



THROUGH BACA'S VALE

J.C. PHILPOT

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Yr. Affectionate Friend
J. C. Philpot

THROUGH BACA'S VALE

OR

DAILY WORDS

FOR

ZION'S WAYFARERS

SELECTED FROM THE WORKS OF

J. C. PHILPOT

BY HIS DAUGHTERS

Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them. Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools. They go from strength to strength, everyone of them in Zion appeareth before God. Psalm 84. 5,6,7.

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PREFACE

Some years ago, as is well known to most of our readers, we published a series of extracts in the form of Daily Portions from the works of our late dear Father, J. C. Philpot, which received a welcome far, far more cordial than we had ventured to hope or expect. Indeed, the numerous testimonies that have reached us again and again, from various quarters, of the blessing of God richly attending the perusal of these Portions have made our hearts burn within us, and the thought that He should condescend to put His seal of approbation upon our labours may well excite the deepest humility and gratitude.

Now, with mixed feelings of pleasure and regret, we find the edition is rapidly coming to an end, and as several friends have expressed a wish for another series of Portions culled from the same source, we thought, as there still remained sufficient material to draw upon, that we should prefer to bring out another book rather than merely reprint the former. That the present volume is larger and contains more matter will be seen at a glance: the fact is, all the suitable short pieces were selected for the earlier one, consequently, these in most cases are longer, which, under the circumstances, was unavoidable, but we trust that even the busiest may be able to spare a few minutes to read the portion for the day: if it is a little long, may it be found proportionately seasonable and weighty, refreshing

to a weary spirit—a word of encouragement or exhortation to pilgrims journeying Zionwards.

As a frontispiece, a colotype portrait has been added, copied from the most pleasing photograph we possess of our dear Father. This we thought would be valued, not only by those who knew him personally, but by a new generation, who would doubtless like to have some idea of the outward form and features of one whom, though they never saw him in the flesh, they love and esteem for his works' sake.

It may be observed in this as in the former volume that some of the pieces begin and end rather abruptly, but it must be remembered that they were not written for the purpose to which they are now applied, as was the case with Mason's and Hawker's Portions, but are merely extracts gathered, as the title of the earlier work suggested, from those sheaves which have been garnered for the use and edification of the Household of Faith.

In conclusion, we can only express our earnest desire and prayer that the Lord God of Sabaoth may again be graciously pleased to smile upon our efforts, and continue to bless the words of His late dear servant, who "being dead, yet speaketh," to the souls of His living family, and His name shall have all the praise.

S. & D. M. PHILPOT. Croydon, 1893.

THROUGH BACA'S VALE;

OR,

DAILY WORDS FOR ZION'S WAYFARERS

January 1

“Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not.” — Psalm 17. 5.

Without scrupulously or superstitiously observing “days, and months, and times, and years,” few of us altogether pass by so marked an epoch as the dawning of another year upon our path without some acknowledgment of it both to God and man. When we open our eyes on the first morning of the year, we almost instinctively say, “This is New-year’s day.” Nor is this, at least this should not be, all the notice we take, all the acknowledgment we make of that opening year of which we may not see the close. When we bend our knees before the throne of grace, we mingle with thankful acknowledgment for the mercies of the past year, both in providence and in grace, earnest petitions for similar mercies to be experienced and enjoyed through the present. Last evening witnessed our confessions of the many, many grievous sins, wanderings, backslidings, and departings from the living God during the year now gone; this morning witnesses our supplications for grace to hold up our goings in his paths, that our footsteps slip not through the year just come. Tears are most suitable at the burial of the dead; hopes and desires at the birth of the living. The past year was the departed sire, worn out with age and infirmity; the present year the new-born babe in the arms of the smiling

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nurse. It is still, however, mid-winter. To-day, the first of the present year, differs little in outward appearance from yesterday, the last of the past. But the thoughtful, prayerful mind takes little notice of wintry skies. It feels that the old, worn-out year has sunk into its grave, with all its trials and afflictions, and that a new year has come in its place, with its new hopes and new mercies; and if it bring new trials, yet that the promise still stands, that new strength will be given to meet and overcome them. Refreshed and strengthened at the throne by such or similar communings with the God of all our mercies, we go down to meet our families, and are at once greeted on all sides with, "I wish you a happy new year," a greeting which we as warmly and affectionately return. Almost every friend, well-nigh every acquaintance that we meet with in the course of the day, greets us with the same kind wish. Now in all this there may be a great deal of formality, lip-service, and traditional usage; but there may be also a good deal of sincerity, kindness, and affection. We are not, surely, so shut up in miserable self as to have no desire for the health and happiness, the temporal and spiritual welfare, of our families, our friends, or even our acquaintances. And if we desire their good, we need not be backward or unwilling to express it in a few words of friendly greeting. "Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted;" "Be pitiful, be courteous;" "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men," are precepts imbued with all the spirit of the gospel, and may be, indeed, should be, attended to without the least sacrifice of that faithfulness which becomes those who would daily walk in the fear of the Lord. There may be a form of kind words as well as "a form of sound words;" and as we may use the latter in perfect harmony with the doctrines of the gospel, so

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we may use the former in perfect harmony with the spirit of the gospel.

January 2

“But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” — 2 Peter 3. 18.

Growth is the sure mark of life. We see this in vegetation, in the animal creation, in the growth of our own bodies, and of every other thing in which there is life. Where, then, there is the life of God in the soul, there will be a growth in that life. Paul says to the Thessalonian Church: “We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly” (2 Thess. 1. 3); and Peter says, “But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” There is “an increasing in the knowledge of God” (Col. 1. 10), and “a coming in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Eph. 4. 13). It was for this increasing knowledge of the Son of God that Paul stretched every desire of his soul when he followed after, if that he might apprehend that for which also he was apprehended of Christ Jesus; and thus reaching forth unto those things which were before, he pressed toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Phil. 3. 12-14). This is not what is called progressive sanctification, as if the flesh got holier and holier, for that is still ever “the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;” but this is a growth of that “new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” After this growth in grace, this closer conformity to the image of Christ, should we ever be striving with all the powers of our soul; not

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satisfied with a low and lean state before God, but with unceasing prayer and supplication, begging of the Lord that we might be “filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that we might walk worthy of the Lord, unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God” (Colossians 1. 9, 10).

January 3

**“I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever.” —
Psalm 89. 1.**

We are surrounded with mercies; mercies for the body, and mercies for the soul. There are indeed times and seasons when all the mercies of God, both in providence and grace, seem hidden from our eyes, when, what with the workings of sin, rebellion, and unbelief, with a thorny path in the world, and a rough, trying road in the soul, we see little of the mercies of God, though surrounded by them. Like Elisha’s servant, though the mountain is surrounded by the horses and chariots of fire, and the angels of God are round about us, yet our eyes are holden, we cannot see them; and at the very moment when God is already showering mercies upon us, and preparing others in reserve, through some trying dispensation, we are filled, perhaps, with murmuring and rebellion, and cry, “Is his mercy clean gone for ever, will he be favourable no more?” This is our infirmity, our weakness; but it no more arrests the shower of God’s mercies than the parched field arrests the falling rain. The mercies of God, like himself, are infinite, and he showers them in rich profusion upon his Church and people. They come freely as the beams of the sun shining in the sky; as the breezes of the

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air we breathe; as the river that never ceases to flow. Everything testifies of the mercy of God to those whose eyes are anointed to see it, and are interested in it. To them all things in nature, in providence, and in grace, proclaim with one united harmonious voice, "The mercy of the Lord endureth for ever." Now, as these mercies of God are sensibly felt in the soul, they soften, meeken, and subdue the spirit, melt it into the obedience of faith, and raise up in it the tenderness of love. By this we are prepared to enter into the beauty and blessedness of the precept as an integral part of the gospel. If I take a review of the mercies of God, and feel no interest in them; if they are not personally and individually mine, I slight, perhaps even rebel, against the precept as too hard and severe. The yoke is too heavy for my neck to bear. My Jewish mind, my stiff-necked disposition, shrinks from obedience to God's word. But let my soul be favoured with a sweet discovery of the mercies of God; let them reach my heart, soften and subdue my spirit, then there is no cross too heavy to be taken up, no trial too hard to be endured, no path of suffering and sorrow in which we cannot patiently, if not gladly, walk. The reason why the precepts are not obeyed is because the mercies of God are not felt. Love and obedience attend each other as the shadow waits upon the sun.

