

Selected from the Works of J. C. Philpot by His Daughters

Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them. Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools. They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.—
Psalm 84:5, 6, 7

PREFACE

Some years ago, as is well known to most of our readers, we published a series of extracts in the form of Daily Portions from the works of our late dear Father, J. C. Philpot, which received a welcome far, far more cordial than we had ventured to hope or expect. Indeed, the numerous testimonies that have reached us again and again, from various quarters, of the blessing of God richly attending the perusal of these Portions have made our hearts burn within us, and the thought that He should condescend to put His seal of approbation upon our labours may well excite the deepest humility and gratitude.

Now, with mixed feelings of pleasure and regret, we find the edition is rapidly coming to an end, and as several friends have expressed a wish for another series of Portions culled from the same source, we thought, as there still remained sufficient material to draw upon, that we should prefer to bring out another book rather than merely reprint the former. That the present volume is larger and contains more matter will be seen at a glance: the fact is, all the suitable short pieces were selected for the earlier one, consequently, these in most cases are longer, which, under the circumstances, was unavoidable, but we trust that even the busiest may be able to spare a few minutes to read the portion for the day: if it is a little long, may it be found proportionately seasonable and weighty, refreshing to a weary spirit—a word of encouragement or exhortation to pilgrims journeying Zionwards.

As a frontispiece, a collotype portrait has been added, copied from the most pleasing photograph we possess of our dear Father. This we thought would be valued, not only by those who knew him personally, but by a new generation, who would doubtless like to have some idea of the outward form and features of one whom, though they never saw him in the flesh, they love and esteem for his works' sake.

It may be observed in this as in the former volume that some of the pieces begin and end rather abruptly, but it must be remembered that they were not written for the purpose to which they are now applied, as was the case with Mason's and Hawker's Portions, but are merely extracts gathered, as the title of the earlier work suggested, from those sheaves which have been garnered for the use and edification of the Household of Faith.

In conclusion, we can only express our earnest desire and prayer that the Lord God of Sabaoth may again be graciously pleased to smile upon our efforts, and continue to bless the words of His late dear servant, who "being dead, yet speaketh," to the souls of His living family, and His name shall have all the praise.

S. & D. M. Philpot
Croydon, 1893

DAILY WORDS FOR ZION'S WAYFARERS

BY JOSEPH C. PHILPOT

PRESENTED BY THE BIBLE TRUTH FORUM

December 1

"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will."
Ephesians 1:4, 5

It is a very solemn but a very true assertion, that no man can quicken his own soul; and it is an equally solemn, we might almost say, a tremendous truth, that the gospel only comes in power to those whom God has chosen unto eternal life. Indeed the one flows from the other; for if no man can quicken his own soul, it necessarily follows it must be of sovereign grace that it is quickened at all. Once allow the fall, and acknowledge that a man is by nature so thoroughly dead in trespasses and sins that he cannot raise himself up out of this state to newness of life, and the doctrine of election necessarily follows. A living soul may reason thus: "Am I quickened? Yes. Did I quicken myself? No. I could not; for I was dead in sin. Did God then quicken me? Who but he could have given life to my dead soul? But why did he quicken me, when dead in sins? Because he loved me, and chose me in Christ to be an heir of his eternal glory." Whether, however, you can speak thus or not, there is no doubt that the Lord has a people who are dear to him, and to whom he makes himself dear. These, though despised of, or unnoticed by men, are the elect of God; and if you be a vessel of mercy whom he has thus chosen to eternal life, the gospel either has already come, or, in his own time and way, will be made to come with power to your heart and conscience.

December 2

"That he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Romans 3:26

Every created thing, every finite intelligence, must sooner be annihilated, than Jehovah can sacrifice, or suffer the slightest tarnish to come over any one of his eternal attributes. Yet God can be just, infinitely just, scrupulously just, unchangeably just,—and yet, preserving his attribute of justice unchanging and unchangeable, he can still be "the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." The way by which this was effected will take a countless eternity to understand, and a boundless eternity to admire and adore.

But what is meant by the expression, "the justifier?" "The justifier" means, that God can count man as righteous, can freely pardon his sins, can graciously accept his person, can impute to him righteousness without works, and can bring him to the eternal enjoyment of himself. And who is the character that he thus brings to himself by justifying him? "He which believeth in Jesus." What simplicity, and yet what sweetness and suitability is there in the gospel plan! Say it ran thus, "That he might be just, and yet the justifier of *him that worketh*, that pleaseth God by his own performances, that produceth a righteousness satisfactory to the eyes of infinite purity." Who then could be saved? Would there be a single soul in heaven? No; such a word as that would trample down the whole human race into hell. But when it runs thus, "That this is the mind and purpose of God, that this is his eternal counsel, which cannot pass away; that he is 'the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus,'—the poor, the needy, the exercised, the tempted, the distressed, and the perplexed, that believe in Jesus, that look to Jesus, that lean upon Jesus, and rest in his Person, blood, righteousness, and love for all things; that these are justified, that these are pardoned, that these are accepted, that these are graciously received, and saved with an everlasting salvation,"—how sweet, how suitable, does the gospel that declares this become to the living, believing soul!

December 3

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9

"He is faithful and *just*." Oh, what a word is that! There is scarcely to my mind such a word in the Bible as that; so great, so glorious, so comforting: "He is faithful and *just*." "Just?" say you, "why I know that God's mercy and God's grace can pardon sinners; but how can God be just, and pardon transgressors? Does not God's justice demand the punishment of sin? Does not God's justice blaze forth in eternal lightnings against the soul that transgresses his holy law? How, then, can it be true, that God can be just, and yet forgive a confessing sinner?" But it is true, divinely True, blessedly, eternally true. And in it is locked up that grand mystery of redemption by the blood and obedience of God's co-equal Son. It is locked up in this one word—"*just*." "But how?" it may be asked. In this way. The Lord of life and glory became a security and substitute for those whom his Father gave to him. He entered into their place and stead. He endured the punishment that was due to them. For them he fulfilled the whole law by his doings and by his sufferings. For them he bled, and for them he died. For them he rose again, and for them ascended up to the right hand of the Father. And now justice demands the sinner's pardon, and puts in its righteous plea. And see the difference. Mercy begs, justice demands: mercy says, "I ask it as a boon;" mercy, as a part of God's character, looks down with pity and compassion on the mourning criminal; but justice says, "It is his due; it is his right; it belongs to him; it is his because the Redeemer has discharged his debt, because the Surety has stood in his place, because the Saviour has obeyed that law for him which he could not obey in his own person." So that when we can receive this blessed and glorious truth, that to those who confess their sins, "God is faithful," and not merely "faithful," but also "just to forgive them their sins," how it draws out of the bosom of Jehovah a full, free, and irrevocable pardon of all transgressions, and especially of those transgressions that the sinner confesses at his footstool!

