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THE

I AM'S

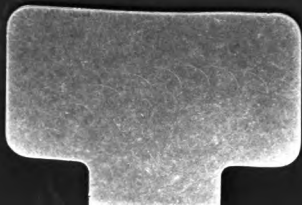
OF

CHRIST.

BY  
S. J. S. O. M. S. P. Y.



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# The "I Ams" of Christ:

BEING

THOUGHTS ON OUR LORD'S ATTRIBUTES, AS UNFOLDED  
BY HIMSELF.

BY

A. S. ORMSBY,

*Author of "Heart Whispers; in Poems and Prose," etc.*

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"God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM."—*Exodus* iii. 14.

"No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, *He hath declared Him.*"—*John* i. 18.

"Jesus! Thou art enough  
The mind and heart to fill;  
Thy life—to calm the anxious soul;  
Thy love—its fear dispell!

"Oh, fix our earnest gaze  
So wholly, Lord, on Thee,  
That with Thy beauty occupied,  
We elsewhere none may see!"



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## PREFACE.

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**I**F the Lord lead us, we may, in some future pages, more fully consider the *remaining* attributes which we find connected with the title "I AM" in the pages of the New Testament. In the following pages we have merely touched upon those to which, we trust, we have been guided by His Spirit, with the earnest desire that both writer and reader may, from the consideration of them, be led to seek a deeper *personal knowledge* of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, in His every word and way.





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## THE "I AMs" OF CHRIST.

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"God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM."—*Exodus* iii. 14.

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**I**N tracing through Scripture the different titles by which God is called, we find He ever presents Himself in such a way as just meets the need and condition of His people. Thus, when this wondrous name first comes under our notice, it is in connection with the commission given to Moses to bring His "people, the children of Israel, *out of Egypt.*" Hence it is one expressive of all-mighty power and sovereignty. Moses said, "They shall say to me, *What is His name?* and what shall I say to them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM." "Jehovah," says one, "in taking this title, was furnishing His people with a blank cheque, to be filled up to any amount. He calls Himself 'I AM,'

and faith has but to write over against that ineffably precious name whatever we want." So His people found it of old; so they find it still: His name is ever intimately connected with the varied needs and necessities of His people. Did they want *righteousness*—His name was "Jehovah-tsdkenu" (the Lord our righteousness); did they want *peace*—it was "Jehovah-shalom" (the Lord send peace); did they want a *banner*—it was "Jehovah-nissi" (the Lord my banner). In a word, He is made unto us "all things." "The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." (Prov. xviii. 10.) And "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, *hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son.*" (Heb. i. 1, 2.) And oh, what tongue can tell, or words describe, how much *His name* unfolds!—the fulness, the preciousness, the perfections of it! Truly we may say, in the words of Solomon's Song (i. 3), "*Thy name* is as ointment *poured forth*, therefore do the virgins love thee"—"poured forth" in His *life*, as He trod this scene, a lonely, sorrowful *man*,

"All the Father's heart revealing  
In His every word and way"—

"poured forth" in His *death*, when on the cross He gave Himself "for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour." (Ephesians v. 2.)

“Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and *given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow*, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Phil. ii. 9-11.)

But who can tell down here all the preciousness and fulness of that blessed name? the divine *suitability* (if I may use such an expression) it has in reference to poor perishing sinners,—exactly meeting them in all their poverty and weakness, supplying their needs, revealing to them their resources, and satisfying their hearts for ever? Again and again the heart falls back upon those wondrously blessed words “I AM,” and, placing what it needs of divine fulness after them, finds *Christ* in it all, and bows in worship. “HE IS.” This is what we need to realize, that He in whom “dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” is the One who *Himself is all in all to us*. Do we as perishing sinners want *life*? “HE is our life.” Do we want *peace*? “HE is our peace.” Do we want *righteousness*? “HE is our righteousness.” Do we want *bread*? HE is “the true bread.” Do we need *care*? HE is the “Good Shepherd.” Do we want *light*? HE is the “light of the world.” “HE is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” HE is the “Alpha and Omega,”

the beginning and the ending; and we may rest assured He is all that comes between. In a word, "*Christ is all, and in all.*"

"When God would teach mankind His name,  
He calls Himself the great 'I AM,'  
And leaves a blank——believers may  
Supply those things for which they pray."

"He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" Jesus has given us *Himself*, and with Himself all the glory, brightness, and blessedness of His own position. We are linked up and associated in vital union with Himself, the Christ. He gives us all the glory the Father gave Him in resurrection. "The glory which *thou* gavest me I have given *them*." We can have nothing apart from a risen Christ; but we have everything, "we have all and abound," *in Him*. All "our springs" are *in Him*—Jehovah-Jesus. There is a power and fullness in that sweet name which reaches to and satisfies our deepest necessities. "All, all we want is there." All for time—all for eternity!

And surely this is most blessed, when we consider *who* it is we thus know—the lowly, despised, and rejected Jesus—the One who, in all the divine consciousness of His eternal power and Godhead, said to the reasoning Jews, "*Before Abraham was I AM,*" and yet they "took up stones to cast at Him."

(John viii. 59.) This is the same One who says, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. . . . Take my yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart : and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matt. xi. 28-30.) How truly did His very presence upon this earth prove Him to be the "meek and lowly" One ! the One who could say, "Lo, I come: I delight to do thy will, O my God !" and who to perform that will "made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men : and being found in fashion as a man, *He humbled Himself*, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." (Phil. ii. 7.) "Though He was rich, yet *for your sakes He became poor*, that ye through His poverty might be rich." Ah, we can never know the depths to which He descended, until we know the heights of glory which He left; and eternity alone will reveal that to us ! But He came into this world to reveal God, to declare or interpret the wondrous title "I AM" to anxious and believing souls. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, *He hath declared Him*." (John i. 18.) And sinners could come unrebuked into His presence, and weep out their tale of guilt and sorrow at His feet, who before had to stand "afar off" at the revelation of His name.

Surely, as we think of Him thus, we may well delight to meditate upon the varied ways in which He presents Himself to our hearts in the New Testament. Surely His every word is, or ought to be, most precious to us; and our hearts, as we pass along through the pages of Scripture, should seek to "gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost."

"There is a sweetness," writes one, "as well as a comprehensiveness in the name 'I AM' which is beyond all power of expression. Each believer can find therein that which exactly suits his own spiritual need, whatever it be. There is not a single winding in all the Christian's wilderness journey, not a single phase of all his soul's experience, not a single point in his condition, which is not divinely met by this title; for the simplest of all reasons, that whatever he wants, he has but to place it by faith over against 'I AM,' and find it all in Jesus."\* Over and over again these words fall from His lips—"I AM," as He puts before us one attribute after another most precious to us. Let us now proceed to trace out their different connections, and the teaching they convey, looking to Him by His Spirit to guide us, to subdue every effort of the flesh or human imagination, and to "bring into captivity every *thought* to the obedience of Christ."

\* See "Notes on Exodus." By C. H. M. Page 51.

Meditating upon and occupied with Himself, we shall learn to know Him *personally* better than we do,—not things *about* Him, however sweet and blessed, but *Himself*, the once lowly but now exalted man at God's right hand. And if once He engage our hearts, He must engage our lives. "*He left all, rose up, and followed Him,*" should be a fit description of every Christian's history, from the moment he comes into contact with Him. We should take our place with a rejected Christ "outside the camp," as those who know our place with a risen Christ inside the veil. Separated from all in the scene around that does not bear the stamp of His divine approval, we should "count all things but loss" that hinders a deeper personal knowledge of Himself; we should have our hearts drawn out, not so much in intelligence respecting things *about* Him as in the "power of a commanding affection" towards Himself; learning all that HE is to us; learning Him as the One who "first came down into our circumstances, and then took us up into His; but occupied not so much with the circumstances as with the One who has brought us into them. In a word, finding *all* in *Christ*, and *Christ in all*.

"All things that God or man can wish  
In Jesus richly meet:  
Not to our eyes is light so dear,  
Nor earthly tie so sweet.

## THE "I AMS" OF CHRIST.

"Oh, may His name still cheer our hearts,  
And shed its fragrance there!  
The sweetest balm of every wound,  
The cure of every care.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Jesus, thy love exceeds our thought!  
But this at least we see,  
The soul that knows Thy love is taught  
To *value nought but Thee!*"



## I.

“**T**H’ ATONING work is done ;  
The Victim’s blood is shed ;  
And Jesus now is gone  
His people’s cause to plead :  
He stands in heaven their great High Priest,  
And bears their names upon His breast.

“ He sprinkles with His blood  
The mercy-seat above ;  
For Justice had withstood  
The purposes of Love ;  
But Justice now withstands no more,  
And Mercy yields her boundless store.

“ No temple made with hands  
His place of service is ;  
In heaven itself He stands,  
A heavenly priesthood His ;  
In Him the shadows of the law  
Are all fulfilled, and now withdraw !”





## THE WAY.

---

“Jesus saith unto him, “I AM *the Way*, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”—JOHN xiv. 6.

**I**N taking the above text as the subject of our first meditation, we would do well to recall when it was first spoken and to *whom*. We find it was to His disciples our Lord addressed these words, as sorrowful and troubled they gathered around Him to hear His parting words on the solemn evening of His betrayal. It was a moment intensely sacred to the sorrow of parting, “a time which the *heart* claimed as entirely belonging to itself”—a moment when nothing but the presentation of what He was *personally* to them could have soothed or mitigated their grief—a moment when the *present* was before them in all the terrible desolation which His absence would make, and the future, with all its brightness and radiant promises, seemed to lie indistinct and far away. Losing Him, they seemed to think they were losing all this life had for them—their Guide, their Counsellor, their *Friend*—more than all, the One, the only One, who would have led them up to God. So

Thomas, in the freedom of expression which the moment of sorrow inspired, unburdened his heart of these his misgivings. "We know not whither Thou goest; and *how can we* know the way?" And truly sweet and blessed is it to hear the Lord's answer, as away from doubts and arguments He leads them back to Himself: If ye know *me*, ye know the *way*—"I AM the Way."

The earliest notice which we get of this "*way*" in Scripture is in the third chapter of Genesis; the latest mention of it in the ninth of Hebrews. In the first we read of a way being *closed*; in the last of a way being thrown open. I would specially ask any readers of these pages who are conscious that they have not, and are not at peace with God, who know and feel they are still at a distance from Him, and that if ushered into His presence now in all their sins, the result of such an interview must be *eternal condemnation*—I would ask such earnestly and prayerfully to study this subject, and learn from these words of our Lord how a sinner can be brought to God in perfect righteousness by "a new and living Way, which *He* hath opened up for us."

"So He drove out the man; and He placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to *keep the way* of the tree of life." (Gen. iii. 24.) Such is the description of the closing of the first way, such the condition of

every child of Adam by nature—fallen and lost, at a distance from God, and shut out of paradise. “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” (Rom. v. 12.) Adam transgressed God’s commandment, and sinned; and as “the wages of sin is *death*,” God had to write the sentence of *death* upon nature in its most unsullied form. But even while He did so, He gave such a revelation and promise of *life* in the midst of it all, that by faith Adam called his wife “Eve—the mother of all living.” Thus “Adam,” says one, “was a safer and happier man outside the bounds of Paradise than he had been within, for this reason, that within, his life depended upon himself, whereas outside it depended upon another, even a promised Christ. And as he looked up, and beheld ‘the Cherubims and the flaming sword,’ he could bless the hand that set them there ‘to keep the way of the tree of life,’ inasmuch as the same hand had opened a better, a safer, and a happier way to that tree.”

But had he sought by his own efforts or contrivance to re-enter Paradise, the result must have been certain and eternal destruction to him. Cain sought to find access to God and to propitiate Him, by offering the fruit of his own toil; he sought on the ground of his own merit and work to approach God. But this could not be. He was a lost, guilty sinner outside of

Paradise, and as such the wages of sin—*death*—was alone due to him. But there is no recognition whatever of this fact in his offering; he sought on the ground of his own toil, by bringing the fruit of the cursed earth, to propitiate God and force his way back unrebuked into His presence. Abel, on the other hand, recognized by faith what his sin required; he met the righteous claims of a holy God against the sinner as they only could be met—by a sacrificed life—by *death*. He came to God with a sacrifice in his hand, the blood of a slain lamb, "the firstlings of his flock and the fat thereof." He came practically confessing his ruined condition and his righteous exclusion from Paradise. There was no attempt on his part to force his way back to the tree of life, or to turn aside the edge of the flaming sword—no attempt, like Cain, to approach God with the fruit of a cursed earth. No, he bowed to God's decision, took the true ground of a sinner, and as such placed the death of a victim between his sins and a holy God. "And God," we read, "had respect unto Abel and to his offering: but unto Cain and to his offering He had not respect." The way was still closed to the tree of life.

As has been often remarked, God tried man *without* law, and he failed; then He tried him *with* law, and he failed also. We see this as we pass on in Scripture to another intimation which we get as to the way being closed. We find it in the description of the furniture

of the tabernacle (all of which were "patterns of things in the heavenlies"), where God was pleased to dwell among His people, that "*the vail shall divide* unto you between the holy place and the most holy. And thou shalt put the *mercy-seat* upon the ark of the testimony *in the most holy place.*" (Ex. xxvi. 34.) This was the direction which He gave unto Moses ere He came down to dwell among them. Still the separation from His presence was most marked and distinct. The most godly Israelite, or the most sinful and polluted in the camp, was alike prohibited from passing within the vail into the "most holy place." None save the high priest—and he but "once a year," and with the blood of a victim in his hand—dared to venture into the light of His presence who was "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity." "Speak unto Aaron thy brother," are His words to Moses, "that he come *not at all times* into the holy place *within the vail . . . . that he die not*: for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy-seat." (Lev. xvi. 2.)

Solemn thought! that man in his natural state dare not come into the presence of God "*lest he die*"—that if God, in the essential righteousness of His character, were to meet the unpardoned sinner, the result must be eternal condemnation to him. Surely then, as we realize this, we can see it was infinite *mercy* which made Him place a vail between the holy place and the most holy, to prevent the access of sinners into

His presence. We do not, I think, sufficiently realize this.

There is a popular thought afloat in men's minds, that God is "too merciful" to do otherwise than to save them and bring them to heaven at last. Now this is a delusion, one of the snares by which Satan seeks to "blind the eyes of them that believe not," and it is sad to think how many succumb to it. God *cannot* be *merciful* at the expense of His justice. He is holy and righteous, and will not leave sin unpunished. Hence it is that we find mercy and judgment always inseparable in divine dealings with the sinner. We get a striking illustration of it in the children of Israel leaving Egypt. Then He dealt *judicially* with the Egyptians, while He acted in freest *grace* to those sheltered beneath the blood of the Lamb. So again at the Red Sea, *judgment* was poured out upon their (and His) enemies, ere they learned the completeness of their deliverance, and were able to sing of His "*mercy*," which had led them forth and redeemed them. (See Exodus xii. 21-36 and xv. 13.) Thus it must ever be: for the word stands true now as ever, "Verily He *is a God that judgeth* in the earth." So it is that He cannot *pass over* sin. A merciful judge is a very contradiction of terms. A judge must be *righteous*, not *merciful*. Hence the necessity of some means being ordained by which God could retain His eternal character as a holy, sin-hating God, and at the

same time pardon and justify the guilty, ruined sinner. And how was this to be done? The most brilliant human intellect fails to solve this divine and all-important problem. It originated in the mind and eternal counsels of God, and He alone can find an answer; but, blessed be His name, He *can*, He *has*—"God has devised a means." (2 Sam. xvi. 14.) He has found a way by which He can be "just and the Justifier" of those who believe; and that way, in a word, is "Christ." "I am the Way"—is the precious testimony of the Lord Jesus Himself—"the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." Let us briefly notice the connection which this places Him in both to sinners and to saints.

And first we may dwell on the preciousness of this divine testimony in reference to the guilty, ruined sinner, who knows and feels that in *God's* way, and His alone, can be found peace and pardon; who feels perfectly unable of himself to make his way back into the presence of God; and that, even were he able to do so, he is not morally fit or suited for that presence. To such an one it must be intense relief to find, on the authority of God's Word, that, in the matter of obtaining salvation, man and his resources are *entirely set aside*, and that the whole question of sin has been entered into and *judged* in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary. What a joy to know that "He who knew *no sin* was

*made sin* for us," that He went down under "all the waves and billows" of God's wrath, took the sinner's place before Him, and *bore the judgment* due to him *alone*; thus meeting and satisfying every claim which divine holiness had against him, and opening a way by which the guiltiest could draw near and stand in perfect peace in the presence of God. It was to this glorious consummation that Abel's sacrifice and Israel's lamb pointed—to a time when no Cherubim with flaming sword should bar the way to the Tree of Life, and when the veil of the temple should be "rent in twain from the top to the bottom," thus leaving free access for the sinner into the Holiest of all "by the blood of Jesus."

A happy friendship once existed between God and man on the ground of innocence; but sin having entered and snapped the chain asunder, there can be no reconciliation but through the full expression of the moral judgment of God against sin. We can only have 'life through death.' God is the God of holiness, and He must judge sin. In saving the sinner He condemns his sin. The cross of the Lord Jesus Christ is the full expression of this. It lays the foundation for everything—pardon, peace, holiness. It was the *death* of the Lord Jesus, and that alone, which opened the floodgates of the heart of God, and let His love flow out unhindered to perishing sinners. It was *His death* which removed every obstacle which hindered the

sinner's approach to God, and enabled him to "draw nigh" who before had been commanded to "stand afar off." It was His *death* which opened up the way for our being brought into living union with Himself in resurrection. And it is in and through His death and resurrection that God has ordained that sinners shall approach Him.

"Redemption," writes the one already quoted, "was no after-thought with God. Before the world was, or Satan, or sin—before even the voice of God was heard breaking the silence of eternity and calling worlds into existence, He had His deep counsels of love, and these counsels could never find a sufficiently solid basis in *creation*. All the blessings, the privileges, and the dignities of creation were founded upon a creature's obedience, and the moment that failed all was gone. But then Satan's attempt to mar creation only opened the way for the manifestation of God's deeper purposes of *redemption*. There was no need for the blood of the Lamb in creation, when it came fresh from the hand of the Creator, exhibiting in every stage and every department of it the beauteous impress of His hand—'the infallible proofs' of 'His eternal power and Godhead.' (Rom. i.) But when 'by one man' sin was introduced into the world, then came out the far higher, richer, fuller, deeper thought of redemption by the blood of the Lamb. This glorious truth first broke through the thick clouds

which surrounded our first parents as they retreated from the garden of Eden ; its glimmerings appear in the types and shadows of the Mosaic economy ; it burst upon the world in full brightness when 'the day-spring from on high' appeared in the Person of 'God manifest in the flesh;' and its rich and rare results will be realized when the white-robed, palm-bearing multitude shall cluster round the throne of God and the Lamb, and the whole creation shall rest beneath the peaceful sceptre of the Son of David."

How truly does all this show it to us as *God's* salvation—what He planned, what He designed, what He carried out, at the cost of the life-blood of His only Son. Surely we may say, it is a "great salvation," just what great sinners needed, but what they never could have provided. It is just as much the *gift* of God to a perishing world as were the robe, the ring, and the shoes, the gift of the father to his prodigal son! Well may the apostle, as he thinks upon it, find words insufficient to express its vastness—"Thanks be unto God for His *unspeakable* gift."

