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PEARLS FROM PHILPOT

Man's religion & God's religion

Man's religion is to build up the creature.

God's religion is to throw the creature down in the dust of self-abasement, and to glorify Christ.

What a mystery are you!

"So I find this law at work—When I want to do good, evil is right there with me." Rom. 7:21

Are you not often a mystery to yourself?
Warm one moment—cold the next!

Abasing yourself one hour—
exalting yourself the following!

Loving the world, full of it, steeped up to
your head in it today—crying, groaning, and
sighing for a sweet manifestation of the love
of God tomorrow!

Brought down to nothingness, covered with
shame and confusion, on your knees before
you leave your room—filled with pride and self
importance before you have got down stairs!

Despising the world, and willing to give it all
up for one taste of the love of Jesus when in
solitude—trying to grasp it with both hands
when in business!

What a mystery are you!

Touched by love—and stung with hatred!

Possessing a little wisdom—and a great deal of folly!

Earthly minded—and yet having the affections in heaven!

Pressing forward—and lagging behind!

Full of sloth—and yet taking the kingdom with violence!

And thus the Spirit, by a process which we may feel but cannot adequately describe—leads us into the **mystery of the two natures** perpetually struggling and striving against each other in the same bosom. So that one man cannot more differ from another, than **the same man differs from himself.**

But the mystery of the kingdom of heaven is this—that our carnal mind undergoes no alteration, but maintains a perpetual war with grace. And thus, the deeper we sink in self abasement under a sense of our vileness, the higher we rise in a knowledge of Christ, and the blacker we are in our own view—the more lovely does Jesus appear.

What stupid blockheads!

"**Are you still so dull?**" Jesus asked them.
Matthew 15:16

What lessons we need day by day to teach us anything aright, and how it is for the most part, "line upon line, line upon line—here a little, and there a little." O . . .

what slow learners!

what dull, forgetful scholars!

what ignoramuses!

what stupid blockheads!

what stubborn pupils!

Surely no scholar at a school, old or young, could learn so little of natural things as we seem to have learned of **spiritual things** after . . . so many years instruction, so many chapters read, so many sermons heard, so many prayers put up, so much talking about religion.

How small, how weak is the amount of growth—compared with all we have read and heard and talked about!

But it is a mercy that the Lord saves whom
He will save—and that we are saved by free
grace—and free grace alone!

Take me as I am with all my sin and shame

"Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed;
save me, and I shall be saved." Jer. 17:14

Here is this **sin!** Save me from it!

Here is this **snare!** Break it to pieces!

Here is this **lust!** Lord, subdue it!

Here is this **temptation!** Deliver me out of it!

Here is **my proud heart!** Lord, humble it!

Here is **my unbelieving heart!** Take it away,
and give me faith; give me submission to
Your mind and will.

**Take me as I am with all my sin and
shame** and work in me everything well
pleasing in Your sight.

Nothing but a huge clod of dust

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

Everything upon earth, as viewed by the eyes
of the Majesty of heaven—is base and paltry.

Earth is after all, **nothing but a huge clod of
dust**, and as such, as insignificant in the eyes
of its Maker as the small dust of the balance,
or the drop of the bucket.

What, then, are . . .
its highest objects,
its loftiest aims, its grandest pursuits,
its noblest employments,
in the sight of Him who inhabits eternity;

but base and worthless?

Vanity is stamped on all earth's attainments.

All earthly pursuits and high accomplishments . . .
wealth,
rank,
learning,
power, or
pleasure,
end in death!

The breath of God's displeasure soon
lays low in the grave all that is rich
and mighty, high and proud.

But that effectual work of grace on the heart,
whereby the chosen vessels of mercy are
delivered from the power of darkness and
translated into the kingdom of God's dear
Son, **calls them out of . . .**
those low, groveling pursuits,
those earthly toys,
those base and sensual lusts in which other
men seek at once their happiness and their ruin.

How can they escape?

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

The Lord sees His poor scattered pilgrims
traveling through a valley of tears—journeying
through a waste-howling wilderness—a path
beset with baits, traps, and snares in every
direction.

How can they escape?

Why, the Lord 'keeps their feet'. He carries them
through every rough place—as a tender parent
carries a little child. When about to fall—He
graciously lays His everlasting arms underneath
them. And when tottering and stumbling, and
their feet ready to slip—He mercifully upholds
them from falling altogether.

But do you think that He has not different **ways** for different **feet**? The God of creation has not made two flowers, nor two leaves upon a tree alike—and will He cause all His people to walk in precisely the same path? No. We have . . . each our path, each our troubles, each our trials, each peculiar traps and snares laid for our feet.

And the wisdom of the all-wise God is shown by His eyes being in every place—marking the footsteps of every pilgrim—suiting His remedies to meet their individual case and necessity—appearing for them when nobody else could do them any good—watching so tenderly over them, as though the eyes of His affection were bent on one individual—and carefully noting the goings of each, as though all the powers of the Godhead were concentrated on that one person to keep him from harm!

God will meet all your needs

"And my **God will meet all your needs** according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus." Phil. 4:19

Until we are brought into the depths of poverty, we shall never know nor value Christ's riches.

If, then, you are a child of God, a poor and needy soul, a tempted and tried believer in Christ, "**God will meet all your needs.**"

They may be very great.

It may seem to you, sometimes, as though there were not upon all the face of the earth **such a wretch as you**—as though there never could be a child of God in your state . . . so dark, so stupid, so blind and ignorant, so proud and worldly, so presumptuous and hypocritical, so continually backsliding after idols, so continually doing things that you know are hateful in God's sight.

But whatever your need be—it is not beyond the reach of divine supply! And the deeper your need, the more is Jesus glorified in supplying it.

Do not say then, that . . .
your case is too bad,
your needs are too many,
your perplexities too great,
your temptations too powerful.

No case can be too bad!

No temptations can be too powerful!

No sin can be too black!

No perplexity can be too hard!

No state in which the soul can get, is beyond the reach of the almighty and compassionate love, that burns in the breast of the Redeemer!

That sympathizing, merciful, feeling, tender, and compassionate heart

"For we do not have a High Priest who is unable to sympathize with our infirmities." Hebrews 4:15

The child of God, spiritually taught and convinced, is deeply sensible of his infirmities. Yes, that he is encompassed with infirmities—that he is nothing else but infirmities. And therefore the great High Priest to whom he comes as a burdened sinner—to whom he has recourse in the depth of his extremity—and at whose feet he falls overwhelmed with a sense of his helplessness, sin, misery, and guilt—is so suitable to him as one able to sympathize with his infirmities.

We would, if left to our own conceptions, naturally imagine that Jesus is too holy to look down in compassion on a filthy, guilty wretch like ourselves. Surely, surely, He will spurn us from His feet. Surely, surely, His holy eyes cannot look upon us in our . . .
blood,
guilt,
filth,

wretchedness,
misery,
and shame.

Surely, surely, He cannot bestow . . .
one heart's thought,
one moment's sympathy,
or feel one spark of love
towards those who are so unlike Him.

Nature, sense, and reason would thus argue,
"I must be holy—perfectly holy—for Jesus to love;
I must be pure—perfectly pure—spotless and
sinless, for Jesus to think of. But . . .
that I, a sinful, guilty, defiled wretch;
that I, encompassed with infirmities;
that I, whose heart is a cage of unclean birds;
that I, stained and polluted with a thousand iniquities;
that I can have any inheritance in Him—or that He can
have any love or compassion towards me—nature, sense,
reason, and human religion in all its shapes and forms,
revolts from the idea."

It is as though Jesus specially address Himself to the
poor, burdened child of God who feels his infirmities,
who cannot boast of his own wisdom, strength,
righteousness, and consistency—but is all weakness
and helplessness. It seems as if He would address
Himself to the case of such a helpless wretch—and
pour a sweet cordial into his bleeding conscience.

We, the children of God—we, who each knows his own
plague and his own sore—we, who carry about with us
day by day a body of sin and death, that makes us
lament, sigh, and groan—we, who know painfully what
it is to be encompassed with infirmities—we, who come
to His feet as being nothing and having nothing but sin
and woe—"we do not have a High Priest who is unable
to sympathize with our infirmities," but One who carries
in His bosom that . . .

**sympathizing,
merciful,
feeling,
tender, and
compassionate heart.**

Why are you cast down, O my soul?

"**Why are you cast down, O my soul?** Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise Him, my Savior and my God."
Psalm 42:11

Do you forget, O soul, that the way to heaven is a very strait and narrow path—too narrow for you to carry your sins in it with you?

God sees it good that you should be cast down.

You were getting very **proud**, O soul.

The **world** had gotten hold of your heart.

You were seeking great things for yourself.

You were secretly roving away from the Lord.

You were too much lifted up in SELF.

The Lord has sent you these trials and difficulties and allowed these temptations to fall upon you, to bring you down from your state of false security.

There is reason therefore, even to praise God for being cast down, and for being so disturbed.

How this opens up parts of God's Word which you never read before with any feeling.

How it gives you sympathy and communion with the tried and troubled children of God.
How it weans and separates you from dead professors.

How it brings you in heart and affection, out of the world that lies in wickedness.
And how it engages your thoughts, time after time, upon the solemn matters of eternity—instead of being a prey to every idle thought and imagination, and tossed up and down upon a sea of vanity and folly.

But, above all, when there is a sweet response from the Lord, and the power of divine things is inwardly felt, in enabling us to hope in God, and to praise His blessed name—then we see the benefit of being cast down and so repeatedly and continually disturbed.

"Why are you cast down, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise Him, my Savior and my God."
Psalm 42:11

Treasure in earthen vessels

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

Do not be surprised if you feel that in yourself you are but an earthen vessel—if you are made deeply and daily sensible of your frail body.

Do not be surprised . . .
if your clay house is often tottering;
if sickness sometimes assails your mortal tabernacle;
if in your flesh there dwells no good thing;
if your soul often cleaves to the dust; and
if you are unable to retain a sweet sense
of God's goodness and love.

Do not be surprised nor startled . . .
at the corruptions of your depraved nature;
at the depth of sin in your carnal mind;
at the vile abominations which lurk and work
in your deceitful and desperately wicked heart.

Bear in mind that it is the will of God that this **heavenly treasure** which makes you rich for eternity, should be **lodged in an earthen vessel.**

We have ever to feel our native weakness—and that without Christ we can do nothing—that we may be clothed with humility, and feel ourselves the chief of sinners, and less than the least of all saints. We thus learn to prize the heights, breadths, lengths, and depths of the love of Christ, who stooped so low to raise us up so high!

All trials, all temptations, all strippings, all emptyings

The very **trials** and **afflictions**, and the sore

temptations through which God's family pass, all eventually endear Christ to them.

And depend upon it, if you are a child of God, you will sooner or later, in your travels through this wilderness, find your need of Jesus as "able to save to the uttermost."

There will be such things in your heart, and such feelings in your mind—the temptations you will meet with will be such—that nothing short of a Savior that is able to save to the uttermost can save you out of your desperate case and felt circumstances as utterly lost and helpless. This a great point to come to. **All trials, all temptations, all strippings, all emptyings** that do not end here are valueless—because they lead the soul away from God.

But the convictions, the trials, the temptations, the strippings, the emptyings, that bring us to this spot—that **we have nothing, and can do nothing**, but the Lord alone must do it all—these have a blessed effect, because they eventually make Jesus very near and dear unto us.

No fear!

"There is **no fear** of God before their eyes."
Romans 3:18

Those who have every reason to fear as to their eternal state before God, have for the most part, **no fear** at all. They are secure, and free from doubt and fear.

The depths of human hypocrisy,
the dreadful lengths to which profession may go,
the deceit of the carnal heart,
the snares spread for the unwary feet,
the fearful danger of being deceived at the last;
these traps and pitfalls are not objects of anxiety to those dead in sin.

As long as they can pacify natural conscience, and do something to soothe any transient conviction—**they are glad to be deceived!**

God does not see fit to disturb their quiet.

He has no purpose of mercy towards them;
they are not subjects of His kingdom;
they are not objects of His love.

He therefore leaves them carnally secure, as
in a dream—from which they will not awake
until the day of judgment.

These difficulties . . .

"From all your idols will I cleanse you." Ezekiel 36:25

When there are no **crosses, temptations, or trials**,
a man is sure to go out after and cleave to idols.

It matters not what experience he has had. If once he
ceases to be plagued and tried, he will be setting up
his household gods in the secret chambers of his heart.

Profit or pleasure, self-indulgence or self-gratification,
will surely, in one form or another, engross his thoughts,
and steal away his heart.

Nor is there anything too trifling or insignificant to
become an idol. Whatever is meditated on preferably
to God—whatever is desired more than He—whatever
more interests us, pleases us, occupies our waking
hours, or is more constantly in our mind—becomes
an idol, and a source of sin.

It is not the **magnitude** of the idol, but its **existence**
as an object of worship—that constitutes idolatry. I have
seen some 'Burmese idols' not much larger than my hand;
and I have seen some 'Egyptian idols' weighing many tons.
But both were equally idols—and the comparative size had
nothing to do with the question.

So spiritually, **an idol is not to be measured by its size**,
or its relative importance or non-importance. A flower may
be as much an idol to one man, as a chest full of gold to
another.

If you watch your heart, you will see idols rising and setting
all day long, nearly as thickly as the stars by night.

But God sends . . .
trials,

difficulties,
temptations,
besetments,
losses,
afflictions,
to pull down these idols—or rather
to pull away our hearts from them.

These difficulties . . .

pull us out of fleshly ease,
make us cry for mercy,
pull down all rotten props,
hunt us out of false refuges, and
strip us of vain hopes and delusive expectations.

Idolatry!

"They tell how you turned to God from **idols**
to serve the living and true God." 1 Thes. 1:9

Nothing is too small or too insignificant
which, at times, may not be an idol.

What is an idol?

Something my carnal mind loves.

How may I know whether my carnal mind loves it?
When we think of it, and are very much pleased with
it. We pet it, love and fondle it, dallying and playing
with it, like a mother with her babe. See how she
takes the little thing and gazes at it. Her eyes are
fixed on it—she dotes upon it because she loves it.

Thus we may know an idol if we examine our own
hearts—by what our imagination, desires and secret
thoughts are going out after.

Instead of being spiritually minded, having his
heart and affections in heaven, he has something
in his mind which it is going out after—something
or other laying hold of the affections.

The child of God has, more or less, all these evil
propensities working within. **There is idolatry in
every man's heart.** How deep this idolatry is
rooted in a man's heart! How it steals upon his
soul! Whatever is indulged in—how it creeps over
him, until it gets such power that it becomes master.

A man does not know himself—if he does not know what power this idolatry has over him.

None but God can make the man know it—and when the Lord delivers him, he then turns to God and says, "What a vile wretch I have been! What a monster to go after these idols, loving this thing, and that. A wretch—a monster of iniquity, the vilest wretch that ever crawled on the face of God's earth—for my wicked heart to go out after these idols!"

When the soul is brought down to a sense of its vileness and loathsomeness—and God's patience and forbearance—it turns to God from idols, to serve the only living and true God, who pardons the idolater.

Through the inward conflicts, secret workings

Through the inward conflicts, secret workings, mysterious changes, and ever-varying exercises of his soul, the true Christian becomes established in a deep experience of . . .
his own folly and God's wisdom,
his own weakness and Christ's strength,
his own sinfulness and the Lord's goodness,
his own backslidings and the Spirit's recoveries,
his own base ingratitude and Jehovah's patience,
the aboundings of sin and the super-aboundings of grace.

He thus becomes daily more and more confirmed in . . .
the vanity of the creature,
the utter helplessness of man,
the deceitfulness and hypocrisy of the human heart,
the sovereignty of distinguishing grace,
the fewness of heaven-taught ministers,
the scanty number of living souls,
and the great rareness of true religion.

Wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores

"The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.

From the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in it—but only **wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores**. They have not been closed, neither bound up, neither soothed with ointment." Isaiah 1:5-6

Every thought, word, and action is polluted by sin.

Every mental faculty is depraved.

The **will** chooses evil.

The **affections** cleave to earthly things.

The **memory**, like a broken sieve, retains the bad and lets fall the good.

The **judgment**, like a bribed or drunken judge, pronounces mindless or wrong decisions.
The **conscience**, like an opium eater, lies asleep and drugged in stupefied silence.

When all these 'master faculties of the mind' are so drunken and disorderly—need we wonder that the bodily members are a godless, rebellious crew?

Lusts call out for gratification.
Unbelief and infidelity murmur.

Tempers growl and mutter.

Every bad passion strives hard for the mastery.

O the evils of the human heart, which, let loose, have **filled earth with misery, and hell with victims**; which deluged the world with the flood—burnt Sodom and Gomorrah with fire from heaven—and are ripening the world for the final conflagration!

Every sin which . . .
has made this fair earth a 'present hell';
has filled the air with groans; and
has drenched the ground with blood;
dwells in your heart and mine!

Now, as this is opened up to the conscience by the Spirit of God—we feel indeed to be of all men most sinful and miserable—and of all **most guilty, polluted, and vile**. But it is this—and nothing but this—which

cuts to pieces our 'fleshly righteousness, wisdom, and strength'—which slays our delusive hopes—and lays us low at the footstool of mercy—without one good thought, word, or action to propitiate an angry Judge.

It is this which brings the soul to this point—that **if saved, it can only be saved by the free grace, sovereign mercy, and tender compassion of Almighty God.**

The wilderness wanderer

"**They wandered in the wilderness** in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in." Psalm 107:4

The true Christian finds this world to be a wilderness.

There is no change in the world itself.

The change is in the man's heart.

The wilderness wanderer thinks it altered—a different world from what he has hitherto known . . . his friends, his own family, the employment in which he is daily engaged, the general pursuits of men—their cares and anxieties, their hopes and prospects, their amusements and pleasures, and what I may call 'the general din and whirl of life', all seem to him different to what they were—and for a time perhaps he can scarcely tell whether the change is in them, or in himself.

This however is the prominent and uppermost feeling in his mind—that he finds himself, to his surprise—a **wanderer in a world** which has changed altogether its appearance to him. The fair, beautiful world, in which was all his happiness and all his home—has become to him a dreary wilderness.

Sin has been fastened in its conviction on his conscience. The Holy Spirit has taken the veil of unbelief and ignorance off his heart. He now sees the world in a wholly different light—and instead of a paradise it has become a wilderness—

for sin, dreadful sin, has marred all its beauty and happiness.

It is not because the world itself has changed that the Christian feels it to be a wilderness—but because he himself has changed.

There is nothing in this world which can really gratify or satisfy the true Christian. What once was to him a happy and joyous world has now become a barren wilderness.

The scene of his former . . .
pursuits,
pleasures,
habits,
delights,
prospects,
hopes,
anticipations of profit or happiness—
is now turned into a barren wasteland.

He cannot perhaps tell how or why the change has taken place, but he feels it—deeply feels it. He may try to shake off his trouble and be a little cheerful and happy as he was before—but if he gets a little imaginary relief, all his guilty pangs come back upon him with renewed strength and increased violence.

God means to make the world a wilderness to every child of His, that he may not find his happiness in it, but be a stranger and a pilgrim upon earth.

Temptation

"The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of **temptations**." 2 Peter 2:9

Few will sincerely and spiritually go to the Lord, and cry from their hearts to be delivered from the power of a **temptation**—until it presses so weightily upon their conscience, and lies so heavy a burden upon their soul, that none but God can remove it.

But when we really feel the burden of a **temptation**; when, though our flesh may love it, our spirit hates it—when, though there may be in our carnal mind a cleaving to it, our conscience bleeds under it, and we are brought spiritually to loathe it and to loathe ourselves for it—when we are enabled to go to the Lord in real sincerity of soul and honesty of heart,

beseeking Him to deliver us from it—I believe, that the Lord will, sooner or later, either remove that **temptation** entirely in His providence or by His grace, or so weaken its power that it shall cease to be what it was before, drawing our feet into paths of darkness and evil.

As long, however, as we are in that state of which the prophet speaks, "**Their heart is divided**—now shall they be found faulty" (Hosea 10:2)—as long as we are in that carnal, wavering mind, which James describes—"A double minded man is unstable in all his ways;" as long as we are hankering after the **temptation**, casting longing, lingering side glances after it, rolling it as a sweet morsel under our tongue; and though conscience may testify against it, yet not willing to have it taken away, there is . . .

no hearty cry,

nor sigh,

nor spiritual breathing of our soul,

that God would remove it from us.

But when we are brought, as in the presence of a heart-searching God, to hate the evil to which we are tempted; and cry to Him that He would—for His honor and for our soul's good—take the **temptation** away, or dull and deaden its power—sooner or later the Lord will hear the cry of those who groan to be delivered from those **temptations**, which are so powerfully pressing them down to the dust.

Idling life away like an idiot or a madman

When one is spiritually reborn, he sees at one and the same moment . . .

God and self,

justice and guilt,

power and helplessness,

a holy law and a broken commandment,

eternity and time,

the purity of the Creator, and

the filthiness of the creature.

And these things he sees—not merely as declared in the Bible—but as revealed in himself as personal realities, involving all his happiness or all his misery in time and

in eternity. Thus it is with him **as though a new existence** had been communicated, and as if for the first time he had found there was a God!

It is as though all his days he had been asleep, and were now awakened—asleep upon the top of a mast, with the raging waves beneath—**as if all his past life were a dream,** and the dream were now at an end. He has been . . . hunting butterflies, blowing soap bubbles, fishing for minnows, picking daisies, building houses of cards, and **idling life away like an idiot or a madman.**

He had been perhaps wrapped up in a religious profession—advanced even to the office of a deacon, or mounted in a pulpit. He had learned to talk about Christ, and election, and grace, and fill his mouth with the language of Zion.

But what did he experimentally know of these things? **Nothing, absolutely nothing!**

Ignorant of his own ignorance (of all kinds of ignorance the worst)—he thought himself rich, and increased with goods, and to have need of nothing—and knew not that he was wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.

This wily devil!

What a foe to one's peace is one's own spirit!
What shall I call it? It is often an infernal spirit.
Why? Because it bears the mark of Satan upon it.

The pride of our spirit,
the presumption of our spirit,
the hypocrisy of our spirit,
the intense selfishness of our spirit,
are often hidden from us.

This wily devil, SELF, can wear such masks and assume such forms!

This serpent, SELF, can so creep and crawl,
can so twist and turn, and can disguise itself
under such false appearances—that it is often
hidden from ourselves.

Who is the greatest enemy we have to fear? We all
have our enemies. **But who is our greatest enemy?**
He whom you carry in your own bosom—your daily,
hourly, and unmovable companion, who entwines
himself in nearly every thought of your heart—who . . .
sometimes puffs up with pride,
sometimes inflames with lust,
sometimes inflates with presumption, and
sometimes works under pretend humility and fleshly holiness.

God is determined to stain the pride of human glory.
He will never let SELF, (which is but another word for
the creature,) wear the crown of victory. It must be
crucified, denied, and mortified.

To bathe in the ocean of endless bliss!

"Blessed are those whose strength is in You,
who have set their hearts on pilgrimage.
As they pass through the Valley of Baca, ("weeping")
they make it a place of springs;
the autumn rains also cover it with pools.
They go from strength to strength,
until each appears before God in Zion."
Psalm 84:5-7

Every living soul that has been experimentally taught
his lost condition—that has known something of a resting
place in Christ—that has turned his back upon both the
world and the professing church—and gone weeping
Zionward, that he may . . .
live in Jesus
feel His power,
taste His love,
know His blood,
rejoice in His grace;
every such soul shall, like Israel of old, be borne safely
through this waste howling wilderness—shall be carried
through this valley of tears—and taken to enjoy eternal
bliss and glory in the presence of Jesus—**to bathe in the
ocean of endless bliss!**

Your eyes will see the King in His beauty!

"Your eyes will see the King in His beauty!" Isaiah 33:17

Where in heaven or on earth can there be found such a lovely Object as the Son of God? If you have never seen any beauty in Jesus . . .

you have never seen Jesus,
He has never revealed Himself to you,
you never had a glimpse of His lovely face,
nor a sense of His presence,
nor a word from His lips,
nor a touch from His hand.

But if you have seen Him by the eye of faith—and He has revealed Himself to you even in a small measure—you have seen a beauty in Him beyond all other beauties, for it is . . .

a holy beauty,
a divine beauty,
the beauty of His heavenly grace,
the beauty of His uncreated and eternal glory.
How beautiful and glorious does He show Himself to be in His atoning blood and dying love. Even as sweating great drops of blood in Gethsemane's gloomy garden, and as hanging in torture and agony upon Calvary's cross—faith can see a beauty in the glorious Redeemer, even in the lowest depths of ignominy and shame!

"How is your Beloved better than others?"

"My Beloved is dark and dazzling, better than ten thousand others!" Song 5:9-10

Can the Ethiopian change his skin?

"Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil."

Jeremiah 13:23

Before the soul can know anything about salvation, it must learn deeply and experimentally the nature of sin—and of itself, as stained and polluted by sin.

The soul is **proud**—and needs to be humbled.

The soul is **careless**—and needs to be awakened.

The soul is **alive**—and needs to be killed.

The soul is **full**—and requires to be emptied.

The soul is **whole**—and needs to be wounded.

The soul is **clothed**—and requires to be stripped.

The soul is, by nature . . .

self-righteous,
self-seeking,
buried deep in worldliness and carnality,
utterly blind and ignorant,
filled with . . .
presumption,
arrogance,
conceit,
and enmity.

It hates all that is heavenly and spiritual.
Sin, in all its various forms, is its natural element.

To make man the direct opposite of what he originally is .

. . .
to make him love God—instead of hating Him;
to make him fear God—instead of mocking Him;
to make him obey God—instead of rebelling against Him;
to make him to tremble at His dreadful majesty—
instead of defiantly charging against Him;
to do this mighty work, and to effect this wonderful
change—requires the implantation of a new nature by
the immediate hand of God Himself!

"Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil."
Jeremiah 13:23

That Heavenly Teacher

We do not learn that we are **sinner**s merely
by reading it in the Bible. It must be wrought—
I might say, burnt into us.
Nor will anyone sincerely and spiritually cry for
mercy—until sin is spiritually felt and known . . .

in its misery,
in its dominion,
in its guilt,
in its entanglements,
in its wiles and allurements,
in its filth and pollution, and
in its condemnation.

Where the Holy Spirit works, He kindles . . .
sighs,
groans,
supplications,
wrestlings, and pleadings
to know **Christ**, feel His love, taste the efficacy
of His atoning blood, and embrace Him as all
our salvation and all our desire.

And though there may, and doubtless will be,
much barrenness, hardness, deadness, and
apparent carelessness often felt—still **that**
heavenly Teacher will revive His work—though
often by painful methods—nor will He let the
quicken soul rest short of a personal and
experimental enjoyment of Christ and His
glorious salvation.

Preserving grace before regeneration

"To those who have been **called**,
who are **loved** by God the Father
and **preserved** in Jesus Christ."

Jude 1

What a mercy it is for God's people that before
they have a 'vital union' with Christ—before they
are grafted into Him experimentally—they have an
'eternal, immanent union' with Him before all worlds.
It is by virtue of this eternal union that they come
into the world . . .

at such a time,
at such a place,
from such parents,
under such circumstances, as God has appointed.

It is by virtue of this eternal union that the circumstances
of their lives are ordained. By virtue of this eternal union
they are **preserved in Christ before they are effectually
called**.

They cannot die until God has brought about a vital union with Christ!

Whatever **sickness** they may pass through—whatever **injuries** they may be exposed to—whatever **perils** assault them on sea or land—**die they will not, die they cannot;** until God's purposes are executed in bringing them into a vital union with the Son of His love.

Thus, this eternal union watched over every circumstance of their birth, watched over their childhood, watched over their manhood, watched over them until the appointed time and spot, when "the God of all grace," according to His eternal purpose, was pleased to quicken their souls, and thus bring about an experimental union with the Lord of life and glory.

Free!

"If the Son sets you **free**, you will be **free indeed**."
John 8:36

To be made **free** implies a liberty from the **WORLD** and the spirit of covetousness in the heart. If we were to follow into their shops some who talk much of 'gospel liberty', we might find that the world's fetter had not been struck off their heart—that they had a 'golden' chain, though invisible to their own eyes, very closely wrapped round their heart.

And there is a being made **free** from the power of **SIN**. I greatly fear, if we could follow into their holes and corners, and secret chambers, many who prattle about gospel liberty, we would find that sin had not yet lost its hold upon them, that there was some secret or open sin that entangled them, that there was . . .
some lust,
some passion,
some evil temper,
some wretched pride or other,
that wound its fetters very close round their heart.

And also there is a being made **free** from **SELF** . . .
proud self,
presumptuous self,
self-exalting self, flesh-pleasing self,
hypocritical self,

self in all its various shapes and turns,
self in all its crooked hypocrisy and windings.

"If the Son sets you **free**, you will be **free indeed**."

These fugitive, transitory things

"The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever." 1 John 2:17

There is a **reality** in true religion, and indeed, rightly viewed, a reality in nothing else. For every other thing passes away like a dream of the night, and comes to an end like a tale that is told. Now you cannot say of a thing that passes away and comes to an end—that it is real. It may have the appearance of reality—when in fact it is but a shadow.

Money, jewels, pictures, books, furniture, securities, are transitory. Money may be spent, jewels be lost, books be burnt, furniture decay, pictures vanish by time and age, securities be stolen.

Nothing is real but that which has an **abiding** substance.

Health decays,
strength diminishes,
beauty flees the cheek,
sight and **hearing** grow dim,
the **mind** itself gets feeble,
riches make to themselves wings and flee away,
children die,
friends depart,
old age creeps on,
and **life** itself comes to a close.

These fugitive, transitory things are then mere shadows. There is no substance, no enduring substance in them. They are for time, and are useful for a time. Like our daily food and clothing, house and home—they support and solace us in our journey through life. But there they stop—when life ends they end with it.

But real religion—and by this I understand the work of God upon the soul—abides in death and after death, goes with us through the dark valley, and lands us safe in a blessed eternity. It is, therefore, the only thing in this world of which we can say that it is **real**.

"The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever." 1 John 2:17

A sad motley mixture

(The following is an excerpt from Philpot's letter to a church which desired him to come as their pastor)

"I am less than the least of all God's people."
Ephesians 3:8

"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am the worst." 1 Timothy 1:15

Many are foolishly apt to think that a minister is more spiritual than anyone else. But I am daily more and more sensible of the desperate wickedness of my deceitful heart, and my miserable ruined state as a sinner by nature and by practice. I feel utterly unworthy of the name of a Christian, and to be ranked among the followers of the Lamb.

I have no desire to palm myself off on any church, as though I were anything. I am willing to take a low place.

The more you see of me, you will be sure to find out more of my infirmities, failings, waywardness, selfishness, obstinacy, and evil temper. I am carnal, very proud, very foolish in imagination, very slothful, very worldly, dark, stupid, blind, unbelieving and ignorant.

I cannot but confess that **I am a strange compound—a sad motley mixture** of all the most hateful and abominable vices that rise up within me, and face me at every turn.

When You shall enlarge my heart.

"I will run the way of Your commandments, **when You shall enlarge my heart.**" Psalm 119:32

The Word of God is full of precepts—but we are totally unable to perform them in our own strength. **We cannot, without divine assistance, perform the precept . . .** with a single eye to the glory of God, from heavenly motives, and in a way acceptable to the Lord, without special power from on high.

We need an extraordinary power to be put forth in our hearts—a special work of the Spirit upon the conscience, in order to spiritually fulfill in the slightest degree, the least of God's commandments.

None but the Lord Himself can enlarge the heart of His people. None but the Lord can expand their hearts Godwards, and remove that narrowedness and contractedness in divine things—which is the plague and burden of a God-fearing soul.

When the Lord is absent,
when He hides His lovely face,
when He does not draw near to visit and bless,
the heart contracts in its own narrow compass.

But when the Lord is pleased to favor the soul with His own gracious presence, and bring Himself near to the heart, His felt presence opens, enlarges, and expands the soul—so as to receive Him in all His love and grace.

Our refuge!

"The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take **refuge**. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation—my stronghold." Psalm 18:2

On every side are hosts of **enemies** ever invading our souls—trampling down every good thing in our hearts—accompanied by a flying troop of temptations, doubts, fears, guilt and bondage sweeping over our soul. **And we, as regards our own strength, are helpless against them.**

But there is a **refuge** set before us in the gospel of the grace of God. The Lord Jesus Christ, as King in Zion, is there held up before our eyes as . . .
the Rock of **our refuge**,
our strong Tower,
our impregnable Fortress;
and we are encouraged by every precious promise and every gospel invitation when we are overrun and distressed by these wandering, ravaging, plundering tribes—to flee unto and find a safe

refuge in Him.

"Keep me safe, O God, for in You I take **refuge**."

Psalm 16:1

"O Lord my God, I take **refuge** in You; save and deliver me from all who pursue me."

Psalm 7:1

Supernatural light

"For **God**, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, **has shined in our hearts**, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." 2 Cor. 4:6

Until, then, this **supernatural light** of God enters into the soul, a man has no saving knowledge of Jehovah. He may . . .

say his prayers,
read his Bible, attend preaching,
observe ordinances,
bestow all his goods to feed the poor,
or give his body to be burned;

**but he is as ignorant of God as
the cattle that graze in the fields!**

He may—call himself a Christian, and be thought such by others—talk much about Jesus Christ, hold a sound creed—maintain a consistent profession—pray at a prayer meeting with fluency and apparent feeling, stand up in a pulpit and contend earnestly for the doctrines of grace—excel hundreds of God's children in zeal, knowledge and conversation.

And yet, if this ray of **supernatural light** has never shone into his soul—he is only twofold more the child of hell than those who make no profession!

Little heathen?

(from Philpot's biography, written by his son)

There was nothing my father mistrusted more than '**childhood piety.**' He insisted that children should never be taught or allowed to use the language of 'personal possession' in reference to God. To sing, for instance, "Rock of Ages, cleft for ME" or, "MY Jesus".

Herein he was most logical. For **by early influence and example you can train up a child to be . . .**
a little patriot,
a little Catholic,
a little Calvinist, or
a little Bolshevist.

But no power on earth can make him a child of God. He took great care that we, his children, attended the means of grace, and never missed chapel or family prayers. **But he never expected us to be anything but little heathen.** We had, it is true, to be **well behaved little heathen.** If not, we got "the stick", or its equivalent.

"Who were **born**, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man—but **of God.**" John 1:13

My desire is . . .

to exalt the **grace** of God;
to proclaim **salvation** through Jesus Christ alone;
to declare the sinfulness, helplessness and hopelessness of **man** in a state of nature;
to describe the living experience of the children of God in their . . .
trials,
temptations,
sorrows,
consolations
and blessings.

And how is he lost?

"O visit me with Your salvation." Psalm 106:4
Salvation only suits the condemned—the lost.
A man must be lost—utterly lost—before he can prize God's salvation.

And how is he lost? By . . .

losing all his religion,
losing all his righteousness,
losing all his strength,
losing all his confidence,
losing all his hopes,
losing all that is of the flesh;
losing it by its being taken from him,
and stripped away by the hand of God.

Wearied, torn, and half expiring

The poor sheep has gone astray; and having once left the fold, it is pretty sure to have gotten into some strange place or other. It has fallen down a rock—or has rolled into a ditch—or is hidden beneath a bush—or has crept into a cave—or is lying in some deep, distant ravine, where none but an experienced eye and hand can find it out.

Just so with the Lord's lost sheep. **They get into strange places.** They . . .
fall off rocks,
slip into holes,
hide among the bushes, and
sometimes creep off to die in caverns.

When the sheep has gone astray, the shepherd goes after it to find it. Here he sees a footprint; there a little lock of wool torn off by the thorns. Every nook he searches—into every corner he looks—until at last he finds the poor sheep **wearied, torn, and half expiring**, with scarcely strength enough to groan forth its misery. The shepherd does not beat it home, nor thrust the goad into its back—but he gently takes it up, lays it upon his shoulder, and brings it home rejoicing.

I am weak and ignorant, full of sin

I am weak and ignorant, full of sin and compassed with infirmity. But I bless God that He has in some measure shown me the power of eternal things, and by free and sovereign grace stopped me in that career of vanity and sin in which, to all

outward appearance, I was fast hurrying
down to the chambers of death.

By the grace of God

"By the grace of God I am what I am."

1 Cor. 15:10

What but sovereign grace—rich, free and
super-abounding grace—has made the
difference between you and the world
who cannot receive Him?

**But for His divine operations upon your
soul**, you would still be of the world, hardening
your heart against everything good and godlike,
walking on in the pride and ignorance of unbelief
and self-righteousness, until you sank down into
the chambers of death!

The outpouring of the everlasting wrath of God

"The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

Isaiah 53:6

What heart can conceive, what tongue express
what the holy soul of Christ endured when "the
Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all?"

In the garden of Gethsemane . . .
what a load of guilt,
what a weight of sin,
what an intolerable burden of the wrath of God,
did that sacred humanity endure, until the pressure
of sorrow and woe forced the drops of blood to fall
as sweat from His brow!
When the blessed Lord was made sin (or a sin offering)
for us, He endured in His holy soul all the pangs of . . .
distress,
horror,
alarm,
misery, and
guilt that all the elect would have felt in hell forever
as they would have experienced under **the outpouring
of the everlasting wrath of God** . . .

the anguish,
the distress,
the darkness,
the condemnation,
the shame,
the guilt,
the unutterable horror.

What heart can conceive—what tongue express—the bitter anguish which must have wrung the soul of our suffering Substitute under this agonizing experience?

Struggling against the power of sin?

How many poor souls are **struggling against the power of sin**, and yet never get any victory over it!

How many are daily led captive by . . .
the lusts of the flesh,
the love of the world,
and the pride of life,
and never get any victory over them!

How many fight and grapple with tears, vows,
and strong resolutions against their besetting
sins, who are still entangled and overcome by
them again and again! **Now, why is this?**

Because they do not know the secret of spiritual
strength against, and spiritual victory over them.

It is only by virtue of a living union with the
Lord Jesus Christ—drinking into His sufferings
and death—and receiving out of His fullness,
that we can gain any victory over . . .the world,
sin,
death,
or hell.

Sin is never really or effectually subdued in any other way.

It is not by legalistic strivings and earnest resolutions,
vows, and tears—the vain struggle of 'religious flesh'
to subdue 'sinful flesh'—that can overcome sin.

But it is by a believing acquaintance with, and a
spiritual entrance into the sufferings and sorrows

of the Son of God—having a living faith in Him,
and receiving out of His fullness supplies of grace
and strength.

The anointing

"But **the anointing** which you have received from
Him abides in you." 1 John 2:27

All the powers of earth and hell are combined against
this holy anointing, with which the children of God are
so highly favored. But if God has locked up in the bosom
of a saint one drop of this divine unction, that one drop
is armor against . . .
all the assaults of **sin**,
all the attacks of **Satan**,
all the enmity of **self**, and
all the charms, pleasures, and amusements of the **world**.

Waves and billows of **affliction** may roll over the soul—
but they cannot wash away this holy drop of anointing oil.

Satan may shoot a thousand fiery darts to inflame all
the combustible material of our carnal mind—but all his
fiery darts cannot burn up that one drop of oil which
God has laid up in the depths of a broken spirit.

The **world**, with all its charms and pleasures, and its
deadly opposition to the truth of God, may stir up waves
of ungodliness against this holy anointing—but all the
powers of earth combined can never extinguish that
one drop which God has Himself lodged in the depths of
a believer's heart.

And so it has been with all the dear saints of God.
Not all their . . .
sorrows,
backslidings,
slips,
falls,
miseries, and
wretchedness,
have ever—all combined, drunk up the anointing that
God has bestowed upon them. If **sin** could have done
it—we would have sinned ourselves into hell long ago;
and if the **world** or **Satan** could have destroyed it or
us—they would long ago have destroyed both. If **our
carnal mind** could have done it—it would have swept

us away into floods of destruction.

