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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***

March 1

"Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved Yes, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work." 2 Thessalonians 2:16, 17

When the Lord is pleased to apply a promise, drop in a word of encouragement, speak home an invitation with power, he administers thereby consolation. It comforts the drooping heart; it speaks peace to a guilty conscience. And this consolation is "everlasting consolation;" for it flows from nothing less than such a source, viz. the eternal love of God; and flows onward to an everlasting ocean of infinite delight. Any intimation of an interest in the everlasting love of God is a blessing beyond all price; for the Lord never gives any such intimation but as a certain pledge, earnest, and foretaste of immortal bliss. He can neither disappoint nor deceive. Once blest, blest for ever. We may indeed for a long time together cease to enjoy the comfort, and even may fall into the greatest depths of darkness and confusion, so as to lose sight of almost all our evidences; but the foundation of God standeth sure: "The Lord knoweth them that are his." The river of eternal love may seem to flow by and not reach our breast, so high are the banks and hidden out of sight the stream. Still if ever it has watered our soul it will be one day "waters to swim in" of eternal delight.

March 2

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." Ephesians 1:3

O, could our faith but embrace a little, were it only a little, and O, could we daily come and drink but a few drops of this pure fountain of immortal joy, in the sweet realisation of being blessed, already blessed, fully blessed, unalterably, irreversibly blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ, what strength and consolation would it impart to our often cast-down soul! Look at the words; examine them again and again; think over in your mind, one by one, the spiritual blessings that you most covet. Is it pardon? Is it peace? Is it the love of God shed abroad in your heart? Is it the spirit of adoption, enabling you to cry, "Abba, Father?" Is it communion with God? Is it the enjoyment of his presence and smiles? Is it deliverance from every doubt and fear? Is it a large measure of his fear in your heart, a subduing of all your lusts and corruptions, a godly, holy life, and a happy, blessed death? Are not these the spiritual blessings which you prize above house or land, wife or

husband, child or relative, or any earthly good? With these, then, and with every other are you blessed, already blessed, if you are one of God's saints and a believer in Christ Jesus. God has not yet to bless you, beyond giving you a foretaste here and the full enjoyment hereafter. He has *already* blessed you with them all in Christ Jesus..

March 3

"Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings." Malachi 4:2

Just as the sun rises in the east and gradually mounts up into the meridian sky, dispersing with every ray light, warmth, and gladness; so this blessed Lord Jesus, as the Sun of righteousness, is ever dispersing the beams of his grace and the rays of his favour; and whenever those beams come, and those rays fall, there is light and life, and everything to make the soul holy and happy. Now a man would act very foolishly if, wishing to have light in his room when the sun was shining at noonday, he should shut all the shutters, and strike a match to give him a little light for a few moments. Let us not then be so foolish as to look for happiness or comfort in our own performances when the glorious Sun of righteousness is at the right hand of God, and shining thence upon believing hearts. But when the veil is over the heart, it is like shutters in a room: there is no light to shew who, what, or where Jesus is. And then need we wonder that men strike a light and make a fire, that they may "walk in the sparks of their own kindling?" But what is God's word against all such? "This shall ye have of mine hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow" (Isaiah 50:11).

March 4

"In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." John 14:2

O That we could lift our eyes to those blest abodes, those mansions of heavenly bliss, where no sorrow intrudes, where sin is unknown, where tears are wiped from off all faces, where there is no languishing body, no wasting sickness, no pining soul, no doubt, fear, darkness or distress; but one unmingled scene of happiness and pleasure, and the whole soul and body are engaged in singing the praises of God and the Lamb! And what crowns the whole, there is the eternal enjoyment of those pleasures which are at the right hand of God for

evermore. But how lost are we in the contemplation of these things; and though our imagination may seem to stretch itself beyond the utmost conception of the mind, into the countless ages of a never-ending eternity, yet are we baffled with the thought, though faith embraces the blessed truth. But in that happy land, the immortal soul and the immortal body will combine their powers and faculties to enjoy to the uttermost all that God hath prepared for those that love him.

March 5

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."
Revelation 2:29

These words extend the message beyond the church to which they were spoken, and address themselves to every one to whom the word comes, and to whom an ear is given to hear and receive it. Thus each message sent to the churches becomes a message sent personally to us. If we have a spiritually circumcised ear, if we are willing to listen to the voice of the Lord, he speaks to us in every message as personally and as distinctly as he spoke to each individual church. It is indeed an unspeakable blessing to have this ear given to us that we may receive in humility, simplicity, and godly sincerity what the Lord speaks in the word of his grace. It is by his word that he knocks at the door of our hearts; and what a blessing he has pronounced on the man who hears his voice and opens the door when he hears the knock, like a fond and affectionate wife when she hears the knock of her husband at the door of his house: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Rev. 3:20).