But however precious, however priceless, however undeserved, man may account this wondrous revelation of grace and love to be, only *God* can rightly estimate the value and perfection of the atoning work of His Son. Only *God* can fathom what it cost Him to bear the weight of our sin, and the hiding of the Father's face in consequence, and to go down under all the

waves and billows of God's judgment to "save sinners." But He does. Hence, when that mighty transaction was completed between the Father and the Son, when the words were uttered in the ears of God—"It is finished!" "the vail of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom," from heaven to earth, by the very hand of God Himself, and He thus signified His divine approval and satisfaction in the atonement which had been made, throwing open, in token of its value, the way into the holiest, into His very presence.

Thus we see it is on the ground of His satisfaction in the perfect sacrifice of Christ that God can receive, pardon, and *justify* the ungodly sinner; and that He can do this in a way perfectly consistent with His intense holiness and righteousness—in fact, that His righteousness and justice are as much concerned *now* in pardoning and receiving the guilty sinner as before they were in *condemning* him. And simply for this reason, that Christ has borne the judgment due to him—that He who "knew no sin" was "made sin," and "bore our sin in His own body on the tree"—that "He died, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God;" and now

"Payment God will not *twice* demand;  
First at my bleeding Surety's hand,  
And then again at *mine*."

Hence it is "God is just," while He is "the justifier

of every one that believeth in Jesus." His heart is set free now, as it were, to act in boundless grace toward a guilty world; and in doing so He shows Himself not merely to be a God of mercy, but a God of righteousness. He is a "just God" while He is "a Saviour;" and now all the sinner has to do is to bow to God's estimate of his condition, and accept as a free gift the "redemption that is in Christ Jesus." The more clearly we see how entirely this is "*God's salvation*," the better we shall understand how utterly valueless man's works or merits are in procuring it. It is not now a question of measure or attainment. In the judgment of the world, one man may be a great deal better than another. It is simply a question of *condition*, and of that the divine verdict is, "There is *no difference*; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Rom. iii. 23.) The amiable, moral, intellectual man, whose life in the eyes of the world has been "blameless," must approach God (if he would be saved) by the very same way as the most open and notorious sinner; and that way is "Christ." There is no second path by which to reach God. He hath "concluded all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all." "All have sinned," and come short of His glory; all are perishing eternally; hence all need the same remedy; and that remedy, blessed be God, He has provided, and they have but to accept.

This blessed truth, so faintly uttered by type and shadow in the dim and by-past ages, is now plainly and distinctly revealed. "God in these last days has spoken unto us *by His Son.*" A way has been opened by which, not merely one man—once a year—but every man, every sinner, may draw nigh and find access to God, even by Christ, the Holy Lamb of God, that "taketh away the sin of the world." By faith they of old looked *forward* and saw His day, and the work of atonement which He was to accomplish. By faith we look *back*, blessed be God, and see that work completed eighteen hundred years ago upon the cross of Calvary. Thus we read, "Christ *being come* an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but *by His own* blood He entered in once into the holy place, *having obtained eternal redemption for us.*" (Hebrews ix. 12.) Again we read, "*By one offering* He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that He had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." What a glorious proclamation is this of His work! But let us see also the effect of

that work. We have "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by *a new and living way*, which He hath consecrated for us, through the vail, that is to say, His flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; *let us draw near*." (Heb. x. 20.) Thus the one who is now trusting in Christ has been introduced into a place and a position far beyond that which Adam enjoyed in the garden of Eden. The precious blood of Christ has not only obtained "*eternal redemption*" for the sinner, but has opened a way by which that sinner can stand in perfect liberty in the presence of divine holiness.

"The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." We see this exemplified in every page of the four evangelists. The law put the sinner standing "afar off," "without the bounds;" "grace" bids him "draw near;" while "truth" puts him *righteously* in the presence of God. Hence when "God, manifest in the flesh," dwelt among us, He ever exhibited these characteristics in His dealings with men. When they came to Him on the ground of the *law*, as in the case of the young ruler in Luke xviii. or the Pharisees in John viii. 7, all He could do was to condemn them; but when they took their proper place as *sinner*s—lost and guilty before Him, like the woman in the Pharisee's house (Luke vii.)—He has nothing for them but unqualified and unconditional blessing.

It is thus we are now to know God; thus we are to gaze upon Him, and rest in His presence. Not as Israel of old knew Him, when "clouds and darkness were round about Him: righteousness and judgment the establishment of His throne" (Ps. xcvi. 2); but as the "Word made flesh," "Emmanuel," "God with us," "God manifest in the flesh;" "*the man* Christ Jesus," "God in Christ," reconciling the world unto Himself, seeking to win back the confidence of man's heart to God. Oh, have our hearts bowed in adoring worship before that wondrous revelation of "the Father" which we get in "the man Christ Jesus"? "No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, *He hath declared Him.*" (John i. 18.)

As we see that lowly, humble *man* standing in sympathizing silence beside those sorrowing sisters at their brother's tomb—as we read the brief but comprehensive words, "Jesus wept"—as we mark Him on the high road to Jericho, stopping to relieve a poor blind beggar—as we see Him, a wearied, toil-worn man, sitting by the well side at Sychar, and asking as a favour a drink of water from the hands of a Samaritan woman—or again, as we see Him, worn out by the toil of the day, asleep in the hinder part of the boat, crossing the lake of Gennesaret—we may learn Him as the God "with whom we have" now "to do." We may learn Him in His two

essential characteristics—"light" and "love," penetrating and exposing the *conscience* of the sinner, but at the same time attracting his heart.

But we must ever bear in mind that it was not His *life*—holy, beautiful, and blameless as it was—which was the procuring cause of all our blessing. "Except a corn of wheat," are His own words, "fall into the ground and *die*, it abideth alone: but *if it die*, it bringeth forth much fruit." (John xii. 24.) Without His *death* we never could have been brought into union with Himself in resurrection or relationship to God. If He had remained to this very hour going through the cities of Israel "doing good," the veil of the temple would continue unrent, to bar the worshipper's approach to God. It was His death that rent that mysterious curtain "from top to bottom." It is "by His stripes," not by His obedient life, that "we are healed;" and those "stripes" He endured *on the cross*, and nowhere else.

But how is it, we may ask, as we gaze upon this wondrous salvation which God has brought so near us, how is it that any are lost? that all are not saved? The answer is, "Through unbelief." It is as sadly true now of individual souls as it was of Israel of old, "they could not enter in *because of unbelief*." When we look at this salvation from God's side, we see it perfect, because divine; when we look at it as regards man, we see nothing but failure and unbelief—we see

man in every possible way, by his own thoughts and works, seeking to neutralize its freeness and perfection. Distinct and clear the divine testimony rings forth, "No man cometh unto the Father, but *by Me*;" and "him that cometh to Me I will *in no wise* cast out." But men seek a great many other ways by which to approach God. Some think by prayers and fasting they must win His approval. Others, that their good works—feeding the hungry, tending the sick, clothing the naked—are the surest way to propitiate Him. Again, others think, if they do the best they can, God will do the rest. But all, in some form or another, are mixing up their own works in the obtaining of His salvation; and this will not do. Salvation must be received by man as a *free gift* from God. God's grace is like His sunlight; we cannot *buy* it; we do not *merit* it; but we may *receive* it, and bask our souls in the conscious enjoyment of it. But this is just what man will not do. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him." (1 Cor. ii. 14.) Man thinks by his own works in some way to merit God's salvation; but in Scripture we read there is only *one* work which a sinner can do which God will accept. We find what it is in the sixth of John's gospel: "This is *the* work of God, that ye *believe on Him whom He hath sent*." Until we have taken God's side against ourselves, until we have bowed to His verdict on our con-

dition, and come to Him by His ordained way—even by Christ—all our *best* works are only "splendid sins."

This is the lesson which Naaman had to learn as he stood at the door of the house of Elisha, and heard the simple, concise, but most comprehensive directions which the prophet gave him—"Go and wash in Jordan seven times." He had travelled all the way from Syria to Samaria with the hope of being cured of his leprosy. And one would have thought that, surely, when these simple directions were given him, with the unqualified promise attaching thereto, with a thankful heart, without a moment's hesitation, he would have complied with the terms. But not so. Strange infatuation! He who would have travelled any distance, done any thing, given any reward, to obtain relief, now that the blessing was within his reach, within his very grasp, turns away from it, refusing in the pride of his heart to bow in subjection to the word of God uttered through the mouth of His servant Elisha.

What a vivid illustration is this of poor human nature in every age. We know our condition is hopeless—just as hopeless and incurable as was Naaman's leprosy—that the end, unless we are saved, must be *death*; for "the wages of sin is *death*;" and relief must come entirely outside ourselves and our own resources. But still we hesitate; we draw back; we refuse to accept God's great and free

salvation, and to cast ourselves unreservedly upon His faithful word and promises. Distinct and clear the message came to Naaman, "Go, wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, *and thou shalt be clean.*" And equally distinct, and equally clear, and from the mouth of God Himself, the words come to us, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and *thou shalt be saved.*" But we see that what hindered Naaman from obeying the word of the prophet was his thoughts, "Behold, I *thought.*" So it is now. Man's thoughts ever stand in the way of God's blessing, because it is unbelief which thinks and reasons; *faith* never does. Faith simply takes God at His word, and however improbable the assurance may seem to nature, resting upon that infallible authority, says "it shall be so."

And now, reader, let me ask, How is it with you? Have you accepted God's salvation which He has brought so nigh you in the person of His Son? or are you, like Naaman, "rejecting your own mercies," living at conscious distance from God, eternity unprepared for, your soul unsaved? If so, there is no further analogy between your history and Naaman's; for he, at the solicitation of his servants, "repented and went." He bowed to the prophet's word, and "went down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan . . . and he was clean." (2 Kings v. 14.) The obedience of faith never loses its reward. Further, in

the earnest entreaties of Naaman's servants, I think we get a little hint, as it were, of the work of the Holy Ghost—the strivings of the Spirit of God in the soul of the sinner—the pleadings of God Himself. "Turn ye, turn ye; why will ye die?" And surely it is sweet and blessed to remember that He does act so; but, at the same time, most solemn is our state if we refuse to be influenced by Him; for the time will come when He will cease to strive with men, when He will leave this world, which is now the scene of His operations, to fill up the measure of its iniquity without let or hindrance—a day when the door of grace, now standing so wide open, will be shut, and shut for ever!—shut not in the face of those who knew nothing at all about it, but in the face of those who knew the way in, but did not avail themselves of it.

Reader, let it not be so with you. You hear *now*, if you never did before, God's plan of salvation, His provision for the guilty, ruined sinner. If you had never seen a Bible, nor heard a sermon, nor uttered a prayer—if you were as ignorant of divine truth as a poor heathen from a foreign land, in the words of our Lord we are now meditating on, there is enough to save ten thousand souls. "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me." Once again I ask you, Do you know Him as the Way? Have you accepted Christ as your Sub-

stitute, your divinely-appointed Substitute? Have you cast your soul upon Him? Do you know you have no hope, no help but *in Him*? Do not, I beseech you, leave this an unanswered question. Let it be settled now, and settled for ever. Do not treat as a matter of little importance your soul's eternal destiny. Awake, ere it be too late, from your sleep of indifference. The time is rapidly passing by. The hour is approaching when you will have to meet God—meet Him either as your *justifier* or your *judge*. The decision *now* lies in your hands, which it will be. The *past*, the dark and faithless *past*, you cannot recall; the *future* you cannot reckon upon, even an hour, as being yours; but the *present*, this moment, as you read these pages, you may have such a dealing with Christ as your Saviour that there may be a link formed eternally between your soul and Him. You may be conscious of a lifetime of sin, of warnings despised, and entreaties rejected; you may be fearful now that for you all is lost, as you cannot retrieve the dark and ruined past; but it is not too late yet; God still pleads with you, Jesus still lingers, unchanged in His love towards perishing sinners; and with such a Saviour there is no room for despair; and for you there is still open, and free of access, a throne of mercy and a throne of grace.

“Come, for thy day, thy wasted day, is closing,  
With all its joy and sun;

Bright loving hours have passed thee by unheeded,  
Thy work on earth undone.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Clasp a far truer hand, a kinder, stronger,  
Of Him the crucified;  
Let in a deeper love into thy spirit,  
The love of Him who died!"

It is all you have to do—to open your heart, and let in His love; to be content to be a *receiver* at His hands of all that which He so freely gives. This day of God's grace is rapidly running out, the shadows of night are darkening around us, and true hearts are watching on the hills of time for the bright and Morning Star to arise; but still He lingers, and His long-suffering is salvation to you, if you will only respond *now* to His loving and gentle entreaty. In His grace He has spread "a supper," and He bids you to it. (Luke xiv.) He says, "Come, for all things are now ready." You have nothing to *do*, only to partake of His grace. Will you still refuse? Decide *now*, for a day—yea, an hour—and all may be lost for eternity. He is calling you to light, and love, and happiness: will you choose endless misery and blackness of darkness for ever? He calls you up from the shifting, sinking sands of time; from your losses and your gains; from this life, with its ever-changing scenes of joy and sorrow; from your aims, ambitions, and pursuits, which never in their widest range pass the bounds of this poor world's horizon; from the "things

seen, but temporal." He calls you into a region of eternal joy, and peace, and blessing, to "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and"—happy contrast to the things of earth—"that fadeth *not* away."

In conclusion, let us very briefly consider these words of our Lord in reference to *His people*. To them He still presents Himself, saying, "I am the Way." Some reader may enquire, "What does it mean? It is plain enough when addressed to lost, ruined *sinner*s, but what does it imply when spoken to His saints?" The answer is simply this: "As Christ is the only way for a *sinner* to approach *God*, so He is the only way for a *saint* to approach the *Father*." It is not merely that we have got *salvation*, but we have got a *Saviour*, one to whom we owe the love of our hearts, as well as the obedience of our lives. And just as surely as there is no other way by which a sinner can stand in righteousness and peace in the presence of divine holiness, even so there is no other way by which a saint can draw nigh and enjoy uninterrupted and unhindered communion with the Father. "Christ" is the alone title for both. It is Christ for the sinner, and it must be Christ for the saint! Through Him we enter into all the joy and liberty of the Father's house. Through Him we can stand in the presence of God as purged worshippers, offering the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to God continually; and through Him we have "boldness to

enter into the Holiest," and to "draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith."

All this comes out most beautifully in the Epistle to the Hebrews. In the first ten chapters every sight which we get of Him is as the One who died "to put away sin." Indeed, the whole epistle forms a most striking and precious contrast to the Book of Leviticus. There we find Atonement foreshadowed—but nothing more—in all its types, sacrifices, and ceremonies. Sin was again brought to remembrance, and had to be put away afresh every year. In Hebrews we find it all *commemorative*. Sin *has been* judged and put away for ever, and the sinner brought into the closest and most perfect relationship with God. Christ is here presented as the Ascended One, our great High Priest who has entered for us within the vail, crowned with glory and honour. All His life of humiliation done with, His work on earth accomplished, He now appears in the presence of God for us, as the One who has put away sin for ever.

And now our part, as "accepted in Him," is to know and value Him as and where He is, feeding in communion with the mind of God upon our true "peace offering," knowing and realizing *Christ as our Way into all and every blessing which God has given us*, and praising and thanking Him that it is so; not stopping short of this our true and normal position, but as "worshippers once purged" being ever before

Him, in the joy and liberty which His death and resurrection have set us in. It is thus the Spirit of God leads us on through the whole epistle. From the first chapter, where the Lord Jesus is presented to our souls as the One highly exalted in personal and official excellency above the angels, as the result of His having on earth "by Himself purged our sins," to the tenth, where we learn how His "one offering" has perfectly satisfied the righteous demands of the altar of sin-offering, and that it will never look for another victim; the slain Lamb is in glory; and now all that remains for us is to "draw nigh in full assurance of faith," and as "sanctified and perfected for ever," to take our place, as we find it expressed in the twelfth and thirteenth chapters, *near* Him with a *peace-offering*, in all the joy of unclouded communion, and *before* Him with a *burnt-offering* in the character of a *worshipper*.

This is truly the crowning and finishing of all this story of mysterious grace. This is not only spreading the feast for us, but setting us in perfect ease at the feast; telling us to be of good courage, and of animated hearts, because of thoroughly relieved consciences, in the full brightness of the divine presence. Thus we may surely say, we have reached the altar of the present temple of God as an altar of peace-offerings. We have communion with God, in full peace of soul, because of reconciliation through

the offering of Him who was made sin for us. Thus we see He has "made peace through the blood of His cross" (Col. i. 20), and more, "He is our peace." Yea, more, He is our joy, our glory, and our crown; He has not only "redeemed us to God by His blood," but introduced us into a scene the brightness and blessedness of which no tongue can tell or heart conceive—the Father's house, the eternal home of our hearts!

"The vail is rent, our souls draw near  
Unto a throne of grace;  
The merits of the Lord appear,  
They fill the holy place.

"His precious blood has spoken there  
Before and on the throne;  
And His own wounds in heaven declare  
The atoning work is done.

"'Tis finished!' on the cross He said,  
In agonies and blood;  
'Tis finished!—now He lives to plead  
Before the face of God!

"'Tis finished!—here our souls have rest;  
His work can never fail:  
By Him, our Sacrifice and Priest,  
We pass within the vail.

"Within the holiest of all,  
Cleansed by His precious blood,  
Before the throne we prostrate fall,  
And worship Thee, O God!

"Boldly the heart and voice we raise,  
His blood, His name, our plea;  
Assured our prayers and songs of praise  
*Ascend by Christ to Thee.*"

## II.

“**D**OWN in the pleasant pastures,  
Besides the waters still,  
Behold the Shepherd leadeth  
His little flock at will ;  
Gently, oh gently, guiding  
The way the sheep must go,  
Still onward to the fountains  
Where the living waters flow.

“And all His own He knoweth ;  
He calleth them to come ;  
O'er the distant hills they hear Him,  
And so He draws them home.  
Though the way be set with briars,  
Though the narrow path be steep,  
Yet they know His word of warning,  
And the Shepherd knows His sheep.

“If the wolf's voice affright them,  
By the Shepherd's side they keep ;  
For He who watcheth o'er them  
Will slumber not nor sleep.  
The heedless sheep may wander ;  
He sees the wanderer's track ;  
O'er the mountain, through the valley,  
He will gently lure it back.

“With tenderness He cleanseth  
The fleece from every stain ;  
Binds up each wound, and raiseth  
The weary one again.

*THE "I AMS" OF CHRIST.*

With no harsh blow He greets it,  
For all the pains it cost;  
With smiles of love He meets it,  
Though but for Him 'twere lost.

"If a wayward lamb He findeth,  
Doth He coldly stand aloof,  
Or seek the little trembler  
With voice of stern reproof?  
With gentle words of welcome  
Doth the Good Shepherd come,  
And bears it in His bosom  
With fond rejoicing home."





## THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

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"I AM the Good Shepherd : the Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep."—*John* x. 11.

"I AM the Good Shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine."  
*John* x. 14.

**I**N the first place, ere we proceed to meditate upon these precious words, let us consider what characterizes a Good Shepherd literally. We get a striking example of one in David. Very beautifully he stands out in contra-distinction to the wicked shepherds of whom we read in Ezekiel. Careless, faithless, and cruel, the Lord proclaimed against them in judgment, and "set up one shepherd" over His sheep, even His servant David. "He shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd." (Ezekiel xxxiv. 23.) I need scarcely remind the intelligent reader how fully this type finds expression in the true David, who was, and will yet prove Himself to His people, *the* Good Shepherd.

