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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

February 1

"They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them."—Jeremiah 31:9

Until God is pleased to pour out upon us the spirit of grace and of supplications, we cannot worship him aright; for God is a Spirit, and those who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth; nor can we without this spirit offer up that spiritual sacrifice which is acceptable to him through Jesus Christ. When this spirit has been once given and kindled in a believer's breast, it never dies out. It is like the fire upon the brazen altar, which was first given by the Lord himself from heaven, and concerning which God gave this command: "The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar; it shall never go out" (Lev. 6:13). This fire might sink low; it might be covered with the ashes of sacrifice, but it never was suffered to go out for want of supply of fuel. So at times it may seem to you as if there were scarcely any spirit of prayer alive in your bosom; and you may feel as destitute of a spirit of grace and of supplications as if you had never known its lively movements and actings. But you will find it drawn out from time to time by circumstances. You will be placed under peculiar trials, under which you will find no relief but at a throne of grace; or God will in tender mercy breathe again upon your soul with his own gracious Spirit, and by his quickening breath will revive, I will not say kindle, for it is not gone out, that holy fire which seemed to be buried under the ashes of corruption, that inward spirit of prayer which he gave you at regeneration, and which will never cease till it issue in everlasting praise.

February 2

"But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him." 1 John 2:27

Have you ever had a solitary drop of this holy anointing oil fall upon your heart? One drop, if it be but a drop, will sanctify you for ever to the service of God. There was not much of the holy anointing oil used for the service of the tabernacle, when we consider the size and quantity of what had to be consecrated, for

Moses had to anoint therewith the whole of the tabernacle of the congregation, as well as all the vessels, with all their various appurtenances. When he went through the sacred work, he touched one vessel after another with a drop of oil; for one drop sanctified the vessel to the service of the tabernacle. There was no repetition of the consecration wanted; it abode. So if you ever had a drop of God's love shed abroad in your heart,—a drop of the anointing to teach you the truth as it is in Jesus; a drop to penetrate, to soften, to heal, to feed and give light, life, and power to your soul,—you have the unction from the Holy One; you know all things which are for your salvation, and by that same holy oil you have been sanctified and made meet for an eternal inheritance.

February 3

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." Colossians 3:1

How many there are even of those who desire to fear God who are kept down by the world, and to whom it has not lost its attractive power; who are held fast, at least for a time, by worldly business, or entangled by worldly persons or worldly engagements. Their partners in business or their partners in life; their carnal relatives or their worldly children; their numerous connections or their social habits; their strong passions or their deep-rooted prejudices, all bind and fetter them down to earth. There they grovel and lie amid, what Milton terms,

"The smoke and stir of this dim spot which men call earth;"

and so bound are they with the cords of their sins that they scarcely seek deliverance from them, or even desire to rise beyond the mists and fogs of this dim spot into a purer air, so as to breathe a heavenly atmosphere, and rise up with Jesus from the grave of their corruptions. But if, as members of his mystical body, they are already risen with Christ, as it was not possible for the Head to be holden of death when God loosed the pains thereof (Acts 2:24), so neither shall they ever be buried in the grave of carnality and worldliness. They must rise spiritually if they rose mystically. If interested in the *reality* of Christ's resurrection, they must know the *power* of Christ's resurrection.

February 4

"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." Revelation 19:7

We want two things to take us to heaven; *a title to it*, and *a meetness for it*. Our only *title* to heaven is the blood and righteousness of the Son of God—that blood which "cleanseth from all sin," and that righteousness which "justifies us from all things from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses." Nothing unclean or defiled can enter heaven. This is God's own testimony: "There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie, but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Rev. 21:27). But besides the *title*, there must be also a *meetness* for this heavenly city, according to the words of the apostle: "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light" (Col. 1:12). Whilst here below, then, we must learn to sing some notes of that joyous anthem which will issue in full, uninterrupted harmony from the hearts and lips of the redeemed in the realms above, when that glorious company will ever cry, "Alleluia! Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power unto the Lord our God." If we are to sit down among those blessed ones who are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb, not only must we be "arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints," but we must have had "the kingdom of God, which is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 14:17), set up in our hearts.

