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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

June 1

"Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Romans 8:34

As the soul is led and taught by the Spirit, it follows the Lord through all the various acts and sufferings of his life. The first spot to which the Holy Ghost takes the poor sinner is the cross of Jesus. That is the first real saving view we get of the Lord of life and glory; the Holy Ghost taking the poor guilty sinner, laden with the weight of a thousand sins, to the foot of the cross, and opening his eyes to see the Son of God bleeding there as a propitiation for sin. To be brought there by the power of the Holy Ghost, and receive that blessed mystery of the bleeding, suffering, and agonising Son of God into our hearts and consciences, is the first blessed discovery that God the Spirit favours us with.

But we pass on from that to see Jesus sleeping in the sepulchre; for we have to die ourselves, and we want to see the Forerunner who has entered into the grave for us. We want to feel that we can lie down in the grave, and see that narrow bed in which our body will one day be stretched, in a measure perfumed by Jesus having lain there before us. And when we have travelled from the cross to the sepulchre, we then go a step farther; to the resurrection of the Lord of life and glory. On the third day we view him by faith springing out of the sepulchre in which he lay entombed, rising up in glory and power for our justification. And thus we see in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus the hope of the soul for a blessed immortality. But we do not tarry there; as the Lord the Spirit gives us eyes to see, and moves our heart to feel, we travel one step farther; this is, to the ascension of the Lord of life and glory; not tarrying on earth (for he tarried not there), but mounting up to see him sitting at the right hand of the Father, as the Mediator between God and man, as the divine Intercessor, as the glorious Head of grace, as communicating out of his own fulness gifts and graces unto poor and needy souls, who are living in daily and hourly bankruptcy. These want to receive perpetual supplies of life, light, and grace out of his fulness, to keep them in the way wherein the Lord has set their feet. So that the ascension of the Lord Jesus up on high, and his sitting at the right hand of God, when received into the conscience under the power of the Spirit, is not a dry doctrine, not a dead bone of a withered skeleton; but is so connected with all the feelings of our heart, with all our misery

and ruin, with all our wretchedness, with all our guilt, with all our daily wants, with all our hourly necessities, that, when led by the Spirit's teaching to look at this Mediator at the right hand of the Father, it becomes a truth full of blessed sweetness and power to the heaven-taught soul.

June 2

"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." John 6:37

Now, poor sinner, upon whose head the beams of a fiery law are darting; now, poor sinner, distressed in thy mind, guilty in thy conscience, plagued with a thousand temptations, beset by innumerable doubts and fears, canst thou not look up a little out of thy gloom and sadness, and see that the eternal God is thy refuge? Dost thou not cleave to him with the utmost of thy power, as being beaten out of every other? Hast thou not taken hold of his strength that thou mayest make peace with him? Art thou not looking to him? And does he not say, "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth?" He bids thee look at him as Moses bade the Israelites look to the brazen serpent. Poor sinner, groaning under the weight of thy transgression, he bids thee look to him. Has the blessed Lord, he into whose lips grace was poured, not said, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out?" Why should you not look? Why should you not come to him? Will he cast you out? Do you not feel the secret drawings of his grace, movements upon your heart which make you come often with strong crying and tears, with groans and sighs, earnest, vehement, and continual supplications? What are these but the inward teachings of God, as our Lord said, "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." And do you not know that the Lord himself said, that no man can come to him except the Father which hath sent him draw him? These comings, therefore, of thy soul in earnest and vehement desire are, according to his own testimony, from the special teachings and gracious drawings of God in thee. Having made his dear Son to be the refuge of thy soul, he is now drawing thee unto him that thou mayest find pardon and peace in him. But perhaps you will say, "I am so sinful, so guilty, I have been such a sinner, much worse than you can form any conception of; and it is this

which sinks me so low." Art thou lower than brother Jonah when he was in the whale's belly, and, in his own feelings, in the belly of hell? And yet what said he? "Yet will I look again toward thy holy temple." Canst thou not look again toward the holy temple? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? So David felt and feared, but it was not so, for "his mercy endureth for ever;" and that is a long and strong word. Look and live, look and live!

June 3

"In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise." Ephesians 1:13

Sealing is subsequent to believing: "In whom after ye believed, ye were sealed." In legal documents the writing always precedes the sealing. That is the last act, and follows even the signing, putting an attesting stamp on the whole document, from the first word to the last signature. So in grace. The Spirit begins the work. He writes the first lines of divine truth on the soul; he makes the first impression on the heart of stone, which under his operation becomes a heart of flesh; he writes every truth that he thus makes known on the fleshy tables of the heart. He thus gives faith and hope, and then he comes with his special inward witness, and seals the truth and reality of his own work, so as not only to make it plain and clear, but to ratify and confirm it beyond all doubt and fear, questioning or dispute, either by ourself or others. The work of God on the soul sometimes seems to lie as if dead and dormant; little prayer goes up, little answer comes down. Then doubts and fears arise whether the work be genuine, and much bondage and darkness sensibly gather over the mind like a dark and gloomy cloud, which much obscures the handwriting of the divine finger. Now the blessed Spirit revives his work by some application of the word with power, some softening and melting of the hard heart by his divine influence, some communication of a spirit of prayer, some discovery of the gracious Lord, some strengthening of faith, reviving of hope, and drawing forth of love. He thus puts the seal on his own work, and stamps it as genuine. Under the sweetness and blessedness of this attesting seal many a poor child of God can look back to this and that testimony, this and that Ebenezer, this and that hill Mizar, this and that deliverance, blessing, manifestation, answer to prayer, special season under the word or on his knees, which were almost lost and buried in unbelief and

confusion. But especially when he bears witness with their spirit that they are the children of God, and shedding abroad the love of God in their heart becomes in them the Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, "Abba, Father," is his sealing manifest and complete.

June 4

**"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."
Romans 3:23**

What is it to "come short of the glory of God?" It is to act without a view to his glory. Now everything that we have ever done, which has not been done with a single eye to God's glory, has the brand of sin stamped on it. But who in an unregenerate state, who, as the fallen son of a fallen parent, ever had an eye to the glory of God? Did such a thing ever enter into man's natural heart as to speak to God's glory, act to his glory, consult his glory, and live to his glory? Before ever such a thought, such a desire can cross our breast, we must have seen Him who is invisible; we must have had a view by faith of the glory of the Three-One God; we must have had a single eye given us by the Holy Ghost to see that glory outshining all creature good. Every movement, then, of the selfish heart, every desire to gratify, please and exalt self, is a coming short of the glory of God. This stamps all natural men's religious services with the brand of sin. It leaves the religious in the same awful state as the irreligious; it hews down the professing world with the same sword that cuts down the profane world. When men in a state of nature are what is called "religious," is their religion's end and aim the glory of God, the glory of free grace, the glory of the Mediator between God and man, the glory of the Holy Ghost, the only Teacher of God's people? Take it in its best, its brightest shape, is it not another form of selfishness, to exalt their own righteousness, and climb to heaven by the ladder of their own doings? And is not this a coming short of the glory of God? But besides that, the very glory of God requires that every one accepted in his sight should be without spot, speck, stain or blemish. A pure God cannot accept, cannot look upon, cannot be pleased with impurity; and just in proportion to the infinite purity and ineffable holiness of Jehovah, must all impurity, all carnality, all unholiness, and the slightest deviation from absolute perfection be hateful and horrible in his sight.

