

# THE NIGHT WATCHES

By John MacDuff

*"When I remember you upon my bed, and meditate on you in the night watches." — Psalm 63:6*

*"My soul waits for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning." — Psalm 130:6*

*"Yet the LORD will command his loving-kindness in the day time, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life." — Psalm 42:8*

## THE GLORY OF GOD

*"Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, you are God." — Psalm 90:2*

O My Soul! Seek to fill yourself with thoughts of the Almighty. Lose yourself in the impenetrable tracts of His Glory! "Can you by searching find out God?" Can the animalcule fathom the ocean, or the worm scale the skies? Can the finite grasp the Infinite — the mortal Immortality? We can do no more than stand on the brink of the shoreless sea, and cry, "Oh the depth!" "From everlasting!" — shrouded in the great and amazing mystery of eternity. Before one star revolved in its sphere — before one angel moved his wing — God was! His own infinite presence filling all space. All time, to Him, is but as the heaving of a breath — the beat of a pulse — the twinkling of an eye.

The Eternity of bliss, which is the noblest heritage of the creature, is in its nature progressive. It admits of advance in degrees of happiness and glory. Not so the Eternity of the Great Creator; He was as perfect before the birth of time, as He will be when "time shall be no longer;" — as infinitely glorious when He inhabited alone the solitudes of immensity, as He is now with the songs of angel and archangel sounding in His ear! But "who can show forth all His praise?" We can at best but lisp the alphabet of His glory. Moses, who saw more of God than most, makes it still his prayer, "I beseech You, show me Your glory." Paul, who knew more of God than other men, prays still, "that I may know Him." "Our safest eloquence concerning Him," says Hooker, "is our silence, when we confess without confession, that His glory is inexplicable."

And is this the Being to whom I can look up with sweetest confidence, and call "My Father"? Is it this Infinite One, whom "the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain," I can call "My God"? Believer, contemplate the medium through which it is you can see the glory of God, and yet live. "No man has seen God at any time, the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him." He, who dwells in light inaccessible, comes forth from the pavilion of His glory in the person of "Immanuel, God with us." In Christ, "the Image of the invisible God," the creature — yes, sinners — can gaze unconsumed on the lusters of Deity! Be it yours to glorify Him. Seek thus to fulfill the great design of your being. Let all your words and ways, your actions and purposes, your crosses and losses, redound to His praise. The highest seraph can have no higher or nobler end than this — the glory of the God before whom he casts his crown.

But He has a claim on you, which He has not on the unredeemed angels. "He gave Himself for you!" This mightiest of all boons which Omnipotence could give, is the guarantee for the bestowment of all lesser necessary blessings, and for the withholding of all unnecessary trials. While you are called to behold "His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the

Father," remember its characteristic; it is not a glory to appall you by its splendors, but to win and captivate you by its beauties — it is "full of grace and truth." He is your God in covenant. "Underneath are the everlasting arms." You may compose yourself on your nightly pillow, with the sweet pledge of security, and say, "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for you, LORD, only make me dwell in safety." — Psalm 4:8

### **THE IMMUTABILITY OF GOD**

*"But you are the same."* — Psalm 102:27

What a fountain of comfort is to be found in the Immutability of God! Not one ripple can disturb the calm of His unchanging nature. Were it so, He would no longer be a perfect Being — He would un-deify Himself — He would cease to be God! "Change is our portion here." "They shall perish," is the brief chronicle regarding everything on this side Heaven. The firmament above us, the earth beneath us, the elements around us — "all these things shall be dissolved." Scenes of hallowed endearment — they have fled! Friends who sweetened our pilgrimage with their presence — they are gone! But here is a sure and safe anchorage amid the world's heaving ocean of vicissitude — "You are the same." All is changing but the Unchanging One. The earthly scaffolding may give way, but the living Temple remains. The reed may bend to the blast, but the living Rock spurns and outlives the storm!

How blessed, especially, to contemplate the unchangeableness of our Great High Priest, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever!" True, He is, in one sense, "changed." No longer the Man of sorrows — the homeless wanderer. He is enthroned amid the glories of Heaven. Seraphs praise Him — Saints adore Him. But His Heart knows no

change. His ascension glories have not obliterated His tender human sympathies. We can think of Him receiving an outcast sinner, or stilling the storm, or standing at the gate of Nain, or weeping tears of pity over a lost city, or tears of sympathy over a buried friend, and write over all these, "You are the same!" The name which He bequeathed by angels to His Church until He comes again is — "that same Jesus!" His own Patmos title is His memorial for all time — "I AM He who lives!" Believer! has He ever seemed to change towards you? Are you even now mourning over the withdrawal of that countenance whose smile is heaven? Are you saying in the bitterness of your spirit, "Has the Lord forgotten to be gracious?" The change is with yourself, not with your God. Behind the clouds of your own departure, the Sun of His love shines brightly as ever. "He faints not, neither is weary."

Or, it may be, you are laboring under other trials. The hand of your God may be heavy upon you. The secret thought may be harbored that some tear might have been spared; that your chastisement might have been less severe — that your bereavement, with its dark accompaniment, might have been mitigated or averted. Look upwards and take the Psalmist's antidote as your own, "I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High." Think that the same Hand which was for you nailed to the Cross, is now pleading for you on the Throne; ordering and controlling every trial; and over every dark providence writing the unanswerable challenge, "He who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"

Oh! thus pillowing your head on the Immutability of Jesus, amid the crude buffetings of a changing world, you will be able to say — until the dawn of the morning breaks on you, which knows neither night nor vicissitude, "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for you, LORD, only make me dwell in safety."  
— Psalm 4:8

## THE OMNIPOTENCE OF GOD

*"The Lord God omnipotent reigns."* — Revelation 19:6

Believer! what can better support and sustain you amid the trials of your pilgrimage, than the thought that you have an Omnipotent arm to lean upon? The God with whom you have to do, is boundless in His resources. There is no crossing His designs — no thwarting His purposes — no questioning His counsels. His mandate is law; "He speaks, and it is done!" Your need is great. From the humblest crumb of providential goodness, up to the richest blessing of Divine grace, you are hanging from moment to moment a pensioner on Jehovah's bounty! But, fear not! "I am the Almighty God!" Finite necessities can never exhaust infinite fullness. "My God shall supply all your needs!"

To You, O blessed Jesus! all power has been committed in Heaven and in earth. "all power!" He has in His hands the reigns of universal empire! To "the Lion of the tribe of Judah" has been entrusted the seven-sealed roll of Providence. Whatever be the blessing which the poorest, weakest, loneliest, most afflicted of His saints require, if it be really for their good, the "Wonderful Counselor" secures it. "As a Prince, He has power with God," and must "prevail." He combines in His adorable Person all which a sinner requires. A Heart tender enough to love; and a Hand strong enough to save. The Elder Brother! the "Mighty God!" How He delights in the exercise of that omnipotence in behalf of His own people — in ruling over their interests, and overruling their trials for their interests! When He prays for Himself, it is "Not My Will." When He prays for them, it is, "Father, I will!" May I not well take the motto which He still bears on His breastplate before the Throne, as the ground of support and encouragement in all time of tribulation — "able to save to the uttermost"?

My enemies are many — their name is Legion. Satan, the great adversary; the world, and the world's trinity: "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life" — heart traitors; bosom sins. But He who is for me, is greater far than all that can be against me. He is "stronger" than the "strong man." "Christ the Power of God." "I, who speak in righteousness, am mighty to save!" Believer, are you in trial, beaten down with a great fight of afflictions — like the disciples, out in a midnight of storm, buffeting a sea of trouble? Fear not! When the tempest has done its work, when the trial has fulfilled its embassy, the voice which hushed the waters of old, has only to give forth the omnipotent mandate, "Peace, be still!" and immediately there will be a great calm. The "all power" of Jesus! — what a pillow on which to rest my aching head; disarming all my fears, and inducing thoughts of sweetest comfort, consolation, and joy! "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for you, LORD, only make me dwell in safety." — Psalm 4:8

## **THE OMNIPRESENCE OF GOD**

*"Where shall I go from your spirit? or where shall I flee from your presence?" — Psalm 139:7*

The omnipresence of God! How baffling to any finite comprehension! To think that above us, and around us, and within us, there is nothing but Deity — the invisible footprints of an Omniscient, Omnipresent One! "His Eyes are in every place;" on rolling planets and tiny atoms, on the bright seraph and the lowly worm — roaming in searching scrutiny through the tracks of immensity, and reading the dark and hidden page of my heart! "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."

O God! shall this Your Omnipresence appall me? No, in my seasons of sadness and sorrow and loneliness — when other comforts and comforters have failed —

when, it may be, in the darkness and silence of some midnight hour, in vain I have sought repose — how sweet to think, "My God is here!" I am not alone. The Omniscient One, to whom the darkness and the light are both alike, is hovering over my sleepless pillow. "He who keeps Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps!" O my Unsetting Sun, it cannot be darkness or loneliness or sadness where You are. There can be no night to the soul which has been cheered with Your glorious radiance!

"Lo! I am with you always!" How precious, blessed Jesus, is this Your legacy of parting love! In the midst of Your Church until the end of time — ever present, omnipresent. The true "Pillar of cloud" by day and "Pillar of fire" by night, preceding and encamping by us in every step of our wilderness journey. My soul! think of Him, at this moment, in the mysteriousness of His Godhead nature — and yet, with all the exquisitely tender sympathies of a glorified Humanity — as present with every member of the family that He has redeemed with His blood! Yes, and as much present with every individual soul, as if He had none other to care for, but as if that one engrossed all His affection and love!

The Great Builder, surveying every stone and pillar of His spiritual temple — the Great Shepherd, with His eye on every sheep of His fold — the Great High Priest and Elder Brother, marking every tear-drop; noting every sorrow — listening to every prayer — knowing the peculiarities of every case; no number perplexing Him — no variety bewildering Him; able to attend to all, and overtake all, and answer all — myriads drawing hourly from His Treasury, and yet no diminution of that Treasury — ever emptying, and yet ever filling, and always full!