But as we read over the early pages of David's history, we find in him a beautiful example of what

a good shepherd ought (literally) to be, in tender watchfulness and unceasing care. He himself tells us how, though but a stripling at the time, he risked his life to save his father's flock. Listen to his simple account of this act of unparalleled bravery, as he recounts it before Saul and Jonathan: "Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: and I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God." (1 Sam. xvii. 34-36.) What a faithful shepherd he was! Not only tending, watching, caring for his flock, binding up their wounds, and carrying the lambs in his arms, strengthening that which was sick, and going after those which strayed away, and gently bringing them back, but even facing the greatest dangers and difficulties to save and rescue them, putting himself ever foremost in dangerous places, and placing himself between them and their foes.

And does not this recall to our mind the true David, the "Great Shepherd," to whom every beauteous type and shadow in early Scripture pointed forward—the One of whom we read that touching description in Isaiah, "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd:

He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young"? (xl. 11.) Doubtless this primarily refers to His connection with Israel, as does our Lord Himself when He utters the sweet words, "I am the Good Shepherd." Hitherto they had known only the Jewish fold fenced and walled around by the law, and Israel's divinely-appointed ordinances. But He came, and by laying down His life opened a door through which He led forth His sheep into the green pastures, and beside the still waters of His eternal counsels of love and grace. Israel of old was Jehovah's flock. "Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron." (Ps. lxxvii. 20.) They knew Him, therefore, in a *special* way as the Good Shepherd. Even so, though at this moment scattered far among the nations of the earth, they will again know and recognize Him as such when His own words regarding them are fulfilled—"Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the dark and cloudy day. And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the

inhabited places of the country. I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: they shall lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God." (Ezekiel xxxiv. 11-15.) But my object in these meditations is not so much to dwell on our Lord's connection with the Jews dispensationally, but rather on the aspect in which He now presents Himself to *us* as outside the earthly fold of Jewish ordinances, and gathering out a people from Jew and Gentile, and uniting them *in one flock*—"the flock of God." (1 Peter v. 2.)

Very precious it is to see and know our happy place and position in association with Him, under the care of *such* a Shepherd, though it be outside all man's religion and apart from the whole array of Israel's divinely-appointed ordinances; very precious to know that if we have "received Him" we are the sheep of His flock, and ever have Him watching, tending, and shepherding us! Most surely we need to know Him as the Good Shepherd. We need Him at every fresh turn of the road of life. We need to know Him as the One who is caring for and watching over us, never laying upon us more than we can bear, "staying His rough wind in the day of His east wind," and ever going before us as He leads us onward to our eternal rest.

The twenty-third Psalm expresses the experience of one who could truly say, "The Lord is my Shepherd." And how are we to know Him thus? Simply by following Him. But we need to be better acquainted with Him in this aspect. We should go to the gospels with a deeper personal interest in every little act and motion of His ways, feeling that there we are tracing His footsteps and learning this character of His love! How well David knew Him when he could say, "He *maketh* me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters." It is truly the desire of His heart ever to have His people "satisfied with His favour," "full" with His blessing, lying down in the green pastures of His changeless love. And as surely as they can say, "The Lord is my Shepherd," they may add with equal certainty, in all places, at all times, for all things, "*I shall not want.*" It reminds us somewhat of Paul in the fourth of Philippians. He speaks there as one who had known all kinds of trouble and vicissitudes; both "how to be abased and how to abound," how to be "full and how to be empty;" and yet there he stands, having passed through all, giving the calm, steadfast, confident assertion to his doubting brethren, "My God shall supply all your need." I have proved Him, and never found Him fail me, and be assured He will not fail you. "God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always *having all suffi-*

*ciency in all things, may abound to every good work.*"  
(2 Cor. ix. 8.)

In the scripture we have now before us for meditation we may notice two actions described—the action of the Shepherd and the action of the sheep. First, we find what this Good Shepherd does—"He calleth His own sheep by name, and leadeth them out." A little further on in the same chapter we read, "The Good Shepherd giveth *His life* for the sheep." That He has done so, we know and own with adoring gratitude, and as we think of it our hearts unreservedly re-echo the words of the hymn—

"My Shepherd is the Lamb,  
The living Lord who died;  
With all things good I ever am  
By Him supplied.

\* \* \* \*

"Still shall I lift my voice,  
His praise my song shall be,  
And I will in His love rejoice,  
Who *died for me!*"

He has *died*, He has given His life to save lost sheep—ruined, guilty sinners—but, blessed be God, we know *He* has "brought again *from the dead* our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant" (Heb. xiii. 20), and now Jesus Himself tells us, "He calleth His own sheep by name, and leadeth them out."

How every *word* in these precious verses, as we

gaze upon them, ever reveals fresh depths of beauty and meaning. "*He calleth!*" He does not depute angels or archangels. He Himself speaks the word. "*He calleth!*" May we not recall how blessedly He did so in the case of Matthew the publican? What a word that was—"Follow me!" It must have been like a living touch to his soul, impelling him to "rise up and follow" Him who spoke it. We might have thought it would have needed much more to arrest Matthew's attention, sitting there at the "receipt of custom" with his ears filled with the noise and traffic of the crowded port of Capernaum. Yet two little words, "Follow me!" reached his heart, and detached it at once and for ever from the scene around. Do we ask, from whence their power? Surely only in the One who uttered them. "*He calleth.*" So too with the woman of Samaria, "Go, call thy husband, and *come hither*" struck a chord in her heart and conscience, which impelled her to leave "her water-pot"—her worldly all—and hasten to the city with the earnest entreaty, "Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" (John iv. 29.) Again we think of blind Bartimæus, sitting by the roadside begging, who, amid the noise of the crowd and the tramp of the passing multitude, heard the gracious summons, "Arise, *He calleth thee!*" This was the word to him. The result was practically the same as in the

other cases—he “followed Jesus in the way.” (Mark x. 46.) Again we remember the *one* brief word which reached Peter’s ears, above the roar of the tempest and the noise of the waves, “*Come!*” sounding out over the wild, dark sea, constraining him by its mighty moral force to leave the ship, all that nature could lean upon and rest in, and walk upon the water to go to the One who uttered it. Such in every case is the result when He “calleth His own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.”

But more. It is “*by name.*” It is not collectively, it is not “*en masse,*” that He knows His people. It is singly, individually, “*by name.*” “I have called thee *by thy name,* thou art mine,” is a truth not merely applicable to Israel but to His people now. We get two very sweet illustrations of this in the New Testament. One we find in Luke xx., where in the gray dawn of that resurrection morn we find our Lord meeting and satisfying a lonely heart which was sorrowful without Him. How does He address her? It is the same old once familiar name which He uses—“*Mary*”—unaltered, unforgotten. It is the first He utters with His resurrection lips. Thus He knew her on earth, thus He showed her He remembered her after He rose—“*by name.*” Again, later on, when He had ceased to walk upon this earth, when He had risen far above all earthly scenes and associations, from the highest heavens He sends Ananias—an humble dis-

ciple living in Damascus—to be the honoured bearer of a message from Him to Saul. And now mark the directions he receives from that risen Saviour, hear the minuteness, the precision, the particularity—"Go into the *street* which is called *Straight*, and enquire in the *house* of *Judas* for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, *he prayeth*." (Acts ix. 11.) Ananias did not know where Saul was; but God did. Not only the *house* in which he was staying, but the name of the street in which it was situated, and the occupation in which he was engaged at that moment.

Again we have another somewhat similar example of the *individuality* of supervision which the Lord exercises over His people in the case of Peter. "There was a certain man in Cæsarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band." To him the Lord appeared in a vision, about "the ninth hour of the day," and told him to "send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter: he lodgeth in the house of one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side." (Acts x. 6.) How sweet and precious these minute details are, coming as they do from the lips of the Lord Jesus Himself! How truly we may say, He knoweth His sheep "*by name!*" Not one, the smallest or feeblest, is unnoticed or overlooked by Him. The world may not know them; yea, even their brethren may not have heard or thought of them. But He does. Not merely their

name, but their surname, the house in which they lodge, and their daily employment. How it should comfort our hearts to know it is thus, even thus *now*, individually and personally, that the Good Shepherd is watching over His scattered flock! "He calleth His own sheep by name, and leadeth them out."

"*Leadeth them out.*" We might have noticed how this was ever the result of His calling in the different cases we have looked at. He "leadeth them out" to *Himself*. And where is He? "*Outside the camp,*" standing apart from Israel's temple, and ordinances, and priesthood, as the alone object of faith and the alone way of communion with God. He presents Himself as the "door" through which Jew and Gentile must now come, if they would come *to God*. Thus we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "Jesus also, that He might sanctify (or separate) the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore UNTO HIM *without the camp*, bearing His reproach." The Jew, who would now be secure and fed, must abandon the fold within which he was fenced and walled around by Levitical ordinances, and find the Shepherd outside of all ordinances *by faith*, as the sinner finds the Saviour; and not only are the outcasts of *Israel* gathered now in this way, but *any man* may enter by this door of grace.

But more we may notice—when He leadeth His sheep "out" it is to Himself He brings them. When

we "go forth" without the camp, it is "*unto Him*;" Jesus does not call a soul away from an object to leave it without one. No: He ever presents Himself as the attraction to the lonely and desolate heart. And the heart that obeys His call, and leaves all to walk in the path of obedience with Him, finds *Him enough*! Once the soul has heard and obeyed His loving voice—*faith* counts "all things" but loss to win Him! It can leave earthly position and riches, however great; it can leave earthly ties, however sweet; it can leave human traditions and resources, however plausible and ensnaring—to walk on the waters to Him! And how is this? Simply because He is the object before the soul. Faith can leave everything—however brilliant, however attractive, however secure, that is merely of earth and nature—for *Him*! "When He putteth forth His own sheep, *He goeth before them*, and His sheep follow Him: for they know His voice." When He is known and valued by the soul, all other objects are displaced by Him.

Naturally, this leads us on to consider the action of His people—"the sheep." If we are Christians we have, without doubt, "heard His voice." O'er the distant hills of our ruin, our guilt, our separation from Him—His loving accents have reached our ears—"Come unto Me!" and now He expects that we will *follow Him*. He looks upon it as the natural result of our having heard His voice. Are

we doing so? I put the question to my own conscience as to yours. Can we say, "Wherever I have seen the print of His foot in the earth, there have I coveted to set my foot also." Are we following Him earnestly, unshrinkingly, devotedly? Are we following Him like the multitude of old, merely for what we *gain* by Him? or are we doing so like Paul, at the cost of all personal advantage and exaltation? Are our eyes looking "right on," our hearts "perfect" before Him? Can we say, "This *one thing* I do—I *press* toward the mark?" Are we prepared to follow Him out on the dark stormy waters of trial and difficulty, as well as up into the mount, where we see only His glory and beauty? In a word: are we prepared to follow Him at any cost? Let us remember, the path is not an unknown or untrodden one, but every step of the way He has first passed over, and now once a soul sets out on it—"He goeth before them." Truly we may say, "All His paths drop fatness." And there is unspeakable blessedness in following in His footsteps; following even though it necessitate the surrender of all this world holds worthy of being prized; following, it *may be*, unto *death*; but from death it will be up to the throne of God!

And blessed be His name, though at times we but follow Him "*afar off*," though we stumble and fall, and wander from the track of His footsteps—His care is unceasing, His love is unchanged, as from the hour

we first set out. He is still the "Good Shepherd" watching over, and tending, and caring for His sheep. He is the living exponent of His own parable of the shepherd who left the ninety and nine sheep, which needed no care, to go after the *one* which had wandered, and bring it back.

Yes, His eye is ever upon the wanderer: He proved that when He came Himself to this ruined world to "seek and save that which was lost." And still His eye is gazing upon one here, and one there, in the great crowd teeming around us; He "seeketh" His sheep and "searcheth them out." Take an example of this in the case of Nathanael: see how He sought him out; His eye rested upon him, when none other did—when he stood under the shade of the fig tree, sheltered as he thought from all human observation. Mark his astonishment when, brought to Jesus as a stranger, he finds himself already known. "Whence knowest thou me?" he asks, in incredulous surprise. And mark the answer. "*Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.*" (John i. 48.) See too how He sought out Peter: amid the crowded court of the high priest's palace, surrounded by "the chief priests and elders, and all the council," who were seeking false witness to put Him to death—we find the heart of the Lord Jesus still occupied with one who had wandered from His side. We might have thought, at such a time and in such a place, when

the terribly solemn crisis of His earthly history was so rapidly approaching, and throwing its dark shadow over His soul—at such a moment, we might have imagined, He can surely only be occupied with His own and His Father's interests—with the work which He was about to accomplish, and the glory He was subsequently to receive. Not so; His thoughts were still engaged with "His own which were in the world," His heart was still with them, and as the "Good Shepherd" He saw how far one of His sheep was wandering from Him, and hastened to recall it. And we may well believe, as through that dense crowd which surrounded them His eye met Peter's, there was a link formed between Him and Peter's soul, which was the best safeguard against his ever straying again.

Surely the thought of the Lord Jesus thus shepherding His people ought to be most precious to our souls. The thought of His *sustaining* grace, as well as His *seeking* grace, should be most dear to our hearts. Reader, do you value it? Do you use it? Do you *rest* upon it? Are you *weary*? The Good Shepherd carries His weary ones in His arms. Are you *sick*? He has a *special care* for His weak and faint ones. Are you tired and disheartened, wearied with the burden and heat of the day? Do you find the world "a dry and thirsty land, where no water is?" To you His words are—"Come unto Me, all ye that labour and

are heavy laden, and *I will give you rest.*" Take Him at His word, lie passive in His hands, and you will find He will lead you forth beside the "still waters" and into the "green pastures" of His changeless and eternal love. Only surrender yourself entirely to His guidance and control. Do not strive or struggle to get out of His hands; distrust yourself. Feel that your own strength is perfect weakness. Remember the Lord's own description of how the shepherd treated his restored wanderer: "*He layeth it upon his shoulders, rejoicing.*" (Luke xv. 5.) No reproach to break its heart; no stern upbraidings or cold reception; but He brings it into the nearest, closest intimacy—"He layeth it upon His shoulders," the place of strength, and carries it home. His strength is made perfect in its weakness, and He makes Himself chargeable for all the rest of the journey. How precious, how unspeakably precious, is this parable of divine love to our souls! Well may we sing, as we think upon it—

"The Shepherd's bosom bears each lamb  
O'er rock, and waste, and wild;  
The object of that love I am,  
And *carried like a child!*"

Carried in His arms! carried *home!* John, "leaning upon Jesus' bosom" at supper, knew how to value rightly this blessed intimacy into which His Lord had brought him. Would that *we* His children entered more fully into it! Would that we knew more of what it is

to "lie passive in His hands" and allow Him to carry us; not to struggle or to strive to get on by ourselves, or in our own strength, but to put ourselves unreservedly into His hands, His care! This is what He desires for us—that we should cast all our care, cast *ourselves* upon Him, knowing that He careth for us. Oh to trust Him more fully, more absolutely, for all the exigencies of the way! to count upon Him and His unfailing supplies of grace and tenderness for the need of every hour! to realize and treasure in our souls the thought that He is ever watching over and caring for us, but most specially when we are sick or suffering, tried or tempted.

His eye of love is ever gazing upon us; and when at times the way seems long and weary, when we are weak and faint in body and mind, when surrounding circumstances press with overwhelming force from all sides upon us,—*then* "He careth for us." "He knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are but dust." "Like as a Father pitieth His children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him." Only trust Him! Do not dishonour His faithfulness or doubt His love by over-anxiety. Trust Him, even when you cannot trace Him. Be assured He is watching over you, though for a while the surrounding darkness hide Him from your view. Remember, not one of His sheep can ever perish, not one is forgotten or overlooked by the Good Shepherd. The feeble, the

weaker, the more insignificant you may appear in human sight, the more intensely interested and anxious He is about you. Rest assured, if you can truly say, "*The Lord is my Shepherd*," you may with all confidence add, "*I shall not want!*" Yea, more, you may continue, in the words of David—as you look back over your past experience, and its gentle, tender, loving guidance, and think of the "fulness of joy" which you find even now "in His presence"—"He leadeth me beside the still waters: He maketh me to *lie down* in the green pastures." I shall not need to wait until "I wake up in His likeness" to be "satisfied:" even *now*, even *here*, "HE *satisfieth*."

Ere we conclude, let us briefly glance over His own parable of the lost sheep, that parable of *human* love and grace which so truly expounds to us the *divine*. And most surely the ways and words of the shepherd there described find their living expression in the One who related it. How blessedly true it is of Him that He left the "*ninety and nine*" and went after the "*one*" which was lost. Passing by angels and archangels, He came to the desolate shores of a ruined world to seek and to save lost and perishing sinners. Mark too the difference of the action here described to that upon which we have been meditating. There it was the sheep following the Shepherd; *here* the Shepherd has to follow the sheep, and we learn the distance to which they had wandered, and the indifference to

their condition which necessitated His "seeking and searching" them out. He had to come down first into *our* circumstances, before He took us up into His !

How precious are these four little words—"until *He find it.*" There is a ring of divine *certainty* about their utterance which encourages the fainting heart. God never leaves any work *half* finished. What He begins He always completes. The Good Shepherd does not commence to search for His sheep, and then from opposition, or difficulty, or danger give up the search. No ; He pursues it in spite of all obstacles which may lie in the way, even though it necessitate the laying down of His own life, "*until He find it.*" And what then? Simply He "layeth it upon His shoulders rejoicing." Safe and happy position for the poor lost sheep in the Shepherd's arms ! Blessed security for the weakest and feeblest one who is trusting to Him, simply submitting to Him to be carried *home*, carried in His arms ! It is the Shepherd's work all through. The sheep was lost, and could do nothing but *submit* to be carried ; and the sinner has nothing to do but so implicitly trust the Good Shepherd as to submit to be taken *in the very same way*. "He layeth it on His shoulders *rejoicing.*" What a word this is ! It reminds us of the way of the creditor with his two debtors in Luke vii., who, when they had nothing to pay, "*frankly* forgave them both !" or of that word in Romans iii. 24 : "Being justified *freely* by His grace

through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." "*Frankly!*" "*Freely!*" "*Rejoicing!*" How worthy of God are these three precious words—worthy of Him from whom they come! Oh, let us rise to the height of the great argument, if only for a few moments, and let us look at *God's side* of all this! Let us learn in adoring wonder how, if it is blessed and happy for the sheep to be found, it is the Shepherd's *joy* to be the *finder*. God finds His fullest satisfaction in the salvation of the sinner. "It is the Father's *joy* to bless," to seek, to save, to secure. Three times over in this fifteenth of Luke He seeks to impress this upon us. The Shepherd *rejoices* over His sheep, the woman over her coin, and the father over his restored child. Very beautifully they all tell of the united joy of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost in the salvation and reception of lost sinners.

Reader, has the Good Shepherd thus had His joy over you? Can you say with *certainty* that you belong to the "flock of God"? If so, have you gone out of all humanly-appointed and humanly-arranged folds to the place where the "Good Shepherd" leads His flock? He is outside all earthly barriers and restraints. Have you come forth *to Him*? Until you *have* you will never know the deep blessedness of walking along the same path with Him—the path of obedience and separation, which involves indeed rejection by the world, but fellowship with God.

