

Monergism

WORDS OF PEACE AND WELCOME

HORATIUS BONAR



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AND WELCOME**



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by Horatius Bonar

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The Quickening Spirit

"And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."—
GEN. 1:2.

IT had just been said, "darkness was upon the face of the deep" (or abyss.) Here it is said "the Spirit moved upon (or brooded over) the face of the waters;" shewing us that the abyss was a watery waste of utter gloom.

Into this region of deep darkness the Holy Spirit came, taking possession of it and filling it with His quickening power. For all quickening is from Him. He is the infinite, the almighty quickener. As such He shewed Himself when coming down to brood over the lifeless earth. As such He shews Himself when He comes down to

brood over and fill with His life-breathing presence the dead soul of man.

There was nothing comely on the earth to attract Him; yet He came. There was nothing fair or fragrant, or loveable, or holy, to bring Him; yet He came. There was no trace of life below to form a magnetic power by which the life from above might be drawn down; yet He came. There was no sound or voice of the living to invite His coming, or bid Him welcome when He arrived; yet He came. And thus it is that He comes still. Even though uninvited, unwelcomed; nay, even though grieved and resisted, yet He comes! In the sovereignty of His power and of His grace He comes! Were it otherwise, where would be the sinner's hope?

He is the "free Spirit," (Ps. 51:12,) and as such is free to come to whomsoever He will. No amount of evil in us can hinder Him.

God's Joy in His Works

"God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good."—GEN. 1:31.

SUCH is the joy of God! He "rejoices in His works." (Ps. 104:31.) These were but "parts of His ways," (Job 26:14,) the first scene in the unfolding of His wondrous purpose; yet it is very glorious; and in it He is well pleased. Each day's work was good; all things above and beneath; the heaven, with its stars; the earth with its flowers and gems, its hills, and seas, and streams; man, and beast, and fowl; all were good.

How deep the interest which He takes in all that He has made! Each atom is His own, and each atom comes under His eye. It is not only

the hairs of our head that are numbered, nor the sparrow that He notices, nor the lily of the field that He paints; but the very dust of the ground, the sand of the desert, the pebble on the ocean-beach; all these are owned and cared for by Him. How truly has this earth been called His "well-beloved world!"

This is the God in whom "we live, and move, and have our being!" How deep His love! What will it not do for us in all things great and small! He cares for our earth, and for us its dwellers! His delight is to bless; and what amount of blessing, will He count too great to bestow on those for whom He has already given His Son! Let us trust Him in everything. He will not fail us; He will do us good and not evil abundantly all the days of our lives.

Security in the Evil Day

"And the Lord shut him in."—GEN. 7:16.

THEN was he safe indeed! No peril could reach him, no enemy could find access, no sudden mischance could surprise him. He was as safe in the midst of the rolling waters as was Enoch in the presence of that Lord to whom he was caught up, that he might be taken away from the evil to come.

He who shut Noah in did, by that very act, shut out all evil. He shut out the flood, he shut out the storm, he shut out death. He gave a pledge to his faithful servant that all would be well. Above, there was darkness; beneath, the tossing wave; around, the moaning wind; far off and near, the cries of dying multitudes; yet Noah was secure. Jehovah had shut him in; Jehovah kept watch.

It is Jehovah who "shuts in" His Noahs, with their families, in the day of evil. He has His chambers provided for them; He leads them into these when danger threatens; He secures them against enemies; He himself stands sentinel at the gate.

In stormy times let us call to mind this security. The name of the Lord is our strong tower; let us run into it and be safe. He bids us enter; He shuts us in; He keeps watch without. Though the whole world, like a mighty flood, rise against us, as if to overflow and overwhelm, He who shuts us in will keep us. We shall not be moved. Jesus is our ark, and He who shuts us in is the Father.

Light in Darkness

"I do set my bow in the cloud."—GEN. 9:13.

IT was out of the cloud that the deluge came, yet it is upon it that the bow is set! The cloud is a thing of darkness, yet God chooses it for the place where He bends the arch of light! Nay, it is just upon this mass of overhanging gloom that He spreads out, in all its sevenfold richness, the beauty of His wondrous light.

Such is the way of our God. He knows that we need the cloud, and that a bright sky without a speck or shadow would not suit us in our passage to the kingdom. Therefore He draws the cloud above us, not once in a lifetime, but many times. But lest the gloom should appal us, He braids that cloud with sunshine, nay, makes it the object which gleams to our eye with the very fairest hues of heaven.

Yes. It is not merely light after the darkness has fled away. That we shall one day know. How fully! But it is light in darkness; light beaming out of, nay, produced by, that darkness! Water from the

rock; wells from the sand; light from the very cloud that darkens; life in the very midst of death! This is the marvel; this is the joy. Peace in trouble, gladness in sorrow; nay, peace and gladness produced by the very tribulation itself; peace and gladness which nothing but that tribulation could have produced! Such is the deep love of God; and such is the way in which He makes all things work together for good to us.

Our Everlasting Rock

"Who is a rock, save our God?"—2 SAM. 22:32.

YES, who is a rock, save He? Shelter, shadow, fortress, shield, hiding-place and covert—all in Him! Jehovah, God of heaven and earth; the God who so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son, He is our ROCK!

What shall we then say? If God be for us, who can be against us? If He be our rock, who can harm us? What storm of the ocean can overthrow us when established on this Rock? or what sun of the desert can scorch us when seated under the shadow of the Great Rock in the weary land?

Let us trust and not be afraid. Let us be without carefulness. Let us not forecast evil, or trouble ourselves about the future. All is well. Who is a rock save our God? We may well be calm and peaceful. We have a good right to be steadfast and unmoveable.

It is not we that have made the Rock, nor placed it where it is. It is Jehovah himself; and He has done it for us.

It is on this Rock that the Holy Spirit places us when He draws us out of the horrible pit. And He does so simply in enabling us to receive God's testimony concerning this wondrous Rock; concerning the free love of Him who is our rock and refuge.

"Trust ye in the Lord for ever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength;"—the ROCK of Ages—(Isa. 26:4.)

Deliverance for the Sorrowful

"Thou wilt save the afflicted people."—PS. 18:27.

TO be numbered among "the afflicted people," need not cast us down. We are not thereby made outcasts, as if God were shaking us off like withered leaves, to leave us to perish, and think on us no more. He will "save the afflicted people." This was the confidence which David knew to repose in Him when brought very low; and this was the confidence with which a Greater than David leaned upon Him when He was brought lower still.

It is salvation that the afflicted need. Their case is a much more desperate one than they imagine, however sharp and sad be the stroke that wounds them. It is not mere help, or comfort, or relief, that they need. It is salvation. Their saddest case needs no more, but their least affliction needs no less.

And in God there is salvation for them. He who afflicts is the same that delivers. The smiter is the Saviour. The wounder is the healer. Into His hands we commend ourselves, that He may undertake for us. He that is our God is the God of salvation; and this is enough both to assure us that the trial will not be too bitter, and that deliverance will come in due time. When it comes it will be complete.

There is no real evil in affliction, save that which we put into it ourselves by our perversity. There is only good. Not to be afflicted, is the worst affliction that can come upon us.

The Soul's True Sun

"In His favour is life."—PS. 30:5.

WERE the sun to be blotted out of the heavens, every leaf and flower would wither; life would cease. Without sunshine, earth would be a desert.

Jehovah is the sun of the soul. Without His beams all is not merely darkness, but death. His love is the sunlight that gladdens and revives us. Where that love is shed down, all is peace; where that love is withheld, all is sadness, and terror, and gloom. Life is not life when this love is hidden. In His favour is life. The favour of others may cheer us for an hour, and make us forget our weariness; but it leaves the soul as heavy and dark as before. It does not comfort, it does not quicken, it does not heal or refresh. Only of God's love can it be said that in it is life.

Yes, it contains life for us, the true life of the soul; and he who findeth this favour, findeth life. The possession of that favour is blessedness. Nor is this favour hard to find. It does not need to be bought. It is freely given. We have but to take it. Like the sunshine, it is around us, and we have but to give it entrance. God sends us the good news of it in the gospel of His grace; and he who simply receives that gospel, is at once put in possession of the Divine favour, the whole free love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Hence the apostle says, "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us." (1 John 4:16.)

Let God Plan for Thee

"My times are in Thy hand."—Ps. 31:15.

THESE are Christ's words, for the psalm is one of His utterances when bearing our sins. He is speaking as the "sent" one, the dependent, trusting Son of man.