Jesus! Your perpetual and all-pervading presence turns darkness into day! I am not left un-befriended to weather the storms of life, if Your hand be from hour to hour piloting my frail bark. Gracious antidote to every earthly sorrow — "I have set the Lord always before me!" Even now, as night is drawing its curtains

around me, be this my closing prayer — 'Blessed Savior! abide with me, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent!' Under the shadowing wings of Your presence and love, "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for you, LORD, only make me dwell in safety." — Psalm 4:8

## THE WISDOM OF GOD

*"His understanding is infinite."* — Psalm 147:5

How baffling often are God's dispensations! The more we attempt to fathom their mystery, the more we are driven to rest in the best earthly solution — "Your judgments are a great deep!" *But where sense says, "All these things are against me," faith has a different verdict — "All things are working together for good."* This is the province of faith, confidently to lean on the arm of God, and to say, "The Lord is righteous in all His ways." We speak of God "foreseeing," but the past, present, and future are with Him all alike. He sees the end from the beginning. We can discern but a short way, and that, through an imperfect and distorted medium. In a piece of earthly mechanism we seldom can discover beauty in the uncompleted structure. The mightiest works of science, while in progress, are often a chaos of confusion. It is only when finished that we can admire the relation and adjustment of every part to the whole. So also with the mechanism of God's moral administration. At present, how much mystery! But, when in the light of eternity we come to contemplate the completion of the mighty plan, how shall we be brought to own and exclaim, "The works of the Lord are right."

Believer, are the dealings of your God at present displaying a mysterious aspect to you? Are you about to enter some dark cloud, exclaiming, "Truly, You are a God that hides Yourself?" Do you "fear to enter the cloud?" Take courage! It will be with you as with the

disciples on their Mount of Transfiguration; unexpected glimpses of heavenly glory — unlooked-for tokens of the Savior's presence and love await you! If your Lord leads you into the cloud, follow Him. If He "constrains you to get into the ship," obey Him. The cloud will burst in blessings. The ship will conduct you (it may be over a stormy sea) to a quiet haven at last. It is only the surface of the ocean that is rough. All beneath is a deep calm, and in every threatening wave there is a "needs-be!"

Oh! trust Him, who is emphatically "The Wisdom of God." He is your Counselor — combining the infinite knowledge of God with the experience and sympathy of man. He is pledged to use the discipline most wisely suited for each believer's case.

Under the blessed persuasion, that a day of disclosures is at hand, when, "in Your light, I shall see light," I will trust the wisdom I cannot trace; and repeat, as the shadows of evening gather around me, until the night of earth's ignorance vanishes before the breaking of an eternal day — "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for you, LORD, only make me dwell in safety." — Psalm 4:8

## **THE HOLINESS OF GOD**

*"You only are holy."* — Revelation 15:4

What a sublime perfection is this! It would seem to form the loftiest theme for the adorations of saints and angels. They cease not day nor night to cry, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty!" It evokes from the Church on earth her loudest strains — "Let them praise His great and terrible name, for it is Holy!"

Reader, seek, in some feeble measure, to apprehend the nature of God's unswerving hatred at sin! It is the deep, deliberate, innate holiness of His nature which

requires Him to hate moral evil, and to visit it with impartial punishment. It is not so much a matter of will as of necessity.

But what pleasure can there be in meditating on so awful a theme? The contemplation of a God "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity" — in whose sight "the heavens are not clean!" Jesus! Your glorious atonement is the mirror in which we can gaze unappalled on this august attribute. Your cross is, to the wide universe, a perpetual monument and memorial of the Holiness of God. It proclaims, as nothing else could, "You love righteousness and hate wickedness!" Through that cross the Holiest of all Beings becomes the most gracious of all. "Now, we can love Him," says a saint who has entered on his rest, "not only although He is holy, but because He is holy."

Gaze, and gaze again on that monumental column, until it teaches the lesson, how vain elsewhere to look for pardon; how delusive that dream; on which multitudes peril their eternal safety, that God will be at last too merciful to punish! Surely, if any less awful vindication could have sufficed — or had it been compatible with the rectitude of the Divine nature, and the requirements of the Divine law, to dispense pardon in any other way, Gethsemane and Calvary, with all their awful exponents of agony, would have been spared. The Almighty victim would not have voluntarily submitted to a life of ignominy and a death of woe, if, by any simpler method, He could have "cleared the guilty." But this was impossible. If He was to "save others," Himself He could not save!

Believer, seek that some faint and feeble emanations from this Divine attribute of Holiness may be yours. Let "Holiness to the Lord" be the superscription on your heart and life. Abounding grace can give no sanction or encouragement to abound in sin. 'His mercy,' says Reynolds, 'is a holy mercy which knows how to pardon sin, not to protect it; it is a sanctuary for the penitent, not for the presumptuous.'

Oh, are you tempted to murmur under the dealings of your God? What are the sorest of your trials in comparison with what they might have been, had this Holy God left you to know, in all the sternness of its meaning, how "Glorious He is in Holiness?" Rather marvel, considering your sins, that your trial has been so small — your cross so light. Blessed Jesus! into this sanctuary of "holy mercy" which You have opened for me, I will flee. I can now "give thanks at the remembrance of God's holiness." Deriving, even from this august attribute, one of the 'songs in the night' — "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for you, LORD, only make me dwell in safety." — Psalm 4:8

## **THE JUSTICE OF GOD**

*"Justice and judgment are the habitation of your throne." — Psalm 89:14*

The Justice of God is "His Holiness in exercise." Let us go to the spot marked out as the scene of its most awful manifestation. In the depths of eternity past, the summons was heard, "Awake, O Sword, against My Shepherd, and against the Man who is My Fellow!" That mysterious commission has been fulfilled. The Shepherd has been smitten. Myriads of condemned spirits could not have borne God's inexorable rectitude as when, on the cross of Calvary, One lone voice sent up the wailing cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

Believer, rejoice! Justice, which before had demanded the execution of a righteous doom upon millions lost, can now unite with Mercy in sheathing the avenging sword and exulting over myriads redeemed. The Law which brought in a whole world "guilty before God," can exult with Mercy in seeing its every requirement obeyed, its every demand fulfilled; the Lawgiver Himself "the Just and yet the Justifier;" unloosing every chain of condemnation, and pronouncing "Not

guilty!" "O Law!" says Luther, "I drown my conscience in the wounds, blood, death, resurrection, and victory of Christ."

Wondrous thought! — Justice, the very attribute which excluded the sinner, has become the first to throw open a door of welcome; proclaiming that infinite merit has cancelled infinite demerit — infinite holiness has covered infinite sin! While "justice and judgment" are the habitation of God's throne, provision has been made whereby, in perfect consistency with every principle of His moral government, "mercy and truth" may go continually before His face!

Reader, it is well for you often to thus devoutly dwell on the inflexible Justice of your God. It will magnify and enhance to you, the riches of His grace, the glories of redemption, the preciousness of Jesus. If the sinner is to be saved, "judgment must be laid to the line, and righteousness to the plummet!" "The Sinless One must be condemned," says Lefevre, "if he who is guilty is to go free. The Blessed One must bear the curse, if the cursed ones are to be brought into blessing. The Life must die, if the dead are to live!" "In prayer one evening," says Henry Martyn, "I had such near and frightening views of God's judgment upon sinners in Hell, that my flesh trembled for fear of them. I flew trembling to Jesus Christ, as if the flames were taking hold of me. Oh! Christ will indeed save me, or else I perish!"

My soul! take hold of that touchingly simple assurance to which Justice has appended its seal, "Whoever believes in Him shall not perish!" "Not perish!" Justice, and a God of justice, proclaiming so great salvation — safety from the terrors of a violated law — rest from the accusations of a guilty conscience — calmness in the prospect of death — Grace here! Glory hereafter! Oh, what more can the sinner need, or God bestow! "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for you, LORD, only make me dwell in safety." — Psalm 4:8

## THE LOVE OF GOD

*"God is love."* — 1 John 4:16

"The only real mystery of the Bible," says an old writer, "is a mystery of Love." "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." What? For a lost and ruined world, the Prince of Life should leave His Throne of glory, travel down to a valley of tears, and expire by an ignominious death on the bitter tree! Love unutterable! unspeakable! The reflection of the skeptic of a by-gone age, may have formed at times the musing of better minds, "This is far too great — it is far too good to be true." Infinite majesty compassionating infinite weakness! The great Sun of heaven, the Fountain of uncreated light, undergoing an eclipse of darkness and blood for the sake of a candle that glimmered in nothingness in comparison with His beams.

"God so loved the world." Man never can get farther in the solution of the wondrous problem. Eternity itself will form a ladder — the saints climbing step by step its ascending glories — but, as the prospect widens, each will elicit the same confession, "the love of Christ, which passes knowledge."

My soul! seek to enter into the secrets of this Love of your adorable Redeemer! Before all time, that love began. We have glimpses of it bursting out from the recesses of a past eternity — "Then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him, and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him!" And "when the fullness of the time had come," though foreseen were all His untold sufferings — nothing would deter Him from pursuing His anguished path — "He set His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem;" — no, as if longing for the hour of victory, He exclaimed. "There is a terrible baptism ahead of Me, and I am under a heavy burden until it is accomplished!"

Think of that love now! The live coals, in the censer of old, form a feeble type of the burning ardor of affection still manifested by our Great High Priest within the veil, in behalf of His own people. There He bears the name of each indelibly engraved on His breastplate; loving them at the beginning, He will love them even unto the end. Earthly love may grow cold and changeable; earthly love may die. Not so the love of this "Friend of friends." It is strong as death — surviving death, no, as deathless as eternity! Listen to His own exponent of its intensity — "As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you!" "You see in Him;" says an old writer, "an ocean of love without bottom, without bounds, overflowing the banks of Heaven, streaming down to this world to wash away the vileness of man!"