But the anointing abides sure, and cannot be destroyed; and where once lodged in the soul, it is **secure against all the assaults of earth, sin, and hell.**

"But **the anointing** which you have received from Him abides in you." 1 John 2:27

Can I be a child of God, and be thus?

Perhaps you are a poor, tempted creature—and your daily sorrow, your continual trouble is that you are so soon overcome—that . . .
your temper,
your lusts,
your pride,
your worldliness, and
your carnal, corrupt heart
are perpetually getting the mastery.

And from this you sometimes draw bitter conclusions. You say, in the depth of your heart, "**Can I be a child of God, and be thus?** What mark have I of being in favor with God when I am so easily—so continually overcome?"

But the Spirit reveals Christ—taking of the things of Christ, and showing them unto us—applying the word with power to our hearts, and bringing the sweetness, reality, and blessedness of divine things into our soul. It is only in this way that He overcomes all unbelief and infidelity, doubt and fear, and sweetly assures us that all is well between God and the soul.

Faith keeps eyeing the atonement—faith looks not so much to sin, as to salvation from sin—at the way whereby sin is pardoned, overcome, and subdued.

The truth shall make you free!

"You shall know the truth, and **the truth shall make you free!**" John 8:32

To a spiritual mind, sweet and self-rewarding is the task, if

task it can be called, of **searching the Word as for hidden treasure**. No sweeter, no better employment can engage heart and hands than, in the spirit of prayer and meditation, of separation from the world, of holy fear, of a desire to know the will of God and do it, of humility, simplicity, and godly sincerity—to seek to enter into those heavenly mysteries which are stored up in the Scriptures—and this, **not to furnish the head with notions, but to feed the soul with the bread of life**.

Truth, received in the love and power of it . . .
informs and establishes the judgment,
softens and melts the heart,
warms and draws upward the affections,
makes and keeps the conscience alive and tender;
is the food of faith,
is the strength of hope,
is the main-spring of love.

To know the truth is to be made blessedly free . . .
free from error;
free from the vile heresies which everywhere abound;
free from presumption;
free from self-righteousness;
free from the curse and bondage of the law;
free from the condemnation of a guilty conscience;
free from a slavish fear of the opinion of men;
free from the contempt of the world;
free from the scorn of worldly professors;
free from following a multitude to do evil;
free from companionship with those who
have a name to live, but are dead.

"You shall know the truth, and **the truth shall make you free!**" John 8:32

Sin cannot be subdued in any other way.

"The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God." Galatians 2:20

There is no way except by being spiritually immersed into Christ's death and life—that we can ever get a **victory over our besetting sins**. If, on the one hand, we have a view of a **suffering** Christ, and thus become immersed into His sufferings and death—the feeling, while it lasts, will subdue the power of sin.

Or, on the other hand, if we get a believing view of a **risen** Christ, and receive supplies of grace out of His fullness—that will lift us above sin's dominion.

If sin is powerfully working in us, we need one of these two things to subdue it.

When there is a view of the sufferings and sorrows, agonies and death of the Son of God—power comes down to the soul in its struggles against sin—and gives it a measure of holy resistance and subduing strength against it.

So, when there is a coming in of the grace and love of Christ—it lifts up the soul from the love and power of sin into a purer and holier atmosphere. **Sin cannot be subdued in any other way.** You must either be immersed into Christ's sufferings and death—or you must be immersed into Christ's resurrection and life. A sight of Him as **a suffering God**—or a view of Him as **a risen Jesus**—must be connected with every successful attempt to get the victory over sin, death, hell, and the grave.

You may strive, vow, and repent—and what does it all amount to? You sink deeper and deeper into sin than before. Pride, lust, and covetousness come in like a flood—and you are swamped and carried away almost before you are aware!

But if you get a view of a suffering Christ, or of a risen Christ—if you get a taste of His dying love—a drop of His atoning blood—or any manifestation of His beauty and blessedness—there comes from this spiritual immersion into His death or His life a subduing power—and this gives a victory over temptation and sin which nothing else can or will give.

Yet I believe we are often many years learning this divine secret—striving to repent and reform, and cannot; until at last by divine teaching we come to learn a little of what the Apostle meant when he said, "The life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God." And when we can get into this life of faith—this hidden life, then our affections are set on things above.

There is no use setting to work by 'legal strivings'—they only plunge you deeper in the ditch. You must get Christ into your soul by the power of God—and then He will subdue—by His smiles, blood, love, and presence—every

internal foe.

Two kinds of repentance

"**Godly sorrow** brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret—but **worldly sorrow** brings death." 2 Cor. 7:10

There are **two kinds of repentance** which need to be carefully distinguished from each other, though they are often sadly confounded—**evangelical** repentance, and **legal** repentance.

Cain, Esau, Saul, Ahab, Judas, all repented—but their repentance was the remorse of natural conscience—not the godly sorrow of a broken heart and a contrite spirit. They trembled before God as an angry judge—but were not melted into contrition before Him as a forgiving Father. They neither hated their sins nor forsook them—they neither loved holiness nor sought it. Cain went out from the presence of the Lord; Esau plotted Jacob's death; Saul consulted the witch of Endor; Ahab put honest Micaiah into prison; and Judas hanged himself.

How different from this forced and false repentance of a reprobate, is the repentance of a child of God—that true repentance for sin, that godly sorrow, that holy mourning which flows from the Spirit's gracious operations.

This repentance does not spring from a sense of the wrath of God in a broken law—but from His mercy in a blessed gospel—from a view by faith of the sufferings of Christ in the garden and on the cross—from a manifestation of pardoning love; and is always attended with self-loathing and self-abhorrence, with deep and unreserved confession of sin and forsaking it, with most hearty, sincere, and earnest petitions to be kept from all evil, and a holy longing to live to the praise and glory of God.

Have we nothing to give to Christ?

Yes!

Our sins,
our sorrows,

our burdens, our trials, and above all,
the salvation and sanctification of our souls.

And what has He to give us? What? Why . . .
everything worth having,
everything worth a moment's anxious thought,
everything for time and eternity!

After you have suffered a while

"But the God of all grace, who has called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, **after you have suffered a while**—make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you." 1 Peter 5:10

There is no divine establishment, no spiritual strength, no solid settlement—except by suffering. But after the soul has suffered, after it has felt God's chastising hand, the effect is . . .
to perfect,
to establish,
to strengthen,
and to settle it.

By suffering, a man becomes settled into a solemn conviction of the **character of Jehovah** as revealed in the Scripture, and in a measure made experimentally manifest in his conscience. He is settled in the persuasion that "all things work together for good to those who love God, and are the called according to His purpose"—in the firm conviction that everything comes to pass according to God's eternal purpose—and are all tending to the good of the Church, and to God's eternal glory.

His soul, too, is settled down into a deep persuasion of the misery, wretchedness, and emptiness of the creature; into the conviction that the world is but a shadow—and that the things of time and sense are but bubbles that burst the moment they are grasped—that of all things sin is most to be dreaded—and the favor of God above all things most to be coveted—that nothing is really worth knowing except Jesus Christ and Him crucified—that all things are passing away—and that he himself is rapidly hurrying down the stream of life, and into the boundless ocean of eternity.

Thus he becomes settled in a knowledge of the truth, and his soul remains at anchor, looking to the Lord to

preserve him here, and bring him in peace and safety to his eternal home.

In this scene of confusion and distraction

"In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for—but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express." Romans 8:26

"We do not know what we ought to pray for." How often do we find and feel this to be our case . . .
darkness covers our mind;
ignorance pervades our soul;
unbelief vexes our spirit;
guilt troubles our conscience;
a crowd of evil imaginations, or foolish or worse than foolish wanderings distract our thoughts;
Satan hurls in thick and fast his fiery darts;
a dense cloud is spread over the mercy-seat;
infidelity whispers its vile suggestions,
until, amid all this rabble throng, such confusion and bondage prevail that words seem idle breath, and prayer to the God of heaven but empty mockery.

In this scene of confusion and distraction, when all seems going to the wreck—how kind, how gracious is it in the blessed Spirit to come, as it were, to the rescue of the poor bewildered saint, and to teach him how to pray and what to pray for.

He is therefore said "to help our **weaknesses**," for these evils of which we have been speaking are not willful, deliberate sins, but wretched infirmities of the flesh. He helps, then, our infirmities—by subduing the power and prevalence of unbelief—by commanding in the mind a solemn calm—by rebuking and chasing away Satan and his fiery darts—by awing the soul with a reverential sense of the power and presence of God—by presenting Jesus before our eyes as the Mediator at the right hand of the Father—by raising up and drawing forth faith upon His Person and work, blood and righteousness—and, above all, by Himself interceding for us and in us "with groans that words cannot express."

His own sore and his own afflictions

"When a prayer or plea is made by any of Your people Israel—each one aware of **his own sore and his own afflictions**, and spreading out his hands toward this Temple—then hear from heaven, Your dwelling place. Forgive, and deal with each man according to all he does, since You know his heart, for You alone know the hearts of men." 2 Chronicles 6:29-30

The man for whom Solomon prays is he who knows and feels, painfully feels, his "own sore" and his "own afflictions"—whose heart is indeed a grief to him—whose sins do indeed trouble him.

How painful this sore often is!
How it runs night and day!
How full of ulcerous matter!
How it shrinks from the probe!

Most of the Lord's family have a "sore"—each some tender spot—something perhaps known to himself and to God alone—the cause of his greatest grief. It may be . . .
some secret slip he has made,
some sin he has committed,
some word he has spoken, or
some evil thing he has done.

He has been entangled, and entrapped, and cast down—and this is his grief and his sore which he feels—and that at times deeply before God.

For such Solomon prays, "then hear from heaven, Your dwelling place. Forgive, and deal with each man according to all he does, since You know his heart, for You alone know the hearts of men." Yes—God alone knows the heart—He knows it completely—and sees to its very bottom.

What are we, when we have no trials?

The Lord has appointed **the path of sorrow** for the redeemed to walk in. Why? One purpose is to wean them from the world—another purpose is to show them the weakness of the creature—a third purpose is to make them feel the liberty and vitality of genuine godliness made manifest in their soul's experience.

What are we, when we have no trials?

Light,
frothy,
worldly-minded,
carnal,
frivolous.

We may talk of the things of God, but they are at a distance—there are . . .
no solemn feelings,
no melting sensations,
no real brokenness,
no genuine contrition,
no weeping at the divine feet,
no embracing of Christ in the arms of affection.

What can bring a man here? A few dry notions floating to and fro in his brain? That will never bring the life and power of vital godliness into a man's heart. It must be by being 'experimentally acquainted with trouble'. When he is led into the path of tribulation, he then begins to long after, and, in God's own time and way, he begins to drink into, the sweetness of vital godliness, made manifest in his heart by the power of God.

When affliction brings a man down, it empties him of all his high thoughts, and lays him low in his own eyes.

Spiritual poverty

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

Spiritual poverty is a miserable feeling of soul-emptiness before God, an inward sinking sensation that there is nothing in our hearts spiritually good, nothing which can deliver us from the justly merited wrath of God, or save us from the lowest hell. To be **poor in spirit**, then, is to have this wretched emptiness of spirit, this nakedness and destitution of soul before God.

He who has never thus known what it is to groan before the Lord with breakings forth of heart as a needy, naked wretch—he that has never felt his miserable destitution and emptiness before the eyes of a heart-searching God—has not yet

experienced what it is to be **spiritually poor**.

Satisfaction!

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

What a sweetness there is in the word "satisfy!"

The **world** cannot satisfy the child of God.
Have we not tried, some of us perhaps for
many years, to get some satisfaction from it?
But can wife or husband satisfy us?
Can children or relatives satisfy us?
Can all the world calls good or great satisfy us?
Can the pleasures of sin satisfy us?

Is there not in all an aching void? Do we not reap
dissatisfaction and disappointment from everything
that is of the creature, and of the flesh? Do we not
find that there is little else but sorrow to be reaped
from everything in this world? There is little else to
be gathered from the world but . . .
disappointment,
dissatisfaction,
"vanity and vexation of spirit."

The poor soul looks round upon the world and the
creature—upon all the occupations, amusements
and relations of life—and finds all one melancholy
harvest—so that all it reaps is **sorrow, perplexity,
and dissatisfaction**.

Now when a man is brought here—to desire satisfaction,
something to make him happy, something to fill up the
aching void, something to bind up broken bones, bleeding
wounds, and leprous sores—and after he has looked at
everything—at doctrines, opinions, notions, speculations,
forms, rites and ceremonies in **religion**—at the **world** with
all its charms—and at **self** with all its varied workings, and
found nothing but bitterness of spirit, vexation and trouble
in them all, and thus sinks down a miserable wretch—why,
then when the Lord opens up to him something of the bread
of life, he finds a satisfaction in that which he never could
gain from any other quarter.

And that is the reason why the Lord so afflicts his people;
why some carry about with them such weak, suffering

bodies; why some have so many family troubles; why others are so deeply steeped in poverty; why others have such rebellious children; and why others are so exercised with spiritual sorrows that they scarcely know what will be the end.

It is all for one purpose—to make them miserable out of Christ—dissatisfied except with gospel food—to render them so wretched and uncomfortable that God alone can make them happy, and alone can speak consolation to their troubled minds.

The religion of a dead professor . . .

How different the religion of a child of God is, from the religion of a dead professor!

The religion of a dead professor . . .

begins in self, and ends in self;
begins in his own wisdom, and ends in his own folly;
begins in his own strength, and ends in his own weakness;
begins in his own righteousness, and ends in his own damnation!

There is in him never any going out of soul after God, no secret dealings with the Lord.

But the child of God, though he is often faint, weary, and exhausted with many difficulties, burdens and sorrows—yet he never can be satisfied except in living union and communion with the Lord of life and glory.

Everything short of that leaves him empty.
All the things of time and sense leave a child of God unsatisfied. Nothing but vital union and communion with the Lord of life, to . . .
feel His presence,
taste His love,
enjoy His favor,
see His glory;
nothing but this will ever satisfy the desires of ransomed and regenerated souls. This the Lord indulges His people with.

Have we not leaned upon a thousand things?

"If you lean on Egypt, you will find it to be a stick that breaks beneath your weight

and pierces your hand." Isaiah 36:6

Have we not leaned upon a thousand things?

And what have they proved? Broken reeds that
have run into our hands, and pierced us . . .
our own strength and resolutions,
the world and the church,
sinners and saints,
friends and enemies,
have they not all proved, more or less, broken reeds?

The more we have **leaned** upon them, like a man
leaning upon a sword, the more have they pierced
our souls.

The Lord Himself has to wean us . . .
from the world,
from friends,
from enemies,
from self,
in order to bring us to **lean** upon Himself; and
every prop He will remove, sooner or later, that
we may **lean** wholly and solely upon His Person,
love, blood, and righteousness.

Poor, moping, dejected creatures

We are, most of us, **so fettered down by . . .**
the chains of time and sense,
the cares of life and daily business,
the weakness of our earthly frame,
the distracting claims of a family, and
the miserable carnality and sensuality of our fallen nature,
that we live at best a poor, dragging, dying life.

Many of us are **poor, moping, dejected creatures.**

We have . . .
a variety of trials and afflictions,
a daily cross and
the continual plague of an evil heart.

We know enough of ourselves to know that in SELF
there is neither help nor hope, and never expect a
smoother path, a better, wiser, holier heart. As then . . .
the weary man seeks rest,

the hungry man seeks food,
the thirsty man seeks drink,
and the sick man seeks health,
so do we stretch forth our hearts and arms that we
may embrace the Lord Jesus Christ, and sensibly
realize union and communion with Him.
He discovers the evil and misery of sin that we may
seek pardon in His bleeding wounds and pierced side.

He makes known to us our nakedness and shame,
and, as such, our exposure to God's wrath, that we
may hide ourselves under His justifying robe.

He puts gall and wormwood into the world's choicest
draughts, that we may have no sweetness but in and
from Him.

No sight, short of this

"He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree."
1 Peter 2:24

We beg of the Lord, sometimes, to give us . . .
a broken heart,
a contrite spirit,
a tender conscience,
and a humble mind.
But it is only a view by faith of what the gracious
Redeemer endured upon the cross, when He bore
our sins in his own body with all their weight and
pressure, and with all the anger of God due to them,
that can really melt a hard, and break a stony heart.

No sight, short of this, can make sin felt to be hateful;
bring tears of godly sorrow out of the eyes, sobs of true
repentance out of the breast, and the deepest, humblest
confessions before God as to what dreadful sinners and
base backsliders we have been before the eyes of His
infinite Purity, Majesty, and Holiness.

Oh, what hope is there for our guilty souls; what
refuge from the wrath of God so justly our due;
what shelter from the curse of a fiery law, except
it be in the cross of Jesus?

O for a view of Him revealed to the eyes of our
enlightened understanding, as bearing our sins

in His own body on the tree!

The penetrating light of the Spirit

"For God . . . made **His light** shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." 2 Cor. 4:6

"But you have **an anointing from the Holy One**, and all of you know the truth." 1 John 2:20

The only saving light is the light of God shining into the soul—giving us to see and know "the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent."

A man may have the clearest light in his judgment, and yet never have **the penetrating light of the Spirit** producing conviction in his soul. He may have the soundest knowledge of the doctrines of grace, and see the harmonious scheme of salvation—and yet never have by **divine teaching**, seen a holy God, nor have ever felt the spirituality of God's righteous law condemning him as a transgressor.

If we do not have this **penetrating light of the Spirit**, we shall be sure to go astray. We shall . . .
be entangled in some error,
plunge into some heresy,
imbibe some doctrine of devils,
drink into some dreadful delusion,
or fall into some dreadful sin, and
have our faith shipwrecked forever.

A false light can but wreck us on the rocks of presumption or despair. But the light of divine life in the soul is accompanied with all the graces of the Spirit. It is . . .
the light of the glory of God,
the light of Jesus' countenance,
and the light of the Spirit's teaching,
and therefore an infallible guide and guard.
And this infallible pilot will guide the soul to whom it is given safe into the harbor of endless rest and peace.

All true religion

Jesus is . . .
our sun, and without Him all is darkness;
our life, and without Him all is death;
the beginner and finisher of our faith;
the substance of our hope;
the object of our love.

It is the Spirit who quickens us . . .
to feel our need of Christ;
to seek all our supplies in Him and from Him;
to believe in Him unto everlasting life,
and thus live a life of faith upon Him.

By His . . .
secret teachings,
inward touches,
gracious smiles,
soft whispers,
sweet promises,
manifestations of Christ's glorious Person and work,
Christ's agonizing sufferings and dying love,
the Holy Spirit draws the heart up to Christ.
He thus wins our affections, and setting Christ
before our eyes as "the chief among ten thousand
and the altogether lovely One," draws out that love
and affection towards Jesus which puts the world
under our feet.

All true religion flows from the Spirit's grace,
presence and power.

The regenerating operations of the Holy Spirit

From the very nature of the fall, it is impossible
for a dead soul to . . .
believe in God,
know God,
or love God.

It must be quickened into spiritual life before it can
savingly know the only true God. And thus there lies
at the very threshold—in the very heart and core of
the case—the absolute necessity of **the regenerating
operations of the Holy Spirit** upon the soul.

The very completeness and depth of the fall render the **regenerating work of the Holy Spirit** as necessary, as indispensable as the **redeeming work of the Son of God**.

This hard school of painful experience

In times of trial and darkness, the saints and servants of God are instructed. They see and feel what the flesh really is, how alienated from the life of God—they learn in whom all their strength and sufficiency lie—they are taught that in them, that is, in their flesh, dwells no good thing—that no exertions of their own can maintain in strength and vigor the life of God—and that all they are and have, all they believe, know, feel, and enjoy, with all their ability, usefulness, gifts, and grace—flow from the pure, sovereign grace—the rich, free, undeserved, yet unceasing goodness and mercy of God.

They learn in **this hard school of painful experience** their emptiness and nothingness—and that without Christ indeed they can do nothing. They thus become clothed with humility, that lovely, becoming garb—cease from their own strength and wisdom—and learn experimentally that Christ is, and ever must be, all in all to them, and all in all in them.

Many difficulties, obstacles, and hindrances

"Oh, that we might know the Lord! Let us press on to know Him!" Hosea 6:3

The expression, "press on," implies that there are **many difficulties, obstacles, and hindrances** in a man's way, which keep him back from "knowing the Lord." Now the work of the Spirit in his soul is to carry him on in spite of all these obstacles—to lead him forward—to keep alive in him the fear of God—to strengthen him in his inner man—to drop in those hopes—to communicate that inward grace—so that he is compelled to press on.

Sometimes he seems driven,
sometimes drawn,
sometimes led, and
sometimes carried,
but in one way or another the Spirit of God so works upon him that, though he scarcely knows

how—he still "presses on."

His very burdens make him groan for deliverance—his very temptations cause him to cry for help—the very difficulty and ruggedness of the road make him want to be carried every step—the very intricacy of the path compels him to cry out for a guide—so that the Spirit working in the midst of, and under, and through every difficulty and discouragement, still bears him through, and carries him on—and thus brings him through every trial and trouble and temptation and obstacle, until He sets him in glory.

It is astonishing to me how our souls are kept alive. The Christian is **a marvel to himself**. Carried on, and yet so secretly—worked upon, and yet so mysteriously; and yet led on, guided, and supported through so many difficulties and obstacles—that he is **a miracle of mercy** as he is carried on amid all . . . difficulties, obstacles, trials, and temptations.

The poison fang of sin!

We must go down into the depths of the fall to know what our hearts are, and what they are capable of—we must have the keen knife of God to cut deep gashes in our conscience and lay bare the evil that lies so deeply imbedded in our carnal mind—before we can enter into and experience the beauty and blessedness of salvation by grace.

"From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it—but **wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores**—they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment." Isaiah 1:6

When the Church of God fell in Adam, **she fell with a crash which broke every bone** and bruised her flesh with wounds which are ulcerated from head to toe.

Her understanding, her conscience, and her affections were all fearfully maimed . . . her understanding was blinded; her conscience stupefied;

her affections alienated.

Every mental faculty thus became perverted and distorted.

When Adam fell into sin and temptation—sin rushed into every faculty of body and soul—and penetrated into the inmost recesses of his being.

As when a man is bitten by a poisonous serpent, the venom courses through every artery and vein, and he dies a corrupted mass from head to foot; so did **the poison fang of sin** penetrate into Adam's inmost soul and body, and infect him with its venom from the sole to the crown. But it is only as sin's desperate and malignant character is opened up by the Holy Spirit that it is really seen, felt, grieved under, and mourned over as indeed a most dreadful and fearful reality.

"The whole head is sick—and the whole heart faint." Every thought, word, and action is polluted by sin.

Every mental faculty is depraved . . .

the **will** chooses evil;
the **affections** cleave to earthly things;
the **memory**, like a broken sieve,
retains the bad and lets fall the good;
the **judgment**, like a bribed or drunken judge,
pronounces heedless or wrong decisions;
the **conscience**, like an opium eater, lies
asleep and drugged in stupefied silence.

A penitent backslider and a forgiving God!

"And while he was still a long distance away, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him." Luke 15:20

After a child of God has enjoyed something of the goodness and mercy of God revealed in the face of His dear Son, he may wander from his mercies—stray away from these choice gospel pastures—and get into a waste howling wilderness, where there is neither food nor water—and yet, though half starved for poverty, has in himself no power to return.

But in due time the Lord seeks out this wandering sheep, and the first place he brings him to is the mercy seat—confessing his sins and seeking mercy.

O what a meeting!

A penitent backslider and a forgiving God!

O what a meeting!

A guilty wretch drowned in tears—and a loving Father falling upon his neck and kissing him!

O what a meeting for a poor, self-condemned wretch, who can never mourn too deeply over his sins, and yet finds grace super-abounding over all his abounding sins—and the love of God bursting through the cloud, like the sun upon an April day—and melting his heart into contrition and love!

Salvation!

Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say:
"Now has come the **salvation**." Rev. 12:10

The sweetest song that heaven ever proclaimed,
the most blessed note that ever melted the soul,
is "**salvation**."

To be **saved from** . . .
death and hell;
the worm which dies not;
the fire which is not quenched;
the sulphurous flames of the bottomless pit;
the companionship of tormenting fiends;
all the foul wretches under which earth has groaned;
blaspheming God in unutterable woe;
an eternity of misery without hope;
and **saved into** . . .
heaven;
the sight of Jesus as He is;
perfect holiness and happiness;
the blissful company of holy angels and glorified saints! And all this during the countless ages of a blessed eternity!

What tongue of men or angels can describe

the millionth part of what is contained in the word **salvation!**

A peculiar people

"But you are . . .
a chosen generation, a royal priesthood,
a holy nation,
a peculiar people." 1 Peter 2:9

May we never forget that the suffering Son of God gave Himself to purify unto Himself **a peculiar people** . . .
a people whose **thoughts** are peculiar, for their thoughts are the thoughts of God, as having the mind of Christ;
a people whose **affections** are peculiar, for they are fixed on things above;
a people whose **prayers** are peculiar, for they are wrought in their heart by the Spirit of grace and supplication;
a people whose **sorrows** are peculiar, because they spring from a spiritual source;
a people whose **joys** are peculiar, for they are joys which the stranger cannot understand;
a people whose **hopes** are peculiar, as anchoring within the veil;
a people whose **expectations** are peculiar, as not expecting to reap a crop of happiness in this marred world—but are looking for happiness in the kingdom of rest and peace in the bosom of God.

They make it manifest that they are **a peculiar people** by . . .
walking in the footsteps of the Lord the Lamb,
taking up the cross,
denying themselves, and
living to the honor, praise, and glory of God.

Softened, broke, and melted your heart

"I drew them with cords of human kindness,
with ties of love." Hosea 11:4

When God draws His people near unto Himself, it is not done in a mechanical way. They are drawn, not with cords of iron, but with the cords of kindness; not as if God laid an iron arm upon His people to drag

them to Himself—whether they wished to come or not. God does not so act in a way of mechanical force.

We therefore read, "Your people shall be **made willing** in the day of Your power." **He touches their heart with His gracious finger**, and he communicates to their soul both faith and feeling. **He melts, softens, and humbles their heart** by a sense of His goodness and mercy—for it is His goodness, as experimentally felt and realized, which leads to repentance.

If you have ever felt any secret and sacred drawing of your soul upward to heaven—it was not compulsion, not violence, not a mechanical constraint—but **an arm of pity and compassion let down into your very heart**, which, touching your inmost spirit, drew it up into the bosom of God.

It was some view of His goodness, mercy, and love, with some dropping into your spirit of His pity and compassion towards you, which **softened, broke, and melted your heart**. You were not driven onward by being flogged and scourged, but blessedly drawn with the cords of kindness, which seemed to touch every tender feeling and enter into the very depths of your soul.

Fixed and fastened by an Almighty hand.

Truth, as it stands in the naked word of God, is **lifeless and dead**—and as such, has no power to communicate what it has not in itself—that is, life and power to the hearts of God's people. It stands there in so many letters and syllables, as lifeless as the types by which they were printed. But **when the incarnate Word takes of the written word**, and speaks it home into the heart and conscience of a vessel of mercy, whether in letter or substance—then He endues it with divine life—and it enters into the soul, communicating to it a life that can never die.

Eternal realities are then brought into the soul, **fixed and fastened by an Almighty hand**. The conscience is made alive in the fear of God; and the soul is raised up from a death in sin, to a heavenly, new, and supernatural life.

When we are reduced to poverty and beggary

How often we seem not to have any real religion, or enjoy any solid comfort! How often are our minds covered with deep darkness! How often does the Lord hide Himself, so that we cannot behold Him, nor get near to Him! What a painful path is this to walk in, but how profitable!

When we are reduced to poverty and beggary, we learn to value Christ's glorious riches.

The worse opinion we have of our own heart, and the more deceitful and desperately wicked that we find it—the more we put our trust in His faithfulness.

The more black we are in our own esteem—the more beautiful and lovely does He appear in our eyes.

As we sink—Jesus rises.

As we become feeble—He puts forth his strength.

As we come into danger—He brings deliverance.

As we get into temptation—He breaks the snare.

As we are shut up in darkness and obscurity; He causes the light of His countenance to shine.

Now it is by being led in this way, and walking in these paths, that we come rightly to know who Jesus is; and to see and feel how suitable and precious such a Savior is to our undone souls! We are needy, He has in Himself all riches.

We are hungry—He is the bread of life.

We are thirsty—He says, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink."

We are naked—and He has clothing to bestow.

We are fools—and He has wisdom to grant.

We are lost, and He speaks—

"Look unto Me, and be saved."

Thus, so far from our misery shutting us out from God's mercy—it is the only requisite for it.

So far from our guilt excluding His pardon, it is the only thing needful for it.

So far from our helplessness ruining our souls, it is the needful preparation for the manifestation of His power in our weakness.

We cannot heal our own wounds and sores. That is the very reason why He should stretch forth His arm.

It is because there is no salvation in ourselves, or in any other creature, that He says, "Look unto Me, for I am God, and there is no other."

Not a grain! Not an atom!

What am I?

What are you?

Are we not filthy, polluted, and defiled?

Do not we, more or less, daily feel altogether as an unclean thing?
Is not every thought of our heart altogether vile?

Does any holiness, any spirituality, any heavenly-mindedness, any purity, any resemblance to the divine image dwell in our hearts by nature?

Not a grain! Not an atom!

How then can I, a polluted sinner, ever see the face of a holy God?

How can I, a worm of earth, corrupted within and without by indwelling and committed sin, ever hope to see a holy God without shrinking into destruction?

When we view the pure and spotless holiness of Jesus imputed to His people, and view them . . . holy in Him,

pure in Him,
without spot in Him,
how it does away with all the wrinkles of the
creature, and makes them stand holy and
spotless before God.

They will come with weeping

"They will come with weeping; they will
pray as I bring them back." Jeremiah 31:9

As they come, they weep. They mourn . . .

over their base backslidings,
over the many evils they have committed,
over the levity of mind which they have indulged,
over the worldliness of spirit,
over the—
pride,
presumption,
hypocrisy,
carnality,
carelessness, and
obstinacy of their heart.

They go and weep with a broken heart and softened
spirit—seeking the Lord their God—seeking the secret
manifestations of His mercy, the visitations of His
favor, the "lifting up of the light of His countenance"—
seeking after a revelation of the love of Jesus—to
know Him by a spiritual discovery of Himself.

Being thus minded . . .

they seek not to establish their own righteousness;
they seek not the applause of the world;
they seek not the good opinion of professors;
they seek not the smiles of saints. But they . . .
seek the Lord their God,
seek His face day and night,
seek His favor,
seek His mercy,
seek His grace,
seek His love,
seek His glory,
seek the sweet visitations of His presence and power,
seek Him until they find Him to be their covenant God,
who heals all their backslidings.

This is the saint's inheritance!

"Now if we are children, then we are heirs—**heirs of God** and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in His sufferings in order that we may also **share in His glory**." Romans 8:17

This is the especial blessedness of being a child of God: that death, which puts a final extinguisher on all the hopes and happiness of all the unregenerate—gives him **the fulfillment of all his hopes and the consummation of all his happiness**—for it places him in possession of "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in heaven."

In this present earthly life, we have sometimes sips and tastes of sonship, feeble indeed and interrupted; yet are they so far pledges of an inheritance to come.

But this life is only an introduction to a better. In this life we are but children—but in the life to come, we shall be put into full possession of the eternal inheritance.

And what is this? Nothing less than God Himself. "**Heirs of God!**" says the Apostle. God Himself is the inheritance of His people—yes, He Himself in all His glorious perfections . . .
all the love of God,
all the goodness of God,
all the holiness of God,
all His happiness, bliss, and blessedness,
all His might, majesty, and glory, in
all the blaze of one eternal, unclouded day!

This is the saint's inheritance!

Let us press on by faith and prayer to win this eternal and glorious crown!

Savory food such as their soul loves

"For **My flesh is real food** and My blood is real drink." John 6:55

This food is specially for the elect . . .
blood shed for their sins, and for their sins only;
righteousness brought in for them, and for them only;

love bestowed upon them, and upon them only;
promises revealed for their comfort, and for their comfort only;
an eternal inheritance reserved in heaven for them, and for them
only.

The elect are the only people . . .

who hunger after it,
who have an appetite for it,
who have a mouth to feed upon it,
who have a stomach to digest it.
They are the only people whose eyes
are really open to see what "food" is.
All others feed upon shadows—they know nothing of
the savory food of the gospel. "I have food to eat
which you know not of." Jesus' food was . . .
the hidden communications of God's love,
the visitations of His Father's presence,
the divine communion that He enjoyed with His Father.

So, for the children of God, there is food in Christ;
and this food the Lord gives them **a hunger after**.
He not only sets before their eyes what the food is,
but **He kindles inexpressible longings in their
soul** to be fed with it.

God's people cannot feed . . .

upon husks,
nor upon ashes,
nor upon chaff,
nor upon the wind,
nor upon grapes of gall and the bitter clusters of Gomorrah.

**They must have real food, "savory food such as
their soul loves,"** that which God Himself communicates,
and which His hand alone can bring down, and give unto
them, so that they may receive it from Him as their soul-
satisfying portion.

"For **My flesh is real food** and My blood is real drink."

A smoother way to glory?

"They encouraged them to continue in the faith,
reminding them that **they MUST enter into the
Kingdom of God through many tribulations.**"
Acts 14:22

The Lord has chosen that His people should pass

through deep and cutting afflictions, for it is "through **many tribulations**" they are to enter the Kingdom of God above, and into the sweetness and power of the Kingdom of God below.

But every man will resent this doctrine, except God has led him experimentally into it. **It is such a rough and rugged path**—it is so contrary to flesh and blood—it is so inexplicable to nature and reason—that man, proud, rebellious man, will never believe that he must "enter into the Kingdom of God through **many tribulations**."

And this is the reason why so many find, or seek to find, **a smoother way to glory** than the Lord has appointed His saints to walk in. But shall the Head travel in one path—and the members in another? Shall the Bridegroom walk and wade through seas of sorrow—and the bride never so much as wet her feet with the water? Shall the Bridegroom be crucified in weakness and suffering—and there be no inward crucifixion for the dearly beloved of His heart?

Shall the Head . . .
suffer,
grieve,
agonize,
groan,
and die—
and the members dance down a flowery road,
without inward sorrow or outward suffering?

But, perhaps, there are some who say in their heart, "I am well convinced of this—but **my coward flesh** shrinks from it. I know if I am to reach the Canaan above, I must pass through the appointed portion of tribulation. But my coward flesh shrinks back!" It does! it does! Who would willingly bring trials upon himself? Therefore the Lord does not leave these trials in **our** hands—but He Himself appoints a certain measure of tribulation for each of His people to pass through. They will come soon enough; you need not **anticipate** them; you need not **wish** for them. **God will bring them—in His own time and in His own way.**

And what is more, God will not merely bring you **into** them, but God will bring you **through** them, and God will bring you **out of** them!

It will be our mercy if enabled to ask the Lord . . .
to bless us with faith and patience under tribulation;
to give us strength to bear the storm;
to lie as clay in His hands;
to conform us to the image of His Son;
to guide us through this valley of tears below;
and eventually to take us to be with Him above!

Should you then seek great things for yourself?

"Should you then seek great things for yourself? Seek them not." Jeremiah 45:5

Ministers often seek . . .

great gifts,
great eloquence,
great congregations,
great popularity.

They are wrong in seeking these so-called great things.
Let them rather seek real things, gracious things, things
that will make their souls blessed here and hereafter.

We stand upon slippery places!

"The Lord keep you." Numbers 6:24

How we need the Lord to keep us!

We stand upon slippery places!

Snares and traps are laid for us in every direction.

Every employment, every profession in life, from the highest to the lowest—has its special temptations. Snares are spread for the feet of the most illiterate as well as the most highly cultivated minds. Nor is there anyone, whatever his position in life may be, who has not a snare laid for him—and such a snare as will surely prove his downfall if God does not keep him.

Well, then, may it be the desire of our soul,
"The Lord keep me" . . .
keep me in His providence, keep me by His grace;

keep me by planting His fear deep in my soul, and
maintaining that fear alive and effectual in my heart;
keep me waking, keep me sleeping;
keep me by night, keep me by day;
keep me at home, keep me abroad;
keep me with my family, keep me with my friends;
keep me in the world, and keep me in the church.

May the Lord keep me, according to His promise,
every moment—keep me by His Spirit and grace
with all the tenderness implied in His words,
"O keep me as the apple of Your eye!"

My friends, you can know . . .
little of your own heart,
little of Satan's devices,
little of the snares spread for your feet,
unless you feel how deeply you need this
blessing—"The Lord keep you."

And He will, for we read of the righteous, that they
are kept "by the power of God through faith unto
salvation;" and that "He will keep the feet of His saints."

One grain of holiness?

Have I **one grain of holiness** in myself? Not one.

Can all the men in the world, by all their united
exertions, raise up **a grain of spiritual holiness**
in their hearts? Not an atom, with all their efforts.
If all the preachers in the world were to unite
together for the purpose of working **a grain of
holiness** in one man's soul, they might strive
to all eternity—they could no more by their
preaching create holiness, than by their
preaching they could create a lump of gold.

But Jesus imparts a measure of His own holiness
to His people. He sends the Holy Spirit, to raise up
holy desires. He communicates a heavenly, spiritual,
and divine nature—which bathes in eternal things
as its element—and enjoys spiritual things as sweet
and precious. It may indeed be small in measure;
and he that has it is often troubled because he has
so little of it—yet he has enough to know what it is.

Has not your soul, though you feel to be a defiled wretch, though every iniquity is at times working in your heart, though every worm of obscenity and corruption is too often trailing its filthy slime upon your carnal mind—has it not felt, does it not sometimes feel—a measure of holiness Godwards?

Do you ever feel a breathing forth of your soul into the bosom of a holy God . . .
heavenly desires,
pure affections,
singleness of eye,
simplicity of purpose,
a heart that longs to have the mind, image,
and likeness of Jesus stamped upon it?

This is a holiness such as the Lord of life and glory imparts out of his fullness to His poor and needy family.

What is this hidden manna?

"To him who overcomes, I will give some of the **hidden manna** to eat." Rev. 2:17

What is this hidden manna?

Is it not God's Word applied with power to the heart? What does the prophet Jeremiah say? "Your **Words** were found, and I did **eat** them; and Your Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart."

When the Lord is pleased . . .
to drop a word into the heart from his own lips;
to apply some promise;
to open up some precious portion of his Word;
to whisper softly some blessed Scripture into the heart;
is not this manna?

Whence did the manna flow? Was it cultivated by the hand of man? No—it fell from heaven. And is not this true of the Word of the Lord applied with power to the heart? It is not **our searching** the Scriptures, though it is good to search the Scriptures—but it is the Lord Himself being pleased to apply some precious portion of truth to our hearts—and when this takes place, it is "manna;" it is . . .
sweet,

refreshing,
strengthening,
comforting,
encouraging;
yes, it is angels' food—the very flesh and blood of
the Lamb with which the Lord is pleased from time
to time to feed and favor hungry souls.

But, in the text it is called "hidden." Why "hidden"?
Because hidden from the eyes of the wise and prudent.
Hidden from the eyes of self-righteous pharisees;
hidden from those who fight in their own strength,
and seek to gain the victory by their own brawny arm;
hidden from all but God's tried and tempted family;
hidden from all but those who know the plague of
their own hearts; hidden from all but those who have
learned the secret of overcoming by the blood of the
Lamb and by the word of His testimony.
When the Lord leads us to sink down into weakness,
and in weakness to find his strength made perfect—
to fall down all guilty—and then to feel the application
of atoning blood—this is manna.

The children of Israel had to endure hunger in the
wilderness before manna fell—and thus the Lord's
people learn the value of the hidden manna—the
sweet communications from above—by hungering
and thirsting in a waste-howling wilderness.

This is hidden from all eyes except those that are
anointed by the Spirit to see it—and hidden from all
hearts except those that are prepared to receive
and feed upon it.