We too can take up these words. We look up and remember Jehovah. What He is, even apart from what He is to us, is our joy. He is Jehovah; He is the disposer of times and events, the sovereign arranger of everything relating to us. We are creatures, sinners, worms; yet He is so condescendingly mindful of us that He orders our whole life and lot. He in whose hand our times are is the God of love.

1. What solemnity, then, does this cast over life! A life thus wholly ordered in all its times by the infinite Jehovah must be a solemn thing.
2. What stability does it impart! Even in such an unstable world everything is under the regulation of an unchanging purpose.
3. What certainty does it give to all that passes! There can be no random, nay, no trivial events; nothing disjointed or loose.
4. What peace does it fill us with in this tempestuous age! Empires may rock to and fro, statesmen stagger, confusion reign; we are at peace. All is well.

5. What consolation in sorrow! Our times are in hands divinely wise and powerful. All must work for good. There can be no real evil.

6. What hope for the future! We know that there is light beyond this gloom. The storm is for an hour, the calm that follows is eternal.

The True Burden-bearer

"Cast thy burden on the Lord, and he shall sustain thee."—PS.
55:22.

WE do not need to bear our own burdens any more than we need to bear our own sins. God has provided for the bearing of both. He takes them upon Himself. The work of burden-bearing is as completely His as is the work of sin-bearing. His love has removed all necessity for our attempting to bear either the one or the other.

Even if we could, then, why should we bear them? It is not wise; nay, it is foolish beyond measure; and it is as useless as it is foolish.

But more than this, it is sinful. To try to be our own sin-bearers is to make void the work of Christ as such; so to try to be our own burden-bearers is to make void His work as such. We see the sin of trying to bear our own guilt, let us learn to see as clearly the sin of seeking to bear our own burdens. Let us understand the sin of not casting our burden on the Lord.

What is there about these burdens that we should be so unwilling to part with them? Or what is there about God that should make us unwilling to cast them on Him? His love, and power, and faithfulness, all invite us to do this. Not to do it is to suspect and distrust Him. He delights to bear the whole undivided weight; shall

we not, then, give up every burden to Him who wants us to be "without carefulness" because He careth for us! What sweet and holy lightness of spirit would then be ours! The burden is not lessened in itself, but it is borne by the Mighty God!

Still Trust

"Trust in Him at all times."—PS. 62:8.

ONE of God's heaviest complaints against us is, that we will not trust Him. There is nothing that He desires so much as this; there is nothing that honours Him so much as this; there is nothing that would bring so many blessings to ourselves; yet we do not trust Him. We speak of Him, but we do not trust Him. We pray to Him, but we do not trust Him.

Have we any good reason for this distrust? Is God's character such as to repel our trust? Has He shewn us so much ill-will that we dare not trust Him? Surely there are no reasons in Him for distrust! His whole character and actings towards us are such as to draw out our most hearty trust. His love, His grace, His long-suffering,—all these revealed and pledged to us in the gift of His beloved Son,—shew us what a God we have to do with, and how entirely worthy of our trust He is.

Nor can anything in us, however evil, be a reason for not trusting Him. Our sins may be many, our hearts may be hard, our wills may be crooked, our ways very rebellious; but all these together are no reason for distrusting God. To distrust Him because of these, would be adding sin to sin. He is "rich in mercy;" He is the "God of all grace;" let us "trust in Him at all times." Simple trust in Him as the

God of all grace would do for us what nothing else could do. We shall be no losers by our confidence.

Fulness for the Empty

"He satisfieth the longing soul."—PS. 107:9.

IT is our poverty that fits us for the riches of God. This is our only qualification. It is with the poor that God deals. It is the empty that He fills.

We are very unwilling to be thought wholly poor or wholly empty. And this is the real hindrance to our being blessed! Were we always willing to be treated as such, we should soon find what blessing would pour in. Then the great barrier would be taken away.

When a soul comes to know that it is really poor and empty, then it stretches out its hands to Him who alone can satisfy. It is in this attitude that God meets us. "He satisfieth the longing soul." Shall we not come before Him thus? He wants no merit, no claim on our part. All He desires is that we should be willing to be receivers. He asks no more. He loves to bless. "He gives to all men liberally, and upbraideth not." Let us go to Him. He sends none empty away.

Each longing cry that goes up in His ears meets with a ready response. He is not slow to give. His love is not as our love; His thoughts are not as our thoughts; His ways are not as our ways. He gave His Son, and what will He not give? He has sent His Spirit, and what will not that Spirit bring to us? He has made known to us His "gospel,"—His "good news;" and how much does that imply? How can we be poor, with such riches as His at our side?

Look to Him who made thee

"Thy hands have made me, and fashioned me: give me understanding, that I may learn Thy commandments."—PS. 119:73

IT was in the same way that Peter wrote, ages after—"Commit the keeping of your souls to Him, as unto a faithful Creator." Both the Old and New Testament saints are looking at God, as the God that made them; not merely the God who clothes the lilies and feeds the ravens, but the God who made themselves. On this they build their trust. He made them, and He has not unmade them. Surely they may trust Him. They seem to say to God, "Thou hast made us: surely Thou wilt teach us; surely Thou wilt preserve and comfort us. The God who created us will not forsake the work of His own hands. He who gave us breath, will He not much more give us His Holy Spirit? He who cares for these vile bodies, will He not much more care for these souls?"

This is a peace-giving truth. It is a strong and blessed argument against all unbelief. We cannot deny that He made us; surely we cannot doubt that He will care for us, and keep us, and bless us. It is like Paul's argument in Romans 8:32, "He that spared not his own Son, will he not with him freely give us all things?" He who I uphold us in being and keeps us out of hell, what will He not do for us?—what will He not give us? Would He give us our daily life, with all its common mercies, if He were only seeking to destroy us?

Water for the Thirsty

"I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground."—ISA. 44:3.

MOST tender are the compassions of our God. Most affectionate is the interest which He takes in our welfare. His thoughts towards us are thoughts of peace. He does not weary in well-doing towards us, in spite of all our ill-doing towards Him.

He would fain see us happy, and He gives us His promise that He will make us so. He does so in a way that shews us that nothing shall be able to hinder our being happy, if we will but allow Him to make us so. "Let Me make you happy; let Me fill you with My joy." Thus He speaks to us.

He knows what a thirsty land we dwell in, a desert where there are no springs of water and no shady palm-trees. He sees how certain we are to be thirsty in such a world, and He provides for it. "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty;" nay, I will pour "floods upon the dry ground." These souls of ours are like the earth we dwell in—"dry ground." But here is the promise of the welcome shower. It comes from God himself. It is from His free love that the refreshing rain descends; nay, it is that free love that is itself the reviving rain. Let us but lay our parched and weary souls under it, that we may be made fresh and glad. These "showers," these "floods" from heaven can refresh the most withered and drooping.

Strength for the Helpless

"In the Lord have I righteousness and strength."—ISA. 45:24.

THESE are the two things we most needed—righteousness for our unrighteousness, and strength for our helplessness. "I am unrighteous," is our feeling every moment. To meet this, a divine righteousness is at hand. "I am without strength," is our feeling also. But it was because we were without strength that Christ died for us. And, besides, there is strength provided, divine strength; strength as free and perfect, and near as is the righteousness. This strength completely meets our complaint of inability. The truth is that we are far more helpless than we think ourselves. Yet that matters not. It is to them that have "no might" that He "increaseth strength." We ought, then, no more to be cast down by a sense of inability than by a sense of unworthiness. God has provided against both. There is enough of strength at our disposal not only to make our inability no real hindrance, but to make it the very thing which gives us hope, inasmuch as it draws out the strength which is in the Lord for us. It gives Him an opportunity for magnifying His strength in our weakness. Most gladly, then, let us "glory in our infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon us." (2 Cor. 12:9.) It is thus that "out of weakness we are made strong."

A Present Righteousness

"I bring near My righteousness."—ISA. 46:13.

GOD is here speaking to those who are "far from righteousness;" and He proposes to remedy their evil, and to remove this distance, by bringing His righteousness near to them. They will not come near to His righteousness. They keep aloof from it. In great love, therefore, He resolves to bring it nigh them.

And He has brought it near! It is as near as it is possible for any thing to be to us,—as near as the words themselves which tell us of it. What can be nearer to us than words which not only float round us, but which, entering by the ear, go through our whole man? So near is this righteousness, as the apostle shews us, in the tenth of the Romans. We do not need to go up to heaven for it, nor to go down into the earth for it. We do not need to go one step nor to move one inch in order to reach it. It is so near as to be within the reach of every sinner to whom the good news are preached. We know that it is free; that it is precious; that it is sufficient; that it is suitable; but we also know that it is NEAR. Were it far off it would not do for us. But it is so near that we have nothing to do in order to get it, but merely to consent to let God put it upon us! This is faith. Oh, let us not thrust away the Hand that would clothe us with raiment so needful and so divine!