December 4

***"For I am poor and needy, and my heart is wounded within me."*
Psalm 109:22**

The needy is a character who is not merely poor, empty, and naked before God, but who is feelingly in want of spiritual blessings applied to his soul. Some persons can rest on

temptations, and take temptations as evidences. Others can build on doubts and fears, and rest on doubts and fears as evidences. Some can take powerful past convictions, or present convictions, and lean on them as evidences. Others can look to a profession of religion, and take that as an evidence. But a living soul must have heavenly blessings communicated immediately to his heart and conscience from the mouth of God. He must have deliverance manifested to his soul as a reality; he must have the blood of Jesus sprinkled on his conscience with divine power, to purge it from filth and dead works; he must have his eyes anointed with eye-salve to see Jesus; yea, his soul pants to be led up into sweet communion with Jesus; he wants to be taken spiritually into fellowship with Christ, that he may see him with the eyes of his soul, that he may look upon him whom he has pierced, mourn over him, and for him, and with him, and have some sweet, spiritual, and supernatural manifestation of his dying love to his soul. A nominal Christ will never do for a needy sinner, but it must be the Christ of God made spiritually known by the power of the Holy Ghost, sweetly revealed and coming into his heart with all his blessed efficacy, and shining into his soul like the sun in his strength, beaming forth blessed rays of grace and mercy. Nothing but this will ever satisfy a soul that has life in it.

December 5

"Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Hebrews 12:6

Does not James say, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation?" And again, "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations?" Why? Is there any joy in trials, any pleasure in sorrow? No, none. But in the deliverance from the Lord; in the power of God put forth to bring the soul out; there is joy there. And, therefore, we have to walk in a dark path to make the light dear to our eyes; we have to pass through trials to taste the sweetness of the promises when applied with power; we have to endure temptations, that we may enjoy the sweetness of deliverance. And this is the way, be sure of it, that God deals with his people. Is your conscience made honest? Does that monitor in your bosom speak the truth? Tell me what it says. Does it not say, "Few trials, few consolations; few sorrows, few joys; few difficulties, few testimonies from God; few sufferings, few

discoveries of love and blood?" Does not the Apostle say, "As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ?" (2 Cor. 1:5.) And does he not say, "Our hope of you is steadfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation?" And does he not tell us to be mindful not to forget what the Lord says when he speaks to his people, that the lot of a child is to endure chastisement? He says, "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him; for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement," (O solemn word! O how applicable to thousands!) "whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons."

December 6

"O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee." Psalm 84:12

Trust in God implies total self-renunciation. The moment that I trust in myself, I cease to trust in God. The moment I take any portion of my confidence away from the Lord and put a grain of it in myself, that moment I take away *all* my trust in God. My trust in God must be all or nothing. It must be unreserved and complete, or else it is false and delusive. Is not the Lord worthy to be trusted? And if he is worthy to be trusted at all, is he not worthy to be trusted with all? What real confidence could a man have in the wife of his bosom if he could trust her with *one* key, but not with *all*? Is *that* full confidence? So, if we can trust God for one thing and not for all, it shews that we have no real trust in him. A man has no real trust in his wife who cannot give her all the keys. A man has no real trust in God who cannot give him all his heart, and put everything into his hand; family, property, body, and soul. The province and work of true faith is to put everything into the hands of God, keeping back no part of the price. It is this secret reserve that God hates; there is hypocrisy on the very face of it. Trust in God for nothing; or trust in him for all. God will not take a divided heart. Give him all, or none. And is he not worthy of it? Has he ever disappointed you whenever you have really put your trust in him? Does he not say, "Have I been a

wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness? wherefore say my people, We are lords; we will come no more unto thee?" (Jer. 2:31.)

But David saw how few there were that with all their hearts did trust in God. This feeling seems to have made him say, "Blessed is *the man*," that peculiar man, that rare individual, "that trusteth in thee!" The blessing of God rests upon that happy, that highly-favoured man. He is blessed for time and for eternity. He has the blessing of God even now in his soul. Oh! how rare it is for us to be in that sweet, blessed frame when we can put our trust wholly in God; trust him for life and death; trust him for all things, past, present, and to come. Yet without a measure of this faith, there is no solid peace, no real and abiding rest. And to this you must sooner or later come; for you cannot carry your own burdens without their breaking your back. But when you can cast your burden on the Lord, then you will surely find sweet relief.

May we not, then, join heart and voice with David, "O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee?" Such a one will never be disappointed. The Lord will hear his prayer; the Lord will bless his soul; will be with him in life, support him in death, and take him to be with him in eternity.

December 7

"He that overcometh shall inherit all things." Revelation 21:7

"He shall inherit all things." When? In eternity? Yes. But only in eternity? O no! In time also. There is a twofold inheritance, though one and the same; one in time, another in eternity; one the firstfruits, the other the harvest; one the earnest, the other the full sum. There is an inheriting here below, and an inheriting above; and he that never receives any portion of his inheritance below will never receive an inheritance above. Now, just in proportion as we overcome, are we put in possession of this inheritance. What are we to inherit? Riches, glory, honour, power, praise? These are worldly things; let the world enjoy them. In inheriting "all things," we are to inherit the things of God; the favour of God, the love of God, the mercy of God, the glory of God; all that a covenant God gives in giving himself; peace here, glory hereafter;

pardon below, salvation above; the beginning of rest on earth, the fulness of rest in heaven.

Now, whilst we are overcome, there is no being put into possession of this eternal inheritance. Does sin overcome us? Do we inherit pardon in being overcome? No; we inherit shame and confusion, guilt, fear and wrath. But do you, do I, ever overcome sin by the fear of God in our soul, as Joseph did? Do I ever overcome sin by looking to the Lord of life and glory to sprinkle his blood upon my conscience? Do I ever overcome sin by the leadings and teachings of the Spirit in my heart? No sooner do I thus overcome by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of his testimony, than I enter into the inheritance. So that there is a connection, a beautiful, an experimental connection, between overcoming here below, and inheriting here below. But in order to enter into this inheritance, we must be perpetually reminded that we have no strength of our own. And thus our slips, our falls, our backslidings, our frailties, (though we would not, dare not justify them,) are mercifully overruled amongst the "all things" that work together for our good. They teach us our weakness, and by teaching us our weakness, lead us up to Christ's strength; and by leading us up to Christ's strength, to "inherit all things;" for in inheriting him, we inherit all that he is to God's people.

December 8

"And I will be his God, and he shall be my son." Revelation 21:7

What a promise! That the God of heaven and earth will be our God, our Father, our Benefactor, our eternal, almighty Friend! and that we, in overcoming, shall receive the adoption of sons; shall be manifested as the "sons and daughters" of the Almighty, and receive the inheritance reserved for the children of God! The promise runs in connection with "him that overcometh." If we do not overcome, the promise is not for us. The promise of sonship is connected with overcoming, in the same manner as that of "inheritance" is connected with it. Do I want to receive into my heart the Spirit of adoption? Do I want to feel the love of God the Father shed abroad in my soul? Do I want to establish a blessed title to the inheritance that he giveth to his children? How am I to get it? How is it to be obtained? By making myself religious, becoming holy, subduing my lusts in my own strength? This sets

me farther from God than I was before. This makes me a god to myself! If I be saved by my own holiness, by my own strength, by my own righteousness, I worship myself; and in worshipping myself, *I become my own god*. That is idolatry, damnable idolatry; so that he who lives and dies in the worship of self, will live and die under the wrath of God as an idolater. Then how am I to receive adoption? By overcoming, not in my own strength, but in the strength of the Lord of life and glory. If I am shut up in self, I inherit self; nothing more. If I inherit the world, I have no more than the world. If I inherit sin, I inherit death, which is the wages of sin. Nothing more. But if I overcome; if weak, helpless, and defenceless, I yield myself up to the hands of the Lord, as clay in the hands of the Potter; not seeking my own will, but looking to the Lord to make known his will in my conscience, and to work in me that which is well-pleasing in his sight,—if I have this, I have an evidence of sonship; and where that evidence is, there will be a further evidence of it in the Spirit of adoption, enabling the soul to call God "Father." And he that calls God "Father" here below, will call God "Father" above, where he will enter into the full enjoyment of it, and bathe in the consolations of Father, Son, and Spirit to all eternity.