*THE "I AMS" OF CHRIST.*

"In Heavenly Love abiding,  
No change my heart shall fear;  
And safe is such confiding,  
For nothing changes here.  
The storm may roar without me,  
My heart may low be laid;  
But God is round about me,  
And can I be dismayed?

"Wherever He may guide me,  
No want shall turn me back;  
My Shepherd is beside me,  
And nothing can I lack.  
His wisdom ever waketh,  
His sight is never dim;  
He knows the way He taketh,  
And I will walk with Him.

"Green pastures are before me,  
Which yet I have not seen;  
Bright skies will soon be o'er me,  
Where the dark clouds have been.  
My hope I cannot measure;  
My path to life is free;  
My Saviour is my treasure,  
And He will walk with me."



### III.

“**L**ORD JESUS, are we one with Thee?  
O height, O depth of love!  
Once slain for us upon the tree  
We're one with Thee above.

- “Such was thy grace, that for our sake  
Thou didst from heaven come down;  
With us of flesh and blood partake,  
And make our guilt thine own.
- “Our sins, our guilt, in love divine  
Confessed and borne by Thee;  
The gall, the curse, the wrath were Thine,  
To set Thy members free.
- “Ascended now, in glory bright,  
Life-giving head Thou art;  
Nor life, nor death, nor depth, nor height,  
Thy saints and Thee can part.
- “Then teach us, Lord, to know and own  
The wondrous mystery,  
That Thou with us art truly one,  
And we are one with Thee.
- “And soon shall come that glorious day  
When, seated on thy throne,  
Thou shalt to wondering worlds display  
That Thou with us art one.”





## THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE.

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"I AM the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die."—*John xi. 25, 26.*

**T**O my mind there is scarcely a more sublime and glorious record to be found in the pages of the New Testament, nor one which enforces more clearly a vital principle of our Christian experience, than this brief utterance of our Lord addressed to a poor sorrowing woman. "*I am the resurrection and the life.*" It breaks like a gleam of sunlight upon a darkened landscape—this revelation of LIFE in the midst of a scene of *death*. Look where we may in this wide world, we see death stamped upon its fairest and most brilliant scenes. It is written upon flower and tree, sea and sky, with their ever-changing, ever-dying hues—"The world passeth away." In this sense the old adage is true, "In the midst of life we are in death;" but with far deeper, truer meaning the Christian may say, "In the midst of death I am in life." We are living souls, moving

consciously but calmly through a scene of death and judgment. We are possessors of a life beyond and above the reach of their cold, strong grasp, because we possess it *in One* who has Himself "abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." (2 Tim. i. 10.) One who left the heights of glory, and came down to this lost and ruined world, "took not on Himself the nature of angels, but took on Him the seed of Abraham," and "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," that "*through death* He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." (Heb. ii. 14.)

"Wherefore," says the apostle, "as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned;" "that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." "For the wages of sin is *death*; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. vi.) Ah, all this is a lesson of *death* which the heart does not find very difficult to learn, so much is there to enforce it at every turn of the road of life. Martha and Mary weeping by their loved brother's tomb could readily have echoed through their blinding tears Hezekiah's words—"The grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee"

(Isaiah xxxviii. 18); or anon the psalmist's "Shall the dead arise and praise thee? shall thy lovingkindness be declared in the grave?" (Psalm lxxxviii. 10.) But ah, that One for whom they had so eagerly sent when their sorrow first burst upon them, that One who stood in loving sympathy by their side, would teach them a lesson harder to learn, it may be, than the other because it was a lesson of *faith* and not of *sight*, but the one of all others most calculated, did they but rightly understand it, to soothe and comfort their troubled hearts: He would have them finish Hezekiah's song which he uttered, looking forward with the eye of faith through the dim future to HIMSELF, "The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day." (Isa. xxxviii. 19.)

*Death* was around them, death in its bitterest form was before their very eyes; but He would fill their soul's vision with *Himself*; He would shed such a light upon the grave as had never shone upon it before, as those wondrously blessed words burst from His lips—"I AM *the resurrection and the life*." God, coming into this world where death is reigning, must come as the living God, must come as the one who purposes to overthrow death and to give life again—life in victorious strength to those who had been the captives of the power of death. And so He could use these words, though at that very moment His face was steadfastly set towards Jerusalem, and

He knew at what a cost to Him our resurrection-life was to be purchased. He was to pass through the dark waters of death; all its waves and billows were to flow over His holy head, that we might pass through dry-shod. He was to drink the cup of God's wrath and judgment, due to us and *us only*, that we might never taste it, but receive from His hand the cup of salvation flowing over. He, when His hour was come, was to *die*; for He said, "Unless a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." (John xii. 24.) And it cheered His heart, if we may thus speak, to think of the mighty harvest of which He was Himself to be the first-fruits.

When God looked down upon a newly created world, He pronounced it "very good;" and He placed man in it "to have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." (Genesis i. 28.) But, alas! man sinned, and by one act of disobedience ruined for ever the fair creation of God; and "cherubims and a flaming sword" were placed to keep the way to the tree of life. "By one man sin entered into the world, and *death by sin*; so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

Into this scene of ruin, and desolation, and death, the Son of God came down; that He, Himself "THE LIFE," might impart it to others: and thus become

the Head of a new creation, through which God could be more abundantly glorified, and brought into closer connection with man, than by the old. "And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam, *a quickening spirit*." (1 Cor. xv. 45.) "For as *in Adam all die*, even so *in Christ* shall all *be made alive*." Thus He could look beyond the agony, the shame, the sorrow, the unutterable anguish of bearing the wrath of a holy sin-hating God on behalf of a ruined dying race, in the blessed consciousness that He was thus opening up for them a wider range, a vaster sphere of blessings than they could ever have enjoyed in innocence in the garden of Eden. And surely we may say for *this* "joy set before Him"—that of bringing "many sons to glory"—He endured the cross, despising the shame, and could calmly say, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but *I lay it down of myself*. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."

He had *life* in Himself, and we can see how this truth runs through the whole Gospel of John, from the first chapter—where we read, "*In Him was life; and the life was the light of men*"—to the ninth and tenth, where as He is closing His public ministry His comment upon it all is, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

Surely this is most sweet and blessed to find that He came bringing LIFE into this scene, where only *death* was reigning: and *that* life being in Himself, His special object was to impart it to others, and this He did by first surrendering His own. "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the *death of His Son*, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved *by His life*." (Rom. v. 6-10.) He could say, as He bowed His holy head under the righteous judgment of a sin-hating God, "*All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.*" "My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death." (Psalm xxii. 15.) But, looking on beyond the darkness of that hour of sorrow to the glory which followed, He could continue—"Thou *hast heard Me*, . . . I will declare Thy name unto *my brethren*: in the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee." (Psalm xxii. 21, 22.) Now may we reason in the words of the apostle—"If we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him: knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; *death hath no more dominion over Him.* For in that

He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God." (Rom vi. 8-10.) And the same "mighty power," which God wrought in Him when He raised Him from the dead, is now wrought in and for the feeblest and weakest of us "who believe." (Eph. i. 19.) And now surely we may sing—

"That death of shame and agony  
Opened the way of life to me!"

That cross which told out God's hatred of sin, also told out His deep unspeakable love to the sinner—yea more, it tells us how completely Christ has by His death satisfied the claims of justice, and opened up a way by which the grace of God can flow out unhindered to the vilest and the worst. The empty tomb also tells us this; but more than all, a glorified Christ tells us, and we may challenge all the power of hell to refute it, that "there is no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus;" and "who is he that condemneth?" since Christ has died, yea, rather is risen again. The world thought they had seen the last of the Lord Jesus when He was put within the borrowed tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, and a great stone was rolled to the mouth of the cave; but with no shout of archangel, or trump of God, yet with the far "sublimar calmness of His own indwelling power," on the third day He rose from the dead, to take again His seat on high at the right hand of the throne of God.

And He has left that blessed word which He spoke to Martha as a legacy of comfort to every believing troubled heart—"I am the Resurrection, and the Life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and he that liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore;"—and "Because I live, ye shall live also." I drank to the dregs the cup of wrath, that you might only have the cup of blessing; I went down into the dust of death, that you might have life, endless and eternal!

What a precious truth this is to *rest* upon, that our life is in the risen Son of God! It is not merely that we are saved from wrath *through* Him, but that we have got eternal life *in* Him! We have "*passed from death unto life.*" It is a present, perfect, accomplished fact; for "if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection." "By man came *death*; by man came also the resurrection of the dead." Thus, then, are we introduced into the new creation, of which Christ is the Head. Thus are we given a life in our souls, which under the old creation we never possessed. We were "dead in trespasses and sins." Not a pulse of our hearts beat for Him, not a motion of our lives was towards Him. We were utterly insensible and indifferent to His constraining acts of love and grace. And Christ came down into the place of

death, bore the judgment due to us alone, satisfied completely the righteous demands of a holy God, and "put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." "Him," saith Peter, in his ever memorable sermon on the day of Pentecost, "God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that He should be holden of it." (Acts ii. 24.) Thus, our sins having been all put out of God's sight, buried for ever, as it were, in the empty tomb of Jesus, He has brought us into a new order of things altogether, in raising us up and giving us a place in resurrection before Himself.

Thus Christ, risen from the dead and gone up to heaven, is our "life," in whom we are "complete." True, we have still our old Adam nature, which we must ever view as an encumbrance, and strive to mortify and subdue; but our *life* is secure for ever, for it is Christ Himself who *is our life*. Happy for us that it is so. Well that it is not in our own keeping—our own hands; were it so, we could not feel secure for half an hour. But, blessed be God, it is "hid with Christ" in Him; our life is in God's own hands, for we possess it in the Son of His love! And now it is not a question as to whether we feel or realize this our standing in Christ, but simply a question as to whether God is satisfied with the atonement of His blessed Son, and has raised Him up from the dead? And thus the apostle argues: "*If Christ be not risen,*

then is your faith vain : ye are yet in your sins. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God ; because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ." But if, as, blessed be God, we know it is so, "*He is risen*," then are we risen with Him, victorious over sin, death, and judgment, and blessed in Him with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. Surely His words have a deeper, sweeter, because more personal, application as we again repeat them, "I am the resurrection and the life ;" and we can enter more fully into His own blessed guarantee, as it were, which He gives us : "*Because* I live, ye shall live also," as well as the future promise, "Where I am, there *shall* ye be also." The one, our present "*life*," we are already in possession of ; the other, our future *glory*, is as sure as the word and promise of a faithful God can make it !

And naturally our thoughts may pass on from thus contemplating Him as "our life" to the consideration of how far practically we have entered into and appropriated this blessed truth ! Oh, for subdued hearts to enter upon the consideration of the wondrous *place* which God in the fulness of His grace has made ours in Christ, yet with holy freedom, as those who know the value of the death and resurrection of their Saviour, who know that we are "not our own," but "bought with a price," even the "precious blood of Christ !" May we in our measure, however feeble it be, gaze upon the wondrous glories of our Lord Jesus

Christ, and more practically learn the part we have in them with Him ! For most surely it is "in Him" that we get every blessing—life, righteousness, and resurrection-glory—all *in Him* in whom is "all the fulness of the Godhead bodily"—*in Him*, that lonely "Man of Sorrows," who once trod this sin-stained earth of ours, seeking to win the hearts of men back to God. As we trace Him in all that wondrous path of His humiliation, from the manger to the cross, the brief record of prophecy seems the most comprehensive description of His whole career—"despised and rejected of men." But as we stand in thought with Mary, in the grey morning light, beside the empty tomb where her crucified Lord had lain, and see it lonely and unoccupied, and listen to the sweet music of the angel voices, saying, "He is not here ; *He is risen*," our souls learn the divine counterpart of that prophecy, "*Chosen of God and precious*." If we can read *man's* estimate of our blessed Lord in the fact that they crucified Him, and placed Him in a tomb, we can read *God's* estimate of Him in the fact of His being raised up out of it. In other words, "The Stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner."

And now let our Lord's question which He addressed to Martha, with the desire, as it would seem, of proving how far she entered into all the sweet reality of what He had just unfolded to her—let that question be

answered by our own hearts individually. "*Believest thou this?*" Ah! we say we *do*. We may talk much and often of our blessings and portion in Christ, but do not our hearts tell us how sadly we fail in making good the position *practically*, in placing our feet firmly and distinctly upon every inch of the good land—the heavenly inheritance which God has made ours in Christ?

The conduct and experience of the children of Israel may form a good illustration of our subject on this point. With a "mighty hand and an outstretched arm" God brought them forth from Egypt, the land of their bondage and slavery. Not merely did He give them to know their exemption from death and judgment on that terrible night when the destroying angel passed through the land, but, standing on the further shore of the Red Sea, they learned their full and perfect deliverance as they saw the pursuing hosts of their enemies engulfed beneath the overflowing waters through which they had so securely passed. Even so the soul never realizes its full deliverance and eternal redemption until it stands at God's side of the cross of Christ, and there learns how *He* has put an end for ever to all their sin, and everything which could be against them; and then it finds itself in the "wilderness"—a scene where there is nothing to minister to its new life, save the supplies which come down directly from God Himself.

But though this experience may be blessed, it is not

the right or normal position for a Christian to occupy. God did not bring His people out of Egypt only to leave them in the wilderness. No; He would have brought them *through* the wilderness *into* Canaan. Canaan was their destination—the wilderness God would have had, but as the fittest *route* for them by which to travel thither. But we know how they frustrated His purpose, how failure and murmuring set in, and how they could not enter in “*because of unbelief;*” and all save two of that mighty host lived and died in the wilderness. Alas! what a picture this is of many and many of God’s people in these days—Christians who, though they know they are “redeemed with the precious blood of Christ,” still, so to speak, live and die in the wilderness; who never get beyond wilderness blessings and future hopes; who fail, like the Israelites, to take possession of the good land which God has given them, the heavenly inheritance which Christ has opened up for them. But further, in Caleb and Joshua we may get a beauteous type of those who, living “by the faith of the Son of God,” stay not behind in the wilderness, but, unhindered by either its trials or attractions, press on until their feet stand firm upon *the Canaan side of the Jordan*, through whose dark waters they pass dry-shod in the track of the priests who bore the ark. Of such the apostle says, “If we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also

in the likeness of His resurrection." (Romans vi. 5.) "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." (Col. iii. 1.) Oh, let us respond to these desires of His heart for us, and unquestioningly take possession of the place in which He has set us, remembering it is the place *from which we start* when we are born anew, not the goal *to which we run*. It is not a possession which we may *hope* to attain at the close of life, but a blessed *reality*, which it needs *faith alone* to make ours now.

True, conflict will await us the moment we *do* take possession; but it will not be with flesh and blood such as Israel had in Canaan, but with "the rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. vi. 12); and it is only as we are "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might," that we shall be able to overcome. We belong to heaven; and it is in making good our position as heavenly men that we have to fight with wicked spirits in the heavenlies, in the very sphere which belongs to us, and from which they have not yet been expelled. If we are satisfied to "walk as men," to live as those who belong to this world, to stop short of Jordan; if we are satisfied to live as "dwellers upon the earth;" if we do not aim at our proper heavenly portion and position, then we shall not know anything of the conflict of Ephesians vi. 12. It

is seeking to live as heavenly men now on the earth, that we shall enter into the meaning of that conflict which is the antitype of Israel's war in Canaan. We shall not have to fight when we get to heaven; but if we want to live a heavenly life on the earth, if we seek to carry ourselves as those who are dead to the world and alive in Him who went down into Jordan's cold flood for us, then assuredly we must fight. Satan will leave no stone unturned to hinder our living in the power of our heavenly life; and hence the conflict. He will seek to make us walk as those who have an earthly standing; to be citizens of this world; to contend for our rights; to maintain our rank and dignity; to give the lie practically to that great foundation Christian truth, that we are dead and risen with and in Christ. It is truly humbling to think (if one may speak for others) how little we know of this heavenly conflict; how prone we are to keep wandering up and down in the wilderness, instead of realizing our place as risen out of it all, and seated in heavenly places "in Christ."

"O happy saints, for ever freed  
From guilt and every care;  
Dwell, dwell with your exalted Head,  
And let your life be there!

"O think not of this world of woe,  
Though subject still to grief;  
But seek your portion *there* to know,  
For this will give relief."

It is with the ardent desire to enter into all the depths of this blessed fact that the Apostle Paul exclaims, "That I may know Him, and the *power of His resurrection*, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death." (Phil. iii. 10.) And that he did learn it in a very full measure is evident from his confident assertion, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Gal. ii. 20.) Oh the power and joy of having nothing, being nothing, and knowing nothing but a glorified Christ in heaven! and to know ourselves as seated there in Him; not stopping at anything short of this our proper normal position; not lingering by the shores of the Red Sea, content merely to know that we are saved from judgment by the blood of the Lamb; not merely remaining in the wilderness, occupied and ever anxious about the trials and difficulties of the way, but pressing on, with eager hearts and bounding footsteps, to take possession of the good land which faith has made ours. Surely we may well seek to re-echo the apostle's desire to "*know Him* and the power of His resurrection," as well as the "fellowship of His sufferings," and then to live and act and move in the energy of it; to pass through this world as those who have died to it all—not that it has died to us (that is rather

wilderness experience—one thing after another failing to supply our needs or satisfy our hearts, and fading away before our eyes), but us dying to them—knowing the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ, going down into death with Him, and practically proving the reality of that verse: “We are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

This is the source of true power in testimony; and it is worthy of notice that we never read of any people attaching themselves to the Israelites while they were in the wilderness; we read not of any testimony which they bore, nor of any going with them, though it was said to one, “Come thou with us, and we will do thee good.” (Num. x. 29.) But once they take possession of the land, all is different. Then it is that the nations around are attracted to and desire alliance with them. Then it is that they stand out in distinct and solitary testimony to the faithfulness and power of Israel’s God. Then it is that the kings of the east and the queen of the south come up to enquire of Solomon, and to see the beauty of the Lord in the temple he had builded—thus endorsing the prophet’s words, “They shall come after thee . . . . saying, Surely God is in thee; and there is none else, there is no God.” (Isa. xlv. 14.)

Most surely should this also be the result of our

occupying our true heavenly position. Like "a city set upon an hill, which cannot be hid," we should walk through this world, bearing a distinct, unflinching testimony that we are *not of it*; that we have risen out of and above it all; that our life is "hid with Christ in God;" and that consequently every breath, every motion of our life should be "*to God*." We should walk in conscious, living union with Him who has passed out of this scene. Oh! to walk "in the light as He is in the light," to know Him as our life, to be able to say, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom *the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world*." May we walk here as strangers and pilgrims, whose citizenship is above, and pass through this scene as *contributors*, not as receivers; ever ready to minister to the world's ceaseless needs and necessities, but totally independent of all its varied attractions and supplies. May we be more distinctly detached from this present scene, through the knowledge of our union with that One who is rejected from it, knowing that though we have nothing in ourselves, we have everything and are "complete in Christ."

If we speak of our "life," we get it alone "in Christ;" of our righteousness, "in Christ;" our power, "in Christ;" our possessions, "in Christ," and our security for all "in Christ." Oh for a more simple faith to take what God so freely gives!