Now this all the election of grace are brought more or less to feel. It is the solemn and indispensable preparation of the heart for mercy; it is the introduction by the hand of the Spirit into the antechamber of the King of kings. It is the bringing of the soul to that spot, that only spot, where grace is felt, received, and known. It is, therefore, utterly indispensable for the election of grace, for all the ransomed and quickened family of God, to have this felt in their conscience, that they "have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

June 5

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." Hebrews 10:19

Nothing will satisfy a living soul but coming "into the holiest." He wants to have communion with God, the holy, holy, holy Lord God of hosts. He is not dealing with a God distant and afar off, an idol, a God in whom he has neither faith, nor hope, nor love; who can neither see, nor hear, nor save; a God of his own conception or of some indistinct, traditional opinion; but he feels in his very conscience that he is carrying on a sacred and holy intercourse with the God of heaven and earth, the God who has made himself in some measure known to his soul as the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. With him he has to do; to him he must come; and with him he must hold holy communion. Before his heart-searching eyes he feels he stands; into his ever-open ears he pours his petition; to his mercy and pity he appeals; his compassion he craves; his love he seeks; his salvation he longs for; and his presence above all things he earnestly desires. So he must come into the holiest, for there God dwells; and to come unto God is to come there. The man who thus feels and acts is an Israelite indeed in whom there is no guile; one of the true circumcision who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. Others are satisfied with the courts of the house, with admiring the external building, or the painted windows, carved pews, and long drawn aisles; with the mere worship of God as so much lip service. But the living soul goes beyond all that into the very heart of the sanctuary itself. As the high priest on the day of atonement did not tarry amongst the

people in the court, nor with the priests in the holy place, but pressed on, ever pressed on through the thick veil until he got into the holy of holies; so with the saint of God—he does not tarry in the outer court with the profane, nor in the sanctuary with the professor, so as to be satisfied with seeing God with a veil between. But he must come into that immediate presence of God, where he may see something of his grace, behold something of his glory, feel something of his mercy, and taste something of his power. And this makes him press forward into the holiest.

June 6

"Thus saith the Lord; I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown." Jeremiah 2:2

If we look at salvation, we shall see that it consists of three parts; salvation past, salvation present, and salvation future. Salvation past consists in having our names written in the Lamb's book of life before the foundation of the world. Salvation present consists in the manifestation of Jesus to the soul, whereby he betroths it to himself. And salvation future consists in the eternal enjoyment of Christ, when the elect shall sit down to the marriage-supper of the Lamb, and be for ever with the Lord. Now, as none will ever enjoy salvation future who have no interest in salvation past; in other words, as none will ever be with Christ in eternal glory whose names were not written in the book of life from all eternity; so none will enjoy salvation future, who live and die without enjoying salvation present. In other words, none will live for ever with Christ in glory who are not betrothed to him in this life by the manifestations of himself to their soul. According to the Jewish custom, the man, at the time of betrothing, gave the bride a piece of silver before witnesses, saying to her, "Receive this piece of silver as a pledge that at such a time you shall become my spouse." And the parties then exchanged rings. This meeting of the espoused parties together, who then saw each other for the first time, is a sweet type of the first meeting of the soul with Jesus. The damsel had heard of the youth, but till then had never seen him; as seeking souls hear of Jesus by the hearing of the ear, before their eyes see him. The vail was upon her face (Gen. 24:65), as the vail is upon the heart (2 Cor.3:15), until Jesus rends it in twain from the top to the bottom. The bridegroom gave his

betrothed a piece of silver, as a pledge that all he had was hers. And thus Christ gives to the soul, whom he betroths to himself by his own manifestations, a pledge, a token, a testimony, which, in itself, is the first-fruits and assurance of eternal glory. The parties exchanged rings, as pledges of mutual affection and eternal faithfulness. And thus, when Christ reveals himself to the soul in his dying love, mutual engagements, mutual promises, mutual assurances and pledges of faithfulness and love pass between the soul and him. "One shall say, I am the Lord's, and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob, and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord." At these seasons, "in the day of the King's espousals," the language of the soul is, "I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste; he brought me to the banqueting-house, and his banner over me was love."

June 7

"Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at." Zechariah 3:8

A sinner saved is a spectacle for angels to contemplate. As the Apostle says, "We are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels and to men." The ancients used to say that "a good man struggling with difficulties was a sight for the gods to look at." We may say, with all Christian truth, that the mysteries of redemption are "things the angels desire to look into;" and among the mysteries of redemption, what greater than a redeemed sinner? That a man who deserves, by sin original and sin actual, nothing but the eternal wrath of God, should be lifted out of perdition justly merited into salvation to which he can have no claim, must indeed ever be a holy wonder. And that you or I should ever have been fixed on in the electing love of God, ever have been given to Jesus to redeem, ever quickened by the Spirit to feel our lost, ruined state, ever blessed with any discovery of the Lord Jesus Christ and of his saving grace,—this is and ever must be a matter of holy astonishment here, and will be a theme for endless praise hereafter. To see a man altogether so different from what he once was; once so careless, carnal, ignorant, unconcerned; to see that man now upon his knees begging for mercy, the tears streaming down his face, his bosom heaving with convulsive sighs, his eyes looking upward that pardon may reach him in his desperate state,—is not that a man to be looked at with wonder and admiration? To see a man preferring one smile from the face of Jesus, and one word from his peace-speaking lips to all the titles, honours, pleasures, and power that the world can bestow; why, surely if there be a wonder upon earth, that man is one. Was not this the very feeling of the disciples when Saul first "preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God?" "All that heard him were amazed, and said, Is not this he that persecuted the Church of God?" So we look and wonder, and feel at times a holy joy that he who reigns at God's right hand is ever adding trophies to his immortal crown. And whenever we see any of those near and dear to us in the flesh; be it husband, wife, sister, brother, child, relative, or friend, touched by the finger of this all-conquering Lord, subdued by his grace, and wrought upon by his Spirit, then not only do we look upon such with holy wonder, but with the tenderest affection, mingled with the tears of thankful praise to the God of all our mercies.

