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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*

November 1

*"The entrance of thy words giveth light."* Psalm 119:130

The blessed Spirit is pleased sometimes to give some testimony concerning Jesus, to open up some passage of Scripture which speaks of Jesus, to cast a divine light before the astonished eyes, and to throw some of the blessed beams of gospel truth into our souls, whereby we see Jesus. We are brought sometimes in soul feeling to the desires of those Greeks who came up to worship at the feast, and went to Philip, saying, "Sir, we would see Jesus;" and from some apprehension of his beauty and loveliness, we pour out our soul before God, and say, "We would see Jesus." We want to feel his love, to have our eyes anointed to behold his glory, to look upon him as crucified for us and bearing our sins in his own body on the tree, that we may have a sweet and blessed fellowship with him as our suffering Surety, and thus, by faith, enter into the length and breadth and depth and height of that love of his "that passeth knowledge." Wherever there is a work of grace upon the soul, there will be this pining after Christ. The soul that is really taught of God can never rest satisfied short of Jesus. "There remaineth a rest to the people of God," and they can never be satisfied short of that rest, which consists in an experimental knowledge of the Son of God, as revealed by the Holy Ghost to their souls. But before the enjoyment of this spiritual rest, there is often long delay; clouds of darkness for months and years together often envelope the mercy-seat; the cross of Christ cannot be seen; the Holy Ghost does not fulfil his covenanted office in taking of the things of Christ, and shewing them to the soul; and in the absence of these heavenly manifestations, we cannot realise our interest in the things of salvation, nor can we feel our hearts sweetly composed and settled down in the blessed assurance, that when this life shall come to a close, we shall inhabit mansions prepared for us before the foundation of the world. When "with clouds he covereth the light, and commandeth it not to shine by the cloud that cometh betwixt," there are many doubts and fears, suspicions, surmises, and jealousies whether we are not deceived and deluded altogether. At such seasons, everything seems to be against us, and to stamp us as being nothing but nominal professors.

It is in such dark and gloomy seasons as these that "the entrance of God's words giveth light." For instance, some such promise as

**this is made sweet to the soul: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." As that promise is brought home with power to the heart, and is shed abroad with some sweetness in the soul, it draws forth and strengthens faith, and the toiling pilgrim comes to the Lord, feeling himself "weary and heavy laden," and as he comes, he is indulged sometimes with a few sweet moments of rest. He is enabled to look out of fallen self, with all its miseries, and to look upon Jesus in his grace and beauty. He is favoured to cast himself simply, as he is, upon Jesus, and some sense of his atoning blood, dying love, and complete propitiation for sin is opened up to his heart. Faith springs up to lay hold of and embrace it, and he begins to taste the savour and sweetness and healing efficacy of a Saviour's blood and love. Thus "the entrance of God's words giveth light," and he feels by the divine coming in of what God has externally revealed, that inward light is shed abroad in the recesses of his soul, and he can, in some measure, realise the power of the cross of Jesus in his heart.**

**November 2**

*"And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." 1 Corinthians 6:11*

**Justification and sanctification are distinct blessings. The first springs out of, and is connected with, the finished work of the Son of God; the other springs out of, and is connected with, the work of the Holy Ghost on the soul. Sin has defiled our persons externally, as well as polluted our souls internally. We cannot, therefore, stand before God unless washed in the blood of the Lamb, and clothed in his spotless righteousness. This righteousness forms our *title* to heaven, as holiness constitutes our *meetness*. The former is our wedding robe, the latter our spiritual qualification. The hymn well draws this distinction:**

**"'Tis he adorn'd my naked soul,  
And made salvation mine;  
Upon a poor, polluted worm  
He makes his graces shine.**

**And, lest the shadow of a spot  
Should on my soul be found,**

**He took the robe the Saviour wrought,  
And cast it all around.**

**The Spirit wrought my faith, and love,  
And hope, and every grace;  
But Jesus spent his life to work  
The robe of righteousness."**

**Without these two qualifications, what entrance could there be into heaven, or what happiness there, could entrance be gained? For consider not only the infinite purity and holiness of God, but the blazing splendour of his immediate presence, the piercing ray of his deep-searching eye. Who or what can live in his presence but what is absolutely perfect without and within? But this the Church could not be, unless she were washed in the blood and clothed in the righteousness of God's dear Son, and perfectly sanctified by the operations and indwelling of his Spirit. We therefore read: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:25-27).**

November 3

*"It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord."* Lamentations 3:26

The Lord does not bring his poor and needy children to a throne of grace, and send them away immediately they have come. But his purpose is, to shew them deeply what they are, to make them value his favours, to sink them lower and lower in self, that they may rise higher and higher in Christ, to "teach them to profit" (as the Scripture speaks), to write his laws upon their hearts in lines of the Spirit's drawing, in deep lines, "graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever;" not characters traced out in the sand, to be washed out by the rising tide, or effaced by the wind, but in characters as permanent as the soul itself. The work of the Spirit in the hearts of the redeemed is radical work, work that goes to the very bottom; nothing flimsy, nothing superficial, nothing which can be effaced and obliterated springs from him, but that which shall have an abiding effect, that which shall last for eternity. The Lord is fitting his people for eternity, and therefore his work in them is thorough work; it goes right through them; it leaves nothing covered up and masked over, but turns all up from the very bottom, "discovering the foundation unto the neck" (Hab. 3:13), and doing in a man spiritually what the Lord threatened to do in Jerusalem literally, "I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish, wiping it, and *turning it upside down*" (2 Kings 21:13). Therefore he does not answer the prayers of his children immediately when they come to his throne of mercy and grace, but rather he deepens those convictions that he has implanted; he makes the burdens heavier that he has put upon their back; he hides himself instead of discovering himself, and draws back further instead of coming nearer. Now this is intended to make them wait with greater earnestness, with more unreserved simplicity, with more absolute dependence upon him and him alone to communicate the blessing, with greater separation of heart from all the strength of the creature, with a firmer resolution in the soul to cast away all its own righteousness, and to hang solely and wholly upon the Spirit's teachings, and Jesus' sweet revelation of himself.

November 4

*"Love is of God." 1 John 4:7*

Love is a gift which the risen Mediator has received that he may freely communicate it out of his fulness to his people. And we must be brought to feel that it is a gift. Could we produce or keep it alive in our own hearts, we should burn incense to our own skill or our own care. Some perhaps will scarcely believe that a child of God can feel enmity against Christ; but his carnal mind is unmitigated enmity against him. And oh, what a cutting feeling it is for a follower of the Lamb to have a principle in him which hates Christ; hates, bitterly hates his Person, hates his holiness and purity; which could join in the cry, "Crucify him, crucify him," and push and strike him with the Roman soldiers and the Jewish rabble. Unless painful experience convinced us that there was such a dreadful principle within, we could not believe that there was this devilish enmity in our heart against him whom our souls desire to love and adore. But what know we about love, if we have not all this enmity, carnality, and coldness to try it? When we have been exercised with all these wretched feelings, and the Lord begins to drop into our hearts a little mercy and grace, and to draw forth our affections unto him, we then begin to feel what a sweet thing love is. Love is the sweetest balm man can taste in this life. It is so naturally. There is a sweetness in love. When we love our wives, our children, our friends, there is a sweetness and tenderness in the very feeling, that is—as moralists say of virtue—its own reward. Coldness, dislike, envy, prejudice, jealousy, suspicion, peevishness, quarrelling—these sparks of hell burn and torture every spot on which they fall. And so, if ever there is a hell in a man's bosom, it is when full of hatred against God and his people. But if ever we feel a foretaste of heaven, it is when the Lord kindles some meltings of love, some drawings of affection toward Jesus and to them that are his. Then enmity and prejudice flee away; and we feel as if we could take all the people of God into our bosom, and say, "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."