Do we know anything of this? Do we know its living energising power in our souls? "*To be ever and always happy, with the heart lifted out of present things, Christ, the only excellent one, must be the object. Positive truth—not negative, objective not subjective—is that which will have power over the soul;*" and we find our Lord Himself reminding Martha of this in the words "I AM." He is! That blessed One is Himself the power of our life. Well may we pray, "that I may *know Him.*" It is all we need, to be acquainted with, and occupied with—Himself. Not merely to hold our resurrection-life as a theory or a doctrine, but to know that we have it as a blessed reality *in Him.*

Christian reader, a voice now sounds upon your ears, as surely as it did upon Martha's of old, and though it comes now from a *risen Saviour*, He is uttering the same sweet words He spoke to her—and He is telling you as He did her, to look away from the scene of death and desolation around, to look to Him and find eternal LIFE. He is telling you to leave the world far behind, and get up into the mount by faith, and "look northward and southward, and eastward and westward," as Moses surveyed the land of promise, and enter it, and appropriate it all in Him, "in whom all the promises of God are yea and Amen." And rest assured as with the Israelites, "*thou shalt not lack anything in it.*" (Deut. viii. 7-10.) "For all things are yours . . . the world, or life, or death, or things

present, or things to come ; *all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.*" (1 Cor. iii. 21-23.) Only take possession of all these blessings which God has made yours in Christ, and feed upon the fruit of the land—the exhaustless riches of His grace and glory !

“ ‘One spirit with the Lord,’  
O blessed, wondrous word !  
What heavenly light, what power divine,  
Doth that sweet word afford !

“ ‘One spirit with the Lord !’  
The Father’s smile of love  
Rests ever on the members here  
As on the Head above !

“ ‘One spirit with the Lord !’  
Jesus the glorified  
Esteems the church for which He bled  
His body and His bride !

“And though by storms assailed,  
And though by trials pressed,  
*Himself our life*, He bears us up,  
Right onward to our rest !”



#### IV.

“**I**N the distant land of famine,  
Longing with the swine to feed,  
Oh, how bitter that awakening  
To my sin and shame and need !  
Dark and dreary all around me,  
Now no more by sin beguiled,  
I would go and seek my Father,  
Be a bondsman, not a child.

“ Yet a great way off He saw me,  
Ran to kiss me as I came ;  
As I was my Father loved me,  
Loved me in my sin and shame.  
Then in bitter grief I told Him  
Of the evil I had done—  
Sinned in scorn of Him, my Father—  
Was not meet to be His son.

“ But I know not if He listened ;  
For He spake not of my sin :  
He within His house would have me,  
Make me meet to enter in.  
From the riches of His glory  
Brought His costliest raiment forth,  
Brought the ring that sealed His purpose,  
Shoes to tread His golden courts.

“ Put them on me, robes of glory,  
Spotless as the heavens above !  
Not to meet my thoughts of fitness,  
But His wondrous thoughts of love.  
Then within His home He led me,  
Brought me where the feast was spread ;  
Made me eat with Him, my Father—  
Me who begged for bondsman’s bread.”

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## THE BREAD OF LIFE.

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"I AM the bread of life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst."—*John* vi. 35.

"I AM the living bread which came down from heaven."—*John* vi. 51.

**T**HE first words of the prodigal son, when he "came to himself" in the far country, are worthy of remark, illustrating most vividly as they do the condition and prospect of every child of Adam. "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and *I perish with hunger!*" (Luke xv. 17.) Let us retrace in thought his career ere these words fell from his lips. In the comprehensive brevity of Scripture we read, he "took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance in riotous living." What a description of us by nature! Who can tell how far, to what a distance, sinners have wandered from God?—

"By nature and by practice far,  
How very far, from God;  
Yet now by grace brought nigh to Him  
Through faith in Jesu's blood;"—

using their time, talents, and energies, all in the service of Satan, the god of this world ; spending their strength indeed for naught, and their labour for that which satisfieth not ; lavishing the best of their days in the interests and pursuits of this fading, hollow world, which will not and *cannot* recompense them.

*"And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want."*

Most surely this is the next chapter in the history of every soul that has lived to and *for* this world, this life. Doubtless, so long as he had plenty of *money* he had plenty of *friends*; but when it went, they went too; and so the very ones on whom he had spent his all forsook him in the hour of need. "*There was a famine in that land.*" Ah! this must ever be the ending of all this world's lovely but unreal scenes of joy and pleasure—"famine and want." They will not, cannot satisfy; they will fail just when they are needed most, and leave those who have been dependent on them to go on as best they may without them.

But to go on. In his distress, his poverty, and wretchedness, we find "*he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country.*" Just the last thing which he should have done—the very worst thing possible for him. Had he not a father and a home? Why not have gone to *them*? Was not his father just as ready to receive him *then* as he was some days after when

he did go? Most surely. But ah! this is just a picture of our poor human nature, ever prone and ready to catch at any straw of human relief or resource that is *seen*, rather than by *faith* lean upon the arm of the All-mighty, and draw our supplies from Him alone. Besides, the natural heart *mistrusts* God. Satan instilled a doubt into the mind of Adam, which every soul has by inheritance from him. “*God doth know* that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.” (Gen. iii. 5.) He made Adam and Eve begin to reason about things which did not concern them at all, and to question the love and justness of God in prohibiting their eating of that special tree; and when once a human being begins to reason about God or things connected with His sovereignty, he is fast hurrying down the tide of infidelity, which, unless by the grace of God he escape from it, will soon land him in the lake of fire.

So, doubtless, the prodigal reasoned within himself, that he would try and work out his life some way or another before he returned to his home, where perhaps he would get only a very cold reception; and so, as one thing after another failed to satisfy his wants, he went at last and joined himself to this citizen. In other words, he gave himself up thoroughly to the world. And how did it treat him? By giving him the lowest and most degrading occupation it well

could—"sent him into his fields to feed swine." But oh! what straits he must have come to when we read "*he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat.*" What a change this was from the sumptuous banquets and profuse expenditure with which he had passed his early career! But thus it is ever this world gives—poorly, feebly, and grudgingly. And still wretched as are the supplies of this poor world, how many there are who would fain seek to stay their souls' hunger with the "husks" of its empty pleasures! They admit they are unsatisfying; they admit they are poor at their very best; and still they continue to try its very lowest resources, ever expecting but never receiving relief.

But a turning-point came to him at last, as it comes to all, when it must be decided what our future will be for eternity: whether we will choose to live and die in the "far country"—ever hoping for the famine to cease, and meanwhile staying our hunger by the wretched pleasures and amusements which the world has ever at its command—or arise and go to our Father and accept all the joy and blessing and abundance He is so willing to give us! Happily for the prodigal, his decision was the latter. "When he came to himself he said, How many hired servants of my Father have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger. I will arise and go to my Father." We can notice two things brought out here. That he knew and

acknowledged what his true condition *was*, and he owned what it *might be*. He was perishing with hunger, he knew it, and he owned it; he confessed he was dying, and dying by his own choice, because he would not trust his father's love sufficiently to return to him just as he was. And so the soul that feels its need of salvation, and knows that salvation is in Christ, and to be had by faith, and yet holds back from accepting it, as God's free and wondrous gift—that soul, if it perish—perishes by its own free will and deliberate choice. It has chosen the “wide gate” and the “broad way,” though it knows well that the “strait gate” and the “narrow way” alone lead to life eternal. Here the prodigal had the two things before him; the option to drag on a miserable existence, subsisting on the husks the swine eat, or to enter upon the abundance of the Father's house where there is ever “*enough and to spare*.”

But ah! though he seems to have known well enough what was in his Father's *house*, he certainly did not know what was in his Father's *heart*, when he could think for a moment that his Father would permit him to be as a servant beneath his roof. He had but poor unworthy thoughts of that unquenchable love, which all his bad conduct had failed to weaken or erase. And such too are sinners' thoughts about God—feeble, faithless, and unworthy—not doing justice to the heart of that One who “so loved”

them, that He "spared not His only begotten Son, but delivered Him up for us all," that "whosoever believeth on Him should *not perish*, but have everlasting life." But as has often been remarked, the prodigal did not say anything about being made a servant, when he was in his father's arms. Ah, no; that "kiss," that reception, must have closed his mouth to such unsuited words, and must have dispelled such thoughts from his mind, and dispelled them for ever! He could not say, "Make me a *servant*," when his father was owning him as a *son*! Let us read the account of how he was received. "*When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck, and kissed him . . . and said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and be merry.*"

My thoughts have been led thus briefly to retrace the story of the prodigal son, in connection with the words of our Lord, which we now come to consider, "I AM *the Bread of Life*" as I think it serves as a very true illustration of the condition of every soul that knows its own need, and the salvation and sufficiency which is in Christ for them. "I perish with hunger!" surely this is the cry of a soul conscious of its sad condition. "I am the Bread of Life!" seems like an echo of the Father's welcome, just meeting and sup-

plying the son's need. Well might his song have been—

“It is the Father's joy to bless :  
His love has found for me a dress,  
A robe of spotless righteousness,  
O Lamb of God, in Thee !

“And now my famished soul is fed ;  
A feast of love for me is spread ;  
I feed upon the children's bread,  
O Lamb of God, in Thee !”

“*I perish with hunger !*” Oh, what an echo the words raise in our souls !—an echo of the cry of our hearts, at one time or another of our life's history. With some it is early in youth's morning, when as yet the world has only shewn its brightness and beauty ; the heart knowing its own bitterness, ere it even tastes the tempting supplies spread before it, is lead to cry, “I perish with hunger.” With others, it is further on in life, when the soul has learned by sad *experience* the desolations which lie hidden under all this world's brightness : when like him of old, who tried it all and then wrote his verdict—“Vanity and vexation of spirit, and no profit under the sun”—they feel all that remains for them of what once seemed so bright, and splendid, and satisfying, is a few wretched hollow “husks,” and the almost despairing cry is wrung from their lips—“I perish with hunger.” But with all it is a conscious *need*, which the immortal soul must at some time or another feel ! And most surely nothing in all the vast range of this world's resources,

will or can satisfy or stay our soul's hunger. Even when the cup of earthly blessing and prosperity is full—when our dearest hopes are realized, and the sky of life is unshadowed by a single dark or threatening cloud; when we have gained the world's honours, the world's riches, the world's applause—still the *heart*, conscious of its inward need, ever cries, "Is this *all*?" I have worked so hard to attain this distinction; I have toiled so many years to make this fortune; I have dreamed since early youth of the happiness which the realization of these plans and hopes would bring me—and now, is this,—"*can this be all*?" And the heart that has learned the unsatisfying quality of this world's best and brightest objects can only answer in the affirmative, but calmly and quietly, "*It is all—the all of earth, but not the all of heaven.*"

We have heard of bodily hunger, of the terrible gnawing pain which they endure who suffer from it, of the lingering despair, the unutterable agony of those who perish from lack of food. But what is it compared to a famine of the soul?—a hunger which nothing earthly can satisfy, which ends not with this life, but is unceasing, eternal—a hunger to which there can be no assuagement, no relief! Yet such, alas! is the condition, and will be the everlasting portion of all those who refuse to partake now of the "Bread of Life," which is freely offered them by God—those who prefer to remain in the "far country" starving, instead of

accepting all the fulness and blessing which is in the Father's house—those who over and over again have heard the solemn invitations issued, "Come, for all things are now ready;" and who if not in words, have *practically* refused to respond to that gracious invitation, and gone their ways—"one to his farm, another to his merchandise," all with one consent "making excuse."

Reader, is it so with you? Do you feel—specially at times it may be—this terrible soul-hunger? Do you know you are perishing, and will you still go on refusing to accept God's great salvation offered you so freely through Christ Jesus? Will you still persist in seeking satisfaction for soul and body in the world—this hollow, unsatisfying, transitory world, with the voice of God sounding in your ears, beseeching you to partake of the Bread of Life? Beware of refusing any longer His loving invitations,—that the solemn words addressed to Israel, may not be sadly applied to you, "*Because when I called, ye did not answer; when I spake, ye did not hear;* but did evil before mine eyes, and did choose that wherein I delighted not. Therefore thus saith the Lord God,—Behold *my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry;* behold my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty: behold my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed." (Isaiah lxx. 12.) The door of mercy once shut, the voice of God having ceased its invitations, this brief

life past—yours will be an unresponded-to cry, ringing in never-dying echoes on the shores of a ruined eternity—" *I perish with hunger !*"

But, thank God, not *now*, not here, not on these shores of time, is that cry of conscious need unanswered ; not if with the conviction of conscience which draws it forth there is the faith and confidence which makes it own the source from whence alone relief can come. The prodigal knew he was "perishing." He was in a land of famine, where there was nothing to give or sustain his life ; and so, by faith, he looked away to his far distant home, and realized what his portion there was, or *could* be. And it is worthy of remark, that the moment he expresses his consciousness of his true condition, and owns himself as lost and perishing, that moment his thoughts are detached from himself, and fixed upon another ! He looked for relief *outside himself !*

This is just what we too must do—take and own our true condition before God as perishing sinners. I know these words are repeated week after week by numbers who would not be at all pleased if they were told that they were "without God" and "without hope in the world." (Ephesians ii. 12.) Yet this cry must ever bespeak a condition of soul apart from God. The prodigal was in the "far country" when he uttered it, not in his Father's house ! and so the soul that is truly conscious of its condition as a "per-

ishing sinner" must also be conscious of its distance from God. And this is just what we need to realize—what our true condition is before God, in God's sight—our true condition as not merely "perishing," but *dead* spiritually—"dead in trespasses and sins"—utterly unable of ourselves to do, or say, or think a single right or holy thing. We need to be thoroughly convinced in our souls as to this, and then to see how God, in His deep and wondrous love for us, gave "His only begotten Son" to impart "*life*" to us by His death and resurrection, and save us from perishing eternally. And so most sweetly we get in our Lord's own words what just meets our need and condition as perishing sinners, and sends us on our way with bounding hearts toward home—"I AM *the Bread of Life*." Oh, what a blessed answer is this to the soul's cry of conscious need, and what perfect peace it ought at once to impart! What more does it want, what more can it require than is treasured up in that blessed One, who thus presents Himself to the hungry soul? Surely nothing! Surely in Him there is indeed "bread enough, and *to spare*." "*In Him* dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." After all the weary, unsatisfied longings; after all the bitter experiences of the "far country," here is a quiet haven to enter, a blessed assurance to rest upon—"He that cometh to me shall *never hunger*; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."

What a presentation of Himself this is to us ! Just what we need, "a full Christ for empty sinners," and it is all "*in Him*"—"I AM." Well may we say, "'Tis eternal life to *know Him*." "If any man eat of this bread, he shall *live for ever* ; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." What a contrast to the prodigal's "husks !" They might have sustained life for a while, but only for a while ; Christ offers Himself to the perishing sinner as the One who can give him "life," and life *for ever* ! But surely, when we think at what a cost to Himself it was that He did this, our souls should bow down under an adoring sense of the magnitude of God's gift ! "This is the will of *Him that sent me*, that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life : and I will raise him up at the last day." Truly "He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." "Unless," said He, "a corn of wheat fall into the ground and *die*, it abideth alone : but *if it die*, it bringeth forth much fruit." Do we ever think of this ? Do we ever consider what it *cost* the Son of God ere He could come forward, and in response to the sinner's bitter cry, "I perish with hunger," say, "I am the Bread of Life ?"

"Jesus, of Thee we ne'er would tire :  
The new and living food  
Can satisfy our hearts' desire ;  
And life is in Thy blood."

"*Life is in Thy blood!*" Ah! yes, how all our blessings spring from and lead us back to "*the blood,*" the "PRECIOUS BLOOD OF CHRIST." I know no more comprehensive verse in Scripture on which to rest the soul than that in the First Epistle of John: "*The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.*" It is not from *some* sins, or *small* sins, but from "*sin,*" the whole moral condition in which man lay "dead," and which God judged and put out of His sight for ever on the cross, when He, "the just," the "holy One of God," died for us, "the unjust," and "gave His life a ransom for many." And *now* "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were *yet sinners, Christ died for us*" (Rom. v. 8); "that, as sin hath reigned unto *death*, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." And He went down under all the waves and billows of God's wrath, and "poured out His soul unto death," that He might rise again with the blessed assurance to every perishing sinner, "Come unto me," "I am the Bread of Life."

But is it thus we know God, as One who is "slow to anger and of great mercy," and who, to let that mercy righteously meet us in our depth of ruin and poverty in the "far country," gave us His only begotten Son, "that whosoever believeth in Him should *not perish*, but have everlasting life?" Surely, if it is thus we know Him, the convicted sinner must be

constrained to cry, "I will arise, and go to Him; I will accept Him as my Bread of Life, the One who alone can satisfy my soul-hunger; and I will trust myself for time and eternity in His hands." And what then remains for one that thus takes Him at His word? What but the "best robe," the "fatted calf," and the abundance and blessing of the Father's house for evermore! Blessed exchange! in place of the "famine" and "want," in place of the craving for the poor hollow empty "husks" of this world's supplies, "*bread enough, and to spare.*" It is not merely, "I shall not *want*," but "*my cup runneth over.*" "They shall be *abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thy house*; and Thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures." (Psalm xxxvi. 8.)

But not only to poor perishing *sinner*s does the Lord Jesus Christ thus present Himself, but to His *saints* as well He comes, saying, "I am the Bread of Life;" and it is needful to mark this. The "famine" and "want" of the "far country," once we have left it, *we can never know again*; but too often the things of God and His Christ lose their sweetness and freshness to our taste. How is it we see so many stunted and feeble Christians—Christians such as those of whom the apostle said, "Ye *did* run well; who did hinder you?"—Christians who seem quite content to be merely *saved*, but who know nothing whatever of "going on unto perfection"—"pressing towards the mark,"

“resisting unto blood, striving against sin?” Ah! surely, our experience tells us, it is because we have not got Christ as the “Bread” of our life—the food of our souls. We are not occupied *with Him*, and drawing from Him what alone can nourish and feed our new nature. In principle, if not in words, we repeat the cry of Israel of old—“There is nothing at all beside this manna before our eyes.” (Num. xi. 7.) Strange infatuation! What a story it tells of the poor human heart! They lusted after the “fish, the cucumbers, the leeks” of Egypt, and but lightly esteemed the angels’ food, which God had sent down from heaven for them. Alas! how often is it just so in principle with us! How often do we in *heart* turn back again into Egypt, regretfully remembering the excitements and resources which we fed upon when there, but forgetting the hard bondage and the hunger withal! And what ensues from our yielding thus to the flesh and nature? Just as with Israel, “He gave them their desires, *but sent leanness into their souls.*”

Most solemn warning for us who are His people, if we are feeding and nourishing the old nature, in place of the new; if the things of time and sense are occupying and engrossing us more than the “things of God!” Mark the solemn result, the solemn ending to our conduct—“leanness and barrenness *in our souls!*”

Nor do I think this will only be the sad consequences of our occupation with *worldly* scenes and

H

interests. I believe the Lord's work itself may often come between our souls and Him. Tending the sick, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked—happy services as they are, when they come as the fruit of our personal devotedness to *Himself*—too often become the object and interests of our lives, and thus occupied with the *work* we overlook Him, and so our souls get cold and dead ; not indeed as to the amount of service done—which we still pursue, it may be with vigour and energy—but as to *Himself*, His interests, His own *person*.