June 8

"I am God, and not man." Hosea 11:9

We speak sometimes of the attributes of God, and we use the words to help our conception. But God, strictly speaking, has no attributes. His attributes are himself. We speak, for instance, of the love of God, but God is love; of the justice of God, but God is just; of the holiness of God, but God is holy; of the purity of God, but God is pure. As he is all love, so he is all justice, all purity, all holiness. Love, then, is infinite, because God is infinite; his very name, his very character, his very nature, his very essence is infinite love. He would cease to be God if he did not love, and if that love were not as large as himself, as infinite as his own self-existent, incomprehensible essence. The love of the Son of God, as God the Son, is co-equal and co-eternal with the love of the Father; for the holy Trinity has not three distinct loves, either in date or degree. The Father loves from all eternity; the Holy Ghost loves from all eternity. The love of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, as one, equal, indivisible, infinite Jehovah cannot be otherwise but One. We therefore read of "the love of God," that is the Father (2 Cor. 13:14); of "the love of the Son" (Gal. 2:20); and of "the love of the Spirit" (Rom. 15:30). This love being infinite, can bear with all our infirmities, with all those grievous sins that would, unless that love were boundless, have long ago broken it utterly through. This is beautifully expressed by the prophet: "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man."

June 9

"For we which have believed do enter into rest." Hebrews 4:3

To rest is to lean upon something. Is it not? So spiritually. We want to lean upon something. The Lord himself has given us this figure. "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved?" The figure of "a rock" on which the Church

is built, "the foundation" which God has laid in Zion, points to the same idea, that of leaning or dependence. Now when the soul comes to lean upon Jesus, and depend wholly and solely on him, it enters into the sweetness of the invitation. Have we not leant upon a thousand things? And what have they proved? Broken reeds that have run into our hands, and pierced us. Our own strength and resolutions, the world and the church, sinners and saints, friends and enemies, have they not all proved, more or less, broken reeds? The more we have leant upon them, like a man leaning upon a sword, the more have they pierced our souls. The Lord himself has to wean us from the world, from friends, from enemies, from self, in order to bring us to lean upon himself; and every prop he will remove, sooner or later, that we may lean wholly and solely upon his Person, love, blood, and righteousness.

But there is another idea in the word "rest"—termination. When we are walking, running, or in any way moving, we are still going onwards; we have not got to the termination of our journey. But when we come to the termination of that we have been doing, we rest. So spiritually. As long as we are engaged in setting up our own righteousness, in labouring under the law, there is no termination of our labours. But when we come to the glorious Person of the Son of God, when we hang upon his atoning blood, dying love, and glorious righteousness, and feel them sweet, precious, and suitable, then there is rest. "We which have believed do enter into rest," says the Apostle. His legal labours are all terminated. His hopes and expectations flow unto, and centre in Jesus—there they end, there they terminate; such a termination as a river finds in the boundless ocean.

June 10

"The fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." 1 Corinthians 3:13

The fire which is to prove every man's work of what sort it is, is not merely God's wrath as manifested at the last day; but his fire as significative of the fiery trial which takes place in this life, and which God mercifully brings upon his people to burn up their wood, hay, and stubble. Now it is an inestimable mercy to have all this combustible material burnt up before we come to a death-bed. Fiery trials, such as God sends through afflictions,

temptations, distressing feelings, and painful soul exercises, will burn up the wood, hay, and stubble which any of his saints may have gathered up as a superstructure. Guilt pressing upon a man's conscience, the terrors of the Almighty in a fiery law, his arrows deeply fixed in the breast and drying up the spirit, fears of death, hell, and judgment, and the terrible consequences of dying under the wrath of God, all these are a part of the fiery trial which burns up the wood, hay, and stubble heaped by Babel builders on the foundation. All sink into black ashes before this fire, which proves what they are, and what a vain refuge they afford in the day of trouble.

What then stands the fiery trial? God's work upon the soul, the faith that he implants by his own Spirit. It may be weak; it may be, it must be tried; it may seem at times scarcely to exist; and yet being of God, it stands every storm, and lives at last. A good hope through grace, a hope of God's own communicating and maintaining,—like a well-trying anchor, this will stand the storm; like gold and silver, this will bear the hottest furnace; lose its dross, but not lose the pure material, but be refined, purified, and manifested all the more as genuine metal. So, too, these "precious stones" (1 Cor. 3:12), these heavenly visits, sweet manifestations, blessed promises, comforting discoveries, and gracious revelations of the Son of God, with the whispers of his dying, bleeding love,—these heavenly jewels can never be lost and never be burnt up. They may be tried, and that keenly and sharply, but being of God's gift and operation, they are essentially indestructible.

June 11

**"But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength."
Isaiah 40:31**

How different the religion of a living soul is from the religion of a dead professor! The religion of a dead professor begins in self, and ends in self; begins in his own wisdom, and ends in his own folly; begins in his own strength, and ends in his own weakness; begins in his own righteousness, and ends in his own damnation. There is in him never any going out of soul after God, no secret dealings with the Lord, no actings of faith upon the divine perfections. But the child of God, though he is often faint, weary, and exhausted with many difficulties, burdens and sorrows; yet

when the Lord does shew himself, and renews his strength, he soars aloft, and never ceases to mount up on the wings of faith and love till he penetrates into the very sanctuary of the most High. A living soul never can be satisfied except in living union and communion with the Lord of life and glory. Everything short of that leaves it empty. All the things of time and sense leave a child of God unsatisfied. Nothing but vital union and communion with the Lord of life, to feel his presence, taste his love, enjoy his favour, see his glory—nothing but this will ever satisfy the wants of ransomed and regenerated souls. This the Lord indulges his people with. "They shall renew their strength." They shall not be always lying groaning on the ground, not always swooning away through the wounds made by sin, not always chained down by the fetters of the world, not always hunted in their souls like a partridge upon the mountains. There shall be a renewal of their strength; and in their renewal, "they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

June 12

"I will satisfy her poor with bread." Psalm 132:15

What a sweetness there is in the word "satisfy!" The world cannot satisfy you and me. Have we not tried, some of us perhaps for many years, to get some satisfaction from it? But can wife or husband "satisfy" us? Can children or relatives "satisfy" us? Can all the world calls good or great "satisfy" us? Can the pleasures of sin "satisfy" us? Is there not in all an aching void? Do we not reap dissatisfaction and disappointment from everything that is of the creature, and of the flesh? Do we not find that there is little else but sorrow to be reaped from everything in this world? I am sure I find, and have found for some years, that there is little else to be gathered from the world but disappointment, dissatisfaction, "vanity and vexation of spirit." The poor soul looks round upon the world and the creature, upon all the occupations, amusements and relations of life, and finds all one melancholy harvest, so that all it reaps is sorrow, perplexity, and dissatisfaction. Now when a man is brought here, to want satisfaction, something to make him happy, something to fill up the aching void, something to bind up broken bones, bleeding wounds, and leprous sores, and after he has looked at everything, at doctrines, opinions, notions,

speculations, forms, rites and ceremonies in religion, at the world with all its charms, and at self with all its varied workings, and found nothing but bitterness of spirit, vexation and trouble in them all, and thus sinks down a miserable wretch, why, then when the Lord opens up to him something of the bread of life, he finds a satisfaction in that which he never could gain from any other quarter. And that is the reason why the Lord so afflicts his people; why some carry about with them such weak, suffering tabernacles, why some have so many family troubles, why others are so deeply steeped in poverty, why others have such rebellious children, and why others are so exercised with spiritual sorrows that they scarcely know what will be the end. It is all for one purpose, to make them miserable out of Christ, dissatisfied except with gospel food; to render them so wretched and uncomfortable that God alone can make them happy, and alone can speak consolation to their troubled minds.