December 9

"Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." Ecclesiastes 12:7

Nature shrinks from death, even apart from that which following after death makes it to so many a king of terrors. Even where grace has set up its throne, and mercy rejoices over judgment, many unbelieving, infidel thoughts at times will cross the mind and perplex the judgment about the separation of body and soul, and the launching of the spirit into an unseen, unknown world. Faith, it is true, can subdue these perplexing thoughts, better hinted at than described, but faith needs some solid ground on which to build and rest. If, then, the soul is blessed with any assured hope or sweet persuasion of interest in the blood and obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ, so as to remove guilty fears, how strengthening to faith is a view of his death, not merely as the only sacrifice for sin, but as the exemplar, so to speak, of our own. We shall all have to die, and therefore to look by faith at the death of Jesus may be a profitable subject of meditation as a relief

against the perplexing thoughts to which we have before alluded. Into his Father's hands the dying Lord commended his spirit. The Father received it, for him the Father heareth always (John 11:42); and thus his spirit returned unto him who gave it. Thus, by the act of dying, the soul and body of the blessed Redeemer were, for a time, fully and actually separated—as fully and actually as ours will also be at death. But follow by faith that soul of Jesus when he breathed it forth, and view it at once and immediately entering paradise, into the blissful presence of God. What food for faith is here! How strengthening, how encouraging to a believing heart which has often been perplexed by such thoughts as we have named, to view the soul of Jesus thus passing at once into paradise. And may we not, by faith, view the soul also of the believing malefactor, when the time of release was come, winging its flight into the same paradise whither the soul of Jesus had preceded it? If we know anything painfully and experimentally of the assaults of unbelief, the arrows of infidelity, and the fiery darts of the wicked one, and how they are all quenched by the shield of faith, we have found that faith, in order to stand firm, must have the word of truth, a "Thus saith the Lord," upon which to rest. Let us now, then, see how this stands as connected with the death of the blessed Lord. Fortified by his holy example, if blessed with faith in his Person, blood, and righteousness, the dying believer may commend his spirit into the hands of Christ as did martyred Stephen, in the same confidence that the Lord Jesus commended his spirit into the hands of his heavenly Father.

December 10

"My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God." Psalm 42:2

Has your heart ever panted after the Lord Jesus as the hart panteth after the water brooks? Do you ever lie in the dust mourning over your sins against such bleeding, dying love? Do you ever ask God to kindle in your soul an intense desire to have Jesus as your Christ, that he may be your delight here and your portion for ever? Surely there is that in him which is not in anything below the skies, and which if not found here will not be found hereafter. If you have no love or affection for him, why is it but because he has not endeared himself to your soul? But if he has manifested himself to you, you have seen and felt enough of

his blessedness to convince you that there is no real peace or happiness out of him. It is true that you may have many trials and temptations to encounter; many perplexities and sorrows may be spread in your path; but be not dismayed, for the love of Christ, if you have ever felt that love shed abroad in your heart, will bear you more than conqueror through them all. The Lord make and keep us faithful to the truth as it has been made known to our consciences; and may the goodness and mercy of God shine into our hearts and shed abroad its rays of light and joy in our darkest moments and under our severest trials. And O to be found in him at the great day, as members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones, to be found the Lord's "peculiar treasure" in that day when he maketh up his jewels! And O then where will be those who are not found in the Lord Jesus? They will call upon the mountains and the rocks to "fall on them and hide them from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb."

December 11

"So did not I, because of the fear of God" Nehemiah 5:15

We can never praise God sufficiently for his restraining grace; for what should we be without it? What an unspeakable mercy, then, it is, that you cannot be what you would be, nor act as you would act, nor speak what you would speak, nor do the things you would do, because there is in you who fear God a spiritual principle which holds you up, and keeps you back from the ways of sin and death in which the flesh would walk. How this spirit of grace and godly fear kept Joseph in the hour of temptation! How it preserved David when he had Saul in his power as he lay asleep in the cave! How it kept Nehemiah in the fear of God from extortion and oppression! And how, in thousands of instances, it has preserved the feet of the saints, and kept them from doing things that would have ruined their reputation, blighted their character, brought reproach upon the cause of God, and the greatest grief and distress into their own conscience!

December 12

"I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment; that I may cause those that love me to inherit substance."
Proverbs 8:20, 21

Whence springs it, that God causes his people "to inherit substance," by "leading them in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment?" When he leads them first into the way of righteousness by opening up his holy law, it drives away all shadows. We had been heaping together, with great toil, chaff and hay and straw and stubble; we had been like the man spoken of in Scripture, who "dreamed, and behold! he ate, but he awoke and his soul was empty;" so we were dreaming our life away continually with shadows, with a name to live, with a formal religion, with a mere external show of godliness, content with a few ordinances and sermons, and thinking that these would shelter us in the day of wrath. These were only shadows; of no more avail to deliver our souls from the wrath to come, than the shadowy form of a mountain in the morning sun. But when the Lord began "to lead us in the way of righteousness," these shadows vanished. Something was then wanted to conciliate the favour of God; something was needed, whereby the soul could escape those piercing eyes that looked it through and through; and the soul began to look after "substance," wanted realities, needed a voice within from the Lord himself, a testimony of his eternal favour, and a manifestation of his love. There was "substance" needed. The soul began to "hunger and thirst after righteousness," to pant and long after the manifestation of Jesus' love, and to be restless and discontented and weary of everything short of the work and witness of the Holy Ghost. When the "mouth is stopped, and the soul has become guilty before God," it wants pardon, peace, mercy, blood, and love; nothing else can satisfy it, and after this it pants with unutterable longings. And when Jesus leads his people "in the way of righteousness" by shewing to them his glorious righteousness, they begin to "inherit the substance" after which they were panting. There is no substance under the law; it is but a preparing the soul to receive substance; it is emptying the soul that it may be filled; it is stripping the soul that it may be clothed; it is wounding the soul that it may be healed; bringing down the soul that it may be lifted up. But when he "leads in the way of righteousness," that wonderful way whereby the soul is justified by his imputed righteousness, he causes that soul to "inherit substance," to inherit it even now upon earth, to have a taste of it, the beginnings of it, the earnest of it, and the firstfruits of it.

Oh! what a dreamy, shadowy thing is a mere profession of religion! And what a delusive cheat is all the pleasure to be gained by sin! How it leaves a soul naked and bare, wounded, stripped, and guilty before God! We have often promised ourselves pleasure in sin; and what have we found? The wormwood and the gall. All the anticipated pleasure vanished; and its flight left us full of guilt and shame. But if ever God indulged our souls with sweet communion with him, if ever he brought our affections to centre in himself, if ever he melted our souls at his feet, if ever he blessed us with the communications of his eternal favour and distinguishing love, there was substance in that, there was weight, there was power, there was the foretaste and earnest of a never-ending eternity.