March 6

"Thou hast delivered my soul from death." Psalm 56:13

You may have been delivered from death, as much as David was, but not so fully in the assurance of the deliverance. God may have quickened your soul into life divine; he may have communicated his grace to your heart, and yet you have many doubts and fears whether it be a real work of grace upon your soul. It is not every child of God who has been delivered from death by regenerating grace who can use the words with the confidence expressed here: "Thou hast delivered my soul from death." But I will shew you when he can.

When God is pleased to bless him with a sense of his pardoning love; when Jesus is revealed to his heart, and manifested with power to his soul; when the blood of sprinkling is applied to purge his conscience from guilt, filth, and dead works, to serve the living God; when the Spirit of adoption is given, and he is enabled to cry, "Abba, Father;" when he can "read his title clear to mansions in the skies" by the witness of the Holy Ghost in his breast that he is a child of God; when he feels the presence of God, and a sweet flowing forth of love and affection to his heavenly Father,—at such favoured seasons as these, he can say in the sweet confidence of faith, "Thou hast delivered my soul from death."

March 7

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." 1 John 2:15

This is a very wide sentence. It stretches forth a hand of vast grasp. It places us, as it were, upon a high mountain, such as the Lord stood upon when tempted of Satan, and it says to us, "Look around you: now there is not one of these things which you must love." It takes us, again, to the streets of a crowded city; it shews us shop windows filled with objects of beauty and ornament; it points us to all the wealth and grandeur of the rich and noble, and everything that the human heart admires and loves. And having thus set before us, as Satan did before our Lord upon the high mountain, the kingdoms of the world, it says, not as he did, "All this will I give you," but, "All this I take from you. None of these things are for you. You must not love one of these glittering baubles; you must not touch one of them, or scarcely look at them, lest, as with Achan, the golden wedge and the Babylonish garment should tempt you to take them and hide them in your tent." The precept takes us through the world as a mother takes a child through a bazaar, with playthings and ornaments on every side, and says, "You must not touch one of these things." In some such similar way the precept would, as it were, take us through the world, and when we had looked at all its playthings and its ornaments, it would sound in our ears, "Don't touch any one of them; they are not yours; not for you to enjoy, not for you even to covet." Can anything less than this be intended by those words which should be ever sounding in the ears of the children of God, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world?"

March 8

"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

Christ's resurrection was the sure pledge and meritorious cause of the Church's regeneration. The whole body of the elect was "quickened together with Christ," as well as raised up together with him; that is, mystically quickened, as they were mystically raised, quickened in a mystical regeneration of soul, as well as raised up in a mystical regeneration of body. How wonderful is this, that every soul quickened into divine life in time is so because mystically quickened as a member of Christ when he was raised from the dead. View the whole body of the elect as dead in sin. Then view them quickened, one by one, in all their countless multitude, during the whole stretch of time. Consider the power put forth in the regeneration of each individual. Then take a view of the quickening of the dead body of Christ, as prior to the resurrection, and the whole body of the elect mystically quickened together with him. Do you see no act of infinite power, and power in harmony with love and grace here? Where are the eyes of your faith, if you see not this? Where your admiring love, if you do not adore this act of love to the Church, as in union with her covenant Head? Was not that a mighty act of power and love which, at one moment, and by one and the same act, mystically quickened millions of souls which shall live for ever in the presence of God?

March 9

"And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no." Deuteronomy 8:2

When you look back upon the way the Lord has led you these many years in the wilderness, can you not see how circumstance after circumstance, and event after event arose, to prove what was in you; whether godly fear, whether simplicity and sincerity, whether a desire to fear God, whether a dread to offend him, whether the life and power of vital godliness, or whether little else than an empty profession without the life-giving power of God in the soul? What a mercy for you to be able to look back and see how the Lord appeared for you, when without him you must have sunk; when you can feel, to your soul's comfort, that the Lord did uphold you in the trying hour, did appear for you in distressing circumstances, did make bare his right arm when you

had no strength of your own, did guide you when you had lost all clue, did bring you safe through all when, without his help, you must have been utterly lost. What a mercy it is to be able, by the actings of living faith (and sure I am, there must be faith in exercise), to look back upon the way, and believe that indeed the grace of God was in your heart, that the Lord proved it, and shewed it to be genuine by every circumstance that has taken place.