"I am the living bread who came down from heaven.
If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever."
John 6:51

Entangled, perplexed and distressed?

How many of the Lord's people are continually under
bondage to evil! What power the **lusts of the flesh**
have over some—how perpetually they are entangled
with everything sensual and carnal! What power the
pride of the heart has over another! And what strength
covetousness exercises over a third! What power the
love of the world and the things of time and sense

exercise over a fourth!

How then are they to overcome sin?

By making resolutions? By endeavoring to overcome it in their own strength? No! Sin will always break through man's strength. It will always be stronger than any resolution we can make not to be overcome by it.

The Lord allows His people to be so long and often **entangled, perplexed and distressed**, that they may learn this secret—which is hidden from all but God's living family—that **the strength of Christ is made perfect in their weakness.**

Have not some of you had to learn this lesson very painfully? There was a time when you thought you would get better and better, holier and holier—that you would not only not walk in open sin as before, but would not be . . .

entangled by temptation,
overcome by besetting lusts,
or cast down by hidden snares.

There was a time when you thought you were going forward—attaining some more strength—some better wisdom than you believed you once possessed.

How has it been with you?

Have these expectations ever been realized?

Have you ever attained these fond hopes?

Has sin become weaker?

Has the world become less alluring?

Have your lusts become tamer?

Has your temper become milder?

Have the corruptions of your heart become feebler and feebler?

If I can read the heart of **some poor tried, tempted soul** here present, he would say, "**No!** To my shame and sorrow, be it spoken, I find on the contrary that sin is stronger and stronger—that the evils of my heart are more and more powerful than ever I knew them in my life—and as to my own endeavors to overcome them, I find indeed that they are fainter

and fainter, and weaker and weaker. This it is that casts me down. If I could have more strength against sin—if I could stand more boldly against Satan—if I could overcome my besetting lusts—live more to God's glory—and be holier and holier—then, then, I could have some comfort. But to feel myself so continually baffled, so perpetually disconcerted, so incessantly cast down by the workings of my corrupt nature—it is this, it is this that cuts so keenly—it is this, it is this that tries me so deeply!"

My friend, you are on the high road to victory. This is the very way by which you are to overcome. When you feel . . .
weaker and weaker,
poorer and poorer,
guiltier and guiltier,
viler and viler,
so that really through painful experience you are compelled to call yourself, not in the language of mock humility, but in the language of self abhorrence—the chief of sinners—then you are on the high road to victory.

Then the blood of the Lamb is applied to the sinner's conscience, and the Word of God's testimony comes with power into his soul—it gives him the victory over those lusts with which he was before entangled—it brings him out of the world that had so allured him—and breaks to pieces the dominion of sin under which he had been so long laboring.

A very different thing from lifeless, barren head knowledge

"We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know Him who is true." 1 John 5:20

There is a difference between a gracious, enlightened understanding of the truth of God which springs out of the teaching of the Spirit—and what is commonly called "head knowledge." There is such a thing—and a most dangerous, delusive thing it is—as "mere head knowledge" and it is widely prevalent in the churches.

You may say, "How am I to distinguish between mere head knowledge and this spiritual understanding?"

I will tell you. When a special light is cast into your mind—when the Word is opened up in its spiritual, experimental meaning—when the Holy Spirit seals it with sweetness and power upon your heart—and you not only understand what you read but receive it in faith, feel its savor, and enjoy its blessedness. Is not this **a very different thing from lifeless, barren head knowledge?**

Poor in spirit

"Blessed are the **poor in spirit**, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:3

None are really **poor in spirit**, but those whom the hand of God has stripped—whom He has brought down—and made to abhor themselves in dust and ashes—and to see and feel themselves destitute of everything good, holy, heavenly, and pleasing in His pure and heart searching eyes.

The heart must be stripped and emptied, and laid bare effectually—by a work of grace that goes to the very bottom, and penetrates into the recesses of the soul—so as to detect all the corruption that lurks and festers within.

The really "poor" man is one who has had everything taken from him—who has had not merely his dim views of a merciful God (such as natural men have) taken from him—not merely his legal righteousness stripped away—but all that kind of notional, traditional religion, which is so rife in the present day, taken from him also—and who has been brought in guilty before God, naked, in the dust, having nothing whereby to conciliate Him, or gain His favor.

God's purpose

"That no flesh should glory in His presence."

1 Cor. 1:29

Man may glory in himself—but God has forever trampled man's glory under foot. **God's purpose is to stain the pride of human glory.**

Utter fools!

"Claiming to be wise, they became **utter fools** instead."
Romans 1:22

What am I by nature? A fool! All my wisdom, outside of Christ, is nothing but the height of foolishness—and all my knowledge nothing but the depth of ignorance!

Left to ourselves we are **utter fools!** We have no wisdom whatever to direct our feet. We are . . . blind, ignorant, weak, helpless, and utterly unable to find our way to God.

All **wisdom** which does not come down from the Father is folly. All **strength** not divinely wrought in the soul is weakness. All **knowledge** that does not spring from the Lord's own teaching in the conscience is the depth of ignorance.

We must know the value of the **gem** before we can really prize it. When diamonds were first discovered in Brazil, nobody knew that they were diamonds. They were handed about as pretty, shining pebbles. But as soon it was discovered they were diamonds, they were eagerly sought, and their value rose a thousandfold.

So spiritually. Until we can distinguish between the "pebble of man's teaching" and the "diamond of divine illumination" we shall neglect, we shall despise, we shall not value divine wisdom.

The heart of God's child

There is much . . .
presumption, pride,
hypocrisy,
deceit,
delusion,
formality,
superstition,
will-worship and
self-righteousness

to be purged out of **the heart of God's child**.

But all these things . . .
keep him low,
mar his pride,
crush his self righteousness,
cut the locks of his presumption,
stain his self-conceit,
stop his boasting,
preserve him from despising others,
make him take the lowest room,
teach him to esteem others better than himself,
drive him to earnest prayer,
fit him as an object of mercy,
break to pieces his free-will, and
**lay him low at the feet of the Redeemer, as
one to be saved by sovereign grace alone!**

A spirit of delusion

A spirit of delusion seems to us widely prevalent . . .
a carnal confidence,
a dead assurance,
a presumptuous claim,
a daring mimicry of the spirit of adoption.

Who that has eyes or heart does not see and
feel the wide spread of this gigantic evil?

No brokenness of heart,
no tenderness of conscience,
no spirituality of mind,
no heavenly affections,
no prayerfulness and watchfulness,
no godly devotedness of life,
no self denial and crucifixion,
no humility or contrition,
no separation from the world,
no communion with the Lord of life and glory.

In a word, none of the blessed graces and fruits
of the Spirit attend this carnal confidence.

On the contrary . . .
levity,
jesting,
pride,

covetousness,
self-exaltation, and
often gross self-indulgence
are evidently stamped upon many, if not most,
of these hardened professors.

The husks which the swine eat

All forms, opinions, rites, ceremonies and notions to me are nothing—and worse than nothing. They are **the husks which the swine eat**—not the food of the living soul.

To have the heart deeply penetrated with the fear of Jehovah—to be melted and filled with a sweet sense of Jesus' dying love—to have the affections warmed and drawn forth under the anointings of the Eternal Comforter—this is **the only religion that can suit and satisfy a regenerate soul!**

Then they cried

"They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. **Then they cried** unto the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses."

Psalm 107:4-6

Until they wandered in the wilderness;
until they felt it to be a solitary way;
until they found no city to dwell in;
until hungry and thirsty their soul fainted in them;
there was no cry.

There might have been
a prayer,
a desire,
a feeble wish, and
now and then a sigh or a groan.

But this was not enough. Something more was needed to draw forth loving-kindness out of the bosom of the compassionate Head of the Church.

A cry was needed—a cry of distress, a cry of soul trouble, a cry forced out of their hearts by heavy burdens. A cry implies urgent need—a perishing without an answer to the cry. It is this solemn feeling in the heart that there is no other refuge but God.

The Lord brings all His people here—to have no other refuge but Himself. Friends, counselors, acquaintance—these may sympathize, but they cannot afford relief. There is . . .

no refuge,
nor shelter,
nor harbor,
nor home
into which they can fly, except the Lord.

Thus troubles force us to deal with God in a personal manner. They chase away that half-hearted religion of which we have so much; and they drive out that notional experience and dry profession that we are so often satisfied with. They chase them away as a strong north wind chases away the mists; and they bring a man to this solemn spot—that he must have God to support him—and bring him out of his trouble.

But what a mercy it is when there is a cry!

And when the Lord sends a cry in the trouble,
He is sure in his own time and way to send
deliverance out of it.

O what painful work it is!

"You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house." 1 Peter 2:5

God's people require . . .

many severe afflictions,
many harassing temptations,
and many powerful trials
to hew them into any good shape, to chisel
them into any conformity to Christ's image.

For they are not like the passive marble under

the hands of the sculptor, which will submit without murmuring, and indeed without feeling, to have this corner chipped off, and that jutting angle rounded by the chisel.

But God's people are **living** stones, and therefore, **they feel every stroke**. We are so tender skinned that we cannot bear a 'thread of trouble' to lie upon us—we shrink from even the touch of the chisel.

To be hewed, then, and squared, and chiseled by the hand of God into such shapes and forms as please Him—**O what painful work it is!**

If the Lord, then, is at work upon our souls . . .

we have not had,
we are not now having,
we shall never have . . .
one stroke too much,
one stroke too little,
one stroke in the wrong direction.

But there shall be just sufficient to work in us that which is pleasing in God's sight—and to make us that which He would have us to be.

What a great deal of trouble would we be spared if we could only **patiently submit to the Lord's afflicting stroke**—and know no will but His.

We get no better, but rather worse

"Accepted in the Beloved." Ephesians 1:6
We are ever looking for something in SELF to make ourselves acceptable to God—and are often sadly cast down and discouraged when we cannot find . . .
that holiness,
that obedience,
that calm submission to the will of God,
that serenity of soul,
that spirituality and heavenly mindedness,
which we believe to be acceptable in His sight.

Our crooked tempers, our fretful peevish minds,
our rebellious thoughts,
our coldness,

our barrenness,
our alienation from good,
our headlong proneness to evil,
with the daily feeling that **we get no better,
but rather worse**—make us think that **God
views us just as we view ourselves**. We
seem to lose sight of our acceptance in Christ,
and get into the miserable dregs of SELF. **We
are so vile, and only get worse as we get
older.**

Now the more we get into these dregs of SELF,
and the more we keep looking at the dreadful
scenes of wreck and ruin which our heart presents
to daily view—the farther do we get from the grace
of the gospel—and the more do we lose sight of
the only ground of our acceptance with God.

It is "in the Beloved" alone, that we
are accepted—and not for any . . .
good words,
good works,
good thoughts,
good hearts, or
good intentions
of our own.

And a saving knowledge of our acceptance "in
the Beloved," independent of everything in us
either good or bad, is a firm foundation for our
faith and hope—and will keep us from sinking
altogether into despair.

Blundering and stumbling on in darkness

After the Lord has quickened our souls, for a
time **we often go blundering on**, not knowing
there is a Jesus.

We think that the way of life is to . . .
keep God's commandments,
obey the law,
cleanse ourselves from sin,
reform our lives,
cultivate universal holiness in thought, word,
and action—and so we go—**blundering and
stumbling on in darkness**—and all the while
never get a single step forward.

But when the Lord has allowed us to weary ourselves to find the door, and let us sink lower and lower into the pit of guilt and ruin, from feeling that all our attempts to extricate ourselves have only plunged us deeper and deeper—and when the Spirit of God opens up to the understanding and brings into the soul some spiritual discovery of Jesus, and thus makes known that there is a Savior, a Mediator, and a way of escape—this is the grand turning point in our lives, the first opening in the valley of Achor (trouble) of the door of hope.

When you are in the wilderness

"Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the **wilderness**, and speak comfortably unto her." Hosea 2:14

When you are in the wilderness, you have . . .
no friend,
no creature help,
no worldly comfort—
these have all abandoned you.

God has led you into the wilderness to bereave you of these earthly ties, of these 'creature refuges and vain hopes', that He may Himself speak to your soul.

If, then, you are separated from the world by being brought into the wilderness—if you are passing through trials and afflictions—if you are exercised with a variety of temptations—and are brought into that spot where the creature yields neither help nor hope—then you are made to see and feel that nothing but God's voice speaking with power to your soul can give you any solid grounds of rest or peace.

But is not this profitable? It may be painful—it **is** painful—but it is profitable, because by it we learn to look to the Lord and the Lord alone—and this must ever be a blessed lesson to learn for every child of God.

O what crowds of pitiable objects

"Let us then approach the throne of grace with

confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."

Hebrews 4:16

What heart can conceive or tongue recount the daily, hourly triumphs of the Lord Jesus Christ's all-conquering grace?

We see scarcely a millionth part of what He, as a King on his throne, is daily doing. What a crowd of needy petitioners every moment surrounds His throne! What urgent needs and woes to answer; what cutting griefs and sorrows to assuage; what broken hearts to bind up; what wounded consciences to heal; what countless prayers to hear; what earnest petitions to grant; what stubborn foes to subdue; what guilty fears to quell!

What grace,
what kindness,
what patience,
what compassion,
what mercy,
what love,
what power,
what authority,
does this Almighty Sovereign display!

No circumstance is too trifling;
no petitioner too insignificant;
no case too hard;
no difficulty too great;
no seeker too importunate;
no beggar too ragged;
no bankrupt too penniless;
no debtor too insolvent;
for Him not to notice and not to relieve.
Sitting on His throne of grace . . .
His **all-seeing eye** views all,
His **almighty hand** grasps all,
and His **loving heart** embraces all whom the Father chose—whom He himself redeemed by His blood—and whom the blessed Spirit has quickened into life by His invincible power.
The hopeless, the helpless;
the outcasts whom no man cares for;
the tossed with tempest and not comforted;

the ready to perish;
the mourners in Zion;
the bereaved widow;
the wailing orphan;
the sick in body;
and still more sick in heart;
the racked with hourly pain;
the fevered consumptive;
the wrestler with death's last struggle.

O what crowds of pitiable objects

surround His throne—and all needing . . .
a look from His eye,
a word from His lips,
a smile from His face,
a touch from His hand!

O could we but see what His grace **is**—what His grace **has**—what His grace **does**—and could we but feel more what it is doing in and for ourselves, we would have more exalted views of the reign of grace now exercised on high by Zion's enthroned King!

Trouble, sorrow, and affliction

"And He led them forth by **the right way**,
that they might go to a city of habitation."
Psalm 107:7

Those very times when God's people think they are faring ill, may be the seasons when they are really faring well. For instance, when their souls are bowed down with trouble, it often seems to them that they are faring ill. God's hand appears to be gone out against them. Yet perhaps they never fare better than when under these circumstances of **trouble, sorrow, and affliction**. These things wean them from the world.

If their heart and affections were going out after idols—they instrumentally bring them back. If they were hewing out broken cisterns—they dash them all to pieces.

If they were setting up, and bowing down to idols in the chambers of imagery, affliction

and trouble smite them to pieces before their eyes—take away their gods—and leave them no refuge but the Lord God of hosts.

So that when a child of God thinks he is faring very ill, because burdened with sorrows, temptations, and afflictions—he is never faring so well. The darkest clouds in due time will break, the most puzzling enigmas will sooner or later be unriddled by the blessed Spirit interpreting them—and the darkest providences cleared up—and we shall see that God is in them all—leading and guiding us by **the right way**, that we may go to a city of habitation.

If you are at home in the world

"We are here for only a moment, **sojourners and strangers in the land** as our ancestors were before us. Our days on earth are like a shadow, gone so soon without a trace." 1 Chron. 29:15

If you possess the faith of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, you, like them, confess that you are a stranger; and your confession springs out of a believing heart and a sincere experience. You feel yourself a stranger in this ungodly world.

It is not your element.

It is not your home.

You are in it during God's appointed time, but **you wander up and down this world . . .**

a stranger to its company,
a stranger to its maxims,
a stranger to its fashions,
a stranger to its principles,
a stranger to its motives,
a stranger to its lusts,
a stranger to its inclinations—and all in which this world moves as in its native element.

Grace has separated you by God's sovereign power, that though you are **in** the world, you are not **of** it.

I can tell you plainly **if you are at home in the world**—if the things of time and sense are your

element—if you feel one with . . .
the company of the world,
the maxims of the world,
the fashions of the world, and
the principles of the world,
grace has not reached your heart—the faith
of God's elect does not dwell in your bosom.

The first effect of grace is to separate.

It was so in the case of Abraham. He was called by grace to leave the land of his fathers, and go out into a land that God would show him. And so God's own word to His people is now, "Come out from among them, and be separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."

Separation, separation, separation from the world;
is the grand distinguishing mark of vital godliness.

There may be indeed separation of **body** where there is no separation of **heart**. But what I mean is . . .
separation of **heart**,
separation of **principle**,
separation of **affection**,
separation of **spirit**.

And if grace has touched your heart, and you are a partaker of the faith of God's elect—you are a stranger in the world—and will make it manifest by your life and conduct that you are such.

From a burning hell—to a blissful heaven!

"I consider that our present sufferings are **not worth comparing** with the glory that will be revealed in us." Romans 8:18

What is to be compared with the salvation of the soul? What are—riches, honors, health, long life? What are all the pleasures which the world can offer, sin promise, or the flesh enjoy? What is all that men call good or great? What is everything which the eye has seen, or the ear heard, or has entered into the carnal heart of man—put side by side with being saved in the Lord Jesus Christ with an everlasting salvation?

For consider **what we are saved FROM**,
as well as **what we are saved UNTO**.

From a burning hell—to a blissful heaven!

From endless wrath—to eternal glory!

From the dreadful company of devils and damned spirits, mutually tormenting and tormented—to the blessed companionship of the glorified saints, all perfectly conformed in body and soul to the image of Christ, with thousands and tens of thousands of holy angels—and, above all, to seeing the glorious Son of God as he is, in all the perfection of His beauty, and all the ravishments of His presence and love.

To be done forever with . . .
all the sorrows, troubles, and afflictions of this life;
all the pains and aches of the present clay tabernacle;
all the darkness, bondage, and misery of the body of sin and death.

To be perfectly holy in body and soul, being in both without spot, or blemish, or any such thing, and ever to enjoy uninterrupted communion with God!

Our own wisdom, righteousness, and strength

"Do not deceive yourselves. If any one of you thinks he is wise by the standards of this age, **he should become a "fool"** so that he may become wise." 1 Cor. 3:18

The fruit and effect of divine teaching is—to cut in pieces, and root up all our **fleshly** . . .
wisdom,
strength, and
righteousness.

God never means to patch a new piece upon an old garment. All our wisdom, our strength, our righteousness must be torn to pieces! It must all be plucked up by the roots—that a new wisdom, a new strength, and a new righteousness may arise upon its ruins.

But until the Lord is pleased to teach us—we never can part with our own righteousness, never give up our own wisdom, never abandon our own strength. These things are a part and parcel of ourselves—so ingrained within us—so innate in us—so growing with our growth—that we cannot willingly part with an atom of them until the Lord Himself breaks them up, and plucks them away.

Then, as He brings into our souls some spiritual knowledge of our own dreadful corruptions and horrible wickedness—**our righteousness** crumbles away at the divine touch.

As He leads us to see and feel our ignorance and folly in a thousand instances—and how unable we are to understand anything aright but by divine teaching—**our wisdom** fades away.

As He shows us our inability to resist temptation and overcome sin, by any exertion of our own—**our strength** gradually departs—and we become like Samson, when his locks were cut off. Upon the ruins, then, of **our own wisdom, righteousness, and strength**, does God build up Christ's wisdom, Christ's righteousness, and Christ's strength.

But only so far as we are favored with this special teaching are we brought to pass a solemn sentence of condemnation upon our own wisdom, strength, and righteousness—and sincerely seek after the Lord's.

Oh! sweet grace, blessed grace!

"For it is by **grace** you have been saved."
Ephesians 2:8

We are saved by **grace** . . .
free grace,
rich grace,
sovereign grace,
distinguishing grace—
without one atom of works,
without one grain of creature merit,
without anything of the flesh.

Oh! sweet grace, blessed grace!

Oh! what a help—what a strength—what a rest for a poor toiling, striving, laboring soul—to find that grace has done all the work—to feel that grace has triumphed in the cross of Christ—to find that . . . nothing is required, nothing is needed, nothing is to be done!

Dying?

"As **dying**, and, behold, we live."
2 Corinthians 6:9

Though we die, and die daily—yet, behold, we live. And in a sense, the more we die, the more we live.

The more we die to self,
the more we die to sin.

The more we die to pride and self-righteousness,
the more we die to creature strength.

The more we die to sinful nature, the more we live to grace.

This runs all the way through the life and experience of a Christian.
Nature must die,
that grace may live.

The weeds must be plucked up,
that the crop may grow.

The flesh must be starved,
that the spirit may be fed.

The old man must be put off,
that the new man may be put on.

The deeds of the body must be mortified,
that the soul may live unto God.

As then we die—we live.

The more we die to our own strength,

the more we live to Christ's strength.

The more we die to creature hope,
the more we live to a good hope through grace.

The more we die to our own righteousness,
the more we live to Christ's righteousness.

The more we die to the world,
the more we live to and for heaven.

This is the grand mystery—that the Christian
is always **dying**, yet always living—and the
more he dies, the more he lives.

The death of the flesh,
is the life of the spirit.

The death of sin,
is the life of righteousness.
The death of the creature,
is the very life of God in the soul.

"As **dying**, and, behold, we live." 2 Corinthians 6:9

You were bought with a price!

"You were bought with a price!" 1 Cor. 6:20

How deep,
how dreadful,
of what alarming magnitude,
of how black a dye,
of how ingrained a stamp—
must sin be, to need such an atonement,
no less than the blood of the Son of God,
to put it away!

What a slave to sin and Satan,
what a captive to the power of lust,
how deeply sunk,
how awfully degraded,
how utterly lost and undone, must guilty
man be—to need a sacrifice like this!

Have you ever felt your bondage to sin, Satan,
and the world? Have you ever—groaned, cried,

grieved, sorrowed, and lamented under your miserable captivity to the power of sin?

Has the iron ever entered into your soul? Have you ever clanked your fetters, and as you did so, and tried to burst them—they seemed to bind round about you with a weight scarcely endurable?

You were slaves of sin and Satan. You were shut up in the dark cell, where all was gloom and despondency. There was little hope in your soul of ever being saved.

But there was an entrance of gospel light into your dungeon—there was a coming out of the house of bondage! **"You were bought with a price!"**

Which is better?

"You are not your own." 1 Corinthians 6:19

Remember that **you must belong to someone.** If God is not your master—the devil will be.

If grace does not rule—sin will reign.

If Christ is not your all in all—the world will be.

We must have a master of one kind or another.

Which is better . . .

a bounteous benevolent Benefactor;
a merciful, loving, and tender Parent;
a kind, forgiving Father and Friend;
a tender-hearted, compassionate Redeemer?

or

a cruel devil,
a miserable world, and
a wicked, vile, abominable heart?

Which is better . . .

to live under the sweet constraints of the dying love of a dear Redeemer—under . . .
gospel influences,
gospel principles,
gospel promises, and
gospel encouragements?

or

to live with sin in our heart, binding us in iron chains to the judgment of the great day?

Even taking the 'present life'—there is more real pleasure, satisfaction, and solid happiness . . . in half an hour with God, in reading his Word with a believing heart, in finding access to His sacred presence, in knowing something of His favor and mercy—than in . . . all the delights of sin, all the lusts of the flesh, all the pride of life, and all the amusements that the world has ever devised to kill time and cheat self—thinking, by a deathbed repentance, at last to cheat the devil.

Conflicts, trials, painful exercises, sharp sorrows, and deep temptations

"The Lord tries the righteous." Psalm 11:5

To keep water fresh, it must be perpetually running. And **to keep the life of God up in the soul**, there must be continual trials.

This is the reason why the Lord's people have so many . . . **conflicts, trials, painful exercises, sharp sorrows, and deep temptations—**to keep them alive unto God—to bring them out of, and to keep them out of that slothful, sluggish, wretched state of carnal security.

The Lord, therefore, "tries the righteous." He will not allow His people . . . to be at ease in Zion; to be settled on their lees, and get into a wretched Moabitish state.

He therefore sends upon them afflictions, tribulations, and trials—and allows Satan to tempt and harass them.

Personal, spiritual, experimental knowledge of Jesus

It is our dim, scanty, and imperfect knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ in His eternal love—and in His grace and glory—which leaves us so often cold, lifeless, and dead in our affections towards Him.

If there were more blessed revelations to our soul of the Person and work, grace and glory, beauty and blessedness of the Lord Jesus Christ—it is impossible but that we would more and more warmly and tenderly fall in love with Him—for He is the most glorious object that the eyes of faith can see!

He fills heaven with the resplendent beams of His glorious majesty—and has ravished the hearts of thousands of His dear family upon earth by the manifestations of His bleeding, dying love. Just in proportion to our **personal, spiritual, experimental knowledge of Him**, will be our love to Him.

I have loved you with an everlasting love

The Lord has appeared of old unto me, saying,
"Yes, **I have loved you with an everlasting love**;
therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you."
Jeremiah 31:3

There can be no new thought in the mind of GOD.

New thoughts, new feelings, new plans,
new resolutions continually occur to OUR
mind—for ours is but a . . .
poor,
fallen,
fickle,
changeable nature.

But God has no new—thoughts, feelings, plans or resolutions. For if He had, He would be a 'changeable' Being—not one great, eternal, unchangeable 'I Am'. All His thoughts, therefore, all His plans, all His ways are like Himself . . .
eternal,
infinite,
unchanging,

unchangeable.

The love of Christ to His Church is also—eternal, unchanging, unchangeable. And why? Because He loves as Deity.

O what a mercy it is for those who have any gracious, experimental knowledge of the love of Christ—to believe it is from everlasting to everlasting—that no incidents of time, no storms of sin or Satan, can ever change or alter that eternal love—but that it remains now and will remain the same to all eternity!

Help from the sanctuary

"May the Lord answer you when you are in distress—may the name of the God of Jacob protect you. May he send you **help from the sanctuary** and grant you support from Zion."
Psalm 20:1-2

When the soul has to pass through the trying hour of temptation, it needs **help from the sanctuary**. All other help leaves the soul just where it found it.

Help is sent from the sanctuary because his name has been from all eternity . . . registered in the Lamb's book of life, engraved upon the palms of His hands, borne on His shoulder, and worn on His heart.

Communications of life and grace from the sanctuary produce spirituality and heavenly-mindedness. The **breath of heaven** in his soul . . . draws his affections upward, weans him from earth, and makes him a pilgrim and a sojourner here below, "looking for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

Holy wrestling

Wherever the Lord brings trials upon the soul, He pours out upon it the spirit of grace and supplication.

If the child of God has a **burden**;
if he is laboring under a **strong temptation**;
if his soul is passing through some **pressing trial**;
he is not satisfied with merely going through a
'form of prayer'. There is at such times and
seasons, a **holy wrestling** . . .
there are fervent desires;
there are unceasing groans;
there is a laboring to enter into rest;
there is a struggling after deliverance;
there is a crying unto the Lord—until He appears
and manifests Himself in the soul.

A disciple of Jesus

A disciple of Jesus is one who is admitted by the Lord Jesus into His school—whom He Himself condescends personally to instruct—and who therefore learns of Him to be meek and lowly of heart.

A disciple of Jesus is one who sits meekly at the Redeemer's feet—receiving into his heart the gracious words which fall from His lips.

But a true and sincere disciple not only listens to his Master's instructions, but acts as He bids. So **a disciple of Jesus** is one who copies his Master's example—and is conformed to his Master's image.

A disciple of Jesus is also characterized by the love which he bears to his Master—he is one who treasures up the words of Christ in his heart—ponders over His precious promises—and delights in His glorious Person, love, and blood.

A disciple of Jesus is one who bears some reflection to the image of his heavenly Master—he carries it about with him wherever he goes—that men may take knowledge of him, that he has been with Jesus. The true disciple shines before men with some sparkles of the glory of the Son of God.

To have some of these divine features stamped upon the heart, lip, and life—is to be **a disciple of Jesus**.

To be much with Jesus is to be made like unto Jesus—

to sit at Jesus' feet is to drink in Jesus' words—to lean upon Jesus' breast is to feel the warm heart of Jesus pulsating with love—and to feel this pulsation, causes the heart of the disciple to beat in tender and affectionate unison—to look up to Jesus, is to see a face more marred than the sons of men; yet a face beaming with heavenly beauty, dignity, and glory.

To be **a disciple of Jesus**, is to copy His example—to do the things pleasing in His sight—and to avoid the things which He abhors.

To be **a disciple of Jesus**, is to be as . . .
meek as He was;
humble as He was;
lowly as He was;
self-denying as He was;
separate from the world as He was;
living a life of communion with God—
as He lived when He walked here below.

To take a worm of the earth and make him **a disciple of Jesus** is the greatest privilege God can bestow upon man! To select an obstinate, ungodly, perverse rebel, and place him in the school of Christ and at the feet of Jesus—is the highest favor God can bestow upon any child of the dust.

How unsurpassingly great must be that kindness whereby the Lord condescends to bestow His grace on an enemy—and to soften and meeken him by His Spirit—and thus cause him to grow up into the image and likeness of His own dear Son. Compared with this high privilege—all earthly honors, titles and robes sink into utter insignificance.

Sovereign, supreme disposal

"And God placed all things under His feet and appointed Him to be head over everything,"
Ephesians 1:22

How vast—how numerous—how complicated are the various events and circumstances which attend the Christian here below, as he travels onward to

his heavenly home!

But if all things are put under Jesus' feet—there cannot be a single circumstance over which He has not supreme control. Everything in providence and everything in grace are alike subject to His disposal. There is not . . .

a trial,
a temptation,
an affliction of body or soul,
a loss,
a cross,
a painful bereavement,
a vexation,
a grief,
a disappointment,
a case, state or condition,
which is not put under Jesus' feet.

He has sovereign, supreme disposal over all events and circumstances. As possessed of infinite **knowledge** He sees them—as possessed of infinite **wisdom** He can manage them—and as possessed of infinite **power** He can dispose and direct them for our good and His own glory.

How much trouble and anxiety would we save ourselves, could we firmly believe, realize, and act on this!

If we could see by the eye of faith that . . .
every foe and every fear,
every difficulty and perplexity,
every trying or painful circumstance,
every looked-for or unlooked-for event,
every source of care, whether at present or in prospect—are all put under His feet—at His sovereign disposal—what a load of anxiety and care would be often taken off our shoulders!

You must not love one of these glittering baubles

"Do not love the world or anything 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**, and it says to us, "Look around you—there is not one of these things which you must love."

It takes us, again, to the **streets of a crowded city**—it shows 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, it says, "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—"Do not love the world or anything in the world"?

One unmingled scene of happiness and pleasure

"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 blessed 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,
no fear, no darkness,
no distress—
but **one unmingled scene of happiness and pleasure**—and the whole soul and body are engaged in singing the praises of the Lamb! And what crowns the whole—there is the eternal enjoyment of those pleasures which are at the right hand of God forevermore!

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 has prepared for those who love Him.

The rod was dipped in love

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

It is a view of our sins against God that enables us to bear the indignation of the Lord against us and them.

As long as we are left to a spirit of pride and self-righteousness, we murmur at the Lord's dealings when His hand lies heavy upon us.

But let us only truly feel what we rightly deserve—that will silence at once all murmuring. You may murmur and rebel sometimes at your hard lot in **providence**. But if you feel what you deserve—it will make you water with 'tears of repentance'

the hardest cross.

So in **grace**, if you feel the weight of your sins, and mourn and sigh because you have sinned against God, you can lift up your hands sometimes with holy wonder at God's patient mercy that He has borne with you so long—that He has not smitten you to the earth, or sent your guilty soul to hell.

You will see, also, that the heaviest strokes were but fatherly chastenings—that **the rod was dipped in love**—and that it was for your good and His glory that it was laid on you.

When this sense of merited indignation comes into the soul, then meekness and submission come with it, and it can say with the prophet—"I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him."

You would not escape the rod if you might.

You can trust no minister really and fully.

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

The way to learn truth is to be much in prayer to the Lord Jesus Christ. Beg of Him to teach you Himself—for He is the best teacher. The words which He speaks, they "are spirit and life." What He writes upon our hearts is written in characters which will "stand every storm and live at last."

We forget what we learn from 'man'—but we never forget what we learn from Jesus.

'Men' may deceive—Christ cannot.

You can trust no minister really and fully.

Though you may receive truth from his lips, it is always mixed with human infirmity. But what you get from the lips of Jesus—you get in all its purity and power. It comes warm from Him—it comes cold from 'men'.

It drops like the rain and distills like the dew from His mouth—it comes only second-hand from men.

If I preach to you the truth, I preach indeed as the Lord enables me to speak. **But it is He who must speak with power to your souls to do you any real good.** Look then away from me—look beyond me—to Him who alone can teach us both.

By looking to Jesus in the inmost feelings of your soul, you will draw living truth from out of His bosom into your own—from His heart into your heart—and thus will come feelingly and experimentally to know the blessedness of His own declaration—"I am the truth."

Buried in the grave of carnality and worldliness

"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God." Col. 3:1
How many there are even of those who desire to fear God who are kept down by the **world**, and to whom it has not lost its attractive power.

They are held fast, at least for a time, by worldly business—or entangled by worldly people or worldly engagements . . .
their partners in business or their partners in life;
their carnal relatives or their worldly children;
their numerous connections or their social habits;
their strong passions or their deep rooted prejudices;
all bind and fetter them down to earth.

There they grovel and lie amid "the smoke, and stir of this dim spot which men call earth;" and so bound are they with the cords of their sins, that they scarcely seek deliverance from them—or ever desire to rise beyond the mists and fogs of this dim spot into a purer air—so as to breathe a heavenly atmosphere, and rise up with Jesus from the grave of their corruptions.

But they shall never be **buried in the grave of carnality and worldliness.**

A solitary drop of this holy anointing oil

"As for you, the **anointing** you received from Him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as His **anointing** teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit . . ."

1 John 2:27

Have you ever had a solitary drop of this holy anointing oil fall upon your heart?

One drop, if it be but a drop, will sanctify you forever to the service of God. There was not much of the holy anointing oil used for the service of the tabernacle, when we consider the size and quantity of what had to be consecrated. When he went through the sacred work, he touched one vessel after another with **a drop** of oil—for **one drop** sanctified the vessel to the service of the tabernacle.

There was **no repetition** of the consecration needed—it abode. So if you ever had a drop of God's love shed abroad in your heart—a drop of the anointing to teach you the truth as it is in Jesus—a drop to penetrate, to soften, to heal, to feed—and give light, life, and power to your soul—you have the unction from the Holy One—you know all things which are for your salvation, and by that same **holy oil** you have been sanctified and made fit for an eternal inheritance.

'Practical atheists', we daily prove ourselves to be.

We profess to believe in an All-mighty, All-present, All-seeing God. But we would be highly offended if a person said to us, "You do not **really** believe that God sees everything—that He is everywhere present—that He is an Almighty Jehovah." We would almost think that he was taking us for an atheist! **And yet 'practical atheists', we daily prove ourselves to be.**

For instance, we profess to believe that **God sees**

everything. And yet we are plotting and planning as though He saw nothing.

We profess to know that **God can do everything.** And yet we are always cutting out schemes, and carving out contrivances, as though He were like the gods of the heathen, looking on and taking no notice.

We profess to believe that **God is everywhere present** to relieve every difficulty and bring His people out of every trial. And yet when we get into the difficulty and into the trial—we speak, think, and act, as though there were no such omnipresent God, who knows the circumstances of our case, and can stretch forth His hand to bring us out of it.

Thus the Lord is obliged to thrust us into trials and afflictions, because **we are such blind fools,** that we cannot learn what a God we have to deal with—until we come experimentally into those spots of difficulty and trial, out of which none but such a God can deliver us.

This, then, is one reason why the Lord often plunges His people so deeply into a sense of **sin.** It is to show them what a wonderful salvation from the guilt, filth, and power of sin, there is in the Lord Jesus Christ.

For the same reason, too, they walk in such scenes of **temptation.** It is in order to show them what a wonder-working God He is, in bringing them out.

This too is the reason why many of them are so **harassed and plagued.** It is that they may not live and act as though there were . . .

no God to go to,

no Almighty friend to consult,

no kind Jesus to rest their weary heads upon.

It is in order to teach them experimentally and inwardly those lessons of grace and truth which they never would know until the Lord, as it were, thus compels them to learn—and actually forces them to believe what they profess to believe.

Such pains is he obliged to take with us—**such poor scholars, such dull creatures we are.** No child at a school ever gave his master a thousandth part of the trouble that we have given the Lord to teach us.

In order, then, to teach us what a merciful and compassionate God He is—in order to open up the heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths of His love—He is compelled to treat, at times, His people very roughly—and handle them very sharply. He is obliged to make very great use of His rod, because He sees that "foolishness is so bound up in the hearts" of His children—that nothing but the repeated "rod of correction will ever drive it far from them."

Dead in sin

"As for you, you were **dead in** trespasses and **sins**." Ephesians 2:1

To be **dead in sin** is to have . . .
no present part or lot with God;
no knowledge of Him;
no faith, no trust, no hope in Him;
no sense of His presence;
no reverence of His awesome Majesty;
no desire after Him or inclination toward Him;
no trembling at His word;
no longing for His grace;
no care or concern for His glory.

To be **dead in sin** is to be as a beast before Him, intent like a brute on satisfying the cravings of lust, or the movements of mere animal passion—without any thought or concern what shall be the outcome, and to be bent upon carrying out into action every selfish purpose, **as if we were . . .**

self creators,
our own judge,
our own lord,
and our own God.

O what a terrible state is it to be thus **dead in sin**, and not to know it—not to feel it—to be in no way sensible of its present danger and certain end—unless delivered from it by a mighty act of sovereign power!

It is this lack of all sense and feeling which makes the death of the soul to be but the prelude to that second death which stretches through a boundless

eternity.

Continual salvation?

"I cried unto You—**Save me**, and I shall keep Your testimonies." Psalm 119:146

If you know anything for yourself, inwardly and experimentally of . . .
the evils of your heart,
the power of sin,
the strength of temptation,
the subtlety of your unwearied foe,
and that daily conflict between nature and grace, the flesh and the spirit, which is the peculiar mark of the living family of heaven; you will find and feel **your need of salvation as a daily reality**. There is **present salvation**—an inward, experimental, and **continual salvation** communicated out of the fullness of Christ as a risen Mediator.

You need to be daily and almost hourly saved from the . . .
guilt,
filth,
power,
love, and
practice
of indwelling sin.

"I cried unto You—**Save me**, and I shall keep Your testimonies." Psalm 119:146

The fatal mistake of thousands

The fatal mistake of thousands is to offer unto God the fruits of the **flesh**—instead of the fruits of the **Spirit**.

Fleshly holiness,
fleshly exertions, fleshly prayers,
fleshly duties,
fleshly religious forms,
fleshly zeal—
these are what men consider good works,

and present them as such to God.
But well may He "who is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity", say to all such fleshly workers, "If you offer the **blind** for sacrifice, is it not evil? And if you offer the **crippled** and the **diseased**, is it not evil?"

All that the flesh can do is evil, for "every imagination of man's heart is only evil continually;" and to present **the fruits of this filthy heart** to the Lord of hosts, is "to offer defiled food upon His altar."

A broken heart,
a contrite spirit,
a tender conscience,
a filial fear of God,
a desire to please Him,
a dread to offend the great God of heaven,
a sense of the evil of sin,
a desire to be delivered from sin's dominion,
a mourning over our repeated backslidings,
grief at being so often entangled in our lusts and passions,
an acquaintance with our helplessness and weakness,
simplicity and godly sincerity,
a hanging upon grace for daily supplies,
watching the hand of Providence,
a singleness of eye to the glory of God,
—these are a few of the fruits of the Spirit.