February 5

"Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." John 1:17

The way to learn truth is to be much in prayer to the Lord Jesus Christ; as you lie upon your bed, as engaged in your daily occupation, to be from time to time looking up to the Lord himself as he sits upon his throne of grace, and be begging of him to teach

you himself, for he is the best teacher. The words which he speaks, they "are spirit and life." What he writes upon our hearts is written in characters which will "stand every storm and live at last." We forget what we learn from man, but we never forget what we learn from Jesus. Men may deceive—Christ cannot. You can trust no minister really and fully. Though you may receive truth from his lips, it is always mixed with human infirmity. But what you get from the lips of Jesus, you get in all its purity and power. It comes warm from Him; it comes cold from us. It drops like the rain and distils like the dew from his mouth; it comes only second-hand from ours. If I preach to you the truth, I preach indeed as the Lord enables me to speak. But it is he who must speak with power to your souls to do you any real good. Look then from me; look beyond me, to him who alone can teach us both. By looking to Jesus in the inmost feelings of your soul, you will draw living truth from out of his bosom into your own, from his heart into your heart, and thus will come feelingly and experimentally to know the blessedness of his own declaration: "I am the truth."

February 6

"Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed." 2 Corinthians 4:9

You may be cast down by many doubts and fears, and lose the sense of the Lord's love to your soul, but you cannot lose the reality, nor is your faith destroyed by the hottest flame. It is like gold; the fire melts away and separates the dross and tin, but never touches the gold. In your hottest trials your faith will not have lost a particle. Neither will your hope be destroyed, however you may be cast down about your state or standing; for not a particle of hope, or of any one Christian grace can ever be lost. They may seem to suffer diminution as the apostle speaks, "If a man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss" (1 Cor. 3:15); but it is no real loss,—it is merely the dross taken away, that he may come forth a vessel for the finer. The work of the Holy Spirit is as indestructible as the work of Christ; and thus every grace which he implants in the soul remains there untouched, unharmed in all its divine integrity. Love, patience, submission, and humility all remain unhurt in the flame, though the dross which is mixed with them is taken from them that they may shine all the brighter. Thus though you may be plunged into the hottest fires, you will

not be destroyed, any more than the three children were destroyed in Nebuchadnezzar's furnace, or Jonah in the belly of the whale.

February 7

"In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." Ephesians 1:13, 14

Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people. Holy are its inhabitants, holy its employments, holy its enjoyments. Therefore unless we know something of the teaching, the work, and witness of the Holy Spirit here, and are made partakers of a new, holy, spiritual, and heavenly nature we have no pledge or earnest of our interest in the inheritance of the saints in bliss. A carnal, un sanctified, unholy, un renewed heart is utterly incapable of understanding, entering into, longing after, and loving an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. But every holy desire, heavenly affection, gracious longing, spiritual enjoyment, and believing, hoping, loving, looking unto and cleaving to the Lord of life and glory by the power of the Holy Spirit, are all so many pledges and earnest of an interest in the glorious inheritance of the saints in light. The love, the joy, the peace, the calm tranquillity, and holy acquiescence in the will of God; the ravishing views of the glory of Christ which change the soul into the same image, from glory to glory; the delight felt in him, and the whole surrender of the heart and affections to the blessed Lord as the chiefest of ten thousand and the altogether lovely, are all so many earnest of the inheritance above, as being heaven begun below.

February 8

"These all died in faith." Hebrews 11:13

When death came it did not rob them of their faith. They held with their believing hand in death every truth which they had held with their believing hand in life. It is in death that the gospel

is such a blessing when held by a believing hand. What should we do upon a dying bed, with all our sins staring us in the face in all their awful magnitude, accused by Satan, condemned by conscience, terrified by a holy law, and frowned upon by an indignant God? What must be our end upon the bed of death if we had nothing to look to but a God who is a consuming fire, with nothing but the bitter recollection of past sins to agonise the mind and distress the conscience? O, if ever faith is needed, it will be needed then; if ever the gospel embraced, embraced then; if ever Christ looked to, looked to then; if ever laid hold of by the hand of faith, laid hold of then! Now if you know what faith is, and your faith has embraced the Son of God, and love has worked by that faith, and Christ in that faith has made himself precious, that faith will never give up the ghost in a dying hour. False faith will then expire; but the faith of God's elect will not leave you in the hour of death, but support you as you pass through the dark valley, and land you safe on that happy shore where faith is turned into sight, hope into enjoyment, and love abides in its fullest manifestation.