March 10

"He satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness."
Psalm 107:9

We find the living family of God sometimes set forth under the character of the hungry. Let us see what they are hungering after. Is it pleasure, honour, promotion, respectability? O no; these toys and baubles cannot satisfy the spiritual hunger of a living soul. They cannot hunger after that on which they cannot feed. They hunger then after righteousness, as the Lord said: "Blessed are ye that hunger and thirst after righteousness." They hunger after God himself in his blessed manifestations; they hunger after the bread of life which came down from heaven, that a man should eat thereof and not die. Christ in the letter of the word cannot satisfy their keen appetite. They must feed upon him internally, or their famine still continues. To these hungry, famishing souls, to have Christ in the letter is like a starving beggar standing outside a shop where there is plenty of provisions, and not having a farthing to buy them with. What is Christ in the letter? Will a sight of Christ in the word of God remove the burden of guilt, bring peace into the soul, purge the conscience or subdue the power of sin? Will the mere doctrine of Christ draw up the affections to him, cast out the world, dethrone self, or purify the heart? "Alas!" we say by painful experience, "not one jot, not one jot." But the presence of Christ in the soul can at once do all these things. Thus a hungry, famishing soul can only be pacified by Christ coming into his heart as the hope of glory.

March 11

"This is the true God, and eternal life." 1 John 5:20

O the blessedness, which eternity itself can never exhaust, of possessing eternal life! There is something to my mind so singularly blessed in the expression "eternal life," that I cannot help dwelling upon it. How the thought, the feeling of it expands the breast! Compared with it, how poor, mean, and low is our temporal life and all its concerns—the short span which God has allotted to us here below! And do observe how our eye is directed by holy John to the true God as being himself eternal life. He is not only the Giver, the Spring, the Subject, the Object of it; He himself is it all. O if he has but quickened our souls by his Spirit and grace, we carry now, even now, eternal life in our breast! for this eternal life is the precious fruit on earth of that eternal life in heaven which was with the Father and was manifested unto us (1 John 1:2). But how shall we know that we have eternal life, you may ask? How do we know that we have natural life? By an inward consciousness that we are alive; by the pulse which beats, the lungs which breathe, the eye which sees, the ear which hears, the tongue which speaks, the hands which feel, by the warm play of blood through our veins, by the thoughts which pass to and fro through our mind. Similarly we know the possession of spiritual life by an inward consciousness of it and by its inward actings. And as where there is spiritual there is eternal life, as we feel the bubblings, springings, risings, and varied movements of this spiritual life in our bosom, we have a testimony that we have also eternal life; that this eternal life is in the Son of God, and from the Son of God has been breathed into and communicated unto our souls.

March 12

***"Yet thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name."
Jeremiah 14:9***

If the Lord has ever been in our soul to manifest there a sense of his goodness and mercy, we can then make use of this as our plea, "Yet thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us." If he has ever heard your prayer he is with you; if he has ever given you a promise he is with you; if he has ever touched your heart with his finger he is with you; if he has ever favoured you with a smile he is with you. And though taking the general run of your experience he may be a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night, or though even as it may seem, as if he were astonished at what you are—a mighty man that cannot save, still every token for good encourages you to cling, to cleave, to hang round him, to catch hold of his feet as the Shunamite caught Elisha by the feet, and would not be thrust away; for you cannot but feel that, with all that you are and have been, you dearly love him, and have a

good hope, if not a clear testimony, that he loves you. Can you not sometimes look up to him, may I not say almost look at him in the face and say, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee?" And though my abominable sins have often made thee a stranger to me, yet in my heart of hearts, in the very depths of my soul thou knowest that I love thee." And if you can look at the Lord in the face, and appeal to his heart-searching eye that you do love him, depend upon it he loves you, for the word of truth declares, "We love him because he first loved us."

March 13

"Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me." Matthew 11:6

What is the feeling of your heart toward Jesus? What is the solemn desire of your soul? that he would come and make your heart his abode? that he would visit your soul with the light of his countenance? that he would sprinkle his blood upon your conscience? that he would make himself very near, very dear, and very precious? Do you count one word from his lips worth a thousand worlds? a smile of his countenance worth thousands of gold and silver? Then you are blessed. You are not stumbling upon the dark mountains of error. You are not stumbling at the perfections of the Son of God. You are not offended at a free gospel, an unconditional salvation. No; the Lord in mercy has slaughtered your prejudices, subdued your enmity, and brought you to receive the gospel as a little child. "Well," but some may say, "I believe all this; but, then, I have doubts and fears whether the Lord has begun his work in me, whether I am one of his family. I cannot enjoy the power of truth as I could wish." But does not the Lord say, "Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me?" You are not offended and stumbled at Jesus. And he that is not offended in him, but is enabled to receive him as the Christ of God, to look to him, to believe in him, and at times to feel him precious—he comes under the blessing which maketh rich, and addeth no sorrow with it.