June 13

"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." Ephesians 3:17

God bade Moses receive from the people oil for the light, and to set up a candlestick with seven lamps, ever burning with this oil, to illuminate the holy place. This light was typical, no doubt, of the Holy Spirit, but as it is only by his own gracious light that the Lord Jesus is made known, we may still say, that as Christ dwells in the heart by faith, faith giving him a place in the bosom, he dwells in the enlightened understanding of his saints, in the gracious light of his own manifestations. Have you not seen at times wondrous beauty in the gospel? Has not a sacred light shone, from time to time, upon the holy page, when it testified of Christ? Have you not seen wondrous glory in a free gospel, a gospel that saves the sinner, and yet magnifies and glorifies the justice of God; a gospel that reconciles every apparently jarring attribute, brings justice and mercy to kiss each other, and makes God to be just, and yet the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus? Now that light whereby you saw the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, was gospel light; and as Christ came into the heart in the glory of that light, he may be said to dwell in the shining light of his own grace.

You may complain, and often bitterly complain, of the darkness of your mind, and it may seem at times as if you never had any true light to shine into your soul. But I would have you carefully observe these two things; first, that the very cause of the darkness which you feel is the presence of light. The Apostle, therefore, says, "But all things that are reproved, (margin, 'discovered,') are made manifest by the light, for whatsoever doth make manifest is light" (Eph. 5:13). Apply these words to your case. Is there not something in you that discovers to you your darkness, and not only discovers, but reproveth it, and makes it manifest as a thing to be condemned? This secret something is light, for "whatsoever doth make manifest is light." And as you not only see it, but feel and mourn under it, it is "the light of life" which the Lord promised those should have who follow him. But observe, secondly, that whenever a little light dawns in again upon your soul, in that light you again see the same grace and glory in Christ which you saw in him before. Now, what a proof this is that Christ dwells in the heart by faith, and that the light in which we see him, is the light wherewith he hath enlightened our understanding, and himself dwells in it.

June 14

"Again, they are minished and brought low through oppression, affliction, and sorrow." Psalm 107:39

Oppression is the exercise of strength against weakness, the triumph of power over helplessness; so that poverty literally opens the door for oppression. It was so with Hezekiah. When Hezekiah was laid on his bed of sickness, death stared him in the face, and he expected he should be cut off, and cast into perdition. This opened the door for oppression; says he, "Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me." The cold damps of death stood upon his forehead, and despair pressed upon his soul. All his fleshly religion vanished in a moment; and he had but just faith and strength enough to cry out under the gripe of the oppressor's hand at his throat, "Undertake for me" (Isaiah 38:14).

Oppression then is a weight and a burden superadded to poverty. It is not the same thing as poverty, but it is an additional infliction to poverty. A man may be poor without being oppressed; but when he is poor and oppressed too, it makes the poverty tenfold

greater than before. Thus the Lord, in his dealings with his people in order to bring them down, first strips them and makes them poor; and when he has made them poor, and brought them into the depths of soul-destitution, then he causes burdens to lie on them as heavy loads, as though they would sink them into a never-ending hell. But here is the mark of life; the groaning, panting, sighing, and crying of the soul under the burden. The dead in sin feel nothing; the hypocrites in Zion feel nothing; and those that are at ease in a fleshly religion feel nothing. They may have powerful temptations; they may have alarming fears of going to hell; but as to any heavings up of a quickened conscience under the weight of oppression, as to any pouring out of the heart before God, or any giving vent to the distresses of the soul in sighs and cries unto the Lord to have mercy, to speak peace, and bring in a sweet manifestation of pardon and love, and to keep at this day after day, and night after night till the Lord appears; these are exercises unknown to the dead, and peculiar to the living family. A man may "cry for sorrow of heart, and howl for vexation of spirit" (Isaiah 65:14), but as the prophet speaks, "they do not cry unto God with their heart, when they howl upon their beds" (Hosea 7:14). But to breathe and pant after the Lord, to groan and sigh because of oppression, to wrestle with the Saviour and give him no rest until he appears in the soul—this inward work is known only to the elect, and is out of the reach of all who have a name to live while they are dead. It is the fruit of the pouring out of the spirit of grace and supplications into their soul; it is the work of the Holy Ghost in the heart, helping its infirmities, and making intercession in it with groanings which cannot be uttered.

June 15

"A time to kill, and a time to heal." Ecclesiastes 3:3

All through the Christian's life there will be "a time to kill, and a time to heal." We sometimes read in books, and hear in conversation, an experience of this kind—a work of grace commencing with very powerful convictions of sin, and the soul brought almost to the very brink of hell, and then a wonderful revelation of Jesus Christ, a powerful application of his atoning blood to the conscience, and a blessed manifestation of God's love to the soul. And then what follows? If we can credit their account, and they are not deceiving us, or not deceiving themselves, or if

we do not misunderstand their statements, they possess an unwavering assurance during the remainder of their sojourn upon earth. Sin and Satan never distress nor wound them; the flesh lies calm and tranquil, like the summer sea, never lashed up by angry gusts into a storm of fretfulness and rebellion; the sea birds of doubt and fear never flit with screams around them, as harbingers of a tempest, but the gale of divine favour gently fills their sail, and wafts them along till they reach the harbour of endless rest. Is this consistent with the Scriptures of truth? Does not the word of God set forth the path of a Christian as one of trial and temptation? Can a living soul pass through many scenes without ever being killed experimentally in his feelings as one of "the flock of slaughter?" Does not a chequered experience run through the whole of a Christian's life? Does the Scripture ever afford us the least warrant to believe that a man can be walking in the footsteps of a tempted, suffering Lord, who continues for months and years together at ease in Zion, without any trouble, exercise, grief, or distress in his soul? David never was there. Jeremiah never was there. Paul never was there. Heman never was there. Asaph never was there. You will find that no saints of God, whose experience is left on record in the Bible, ever were there; but their path was one of change and vicissitude; sometimes down, sometimes up, sometimes mourning, sometimes rejoicing, but never long together in one unvaried spot. The Spirit of the Lord, in carrying on this grand work in the hearts of God's people, will be continually operating in two distinct ways upon their souls. Jeremiah was a prophet of the Lord, and he was "set over the nations and over the kingdoms to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down"—thus ran one part of his commission "to build and to plant"—that was the second part of his office. These two distinct operations were to run through the whole of his mission; they were "the burden of the Lord," laid upon him at his first call to the prophetic office, and they continued during the whole of his ministry, a space of more than forty years. Did he, then, merely on one occasion pull down, and on one occasion build up? Was not the whole of his ministration, as evidenced in the prophecies that are contained in the book that bears his name, a continual pulling down with one hand, and building up with the other? So is it then with the ministration of the Spirit of the Lord in a vessel of mercy. He is continually killing, continually healing, continually casting down, continually raising up, now laying the soul low in the dust of self-abasement, and now building it up sweetly in Christ.