December 13

"And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him." Zechariah 3:1

It is the object of Satan to keep those secure who are safe in his hands; nor does God see fit to disturb their quiet. But on the other hand, where Satan perceives a work of grace going on, where he sees the eyes sometimes filled with tears, where he hears the sobs heaving from the contrite heart, where he observes the knees often bent in secret prayer, where his listening ear often hears the poor penitent confess his sins, weaknesses, and backslidings before God, (for by these observations we have reason to believe Satan gains his intelligence,) wherever he sees this secret work going on in the soul, mad with wrath and filled with malice, he vents his hellish spleen against the objects of God's love. Sometimes he tries to ensnare them into sin, sometimes to harass them with temptation, sometimes to stir up their wicked heart into desperate rebellion, sometimes to work upon their natural infidelity, and sometimes to plague them with many groundless doubts and fears as to their reality and sincerity before a heart-searching God. So that whilst those who have no work of grace upon their hearts at all are left secure, and free from doubt and fear, those in whom God is at work are exercised and troubled in their minds, and often cannot really believe that they are the people in whom God takes delight. The depths of human

hypocrisy, the awful lengths to which profession may go, the deceit of the carnal heart, the snares spread for the unwary feet, the fearful danger of being deceived at the last—these traps and pitfalls are not objects of anxiety to those dead in sin. As long as they can pacify natural conscience, and do something to soothe any transient conviction, they are glad to be deceived. But, on the other hand, he that has a conscience tender in God's fear knows what an awful thing it is to be a hypocrite before God, to have "a lie in his right hand," and be deluded by the prince of darkness; and therefore, until God himself with his own blessed lips speaks with power to his conscience, and establishes him in a blessed assurance of his interest in Christ by "shedding abroad his love in his heart," he must be tried and exercised in his mind, he must have these various tossings to and fro, for this simple reason—because he cannot rest satisfied except in the personal manifestations of the mercy of God.

December 14

"He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." 1 John 5:10

The grand point to have decided in a man's bosom is, whether he is Christ's or not; and this is a problem which none but the Lord himself can solve. Blessed is he who has the witness in himself; and this he can only have by believing on the Son of God, as John speaks, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." This is the internal witness of the Spirit, as the Apostle declares, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." What witness have you ever had in your bosom that you are a child of God? Or if you have not had this special witness, what marks or evidences, what tokens for good has the Lord bestowed upon you? Can you not remember something that the Lord has done for you in times past, some promise applied, some manifestation of his presence, some look of love, some softening touch of his gracious hand, which melted you into the dust, and brought sweet peace and assurance with it? It might not last long, or be very deep, but it was an evidence when felt that you belonged to Christ. You remember the time and the circumstances, the darkness, distress and bondage before, and the deliverance into sweet liberty then enjoyed; but still you are dissatisfied. You want the Lord once more to appear; you want

another smile, another word, another look, another promise, another testimony, and without it your soul often sinks down into doubt and fear. Now this is the path in which most of God's saints walk; I will not say all, because some are more favoured with an abiding testimony, though even they have great sinkings and heavy trials. But with most it is a very chequered, in and out path. Thus, sometimes they are indulged with a smile, and then such darkness of mind falls upon them that they can scarcely see a single evidence. Then the sun shines again; but darkness once more covers the scene, and down they sink again into doubt, guilt, and fear. Then the Lord appears again, and then they love, and hope, and rejoice again; and so they go on, the scene ever changing, like an April day. Still on they go until they come at last to the closing scene, when the Lord usually appears, scatters all their doubts and fears and darkness, and gives them a blessed dismissal into his own bosom of eternal rest and peace.

December 15

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." 2 Corinthians 4:17

The Hebrew word "glory" literally signifies "weight;" and the Apostle seems to have some allusion to that circumstance by connecting, as he does, the two words together. There is indeed a natural connection between what is weighty and what is solid and substantial. He would thus represent future glory as something solid, lasting, and durable, and therefore utterly distinct from the light, vain trifles of time, and even the passing afflictions of the day or hour. But he seems chiefly to be alluding to the exceeding greatness of that glory which is to be revealed as compared with our present faculties of body and mind and all our present conceptions. It is as though he should say, "In our present imperfect state, with our limited faculties of mind, and our weak, frail tabernacle, we could not bear the weight of that immortal glory which is prepared for the saints in the realms of bliss." "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." Heaven, with its opening bliss, would crush our present body and soul at once into the dust. "No man," said God to Moses, "can see me and live." When John in Patmos had a view of

the glory of his risen Lord, though he had lain in his bosom at the last supper, yet he fell at his feet as dead. Therefore, we must have our soul purified from all stain of sin and expanded to the utmost of its immortal powers, and our body glorified and conformed to the body of the Lord Jesus Christ, that soul and body may alike be able to bear the weight of eternal glory with which they are to be clothed. As the Apostle speaks, "Not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life."

But there is something in the word "*glory*" that I must not pass by. The Lord, in that touching chapter, John 17, thus prays, or rather thus expresses his heavenly will, "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." This is the "weight of glory" that the Apostle speaks of, not merely freedom from sin and sorrow, not merely seeing Christ as he is, but beholding and enjoying that unutterable glory which the Father gave him, which is all the glory of Godhead as revealed in, and shining through his human nature. The fulness and perfection of this glory is reserved for the saints of God to enjoy when they shall see him as he is, and know even also as they are known. We see a gleam of it when Christ is revealed to the soul; when the heavens are opened to faith; when his beauty and blessedness are manifested to our heart by the power of God. But the "exceeding and eternal weight of glory" can never be fully comprehended in this present life.

December 16

"Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake." Psalm 115:1

Many of God's dear children cannot get much beyond gentle intimations of his mercy, passing touches of his gracious hand, and softenings of heart under a sense of undeserved goodness and love; yet they feel sensibly relieved by what their faith thus lays hold of and brings in, and give glory to God. Sometimes again, as they hear the preached word and get a blessing under, it, or some precious promise comes home to their soul with divine power, or they are favoured in secret prayer, and light and life break in upon their mind, they see such a glory in what is thus made

known to them that they glorify God for what they see and feel. But more especially when the way of salvation is opened up to them; when Christ is revealed to their soul by the power of God; when they see that wondrous plan unfolded, how God can be just, and yet the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus; then as they view in the greatness of the mystery of the Person of Christ the blessed solution of the problem which has so exercised their mind, they freely and fully give all the glory to God. "Lord," they cry, "who and what am I, that thou shouldest have had pity and compassion upon me, shouldest have touched my heart by thy grace, shouldest have planted thy fear in my breast, led me to pray and seek thy face, and listened to my feeble cries, shouldest thus have given me to hope in thy mercy, and blessed my soul with a manifestation of thy dear Son? Oh, who and what am I to be thus favoured, when thousands are left to perish in their sins? Oh, how glorious art thou! what a good God! how thy mercy melts my heart, and thy goodness softens my soul! To thy name be all the honour and praise, both now and for ever and ever." Here is giving glory to God. Thus, true faith will always give God the glory; will never take an atom of its own praise to itself, but will ascribe the whole glory to God as its sole author and finisher, until blessings here end in blessings hereafter, and streams of grace on earth issue into the boundless ocean of glory in heaven.