March 14

"An inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." 1 Peter 1:4

Whatever you may have in this world, be it much or little, you must leave. And if you have no other inheritance than earth gives, where will be your portion in death and to all eternity? But if you are begotten again unto a lively hope, even if you do not enjoy the full assurance of faith, you have before you an inheritance which fadeth not away. We fancy sometimes how happy we should be if we had this man's fine estate, or that man's large property; how much better we should spend it than he does, and what good we should do with it. And do you think that these men are happy with all their possessions, and that you would be happier or better if you had them? It is not in nature to be happy. These rich men have a canker which eats up all their happiness. And even if free from the heavier troubles of life, all satisfaction of the flesh fadeth away, for possession of itself rubs off all the bloom, and with possession come all the anxieties and cares connected with it. But this eternal inheritance "fadeth not away." The sweetest flowers fade and are thrown away as they become nauseous to sight and smell. But there is an abiding freshness, a constant verdure, a perpetual bloom, an unceasing fragrance, a permanent sweetness in this eternal inheritance, so that it is never flat or stale, but remains ever the same, or rather is ever increasing in beauty and blessedness, as more known, believed in, hoped unto, and loved.

March 15

"Being justified freely by his grace." Romans 3:24

And it is because grace is free it can reach us. How free is the sun in sending forth its enlightening, warming beams; how free the clouds in discharging their watery treasures; how free the dew in falling from the face of heaven; how free the wind in blowing where it listeth. Now these are scriptural types and representatives of the free grace of God. It shines as freely as the sun; drops as freely as the rain; falls as freely as the dew; and blows as freely as the wind. But not in grace as in nature to all men. I mean not that; but all to whom it comes it comes freely. And whenever it so comes it communicates precious things with it. As the sun lights and warms, as the rain fertilises, as the dew softens, as the wind invigorates, so it is with the grace of God which comes out of the fulness of Christ. It enlightens the understanding, warms the heart, fertilises the soul, softens the spirit, and invigorates the whole new man of grace. And all this grace does freely, without charge or cost, without money or price, wanting nothing, asking nothing from us but a kindly return. The best debt to a benefactor is the debt of gratitude; the best return of kindness is the return of love; the best acknowledgment of a favour is good words and suitable deeds. The best thanks which the earth can give to the sun, rain, dew,

and wind of heaven is to be fruitful—to manifest by the goodness of the crops, the goodness of what falls from heaven upon it. So it is in grace: "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me" (Psalm 50:23). A believing, loving heart, a prayerful, thankful lip, and a holy, godly life are the best returns for grace.

March 16

"Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass."
Psalm 37:5

What shall God bring to pass? The thing that lies deepest in the heart—"thy way." Does not thy way lie deepest in thy soul—the path that God has led, the path that God is now leading you by? You may be troubled in your soul, doubting and fearing in your mind, distressed in your feelings; you may sink down to the lowest point that a child of God can sink to; yet that way, in which you are so deeply sunk, if the Lord enable you from time to time to commit it to him, and trust in him, he will bring to pass above what your heart desires. Look at the movements of your heart God-ward; look at your embarrassments, temptations, and exercises; look at that which rolls backwards and forwards in your mind, that which is tossed to and fro on the waves of your anxious bosom,—what lies nearest, dearest, and deepest,—let honest conscience speak. That, whatever it be, the Lord tells you, and sometimes enables you to commit, to trust to him. Now whatever it be so committed and so trusted, the Lord has declared in his unerring word of truth, he "will bring it to pass;" he will fulfil it when his time has arrived. Does darkness envelope it? do mountains of difficulty stand up in the way of its fulfilment? Never mind; God will bring it to pass in the face of all, over mountains and through difficulties, in spite of, and in the midst of, all surrounding obstacles. He "will bring it to pass,"—that which lies deepest in your heart, nearest your affections, and that which you are enabled in the actings of living faith sometimes to commit into the hands of the Lord God Almighty.