February 9

"Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall." 2 Peter 1:10

Have you any testimony to your effectual calling? Has grace indeed laid hold of your heart? O that you might know more fully—more powerfully—what a blessed hope of eternal life is laid up in the bosom of this heavenly calling, that it might cheer and encourage you to press on more and more to realise all that is given you in Christ, both for here and hereafter, in present grace and in future glory! In knowing what is the hope of their effectual calling, the saints of God learn that this hope embraces all things which are made theirs in Christ, whether life or death, or things present or things to come, that all are theirs; and for this blessed and all-sufficient reason, that they are Christ's and Christ is God's. It is by making sure our calling that we make sure our election,—for the one is the sure evidence of the other; and thus, if doubt and uncertainty hang over our calling, the same doubt and uncertainty must rest upon our election to eternal life. But as these doubts and fears are removed by the spirit of wisdom and

revelation in the knowledge of Christ, and we can clearly see and fully believe that the grace of God effectually called us out of darkness into his marvellous light, then we see by faith what is laid up in the bosom of this calling, and what a glorious hope of eternal life is thereby afforded as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and thus abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost.

February 10

"Lord, all my desire is before thee; and my groaning is not hid from thee." Psalm 38:9

Many of the Lord's people cannot clearly read their names in the book of life; many are the doubts and fears that work in their bosom whether the Lord really has begun a work of grace upon their souls, and whether they truly are among the Lord's living family. But this thing they must know—whether at times and seasons they can lie in humility at the footstool of mercy, and appeal to a heart-searching God—"All my desire is before thee." They must know whether they ever fell down in humility and brokenness of heart before the divine Majesty, and felt these living desires going out of their bosom into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth; and whether they can, with honesty, uprightness, and godly sincerity, say to the Lord in the language before us, "O Lord, all my desire is before thee." "Thou seest my heart, and knowest everything that passes in my troubled breast." If you can say *that*, it is a mark of life. If that has been the feeling of your heart from time to time, you find it was the same feeling that worked in the bosom of David. And God saw fit that it should be written by the finger of the Spirit, and placed upon solemn record for the consolation and encouragement of souls in similar circumstances.

February 11

"My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass." Deuteronomy 32:2

In the falling of the natural dew there is something soft, still, and gentle. We therefore read, "We will light upon him as the dew falleth on the ground" (2 Sam. 17:12), that is, stealthily and unseen. It does not rush down like the pelting hail, but falls stilly and often imperceptibly; so that we scarcely know it has fallen, till we go out in the morning and see every blade of grass tipped with the sparkling dew-drops; by these bright gems we know that dew has fallen during the still hours of the night. So spiritually, the kingdom of God is not in noise, rant, or wild excitement. The Lord was not in the strong wind, nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire, but in the still small voice (1 Kings 19:11, 12). And thus there may be a great deal of religious fire, but no presence of God felt; fleshly passions worked up into a storm, but no "still small voice" speaking to the conscience; a very earthquake of natural convictions, but no inward "demonstration of the spirit and of power." But when the spiritual dew falls, it drops gently, softly, and stilly into the heart, and it is only known by the sweet and blessed effects it produces.

Dew also has a *softening effect*, especially in warm climates, where it falls very copiously. We therefore read, "Thou makest it soft with showers" (Psalm 65:10). It does not tear up the ground as with thunderbolts, but by moistening and softening penetrates into the soil. And thus the dew of God's grace moistens and softens the heart, humbles, dissolves, and fertilises it; not by tearing it up with the thunderbolts of wrath and condemnation, but by dropping gently and stilly into it, so as to melt it into contrition, meekness, and godly sorrow before the throne of mercy and grace.