January 4

**"Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." —
Acts 14. 22.**

The very word "confirm" implies that the souls of Christ's disciples need strengthening. If there were no temptations to try, no sharp

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sorrows to grieve, no painful afflictions to distress them; or if, on the other hand, there were no sensible weakness of soul, no sinking of heart, no despondency of spirit, no giving way of faith and hope, no doubt or fear in the mind, how could the souls of the disciples be strengthened? The souls of God's people are not made of cast iron, against which arrow after arrow may be discharged and leave no dent, make no impression. The hearts of the Lord's people are in a measure conformed to the heart of Christ. And what was his heart? "My heart," he says, "is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels." And thus the Lord's people, who carry in their bosom broken hearts and contrite spirits, made so by grace, are often sinking, often shaken, often cast down through the many trials they have to encounter. It is for this reason that they need confirming, supporting, strengthening, and that the Lord himself would lay his everlasting arms underneath them, lift them into his bosom, and make his strength perfect in their weakness. And is not this the gospel way? Can I, by dint of creature exertion, brace up my soul to a certain pitch? If trouble come, am I like a patient sometimes under the keen knife of the surgeon to brace up my nerves to bear the operation more unflinchingly? This is nature, flesh, reason; not grace. The Lord does not require this of his people. He dealt not so with his beloved Apostle, according to the account which he gives in 2 Corinthians 12. What did the Lord speak into his heart, under trial and temptation, that he might proclaim it upon Zion's walls to the Church of the living God? "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore, he adds, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." But it is very painful to

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the Lord's people to find no strength when they want it most, no faith when they have the greatest need of it, no help when most required. To pass through this experience baffles and disconcerts many of the living family; but when the Lord is pleased in a mysterious way to communicate his own strength, and to make it perfect in weakness; when he deals with them, as with the worthies of old, who "out of weakness were made strong," they can then bless the Lord for their very weakness, and, like Paul, glory in their infirmities, because the power of Christ rests upon them.

January 5

"Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace." — Luke 1. 78, 79.

There is a way of peace, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. For he is "our peace," and "the way," and therefore the way of peace. He has made peace through the blood of his cross (Col. 1. 20), having slain the enmity thereby, and came and preached peace to them which were afar off, "sitting in darkness and the shadow of death," and to them that were nigh (Eph. 2. 16, 17). The dayspring, then, breaking in upon the soul, shines upon the way of peace, and guides the feet into it. The light shines upon the way lined with blood, the way of salvation through the finished work, atoning blood, and meritorious sufferings of the Son of God. As, then, the light shines upon the way, and it is seen as a way of peace, a way of pardon and reconciliation, a way of access and acceptance, a way of grace and glory, a way of life and happiness, the feet of faith move towards it, enter upon it, and walk in it. This

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is a peace that passeth all understanding, a peace which the world cannot give or take away, a holy calm, a gracious subduing of all rebellion; and that power which once said to the boiling waves and howling winds that chafed their whitened crests into a succession of billows, "Peace, be still!" does it all. How great the change! Instead of war with God, to be at peace; to see by the eye of faith that the whole way from earth to heaven, as revealed in the Person and work of the Son of God, is peace from first to last, and that as long as the feet are moving in that path they are walking in a way of peace here and hereafter. O to know, feel, and enjoy more of this peace, the peace of which Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you!" The only peace is peace in believing, peace through atoning blood, peace by walking in sweet communion with Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Nor are we left ignorant how it is to be attained and maintained: "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4. 6, 7).

January 6

**"O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee." —
Psalm 63. 1.**

David here speaks of seeking God for what he is in himself as distinct from what he has to give. His gifts are one thing, himself is another. Therefore he says, "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek *thee*;" thee as distinct from thy gifts. The bride may value her bridegroom's costly gifts; but what are his gifts apart from himself? So

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the Church highly prizes her royal Husband's gifts and blessings; but what are these compared to Him who, in her admiring eyes, is the chiefest among ten thousand and altogether lovely? Thus, as seen by the eye of faith, there is that in his most blessed Majesty which alone can satisfy the soul taught by his Spirit and influenced by his grace. The soul was made *for* him; it was gifted with immortality *by* him. Powers and faculties were given to it that might be expanded into an infinite capacity to know and to enjoy him. So that being created for God, nothing but God can really satisfy its cravings and desires. But there is that in him, as revealed to a believing heart, which can satisfy. His favour is life; his presence heaven begun; his love a foretaste of eternal bliss. Thus in seeking the blessings he has to bestow, we do not seek them independent of the Giver. We love the gift, but we prize the Giver more. Without the Giver, the gift would be worthless. The bridal ring is the pledge of union. But what would be the ring without the bridegroom? Mockery. So all the favours and blessings which the Lord has to bestow, if he gave all and withheld himself, would be but to mock us. But in giving them, he gives himself. As when the bridegroom puts the ring on the finger of his betrothed he gives himself with the gift; so when the Lord seals a sense of his espousal upon the heart of his beloved one, in giving his love he gives himself. Nor can anything else satisfy the desires of an awakened soul. "It is Jesus," it says, "that I want; without him, heaven itself would be hell; without him, life would not be life, nor glory be glory, nor immortality be immortality!" As without the sun, the earth could not exist; so the Church could not exist without Jesus. And as in the absence of the sun, no tapers could take the place of heaven's own glorious light; so no sparks, however bright, of

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fires kindled by human hands, could make up to the Church for the absence of the Sun of righteousness. He must be, as he is, our all; having him, we have everything; not having him, we have nothing. The Lord the Spirit write that truth deeply upon your heart that you may take it wherever you go, and make it ever your bosom companion. If you have Jesus, you have everything; if you have not him, you have nothing. This continual feeling of happiness in and with him, and of misery out of and without him, as maintained in your breast by the power of the blessed Spirit, will be leading you to seek him perpetually. This made David say, "Early will I seek thee."

January 7

"Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens." — Lamentations 3. 41.

When the Lord lays judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, when he makes the living man complain on account of deserved chastisement for his sins, and thus brings him to search and try his ways, he raises up an earnest cry in his soul. "Let us lift up our heart with our hands," and not the hands without the heart; not the mere bended knee; not the mere grave and solemn countenance, that easiest and most frequent cover of hypocrisy; not the mere form of prayer, that increasing idol of the day, but the lifting up of the heart with the hand. This is the only true prayer, when the heart is poured out before the throne of grace, the Spirit interceding for us and within us with groanings that cannot be uttered. "God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." The contrite heart and broken spirit, the inward panting of the

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soul after his manifested presence, the heaving sigh and penitential tear will be regarded by him, when he will turn away from lip-service and bodily exercise.