God's Cure for Darkness

"Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God."—ISA.

50:10

OUR way is often dark in this dark world. Evil and sorrow surround us like so many thick clouds that shut out the light. What, then, shall we do, when we are thus on the point of losing our way? Take hold of God's hand, as the little child does of its father's in the dark night, and keep close to His side.

This is God's cure for darkness—simple confidence in Himself. The want of this confidence puts us all wrong. The possession of it keeps

us all right.

But am I warranted in trusting God at all times, whatever may be the evil that I feel to be in me? Of course you are, just as you are bound to obey the command which says, "Thou shalt love Him with all thy heart." You would not say, "I am so bad that I am not warranted in loving God." That would be adding sin to sin. So you ought never to say, "I am so bad that I am not entitled to trust God." God commands you to trust Him; and not to do so would just be adding sin to sin. Trust Him at all times, for He is worthy to be trusted. Stay upon Him, for His arm is strong enough to bear the whole weight both of yourself and your sins. Do not hesitate or delay. Trust Him at once, and as you are. Trust Him now.

The Man of Sorrows

"His visage was so marred more than any man."—ISA. 52:14.

HE of whom the prophet speaks is the same as is said to be "fairer than the children of men." Yet, behold, He is so marred that He has "no form nor comeliness!" Once fairer than all, now more disfigured than any!

1. Earth's climate did not suit this "tender plant." The air was not genial like that of heaven, whence He had come; and the soil had the curse on it. How could it but wither?
2. Inward grief consumed Him. Like a fire within, His sorrow dried up His freshness, till He became "like a bottle in the smoke."
3. Man's hatred smote Him. Each day did He meet the contradiction of sinners against Himself. He was forced to say, "Reproach hath

broken mine heart;" and that reproach which broke His heart could not but mar His visage.

4. God's wrath came down on Him. Often in the days of His flesh was He constrained to cry, "Thy wrath lieth hard upon me." This wrath could not fail to mar His visage. Was there ever wrath like this? And was there ever any of the sons of men so likely to be affected by that wrath? His holiness, His heavenliness, but made Him feel that wrath the more. No wonder that His visage was marred more than any man.

That much-marred visage is our light and healing. We look at it and are enlightened; we look at it and are healed; for every line of sadness on it, every wrinkle of grief, speaks to us of love.

God's Desire to be Known

"Ye shall know that I am the Lord."—EZEK. 7:4.

IT is God's desire that He should be known; nay, more, it is His purpose that He should be known. He will compel even His enemies to know Him. If they will not know Him in His love, they shall know Him in His wrath. If they will not know Him in His pardons, they shall know Him in His judgments.

It is, however, a blessed thought for us that God wishes to be known. There is no hiding of Himself; no retiring out of view. He is not unwilling to shew Himself; nay, His object in all that He says and does is so to reveal Himself that it shall be impossible for any one not to know Him. Considering what God has done to unfold His glorious character, we are led to wonder that He should be to so many still "the unknown God."

It is life to know Him. (John 17:3.) It is peace to be acquainted with Him. (Job 22:21.) And if He is so willing to be known, why should any of us remain ignorant of Him? Shall we not go straight to Him, that He may teach us to know Himself? If He is so desirous that even those who are turning away from Him should know Him, will He hide His love or veil His glory from those that are seeking His face?

The knowledge of Jehovah! What is there of peace and light and joy that is not contained in that!

Be Quite Sure of Getting

"Ask, and it shall be given you."—MATT. 7:7.

WE sometimes feel our need of certain things, but are sad because we think them beyond our reach. Were they within sight, or within touch, like the grass under our feet, or like the river that flows by our dwelling, we should feel certain of getting them; but they seem to us far off, and we despair of having them.

This is unbelief. It is dealing with God as if He were not the God of all grace; it is using prayer as if it were not the means of obtaining what we need; and it is treating His promises as if they were not meant to be kept.

Now, the question with us ought never to be, Is the thing that we desire out of sight, or far off, or difficult, or costly? but simply, Has God bidden us come to Him for it? Whatever we are warranted to ask for, is as truly within our reach as is the flower at our side, which we have only to stoop down and pluck. Thus God has placed every

spiritual blessing within our reach, because He has told us to pray for them. Is it His own Holy Spirit that we desire, or is it more faith, or a truer sense of sin, or warmer love, or a holier life? Let us never feel as if any of these things were far off, or hard to be gotten. They are at hand. They but wait our asking. They are within God's reach, and therefore they are within ours, because they are the things which He has taught us to ask for.

The Servant of Sinners

"I am among you as he that serveth."—LUKE 22:27.

IN the kingdom of Christ, the lowest place is the place of honour. It was this that He himself stooped to when He took upon Him the form of a servant.

It was in lowly love that He thus came to serve us; and what is there that He is not willing to stoop to in order that He may supply our need? He has already stooped to the cradle, and the cross, and the tomb; and what is there, after these, that He will shrink from or refuse, in the way of service for us?

He has taken on Him this special office, and will He not perform it well? What want is there, be it great or small, that He will not supply? In going to Him for this supply, we are not taxing His patience, we are not making undue demands upon Him, we are not making too free with His love or condescension. We are only employing Him in the very way in which He delights to be employed. We are only making that use of His condescension which the Father designed, when He filled Him with the Spirit without measure, and sent Him to us, that He might "supply all our need, according to His riches in glory." We cannot be too needy, or too empty. We cannot

apply to Him too often or too importunately. He is as unwearied in His service as in His love.

Peace in Christ

"These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace."—JOHN 16:3.

THERE is peace for us; yes, PEACE even in a world of evil and unrest. Whatever shadows may fling themselves across our path or rest above our dwellings, there is peace. We do not need to be troubled or sad.

Nor is it man that speaks it. It is the Son of God. He makes known the gladdening truth. He says "there is peace." Nay, and He tells us where it is to be found,—in Himself. "He is our peace," and the "peace which passeth all understanding" is in Him alone. "In me ye shall have peace." "Peace I leave with you. My peace I give unto you."

Yet again, He tells us that it is through what He has spoken to us that we are to get this peace which is in Him. His words are the words of peace. They lead us to Himself. They make known the grace that is in Him. They tell us what He is as well as what He has done. To listen to the words which Christ has spoken, is to drink in the peace of which He is the fountain. In hearing Him, peace flows in upon us like a river. It is only by closing the ear against Him, and against His words, that we can shut out the blessed peace.

How little do men know how much they lose in not listening to His voice! and how much they would gain in listening!

The Sinner's Substitute

"Christ died for our sins."—1 COR. 15:3.

IF Christ, then, has died, why should we die? It was once needful that every sinner should die for his sins; but now it is no longer needful. If the sinner now dies, it is because he is resolved to do so; because he will have nothing to do with the Substitute. That Substitute is the Son of God, who suffered for sin—the just for the unjust. He is not afar off, but at hand. He is a sufficient, a willing, a loving Substitute.

It is not our money nor our merits that He asks; it is simply our consent. He was willing to become the Sin-bearer; are we willing that He should become our Sin-bearer? The Father consents; the Son consents; the Holy Spirit consents; do we consent? Then the great transaction is done; the great exchange is made. He gets our sins, we get His righteousness. He gets our death, we get His life. For what is faith but our consenting to have Him for our Surety and Substitute?

Here we rest. We hand over to Him all our sins and burdens. He takes them from us, and buries them out of sight in His own grave. No other, save the Divine Substitute can relieve us of our guilt. No other can remove our fears or give rest to our troubled conscience. He can and will do it all. For this He died and rose again. For this He ascended on high, and ever liveth to intercede.

Christ our Peace

"He is our peace."—EPH. 2:14.

IT was peace that we needed; for sin had thrown us out of peace, by troubling the conscience, and coming in between us and God. It was peace that we needed; for without peace what is life?

It is peace that Christ has made. He has not left it for us to make. He has made it on the cross, leaving nothing that is needful for our peace undone. Faith simply apprehends what Christ has made. Unbelief tries to make peace; but faith takes it as already made, and rejoices in it. All that hindered our having peace has been taken away; and all that could cause trouble of conscience has been fully met by the work of the Great Substitute upon the cross.

The cross is the display of righteous love,—love coming to us from God in a righteous way. We lift up our eyes to the cross, and see the Son of God there bearing sin. Then does the love flow in to us. The more that we allow the thoughts of this free love to find their way into us, the deeper and more abiding will be our peace. We are like men placed in an atmosphere filled with fragrance and health. We have only to inhale it. The gospel has surrounded us with this atmosphere of free love. Let us open our mouths, and breathe this blessed air. It will at once revive and refresh us. We shall find what health and vigour it can impart!