June 16

"In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve." Jeremiah 50:20

Some have feared lest in the great day their sins should be brought to light, and they put to shame by the exposure of their crimes to open view. But that will not be the case with the dear family of God. We read indeed that "many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake;" and whilst some awake "to everlasting life," others will awake "to shame and everlasting contempt," because their sins will be remembered and brought against them as evidences of their just condemnation. But the wise, who "shall shine as the brightness of the firmament," will rise to glory and honour and immortality, and not one of their sins will be remembered, charged, or brought against them. They will stand arrayed in Christ's perfect righteousness and washed in his blood, and will appear before the throne of God without spot or blemish. We can scarcely bear the recollection of our sins now. But what would become of us if the ghost of one unburied sin could flit before our eyes in the day when the Lord maketh up his jewels? If any one sin of the Lamb's wife could be remembered or brought against her, where would be the voice which John heard in Revelation, as "the voice of a great multitude, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth?" Now what was this voice? "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. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints" (Rev. 19:7, 8). But suppose that any of the past transgressions of the Lamb's wife could be brought against her on that marriage day, any one instance of unfaithfulness to her plighted troth, would it not be sufficient to prevent the marriage, mar the wedding supper, and drive the bride away for very shame? No, there is no truth in God's word more certain than the complete forgiveness of sins, and the presentation of the Church to Christ at the great day faultless before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy.

June 17

"And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem." Isaiah 27:13

Called by the sounding of the great trumpet, the perishing and outcasts "come." And what do they when they come? Do they trifle with sin, mock God, and abuse his grace? We read not so. They "worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem." They worship him in spirit and in truth; they worship him in the beauty of holiness. With purified hearts, purged consciences, and spiritual affections, they fall down before him, and their souls are impressed with a sense of the greatness of his love. They had no such heavenly feelings before; they could not therefore worship the Three-One God in the holy mount nor at Jerusalem. The great trumpet had not been blown, the jubilee had not come, the chains had not been knocked off, the shackles not loosed, and the prison-gates not thrown open; they could not therefore worship God freely, fully and calmly, with liberty of access and freedom of spirit.

But where do they worship him? "In the holy mount." The holy mount we may understand to signify spiritually Mount Zion, the place where Jesus sits in glory. This is the ancient declaration of the Father, "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." Here Jesus ever sits with love in his heart, grace in his lips, and the gospel in his hands. He sits on a holy hill, sways a holy sceptre, and rules in the hearts of a holy people. Men talk much of holiness; and indeed they may well talk of it, for it is a most solemn declaration, that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." But what sort of holiness are most men seeking after? A holiness of the flesh, a sanctity of the creature. They must do this and abstain from that; and if they do this and abstain from that, then they are holy. So many prayers must be said, so many chapters read, so many duties done. This is a Popish holiness, the sanctified austerity of a St. Dominic, not that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. That is of a very different nature—different every way, in source, way, means, and end. The only true holiness is that which is produced by the Spirit of God in the soul. Other source or fountain there is none. And how does he

produce it? By the law or the gospel? By the gospel, certainly. When the great trumpet of jubilee sounds in the soul, when it listens to the notes, and comes obedient to its call, it is to worship the Lord in his holy mount at Jerusalem. True holiness is then produced in the soul, for then there are given spiritual desires, spiritual affections, spiritual views, spiritual feelings, and spiritual hearts. This is the holiness which is wrought in the soul by the Spirit of God, and without which no man shall see the Lord.

June 18

"But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak." Hebrews 6:9

What is "salvation?" In looking at salvation, we must consider it in two points of view; salvation wrought out for us, and salvation wrought out in us. Salvation was wrought out for the Church by the finished work of the Son of God, when he cried with expiring breath, "It is finished." The salvation of "the remnant according to the election of grace" was then completely accomplished, so that nothing could be added to, or taken from it; for "by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified;" and thus the Church stands complete in Christ, "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."

But there is a salvation which is wrought out in the soul; the manifestation and application of that salvation which Jesus wrought out by his sufferings, blood-shedding, and death; and this we can only know experimentally so far as the blessed Spirit brings it into our hearts, and seals it there with holy unction and heavenly savour.

But all the people of God cannot feel sure they have this salvation as an experimental reality; doubts, fears, darkness, and temptations becloud their path; Satan hurls his fiery darts into their souls; and they are often unable to realise their interest in the Lord Jesus Christ and his salvation. They do not doubt that the Lord Jesus is the Saviour of those that believe; they know that there is no other refuge for their guilty souls but the blood of the Lamb. They are effectually stripped from cleaving to a covenant of works; they are not running after things that cannot profit them, nor hiding their heads in lying refuges; from all these things

they are effectually cut off by a work of grace on their souls. But through the unbelief of their hearts, the deadness of their frames, the barrenness of their souls, and the various temptations they are exercised with, they fear they have not the marks of God's family, and are not able to realise their interest in the love and blood of the Lamb. The Apostle, therefore, speaks of "things that accompany salvation;" that is, certain marks and signs, certain clear and indubitable tokens of the work of grace on the soul. And, speaking to the Hebrews, he says for their comfort and encouragement, "We are persuaded," whatever be your doubts and fears, whatever the darkness of your mind, however exercised with sharp and severe temptations, "we are persuaded" you are in possession of those "better things," of those "things that accompany salvation;" and that this salvation is therefore eternally yours.

June 19

"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." John 1:12

Wherever faith is given to the soul to "receive" Christ, there will be mingled with this faith, and blessedly accompanying it, love to the Lord of life and glory; and sometimes we may know the existence of faith when we cannot see it, by discerning the secret workings and actings of love towards that Saviour, in whom God has enabled us to believe. There will be, from time to time, in living souls a flowing forth of affection towards Jesus. From time to time, he gives the soul a glimpse of his Person; he shews himself, as the Scripture speaks, "through the lattice;" passing perhaps hastily by, but giving such a transient glimpse of the beauty of his Person, the excellency of his finished work, dying love, and atoning blood as ravishes the heart, and secretly draws forth every affection of the soul, so that there is a following hard after him, and a going out of the desires of the soul towards him. Thus, sometimes as we lie upon our bed, as we are engaged in our business, as we are occupied in our several pursuits of life; or at other times under the word, or reading the Scripture, the Lord is pleased secretly to work in the heart, and there is a melting down at the feet of Jesus, or a secret, soft, gentle going forth of love and affection towards him, whereby the soul prefers him before

thousands of gold and silver, and desires nothing so much as the inward manifestations of his love, grace, and blood.