But there is much also implied in the words, "God in the heavens." This expression represents him as seated far above all heavens, enthroned in light, majesty, and glory unspeakable; and yet sitting on his throne of mercy and grace to bless the soul that waits upon him, full of love and compassion for the poor and needy one that lifts up his heart together with the hand, that he may receive pardon and peace out of Jesus's fulness, and pants with unutterable longings that the Lord himself would graciously smile and beam love and favour into his soul. This lifting up of the heart—the only true and acceptable prayer—no man can create in himself. God, who works all things after the counsel of his own will, can alone work in us thus "to will and to do of his own good pleasure." Nature cannot, with all her efforts, and all her counterfeit imitations of vital godliness, accomplish this spiritual sacrifice. She may cut her flesh with lancets, and cry, "Baal, hear us," from morning till evening, but she cannot bring down the holy fire from heaven. She can lift the hand, but she cannot lift up the heart. Depend upon it that in this spiritual intercourse with the living God, out of the sight and out of the reach of the most refined hypocrite and self-deceiver, much of the power of vital godliness lies. This lifting up of the heart when no eye sees and no ear hears, in the daily and often hourly transactions of life, in the lonely chamber, and on the midnight bed, surrounded perhaps by the world, and yet in spirit separate from it, is a secret known only to the living family of God.

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January 8

“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” —

John 14. 16, 17.

The holy Comforter and most gracious Spirit does not take up a temporary abode in the heart of the Lord’s people. Where he once takes up his dwelling, there he for ever dwells and lives. “He shall give you another Comforter, *that he may abide with you for ever.*” Oh, the blessing! Where once that holy Dove has lighted, there that Dove abides. He does not visit the soul with his grace, and then leave it to perish under the wrath of God, or allow his work to wither, droop, and die. But where he has once come into the soul with power, there he fixes his continual habitation, for he makes the bodies of the saints his temple. He consecrates them to the service of God. He takes up his dwelling in their hearts; there he lives, there he moves, there he works, and sanctifies body and soul to the honour and glory of the Lord God Almighty.

And oh, what a blessing it is to have received the same gracious and heavenly Teacher as the Spirit of truth! If this be your happy case, you know the truth for yourself, and the truth is dear to your soul; it has been ingrafted by a divine witness in your heart, and inlaid by the power of God in your conscience. The truth as it is in Jesus is very, very precious to you. You cannot part with it; it is your very life. Sooner than part with God’s truth and your interest therein, you would be willing in favoured moments to lay down your life itself. But what makes you love God’s truth? What has given you a heart to embrace and

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delight in it; and when you have come to the house of prayer, it may be with a fainting body and a troubled mind, has yet supported your weary steps and brought you on; or when you have gone home from hearing the word, has cheered your heart in the dark and gloomy night as you have lain upon your bed, and drawn your affections up to the Lord Jesus Christ? The Comforter, the Spirit of truth. He, and he alone, could give it so firm and enduring a place in your heart, conscience, and affections.

Then live that truth as well as love it, and proclaim its power and efficacy in your life and conversation. If the Spirit has written his truth upon your heart, he will bring forth that truth in your lips and in your life. He will make it manifest that you are “children that cannot lie.” You will show forth the power of truth, in the sincerity of your speech, in the uprightness of your movements, in your family, in the Church, in your business, in your general character and deportment, and in everything which stamps the reality of religion and the power of vital godliness.

January 9

“Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” — 2 Peter 1. 20, 21.

The Bible is put into our hands as a revelation from God. As such we have received it from our fathers. As such, and as such only, does it claim our attention and our obedience. If it is not the word of God—we speak with reverence—it is an imposture. Now, if we can but firmly establish the necessity of a revelation from God, we have laid a strong foundation for a belief that the Bible is that

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revelation; for no other is worth a moment's examination. This argument from necessity, then, is very strong, stronger, perhaps, than it at first appears, and as extensive in application as firm in strength. To feel the force of this argument, cast your eyes for a few moments over creation, and see what a provision has been made everywhere by its all-wise and all-powerful Creator for necessity. From man, at the head of creation, down to the lowest organised structure, there is not a necessity for which provision has not been made, and that in exact proportion to its wants. You yourself came into this world a poor, naked, helpless infant, full of necessities, and must have perished from the womb unless provision had been made for them. Who filled for you your mother's breast with milk and your mother's heart with love? But you have a soul as well as a body—no less naked, no less necessitous. Shall, then, the body have its necessities, and these be provided for, and shall the soul have its necessities too, and for these there be no provision made? Is there no milk for the soul as well as for the body? no "sincere milk of the word that it may grow thereby?" The craving after God felt by every newborn soul, the eagerness with which it flies at once to get comfort and instruction from the word, the holy joy with which it hails every ray of heavenly light that shines on its dark path, evidently show how deep the necessity of a divine revelation is laid in the relationship between man and his Maker.

January 10

**"Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me,
bless his holy name." — Psalm 103. 1.**

As the Son has glorified the Father and the Father has glorified the Son, so there is a people in whom both the Father and the Son

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will be glorified. He therefore said, "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one" (John 17. 22); and again, "And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them." When, then, God's goodness and mercy in the face of Jesus Christ are manifested to this people whom he has formed for himself that they might show forth his praise, then they give him back his glory. But how is this done? By praising and blessing his holy name for the manifestation of his goodness and mercy to their soul. We thus see in what a blessed circle this glory runs. The Father glorifies the Son; the Son glorifies the Father; both unite in glorifying his chosen and redeemed people; and they glorify Father and Son by giving them the glory due to their name. We therefore read that "the Gentiles glorify God for his mercy." But how? "Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people. Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people" (Romans 15. 9-11). This is beautifully developed in Psalm 103. It begins with blessing and praising God. "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." Why was it that David called upon his soul to bless the Lord—yea, appealed to every faculty within him to unite in blessing his holy Name? Why did he charge it upon his soul not to forget all God's benefits, but bear them in perpetual remembrance? For this reason, that he might render unto God a tribute of thankful praise. Now by this God is glorified, for whoso offereth praise glorifieth him. We cannot add to his glory; for his glory is above the heavens. It is infinite, eternal, ineffable. No creature therefore can add to it or take from it; but he does permit poor worms of earth to glorify him by giving him a tribute of thankful praise. But

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this we can only do by believing in his dear Son, receiving of his fulness grace for grace, and blessing and praising his holy name for the manifestation of his goodness, mercy, and love, as brought into our soul by his own divine power.

January 11

“Preserved in Jesus Christ, and called.” — Jude 1.

What a mercy it is for God’s people that before they have a vital union with Christ, before they are grafted into him experimentally, they have an eternal, immanent union with him before all worlds. It is this eternal union that brings them into time existence. It is by virtue of this eternal union that they come into the world at such a time, at such a place, from such parents, under such circumstances, as God has appointed. It is by virtue of this eternal union that the circumstances of their time-state are ordained. By virtue of this eternal union they are preserved in Christ before they are called; they cannot die till God has brought about a vital union with Christ. Whatever sickness they may pass through, whatever injuries they may be exposed to, whatever perils assault them on sea or land, fall they will not, fall they cannot, till God’s purposes are executed in bringing them into a vital union with the Son of his love. Thus, this eternal union watched over every circumstance of their birth, watched over their childhood, watched over their manhood, watched over them till the appointed time and spot, when “the God of all grace,” according to his eternal purpose, was pleased to quicken their souls, and thus bring about an experimental union with the Lord of life and glory.