Now what is the remedy for this state of things? Just what our Lord Himself gives us in the fifty-seventh verse of this chapter. "*As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father : so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.*" We must have Christ down here, as the alone portion of our souls ! How did He pass on through this scene? How did He walk through this world? Living by the Father as the perfectly dependent, obedient man ! living day by day, and hour by hour, in absolute and entire dependence upon His Father : drawing all His supplies from *above*, speaking His word, doing His will, working His work — "*I do nothing of myself,*" was the testimony of His life : "but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. . . . He that sent me is with me : the Father hath not left me alone ; for I do always those things which please Him." (John viii. 28.) "The Lord God

hath *given me* the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary : He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned." (Isaiah l. 4.) Beautiful picture of the perfectly Dependent One—"morning by morning" looking up for the suited supplies to meet all the exigencies of the day ! And thus are we to live ! He has left us an example, that we should follow His steps ; and as He lived by His Father, so we are to live by Him. We are to "make Christ the paramount object of our soul's pursuit, else our spiritual life will inevitably decline. . . . It was Christ yesterday, and it must be Christ to-day, and Christ for ever. Moreover, it will not do to feed partly on Christ and partly on other things. As in the matter of *life*, it is Christ *alone* ; so in the matter of *living*, it must be Christ *alone*. As we cannot mingle anything with that which *imparts* life ; so neither can we mingle anything with that which *sustains* it." Feeding thus upon Him, we shall "grow up into Him in all things ;" not looking to earthly streams or sources of refreshment, but drawing all our supplies directly from the hand of God Himself ! In connection with this, we get a very sweet passage in Deut. viii. 3 : He *suffered thee to hunger*, and fed thee with Manna." He permits us to feel the sorrows, and trials, and difficulties of the way : that we may know and *prove* His sustaining grace and

power. He lets us feel our depths of need, our feebleness, and our failure : that we may turn to Him and find Him the precious and all-satisfying portion of our souls. He "*suffers us* to hunger" that we may learn the unlimited resources which our daily and hourly needs and necessities but prove we have in Him. Our waywardness needs, and has His forbearance and long suffering ; our sorrows and difficulties, His guidance and compassion ; our weakness, His strength. Thus viewed, these wilderness trials are but blessed opportunities of learning the depths of love, and grace, and tenderness, which are in the heart of God : which an eternity of glory will fail to afford. The "bitter waters," He alone can sweeten ; the Valley of Baca, He only can lead us out of ; the "hunger and thirst, the weariness and watchings," only open up for us the resources of the living God.

But let us notice, ere we conclude, what a practical word our Lord speaks in the twenty-seventh verse, one which we would do well to lay to heart in these days of feverishness and unrest, when the perishable things of time and sense seem all that men think worth while seeking after ; when they are rising early, and toiling late to get on in this world and make a place and a name for themselves there ; when the "things seen" seem to engross them to the entire exclusion of "*things unseen*," but eternal ; when the great question of life seems to be, "What shall we

eat? and what shall we drink? and wherewithal shall we be clothed?" He looks round upon all the toiling and striving, and knowing its unremunerative conclusion, exhorts His people to "*Labour not for the meat which perisheth*, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you." And we may remember how in another place, where He is again speaking of His people's *temporal* wants, He urges upon them to "take no thought for their life, what they shall eat, nor for the body, what they shall put on," because they are in dependence upon a "*Father's*" care. Indeed it is beautiful to remark in that chapter (Luke xii.) the different way in which He presents God to them; the divine *suitability* with which He meets their need. When it is a question of their bearing testimony for Him, and they are in fear of their enemies, He puts "GOD" before them, as the Almighty One, who alone has power over soul and body; but when it is a case of their daily needs and necessities, their food, and raiment, and stores, He presents Him to them as a "*Father*." "Your Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." Surely this is most precious, yea *divine*; and even thus are we to know Him, the strength of His hand, and the love of His heart, ever engaged on our behalf all through this wilderness journey. Just as Israel had nothing to sustain them during those forty years' wanderings but supplies received directly

from the hand of God, so we have nothing to sustain or nourish our spiritual, our new life, but CHRIST. Not things *about* Him, however needful and precious ; not His people ; not even His work, but *Himself*, the true "Bread sent down from heaven." And feeding thus upon Him, we shall learn by sweet experience the truth of the promise, "He *satisfieth* the longing soul, and *filleteth the hungry soul* with good things." Surely we may say—

"Jesus, Thou art enough  
The mind and heart to fill !  
Thy life—to calm the anxious soul ;  
Thy love—its fear dispel."

We know when at last Israel got into the land of promise, that the "manna ceased," and they fed upon the old corn of the land that year. We read in Joshua (v. 11, 12), "The manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land ; neither had the children of Israel manna any more ; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year." The circumstances in which they had needed this heavenly supply were passed. They had entered upon their possessions, and they partook of the proper food of that land when they had crossed the Jordan into Canaan.

Even so the child of God needs to feed upon Christ. We need to know Him *both* as the "manna" and the "old corn of the land." In the former, we know Him as the *humbled* Son of God, who *came*

*down* into all the circumstances of our mortal life, and, entering into them, made them His own. In the latter, we know Him as the glorified one who has risen "far above all principality, and power, and might," and taken us up, in union with Himself, by the power of His Spirit, into that bright scene of blessedness and glory. As a matter of *fact* we are down here still in our mortal bodies; hence we need the wilderness supplies of manna—Christ coming down and entering into every detail of our life; but, as a matter of *faith*, we are risen with Him, and seated with Him in the heavenly places; hence the apostle exhorts us to "seek those things that are above," and set our mind upon (or be occupied with) them.

In conclusion we may notice, that when the heart is carried forward to the scenes of eternal blessedness, so gloriously described in Revelation vii., we find that old earthly longings have ceased for ever. As we read, "They shall *hunger no more*, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For *the Lamb* which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." "*The Lamb shall feed them!*" Precious truth! "I AM the bread of life." We have none *here* but Christ; and we shall have none *there* but Christ. It is Christ for time, and Christ for eternity. No longer hindered by the flesh as we are


now, we shall not "hunger and thirst" after Him as we now do, conscious that at times the trials or difficulties, or even expectations, of this life get between our souls and Him, but for ever beyond the reach of earth's storms and distractions, in the calmness and light of His own blessed presence, not feasting upon the joys and unspeakable glories of *heaven*, but occupied with and gazing upon Himself, we shall be perfectly, eternally, divinely satisfied !

"My heart is resting, O my God !  
I will give thanks, and sing !  
My heart has found the secret source  
Of every precious thing.  
Yes, the frail vessel Thou hast made  
No hand but Thine can fill ;  
For the waters of the earth have failed,  
And I am thirsty still.

"I thirst for springs of heavenly life,  
And from Thyself they rise ;  
I seek the treasure of Thy love,  
And close at hand it lies.  
Thus a new song is in my mouth,  
To long-loved music set :  
Glory to Thee for all the grace  
I have but tasted yet.

"Glory to Thee for strength withheld ;  
For want and weakness known ;  
For the fear that sends me to Thy breast ;  
For what is most my own.  
I have a heritage of joy  
That yet I cannot see ;  
But He who bled to make it mine  
Is keeping it for me."

V.

 JESUS, how much Thy name unfolds  
To every opened ear!  
The pardoned sinner's memory holds  
None other half so dear.

Thy name encircles every grace  
That God as Man could show;  
There only can the Spirit trace  
A perfect life below.

Jesus, it speaks a life of love,  
And sorrows meekly borne;  
It tells of sympathy above,  
Whatever makes us mourn.

It speaks of righteousness complete;  
Of fellowship with God;  
And to our ears no tale so sweet  
As the atoning blood.

Jesus—the One who knew no sin  
Made sin to make us just—  
Worthy art Thou our love to win,  
And worthy all our trust.

The mention of Thy name shall bow  
Our hearts to worship Thee;  
The chiefest of ten thousand Thou,  
The chief of sinners we.





## "I AM JESUS."

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"I AM *Jesus*."—*Acts ix. 5.*

**I** AM not sure, if correctly speaking, the above words may be classed amongst the attributes which Christ assures His people *He is* to them. But it may be sweet and profitable to meditate upon the title the Lord Jesus Christ here calls Himself by, and notice where and when He does so, in this the closing dispensation of God's dealings with man.

We know that every sacrifice, every type, every ordinance, pointed onward, through the dim twilight of the by-past ages, to a coming Saviour; every prophetic harp, from Miriam to Malachi, resounded with the music of His name; but now, in the chapter before us, we are not called to consider a *coming* Saviour, but thankfully and trustfully to gaze by faith upon One who *has come*; who having perfectly fulfilled all the

Scriptures which foretold Him, and having "finished the work" His Father gave Him to do, has now returned to that bright scene of glory which He left for our sakes, and has ascended up "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." (Eph. i. 21.)

We may specially notice two things in the Scripture before us. First, *the person who was spoken to*; secondly, *the words which were said to him*. What a sight it must have been, that fiery young Roman, one moment riding so proudly at the head of his troop of soldiers, the next struck to the ground by the overwhelming brightness of the "glory of that light" which shone around him! We read, "*He fell to the ground.*" Fit and proper attitude for one to be in whose heart had been exposed and laid bare in the presence of Him who was Himself the "light" and the searcher of hearts. It is the place all have taken in every age, when brought into close personal dealing with God. See an illustration of it in Isaiah, when the whole house was filled with the glory of God: "Woe is me! for I am undone; . . . for mine eyes have *seen the King*, the Lord of hosts," were his conscience-stricken words. See it too in Peter, when, standing on the deck of his fishing-boat, assisting his partners to haul in the overloaded net, he saw "the light of the glory of God," so shining in the

face of Jesus, that, unable any longer to *stand* in His presence, we read, "he fell at His feet," while the cry of conviction was wrung from his lips, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." So too in the case of the woman in John viii., we see the same moral characteristics. She, a convicted sinner, was in the presence of One in whom the scribes and Pharisees were seeking with all their energy to find something worthy of death, and yet, with the inner consciousness of who and what He was, when one after another had withdrawn, and she was alone with Him, she could only fall at His feet, with the feeling if not the words of Peter, "Lord, to whom can I go? *thou* hast the words of eternal life," until those words of gracious acquittal sounded upon her ears, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, sin no more."

This must ever be the effect produced in the soul when the glory of God in convicting power bursts upon it: it lays the soul at the feet of Jesus. And what a sweet and blessed place this is to be brought to!—a place where the things of earth and sight seem very far away, and utterly valueless, when, standing as it were on the threshold of time, we look out, with trembling, anxious hearts, at the dim eternity before us! At the feet of Jesus! It is a place surely of richest, deepest blessing; a place of which we can say, "It is good for us to be here;" a place where, when the Saviour and the sinner meet, the one bring-

ing nothing but sin and guilt, the other nothing but blessing and pardon, there is a link formed which unites them eternally. So Saul of Tarsus found it; and so will every convicted sinner who takes this place at once as he did.

And this is only the same "old, old story"—told in so many different ways—which Scripture has been relating from the third chapter of Genesis; the old story of man's ruin and God's remedy. Beautiful and most instructive it is to notice these differences, and to see the various ways in which God acts in His sovereignty and in His grace. At times, as with Peter, it is by the presentation of what He is individually that He brings the soul to take and own its true condition before Him; at times, as with the woman of Samaria at the well of Sychar, He speaks some word so directly to the conscience that the soul is forced to bow before Him; at times He creates such a need in the heart that it is brought to crave for Him, and then He reveals Himself as the One who can supply that need—the All-sufficient; at times, with others, it is a gradual weaning away from earth, a leading up into some "high mountain apart" ere the all-important question is put, "What think ye of Christ?" or anon, as in the scene before us, without a moment's preparation, He so presents Himself to the soul that it can only fall in the dust before Him, and own Him "Lord!"

"At times, with sudden glory, He speaks, and it is done :  
Without one stroke of battle the victory is won.  
While we with joy beholding can scarce believe it true,  
That e'en our kingly Jesus can form such hearts anew !

"But sometimes in the stillness He gently draweth near,  
And whispers words of welcome into the sinner's ear ;  
With anxious heart awaiteth the answer to His cry,  
The oft-repeated question, O wherefore wilt thou die ?"

But however different may be the ways by which God draws souls to Himself ; however diverse those wondrous paths along which the soul travels up to God ; whether the action is accomplished in the space of a moment of time, or lasts through long and weary years, in this they are identical, viz., the goal they reach, the platform on which they rest, which is *at the feet of Jesus!* Blessed meeting-place ! Happy resting-place ! At His feet now, as convicted sinners, we shall be on His throne by and bye as risen saints ; yea faith takes its place there already "*in Him!*"

But this is a place where all thought of human merit must be set aside, and set aside *for ever*, and all who will be saved must stand upon the broad platform of *universal condemnation*. "Every mouth must be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God." (Rom. iii. 19.) Here it is the sinner must learn to cast away every shred of his own self-righteousness, to give up every thought of self-improvement or self-justification, and like blind Bartimæus, who we read

"casting away his garment, rose and came to Jesus," he must relinquish every claim to merit, or pretension of any kind, and owning himself "poor and miserable, blind and naked," take his place as a "beggar," at "the feet of Jesus," to receive thankfully and trustfully the blessing He is so ready to bestow. But this was just what Saul of Tarsus could not do ; he was willing enough, I doubt not, to strive to earn heaven in some way by his own merit or holy zeal, and to this end, "according to the straitest sect of his religion, he lived a Pharisee." And so far from being anything outwardly bad, he bore a high reputation and character amongst the religious professors of the day. He was highly educated, brought up "at the feet of Gamaliel," and touching the righteousness of the law, he was "blameless." But with all his education, and all his knowledge, he did not know Christ. Unspeakable loss for the soul ! "*Who art thou, Lord?*" was a fitting question for one who was totally ignorant of Him. He might and doubtless did know plenty *about* Him, and had heard plenty *of* Him ; but with all his knowledge he was really more pitiably ignorant than the poorest of the fisher disciples ; for he was totally ignorant of the only thing worth knowing, which was Christ as his Saviour.

Is this the experience of any whose eyes may fall upon these pages, who, it may be, are high up in the world's estimation ; who own a name and a

position far beyond most of their associates, as authorities on abstruse subjects; whose whole hearts and minds, as well as time and talents are devoted to the attainment and advancement of knowledge in every form; who can reason most logically about Scripture and religion; who have from their youth heard and known about Christ and His work, and yet from whose lips Saul's question would most naturally be drawn forth, were He presented to them in all His personal excellence and beauty, "Who art thou, Lord?" If such are conscious that with all their attainment there is a total dissatisfaction, a void in the heart still unfilled, which all their learning can never supply; that though the world's honours and applause be heaped upon their heads, and they be classed among the great and wise ones of the earth, they have yet failed to discover what will pass them into the presence of God in perfect righteousness—I would earnestly pray them in the words of him of old, "*Acquaint now thyself WITH HIM, and be at peace.*" (Job xxii. 21.)

This alone can be called true knowledge, yea more than knowledge—it is life! "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." This is the true knowledge which carries the soul into a region infinite, immutable, eternal, and this can only be learned even where Saul of Tarsus learned it, at the

feet of Jesus ! For "*in Him*" only "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Only let us see that we are *empty* vessels thus *ready* as well as willing to be "filled with all the fulness of God." "God's grace," says one, "is like His sunlight. We cannot buy it, we do not merit it, but we may *receive* it," and bask our souls in the conscious enjoyment of it.

Saul knew nothing of this blessed truth until he learned it at noontide, upon that Damascus highway ! Before he had, like many a one still, been seeking to work out his own salvation, and could boldly say as "touching the righteousness of the law" he was "blameless," and it was his very religious zeal which led him to persecute the followers of Christ, thinking he did God service. Miserable delusion ! one out of the many with which Satan "blinds the minds of those that believe not, *lest* the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." (2 Cor. iv. 4.) Doubtless he would never have cast in his lot with the rejected and crucified Leader of the despised sect of the Nazarenes, had he not been arrested in his headlong career of guilt by the revelation of a glorified Christ in heaven, and read in the wondrous blaze which was shining around him the truth, "God is light," and so been brought to see himself in a way he never had before, and to own his condition as being utterly unfit

to stand the scrutiny of God's presence. More than this, he seems to have been morally as well as physically blinded to all else by that wondrous blaze. "*I could not see,*" seems a fit description of all his after-experience, "*for the glory of that light.*" Like one who withdraws his gaze from a noontide sun, to whom the surrounding scene, however bright it may in reality be, seems dark and indistinct, so *he* seems to have been blinded to all this world's brightness and attractions by the sight of a glorified Christ. That one sight of Him, who was "the brightness of the Father's glory" seems to have made the whole world dim and dark to him from henceforth !

Let us now pass on to consider for a little the words which were first addressed to him. We are inclined to expect when we consider the mission upon which he was going—which had as its object the persecution and extermination of the Church of God, the little handful of believers in Christ—that God might justly and righteously have struck him to the earth, and left him there, as a solemn warning to those who might be following his example. But, ah ! God's ways are not as our ways, nor His thoughts as our thoughts, and He did not purpose making him thus a monument of judgment, but a monument of grace and mercy ! He would bring that proud, self-righteous, persecuting Pharisee a captive in the chains of love to His feet, and then raise him up as a brilliant trophy of how

"grace reigns through righteousness." Hence it is that we do not read, when Saul asked, "Who art thou, Lord?" of His making any startling declaration of Himself! He does not say to the trembling and convicted sinner, "I am King of kings and Lord of lords;" "I am the Holy One of Israel," "the mighty One of Jacob," that will "by no means clear the guilty," though by any of these titles at that time He might have made Himself known; and surely this is only another illustration of how "He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax." He does not reveal Himself as a "King," a "Judge," or the "Searcher of hearts" (though most surely He is all these) to the trembling heart of a convicted sinner, but only as a Saviour. "*I am Jesus.*" Surely sweeter music never fell upon a trembling sinner's ears than this, and methinks as Saul heard it there must have risen in his mind the recollection of a wonderful prophecy of which he had often heard—" *Thou shalt call His name JESUS, for He shall save His people from their sins.*"

"Unfathomable wonder,  
And mystery divine!  
The voice that speaks in thunder  
Says, sinner, 'I am thine!'"

"*I am Jesus.*" Ah! this is what alone gave Paul confidence, as he gazed up into that intensely brilliant light, and felt it burning into his whole moral being,

exposing and convicting his heart and conscience. In the scrutinizing flash which revealed the truth, "God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all," he read also the blessed heart-assuring counterpart, "God is Love." Oh! what a blessed fact to learn "at the feet of Jesus" that, lying there in the dust, he was lying at the feet of the Saviour of sinners; that, conscious of his lost and ruined condition, he was still in the presence of the very One who "came to seek and to save that which was lost." Surely this is what set his heart at liberty and at rest for ever in God's presence, when his soul grasped, in all their length and breadth and depth and height, the meaning of those three precious words, "*I AM Jesus!*" No wonder that in his after ministry this name was his theme. Of all the testimony which "from henceforth" was to be sounded out, he made this the keynote! Jesus! Jesus! "He preached unto them *Jesus*" (Acts xvii. 18); "a Saviour, *Jesus*" (Acts xiii. 23); yea, he was "pressed in the Spirit," testifying to the Jews that "*Jesus* was the Christ." (Acts xviii. 6.) And as that name was the theme of his first discourse, so was it also of his last. When we come to the latest historical record which we have of him we read: "There came many unto him to his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them *concerning* JESUS, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening." (Acts xxviii. 23.)