And thus a living soul "receives" Christ; not merely as driven by necessity, but as also drawn by affection. He does not receive Christ, merely as a way of escape from "the wrath to come," merely as a something to save the soul from "the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched;" but mingled with necessity, sweetly and powerfully combined with it, and intimately and intricately working with it, there is the flowing forth of genuine affection and undissembled love, that goes out to him as the only object worthy our heart's affection, our spirit's worship, and our soul's desire. And we cannot say that less than this comes up to the meaning of the Scripture expression—"to receive Christ."

June 20

"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving."
Colossians 2:6, 7

It is a goodly sight to see a noble tree; and we may gather from the strength of the tree the strength of the soil, for only in deep and good soil will such trees grow. But look at the trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified! What depth and richness there is in the heavenly soil in which they are planted! View the true, real, and eternal Sonship, the glorious Deity of Jesus, and view that Deity in union with his suffering humanity! What soil is there! What breadth to hold thousands and thousands of noble trees! What depth for them to root in! What fertility to clothe them with verdure and load them with fruit! The most fertile natural soils may be exhausted, but this is inexhaustible. For can Deity be exhausted? Is it not its very nature to be infinite? And when we view what our most blessed Lord now is at the right hand of God, what a perfect and complete Saviour he is for the soul to lay hold of! Again, as the more deeply and widely that a tree spreads its roots into the soil, the more nourishment does it suck up; so it is with a believing heart. The more Christ is laid hold of by faith, the more the soul roots down into him; and the firmer hold it takes of him, and the more deeply

it roots into him, the stronger it stands, and the more heavenly nourishment it draws out of his fulness. This is being "rooted in Christ." A religion must always be a shallow, deceptive, and ruinous religion if it has not Christ to root in, for then it must be rooted in self. But if it is planted and rooted in Christ, then there is a sufficiency, a suitability, a glorious fulness in him in which the soul may take the deepest root, and not only for time but for eternity; for such a faith can never be confounded, such a love never perish, and such a hope be never put to shame.

June 21

**"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."
Psalm 119:105**

O what a change takes place in the soul's feelings toward the word of God when God is pleased to quicken it into divine life! Nor, indeed, need we wonder why there is such a marked revolution in our feelings toward it; for it is by the power of God's word upon the heart that this wondrous change is effected. "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth" (James 1:18). Other books may instruct or amuse; they may feed the intellect, charm the imagination, and cultivate the mind. But what more can they do? I do not mean by this to despise or set aside every other book but the Bible, for without books society itself, as at present constituted, could not exist; and to burn every book would be to throw us back into the barbarism of the Middle Ages. Let, then, books have their place as regards this life; but what can they do for us as regards the life to come? What can our renowned authors, our choice classics, our learned historians, our great dramatists, or our eloquent poets do for the soul in seasons of affliction and distress? How powerless all human writings are in these circumstances. Is it not as Hart well says,

**"What balm could wretches ever find
In wit, to heal affliction?
Or who can cure a troubled mind
With all the pomp of diction?"**

Now here is the blessedness of the word of God, that when everything else fails, that comes to our aid under all circumstances, so that we can never sink so low as to get beyond

the reach of some promise in the word of truth. We may come, and most probably shall come, to a spot where everything else will fail and give way but the word of God which for ever is settled in heaven. Then the word of grace and truth which reaches down to the lowest case, the word of promise upon which the Lord causes the soul to hope, will still turn towards us a friendly smile, and still encourage us under all circumstances to call upon the name of the Lord, and to hang upon his faithfulness who hath said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." Thus, under circumstances the most trying to flesh and blood, where nature stands aghast and reason fails, there the word of God will come in as a counsellor to drop in friendly advice, as a companion to cheer and support the mind by its tender sympathy; and as a friend to speak to the heart with a loving, affectionate voice. We need not wonder, then, how the word of God has been prized in all ages by the family of God; for it is written with such infinite wisdom, that it meets every case, suits every circumstance, fills up every aching void, and is adapted to every condition of life and every state both of body and soul.

June 22

"He led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye." Deuteronomy 32:10

"He led them about." This was true literally. What a circuitous, tangled, backward and forward route was that of the children of Israel in the wilderness! Yet every step was under God's direction; they never moved till the cloudy pillar led the way.

But how does the Lord lead about in grace? By leading his Israel into a path of which they do not see the end. One turn of the road hides the next. I have read that you may make a road with a curve at every quarter of a mile, and yet in a hundred miles the distance will not be so much as a mile more than a perfectly straight line. So in grace. The length of the road swallows up the turnings. But these turnings make the road seem more round about than it really is. All before us is hidden. For instance, when the Lord begins a work of grace, he brings convictions of sin, opens up the spirituality of the law, makes the soul feel guilty, guilty, guilty in every thought, word, and deed. But does a man in that condition

know what the Lord is about? Can he clearly trace out the work of God upon his soul? Is he able to say, "This, this is the work of God upon my heart?" For the most part, he knows not what is the matter with him; why he is so distressed; why he can take no rest; why the things of eternity keep rolling in upon his soul; why he stands in continual dread of the wrath to come; why his mind is so exercised with thoughts upon God; why he feels condemnation, bondage, and misery. Nor even when the Lord is pleased to raise him up to some hope, to apply some sweet promise to his soul, to encourage him in various ways under the ministry of the word, can he often take the full comfort of it. He may for a time, but it is soon gone, and he can scarcely believe it to be real. Unbelief suggests that it did not come exactly in the right way, or did not last long enough, or did not go deep enough, or was not just such as he has heard others speak of; and so he is filled with doubts, fears, and anxieties whether it was really from the Lord. But when God leads him on a step further; opens up the gospel, reveals Christ, drops into his heart some sweet testimony, gives him some blessed discovery of his interest in the Lord Jesus, and seals it with a divine witness in his heart, this banishes all his doubts and fears, and fills his soul with joy and peace. Yet even after this, when the sweet feeling is gone, he may sink again very low, and may question the reality of the revelation he has enjoyed. All this is "leading about;" for one turn of the road hides the other.

June 23

"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." Psalm 84:5, 6

David casts a glimpse here at those pilgrims who were taking their upward journey to worship God in Zion. He marks their road, and takes occasion to spiritualize it; for he says, "In whose heart," in whose experience, in whose soul, "are the ways" of these pilgrims Zionward.

What are these "ways?" It is this, that "passing through the valley of Baca, they make it a well." This valley of Baca appears to have been a very perilous pass, through which pilgrims journeyed toward Jerusalem; and on account of the difficulties,

dangers, and sufferings that they met with, it was named "the valley of Baca," or "the valley of weeping," "the vale of tears."

But the Psalmist says, "Blessed is the man in whose heart are the ways of them, who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well." Here is the distinctive character of the true pilgrim. Not that he is journeying merely through the "valley of Baca;" not that his eyes are drowned in tears; not that his heart is filled with sorrows; not that his soul is cut with temptations; not that his mind is tried by suffering. But this is his distinctive feature—he "makes it a well." This the ungodly know nothing of; this the professing world, for the most part, are entirely unacquainted with; but this is the secret which "no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen."