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January 12

“But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.” —

2 Thessalonians 2. 13.

There is the impartation of righteousness, as well as the imputation of it; and the impartation of it is the communication of a divine nature to the soul. Have I one grain of holiness in myself? Not one. Can all the men in the world, by all their united exertions, raise up a grain of spiritual holiness in their hearts? Not an atom, with all their efforts. If all the preachers in the world were to unite together for the purpose of working a grain of holiness in one man's soul, they might strive to all eternity: they could no more by their preaching create holiness, than by their preaching they could create a lump of gold. But because, by a gracious act of God the Father, Jesus is made unto his people sanctification, he imparts a measure of his own holiness to them. He works in them to will and to do of his own good pleasure; he sends the Holy Spirit, to raise up holy desires: in a word, he communicates a nature perfectly holy, which therefore loves holiness, and has communion with a holy God; a heavenly, spiritual, and divine nature, which bathes in eternal things as its element, and enjoys spiritual things as sweet and precious. It may indeed be small in measure; and he that has it is often exercised and troubled because he has so little of it; yet he has enough just to know what it is. Has not your soul, though you feel to be a defiled wretch, though every iniquity is at times working in your heart, though every worm of obscenity and corruption is too often trailing its filthy slime upon your carnal mind—has

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it not felt, does it not sometimes feel, a measure of holiness Godward? Do you never feel a breathing forth of your soul into the bosom of a holy God? Heavenly desires, pure affections, singleness of eye, simplicity of purpose, a heart that longs to have the mind, image, and likeness of Jesus stamped upon it—this is a holiness such as the Lord of life and glory imparts out of his fulness to his poor and needy family.

January 13

“The Lord bless thee.” — Numbers 6. 24.

The key to the words, “The Lord bless thee,” is, I believe, to be found in Ephesians 1. 3: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with *all spiritual blessings* in heavenly places in Christ;” for the blessings prayed for in our text would seem to be chiefly spiritual blessings. Not that we are to think lightly of temporal favours. They are left-hand blessings, if not right-hand mercies; they are gifts to be thankful for on earth, if not graces that take to heaven; provision for the perishing body, if not food for the immortal soul. Health, strength, such a measure of worldly goods as shall keep the wolf from the door, and enable us to owe no man anything but love; children growing up to be a comfort to their parents; a kind and affectionate partner; warm and faithful friends; an untarnished name; and a little provision for those dear and near to us, that their tears over our body may not be doubly embittered by poverty and dependence; who shall say that these are not blessings for which God is to be praised? Viewed by the eye of faith, blessings in providence come down from heaven steeped in mercy. And yet how short, oh, how infinitely short do these temporal blessings,

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which perish in the using, fall of spiritual blessings, which endure for evermore! A striking proof of this is that when we are privileged to draw near to a throne of grace with some measure of faith and feeling, the heart's desire is wholly towards spiritual blessings; and the eye of the soul is so wholly and solely fixed upon them, that there is scarcely left place either in the heart or lips to ask for any other.

But look at the personality of the blessing asked: "The Lord bless thee;" not "you." And yet when the high priest pronounced the blessing he did not fix his eye upon, nor did he address his speech to, any one individual. It was spoken to the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel; and yet the words were so framed as though the blessing were for each individual. Such are God's blessings—personal, individual. Gracious souls, sometimes, when they have heard the word with any particular sweetness or power, say, "It was all for me." Well, it was all for thee; but art thou the only "me" in the place? Might not some one sitting by thy side say, "It was all for me?" Don't think that one alone is to be blessed, and all others excluded. There is enough for each, and there is enough for all. But there is something so singularly appropriating in the mercy of God when brought into the heart, that it seems as though it were for me, and for me alone. But here is the blessedness of the mercies of God, of the riches of his grace and glory—that one having a part does not exclude the other. It is not like a natural family, where each successive child seems to withdraw a portion of the inheritance from the others; so that, if they had the covetous feelings of grown-up people, the elder might well say to the new-born babe, "We don't want thee, thou little robber! Why art thou come to cry halves with us?" It does not narrow the heavenly inheritance that there are so many to enjoy

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it; if it did, it would narrow God himself, for God is their inheritance, and in God is enough to satisfy myriads of elect angels as well as myriads of ransomed men. There need be no envy in the things of God; it is excluded by the freeness, fulness, and richness of God's love.

January 14

“The Lord keep thee.” — Numbers 6. 24.

How we need the Lord to keep us! We stand upon slippery places. Snares and traps are laid for us in every direction. Every employment, every profession in life, from the highest to the lowest, has its special temptations. Snares are spread for the feet of the most illiterate as well as the most highly cultivated minds; nor is there any one, whatever his position in life may be, who has not a snare laid for him, and such a snare as will surely prove his downfall if God keep him not. When Elisha sat upon the mountain and his servant was distressed lest his master should be taken away by violence, the prophet prayed the Lord to open his servant's eyes. What then saw he? Chariots and horses of fire all round about the mountain guarding the prophet. Perhaps if the Lord were to open our eyes as he opened the eyes of Elisha's servant, we might see devils where he saw angels, see ourselves surrounded by Beelzebub and his legions, as the eyes of the servant saw Michael with the flaming hosts of heaven. Well, then, may it be the desire of our soul, “The Lord keep me”—keep me in his providence, keep me by his grace; keep me by planting his fear deep in my soul, and maintaining that fear alive and effectual in my heart; keep me waking, keep me sleeping; keep me by night, keep me by day; keep me at home, keep me abroad; keep

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me with my family, and keep me with my friends; keep me in the world, and keep me in the Church; the Lord keep me, according to his promise, every moment; keep me by his Spirit and grace with all the tenderness implied in his words, "O keep me as the apple of thine eye!" My friends, you can know little of your own heart, little of Satan's devices, little of the snares spread for your feet, unless you feel how deeply you need an interest in this blessing: "The Lord keep thee." And he will, for we read of the righteous, that they are kept "by the power of God through faith unto salvation;" and that "He will keep the feet of his saints."

January 15

**"The Lord make his face shine upon thee." —
Numbers 6. 25.**

The allusion here seems, to my mind, to be to the sun. Sometimes the natural sun has not risen; and the world must needs be dark if the sun be still beneath the horizon. So with many gracious souls; it is darkness with them, midnight darkness, Egyptian darkness, darkness to be felt, because at present neither the Day-star has appeared nor the Sun of righteousness risen upon them with healing in his wings. It will and must be dark with them till the Sun rise. But sometimes after the sun has risen we see not his face; clouds, deep, dark clouds, may obscure the face of that bright luminary throughout the whole day, and we may not get a single ray from him through the whole period that he is above the visible horizon. So, many of the Lord's family, after the Sun has risen upon them in the morning of their spiritual life, may pass, perhaps, much of their subsequent time in the dark shadow, till perhaps at evening tide there is light,

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and a departing ray gilds the dying pillow. But again, there are sometimes days when mists drive rapidly across the face of the bright orb of day, and yet occasionally he peeps through the breaking clouds. And is not this, in some measure, an emblem of the way in which the Sun of righteousness is continually obscured by the mists and fogs which spring up out of our unbelieving heart, hidden from view by the doubts and fears that, like the vapours of the valley, spread themselves, to our view, over his beauteous face? Yet there are times when he gleams through the clouds and disperses the mists. When the Lord is pleased to bless the soul and shine upon it with any sweet manifestation, then he breaks in through the dark clouds, but they gather again. It is not in Christian experience one bright summer day. We do not live in Australia or Peru, where clouds and mists rarely obscure the face of the sun. Our spiritual climate is humid, our inward latitude northern.

“The Lord make his face shine upon thee.” Is the Lord, then, sovereign in these matters? Can we not lift up our hand and remove the cloud? We have as much power to stretch forth our hand and sweep away the mists that obscure the Sun of righteousness, as we have power with the same hand to sweep away a London fog. How this puts the creature into his right place! And the creature is only in his right place when he is nothing, and God is all in all. How blessed to see the face of the Father, and to see it shine! not covered with lowering clouds of justly-merited displeasure, as sometimes we see in the natural sky an obscured sun looking angrily down, presaging wind and storm. It is indeed true that, when we have brought guilt into our consciences, the face of God is seen to lower with anger. We have brought his just dis-

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pleasure upon our heads; though not angry with the persons of his people, yet is he justly angry with their sins; and a sense of this in the soul covers his face with clouds: "Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud, that our prayer should not pass through" (Lam. 3. 44).