Blessed Jesus! how cold, and fitful, and transient has been my love to You in comparison of Your love to me! Bring me more under its constraining influence. May this be the superscription on all my thoughts and actions; my occupations and my time — 'I am not my own. Lord, I am Yours! How can I love You enough, Who so loves me! My life shall henceforth be one thank-offering of praise for Your redeeming mercies.'

Standing this night on the shores of this illimitable ocean — surveying its length and breadth — every wave murmuring, "Peace on earth and good-will to men," "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for you, LORD, only make me dwell in safety." — Psalm 4:8

## **THE GRACE OF GOD**

*"The God of all grace."* — 1 Peter 5:10

"By the Grace of God I am what I am." This is the believer's eternal confession. Grace found him a rebel — it leaves him a son. Grace found him wandering at

the gates of Hell — it leaves him at the gates of Heaven. Grace devised the scheme of Redemption. Justice never would; Reason never could. And it is Grace which carries out that scheme. No sinner would ever have sought his God but "by grace." The thickets of Eden would have proved Adam's grave had not grace called him out. Saul would have lived and died the haughty self-righteous persecutor, had not grace laid him low. The thief on the cross would have continued breathing out his blasphemies, had not grace arrested his tongue and tuned it for glory. "Out of the knottiest timber," says Rutherford, "He can make vessels of mercy for service in the high palace of glory!"

Toplady writes — "I came, I saw, I conquered," may be inscribed by the Savior on every monument of grace. "I came to the sinner; I looked upon him; and with a look of omnipotent love, I conquered."

Believer, you would have been this day a wandering star, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever — Christless — hopeless — portionless; had not grace invited you, and grace constrained you! And it is grace which, at this moment, "keeps" you. You have often been a Peter — forsaking your Lord, but brought back to Him again. Why have you not been a Demas or a Judas? "I have prayed for you that your faith fail not." Is not this your own comment and reflection on life's retrospect? — "Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me!"

Seek to realize your dependence on this grace every moment. "More grace! more grace!" needs to be your continual cry. But the infinite supply is commensurate with the infinite need. The treasury of grace, though always emptying, is always full. The key of prayer which opens it, is always at hand: and the Almighty Bestower of the blessings of grace is always "waiting to be gracious." The recorded promise never can be cancelled or reversed — "My grace is sufficient for you."

Reader! seek to dwell much on this inexhaustible theme. The grace of God is the source of lesser temporal blessings, as well as of higher spiritual blessings. It accounts for the crumb of daily bread as well as for the crown of eternal glory. But even in regard to earthly mercies, never forget the CHANNEL of grace — "through Christ Jesus!" It is sweet thus to connect every (even the smallest and humblest) token of providential bounty with Calvary's cross — to have the common blessings of life stamped with "the print of the nails." It makes them doubly precious to think, "This flows from Jesus!"

Let others be contented with the un-covenanted mercies of God. Be it mine to say, as the child of grace and heir of glory — 'My Father in Heaven, give me today my daily bread.' Reposing in the "all sufficiency in all things" promised by "the God of all grace," "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for you, LORD, only make me dwell in safety." — Psalm 4:8

## **THE TENDERNESS OF GOD**

*"He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." — Isaiah 40:11*

How soothing, in the hour of sorrow, or bereavement, or death, to have the countenance and sympathy of a tender earthly friend. Reader, these words tell you of One nearer, dearer, tenderer still; the Friend that never fails; a tender God! By how many endearing epithets does Jesus exhibit the tenderness of His relation to His people. Does a shepherd watch tenderly over his flock? "The Lord is my Shepherd." Does a father exercise fondest solicitude towards his children? "I will be a Father unto you." Does a mother's love exceed all other earthly types of

affection. "As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you." Is the 'apple of the eye' (the pupil) the most sensitive part of the most delicate bodily organ? He guards His people "as the apple of His eye!"

"He will not break the bruised reed." When the Shepherd and Guardian of Souls finds the sinner, like a lost sheep, stumbling on the dark mountains, how tenderly He deals with him! There is no look of wrath; no word of upbraiding; in silent love "He lays him on His shoulders rejoicing!"

When Peter fell, He did not unnecessarily wound him. He might have repeated often and again the piercing look which brought the flood of penitential sorrow. But He gave that look only once; and when He reminded Peter of his threefold denial, it was by thrice repeating the gentlest of questions, "Do you love Me?" Reader, are you mourning over the weakness of your faith; the coldness of your love; your manifold spiritual declensions? Fear not. He knows your frame! He will give 'feeble faith' tender dealing. He will "carry" in His arms those that are unable to walk, and will conduct the burdened ones through a path less rough and rugged than others.

When "the lion" or "the bear" comes, you may trust the true David, the tenderest of Shepherds! Are you suffering from outward trial? Confide in the tenderness of your God's dealings with you. The strokes of His rod are gentle strokes; the needed discipline of a father yearning over his children the very moment he is chastising them. The gentlest earthly parent may speak a harsh word at times; it may be, needlessly harsh. But not so God. He may seem, like Joseph to his brethren, to speak roughly; but all the while there is love in His heart.

The 'pruning knife' will not be used unnecessarily. It will never cut too deeply. The 'furnace' will not burn more fiercely than is absolutely required. A tender God is seated by it, tempering the fury of its flames.

And what, believer, is the secret of all this tenderness? "There is a Man upon the Throne!" Jesus, the God Man Mediator; combining with the might of Godhead, the tenderness of spotless humanity. Is your heart crushed with sorrow? so was His! Are your eyes dimmed with tears? so were His! "Jesus wept!" Bethany's Chief Mourner still wears the Brother's heart in glory. Others may be unable to enter into the depths of your trial; He can; He does!

With such a "tender God" caring for me, providing for me, watching my path by day, and guarding my couch by night — "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for you, LORD, only make me dwell in safety." — Psalm 4:8

## **THE PATIENCE OF GOD**

*"The God of patience."* — Romans 15:5

There is no more wondrous subject than this — "The Patience of God." Think of the lapse of ages during which that patience has lasted 6000 years. Think of the multitudes who have been the subjects of it — millions on millions, in successive climates and centuries. Think of the sins which have, all that time, been trying and wearying that patience — their number — their heinousness — their aggravation. The world's history is a consecutive history of iniquity, a lengthened provocation of the Almighty's forbearance. The Church, like a feeble ark, tossed on a mighty ocean of unbelief; and yet the world, with its cumberers, still spared! The cry of its sinful millions at this moment enters "the ears of the Lord Almighty" and yet, "for all this," His hand of mercy is "stretched out still!"

And who is this God of patience? It is the Almighty Being who could strike these millions down in a moment; who could, by a breath, annihilate the world

— no, who would require no positive or visible putting forth of His omnipotence to effect this, but simply to withdraw His sustaining arm!

Surely, of all the examples of the Almighty's power, there is none more wondrous or amazing than "God's power over Himself." He is "slow to anger." "Judgment is His strange work." He "shows mercy unto thousands [of generations]." God bears for 1500 years, from Moses to Jesus, with Israel's unbelief; and yet, as a writer remarks, "He speaks of it as but a day." "All day long have I stretched out My hands to a disobedient and obstinate people." What explanation for this tenderness? "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, says the Lord!"

Believer, how great has been God's patience towards you! In your unconverted state, when a wanderer from His fold, with what unwearied love He went after you; notwithstanding all your waywardness; never ceasing the pursuit "until He found you!" Think of your fainting and weariness since being converted — your ever-changing frames and feelings — the ebbings and the flowings in the tide of your love; and yet, instead of surrendering you to your own perverse will, His language concerning you is, "How can I give you up?" For a lifetime, your Savior-God has been standing knocking at your door; and His attitude is still the same — "Behold, I stand!"

How should the patience of Jesus lead me to be submissive under trial! When He has so long borne with me, shall not I "bear" with Him? When I think of His patience under a far heavier cross, can I murmur when He murmured not! No, I will check every repining thought, and looking up, in confiding affection, to "the God of all patience," "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for you, LORD, only make me dwell in safety." — Psalm 4:8

## THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD

*"Your mercy, O LORD, is in the heavens; and your faithfulness reaches unto the clouds." — Psalm 36:5*

It has been well said, that "the universe around is a parable of grace." "Just as the mountains surround and protect Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds and protects His people, both now and forever." But more stable than even these types of immutability in the kingdom of nature, is the word of a Covenant-keeping God in the kingdom of grace. These mountains (nature's best emblems of steadfastness) may depart, and the hills be removed, "but," says their Almighty Maker, "My kindness shall not be taken from you!" We can look upwards to the stars of night, and see the "faithfulness" of God "established" in the material heavens — "They continue, to this day, according to Your plans; for all are Your servants." But these are feeble types and symbols of brighter constellations in the spiritual firmament — the declarations of an unchanging God — "Your word is forever settled in Heaven!"

What a gracious assurance amid our own unfaithfulness, "The Lord is faithful!" My soul, anchor yourself on this rock of the Divine veracity. Take hold of that blessed parenthesis which has been, to many a tossed soul, as a polar star in its nights of darkness — "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." He loves them in life — loves them in death — loves them through death — loves them into glory!

Are you not at this hour a monument of God's faithfulness? Where would you have been, had not the magnet of His grace kept you, and drawn your fugitive affections towards Himself? From how many temptations He has rescued you — laying hold of you on the precipice, when about to plunge headlong down; employing, sometimes constraining grace, at other times, restraining grace — making this your brief history: "Kept by the power of God," and

overruling all — ALL for His own glory, and your own good!