November 5

*"A time to weep, and a time to laugh." Ecclesiastes 3:4*

Does a man only weep once in his life? Does not the time of weeping run, more or less, through a Christian's life? Does not

mourning run parallel with his existence in this tabernacle of clay? for "man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards." Then "a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up" must run parallel with a Christian's life, just as much as "a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance." Living souls will know many times to weep; they will have often to sigh and cry over their base hearts; to mourn with tears of godly sorrow their backslidings from God; to weep over their broken idols, faded hopes, and marred prospects; to weep at having so grieved the Spirit of God by their disobedience, carnality, and worldliness; to be melted into contrition at the feet of a dying Lord, so as in some measure to be led into the path in which Jesus walked as "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." They will have to bewail the falling off of those friends whom once they looked upon as bidding fairer for the kingdom of God than themselves; to weep at the cruel arrows of calumny which are shot against them by professors; to mourn over the low state of Zion, how few there are who really serve the Lord acceptably with reverence and godly fear, and adorn the doctrine in all things. But above all things will they have to weep over the inward idolatries of their filthy nature; to weep that they ever should have treated with such insult that God whom they desire to love and adore; that they should so neglect and turn their backs upon that Saviour who crowns them with lovingkindness and tender mercies; and that they bear so little in mind the instruction that has been communicated to them by the Holy Spirit. There is many a weeping time for God's children; and if there be one frame of mind in soul experience more to be coveted than another, it is to be weeping at Jesus' feet. We have two sweet instances of the Lord's manifesting himself to those who were weeping—one to "the woman which was a sinner," who stood behind him, and washed his feet with her tears; the other was to Mary Magdalene, who "stood without at the sepulchre weeping." Oh, how different is the weeping, chastened spirit of a living soul from the hardened, seared presumption of a proud professor! How different are the feelings of a broken-hearted child of God from the lightness, the frivolity, the emptiness, and the worldliness of hundreds who stand in a profession of religion! How different is a mourning saint, weeping in his solitary corner over his base backslidings, from a reckless professor who justifies himself in every action, who thinks sin a light thing, and who, however inconsistently he acts, never feels conscience wounded thereby! "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."

November 6

*"The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."* Matthew 26:41

Why is flesh so weak? Because it is fallen, because it is sinful, because it has an alliance with the temptation which is presented to it. It is weak against temptation for the same reason that a man who loves strong drink is weak against the offered dram. If we had no inward lusting after evil, no pride, no rebelliousness, no fallen nature, no carnal mind, no vile affections, nothing in us earthly, sensual, or devilish, need we fear temptation? No; for then we should be proof against it; it would be like dipping a match in water. Here our weakness lies. If we could always resist we should conquer, but resist we cannot, except by the special power of God. This is a lesson we all need to learn. The weakness of the flesh manifests itself continually in compliance, in nonresistance, in giving way, in yielding, often almost without a struggle, nay, sometimes in acting a worse and more wicked part still. How striking are the words of Hart!

"That mariner's mad part I played  
Who sees, yet strikes the shelf."

Is there any one that knows and fears God who can say he has never played that mad part; never seen the rock ahead, and yet run upon it; never mourned, sighed, cried, groaned and repented, and yet been again overcome; never seen the evil of the snare, never felt the wire round his neck, and yet been entangled, I was going to say strangled? It is through these things that we learn the weakness of the flesh; weak to believe, weak to hope, weak to love, weak to fight, weak to resist, weak to overcome, weak to watch, weak to pray, weak to stand, weak to everything good; strong to everything evil. The flesh indeed is weak. What are all resolutions, all promises, all desires, all endeavours, all strugglings, all strivings, except the soul is held up by the mighty power of God?

And yet *"the spirit is willing."* Here the child of God is distinguished from those who are given up as a prey to temptation. He has a willing spirit, which they have not. But how is the spirit willing? It is made "willing in the day of God's power." It is a new spirit, a free spirit, a holy spirit, a gracious spirit, and therefore a willing spirit. But what is it willing to do?

Willing to obey, to watch, to pray, to be conformed to the will of God, to crucify the lusts and affections, to put off the old man and to put on the new. And how does it shew its willingness? By the very struggles it maintains against the flesh; flesh and spirit pulling contrary ways; the spirit all willingness, the flesh all weakness; flesh twining around spirit, spirit struggling under the firm and strong embrace of flesh. Hence the conflict; the spirit willing to read God's word, to pray and seek God's face, and pour out the heart before him; the flesh weak, and finding prayer a burden. The spirit willing to make sacrifices, endure persecutions, bear afflictions, carry the cross, suffer with Jesus, resist even unto blood striving against sin; the flesh weak, dragging the spirit down with it, unable to stand a single moment, complying with every suggestion to evil, listening to every insinuation of Satan breathed into the ear, hearkening to the tempter, and almost as bad as he. This then, the willingness of the spirit and the weakness of the flesh, is the reason why there should be watchfulness and prayer. If there were no willing spirit, there would be no need of watchfulness; it would be useless; nor of prayer, for it would not ascend with acceptance into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. If there were nothing but flesh, the believer would be all weakness; possessing spirit, there is in him some willingness, and this God looks at.

November 7

*"My people hath been lost sheep."* Jeremiah 50:6

When God the Holy Ghost takes a soul in hand, just as the fingers of a man's hand wrote a sentence of condemnation upon the wall of the palace of the king of Babylon, so does the blessed Spirit write the word "lost" upon the conscience of every vessel of mercy; and when he has written this word with power on their consciences, they carry it about with them branded as it were in letters of fire, in such a manner that the impression is never to be erased, until it is blotted out by the atoning blood of the Mediator.

And thus in the teachings of the Holy Ghost in the consciences of God's family, "lost, lost, lost" is written on their heart; "lost, lost, lost" is the cry of their lips; "lost, lost, lost" is the deep feeling of their soul. And none was ever found who had not the feeling *lost*, written more or less deeply upon his heart. None was ever

gathered into the arms of the heavenly Shepherd; sought out upon the mountains and the hills, laid upon his shoulders, and brought home with rejoicing; none was ever brought into a spiritual acquaintance with Jesus, so as to enjoy communion with him, who had not sighed and groaned and cried under a sense of his lost state, as a guilty sinner before God.