The Threefold Blessing

"Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."—EPH. 6:23

PEACE, love, faith; these are the three things which the apostle desired for the brethren; remembering, no doubt, what had come to himself,—"the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant, with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 1:14.) This threefold

blessing comes directly from the Father and the Son, through the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.

"I need peace." Yes; and it is this that the Father gives. It is this that Jesus gives. Both Father and Son desire that you should have it. Allow them to give it.

"I need love." Yes; and it is this which the Father and the Son bestow. They hold it out to you. They will not only teach you their own vast love, but also to love in return.

"I need faith." Yes, surely you do; and the whole Godhead presents it to you. "It is the gift of God." Lord, increase our faith! Lord, help our unbelief!

Go, then, trustingly to God; to the Father and the Son; that you may get at once the peace, the love, the faith which you need so much. Confide in the free love of Godhead. You will find in this simple confidence the cure of all spiritual diseases, the channel of all health and blessing. Distrust will do nothing for you. It will only make you worse. Unreserved confidence will do everything for you. God asks this. Give Him his request.

Give God your Cares to Keep

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

WE do not need to bear our own sins, for Christ has borne them on the cross. Nor do we need to bear our own cares, for He is the bearer

of our cares as well as of our sins. "He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows." (Isa. 53:4.)

"If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;" so that we have only to take our sins to Him, that they may be forgiven. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." In like manner, let us go to Him with our cares. He is as willing to take them from us as our sins. Let us not keep them to ourselves, nor try to bear them with our own strength.

Why should we insist on bearing our own cares, when He is so ready to bear them for us? Why do we magnify them, and multiply them, and brood over them, as if in so doing we could relieve ourselves, or make them seem fewer and lighter? Let us go with them at once to Him; knowing that it is as self-righteous to keep our cares as our sins from Him. Let us go to Him "with thanksgiving," as well as "prayer." Oh, how thanksgiving lightens all burdens and scatters all shadows! How quickly care leaves us when we rebuke it with, "Bless the Lord, O my soul!"

Divine Fulness

"It pleased the Father, that in Him should all fulness dwell."—
COL. 1:19.

THERE is no fulness like this. It is fulness provided by the Father himself. It is the infinite fulness of the eternal Son, the God-man. It is all fulness. It is fulness of the very kind that sinners need. It is fulness for us. There is fulness of pardon, fulness of life, fulness of grace, fulness of righteousness, fulness of strength, fulness of wisdom. For "He of God is made unto us righteousness, and wisdom, and sanctification, and redemption."

Is there, then, any reason for our remaining empty? That fulness is at our side, and ready to flow into us. How unreasonable, then, are our desponding complaints of emptiness and leanness! What can despondency mean, when God has provided such a fulness of every blessing? and in what light does God view such despondency, but as our refusal to be blest?

It is of this fulness that the Holy Spirit takes and pours it into us. It is His part first to make us willing to receive it, and then to pour it in. How willing is the whole Godhead, Father, Son; and Spirit, that we should be made partakers of this fulness! "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it."

We need not, then, be poor, so long as Christ is rich; nor need we be weak, so long as He is strong. God's desire is, that we should partake of this fulness; and His delight is in seeing us filled.

Everlasting Consolation

"Who hath loved us, and given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace."—2 THESS. 2:16

IT is both of the Father and of the Son that the apostle speaks. The love of Godhead is what he presents to us. "He loved us;" and hence the name which we get is, "Beloved of God." (Rom. 1:7.) He loved us, and gave His Son for us. He loved us, and gave us eternal life in Him. He loved us, and gave us "everlasting consolation and good hope."

God's free love is the great fountainhead of our consolation. The very thought of it is comfort; but the rich supplies of comfort which it administers are far beyond that which comes from merely remembering the love. God pours in the consolation. In spite of

sorrow, He comforts. No earthly grief is able to resist the power of consolation so almighty, so divine. It forces back the tide of sorrow, and in its place brings not merely submission, but gladness.

Everlasting consolation! This is our portion. "Good hope,"—hope of His coming and of the long-promised glory;—"hope through grace,"—through that free love which first took us up when lying in our sins,—this is the hope which bears up! What sorrow here can withstand the comfort which comes from a hope so full of blessedness and glory? With this consolation, and this hope, let us go upon our way in peace. What or who can dishearten or dismay us?

The Lord's Tender Love

"The Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy."—JAMES 5:11.

THIS suits us well. It takes in all that we need. We need "pity," for we are often sad and weary—and here is the pity that we need. Our God is pitiful, yes, "very pitiful." His pity, like Himself, is truly infinite. It knows no bounds. It is not narrow, nor feeble, nor changeable. It is wide as the bosom out of which came the Eternal Son, the "unspeakable gift." Nothing in us can alter it, or lessen it, or make it flow less freely. It is a father's pity, which no unworthiness nor unthankfulness can change or check. A child's unhappiness, from whatever cause, stirs the father's pity; so our wants, and weaknesses, and cares, and fears, and sorrows, call up new pity in the bosom of Him who is "very pitiful." Whether we will believe it or not, He pities us; nay, pities us all the more when He sees the unhappiness to which our unbelief exposes us.

There is "mercy" too for us, for we are always sinning, rebelling, murmuring, going astray. It is "abundant mercy." It is "tender

mercy," or, as we read elsewhere, "tender mercies;" nay, it is a "multitude of tender mercies." This is enough, even for the most sinful. The thought of these "tender mercies" keeps the soul in peace, even when all things in us and about us speak trouble and war.

Keep the Joy in View

"Who, for the joy set before Him, endured the cross."—HEB. 12:2.

CHRIST'S cross was the heaviest ever borne, yet He bore it. Its pains were the sharpest that ever tore the frame of man, yet He endured them. No cross of ours can ever be like His, yet He "endured it." He went up to it without a murmur.

What made Him so willing to endure the cross, so patient under its shame and agony? It was the joy set before Him. He looked forward to the joy that lay beyond the cross, and He bore it gladly. It was that joy that made it so easy to bear.

Our cross is sometimes hard to bear. Grief comes on grief till we are quite bowed down. Burden presses on burden till we are ready to faint. The way is long, and rough, and dark. We get weary and troubled.

In such a time what is our relief? The joy set before us. This lifts us up. This smoothes our brow. This dries our tears. This nerves us with new strength. The joy set before us! How cheering the hope! For it is unspeakable and everlasting. And it will be here so soon! What is one hour's darkness to the eternal sunshine? What is one night's tossing on the roaring deep to the calm of the everlasting haven? What are the tears of the night to the joy of the bright morning and the

triumphant jubilee of the unending day? "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." (Ps. 30:5.)

Remember Thy Creator

"Thou hast created all things."—REV. 4:11.

HE who made things to be, must be the I Am. The Creator's name is JAH! And this is the God with whom we have to do. The Maker of heaven and earth is "our God."

The word creation is familiar to us. We think we understand it. In truth we do not. The idea is an unfathomable one. It is one of the deepest things of God. Who knows what it is to create save He who creates? Things that were not, are, when He speaks. This is all we know.

Here is the link between the seen and the unseen, the connexion between the outer and the inner circle of being. Here is the tie between this universe of ours and God. It is a tie closer, firmer, more abiding than any other. In comparison with it, all the ties we are wont to speak of as tender or endearing are as a thread or straw. Yet who amongst us feels either the strength or the blessedness of this peculiar tie? Was it not to this that Job appealed when he said, "Is it good that Thou shouldest despise the work of Thy hands?" (Job 10:3.) Might we not use it too, and say, "O Lord, Thou hast made, wilt Thou not bless me?"

The God who made these starry heavens and this green earth, is the God whose love is all to us; and in loving whom is the very joy of joys. His love in the new creation is no doubt the highest of all; but let us

not forget His love in the old creation, to which David and Job appealed.

The Eternal Well

"I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely."—REV. 21:6.

IT is as if Christ had said, "Is there any one on earth that wants to be happy, but knows not how, let him come to Me, and I will give him all that he needs."

Christ spoke these words from heaven, shewing us that His love is the same in heaven as it was on earth. He spoke them especially for those who should live in the last days, for they come in at the close of the book, just after it had been said, "It is done." We ought to feel as if the message was specially meant for us, who are living so far down the ages, and so near the day of His coming.