February 12

***"In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins."* Colossians 1:14**

Of all spiritual blessings made known to the soul by the power of God "a knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins" is the hardest to be obtained, and most prized when got. How many poor tried, exercised, distressed souls are at this very moment sighing and crying for the manifestation of this one blessing. These well know, and some of them by the painful experience of many years' hard bondage and travail, how hard it is to get

forgiveness sealed on their heart. Not that it is really hard on the part of God now to forgive, that is, in experimental manifestation; for it is already done to and for all the elect of God: "And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, *having forgiven* you all trespasses" (Colossians 2:13); and again, "In whom we *have*" (not "shall have," but "have," that is, now have) "redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins." Though he may not be able to lay hold of it for himself, appropriate it as a personal blessing, and feel sweetly and blessedly assured, in his own heart and conscience, of the forgiveness of all his sins; yet every quickened soul is really forgiven all his trespasses, past, present, and to come. It is one of the spiritual blessings with which he has been blessed, already blessed, in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

February 13

"O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles." Psalm 43:3

A living man cannot, in his right mind, bear the idea of standing still, that is to say, standing still so as to have no spiritual work going on within; and still less can he bear the idea of going backward. He wants to go forward. He is often dissatisfied with his state; he feels how little he knows; he is well certified of the shallowness of his attainments in the divine life, as well as of the ignorance and the blindness that are in him; and therefore, labouring under the feeling of his own shortcomings for the past, his helplessness for the present, and his ignorance for the future, he wants to go forward wholly and solely in the strength of the Lord, to be led, guided, directed, kept, not by the wisdom and power of the creature, but by the supernatural entrance of light and truth into his soul. The mercy-seat is continually covered with clouds; God hideth himself, and he cannot behold him; the truth seems obscured so that he cannot realise it. He often cannot find his way to Christ; he cannot perceive the path of life, nor whether his feet are in that path. He sees so few marks of grace in his soul, and feels so powerfully the workings of sin and corruption; he finds so few things for him and so many things against him, that he often staggers, and is perplexed in his mind, and seems almost to come to a feeling in his heart, that he is destitute of the grace of God altogether, that the secret of the Lord is not with him, but

that he is a hypocrite in Zion, who has never had even the beginning of wisdom communicated to his soul.

February 14

"Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil." Hebrews 6:19

Anchors, you know, are made of different sizes. You may walk in the Queen's Dockyard, and there you may see anchors for a boat, and anchors for a three-decker. Yet all anchors are made in the same way, and are designed for the same purpose; and the little anchor that holds the boat is as useful and as much an anchor as that which holds the three-decker. So spiritually. There is hope in the heart of the babe. But the hope in the heart of a babe is but as the anchor of a boat; yet it holds that babe as firmly as the anchor holds the boat to which it is moored. But as the Lord increases hope, he increases the size of the anchor; and as the vessel and its anchor always bear a proportion to each other, so when he enlarges the size of the anchor he increases the size of the ship. Nay more, as he increases the size of the ship, he increases its burden, for these two are proportionate. Thus hope takes a more vigorous hold within the veil; it enters more deeply into the presence of God; it takes a firmer grasp of covenant engagements, electing love, the immutability of God's purposes, and the unchangeable nature of the great eternal I AM. Have you not felt at times your hope sweetly enlarged, so that it almost attained to the "full assurance of hope?" Scarcely a cloud remained between you and God; and you believed you should ride triumphantly into the haven of bliss and peace; and having these blessed sensations in your heart, you could part with life itself at that moment to fall into the embrace of your God.

February 15

"Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures." Luke 24:45

Blessed opening, when He that hath the key of David puts in his hand by the hole of the door, and opens our heart to receive his own word. Then when we go to the Word of Truth, after it has come to us, our fingers drop with sweet-smelling myrrh upon the handles of the lock. It is said that "the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." O, to hear the voice of the Son of God in our hearts! Surely it shall make our dead hearts, cold frames, withering hopes, drooping love, dying faith, languishing prayers, and fainting minds live; yea, revive as the corn and grow as the vine. What is all religion without a divine beginning, middle, and end, commencing, carried on, and accomplished with a heavenly power, supernatural life, and spiritual unction? Well may we be ashamed and sick of, and sorry for all our thoughts, words, and works, all our knowledge and profession that have not stood, or do not stand, in the power, teaching, and wisdom of God. All our talk has been but vain babbling, our prayers lip-service, our preaching wind and vanity, our profession hypocrisy, our knowledge the worst kind of ignorance, and all our religion carnality or delusion, if they have not been divinely communicated. Sir Isaac Newton, the wisest philosopher, is said to have remarked to one who congratulated him on his knowledge, "I have been like a little child on the sea-shore taking up a little water in a shell when the vast ocean of truth lay undiscovered before me." Much more may a spiritual man feel how little, how nothing he knows of the unsearchable riches of Christ, and the boundless stores of wisdom hid in them.