Now when the soul has been taught by the Holy Ghost, to feel as well as to see and know itself to be without strength to deliver itself from the wrath to come, and is in consequence sunk down into despondency and dismay, then is the time when the Holy Ghost usually gives it some discovery of the mercy of God in the face of Jesus Christ. We find this sweetly set forth in that remarkable chapter, Ezekiel 16. The vessel of mercy is there delineated under the figure of a new-born babe, abandoned by its mother, and "cast out in the open field, to the loathing of its person in the day that it was born." As unpitied, as abandoned, as polluted, as helpless, as perishing, as wretched an outcast is the quickened soul. But it is not left to perish. "When I passed by thee," says the loving Redeemer, "and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee" (the sign of espousal, Ruth 3:9), "and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swear unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine."

November 8

*"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels." 2 Corinthians 4:7*

Gold and silver, those precious metals, take no injury, receive no spot of corruption from the vessel in which they are contained; let them be buried in the damp earth, no tarnish or rust forms upon them. So spiritually, the grace of God in the heart, surrounded as it is with corruption, is not tarnished by it, the heavenly treasure is not contaminated, though lodged in an earthen vessel. Christ in the heart is not defiled by the inward workings of depravity, and by the base thoughts that strive perpetually against his grace, any more than the gold of the Bank of England is defiled by the dark and damp cellars in which it is stowed. And what a mercy it is, that our corruptions cannot tarnish the grace of God; that our unbelief cannot mix with, and adulterate the faith of God's elect; that our despondency cannot spoil and ruin a gospel hope; that

our deadness, darkness, coldness, and rebellion cannot mingle with and defile the love of God in the soul! This heavenly treasure remains still as unpolluted and pure as when God first put it there; being a part of "the divine nature," it remains uncontaminated by the filth and corruption that surround it. Is not this a mercy for God's tried people, that spiritual knowledge, living faith, gospel hope, heavenly love, and the fruits and graces of God's Spirit in the soul can never be defiled; but, like the streams of a fountain, are ever gushing forth in pure water? What a blessing it is, that the pure grace of God in a man's heart cannot be contaminated by the filthy streams that are dashing from a vile nature against it, like the torrents of water from a fire-engine against a burning house, but remains as pure as when God the Spirit first breathed it into the soul.

November 9

*"And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me."* Genesis 32:26

What a strange intermixture there is in a believing heart of everything to cast down and yet of everything to encourage! How there is everything on the one side to perplex, to confuse, and put the soul to its wits' end, and yet how on the other there is everything to hold up its head, strengthen its faith, support its hope, and encourage it to hold on to the last gasp! Now this is that very trial of faith which is more precious than of gold that perisheth, for faith is not a dead, sluggish grace, and is never more active than when it is being tried as with fire. You cannot give up from what you have felt and experienced, for that is the grand evidence, the persuasion that you have the life of God in your soul, and compared with that how worthless and valueless all other things seem to be in your eyes, because to give that up is to give up all your hope. Here, then, is the grand mystery, to hang and hold on, to hold out, and not suffer oneself to be cast away, but the more the Lord would seem to put us away, the more to cling to him. Was not this the faith of the Syro-Phoenician woman, who, so to speak, would not take "No" for an answer? or, like the faith of Ruth, "Entreat me not to leave thee?" or, like the faith of Hannah, when "she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the Lord and wept sore?" Does not this faith resemble that of Heman's, when he cried out, "Wilt thou shew wonders to the

dead? Shall the dead arise and praise thee?" and that of Asaph, when his feet were almost gone, and his steps had well-nigh slipped? Thus the more the Lord seems to put us away, the more we cling to him. The viler we are, the more we need his grace; and the very magnitude of our sins only makes us hang more upon his atoning blood and cling more closely to his word and promises as suitable to our case. Nor will anything induce us to give up our hope or relinquish our hold of his mercy.

November 10

*"In the light of the king's countenance is life; and his favour is as a cloud of the latter rain."* Proverbs 16:15

What is religion without a living faith in, and a living love to the Lord Jesus Christ? How dull and dragging, how dry and heavy, what a burden to the mind, and a weariness to the flesh, is a round of forms where the heart is not engaged and the affections not drawn forth! Reading, hearing, praying, meditation, conversation with the saints of God, what cold, what heartless work where Jesus is not! But let him appear, let his presence and grace be felt, and his blessed Spirit move upon the heart, then there is a holy sweetness, a sacred blessedness in the worship of God and in communion with the Lord Jesus that makes, whilst it lasts, a little heaven on earth. It is this inward sense of the blessedness of his presence and the misery of his absence, the heaven of his smile and the hell of his frown, that makes the sheep of Christ seek communion with him. He has won their heart to himself by discovering to them his beauty and his love, and they having once seen the glory of his Person, heard the sweetness of his voice, and tasted the grace of his lips, follow him whithersoever he goeth, seeking to know him and the power of his resurrection, and counting all things dung and loss that they may win him, and have some manifestation of his love. What is to support the soul under those trials and temptations that at times press it so sore, relieve those cruel doubts which so disquiet, take away those fears of death which so alarm, subdue that rebelliousness which so condemns, wean from the world which so allures, and make it look beyond life and time, the cares of the passing hour, and the events of the fleeting day, to a solemn and blessed eternity, but those visitations of the blessed Lord to the soul which give it communion with himself? Thus were the saints

of God led and taught in days of old, as the Holy Ghost has recorded their experience in the word of truth. Remembering the past, one says, "Thy visitation hath preserved my spirit." Longing for a renewal, another cries, "O when wilt thou come unto me?" and under the enjoyment of his presence the Church speaks, "He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love."

November 11

*"But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law."* Galatians 5:18

If we are led of the Spirit by walking in him; if he be our Guide and Teacher; if he be continually operating upon our heart, and bringing near the influences of his grace; if he be in us and with us, guiding us into all truth, making and keeping us believing, loving, prayerful, tender, watchful, humble, contrite, and sincere; if we are thus led by the Spirit, we are not then under the law. Now whilst the conflict is going on in your bosom, you are often in your feelings under the law. The law's curse is ringing in your ears, the law's condemnation piercing your conscience. The flesh in some unguarded moment, it may be, prevails: you are entangled in some evil; you slip and fall into something which brings guilt upon your conscience. Now the law thunders; inward condemnation re-echoes its peals; and the soul falls into bondage, doubt, and fear. But if you are led by the Spirit; if that blessed Guide is pleased to lead you out of yourself into Christ's blood and righteousness; if you are experimentally favoured with his blessed teachings and sweet influences, bringing with them light, life, liberty, and love, the law has no more curse for you; it cannot condemn you to hell, nor send your soul to lie for ever under the curse of God. For being led by the Spirit you are delivered from the curse of the law into the blessing of the gospel; from the bondage of the law into the liberty of truth; from law charges into gospel mercies; from the accusations of a guilty conscience into the witness of a good, because a purged and sprinkled conscience, and to sum it all up in one sentence, are thus translated from the power of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son. Oh the blessedness of walking in the Spirit, and being led by the Spirit!