Just when He is about to come, He looks down on a miserable world, as He did on Jerusalem, and sends before Him this declaration of His love. How unwilling is He to smite, how willing to save; how desirous that we should drink the living water, and be made partakers of the joy that there is in Himself for us! "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely."

"Behold, I come quickly." "Behold, I come as a thief." Thus He warns us? Yet side by side with the warning He sets the invitation, "I will give to him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely."

Do You Know Your Maker?

"None saith, Where is God my maker, who giveth songs in the night."—JOB 35:10.

HE who made all things to be must be the I AM. Who but JAH, the Being of beings, can create? Who but "the Beginning and the Ending" could create "in the beginning?" All within the circle of the universe, upper and under, is of His creating; above and beyond that circle must He be; greater, brighter, and more glorious than all that it contains.

This is the God with whom we have to do. He made us for Himself, and He made that universe for us. The Creator of heaven and earth is "our God." Have I learned in loving peacefulness of spirit to say, "He is mine?" His making me for Himself shews that He desires my fellowship; His making this fair world for me shews that He seeks my happiness; is He not then just such an one as I can confide in and commune with? Has He done aught to estrange Himself from me or repel my confidence? Has He not done everything to draw me to Himself, and win my unwilling love?

I dwell beneath the blue of His bright heaven; I walk upon the face of His fair earth; shall I not lean on Him? Shall I not love Him? Shall I not lay myself to rest each night upon His breast as the child upon the bosom of its mother? Is it not in this way that I am "to commit my soul unto Him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator?" (1 Pet. 4:19.)

Delight Thyself in God

"O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him."—PSALM 34:8

TO delight myself in God must be the very life of my life, the very sunshine of my days. I am made for this; and nothing else can satisfy.

All the gifts of God—the sun, the sky, the stars, the flowers, the streams—are intended to facilitate this delighting in God, to be instruments for carrying it on and intensifying it.

Shall I then take these gifts and use them for the purpose of making myself happy without God? If the thoughts of God are pleasant to my spirit, then these gifts will be used for augmenting, ramifying, perpetuating such thoughts. If I have no joy in thinking of God, then these gifts will assuredly be perverted to the awful purpose of excluding God, drowning the thoughts of God,—nay, of making me happy without the necessity of having recourse to God at all!

Is not this what thousands are deliberately doing? Is not the whole system of their life based upon the principle of being happy, easy, comfortable without God? Is it not their object to draw so largely upon the gifts as to enable them to live without thinking of the Giver at all? "My soul, come not thou into their secret!"

This preference of created things to God may do for a few years; but what will eternity be to those who have no God to delight in?

When Wilt Thou Turn?

"To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart."—
PSALM 95:7, 8.

THY time on earth, O man, is but a day! These limbs will soon cease to move; these eyes will close; that heart will no longer throb; and all that you call life will soon be done!

Is it not then time to turn? Have you calculated the chances and weighed the opportunities of your coming years, so that you can quietly sit down and say, "I will wait. I intend to turn, but not now!" Yet God urges you with His NOW. Your word is to-morrow, but His word is TO-DAY. Wilt thou not then turn now? Thou must turn some time or other, or else be lost; and why not NOW? Can you afford to trifle with your quick-posting time? Is it of so little value in your eyes? Ah, time, time! It may seem nothing now, it will soon be all; and you will learn its preciousness when all is over.

Can you afford to trifle with your souls? Have they so little value in your eyes that you can sport them away, or sell them for a few vain pleasures? Ah, that soul!—the seat of such joy and grief,—that soul, is it to be thus destroyed?

Can you afford to trifle with sin? Is it nothing to you? Is that which God hates so infinitely a mere word or sound?

Can you afford to trifle with God? And will He be trifled with? Be not deceived, God is not mocked!

Can you afford to trifle with Christ and His blood? Is the Saviour nothing? Is His blood a common thing? Oh, awake from your miserable sleep,—awake and turn! It must be NOW!

Art Thou Ready?

"There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth."—
REV. 21:27.

THERE is a life to come, and a world to come! Our course on earth will be ended soon. The place that knew us shall know us no more. We shall have passed away out of all that grieves or gladdens us here.

What, then, O man, are thy hopes? What is that eternity to be which shall so soon receive thee? Whatever it may be, it can be no unimportant thing to thee. A whole eternity of being! That, surely, may startle and arouse thee. What thou art, or hast, here on earth, concerns thee very little, for what is your life? it is but a vapour. But what thou art to be and to have hereafter concerns thee much. This life is but a dream; the life to come is real.

Art thou, then, ready to pass on into that eternity? Are all preparations made, and thy well-being secured, so that thou canst enter on it without a fear? Or has no preparation been made? Is there nothing but darkness overhanging thee, so that thou shrinkest from the sick-bed, and the death-bed, and the tomb?

Hast thou been born from above?—born of the Spirit, born the second time, born of God? These are the marks of a soul prepared to pass into the eternal mansions. Are these marks traceable on thee? Hast thou been made partaker of this better birth,—this birth which, while it marks the sonship, secures the heirship and the kingdom?

The Evil of Sin

"The soul that sinneth, it shall die."—EZEK. 18:4.

ONE sin casts the angels out of heaven. One sin blights paradise and ruins a race. One sin spreads itself out, not over a region, but over a world. One sin propagates itself, and overflows, not one generation, but generations for six thousand years. One sin contains enough in its one drop to destroy millions upon millions,—to destroy them for eternity. What then must sin be! What must be its virulence, its contagiousness, its immeasurable fruitfulness in evil! What havoc it makes among immortal beings! With what a terrific power it is armed!

One sin! Who can count up its consequences? Yet in each of us there are myriads—not one, but myriads of these roots or seeds of evil!

Surely if we realised the woe, the curse that is wrapped up in each of these, we should tremble and be appalled. Our hearts would fail us at the thought. We are poison-trees, from whose branches there hang myriads of seeds,—seeds which every moment are dropping from us and springing up around.

Yet the divine Sin-bearer is at hand, ready to deliver, able to undo the evil. Shall we not seek His aid? Is not that aid available for us to the full, so that life, instead of death, may be ours? "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. 6:23.)

Forsaking the Lord

"Know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God."—JER. 2:19

THERE is not one evil under which we ever groaned which may not be traced to our forsaking the Lord. This is the one root of bitterness which has shot up into a tree of ten thousand branches. There may be other external causes of the evil, but this is the main one. This is the only one that God will recognise as a real cause. As to all the rest, He says, They could have had no power to harm one hair of your head had you not forsaken Me. In keeping close to Me, in leaning on my arm, in abiding under the shadow of my wings, you were absolutely and entirely safe. But in departing from Me you have exposed yourselves to every form of evil and danger.

These, then, are the lessons which our God would teach us:—

1. That we have none to blame for all the evils that have ever come upon us, or our nation, or our world, but ourselves. We have done it with our own hands.
2. That these evils have all flowed from our forsaking God. To be near Him is joy and life; to be far off is woe and death.
3. That the true cure for them is our returning to Him whom we have thus forsaken. No other cure will be effectual. They will not reach the real seat and cause of the disease.

Long-wandering sinner, wilt thou not return and be blessed? Why should you die in the far country when there is bread enough and to spare in your Father's house?

Man his own Destroyer

"Hast thou not procured this unto thyself?"—JER. 2:17.

THE power of the creature to do evil is as striking as is his powerlessness to undo it. He has power to blight a world, though he has no power to restore freshness to one faded leaf. He can kill, but he cannot make alive again one worm beneath his feet. He can ruin to an infinite extent; he cannot rectify one displaced atom.

What terrific responsibility is this? The thought of it is fitted to act on us with power.

1. It startles. Am I, a creature, a sinner, really possessed of such power of evil? How then can I be heedless as to the very least thing I do?

2. It saddens. Alas! what sorrow is likely to be mine,—doing all manner of evil, yet undoing none! Blighting everything, but freshening nothing!

3. It overawes. What an infinite greatness does this confer on me! What stupendous importance does it attach to everything in life! Every word or action tells either for evil or good; there is nothing little, nothing unmeaning.

4. It solemnises. In such a case there is no room for levity. Life becomes a solemn thing. Far hence with all frivolity, and gaiety, and idleness!

5. It animates. If such be my responsibility, then I have no time to lose. Up, and be doing! Lay out every moment well. For I can recall nothing; I can undo nothing. For good or for evil, there it stands.

The Sinner Returning

"When he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father."—LUKE 15:17

WHEN he "comes to himself," he begins to think of the happy home he had left: he calls to mind his father and his father's house. He sees famine all around. No kindness meets him or supplies his poverty. Then he remembers the home of his youth.