"The Lord make his face shine upon thee." And if he make his face shine upon thee, he will make thy face shine too. It was so with Moses, when he was in the mount and was holding sweet communion with God. When he came down amongst the people, the skin of his face shone; the glory of God was reflected upon it. And if the Lord make his face shine upon thee, it will make thy face not unlike the face of Moses when thou goest among the people of God.

January 16

"And be gracious unto thee." — Numbers 6. 25.

How sweet the gospel is! But what makes the gospel sweet? That one word which sheds a perfume through the whole—grace. Take grace out of the gospel and you destroy the gospel; you nullify and overthrow it; it is the gospel no more. Grace pervades every part and every branch of the blessed gospel; it is the life of the gospel; in a word, it is the gospel itself. "Be gracious unto thee." In what, then, is God gracious? In a broken law? What does that know of grace? In resolutions of amendment, creature performances, and human righteousness? Can the Lord, will the Lord show himself gracious in these? I have read of a project for extracting sunbeams out of cucumbers. We might as well expect to make sunbeams out of cucumbers as to make grace out of the law; it is cold as cucumbers; there is no sun in it. Grace, to be grace, must come out of the gospel. It is *in* the gospel, and *out* of the

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gospel must it come; and it does come, excluding all creature righteousness, putting an extinguisher upon all human merit. As the Apostle argues: "And if by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work" (Rom. 11. 6). "The Lord be gracious unto thee."

But how is the Lord gracious? Perhaps you have had occasion, at some time of your life, to go into the presence of some one in worldly rank far your superior, and you went timid, nervous, and trembling; but you experienced what is called a "gracious reception." Did not that enable you to speak and open your petition? So it is in the things of God. A sense of our meanness and unworthiness may and does make us tremble and feel timid before the face of the Most High; but when he draws us into his presence, and receives us graciously, as king Ahasuerus received the trembling Esther, extending to her the sceptre of his grace, it emboldens the soul to lay its petition at his feet. Nothing will do it but this. But you feel and say often, "I am so unworthy." Will you ever be anything else? When do you hope to be worthy? When do you mean to be worthy? If you could be worthy tomorrow, where is your worthiness today? Is the old score yet paid? If you venture upon the ground of worthiness you must have the old score rubbed off before you come to the new. Worthiness! where is it? In man? Never since the day that Adam fell. Righteousness fell in Paradise; when Adam's hand touched the apple, worthiness fell to the ground, and never since has been able to raise its head. I must not, then, go to God upon the ground of worthiness. But may I go on the ground of unworthiness? I read of one who did, and met with a very gracious reception. "Lord," said one, "I am not worthy that thou shouldst come

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under my roof; but speak the word only and my servant shall be healed." What did the Lord say of this man? That he had not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. What, too, was the confession of the returning prodigal? "I am no more worthy to be called thy son." But this brought out the best robe, the ring for the hand, and the shoes for the feet. Why? Faith dwells with a sense of unworthiness; they are bosom companions; it dwells in no other but unworthy breasts. Feel spiritually unworthy and you are spiritually believing, for it is faith that gives a sense of unworthiness. You believe you are unworthy; by the same faith that you believe your unworthiness you believe God's grace. "Be gracious unto thee." That melts the heart; law and terrors do but harden. It is grace that softens, grace that melts, grace that constrains, grace that produces godly obedience.

January 17

"The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." — Numbers 6. 26.

When we offend a person, his face is not toward us as at other times. It was so with Laban towards Jacob; and if we have in any way incurred a friend's or superior's displeasure, we watch instinctively his countenance. Is it down or up? Does it wear a frown or a smile? Is it looking upon us with the eye of affection, or are the eyes averted? We can tell in a moment if we know the countenance. Thus is the blessing asked, "The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee," as a kind and affectionate parent upon an obedient child, as a fond husband upon a loving, devoted wife; for such is God to his children—Father and Husband. And do we not, as children, often provoke him to look upon

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us with frowning brow, or rather, not to look upon us at all, to "hide his face," as we read, "that we cannot see him?" The prayer then is, "The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee," with a smile upon it; free, open, forgiving, merciful, and mild, that thou mayest advance therein. When a disobedient child comes home and sees its father's face not towards it as before, it shrinks away; there is no pressing forward to get upon the knee, no throwing the little arms round the neck and snatching a kiss, but a shrinking away through guilt and shame. So it is in the things of God. When conscience tells us how in this and that instance we have disobeyed, been inconsistent, transgressed, and done amiss, when we go into God's presence there is a hanging back, a shrinking away, through fear of an ill reception. But oh, the change in the child when the frown disappears and the smile succeeds; when the little one is taken once more into the arms and the tears are kissed away! How much more so in the things of God when he kisses away the tears of the disobedient child, as in the case of the returning prodigal! There are no kisses like those kisses of forgiveness, of mercy, and of restoring grace.

"And give thee peace." Oh, what a blessing! As Hart says,

"I'll lay me down and sweetly sleep,
For I have peace with God."

It is this that makes the pillow easy in life, and will alone make that pillow easy in death—peace with God through Jesus Christ, peace through the reconciliation, peace through the blood of sprinkling, "the peace of God which passeth all understanding." Many covet great things, high things. But what said the Lord to Baruch? "Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not." Ministers often

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seek great gifts, great eloquence, great knowledge of mysteries, great congregations, great popularity and influence. They are wrong in seeking these so-called great things. Let them rather seek *real* things, gracious things, things that will make their souls blessed here and hereafter. The blessing that the gracious soul most earnestly covets is peace; for this is the sweetest honey-drop in God's cup. It is true that it does not make the heart overflow like joy, nor to dance with exultation like the first beaming in of the rays of hope, nor melt it down like the visits of love; but it is in some respects sweeter than all, because it so settles down the soul into sweet assurance; it is the realisation of the Saviour himself, for "he is our peace," and may thus be called the crowning blessing.

January 18

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

When there are no crosses, temptations, or exercises, a man is sure to go out after and cleave to idols. It matters not what experience he has had, whether of trouble or consolation, distress or enjoyment; if once he cease to be plagued and exercised, he will be setting up his household gods in the secret chambers of imagery. Profit or pleasure, self-indulgence or self-gratification will surely, in one form or another, engross his thoughts, and steal away his heart. Nor is there anything too trifling or insignificant to become an idol. Whatever is meditated on preferably to God, whatever is desired more than he, whatever more interests us, pleases us, occupies our waking hours, or is more constantly in our mind, becomes an idol and a source of sin. It is not the magnitude of the idol, but its existence as an object of worship,

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that constitutes idolatry. I have seen some Burmese idols not much larger than my hand, and I have seen some Egyptian idols weighing many tons. But both were equally idols, and the comparative size had nothing to do with the question. So spiritually, the idol is not to be measured by its size, its relative importance or non-importance. An auricula may be as much an idol to one man as a chest full of gold to another. If you watch your heart, you will see idols rising and setting all day long, nearly as thickly as the stars by night. Now exercises, difficulties, temptations, besetments, losses, trials, afflictions, are all sent to pull down these idols, or rather to pull away our hearts from them. They pull us out of fleshly ease, and prevent us from sitting down contented with a name to live whilst dead. They make us cry for mercy, pull down all rotten props, hunt us out of false refuges, and strip us of vain hopes and delusive expectations.