November 12

*"He will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." Micah 7:19*

Sin subdued is the next greatest blessing to sin pardoned; and wherever God does pardon sin he subdues sin; for the same grace which saves sanctifies; the same grace which casts sin behind God's back, puts its foot upon the corruptions of the believer, and prevents iniquity from having dominion over him. The Scripture is very plain and express upon this point. "Sin shall not have dominion over you." Why? "Because ye are not under the law," which gives sin its strength and power, "but under grace," which is able to subdue its dominion. Nor do I believe that any child of God can ever rest satisfied except by the subduing of his sins as well as the pardoning of them. To have his unbelief, infidelity, worldly-mindedness, pride, and covetousness subdued by the grace of God, its power taken out of it, its dominion dethroned, its authority destroyed, and its strength weakened and diminished, that he may not be under the dominion of any lust, or carried away by the strength of any secret or open sin, but may walk before God in the light of his countenance, as desirous to know his will and do it,—this is the desire and breathing of every one that knows sin in its guilt, filth, and power. How gracious, then, is the promise, how sweet the favour, that the Lord has promised to subdue our iniquities by the same grace as that whereby he pardons them; that, as we receive the blood of Christ to sprinkle the conscience, so we receive the grace of Christ to sanctify and renew the soul, and the strength of Christ to overcome all our inward and outward foes.

November 13

*"And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Hebrews 2:15*

It is no evidence against you if you are subject to bondage; it is no mark against you if you cannot look death in the face without doubt or fear. Is it not "the children" who feel the bondage? And did not the Lord come to deliver them from it? Are you then not a child because you fear death? If you had no sense of sin, no

tenderness of conscience, you would be as careless about death as most other people are. Thus your very bondage, your very fears, if they make you sigh and cry for deliverance, are marks of life. And the day will surely come when the Lord will remove these chilling fears and put an end to these killing doubts. As you draw near to the brink of Jordan, the Lord will be with you to deliver you, who, through fear of death, are now subject to bondage; he will extract its sting, and rob the grave of its victory, enabling you to shout "Salvation!" through his blood, even at the moment when nature sinks lowest and the last enemy appears nearest in view. Oh, what a blessed Jesus we have; what a heavenly Friend; what a divine Mediator between a holy God and our guilty souls! What love he displayed in taking our flesh and blood; what kind condescension, what wondrous depths of unspeakable grace! He loved us sufficiently to lay down his life for us. Did he not for our sakes endure the agony of the cross, the hidings of God's face, the burden of sin, the pangs of hell? And if he has done all this for us on earth, will he leave his work undone in heaven? Has he quickened you into life, made you feel your sin, taught you to seek for mercy, raised up a good hope in your heart, applied a promise to your soul, given you a testimony? He may have done all this, and yet at times your conscience may be held down in bondage and imprisonment. But it is only to make further way for his grace; to open up more and more of his willingness and ability to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him. It is only to make himself in the end more precious to you; to shew you more of his finished work, more of his dying love and atoning blood, and more of what he is able to do in delivering you from all your fears. Thus, as the Adam fall was overruled by the wisdom of God to make manifest the riches of his eternal love, mercy, and grace, so your very doubts, fears, and bondage will be blessedly overruled to give you further discoveries of Christ, to wean you more from an arm of flesh, and to make you know more experimentally what the Lord Jesus Christ is to those who seek his face and hang upon and trust him and him alone.

A man who believes that he may live and die, and that safely, without an experimental knowledge of Christ, will never seek his face, never call upon his name, never long for the manifestations of his love. But he who feels that he can neither live nor die without him, who knows that he has a soul that only Christ can save, who has sins which only Christ's blood can pardon, iniquities that only Christ's righteousness can cover, will be often crying to the Lord to visit his soul with his salvation, and will find

**no rest till Christ appears; but when Christ appears to the joy of his soul, will bless and praise him with joyful lips. And oh, what a glorious trophy will that man be of Christ's eternal victory over sin and Satan, when he will reign with him and with his assembled saints in one immortal day!**

**November 14**

*"Having a good conscience." 1 Peter 3:16*

**We cannot often see our faith, but we can sometimes see our conscience. We cannot always rejoice in the Lord, but we can see whether we fear his great name. We cannot always triumph over our enemies, but we can sometimes observe whether there is a sentinel upon the look out. Thus, if you want to know whether you have faith, look at faith's companion, see what faith is attended by; and if you find not "a good conscience," write death upon your religion. Throw away your sword; it is useless; it is of human manufacture; it will break in pieces when you have to encounter your enemy, the king of terrors; God's lightning will shiver it then. But if the Lord has given you "a good conscience," a tender conscience, a pure conscience, he will strengthen your arm to fight the good fight of faith. You will often think your sword is so short, and your arm so weak that you cannot fight the Lord's battles. But if he has given you "a good conscience," a conscience tender in his fear, he has put into your hands the sword of faith, and he will one day manifest it clearly, that he has himself equipped you with it, by giving you victory over all your foes. Oh, may the Lord raise up in our hearts some sweet testimony that we have "a good conscience," and then we shall have this blessed consolation, that concerning faith we shall not make shipwreck.**

**November 15**

*"My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." John 10:29*

**In that most sublime and touching prayer which the Lord Jesus Christ, as the great High Priest over the house of God, offered up to his heavenly Father before he shed his precious blood on the**

cross, there is one petition, or rather an expression of his holy will, which is full of unspeakable blessedness. "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." The change from petitioning as a Priest to willing as a King is very remarkable, and casts a gracious light on the nature of Christ's mediatorial intercession at the right hand of God. On the footing of his covenant engagements, atoning sacrifice, and finished work, as well as from the perfect equality of his divine nature with that of the Father and of the Holy Ghost, he utters the expression of that sovereign will which was and is identically the same with the eternal will and fixed decrees of his heavenly Father. And oh, how full and comprehensive, how gracious and condescending is the will of Christ as thus expressed! How it embraces in its firm and sovereign grasp all the members of his mystical body, all the sheep of his pasture and the flock of his hand, all that the Father gave him to be eternally his own! Yes; all the countless millions who before the foundation of the world were given, him as his joy and crown, as his eternal inheritance, as the delight of his heart, and the promised reward of his incarnation, sufferings, and death, were included in this expression of his holy and unchanging will. Whatever be their state and condition here below, whatever sins and sorrows they may have to sigh and groan under, whatever opposition they may encounter from earth or hell, this will of Christ holds them up so that they cannot fall out of his hand, or be deprived of their glorious inheritance.

