

HEART'S EASE.

THERE is a little flower of this name, which is often made the subject for a jest. It is not, however, the object of these few lines to speak of that, but of a much more serious and important thing: even of the way in which the wicked heart of man—your own heart, my reader—may have ease from the burden of sin, which, unless it be removed, will weigh down the soul into hell. But, perhaps you may say, “I have ease already: my heart is as light as the roe on the mountains.” Then, I would ask you,—What makes it light? Is it because you think, as many do, that you have no sin: that you have a good heart, and never did any body any harm? Believe me when I tell you, that this is a very bad foundation for ease of heart to rest upon. May God give you to see its hollowness before the great day, when it will sink from under you, and it will be too late to seek another.

You think you have a good heart, and never did any body any harm. But, if you have not offended man, have you never offended God, the judge before whom you will have to stand at the great day? This is the main point in question.

God, in his word, declares that “the heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.” (Jer. xvii.)—that “all are under sin, there is none righteous, no not one.” (Rom. iii. 9, 10.) Will you believe him, or judge for yourself as to the state of your own heart. “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” Your heart would be ill at ease, if you were to come into his presence and have all the vain thoughts, all the impure desires, and all the secret sins of which you ever were guilty, brought to light. You may have forgotten them, and man may know nothing of them; but they are written down in God’s book of remembrance, and will certainly be brought out at the day of judgment, if they are not pardoned before that day arrives: for God will then both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and make manifest the counsels of the heart. (1 Cor. iv. 5.)

Suppose you were to see a condemned criminal on his way to the scaffold, singing songs with a light and merry

heart, altogether heedless of his approaching doom, would you not conclude him to be either a most hardened wretch or a madman? But what is the difference between his case and your own? You are on the road to destruction as well as he, and your heart is at ease though you may be just on the precipice of hell. I would fain, then, awake you from your dangerous slumber, and shew you where true heart's ease is to be found. I will not ask you, however, to read further, unless you are already convinced that you are indeed a sinner, and that the lightness of heart you have hitherto possessed is on a wrong foundation.

True heart's ease arises from a knowledge of him who said, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." This was the Lord Jesus Christ, who came down from heaven, as the friend of sinners, "to give life unto the world." He came, "to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." The way in which he did this was, to take the sinner's place—to bear the punishment due to sin, the wages of which is death; and thus to set the sinner free. Jesus, the just or righteous one, died upon the cross for the unjust or unrighteous, that those who believe in him might stand as righteous ones, without fear, before God; and it is the knowledge of this alone, that can truly set the heart at ease in the presence of God.

God is a God of justice and righteousness, and he requires sin to be punished; but he is also a God of mercy, and he has himself provided the way in which his justice may be satisfied, and the sinner at the same time pardoned. "He made him who did no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him;" that is, Jesus, who was the only one on earth who ever lived free from sin, was treated as a sinner, and suffered death on the cross that we poor unworthy sinners might be reckoned and treated by God as though we were perfectly righteous and free from sin; and on the ground of this sacrifice, of God's own providing, he is beseeching sinners to be reconciled to him, as saith the apostle Paul, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech by us we pray, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

You see, therefore, dear reader, that God is not an angry God, desiring the death of a sinner, but rather that he

should be reconciled to him and live. He is not as a hard task-master, exacting to the utmost from his creatures; but he is a good and gracious God, who delights in shewing mercy, when he can do it consistently with his justice; and if you have felt yourself to be a sinner deserving his wrath, and flee to Jesus as the sinner's friend, and substitute, and sacrifice, then you need no longer fear the wrath of an offended and angry God, but may know him as a reconciled Father, and as one on whom you may rely in every time of difficulty and danger, and as a very present help in trouble and need.

There are those, however, who acknowledge themselves to be sinners, whose sins are so flagrant, both against God and man, that they cannot deny it, but who think that their repentance and subsequent good conduct entitle them to forgiveness. They may have lived morally for a length of time,—or, perhaps, they only hope to do so,—to take a turn for the better, and leave off their sins before they die; and they imagine that their good deeds will outweigh their evil ones, or that, if they fall a little short, the merits of Christ will make up the rest, God being a merciful God. And they get heart's ease in this way. If you, reader, should be one of this kind, let me tell you that this is the devil's road to heaven. He calls it the way to heaven, but he knows it leads to hell. God tells us a very different story in his book. He tells us "there is none righteous" in his sight, not even the most moral man, and, therefore, with all your morality, you are only adding to your load of sin instead of reducing it, and it is a vain hope to think of paying it off yourself. The Lord Jesus said "I am the way, the truth, and the life, no man cometh unto the father but by me." If, however, you could pay of your debt of sin yourself, Christ would have died in vain, as far as you are concerned, for you could go to heaven without him.

If you have had any thought about him making up the deficiency, and thus giving a turn for the balance in your favour, this too is a vain thought, for it is written, "He shall save his people from their sins," and again, "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." He is no half-saviour, making up for man's deficiency. What he does, he does wholly himself—his own self—"Who his *own self* bare our sins." Think not, then, that

you can be a sharer with Christ in the work of your own salvation. If you would be saved, you must come as an utterly undone helpless sinner to Jesus, and rest wholly on his work,—on the sacrifice which he himself offered on the cross, and which God shewed that he accepted in raising Jesus again from the dead. “There is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we can be saved;” but, “Be it known unto you, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law.”

The question then for you, reader, is, Do you believe in your heart in Jesus as Christ, the son of God, and trust him for the forgiveness of your sins, desiring and determining at the same time, by the help of God, to forsake them; and are you fully convinced that your own good deeds would never entitle you to stand with acceptance in the presence of God? If so, then you have the forgiveness of your sins, Jesus is *your* Saviour, and your heart may be at ease. You need not fear death, for sin, the sting of death, is gone. Jesus has taken it away, and you may say, with a joyful heart, “O death, where is thy sting. O grave, where is thy victory.”

But if you are careless about these things, and think that it will be time enough to give your mind to them when you have enjoyed the world a little longer, remember that the iron grasp of death may seize you at an hour when you think not, and then all your struggles to escape will be in vain.

If any should read these lines whose hearts are ill at ease, on account of the trouble, and care, and anxieties of this life, let him not seek relief in the world, but in Jesus, who said, “Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” You may get temporary relief from the world, but your trouble will only return again with tenfold force. But if you find peace by fleeing to Jesus in the way already spoken of, you will have a peace which passeth understanding; a joy which the world cannot give, and which it cannot take away. You will thus find TRUE Heart’s Ease.