I love to think of Your faithfulness, O "Tried stone," "laid in Zion." You were tried by the Law — by Justice — by the fierce assaults and temptations of Satan — by the mockings and revilings and cruelties of wicked men; and yet You remain faithful! You have been tried in another sense by Prophets and Apostles; by Martyrs and Saints; by youthful sinners, and aged sinners, and dying sinners — and You have been found "faithful," by all and to all; and You are faithful still!

Reader, never suppose, amid the unfaithfulness of earth's trusted friends, that you are doomed to thread your way in loneliness and solitude. There is more than one 'Emmaus journey.' The "abiding" Friend is still here! He is always the same. "He faints not, neither is weary!" His faithfulness is a tried faithfulness. His word is a tried word. His friendship is a tried friendship. He is always better than His word. He pays 'with interest'!

When I think that at this very moment the eye of that faithful Savior God is upon me — "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for you, LORD, only make me dwell in safety." — Psalm 4:8

## **THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD**

*"And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he does according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What do you?" — Daniel 4:35*

How blessed that elementary truth — "The Lord reigns!" To know that there is no chance or accident with God — that He decrees the fall of a sparrow —

the destruction of an atom — the annihilation of a world!

The Almighty is not like Baal, "asleep." "He who keeps Israel" can never for a moment "slumber." Man proposes; but God disposes. "You have done it," is the history of every event, past, present, and to come. His purposes none can change — His counsels none can resist.

Believer, how cheering to know that all that befalls you, is thus ordered in the eternal purpose of a Covenant God! Every minute circumstance of your lot — appointing the bounds of your habitation — meting out every drop in the cup of life — arranging what by you is called its "vicissitudes" — decreeing all its trials; and at last, as the great Proprietor of life, revoking the lease of existence when its allotted term has expired!

How it should keep the mind from its guilty proneness to brood and fret over second causes, were this grand but simple truth ever realized — that all that befalls us are integral parts in a stupendous plan of wisdom — that there is no crossing or thwarting the designs and dealings of God; none can say, "What are You doing?" All ought to say, "He does all things well."

We dare not venture, with presumptuous gaze, to penetrate into "those secret things which belong unto the Lord our God." In all that is fitted, in the consideration of this august theme of the Divine Decrees, to impart encouragement and consolation, let us rejoice; in all that is mysterious and incomprehensible, let us with childlike reverence exclaim, "Oh, what a wonderful God we have! How great are His riches and wisdom and knowledge! How impossible it is for us to understand His decisions and His methods! For who can know what the Lord is thinking? Who knows enough to be His counselor? And who could ever give Him so much that He would have to pay it back? For everything comes from Him; everything exists by His power and is intended for His glory. To Him be glory evermore. Amen!"

The contemplation of the Sovereignty of God formed subject-matter of rejoicing to the Savior Himself in His humiliation — "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight!" What supplied material for comfort and joy to an Almighty Sufferer may well dry the tears and soothe the pangs of His suffering people. Oh, how sinners may magnify their God by a calm submission to His will; by seeing no hand but One in their trials; in giving or taking: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised!" "Who knows not in all these, that the hand of the Lord has done this?"

Will it not further help to the breathing of the prayer, "Your will be done," when I think, in connection with the Sovereignty of God, of the grand end of His immutable decrees — it is, "His own glory." "Of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things." What more can I desire? "All things." —God's glory and my own good! "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for you, LORD, only make me dwell in safety." — Psalm 4:8

## **THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD**

*"His kingdom rules over all."* — Psalm 103:19

Believer, try to see God in everything, and everything in God! Lose your own will in His. Enter on no pursuit, engage in no plan, without Paul's prayer and condition, "The will of the Lord be done." How it would hallow prosperity, and sweeten adversity, thus, in all things, to follow, like Israel, the Guiding Pillar — at His bidding to pitch our tents; at His bidding to depart. Each providence has a voice, if we would only hear it. It is a fingerpost in the journey, pointing us to "the right way," that we may go to "the city of habitation."

Often what a mysterious volume Providence is! Its every page full of dark hieroglyphics, to which earth can furnish no key. But faith falls back on the assurance that "the Judge of all the earth must do right." The Father of all His people cannot do wrong. To the common observer, the stars in the nightly heavens are all confused masses, pursuing diverse and erratic courses. But to the astronomer, each has its allotted and prescribed pathway, and all are preserving inviolately, one universal law of harmony and order. It is faith's loftiest prerogative, patiently to wait until 'that day of disclosures,' when page by page the mysterious book will be unraveled, and the believer himself will endorse every page with, "It is well!"

Providences may even seem to be getting darker — merging like declining day into the shadows of twilight. But, contrary to nature, and to the Christian's expectations, "At evening time it shall be light!" The gathering cloud will then be seen to be fraught only with blessings, which will burst on the believer's head. My soul, be still, and know that He is God! "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him." The mysterious "why" you have so long been waiting for, will soon be revealed. The long night-watch will soon terminate in the looked-for, longed-for morning.

Blessed Lord! my pilgrimage path is studded thick with Ebenezers testifying to Your faithfulness and mercy. I love to think of Your manifold gracious interpositions in the past — God sustaining me in trial — God supporting me in perplexity — God rescuing me when in temptation — God helping me when "vain was the help of man!" "When my foot slipped, Your mercy, O Lord, held me up!" And shall I not take all Your goodness previously manifested, as a pledge of faithfulness in the future? In full confidence that You are a "rich Provider," I shall take no anxious thought for the morrow, but repose in this covenant assurance of a covenant-keeping God — "I will never fail you nor forsake you." "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for you, LORD, only make me dwell in safety." — Psalm 4:8

## THE WORD OF GOD

*"Your word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." — Psalm 119:105*

Man's word disappoints — God's Word, never! "The Word of the Lord is tried." It has been tried by the sinner; he neglected it and perished. It has been tried by the saint; he has believed it and been saved. What a precious legacy of God to our world! The volume of NATURE, much as it teaches, is dumb on the question of a sinner's acceptance. The Scriptures alone can solve the enigma, "How is God to deal with the guilty?" That question unanswered — in peace we could not live, in peace we dared not die! But glad tidings, O precious messenger from God, have You brought to a doomed earth: "God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life!" Were there no more in the Divine communication than that one brief entry, the Bible would still be better to us than "millions in gold and silver."

The Word of God is a vast repository and emporium of heavenly wisdom — free to all — suited for all — intended for all — offered to all. The Word of God is an inexhaustible mine — the deeper you dig, the richer the ore. It has a word in season for rich and poor; for young and old; for the wandering; for the doubting; for the sorrowing; for the believing; for the dying; for the perishing!

Reader, sit at the feet of Jesus in His Word, and with the docility of a little child, say, "Speak, Lord, for Your servant is listening!" Always approach it as if it met you with the living salutation, "I have a message from God for you." There are differences in every heart-chamber, but this key fits every door! Make it a faithful mirror, in which you see a reflection of yourself! The more faithfully it is held up, the more

will the sense of your deficiency and defilement drive you to the atoning blood. In all your difficulties, make it "your counselor." In all your perplexities, make it your interpreter and guide. In all your sorrows, make it your fountain of consolation. In all your temptations, make it your ultimate court of appeal. When venturing on debatable ground, let this deter you — "What does the Scripture say?" When assailed, let this protect and defend you — "It is written!"

Precious at all times, it is especially precious in "the cloudy and dark day." We may do without our lamp in the day; but where are we, without it, in the midnight tempestuous sea? "I would have perished in my affliction," says a sinking cast-away, "but Your Word has quickened me."

Be it mine to look forward to that blessed time, when the intervention of that Word, and all other means of grace, will terminate; for, in Heaven, "they need no candle." Meanwhile, pillowing my head on the Word of the eternal God, and with these glorious prospects in view — "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for you, LORD, only make me dwell in safety."  
— Psalm 4:8

## **THE ORDINANCES OF GOD**

*"Therefore with joy shall you draw water out of the wells of salvation."— Isaiah 12:3*

A wilderness is your place of sojourn. But Immanuel has provided wells in this 'Baca' — this valley of weeping; for the refreshment of His pilgrims! In merciful adaptation to their weakness and needs, He has furnished means and instrumentality to keep alive the flame that would otherwise languish and decay. These are the golden pipes which convey living water to the soul, fed by Christ Himself from the great cistern of His own grace.

Reader! Do you love the ordinances of God's appointment? Is Sunday to you a holy and welcome season? Do you gladly respond to the summons, "Go you up into the house of the Lord"? Have you felt that it is there, "He commands the blessing, even life for evermore"? Or, holier ground still; do you rejoice, as the solemn season comes round, to covenant afresh with your adorable Redeemer at His own Sacred Feast; to record anew your unalterable attachment to Him as your Lord and Master, and commemorate His dying, ever-living love? See that it not be the reverse of all this. Do the Sunday hours, once a delight — hang heavily upon you? Is prayer now less a privilege than it was? Is the closet less habitually frequented? Is the fire burning with a sicklier glow on the domestic altar? Have the services of the sanctuary become more matter for the head than for the heart? Be assured these are lamentable symptoms of declension — tokens of a backward and downward state. "You did run well — who hindered you?"

Return speedily to the deserted closet! crucify quickly the deadening sin. Have you not thought of it, over and over, at a communion season? Why allow it again to have dominion over you, robbing you of all your joy — extracting all relish from ordinances — impeding grace — grieving the Spirit? Lose no time in seeking restoration of lost filial nearness. "Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation."

The lost Bride, in the Song of Solomon, found her Lord beside the "Shepherds' tents." You may sometimes have long to wait at the 'Gospel Bethesdas' (one of the men lying there had been sick for thirty-eight years), without any visible blessing; but, be assured, the Angel of the Covenant will, in due time, come down, and show that He "is good to those who wait for Him — to the soul that seeks Him." Wait, then, on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart!