The great secret of vital godliness

The great secret of vital godliness is to be nothing—that Christ may be all in all.

Every stripping, sifting, and emptying—every trial, exercise and temptation that the soul passes through, has but one object—to beat out of man's heart that cursed spirit of independence which the devil breathed into him when he said, "You shall be as gods".

A man must well near be bled to death before this venom can be drained out of his veins!

The filthy holes and puddles

in which it grovels

In the first awakenings of the soul, we do not usually know much, nor feel much, of our fallen sinful nature. We feel more the guilt of sin 'committed' than of sin 'indwelling'.

The way in which SIN sometimes seems to sleep, and at other times to awake up with renewed strength—its active, irritable, impatient, restless nature, the many shapes and colors it wears, **the filthy holes and puddles in which it grovels**, the corners into which it creeps, its deceitfulness, its hypocrisy, its craft, its deceptive attraction, its intense selfishness, its utter recklessness, its desperate madness, and insatiable greediness—are **secrets, painful secrets, only learned by bitter experience.**

If the devil ever feels joy

If the devil ever feels joy—it is in making souls miserable.

The **cries** of the damned are his music.

Their **curses** and **blasphemies** are his songs of triumph. Their **anguish** and **despair** are his wretched feast.

Do not fear.

Say to those who are afraid, "Be strong, and **do not fear**, for your God is coming to destroy your enemies. He is coming to save you." Isaiah 35:4

"**Do not fear.**" "Ah! but Lord," the soul says, "I do fear. I fear myself more than anybody. I fear . . . my base, wicked heart, my strong lusts and passions, my numerous inward enemies,

the snares of Satan,
and the temptations of the world.
I do fear. I cannot help but fear."

Still the Lord says, "Do not fear."

Here is a child trembling before a large mastiff
dog; but the father says, "Do not fear, he will
not hurt you, only keep close to me."

Who is that dog but Satan, that huge mastiff,
whose jaws are reeking with blood? If the Lord
says, "Do not fear," why need we fear him?
He is a chained enemy.

But how the timid soul needs the divine "Fear nots!"
For without Him, it is all weakness—with Him, all strength;
without Him, all trembling—with Him, all boldness.

Say to those who are afraid, "Be strong, and **do
not fear**, for your God is coming to destroy your
enemies. He is coming to save you." Isaiah 35:4

The desire of our soul

"**The desire of our soul** is to Your Name, and
to the remembrance of You." Isaiah 26:8

How sweet and expressive is the phrase, "**The desire
of our soul!**" How it seems to carry our feelings with it!
How it seems to describe the longings and utterings of
a soul into which God has breathed the spirit of grace
and mercy!

"**The desire of our soul**"—
the breathing of our heart,
the longing of our inmost being,
the cry, the sigh, the panting of our new nature,
the—
heavings,
gaspings,
lookings,
longings,
pantings,
hungerings,
thirstings, and
ventings forth of the new man of grace;
all are expressed in those sweet and blessed

words—"The desire of our soul."

And what a mercy it is, that there should ever be in us "the desire" of a living soul—that though the righteous dealings of God are painful and severe, running contrary to everything nature loves—yet that with all these, there should be dropped into the heart that mercy, love, and grace—which draw forth the desire of the soul toward the Name of God.

This is expressed in the words that follow, "My soul yearns for You in the night—in the morning my spirit longs for You!" Isaiah 26:9.

Is your soul longing after the Lord Jesus Christ?

Is it ever, in the night season, panting after the manifestation of His presence? hungering and thirsting after the dropping of some word from His lips—some sweet whisper of His love to your soul?

These are marks of saving grace.
The carnal, the unregenerate, the ungodly,
have no such desires and feelings as these!

O self! Self!

Oh, to be kept from myself—my . . .
vile,
proud,
lustful,
hypocritical,
worldly,
covetous,
presumptuous,
obscene self.

O self! Self!

Your desperate wickedness,
your depravity,
your love of sin,
your abominable pollutions,
your monstrous heart wickedness,
your wretched deadness, hardness,
blindness, and indifference.

You are a treacherous villain,

and, I fear, always will be such!

What are all the gilded toys of time?

What are all the gilded toys of time compared with the solemn, weighty realities of eternity!

But, alas! what wretches are we when left to . . .
sin,
self, and
Satan!

How unable to withstand the faintest breath
of temptation!

How bent upon backsliding!

Who can fathom the depths of the human heart?

**Oh, what but grace, superabounding grace,
can either suit or save such wretches?**

That dear, idolized creature

"I have been **crucified** with Christ.
Nevertheless I **live**." Galatians 2:20

The crucifixion of **self** is indispensable to following Christ.
What is so dear to a man as himself?

Yet this **beloved self** is to be crucified.

Whether it be . . .

proud self,

or **ambitious** self,

or **selfish** self,

or **covetous** self,

or, what is harder still, **religious** self;

that dear, idolized creature, which has
been the subject of so much . . .

fondling,

petting,

pampering,

nursing—

this **fondly loved self** has to be taken out of
our bosom by the hand of God, and nailed to
Christ's cross! The same grace which pardons
sin also subdues it!

To be crucified with Christ! To have everything that the flesh loves and idolizes put to death!
How can a man survive such a process?

"Nevertheless I **live!**"

As the world, sin, and self are crucified, subdued, and subjugated by the power of the cross, the life of God springs up with new vigor in the soul.

Here, then, is **the great secret of vital godliness:** that the more that sin and self, and the world are mortified, the more do holiness and spirituality of mind, heavenly affections and gracious desires spring up and flourish in the soul.

O! blessed **death!** O! still more blessed **life!**

"I have been **crucified** with Christ. Nevertheless I **live.**" Galatians 2:20

Unquenched, unquenchable!

"Many waters cannot quench love; neither can floods drown it." Song of Solomon 8:7

The bride uses a figure which shall express the insuperable strength of divine love against all opposition; and she therefore compares it to a fire which burns and burns unquenched and unquenchable, whatever be the amount of water poured upon it. Thus the figure expresses the flame of holy love which burned in the heart of the Redeemer as unquenchable by any opposition made to it.

How soon is **earthly** love cooled by opposition! A little ingratitude, a few hard speeches, cold words or even cold looks, seem often almost sufficient to quench love that once shone warm and bright. And how often, too, even without these cold waters thrown upon it, does it appear as if ready to die out by itself.

But the love of Christ was unquenchable by all those waters. Not all the ingratitude, unbelief, or coldness of His people could quench **His eternal love to them!**

He knew what the Church was in herself,
and ever would be . . .
how cold and wandering her affections,
how roving her desires,
how backsliding her heart!

But all these waters could not extinguish His love!

It still burnt as a holy flame in His bosom,
unquenched, unquenchable!

**"Many waters cannot quench love; neither
can floods drown it."** Song of Solomon 8:7

**He can crawl like a serpent,
and he can roar like a lion!**

"So that Satan will not outsmart us. For we are
very familiar with **his evil schemes**." 2 Cor. 2:11

Satan well knows both how to **allure** and how to
attack; for **he can crawl like a serpent, and he
can roar like a lion!** He has **snares** whereby he
entangles, and **fiery darts** whereby he impales.

Most men are easily led captive by him at his will,
ensnared without the least difficulty in the traps
that he lays for their feet; for they are as ready
to be caught as he is to catch them! Why would
Satan need to roar against them as a lion, if he
can wind himself around them and bite them as
a serpent?

If you want to see what sin really is

To cast the **sinning angels** out of heaven;
to banish **Adam** from Paradise;
to destroy the **old world** by a flood;
to burn **Sodom and Gomorrah** with fire from heaven—
these **examples of God's displeasure against sin** were
not sufficient to express His condemnation of it. He
would therefore take another way of making it manifest.

And what was this?

By sending His own Son out of His bosom, and offering Him as a sacrifice for sin upon the tree at Calvary, He would make it manifest how He abhorred sin, and how His righteous character must forever condemn it.

See here the **love of God to poor guilty man** in not sparing His own Son; and yet the hatred of God against sin, in condemning it in the death of Jesus.

It is almost as if God said, "**If you want to see what sin really is**, you cannot see it in the depths of hell. I will show you sin in blacker colors still— you shall see it in the sufferings of My dear Son; in His agonies of body and soul; and in what He as a holy, innocent Lamb endured under My wrath, when He consented to take the sinner's place."

What wondrous **wisdom**,
what depths of **love**,
what treasures of **mercy**,
what heights of **grace**
were thus revealed and brought to light in God's unsparing condemnation of sin, and yet in His full and free pardon of the sinner!

If you have ever had a view by faith of the suffering Son of God in the garden and upon the cross; if you have ever seen the wrath of God due to you, falling upon the head of the God-Man; and viewed a bleeding, agonizing Immanuel; then you have seen and felt in the depths of your conscience **what a dreadful thing sin is**. Then the broken-hearted child of God looks unto Him whom he has pierced, and mourns and grieves bitterly for Him, as for a firstborn son who has died.

Under this sight he feels what a dreadful thing sin is.

"Oh," he says, "did God afflict His dear Son? Did Jesus, the darling of God, endure all these sufferings and sorrows to save **my soul** from the bottomless pit? O, can I ever hate sin enough? Can I ever grieve and mourn over it enough? Can my stony heart ever be dissolved into contrition enough, when by faith I see the agonies, and hear the groans of the suffering, bleeding Lamb of God?"

Christians hate their sins. They hate that sinful, that dreadfully sinful flesh of theirs which has so often,

which has so continually, betrayed them into sin. And thus they join with God in passing condemnation upon the whole of their flesh; upon all its actings and workings; upon all its thoughts and words and deeds; and hate it as the prolific parent of that sin which crucified Christ, and torments and plagues them.

The hard-hearted, cold-blooded, wise-headed professor

We are surrounded with **snares**.

Temptations lie spread every moment in our path.

These snares and these temptations are so suitable to the lusts of our flesh, that we would certainly fall into them, and be overcome by them, but for the restraining providence or the preserving grace of God. The Christian sees this; the Christian feels this.

The hard-hearted, cold-blooded, wise-headed professor sees no snares. He is entangled in them, he falls by them, and not repenting of his sins or forsaking them, he makes utter shipwreck concerning the faith.

The child of God . . .

sees the snare,
feels the temptation,
knows the evil of his heart,
and is conscious that if God does not hold him up, he shall stumble and fall.

As then a burnt child dreads the fire, so he dreads the consequence of being left for a moment to himself; and the more is he afraid that he shall fall.

If his eyes are more widely opened to see . . .
the purity of God,
the blessedness of Christ,
the efficacy of atoning blood,
and the beauties of holiness,
the more also does he see the evil of sin, the dreadful consequences of being entangled therein. And not only so, but his own **helplessness** and **weakness** and **inability** to stand against temptation in his own strength.

And all these feelings combine to raise up a more

earnest cry, "**Hold me up, and I shall be safe!**"

A stable, a hovel, a hedge, any unadorned corner

This is what the Sovereign Lord says: "Although I sent them far away among the nations and scattered them among the countries, yet **I will be to them as a little sanctuary** in the countries where they have gone." Ezekiel 11:16

Every place in which the Lord manifests Himself, is a sanctuary to a child of God.

Jesus is now our sanctuary, for He is "the true place of worship that was built by the Lord and not by human hands." We see the power and glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.

Every place is a sanctuary, where God manifests Himself in power and glory to the soul. Moses, doubtless, had often passed by the bush which grew in Horeb; it was but a common thorn bush, in no way distinguished from the other bushes of the thicket. But on one solemn occasion it was all "in a flame of fire," for "the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire" out of the midst; and though it burned with fire, it was not consumed. God being in the bush, the ground round about was holy, and Moses was bidden to take off his shoes from his feet. Was not this a sanctuary to Moses? It was, for a holy God was there! Thus **wherever God manifests Himself, that becomes a sanctuary to a believing soul.**

We don't need places made holy by the ceremonies of **man**; but **places made holy by the presence of God!**

Then **a stable, a hovel, a hedge, any unadorned corner** may be, and is a sanctuary, when God fills your heart with His sacred presence, and causes every holy feeling and gracious affection to spring up in your soul.

Poor, miserable, paltry works of a polluted worm!

"We are all infected and impure with sin. When we proudly display **our righteous deeds**, we find they **are but filthy rags**. Like autumn leaves, we wither and fall. And our sins, like the wind, sweep us away."
Isaiah 64:6

We once thought that we could gain heaven by our own righteousness. We strictly attended to our religious duties, and sought by these and various other means to recommend ourselves to the favor of God, and induce Him to reward us with heaven for our sincere attempts to obey His commandments.

And by these religious performances we thought we would surely be able to make a ladder whereby we could climb up to heaven. This was our **tower of Babel**, whose top was to reach unto heaven, and by mounting which, we thought to scale the stars.

But the same Lord who stopped the further building of the tower of Babel, by confounding their speech and scattering them abroad on the face of the earth; began to confound our speech, so that we could not pray, or talk, or boast as before; and to **scatter all our religion like the chaff** of the threshing floor. Our mouths were stopped; we became guilty before God; and our bricks and mortar became **a pile of confusion!**

When, then, the Lord was pleased to discover to our souls by faith, **His** being, majesty, greatness, holiness, and purity; and thus gave us a corresponding sense of **our** filthiness and folly; then **all our creature religion and natural piety** which we once counted as gain, we began to see was but loss; that our very religious duties and observances, so far from being **for** us, were actually **against** us; and instead of pleading for us before God as so many deeds of righteousness, were so polluted and defiled by sin perpetually mixed with them, that **our very prayers were enough to sink us into hell**, had we no other iniquities to answer for in heart, lip or life.

But when we had a view by faith of the Person, work, love, and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, then we began more plainly and clearly to see, with **what religious toys we had been so long amusing ourselves**, and what is far worse, **mocking God by them**.

We had been secretly despising . . .

Jesus and His sufferings,
Jesus and His death,
Jesus and His righteousness,
and setting up the **poor, miserable, paltry
works of a polluted worm** in the place of
the finished work of the Son of God.

Mere toys and baubles

True religion must be everything or nothing with us.
In religion, indifference is ruin; neglect is destruction.

Of all losses, the loss of the **soul** is the only one that is utterly irreparable and irremediable. You may lose **property**, but you may recover the whole or a portion of it; you may lose **health**, but you may be restored to a larger measure of bodily strength than before your illness; you may lose **friends**, but you may obtain new ones, and those more sincere and valuable than any whom you have lost. But if you lose your **soul**, what is to make up for that loss?

Do you ever feel what a tremendous stake heaven or hell is? Have you ever felt that **to gain heaven** is to gain everything that can make the soul eternally happy; and **to lose heaven** is not only to lose eternal bliss, but to sink down into . . .
unfathomable,
everlasting,
unutterable woe?

It is this believing sight and pressing sense of eternal things; it is this weighty, at times overpowering, feeling that they carry in their bosom an immortal soul, which often makes the children of God **view the things of time and sense as . . .
mere toys and baubles**, trifles lighter than vanity, and pursuits empty as air, and gives them to feel that the things of eternity are **the only solid, enduring realities**.

Heavenly dew

"My words descend like **dew**." Deuteronomy 32:2

The dew falls imperceptibly. No man can see it fall. Yet its **effects** are visible in the morning. So it is with the blessing of God upon His Word. It penetrates the heart without noise; it sinks deep into the conscience without anything visible going on. And as the dew opens the pores of the earth and refreshes the ground after the heat of a burning day, making vegetation lift up its drooping head, so it is with the blessing of God resting upon the soul.

Heavenly dew comes imperceptibly, falls quietly, and is manifested chiefly by its **effects**, as softening, opening, penetrating, and secretly causing every grace of the Spirit to lift up its drooping head.

Whenever the Lord may have been pleased to bless our souls, either in hearing, in reading, or in private meditation, have not these been some of the effects? Silent, quiet, imperceptible, yet producing an evident impression . . . softening the heart when hard, refreshing it when dry, melting it when obdurate, secretly keeping the soul alive, so that it is neither withers up by the burning sun of temptation, nor dies for lack of grace.

"May God give you the dew of heaven." Genesis 27:28

Coming up from the wilderness

"Who is this coming up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved?" Song of Solomon 8:5

To come up from the wilderness, is to come up out of OURSELVES; for we are ourselves the wilderness. It is **our wilderness heart** that makes the world what it is to us . . .
our own barren frames;
our own bewildered minds;
our own worthlessness and inability;
our own lack of spiritual fruitfulness;
our own trials, temptations, and exercises;
our own hungering and thirsting after righteousness.

In a word, **it is what passes in our own bosom that makes the world to us a dreary desert.**

Carnal people find the world no wilderness. It is an Eden to them! Or at least they try hard to make it so.

They seek all their pleasure from, and build all their happiness upon it. Nor do they dream of any other harvest of joy and delight, but what may be repaid in this 'happy valley', where youth, health, and good spirits are ever imagining new scenes of gratification. But the child of grace, exercised with a thousand difficulties, passing through many temporal and spiritual sorrows, and inwardly grieved with his own lack of heavenly fruitfulness, finds the wilderness within.

But he still comes up out of it, and this he does by looking upward with believing eyes to Him who alone can bring him out. He comes up out of his own **righteousness**, and shelters himself under Christ's righteousness.

He comes up out of his own **strength**, and trusts to Christ's strength.

He comes up out of his own **wisdom**, and hangs upon Jesus' wisdom.

He comes up out of his own tempted, tried, bewildered, and perplexed condition, to find rest and peace in the finished work of the Son of God.

And thus he comes up out of **the wilderness of self**, not actually, but experimentally. Every desire of his soul to be delivered from his 'wilderness sickening sight' that he has of sin and of himself as a sinner. Every aspiration after Jesus, every longing look, earnest sigh, piteous cry, or laboring groan, all are a **coming up from the wilderness**.

His turning his back upon an ungodly world; renouncing its pleasures, its honors, its pride, and its ambition; seeking communion with Jesus as his chief delight; and accounting all things but loss and rubbish for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus his Lord as revealed to his soul by the power of God; this, also, is **coming up from the wilderness**.

When we gaze upon the lifeless corpse

From the cradle to the coffin, affliction and sorrow are the appointed lot of man. He comes into the world with

a wailing cry, and he often leaves it with an agonizing groan! Rightly is this earth called "a valley of tears," for it is wet with them in infancy, youth, manhood, and old age. In every land, in every climate, scenes of misery and wretchedness everywhere meet the eye, besides those deeper griefs and heart-rending sorrows which lie concealed from all observation. So that we may well say of **the life of man** that, like Ezekiel's scroll, it is "written with lamentations, and mourning and woe."

But this is not all. The scene does not end here!

We see up to death, but we do not see beyond death.

To see a man die without Christ is like standing at a distance, and seeing a man fall from a lofty cliff—we see him fall, but we do not see the crash on the rocks below.

So we see an unsaved man die, but **when we gaze upon the lifeless corpse**, we do not see how his soul falls with a mighty crash upon the rock of God's eternal justice! **When his temporal trials come to a close, his eternal sorrows only begin!** After weeks or months of sickness and pain, the pale, cold face may lie in calm repose under the coffin lid; when the soul is only just entering upon an eternity of woe!

But is it all thus dark and gloomy both in life and death? Is heaven always hung with a canopy of black? Are there no beams of light, no rays of gladness, that shine through these **dark clouds of affliction, misery, and woe** that are spread over the human race?

Yes! there is one point in this dark scene out of which beams of light and rays of glory shine! "God did not appoint us to suffer wrath, but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Thessalonians 5:9

There, on the other side, is my solitary soul

"For what is a man **profited**, if he shall gain the whole world, and **loses** his own soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?" Mt. 16:26

Here is my scale of profit and loss.

I have a soul to be saved or lost.

What then shall I give in exchange for my soul?

What am I profited if I gain the whole world and lose my soul?

This deep conviction of a soul to be saved or lost lies at the root of all our religion.

Here, on one side, is the WORLD and all . . .

its profits
its pleasures,
its charms,
its smiles,
its winning ways,
its comforts,
its luxuries,
its honors,
to gain which is the grand struggle of human life.

There, on the other side, is my solitary SOUL,

to live after death, forever and ever, when the world and all its pleasures and profits will sink under the wrath of the Almighty.

And this dear soul of mine, my very self, my only self, my all, must be lost or saved.

Even your own relatives think you are almost insane

"The Spirit of truth. **The world** cannot receive Him, because it **neither sees Him nor knows Him.**"
John 14:17

The world—that is, the world dead in sin, and the world dead in profession—men destitute of the life and power of God—**must have something that it can see.** And, as heavenly things can only be seen by heavenly eyes, they cannot receive the things which are invisible.

Now this explains why **a religion that presents itself with a degree of beauty and grandeur to the natural eye will always be received by the world;** while a . . .
spiritual,
internal,
heartfelt and
experimental
religion will always be rejected.

The world can receive a religion that consists of . . .

forms,
rites, and
ceremonies.

These are things **seen**.

Beautiful buildings,
painted windows,
pealing organs,
melodious choirs,
the pomp and parade of an earthly priesthood,
and a whole apparatus of 'religious ceremony',
carry with them something that the natural eye can
see and admire. The world receives all this 'external
religion' because it is suitable to the natural mind
and intelligible to the reasoning faculties.

But the . . .

quiet,
inward,
experimental,
divine religion,
which presents no attractions to the outward eye, but
is wrought in the heart by a divine operation—the world
cannot receive this—because it presents nothing that
the natural eye can rest upon with pleasure, or is
adapted to gratify their general idea of what religion
is or should be.

Do not marvel, then, that worldly professors despise a
religion wrought in the soul by the power of God. **Do not
be surprised if even your own relatives think you are
almost insane**, when you speak of the consolations of
the Spirit, or of the teachings of God in your soul. They
cannot receive these things, for they have no experience
of them; and being such as are altogether opposed to
the carnal mind, they reject them with enmity and scorn.

Make straight paths for your feet.

"Make straight paths for your feet." Hebrews 12:13

Surrounded as we are with a crooked generation,
professing and profane, whose ways we are but too
apt to learn; beset on every hand by temptations . . .
to turn aside into some crooked path,
to feed our pride,
to indulge our lusts,

to gratify our covetousness;
blinded and seduced sometimes by the god of this world;
hardened at other times by the deceitfulness of sin; here
misled by the example, and there bewitched by the flattery
of some friend or companion; at one time confused and
bewildered in our judgment of right and wrong; at another
time entangled, half resisting, half complying, in some
snare of the wicked one; what a struggle have some of us
had to **make straight paths for our feet**; and what pain
and grief that we should ever have made crooked ones.

"But as for me, my feet had almost slipped;
I had nearly lost my foothold." Psalm 73:2

When I said, "My foot is slipping," Your love,
O Lord, supported me. Psalm 94:18

"He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the
mud and mire; He set my feet on a rock and
gave me a firm place to stand." Psalm 40:2

"Hold me up, and I shall be safe!" Psalm 119:117

"I guide you in the way of wisdom and **lead
you along straight paths.**" Proverbs 4:11

Have nothing to do with them.

"They mingled among the pagans and adopted
their evil customs. They worshiped their idols,
and this led to their downfall." Ps. 106:35-36

The 'carnal professors' of the day see nothing
wrong, nothing amiss, nothing inconsistent in
their conduct or spirit, though they are **sunk in . . .
worldliness,
carnality, or
covetousness.**

But where there is divine life, where the blessed
Spirit moves upon the heart with His sacred
operations and secret influences, there will be
light to see, and a conscience to feel, what is . . .
wrong,
sinful,
inconsistent,
and improper.

It is but too evident that we cannot be mixed up with the professors of the day without drinking, in some measure, into their spirit and being more or less influenced by their example.

We can scarcely escape the influence of those with whom we come much and frequently into contact. If they are **dead**, they will often benumb us with their corpse-like coldness. If they are **light and trifling**, they will often entangle us in their carnal levity. If they are **worldly and covetous**, they may afford us a shelter and an excuse for our own worldliness and covetousness.

Abhor that loose profession, that ready compliance with everything which feeds the . . .
pride,
worldliness,
covetousness,
and lusts of our depraved nature,
which so stamps the present day with some of its most perilous and dreadful characters.

"Having a form of godliness but denying its power.
Have nothing to do with them." 2 Timothy 3:5

The foulest filth under the cleanest cloak

"Take heed unto **yourselves!**" Acts 20:28

There are few Christians who have not ever found SELF to be their **greatest enemy**. The pride, unbelief, hardness, and impenitence of a man's own heart; the deceitfulness, hypocrisy, and wickedness of his own fallen nature; the lusts and passions, filth and folly of his own carnal mind; will not only ever be his **greatest burden**, but will ever prove his **most dreaded foe!**

Enemies we shall have from outside, and we may at times keenly feel their bitter speeches and cruel words and actions. **But no enemy can injure us like ourselves!** In five minutes a man may do himself more real harm, than all his enemies united could do to injure him in fifty years!
To yourself you can be **the most insidious enemy** and **the greatest foe!**

In all its forms, SELF in its inmost spirit is still a . . .

**deceitful,
subtle,
restless,
proud, and
impatient**

creature; masking its real character in a thousand ways, and concealing its destructive designs by countless devices.

We have but to look on the professing church to find . . .

the highest **pride** under the lowest humility,
the greatest **ignorance** under the vainest self-conceit,
the basest **treachery** under the warmest profession,
the vilest **sensuality** under the most heavenly piety,
and **the foulest filth under the cleanest cloak.**

"Take heed unto **yourselves!**" Acts 20:28

Familiarity with sacred things

"Take heed unto **yourselves!**" Acts 20:28

This was Paul's public warning to the elders of the church at Ephesus. It was Paul's private warning to his friend and disciple, his beloved son, Timothy. And do not all who write or speak in the name of the Lord need the same warning?

Familiarity with sacred things has a natural tendency to harden the conscience, where grace does not soften and make it tender.

Men may preach and pray until both become a mere mechanical habit; and they may talk about Christ and His sufferings until they feel as little touched by them as a 'tragic actor' on the stage, of the sorrows which he impersonates.

Well, then, may the Holy Spirit sound this note of warning, as with trumpet voice, in the ears of the servants of Christ. "Take heed unto yourselves!"

Pride, self-conceit, and self-exaltation

Pride, self-conceit, and self-exaltation, are both

the **chief temptations**, and the **main besetting sins**, of those who occupy any public position in the church.

Therefore, where these sins are not mortified by the Spirit, and subdued by His grace; instead of being, as they should be, the **humblest** of men; they are, with rare exceptions, the **proudest**.

Did we bear in constant remembrance our slips, falls, and grievous backslidings; and had we, with all this, a believing sight of the holiness and purity of God, of the sufferings and sorrows of His dear Son, and what it cost Him to redeem us from the lowest hell; we would be, we must be clothed with humility; and would, under feelings of the deepest self-abasement, take the lowest place among the family of God, as the chief of sinners, and less than the least of all the saints.

This should be the feeling of every child of God.

Until this pride is in some measure crucified, until we hate it, and hate ourselves for it, the glory of God will not be our main object.

What? Will He forgive us all sins?

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

What? Will He forgive us all sins?

Every sin that we have committed?

Do we not sin with every breath that we draw?

Is not every **lustful desire** sin?
And is not every **proud thought** sin?
And is not every **wicked imagination** sin?
And is not every **unkind suspicion** sin?
Every act of **unbelief** sin?
And every working of a depraved nature sin?

We committed sin when we sucked our mother's breast! We committed sin as soon as we were able to stammer out a word. And as we grew in body, we grew in sinfulness.

Will He forgive . . .

sins of thought,
sins of look,
sins of action,
sins of omission,
sins of commission,
sins in infancy,
sins in childhood,
sins in youth,
sins in old age?

Will He forgive . . .

all the base lusts,
all the filthy workings,
all the vile actions,
all the pride,
all the hypocrisy,
all the covetousness,
all the envy, hatred, and malice,
all the aboundings of inward iniquity?

"The blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin."
1 John 1:7

This sacred anointing

"But you have an **anointing** from the Holy One."
1 John 2:20

Wherever the **anointing** of the Holy One touches a man's heart it spreads itself, widening and extending its operations. It thus communicates divine gifts and graces wherever it comes. It . . . bestows and draws out faith, gives repentance and godly sorrow, causes secret self-loathing, and separation from the world, draws the affections upwards, makes sin hated, and Jesus and His salvation loved.

Wherever the **anointing** of the Holy Spirit touches a man's heart it diffuses itself through his whole soul, and makes him wholly a new creature. It . . . gives new **motives**, communicates new **feelings**, enlarges and melts the **heart**, and

spiritualizes and draws the **affections** upwards.

Without **this sacred anointing** . . .
all our religion is a bubble,
all our profession a lie, and
all our hopes will end in despair.

O what a mercy to have one drop of this heavenly **anointing**! To enjoy one heavenly feeling! To taste the least measure of Christ's love shed abroad in the heart! What an unspeakable mercy to have one touch, one glimpse, one glance, one communication out of the fullness of Him who fills all in all!

By this **anointing** from the Holy One, the children of God are supported under . . .
afflictions,
perplexities,
and sorrows.

By this **anointing** from the Holy One, they see the hand of God . . .
in every **chastisement**,
in every **providence**,
in every **trial**,
in every **grief**, and
in every **burden**.

By this **anointing** from the Holy One they can bear chastisement with meekness; and put their mouth in the dust, humbling themselves under the mighty hand of God.

Every good word,
every good work,
every gracious thought,
every holy desire, every spiritual feeling
do we owe to this one thing:
the **anointing** of the Holy One.

"But you have an **anointing** from the Holy One."
1 John 2:20

What makes the children of God so strange?

"To God's elect, **strangers in the world.**" 1 Peter 1:1

Strangers!

What makes the children of God so strange?

The grace of God which calls them out of this wretched world. Every man who carries the grace of God in his bosom is necessarily, as regards the world, a stranger in **heart**, as well as in **profession**, and **life**.

As **Abraham** was a stranger in the land of Canaan;
as **Joseph** was a stranger in the palace of Pharaoh;
as **Moses** was a stranger in the land of Egypt;
as **Daniel** was a stranger in the court of Babylon;
so **every child of God** is separated by grace,
to be a stranger in this ungodly world.

And if indeed we are to come out from it and to be separate, the world must be as much a strange place to us; for **we are strangers to . . .**

its views,
its thoughts,
its desires,
its prospects,
its anticipations,
in our daily walk,
in our speech,
in our mind,
in our spirit,
in our judgment,
in our affections.

We will be strangers from . . .
the world's **company**,
the world's **maxims**, the world's **fashions**,
the world's **spirit**.

"They confessed that they were **strangers**
and pilgrims on the earth." Hebrews 11:13

By His wounds we are healed

Sin has thoroughly diseased us,
and poisoned our very blood.

Sin has diseased our **understanding**, so
as to disable it from receiving the truth.

Sin has diseased our **conscience**, so as to make it dull and heavy, and undiscerning of right and wrong.

Sin has diseased our **imagination**, polluting it with every idle, foolish, and licentious fancy.

Sin has diseased our **memory**, making it swift to retain what is evil, slow to retain what is good.

Sin has diseased our **affections**, perverting them from all that is heavenly and holy, and fixing them on all that is earthly and vile.

"But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and **by His wounds we are healed.**" Isaiah 53:5

Strangle and suffocate it!

"O Israel, **you have destroyed yourself!** But in Me is your help." Hosea 13:9

Is not this a true charge? Does not your conscience agree with it, as a well founded accusation? Have you not willingly with your eyes open, run into some sin, which, **but for God's mercy and upholding hand**, would have proved your certain destruction? Have you not stood upon the very brink of some deep pit, down into which one more step would have plunged you?

As you realize the evils of your heart, you see what a marvel it is, that grace is kept alive in your bosom! You see yourself surrounded on every side with that which would inevitably destroy it—but for the mighty power of God!

You look back and wonder how the life of God in your soul has been preserved so many years. Sometimes you have been sunk into such carnality. You have felt such emptiness of all good, and such proneness to all evil, that you wonder how you have not been swallowed up, overcome, and carried away into the pit of destruction!

David said, "I am as a wonder to many." But you can say, "**I am a wonder to myself!**" The world, the devil,

and your own evil heart, have been for years all aiming to destroy the precious life of God in your soul—all stretching out their hands to **strangle and suffocate it!**

And yet, in His mysterious wisdom, unspeakable grace, and tender compassion, He has kept the holy principle alive in your soul.

O, the mystery of redeeming love!

O, the blessedness of preserving grace! We have been preserved, upheld, and kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation!
"O Lord, You have kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit!" Psalm 30:3

"He has preserved our lives and kept our feet from slipping!" Psalm 66:9

"Hold me up, and I shall be safe!" Psalm 119:117

They will never perish!

"For God has reserved a priceless inheritance for His children. It is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay!
And God, in His mighty power, will protect you until you receive this salvation." 1 Peter 1:4-5
The elect are preserved in Christ, BEFORE they are called by grace. **They are kept by the power of God from perishing in their unregeneracy.**

Have not you been almost miraculously **preserved** in the midst of dangers, and escaped when others perished by your side—or been raised up as it were, from the very brink of destruction and the very borders of the grave?

Besides some striking escapes from what are called 'accidents', three times in my life—once in infancy, once in boyhood, and once in manhood, I have been raised up from the borders of the grave, when almost everyone who surrounded my bed thought I would not survive the violence of the attack.

Were not these instances of being **kept** by the power of God? **I could not die until God had manifested His purposes of electing grace and mercy to my soul.**

But the elect are also kept by the mighty power of God AFTER they are called by grace; for they are in the hollow of His hand, and are kept as the apple of His eye. I will not say they are kept from **all** sins. Yet I will say that they are kept from **damning** sins. They are kept especially from three things . . .
from the dominion of **sin**,
from daring and final **presumption**,
from lasting and damnable **error**.

They are never drowned in the sins and evils of the present life so as to be swallowed up in them—for **it is impossible that they can ever be lost!**

They are therefore preserved in hours of temptation, for they are guarded by all the power of Omnipotence, shielded by the unceasing care and watchfulness of Him who can neither slumber nor sleep.

Looking back through a long vista of years, can **you** not see how the hand of God has been with you—how He has held you up, and brought you through many a storm, and preserved you under powerful temptations? How gently He sometimes drew you on, or sometimes kept you back?

"I give them eternal life, and **they will never perish!** No one can snatch them out of My hand!" John 10:28

Having **chosen** us, God **begets** us with His word, **regenerates** us by a divine influence, and makes us **new creatures** by the power and influence of the Holy Spirit.

All things!

"You crowned Him with glory and honor and put **all things** under His feet. In putting **all things** under Him, God left nothing that is not subject to Him." Hebrews 2:7-8

See the sovereign supremacy of Jesus!

There may be circumstances in your earthly lot which at this moment are peculiarly trying. You look around and wonder how this or that circumstance will

terminate. At present it looks very dark—clouds and mists hang over it, and you fear lest these clouds may break, not in showers upon your head, but burst forth in the lightning flash and the thunder stroke!

But **all things** are put in subjection under Christ's feet! That which you dread cannot take place except by His sovereign will—nor can it move any further except by His supreme disposal. Then make yourself quiet. He will not allow you to be harmed. That frowning providence shall only execute His sovereign purposes, and it shall be among those **all things** which, according to His promise, shall work together for your good.

None of our trials come upon us by chance! They are all appointed in weight and measure—are all designed to fulfill a certain end. And however painful they may at present be, yet they are intended for your good.

When the trial comes upon you, what a help it would be for you if you could view it thus, "This trial is sent for my good. It does not spring out of the dust. The Lord Himself is the supreme disposer of it. It is very painful to bear; but let me believe that He has appointed me this peculiar trial, along with every other circumstance. He will bring about His own will therein, and either remove the trial, or give me patience under it, and submission to it."

You may be afflicted by **sickness**. It is not by chance that such or such sickness visits your body—that the Lord sees fit to afflict head, heart, chest, liver, hand, foot, or any other part of your body. **All things** are put in subjection under Him, and He has not exempted sickness and disease! Whatever you suffer in bodily disease, He appoints and arranges it for your good. Be resigned to His holy and almighty will.

All your **afflictions** are put under the feet of Jesus! You may think at times how harshly you are dealt with—mourning, it may be, under family bereavements, sorrowing after the loss of your 'household treasures'—a beloved husband, wife, or child. But O that you could bear in mind that **all your afflictions**, be they what they may, are put under the feet of Jesus, so that, so to speak, not one can crawl from under His feet but by His permission—and, **like scolded hounds**, they crawl again beneath them at a word of command from His lips!

Let us then hold fast this truth, for on it depends so

much of our comfort.

Without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish!

"Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her. He did this to present her to Himself as a **glorious** church **without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish!** Instead, she will be holy and without fault." Ephesians 5:25, 27

What are we ourselves as viewed by our own eyes?

Full of spots, wrinkles, and blemishes! And What do we see in ourselves every day, but **sin and filth and folly?** What evil is there in the world that is not in us, and in our hearts? It is true others cannot read our hearts. But we read them; yes, are every day, and sometimes all the day reading them. And what do we read there? Like Ezekiel's scroll, it is "written within and without;" and we may well add, if we rightly read what is there written, we have every reason to say it is "full of lamentations, and mourning, and woe." Ezekiel 2:10

For I am sure that there is nothing that we see there every day and every hour, but would cover us with shame and confusion of face, and make us blush to lift up our eyes before God, or almost to appear in the presence of our fellow man!

But neither others, nor we ourselves, now see what the church one day will be, and what she ever was in the eyes of Jesus! He could look through all the sins and sorrows of this intermediate period, and fix His eye upon the bridal day—the day when before assembled angels, in the courts of heaven, in the realms of eternal bliss, He would present her to Himself a glorious church, **without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish**, but holy, and without fault.

O what a day will that be, when the Son of God shall openly wed His espoused bride; when there shall be heard in heaven, "what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting—Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns! Let us rejoice and be glad and give Him glory! For **the wedding of the Lamb has come**, and His bride has made herself ready." Revelation 19:6-7

Bitten by this serpent's tooth

No man has ever sounded the depths of the fall.

The children of God have indeed discoveries of the evil of sin. And they have such views at times of the desperate wickedness and awful depravity of human nature, that they seem as if filled with unspeakable horror at the hideous enormity of the corruption that works in their carnal mind.

But no man has ever seen, as no man ever can see, in this time-state, what sin is to its full extent, and as it will be hereafter developed in the depths of hell.

We may indeed in our own experience see something of its **commencement**; but we can form little idea of its **progress**, and still less of its **termination**. For sin has this peculiar feature attending it, that **it ever spreads and spreads until it involves everything that it touches in utter ruin**.

We may compare it in this point of view to the venom-fang of a serpent. There are serpents of so venomous a kind, as for instance the Cobra de Capello, or hooded snake, that the introduction of the minutest portion of venom from their poison tooth will in a few hours convert all the fluids of the body into a mass of putrefaction. A man shall be in perfect health one hour, and **bitten by this serpent's tooth** shall in the next, be a loathsome mass of rottenness and corruption. **Such is sin**.

The introduction of sin into the nature of Adam at the fall was like the introduction of poison from the fang of a deadly serpent into the human body. It at once penetrated into his soul and body, and filled both with death and corruption.

Or, to use a more scriptural figure, sin may be compared to the disease of **leprosy**, which usually began with a "bright spot," or "rising in the skin", scarcely perceptible, and yet spread and spread until it enveloped every member, and the whole body becoming a mass of putrefying hideous corruption.

Or sin may be compared to a **cancer**, which begins perhaps with a little lump causing a slight itching, but goes on feeding upon the part which it attacks, until the patient dies worn out with pain and suffering.

Now if sin be . . .
this **venom fang**,
this **spreading leprosy**,
this **loathsome cancer**;
if its destructive power be so great that, unless
arrested and healed, it will destroy body and soul
alike in hell, the remedy for it, if remedy there be,
must be as great as the malady. Thus if there be . . .
a cure for sin,
a remedy for the fall,
a deliverance from the wrath to come,
it must be at least as full and as complete
as the ruin which sin has entailed upon us.