February 16

"I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." Galatians 1:12

When I speak of a revelation of Christ, I am not contending for anything visionary. Dreams, voices, appearances in the air, sights and sounds, crosses in the sky, and apparitions at the bedside, I must leave to others. I believe that for the most part they are the portion of visionaries and enthusiasts, for we have all these in the visible Church of God, as well as Pharisees and hypocrites, Arminians and Antinomians. I will not indeed deny that the Lord may have wrought by them in some peculiar instances, as in the cases of Augustine and Colonel Gardiner. But taking the generality of God's people and the ordinary mode of divine

operation, the revelation of Christ to the soul is a gracious internal discovery by the power of the Spirit, revealing him to the eyes of faith. Nothing is seen or heard by the bodily senses; and yet his glorious Person is as much seen, and his voice as much heard, as though eye and ear beheld his glory and listened to his words. It is altogether of grace, wholly heavenly and divine, and therefore nature, sense, and reason have no place here. It is a divine bringing into the heart of the power and presence, grace and glory, love and blood of Christ in a way that may be felt but never described. Under these spiritual operations and influences,—for it is the Spirit's work to take of the things of Christ and reveal them to the soul; it is his covenant office to testify of Jesus,—under these sacred influences, divine anointings, and gracious operations, Christ is made known unto the heart and looked unto, according to his own word: "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth."

February 17

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."
Romans 8:28

To look at all our varied circumstances; and then to believe that if we are the lovers of God, all things we experience are working together for our spiritual good, what a view does it give us of the wisdom, grace, and power of a wonder-working God! And we are to measure this good, not by what the creature thinks, but by what God himself has declared to be good in his word, and what we have felt to be good in our soul's experience. Have your trials humbled you, made you meek and lowly? They have done you good. Have they stirred up a spirit of prayer in your bosom, made you sigh, cry, and groan for the Lord to appear, visit, or bless your soul? They have done you good. Have they opened up those parts of God's word which are full of mercy and comfort to his afflicted people? Have they stripped off the covering that is too narrow? Have they made you more sincere, more earnest, more spiritual, more heavenly-minded, more convinced that the Lord Jesus can alone bless and comfort your soul? They have done you good. Have they been the means in God's hand of giving you a lift in hearing the preached word, of opening your ears to hear none but the true servants of God, those who enter into a tried path,

and describe a gracious experience? Have they made the Bible more precious to you, the promises more sweet, the dealings of God with your soul more prized? They have done you good.

February 18

"Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption." Psalm 130:7

"Let Israel hope in the Lord." Has she ceased to hope in the creature? Does she despair of salvation from any other source or quarter but the blood of the Lamb? Is she crying, sighing, longing, panting, and begging of the Lord to appear in her soul? "Let Israel," then, "hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy." He will not spurn his waiting Israel from his feet; he will not smite her with the lightnings of his wrath; he will shew mercy to the poor, guilty sinner that comes with dust upon his head, clothed with sackcloth and ashes, mourning and lamenting his vileness before the Lord. There is no wrath in the bosom of the Lord against him; there is mercy, pardoning mercy in the bosom of Jehovah for Israel; therefore "let Israel hope in the Lord." If Israel look to herself, she cannot have one grain of hope; if she look to the law, she cannot have one ray of expectation; or if she look to an arm of flesh, none can do her good. But if Israel look "to the hills from whence cometh her help"—to God the Father, in his electing love—to God the Son, in his redeeming blood—to God the Spirit, in his sanctifying work; if Israel is thus enabled to anchor within the veil, thus to "hope in the Lord," her hope shall not be cut off, shall not be disappointed; it shall not be as "the hope of the hypocrite," a spider's web, that the first gust of eternal displeasure shall for ever sweep away.