Seek to value ordinances, but do not overvalue them. Put not ordinances in the place of the God of ordinances. They are at best but the pole upon which

to suspend the brazen serpent; the scaffolding by which to get up beside the Chief cornerstone. "Hold me up, and I shall be safe!" It is not "the altar of God," but "God Himself" who is "the exceeding joy" of His people. And thus, even if wasting health and pining sickness should deprive me of outward ordinances, I may look upwards to that God who, though He "loves the gates of Zion," does not forget "the dwellings of Jacob," and say — "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for you, LORD, only make me dwell in safety." — Psalm 4:8

## **THE SPIRIT OF GOD**

*"Take not your holy spirit from me." — Psalm 51:11*

"But it is actually best for you that I go away, because if I don't, the Comforter won't come. If I do go away, He will come because I will send Him to you." How momentous must be the agency of the Holy Spirit, when the adorable Redeemer represented the Church as being more than compensated for the blank of His own departure — the loss of His own presence — by the gift of this Divine Paraclete! "It is the Spirit who quickens." It is He who is the Agent in the new birth — "Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of Heaven." It is He who enables the sinner by faith to lay hold on Jesus, and embrace His salvation — "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Spirit." It is He who carries on the progressive work of holiness — we are saved "through the sanctification of the Spirit." It is He who creates anew the lost image of the Godhead — impresses on the soul the lineaments of the Savior's character — "We are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, by the Lord the Spirit." It is He who illumines the Divine Record, acting like a telescope to the moral vision, disclosing in the firmament of inspiration "wondrous things" contained in the law, which the natural eye

cannot see. It is He who unfolds the glories of the Redeemer's work — the beauties of His person — the completeness of His sacrifice — the riches of His grace — "He shall glorify Me; for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you." More — the soul of the believer becomes itself a temple of the Holy Spirit.

Oh! with what holy jealousy would the child of God guard every avenue to temptation, if this amazing truth exercised its habitual and solemnizing power over him — "The Spirit of God dwells within me!" How would he avoid anything and everything by which he would be likely to "grieve" this blessed Agent, "whereby he is sealed until the day of redemption." "Behold!" He seems to say, "I make all things new." The initial operation is His — He broods over the face of the spiritual chaos, saying, "Let there be light." The closing and consummating grace is His — He conducts the soul through the swellings of Jordan, until it joins with the ransomed multitude before the throne, in ascribing to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit the glories of a completed salvation.

Take not, then, O God! Your Holy Spirit from me. In vain are the Word, ordinances, sacraments, sermons, prayers, without Him. All are in themselves passive instruments; His is the omnipotent arm which wields and vanquishes. Our adorable Redeemer — the great High Priest — was Himself anointed with the Holy Spirit. That anointing oil, poured upon the Church's living Head, runs down to the skirts of His garment, anointing, as it flows, all His members. And those that are lowest and humblest — nearest the skirts — receive the most. Reader, if this be your position — at the feet of Jesus — the blessed influences of the Holy Spirit, streaming down upon you in copious effusion, sanctifying you more and more, and making you more fit for glory — then you may well say, night after night, until the day-spring of that glory burst upon you — "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for you, LORD, only make me dwell in safety." — Psalm 4:8

## THE PROMISES OF GOD

*"For all the promises of God in him are yes, and in him Amen." — 2 Corinthians 1:20*

God has made a Will, or Testament, in behalf of His people! It is signed and sealed. It cannot be altered — nothing can divest us of our inheritance. The bequest is His own "exceeding great and precious promises." What a heritage! All that the sinner requires — all that the sinner's God can give. In this testamentary deed there are no contingencies — no peradventures. The testator commences it with the sure guarantee for its every jot and tittle being fulfilled, "Truly, truly, I say unto you!" He endorses every promise, and every page, with a "Yes, and Amen." "God, willing more abundantly to show to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath." But, who provided such a rich Promise Treasury? What is the source, where is the fountain-head, from which these streams of mercy flow to the Church? "In HIM." Believer! from Jesus every promise is derived — in Jesus every promise centers. Pardon, peace, adoption, consolation, eternal life — all "in Him." In Him you are "chosen," "called," "justified," "sanctified," and "glorified." You have in possession all the blessings of present grace; you have in reserve all the happiness of coming glory. And "He is faithful that promised."

Your friend may deceive you — the world has deceived you — the Lord never will! Myriads in glory, are there to tell how not one thing has failed of all that the Lord their God has spoken. Rely on this faithfulness. He gave His Son for you. After the greater blessing, surely, for subordinate ones, you may trust Him. And where do these promises beam most brightly? Like the stars, it is in the night! In the midnight of trial — when the sun of earthly prosperity has set — when deep is calling to deep, and wave to wave; when tempted, bereaved, beaten down with "a

great fight of afflictions," the spiritual firmament with its galaxy of Promises is brightest and clearest!

But do not be deceived; the night of sorrow cannot 'in itself' give you the comfort of the Divine Promises. It may be night, and yet the stars invisible. It is only "in Him" these promises can be discerned in their luster. Reader! if you are "out of Christ," these stars of Gospel promise shine in vain to you; they have, to the unspiritual eye, no beauty or brightness. In the midnight battle of Barak, "the stars in their courses fought against Sisera." They shone on Israel, but denied their light to the enemies of God. The guiding pillar, so lustrous to the chosen people, was a column of portentous gloom to Pharaoh's host. But "in Him," as "heirs of God," you are inheritors of "all the promises." All the promises! Oh! with such a pillow whereon to rest your aching head, you may well resume your nightly song — "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for you, LORD, only make me dwell in safety." — Psalm 4:8

## **THE WARNINGS OF GOD**

*"Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." — Exodus 34:7*

"He is faithful who promised." Do we bear sufficiently in mind another truth of equal fidelity — He is faithful who threatens? Ponder that solemn word, "He will by no means clear the guilty!" Remember when that word was spoken it was in connection with a sublime apocalypse of God's majesty. It was as "the glory of the Lord" was passing before Moses. Was not this intended to show, that there is an awful and inseparable connection between the Divine glory and the impossibility of God's clearing the guilty? It was at a time, moreover, when the benignity of God was intended to be more specially manifested. It was

when He was declared to be "the Lord, the Lord God, merciful, gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness." Then it was, we listen to the awful note of warning, that "clear the guilty," He will not, and cannot.

His law requires — the honor of His throne requires; demands that the guilty be "not cleared." Reader! are you still clinging to a dream of final mercy? Do you believe in the first part of the Divine proclamation at Sinai, and persist in presumptuous and fatal skepticism with regard to the last? That boundless in His resources, and infinite in His love, God will, by some means, "clear the guilty?" Do not be deceived, that you do not incur the woe of him who "strives with his Maker." The Lord, who "is not slack concerning His promises," cannot be slack concerning His threatenings.

Time blunts the wrath of man; and chastens and subdues the turbulence of his passions; but there is no blind impulse — no vacillation in Him with whom "a thousand years are as one day." "God's threatenings," says a writer, "are God's doings!" The law has not one breathing of mercy for you. There is not one cleft in all Mount Sinai where you can escape the vengeance of the storm. Unless you flee without delay to Him who has "cleared the guilty" by Himself, the Guiltless One, becoming the guilt-bearer; be assured that through eternity "you will by no means be cleared."

My soul! are you yet in this state of perilous estrangement? still launched on the cheerless ocean of uncertainty; leaving everything to a dying hour; the time to which nothing should be left, but to die! Ponder these living words of unchanging truth — "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not escape unpunished." The golden chain of grace stretches from Heaven to earth, but it can go no further — "Seek the Lord while He may be found." There is solemn warning in that one word. It tells you, there is a day coming, when the Lord will be sought, but will not be found.

Reader! cast yourself this night at His footstool; implore His mercy. Rise not from your bended knees, until, with His propitiated smile gladdening you, and the hope of His Heaven cheering you, you may (it may be for the first time in your life) lie down with a quiet conscience and a pardoned soul on your nightly couch, exclaiming — "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for you, LORD, only make me dwell in safety." — Psalm 4:8

## **THE CHASTISEMENTS OF GOD**

*"For whom the Lord loves he chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives." — Hebrews 12:6*

Chastisement — the family badge — the family pledge — the family privilege — "To you it is given to suffer." "Troubles," says a good man, "are in God's catalogue of mercies." "Afflictions," says another, "are God's hired laborers to break the clods and plow the land." Reader, is the hand of your God heavy upon you? Has He been breaking your cisterns, withering your gourds, poisoning your sweetest fountains of earthly bliss? Are the world's bright spots outnumbered by the dreary ones? Has one tear been following another in quick succession? You may have to tell, perhaps, of a varied experience of trials. Every tender point touched — sickness, bereavement, poverty — perhaps all of these.

Be still. If you are a child of God, there is no exemption from the "household discipline." The rod is the Father's; the voice that speaks may be rough, but the hand that smites is gentle. The furnace may be seven times heated, but the Refiner is seated nearby. His object is not to consume, but to purify. Do not misinterpret His dealings; there is mercy on the wings of "the rough wind." Our choicest fountains are fed from dark lowering clouds. All, be assured, will yet bear the stamp of love. Sense cannot discern yet "the

bright light in the clouds." Aged Jacob exclaimed at first, "All these things are against me;" but at last he had a calmer and a more just verdict, "his spirit revived!"

"At evening time it was light." The saint on earth can say, regarding his trials, in faith and in trust, "I know, O Lord, that Your judgments are right." The saint in glory can go a step farther, "I see, O Lord, that they are so!" His losses will then be shown to be his riches. Believer! on a calm retrospect of your heaviest afflictions — say, were they unneeded? Was this what Augustine calls, "the severe mercy of God's discipline" — was it too severe? Less would not have done. Like Jonah, you never would have awoke but for the storm. He may have led you to a Zarephath (a place of furnaces), but it is to show you "one like unto the Son of God!" When was God ever so near to you, or you to your God, as in the furnace-fires?