December 17

"Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."
Colossians 3:2

How are we to set our affection on things above? Can we do this great work of ourselves? No; it is only the Lord himself manifesting his beauty and blessedness to our soul, and letting down the golden cord of his love into our breast, that draws up our affections, and fixes them where he sits at God's right hand. In order to do this, he captivates the heart by some look of love, some word of his grace, some sweet promise, or some divine truth spiritually applied. When he thus captivates the soul, and draws it up, then the affections flow unto him as the source and fountain of all blessings. We are not flogged into loving him, but drawn by love into love. Love cannot be bought or sold; it is an inward affection that flows naturally and necessarily towards its object and all connected with it; and thus, as love flows out to Jesus, the

affections instinctively and necessarily set themselves "on things above, and not on things on the earth."

But what are these "things above?" They are all things stored up in Christ, that breathe of Christ, and come out of Christ. Pardon, peace, righteousness, love, "joy unspeakable and full of glory," with strength against sin, victory over death and hell; power against besetting lusts and temptations; in a word, every blessing wherewith God hath blessed his people "in heavenly places in Christ;" these are the "things above," that the soul has to set its affections upon. But we must have some view by faith of the Person of Christ, the eternal Son of the eternal Father; he must be revealed to our soul by the power of God before we can see his beauty and blessedness, and so fall in love with him as "the chiefest among ten thousand and altogether lovely." Then everything that speaks of Christ, savours of Christ, and breathes of Christ, becomes inexpressibly sweet and precious.

This is "the golden oil" that flows into the heart; this is the sweet-smelling myrrh which drops upon the handles of the lock; this is "the aloes and cassia out of the ivory palaces;" this is "the love which many waters cannot quench, nor the floods drown;" and by an experience of this the affections become set on things above. And in no other way can they be lifted up from earth to heaven. We cannot control our affections; they will run out of their own accord. If then our affections be earthly, they will run towards the earth; if they be carnal and sensual, they will flow toward carnal and sensual objects. But when the Lord Jesus Christ, by some manifestation of his glory and blessedness, or the Holy Ghost, by taking of the things of Christ and revealing them to the soul, sets him before our eyes as the only object worthy of and claiming every affection of our heart, then the affections flow out, I was going to say naturally, but most certainly spiritually towards him; and when this is the case, the affections are set on things above.

December 18

"God is the Lord, which hath shewed us light." Psalm 118:27

The Psalmist was clearly possessed of light, for he says, "God is the Lord, which hath shewed us light." He was evidently, then, possessed of light; and this light was in him as "the light of life."

This light had shone into his heart; the rays and beams of divine truth had penetrated into his conscience. He carried about with him a light which had come from God; in this light he saw light, and in this light he discerned everything which the light manifested. Thus by this internal light he knew what was good and what was evil, what was sweet and what was bitter, what was true and what was false, what was spiritual and what was natural. He did not say, This light came from creature exertion, this light was the produce of my own wisdom, this light was nature transmuted by some action of my own will, and thus gradually rose into existence from long and assiduous cultivation. But he ascribes the whole of that light which he possessed unto God the Lord, as the sole Author and the only Giver of it. Now, if God the Lord has ever shewed you and me the same light which he shewed his servant of old, we carry about with us more or less a solemn conviction that we have received this light from him. There will, indeed, be many clouds of darkness to cover it; there will often be doubts and fears, hovering like mists and fogs over our souls, whether the light which we have received be from God or not. But in solemn moments when the Lord is pleased a little to revive his work, at times and seasons when he condescends to draw forth the affections of our hearts unto himself, to bring us into his presence, to hide us in some measure in the hollow of his hand, and give us access unto himself; at such moments and seasons we carry about with us, in spite of all our unbelief, in spite of all the suggestions of the enemy, in spite of all doubts, fears, and suspicions that rise from the depths of the carnal mind, in spite of all these counter-workings and underminings, we carry about with us at these times a solemn conviction that we have light, and that this light we have received from God. And why so? Because we can look back to a time when we walked in no such light, when we felt no such light, when everything spiritual and heavenly was dark to us, and we were dark to them.

December 19

***"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."
Psalm 46:1***

The Christian who has ever known what it is to worship God in spirit and in truth has a God to help him in his direst extremities; for as long as the spirit of prayer abides in his bosom—and that

spirit once given is never taken away—he can at times and seasons pour out his heart before God, and find help and strength in him. This, then, is one of his blessed resources, that he has a God to go to, the Lord of Sabaoth, into whose ears his cries may enter. But besides this, all the promises are on his side, which are yea and amen in Christ Jesus. Nor is he without sword or shield, or the whole armour of God. Nor is he without faith and hope, or secret supplies of strength made perfect in weakness. Nor is he without a knowledge of the truth, nor destitute of evidences of an interest in it. Thus, let a Christian be involved in the greatest perplexity, there is still the voice of prayer in his bosom, and still the goings up and actings of a living faith upon the Son of God who has been manifested to his soul, still the firm anchorings of hope within the veil. He is not like a sailor cast upon a wide ocean without rudder, chart, or compass. He knows what to do; he knows what course to steer; he knows the land to which his eyes are ever directed. Let him sink into the greatest perplexity, he still knows there is at the right hand of the Father a Jesus, upon whom help is laid as one that is mighty. Still, still the solemn fact is recorded deep in his mind, an ineffaceable impression has been left upon his soul from former discoveries of the King in his beauty, that this Jesus is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him. Thus he is not left without resource, help, or hope.

December 20

"The love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." Ephesians 3:19

That eminent saint, the Apostle Paul, who had been in the third heaven, and there saw glorious sights, and heard unspeakable words, though he exhausted human language to set forth the surpassing excellency of the love of Christ, comes at last to this point: "It passeth knowledge." Indeed it must pass knowledge. Is it not infinite? What measure, then, can be assigned to the love of Christ? If Christ be God, and as such the equal of the Father, his love is as infinite as Deity. Our love is the love of the creature; the love of God is as great as Deity, as infinite as the self-existent I Am; it must needs therefore pass knowledge. You may wonder sometimes—and it is a wonder that will fill heaven itself with anthems of eternal praise—how such a glorious Jesus as this can ever look down from heaven upon such crawling reptiles, on such

worms of earth,—what is more, upon such sinners who have provoked him over and over again by their misdeeds. Yes, that this exalted Christ, in the height of his glory, can look down from heaven his dwelling-place on such poor, miserable, wretched creatures as we, this is the mystery that fills angels with astonishment. But it is the glory of Christ thus to love; it is his special glory to take his saints to heaven, that they might be witnesses of his glory and partakers of it. Therefore, it is not because we are such crawling reptiles, that we are such undeserving creatures, that we are so utterly unworthy of the least notice from him, we are to put away all this matchless love from us, and say, "Can Christ love one like me? Can the glorious Son of God from heaven his dwelling-place cast an eye of pity and compassion, love and tenderness upon one like me, who can scarcely at times bear with myself; who see and feel myself one of the vilest of the vile, and the worst of the worst? Oh, what must I be in the sight of the glorious Son of God?" And yet, he says, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." This love has breadths, and lengths, and depths, and heights unknown. Its breadth exceeds all human span; its length outvies all creature line; its depth surpasses all finite measurement; and its height excels even angelic computation.