November 16

*"Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."* Philippians 4:6

What a word this is! "Everything!" You are privileged, saint of God, to go to the throne of God with everything. What, with every little occurrence? Yes. What, with things that people call trifles? Yes. With your daily concerns? Yes. If you feel that there is a God who can hear you, it is your privilege to go to him in *everything*. All things are comprehended; nothing is excluded. In everything, and that by prayer and supplication. Sometimes we pray, sometimes we supplicate. Prayer is something more gentle than

supplication, less earnest, less fervent, less powerful; yet not less effectual. I have sometimes compared prayer and supplication to two things in nature. The one to a river—a stream, such as we see in our low country that flows with gentle course to the sea; the other to the torrents found in mountainous countries, that leap from precipice to precipice. The one is the calm prayer of the soul, the other the fervent cry, the earnest supplication, the breathed agony of the spirit rushing along into the bosom of God with many a broken sigh and many an earnest groan. Here the two seem contrasted. There is prayer, calm and gentle, the simple pouring out of the soul into the bosom of God; and then there is supplication, which is earnest, and calls upon the Lord as though the soul must be heard. We see it in the blessed Jesus himself. We read on one occasion that he went into a mountain the whole night to pray. Now we have no reason to believe he prayed on that occasion in the same way that he prayed in the garden and upon the cross. In the one case he had sweet union and communion with his Father; in the other he cried with groans and tears and was heard. The one was prayer; the other supplication. When your soul is calmed by the presence of God, and you feel the breath of prayer to enter your bosom, then you can pray to the Lord with sweetness and with spirit. But there are times and seasons when the soul, under the attacks of Satan and a terrible sense of guilt and shame, is obliged to cry as one that must be heard, and that is supplication. But there is another thing which is to be mingled with it, and a thing much omitted, and that is thanksgiving. These are the three constituents of a spiritual service, prayer, supplication, and thanksgiving.

November 17

*"Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us." 2 Peter 1:1*

What a thought it is, that if you and I possess one grain of living faith, the same precious grace is in our hearts that was in the hearts of all the saints of God, from Abel the proto-martyr, in all the saints of the Old Testament, in all the prophets, and martyrs, and servants and apostles of God; and will subsist in the bosom of every saint down to the remotest period of time. There is but "one faith," as there is "one God, one Lord, and one baptism;" and it is by the possession of this "like precious faith" that all the family of

God are knit together into one glorious body, of which the Lord Jesus Christ is the risen Head. You, in yourself, may be very poor and needy, for faith gives us to feel our poverty and need; you may think and feel yourself unworthy of the least notice of God's favouring eye; but if the blessed Spirit has raised up one grain of living faith in your soul, you stand on the same holy platform with saints, apostles, prophets, and martyrs, and you are as much "accepted in the Beloved," as much loved of God, and as much a member of the mystical body of Christ, as though you were the Apostle Peter, Paul, Enoch, Abel, Isaiah, or any of the prophets.

November 18

*"After the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest, who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life." Hebrews 7:15, 16*

We may say of the life which the Lord Jesus lives in the courts of heavenly bliss that it is a threefold life. There is, first, his *eternal* life, by which I mean the eternal life of God in his divine nature. This he lives in himself; for "as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself" (John 5:26). He is hereby "Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." And this life is the foundation of all his acts of mediation, as being God over all, blessed for ever.

But there is a life which he lives for himself, viz. a life of inconceivable glory in his *human nature*. This is the life which he laid down that he might take it again. This life is the cause of, and is attended with all that ineffable glory which he now enjoys in heaven. This life he lives for himself, his reward, and the glory and honour with which he is crowned; as the Psalmist says, "Thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head. He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever" (Psalm 21:3, 4).

But there is another life which he lives: a *mediatorial life*, a life for us. Thus we read, that "he was made a priest after the power of an endless life;" and he says of himself, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death" (Rev. 1:18). Now this life does not differ essentially from the second life, of which I have spoken, the

life of glory in the human nature; but it differs in this point, that when the work of mediation is accomplished, he will cease to live a mediatorial life; for he will then "deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power" (1 Cor. 15:24).

November 19

*"But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead." 2 Corinthians 1:9*

What is life naturally and what is death naturally? Is not that life in which there is breath, energy, movement, activity? And what is death but the utter cessation of all this moving activity and vital energy? To die is to lose life, and by losing life to lose all the movements of life. Thus, when the Lord takes, as it were, out of our heart and hands everything in which we once had life, in which we lived and moved and seemed to have our earthly, natural, and enjoyed being, and condemns it by his holy word, so as to record therein, and in our conscience as an echo to his voice, a continual sentence of death against it, he delivers us over unto death. And you will observe that none but the living family of God are so delivered: "For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake;" and observe also that the reason for this mysterious dispensation is to bring to light the hidden life of Jesus within, for the Apostle adds, "that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." And observe also the connection which this sentence of death has with the death of Christ: "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus." We must suffer with Jesus if we are to be glorified with him; must die with him if we are to live with him. His death is the exemplar, the model and the means of our own; and as he had the sentence of death in himself upon the cross, so must we be crucified with him, that we may be conformed to his suffering, dying image. Thus not only is there a death by, under, and unto the law, so as to kill the soul to all creature hope and help, to all vain confidence, and all self-righteousness; but in the continual teachings and dealings of God upon the heart, and especially in times and by means of heavy affliction, painful trial, and powerful temptation, does the Lord by his Spirit and grace execute a

sentence of death in all those to whom he is giving to drink of Christ's cup and to be baptized with Christ's baptism.

November 20

*"For thy Maker is thine husband; the Lord of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called." Isaiah 54:5*

As in the marriage union man and wife become one flesh, and, God having joined them together, no man may put them asunder, so when the Lord Jesus Christ, in "the everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure," betrothed the Church unto himself, they became before the face of heaven one in indissoluble ties. As he undertook in "the fulness of time" to be "made of a woman," she became one with him in body by virtue of a common nature; and becomes one with him in spirit when, as each individual member comes forth into a time state, the blessed Spirit unites it to him by regenerating grace. Such is the testimony of the word of truth. "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones;" "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit." Her union, therefore, with his flesh ensures to her body conformity in the resurrection morn to the glorified body of Jesus; and her union with his spirit ensures to her soul an eternity of bliss in the perfection of knowledge, holiness, and love. Thus the union of the Church with Christ commenced in the councils of eternal wisdom and love, is made known upon earth by regenerating grace, and is perfected in heaven in the fulness of glory.

The Church, it is true, fell in Adam from that state of innocence and purity in which she was originally created. But how the Adam fall, in all its miserable consequences, instead of cancelling the bond and disannulling the everlasting covenant, only served more fully and gloriously to reveal and make known the love of Christ to his chosen bride in all its breadth and length and depth and height! She fell, it is true, into unspeakable, unfathomable depths of sin and misery, guilt and crime; but she never fell out of his heart or out of his arms. Yet what without the fall would have been known of dying love or of the mystery of the cross! Where would have been the song of the redeemed, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood?" Where the

victory over death and hell, or the triumphs of superabounding grace over the aboundings of sin, guilt, and despair? Where would have been the "leading captivity captive," the "spoiling principalities and powers, and making a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in himself?" What would have been known of that most precious attribute of God, *mercy*? What of his forbearance and long-suffering; what of his pitiful compassion to the poor, lost children of men? As then the Church's head and husband could not and would not dissolve the union, break the covenant, or alter the thing that had gone out of his lips, and yet could not take her openly unto himself in all her filth, and guilt, and shame, he had to redeem her with his own heart's blood, with agonies and sufferings such as earth or heaven never before witnessed, with those dolorous cries under the hidings of his Father's face, which made the earth to quake, the rocks to rend, and the sun to withdraw its light. But his love was strong as death, and he endured the cross, despising the shame, bearing her sins in his own body on the tree, and thus suffering the penalty due to her crimes, reconciled her unto God "in the body of his flesh, through death, to present her holy; and unblameable, and unproveable in his sight." Having thus reconciled her unto God, as she comes forth from the womb of time, he visits member after member of his mystical body with his regenerating grace, that "he may sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word," and thus eventually "present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."