One feature of the "valley of Baca" was, that the burning sun above, and the parched ground beneath, at the time of year when the pilgrims travelled, made the whole valley arid and dry. But "they made it a well." There were wells dug in this valley of Baca for the pilgrims to slake their thirst at. And David, looking at these wells dug for the pilgrims, applies them spiritually to the refreshment that the Lord's people meet with in their course Zionward. "Make it a well;" that is, there are from time to time sweet refreshments in this valley of tears; there are bubblings up of divine consolation; there are fountains of living waters, streams of heavenly pleasures.

I remember a friend of mine telling me, that once while journeying through one of the deserts in Asia, he and his companions came to a well; and their disappointment when they found the well was dry he said no language could depict; their grief and trouble when, after hours' travelling, they came at night to encamp by the well, and found that the sun had dried it up, were indeed most acute. As, therefore, none but pilgrims through the dry and parched valley could adequately feel the sweetness of the natural well; so none but spiritual pilgrims, afflicted, exercised, and harassed, can appreciate the sweetness of the "pure water of life" with which the Lord at times refreshes the soul.

June 24

"They go from strength to strength." Psalm 84:7

"They go from strength to strength." It is in the margin, "from company to company." I rather think, that the meaning implied is, "they go from halting place to halting place." There were certain fixed spots where the whole company rested at night; as we read, when the infant Jesus tarried at Jerusalem, his parents knew it not: they supposed that he was "in the company;" that is, had gone on with the travelling pilgrims; but when night came, and they looked for him, he was not there.

These halting places were certain spots where the caravan of the travelling pilgrims rested at night; by these successive haltings their strength was recruited, and they were enabled to bear the long journey, rising in the morning refreshed with their night's rest.

The Psalmist viewing it spiritually says, "They go from strength to strength." At each halting place they received fresh strength to pursue their journey onward. And is not this true in grace? There are halting places in the divine life, spots of rest, where the true pilgrims renew their strength. For instance, every manifestation of the Lord is a communication of divine strength, a recruiting place, where the soul renews its strength to travel onward. Every promise that comes with sweet power is another halting place where the traveller may rest. Every discovery of interest in Christ; every glimpse of the grace and glory of Jesus; every word from the Lord's lips; every smile from the Lord's face; every token for good; every thing that encourages, supports, blesses, and comforts the soul, enabling it to go onwards towards its heavenly home, is a halting place, where the pilgrim rests, and where he recruits his weary limbs. And where can we rest, except where God rests? But does not God "rest in his love?" And can we rest anywhere short of God's love shed abroad in our heart? Does not God rest in his dear Son? Did not this voice come from the excellent glory, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased?" All the satisfaction of God centres in Jesus; all the delight of the Father rests in the Son of his love. "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth!" Can we then rest anywhere but where God rests? Is it not spiritually with us as with the Israelites of old? When the cloud tarried, they tarried; when the cloud went, they went; when the cloud moved onward, they followed it; and when the cloud stopped, they halted, and rested beneath its shadow.

June 25

"Every one of them in Zion appeareth before God." Psalm 84:7

As the Lord is true, no spiritual pilgrim will ever fall and die in the valley of Baca. Some may fear that through temptation their strong passions or boiling lusts will one day break out and destroy them. No, not if they are pilgrims. "Every one of them in Zion appeareth before God." Others may think they never shall have a testimony; they never shall read their name clearly in the Book of Life; the Lord will never appear in their heart or bless their soul; they never shall be able to say, "Abba, Father." If Jesus is theirs, they shall. But are they spiritual pilgrims? Do they find it a vale of tears? Are their faces Zionward? Have they come out of the world? Do they sometimes make the valley of Baca a well? And does the rain fill the pools? And have they ever had strength made perfect in weakness? Then every one of them will appear before God in Zion. Blessed end! Sweet accomplishment of the pilgrim's hopes, desires, and expectations! The crowning blessing of all that God has to bestow! "Every one of them appeareth before God," washed in the Saviour's blood, clothed in the Redeemer's righteousness, adorned with all the graces of the Spirit, and made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. No weeping then! The valley of Baca is passed, and tears wiped from off all faces. No thorns to lacerate the weary feet there; no prowling wild beasts to seize the unwary traveller there; no roving banditti to surprise stragglers there; no doubts and fears and cutting sorrows to grieve, perplex, and burden them there. Safe in Zion, safe in the Redeemer's bosom, safe in their Husband's arms, safe before the throne, every one of them appeareth before God in glory.

June 26

"Blessed are the poor in spirit." Matthew 5:5

Spiritual poverty is a miserable feeling of soul-emptiness before God, an inward sinking sensation that there is nothing in our hearts spiritually good, nothing which can deliver us from the justly merited wrath of God, or save us from the lowest hell. And intimately blended with the poignant feelings of guilt and

condemnation, there is a spiritual consciousness that there is such a thing enjoyed by the elect as the Spirit of adoption, that there are such sweet realities as divine manifestations, that the blood of Jesus Christ is sprinkled by the Holy Ghost upon the consciences of the redeemed to cleanse them from all guilt and filth. And thus by comparing its own wants with their blessings, and having an inward light wherein the truth of God's word is seen, and an inward life whereby it is felt, a soul wading in the depths of spiritual poverty, is brought to feel that it must be the manifestation of the light of God's countenance which can alone deliver; that it must be the testimony of God spoken by his own lips to the heart that alone can save; and that the want of this is the want of everything that can manifest it to be a vessel of mercy here, and fit it for, as well as carry it into, eternal glory and bliss hereafter.

To be poor, then, is to have this wretched emptiness of spirit, this nakedness and destitution of soul before God. Nor is it, perhaps, ever more deeply felt than in the lonely watches of the night, when no eye can see, nor ear hear, but the eye and ear of Jehovah; in these solemn moments of deep recollection, when the stillness and darkness around us are but the counterpart of the stillness and darkness of the soul, he that is spiritually poor often feels how empty he is of everything heavenly and divine, a sinking wretch without a grain of godliness; and without drawing too rigid a line of exclusion, we may unhesitatingly say that he who has never thus known what it is to groan before the Lord with breakings-forth of heart as a needy, naked wretch, he that has never felt his miserable destitution and emptiness before the eyes of a heart-searching God, has not yet experienced what it is to be spiritually poor.