March 17

"God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." 1 Corinthians 1:9

When God calls his people by his grace, it is to make them partakers of the highest bliss and the greatest glory that he could confer upon the sons of men. And this not only in eternity, but in time; not only beyond, but this side of the grave. He appeals, therefore, to them by his prophet. "Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness?" (Jer. 2:31.) When the Lord calls his people out of earthly pleasures, is it for no other purpose than to lead them into paths of affliction and sorrow? Does he make them leave the flesh-pots of Egypt to starve them in a waste howling wilderness? This was the complaint of the ancient murmurers, that Moses had brought them up out of Egypt to kill them with thirst (Exod. 17:3). Does he take them from earthly delights to abandon them to misery and despair? O no! He calls them even in this time state to the greatest privilege and highest favour that his everlasting love could confer upon them, which is no less than "the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord," that they may have union and communion with the Son of God by grace here, and be partakers of his glory hereafter. God's dear Son is and always has been the object of his eternal delight. To glorify him has been from all eternity his fixed, his settled purpose; and in pursuance of this settled purpose, he gave him a people whom he formed for himself, that they might shew forth his praise. Thus, therefore, the Redeemer addressed his heavenly Father—"And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them."

March 18

"To them that have no might he increaseth strength." Isaiah 40:29

The Lord's people are often in this state, that they "have no might." All their power seems exhausted, and their strength completely drained away; sin appears to have got the mastery over them; and they feel as if they had neither will nor ability to run the race set before them, or persevere in the way of the Lord. Yet, even then, they have strength; for it says, "*he increaseth strength.*" It does not say, 'he gives, bestows, communicates strength;' but "*he increaseth strength.*" How can this be? We must have power to feel our weakness. God must put forth his power to enable us to fall down into nothingness and helplessness. It therefore says, "*he increaseth strength.*" As though it would imply, 'Is not the very power to sink down into creature weakness, helplessness, and nothingness, *strength?*' It is so in God's mysterious dealings. And, therefore, "to them that have no might" (in other words, those who are sensible in their own consciences that they have no power at all, who are completely exhausted of nature's strength and wisdom), to these "*he increaseth strength.*" Now the Lord "*increaseth strength*" in a very

mysterious way. He often drops strength stillly and secretly into the soul. We are not always to expect very great manifestations. This is not the way in which the Lord usually increases strength. His visits to the soul are often better known by their fruits and effects, and by looking back upon them when they are past, than by any immediate impulse. The strength given is more easily felt than the hand seen which communicates it. In this respect it much resembles the new birth, of which the Lord says, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou nearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth" (John 3:8).

March 19

"Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." 1 Peter 1:13

Hope chiefly regards "*the end*;"—for that is "better than the beginning," the crowning consummation of all that faith believes, hope expects, and love enjoys. But through what dark and gloomy seasons has hope often to look before this end comes, being sometimes sunk so low as almost to despair even of life! How it has in these low spots to muster all its evidences, look back to this and that Ebenezer, this and that hill Mizar, this and that deliverance, manifestation, and blessing; how it has to hang upon the word of promise, cry out for help, and that mightily, as if at its last breath, and hope against hope in the very face of unbelief, infidelity, and despair. An end must come to all our struggles, trials, exercises, afflictions, and conflicts. We shall not be always struggling and fighting with a body of sin and death. We shall not be always exposed to snares and temptations spread in our path by sin and Satan, so as hardly to escape falling by them as if by the very skin of our teeth. Every day reminds us with warning voice that an end must come. But now comes the question, and often a very anxious question it is, What will that end be? Here hope comes in to sustain and support the soul, enabling it to look forward, that it may prove to be a hope that maketh not ashamed, a good hope through grace, and a hope of such a complete and enduring nature that the end may prove it was a grace of the Holy Spirit, and, as such, stamped with his own perfecting power.

March 20

"I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living." Psalm 116:9

There is a distinction between walking *before* God and walking *with* God. To walk *before* God is to walk with an abiding sense of God's eye being upon us; to walk with a desire to do those things which are pleasing in his sight; to walk in his ordinances blameless; to walk before his people with our garments unspotted by the world; in a word, to walk before him in private as in public, alone and in company, before the Church and the world, by day and by night, as we should walk if we had a personal view of his glorious majesty in heaven before our eyes. Now if you carried about with you a deep and daily sense that God saw every thought, marked every movement, heard every word, and observed every action, this sense of his presence would put a restraint upon your light, trifling, and foolish spirit. You would watch your thoughts, your words, your actions, as living under a sense of God's heart-searching eye. This is to walk *before* God. But we read of Enoch that he "walked *with* God." This is a more advanced stage of the divine life. To walk *with* God is to walk with him in sweet familiarity, in holy confidence, in a blessed sense of interest in his love and grace, and thus to walk with him and talk with him as a man walketh and talketh with his friend. There are some who walk before God, but how few walk with God! Many live under a more or less deep and daily sense of God's heart-searching presence, who are not admitted into this sweet familiarity, nor enjoy the blessedness of this heavenly intercourse.