"*I AM Jesus!*" Reader, have these words ever fallen upon your ears? Has your heart bowed to the name of *Jesus*? Have you ever felt there is *in that name* what just meets your need? and, as you think of it, can you say—

"Salvation in that name is found,  
Cure for my grief and care;  
A healing balm for every wound—  
*All, all I want is there*"?

True, you cannot now gaze upon that face, once "marred more than any man's;" or press through the crowd to "touch if only the hem of His garment;" but the eye of *faith* can still "see Jesus," and the ear of faith still hears that tender voice, giving the same gracious invitations that He did of old, and uttering the same sweet words, "*I AM Jesus!*" and knows they come from a risen Saviour, and we glory that it is so. Yet the truly devoted heart must ever rejoice, that the act which gave Him that title is for ever past, and cannot be repeated, though the remembrance of it and the results which flow from it must be eternal. In other words, though when our condition after Adam's fall was that of lost ruined sinners, lying under sentence of death and judgment: and God, in the eternal counsels of His love, "gave His only begotten Son" to meet our need, and remedy our ruined condition by justifying us freely "through the redemption that was in Christ Jesus;"—though He "so loved the world,

that He gave His Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John iii. 16.) That act can never be repeated. God "spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all," that we should not perish eternally;—but He will not do so again. Christ "*once* suffered" the "just for the unjust;" but now He has "*for ever* sat down on the right hand of God." (Heb. x. 12.) It is all past and over for Him. He came to do God's will, and ere He left this world, He could say, "I have *finished* the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." (John xvii. 4, 5.)

This glory He has entered upon. Still, to God's eye, we know that great transaction is as fresh to-day, and will be through the countless ages of eternity, as the moment it actually took place. "*Man*," says one, "could suffer, but could not satisfy; *God* could satisfy, but could not suffer; so God *became* a man, that He might both suffer and satisfy." And forasmuch as we are "partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." (Heb. ii. 14.) "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered.

And being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him." (Heb. v. 8.) "Though He was rich, yet *for your sakes He became poor*, that ye through His poverty might be rich." Oh, what a sight it must have been to all the hosts of heaven to see the Son of God as a helpless infant lying in a manger, because "there was no room in the inn!" Oh, to what a depth of poverty and degradation did He descend for our sakes! And was it appreciated? How was He received? Ah! "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not:" the cold repulse He met with at the wayside inn was but a *formula* for all His after experience. There was "no room," no welcome, for Him in His own world! Even though that was a lost world, hurrying on to eternal destruction, and He came into it with the name of SAVIOUR written upon His brow! "Thou shalt call His name *Jesus*." He came seeking to win back the confidence of men's hearts to God, by revealing what was in God's heart towards them; but man would not be won. In principle as well as practice they just said, "This is the heir; come, let us kill Him;" and they did so with "wicked hands:" He was crucified and slain. But that very act only threw open the floodgates of the heart of God, and let His deep love flow out unhindered to perishing sinners. For now He can righteously accept and bless the repentant believing soul, on the ground of

*the perfect sacrifice of Christ*, and be "just and the justifier" of all who believe in Jesus.

But further : when we think of this name, this title, we cannot but pause to admire its suitability. What did lost sinners need but a *Saviour*? He did not come as the "mighty God," the "everlasting Father," or even the "Prince of Peace," but as a "Saviour, Christ the Lord." This was what rang out over those dark Judæan plains, from the lips of angel hosts, that midnight long ago ; the "glad tidings" they bore were comprised in these five little words : "A Saviour, Christ the Lord." How the heart turns again and again to these "glad tidings," and rests upon the fact that "He came to seek and to save that which was lost." He came to meet man in his ruin and wretchedness, and "to as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God."

But what a life He spent here upon this earth ! How feebly we realize it ! "*The man* Christ Jesus" walking through this hostile scene, enduring the contradiction of sinners against Himself, though they were the very ones He left the brightness of the Father's glory, and all the unspeakable joys of heaven, and came down to the desolate shores of a ruined world "to save ;" yet they "saw no beauty in Him that they should desire Him." As one very truly writes, "In His relationships to the world which was around Him, we see Him at once a *conqueror*, a *sufferer*, and a

*benefactor.* What moral glories shine in such an assemblage ! He overcame the world, refusing all its attractions ; He suffered from it, bearing witness against its whole course ; He blest it, dispensing the fruit of His grace and power incessantly. Its temptations only made Him a conqueror, its pollutions and enmities a sufferer, its miseries only a benefactor ! What a combination !"

*Pain and suffering*, looking to Him, were at once relieved. *Sorrow*, tracking His footsteps, got sympathy and comfort. *Sin*, crouching at His feet, was not spurned away with harsh rebuke, but received compassionate words of acquittal. *Death* itself had to yield up its power in His presence, who was Himself the Resurrection and the Life ! Such was *Jesus* — "the *man* Christ Jesus"—who is now glorified at God's right hand ; but with the same ear, the same heart, the same love unchanged, as in the days of His humiliation, all engaged in His people's behalf. It is very sweet thus to gaze back upon His earthly history, and mark His path, winding like a streak of light through the darkness of the surrounding scene—

"All the Father's heart revealing,  
In His every word and way ;"

drawing hearts to Himself by the controlling power of His love, convicting the *conscience*, it may be, but ever with that winning the confidence of the *heart* ; making His words, "*follow Me*," like a living

touch to souls, winning them away from the world, from home, from occupation, to find *Himself* as the only centre of attraction. But unless the heart is on fire from having seen Jesus, how any little thing turns it aside from the glory of the Lord! How that little word "Nazareth" came between Nathanael and the Son of God! But when he *sees Jesus*, he finds that Philip has not said half enough, and falls down in worship at once. Surely it is well to acquaint our hearts with Him thus as *Jesus*, as the "man of sorrows," and the One who "was in all points tempted like as we are," that He might thus more perfectly be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities."

There is a verse of a sweet little hymn which I learned long ago, in the days of my bright, happy childhood, and though they are common, simple lines, known to most, I think there is a vein of deep feeling and devotion lying underneath their simplicity; and very sweetly they seem to me to express the desire of many an earnest soul now—

"I think, when I read that sweet story of old,  
When Jesus was here among men,  
How He called little children as lambs to His fold,  
*I should like to have been with Him then.*

"I wish that His hands had been placed on my head,  
That His arms had been thrown around me,  
And that I might have seen His kind look when He said,  
'Let the little ones come unto Me.'"

These poor, faithless hearts of ours are so prone

to reason thus: "If Jesus were but here personally now, how very different all would be! If we could but get near Him now, and hear those 'gracious words' He was ever uttering, and gaze upon His face, we could confidently cast all our care upon Him, assured of having His sympathy and love. But 'He is risen,' He has left this earth, and heaven seems so far away, I can scarcely realize His watchful care." Ah, it is unbelief which thus speaks, thus reasons; faith never does. Faith believes and rests in the angel's words addressed to the disciples long ago, in whose desolate hearts such thoughts may also have arisen, as with straining eyes they gazed up into the blue vault of heaven which had hidden the form of their ascended Master from their sight—"Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? *This same Jesus*, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." (Acts i. 11.) Faith treasures this sentence in her soul as she thinks of all He was when down here, telling out the secrets of the Father's name—Himself a living exponent of the words "God is love"—every utterance of His heart, and every act of His hand, meeting all our need, and making our sorrow His own; and she rests in the blessed consciousness that it is "*the same Jesus*" whom we still have in heaven, with His hand unshortened, and His heart unchanged!

Rather, if possible, is He more intensely interested in His people now than when He was upon this earth, in consequence of their being more intimately associated with Him, and linked up in living union with Him by His Spirit where He is. He is the "Head," they are "the members." "No man ever yet hated his own flesh ; but *nourisheth it and cherisheth it*, even as the Lord the church." (Eph. v. 29.) Saul learned this blessed truth of the Lord's perfect identification with His people in all their sorrows and sufferings and persecutions on earth, when the voice of Jesus sounded upon his ears from the excellent glory—"Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou *Me*?" And this is a truth much needed to be realized by saints in these days, that however blessed and happy might have been our association with our Lord when He was here upon earth, we could not have been brought into relationship with God as our Father, nor union with Himself, until after He rose from the dead, and thus became the head of a new creation. (See 1 Cor. xv. 12-50 ; Eph. i. ii. ; Col. i. 12-22 ; ii. 6-20.)

It is doubly sweet for us as we realize what He is *to* us now, to retrace in thought His earthly path, and see what He was *for* us when here; to follow Him in recollection through the different scenes of joy and sorrow which He encountered with His disciples; to walk with them over the wild mountain side, and hear the faithless question, "Whence should

we have so much bread in the wilderness as to feed so great a multitude?" or anon stand with that crowd upon the sea shore, and listen to that beautiful parable of the sower and the seed; or get still closer to Him when He is "alone," and hear the wondrously beautiful explanation of it. (Mark vi. 10.) We may walk through the ripe corn-fields, or linger in the desert with them, and the voice of the Master seems to fall sweetly and familiarly upon our ears, uttering those words which have since stirred so many noble and true hearts in the cause of spreading the gospel—"The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest."

Thus occupied, we shall learn to know Him *personally* better than we do—to recognize the tone of His voice, as it were, and the touch of His hand, and the unfailing treasury of grace which was ever open in His heart for needy sinners to draw from. And should storms arise, and dark clouds, sweeping over our life-path, seem for a time to hide Him from our gaze—when "no moon or stars for many days appear," and "no small tempest lies upon us," but we feel ourselves out alone amid the pitiless storm—"in the fourth watch of the night," the darkest, most desolate hour—we shall hear His voice, as did his disciples of old, upon the lake of Galilee, uttering the same peace-giving word to us as to them—"It is I"—"I

Jesus." Ah! this is what comforts, this is what sustains us when nothing else can—His own presence—*His very self*—being with us in the darkness and trouble, and making every wave, as He passes along, beam with light and blessing beneath His feet.

One more thought about this precious name—JESUS. That He still owns it, and bears it in heaven for the comfort and encouragement of His people on earth, I think comes out very touchingly near the close of Scripture; when the last utterances of Christ to and for His church are recorded for them by the Holy Ghost through the apostle John; when the heart is trembling under a sense of the terribleness of the judgments which have been poured out, and the ear is stunned with the noise of the "voices and thunderings and lightnings" and earthquakes; and when that glorious description of the new Jerusalem, with its unfading beauties and its ceaseless joys, scarcely serves to reassure the heart, one little gleam of light is given to lift the soul above the influences of present things, two little notes are uttered, as the trumpet call to a rallying-point, for the worn and scattered army—two brief words to soothe and calm the trembling heart, and bring it into a place where it is at rest and at home—"I JESUS." Ah! this is a watch-word to which the true heart alone can respond, "*Come, Lord Jesus*" (Rev. xxii. 16); and it does so joyfully. This is the name which speaks to our hearts

as none other can, because it speaks to us of a *person*, of One we *know*, and whom we desire and long to *see*—One "whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, *though now ye see Him not*, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

"There is a *name* I love to hear,  
I love to sing its worth ;  
It sounds like music in mine ear,  
*The sweetest name on earth.*

"It tells me of a Saviour's blood,  
Who died to set me free ;  
It tells me of His precious blood,  
The sinner's perfect plea.

"It tells me of a Father's smile,  
Beaming upon His child ;  
It cheers me through this 'little while,'  
Through desert, waste, and wild.

"It tells of One whose loving heart  
Can feel my deepest woe ;  
Who in each sorrow bears a part  
That none can bear below.

"JESUS!—the name I love so well,  
The name I love to hear ;  
No saint on earth its worth can tell,  
No heart conceive how dear.

"*This name* shall shed its fragrance still  
Along life's thorny road,  
Shall sweetly smooth the rugged hill  
That leads me up to God."

## VI.

“**T**HE gloomy night will soon be past,  
The morning will appear;  
The harbinger of day at last  
Each waiting eye will cheer!

“Thou ‘Bright and Morning Star’  
Wilt to our joy be seen;  
Thou, Lord, wilt meet our longing sight  
Without a cloud between!”






## THE BRIGHT AND MORNING STAR.

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*"I AM the root and the offspring of David, the bright and morning star."—Rev. xxii. 16.*

E now come to consider the last place in Scripture where our blessed Lord prefaces the declaration of His attributes with that brief but most comprehensive title, "*I AM*." We find it in connection with a word addressed directly and specially to the *heart*, and it is one which the heart alone can understand. Human reason must fall powerless before this word, and the most brilliant intellect must own its inability to grasp its fulness or probe its depths. It is a subject exclusively for the *heart* to enter into—this bright, this blessed hope of the appearing of the Morning Star!

Specially sweet it is and precious, coming just where it does in the last chapter of the last book of divine communication from God to man. "I am the bright and Morning Star." It is a beam of "the glory of

God in the face of Jesus Christ" addressing itself to the heart, and calling forth the response from it, "*Come!*" There is a word concerning Israel, which we read in Isaiah xxxii., which forms, to my mind, a forcible illustration of the position of the children of God as we get them in the Revelation. "My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places; when *it shall hail*, coming down on the forest, and the city shall be utterly abased." (See margin.) Though doubtless as regards Israel it will yet be *literally* fulfilled, surely we may say, as regards the Church, it will be spiritually. When the wrath and judgment, when the plagues and desolation, which we find so plainly and solemnly described in the Revelation, are being poured out upon Christendom; when there will be "great woe to the inhabitants of the earth," then we are tenderly reminded that the Church—the Bride of Christ—will be out of it, and *above it all*. She will be dwelling in the peaceable habitation and quiet resting-place of His own beloved presence.

Nevertheless God has told us, His children, of the prospects of this world, and expects us to be interested in what interests Him; but personally we have nothing whatever to say to it, we are outside the scene altogether. Before ever a thunder utters its voice, or a seal is broken, or a vial poured forth, we shall be above the storm, above the trouble, "shut

in" *with* the Bridegroom, blessed be God! to "go no more out."

But because we are not personally and individually concerned in all these governmental dealings of God, which we get here described, let us not be indifferent to them. As one has said, it is a "very touching proof of confidence on the Lord's part" His telling us of them. Just as of old, when on His way to destroy the cities of the plain, and pour out the fiery judgment upon them, He turned aside to let Abraham, as it were, into His secrets—to tell him what He was about to do, although it had no immediate reference to him. So when passing on to the judgment of this world, He turns aside, in this sense, to confide in *us* as His friends, and in this relationship makes all things known unto us. As He says Himself, "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth: but I have called you *friends*; for all things that I have heard of my Father *I have made known unto you.*" (John xv. 15.) Let us value His confidence, and may the acceptance of it have that sanctifying influence upon our life and walk that He looks for, separating us from all the corruption, deadness, and evil of the scene around, which is so solemnly and so speedily to be judged, and lightening up the path we must tread in the midst of it all. Not that we are to be occupied with the evil, with the judgments; far from it. That would never produce

the desired result; but to be exclusively occupied with Himself will of necessity throw us into the place taken by Him outside it all, and lead us into deeper sympathy and communion with His mind and ways. And this is what He longs for; and this seems to be His reason for again addressing His people in the final chapter of the Revelation. It is as if He could not bear, after so fully describing the dark and solemn prospects of the world, to close that last communication from God to man, without comforting the hearts of His people, by referring to that which lay before them—even His own personal return—"Behold I come quickly." Three times over in this short chapter He repeats this unspeakably precious promise, and however He may connect it with reward and blessing, and thus probe the conscience in the first two verses, we may safely say in the last it is a word addressed specially and exclusively to the *heart*, and hence draws forth from the true one, which beats in unison with His, the ready response, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

It is sweet to notice also how He calls Himself still, as we get it in this chapter, by the old familiar name which He bore here upon earth, "I am *Jesus*." He shows His people He is still the same One whom they had learned to love so well—unchanged and unchangeable; and then He cheers their hearts with the promise of His speedy return, "Surely I come

quickly." It is an echo of the words of comfort with which He sought to sustain them at the hour of parting in the fourteenth of John, "*I will come again.*" And what so calculated to comfort their hearts in that intensely sorrowful moment as the promise, received from His own lips, of His return? Well He knows this, and so He presents it to them as the hope of their hearts. And mark, it is not the bare doctrinal fact of His second coming which He unfolds. He does not say merely, "I will come again," come as a King, come as a Judge, come "in flaming fire taking vengeance on those that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of His grace"—though most surely He will yet do so; but as that was a moment intensely sacred to the sorrow of parting, He only speaks to them of their once more being united, "*I will come again, and receive you unto myself.*" He throws open the view into the Father's house, shews them the blessedness He is going to prepare for them, and then tells them He will come again to lead them there. And this is just the substance of the last words He addresses to His people in the Apocalypse—the last message He sends them from glory—"I am the bright and Morning Star!" "Surely I come quickly."

Just as those who watch through the long dark night are the ones, and the only ones, to see the day-star arise which precedes the rising sun, so He exhorts us

to watch for Him; for thus He will come as the bright Morning Star, shedding His soft welcome beams into His people's hearts when the night is darkest and the gloom is deepest in all the scene around. It is as if He said, "Though all grow darker and darker, though evil abound and the love of many wax cold, be not faithless. 'I am the Root and offspring of David.' I must come, the foretold, the promised Messiah. To my forsaken, but not forgotten people, who have rejected me, I will arise as the 'Sun of righteousness with healing in my beams' (Malachi iv. 2); but to you who know me as '*Jesus*,' as a Saviour, I will come in a different aspect altogether—I will come as 'the bright and Morning Star.'"

There seems to me peculiar sweetness and beauty in our Lord *thus* presenting Himself to us, instead of as the Sun of righteousness; for it is not the glory and splendour of His coming kingdom which has won our hearts, but the revelation of Himself in grace, and love, and tenderness. Hence He presents Himself to the Church, and to her only, in this aspect. The world will see His glory and majesty when He comes with ten thousand of His saints to judge it; but His people, His disciples only want *Himself*, so He comes to them as that which is unnoticed and unthought of by the world—"the bright and Morning Star." And mark the result of His thus making Himself known—"The Spirit and the

Bride say, Come!" There is an instantaneous response made in the language only known to faith, and which only the true heart now can utter.

This hope, need I say it? is most *practical* when held in living power by the soul. It bears in a most direct and special way, no less upon the conscience than upon the heart. "Every man," says the apostle, "that hath *this hope* in Him *purifieth himself* even as He is pure." We must ever look for souls who hold this truth to express it as practically as did the Thessalonian converts, who, we read, "turned to God from idols, *to serve* the living and true God, and *to wait* for His Son from heaven." It seems as if "serving" were almost inseparably connected with "waiting." Our hearts cannot be in a true state of expectancy unless our lives are practically carrying out His one desire, "*Occupy till* I come." If I am in a state of instant expectation of the return of some loved one, I shall take care not to be mixed up and associated with what that loved one could not approve; yea, more, I shall not merely "cease to do evil," but I shall "learn to do well"—I shall seek to be in a position and a place in which I know it will rejoice his heart to find me.

We get a beautiful illustration of this fine principle in the case of Mephibosheth, whose heart was so intensely occupied with his rejected lord, that his outward appearance and ways could not fail to ex-

hibit it—he “neither dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came again in peace.” (2 Sam. xix. 24.) Would to God that we in these days bore the same distinct testimony as to our carelessness and indifference towards all that is in the world around, so long as our Lord and Master is out of the scene ! Would that in our ways, and manners, and dress, and conversation we were more “*like* unto men that wait for their Lord ;” like unto those who have nothing to get and nothing to lose of this world’s resources, and who have nothing to say to the wilderness—like Rebecca passing through it on her way to meet Isaac, holding it of no interest or account—save as a sphere for learning all the depths of the riches of His grace, and using all the supplies which His hand of love has provided for the way !