When was the presence and love and sympathy of Jesus so precious? When "the Beloved" comes down from the Mountain of Myrrh and the Hill of Frankincense to His Garden on earth. He can get no fragrance from some plants but by bruising them. The spices in the Temple of old were crushed. The gold of its candlestick was beaten gold! It was when the Marah-fountain of your heart was bitter with sin, that He cast in some cross, some trial, and "the waters were made sweet!"

My soul, be still! You have, in affliction, one means of glorifying God, which even angels have not, in their sorrowless world — patience under the rod — submission to your Heavenly Father's will! Pray not to have your affliction removed, but for grace to bear up under it, so that you may glorify God even "in the fires." Remember that though "weeping endures for a night, joy comes in the morning," close your tearful eyes, saying — "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for you, LORD, only make me dwell in safety."  
— Psalm 4:8

## THE INVITATIONS OF GOD

*"All that the Father gives me shall come to me; and him that comes to me I will in no wise cast out." —*

John 6:37

How broad is the door of welcome! Before the prodigal son, the ungrateful returning wanderer, could stammer forth through penitential tears the confession of his sins, the arms of his father's mercy were around him. The prodigal thought of no more than the menial's place; the father had in readiness the best robe and the fatted calf! God has the first word in the overtures of mercy. He refuses none — He welcomes all — the poor — the wretched — the blind — the naked — the burdened — the heavy laden — the hardened sinner — the aged sinner — the daring sinner — the dying sinner — ALL are invited to come! "Come now, and let us reason together!"

The most parched tongue that laps the streams from the smitten Rock has everlasting life. "When we forgive, it costs us an effort; when God forgives, it is His delight." From the battlements of Heaven He is calling after us: "Turn, turn, Why will you die?" He seems to wonder if sinners have pleasure in their own death. He declares, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live." Reader! have you yet closed with the Gospel's free invitation? Have you gone, just as you are — with all the raggedness of nature's garments — standing in your own nothingness — feeling that you are insolvent — that, you have "nothing to pay," already a bankrupt, and the debt always increasing? Have you taken hold of that blessed assurance, "He is able to save to the uttermost"? Are you resting your eternal all on Him who has done all and suffered all for you; leaving you, "without money and without price," a free, full, unconditional offer of a great salvation?

Say not that your sins are too many — the crimson dye too deep. It is because you are a great sinner, and have great sins, that you need a great Savior. "Of whom I am the chief," is a golden postscript to "the faithful saying." Do not dishonor God by casting doubts on His willingness or ability. If your sins are heinous, you will be all the more an amazing monument of grace. You may be the weakest and unworthiest of vessels; but, remember, there was a niche in the Temple for both the great and for the small — for the cups, as well as for the pitchers. Even the smallest vessel glorifies Christ.

Arise then, call upon the Lord! We cannot say, with the king of Nineveh, "Who can tell if God will turn?" He is turning now — declaring, on His own immutable word, that He will "never cast out." "Though you have lived among the pots, you shall be as the wings of a dove, covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold!" Close, without delay, with these precious invitations, that so, looking up to a reconciled God and Father in Heaven, you may even this night say — "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for you, LORD, only make me dwell in safety." — Psalm 4:8

## **THE CONSOLATIONS OF GOD**

*"Comfort you, comfort you my people, says your God." — Isaiah 40:1*

God's people are prone to be discouraged because of the difficulty of the way. In the bitterness of their spirits, they are often apt to say, with desponding Zion, "The Lord has forsaken me;" or with the faithless prophet, "It is better for me to die than to live."

But the Christian has his consolations too, and they are "strong consolations." The "still small voice"

mingles with the hurricane and the storm. The bush burns with fire, but the great God is in the bush, and therefore it is indestructible! "The Lord lives, and blessed be my rock; and may the God of my salvation be exalted." Earthly consolations may help to dry one tear, but another tear is ready to flow. God dries all tears. There is no need in the aching voids of the heart that He cannot supply.

Is it mercy to pardon? I can look up to the throne of the Most High, and see Holiness and Righteousness, Justice and Truth, all bending, in exulting harmony, over my ruined soul, exclaiming, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners!" Is it grace to help? I can look up to that same throne, and behold, seated thereon, a Great High Priest; no, a mighty Prince, having power with God, and prevailing — prayer without ceasing ascending from His lips in behalf of His people. When Satan seeks "to sift" them, His upholding power protects them. When temptation assails them in their earthly conflicts, the true Moses on the Mount, with hands that never "grow heavy," makes them "more than conquerors." When trial threatens to prostrate them, He identifies Himself with the sufferers — He points to His own sorrows, to show them how light the heaviest of earth's sorrows are. Even over the gloomy portals of the grave He can write, "Blessed are the dead!" He alone felt Death's substance. His people only see "the shadow." He makes it a Valley of Achor, through which "the two spies, Faith and Hope," fetch back Eshcol-pledges of the true Land of Promise!

Reader, are you now weary or desponding? Is some cross heavy on you — some trial oppressing you — some thorn in the flesh sorely lacerating you? Be still! He will make His grace sufficient. If He has allured you into the wilderness, it is that He may speak comfortably to you. He has an antidote for every bosom — a balm for every wound — a comfort for every pang — a solace for every tear. "When anxiety was great within me, Your consolation brought joy to my soul." "I will both lay me down in peace, and

sleep: for you, LORD, only make me dwell in safety."  
— Psalm 4:8

## THE PATHS OF GOD

*"All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth unto  
such as keep his covenant and his testimonies."—  
Psalm 25:10*

"All the paths." It is no small effort of faith to say so, when blessings are blown upon, and schemes crossed, and fellow-pilgrims, (it may be beloved spouses in our spiritual joys) are mysteriously removed, to say, "All — ALL is mercy! All — ALL is well!" They are "the paths of the Lord" — His choosing; and, be assured, He will "lead His people by a right way." It may not be the way of their own selecting. It may be the very last they would have chosen. But when He leads His sheep, "He goes before them." The Shepherd portions off our pasture-ground. He guides the footsteps of the flock. He will lead them by no rougher way than He sees needful. Does a father give his child his own way? If he did, it would be his ruin. Will God surrender us to our own truant wills, which are often bent on wandering farthest from Him? He knows us better! He loves us better!

Believer, it is the loftiest triumph and prerogative of faith to have no way — no path of your own — but with childlike simplicity and reliance to say, "Teach me Your paths." "Undertake for me!" Lead me however and wherever You please. Let it be through the darkest, loneliest, thorniest way — only let it bring me nearer Yourself.

Would that we could keep our eye not so much on the path, as on the bright gate, which terminates it. When standing at that luminous portal, we shall trace, with adoring wonder, the way in which our God has

led us; discerning the "need be" of every teardrop — and to the question, "Is it well?" to which often on earth we gave an evasive answer, ready with an unhesitating, "It is well!" What a light will then be flashed on these three often mysterious words, "God is love!" Then, at last, shall we be able to add the joyful comment — "We have known and believed the love which God has to us."

Meanwhile, Reader! if you are treading a path of sorrow, consider, as an encouragement, that your Lord and Master trod the same before you. Behold, as He toiled on His blood-stained journey, how submission to the Divine will formed the secret of His support. "Even so, Father, not My will, but Yours be done!" The True David was strengthened with what sustained His typical ancestor in a dark and trying hour: "O Lord, You are my God!" Believer, if it is your God in covenant who is leading you, what more can you require? "His Ways are truth and judgment." He will guide you by His counsel, while you live, and afterward receive you into glory. My God! if such be the design of Your dealings and discipline — "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for you, LORD, only make me dwell in safety." — Psalm 4:8

## **THE SECRET OF GOD**

*"The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant." — Psalm 25:14*

Believer, your God has some mighty secret to confide to you! What is this, which (a mystery to the world), is to be conveyed in whispers into the ears of His people! "He will show them His Covenant!" Listen, this night, to this blessed "secret." You have pondered it often before. But its wonders never diminish by repetition.

The Author of it is God — the Eternal Father. He framed its articles before the foundation of the world. It is an inverted order of truth that would represent the atonement as the cause of God's love. God's love was rather the originating cause of the atonement. "God so loved the world." How runs the Covenant-Charter? "Everything belongs to you .... the whole world and life and death; the present and the future. Everything belongs to you, and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God."

The initiative — the first overture of covenant-mercy was with Him. It was the insulted Sovereign who first dreamed of mercy towards the rebels; the injured Father who first thought of His ungrateful children. Wondrous secret — that from all eternity, the Heart of God was all Love to us!

Think of the Surety of the Covenant. It was the adorable Son of the Father. He voluntarily accepted the Covenant stipulations: "Lo, I come! I delight to do Your will, O My God!" He ceased not, until, all the terms being fulfilled, He could claim His stipulated reward: "I have glorified You on the earth, I have finished the work which You gave Me to do." And still He lives, and reigns, and intercedes, under the blessed title of "Mediator of the Everlasting Covenant!"

Think of the Almighty Dispenser of the blessings of the Covenant. It is the Spirit of all Grace — the third person in the ever-blessed, co-equal Trinity.

Think of the Heirs of the Covenant. They are all who, by simple faith, are willing to appropriate its inestimable blessings.

Think of the Security of the Covenant. There is nothing but contingency in other things. But all is certainty in the Covenant — "I will be unto you a God, and you shall be to Me a people." Unfailing! it has the rock of Christ's Deity to rest upon; and a Triune God pledged to make good all its provisions — "My covenant will I not break, nor alter the word that has

gone out of My mouth!" Think of the Perpetuity of the Covenant: "I will betroth you unto Me forever!" Think of the rich Inheritance of the Covenant. Oh! here is the mighty secret of unfathomable love: "If children, then Heirs — Heirs of God." "Heirs of God!" All within the scope of Omnipotence to bestow! "God," says Beveridge, "thus speaks. "I AM that I AM!" He puts His hand to a blank check, that His people may write under it what they please, that is for their good.