When the sinner comes to himself, he begins to think of God. He had been trying to be happy without God; but it will not do. All refuge fails him. He is thoroughly miserable. The world is unkind and empty. Its fountains have run dry. He calls to mind his forsaken God, and thinks upon the love that he might have been enjoying. To Him he must return. If there is refuge for him anywhere, it must be with Him. If his wants are to be supplied, and his sorrows soothed, it must be by the hand of this Father. For a father is a father still, whatever may be the wickedness of a wayward son. He has heard of the free love of God shewn forth in the gift of His Son; he has heard how others, just such as he, have been received, and why not he? "I will arise and go."

And will he succeed? Will he be received? Oh, rather, ask, Is it possible that he can be sent empty away? Is it possible that the love which gave the Son can do anything but forgive and bless him?

Wilt thou be Made Whole?

"They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick."—MATT. 9:12.

IS it our health that we bring to the physician? Nay, not our health, but our sickness. In so far as we are healthy, we do not need him; but only so far as we are sick.

Yet how many reverse this in spiritual things! The amount of disease about them seems to discourage and disqualify. And they labour to find or to make some symptoms of returning health in order to qualify them for the Physician.

They say, "Alas! I have no convictions of sin; how can I come?" Why, if you have no convictions, you have all the more need to come, for that proves that you have more disease about you. They say, "I have no love; how can I come? Surely I am disqualified." Why, if you have no love, you have more need to come, and are the more qualified for the Physician by being the more sick. Each disease is a claim upon the Physician's skill and power, an appeal to the Physician's tenderness and care. Doubting, troubled spirit, hear this, and be encouraged; yea, be confident and glad. The evils of which you complain are evils which none but the Saviour can remove. Can you, then, bring them too soon? Can you bring too many of them? Are they beyond His power to relieve? And is this your reason for keeping them to yourself, and trying to get rid of them before you come? Oh the folly, as well as the wickedness of unbelief!

The Living Water

"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters."—ISA. 55:1.

THE fountain of these living waters is God himself. With Him there is the fulness of everything that can refresh, and gladden, and bless. There can be no more question, then, that there are such waters, than there can be that God is.

If so, then, unhappy soul, you may be happy yet. There is enough in that fountain even for such a soul as thine. Its sorrows are not too deep, its troubles are not too many, its thirst is not too great. A fountain such as this is sufficient for them all.

That fountain is sending out its reviving streams. They are flowing through the plains of this parched earth. They are flowing by your side! And they are FREE. "I will give to him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." You must not try to buy them: they are not to be bought by you. And you need not, for they are "without money and without price."

Are you not thirsty? Are you not saying, "Who will shew me any good?" Are you not asking to be made happy, yet not knowing how? Then drink abundantly of this fresh well-spring. God invites you to come and quench your thirst. That unhappiness which wearies and oppresses you is just the thirst of which God here speaks; and His saying, "Come to the waters," is just saying, "Come, and drink of this river of My free love, and be made glad for ever."

Christ's Welcome

"Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."—JOHN 6:37.

OUR right to come is thus full and clear. It is irrespective of aught in us. It presupposes want and sin; nothing more.

The invitation is wide and free. It takes us just as we are, annexing no restriction and enjoining no prerequisite. It does not fence itself round with conditions, as if fearful lest too many might avail themselves of it, or as if desirous to keep off the unqualified and the unworthy. It makes no exceptions as to previous life or present

character; it welcomes the unworthiest. It forbids none. It leaves no room for suspicion on the part of any. "Come,—and come at once; come,—and come boldly," is its message to all; for, "him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

The Promiser is altogether such an one as His promise betokens. His words and His heart are in harmony. And thus the free love of the Inviter makes the invitation doubly sure. It is this free love that beckons and beseeches. It does not stand upon ceremony or insist upon terms. It does not say, "Whosoever comes in this manner or that manner, according to this rule or that rule; but, "Whosoever cometh I will in no wise cast out." Weary sinner, come at once, and be blest! You need not linger, as if the Lord Jesus was not quite willing. Make haste and claim the promise. He will shew you His love.

The Everlasting Gospel

"I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth."—REV. 14:6

IT is "eternal redemption" that is provided for us by the God-man Redeemer. So the Gospel or good news concerning this is called "everlasting." And to this the Apostle Peter refers when, contrasting the withering grass with the enduring word, he says, "But the word of the Lord endureth for ever; and this is the word which, by the gospel, is preached unto you." (1 Peter 1:25.)

It is not the Gospel of one age, but the Gospel of every age,—everlasting. It is not the Gospel of the past age, nor of the present age, nor of the age to come, but the Gospel of all ages,—everlasting.

It is not Gospel whose good news ebb and flow, darken and brighten, alternately. It abides the same,—for it is good news of the grace of Him with whom there is no variableness, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Our changes cannot affect the Gospel, just as they cannot affect Him, or make Him less loving, less gracious, less forgiving.

It is a Gospel that will carry us through the gloom and weariness of our pilgrimage, even to the end; it is a Gospel that will abide with us through eternity; for it is the "everlasting Gospel," and all its blessings are, like itself, "everlasting." Everlasting life is the sure portion of the believing sinner.

The Tender Mercies of God

"The Lord is good to all; and his tender mercies are over all his works."—PSALM 145:9.

WHAT God does and what God feels must ever be in harmony. If He does what is kind and gracious, it is because He feels so. If He feeds me and clothes me and compasses me about with blessings, it must be because His interest in my welfare is sincere and deep. To suppose otherwise would be to say that while He is speaking and acting in one way, He is in reality feeling in a way totally the reverse.

This cannot be; for all is sincerity with Him. He is not like man, covering over a heart of coldness with the words or acts of love. He feels just as He acts.

Hence I can find the Gospel every where. To be kept one moment out of hell is of itself marvellous grace. But to be placed, though a sinner, in a world so fair and sunny, so full of comforts and blessings, is

grace more marvellous still. Each rising sun thus brings me glad tidings of the free love of God. Each bud, each leaf, each flower, each rain-drop, preaches to every eye that looks upon them glad tidings of the abundant grace of God. For if there be no grace for me, why am I kept here? Why am I compassed about with so many messengers of grace which, day after day, throughout the seasons, meet my ear and eye?

The Love of God

"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."—1 JOHN 4:10

HOW am I to measure the love of God? By the distance between "the throne of the Majesty in the heavens" and the grave in which the Son of God was laid. It was an infinite descent, and it is the measure of an infinite love.

How am I to estimate the love of God? By the gift which is so freely sent down to us—the infinite, the unspeakable gift. Nothing can equal that gift in value, and nothing can equal that love in greatness.

How am I to understand the love of God? It cannot be understood; it passeth knowledge; it is beyond the stretch of our thought.

How am I to deserve this love of God? Deserve it! It is love to the undeserving. This is its essence, its characteristic. It is absolutely free.

How am I to obtain this love of God? By receiving Him who is the embodiment, the incarnation of it. In giving credit to the divine record concerning Him, I let this holy love of God pour itself into my

soul, as light streams in upon the body the moment I open my eye to the sun. I look, and live; I look, and am healed; I look, and am blest for ever.

How am I to keep this love of God? By "holding the beginning of my confidence steadfast unto the end." (Heb. 3:14.) I am to keep hold of it, just as I first took hold of it.

Immediate Forgiveness

"Be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee."—MATT. 9:2.

MANY who speak much of forgiveness like to place it beyond their reach, so that they may not obtain immediate and certain possession of it; for that would interfere with their self-righteous efforts to work or to pray themselves into the favour of God.

If I am forgiven simply in believing the record which God hath given of His Son, then all such efforts are at once superseded and set aside. I will still work, but it will be the working of grateful, happy love. I will still pray, but my praying will be the child-like breathings of the spirit of adoption, the unbosoming of my "enlarged heart" to a reconciled God.

To place forgiveness beyond the sinner's reach; to place it at the very end of his course; to make it a thing of perpetual doubt, is to afford room and excuse for self-righteousness, that very room and excuse which God, by sending us so free a Gospel, has been at such pains to take away. If there be room left for doubting, there will also be room for boasting; whereas God, in making known His free love, meant to leave no room for either.

Come, then, and be forgiven! God is holding out to you the riches of His forgiving love. Why should you hesitate or delay? His desire is to bless you now; and why should you decline an immediate blessing?

The Prevailing Name

"There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."—ACTS 4:12

In coming to God, I must either use my own name as my plea, or another's. In either case, I shall be dealt with by God precisely according to the value of the plea; that is, the influence of the name in which I come.