Do you and I live in the light of the Lord Jesus Christ’s coming *at any* moment ? Is that the hope that sheds light on everything ? It is of immense practical comfort as well as power. If it were always the present object of the heart, how would it be possible to be overcome by the trials and difficulties we have to pass through ? He may be coming to-night, or we may have years of trial or of persecution in the wilderness ; but in the thought of His coming to fetch us, and His hand under us, can we not forget this body of humiliation and these trials

until then? If each day as it passes over our heads we were to realize and live in the expectation of the Lord's return before night-time, what different people we should be ! We should live much more loosely to the things of time and sense ; the ten thousand attractions which Satan spreads around, seeking to entice our hearts away from God, would lose their power ; the flesh would be mortified, and counted as a dead thing ; and the world would be in its proper place—beneath our feet !

But, alas ! too often this hope gets dim, and our hearts grow cold, and the road of life seems to stretch a long way before us into the dim and unknown future, and our hearts, if not our lips, echo the words of the evil servant, "My Lord delayeth His coming." It is not that we doubt His promise to return. Not at all. We believe He will return, and is coming. But Satan tempts us to think "*not yet.*" So it is the old story over again—while he tarried, "they all slumbered and slept." But, blessed be God, He does not let this continue. If we pursue this parable further, we read : "At midnight there was a cry made." In His grace and love, He does not allow His saints to be taken wholly by surprise. He gives them a warning—He sends forth a cry. And, beloved reader, this warning has been given, the midnight cry has gone forth, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh ;" and never was there a time when the subject of

Christ's coming is more universally spoken of, and urged upon people's attention, than the present. And yet—solemn thought!—when He does come, the *world* will be taken by surprise. It will not be *ready* to go in with Him to the marriage, though it may hold the lamp of profession ostentatiously in its hand.

We know from Scripture what living power the hope of the Lord's return had in the souls of the early Christian converts—with what zeal they "went forth to meet the Bridegroom," "looking for that blessed hope," "waiting for the Son from heaven." But we also know how soon they gave it up, and went back again, and that for many centuries they indeed "all slumbered and slept." It is never once mentioned in the earliest writings of the fathers, nor touched upon in the most ancient record of Church history. For more than 1600 years this blessed hope was completely lost sight of. In fact the first few verses of Matt. xxv. is just a graphic description of the departure of Christendom from its original calling. "They all slumbered and slept." But now in these "last days," in these closing hours of the present dispensation, God in His boundless grace, has by His Spirit again awakened up His people to look for and expect His coming. And what is the consequence? We find ourselves surrounded on all sides by the confusion consequent upon the midnight cry being heard. And

mark, that cry never was repeated. It floated for a brief while upon the still midnight air, and then the next thing was, the Bridegroom came, and "*they that were ready* went in with Him to the marriage; and the door was shut." Most surely we are *in* the night. How can it be otherwise when He who is the *light* is absent from the earth? But it is a night which is "far spent," "the day is at hand." Even now faith can see the faint light of a coming dawn beyond the dark clouds which lie upon this world's horizon, and can take up "the burden of Dumah." "*The morning cometh, and also the night;*" the morning of the church's deep unspeakable joy and blessing; the night of judgment on the world.

Reader, be assured if that morning does not dawn upon you in all its brightness and blessing, that night will overtake you with all its unutterable darkness and wrath. Ponder, I would earnestly ask you, the first thirteen verses of Matt. xxv., and ask yourself if the Lord were to come to-night, would you be ready to meet Him? Do not trifle, I beseech you, with this all-important question; leave it not unsettled for half an hour longer. The door is still open; Jesus still invites, the Holy Spirit is still here; but the moment is rapidly approaching when "the Master of the house" will rise up, and the door will be then shut, and shut for ever! And who can tell how soon this may be! It may be to-morrow, it may be to-night, it may be an

hour hence. "At even, or at midnight, or at cock-crowing, or in the morning."

"It may be at the cock-crow,  
 When the night is dying slowly  
     In the sky,  
 And the sea looks calm and holy,  
 Waiting for the dawn of the golden sun  
     Which draweth nigh ;  
 When the mists are in the valleys,  
     Shading the rivers chill,  
 And my morning star is fading, fading  
     Over the hill ;—  
 Behold, I say unto you, ' Watch !'  
 Let the door be on the latch  
     In your home,—  
 In the chill before the dawning—  
     I MAY COME !

"It may be in the *morning*,  
 When the sun is bright and strong,  
 And the dew is glistening sharply  
     Over the little lawn ;  
 Where the waves are laughing loudly  
     Along the shore,  
 And the little birds are singing sweetly  
     About the door.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Remember that *I may be* the next  
 To come in at the door,  
 To call you from your busy work  
     For evermore !  
 As you *work*, your *heart must watch* ;  
 For the door is on the latch,  
     In your room,—  
 And it may be in the *morning*  
     I WILL COME !"

That day, "that hour, knoweth *no man*." The ablest prophetic student, the most learned chronologist, must admit their inability to answer the deeply interesting question as to *when* He will come. Human reasonings and human calculations, prove utterly at fault when they seek to determine this momentous epoch, and men must ever find that their thoughts and God's as regards this matter differ not a little, and the word holds good whether they will bow to it or not—"That hour knoweth no man." But we do know, on the *infallible authority* of the word of the living God, that He will come *quickly*, He will come *suddenly*, He will come *soon*. "Behold!" are His own words, "I come *quickly*!" "Watch, therefore, for at such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh!" He will come suddenly; for "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," "we shall all be changed," and "shall be caught up" to meet Him in the air. He will come *soon*; for "yet a *little while*, and He that shall come *will come*, and will not tarry." On this blessed hope James in his epistle exhorts us to stay our hearts. "Be ye also patient, stablish your hearts; for *the coming of the Lord draweth nigh*."

Who can tell how nigh? These may be the last words I shall write: they may be the last you shall read. To me the thought is most solemn, but most precious. Is it less so to you? Before another sun rises upon this guilty world, we, if true believers in

Him, may have been taken away from the scene altogether, to be for ever in His beloved presence. "For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God : and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air ; and so shall we ever be with the Lord." (1 Thess. iv. 16.) Those who study the original text tell us that the word translated "shout" implies a term expressive of *relationship*. If such is the case, the appropriateness of it is most beautiful. It is a call from the lips of the Lord Jesus Himself, which only His people will understand and answer to. To the *world*, if it hears it, it will be an unknown, unintelligible sound. But "His own" will at once recognise it and respond, "*It is the voice of my Beloved!* Behold He cometh!"

"*Behold He cometh!*" This should be the Christian's watchword while passing along through the ranks of the enemy in this strange and pilgrim land, the eye brightening and the heart warming as lip after lip repeats it. And however dark the scene around may grow ; though on all sides "wars and rumours of wars" may spread their vast and appalling flood of desolation, famine, and plague ; though the "sea and waves are roaring, and men's hearts are failing them for fear, and for looking for the things which are

coming on the earth ;” though the most stable human props are quaking to their foundation, and the most ancient institutions are giving way beneath the battering-rams of popular infidelity and lawlessness ; though the very mention of Christ’s coming is received by the *mass* with incredulity and scorn, while the scoffing question is asked, as year after year rolls on, “Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation” (2 Peter iii. 4) ; yet we may be calm and peaceful, lifting up our heads in watchful expectancy, knowing that “our redemption draweth nigh.”

But while we may hold this blessed hope as from God, and have clearly and intelligently apprehended the different aspects of our Lord’s second coming, we would do well to see that we hold it not merely as a doctrine or a theory, an important item of our Christian faith, but as a living practical power in our soul. Christianity is a living, energizing, vital principle, not a set of theological notions. It all centres *in* and around a *person*, and that person is Christ ! And I am persuaded, however deeply we may study Scripture ; however high the truth we hold ; however separate from the world and its systems the place we take, we shall not be “growing up,” we shall not be as “lights,” we shall not be “epistles,” we shall not be reflectors of Him, unless we are advancing daily in

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a deeper *personal* knowledge of Himself. He must ever be the source, and centre, and spring of every blessing to our souls; consequently He should ever be the object of attraction to our hearts, leading us to "go forth" from every thing else *to Him*. Thus even this hope of His coming, if held only *intellectually*, apart from a personal love to Him, must be profitless. When we "go forth" it must be "*unto Him*." The apostle does not say, "Let us go forth to a sect, or a system, or a theory"—these would be but poor centres round which to gather; but, blessed be God, it is "*unto Him*," the changeless, the eternal, yet humbled Son of God. This is the same principle we find exemplified in the parable in Matthew xxv. It was a *person*, not a doctrine, which controlled them then. They "went forth to meet *the Bridegroom*." It was a *person* who had won their affections and attracted their hearts; and they could leave all for Him, counting nothing so precious as *Himself*. We know when He ceased to be their object, how soon the hope of His return lost its power over their lives, and "they all slumbered and slept."

Is it so with us? I challenge my own heart, as yours, to answer this deeply important question. Do we long for His return—not merely because we shall then have done with the trials and sorrows of life, and have actually entered into the glory, which already by faith we know as ours—but simply because He has

so completely won our hearts, that we are weary longing for Him to come, and take us to be for ever with Himself? Do we feel that His cross has cut every tie which linked us with this world, and that now it is to us what it was to Mary, the empty tomb of Jesus, the place where our loved One was, but from whence He has gone. It is this feeling alone which sends us "forth" in the face of all opposition and discouragement to meet His returning footsteps. It is this which weans us from everything here, and enables us to hold all so loosely, that any moment we may pass into His beloved presence as "those who have all to gain, and nothing to lose."

Meanwhile He tarries in longsuffering grace toward a guilty world, whose judgment but lingers till He comes. And this longsuffering, He proclaims, is salvation to all who believe and trust in Him now. Well may *this* thought rebuke our often impatience, and make us willing to *wait with Him* for that moment to which He as well as we look forward. While the *hope* of His soon coming sheds such a light upon our path down here as nothing else can; it raises us above our difficulties, our anxieties, our cares, as no other hope does—by exposing our folly in dreading a day which may never arrive, and planning for a to-morrow on which we cannot count. It enables us to rise superior to everything in the scene around, however trying and sorrowful, and like Paul, "rejoice" in the

midst of it all: simply because it places Him between us and all our circumstances, and nearer to us than all our sorrow. Thus we may again repeat the words of the apostle, "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed. . . . Knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall *raise up us also by Jesus*, and present us with you." (2 Cor. iv. 8, 14.)

This hope takes us right up out of all our circumstances down here, into the calmness of His own presence—into which they can never enter. "For our citizenship (our possession, our inheritance) is in heaven; *from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.*" (Phil. iii. 20.) He has won our hearts and carried them with Himself, up to that bright Zoar above; and we hasten in spirit to leave the plains of earth, already so dark with clouds of coming judgment. Let us see, as we hasten onward, that we are witnesses by the way for Him; that we are a heavenly people, whose souls are tasting what it is to have *perfect confidence of heart in the One who is coming*, and are telling it out as they pass along. For we are called to be reflectors of Him down here, in His absence: as we gaze upon His unveiled face, not only to be filled ourselves with His glory, but to show it out to others. The darker the scene around may grow, the more we are called to shine *distinctly* for Him—to "walk in

the light as He is in the light," as those who know their living union with Him *where He is*. "The night is far spent, the day is at hand," and the "morning without clouds" will usher us into the light where Christ now is; He is the bright and Morning Star. For eighteen hundred years He has been dealing with a people down here; the night may be very dark, but the darkness does not reach up to the bright Morning Star. No cloud can cover Him; soon He will shine out. We are only on sufferance here, on our way to what lies farther on. He is our bright and Morning Star; we shall see Him; He will take us up and guide us to the Father's house, before the Sun shines out.

Is not this thought of His near approach a call to us to be up and doing—not merely to be "*waiting*" but "*serving*," and serving as if every hour were the last—as indeed we know not but it may—we should be left on earth? Do we feel the *reality* of thus expecting Him? Does it stamp earnestness, decision, devotedness, upon our every work and way? Does it make us feel there is much to be done, and but a short time in which to do it? that this is the time for labour—when He comes, but not till then, the time for *rest*? that we have opportunities *now* of being *for Him*, which must cease with time, while the countless ages of eternity will ever be revealing how blessedly and perfectly He has been "for us?" Does it enable us to forego our *rights* cheer-

fully, patiently, submissively—letting our “moderation (*yieldingness*) be known unto all men,” remembering “the Lord is at hand,” not resisting evil, but if smitten on one cheek turning the other also ; forgiving our brother if he have wronged us and oweth us aught, not merely *seven* times, but seventy times seven ; yielding in everything which merely concerns *our own* interests and exaltation, though unflinching, and unmovable in every thing which affects His glory or name? Thus “*serving*,” while “*waiting*,” it will not seem long until the day break, and the shadows which now surround us flee away ; and we hear His own beloved voice calling us away from labour to eternal rest ; away from sorrow, to eternal joy ; away from what is at best but the twilight of earth, into the unclouded light of His immediate presence.

Of old He appeared to His anxious and fearful disciples, toiling with rowing on the lake of Galilee in the “fourth watch of the night”—just the hour preceding the dawn, when all was darkest, when the storm was loudest, and the wind most contrary—not only cheering and comforting their hearts with the utterance of His own lips, “It is I,” but His own hand conducting them safe to shore, as we read in the brief but most comprehensive record of the incident, “they willingly received Him into the ship, and *immediately the ship was at the land*”—they reached “the haven where they would be”—they were *safe*

*with Him.* Even so it will be at the darkest hour of this world's midnight insensibility, when men shall be crying, "Peace, peace; when there is no peace." He who now from the heavenly hill is watching over His church, which, like the disciples on the lake long ago, is still left here tossed to and fro upon the waves of trial and difficulty in this troublesome world, will come to take her out of this scene of storm and trouble altogether, to be safe for ever with Himself ere the night of judgment overtake the world, and He can rise as Sun of Righteousness, with healing in His beams, upon a millennial earth. The bright and Morning Star is an entirely new glory. There were hearts bound to Him when down here which traced Him up into heaven; and ever since then a people's eyes have looked up, and their hearts have been expecting Him. It is a title of glory connected with the hearts of His people. How blessed for any to say, "I have watched through the night to get the first glimpse of Him. My heart is so attached to that Lord, and all my blessedness so connected with Him, that I cannot help being constantly on the look out for the first glimpse of Him as He descends from heaven into the air."

"*Of Him?*" Yes; it is just this which fills our hearts with joy—*Himself!* Surely He counted upon this when He uttered those most precious words, "I am the bright and Morning Star." It is not so much

His speedy return which He puts before us as His own self—His person—"I AM." And most surely it is not the glory ; it is not the splendour ; it is not the freedom from earth's sorrows and cares which will thrill our hearts when we rise to meet Him in the air. It will not be the place we shall occupy, or the crowns we shall wear, which shall entrance and absorb our every feeling throughout eternity, but it will be *Himself*—the One who so loved us as to give Himself for us, whom we shall meet face to face, and eye to eye, and heart to heart, valuing indeed the surrounding circumstances as the blessing into which our union with Him has introduced us, but prizing Him, the living source and centre, above and beyond all the surroundings.

As He will Himself be the attraction to our hearts when there, most surely *here* and *now* ought He to be the same. There may be trouble and care to pass through ; there may be weakness and weariness of the flesh to bear and to suffer from, but in the midst of it all *He* should occupy our hearts. And however dark our path, however rough, or difficult, or lonely, this hope of His return as the Morning Star should shed such a light upon it as no surrounding circumstances could obscure, and it should cheer the heart, through the long dreary night of His absence and rejection—the night which is yet *darker* now than it was then ! This only confirms the word of truth, that

it is "far spent," as the darkness of actual night always thickens till again the dawn of another day rise beyond on the other side of heaven, and the morning star appears to fix the eye of the watchful and waiting soul, and cheer the heart with a sure and certain hope. And what then do we want of the things of this dark place, which is now under judgment for having nailed God's Son to the cross? Surely nothing. It can give us nothing that we need, or aught that we desire. Do not therefore be seeking the riches, the honours, the power of this world, on which Christ is coming to execute judgment. One ray of the glory of Christ will at once wither up all the glory of this defiled world like an autumn leaf. Do not therefore go on mixing yourself up with it and its associations, seeking a name and a place where your Lord and Master had none. Remember He is at hand. What value will your wealth, your name, or your position appear in His presence? Surely none. Not that we should keep separate from this world merely because of the worthlessness of all in it, and because it is going to be judged. Certainly not. But because we know and have our portion outside it all, "in heavenly places *in Christ*," we know Him as the all-satisfying portion of our souls, and are separated from the world by *affection*, not by fear.

May we each know more of the reality of this. Let us seek to be in the position of men waiting for the

dawn, watching through the long dark night for the Morning Star to arise—standing on the deck, as it were, with the cry on our lips, "Come, Lord Jesus!" For most surely it will be only a "little while," and "He that shall come *will* come, and will not tarry;" and when "we who are alive and remain" hear His shout, and descry His presence descending to meet us in the air, be it ours to antedate the joyous cry of Israel, as yet unuttered by them, "Lo, this is our God! *we have waited* for Him."

" 'A little while'—He'll come again;  
Let us the precious hours redeem;  
Our only grief to give Him pain,  
Our joy to serve and follow Him:  
Watching and ready may we be,  
As those that long their Lord to see."

Only let us not think it long to wait His time, when He waits so long for the return of ruined sinners. It will be only a little longer "till He come;" meanwhile let us "be patient." Every night brings us nearer and nearer, and every departing sun bids us take heart and labour, for soon will our work be done! Our travelling days of toil and weariness and heat are nearly over. Let our eyes be fixed more intently upon *the end of the way*; our hearts more occupied with thoughts of the riches and glories and person of the One we are so soon to meet. Let us press forward in spirit, as Rebecca did in feet, to the

bright goal which lies before us. Let nothing turn us aside, let nothing lead us to look back with regretful yearnings for the scene we have left ; but knowing no past save the cross, no future but the glory, press on as those who can calmly, if sadly, declare the history of their earthly hopes is finished. There are only a few more waves to buffet, only a few more temptations to resist, only a few more sorrows and trials to pass through, and then soon, very soon, perhaps before ever we are aware, as we "lift up our eyes" with yearning expectancy, we shall see our true Isaac coming to meet us, and take us to be for ever with Himself.

- "Only a few more burdens must we carry  
In heat and toil beneath the scorching sun ;  
Only a little longer must we tarry,  
Only a little longer, 'till He come !"
- "Only a little more of life's long journey  
Through the world's desert till the day is done ;  
Only a few more desert scenes of conflict,  
Only a few more Marahs, 'till He come !"
- "Only a little longer, thinking gladly  
Of the uprising of the brighter sun ;  
Only a little longer, waiting sadly ;  
In the fast-falling twilight, 'till He come !"
- "Only a few more billows, wildly tossing,  
Beating us backward from the longed-for shore ;  
Only a few more snares our pathway crossing,  
*Then* will all the trials of the way be o'er.

"So let our eyes be on Him in His absence,  
Seeking to serve Him in this day of grace ;  
While the thought cheers us in our constant sadness,  
*Soon He will come*, and meet us face to face !"



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