February 19

"But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." 1 Corinthians 1:30

Consider what heavenly blessings there are for those who have a living union with the Son of God. Everything is provided for them

that shall be for their salvation and their sanctification: not a single blessing has God withheld that shall be for their eternal good. View them as foolish, ignorant, unable to see the way, puzzled and perplexed by a thousand difficulties, harassed by sin, tempted by Satan, far off upon the sea. How shall they reach the heavenly shore? God, by an infinite act of sovereign love, has made his dear Son to be their "wisdom," so that none shall err so as to err fatally; none shall miss the road for want of heavenly direction to find it or walk in it. Their glorious Head, who is in heaven, is made of God unto them wisdom on earth to bring them to their heavenly inheritance. He opens up his word to their heart; he sends down a ray of light into their bosom, illuminating the sacred page and guiding their feet into the way of truth and peace. If they wander, he brings them back; if they stumble, he raises them up; and whatever be the difficulties that beset their path, sooner or later some kind direction or heavenly admonition comes from his gracious Majesty. Thus the wayfaring man, though a fool, does not err in the way of life, for his gracious Lord being his "wisdom" leads him safely along through every difficulty until he sets him before his face in glory.

February 20

"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

It is through the word that the soul in the first instance is cleansed. It is by the word that the soul is begotten again unto eternal life. It is, too, by the word applied to the heart that the blessed Spirit from time to time keeps alive communion with the Lord Jesus Christ. Is it not so in vital experience? Some passage of Scripture drops into the soul, some promise comes warm into the heart, and as it comes it makes way for itself. It enters the heart, breaks down the feelings, melts the soul, and draws forth living faith to flow unto and centre alone in the "altogether lovely." There are many times and seasons when the word of God is to us a dead letter; we see and feel no sweetness in it. But there are other times, through mercy, when the word of God is made sweet and precious to us; when we can say, with the prophet of old, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart" (Jer. 15:16). It

was so in the case of David. He says, they are "more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb" (Psalm 19:10). When this is felt, the sure effect is to bring the soul into communion with the Lord Jesus, who is the true word of God, and makes use of the written word to draw us near unto himself.

February 21

"Who loved me, and gave himself for me." Galatians 2:20

Many of the saints of God may not be so highly favoured as to take up into their lips Paul's language of strong, personal assurance. They may hope, and at times may rise beyond a hope, into a sweet confidence, by the shining in of the Sun of righteousness, that the Son of God has loved them, and given himself for them. But the strength of Paul's persuasion and the full expression of his confidence so far outstrip both their assurance and their language, that many real saints of God confess they come short both in heart and tongue. Yet their coming short of this blessed certainty as an enjoyed reality in the heart, and as a declared confidence by the mouth—for conscience and tongue must move together where God works—does not affect the fact. Clouds and mists sometimes obscure the sun, but they do not blot him out of the sky. So the mists and fogs of unbelief may obscure the Sun of righteousness, yet they do not blot him out of the spiritual hemisphere. He still loved you and gave himself for you who believe in his name, though you may not be able to rise up to the faith of Paul, or speak with the same fulness of assurance. The bud has the same union with the vine as the branch, but not the same strength of union; the babe is as much a member of the family as the grown-up son, but has not the same knowledge of its relationship; the foot is as much a part of the body as the eye or the hand, though it has not the same nearness to the head, or the same honours and employments.

February 22

"I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him." Micah 7:9

It is a view of our sins against God that enables us to bear the indignation of the Lord against us and them. As long as we are left to a spirit of pride and self-righteousness, we murmur at the Lord's dealings when his hand lies heavy upon us. But let us only truly feel what we rightly deserve: that will silence at once all murmuring. You may murmur and rebel sometimes at your hard lot in providence; but if you feel what you deserve, it will make you water with tears of repentance the hardest cross. So in grace, if you feel the weight of your sins, and mourn and sigh because you have sinned against God, you can lift up your hands sometimes with holy wonder at God's long-suffering mercy that he has borne with you so long; that he has not smitten you to the earth, or sent your guilty soul to hell. You will see, too, that the heaviest strokes were but fatherly chastenings; that the rod was dipped in love; and that it was for your good and his glory that it was laid on. When this sense of merited indignation comes into the soul, then meekness and submission come with it, and it can say with the prophet, "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him." You would not escape the rod if you might. As Cowper says,