Now this is the very reason why this love is so adapted to us. We want a love like this; a love to spread itself over us, to come down to our lowest depths; a love that can land us safe in heaven. A love short of this would be no love at all. We should exhaust it by our sins if this love were not what it is here represented. Long ago we should have out-sinned this love, and drained it dry by our ingratitude, rebellion, and misdoing. But because it is what it is, love so wondrous, so deep, so long, so broad, so high; it is because it is what it is that it is so suitable to every want and woe.

December 21

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." Psalm 23:4

Death, the gaunt king of terrors; Death, who with his scythe in his resistless hand, mows down whole millions of the human race; Death, who awaits his victims at every corner; Death, that must

soon lay you and me low in the grave, casts a shadow wherever he comes. He visits the sick room, and casts a shadow there; he hangs over the cradle, and his shadow falls on the infant's face; he comes in the Indian letter from abroad, or with the black seal and mourning envelope put into our hand at home; and these tidings or these tokens cast a deep shadow over our hearts. Indeed, where is the place where death does not cast his shadow? where the house where this shade has never fallen? In fact, he never comes without it. He is "the last enemy;" he is the final fulfilment of the original curse. And though death, to a saint of God, is stripped of its terrors, robbed of its sting, and disarmed of its victory; though, to the expiring believer it is but a portal of life into the mansions of eternal bliss, yet, say what we may, the portal casts a shadow. Even David, though full of sweet confidence that "the Lord was his shepherd," at the very time when "his cup ran over" with the Lord's goodness and love, calls it "the valley of the shadow of death." "The rod and the staff" comforted him, and he "feared no evil," but it was still "a valley," overhung by frowning mountains and dark, overarching woods, and "the shadow of death" was spread upon it from the entrance to the end. And yet it is but a "shadow." To the graceless, the Christless, the impenitent, the unbelieving, it is a substance, for the wrath of God, which burns to the lowest hell, awaits them at the end of the valley, to plunge them into the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. But to those who die in the Lord, in the sweet enjoyment of peace through his blood, it is but a passing shadow. For them the substance died when Jesus died. It was buried in his tomb, but did not rise with him, for he destroyed it when he "abolished death and brought life and immortality to light."

December 22

"That ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." James 1:4

The word "perfect" in the Scripture does not mean, as applied to a saint of God, anything approaching to the usual idea of perfection, as implying spotless, sinless holiness, but one who is matured and ripened in the life of God, no longer a child but a grown man. As a tree grown to its full stature is said to have attained perfection; so when the Lord the Spirit has brought forth the work of patience in your soul, as far as regards that work you are perfect, for it is God's work in you; and so far you are

"entire," that is, possessing all which that grace gives, and "wanting nothing" which that grace can communicate. To submit wholly to the will of God, and be lost and swallowed up in conformity to it, is the height of Christian perfection here below; and he that has that wants nothing, for he has all things in Christ. What, then, is the greatest height of grace to which the soul can arrive? Where did grace shine forth so conspicuously as in the Lord Jesus Christ? and where did grace manifest itself more than in the gloomy garden and on the suffering cross? Was not the human nature of Jesus more manifestly filled with the Spirit, and did not every grace shine forth in him more conspicuously in Gethsemane and on Calvary than when enraptured upon the Mount of Transfiguration? So there is more manifested grace in the heart of a saint of God who, under trial and temptation, can say, "Thy will be done," and submit himself to the chastening rod of his heavenly Father, than when he is basking in the full beams of the Sun of righteousness. How often we are mistaken in this matter; longing for enjoyment, instead of seeing that true grace makes us submit to the will of God, whether in the valley or upon the mount!

December 23

"And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it." Psalm 90:17

What is this beauty? "The beauty of the Lord our God." It is, therefore, the beauty of the God-man; the comeliness, the holiness, the perfection, and glory that ever dwell in the Son of God. Now "days of affliction, and years of evil" have marred all creature comeliness. There was a time, perhaps, when we could take some pleasure and delight in what we were, or what we vainly fancied we should be. Our own righteousness had a beauty and comeliness to us; and our religion was amiable and pleasing in our own sight. But what has become of it? Marred, marred; effectually marred. By what? "Days of affliction, and years of evil." These have effectually ruined, defaced, and polluted all creature comeliness. In a word, we were once deeply in love with self; but self has been shewn to us such a hideous monster, in so vile and despicable a light, that we have fallen out of love with him altogether; and we have seen, at times, such beauty, glory,

loveliness, and suitability in the Son of God, that as we have fallen out of love with self, we have fallen in love with him. Thus as all our own beauty and our own comeliness have been marred and defaced, the beauty and comeliness of the Lord have risen in due proportion. So that this has become the desire of our soul, "'Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us.' Let us stand accepted in it; let it be put upon us by the imputation of God himself; let us be clothed with it manifestly before the eyes of a heart-searching Jehovah. Let the beauty of Jesus' atoning blood, the beauty of his perfect righteousness, the beauty of his dying love, the beauty and holiness of his glorious Person be upon us, covering all our filth, guilt and shame, spreading itself over all our nakedness, sin and pollution, that when God looks upon us, he may not see us as we are, marred, defaced, and full of wounds and bruises and putrifying sores; but may see us standing accepted in the Beloved, with 'the beauty of the Lord our God' upon us." Oh, what a matchless robe is this! It outshines angels': for it is the righteousness of God's only-begotten Son! And if we stand with "the beauty of the Lord our God" upon us, we can bid defiance to all law-charges, to all the accusations of a guilty conscience, and to all the darts from hell.

December 24

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us." Titus 3:5

To view mercy in its real character, we must *go to Calvary*. It is not sufficient to contrast the purity of God with the impurity of man. That indeed affords us some view of what mercy must be to reach the depths of the fall; a sideface of that precious attribute. But to see its full face shining upon the redeemed, we must go by faith, under the secret teachings and leadings of the Holy Ghost, to see "Immanuel, God with us," grovelling in Gethsemane's garden. We must view him naked upon the cross, groaning, bleeding, agonizing, dying. We must view Godhead and manhood united together in the Person of a suffering Jesus; and the power of the Godhead bearing up the suffering manhood. We must view that wondrous spectacle of love and blood, and feel our eyes flowing down in streams of sorrow, humility, and contrition at the

sight, in order to enter a little into the depths of the tender mercy of God. Nothing but this can really break the sinner's heart.

**"Law and terrors do but harden,
All the while they work alone;
But a sense of blood-bought pardon
Soon dissolves a heart of stone."**

Law terrors, death and judgment, infinite purity, and eternal vengeance will not soften or break a sinner's heart. But if he is led to view a suffering Immanuel, and a sweet testimony is raised up in his conscience that those sufferings were for him—this, and this only will break his heart all to pieces. Thus, only by bringing a sweet sense of love and blood into his heart does the blessed Spirit shew a sinner some of the depths of the tender mercy of God.