November 21

*"Make me not the reproach of the foolish."* Psalm 39:8

Who are these "foolish?" I think the best answer to this question is given by our Lord himself, in the parable of the wise and foolish virgins. "The foolish" were those who had oil in their lamps, but none in their vessels. By "the foolish" in the text, therefore, we may understand those who have the light of knowledge in their heads, and the lamp of profession in their hands, but no oil of grace in their hearts. They are "foolish," because they know neither God nor themselves, neither sin nor salvation, neither the depth of the fall nor the greatness of the remedy. They are "foolish," as regards themselves, in thinking that light and knowledge will save them, without life and grace; and they are

**"foolish," as regards others, for want of an experimental acquaintance with the heart. They know nothing, therefore, of the temptations of a child of God; how he is beset on every hand; how Satan is ever thrusting at or enticing him; how his own heart is continually prompting him to evil; and how snares are in every direction laid for his feet. "The foolish" know nothing of these trials; they are Pharisees, who "make clean the outside of the cup and platter," who whitewash and adorn the sepulchre without, whilst within it is "full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness." David knew well, and every child of God knows well, that if he were allowed to slip, if he were suffered to say or do anything unbecoming, these would be the very first to make him an open reproach. "The foolish" can, and will, make no allowances for the least slip of tongue or foot, for they themselves are ignorant of the weakness of the flesh, the subtlety of Satan, the strength of sin, and the power of temptation. Were he to stumble and fall, "the foolish" would be sure to point the finger of scorn at him. In breathing forth, then, this petition, we may well suppose him to say, "Lord, whatever temptations I may be called upon to endure, whatever snares of Satan or lusts of the flesh may beset my path behind and before, O keep me, keep me that I may not be 'the reproach of the foolish;' that they may have nothing to take hold of, to make me a bye-word, and through me to reproach thy name, cause, and truth."**

**November 22**

***"But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel." Luke 24:21***

**What a trial to their faith must the death of Jesus have been to his disciples and believing followers! When their Lord and Master died, their hopes, for the time at least, seem almost to have died with him. And indeed to the eye of sense, truth, holiness, innocence, all fell crushed by the arm of violence as Jesus hung on the cross. To the spectator there, all his miracles of love and mercy, his words of grace and truth, his holy, spotless life, his claims to be the Son of God, the promised Messiah, the Redeemer of Israel, with every promise and every prophecy concerning him were all extinguished when, amidst the triumph of his foes, in pain, shame, and ignominy, he yielded up his breath. We now see that, by his blood-shedding and death, the blessed Lord wrought**

out redemption, finished the work which the Father gave him to do, put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, reconciled the Church unto God, triumphed over death and hell, vanquished Satan, magnified the law and made it honourable, exalted justice, brought in mercy, harmonised every apparently jarring attribute, glorified his heavenly Father, and saved millions with an everlasting salvation. But should we have seen this as we see it now, had we stood at the cross with weeping Mary and broken-hearted John, heard the railing taunts of the scribes and Pharisees, the rude laughter of the Roman soldiery, and the mocking cries of the Jewish mob, viewed the darkened sky above, and felt the solid earth beneath rocking under our feet? Where would our faith have been then? What but a miracle of almighty grace and power could have sustained it amidst such clouds of darkness, such strength of sense, such a crowd of conflicting passions, such opposition of unbelief?

So it ever has been, so it ever will be in this time state. Truth, uprightness, godliness, the cause of God as distinct from, as opposed to error and evil, have always suffered crucifixion, not only in the Person, but in the example of a crucified Jesus. It is an ungodly world; Satan, not Jesus, is its god and prince; and therefore, not truth but falsehood, not good but evil, not love but enmity, not sincerity and uprightness but craft and deceptiveness, not righteousness and holiness but sin and godlessness prevail and triumph as they did at the cross. This tries faith; but its relief and remedy are to look up, amidst these clouds, to the cross, and see on it the suffering Son of God. Then we see that the triumphing of the wicked is but for a moment; that though truth is now suffering, it is suffering with Christ; and that as he died and rose again, so it will have a glorious resurrection, and an eternal triumph.

November 23

*"Who against hope believed in hope."* Romans 4:18

Hope is a fruit of the Spirit; and the absence of hope, the thorough, complete absence of hope, stamps death upon that nominal branch, in which the absence of all hope is found. But some will say, "Are not the children of God often plunged into despair?" No; not into despair. They are often very near it, they

are on the borders of it; they go to the very brink of it; the gusts from that pestiferous land may so blow their blasts upon them, that in their feelings they shall be in despair; yet no living soul ever set his foot beyond the brink, no child of God ever stepped beyond the border, so as to get into the regions of despair. If he got there, he would no longer be in "the land of the living;" if ever he set his foot over the border that separates the land of hope from the land of despair, he would be no longer calling upon the Lord to save his soul from the lowest hell, but he would be at once overwhelmed by those torrents, which would sweep him away into endless perdition. Hell is the place of despair, and the conscience of the reprobate, before he is cast into those devouring flames; and therefore, unless you know what the very feelings of the damned in hell are (which you can never be certain you do, however you may think you know them), or unless you have gone into the very feelings of despair in the conscience of the reprobate before hell opens its jaws to receive him for ever, however near you have been to the borders of that dreadful land, you never can say your foot has crossed the threshold. No; there is a "Who can tell?" a secret support of "the everlasting arms;" there is a band, a tie, wreathed round the soul by the God of all grace; there is a golden chain let down by God himself from the everlasting throne of mercy and truth, which keeps the soul from ever being drawn into that whirlpool, going down those tremendous cataracts, and being swallowed up in the boiling abyss below. There is an invisible arm that preserves the soul from being swept away by the water-floods; and this secret help is manifested by a lifting up of the heart oftentimes in prayer, and the relief sometimes experienced in pouring forth the soul in fervent cries, upholding all who feel it from being overwhelmed in the torrent of despair, when the sluices of God's wrath seem pulled up to hurry it into eternal misery. And therefore there is no child of God that has been quickened by the Spirit, but has some degree of hope, which keeps him from making shipwreck altogether. So that we do not go too far in saying that the absence of hope altogether stamps death upon a man.