**"Bastards may escape the rod,
Sunk in earthly, vain delight;
But the true-born child of God
Must not, would not if he might."**

February 23

"He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure." 2 Samuel 23:5

O the blessedness of having a manifest interest in the blood of the covenant, and thus to have a testimony that God has made a covenant with his dear Son upon our behalf; that our names are written in the book of life; and that Christ is our Mediator at the right hand of the Father! What are all earthly blessings compared with this? What are health and strength and riches and all the goods of this life; what is everything that the carnal heart can desire or the covetous mind grasp; what is all compared with an interest in the everlasting covenant, and in the love and blood and righteousness of the Lord the Lamb? What is earth, with all its

attractions, compared with an interest in the precious, precious blood of a dying Jesus? You will find it so when you come to lie upon a bed of languishing and pain; when the cold drops of sweat stand upon your forehead, and the last enemy is about to grasp you by the throat. What will your anxious strivings to have something and be something more than you have or are,—aye, I may add, your successes,—what will they do for you then? Only be so many ghastly spectres of the past to terrify and alarm your conscience, to see what shadows you have been seeking to grasp to the neglect of solid substance. But in that solemn hour to have a testimony from God of pardon and peace, will make smooth a dying bed, will calm all anxious fears, and will take you safe through the dark valley of the shadow of death.

February 24

"As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." 2 Corinthians 6:10

Though the Christian in himself is sorrowful, and has reason to be so all the day long, yet so far as he has any views by faith of the Lord Jesus Christ, any good hope through grace, or any manifestation of his Person, work, blood, and love, he may be always rejoicing. Nay, his very sorrow opens up a way for joy. There is no room in a worldly heart for spiritual joy, for the Lord gives joy in sorrow. When the heart is sunk in gloom and fear, and doubt and distress take possession of the mind, when family afflictions, or painful bereavements, or trying circumstances fill the heart with grief and dismay, that is the very time for the Lord to pour joy into the soul. As afflictions abound, so do consolations. Sorrow and joy are linked together as night and day, as sun and moon, as heaven and earth. Without sorrow there can be no joy, for joy is its counterpoise. If you had everything your heart could desire, what room would there be for spiritual joy? But when all sources of earthly joy dry up, and there is nothing but sorrow and trouble before you in this world, as long as life remains; when you are afflicted in body, poor in circumstances, tried in your family, distressed in your mind, and there is nothing but grief and misery,—then you have room made in your heart to receive the sweet consolations of God's grace.

February 25

"He will keep the feet of his saints." 1 Samuel 2:9

The Lord sees his poor scattered pilgrims travelling through a vale of tears, journeying through a waste howling wilderness, a path beset with gins, traps, and snares in every direction. How can they escape? Why, the Lord keeps their feet, carries them through every rough place, as a tender parent carries a little child; when about to fall, graciously lays the everlasting arms underneath them, and when tottering and stumbling, and their feet ready to slip, mercifully upholds them from falling altogether. Thus the Lord keeps the feet of his saints. But do you think that he has not different ways for different feet? The God of creation has not made two flowers, nor two leaves upon a tree alike; and will he cause all his people to walk in precisely the same path? No; we have each our path, each our besetment, each our trials, each peculiar traps and snares laid for our feet. And the wisdom of the all-wise and only-wise God is shewn by his eyes being in every place, marking the footsteps of every pilgrim, suiting his remedies to meet their individual case and necessity, appearing for them when nobody else could do them any good; watching so tenderly over them, as though the eyes of his affection were bent on one individual; and carefully noting the goings of each, as though all the powers of the Godhead were concentrated on that one person to keep him from harm.