March 21

"I am the Lord that healeth thee." Exodus 15:26

How does God heal the diseases of his people? He heals them chiefly by subduing them; for in this life they are never thoroughly healed. The promise runs: "He will subdue our iniquities" (Micah 7:19). To subdue them is to restrain their power. Thus he sees one suffering under the power of unbelief. He gives him faith: this subdues his unbelief. Here is another poor languid patient, dying of exhaustion: he gives him strength. Here is a third mourning under his corruptions: he gives a drop of his blood to purge his conscience, and a taste of his love to warm his heart. He sees a fourth crying under the strong assaults of Satan: with one look Satan flies and the soul is set free. Thus with infinite wisdom blended with infinite love and power, he passes on from bed to bed of every sick patient, administering health wherever he goes. This blessed Physician has a remedy for every disease, and the remedy is always

felt to be exactly suitable to the exigency of the case. It goes, so to speak, at once to the right spot; it heals the malady wherever it be, and whatever it be, just in the right way, and just at the right time. O then how good it is to bring all our diseases before the Lord! In a case of bodily sickness or painful complaint we uncover freely our malady to a physician whom we can trust; we tell him every circumstance and disclose every symptom. So should we go to the Lord with all our diseases, tell him all our complaints, unfold to him all our sorrows, and fully and freely lay before him everything that burdens the conscience, pains the mind, and distresses the soul, looking and waiting until he speaks the word, and every malady is healed.

March 22

"His bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob." Genesis 49:24

Our ancestors, you know, were celebrated bowmen. Victories were won at Cressy and Agincourt by the English yeomanry, who were skilled in the use of the bow. Latimer says, in a sermon preached before the king, that no man could be a good archer who did not learn from his boyhood; and the custom he tells us was for the father to put his hands upon the son's hands, to teach him how to shoot, and throw the whole strength of his body into the bow. When the boy drew the bow, it was not the strength of his own arm that drew the string, nor was it the keenness of his eye that directed the arrow to the mark. The child appeared to draw the bow and to direct the arrow; but the hand of the father was upon the hand of the child, and the eye of the father was guiding the eye of the child; thus though the child seemed to draw the bow, it was the strength of the father that really pulled the string. So in the case of Joseph to whom our text refers, "the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob." God put his hands upon the hands of Joseph, drew the bow for him, directed the arrow, and hit effectually the mark. Apply this to your experience. When you pray effectually, it is not you that pray; it is the Spirit of God that prays in you; for he helpeth our infirmities, and intercedeth for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. When you believe, it is the Spirit of God that works faith in you; when you hope, it is the Spirit of God that produces hope in you; when you love, it is the Spirit of God that sheds abroad love in you; it is the arms of his hands that are put upon your hands, and they are made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob.

March 23

"Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." Romans 12:2

How shall we find the will of God acceptable? Only as we are renewed in the spirit of our mind, and are transformed and conformed to the suffering image of the sorrowing Son of God. How fearful, then, how dangerous, and yet how ensnaring is that worldly conformity which sets us in deadly opposition to that good and perfect will of God which was, and is "acceptable" to his dear Son, to all the holy angels round the throne, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to his spiritually-minded people on earth, and hateful to none but devils and carnal, ungodly men. And how truly blessed to be brought out of the power and prevailing influence of this worldly spirit, and to be cast into the gospel mould, where, being renewed in the spirit of our mind, we prove that the will of God is not only "good," pure goodness, and "perfect," worthy of all his glorious perfections, but "acceptable" to our heart and affections, which therefore tenderly embrace it, and thus, as it were, incorporate it into our will, making the two wills one. To bring us to this point is the grand object of all gospel discipline; and one may say that the ultimatum of gospel obedience is,

**"To lie passive in his hand,
And know no will but his."**

Here then only can we fully enter into the beauty and blessedness of gospel truth; here only can we submit to the weight of a daily cross, glory in tribulation, patiently endure afflictions, feel the sweetness of the promises, walk in obedience to the precepts, and tread the path that leads to endless glory.

March 24

"That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." Ephesians 2:12

The Apostle here tells the Ephesians that in their natural state, before divinely quickened and made alive unto God, they were "without Christ," that is,

without manifest union and communion with him. Though in the purposes of God, and by their eternal election in Christ, they were members of his mystical body, they had not been baptized into Christ by the Spirit so as to be made living members of his spiritual body, the Church (1 Cor. 12:13), and therefore had not "put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27). And as they were, such were we. We were "without Christ" in our Gentile days. He had no place in our thoughts. We knew nothing of his Person and work, blood and righteousness, beauty and blessedness, grace and glory. He was to us a root out of a dry ground, and in our eyes he had no form nor comeliness. His name might have been on our lips, but his Spirit and grace were not in our hearts. And if matters be in any way different now with us, if there be any faith on him, hope in him, or love to him, grace has wrought it all. Let us never forget what we were before we were called by grace. Let the remembrance of our sins and of the whole bent and current of our lives be bitter to us, that we may all the more prize and admire the riches of that sovereign grace which stooped to us in our low and lost estate. The paschal lamb was to be eaten with bitter herbs. The remembrance of Egyptian bondage should ever accompany the enjoyment of gospel liberty, and godly sorrow for sin the feeding on the flesh of Christ.