The man who has slight, superficial views and feelings
of **sin** will have equally slight and superficial views of
the **atonement** made for sin. The groans of Christ will
never sound in his ears as the dolorous groans of an
agonizing Lord; the sufferings of Christ will never be
opened up to his soul as the sorrows of Immanuel, God
with us; the death of Christ will never be viewed by him,
as the blood shedding of the darling Son of God. While
he has such slight, superficial views of the **malady**, his
views of the **remedy** will be equally slight and superficial.

As we are led down into a spiritual knowledge of **self**
and **sin**, so we are led up into a gracious knowledge
of the Lord Jesus Christ.

By suffering all the penalties of our sin, Jesus redeems
us from the lowest hell and raises us up to the highest
heaven—empowering poor worms of earth to soar above
the skies and live forever in the presence of Him who
is a consuming fire!

"And she will have a son, and you are to name Him
Jesus, for **He will save His people from their sins.**"
Matthew 1:21

Like a weed upon a dung-heap!

"I hate pride and arrogance!" Proverbs 8:13
Our hearts are desperately proud.

If there is one sin which God hates more than
another, and more sets Himself against, it is

the sin of **pride**.

Like a weed upon a dung-heap, pride grows more profusely in some soils, especially when well fertilized by . . .

rank,
riches,
praise,
flattery,
our own ignorance,
and the ignorance of others.

We all inherit pride from our fallen ancestor **Adam**, who got it from **Satan**, that "king over all the children of pride."

Those, perhaps, who think they possess the least pride, and view themselves with wonderful self-admiration as the humblest of mortals, may have more pride than those who feel and confess it. It may only be more deeply hidden in the dark recesses of their carnal mind.

As God then sees all hearts, and knows every movement of pride, whether we see it or not, **His purpose is to humble us!**

When I look back upon my life, and see . . .
all my **sins**,
all my **follies**,
all my **slips**,
all my **falls**,
my conscience testifies of the many things
I have thought, said, and done, which . . .
grieve my soul,
make me hang my head before God,
put my mouth in the dust, and
confess my sins unto Him.

When I contrast my own exceeding
sinfulness with . . .
God's greatness,
God's majesty,
God's holiness, and
God's purity . . .
I fall down, humbly and meekly before Him,
I put my mouth in the dust,
I acknowledge I am vile.

"I am nothing but dust and ashes." (Abraham)

"Behold, I am vile!" (Job)

"Woe to me! I am ruined!" (Isaiah)

"I am a sinful man!" (Peter)

He alone can rescue me

"My eyes are always looking to the Lord for help, for **He alone can rescue me** from the traps of my enemies." Psalm 25:15

"Oh, please help us against our enemies, for all human help is useless." Psalm 60:11

What a mighty God we have to deal with!

And what would suit our case but a mighty God?

Have we not mighty **sins**?

Have we not mighty **trials**?

Have we not mighty **temptations**?

Have we not mighty foes and mighty **fears**?

And who is to deliver us from all this mighty army, except the mighty God? It is not a 'little God' (if I may use the expression) that will do for God's people. They need a 'mighty God', because they are in circumstances where none but a mighty God can intervene in their behalf.

And it is well worth our notice that the Lord puts His people purposely into circumstances where they may avail themselves, so to speak, of His omnipotent power, and thus know from living personal experience, that He is a mighty God, not in mere doctrine and theory, but a mighty God in their special and particular behalf. Why, if you did not feelingly and experimentally know . . .
your mighty sins,
your mighty trials,
your mighty temptations,
your mighty fears,
you would not need a mighty God.

O how this brings together the strength of God and

the weakness of man! How it unites poor helpless creatures with the Majesty of heaven! How it conveys to feeble, worthless worms the very might of the Omnipotent Jehovah!

This sense of . . .
our weakness and His power,
our misery and His mercy,
our ruin and His recovery,
the aboundings of our sin and
the super-aboundings of His grace;
a feeling sense of these opposite yet harmonious things, brings us to have personal, experimental dealings with God. And it is in these personal dealings with God that the life of all religion consists. "The Lord hears His people when they call to Him for help. He rescues them from all their troubles." Psalm 34:17

The Lord sometimes flogs His children home!

"As chastened, yet not killed." 2 Corinthians 6:9

The Lord does not see fit to lay the same chastisements upon all His people. **He has rods of different sizes and different descriptions**; though all are felt to be rods when God brings them upon the back.

The Lord chastises with one hand, and upholds with the other. In your spiritual experience, you may have passed under **many chastising strokes**. And when they fell upon you, they seemed to come as a killing sentence from God's lips. You feared your **illness** might end in death. Under your **bereavement**, you felt as if you could never hold up your head again. You thought your **providential losses** might prove to be your earthly ruin. Your **family afflictions** seemed to be so heavy, as to be radically incurable. All these were **killing strokes**. But though chastened, you were not killed. You lost no divine life thereby; but you lost much that **pleased the flesh**; much that **gratified the creature**; much that looked well for days of prosperity, but would not abide the storm.

But you lost nothing that was for your real good.

If you lost bodily health; you gained spiritual health.

If you lost a dear husband or child; God filled up the void in your heart by making Christ more precious.

If you had troubles in your family; the Lord made it up by giving more manifestations of His love and grace.

Your very losses in providence were for your good; for God either made them up, or what you lost in providence He doubled in grace.

So that though chastened; **you are not killed!** Has anything that has happened to you quenched or extinguished the life of God in your soul?

As the dross and tin were more separated; has not the gold shone more brightly? Have you not held spiritual things with a tighter grasp? **When God chastens His people, it is not to kill them; it is . . .** to make them partakers of His holiness, to revive their drooping graces, to make them more sincere, upright and tender in conscience, to make them more separate from the world, to make them seek more His glory, to make them have a more single eye to His praise, to make them live more a life of faith.

Here is the blessedness—that **when God chastises His people**, it is not for their injury, but for their profit; not for their destruction, but for their salvation; not to treat them with the unkindness of an enemy, but with the love of a friend!

Look at the afflictions, chastenings and grievous sorrows that you have passed through. **Have they been . . .** friends to you, or enemies? instruments of helping you, or hindrances? ladders whereby you have climbed up to heaven, or steps whereby you have descended into hell? means of taking you nearer to Christ, or means of carrying you more into the world?

If you know anything of God's chastening, you will say, "Every stroke has brought me nearer to God! **He has flogged me home!**" As a father will seize his truant boy out of a horde of other children and flog him home, so **the Lord sometimes flogs His children home!** Every stroke laid upon their back brings them a step nearer to their home in the mansions above!

In your own experience, you know that **God's**

chastenings have not killed you. But rather they have been the means of reviving and keeping alive the work of grace upon your heart!

"As chastened, yet not killed." 2 Corinthians 6:9

He may talk like an angel, and live like a devil.

There is "a knowledge of the things of God" which a man may possess without a personal experience of the new birth—without any divine operation upon his soul whatever, or any participation of the grace of God.

>From reading the scriptures and hearing the Gospel preached, many attain to **a carnal, intellectual, barren head knowledge of the truth;** who, as to any **experimental, vital, saving acquaintance** with it, are still in the very gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity.

A man may have the 'knowledge of an **apostle**' and the 'worldliness of a **Demas**'.

He may be clear in **head**, and rotten in **heart**.

He may talk like an angel, and live like a devil.

He may understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and be nothing but a hypocrite and an impostor.

In our day such characters abound in the churches. But distinct from this "head knowledge", as distinct from it as heaven from hell, there is a most blessed "spiritual knowledge" of the things of God, with which the people of God are favored.

"Then **He opened their minds** so they could understand the Scriptures." Luke 24:45

This idol-making, idol-loving world

'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians. You know how I brought you to Myself and carried you on eagle's wings.'" Exodus 19:4

The idea here, is of snatching His people out of Egypt as an eagle would snatch her young away from the hands of the spoiler of her nest, and bear them away and aloft on her outstretched wings. Deliverance . . . from **idolatry**, from **bondage**, from a state of **degradation** and **abject slavery**, is the leading idea of bringing His people out of Egypt.

So, spiritually, the Lord bears us out of a worse Egypt, by His Almighty power. Has He given you some deliverance from the **world** and the spirit of it, and brought you to Himself by the power of His grace? Has He carried you up out of **sin** . . . its open commission, its secret practice, its inward indulgence, and broken in some measure the love and the power of it?

Has He carried you not only out of the grosser iniquities of Egypt, but its more 'refined and acceptable sins', such as . . . creature idolatry, religious lip-service, self-righteousness, and mocking God by superstition, tradition, and vain ceremony?

Has He carried you, as on eagles' wings, out of all the **idols** of Egypt? For Egypt was a land teeming with idolatry, and therefore an apt emblem of **this idol-making, idol-loving world**.

"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, so that you would no longer be **slaves** to the Egyptians." Leviticus 26:13

"Praise be to the Lord, for He has **saved** you from the Egyptians and from Pharaoh. He has **rescued** His people from the power of Egypt!" Exodus 18:10

Accomplished actors

"The **pulpit** has its **accomplished actors**, as well as the **playhouse!**"

He has given me a cup of deep sorrow to drink
"He has filled me with bitterness. He has given me
a cup of deep sorrow to drink." Lamentations 3:15

The Lord's people have many hard lessons which they have to learn in the 'school of Christ'. **Each one has to carry a daily cross**, and are burdened and pressed down under its weight. This daily cross may and does differ in individuals. But every child of God has his own cross, which **laid upon his shoulders by an invincible hand**, he has, for the most part, to carry down to the very grave.

Thus, some of God's people are afflicted in **body** from the very time the Lord begins His work of grace upon their heart. Or if exempt from disease, are shattered in nerve, depressed in spirits, and weighed down by lassitude and languor, often harder to bear than disease itself.

Some are tied to **ungodly partners**, meeting with opposition and persecution at every step.

Others have nothing but **trouble in their family**, either from the invasion of death into their circle, or what sometimes is worse than death—disgrace, shame, and ungodliness.

Others have little else but one continual series of losses and crosses in their circumstances, wave after wave rolling over their heads.

O, view the family of God toiling homeward . . .

some dragging along an afflicted body;
others a wounded spirit;
others carrying upon their shoulders dying children;
others with scarcely a rag to their back or a crust in their hand;
footsore,
fearful in heart,
trembling at a rustling leaf,
a deep river to pass, and
a furious enemy in sight.

"Even though the fig trees have no blossoms, and there are no grapes on the vine; even though the olive crop fails, and the fields lie empty and barren; even though the flocks die in the fields, and the cattle barns are empty, yet I will rejoice in the Lord! I will be joyful in the God of my salvation. **The Sovereign Lord is my strength!**"
Habakkuk 3:17-19

Were we left wholly in its hands!

"No **temptation** has seized you except what is common to man." 1 Cor. 10:13

There is **not a single sin ever perpetrated by man** which does not lie deeply hidden in the recesses of **our** fallen nature! But these sins do not stir into activity until temptation draws them forth.

Temptation is to the corruptions of the heart, what fire is to stubble. Sin lies quiet in our carnal mind until temptation comes to set it on fire.

Temptation is to our corrupt nature, what the spark is to gunpowder. Have you not found this sad truth: how easily by temptation are the corruptions of our wretched heart set on fire, and burst into every kind of daring and dreadful iniquity?

In temptation, we learn what sin is . . .

its dreadful nature,
its aggravated character,
its fearful workings,
its mad, its desperate upheavings against God,
and **what we are or would be,**

were we left wholly in its hands!

"Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation." Matthew 26:41

"Hold me up, and I shall be safe!" Psalm 119:117

Romantic dreams of pleasure and earthly joy?

"**The things on earth will be shaken**, so that only eternal things will be left." Hebrews 12:27

Man is always seeking happiness in some shape or other, in the things of this world. He does not see or

feel that outside of God, happiness is impossible; and that to seek it in 'the creature' is to add sin to sin. But look at this vain attempt in a variety of instances.

Look at **people young in life**. What romantic prospects dance before their eyes! "What dreams of love and home by flowery streams!" But what a rude shock do these 'dreams of earthly happiness' usually experience! This is true of most,

if not all, who build their hopes of happiness on 'the creature'. But particularly so in the case of the family of God. How jealous is He of all such schemes of earthly bliss—and how, sooner or later, He shatters them all by His mighty hand!

Look, for instance, at **health**, that indispensable element of all earthly happiness! What a rude shock many of the dear family of God have experienced in their earthly tabernacle, even in their youthful days, by accident or disease, so as to mar all earthly happiness almost before the race of life was begun!

Look again at **wedded happiness**—that "perpetual fountain of domestic sweets"—how bitter a drop often falls from the hands of God into that honeyed cup! Why does that mourning **widow** sigh? Why does her heart swell, and her eye run over? What does that scalding drop on her cheek mean? How many a blooming **daughter** has faded away in consumption before a mother's eye! How many a fine strong **son** has been cut down by an accident—or sudden illness has borne him away to the cold grave, in the very pride and prospect of life!

But apart from these elements of shattered and broken creature happiness, what **disappointment**, what **vexation**, what **sorrow** and **care** we find in everything we put our hands to! Even with health and home unbroken, wife and child untouched by death's cold hand, there is **sin and misery enough in a man's own bosom** to fill his heart with continual sorrow!

Thus wisely and mercifully, **all our attempts to grasp earthly happiness** fail and come to nothing.

Child of grace, do not murmur at the hand of the Lord which has broken your 'dreams of creature happiness'. God does not intend that you should have your heaven here on earth, nor live after the fashion of this world. It is **a kind hand, though a rough one**, which blasts all your schemes of creature happiness, which breaks your body into pieces with sickness, blights all your prospects of wealth, and fame, and reputation, and ambition, and pours bitter gall into each honeyed cup. **Why** does the Lord brake all your earthly schemes of human happiness? **Why** does He blight all . . . your prospects, your plans of ambition and of success in life, your **romantic dreams of pleasure and earthly joy?**

That they may all be removed out of your hearts' affections;

and give you happiness which shall endure forever and ever!

"Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe." Hebrews 12:28

The love of the truth

"They perish because they did not receive **the love of the truth**, that they might be saved." 2 Thess. 2:10

There is a receiving of 'the truth', and a receiving of 'the **love** of the truth'. These two things widely differ. To receive the truth will not necessarily save; for many who receive the truth, never receive 'the **love** of the truth'.

Professors by thousands receive the truth into their judgment, and adopt the plan of salvation as their creed; but are neither saved nor sanctified thereby. But to receive 'the **love** of the truth' by Jesus being made sweet and precious to the soul, is to receive salvation itself.

"Yes, He is very precious to you who believe." 1 Peter 2:7

These "lovers" of ours

"I will run after **my lovers** and sell myself to them for food and drink, for clothing of wool and linen, and for olive oil." Hosea 2:5

Here is the opening up of what we are by nature, what our carnal mind is ever bent upon, what we do or are capable of doing, except as held back by the **watchful providence** and **unceasing grace** and **goodness** of the Lord.

These "lovers" of ours are our old sins and former lusts which still crave for gratification. To these sometimes the carnal mind looks back and says, "**Where are my lovers** that gave me my food and drink? Where are those former delights that so pleased my vile passions, and so gratified my base desires?"

These lovers, then, are . . .
the lust of the flesh,
the lust of the eyes,

and the pride of life;
all which, **unless subdued by sovereign grace**,
still work in our depraved nature, and seek to
regain their former sway.

But the Lord, for the most part, mercifully interposes,
nor will He usually let His children **do** what they gladly
would do; or **be** what they gladly would be. He says,
"therefore I will block your path with thorn bushes; I
will wall you in so that you cannot find your way."
(Hosea 2:6)

The Lord, in His providence or in His grace, prevents
our carnal mind from carrying out its base desires;
hedges up our way with thorns—by which we may
spiritually understand prickings of conscience, stings
of remorse, pangs of penitence—which are so many
thorny and briery hedges that fence up the way of
transgression, and thus prevent our carnal mind from
breaking forth into its old paths, and going after these
former lovers to renew its ungodly alliance with them.

A hedge of thorns being set up by the grace of God,
our soul is unable to break through this strong fence,
because the moment that it seeks to get through it,
or over it, every part of it presents a pricking brier or
a sharp and strong thorn, which wounds and pierces
our conscience.

What infinite **mercy**, what surpassing **grace**, are hereby
manifested! Were our conscience not made thus tender
so as to feel the pricking brier, we can hardly tell what
might be the fearful consequence, or into what a miserable
abyss of sin and transgression our soul would fall.

But **these lacerating briers** produce remorse of soul
before God; for finding, as the Lord speaks, "that
when she runs after her lovers, she won't be able
to catch up with them. She will search for them but
not find them," there comes a longing in her mind
for purer pleasures and **holier delights than her
adulterous lovers could give her**. And thus a change
in her feelings is produced, a revolution in her desires.
"Then she will say, I will go back to my Husband as
at first, for then I was better off than now."

The idea is of an adulterous wife contrasting
the innocent enjoyments of her first wedded
love—with the state of misery into which she

had been betrayed by base seducers.

And thus the soul spiritually contrasts its former enjoyment of the Lord's presence and power—with its present state of darkness and desertion. "Where," she would say, "are my former delights, my first joys, and the sweetness I had in days now passed, in knowing, serving, and worshiping the Lord? Ah! He was a kind and loving husband to me in those days. I will return to Him if He will graciously permit me, for it was better with me when I could walk in the light of His countenance, than since I have been seeking for my lovers, and reaping nothing but guilt, death, and condemnation."

It is in these storms

"When **the storm** has swept by, the wicked are gone; but the righteous stand firm forever." Proverbs 10:25

The very **storms** through which the believer passes, will only strengthen him to take a firmer hold of Christ.

As the same wind that blows down the shallow-rooted tree, only establishes the deep-rooted tree—so the same **storms** which uproot the 'shallow professor', only establish the 'true believer' more firmly in Christ.

Though **these storms** may shake off some of his 'leaves', or break off some of the 'rotten boughs' at the end of the branch, they do not uproot the believer's faith, but rather strengthen it.

It is in these storms that he learns . . .

more of his own weakness, and of Christ's strength;
more of his own misery, and of Christ's mercy;
more of his own sinfulness, and of superabounding grace;
more of his own poverty, and of Christ's riches;
more of his own desert of hell, and of his own title to heaven.

It is in these storms that the same blessed Spirit who began the work carries it on; and goes on to engrave the image of Christ in deeper characters upon his heart; and to teach him more and more experimentally the truth as it is in Jesus.

"Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy!
I look to You for protection.

I will hide beneath the shadow of Your wings until **this violent storm** is past." Psalm 57:1

His secret power and influence

"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me **draws** him." John 6:44

"I have loved you, My people, with an everlasting love. With unfailing love I have **drawn** you to Myself." Jeremiah 31:3

None can really come to Jesus by faith, unless this **drawing power** is put forth.

The Holy Spirit—that gracious and blessed Teacher, acts upon the soul by **His secret power and influence**, puts 'cords of love' and 'bands of mercy' around the heart, and by the **attractive influence** that He puts forth, **draws** the soul to Jesus' feet; and in due time reveals Him as the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely one.

As the Spirit reveals and manifests these precious things of Christ to the soul, He raises up a living faith whereby Jesus is sought unto, looked unto, laid hold of, and is brought into the heart with a divine power, there to be enshrined in its warmest and tenderest affections.

All through its Christian pilgrimage, this blessed Spirit goes on to deepen His work in the soul, and to discover more and more of the suitability, beauty, and blessedness of the Lord Jesus, as He draws the soul more and more unto Him. There is no maintaining of the light, life, and power of God in our souls, except as we are daily coming unto Jesus as the living stone, and **continually living upon Him** as the bread of life.

Every kind of sin

"**He gave Himself to redeem us from every kind of sin.**" Titus 2:14

Sins of **heart**.

Sins of **lip**.

Sins of **life**.

There are **five things as regards sin**, from which our blessed Lord came to redeem us . . .its guilt, its filth, its power, its love, its practice.

By His death, He redeemed us from sin's **guilt**.

By the washing of regeneration, He delivers us from sin's **filth**.

By the power of His resurrection, He liberates us from sin's **dominion**.

By revealing His beauty, He frees us from sin's **love**.

By making the conscience tender in His fear, He preserves us from sin's **practice**.

"The blood of Jesus purifies us from **all sin**."
1 John 1:7

If your flesh had its full swing?

"The old sinful nature loves to do evil, which is just opposite from what the Holy Spirit desires. And the Spirit gives us desires that are opposite from what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so that **you cannot do the things that you would do**." Galatians 5:17

At times, we can hardly tell **how we are kept from evil**.

There is in those who fear God, **a spiritual principle** which holds them up, and keeps them back from the ways of sin and death in which the flesh would walk. This inner principle of grace and godly fear has, in thousands of instances, preserved the feet of the saints, and **kept them from doing things that would have . . .** ruined their reputation, blighted their character, brought reproach upon the cause of God, and the greatest grief and distress into their own conscience!

They **cannot** do the EVIL things that they would do.

The **flesh** is always lusting towards evil, but **grace** is a counteracting principle to repress and subdue it. Grace does not wholly overcome the evil lustings of the flesh, but it can prevent those lustings from being carried out into open action. For the Spirit fights against the flesh, and will not let it altogether reign and rule, nor have its own will and way unchecked.

What a mercy lies couched here! **For what would you be, if your flesh had its full swing?**

What **evil** is there which you would not do?

What **crime** which you would not commit?
What **slip** which you would not make?

What open and horrid **fall** which you would not be guilty of—**unless you were upheld by Almighty power**—and the flesh curbed and checked from running its destructive course?

We can never praise God sufficiently for His **restraining grace**—for **what would we be without it?**

"Hold me up, and I shall be safe!" Psalm 119:117

A coward's castle

A pastor has no right to turn the pulpit into a **coward's castle**, and from there attack those in the congregation, whom he is afraid to meet face to face privately.

It is cruelly unfair to attack an individual who cannot defend himself—to hold him up, as if on the horns of the pulpit, before the congregation, (who generally know pretty well who is meant), and to condemn him without hearing his side, with the pastor being the only judge and jury.

Some beloved idol?

"Because the whole land is filled with idols, and the

people are madly in love with them." Jeremiah 50:38

Have we not all in our various ways,
set up some beloved idol . . .
something which **engaged our affections,**
something which **occupied our thoughts,**
something to which we **devoted all the energies of our minds,**
something for which we were **willing to labor** night and day?

Be it **money,**
be it **power,**
be it **esteem of men,**
be it **respectability,**
be it **worldly comfort,**
be it **literary knowledge,**
there was **a secret setting up of SELF in one or more of its various forms, and a bowing down to it as an idol.**

The man of business makes **money** his god.

The man of pleasure makes the **lust of the flesh** his god.

The proud man makes **his adored SELF** his god.

The Pharisee makes **self-righteousness** his god.

The Arminian makes **free-will** his god.

The Calvinist makes **dry doctrine** his god.

All in one way or other, however they may differ in the object of their idolatrous worship, agree in this: that they give a preference in their esteem and affection to their peculiar idol, above the one true God.

"Idols will be utterly abolished and destroyed."

Isaiah 2:18

There is, then, a time to break down these idols which our fallen nature has set up.

And have not we experienced some measure of this breaking down, both externally and internally?

Have not our idols been in a measure smashed before our eyes, our prospects in life cut up and

destroyed, our airy visions of earthly happiness and our romantic paradises dissolved into thin air, our creature-hopes dashed, our youthful affections blighted, and the objects from which we had fondly hoped to reap an enduring harvest of delight removed from our eyes?

And likewise, as to **our religion** . . .
our good opinion of ourselves,
our piety and holiness,
our wisdom and our knowledge,
our understanding and our abilities,
our consistency and uprightness;
have they not all been broken down, and made a heap of ruins before our eyes?

That monstrous creature within us!

"I abhor the pride of Jacob." Amos 6:8

O cursed **pride**, that is ever lifting up its head in our hearts! Pride would even pull down God that it might sit upon His throne. Pride would trample under foot the holiest things to exalt itself!

Pride is **that monstrous creature within us**, of such ravenous and indiscriminate gluttony, that the more it devours, the more it craves!

Pride is that **chameleon** which assumes every color; that **actor** which can play every part; and yet which is faithful to no one object or purpose, but **to exalt and glorify self!**

"I will put an end to the pride of the mighty." "God will bring down their pride." (Ezek. 7:24, Isaiah 25:11)

God means to kill man's pride! And oh, what cutting weapons the Lord will sometimes make use of to kill a man's pride!

How He will bring him sometimes into the depths of temporal poverty, that He may make a stab at his **worldly pride!**

How He will bring to light the iniquities of his youth, that He may mortify his **self-righteous pride!**

How He will allow sin to break forth, if not openly,
yet so powerfully within, that piercing convictions
shall kill his **spiritual pride!**

And what deep discoveries of internal corruption will
the Lord sometimes employ, to dig down to the root,
and cut off the core of **that poisonous tree, pride!**

The Searcher of hearts dissects and anatomizes **this
inbred evil**, cuts down to it through the quivering and
bleeding flesh, and pursues with His keen knife its
multiplied windings and ramifications.

"The day is coming when **your pride will be brought
low** and the Lord alone will be exalted." Isaiah 2:11

"The arrogance of all people will be brought low.
Their pride will lie in the dust. The Lord alone
will be exalted!" Isaiah 2:17

"The Lord Almighty has done it to **destroy your pride**
and show His contempt for all human greatness."
Isaiah 23:9

Salvation

And they were shouting with a mighty shout,
"**Salvation** comes from our God on the throne
and from the Lamb!" Revelation 7:10
The sweetest song that heaven ever proclaimed,
the most blessed note that ever melted the soul,
is **salvation**.

Saved FROM . . .

death and hell;
the worm which never dies;
the fire which is never quenched;
the sulphurous flames of the bottomless pit;
the companionship of tormenting fiends and
all the foul wretches under which earth has groaned;
blaspheming God in unutterable woe;
an eternity of misery without end or hope!

Saved INTO . . .

heaven;
the sight of Jesus as He is;
perfect holiness and happiness;

the blissful company of holy angels and glorified saints;
and all this during the countless ages of a blessed eternity!

What tongue of men or angels can describe the
millionth part of what is contained in the word
salvation?

The soul's natural element

Before the soul can know anything about salvation,
it must learn deeply and experimentally the nature
of sin, and of itself, as stained and polluted by sin.

It is proud, and needs to be humbled.

It is careless, and needs to be awakened.

It is alive, and needs to be killed.

It is full, and requires to be emptied.

It is whole, and needs to be wounded.

It is clothed, and requires to be stripped.

The soul is, by nature . . .

self-righteous;

self-seeking;

buried deep in worldliness and carnality;

utterly blind and ignorant;

filled with . . .

presumption,

arrogance,

conceit

and enmity;

hateful to all that is heavenly and spiritual.

Sin, in all its various forms, is

the soul's natural element.

Some of the features of the unregenerate
nature of man are . . .

covetousness,

lust,

worldly pleasure,

desire of the praise of men,

an insatiable thirst after self-advancement,

a complete abandonment to all that can please

and gratify every new desire of the heart,

an utter contempt and abhorrence of everything that

restrains or defeats its mad pursuit of what it loves.
Education,
moral restraints,
or the force of habit,
may restrain the outbreaking of inward corruption,
and dam back the mighty stream of indwelling sin,
so that it shall not burst all its bounds, and desolate
the land. But no moral check can alter human nature.

A chained tiger is a tiger still.

"The Ethiopian cannot change his
skin, nor the leopard his spots."

To make man the direct contrary of what
he originally is; **to make him . . .**
love God instead of hating Him;
fear God, instead of mocking Him;
obey God, instead of rebelling against Him;
to do this mighty work, and to effect this wonderful
change, requires the implantation of a new nature
by the immediate hand of God Himself.

Natural light,
natural love,
natural faith,
natural obedience,
in a word, **all natural religion,
is here useless and ineffectual.**

Godly sorrow

Godly sorrow springs from a view of a suffering
Savior, and manifests itself by . . .
hatred of self,
abhorrence of sin,
groaning over our backslidings,
grief of soul for being so often entangled by our lusts
and passions, **and is accompanied by . . .**
softness,
meltings of heart,
flowings of love to the Redeemer,
indignation against ourselves,
and earnest desires never to sin more.

But our coward flesh shrinks from them!

"I have refined you but not in the way silver is refined. Rather, **I have refined you in the furnace of suffering.**" Isaiah 48:10

What benefit is there in afflictions?

Does God send them without an object in view?

Do they come merely, as the men of the world think, **by chance?** No! There is benefit intended by them. The branch cannot bear fruit unless it be pruned.

The love of sin cannot be cast out; the soul cannot be meekened, humbled, softened, and made contrite; the world cannot be embittered; the things of time and sense cannot be stripped of their false hue and their magic appearance—**except through affliction.**

Our greatest **blessings** usually spring from our greatest **afflictions**—they prepare the heart to receive them; they empty the vessel of the poisonous ingredients which have filled it, and fit it to receive gospel wine and milk.

To be without . . .
these afflictions,
these griefs,
these trials,
these temptations,
is to write ourselves destitute of grace.

But our coward flesh shrinks from them!

We are willing to walk to heaven; but not to walk there in God's way. Though we see in the Scripture that **the path to glory is a rough and rugged way;** yet when our feet are planted in **that painful and trying path,** we shrink back; our coward flesh refuses to walk in that road.

God therefore, as a sovereign, brings those afflictions upon us which He sees most fit for our profit and His glory, without ever consulting us, without ever allowing us a choice in the matter.

And He will generally cause our afflictions to come from the most unexpected source, and in a way most cutting to our feelings—in the way that of all others we would least have chosen—and yet in a way which of all others,

is most for our profit.

God deals with us like a surgeon dealing with a diseased organ. **How painful the operation!
How deep the knife cuts!**

How long it may be before the wound is healed!

Yet every stroke of the knife is indispensable!
A skillful and faithful surgeon would not do his duty if he did not dissect it to the very bottom.

As pain before healing is necessary, and must be produced by the knife; so spiritually, we must be wounded and cut in our souls, **as long, and as deeply as God sees needful**, that in His own time we may receive the consolation.

Do the afflictions we pass through humble us?

Do they deaden the love of the world in our hearts?

Do they purge out hypocrisy?

Do they bring us more earnestly to the throne of grace?

Do they discover to us sins that we have not before seen?

Do they penetrate into our very hearts?

Do they lay bare the corrupt fountain that we carry within us?

Do they search and test us before a heart-searching God?

Do they meeken and soften our spirit?

"I have refined you but not in the way silver is refined. Rather, **I have refined you in the furnace of suffering.**" Isaiah 48:10

The filthy holes and puddles in which it grovels

"**The human heart** is most deceitful and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?" Jerem. 17:9
The sin of our fallen nature is a very **mysterious** thing. We read of "the mystery of iniquity". Sin has **depths** which no human plumb line ever fathomed, and **lengths**

which no mortal measuring line ever yet measured out.

Thus the way in which sin sometimes seems to sleep;
and at other times to awake with renewed strength;
its active, irritable, impatient, restless nature;
the many shapes and colors it wears;
the filthy holes and puddles in which it grovels;
the corners into which it creeps;
its deceitfulness;
its hypocrisy;
its craftiness;
its persuasiveness;
its intense selfishness;
its utter recklessness;
its desperate madness;
its insatiable greediness;
are secrets, painful secrets,
only learned by bitter experience.

"**The human heart** is most deceitful and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?" Jerem. 17:9

The Lord's secret power in our souls?

"**He gives power** to those who are tired and worn out; and **increases strength** to the weak." Is. 40:29

The Lord's people are often in the state that they have no might. All their power seems exhausted, and their strength completely drained away; sin appears to have gotten 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.

Now what has kept us to this day? Some of you have made a profession ten, twenty, thirty, or forty years.

What has kept us?

When powerful temptations were spread for our feet, what preserved us from falling headlong into them?

When we felt the workings of strong lusts, what kept us from being altogether carried captive by them?

When we look at the **difficulties** of the way, the **perplexities** which our souls have had to grapple with, the **persecutions** and hard blows from sinners and saints that we have had to encounter—what has still

kept in us a desire to fear God, and a heart in some measure tender before Him?

When we view the . . .

infidelity,
unbelief,
carnality,
worldly-mindedness,
hypocrisy,
pride, and
presumption of our fallen nature,

what has kept us still . . .

believing,
hoping,
loving,
longing,
and looking to the Lord?

When we think of our . . .

deadness,
coldness,
torpidity,
rebelliousness,
perverseness,
love to evil,
aversion to good, and
all the abounding corruptions of our nature,
what has kept us from giving up the very profession
of religion, and swimming down the powerful current
that has so long and so often threatened to sweep
us utterly from the Lord? **Is it not the putting forth
of the Lord's secret power in our souls?**

Can we not look back, and recall to mind our first
religious companions; those with whom we started
in the race; those whom we perhaps envied for their
greater piety, zeal, holiness, and earnestness; and
with which we painfully contrasted our own sluggishness
and carnality; admiring them, and condemning ourselves?

Where are they all, or the greater part of them?

Some have embraced soul-destroying errors; others
are buried in a worldly religious system; and others
are wrapped up in delusion and fleshly confidence.
Thus, while most have fallen into the snares of the devil;
God, by putting forth **His secret power in the hearts of His
fainting ones**, keeps His fear alive in their souls; holds up
their goings in His paths that their footsteps slip not; brings
them out of all their temptations and troubles; delivers them
from every evil work; and preserves them unto His heavenly

kingdom. **He thus secures the salvation of His people by His own free grace.**

How sweet and precious it is . . .

to have our strength renewed;
to have fresh grace brought into the heart;
to feel the mysterious sensations of renovated life;
to feel the everlasting arms supporting the soul . . .
fighting our battles for us,
subduing our enemies,
overcoming our lusts,
breaking our snares, and
delivering us out of our temptations!

God's house?

In the New Testament Scriptures, we find mention made in several places of "the house of the God." The New Testament never, in any one instance, means, by "the house of God," any material building.

It has come to pass, through the traditions received from the fathers, that . . .
buildings erected by man,
collections of bricks and mortar,
piles of squared and cemented stones,
are often called "the house of God."

In ancient Popish times they invested a consecrated building with the title of "**God's house**", thus endeavoring to make it appear as though it were a holy place in which God specially dwelt. They thus drew off the minds of the people from any internal communion with God, and possessed them with the idea that He was only to be found in some holy spot, consecrated and sanctified by rites and ceremonies.

The same leaven of the Pharisees has infected the Church of England; and thus she calls her consecrated buildings, her piles of stone and cement, "churches," and "houses of God."

And even those who profess a purer faith, who dissent from her unscriptural forms, have learned to adopt the same carnal language, and even they, through a misunderstanding of what "the house of God" really is, will call such a building as we are assembled in

this morning, "the house of God."

How frequently does the expression drop from the pulpit, and how continually is it heard at the prayer meeting, "coming up to the house of God," as though any building now erected by human hands could be called the house of the living God.

It arises from a misunderstanding of the Scriptures, and is much fostered by that priestcraft which is in the human heart, inciting us to believe that God is to be found only in certain buildings set apart for His service.

When the Holy Spirit preaches the gospel

We often know the **theory** of the gospel, before we know the **experience** of the gospel.

We often receive the doctrines of grace into our **judgment**, before we receive the grace of the doctrines into our **soul**.

We therefore need to be . . .

brought down,
humbled,
tried,
stripped of every prop;

that the gospel may be to us . . .

more than a sound,
more than a name,
more than a theory,
more than a doctrine,
more than a system,
more than a creed;

that it may be . . .

soul enjoyment,
soul blessing,
and soul salvation.

When the Holy Spirit preaches the gospel

to the poor in spirit, the humbled, stripped, and tried—it is a gospel of glad tidings indeed to the sinner's broken heart.

We get entangled with some idol

Wherever the grace of God is, it constrains its partaker to desire to live to His honor and glory.

But he soon finds the difficulty of so doing.
Such is . . .
the weakness of the **flesh**,
the power of **sin**,
the subtlety of **Satan**,
the strength of **temptation**, and
the **snare**s spread on every side for our feet,
that we can neither **do** what we want, nor **be**
what we want. Before we are well aware, **we**
get entangled with some idol, or drawn aside
into some indulgence of the flesh, which brings
darkness into the mind, and may cut us out
some bitter work for the rest of our days.

But we thus learn not only the weakness of the
flesh, but where and in whom all our strength lies.
And as the **grace of the Lord Jesus**, in its suitability,
in its sufficiency and its super-aboundings, becomes
manifested in and by the weakness of the flesh; a
sense of His wondrous love and care in so bearing
with us, in so pitying our case, and manifesting mercy
where we might justly expect wrath, constrains us
with a holy obligation to walk in His fear and to live
to His praise.

The sins and slips of the saints?

The Scriptures faithfully record
the falls of believers . . .
the drunkenness of Noah,
the incest of Lot,
the unbelief of Abraham,
the peevishness of Moses,
the adultery of David,
the idolatry of Solomon,
the pride of Hezekiah,
the cowardice of Mark and
the cursing and swearing of Peter.

But why has the Holy Spirit left on record
the sins and slips of the saints?

First, that it might teach us that they were
saved by grace as poor, lost, and ruined sinners;
in the same way as we hope to be saved.

Secondly, that their **slips and falls** might be so many beacons and warnings, to guard the people of God against being overtaken by the same sins; as the apostle speaks, "All these events happened to them as examples for us. They were written down to warn us."

And thirdly, that the people of God, should they be overtaken by sin, might not be cast into despair; but that from seeing recorded in the Scripture the **slips and failings** of the saints of old, they might be lifted up from their despondency, and brought once more to hope in the Lord.

Cain, Esau, Saul, Ahab, Judas

"**Godly sorrow** brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but **worldly sorrow** brings death."

2 Cor. 7:10

These **two kinds of repentance** are to be carefully distinguished from each other; though they are often sadly confounded. **Cain, Esau, Saul, Ahab, Judas, all repented.** But their repentance was the remorse of natural conscience, not the godly sorrow of a broken heart and a contrite spirit. They trembled before God as an angry Judge, but were not melted into contrition before Him as a forgiving Father.

They neither hated their sins nor forsook them.

They neither loved holiness nor sought it.

Cain went out from the presence of the Lord.

Esau plotted Jacob's death.

Saul consulted the witch of Endor.

Ahab put honest Micaiah into prison.

Judas hanged himself.

How different from this forced and false repentance of a reprobate, is the repentance of a child of God;

that true repentance for sin, that godly sorrow, that holy mourning which flows from the Spirit's gracious operations!

Godly sorrow does not spring from a sense of the wrath of God in a broken law, but from His mercy in a blessed gospel; from a view by faith of the sufferings of Christ in the garden and on the cross; from a manifestation of pardoning love; and is always attended with self-loathing and self-abhorrence; with deep and unreserved confession of sin and forsaking it; with most hearty, sincere and earnest petitions to be kept from all evil; and a holy longing to live to the praise and glory of God.

Here, and here alone

Standing then at the cross of our adorable Lord, we may see . . .

the law thoroughly fulfilled,
its curse fully endured,
its penalties wholly removed,
sin eternally put away,
the justice of God amply satisfied,
all His perfections gloriously harmonized,
reconciliation completely effected,
redemption graciously accomplished,
and the church everlastingly saved.

Here, and here alone, we see **sin** in its blackest colors, and **holiness** in its most attractive beauties.

Here, and here alone, we see the **love of God** in its tenderest form, and the **anger of God** in its deepest expression.

Here, and here alone, we see the eternal and unalterable displeasure of the Almighty against sin, and the rigid demands of His inflexible justice, and yet the tender compassion and boundless love of His heart to the election of grace.

Here, and here alone, are obtained pardon and peace.

Here, and here alone, penitential grief and godly sorrow flow from heart and eyes.

Here, and here alone, is . . .
sin subdued and mortified,
holiness communicated,
death vanquished,
Satan put to flight, and
happiness and heaven begun in the soul.