My soul! are you an heir of God? Can you look upwards to the throne of that Great "I am," and say, "my God?" Happier words — a more glorious assurance — cannot thrill on an archangel's tongue! With such a Portion as this, surely I am independent of all others. Let that amazing "secret" form the last thought of this day; and, as the Almighty is even now whispering it in my ears, I may close my eyes, repeating — "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for you, LORD, only make me dwell in safety." — Psalm 4:8

## THE NAME OF GOD

*"The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runs into it, and is safe." — Proverbs 18:10*

Strong indeed! "We have a strong city; God makes salvation its walls and ramparts." Every ATTRIBUTE of the Godhead is such a tower. Every perfection such a rampart — all combined to insure the believer's everlasting security. Reader, "Go, inspect the city of Jerusalem. Walk around and count the many towers. Take note of the fortified walls, and tour all the citadels, that you may describe them to future generations. For that is what God is like. He is our God forever and ever, and He will be our guide until we die."

Mark the strong Tower of OMNIPOTENCE. It proclaims that the Almighty is on your side — that there is One with you and for you, boundless in His resources, greater far than all that can be against you!

Mark the strong Tower of UNCHANGEABLENESS. All earthly fabrics are tottering and crumbling around you. The dearest of all your earthly refuges has written on it the doom of the dust. But, sheltered here, you can gaze on all the fitful changes of life, and exult in an unchanging God!

Mark the strong Tower of WISDOM. When dealings are dark, and chastisements mysterious, do you know what it is to retire within this fortress, and to be reminded that all, all that befalls you, is the planning of unerring rectitude and faithfulness? — to see inscribed on the chamber-walls, "The only Wise God!"

Mark the strong Tower of LOVE. When the hurricane has been fierce, your heart breaking with new trials, the past dark, the future a dreary waste, no lull in the storm, no light in the clouds — oh! is it no comfort to you to retire into this most hallowed of bulwarks, and read the living motto emblazoned on its every turret — "God is love!" My soul! are you safe in this impregnable fortress? Have you entered within the gate? Remember, it is not to be "near" the city, but "in" it. Not to know about Christ, but to "win Him, and be found in Him." One footstep outside the walls, and the Avenger of blood can cut you down! "Turn, then, to the stronghold!" as a "prisoner of hope!"

Once, these were colossal walls to 'exclude'. Now, they are unassailable barriers to 'protect' — a citadel where His saints are "kept" by the power of God. Every portal is open; and the God of Mercy issues the gracious proclamation — "Come, My people, enter into your chambers!" How safe! how happy here! "If there be tossing and doubting, it is the heaving of a ship at anchor — not the dashing on the rocks."  
(Evans)

IN GOD! "There is, in this," says Jonathan Edwards, speaking of the same blessed truth, "secured to me, as it were, a calm, sweet aspect, or appearance, of glory in almost everything." We can hear, amid the surges of life, a voice high above the storm, the Name of the Lord — "It is I!"

"It is I," remarks Bishop Hall, "were as much as an hundred names. It is I! I, your Lord and Master. I, the Commander of winds and waters. I, the Sovereign Lord of Heaven and Earth. I, the God of Spirits. Let Heaven be but as one Scroll, and let it be written all over with titles — they cannot express more than — It is I! Oh, sweet and seasonable word of a gracious Savior! — able to calm all tempests — able to revive all hearts — say but so to my soul, and I am safe!" "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for you, LORD, only make me dwell in safety." — Psalm 4:8

## **THE FAVOR OF GOD**

*"In his favor is life"* — Psalm 30:5

How anxious are we to stand well with our fellow-men, and secure their favor! Are we equally so to stand well with God? The favor of man, what is it? A passing breath, which a moment may alienate, a look forfeit, and which, at best, a few brief years will forever terminate. But the favor of God — how ennobling, constant, and enduring! In possession of that favor, we are independent alike of what the world gives and withholds. With it, we are rich, whatever else we lack. Without it, we are poor, though we have the wealth of worlds beside. Bereft of Him, we can truly say with aged Jacob, "I am bereaved." Nothing can compensate for His loss, but He can compensate for the loss of everything!

Reader! are you living a stranger to this favor, under the cheerless sense of alienation from God? Sin un-

cancelled — peace un-purchased — all uncertainty about the question of your eternity? Who need ask, living thus, if you are satisfied, or happy? Satisfied? Impossible! Nothing can satisfy your infinite capacities but the infinite God. Nothing can fill up the aching voids of your immortal being, but Him "who only has immortality." Happy? Impossible! There can be no happiness with sin unforgiven, the conscience unappeased, imperishable interests hanging overhead unsettled and unadjusted, death, and judgment, and eternity, all un-provided for. Living at this "dying rate," peace must be a stranger to your bosom!

Seek to make up your peace with God. Covet His life-giving favor. What a blessed fountain of unsullied joy has that soul which can look up to Heaven and say, "God is mine!" That word — that thought — wipes away every tear-drop, "My Father!" What though the perishable streams be dried, if you are driven to learn the truth, "All my springs are in You." He may empty your cistern, but the Fountainhead remains. Job was the sorest of sufferers, but he could bear patiently to be bereft of all, save One — "Oh that I knew where I might find Him!"

"Go," said Chrysostom, exulting in this favor of the King of kings, when an earthly princess tried to shake his spirit — "Go, tell her that I fear nothing but sin." Blessed state of conscious security!

The same mighty consolation which supported Jesus in His season of humiliation, forms the solace and rejoicing of His true people — "Because He is on my right hand, I shall not be moved." Blessed Jesus! Oh encompass me this night with Your favor as with a shield, and then — "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for you, LORD, only make me dwell in safety." — Psalm 4:8

*"And they shall be mine, says the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels." — Malachi 3:17*

"MY JEWELS!" (or, My special treasure!) Of what favored creatures does Jehovah thus speak? Is it of seraphs? Is it of angels? Methinks, at such a title, even they would take the dust of abasement, and veiling their faces, cry, "Unclean! unclean!" But, marvel of marvels! It is redeemed sinners of the earth — the fallen children of men; once crude, unshapely stones, lying in "the horrible pit and the miry clay," amid the rubbish of corruption, who are thus sought out by grace, purchased by love, destined through eternity to be set as jewels in the crown of the eternal God!

"The Lord's portion is His people." There is a surpassing revelation of love here. Great, unspeakably great, is the privilege of the believer, to be able to look up to the everlasting Jehovah, and say, "You are my portion, O Lord!" But what is this in comparison with the response of Omnipotence to the child of dust, "You are Mine!" Reader, have you learned to lisp your part in this wondrous interchange of covenant-love, "My beloved is Mine, and I am His!"

What an array of wondrous titles belong to the saints of God, and given, too, by God Himself, in His own Word! He calls them — Sons! Brethren! Princes! Friends! Heirs! Jewels! My Portion! Mine!

And when is the time when they become thus dear to Him? Sinner, when you wept at the cross of Jesus, and joined yourself in covenant with God, you became His jewel. No! "He has loved you with an everlasting love!" True, you are not yet set in His crown. You are yet undergoing the process of polishing. Affliction is preparing you; trial is needed to remove all the roughness and inequalities of nature, and make you fit for your Master's use. But, blessed thought! "Now it is God who has made us [literally, chiseled or polished us] for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come." Yes, God Himself, the possessor, who

prized that earthly jewel so much, as to give in exchange for it Heaven's "Pearl of great price!" He has the polishing in His own hand. He will not deal too rashly or roughly.

And where, meanwhile, is the casket in which these jewels are kept until the coronation-day arrives, when the crown of His Church triumphant (every saint a gem) will be placed on the head of Jesus? It is He, their Purchaser, their Proprietor, who preserves them. They are "kept by the power of God." Our great High Priest, the true Aaron, has them set in His breastplate; He bears them on His heart on His every approach to the throne. They are the precious stones set in gold upon the ephod! And though the sins of His people, and the designs of Satan, combine in doing what they can to destroy them, He declares that none shall ever pluck them out of His hand, or from His heart. A jewel in Immanuel's crown! Not only raised from the ash-heap to be set among princes, but to gem through eternity the Forehead that for me was once wreathed with thorns!

Shall I — *can I* — murmur at any way my Savior sees fit to polish and prepare me for such an honor as this? Let me sink down on my nightly pillow overpowered with the thought; and as I hear my covenant God whispering in my ear the astounding accents, "You are Mine!" I may well reply, "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for you, LORD, only make me dwell in safety." — Psalm 4:8

## **THE JUDGMENT OF GOD**

*"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he has done, whether it be good or bad." — 2 Corinthians 5:10*

"ALL!" There is no eluding that searching scrutiny — "Every eye shall see Him." Believer, if safe in the covenant, there is to you no terror in that coming reckoning. The judicial dealing between yourself and your God is already past. You are already acquitted. The moment you cast yourself at the cross of your dear Lord, the sentence of "Not Guilty" was pronounced upon you; and if "it is God who justifies; who is he who condemns?" But this sentence will be ratified and openly proclaimed before an assembled world. On that great day of disclosures God will avenge His own elect. All the calumnies and aspersions heaped on their character will be wiped away. In the presence of devils, and angels, and men, the approving sentence will go forth from the lips of the Omniscient One, "Enter into the joy of your Lord!"

And WHO is to be your Judge? Who is to be enthroned on that tribunal of unerring rectitude, before whom every knee is to bow and every heart is to be laid open? "For He has set a day when He will judge the world with justice by THAT MAN He has appointed." "That Man!" Oh, it is no stranger! It is Him who died for you! who is now interceding for you! who will then stand on that latter day on the earth, to espouse your cause, vindicate your integrity, and utter the challenge to every reclaiming adversary — "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?"