December 25

*"Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men."
Philippians 2:6, 7*

The humanity of our blessed Lord was actual flesh and blood from the moment of its conception, a perfect human body, to which was united a perfect human soul; both without sin, or else he could not be the Lamb without blemish; both without sin, or his pure humanity would not have been that "holy thing" born of the Virgin, which should be called the Son of God. Thus he came forth as the Lamb of God, without spot or blemish. Well indeed might the Apostle say, "Great is the mystery of godliness." Here as in a glass we see the wonderful love of Jesus, that he who is the Sort of God, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Holy Ghost, a sharer of the Father's essence, of the Father's glory, should stoop so low to lift us up so high; that he should condescend to unite to his glorious Person our nature, flesh and blood; to wear a human body like our own; to feel as we do, to speak as we do, to walk as we do, to eat and drink and hunger and thirst and weep and sigh and mourn as we do; yet all the while be the Son of God, and should have a divine nature in as close union with human nature as our soul has with our bodily frame. We cannot tell how our soul is in union with our body. We know it is

so, but how we cannot tell. We only know the fact, but we cannot explain the mode. So we cannot tell how Christ's divine nature is in union with his human nature; we know it is so by the testimony of God, by the express revelation of his word. That revelation to a believer answers all inquiry. But if any man say to me, "Can you explain the mystery of the two natures in Christ?" I ask in my turn, "Can you explain the mystery of your own existence? Can you explain to me how you are able to lift up your own hand, see with your own eye, hear with your own ear, move with your own foot? No man has ever yet been able to explain this apparently simple thing; a feat which every child can perform, but a fact which no philosopher can understand. Can you tell me how mind can act upon matter? how you wish to do a thing with your mind, and can do it instantaneously with your body? When, then, you can explain your own existence and unravel the mystery of your soul acting in union with your body, then I will allow that you may unravel the mystery of the union of Deity and humanity in the Person of the Son of God, as he lived upon earth, and as he now lives in heaven." Beautiful upon this mystery are the words of Hart:

"How it was done we can't discuss;
But this we know, 'twas done for us."

Happy those who can use these words without a wavering tongue!

December 26

"Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Hebrews 11:1

What an eminent grace is the grace of faith! I call it, sometimes, the Queen of graces; for faith seems to lead the van, though hope and love follow almost side by side. But still, faith, as the Queen, seems to go in the foremost rank, and to claim the most eminent place. Now, what is faith? That is a question of questions, for on it hangs heaven or hell. God himself has given us a clear definition of it, where he says, "faith is the *substance* of things hoped for." In other words, faith in the soul gives a realisation to the things in which we are brought to hope, takes what to most men are airy shadows, mere words and names, and gives them a substantial

existence, a firm abiding place in the heart and conscience. The Apostle calls it also *"the evidence of things not seen."* That is, faith, by believing the testimony of God, is to us an internal eye, whereby we see those things, which to the natural eye are invisible. Thus adopting the Apostle's definition, we may call faith the eye of the soul, as we read, "By faith he endured, seeing him who is invisible." For it is only by faith that we see either God, or the precious things of God. It is only by faith that we feel their power. It is only by faith that we know they have a real subsistence, or that we ourselves have a substantial interest in them. But this faith is the special gift of God. It is not the exercise of any intellectual faculty. It is not the result of reasoning or argument. Nor does it spring from any historical proof. It is a special gift of God, a grace of the Spirit raised up by the power of God in the soul, and acting upon the truth of God as the blessed Spirit draws it forth. Jesus is the Author; Jesus is the finisher of it; and we have no more, and I believe no less faith, than he himself, by his almighty power, is pleased to grant and to sustain.

But, looking at faith and some of its properties, we may branch out a little in describing how faith acts. There is an expression of the Apostle's that casts a sweet light upon the work of faith, where he says, "Unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them; but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." Here he brings forward a special operation of faith, in that it mixes with the word of truth. And it does it thus. God the Holy Ghost applies God's word to the conscience. He thus raises up the grace of faith; this grace of faith embraces God's testimony, and so intermingles itself with this testimony that it enters into it, appropriates it, and gives it a substantial realisation and personal indwelling. See how this was done in the instance of Abram. God comes to him in the night visions, and says to him, "Fear not, I am thy shield and exceeding great reward." But Abram, in a fit of unbelief, says, "What wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?" The Lord then takes him abroad into the air, shews him the stars of the sky, and tells him, "So shall thy seed be." Now here was the testimony of God in a certain promise to Abram's conscience; upon this, faith immediately sprang up in his soul; for we read, "Abram believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." When God spake to his soul, Abram believed it by the operation of God's Spirit on his heart. So it is with every child of God. He believes what God speaks to him, he inwardly, spiritually credits it, because he feels what God the

Spirit, applies to his soul with power; for the same Spirit that applies God's word to his heart raises up the faith in his soul that mixes with the word applied, and thus gives the word a substantial realisation, a firm abiding place in his conscience.

December 27

"They shall mount up with wings as eagles." Isaiah 40:31

It is said of the eagle, that he mounts up towards the sun; and that of all birds, he is the only one which can gaze upon the sun with unshrinking eye. So with faith in the soul. The Lord's people alone can look by faith upon the "Sun of righteousness," gaze upon a glorious Immanuel at the right hand of the Father, and see a precious Jesus ever interceding for them, and drawing them near to his bosom. And when this blessed Jesus communicates a measure of his love and blood to their consciences, and raises up and draws forth faith in his name, then the soul begins to mount up with these wings like eagles, soaring higher and higher, till it comes into the presence of God; mounting up in higher and higher circles of spiritual flight, till it penetrates into the very sanctuary of Jehovah.

Now, has not your soul thus soared sometimes as upon eagle's wings? Have there not been those communications of divine life and light, those mountains of faith, those anchorings of hope, those goings forth of love, whereby your soul was enabled to mount up and find delight in Jesus, and felt his name, love, and blood precious? Have you not mounted up too, not only in the exercise of living faith and hope, but also of heavenly affection? Sometimes we are so fastened down to this earth, this vale of tears, this waste-howling wilderness; so chained down to it, that we are like a bird with a broken wing, and cannot mount. We are swallowed up in the world, forgetting God and godliness. But are there not times and seasons when the soul is delivered from these chains and fetters, when earthly cares drop off from the mind, when our wings are new moulted, and fresh pinions as it were given, when the world and its temptations, sin and its snares are left behind, and there is a sweet mounting up in the feelings of heavenly affection? This is to "mount up with wings as eagles," and the soaring soul never ceases to mount till it comes into the very presence of the Three-One God of Israel.

December 28

"And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." Acts 20:32

Not only did Paul "commend" the church at Ephesus "to God," but he commended them also in an especial manner "to the word of his grace." There is a difference between "grace" and "the word of his grace." Nothing but grace can save the soul; nothing but superabounding grace can blot out and hide from the view of justice our aggravated iniquities. But "the word of his grace" is that word which brings this grace into the heart, which communicates life and power to the soul, which the Spirit by his inward teaching and testimony seals on the conscience, and by which he reveals and sheds abroad that favour of which he testifies. This is what the Lord's people want. It is "the word of grace" that reaches their soul. It is not reading of grace in God's word that brings peace into their hearts; it is "the word of his grace," when he is pleased to speak that word with a divine power to their souls, that brings salvation with it.