We do not learn that we are sinners merely by reading it in the Bible. It must be wrought, I might say, burnt into us. Nor will any one sincerely and spiritually cry for mercy, a sense of pardon and reconciliation by the application of atoning blood, until sin in its misery, in its dominion, in its guilt, in its entanglements, in its wiles and allurements, in its filth and pollution, and in its condemnation, is spiritually felt and known. Where the Holy Ghost works, he kindles sighs, groans, supplications, wrestlings, and pleadings to know Christ, feel his love, taste the efficacy of his atoning blood, and embrace him as all our salvation and all our desire. And though there may, and doubtless will be, much barrenness, hardness, deadness, and apparent carelessness often felt, still that heavenly Teacher will revive his work, though often by painful methods; nor will he let the quickened soul rest

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short of a personal and experimental enjoyment of Christ and his glorious salvation.

January 19

“For the Lord God is a sun and shield.”— Psalm 84. 11.

Is not the sun made to shine? It is his office to do so. So it is with the Sun of righteousness; he is made to shine. And does the natural sun lose any of his light by shining? Why, the more he shines, the more light he seems to have. For ages he has shone as brightly as now. His beams were as glorious before we had birth or being, and will be as glorious when the eyes which now see him are mouldering in the dust. Thousands of harvests has he ripened, millions and thousands of millions has he fed; but he shows no sign of exhaustion or decay. And does Jesus lose anything by communicating his light, life, love, and grace? He is all the more glorified thereby; and the more you look to him as the Sun, that as such he might shine into and upon your soul, the more you glorify him as the Sun of righteousness. When in the morning we throw the shutters back, or draw up the blinds, it is to receive the sun into the dark room. So the more we are enabled by divine grace to throw back the shutters of doubt and fear, and draw up the blinds of unbelief which hang down over the mind, the more we glorify the Lord Jesus by receiving out of his fulness, and grace for grace. Oh! it is good to be sometimes enabled to look beyond and above doubts, fears, misgivings, and the many things that try the mind. You may pore over your sins and miseries till you fall well-nigh into despair; you may look back upon your wanderings, inconsistencies, and want of fruitfulness, till you are almost ready to sink down without hope and die. To do this is to resemble a person wandering in a dark

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room, tumbling over the furniture, and at last sitting down and saying, "There is no light." If he can but throw back the shutters, the sun will shine into the room. So we sometimes may sit pondering over our many inconsistencies till we say, "There is no light in my soul; there never was, and there never will be." O to be enabled (when I speak thus, I know well, from soul experience, that it is only God who can do it in us and for us) to throw back the shutters, and look away from those things that so weigh down the mind! Look up, O sinking soul, and see the blessed Sun still shining in the firmament of heaven! Why, the very power to do this, the very act of doing so, brings with it a felt blessedness.

How good, also, to be enabled to make use of Christ as a shield! Oh, how often we go to battle without this shield upon our arm! But depend upon it, the Lord would not have provided such a shield for you unless he knew that your enemies were too many for you. Doubt, fear, darkness, despair, the law, the accusations of a guilty conscience, the fiery darts of the devil—how can you fight against these enemies without a shield? Why, you would be like a soldier going out against the foe without either sword or musket, and laying his bosom bare to every weapon, without Minié or bayonet in his hand to defend himself. So, to go into combat against the law; the accusations of a guilty conscience, and a desponding heart, and have no blessed Jesus to hold up as a shield against these deadly foes, would be enough to sink a man into despair. But if he be enabled to make use of the shield that God has provided, and to hold Christ up against a condemning law, a guilty conscience, an accusing devil, and a desponding mind, and say to them all, "Christ hath died, and died for me," then he receives into the shield those darts which would otherwise sink

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into his soul, and then they all fall harmless, because they all fell on the Lord Jesus.

January 20

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.” —

2 Timothy 3. 16, 17.

On all subjects connected with our most holy faith, it is most desirable to have clear views. Every point of divine truth is laid down with the greatest clearness and precision in the word of God. The darkness, the ignorance, the confusion which prevent us from seeing it are all in us. But as we search the Scriptures, as we meditate upon them, as we by prayer and supplication draw light, life, and wisdom out of Him “in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge;” and, above all, as we mix faith with what we read, there is often, if not usually, a gradual breaking-in of light; and as we follow up its heavenly rays, it shines more clearly and broadly, and the truth stands out more fully and prominently before our eyes. This is the only way in which we can be “filled with the knowledge of God’s will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding,” and thus be established in the faith, abounding therein with thanksgiving. To understand the scripture, to see in it the mind of the Holy Spirit, to be deeply penetrated with, and inwardly possessed of the heavenly wisdom, holy instruction, and gracious revelation of the counsels and will of God unfolded therein, demands much and continual patient and prayerful study. As in business, diligence and industry lead on to prosperity and success, and sloth and idleness are the sure road to ruin; so in the

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greatest, most serious, and important of all business, the concerns of the soul, there is a holy diligence, a heavenly industry, whereby it thrives and grows, and there is a slothful indolence whereby it becomes clothed with rags (Proverbs 23. 21).

January 21

“A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee.” —

Psalm 91. 7.

When Noah was shut up in the ark, Noah and the favoured few, you know how they were tossed about, the rains coming down from heaven, the waters rushing and dashing below. The windows of heaven were opened and the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and while they were thus dashed upon the waters, not a drop came in unto them that were within. “It shall not come nigh thee.” So you see the believer may be surrounded with troubles, and yet “it shall not come nigh him.” And there is something more in the expression used in reference to the making of the ark: “And shalt pitch it within and without with pitch” (Gen. 6. 14). Now, it is a most remarkable fact that the word pitch in Hebrew (the word is Gopher) signifies also atonement. Now see, the slime or pitch with which the ark was daubed within and without kept every drop of water out. This very expression for slime or pitch in the Hebrew signifies also atonement; and is it not the atonement that keeps out the water? Can anything but the atonement keep the soul from the waters of God’s wrath and from the floods of vengeance that shall sweep away the world with the ungodly? There is nothing but the atonement, and that bears up the soul, and keeps out every drop of rain. “It shall not come nigh thee.”

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“Many sorrows shall be to the wicked, but he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about.” “And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.” “Received the atonement.” This is it, to have the “atonement.” God cannot twice exact payment for the debt. He is satisfied; he has declared that he is well pleased with the righteousness of his beloved Son. He exacts no more; his justice demands no more, and therefore fury is not in him.

January 22

**“For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead
bodily” — Colossians 2. 9.**

The temple erected by Solomon in Jerusalem, and the tabernacle set up by Moses in the wilderness were but types of the true temple, the Lord of life and glory. The Lord himself said, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up,” speaking of his own body. All the beauty and glory of the temple were, therefore, figurative; they typified and shadowed forth the glory of Immanuel, for “in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” God the Son has taken to himself a body, according to those words in the fortieth Psalm, as quoted by Paul (Hebrews 10. 5): “a body hast thou prepared me;” a holy body, a sinless, spotless body. According to those words: “Therefore that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God;” and not only a holy body, but united to it a holy, spotless soul. “He shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied.” “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death” (Matthew 26. 38). This holy body, as united with a holy soul, the two forming his spotless human nature, the Son of God

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took into union with himself, and thus became the God-man, Immanuel, God with us. It is this glorious mystery of godliness that a living soul pants to know. We cannot approach pure Godhead; we cannot understand it; it is a mystery too high and too deep for us; for who, "by searching, can find out God? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know?" (Job 11. 7, 8). But when God would make himself known to the children of men, he made himself known by his only begotten Son, the second Person in the glorious Godhead, taking into union with himself the flesh and blood of the children; and thus we can, so far as the Lord gives us faith, approach to an invisible God through the visible God-man; as John says, "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." "No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." And, therefore, when Philip said to him (John 14. 8), "Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us;" Jesus said, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?" And why, but because as he says in another place, "I and my Father are one."