November 24

*"But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul." Hebrews 10:39*

The Scriptures have brought certain marks not only to test, but also to comfort God's people. But in order to keep them tremblingly alive to the fear of being deceived; in order to set up an effectual beacon lest their vessel should run upon the rocks, the blessed Spirit has revealed such passages as we find in the sixth and tenth chapters of the Hebrews. They seem set up by the Spirit of God as a light-house at the entrance of a harbour. Is it not so naturally? Some shoal or sand-bank often lies near the entrance of a port, which the mariner has to guard against. How is he guarded? A light-house is erected on or near the spot, which warns him of the shoal. Now I look on the sixth and tenth chapters of the Epistle to the Hebrews as two light-houses standing near the entrance of the harbour of eternal safety. And their language is, "Beware of this shoal! Take care of that sand-bank! There are gifts without grace; there is profession without possession; there is form without power; there is a name to live whilst the soul is dead." The shoal naturally often lies at the very entrance of a harbour: and as the ship makes for the port, the sandbank lies in her very course; but when the harbour is neared, the friendly beacon not only warns her of the shoal, but also points out the safe passage into the haven. And so spiritually, from these two chapters many of God's people have seen what shoals lie in the way, and have, perhaps, before they were warned off, come near enough to see the shipwrecked vessels. The gallant barks that sailed from the same port with themselves they have seen wrecked on the rocks, the freight lost, and the dead bodies and broken fragments floating on the waves. But these never looked for the light-house, nor saw the bank; they were intoxicated, or fast asleep; they were sure of going to heaven; and on they went, reckless and thoughtless, till the vessel struck on the shoal, and every hand on board perished. These awful warnings and solemn admonitions seem to me so written that they may scrape, so to speak, as nearly as possible the quick of a man's flesh. And they appear couched in language of purposed ambiguity that they may be trying passages; nay, the very beauty and efficacy of them, and the real good to be wrought by them, is in their ambiguity, so that the people of God may take a more solemn warning by them, and may cry unto the Lord more earnestly that they may not be deceived. Then it is not the poor, desponding children of God who are tried by these passages, that have reason to fear them; their being thus tried shews that their conscience is tender in God's fear, and that they are "the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringing forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God;" and that they

are not that "which beareth thorns and briers, which is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned." And thus, these very fears and suspicions, by which many of God's people are exercised, causing strong cries unto the Lord, that he would teach, guide, and lead them, are so many blessed marks that they are not graceless persons, but partakers of the grace of God, and at the same time prove, "that he which hath begun a good work in them" will carry it on, and "will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ," and bring them into the eternal enjoyment of God, that they may see him for themselves, and not another.

November 25

*"There is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen." Job 28:7*

Growth in grace is not progressive sanctification and fleshly holiness on the one hand, nor a false and delusive establishment on the other. The narrow path lies between these two extremes. On the one side is Seneh, and on the other side is Bozez (1 Sam. 14:4), Pharisaic holiness and Antinomian security; and between these two sharp rocks lies the "path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen." From dashing on either of these rocks a living man is kept only by the mysterious dealings of God with his spirit, and the internal exercises through which he continually passes. A constant acquaintance with his own vileness preserves him from a self-righteous holiness in the flesh; a daily cross and a rankling thorn keep him from careless presumption. His path is indeed a mysterious one, full of harmonious contradictions and heavenly paradoxes. He is never easy when at ease, nor without a burden when he has none. He is never satisfied without doing something, and yet is never satisfied with anything that he does. He is never so strong as when he sits still, never so fruitful as when he does nothing, and never so active as when he makes the least haste. All outstrip him in the race, yet he alone gains the goal, and wins the prize. All are sure of heaven but himself, yet he enters into the kingdom, whilst they are thrust out. He wins pardon through guilt, hope through despair, deliverance through temptation, comfort through affliction, and a robe of righteousness through filthy rags. Though a worm and no man, he overcomes Omnipotence itself through violence; and though less than vanity and nothing, he takes heaven itself by force. Thus

amidst the strange contradictions which meet in a believing heart, he is never so prayerful as when he says nothing; never so wise as when he is the greatest fool; never so much alone as when most in company; and never so much under the power of an inward religion as when most separated from an outward one.

November 26

*"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." 1 Corinthians 3:11*

We are very eager to put our hands to work. Like Uzzah, we must needs prop up the ark when we see it stumbling; when faith totters, we must come to bear a helping hand. But this is prejudicial to the work of God upon the soul. If the whole is to be a spiritual building; if we are "living stones" built upon a living Head, every stone in that spiritual temple must be laid by God the Spirit. And if so, everything of nature, of creature, of self, must be effectually laid low, that Christ may be all—that Christ, and Christ alone, may be formed in our heart, the hope of glory. How many trials some of you have passed through! how many sharp and cutting exercises! how many harassing temptations! how many sinkings of heart! how many fiery darts from hell! how many doubts and fears! how much hard bondage! how many galling chains! how often has the very iron entered into your soul! Why? That you may be prevented from adding one stone by your own hands to the spiritual building. The Apostle tells us that "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid," even Jesus Christ. He then speaks of those who build "wood, hay, and stubble," as well as of those who used "gold, silver, and precious stones;" and that the "wood, hay, and stubble" must be burned with fire. It is after the Lord has laid a foundation in the sinner's conscience, brought him near to himself, made Jesus precious to his soul, raised up hope and love in his heart, that he is so apt to take materials God never recognises, "wood, hay, straw, stubble," and rear thereby a flimsy superstructure of his own. But this gives way in the trying hour: it cannot stand one gust of temptation. One spark of the wrath to come, one discovery of God's dread majesty, will burn up this "wood, hay, and stubble" like straw in the oven. The Lord's people, therefore, have to pass through troubles, trials, exercises, and temptations, doubts and fears, and all that harassing path that they usually walk in, that they may be

prevented from erecting a superstructure of nature upon the foundation of grace "wood, hay, and stubble" upon the glorious mystery of an incarnate God.

November 27

*"And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness." Romans 8:10*

We want two things in lively operation; a spiritual death and a spiritual life. We want death put upon the flesh, upon sin, upon everything which is ungodly, that it may not reign or rule; and we want also the communication and maintenance of a divine life which shall act Godward, exist and co-exist in the same breast, and be in activity at the same moment. Here is sin striving for the mastery; but here also is a view of the cross of Christ; here is a testimony of bleeding, dying love. This puts a death upon sin. But as death is put upon sin and the lust is mortified, crucified, resisted, or subdued, there springs up a life of faith and prayer, of hope and love, of repentance and godly sorrow for sin, of humility and spirituality, of a desire to live to God's praise and walk in his fear. The cross gives both. From the cross comes death unto sin; from the cross comes life unto righteousness. From the cross springs the healing of every bleeding wound, and from the cross springs every motive to a godly life. Thus, in God's mysterious wisdom, there is a way whereby sin can be pardoned, the law magnified, justice exalted, the sinner saved, sin subdued, righteousness given, and the soul made to walk in the ways of peace and holiness. Oh, what depths of wisdom, mercy, and grace are here! Look where you will, try every mode, if you are sincere about your soul's salvation, if the Lord the Spirit has planted the fear of God in your heart, you will find no other way but this. There is no other way that leads to holiness here and heaven hereafter; no other way whereby sin can be pardoned and the soul sanctified. It is this view of salvation from sin not only in its guilt but also in its power, this deliverance from the curse of the law and well-spring of all holy, acceptable obedience, which has in all ages so endeared the cross to the souls of God's family, and made all of them more or less to be of Paul's mind, when he declared that he was determined to know nothing save Jesus Christ and him crucified.