June 27

"And patience of hope." 1 Thessalonians 1:3

What is meant by the expression "patience?" It means endurance; as though hope had to endure, faith to work, and love to labour. It is the "patience of hope" that proves its reality and genuineness. Hope does not go forward fighting and cutting its way. Hope is like a quiet sufferer, patiently bearing what comes upon it. Hope is manifested in enduring, as faith is manifested in

acting. For instance: when the Lord hides his face, when testimonies sink out of sight, when signs are not seen, when Satan tempts, when the work of grace upon the soul seems to be all obscured, and in consequence a feeling of despondency begins to set in, then the "patience of hope" is needed to endure all things—not to give way, but to maintain its hold. It acts in the same way, according to the beautiful figure of Paul, as the anchor holds the ship. What is the main value, the chief requisite in the cable that holds the anchor? Is it not endurance? The cable does nothing; it simply endures. It does not make a great ado in the water; its only good quality, the only quality wanted in it, is strength to endure, not to break. When the waves rise, the billows beat, the storm blows, and the tide runs strongly, then the work of the cable is not to part from the anchor, not to break, but firmly to maintain the hold it has once taken. And thus with the anchor too. It does nothing, and is wanted to do nothing. To hold fast is all its work and all its excellence. Thus it is with a hope in a sinner's breast. Has the Lord ever shewn himself gracious unto him? Has the Lord ever made himself precious to his soul? ever dropped a testimony into his conscience? ever spoken with power to his heart? Has his soul ever felt the Spirit inwardly testifying that he is one of God's people? Then his hope is manifested by enduring patiently everything that is brought against it to crush it, and if God did not keep, utterly to destroy it.

June 28

"And he is the propitiation for our sins." 1 John 2:2

What is "propitiation?" By propitiation we are to understand, a sacrifice acceptable to Jehovah; by which God, or rather the attributes of God are propitiated; whereby God can be favourable; whereby mercy, grace, and pardon can freely flow forth. Now sin, and the law condemning sin, barred out, barred back, the favour of God. They were the opposing obstacle to the love of God. For God cannot, as God, love sin and sinners; therefore, the sin of man, and the holy law of God, the transcript of his infinite and eternal purity barred back, so to speak, the favour of God. It was needful, then, that this barrier should be removed, that a channel might be provided, through which the grace, favour, and mercy of God might flow: in a word, that sin might be blotted out, and that the law might be accomplished and

fulfilled in all its strict requirements, that God "might be just," retaining every righteous attribute, not sacrificing one of his holy perfections—and yet, though just, perfectly just, "the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." But how was this to be effected? No seraph, no bright angel could ever have devised a way. It lay locked up in the bosom of the Three-One God from everlasting; and that was, that the only-begotten Son of God, who lay in the bosom of the Father from all eternity, "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his Person," should become a bleeding Lamb, "the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world;" that he should take into union with his own divine Person a human nature, "the flesh and blood of the children," pure, spotless, and holy, and offer up that nature, that body which God prepared for him, a holy sacrifice. When he came into the world, the sacrifice began; and every holy thought, every holy word, and every holy action, in suffering and performing, that passed through the heart, dropped from the lips, or was performed by the hands of the only-begotten Son of God, when he was upon earth, was part of that sacrifice. But the grand consummation of it (the offering up of that body especially) was, when it was nailed to the accursed tree, and blood was shed to put away sin. Now, this is the propitiation, the redemption, the sacrifice, the way, the only way, whereby sin is expiated; the way, the only way, whereby sin is pardoned.

But in order that this blessed sacrifice and atoning propitiation may pass over to us; that its value, validity, efficacy, and blessedness may be felt in our consciences, there must be that wrought in our souls whereby it is embraced. The only salvation for our souls is the propitiation made by Jesus upon Calvary's tree. There is no other sacrifice for sin but that. But how is that to pass into our hearts? How is the efficacy of this atoning sacrifice to be made personally ours? It is by faith. Does not the Holy Ghost declare this by the mouth of the Apostle? He says, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood."

Now, this is the turning point in the soul's salvation. This is the grand point to have decided in a man's conscience before God. This is the Cape to be doubled by every one that sets forth upon the sea of salvation. Before he can double this Cape, he is driven back by the storms, and tossed by the winds; and he often fears lest he should be engulfed in the billows. But when, by living faith, he is enabled to double this Cape, to see the propitiation through the blood of the Lamb, to feel his very heart and soul

going out after, and leaning upon, and feeling a measure of solid rest and peace in the blood of the sacrifice offered upon Calvary—then he has doubled the Cape of Good Hope, then he has passed into the Pacific Ocean from the stormy Atlantic, and then he begins to receive into his conscience a measure of the favour and grace of the Lord God Almighty.

June 29

"Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." Ephesians 2:20

The meaning of this expression, which frequently occurs in the New Testament, is, we think, often misunderstood. It is taken in the first instance from the declaration concerning our Lord in the Psalms, which he in the gospels (Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17) specially claimed and appropriated to himself: "The stone which the builders refused is become the head-stone of the corner" (Psalm 118:22). "The head of the corner," or "the chief corner stone," the meaning of both expressions being one and the same, signifies not the stone which stands at the top of the building, uniting the corners of the two walls just under the roof, but the broad foundation stone, which is firmly fixed at the very bottom; and it is called the "corner stone" or the "head" or "chief of the corner," because being laid as a huge and broad stone for a foundation of the whole building, each wall meets upon it at the corners, it equally supporting and upholding them all. The two walls which thus meet together represent Jew and Gentile; but each of these walls equally rests upon the broad foundation stone which is common to both, and not only supports them separately, but unites them together at the corner, where each meets and rests upon it. It is the expression "head" which has caused the misapprehension of the word "corner stone" to which we have alluded; but the word "head" in Hebrew properly signifies the first or chief; and thus as the foundation is not only the chief stone as supporting the whole, but the first which is laid, so our gracious Lord is not only chief in dignity, but was laid first in place, for the Church was chosen in him. In all things he must have the pre-eminence. Thus he is first in dignity, as the Son of the Father in truth and love; first in choice, God choosing the elect in him; first in suffering, for what sorrows were like his sorrows? first in resurrection, for he is "the first-fruits of them that slept;" first in

power, for "all power is given unto him in heaven and in earth;" first in glory, for he is gone before to prepare a place for his people; and we may well add, he is first in their hearts and affections, for he that loveth father or mother, son or daughter, more than him is not worthy of him.

June 30

"Perplexed, but not in despair." 2 Corinthians 4:8

Oh! what a mercy, amidst every degree of inward or outward perplexity, to be out of the reach of Giant Despair; not to be shut up in the iron cage; not to be abandoned, as Judas or Ahithophel, to utter desperation and suicide, and, after a long life of profession, concerning faith to make awful shipwreck! Now the child of God, with all his doubts, fears, sinkings, misgivings, and trying perplexities is never really and truly in despair. He may tread so near the borders of that black country that it may almost be debateable land whether he is walking in despair or upon the borders of it; for I believe many children of God have at times come to the solemn conclusion that there is no hope for them, for they cannot see how they can be saved or have their aggravated sins pardoned. And though this be not black despair, nor such utter, irremediable desperation as seized Saul and Judas, for there still is a "Who can tell?" yet it certainly is walking very near the borders of that dark and terrible land. I cannot tell, nor do I believe any can, how low a child of God may sink, or how long he may continue under the terrors of the Almighty; but we have the warrant of God's word to believe that he is never given up to utter despair, for the Lord holds up his feet from falling into that terrible pit, and being cast into that sea to which there is neither bottom nor shore.