Now, the Lord's people are continually in those trying states and circumstances, out of which nothing can deliver them but "the word of God's grace." If the soul have to pass through severe trials, it is not hearing of grace that can deliver it out of them. If it be beset with powerful temptations, it is not reading about grace that can break them to pieces. But "the word of his grace," when the Lord himself is pleased to speak with his own blessed lips, and apply some promise with his own divine power, supports under trial, delivers from temptation, breaks snares to pieces, makes crooked things straight and rough places plain, brings the prisoner out of the prison-house, and takes off the yoke by reason of the anointing.

December 29

"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God." 1 Corinthians 1:18

Has the gospel ever come to you in power? If it has, it has done something for you. Has it ever, then, dispelled your many doubts and fears? Has it ever made Jesus precious to your soul; ever brought with it light, life, liberty, and love; ever given you access to the bosom of God; ever communicated that spirit of holy boldness and filial confidence, whereby, as a successful wrestler, you were enabled to prevail with God, and get a blessing out of his hands and heart? But it is useless to talk of power when nothing is done. A manufacturer says to an engineer, "I want you to construct me an engine of a hundred horse power." But if the engineer make the engine, and upon trial it be found only of ninety, and the work require a hundred horse power, the engine is so far useless. Now, what would his employer say to him but, "What a mistake you have made! I ordered an engine of a hundred horse power, and this is only ninety. It will not do the work I want. Take it away." So in grace. We want a power that can move certain weights; the weight of sin, for instance, from off a guilty conscience; killing fears of death and hell; the burden of unbelief; the heavy load of carnality; many grievous temptations that make the soul cry, "Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me." What heavy weights are there to be lifted off; what huge stones to be rolled away from the sepulchre; the world to be overcome; lusts and passions to be crucified; the old man of sin mortified; Satan to be defeated and put to flight! But besides all these weights to be removed, and enemies to be overcome, there is the soul to be saved, heaven to be brought near, hell put out of sight, the law to be for ever silenced, death to be robbed of its sting, and the grave of its victory, and an eternal course of glory to be won. Oh, what a mighty work has to be done in us and for us—a work which no man ever has done or can do for himself!

December 30

"A living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious." 1 Peter 2:4

Though "disallowed of men," the Lord Jesus Christ is "chosen of God;" and God, I speak it with reverence, cannot make an unwise

choice. To think *that*, would be to attribute folly to the Most High. He is "chosen of God," because he alone was fitted for the work. It would have crushed an archangel to bear what Jesus bore. No bright angel, nor glorious seraph, no created being, however exalted, could have borne the load of sin; and therefore none but God's own Son, not by office, but by eternal generation, the Son of the Father in truth and love, could bear the weight of imputed sin and guilt. As Hart says,

"Such loads of guilt were on Him put,
He could but just sustain the weight."

But he was "chosen of God" that he might be Zion's Representative, Zion's Sin-bearer, and Zion's glorious Head; that there might be a foundation for the Church to rest upon with all her miseries, all her sins, all her sorrows, all her base backslidings and idolatries, all her weight of woe and depths of guilt. It need be a *strong* foundation to bear this Church, so loaded with degradation, ignominy, and shame! God's own Son, and none else in heaven or in earth, could bear all this. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, for I am God, and *there is none else.*"

He was "chosen of God" in eternity, in the divine councils, that he might be a Mediator. He was "chosen" to become man; chosen to become the Rock of Ages, Zion's resting-place, harbour, anchorage, and home. Jesus was ever, therefore, and ever will be, unspeakably "precious" to the Father's heart. Man despises him, but God honours him; man disallows him, but God values him as his co-equal Son. God, therefore, not only values him as his "fellow," and has chosen him to be the Mediator, but he is in his eyes unspeakably "precious;" precious in his Deity, precious in his humanity, precious in his blood, precious in his obedience, precious in his sufferings, precious in his death, precious in his resurrection, precious in his ascension to God's right hand, precious in the eyes of God as the Great High Priest over the house of God, and the only Mediator between God and man. Is he not worthy of all your trust, all your confidence, all your hope, and all your acceptance? Look where we will, he is our only hope. Look at the world, what can you reap from that but a harvest of sorrow? Look at everything men call good and great; all that man highly values, good perhaps for time, but valueless for eternity. Perhaps no one could put a higher value than I upon what man naturally regards as good and great, especially upon human learning, and attainments in knowledge and science. Yet I have

seen them as compared with eternity, to be but breath and smoke—a vapour that passeth away and is no more seen. But the things of eternity, the peace of God in the heart, the work of the Spirit upon the soul, with all the blessed realities of salvation—these are not like the airy mists of time, the vapours that spring out of earth and return to earth again, but are enduring and eternal, "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

December 31

"My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." Isaiah 46:10

There is one grand idea running through the whole of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation; and this one grand idea runs through every part of the sacred page, and, like a golden band, unites the whole together. What is this one grand thought? God has many thoughts as well as we, for he tells us that "the thoughts of his heart stand to all generations." But we read also in the same verse of "the counsel of the Lord, which standeth for ever;" and elsewhere of his "working all things after the counsel of his own will" (Psalm 33:11; Ephes. 1:11). Thus in the mind of God, as well as in the mode of his subsistence, there is unity and variety. There is his one thought, and his many thoughts; for though his thoughts are many, his counsel is but one; and this counsel is the exaltation and glorification of his dear Son. It may be as well briefly to trace this unity of thought and the variety of its expression. We see it, then, first expressed in the creation of the first man, when God made him "in his own image, after his own likeness." There was the expression of God's one thought; for Adam the first was a type of Adam the second, and as Christ was by lineal descent "the son of Adam," there was a foreview in the creation of the first man of the incarnation of God's dear Son, who is the brightness of his glory and the express image of his Person. Now next observe how all things were put under Adam's feet, and he thus made the visible head of creation. Read this exaltation of Adam in the light of Psalm 8, and you will see how the inspired Psalmist, as interpreted by the Apostle (Heb: 2:7-9), viewed Adam, in having all things put under his feet, as a type of Jesus, whom God has crowned with glory and honour, set him over the works of his hands, and put all things in subjection under his feet. Look next at

the first promise given after the fall, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. There we have God's one thought again expressed, his dominant counsel in the incarnation of his dear Son, as the seed of the woman, to bruise Satan's head. Look at Noah preserved in the ark with his family when the rest of the world was swept away by the deluge, that from the loins of Adam might come the promised seed. Take the case of Abraham, called by a special calling, that in him and his seed all the nations of the earth might be blessed. Here we have again God's one thought. Take, again, the whole of the Levitical dispensation. Every rite, every sacrifice, every type, every ordinance, all still bear the same stamp of God's one thought, and indeed every part of Scripture is but an exposition of this one thought of God's heart, of this one counsel of his eternal will. The word of God is a perfect mystery to us, and we see no beauty or harmony in the various books of either the Old Testament or the New until we see the mind of God in it, gather up God's thoughts, and especially that grand thought which I have spoken of as binding the whole together, viz. the exaltation of his dear Son to his own right hand as the promised reward of his sufferings and death, and the glorious result of his resurrection and ascension up to the courts of bliss.