November 28

*"But thou, O Lord, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head." Psalm 3:3*

If your soul has ever been favoured with a taste of mercy, with a sip of the brook by the way; if ever your conscience has felt the application of atoning blood, or the love of God has ever been shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Ghost, when the law comes to curse you, endeavour always to bear in mind that the Lord Jesus Christ stands as the shield between you and its curse. The law has therefore nothing to do with you that believe, it has cursed Jesus Christ for you; as the Apostle declares, "He was made a curse for us;" and again, "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree," &c. Therefore the law has nothing to do with you who believe in Christ Jesus. He has intercepted the curse for you, and, by receiving it into his own body and soul, bore it harmless away from you. It is a blessed act of faith when you can thus take Christ in your arms and hold him up as a shield between the law and your conscience. And this the Apostle seems to hint at in a measure when he says, "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked;" for many of these fiery darts are taken from the law. It is indeed a great and special act of faith thus to take Jesus Christ in the arms, and holding him up in the face of the law, to be able to say, "Law, thou hast nothing to do with me; Jesus has fulfilled all thy righteous demands, and endured all thy tremendous curses. He is my shield, to protect me from thy condemning sentence; and all thy curses are harmless; they all fall short of me, because they all fell wholly upon him." I say this is a special act of faith, because we cannot do it except as divinely enabled. Otherwise, it would be but an act of presumption. I may add, also, that it is a very rare thing to be enabled so to take Christ and hold him up as a shield against the curses of the law; but when done under the influences and operations of the blessed Spirit, it is an act of faith which God approves of and honours. Nor is there any other shield to intercept its tremendous curse.

November 29

*"This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest*

*war a good warfare; holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck."* 1 Timothy 1:18, 19

This "good warfare" is carried on against three principal enemies—the flesh, the world, and the devil; and each of these enemies so closely allied to ourselves, and each so powerful and so hostile, that they must surely overcome us, unless we are "strengthened with might in the inner man." There is the flesh, with all its baits, charms, and subtle attractions, continually laying its gins and traps for our feet, perpetually ensnaring us in some evil word or some evil work, and we in ourselves utterly defenceless against it. Said I defenceless? Yea, eager to run into it, like the silly bird that sees the grains of corn spread in the trap, but thinks not, when it flutters around it, that the brick will fall and confine it a prisoner. So we, allured by a few grains of corn spread before our eyes, often see not the snare, until we are fast entangled therein. Faith then is that eye of the soul which sees the concealed hook; by faith we call upon the Lord to deliver us from snatching at the bait; and by faith, as a spiritual weapon, we cut at times the snare asunder. Oh, how defenceless are we, when the temptations and allurements of the flesh plead for indulgence, unless faith is in exercise, unless faith realises the hatred of God against sin, and brings into our consciences a sense of God's heart-searching eye, and his wrath against all transgression! But where the Lord has put this weapon of faith into the hand of his soldier, he will often strengthen his arm to wield it in these seasons of extremity, even though that weapon should cut and wound self. How Joseph was enabled to resist the snares spread for his feet, by calling to mind the presence of the Lord! How he was strengthened to break asunder that bond which was fast twining round his heart, when faith sprang up in his soul, and he said, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" How the three children who were about to be cast into the burning, fiery furnace, unless they would worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up, overcame that dreadful temptation to renounce their God and prove apostates, by living faith! Oh, what a weapon faith is, when the Lord does but give us power to wield it! How, as Hart says, it

"Cuts the way through hosts of devils,  
While they fall before the word."

**But when sin, temptation, and unbelief beat this weapon out of our hands, when it lies seemingly shivered at our feet, and we cannot get another such sword from God's armoury, how we stand naked and defenceless before our enemies! Therefore what need we have not merely of this heavenly grace in our souls, but to hold it fast and not let it go, lest the enchantress should catch our feet in her wiles and snares.**

**So, again, when Satan comes in with his fierce temptations and fiery darts, what but faith can enable the soul to stand up against them, as the Apostle says, "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." Nothing but faith in God, in his power and presence; nothing but faith in Jesus, in his blood and his righteousness; nothing but faith in the holy Ghost, as lifting up a standard in the heart by means of his divine operations; nothing but faith in a triune God can enable the soul to battle against Satan's assaults. Therefore see how indispensable faith is to fight a good fight, yea, so indispensable that a good fight is called emphatically "the fight of faith:" "fight the good fight of faith," implying that true faith will enable a man to come off more than conqueror through every battle and to survive every conflict.**

**November 30**

***"I will overturn, overturn, overturn it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him." Ezekiel 21:27***

**There is one then to come, "whose right it is;" there is a King who has a right to the throne, and to the allegiance of his subjects; a right to all that they are and to all that they have. But whence has he gained this right? "Until he come whose *right* it is." It is his right then, first, by original *donation* and *gift*, the Father having given to the Son all the elect. "Here am I," says Jesus, "and the children that thou *hast given me.*" "All that the *Father giveth* me shall come to me." Then, so far as we are his, Jesus has a right to our persons; and in having a right to our persons, he has, by the same original donation of God the Father, a right to our hearts and affections. But he has another right, and that is by *purchase* and *redemption*, he having redeemed his people with his own blood, having laid down his life for them, and thus bought and purchased them, and so established a right to them by the full and**

complete price which he himself paid down upon the cross for them. This twofold right he exercises every time that he lays a solemn claim to any one of the people whom he has purchased. And this claim he lays when the blessed Spirit comes into the soul to arrest and apprehend a vessel of mercy, and bring it to his feet, that he may be enthroned as King and Lord in its affections. For be it remembered, that the possession of the heart with all its affections is his right; and "his glory he will not give to another;" his property he will not allow to pass into other hands; he is not satisfied with merely having a right to the persons of his dear people, he must have their hearts; and in exercising his right to their affections, he will reign and rule supreme, allowing no rival, admitting no co-operation with self in any shape or form, but he himself to be established as King and Lord there. Then where is the soul before he comes into it in power, in sweetness, in beauty, in preciousness? What and where is it? A heap of ruins. And no man ever knew much of the preciousness of Christ, whose soul was not a heap of ruins, and in whom self had not been overturned and cast to the ground. Nay; no man ever ardently panted that the Lord of life and glory should visit his heart with his salvation, should come in the power of his resurrection, in the glory of his righteousness, in the preciousness of his presence; no man ever spiritually desired, sighed, cried, groaned, sued, and begged for the manifestation of Christ to his soul, who was not a ruined wretch before God, and in whom self had not been overturned so as to be a desolate heap, so overthrown that all the power of man could not put any one stone in its place, or rebuild the former edifice.