March 25

"All thy children shall be taught of the Lord." Isaiah 54:13

The teaching of God can only be known and realised by those who have seen an end of all creature perfection, and who are completely and experimentally destitute of all wisdom in the flesh. And God's teaching does not leave a man where it found him, dead, stupefied, worldly, unfeeling, and carnal. If he is in distress, it does not leave him in distress; if he feels guilty, it does not leave him guilty; if he is in darkness, it does not leave him in darkness; but it lifts him out of these evils. Thus God's people are continually led to come unto him for his instruction, because they feel that without his special teaching they can know nothing as they ought to know. Nay, the more they have, the more they want to have; for no sooner is the light withdrawn, than the darkness is more sensibly felt. If any text of Scripture has been opened up to them, it makes them want to have others made known in a similar way; if they have had any consolation, and it is taken away, it makes them want it again. So that the more wise and spiritual God's people become, the more foolish and carnal they appear in their own eyes; the stronger they are in the Lord and in the power of his might, the more sensibly do they feel the weakness of their flesh;

and the more they are enabled to walk closely with the Lord, the more they discover the wretched wanderings of their base and sinful hearts.

March 26

"The Lord loveth the gates of Zion." Psalm 87:2

What are gates for? Two purposes, entrance and exit. And Zion, too, has her gates of exit and entrance; she has her gates of access to God, entrance into the presence of the Most High; "the door of hope," opened in "the valley of Achor." And who has opened the door; or, rather, who has not only opened it and made it, but himself is the Door? "I am the Door," says Jesus. And was not "the door" opened through his rent flesh? As the Apostle speaks: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh." Through his bleeding wounds, through his pierced side, through his mangled feet and hands, there is now access to God:

"A door of hope is open'd wide
In Jesus' pierced hands and side."

Is there any other access to God, but through the slaughtered Lamb? "Through him we have access by one Spirit unto the Father." There is no other; for he is "the way, the truth, and the life, and no man cometh to the Father but by him." Is not this an open way? Does not the soul through this door "walk in and out and find pasture," and enter into the immediate presence of God? Do you, my friends, ever find access to God, a heart to pray, a sense of acceptance in prayer, an open door, and power to enter therein? What opens it? *Merit*? Set up merit, and we are all damned to a man. It is not merit, great or little; it is the blood of the Lamb which alone has opened a way for poor lost sinners to draw near to God.

March 27

"Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." 1 Corinthians 2:12

What thick clouds of darkness spread themselves at times over our souls; all things out of sight; our signs and tokens buried, as it were, in mist. It is like a sea fog, that comes out of the bosom of the vasty deep, and hides all objects from view. The ships are on the sea, notwithstanding, but this deep fog prevents their being seen. So with our souls at times, all is misty, cloudy, and no signs can be seen of the work of God upon our hearts. And yet we "know" them, by receiving the Spirit of God, for it is the only way whereby they can be known. We can only see light in God's light; only believe by God's faith; only love by God's love; therefore can only know the things freely given to us of God by the revelation of the Spirit. What we know savingly, experimentally, feelingly, we know only by divine teaching. How dark our mind often is; how low we sink at times; it is only the Son of God that can enable us to rise; only by the revelation of his Spirit can we believe that we are his. We know he is God when he shines forth, as we know the sun when it blazes forth in the summer sky. We know him by the teaching of the Spirit, but cannot see him till our eyes are divinely opened. The sun may shine in all its glory—does that communicate light to the eyes of the blind? or warm the corpse lying in the coffin? The blind see not; the dead hear not; the living, the living alone see and know the Son of God.