February 26

"Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions? If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents." Song of Solomon 1:7, 8

If you say that you want food and rest, to know Christ for yourself and to enjoy his presence and love, the Lord gives you two directions to attain to the enjoyment of these two blessings: 1. to tread in the footsteps of the flock, to walk in the way in which the saints of old have walked, in the path of tribulation and faith; 2. if

you are favoured in any way to live within reach of the shepherds' tents, and have the privilege of hearing the gospel preached in its purity and power, to bring your kids in your arms beside the tent, and to put them down to feed on the juicy herbage. And be assured that if you come to the shepherds' tents with a prayerful spirit and a hungry soul, begging of God to open your heart to receive the word with power, and to crown it with his blessing, sooner or later you will find food and rest. But these things go together. If you want food you will go where it is to be got; if you want rest you will go where it is to be obtained. You will get neither in the world. But as you get food and rest beside the shepherds' tents you will find that it is really and truly Jesus himself who feeds, and Jesus himself who makes you lie down and rest. The shepherds are but servants. Christ is the Bridegroom, and he alone has the Bride. The shepherds' joy is to bring the sheep to Christ that they may find food and rest in him; and as your heart receives the joyful sound, and you feel the power of God's truth in your soul, there will be a doing what Christ bids as well as enjoying what Christ reveals.

February 27

"Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father." 1 Thessalonians 1:3

It is air and exercise that keep the body healthy. So it is spiritually. The graces of the Spirit need to be often exercised and well aired to keep them healthy—aired with the pure breath of heaven, and exercised with the operations of the Holy Ghost drawing them forth into activity and energy. And just as in nature a man gains health and strength by using his limbs and working his muscles, so in spiritual things these graces of the Spirit gain strength by use and exercise. Faith by working hard, hope by enduring much, and love by labouring long in the face of difficulties, become each more strengthened, more confirmed, more active, healthy, and energetic. It is a false faith to sleep all day in the sluggard's arm-chair; it is the hypocrite's hope who endures nothing for Christ's sake; it is love in lip and tongue and name that undergoes no labour to please the beloved Object. Look at these things in the light of your own experience. See whether you can find not only faith in your heart, but its work; not only

hope, but its patience; not only love, but its labour. The Apostle remembered without ceasing their work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope. His eye was fixed not so much upon their Christian graces as their exercises of them, and as he saw their faith working diligently, their hope suffering patiently, and their love labouring unweariedly for the glory of God and the good of his people, he was satisfied they were the graces of the Spirit wrought in their heart by a divine power.

February 28

"God, who is rich in mercy." Ephesians 2:4

Mercy well suits a sensible sinner; and the riches of God's mercy especially suit those who are brought down in real extremity of soul to see and feel how abundant he must be in mercy, how overflowing in the exceeding riches of his grace, that they may venture to entertain a hope of an interest in it, as freely coming down to them in their low and lost estate. We know mercy, feelingly and experimentally, before we know love. Love is first in God, but it is not first in our experience of it; nor do we go to God when made first to feel our need of mercy, as if we were objects of his love, or could venture to entertain the remotest idea that a God so holy could love a sinner so vile; but we go to him to obtain mercy, as the Apostle speaks: "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 4:16). Mercy is the first thing sought for at the throne of grace; and when this mercy is obtained, then grace is ever after continually sought for to help the helpless and dependent soul in every time of need, which need lasts all through life; and until grace is swallowed up in glory. Was not the simple plea for mercy the publican's prayer in the temple, "God be merciful to me a sinner?" And such has been the prayer of all and every one, whose heart has been touched by the finger of God.

February 29

"And hath put all things under his feet." Ephesians 1:22

How vast, how numerous, how complicated are the various events and circumstances which attend the Church of God here below, as she travels onward to her heavenly home! But if all *things* as well as all persons are put under Jesus' feet, there cannot be a single circumstance over which he has not supreme control. Everything in providence and everything in grace are alike subject to his disposal. There is not a trial or temptation, an affliction of body or soul, a loss, a cross, a painful bereavement, a vexation, grief or disappointment, a case, state or condition, which is not put under Jesus' feet. He has sovereign, supreme disposal over all events and circumstances. As possessed of infinite knowledge he sees them, as possessed of infinite wisdom he can manage them, and as possessed of infinite power he can dispose and direct them for our good and his own glory. How much trouble and anxiety should we save ourselves, could we firmly believe, realise, and act on this! If we could see by the eye of faith that every foe and every fear, every difficulty and perplexity, every trying or painful circumstance, every looked-for or unlooked-for event, every source of care, whether at present or in prospect, are all, as put under his feet, at his sovereign disposal, what a load of anxiety and care would be often taken off our shoulders!