The desire, then, of every living soul (I am sure it is my desire when the Lord is pleased to work it in my heart) is to be led by the Spirit of God into an acquaintance with the God-man; to behold the glory of God in Jesus Christ; to see the Godhead shining through the manhood, and yet to see the manhood veiling and yet deriving glory from the Godhead; and thus to come to Jesus as a high priest that is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him; to feel nearness of access to the Father by approaching him through the Son of his love; and

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thus to enjoy sweet communion with Immanuel, God with us, God in our nature, God making himself known by taking our flesh and blood into union with himself.

January 23

“So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure; which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer.”

— 2 Thessalonians 1. 4, 5.

The Lord has chosen that his people should pass through deep and cutting afflictions, for it is through much, or many tribulations, as the word really signifies, “through many tribulations” they are to enter the kingdom of God above, and into the sweetness and power of the kingdom of God below (Acts 14. 22). But every man will resent this doctrine, except God has led him experimentally into it. It is such a rough and rugged path; it is so contrary to flesh and blood; it is so inexplicable to nature and reason, that man, proud, rebellious man, whether he be in a profession or whether he be out of a profession, will never believe that he must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom. And this is the reason why so many find, or seek to find, a smoother way to glory than the Lord has appointed his saints to walk in. But shall the Head travel in one path, and the members in another? Shall the Bridegroom walk and wade through seas of sorrow, and the bride never so much as wet her feet with the water? Shall the Bridegroom be crucified in weakness and suffering, and there be no inward crucifixion for the dearly-beloved of his heart? Shall the Head suffer, grieve, agonise, groan, and die, and

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the members dance down a flowery road, without inward sorrow or outward suffering?

“Bastards may escape the rod,
Sunk in earthly, vain delight;
But the true-born child of God
Must not, would not, if he might.”

But, perhaps, there are some who say in their heart, “I am well convinced of this; but my coward flesh shrinks from it. I know if I am to reach the Canaan above, I must pass through the appointed portion of tribulation. But my coward flesh shrinks back.” It does! it does! Who would willingly bring trials upon himself? Therefore the Lord does not leave these trials in our hands; but he himself appoints a certain measure of tribulation for each of his people to pass through. They will come soon enough; you need not anticipate them; you need not wish for them. God will bring them, in his own time and in his own way; and what is more, God will not merely bring you into them, but God will bring you through them, and God will bring you out of them; for the third part was not merely brought into the fire, but through the fire, to cause them to call upon his name. What, then, will be our mercy? It will be our mercy if enabled to ask the Lord to bless us with faith and patience under tribulation; to ask the Lord to give us strength to bear the storm; to lie as clay in his hands, and ask the Lord to conform us to the image of his Son, to guide us through this vale of tears below, and eventually to take us to be with him above.

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January 24

“Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus.”— 2 Corinthians 4. 10.

The two aspects, if I may use the expression, of our gracious Lord, in which are wrapped up all our faith, and hope, and love, are a dying Jesus and a risen Jesus; Christ in his sufferings and death, Christ in his resurrection and life. This is the Christ of God, this is the Son of God in whom we believe unto life eternal, as he is presented to our view in the Scriptures of truth, and by the inward teaching and testimony of the Holy Ghost. If, then, you do not believe in a dying Christ and in a risen Christ, your faith is not the faith of a Christian. Now just see how this bears upon our text. Why do we bear about the *dying* of the Lord Jesus? It is that the *life* of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. As then we bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus; as we suffer with Christ, die with Christ, and enter by faith into the mystery of his crucifixion so as to be mystically and spiritually crucified with him, we rise, so to speak, out of this death into union with the risen, living Christ, so as to derive life and strength, grace and power out of his glorious fulness. For he is risen from the dead: he is no more in the tomb, into which he sank in all the weakness of death; but is risen again, and was thus “declared to be the Son of God with power.” Yes, he has gone up on high, and now sits at the right hand of God in the highest heavens. He is gone within the veil, to be the High Priest over the house of God; there, too, he rules and reigns as King in Zion; and there he ever lives as our glorified and risen Head. As, then, we bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, as crucified with him and conformed to his death, so

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as “risen with him,” there is even now in our body a manifestation of his risen life.

January 25

“That the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.” — 2 Corinthians 4. 10.

It is in this earthen vessel, our poor mortal body, that both the death of Jesus and the life of Jesus are manifested. In the trouble, the perplexity, the being cast down, is the dying of Jesus; in not being distressed, in not being in despair, in not being forsaken, in not being destroyed, is the life of Jesus. Thus in the same body there is a dying Christ and a living Christ, Christ in his cross in his weakness, and Christ at the right hand of God in his power. To know these two things is to know the power of Christ’s resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, those two divine blessings which the soul of Paul so longed to realise and experience. In the knowledge then, the experimental knowledge, I mean, for all other is of no avail, of Christ crucified and Christ risen, consists the spiritual life of a child of God. So to live is to live a life of faith in the Son of God. So to live is to be baptised with that Spirit wherewith Paul was baptised when he said, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” The present life of Christ at the right hand of God the Father, is the source and foundation of all our present life. “Because I live, ye shall live also,” was his gracious promise when here below; and he is gone up on high, to fulfil that promise and make it effectual. He is “our life,” and this life must be made manifest in our mortal flesh, manifest to ourselves, and manifest

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to others; manifest to ourselves by the communication of light, life, liberty, and love, manifest to others by the fruits of a life and conversation adorning the gospel, and by walking in all holy obedience to its precepts.

January 26

“For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” — 1 Timothy 2. 5.

No sooner has living faith embraced the Person of Jesus (and that is the first object which faith lays hold of), than it embraces him as the divinely-appointed Mediator. And how sweet and suitable is such a Mediator to a poor, sinful, crawling reptile, a wretch defiled, morning, noon, and night, with everything foul and filthy, who has broken the law of God a million times, and cannot keep it a single moment! “How can I,” argues the soul, “so full of sin and depravity, how can I approach with acceptance the great, glorious, and holy Jehovah? I cannot, I dare not!” But when it sees, by the eye of faith, a divinely-appointed Mediator, a glorious Intercessor, a great High Priest over the house of God: One that has shed his blood to put away sin; One who has righteousness to justify, and has a fulness of grace and glory to give to the poor, needy, and naked: as faith sees, as hope embraces, as love enjoys this, there is a coming to God through this divine Mediator; as the Apostle saith, “Through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.” “Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.” Our only access to God is through the Mediator whom he hath appointed. All your prayers, tears, sighs, and groans; all your religious thoughts, acts, and words are

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worthless, utterly worthless, unless perfumed by the intercession of the only-begotten Son of God. See to this point; and I would, in all affection, charge it upon your conscience, that you look well how you approach the Father. Do you approach him through the Son of his love? Is there a solemn feeling in your heart, when you draw near to the throne, that you approach only through Jesus? Is there a believing reception of his atoning blood into your conscience as the only sacrifice that purges away sin, and of his justifying righteousness as the only robe of acceptance before God? See to it well, examine your conscience well upon the matter, for it is vital ground. See that you approach the Father through the Son of his love, and through him alone; for depend upon it, if you approach in any other way, you are but a presumptuous professor; there is no holy fire burning on the altar of your soul; nor will any answer come down but through this divinely-appointed way.

January 27

“The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season.” — Psalm 145. 15.