March 28

"Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation."—1 Peter 1:5

Those who are kept by the power of God through faith, are often in their minds troubled and anxious, fearing whether this salvation will ever reach their souls,—whether they may not prove castaways,—whether the work upon their heart is genuine,—whether they are under divine teachings. But the Lord says they are "kept by his power through faith *unto salvation*:" kept as in this garrisoned city, until salvation shall come in all its glory, sweetness, bliss and blessedness into their heart; preserved and encompassed by all the attributes of God from making shipwreck of faith, until they "receive the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls." Then poor, doubting, distressed, fearing, guilty sinner, this promise is for thee. Thy soul is bound up in the bundle of life with the Lord thy God; thy character and thy name are contained here. And it is a promise suitable to you: yea, it is a promise suitable to us all. Suitable to us when we meet together, suitable when absent from each other, suitable for town, suitable for country; suitable for a child of God in a state of trial and temptation, and suitable when he enjoys a temporary respite from them; suitable for him in war, suitable for him in peace; suitable for him when the cannons roar and the earth trembles, suitable for him when

he seems to have no enemy near, for the enemy then may be approaching by stratagem. Yea, could you point out a single moment when this promise is not suitable to you, that would be the very moment in which the promise would be wanted by you most. Could you ever arrive at such a spot as to say, "Now I want the promise no more," that very feeling would shew that you were on the brink of a fall, and therefore never needed the promise so much as then.

March 29

"Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped." Isaiah 35:5

That these miracles are effected by the power of the gospel is plain from the words that immediately precede, "Behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you" (Isa. 35:4). And how does God come and save but in the gospel, and by making it his own power unto salvation? If you look back at your experience you will see that one of the first effects of the power of the gospel upon your heart was, to open your ears to receive it as a message from God. When, for instance, you were first brought under its sound, and began to understand and feel what you heard, was there not given you, as it were, new ears to hear it, and a new heart to receive it? Were not those with you memorable days when you first heard the joyful sound of salvation by free grace; when it first dropped that blessed news into your soul which made your very heart thrill with unspeakable joy? God was then circumcising your ear, unstopping it, and conveying the gospel into your heart through it. "For faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). "As soon as they hear of me," says the Lord in prophecy, "they shall obey me: the strangers shall submit themselves unto me" (Psalm 18:44). That gospel which was death to others was life to you; and that message at which others perhaps gnashed their teeth, came into your heart with an indescribable sweetness as the very voice of God to your soul.

March 30

"Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples." John 15:8

The bearing of much fruit not only brings glory to God, but proves such rich fruit-bearers to be genuine disciples of the Lord Jesus. Now, though there is no merit in their bearing fruit, they sometimes get comfort from it, as proving an abiding union with Christ. "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love." There is no maintaining of holy confidence in the soul but by walking in godly obedience; nor can there be any true spiritual communion with God whilst the guilt of disobedience lies hard and heavy on the conscience. To make straight paths for our feet; to walk in the fear of God; to live to his glory, are not only sweet tests of genuine discipleship, but faith, hope, and love cannot be maintained without them. And yet if we know anything of what gospel fruit is, and what we are as poor, vile sinners, must we not too often put our mouth in the dust? Instead of rejoicing in our fruitfulness, must we not often rather lament our barrenness, and cry out, "My leanness, my leanness, woe unto me!" Still, if we see and feel a deficiency in these points in ourselves and others, and, comparing our hearts, lips, and lives with the word of truth, must plead guilty, shall this utterly discourage us? No. This very discouragement may prove of service to us. It is good, at times, to be discouraged; because it makes us learn that "without Christ we can do nothing," and that it is only by his grace that we can produce fruit to his glory. It is, therefore, good to see and feel our barrenness and unfruitfulness; for it is this very sight and sense of our own want of fruit that leads us in earnest desires to the Lord Jesus Christ to work in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure.

March 31

"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." 2 Corinthians 5:21

Our blessed Lord offered himself for sin; that is, that he might put away sin by the sacrifice of himself—"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree" (1 Pet. 2:24). It was absolutely necessary either that the sinner should suffer in his own person, or in that of a substitute. Jesus became this substitute; he stood virtually in the sinner's place, and endured in his holy body and soul the punishment due to him; for he "was numbered with the transgressors." He thus, by the shedding of his most precious blood, opened in his sacred body a fountain for all sin and all uncleanness (Zech. 13:1). The cross was the place on which this sacrifice was offered; for as the blood of the slain lamb was poured out at the foot of the altar, sprinkled upon its horns, and burned in its ever-enduring fire, so our blessed Lord shed his blood upon

the cross. He there endured the wrath of God to the uttermost; he there put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; he there offered his holy soul and body, the whole of his pure and sacred humanity, in union with his eternal Deity, as an expiation for the sins of his people. Thus all their sin was atoned for, expiated, put away, blotted out, and will never more be imputed to them. This is the grand mystery of redeeming love and atoning blood. Here the cross shines forth in all its splendour; here God and man meet at the sacrifice of the God-man; and here, amidst the sufferings and sorrows, the groans and tears, the blood and obedience of God's dear Son in our nature, grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life.