What **a holy meeting-place** for repenting sinners
and a sin-pardoning God! What **a healing-place**
for guilty, yet repenting and returning backsliders!
What **a door of hope** in the valley of Achor for the
self-condemned and self-abhorred! What **a safe**
spot for seeking souls! And what **a blessed**
resorting-place for the whole family of grace
in this valley of grief and sorrow.

Experimental knowledge

"Now this is eternal life: that they may know
You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ,
whom You have sent." John 17:3

An **experimental knowledge** of Christ in
the soul, is **the only relief for sin's** . . .
poverty,
guilt,
leprosy,
bankruptcy,
and damnation.

This is the true way of preaching Christ crucified;
not the mere doctrine of the Cross, but a crucified
Jesus **experimentally known** to the soul.

I am deeply conscious of my own . . .
baseness,
ignorance,
blindness
and folly.
But my malady is too deeply rooted to be healed by
dry doctrines and speculative theological opinions.

The blood of the Lamb, spiritually and supernaturally
sprinkled and applied, is **the only healing balm for a**
sin-sick soul.

Friend, can you understand my riddle?

I find that **sin** has such power over me, that though I call on the Lord again and again for deliverance, I seem to be as weak as ever when temptation comes.

If a window were placed in my bosom,
what filth and vileness would be seen by all.

"O you hideous monster **sin,**
What a curse, have you brought in!"

I love it; I hate it.

I want to be delivered from the power of it;
and yet am not satisfied without drinking
down its poisoned sweets.

Sin is my hourly companion; and my daily curse.

Sin is the breath of my mouth; and the cause of my groans.

Sin is my incentive to prayer; and my hinderer of it.
Sin made my Savior suffer; and makes my Savior precious.

Sin spoils every pleasure; and adds a sting to every pain.

Sin fits a soul for heaven; and ripens a soul for hell.

Friend, can you understand my riddle?

Is your heart, as my heart?

Alas! Alas! We feel sin's power daily and hourly.
We sigh and groan at times, to be delivered from
the giant strength of our corruptions, which seem
to carry us captive at their will. Though sin is a
sweet morsel to our carnal mind, it grieves our soul.
I am sure I must be **a monument of grace and mercy,**
if saved from the guilt, curse, and power of sin!

My greatest enemy?

I have ever found **myself** to be **my greatest enemy**. I never had a foe that troubled me so much as **my own heart**; nor has any one ever wrought me half the mischief or given me half the plague that I have felt and known within. And it is a daily sense of this which makes me dread **myself** more than anybody that walks upon the face of the earth!

Keep a watchful eye upon every inward foe;
and if you fight, fight against the enemy that
lurks and works in your own breast!

There are many devices in a man's heart

**"There are many devices in a man's heart;
nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that
shall stand."** Proverbs 19:21.

The devices of our heart are generally to find some easy, smooth, flowery path. Whatever benefits we have derived from **affliction**, whatever mercies we have experienced in **tribulation**, the flesh hates and shrinks from such a path with complete abhorrence.

And, therefore, there is always **a secret devising in a man's heart . . .**
to escape the cross,
to avoid affliction, and
to walk in some flowery meadow,
away from the rough road which cuts
his feet, and wearies his limbs.

Another "device in a man's heart" is, that he shall have worldly prosperity; that his children shall grow up around him, and when they grow up, he shall be able to provide for them in a way which shall be best suited to their station in life; that they shall enjoy health and strength and success; and that there shall not be any cutting affliction in his family, or fiery trial to pass through.

Now these devices the Lord frustrates. What grief, what affliction, what trouble, is the Lord continually bringing into some families! Their dearest objects of affection removed from them, at the very moment

when they seemed clasped nearest around their hearts!

And those who are spared, perhaps, growing up in such a searedness of conscience and hardness of heart, and, perhaps, profligacy of life, that even their very presence is often a burden to their parents instead of a blessing; and the very children who should be their comfort, become thorns and briars in their sides!

Oh, how the Lord overturns and brings to nothing the "devices of a man's heart" **to make a paradise here upon earth.**

When a man is brought to the right spot, and is in a right mind to trace out the Lord's dealings with him from the first, he sees it was **a kind hand** which "blasted his gourds, and laid them low;" it was **a kind hand** that swept away his worldly prospects; which reduced him to natural as well as to spiritual poverty; which led him into exercises, trials, sorrows, griefs, and tribulations; because, in those trials he has found the Lord, more or less, experimentally precious.

"There are many devices in a man's heart."

Now you have all your devices; that busy workshop is continually putting out some new pattern; some new fashion is continually starting forth from the depths of that ingenious manufactory which you carry about with you; and you are wanting this, and expecting that, and building up airy castles, and looking for that which shall never come to pass; for **"there are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand."**

And so far as you are children of God, that counsel is a counsel of **wisdom** and mercy. The purposes of God's heart are purposes of **love** and **affection** toward you, and therefore you may bless and praise God, that whatever be the devices of your hearts against God's counsel, they shall be frustrated, that He may do His will and fulfill all His good pleasure.

All are more or less deeply infected with it

**"Are you seeking great things for yourself?
Don't do it!"** Jeremiah 45:5

As we are led aside by the powerful workings of our corrupt nature, **we are often seeking great things for ourselves.**

Riches,
worldly comforts,
respectability,
to be honored, admired, and esteemed by men,
are the objects most passionately sought after
by the world. And so far as the children of God
are under the influence of a worldly principle,
do they secretly desire similar things.
Nor does this ambition depend upon station in life.
All are more or less deeply infected with it, until
delivered by the grace of God. The poorest man
in these towns has a secret desire in his soul after
"great things," and a secret plotting in his mind
how he may obtain them.

But the Lord is determined that His people shall
not have great things. **He has purposed to pour
contempt upon all the pride of man.** He therefore
nips all their hopes in the bud, crushes their
flattering prospects, and makes them for the most
part, poor, needy, and despised in this world.
Whatever schemes or projects the Lord's people may
devise that they may prosper and get on in the world,
He rarely allows their plans to thrive. He knows well
to what consequences it would lead; that this ivy
creeping round the stem would, as it were, suffocate
and strangle the tree.

The more that worldly goods increase . . .
the more the heart is fixed upon them,
the more the affections are set upon idols,
the more is the heart drawn away from the Lord.
He will not allow His people to have their portion
here below. He has in store for them a better city,
that is a heavenly one, and therefore will not allow
them to build and plant below the skies.
A child of God may be secretly aiming at great
things, such as respectability, bettering his
condition in life, rising step by step in the scale
of society. But the Lord will usually . . .
disappoint these plans,
defeat these projects,
wither these gourds,
and blight these prospects.

He may reduce him to poverty, as He did Job; smite him with sickness, as He did Lazarus and Hezekiah; take away wife and children, as in the case of Ezekiel and Jacob; or He may bring trouble and distress into his mind by shooting an arrow out of **His unerring bow** into the conscience.

God has a certain purpose to effect by bringing this trouble, and that is to pull him down from "seeking great things." **For what is the secret root of this ambition? Is it not the pride of the heart?** When the Lord, then, would lay this ambition low, He makes a blow at the root. He strips away fancied hopes, and breaks down rotten props, the great things (so through ignorance esteemed) sought for previously, and perhaps obtained, fall to pieces.

"Are you seeking great things for yourself? Don't do it!" Jeremiah 45:5

Ministers are often desirous of . . .

"Are you seeking great things for yourself? Don't do it!" Jeremiah 45:5

Ministers are often desirous of . . .

a greater gift in preaching,
a readier utterance,
a more abundant variety,
a more striking delivery than they possess.
And this, not for the glory of God, but for the glory of the creature. Not that praise may be given God, but that pride, cursed pride, may be gratified; that they may be admired by men.

My desire and aim is . . .

not to deceive souls by flattery;
not to please any party;
not to minister to any man's pride or presumption;
but simply and sincerely, with an eye to God's glory,
with His fear working in my heart, to speak to the edification of His people.

A minister who stands up with any other motives, and aiming at any other ends than the glory of God, and the edification of His people, bears no scriptural

marks that he has been sent into the vineyard by God Himself.

Have we nothing to give to Christ?

Have we nothing to give to Christ?

Yes!
Our sins,
our sorrows,
our burdens,
our trials, and above all
the salvation and sanctification of our souls.

And what has He to give us? What? Why . . .
everything worth having!
everything worth a moment's anxious thought!
everything for time and eternity!

O self! Self!

Oh, to be kept from myself; my . . .
vile,
proud,
lustful,
hypocritical,
worldly,
covetous,
presumptuous,
obscene self.

O self! Self!

Your desperate wickedness,
your depravity,
your love of sin,
your abominable pollutions,
your monstrous heart wickedness,
your wretched deadness, hardness,
blindness, and indifference.

You are a treacherous villain,
and, I fear, always will be such!

Continual salvation?

"I cried unto You; **save me**, and I shall keep Your testimonies." Psalm 119:146

If you know anything for yourself, inwardly and experimentally of . . . the evils of your heart, the power of sin, the strength of temptation, the subtlety of your unwearied foe, and that daily conflict between nature and grace, the flesh and the spirit, which is the peculiar mark of the living family of heaven; you will find and feel **your need of salvation as a daily reality**. There is **present salvation**: an inward, experimental, and **continual salvation** communicated out of the fullness of Christ as a risen Mediator.

You need to be daily and almost hourly saved from the . . . guilt, filth, power, love, and practice of indwelling sin.

"I cried unto You; **save me**, and I shall keep Your testimonies." Psalm 119:146

Have we not leaned upon a thousand things?

"Who is this that comes up from the wilderness, **leaning upon her Beloved**?" Song 8:5

Have we not leaned upon a thousand things?

And what have they proved? Broken reeds that have run into our hands, and pierced us!

Our own strength and resolutions; the world and the church; sinners and saints; friends and enemies; have they not all proved, more or less, broken reeds? The more we have leaned upon them, like a man leaning upon a sword, the more have they pierced

our souls!

The Lord Himself has to wean us . . .

from leaning on the **world**,
from leaning on **friends**,
from leaning on **enemies**,
from leaning on **self**,
in order to bring us to lean upon Himself.

And every prop He will remove, sooner or later,
that we may lean wholly and solely upon Him.

Superabounding grace

"But where sin abounded, grace did much
more abound." Romans 5:20

What are all the gilded toys of time compared
with the solemn, weighty realities of eternity!

But, alas! what wretches are we when left to
sin, self, and Satan! How unable to withstand
the faintest breath of temptation! How bent
upon backsliding!

Who can fathom the depths of the human heart?

Oh, what but grace, **superabounding grace**,
can either suit or save such wretches?

"But where sin abounded, grace did much
more abound." Romans 5:20

Job's religion

"Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" Job 23:3

What a mere shallow pretense to vital godliness
satisfies most ministers, most hearers, and most
congregations!

But there was a reality in Job's religion.

It was not of a flimsy, notional, superficial nature.
It was not merely a sound Calvinistic creed, and

nothing more. It was not a religion of theory and speculation, nor a well-compacted system of doctrines and duties. There was something deeper, something more divine in Job's religion than any such mere pretense, delusion, imitation, or hypocrisy.

And if our religion be of the right kind, there will be something deeper in it, something more powerful, spiritual, and supernatural, than notions and doctrines, theories and speculations, merely passing to and fro in our minds, however scriptural and correct.

There will be a divine reality in it, if God the Spirit be the author of it. And there will be no trifling with the solemn things of God, and with our own immortal souls.

The heart of God's child

There is much . . .

presumption,

pride,

hypocrisy,

deceit,

delusion,

formality,

superstition and

self-righteousness

to be purged out of **the heart of God's child**.

But all these things . . .

keep him low,

mar his pride,

crush his self-righteousness,

cut the locks of his presumption,

stain his self conceit,

stop his boasting,

preserve him from despising others,

make him take the lowest room,

teach him to esteem others better than himself,

drive him to earnest prayer,

fit him as an object of mercy,

break to pieces his free will, and **lay him low**

at the feet of the Redeemer, as

one to be saved by sovereign grace alone!

The way in which the Spirit of God works

As pride rises, it must be broken down.

As self-righteousness starts up, it must be brought low.

As the wisdom of the creature exalts itself against the wisdom of God, it must be laid prostrate.

The way in which the Spirit of God works is to lay the creature low, by bringing it into nothingness, and crushing it into self-abasement and self-loathing, so as to press out of it everything on which the creature can depend.

Like a surgeon, who will run his lancet into the abscess, and let out the gory matter, in order to effect a thorough cure; so the Spirit of the Lord thrusting His sharp sword into the heart, lets out the inward corruption, and never heals the wound until He has thoroughly probed it.

And when He has laid bare the heart, He heals it by pouring in the balmy blood of Jesus, as that which, by its application, cleanses from all sin.

The world passes away, and the lust thereof

"The world passes away, and the lust thereof."

1 John 2:17

The world and all that is in it comes to an end.

Where are the great bulk of the men and women who fifty, sixty, or seventy years ago trod London streets? **Where are they** who rode about in their gay carriages, gave their splendid entertainments, decked themselves with feathers and jewels, and enjoyed all the pleasures of life?

Where are they?

The grave holds their bodies, and hell holds their souls.

"The world passes away." It is like a pageant, or a gay and splendid procession, which passes before the eye for a few minutes, then turns the corner of the street, and is lost to view. It is now to you who had looked upon it just as if it were not, and is gone to amuse other eyes.

So, could you go on for years . . .

enjoying all your natural heart could wish;
lay up money by thousands;
ride in your carriage;
deck your body with jewelry;
fill your house with splendid furniture;
enjoy everything that earth can give;
then there would come, some day or other, sickness
to lay you upon a dying bed. To you the world has
now passed away with all its lusts; with you all is
now come to an end; and now you have, with a
guilty soul, to face a holy God.

"The world passes away, and the lust thereof."

All these lusts for which men have sold body and soul,
half ruined their families, and stained their own name;
all these lusts for which they were so mad that they
would have them at any price, snatch them even from
hell's mouth; all these lusts are passed away, and **what
have they left?** A gnawing worm; a worm that can never
die, and the wrath of God as an unquenchable fire.
That is all which the love of the world can do for you,
with all your toil and anxiety, or all your amusement
and pleasure.

You have not gained much perhaps of this world's goods,
with all your striving after them. But could the world fill
your heart with enjoyment, and your money bags with
gold, as the dust of the grave will one day fill your mouth,
it would be much to the same purpose. If you had got all
the world, you would have got nothing after your coffin
was screwed down, but grave dust in your mouth.

Such is the end of the world.

"The world passes away, and the lust thereof."

**DEATH is the great and final extinguisher of all human
hopes and pleasures.** Look and see how man sickens
and dies, and is tumbled into the cemetery, where his
body is left to the worms, and his soul to face an angry
God, on the great judgment day.

"The world passes away, and the lust thereof."

Weary?

"Then Jesus said, "Come to Me, all of you who are **weary** and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28

The Lord's purpose in laying burdens upon us is **to weary us out**. We cannot learn our religion in any other way. We cannot learn it from the Bible, nor from the experience of others. It must be a personal work, wrought in the heart of each; and we must be brought, all of us, if ever we are to find rest in Christ, to be absolutely **wearied out of sin and self**, and to have no righteousness, goodness, or holiness of our own.

The effect, then, of all spiritual labor is to bring us to this point: to be **weary** of the **world**, for we feel it, for the most part, to be a valley of tears; to be **weary** of **self**, for it is our greatest plague; **weary** of **professors**, for we cannot see in them the grace of God, which alone we prize and value; **weary** of the profane, for their ungodly conversation only hurts our minds; **weary** of our **bodies**, for they are often full of sickness and pain, and always clogs to our soul; and **weary** of **life**, for we see the emptiness of those things which to most people make life so agreeable.

By this painful experience we come to this point: to be **worn out and wearied**; and there we must come, before we can rest entirely on Christ. As long as we can rest in the **world**, we shall rest in it. As long as the things of time and sense can gratify us, we shall be gratified in them. As long as we can find anything pleasing in **self**, we shall be pleased with it. As long as anything visible and tangible can satisfy us, we shall be satisfied with them.

But when we get **weary** of all things visible, tangible, and sensible—**weary** of ourselves, and of all things here below—then we want to rest upon Christ, and Christ alone.

"Then Jesus said, "Come to Me, all of you who are **weary** and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28

Oh, how religious he once used to be!

"And I, the Son of Man, have come to seek and save **those who are LOST.**" Luke 19:10

Oh, how religious he once used to be!

How comfortably he could walk to church with his Bible under his arm, and look as devout and holy as possible! How regularly also, he could read the Scriptures, and pray in his manner, and think himself pretty well, with one foot in heaven.

But a ray of heavenly light has beamed into his soul, and shown him who and what **God** is; what **sin** and a sinful heart is; and who and what he **himself** as a sinner is. The keen dissecting knife of God has come into his heart, laid it all bare, and let the gory matter flow out. When his conscience is bleeding under the scalpel, and is streaming all over with the gore and filth thus let out, **where is the clean heart once boasted of?**

Where is his religion now?

All buried beneath a load of filth!

Where is all his holiness gone? His . . .

holy looks,

holy expressions,

holy manners,

holy gestures,

holy garb;

where are they all gone?

All are flooded and buried. The sewer has broken out, and the filthy stream has discharged itself over his holy looks, holy manners, holy words and holy gestures; and he is, as Job says, 'in the ditch.'

We never find the right **religion**, until we have lost the wrong one. We never find **Christ**, until we have lost SELF. We never find **grace**, until we have lost our own pitiful self-holiness.

"And I, the Son of Man, have come to seek and save **those who are LOST.**" Luke 19:10

It is a creature of many lives!

Man is a strange compound. A sinner, and the worst of sinners, and yet a Pharisee!

A wretch, and the vilest of wretches, and yet pluming himself on his good works!

Did not experience convince us to the contrary, we would scarcely believe that a monster like man, a creature, as someone has justly said, "**half beast and half devil**," should dream of pleasing God by his obedience, or of climbing up to heaven by a ladder of his own righteousness.

Pharisaism is firmly fixed in the human heart. Deep is the root, broad the stem, wide the branches, but poisonous the fruit, of this gigantic tree, planted by pride and unbelief in the soil of human nature.

Self-righteousness is not peculiar to only certain individuals. It is interwoven with our very being. It is the only religion that human nature . . . understands, relishes, or admires.

Again and again must the heart be ploughed up, and its corruptions laid bare, to keep down the growth of **this pharisaic spirit**.

It is a creature of many lives! It is not one blow, nor ten, nor a hundred that can **kill** it. **Stunned** it may be for a while, but it revives again and again!

Pharisaism can live and thrive under any profession. Calvinism or Arminianism is the same to it. It is not the garb he wears, nor the mask he carries, that constitutes the man.

The believer's chief troubles

As earth is but a valley of tears, the Christian has many **tribulations** in common with the world. **Family troubles**

were the lot of Job, Abraham, Jacob and David. **Sickness** befell Hezekiah, Trophimus and Epaphroditus. **Reverses and losses** fell upon Job. **Poverty and famine** drove Naomi into the land of Moab.

Trouble, then, is in itself no sign of grace; for it inevitably flows from, and is necessarily connected with, man's fallen state.

But we should fix our eye on two things, as especially marking **the temporal afflictions of the Lord's family**:

1. That they are all weighed out and timed by special appointment. For though "man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards," yet "affliction comes not forth of the dust, neither does trouble spring out of the ground."
Job 5:6

2. That they are specially sanctified, and made to "work together for good" to those who love God.

But the believer's chief troubles are internal, and arise from . . .
the assaults of Satan,
powerful temptations,
the guilt of sin laid on the conscience,
doubts and fears about a saving interest in Christ, and
a daily, hourly conflict with a nature ever lusting to evil.

A religion that satisfies thousands.

"Having **a form of godliness** but denying its power."

2 Tim. 3:5

Much that passes for religion,
is not true religion at all.

Much that goes for hopes of salvation,
is nothing but lying refuges.

Much is palmed off for the teaching of the Spirit,
which is nothing but delusion.

Vital godliness is very rare.

There are very few people spiritually taught of God.

There are very few ministers who really preach the truth.

Satan is thus daily deceiving thousands, and tens of thousands.

A living soul, however weak and feeble in himself, cannot take up with **a religion in the flesh.**

He cannot rest on the opinions of men, nor be deceived by Satan's delusions. He has a secret gnawing of conscience, which makes him dissatisfied with **a religion that satisfies thousands.**

Then down they sink to the bottom!

"Until the pit is dug for the wicked." Psalm 94:13

In Eastern countries, the ordinary mode of catching wild beasts is to dig a pit, and fix sharp spears in the bottom. And when the pit has been dug sufficiently deep, it is covered over with branches of trees, earth, and leaves, until all appearances of the pitfall are entirely concealed. What is the object? That the wild beast intent upon bloodshed—the tiger lying in wait for the deer, the wolf roaming after the sheep, the lion prowling for the antelope, not seeing the pitfall, but rushing on and over it, may not see their doom until they break through and fall upon the spears at the bottom.

What a striking figure is this!

Here are the ungodly, all intent upon their purposes; prowling after evil, as the wolf after the sheep, or the tiger after the deer, thinking only of . . .
some worldly profit,
some covetous plan,
some lustful scheme,
something the carnal mind delights in;
but on they go, not seeing any danger until the moment comes when, as Job says, "they go down to the bars of the pit."

The Lord has been pleased to hide their doom from them. The pit is all covered over with leaves of trees, grass, and earth. The very appearance of the pit was hidden from the wild beasts; they never knew it until they fell into it, and were transfixed.

So it is with the wicked; both with religious professors and the profane. There is no fear of God, no taking heed to their steps, no cry to be directed, no prayer to be shown the way; no pausing, no turning back. On they go, on they

go; heedlessly, thoughtlessly, recklessly; pursuing some beloved object. On they go, on they go; until in a moment they are plunged eternally and irrevocably into the pit!

There are many such both in the professing church as well as in the ungodly world. The Lord sees what they are, and where they are. He knows where the pit is. He knows their steps. He sees them hurrying on, hurrying on, hurrying on. All is prepared for them. The Lord gives them . . .

no forewarning,
no notice of their danger,
no teachings,
no chastenings,
no remonstrances,
no frowns,
no stripes.

They are left to themselves to fill up the measure of their iniquity, until they approach the pit that has been dug for them, and **then down they sink to the bottom!**

Who can come out of the battle alive?

"Hold me up, and I shall be safe!" Ps. 119:117

We know little of ourselves, and less of one another. **We do not know . . .**
our own needs,
what is for our good,
what snares to avoid,
what dangers to shun.

Our path is . . .
bestrewed with difficulties,
beset with temptations,
surrounded with foes,
encompassed with perils.
At every step there is a snare!

At every turn an enemy lurks!

Pride digs the pit,
carelessness blindfolds the eyes,
carnality drugs and intoxicates the senses,
the lust of the flesh seduces,
the love of the world allures,
unbelief paralyzes the fighting hand and the praying knee,
sin entangles the feet,

guilt defiles the conscience,
and Satan accuses the soul.

Under these circumstances, **who can come out of the battle alive?** Only he who is kept by the mighty power of God. **"Hold me up, and I shall be safe!"**

MERCY!

"Look upon me, and be merciful unto me." Ps. 119:132

When shall we ever get beyond the need of God's mercy?

We feel our need of continual mercy . . .

as our sins abound,
as our guilt is felt,
as our corruption works,
as our conscience is burdened,
as the iniquities of our heart are laid bare,
as our hearts are opened up in the Spirit's light.

We need . . .

mercy for every adulterous look;
mercy for every covetous thought;
mercy for every light and trifling word;
mercy for every wicked movement of our depraved hearts;
mercy while we live;
mercy when we die;
mercy to accompany us every moment;
mercy to go with us down to the portals of the grave;
mercy to carry us safely through the swellings of Jordan;
mercy to land us safe before the Redeemer's throne!

"Look upon **me**, and be merciful unto **me**."

Why me?

Because I am so vile a sinner.
Because I am so base a backslider.
Because I am such a daring transgressor.
Because I sin against You with every breath that I draw.
Because the evils of my heart are perpetually manifesting themselves.
Because nothing but Your mercy can blot out such iniquities as I feel working in my carnal mind.

I need . . .

inexhaustible mercy,
everlasting mercy,

super-abounding mercy.

Nothing but such mercy as this can suit such a guilty sinner!

A flowery path?

Does the road to heaven lie across a smooth, grassy meadow, over which we may quietly walk in the cool of a summer evening, and leisurely amuse ourselves with gathering of flowers and listening to the warbling of the birds?

No child of God ever found the way to heaven **a flowery path**. It is the wide gate and broad way which leads to perdition. It is the **strait gate** and **narrow way**, the **uphill road**, full of . . . difficulties, trials, temptations, and enemies, which leads to heaven, and issues in eternal life.

But our Father manifests mercy and grace. He never leaves nor forsakes the objects of His choice. He . . . fulfills every promise, defeats every enemy, appears in every difficulty, richly pardons every sin, graciously heals every backsliding, and eventually lands them in eternal bliss!

Toys and playthings of the religious baby-house

"I will feed My flock." Ezekiel 34:15

The only real food of the soul must be of God's own appointing, preparing, and communicating.

You can never deceive a hungry child. You may give it a plaything to still its cries. It may serve for a few minutes; but the pains of hunger are not to be removed by a doll. A toy horse will not allay the cravings after the mother's breast.

So with babes in grace. A hungry soul

cannot feed upon playthings.

Altars,
robes,
ceremonies,
candlesticks,
bowings,
mutterings,
painted windows,
intoning priests, and
singing men and women;
**these dolls and wooden horses; these toys
and playthings of the religious baby-house,**
cannot feed the soul that, like David, cries out
after the living God. (Psalm 42:23)

Christ, the bread of life, the manna that
came down from heaven, is the only food
of the believing soul. (John 6:51)

But oh, the struggle! oh, the conflict!
"I will overturn, overturn, overturn it; and it
shall be no more." Ezekiel 21:27

Jesus wants our hearts and affections. Therefore
every idol must go down, sooner or later, because
the idol draws away the affections of the soul from
Christ. Everything that is loved in opposition to Him
must sooner or later be taken away, that the Lord
Jesus alone may be worshiped. Everything which
exact the allegiance of the soul must be overthrown.

Jesus **shall** have our heart and affections, but in
having our heart and affection, He shall have it . . .
wholly,
solely, and
undividedly.
He **shall** have it entirely for Himself.
He **shall** reign and rule supreme.

Now, **here comes the conflict and the struggle.**
SELF says, "I will have a part." **Self wants to be . . .**
honored,
admired,
esteemed,
bowed down to.
Self wants to indulge in, and gratify its desires.
Self wants, in some way, to erect its throne in
opposition to the Lord of life and glory.

But Jesus says, "No! I must reign supreme!"
Whatever it is that stands up in opposition to Him,
down it must go! Just as Dagon fell down before
the ark, so **self must fall down before Christ . . .**
in every shape,
in every form,
in whatever subtle guise self wears,
down it must come to a wreck and ruin before
the King of Zion!
So, if we are continually building up **SELF**,
Jesus will be continually overthrowing self.
If we are setting up our **idols**,
He shall be casting them down.

If we are continually hewing out "**cisterns**
that can hold no water," He will be continually
dashing these cisterns to pieces.

If we think highly of our **knowledge**,
we must be reduced to total folly.

If we are confident of our **strength**,
we must be reduced to utter weakness.

If we highly esteem our **attainments**, or in
any measure are resting upon the **power of
the creature**, the power of the creature must
be overthrown, so that we shall stand weak
before God, unable to lift up a finger to deliver
our souls from going down into the pit.

In this way does the Lord teach His people the
lesson that **Christ must be all in all**. They learn . . .
not in the way of speculation,
nor in the way of mere dry doctrine,
not from the mouth of others, but
they learn these lessons in painful soul-experience.

And every living soul that is sighing and longing after
a manifestation of Christ and desiring to have Him
enthroned in the heart; every such soul will know,
sooner or later . . .
an utter overthrow of self,
a thorough prostration of this idol,
a complete breaking to pieces of this beloved image,
that the desire of the righteous may be granted, and
that Christ may reign and rule as King and Lord in him
and over him, setting up His blessed kingdom there, and

winning to Himself every affection of the renewed heart. Are there not moments, friends, are there not some few and fleeting moments when the desire of our souls is that Christ should be our Lord and God; when we are willing that He should have **every affection**; that **every rebellious thought** should be subdued and brought into obedience to the cross of Christ; that **every plan** should be frustrated which is not for the glory of God and our soul's spiritual profit?

Are there not seasons in our experience when we can lay down our souls before God, and say "Let Christ be precious to my soul, let Him come with power to my heart, let Him set up His throne as Lord and King, and let self be nothing before Him?" **But oh, the struggle! oh, the conflict!** when God answers these petitions!

When our plans are frustrated, what a rebellion works up in the carnal mind!

When self is cast down, what a rising up of the fretful, peevish impatience of the creature!

When the Lord does answer our prayers, and strips off all false confidence; when He does remove our rotten props, and dash to pieces our broken cisterns, **what a storm; what a conflict** takes place in the soul!

But He is not to be moved; He will take His own way. "I will overturn, let the creature say what it will. I will overturn, let the creature think what it will. Down it shall go to ruin! It shall come to a wreck! It shall be overthrown! My purpose shall be accomplished, and I will fulfill all My pleasure. Self is a rebel who has set up an idolatrous temple, and I will overturn and bring the temple to ruin, for the purpose of manifesting My glory and My salvation, that I may be your Lord and your God."

If God has overturned **our bright prospects**, shall we say it was a cruel hand that laid them low? If He has overthrown **our worldly plans**, shall we say it was an unkind act? If He has reduced **our false righteousness** to a heap of rubbish, in order that Christ may be embraced as our all in all, **shall we say it was a cruel deed?**

Is he an unkind **father** who takes away poison from his child, and gives him food? Is she a cruel **mother**

who snatches her boy from the precipice on which he was playing? No! The kindness was manifested in the act of snatching the child from destruction!

So if the Lord has broken and overthrown our purposes, it was a kind act; for in so doing **He brings us to nothing, that Christ may be embraced as our all in all**, that our hearts may echo back, "O Lord, fulfill all Your own promises in our souls, and make us willing to be nothing; that upon the nothingness of self, the glory and beauty and preciousness of Christ may be exalted!"

A snake, a monkey, an onion, a bit of rag

"Dear children, keep yourselves from **idols.**" 1 John 5:21

Idolatry is a sin very deeply rooted in the human heart.

We need not go very far to find the most convincing proofs of this. Besides the experience of every age and every climate, we find it where we would least expect it—the prevailing sin of a people who had the greatest possible proofs of its wickedness and folly; and the strongest evidences of the being, greatness, and power of God.

It is true that now this sin does not break out exactly in the same form. It is true that golden calves are not now worshiped—at least the calf is not, if the gold is. Nor do Protestants adore images of wood, brass, or stone.

But that rank, property, fashion, honor, the opinion of the world, with everything which feeds the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life; are as much idolized now, as Baal and Moloch were once in Judea.

What is an idol?

It is that which occupies that place in our esteem and affections, in our thoughts, words and ways, which is due to God only. Whatever is to us, what the Lord alone should be—that is **an idol to us.**

It is true that **these idols differ** almost as widely as the peculiar propensities of different individuals. But as both in ancient and modern times, the grosser idols of wood and stone were and are beyond all

calculation in number, variety, shape, and size.
So is it in **these inner idols**, of which the outer
idols are mere symbols and representations.

Nothing has been . . .

too base or too brutal,
too great or too little,
too noble or too vile,
from the sun walking in its brightness—to **a snake,
a monkey, an onion, a bit of rag**—which man has
not worshiped. And these intended representations
of Divinity were but the **outward symbols of what
man inwardly worshiped**. For the inward idol preceded
the outward—and the fingers merely carved what the
imagination had previously devised. The gross material
idol, then, is but a symbol of the inner mind of man.

But we need not dwell on this part of the subject.
There is another form of idolatry much nearer home;
the idolatry not of an ancient Pagan, or a modern
Hindu—but that of a Christian.

Nor need we go far, if we would but be honest
with ourselves, to each find out **our own idol . . .** what it is,
how deep it lies,
what worship it obtains,
what honor it receives,
and what affection it engrosses.

Let me ask myself, "**What do I most love?**"

If I hardly know how to answer that question, let
me put to myself another, "What do I most think
upon? In what channel do I usually find my thoughts
flow when unrestrained?"—for thoughts flow to the
idol as water to the lowest spot.

If, then, the thoughts flow continually to . . .the farm,
the shop,
the business,
the investment,
to the husband, wife, or child,
to that which feeds lust or pride,
worldliness or covetousness,
self-conceit or self-admiration;
that is the idol which, as a magnet, attracts
the thoughts of the mind towards it.

Your idol may not be mine, nor mine yours; and

yet we may **both** be idolaters! You may despise or even hate my idol, and wonder how I can be such a fool, or such a sinner, as to hug it to my bosom! And I may wonder how a partaker of grace can be so inconsistent as to love such a silly idol as yours! You may condemn me, and I condemn you. And the Word of God, and the verdict of a living conscience may condemn us both.

O how various and how innumerable these idols are! One man may possess a refined taste and educated mind. Books, **learning**, literature, languages, general information, shall be his idol. **Music**—vocal and instrumental, may be the idol of a second—so sweet to his ears, such inward feelings of delight are kindled by the melodious strains of voice or instrument, that music is in all his thoughts, and hours are spent in producing those harmonious sounds which perish in their utterance. Painting, statuary, architecture, the **fine arts** generally, may be the Baal, the dominating passion of a third. **Poetry**, with its glowing thoughts, burning words, passionate utterances, vivid pictures, melodious cadence, and sustained flow of all that is beautiful in language and expression, may be the delight of a fourth. **Science**, the eager pursuit of a fifth. These are the highest flights of the human mind. These are not the base idols of the drunken feast, the low jest, the mirthful supper—or even that less debasing but enervating idol—**sleep** and **indolence**, as if life's highest enjoyments were those of the swine in the sty.

You middle-class people—who despise art and science, language and learning, as you despise the ale-house, and ball field—may still have an idol. Your **garden**, your beautiful roses, your verbenas, fuchsias, needing all the care and attention of a babe in arms, may be your idol. Or your pretty **children**, so admired as they walk in the street; or your new **house** and all the new furniture; or your **son** who is getting on so well in business; or your **daughter** so comfortably settled in life; or your dear **husband** so generally respected, and just now doing so nicely in the farm. Or your own still dearer **SELF** that needs so much feeding, and dressing and attending to.

Who shall count the **thousands of idols** which draw to themselves those thoughts, and engross those affections which are due to the Lord alone?

You may not be found out. **Your idol** may be so hidden, or so peculiar, that all our attempts to touch it, have left you and it unscathed. Will you therefore conclude that you have none? Search deeper, look closer; it is not too deep for the eye of God, nor too hidden for the eyes of a tender conscience anointed with divine eye-salve.

Hidden diseases the most incurable of all diseases. Search every fold of your heart until you find it. It may not be so big nor so ugly as your neighbor's. But an idol is still an idol, whether so small as to be carried in the coat pocket, or as large as a gigantic statue.

An idol is not to be admired for its beauty, or loathed for its ugliness—but to be hated because it is an idol.

"Dear children, keep yourselves from **idols**." 1 John 5:21

The mother and mistress of all the sins

"**I hate pride** and arrogance." Proverbs 8:13

"**The Lord detests all the proud of heart.** Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished." Prov. 16:5
Of all sins, **pride seems most deeply imbedded in the very heart of man.** Unbelief, sensuality, covetousness, rebellion, presumption, contempt of God's holy will and word, deceit and falsehood, cruelty and wrath, violence and murder—these, and a forest of other sins have indeed struck deep roots into the black and noxious soil of our fallen nature; and, interlacing their lofty stems and gigantic arms, have wholly shut out the light of heaven from man's benighted soul.

But these and their associate evils do not seem so thoroughly interwoven into the very constitution of the human heart, nor so to be its very life-blood, as pride. The **lust of the flesh** is strong, but there are respites from its workings. **Unbelief** is powerful, but there are times when it seems to lie dormant. **Covetousness** is ensnaring, but there is not always a bargain to be made, or an advantage to be clutched.

These sins differ also in strength in different individuals. Some seem not much tempted with the grosser passions

of our fallen nature; others are naturally liberal and benevolent, and whatever other idol they may serve, they bend not their knee to the golden calf.

But where lust may have no power, covetousness no dominion, and anger no sway—there, down, down in the inmost depths, heaving and boiling like the lava in the crater of a volcano, works **that master sin—that sin of sins, pride!**

Pride is **the mother and mistress of all the sins**; for where she does not conceive them in her ever-teeming womb, she instigates their movements, and compels them to pay tribute to her glory.

The 'origin of evil' is hidden from our eyes. Whence it sprang, and why God allowed it to arise in His fair creation, are mysteries which we cannot fathom. But thus much is revealed—that of this mighty fire which has filled hell with sulphurous flame, and will one day envelop earth and its inhabitants in the general conflagration, **the first spark was pride!**

Pride is therefore emphatically **the devil's own sin**. We will not say his darling sin, for it is his torment, the serpent which is always biting him, the fire which is ever consuming him. But it is the sin which hurled him from heaven, and transformed him from a bright and holy seraph, into a foul and hideous demon!

How subtle, then, and potent must that **poison** be, which could in a moment change an angel into a devil! How black in nature, how concentrated in virulence that **venom**—one drop of which could utterly deface the image of God in myriads of bright spirits before the throne—and degrade them into monsters of uncleanness and malignity!

I needed no monkish rules then.

A man may . . .

have a consistent profession of religion,
have a sound, well ordered creed,
be a member of a Christian church,
attend to all ordinances and duties,
seek to frame his life according to God's word,
have his family prayer, and private prayer,
be a good husband, father, and friend,
be liberal and kind to God's cause and people,

and yet with all this bear no fruit Godwards.

What is all this but **pitiful self-holiness**?

Real gospel fruit is only produced by the word of God's grace falling into the heart, watering and softening it. Without this there is . . .
not one gracious feeling,
not one spiritual desire,
not one tender thought,
not one heavenly affection.

We have tried, perhaps, to **make ourselves holy**.
We have watched our eyes, our ears, our tongues;
have read so many chapters every day out of God's word;
continued so long upon our knees; and so
tried to work a kind of holiness into our own souls.

Many years ago, I used to try to pray for the better part of an hour; and I am ashamed to say, I have been glad to hear the clock strike. What was this but **a monkish, self-imposed rule**, to please God by the length of my prayers?

But when the Lord was pleased to touch my conscience with His finger, He gave me a remarkable spirit of grace and supplication; **I needed no monkish rules then.**

The strong man sinks down into a babe!

"The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer;
my God, **my strength**, in whom I will trust." Psalm 18:2

As long as a man has any **strength** of his own, he will never have any strength in the Lord; for the strength of Jesus is made perfect in our weakness.

Oh, what a painful lesson we have to learn to find all our strength is weakness. **There was a time when we thought we had strength, and could . . .**
resist Satan,
overcome the world,
endure persecution,
bear the reproach of man,
mortify and keep down pride, and the evils of our heart.

Have we found ourselves able to carry out our fancied strength? What has been our experience in this matter?

That we have discovered more and more our own weakness;
that we cannot stand against one temptation; **the least gust blows us down!**

Our besetting lusts, our vile passions, and the wicked desires of our hearts, so entice our eyes and thoughts; so entwine themselves around our affections; that **we give out in a moment**, unless God Himself holds us up! We cannot stand against sin; our heart is as weak as water.

Thus we learn our weakness, by feeling ourselves to be the very weakest of the weak, and the very vilest of the vile.

As the Lord leads a man deeper down into the knowledge of his corruptions, it makes him more and more out of conceit with **his righteous, pious, holy self**. The more the Lord leads a man into the knowledge of . . .
temptation,
his besetting sin,
the power of his corruptions,
the workings of his vile nature;
the more deeply and painfully he learns what a poor, helpless, weak, powerless wretch he is.