Seeing, then, I am a sinner, to use my own name, either in whole or in part, must of necessity lead to my rejection. To use another's will avail me in so far as that other's is acceptable to God, and in so far as God may be willing to let me have the use of that other's.

Now, there is a name infinitely acceptable to God, a name which He is altogether willing that we should make use of in coming to Him—the name of His own Son.

But the difficulty is to get us to consent to forego the use of our own name, and to employ this other. This is one of the hardest things in the world; yet it is on this that our eternity hinges. So long as I persist in standing before God in my own name, I am a rejected man. The moment I consent to make use of the name of Christ, that moment I am accepted, and I am dealt with according to the value and worth of the name on which I have now taken my stand in all my dealings with God. And this is peace! It is such a peace as no amount of conscious unworthiness in me can ever disturb; for it is peace

springing from another's merit, and coming to me through another's name.

The Sinner's Plea

"In thy name shall they rejoice all the day."—PSALM 89:16.

IT is this name—the name of Him who is full of grace and truth—that is the beginning as well as the ending of a sinner's confidence and joy. To go to God with this one name as my plea, is all I need to secure a large and loving answer.

Why, then, am I hesitating? Whence so many doubts? How is there so little confidence in this heart of mine, when I bow the knee before the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ? It is because I falter in pronouncing the name He loves so well, and delights to honour so much. If I doubt or distrust, it must be because I have not fully understood the infinite value of the name, and God's willingness to give effect to that name in the case of every sinner who will but consent to employ it as a substitute for his own. So that as soon as I learn the value of this name, and consent to exchange it for my own, I become "accepted in the Beloved," and cannot but rejoice in that name. My joy comes from what I have found in that name. I have found in it a substitute for my own. I have found in it a well of holy love. And because of these things "I rejoice all the day." When I begin to exchange that name for my own again, immediately doubting and disquietude ensue. But so long as I set aside my own, and employ that name alone, my joy abounds, and my feet stand immoveably on the rock which no storm can shake.

True Peace

"The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ."—ACTS 10:36

IN order to have peace to my spirit I must either forget God, or falsify His character, or be reconciled to Him through the blood of the cross.

The first of these ways can never be fully carried out, for nothing can, ever wholly banish from my thoughts the remembrance of the God that made me. The second of these ways will only lead me down to hell with a lie in my right hand, by making me believe that God is indifferent to sin. The third is the only way of permanent, perfect peace.

In being brought nigh to God, I have peace; for that which marred it was my distance from Him. In being reconciled (righteously reconciled) I have peace, for that which kept me from having it was the variance between Him and me. This distance has been removed, this variance adjusted, by the sin-bearing work of His Son. Over that work the great controversy has been settled for ever; and a friendship never to be broken has commenced between us. This friendship is the very life of my life, the health of my countenance, the joy of my joys.

With God for my friend, I pass through life in peace. He is all to me, and in fellowship with Him I find a joy which overshadows all that the world calls by that name. With God for my friend, neither weakness, nor the grave, nor the judgment, can alarm my soul. All is well!

Will Thinking Well of Myself Save Me?

"The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are."—LUKE 18:11

IF in dealing with God I do or say aught for the purpose of having a better opinion of myself, or of inducing God to form a better opinion of me, and to deal with me on a better footing than that of a mere sinner, I am a Pharisee, whether I go to the corners of the streets or not.

Yet how often have I prayed and confessed sin from this very motive, or at least with this object in view! I have prayed myself into good terms with my own conscience, and when I have confessed sin, I have thought that surely God must now have a more favourable opinion of me, and deal more gently with me!

Alas! and is this all that the Gospel has taught me? Have I not learned from it that there can be but one opinion of my case and character, viz., that I am a total sinner? And has it not taught me that the very worst opinion I can form of myself cannot be too bad; and yet that the worst opinion that God can have of me shall be no hindrance to His grace or my welcome, provided I am content to take the sinner's place and receive the sinner's welcome? This is the very essence and meaning of the Gospel. What more can I desire? What more could God hold out to me? And if all this suffice not to give me confidence, then nothing else will do it, and Christ has died in vain.

Confidence Towards God

"We are the circumcision, who worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."—
PHIL. 3:3

IT is not because of character that I, a sinner, can find favour in the eyes of God. Such is my character, even at its best, that I can found on it no plea of acceptance. I may labour hard to mend and meliorate it; yet after all, I find myself a sinner still; and being so, my character cannot justify me; nor can it in the very least contribute aught towards my justification.

I do not expect anything from God on account of what I am, or feel, or do. Granting that my character is a good one, still it is not so good as that God can shew me favour on account of it. I must therefore set it aside. I cannot act upon it, or ask God to act upon it.

Yet, while my character however good cannot help me, still however bad it cannot hinder me, nor prevent my being received by God. What is good in me (if such there be) does not make me better than a sinner; and what is bad does not make me worse. So that, whatever I be, I must still meet God just as a sinner. And as such He is willing to meet me; as such He is willing to receive and bless me. The only condition He makes is, that I shall come to Him as I am; making no secret of my sins, nor pretending to be—what I am not, and never can be here—less than a sinner.

The Justifying Thing

"The righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference."—
ROM. 3:22

IT is not on account of faith that we are justified, as if by our act of believing we persuaded God to take us into favour, or as if there were aught of recommendatory or meritorious excellence in our faith; it is by or through faith that we are justified; that is, by means of the justifying object with which our faith connects us.

That justifying object is the righteousness of God's incarnate Son. The doing and the suffering of this righteous One, this Divine Substitute, are the objects or things, in being identified with which we are at once forgiven and accepted. That which identifies us with these is our faith.

Thus, in the matter of justification we are simply receivers, not givers, nor workers. God presents to us the righteousness of His Son, telling us that He is willing to deal with us on the footing of that righteousness, and that we are welcome to use it in coming to Him, just as if it were our own. We take Him at His word, consent to be dealt with in this way, and employ the righteousness precisely as if it were our own. This is believing; thus it is that we are "justified by faith;" and thus it is that we are filled "with all joy and peace IN believing, that we may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." (Rom. 15:13.)

The Justifying One

"That He might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus." "It is God that justifieth."—ROM. 3:26, 8:33

HE who has the right to condemn is the only one who has the right to justify. Only the Lawgiver can remit the penalty of the law, and say to the transgressor, "Thou art justified from all things." And He has declared His purpose of doing so; nay, He has sent His Son to carry

that purpose into effect, by "bearing our sins in His own body on the tree," that so God might be as just in forgiving as in condemning.

It is God that justifieth! This assures us that justification is a certain thing, a thing which admits of no doubt, and of which there can be no reversal. The sentence of acquittal from His lips is decisive and final. Our Judge and our Justifier are one.

And who are they whom He justifies? The "ungodly." "To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." (Rom. 4:5.) It is not the good, or the humble, or the penitent, or the prayerful, but the ungodly, that He justifies; and then, being thus justified freely by His grace, they become good and humble and penitent, and prayerful and holy.

Oh, folly without an equal to wait till we are godly in order to be justified! Oh, the strange ignorance of the justifying work of the Divine Substitute, to suppose that we need anything to qualify us for that work, but our utter ungodliness!

The King in His Beauty

"Thou art fairer than the children of men; grace is poured into thy lips; therefore God hath blessed thee for ever."—PSALM 45:2

THE world is fair and bright. It has dazzled and ensnared millions. Yet there is such a thing as a new-found Saviour, eclipsing and outshining all earthly beauty, in the eyes even of those who once admired it most.

Every form of attraction gathers round Him. That attraction is felt to be resistless. With joyful swiftness we hasten to Him whose wondrous goodness we have thus newly discovered. We henceforth move around Him as our centre. We are drawn off from vanities that once bewildered us. The world has lost its comeliness: nay, it has been utterly darkened. It shines no more. It wins no more. It is Egypt to us now, in which we were vile bondsmen. It is Babylon to us now, in which we were weary exiles and captives. But we are free. The true light has risen.

We have seen something that has drawn our eye, and won our heart. The beauty of the world has vanished. Its lustre has waxed dim. In the love of Him who loved us and gave Himself for us, we have found that which has dissolved the bonds of earth, and fastened us to heaven with an everlasting tie.

It is but little of the glory that we have seen as yet; but it is enough to allure us away from vanity, and to make us desire the day when we shall see Him face to face, "whom having not seen, we love."

Divine Raiment

"He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness."—ISA.
61:10.

ISRAEL shall yet sing this song in the latter day, when forgiven and restored; but meanwhile, the Church can use it as her own. For hers is a robe "broad as the law, spotless as the light, and richer than an angel ever wore, the robe of Jesus." Jehovah himself clothes her with it.