Reader, seek to know this God-Man Mediator on a throne of grace, before you meet Him on a throne of judgment. Seek to have your name now enrolled in this Book of Life, that you may hear it then confessed before His "Father and the holy angels." What an incentive to increased aspirations after holiness and higher spiritual attainments, to remember that the awards of that day and of eternity, will be determined by the transactions of time! It is a grand Bible principle, that though justified by faith, we shall be judged by works. No more, while from first to last, Jesus, and Jesus alone, is the meritorious cause of salvation, yet the works flowing from faith in Him and love to Him, will regulate the degree of future bliss;

whether we shall be among the "greatest" or "the least in the kingdom;" whether we shall occupy the outskirts of glory, or revolve in orbits around the throne in the blaze of God's immediate presence!

Were that trumpet-blast now to break on your ear, would you be prepared with the welcome response, "Even so, come." Seek to be living in this habitual state of holy preparedness, that even the midnight cry would not take you by surprise; that the summons which will prove so startling to a slumbering world, would be to you the herald of glory — "He comes, He comes to judge the earth!"

Oh the blessedness of being able, in sweet confidence in the Savior's second coming, to compose myself to rest night after night, and say, "Even though the trumpet of judgment should break upon my ears, "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for you, LORD, only make me dwell in safety." — Psalm 4:8

## **GOD'S BANQUETING HOUSE**

*"He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love." — Song of Solomon 2:4*

"HE brought me!" All of grace! He justifies! He glorifies! The top-stone is brought forth, the banqueting house is entered with shoutings, saying, "Grace, grace unto it!" Believer, contemplate the journey ended, the course finished, the victory won. Seated at the supper-table of the Lamb in glory, guest talking to guest with bounding hearts — recounting their Lord's dealings on earth — the watchword circulating from tongue to tongue, "He has done all things well!"

Angels and archangels, too, will be participants in that banquet of glory; and bright seraphs, who never knew what it was to have a heart of sin or to shed a

tear of sorrow. But, for this reason, there will be one element of joy peculiar to the Redeemed, into which the other unfallen guests cannot enter — the "joy of contrast." How will this present world's "great tribulation" augment the bliss of a world at once sinless and sorrowless! How will earth's woe-worn cheek, and sin-stricken spirit, and tear-dimmed eye, enhance the glories of that perfect state, where there is not that symbol of sadness, nor the solitary trace of one lingering tear-drop!

Then will be realized that sweet paradox, "They rest" — "They rest not!" "The rest without a rest." "They rest" — the eternal pause and cessation from all the feverish disquietudes of this world's sins and sorrows; all that would disturb the rapture of a holy repose. And yet, the restless activity of holiness — the Divine energy of beings whose grand element of happiness is employment in the service and executing of the will of God. In this "they cease not day nor night."

It is sublimely said of the God before whom they hymn their anthems and cast their crowns, "He inhabits the praises of eternity!" My soul, seek often to ponder, in the midst of your days of sadness, the joys of that eternal banqueting house. "You shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more!" One moment at that table — one crumb of the heavenly manna — one draught from the river of life, and all the bitter experiences of the valley of tears will be obliterated and forgotten!

Look upwards even now, and behold your dear Lord preparing for you this glorious "feast of fat things." "Don't be troubled. You trust God, now trust in Me. There are many rooms in My Father's home, and I am going to prepare a place for you. If this were not so, I would tell you plainly. When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with Me where I am." He has Himself entered the banqueting house as the pledge and forerunner of the coming guests. He, the first Sheaf of the mighty harvest, has been waved before God in the temple of the New

Jerusalem, as a pledge of the immortal sheaves still to be gathered into the heavenly garner!

The invitation is issued, "Come, for all things are ready." "The feast has been prepared, and choice meats have been cooked. Everything is ready. Hurry to the wedding banquet!" Reader, prepare for the feast — suitably attire yourself for such a glorious banquet. Put on your beautiful garments — that righteousness of Jesus, without which you cannot be accepted — that holiness of heart, without which no one can see the Lord. Soon shall *the little hour of life's unquiet dream* be over; and then, oh the glorious surprise of being ushered into that banqueting table — to know, forever, the blessedness of those "who are called unto the marriage-supper of the Lamb!"

With the prospect of such joys awaiting me in the *morning of immortality*, with the dark nights of death before me, and the grave my couch, I shall be able to say, even of its lonely chamber — "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for you, LORD, only make me dwell in safety." — Psalm 4:8

## THE PRESENCE OF GOD

*"In your presence is fullness of joy."* — Psalm 16:11

Even in this world, where God is dimly apprehended, how sweet to the Christian is the sense of His presence, and friendship, and love! What will it be in that world, where He is seen in *open vision*! The *foretaste* is blessed, what must be the *fruition*! The *rays* of the Divine glory are gladdening — what must be the *full blaze* of that Sun itself!

Believer, do you often delight to pause in your journey? Does faith love to ascend its Pisgah Mount and get a prospect of this Land of Promise? What is

the grand feature and element which swallows up all the circumstantials in your future bliss? Let Patriarchs, Prophets, and Apostles, answer — It is "Your Presence." "In my flesh, I shall see God," says one. "I shall be satisfied," says another, "when I awake, with Your likeness." "They shall see His face," says a third. Amid all the glowing visions of a coming Heaven granted to John in Patmos, there is One all-glorious object that has ever a peerless and distinctive pre-eminence — God Himself!

There is no *candle* — Why? "For the Lord God gives them light." There is no *temple* — Why? "For the Lord God and the Lamb are the temple thereof." The saints dwell in holy brotherhood; but what is the mighty bond of their union; their chief joy? "He who sits on the Throne shall dwell among them." They have no longer the intervention of ordinances and means — Why? Because "the Lamb that is in the midst of the Throne shall feed them, and lead them to living fountains of waters." They no longer draw on the storehouse of the Promises — Why? Because "God Himself shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Reader, here is the true "Peniel," where you will "see God face to face." Here is the true "Mahanaim," where the Angels of God meet you.

In Heaven is the true communion of saints — the glorious fellowship of the Prophets — the goodly fellowship of the Apostles — the noble army of Martyrs. Yet all these will be subservient and subordinate to the first — the vision and fruition of God! Even the recognition of the *death-divided* (that sweet element in the believer's prospect of bliss) will pale, in comparison, before this "Glory that excels!"

Are you among these "pure in heart," who are to "see God"? Remember the Bible's solemn warning — "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Remember its solemn admonition — "And every man that has this hope fixed on Him, purifies himself even as He is pure." To "see God!" Oh, what preparation needed for so magnificent a contemplation! *Infinite*

*unworthiness and nothingness, to stand in the presence of Infinite Majesty, Purity, and Glory!*

Can I wonder at the much discipline required, before I can be thus "presented faultless before the presence of His glory?" How will these needed furnace-fires be dimmed into nothing when viewed from the Sapphire throne! Heart and flesh may be fainting and failing; but, remembering that that same God is now "the strength of my heart," who is to be my "portion forever," I may joyfully say — "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for you, LORD, only make me dwell in safety." — Psalm 4:8

## **GOD'S CLOSING CALL**

*"Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." — 2 Corinthians 6:2*

Reader! How does it stand with you? Is the question of your soul's salvation finally and forever settled? Are you at peace with God? Can you say with Paul, in the prospect of death, "I am now ready?" Have you been led to feel the infinite peril of postponement and procrastination, and responded to the appeal — "Behold, Now!" Ah, how many have found, when the imagined hour of deathbed preparation had come, that the *tear of penitence* was too late to be shed, and the *prayer of mercy* too late to be uttered! Let there be plain dealing between your conscience and your God. Seek not to escape from the pressing urgency of the question. You may dismiss it now, but there is a day coming when you dare not! Let it not merge in vague generalities — let it be realized as matter of personal concern; of infinite importance to yourself — "Am I saved, or am I not saved? Am I prepared, or am I unprepared, to meet my God?"

You may have, perhaps, an honest purpose of giving it some *future* deliberation at another and "more

convenient season." Do we ever read of Felix's "more convenient season?" It were better not to risk the experiment of a dying hour for the solution of the problem — "Is it safe today?" Take it on trust, that it is a difficult matter — a conference about the soul on the brink of eternity! Remember, God's Spirit "will not always strive." *All His other attributes are infinite, but His patience and forbearance have their "bounds and limits."*

The invitation which is yours today, may be withdrawn tomorrow. The axe may be even now laid at the root of the tree, and the sentence on the wing — "Cut it down!" How awful, if it really be, that you are yet living in this state of estrangement and guilt! What a surrender of present peace! What a forfeiture of eternal joy! Hurry! flee for your life, lest you be consumed! *Your immortality is no trifle.*

"The night is far spent." Who can tell how far? It may be now or never with you! You are about once more to lie down on your nightly pillow. What if your awaking tomorrow were to be "in outer darkness?" But, take courage, that night is not too far spent. Close this last of the "Night Watches," by fleeing, without delay, to Jesus — the Sinner's Savior and the Sinner's Friend. It was on the *last watch of the night*, He came of old to His tempest-tossed disciples. Like them, receive Him now into your soul; and have all your guilty fears calmed by His omnipotent "Peace, be still!"

Are there not ominous signs all around, as if the world's last and closing "night-watch" has come? The billows are heaving high. We hear the footsteps on the waters. Amid the fitful moanings of the blast, the watchword is heard — of joy to some, of terror to others — "Maranatha" — "The Lord is coming!"

Reader! are *you* ready? Is the joyous response on your tongue — "Come, Lord Jesus; Come quickly"? If this night were indeed your very last, and the thunders of judgment were to break upon you before daybreak; would you be able, in the assurance of an

eternal dawn, to say — "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for you, LORD, only make me dwell in safety." — Psalm 4:8