As the Lord is pleased to unfold before his eyes the strength, power, and fullness lodged in Jesus Christ; He draws him, leads him, brings him, encourages him, and enables him to come to this fullness. And by the hand of faith he draws supplies out of that fullness.

As the Lord enables the soul to look to Jesus, His blessed strength is communicated and breathed into his soul. Then the 'poor worm Jacob' threshes the mountains, beats down the hills, and makes them fly before him as chaff. **When the Lord strengthens him, he can . . .**
stand against temptation,
overcome sin,
bear persecution,
subdue the evils of his heart, and
fight against the world, the flesh, and the devil.

When the Lord leaves him, he is like Samson with his locks cut. He sinks into all evil, and feels the helplessness of his fallen nature. Let the Lord but remove His gracious presence, and **the strong man sinks down into a babe!** And he that in the strength

of the Lord could thresh the mountains, falls down
as weak and helpless as a little child.

Thus the Lord painfully and solemnly teaches us, that
being nothing in ourselves, and feeling our weakness,
helplessness, and wretchedness; **in Him alone we
have strength.**

Save me, and I shall be saved!

"Save me, and I shall be saved!" Jeremiah 17:14

This implies **salvation from the power of sin**;
the secret dominion sin possesses in the heart.

O, what a tyrannical rule does sin sometimes
exercise in our carnal minds! How soon are we
entangled in flesh-pleasing snares! How easily
brought under the secret dominion of some hidden
corruption! And how we struggle in vain to deliver
ourselves when we are caught in the snares of
the devil, or are under the power of any one lust,
besetment, or temptation!

The Lord, and the Lord alone can save us from all
these things. **He saves from the power of sin . . .**
bringing a sense of His dying love into our hearts,
delivering us from our idols,
raising our affections to things above,
breaking to pieces our snares,
subduing our lusts,
taming our corruptions, and
mastering the inward evils of our dreadfully fallen nature.

Here is this **sin!** Lord, save me from it.

Here is this **snare!** Lord, break it to pieces.

Here is this **temptation!** Lord, deliver me out of it.

Here is this **lust!** Lord, subdue it.

Here is my **proud heart!** Lord, humble it.

None but the Lord can do these things for us . . .
nothing but the felt power of God,
nothing but the putting forth of His mighty arm,
nothing but the shedding abroad of His dying love,
nothing but the operations of His grace upon our soul,

can deliver us from the secret power of evil.

"Save me, and I shall be saved!"

Crush its viper head with the heel of our boot!

"Whoever will come after Me, let him **deny himself**, and take up his cross and follow Me" Mark 8:34

To deny and renounce **self** lies at the very foundation of vital godliness.

It is easy in some measure to leave the world; easy to leave the professing church; but to go forth out of **self**, there is the difficulty, for this "self" embraces such a variety of forms.

What varied shapes and forms does **this monster SELF** assume! How hard to trace his windings! How difficult to track this wily foe to his hidden den; drag him out of the cave; and immolate him at the foot of the cross, as Samuel hewed down Agag in Gilgal.

Proud self,
righteous self,
covetous self,
ambitious self,
sensual self,
deceitful self,
religious self,
flesh-pleasing self.

How difficult to detect, unmask, strip out of its changeable suits of apparel, **this ugly, misshaped creature**, and then stamp upon it, as if one would **crush its viper head with the heel of our boot!**

Who will do such violence to beloved **self**, when every nerve quivers and shrinks; and the coward heart cries to the uplifted foot, "Spare, spare!"

But unless there is this **self** crucifixion, there is no walking hand in hand with Christ, no heavenly communion with Him; for there can no more be a partnership between Christ and self, than there can be a partnership between Christ and sin.

Poor, moping, dejected creatures

We are, most of us, **so fettered down by . . .**
the chains of time and sense,
the cares of life and daily business,
the weakness of our earthly frame,
the distracting claims of a family, and
the miserable carnality and sensuality of our fallen nature,
that we live at best a poor, dragging, dying life.

Many of us are **poor, moping, dejected creatures.**
We have . . .
a variety of trials and afflictions,
a daily cross and
the continual plague of an evil heart.

We know enough of ourselves to know that in SELF
there is neither help nor hope, and never expect a
smoother path, a better, wiser, holier heart. As then . . .
the **weary** man seeks rest,
the **hungry** man seeks food,
the **thirsty** man seeks drink,
and the **sick** man seeks health,
so do we stretch forth our hearts and arms that we
may embrace the Lord Jesus Christ, and sensibly
realize union and communion with Him.

He discovers the evil and misery of sin that we may
seek pardon in His bleeding wounds and pierced side.

He makes known to us our nakedness and shame, and,
as such, our exposure to God's wrath, that we
may hide ourselves under His justifying robe.
He puts gall and wormwood into the world's choicest
draughts, that we may have no sweetness but in and
from Him.

What a battlefield is the heart

I have so much opposition within, so many
temptations, lusts, and follies; so many
snares and besetments; and a vile heart,
dabbling in all carnality and filth.

I am indeed exercised "by sin and grace."

Sin or grace seems continually uppermost;

striving and lusting against one another.

What . . .

lustings, sorrowings;

fallings, risings;

defeats, and victories.

What a battlefield is the heart, and there the fight is lost and won. When sin prevails, mourning over its wounds and slaughter. When grace and godly fear beat back temptation, a softening into gratitude.

How can he travel through this waste howling wilderness?

If you are alive to what you are as a poor, fallen sinner—you will see yourself surrounded by . . .

enemies,

temptations,

sins, and

snares.

You will feel yourself utterly defenseless, as weak

as water, without any strength to stand against them.

You will see a mountain of difficulties before your eyes.

If you know anything inwardly and experimentally of yourself of .

. .

the evils of your heart,

the power of sin,

the strength of temptation,

the subtlety of your unwearied foe,

and the daily conflict between nature and grace,

the flesh and the Spirit, which are the peculiar marks

of the true child of God—you will find and feel your

need of salvation as a daily reality.

How shall you escape the snares and temptations spread in your path? How shall you get the better of all your enemies . . .

external,

internal,

infernal,

and reach heaven's gates safe at last?

There is **present** salvation, an . . .

inward,

experimental,
continual
salvation communicated out of the
fullness of Christ as a risen Mediator.

Don't you need to be daily and almost hourly
saved? But from what? Why, from everything in
you that fights against the will and word of God.

Sin is not dead in you.

If you have a saving interest in the precious blood
of Christ—if your name is written in the Lamb's book
of life, and heaven is your eternal home—that does
not deliver you from the **indwelling** of sin, nor from
the **power** of sin—except as grace gives you present
deliverance from it.

Sin still works in your carnal mind, and will
work in it until your dying hour. What then
you need to be saved from is the . . .
guilt,
filth,
power,
love, and
practice
of that sin which ever dwells and ever works
in you, and often brings your soul into hard
and cruel bondage.

Now Christ lives at the right hand of God for His dear
people, that He may be ever saving them by His life.
There He reigns and rules as their glorious covenant
Head, ever watching over, feeling for and sympathizing
with them, and communicating supplies of grace for the
deliverance and consolation for all His suffering saints
spread over the face of the earth. The glorious Head is
in heaven, but the suffering members upon earth; and
as He lives on their behalf, He maintains by His Spirit
and grace, His life in their soul.

Each Christian has to walk through a great and terrible
wilderness, wherein are fiery serpents, and scorpions,
and drought (Deut. 8:15); where he is surrounded with
temptations and snares—his own evil heart being his
worst foe.

**How can he travel through this waste howling
wilderness** unless he has a Friend at the right hand

of God to send him continual supplies of grace—who can hear his prayers, answer his petitions, listen to his sighs, and put his tears into his bottle—who can help him to see the snares, and give him grace to avoid them—who observes from his heavenly watch tower the rising of evil in his heart, and can put a timely and seasonable check upon it before it bursts into word or action?

He needs an all-wise and ever-living Friend who can . . .

save him from **pride** by giving him true humility;
save him from **hardness of heart** by bestowing repentance;
save him from **carelessness** by making his conscience tender;
save him from all his **fears** by whispering into his soul, "Fear not, I have redeemed you."

The Christian has to be continually looking
to the Lord Jesus Christ . . .
to revive his soul when drooping,
to manifest His love to his heart when cold and unfeeling,
to sprinkle his conscience with His blood when guilty and sinking,
to lead him into truth,
to keep him from error and evil,
to preserve him through and amid every storm,
to guide every step that he takes in his onward journey,
and eventually bring him safe to heaven.

We need continual supplies of His grace, mercy, and
love received into our hearts, so as to save us . . .
from the love and spirit of the world,
from error,
from the power and strength of our own lusts,
and the base inclinations of our fallen nature.

These will often work at a fearful rate; but this will
only make you feel more your need of the power and
presence of the Lord Jesus to save you from them all.

You are a poor, defenseless sheep, surrounded
by wolves, and, as such, need all the care and
defense of the good Shepherd.

You are a ship in a stormy sea, where winds and
waves are all contrary, and therefore need an all
wise and able pilot to take you safe into harbor.

There a single thing on earth or in hell which can
harm you—if you are only looking to the Lord Jesus
Christ, and deriving supplies of grace and strength

from Him.

What trifles, what toys, what empty vanities

What trifles, what toys, what empty vanities do the great bulk of men pursue!

If God left us for a single hour

"Don't leave us!" Jeremiah 14:9
How much is summed up in those three words!

What would it be for God to leave us?

**What and where would we be,
if God left us for a single hour?**

What would become of us?

We would fall at once into the hands . . .
of sin,
of Satan, and
of the world.

We would be abandoned to our own evil hearts—abandoned, utterly abandoned to the unbelief, the infidelity, to all the filth and sensuality of our wicked nature—to fill up the measure of our iniquities, until we sank under His wrath to rise no more!

"Don't leave us!" Jeremiah 14:9

An idol is an idol

"Son of man, these leaders have set **up idols in their hearts!** They have embraced things that lead them into sin." Ezekiel 14:3

An idol is an idol, whether worshiped inwardly in heart, or adorned outwardly by the knee.

Therefore, give the people of Israel this message

from the Sovereign Lord: "Repent and turn away from your idols, and stop all your loathsome practices. I, the Lord, will punish all those, both Israelites and foreigners, who reject Me and set up **idols in their hearts**, so that they fall into sin." Ezekiel 14:6-7

A worldly spirit will ever peep out

"He gave Himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age." Galatians 1:4

The first effect of sovereign grace in its divine operation upon the heart of a child of God, is to **separate him from the world** by infusing into him a new spirit. There is little evidence that grace ever touched our hearts if it did not separate us from this ungodly world.

Where there is not this divine work upon a sinner's conscience—where there is no communication of this new heart and this new spirit, no infusion of this holy life, no animating, quickening influence of the Spirit of God upon the soul—whatever a man's outward profession may be, **he will ever be of a worldly spirit.**

A set of doctrines, however sound, merely received into the natural understanding—cannot divorce a man from that innate love of the world which is so deeply rooted in his very being. No mighty power has come upon his soul to revolutionize his every thought, cast his soul as if into a new mold—and by stamping upon it the mind and likeness of Christ to change him altogether.

This worldly spirit may be . . .

checked by circumstances,
controlled by natural conscience, or
influenced by the example of others;
but **a worldly spirit will ever peep out** from the thickest disguise, and manifest itself, as occasion draws it forth, in every unregenerate man.

What a lesson is here for ministers!

"And my speech and my preaching were **not with enticing words of man's wisdom**, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power"
1 Cor. 2:4

The word "enticing" is as we now say, "persuasive." It includes, therefore, every branch of skillful oratory, whether it be logical reasoning to convince our **understanding**—or appeals to our feelings to stir up our **passions**—or new and striking ideas to delight our **intellect**—or beautiful and eloquent language to please and captivate our **imagination**.

All these "enticing words" of man's wisdom—**the very things which our popular preachers most speak and aim at**—this great apostle renounced, discarded, and rejected!

He might have used them all if he liked. He possessed an almost unequalled share of natural ability and great learning—a singularly keen, penetrating intellect—a wonderful command of the Greek language—a flow of ideas most varied, striking, and original—and powers of oratory and eloquence such as have been given to few. He might therefore have used enticing words of man's wisdom, had he wished or thought it right to do so—but he would not. He saw what deceptiveness was in them, and at best they were mere arts of oratory. He saw that these enticing words—though they might . . .

touch the natural **feelings**,
work upon the **passions**,
captivate the **imagination**,
convince the **understanding**,
persuade the **judgment**, and to a certain extent force their way into men's minds—yet when all was done that could thus be done, it was merely **man's wisdom** which had done it.

Earthly wisdom cannot communicate heavenly faith. Paul would not therefore use enticing words of man's wisdom, whether it were force of logical argument, or appeal to natural passions, or the charms of vivid eloquence, or the beauty of poetical composition, or the subtle nicety of well arranged sentences. He would not use any of these enticing words of man's wisdom to draw people into a profession of religion—when their heart was not really touched by God's grace, or their consciences wrought upon by a divine power.

He came to win souls for Jesus Christ, not converts to his own powers of oratorical persuasion—to turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God—not to charm their ears by poetry and eloquence—but to bring them out of the vilest

of sins that they might be washed, sanctified, and justified by the Spirit of God—and **not entertain or amuse** their minds while sin and Satan still maintained dominion in their hearts!

All the labor spent in bringing together a church and congregation of professing people by the power of logical argument and appeals to their natural consciences would be utterly lost, as regards fruit for eternity—for a profession so induced by him and so made by them would leave them just as they were . . . in all the depths of **unregeneracy**, with their sins **unpardoned**, their persons **unjustified**, and their souls **unsanctified**.

He therefore discarded all these ways of winning over converts—as deceitful to the souls of men, and as dishonoring to God. It required much grace to do this—to throw aside what he might have used, and renounce what most men, as gifted as he, would have gladly used.

What a lesson is here for ministers!

How anxious are some men to shine as great preachers! How they covet and often aim at some grand display of what they call eloquence to charm their hearers—and win praise and honor to **self**!

How others try to argue men into religion, or by appealing to their natural feelings, sometimes to frighten them with pictures of hell, and sometimes to allure them by descriptions of heaven.

But all such arts, for they are no better, must be discarded by a true servant of God. Only the Spirit can reveal Christ, taking of the things of Christ, and showing them unto us, applying the word with power to our hearts, and bringing the sweetness, reality, and blessedness of divine things into our soul.

"And my speech and my preaching were not with enticing words of man's wisdom, **but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.**"

Unless we have a measure of the same demonstration of the Spirit, all that is said by us in the pulpit drops to

the ground—it has no real effect—there is no true or abiding fruit—no fruit unto eternal life. If there be in it some enticing words of man's wisdom, it may please the mind of those who are gratified by such arts—it may stimulate and occupy the attention for the time—but there it ceases, and all that has been heard fades away like a dream of the night.

A peculiar, indescribable, invincible power

"Our gospel did not come to you **in word only**, but also with **power**, with the **Holy Spirit** and with **deep conviction**." 1 Thes. 1:5

The gospel comes to some **in word only**. They hear the word of the gospel, the sound of truth; but it reaches the outward ear only—or if it touches the inward feelings, it is merely as the word of men.

But where the Holy Spirit begins and carries on His divine and saving work, He attends the word with **a peculiar, an indescribable, and yet an invincible power**.

It falls as from God upon the heart. He is heard to speak in it—and in it His glorious Majesty appears to open the eyes, unstop the ears, and convey a message from His own mouth to the soul.

Some hear the gospel as the mere word of men, perhaps for years before God speaks in it with a divine power to their conscience. They thought they **understood** the gospel—they thought they **felt** it—they thought they **loved** it. But all this time they did not see any vital distinction between receiving it as the mere word of **men**, and as the word of **God**.

The levity, the superficiality, the emptiness stamped upon all who merely receive the gospel as the word of men—is sufficient evidence that **it never sank deep into the heart, and never took any powerful grasp upon their soul**.

It therefore never brought with it any real separation from the world—never gave strength to mortify the least sin—never communicated power to escape the least snare of Satan—was never attended with a spirit of grace and prayer—never brought honesty, sincerity, and uprightness

into the heart before God—never bestowed any spirituality of mind, or any loving affection toward the Lord of life and glory. It was merely the reception of truth in the same way as we receive scientific principles, or learn a language, a business, or a trade. **It was all . . .**

shallow,
superficial,
deceptive,
hypocritical.

But in some unexpected moment, when little looking for it, the word of God was brought into their conscience with a **power** never experienced before. A light shone in and through it which they never saw before . . .

a majesty,
a glory,
an authority,
an evidence
accompanied it which they never knew before. And under this light, life, and power they fell down, with the word of God sent home to their heart.

When then Christ speaks the gospel to the heart—when He reveals Himself to the soul—when His word, dropping as the rain and distilling as the dew, is received in faith and love—He is embraced as the chief among ten thousand and the altogether lovely one—He takes His seat upon the affections and becomes enthroned in the heart as its Lord and God.

Is there life in **your** bosom?

Has God's power attended the work?
Is the grace of God really in your heart?

Has God spoken to your soul?

Have you heard His voice, felt its power,
and fallen under its influence?

"And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as **the word of men**, but as it actually is, **the word of God**, which is effectually at work in you who believe."

1 Thes. 2:13

The deep things of God

"But God has revealed it to us by His Spirit.

The Spirit searches all things, even **the deep things of God.**" 1 Cor. 2:10

The Spirit of God in a man's bosom searches **the deep things of God**, so as to lead him into a spiritual and experimental knowledge of them.

What depths do we sometimes see in a single text of Scripture as opened to the understanding, or applied to the heart?

What a depth in the blood of Christ—how it "cleanses from all sin,"—even millions of millions of the foulest sins of the foulest sinners!

What a depth in His bleeding, dying love, that could stoop so low to lift us so high!

What a depth in His pity and compassion to extend itself to such guilty, vile transgressors as we are!

What depth in His rich, free, and sovereign grace, that it should super-abound over all our aggravated iniquities, enormities, and vile abominations!

What depth in His sufferings—that He should have voluntarily put Himself under such a load of guilt, such outbreakings of the wrath of God—as He felt in His holy soul when He stood in our place to redeem poor sinners from the bottomless pit—that those who deserved hell, should be lifted up into the enjoyment of heaven!

The religionists of the day

"And everyone will hate you because of your allegiance to Me." Luke 21:17

Professors of religion have always been the deadliest enemies of the children of God.

Who were so opposed to the blessed Lord as the Scribes and Pharisees? It was the religious teachers and leaders who crucified the Lord of glory!

And so in every age **the religionists of the day** have been the hottest and bitterest persecutors of the Church of Christ.

Nor is the case altered now. The more the children of God are firm in the truth, the more they enjoy its power, the more they live under its influence, and the more tenderly and conscientiously they walk in godly fear, the more will the professing generation of the day hate them with a deadly hatred.

Let us not think that we can disarm it by a godly life; for the more that we walk in the sweet enjoyment of heavenly truth and let our light shine before men as having been with Jesus, the more will this draw down their hatred and contempt.

"And the world hates them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not." John 17:14

My leanness, my leanness, woe unto me!

"My leanness, my leanness, woe unto me!"

Isaiah 24:16

There is no more continual source of lamentation and mourning to a child of God than a sense of his own barrenness. He would be fruitful in every good word and work. **But when he contrasts . . .** his own miserable unprofitableness, his coldness and deadness, his proneness to evil, his backwardness to good, his daily wanderings and departings from God, his depraved affections, his stupid frames, his sensual desires, his carnal projects, and his earthy grovelings, with what he sees and knows should be the fruit that should grow upon a fruitful branch in the only true Vine, he sinks down under a sense of his own wretched barrenness and unfruitfulness.

Yet what was the effect produced by all this upon his own soul? To wean him from the creature; to divert him from looking to any for help or hope, but the Lord Himself. It is in this painful way that the

Lord often, if not usually, cuts us off from all human props, even the nearest and dearest, that we may lean wholly and solely on Himself.

Those poor stupid people!

"The world knows us not." 1 John 3:1
Both the openly profane world, and the professing world, are grossly ignorant of the children of God. Their . . .
real character and condition,
state and standing,
joys and sorrows,
mercies and miseries,
trials and deliverances,
hopes and fears,
afflictions and consolations,
are entirely hidden from their eyes.

The world knows nothing of the motives and feelings which guide and actuate the children of God. **It views them as a set of gloomy, morose, melancholy beings**, whose tempers are soured by false and exaggerated views of religion—who have pored over the thoughts of hell and heaven until some have frightened themselves into despair, and others have puffed up their vain minds with an imaginary conceit of their being especial favorites of the Almighty. "They are really," it says, "no better than other folks, if so good. But they have such contracted minds—are so obstinate and bigoted with their poor, narrow, prejudiced views—that wherever they come they bring disturbance and confusion."

But why this harsh judgment?

Because the world knows nothing of the spiritual feelings which actuate the child of grace, making him act so differently from the world which thus condemns him.

It cannot understand our sight and sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin—and that is the reason why we will not run riot with them in the same course of ungodliness.

It does not know with what a solemn weight eternal things rest upon our minds—and that that is the cause why we cannot join with them in pursuing so eagerly the things of the world, and living for time as they do—instead of living for eternity.

Being unable to enter into the spiritual motives and gracious feelings which actuate a living soul, and the movements of divine life continually stirring in a Christian breast, they naturally judge us from their own point of view, and condemn what they cannot understand.

You may place a **horse** and a **man** upon the same hill—while the man would be looking at the woods and fields and streams—the horse would be feeding upon the grass at his feet. The horse, if it could reason, would say, "What a fool my master is! How he is staring and gaping about! Why does he not sit down and open his basket of provisions—for I know he has it with him, for I carried it—and feed as I do?"

So the worldling says, "**Those poor stupid people**, how they are spending their time in going to chapel, and reading the Bible in their gloomy, melancholy way. Religion is all very well—and we ought all to be religious before we die—but they make so much of it. Why don't they enjoy more of life? Why don't they amuse themselves more with its innocent, harmless pleasures—be more gay, cheerful, and sociable, and take more interest in those things which so interest us?"

The reason why the world thus wonders at us is because it knows us not, and therefore **cannot understand that we have . . .**
sublimier feelings,
nobler pleasures, and
more substantial delights,
than ever entered the soul of a worldling!

Christian! the more you are conformed to the image of Christ—the more separated you are from the world, the less will it understand you. If we kept closer to the Lord and walked more in holy obedience to the precepts of the gospel, we would be **more misunderstood** than even we now are! It is our worldly conformity that makes the world understand many of our movements and actions so well.

But if our movements were more according to the mind of Christ—if we walked more as the Lord walked when here below—we would leave the world in greater ignorance of us than we leave it now—for the hidden springs of our life would be more out of its sight, our testimony against it more decided, and our separation from it more complete.

We were not always a set of poor mopes

"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For **you died**, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God." Col. 3:1-3

Men's pursuits and pleasures differ as widely as their station or disposition—but a life of selfish gratification reigns and rules in all.

Now it is by this **death** that we die unto . . .
the things of time and sense;
to all that charms the natural mind of man;
to the pleasures and pursuits of life;
to that busy, restless world which once held
us so fast and firm in its embrace—and whirled
us round and round within its giddy dance.

Let us look back. **We were not always a set of poor mopes**—as the world calls us. We were once as merry and as gay as the merriest and gayest of them.

But what were we really and truly with all our mirth?

Dead to God—alive to sin. Dead to everything holy and divine—alive to everything vain and foolish, light and trifling, carnal and sensual—if not exactly vile and abominable.

Our natural life was with all of us a life of gratifying our senses—with some of us, perhaps, chiefly of pleasure and worldly happiness—with others a life of covetousness, or ambition, or self-righteousness.

Sin once put forth its intense power and allured us—and we followed like the fool to the stocks.

Sin charmed—and we listened to its seductive wiles.

Sin held out its bait—and we too greedily,
too heedlessly swallowed the hook.

"May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which **the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.**" Galatians 6:14

To walk after the flesh

"There is therefore now **no condemnation** to those who are in Christ Jesus, **who walk not after the flesh**, but after the Spirit." Rom. 8:1

To walk after the flesh carries with it the idea of the flesh going before us—as our leader, guide, and example—and our following close in its footsteps, so that wherever it drags or draws we move after it, as the needle after the magnet.

To walk after the flesh, then, is to move step by step in implicit obedience to . . .
the commands of the flesh,
the **lusts** of the flesh,
the **inclinations** of the flesh,
and the **desires** of the flesh,
whatever shape they assume,
whatever garb they wear,
whatever name they may bear.

To walk after the flesh is to be ever pursuing, desiring, and doing the things that please the flesh, whatever aspect that flesh may wear or whatever dress it may assume—whether molded and fashioned after the grosser and more flagrant ways of the profane world—or the more refined and **deceptive religion** of the professing church.

But are the grosser and more manifest sinners the only people who may be said to walk after the flesh? Does not all **human religion**, in all its varied forms and shapes, come under the sweep of this all-devouring sword? Yes! Every one who is entangled in and led by **a fleshly religion**, walks as much after the flesh as those who are abandoned to its grosser indulgences.

Sad it is, yet not more sad than true, that **false religion has slain its thousands**, if open sin has slain its ten thousands.

To walk after the flesh, whether it be in the grosser or more refined sense of the term, is the same in the sight of God.

The very thought is appalling!

"Once you were alienated from God and were **His enemies**, separated from Him by your evil thoughts and actions." Colossians 1:21

All man's sins, comparatively speaking, are but 'motes in the sunbeam' compared with **this giant sin of enmity against God**. A man may be given up to fleshly indulgences; he may sin against his fellow creature—may rob, plunder, oppress, even kill his fellow man. But viewed in a spiritual light, what are they compared with the dreadful, the damnable sin of **enmity** against the great and glorious Majesty of heaven?

This is a sin that lives beyond the grave!

Many sins, though not their consequences, die with man's body, because they are bodily sins. But this is a sin that goes into eternity with him, and flares up like a mighty volcano from the very depths of the bottomless pit! **Yes, it is the very sin of devils**, which therefore binds guilty man down with them in the same eternal chains, and consigns him to the same place of torment!

O the unutterable enmity of the heart against the living God! **The very thought is appalling!**

How utterly ruined, then, how wholly lost must that man's state and case be, who lives and dies as he comes into the world . . .
unchanged,
unrenewed,
unregenerated!

I will not dwell longer upon this gloomy subject, on this sad exhibition of human wickedness and misery, though it is needful we should know it for ourselves, that we should have a taste of this bitter cup in our own most painful experience, that we may

know the sweetness of the cup of salvation when presented to our lips by free and sovereign grace.

Nothing but the mighty power of God Himself can ever turn this **enemy** into a **friend**!

"Once you were alienated from God and were **His enemies**, separated from Him by your evil thoughts and actions, yet now He has brought you back as **His friends**. He has done this through His death on the cross in His own human body. As a result, He has brought you into the very presence of God, and you are holy and blameless as you stand before Him without a single fault." Colossians 1:21-22

I will give you rest

Are you ever weary . . .

of the world,

of sin,

of self,

of everything below the skies?

If so, you want something to give you **rest**.

You look to SELF—it is but shifting sand, tossed here and there with the restless tide, and ever casting up mire and dirt. No holding ground; no anchorage; no rest there.

You look to OTHERS—you see what man is, even the very best of men in their best state—how fickle, how unstable, how changing and changeable; how weak even when willing to help; how more likely to add to, than relieve your distress; if desirous to sympathize with and comfort you in trouble and sorrow, how short his arm to help, how unsatisfactory his aid to relieve! You find no rest there.

You lean upon the WORLD—it is but a broken reed which runs into your hand and pierces you. You find no rest there.

So look where you will, there is no rest for the sole of your foot.

But there is a rest. Our blessed Lord says, "Come to **Me**, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens,

and **I will give you rest.**" Matthew 11:28

That which is highly esteemed among men

"That which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God." Luke 16:15

The pride,
the ambition,
the pleasures,
the amusements,
in which we see thousands and tens of thousands engaged—and sailing down the stream into a dreadful gulf of eternity—are all an abomination in the sight of God.

Whereas, such things as . . .

faith,

hope,

love,

humility,

brokenness of heart,

tenderness of conscience,

contrition of spirit,

sorrow for sin,

self-loathing,

self-abasement,

looking to Jesus,

taking up the cross,

denying one's self,

walking in the strait and narrow path that leads to

eternal life—in a word, the power of godliness—**these**

things are despised by all—and by none so much as

mere heady professors who have a name to live while

dead.

"That which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God." Luke 16:15

Invincibly and irresistibly drawn

As the Lord is pleased to enlighten

his mind, the Christian sees . . .

such a beauty,

such a blessedness,

such a heavenly sweetness,

such a divine loveliness,

such a fullness of surpassing grace,

such tender condescension,

such unwearied patience,
such infinite compassion,
in the Lord of life and glory—that he is as
if **invincibly and irresistibly drawn** by these
attractive influences to come to His feet to
learn of Him. So far as the Lord is pleased to
reveal Himself in some measure to his soul,
by the sweet glimpses and glances which he
thus obtains of His Person and countenance,
he is drawn to His blessed Majesty by cords
of love to look up unto Him and beg of Him
that He would drop His word with life and
power into his heart.

Woman's chief besetting sins

"The Lord will strip away their artful beauty—their ornaments, headbands, and crescent necklaces; their earrings, bracelets, and veils. Gone will be their scarves, ankle chains, sashes, perfumes, and charms; their rings, jewels, party clothes, gowns, capes, and purses; their mirrors, linen garments, head ornaments, and shawls." Isaiah 3:18-23

"The Lord will wash away the **filth** of the women of Zion." Isaiah 4:4

These women of Zion are typical representatives of women professing godliness in all ages. The Lord looked at their hearts, and the motives of their gaudy attire. There He saw **pride, luxury, love of dress and admiration**—**woman's chief besetting sins**—and all this was in His eyes so much **filth!**

But as I do not wish to be too hard upon the women, I may say, that **we men have our hidden filth** to as great, or worse degree, than they. In us there are . . . many secret and powerful lusts, much hypocrisy, self-righteousness, pride, and various other sinful and sensual abominations.

You are not your own!

"You are not your own! For you are bought with a price—therefore glorify God in your body, and in

your spirit, which are God's." 1 Corinthians 6:19

Your **eyes** are not your own—that you may feed your lusts, that you may go about gaping, and gazing, and looking into every shop window to see the fashions of the day—learn the prevailing pride of life—and thus lay up food for your vain mind—either in coveting what must be unfitting to your profession—or applying your money to an improper use—or being disappointed because you cannot afford to buy it.

Your **ears** are not your own—that you may listen to every foolish tale—drink in every political, worldly, or carnal report which may fall upon them—and thus feed that natural desire for news, gossip, and even slander—which is the very element of the carnal mind.

Your **tongue** is not your own—that you may speak what you please, and blurt out whatever passes in the chambers of your heart, without check or fear.

Your **hands** are not your own—that you may use them as implements of evil—or employ them in any other way than to earn with them an honest livelihood. Our hands were not given us for sin—but for godly uses.

Your **feet** are not your own—that you may walk in the ways of the world—or that they should carry you to haunts where all around you are engaged upon errands of vanity and sin.

All must be held according to the disposal of God, and under a sense of our obligations to Him.

But perhaps you will say, in the rebellion of your carnal mind, "What restraint all this lays upon us. Cannot we look with our eyes as we like—hear with our ears as we please—and speak with our tongues as we choose? Will you so narrow our path that we are to have nothing of our own—not even our time or money, our body or soul? Surely we may have a little enjoyment now and then—a little recreation, a little holiday sometimes, a little relaxation from being always so strict and so religious—a little feeding of our carnal mind which cannot bear all this restraint?"

Well, but what will you bring upon yourself by . . .
the roving eye,
the foolish tongue,

the loose hand,
the straying foot?

Darkness,
bondage,
guilt,
misery,
death!

"But," you say, "we are not to be tied up so tightly as all this! We have gospel liberty, but you will not allow us even that!"

Yes, blessed be God, there is gospel liberty, for there is no real happiness in religion without it; but not liberty to sin—not liberty to gratify the lusts of the flesh—not liberty to act contrary to the gospel we profess, and the precepts of God's Word—for this is not liberty but licentiousness.

"You are not your own! For you are bought with a price—therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." 1 Corinthians 6:19

Do you seek you great things for yourself?

**"Do you seek you great things for yourself?
Seek them not!"** Jeremiah 45:5

O the pride of man's heart! How it will work and show itself even under a guise of religion and holiness!

Few can see that in religion, what are considered great things—are really very little; and what are considered little—are really very great.

How few can see that . . .

a broken heart,
a contrite spirit,
a humble mind,
a tender conscience,
a meek, quiet, and patient bearing of the cross,
a believing submission and resignation to the will of God,
a looking to Him alone, for all supplies in providence and grace,
a continual seeking of His face,
a desiring nothing so much as the visitations of His favor,
a loving, affectionate, forbearing, and forgiving spirit,
a bearing of injuries and reproaches without retaliation,

a liberal heart and hand, and
a godly, holy, and separate life and walk—
are **the things which in God's sight are great.**
While a knowledge of doctrine, clear insight into
gospel mysteries, and a ready speech are really
very **little** things—and are often to be found side
by side and hand in hand with a proud, covetous,
worldly, unhumiliated spirit, and a living in what is sinful and evil.

How many **ministers** are seeking after great gifts—
thirsting after popularity, applause, and acceptance
among men! They are not satisfied with being
simply and solely what God may make them by
His Spirit and grace—with the blessing which He
may make them to a scattered few here and there.
This inferior position, as they consider it, so beneath
their grace and gifts, their talents and abilities—does
not satisfy their restless mind and aspiring desires.

Their ambition is . . .

to stand at the very head of their peers,
be looked up to and sought after as a leader and a guide,
have a larger building,
have a fuller congregation,
have a better salary, and
have a wider field for the display of their gifts and abilities.
Gladly would they . . .
stand apart from all others,
brook no rival to their 'pulpit throne', and
be lord paramount at home and abroad.

And what is the **consequence** of this proud, ambitious
spirit? What **envy**, what **jealousy**, what **detraction** do
we see in men who want to stand at the top of the tree!
How, again and again, do they seek to rise by standing,
as it were—on the slain bodies of others!

**"Do you seek you great things for yourself?
Seek them not!"** Jeremiah 45:5

We would not be such muck-worms!

"I pray also that the **eyes of your heart may be
enlightened**—in order that you may know the hope
to which He has called you—what a rich and glorious
inheritance He has given to His people." Ephes. 1:18

If the Spirit would but enlighten the eyes of our heart,
how this would lift us up out of the mud and mire of this

wretched world! **We would not be such muck-worms**,
raking and scraping a few straws together—or **running
about like ants with our morsel of grain!** We would have
our affections fixed more on things above. We would . . .
know more of Christ,
enjoy more of Christ,
be more like Christ,
walk more like Christ walked, and
look forward to our glorious inheritance.

If these things were brought into our hearts with divine
power—how they would sweeten every bitter cup, and
carry us through every changing scene, until at last we
were landed above—to see the Lord as He is, in the full
perfection of His infinite glory!

The multitude of Your tender mercies

"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your
loving-kindness—according unto **the multitude of
Your tender mercies** blot out my transgressions."
Psalm 51:1

What a sweet expression it is—and how it seems
to convey to our mind that God's mercies do not
fall 'drop by drop'—but are as innumerable . . .
as the **sand** upon the sea-shore;
as the **stars** that stud the midnight sky;
as the **drops of rain** that fill the clouds before
they discharge their copious showers upon the earth.
It is the **multitude** of His mercies that makes Him so
merciful a God. He does not give but a **drop** or two of
mercy—that would soon be gone, like the rain which
fell this morning under the hot sun. But His mercies
flow like a **river!** There is in Him . . .
a multitude of mercies,
for a multitude of sins,
and a multitude of sinners!
This felt and received in the love of it—**breaks, humbles,
softens, and melts** a sensible sinner's heart—and he says,
"What, sin against such mercies? What, when the Lord has
remembered me in my low estate, and manifested once
more a sense of His mercy? What, shall I go on to provoke
Him again—walk inconsistently again—be entangled in
Satan's snares again? O, forbid it God, forbid it gospel,
forbid it tender conscience, forbid it every constraint of
dying love!"

"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving-kindness—according unto **the multitude of Your tender mercies** blot out my transgressions."
Psalm 51:1

Can Christ love one like me?

"To grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge." Ephesians 3:17-19

You may wonder sometimes—and it is a wonder that will fill heaven itself with anthems of eternal praise—how such a glorious Jesus can ever look down from heaven upon such crawling reptiles, on such worms of earth—what is more, upon such sinners who have provoked Him over and over again by their misdeeds. Yes, how this exalted Christ, in the height of His glory, can look down from heaven on such poor, miserable, wretched creatures as we—this is the mystery that fills angels with astonishment!

We feel we are such crawling reptiles—such undeserving creatures—and are so utterly unworthy of the least notice from Him, that we say, "**Can Christ love one like me?** Can the glorious Son of God cast an eye of pity and compassion, love and tenderness upon one like me—who can scarcely at times bear with myself—who sees and feels myself one of the vilest of the vile, and the worst of the worst? O, what must I be in the sight of the glorious Son of God?"

And yet, He says, "I have loved you with an everlasting love." His love has breadths, and lengths, and depths, and heights unknown!

Its breadth exceeds all human span;
its length outvies all creature line;
its depth surpasses all finite measurement;
its height excels even angelic computation!

Because His love is . . .
so wondrous,
so deep,
so long,
so broad,

so high;
it is so suitable to our every want and woe.

"To grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge." Ephesians 3:17-19

A woman's best ornament

"Don't be concerned about the **outward beauty** that depends on fancy hairstyles, expensive jewelry, or beautiful clothes. You should be known for the **beauty that comes from within**, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is so precious to God." 1 Peter 3:3-4

This "**beauty that comes from within**" is that . . .
meekness,
quietness,
gentleness,
brokenness of heart,
contrition of spirit,
humility of mind, tenderness of conscience,
which are fitting to the children of God.

A gentle and quiet spirit is **a woman's best ornament.**

As to other gay and unbecoming ornaments, let those wear them, who wish to serve and to enjoy . . .
the lust of the flesh,
the lust of the eyes,
and the pride of life.

Let the "daughters of Zion" manifest they have other ornaments than what the world admires and approves.

Let them covet . . .
the teachings of God,
the smiles of His love,
the whispers of His favor.

The more they have of these, the less will they care for the adornments which the "daughters of Canaan" run so madly after; by which also they often impoverish themselves, and by opening a way for admiration, too often open a way for seduction and ruin.

O you filthy creature!

"Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin?" Romans 7:24

No doubt you have **your enemies**—and so have we all.

But I will tell you where you have an enemy—and a greater enemy than ever you have found in others—**yourself!** I have often felt that I could do myself more harm in five minutes, than all my enemies could do me in fifty years! I need not fear what **others** may do or say—I fear **myself** more than them all—knowing what I am as a sinner—the strength of sin—and the power of temptation. Be sure of this—that **YOU are the worst enemy you ever had . . .**

your sin,
your lust,
your covetousness,
your pride,
your self-righteousness.

God Himself will make you feel your enemy. You shall see something of his accursed designs; how sin has deceived you, betrayed you, brought guilt upon your conscience, and made you a burden to yourself. You shall be brought to feel, and say, "There is nothing I hate so much as my own vile heart—my own dreadfully corrupt nature. O what an enemy do I carry in my own bosom! Of all my enemies, he is surely the worst! Of all my foes, he is the most subtle and strong!"

Have you not sometimes felt as though you could take your lusts by the neck and dash their heads against a stone? Have you not felt you could take out of your breast this vile, damnable heart, lay it upon the ground, and stamp upon it?