1. It is a robe of purity. There is not a stain on all its breadth, nor a blemish in any of its waving folds. Its purity is that of the sunbeam or the starbeam, which nothing can soil or dim.

2. It is a robe of gladness. "Joy unspeakable and full of glory," is woven into its texture; so that he who wears it cannot but rejoice.

3. It is a robe of splendour. Its ornaments are the jewels of a bride. It is the raiment of a queen. Its gems and its hues are all of heaven.

4. It is a robe of triumph. It is the festal dress—the robe that suits best that crown and that palm which we are to wear in the kingdom.

5. It is a robe for eternity. It waxes not old. It fades not Ages dim not its freshness nor antique its form. It is as incorruptible and imperishable as it is undefiled.

The clasp which fixes it around us is faith. In believing, we put it on, and fasten it around us. In continuing to believe, we keep that robe about us, and we find in it sufficient covering even for deformity like ours. What storm of earth can unclasp it, or tear it away?

Forgiveness the Root of Holiness

"He shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt-offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him."—LEV.

1:4

MY person must be accepted before any of my doings can be so. The worshipper must be accepted before his worship can be acceptable.

This is the answer to those who think by means of labour, penance, self-denial, almsdeeds, prayers, &c., to secure acceptance. Their efforts are fruitless. Nay, worse; they invert God's order, and subvert the foundation which He has laid. He has said that the person must be accepted before the work; He has moreover, made full provision

of everything needed for our acceptance, so that nothing remains for us to do in order to secure, but simply to recognise the completeness of that provision, and to avail ourselves of it in drawing near to God.

The moment that I receive God's testimony to His Son, and to His work as the sinner's substitute, I am an accepted man, and thenceforth an acceptable worshipper and a successful labourer for God. Until I believe, I am not accepted in person; for I am refusing to acknowledge Him in whom God is well pleased; nor can any of my doings find favour with God. How needful, then, that we should understand the right beginning, lest we grope on in bondage and darkness all our days! We begin by simply believing, and we thus go on unto the end,—complete in Christ, and accepted through Him, before the Father.

What is the Depth of your Religion?

"I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth."—DAN. 10:3.

ABOUT a hundred years ago, a man of God thus wrote in his diary:—"I was enabled to persevere in prayer, till I saw so much need of Divine help, that I knew not how to leave off, and had forgot that I needed food."—(D. Brainerd.)

Strange intensity of desire! He who felt it must have been far above most Christians of our age. Who of us could thus record the longings of his soul?

We feel that this is reality. There is no insobriety or wild excitement here. All is calm and deep. We are listening to the utterances of a soul that has got into conscious contact and vital fellowship with

God; and who, in the profound enjoyment thus entered on, has lost the consciousness of this outer world in which he is still a dweller.

Happy saint! Who would not tread thy footsteps, and thus get as completely within the veil as thou! All thy religion was amid realities and certainties. There was no distance, no dimness, no vagueness in thy intercourse with the Father of spirits. How much of our religion is made up of shadows and incoherencies! How much of our intercourse with God is vague and distant; a groping after something which we seem never to reach, instead of being living, personal, conscious intercourse between our souls and God!

Live for Something

"See that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil."—EPH. 5:15, 16

OUR life here, as saints, is no aimless life. We know the true way of living. We have found an object worthy of our living for. In all we speak and do we serve the Lord Christ.

We do not live at random. Each hour, each word, each action, has its aim. Far short, indeed, we come of that which we propose to ourselves, but still we have always something in our view; something exalted, large, unselfish; something that will last for eternity.

We have done with idleness, frivolity, and vain amusement. Our desire is, not to kill time, but to use it; to gather up all its fragments, to lay out every moment well, to lose nothing of so precious a boon. All that we have of it is too little to be trifled with, too precious to be thrown away.

We would fain live busy lives. We cannot afford to be idle; neither do we desire it. The call is, REDEEM THE TIME. Be always doing something that will last; be always stretching forward to the prize. It will soon be ours, for the Lord is at hand. It is a prize worth all our labour and sorrow here. The very thought of it is enough to put to flight all murmuring, or selfishness, or sloth. To labour here is as blessed as it is to rest hereafter. Work on, work on, till the day of recompense arrives.

Spend and be Spent.

"Be instant in season, out of season."—2 TIM. 4:2.

"I CONFESS," says Richard Baxter, "to my shame, that I remember no one sin that my conscience doth so much I accuse and judge me for, as for doing so little for the saving of men's souls, and dealing no more fervently and earnestly with them for their conversion. I confess to you, that when I am alone, and think of the case of poor, ignorant, worldly, earthly, unconverted sinners, that live not to God nor set their hearts on the life to come, my conscience telleth me that I should go to as many as I can, and tell them plainly and roundly what will become of them if they do not turn; and to beseech them, with all the earnestness that I can, to come in to Christ and make no delay. And though I have many excuses coming from other business, and from disability and want of time, yet none of them all doth satisfy my own conscience, when I consider what heaven and hell are, which will, one of them, be the end of every man's life. My conscience telleth me that I should follow them with all possible earnestness, night and day, taking no denial of them till they return to God."

Oh, well with our land, if each minister were like Baxter! Better still, if each Christian were like him! But, alas! where are such ministers, where are such Christians to be found? The time is short. Men are dying. The night cometh. Let us make haste, if we would do anything for a perishing world.

Stand Fast

"Stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong."—1 COR. 16:13.

IN the last days many shall be as "clouds without water, carried about of winds." And this is one of the special perils of these "perilous times." The winds are let loose, and are now performing their awful work of tossing hither and thither these empty clouds.

Hence the instability that prevails. Men are "carried about with every wind of doctrine." They are not "rooted and grounded in love;" and having never "tasted that the Lord is gracious," nor rested their weary souls upon Him, they go about seeking they know not what. They want something that will fill them, but not going to the Livine fulness of the incarnate Word for it, they wander on in sadness of spirit, vainly trying to soothe their uneasy souls with every new doctrine or device that meets them in the way! All in vain. For what can be a substitute for God and His free love?

Amid all this instability, let us "stand fast in the faith." Let us be "strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." Let us beware of novelties in religion. Let us guard against fickleness of opinion and hastiness of decision. Satan will let loose his blasts and call up his storms; let us only moor our vessel firmer, and keep faster hold of the anchor, which is sure and steadfast, "and which entereth into

that which is within the veil." Thus, in patience shall we possess our souls, for "he that believeth doth not make haste."

Watch

"Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come."—MATT. 24:42.

THE Lord is at hand! The world's Judge and King will soon be here? Is not this a rousing, quickening word? And seeing that it is so, may we not say to one and to all, WATCH?

He comes suddenly and swiftly, as the lightning flashing out from the sky, and bursting down upon the earth in a moment. Therefore, Watch.

He comes silently and stealthily, as the thief coming in at midnight upon a slumbering house, without note of warning. Therefore, Watch.

He comes as a snare, which the fowler casts noiselessly over his prey, that it may be entangled and seized ere it be aware. Therefore, Watch.

He comes to raise His dead saints, and to change His living ones. He comes "to execute vengeance upon them that know not God and obey not His gospel." He comes to smite the nations in His wrath, and to kindle a fire in His anger. He comes to bind Satan, to destroy Antichrist, to set up His kingdom, to dispel the long darkness of earth, to bring in the long-promised day. Watch, therefore, and be ready!

What if He should now be on His way, and what if these tumults of the nations be the sound of His chariot-wheels? The night is far spent, the day is at hand, let us sleep no more. Let us up and be in earnest, for the time that remaineth is short.

Surely I Come Quickly

"He who testifieth these things, saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."—REV. 22:20

THE Lord did not mean these words to be empty sounds. He meant His Church to listen and give heed to the solemn announcement. They speak to each passing age with deeper tone and more awakening voice. The voice of this trumpet waxes louder and louder as the ages roll away.

"Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed!" Are we, in the eager joy of our hearts, trying to measure the ages and count the few years or days that may lie between us and the Lord? Who can wonder that we should do so? Who would not wonder if we did not?

"His wife hath made herself ready." Are we ready? Is the bridal dress put on, "the fine linen, clean and white?" Are we decked for the marriage supper? Are we keeping our garments undefiled? Are we "keeping ourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life?" (Jude 21.)

And are we warning the ungodly? Are we Noahs in the prospect of that fiery deluge that is coming on the earth? Are we "preachers of righteousness?" Do we "condemn the world?" Are we labouring to pluck brands from the burning? Are we becoming more and more

earnest in urging our message upon sinners—"FLEE FROM THE WRATH TO COME?"

THE END.

MONERGISM BOOKS

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