And when tempted with . . .

pride,
or unbelief,
or infidelity,
or blasphemy,
or any hateful lust,
how you have cried out again and again with anguish of spirit, "O this heart of mine!"

We hate our sins, and would, if possible, have no more to do with them, and would say to this **lust, idol, or temptation, "O you filthy creature!** What

an enemy you are to my soul! O that I could forever be done with you!"

"Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin? Thanks be to God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord."
Romans 7:24-25

You never knew what real happiness was!

One false charge against the children of God, is that they are **a poor, moping, miserable people**, who . . . know nothing of happiness, renounce all cheerfulness, mirth, and gladness, hang their heads down all their days like a bulrush, are full of groundless fears, nurse the gloomiest thoughts in a kind of melancholy, grudge others the least enjoyment of pleasure and happiness, and try to make everyone else as dull and as miserable as their dull and miserable selves.

Is not this a false charge?

You know—that you never had any real happiness in the things of time and sense—that under all your 'pretended gaiety' there was real gloom—that every 'sweet' was drenched with bitterness—that vexation was stamped upon all that is called pleasure and enjoyment.

You never knew what real happiness was, until you knew the Lord, and were blessed with His presence, and some manifestation of His goodness and mercy!

Were it no bigger than a child's doll

"I will cleanse you from all your idols." Ezekiel 36:25

Idolatry takes a wide range. There are 'respectable' idols and 'vulgar' idols—just as there are marble statues, and other objects of worship made up of shells and feathers. And yet each will still be an idol.

Respectable idols we can admire—vulgar idols we detest.

But an idol is an idol—however respectable, or however vulgar—however admired, or however despised they may be.

But O how numerous are these respectable idols!
Love of money,
ambition,
craving after human applause,
desire to rise in the world;
all these we may think are natural desires that
may be lawfully gratified. But O, what idols may
they turn out to be!

But there are more **secret** and more **dangerous** idols.
You may have a husband, or wife, or child—whom you
love almost as much as yourself—you bestow upon
this idol of yours all the affections of your heart.
Nothing is too good for it, nothing too dear for it.

You don't see how this is an idol.

But, whatever you **love** more than God,
whatever you **worship** more than God,
whatever you **crave** for more than God,
is an idol.

It may lurk in the chambers of imagery—you may
scarcely know how fondly you love it. But let God
take that idol out of your breast—let Him pluck that
idol from its niche—and you will then find how you
have allowed your affections to wander after that
idol and loved it more than God Himself. It is when
the idol is taken away, removed, dethroned—that
we learn what an idol it has been.

How we hug and embrace our idols!

How we cleave to them!

How we delight in them!
How we bow down to them!

How we seek gratification from them!

How little are we aware what affections entwine
around them—how little are we aware that they
claim what God has reserved for Himself when
He said, "My son, give Me your heart."
Many a weeping widow learns for the first time that
her **husband** was an idol. Many a mourning husband
learns for the first time how too dearly, how too fondly,
how too idolatrously he loved his **wife**. Many a man

does not know how dearly he loves **money** until he incurs some serious loss. Many do not know how dearly they hold **name, fame, and reputation** until some slanderous blight seems to touch that tender spot. Few indeed seem to know how dear **SELF** is, until God takes it out of its niche and sets Himself there in its room.

Self,
pride,
reputation,
the love of money
the love of name and fame—
these idols you cannot take with you into the courts
of heaven. **How would God be moved to jealousy if
you could you carry an idol—were it no bigger than
a child's doll—into the courts above!**

"I will cleanse you from all your idols." Ezekiel 36:25

Your filth will be washed away!

O, what loathsome monsters of iniquity—how polluted, filthy, and vile do we feel ourselves to be—when the guilt of our sin is charged home upon our conscience! Have you not sometimes loathed yourselves on account of your abominations? Has not the filth of your sin sometimes disgusted you; the opening up of that horrible, that ever running sewer, which you daily carry about with you?

We complain, and justly complain—of a reeking sewer which runs through a street—or of a ditch filled with everything disgusting. But do we feel as much—do we complain as often—of the foul sewer which is ever running in our soul—of the filthy ditch in our own bosom?

As the sight of this open sewer meets our eyes—and its stench enters our nostrils, it fills us with self-loathing and self-abhorrence before the eyes of a holy God.

"Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean. **Your filth will be washed away!**"
Ezekiel 36:25-26

Philippians 3:7

"But whatever was to my profit I now consider **loss** for the sake of Christ." Philippians 3:7

This includes the loss . . .
of all your fancied **holiness**,
of all your vaunted **strength**,
of all your natural or acquired **wisdom**,
of all your boasted **knowledge**;
in a word, of everything in **creature religion** of which
the heart is proud, and in which it takes delight.

All, all must be counted loss for Christ's sake—all,
all must be sacrificed to His bleeding, dying love.

Our dearest joys,
our fondest hopes,
our most cherished idols,
must all sink and give way to the grace,
blood, and love of an incarnate God.

Strangers & Pilgrims

"They confessed that they were **strangers**
and pilgrims on the earth." Hebrews 11:13

You feel yourself a **stranger** in this ungodly world;
it is not your element—it is not your home. You are
in it during God's appointed time—but you wander
up and down this world a **stranger** . . .to its company,
to its maxims,
to its fashions,
to its principles,
to its motives,
to its lusts,
to its inclinations, and
all in which this world moves as in its native element.

Grace has separated you by God's distinguishing power,
that though you are **in** the world, you are not **of** it. You
feel yourself to be a **stranger** here—as David says, "a
stranger and a sojourner, as all my fathers were."

I can tell you plainly . . .
if you are at home in the world;
if the things of time and sense are your element;

if you feel one with . . .
the **company** of the world,
the **maxims** of the world,
the **fashions** of the world,
the **principles** of the world,
grace has not reached your heart—the faith
of God's elect does not dwell in your bosom.

The first effect of grace is to SEPARATE.

It was so in the case of Abraham. He was called
by grace to leave the land of his fathers and go
out into a land that God would show him.

And so God's own word to His people is now,
"Come out from among them, and be separate."

Separation, separation, separation from the world
is the grand distinguishing mark of vital godliness!

There may be indeed separation of **body** where there
is no separation of **heart**. But what I mean is . . .
separation of heart,
separation of principle,
separation of affection,
separation of spirit.

And if grace has touched your heart and you are
a partaker of the faith of God's elect—you are a
stranger in the world, and will make it manifest
by your life and conduct that you are such.

But they were also **pilgrims**—that is, sojourners
through weary deserts—longing, longing for home,
possessing nothing in which they could take
pleasure—feeling the weariness of a long journey
and anxious for rest.

Are you not at times almost worn out by . . .
sin,
self,
trials,
temptations,
afflictions;
so that you would gladly lay down your weary
body in the grave—that your soul might rest
in the sweet enjoyment of the King of kings?

If such is your spirit, you have something
of the spirit of the **pilgrim** sojourning in a

weary land, and longing for . . .rest,
happiness,
and peace
in a better country.

"But they desire a better place—a
heavenly homeland." Hebrews 11:16

Looking down into a filthy pit!

"The human heart is most deceitful and desperately
wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?" Jer. 17:9

Sometimes we are so astonished . . .

at what we **are**,
at what we **have been**, or
at what we **are capable of**.

We stand sometimes and look at our heart, and see
what a seething, boiling, and bubbling is there!
And we look at it with indignant astonishment, as
we would look into a pool of filthy black mud, all
swarming and alive with every hideous creature!

So when a man takes a view of his own heart . . .

its dreadful hypocrisy,
its vile rebellion,
its alarming deceitfulness,
its desperate wickedness,
of what his heart is capable of plotting,
of what evil it can conceive and imagine,
it is as if he stood **looking down into a filthy pit** and
saw with astonishment, mingled with self-abhorrence,
what his heart is, as the fountain of all iniquity.

A man must have some knowledge of his own heart
to understand such language as this.

You that are so exceedingly 'pious' and so 'extra good',
and from whose heart the veil has never been taken away
to show you what you are, will perhaps think that I am
drawing a caricature of human nature, and painting it as
the haunt of thieves and prostitutes.

Could you but have the veil taken off your heart,
you would see that you were capable of doing all
that wickedness that others have done, or can do!

By this sight of **ourselves**, we learn **what a wonderful God we have to deal with!** Surely none so highly prize the grace of God as those who are most led into a knowledge of the fall, and the havoc and ruin, and the guilt and misery which it has brought into our own hearts.

The largest slice of the well-sugared cake

"They confessed that they were **strangers and pilgrims** on the earth." Hebrews 11:13

Many profess that they are **strangers and pilgrims** here below. But they take care to have as much of this world's comforts as they can scrape together by hook and by crook. They talk about being 'strangers', yet can be in close friendship with men of the world. And could you see them at the exchange, at the market, behind the counter, or at home with their families—**you would not find one mark to distinguish them from the ungodly!**

Yet they come to chapel—and if called upon to pray, they will tell the people they are "poor strangers and pilgrims in a valley of tears"—while all the time their hearts are in the world—and their eyes stand out with fatness—and they are as light and trifling as a comic actor—and have no concerns except to get **the largest slice of the well-sugared cake** that the world sets before them!

It is not the 'mere profession of the lips'—but 'grace in the heart', that makes a man a stranger and a pilgrim. God's people are strangers and sojourners—the world is not their home—nor can they take pleasure in it. Sin is often a burden to them—guilt often lies as a heavy weight upon their conscience—a thousand troubles harass their minds—a thousand perplexities oppress their souls. They cannot bury their minds in business and derive all their happiness from their successes, for they feel that this earth is not their home. They are often cast down and exercised, because they have to live with such an ungodly heart in such an ungodly world.

"They confessed that they were **strangers and pilgrims** on the earth." Hebrews 11:13

The things which men despise

"**The things which are highly esteemed among men** are an abomination in the sight of God!" Luke 16:15

The pride, ambition, pleasures, and amusements, in which we see thousands and tens of thousands engaged—and sailing down the stream into a dreadful gulf of eternity—are all an abomination in the sight of God!

Whereas **the things which men despise**, such as . . .
faith,
hope,
love,
humility,
brokenness of heart,
tenderness of conscience,
contrition of spirit,
sorrow for sin,
self-loathing,
self-abasement,
looking to Jesus,
taking up the cross,
denying one's self,
walking in the narrow path that leads to eternal life,
—are despised by all—and by none so much as mere heady religious professors—who have a name to live, while dead.

"The things which are highly esteemed among men are an abomination in the sight of God." Luke 16:15

Can they beat back this monster to his filthy den?

"**Hold me up, and I shall be safe!**" Psalm 119:117

The Lord's people are a **tempted** people. **Satan** is ever waiting at their gate, constantly suggesting every hateful and improper thought—perpetually inflaming the rebellion and enmity of their carnal mind—and continually **plaguing, harassing, and besieging** them in a thousand ways!

Can they repel him?

Can they beat back this monster to his filthy den?

Can they beat back this leviathan? They cannot—they feel they cannot. They know that nothing but the voice of Jesus, inwardly speaking with power to their souls, can **beat back the lion of the bottomless pit!** One whisper, one soft word

from the lips of His gracious Majesty, can and will put every temptation to flight!

"Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name—you are Mine! When you go through deep waters and great trouble—I will be with you! When you go through rivers of difficulty—you will not drown! When you walk through the fire of oppression—you will not be burned up—the flames will not consume you. For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel—your Savior!"
Isaiah 43:1-3

When it comes in the guise of a friend

"Be of good cheer, I have overcome **the world.**"

Does not this show that the world is an enemy to the Lord, and to the Lord's people? and never so much an enemy—never to be so much dreaded—as **when it comes in the guise of a friend**. When it . . . steals upon your **heart**, engrosses your **thoughts**, wins your **affections**, draws away your **mind** from God, —then it is to be dreaded.

When the world smites us as an enemy—its blows are not to be feared. It is **when it smiles upon us as a friend**—it is most to be dreaded.

When our **eyes** begin to drink it in,
when our **ears** begin to listen to its voice,
when our **hearts** become entangled in its fascinations,
when our **minds** get filled with its anxieties,
when our **affections** depart from the Lord
and cleave to the things of time and sense,
—then the world is to be dreaded.

Canaanitish idols and heathenish abominations

"You shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their engraved images with fire!" Deuteronomy 7:5

Our hearts are by nature full of **Canaanitish idols and heathenish abominations**, which must be destroyed!

Lusts after evil things,
adulterous images,
idolatrous desires,
strong hankerings after sin—
along with evils which have **the impudence
to wear a religious garb**—such as . . .
towering thoughts of our own ability,
pleasing dreams of creature holiness,
swellings up of pride—dressed out and painted
in all the tawdry colors of Satanic delusion—how
can these abominations be allowed to run rampant
in the human heart?

The altars and **religious rites** of Canaanites were to be
destroyed as much as their **idols!** And thus we may say
of **that very religious being—man**, that his false worship
and heathenish notions of God must be destroyed—as well
as his more flagrant, though not more dangerous, lusts
and abominations.

The sentence against both is, "Destroy them!" They
must not stand side by side with Immanuel, who is
to have the preeminence in all things, and who is
"the Alpha and the Omega—the first and the last."

And O what a mercy it is to have both **our FLESHLY and
RELIGIOUS abominations both destroyed!** For I am sure
that **God** and **self** never can rule in the same heart—that
Christ and the devil can never reign in the same bosom
—each claiming the supremacy!

This inward conflict

"I know that nothing good lives in me—that is, in
my sinful nature. For I have the **desire** to do what
is good—**but I cannot carry it out.**" Romans 7:18

Now it is this which makes the Lord's people such a
burdened people—that makes them so oppressed in
their souls as to cry out against themselves daily,
and sometimes hourly—**that they are what they
are**—that they would be spiritual, yet are carnal—
that they would be holy, yet are unholy—that they would
have sweet communion with Jesus, yet have such
sensual alliance with the things of time and sense—
that they would be Christians in word, thought, and
deed; yet, in spite of all, they feel their carnal mind,

their wretched depravity intertwining, interlacing, gushing forth—contaminating with its polluted stream everything without and within—so as to make them sigh, groan, and cry being burdened, "What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?" Romans 7:24

He would not be entangled in these snares for ten thousand worlds—he hates the evils of his heart, and mourns over the corruptions of his nature. They make the tear fall from his eye, and the sob to heave from his bosom—they make him a wretched man—and fill him day after day with sorrow, bitterness, and anguish.

None but a saved soul, under divine teaching, can see this evil—and mourn and sigh under the depravity, the corruption, the unbelief, the carnality, the wickedness, and the deceitfulness of his evil heart.

This inward conflict, this sore grief, this internal burden, that all the family of God are afflicted with—is an evidence that the life and grace of God are in their bosoms.

"Thank God! **The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord!** So you see how it is—in my mind I really want to obey God's law, but because of my sinful nature I am a slave to sin." Rom. 7:25

Who really knows how bad it is?

"The human heart is most deceitful and desperately wicked! **Who really knows how bad it is?**" Jeremiah 17:9

Without a knowledge of the corruptions and abounding evils of our deceitful and desperately wicked heart . . .

unbelief,
infidelity,
pride,
hypocrisy,
worldly mindedness,
carnality,
sensuality,
selfishness;
there will be . . .
no humility,

no self loathing,
no dread of falling,
no desire to be kept,
no knowledge of the super-aboundings
of grace, over the aboundings of sin.

So many truly sincere and religious people

"Cornelius and all his family were **devout** and **God-fearing**; he **gave generously** to those in need and **prayed to God regularly**." Acts 10:2

Yet Cornelius and his family weren't saved! (Acts 11:14)

—A generous centurion built a synagogue. (Luke 7:3-5)

—A young man keeps the commandments from his youth up. (Luke 18:21)

—Balaam prophesies. (Numbers 23:16)

—Saul weeps. (1 Samuel 24:16)

—Judas preaches the gospel. (Matthew 10:5-8)

Yet none of these men were saved! It is at times, enough to fill one's heart with mingled astonishment and sorrow, to see **so many truly sincere and religious people**, whose religion will leave them short of eternal life—because they are destitute of saving grace.

To see so much . . .

amiability,
benevolence,
devotedness,
self-denial,
liberality
loveliness of character,
integrity,
consistency of life,
all inescapably dashed against the rock of inflexible justice,
and there shattered and lost—swallowed up with its unhappy
possessors in the raging billows beneath—such a sight, did
we not know that the Judge of the whole earth cannot do
wrong, would indeed stagger us to the very center of our being!

Sick of SIN, sick of SELF, sick of the WORLD

"**Delight yourself in the LORD** and He will give you the desires of your heart." Psalm 37:4

By nature we **delight in SIN**. It is the very element of our nature—and even after the Lord has called us by His grace and quickened us by his Spirit—there is the same love to sin in the heart as there was before. We **delight** in it—we would **wallow** in it—take our full **enjoyment** of it—and **swim** in it as a fish swims in the waters of the sea!

By nature we also are **prone to IDOLATRY**. **Self** is the grand object of all our sensual and carnal worship. Our own **exaltation**,
our own **amusement**,
our own **pleasure**,
our own **gratification**.

Something whereby SELF may be . . .

flattered,
admired,
adored,
delighted,
is the grand end and aim of man's natural worship.

By nature we also **delight in the WORLD**. It is . . .
our element,
our home,
what our carnal hearts are intimately blended with.

From all these things, then, which are intrinsically evil—which a pure and holy God must hate with absolute abhorrence—we must be **weaned** and effectually **divorced**—we need to have these things **embittered** to us.

All the time we are doing homage and worship to **self**—all the time we are loving the **world**—all the time we delight in **sin**—all the time we are setting up **idols** in the secret chambers of imagery—there is no delighting ourselves in the Lord.

We cannot delight ourselves in the Lord until we are purged of creature love—until the idolatry of our hearts is not merely manifested, but hated and abhorred—until by . . .
cutting temptations,
sharp exercises,
painful perplexities,

and various sorrows,
we are brought to this state—to be . . .

**sick of SIN,
sick of SELF,
sick of the WORLD.**

Until we are brought to loathe ourselves, we are not brought to that spot where none but God Himself can comfort, please, or make the soul really happy.

Now the very means that God employs to embitter the world to us are cutting and grievous dispensations—as unexpected reverses in fortune—or afflictions of body, of family, or of soul. But these very means that the Lord employs to divorce our carnal union from the world, stir up the self-pity, the murmuring, the peevishness, and the rebelliousness of our nature. So that we think we are being very harshly dealt with, in being compelled to walk in this trying path.

But only by these cutting dispensations we are eventually brought to delight ourselves in Him, who will give us the desires of our heart.

How **long** you shall be walking in this painful path—how **heavy** your trials—what their **duration** shall be—how **deep** you may have to sink—how **cutting** your afflictions may be in body or soul, God has not defined, and we cannot. But they must work until they have produced this result—weaned, divorced, and separated us from all that we naturally love and idolatrously cleave unto—and all that we adulterously roam after. If our trials have not done this, they must go on until they produce that effect.

The burden must be laid upon the back,
affliction must try the mind,
perplexities must encumber the feet,
until we are brought to this point—that **none but the Lord Himself**, with a taste of His dying love, can comfort our hearts, or give us that inward peace and joy which our soul is taught to crave after.

A hundred doctrines floating in the head

By five minutes real communion with the Lord . . .
we learn more,
we know more,

we receive more,
we feel more, and
we experience more
than by a thousand years of merely studying the
Scriptures, or using external forms, rites,
and ceremonies.

One truth written by the Spirit in the heart,
will bring forth more fruit in the life, than
a hundred doctrines floating in the head.

However low we may sink

What a mercy it is to have a faithful, gracious, and
compassionate High Priest who can sympathize with
His poor, tried, tempted family—so that **however
low we may sink . . .**

His **piteous eye** can see us in our low estate,
His **gracious ear** hear our cries,
His **loving heart** melt over us, and
His **strong arm** pluck us from our destructions!

Oh, what would we do without such a gracious
and most suitable Savior as our blessed Jesus!

How He seems to rise more and more . . .

in our estimation,
in our thoughts,
in our desires,
in our affections,

as we see and feel . . .

what a wreck and ruin we are,
what dreadful havoc sin has made with us,
what miserable outcasts we are by nature.

But oh, how needful it is, dear friend, to be
brought down in our soul to be the . . .

chief of sinners,
viler than the vilest,
worse than the worst,
that we may really and truly believe in, and cleave
unto, **this most precious and suitable Savior!**

Yours affectionately in the Lord,
J. C. Philpot, October 1, 1868

Nothing but a slave!

"Once you were slaves of sin!" Romans 6:17

What a picture does this draw of our sad state, while walking in the darkness and death of unregeneracy!

The Holy Spirit here sets forth **Sin as a harsh master, exercising tyrannical dominion over his slaves!** How this portrays our state and condition in a state of unregeneracy—slaves to sin!

Just as a master commands his slave to go here and there—imposes on him certain tasks—and has entire and despotic authority over him—so **sin . . .** had a complete mastery over us, used us at its arbitrary will and pleasure, drove us here and there on its commands.

But in this point we differed from physical slaves—that we did not murmur under our yoke—but gladly and cheerfully obeyed all sin's commands—and never tired of doing the most servile drudgery!

Thus **some** have had sin as **a very vulgar and tyrannical master**, who drove them into open acts of drunkenness, uncleanness, and profligacy—yes, everything base, vile, and evil.

Others have been preserved through education, through the watchfulness and example of parents, or other moral restraints, from going into such open lengths of iniquity—and outward breakings forth of evil. **But still sin secretly reigned in their hearts . . .** pride, worldliness, love of the things of time and sense, hatred to God and aversion to His holy will, selfishness and stubbornness, in all their various forms, had a complete mastery over them! And though sin ruled over them more as a gentleman—he kept them in a more refined, though not less real or absolute slavery! Whatever sin bade them do, that they did, as implicitly as the most abject slave ever obeyed a tyrannical master's command.

What a picture does the Holy Spirit here draw of what a man is! **Nothing but a slave!**—and sin, as his master, first driving him upon God's sword, and then giving him eternal death as his wages!

"He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness—and He has brought us into the Kingdom of His dear Son!" Col. 1:13

A glory, a beauty, and a sweetness

How sweet it is to trace the Lord's hand in providence . . .
to look back on the chequered path that He has led us by;
to see how His hand has been with us for good;
what difficulties He has brought us through;
in what straits He has appeared;
how in things most trying He has wrought deliverance;
and how He has sustained us to the present hour.

How sweet are providential favors when they come stamped with this inscription, "This is from the Lord!"
How precious every temporal mercy becomes—our very food, lodging, and clothing!

How sweet is the least thing when it comes down to us as from God's hands! A man cannot know the sweetness of his daily bread until he sees that God gives it to him—nor the blessedness of any providential dealing until he can say, "God has done this for me—and given that to me." **When a man sees the providence of God stamped on every action of life, it casts a glory, a beauty, and a sweetness over every day of his life!**

Having nothing—and yet possessing all things.

"Having nothing—and yet possessing all things." 2 Cor. 6:10

How can this apparent contradiction be reconciled?

It is resolved thus—
"having nothing" **in self**,
"possessing all things" **in Christ**.

And just in proportion as I have nothing **in self** experimentally—so I possess all things **in Christ**.
My own **beggary** leads me out of self into His **riches**.

My own **unrighteousness** leads me out of self into Christ's **righteousness**.

My own **defilement** leads me out of self
into Christ's **sanctification**.

My own **weakness** leads me out of self
into Christ's **strength**.

My own **misery** leads me out of self
into Christ's **mercy**.

"Having nothing—and yet possessing all things." 2 Cor.
6:10

These two branches of divine truth, so far from clashing with each other—sweetly, gloriously, and blessedly harmonize. And just in proportion as we know spiritually, experimentally, and vitally of "having nothing," **in self**—just so much shall we know spiritually, experimentally, and vitally of "possessing all things" **in Christ**.

Riches, honors, and comforts

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

How different is the estimate that **the Christian** makes of **riches, honors, and comforts**—from that made by the **world** and the **flesh**!

The world's idea of **riches** are only such as consist in gold and silver, in houses, lands, or other tangible property.

The world's estimate of **honors**, are only such as **man** has to bestow.

The world's notion of **comfort**, is "fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind."

But the true Christian takes a different estimate of these matters, and feels that . . .

the only true **riches** are those of God's grace in the heart,
the only real **honor** is that which comes from **God**,
the only solid **comfort** is that which is imparted by the Holy Spirit to a broken and contrite spirit.

Now, just in proportion as we are filled by the Spirit of **God**—shall we take faith's estimate of **riches, honors, and comforts**. And just so much as we are imbued with the spirit of the **world**—shall we take the flesh's estimate of these things.

When the eye of the **world** looked on the Apostles, it viewed them as a company of poor ignorant men—a set of wild enthusiasts, who traveled about the country preaching Jesus, who they said, had been crucified, and was risen from the dead. The natural eye saw no beauty, no power, no glory in the truths they brought forth. Nor did it see that the poor perishing bodies of these outcast men contained in them **a heavenly treasure**—and that they would one day shine as the stars forever and ever—while those who despised their word would sink into endless woe.

The **spirit of the world** can never understand or love the things of eternity—it can only look to, and can only rest upon, the poor perishing things of time and sense.

The continued teachings of the Spirit

When once, by **the operation of the Spirit** on our conscience, we have been stripped of . . .
formality,
superstition,
self-righteousness,
hypocrisy,
presumption,
and the **other delusions of the flesh that hide themselves under the mask of religion**—we have felt the difference between having a name to live while dead, and the power of vital godliness—and as a measure of divine life has flowed into the heart out of the fullness of the Son of God—**we desire no other religion but that which stands in the power of God**—by that alone can we live, and by that alone we feel that we can die.

And, at last, we are brought to this conviction and solemn conclusion—that **there is no other true religion but that which consists in the continued teachings of the Spirit, and the communications of the life of God to the soul.**

And with the Spirit's teachings are connected . . .
all the actings of **faith** in the soul,
all the anchorings of **hope** in the heart,
all the flowings forth of **love**,
every tear of genuine **contrition** that flows down the cheeks,

every sigh of **godly sorrow** that heaves from the bosom,
every **cry** and **groan** because of the body of sin,
every breath of **spiritual prayer** that comes from the heart,
every **casting** of our souls upon Christ,
all **submission** to Him,
all **communion** with Him,
all **enjoyment** of Him, and
all the inward **embracements** of Him
in His suitability and preciousness.

It will come in at every chink and crevice!

"I know that nothing good lives in me."

Romans 7:18

The world within us is ten thousand times worse than the world outside of us! We may shut and bar our doors, and exclude the outside world—but the world within cannot be so shut out! More—we might go and hide ourselves in a hermit's cave, and never see the face of man again—but even there we would be as carnal and worldly as if we lived in Vanity Fair! We cannot shut out the world—**it will come in at every chink and crevice!** This wretched world will intrude itself into our every thought and imagination!

I don't know how it may be with you, but I have no more power to keep out the workings of sin in my heart—than I have power by holding up my hand to stop the rain from coming down to the earth! **Sin will come in at every crack and crevice,** and manifest itself in the wretched workings of an evil heart!

The seeds of every crime are in our nature—and therefore, could your flesh have its full swing—there would not be a viler wretch in **London** than you!

At last to cheat the devil!

If **God** is not your master—the **devil** will be.

If **grace** does not rule—**sin** will reign.

If **Christ** is not your all in all—the **world** will be.

It is not as though we could roam abroad in total liberty. We must have a master of one kind, or another.

And which is best?

A bounteous, benevolent Benefactor,
a merciful, loving, and tender Parent,
a kind, forgiving Father and Friend,
a tender-hearted, compassionate Redeemer?

OR

A cruel devil,
a miserable world,
a wicked, vile, abominable heart?

Which is better?

To live under the sweet constraints of the
dying love of a dear Redeemer—under . . .
gospel influences,
gospel principles,
gospel promises, and
gospel encouragements?

OR

To walk in imagined liberty, with sin in our heart,
exercising dominion and mastery there—and binding
us in iron chains to the judgment of the great day?

Even taking the present life—there is more real pleasure,
satisfaction, and solid happiness in half an hour with God,
in sweet union and communion with the Lord of life and
glory, in reading His word with a believing heart, in finding
access to His sacred presence, in knowing something of the
droppings in of His favor and mercy—than in . . .
all the delights of sin,
all the lusts of the flesh,
all the pride of life, and
all the amusements that the world has ever devised
to kill time and cheat self—thinking, by a death-bed
repentance—**at last to cheat the devil!**

This is what the Lord says

This is what the Lord says—"Cursed is the one who

trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the Lord." Jer. 17:5

The Lord here does not lay down a man's moral or immoral character as a test of salvation.

He does **not** say, "Cursed is . . .
the thief,
the adulterer,
the extortioner,
the murderer,
the man that lives in open profanity."

He puts all that aside, and fixes His eye and lays His hand upon one mark—which may exist with the greatest morality and with the highest profession of religion.

"I will tell you," the Lord says, "who are under My curse—the person who trusts in man—who depends on flesh for his strength—and in so doing, his heart turns away from Me."

This is what the Lord says—"Cursed is the one who **trusts in man**, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the Lord." Jer. 17:5

God's perfect will

"That good, and acceptable, and **perfect will of God**." Romans 12:2

God's will is "perfect". In it, there is . . .
no spot,
no stain,
no weakness,
no error,
no instability.

It is and indeed must necessarily be as perfect as God Himself; for it emanates from Him who is all perfection; and is a discovery of His mind and character.

But when **God's perfect will** . . .
sets itself against our **flesh**,
thwarts our dearest **hopes**,
overturns our fondest **schemes**,
we cannot see that it is a perfect will. But rather, are much disposed to fret, murmur, and rebel against it.

God's perfect will may . . .
snatch a child from your bosom;
strike down a dear husband;
tear from your arms a beloved wife;
strip you of all your worldly goods;
put your feet into a path of suffering;
lay you upon a bed of pain and languishing;
cast you into hot furnaces or overwhelming floods;
make your life almost a burden to yourself!

How can you, under circumstances so trying and distressing as these, acknowledge and submit to **God's perfect will**; and let it reign and rule in your heart without a murmur of resistance to it?

Look back and see how **God's perfect will** has, in previous instances, reigned supreme in all points, for your good. It has ordered or overruled all circumstances and all events, amid a complication of difficulties in providence and grace. Nothing has happened to your injury; but all things have worked together for your good.

Whatever we have lost, it was better for us that it was taken away. Whatever . . .
property,
or comfort,
or friends,
or health,
or earthly happiness we have been deprived of,
it was better for us to lose, than to retain them.

Was your **dear child** taken away? It might be to teach you resignation to God's sacred will.

Has a **dear partner** been snatched from your embrace? It was that God might be your better Partner and undying Friend.

Was any portion of your **worldly substance** taken away? It was that you might be taught to live a life of faith in the providence of God.

Have your **fondest schemes** been marred; your youthful hopes blighted; and you pierced in the warmest affections of your heart? It was . . .
to remove an idol,
to dethrone a rival to Christ,

to crucify the object of earthly love,
so that a purer, holier, and more enduring
affection might be enshrined in its stead.
To tenderly embrace **God's perfect will** is
the grand object of all gospel discipline.

The ultimatum of gospel obedience is to **lie
passive in His hand**, and know no will but His.
"That good, and acceptable, and **perfect will of God.**"
Romans 12:2

This sinner, not the Pharisee

The **proud Pharisee** stood by himself and prayed this
prayer: "I thank you, God, that I am not a **sinner** like
everyone else, especially like that publican over there!
For I never cheat, I don't sin, I don't commit adultery,
I fast twice a week, and I give you a tenth of my
income." Luke 18:11-12

Man unites in himself, what at first sight seem to
be completely opposite things. He is the greatest
of **sinner**s—and yet the greatest of **Pharisees**.

Now, what two things can be so opposed to each
other as **sin** and **self-righteousness**? Yet the very
same man who is a **sinner** from top to toe, with the
whole head sick and the whole heart faint—who is
spiritually nothing else but a leper throughout—how
contradictory it appears that the same man has in
his own heart a most stubborn **self-righteousness!**

Now, against these two evils God, so to speak, directs
His whole artillery—He spares neither one nor the other.

But it is hard to say which is the greatest rebellion
against God—the existence of **sin** in man and what he
is as a fallen sinner—or his **Pharisaism**, the lifting up
his head in pride of self-righteousness.

It is not easy to decide **which is the more obnoxious
to God**—the **drunkard** who sins without shame—or the
Pharisee puffed up with how pleasing he is to God.
The one is abhorrent to **our** feelings—and, as far as
decency and morality are concerned, **we** would rather
see the Pharisee. But when we come to matters of

true religion, **the Pharisee seems the worst!** At least our Lord intimated as much when He said the publicans and harlots would enter the kingdom of God before them.

"But **the publican** stood at a distance and dared not even lift his eyes to heaven as he prayed. Instead, he beat his chest in sorrow, saying, '**O God, be merciful to me, for I am a sinner!**'

I tell you, **this sinner, not the Pharisee**, returned home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." Luke 18:13-14

Five devilisms!

As regards **sin in its workings**, we may say there are **five devilisms** from which we need to be saved . . .

1. The GUILT of sin.
2. The FILTH of sin.
3. The LOVE of sin.
4. The DOMINION of sin.
5. The PRACTICE of sin.

1. We need the application of Christ's precious blood to our conscience, to take away the **guilt** of sin.

2. We need the Spirit of Christ to sanctify and to wash the soul in the fountain, to cleanse from the **filth** of sin.

3. We need the love of Christ shed abroad in our hearts, to take away the **love** of sin.

4. We need the power of Christ, to rescue us from the **dominion** of sin.

5. We need the grace of Christ, to preserve us from the **practice** of sin.

It is feeling **sin** in its various workings, which makes us value **Christ!** Strange mysterious way!

O, strange path! that **to be exercised with sin, is the path to the Savior!**

Very painful, very mysterious, very inexplicable —that the more you feel **yourself** a wretched, miserable sinner; the more you long after **Jesus**, who is able to save you to the uttermost!

Thus, we shall find that we need all that Christ is. For we are **no little sinners**; and He is **no little Savior!**

We are great sinners!

He is a Savior—and a great one!

"He is able to save to the uttermost!" Hebrews 7:25

This is the struggle!

"**Oh, what a wretched man I am!** Who will free me from this body that is dominated by sin?" Rom. 7:24
If a person were to tell me he did not love sin in his carnal mind, I would say with all mildness, "You do not speak the truth!" **If your carnal mind does not love sin . . .**

Why do you think of it?

Why do you secretly indulge it in your imagination?

Why do you play with it?

Why do you seek to extract a devilish sweetness out of it?

O, what a mercy it would be, if there were not this dreadful love of sin in our heart! **This is the struggle** —that there should be this **traitor** in the camp; that our carnal mind should be so devilish as to love that which made the blessed Jesus die; as to love that which crucified the Lord of glory, and to love it with a vehement love!

"Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord!"
Romans 7:25

It is I

"Take courage! **It is I**. Don't be afraid." Mark 6:50

It is I who formed you in the womb, and brought you forth into your present existence. **It is I**, the Lord your God, who has fed you, and clothed you from that hour up to the present moment. **It is I**, the Lord your God, who has preserved you on every side. When you were upon a sick bed, **it was I**, the Lord your God, who visited your soul, raised up your body, and gave you that measure of health which you do now enjoy. **It is I**, the Lord your God, who placed you in the situation of life which you do now occupy.

It is I, the Lord your God . . .
who deals out to you every trial,
who allots you every affliction,
who brings upon you every cross,
who works in you everything according
to My own good pleasure.

When we can thus believe that the Lord our God is about our bed and our path, and spying out all our ways; when we can look up to Him, and feel that He is the Lord **our** God, there is no feeling . . .
more sweet,
more blessed,
more heavenly!

"Take courage! **It is I**. Don't be afraid." Mark 6:50

That sweet grace

"Remember how the Lord your God led you through the wilderness for forty years, **to humble you**." Deut. 8:2

We learn humility by a deep discovery of what we are; by an opening up of . . .
the corruption,
the weakness,
the wickedness,
of our fallen nature.

The Lord's way of teaching His people humility is by placing them first in one trying spot, and then in another; by allowing . . .

some **temptation** to arise;
some **stumbling block** to be in their path;
some **besetting sin** to work upon their corrupt affections;
some **idol** to be embraced by their idolatrous heart;
something to take place to **draw out the sin** which is
in their heart; and thus make it manifest to their sight.

As a general rule, **we learn humility**, not by hearing ministers tell us what wicked creatures we are; nor by merely looking into our bosoms and seeing a whole swarm of evils working there; but from being compelled by painful necessity to believe that we are vile, through circumstances and events time after time **bringing to light those hidden evils in our heart**, which we once thought ourselves pretty free from.

We learn humility, not merely by a discovery of what **we** are, but also by a discovery of what **Jesus** is.

We need a glimpse . . .

of Jesus,
of His love,
of His grace,
of His blood.

When these two feelings meet together
in our bosom . . .
our shame, and the Lord's goodness;
our guilt, and His forgiveness;
our wickedness, and His superabounding mercy;
they break us, humble us, and lay us, dissolved in tears
of godly sorrow and contrition, at the footstool of mercy!

And thus we learn humility, that sweet grace, that
blessed fruit of the Spirit in real, vital, soul-experience.

Slaves of Satan!

"Then they will come to their senses and escape from **the Devil's trap**. For they have been **held captive by him to do whatever he wants**." 2 Timothy 2:26

In our natural state, **we are all the slaves of Satan!**

We love our foul master, hug his chain, and delight in his servitude, little thinking what awful wages are to follow.

This mighty conqueror has with him a numerous train of

captives! This haughty master, the 'god of this world', has in his fiendish retinue, a whole array of slaves who gladly do his behests. They obey him cheerfully, though he is leading them down to the bottomless pit! For though **he amuses them while here in this world with a few toys and baubles**, he will not pay them their wages until he has enticed and flattered them into that ghastly gulf of destruction, in which he himself has been weltering for ages.

"Satan, the god of this evil world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe." 2 Cor. 4:4

To keep me from getting puffed up

"But **to keep me from getting puffed up**, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me and **keep me from getting proud**. Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away. Each time He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for **My power** is made perfect in **your weakness**.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about **my weaknesses**, so that **Christ's power** may rest on me." 2 Cor. 12:7-9

Depend upon it, the Lord's family have to **go through much tribulation on their way to heaven**. So says the unerring word of truth, and so speaks the experience of every God-taught soul. Now . . .
in these seasons of trouble,
in these painful exercises,
in these perplexing trials,
the Lord's people need strength; yet the Lord sends these trials in order to drain and exhaust them of 'creature strength'.

Such is the 'self-righteousness' of our heart; such the 'legality' intertwined with every fiber of our natural disposition—that we cleave to our own **righteousness** as long as there is a thread to cleave to; we stand in our own **strength** as long as there is a point to stand upon; we lean upon our own **wisdom** as long as a particle remains!

In order, then, to exhaust us, drain us, strip us, and purge us of this pharisaic leaven, the Lord sends . . .

trials,
temptations,
sorrows,
perplexities.

What is their effect?

To teach us **our weakness**, and bring us to that one and only spot where God and the sinner meet—the spot of **creature helplessness**.

In order, therefore, to bring us to this spot, to know experimentally **the strength of Christ**, and feel it to be more than a doctrine, a notion, or a speculation—to know it as an internal reality, tasted by the inward palate of our soul—to have this experience wrought into our hearts with divine power, we must be brought to this spot—to feel **our own utter weakness**.

If anyone loves the world

"Do not love the world or anything in the world. **If anyone loves the world**, the love of the Father is not in him." 1 John 2:15

If the love of the Father is in us, we will not love the world—nor will the world love us!

If your heart and spirit are still in the world,
and you are not separated from . . .
its society,
its amusements,
its pursuits,
its pleasures,
its delights,
its men,
its maxims,
you certainly lack any evidence of a divine
change having been wrought in your soul.

"Anyone who chooses to be **a friend of the world** becomes an enemy of God." James 4:4