The Lord will bring all his children sooner or later, each in their measure, to “wait upon him.” Whatever trouble they are in, “the eyes of all wait upon thee;” whatever temptations they have to pass through, “the eyes of all wait upon thee;” whatever difficulty in temporal things, whatever conflict in spiritual things, whatever strait in providence, whatever exercise in grace be their lot, the Lord will bring all his children at one time or another into this experience, “the eyes of all wait upon thee.” “Wait upon thee” for deliverance; “wait upon thee” for a manifestation; “wait upon thee” for

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the lifting up the light of thy countenance; “wait upon thee” for one soft word spoken by thy mouth to the soul; “wait upon thee” for one smile of thine approving countenance; “wait upon thee” for one testimony of thine everlasting favour. And he that knows not what it is to “wait upon God” in this manner, wait upon him by night and by day as the Lord works it in him, wait upon him on his bed, wait upon him behind his counter, wait upon him in the solitary fields, wait upon him in the crowded streets—he lacks that evidence, he wants that divine feature, which the Holy Ghost has stamped here upon all the living family.

“And thou givest them their meat in due season.” There is “meat,” then, that they are waiting upon God for, to receive at his hands. And it is called “*their* meat.” It belongs to them. All the elect of God have provision laid up for them in Christ; for “it hath pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell.” “I will abundantly bless her provision” (Psalm 132. 15). Though none of God’s quickened family ever dare to claim the blessing at God’s hands, yet the Lord has so stored up blessings in Christ, that they are actually and eternally theirs; for, as the Apostle says, “all things are yours.” It is “*their* meat” then; that is, the meat peculiar to the elect. Blood shed for their sins, and for their sins only; righteousness brought in for them, and for them only; love bestowed upon them, and upon them only; promises revealed for their comfort, and for their comfort only; an eternal inheritance, “incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them,” and for them only. It is “*their* meat,” because it is theirs in Christ, being lodged in Christ for their benefit. But it is theirs in another sense; and that is, they are the only people who hunger after it, who have an appetite for

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it, who have a mouth to feed upon it, who have a stomach to digest it. They are the only people whose eyes are really open to see what "meat" is. Others feed upon shadows; they know nothing of the savoury food of the gospel. As the Lord said to his disciples, "I have meat to eat which ye know not of." His meat was the hidden communications of God's love, the visitations of his Father's presence, the divine communion that he enjoyed with his Father while the disciples were gone away, "to do the will of him that sent him, and to finish his work." So, for the children of God, there is meat in Christ; and this meat the Lord gives them a hunger after. He not only sets before their eyes what the meat is, but he kindles inexpressible longings in their soul to be fed therewith. God's people cannot feed upon husks, nor upon ashes, nor upon chaff, nor upon the east wind, nor upon grapes of gall and the bitter clusters of Gomorrah (Deuteronomy 32. 32). They must have "meat," "savoury meat such as their soul loveth," that which God himself communicates, and which his hand alone can bring down, and give unto them, so that they may receive it from him as their soul-satisfying portion.

January 28

**"The fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is."—
1 Corinthians 3. 13.**

How careful and anxious we should be to have two points well secured in our hearts. First, to be right as concerns the foundation. "Do I believe in the Son of God? Have I clear views of the Sonship, the Deity, and the pure humanity of the Christ of God? Have I drunk in no secret error? Am I hiding in my bosom no corrupt doctrine? Is my creed sound? Is the word of God received by me, as

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God has revealed it, into a believing heart?" How many are wrong as to the foundation itself. Then comes, "Am I upon the foundation? Did God himself put me there? Did I see its suitability to my lost and undone soul? Did the blessed Spirit take of the things of Christ and reveal them to me in the hour of need? Was the Son of God made precious to my soul by an act of faith? Am I looking to him, cleaving to him, longing for him, hanging upon him, and trusting wholly to his Person and work? How stands the foundation? Am I on it?"

The next important question is, "How stands the superstructure? Has the Holy Ghost wrought anything with a divine power in my soul? The faith I profess, is it of God? The hope I enjoy, do I believe it came from the Lord himself to support my soul in the trying storm? My repentance, is it genuine? My profession, is it sincere? My walk, is it consistent? My conscience, is it tender? My desires, are they spiritual? My prayers, are they fervent? My heart, is it honest? My soul, is it right before God? What am I looking to as the foundation, and what am I looking to as the superstructure? Do I hang all my hopes upon Christ as the Rock, and all my religion upon the work of the Holy Ghost in my heart?"

If you can answer these questions as in the sight of God, "Yes, yes, ten times yes;" then you are right, you are right. If you stand upon the foundation that God has laid in Zion, you are right; you are right if God the Spirit has wrought a living faith in your heart. But you are wrong, you are wrong if you stand not upon God's foundation; you are wrong, you are wrong, and that for eternity, unless the Holy Ghost is at work upon your conscience.

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January 29

“Lay hold on eternal life.” — 1 Timothy 6. 12.

The main office of the hand is to take hold of and grasp an object. The human hand is the master-piece of anatomy, the fingers and the strong opposing thumb being expressly constructed by their Divine Artificer to seize and retain objects; and therefore every muscle, artery, vein, and nerve conspire together to fulfil this destined office. Is there not in the office of faith something analogous to and corresponding with this? What says the Lord? “Let him take hold of my strength that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me.” There is a taking hold, then, of God’s strength. Is not this by faith? Is there any other grace of the Spirit which takes hold of the Lord, as Jacob took hold of the wrestling angel, or as sinking Peter laid hold of the hand of Jesus? “Lay hold on eternal life,” is Paul’s charge to Timothy. But how is eternal life, and especially Jesus, “the Life,” laid hold of, except by faith? “He that believeth on me,” says Jesus, “hath everlasting life.” He has it by laying hold of it.

So we read also of “fleeing for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us” (Heb. 6. 18). As the manslayer fled for refuge to the appointed city, and when his hand grasped the gates was safe, so guilty sinners flee for refuge to the Lord Jesus, and by faith lay hold upon the hope set before them in the gospel of the grace of God.

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January 30

“Let us run with patience the race that is set before us.”

— Hebrews 12. 1.

None can run this race but the saints of God, for the ground itself is holy ground, of which we read that “no unclean beast is to be found therein.” None but the redeemed walk there; and none have ever won the prize but those who have run this heavenly race as redeemed by precious blood.

Now no sooner do we see by faith the race set before us than we begin to run; and, like Christian in the “Pilgrim’s Progress,” we run from the City of Destruction, our steps being winged with fear and apprehension. All this, especially in the outset, implies energy, movement, activity, pressing forward; running, as it were, for our life; escaping, as Lot, to the mountain; fleeing, as the prophet speaks, “like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah” (Zech. 14. 5); or as the manslayer fled to the city of refuge from the avenger of blood. As, then, the runner stretches forward hands, and feet, and head, intent only on being first to reach the goal, so in the spiritual race there is a stretching forth of the faculties of the new-born soul to win the heavenly prize. There is a stretching forth of the spiritual understanding to become possessed of clear views of heavenly truth. There is a stretching forth of the desires of the heart to experience the love of God; to feel acceptance with him through the blood of sprinkling; to know the way of salvation for ourselves, and to have clear evidences that our feet are in it; to receive tokens for good, and manifestations of the pardoning love of God; to walk in his fear, live to his praise, and enjoy union and communion with the blessed Lord. And there is a

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stretching forth of the affections of the heart after Jesus and the truth as it is in Jesus, with many longings, breathings, earnest cries, and fervent wrestlings at the throne of grace, that we may know the truth and by the truth be sanctified and made free. So that when you look at the word “race” as emblematic of a Christian’s path, you see that it is not any movement of the body, what the Apostle calls “bodily exercise,” that is intended, but an inward movement of the soul, or rather of the grace that God has lodged in your bosom, and to which are communicated spiritual faculties, whereby it moves forward in the ways of God, under the influences of the blessed Spirit.

January 31

“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will shew you things to come” — John 16. 13.

He shall not speak of himself. There is something peculiarly gracious in this feature of the Holy Spirit, that, if we may use the expression, he does not glorify himself by speaking of himself in the same direct, personal manner as the Father and the Son speak of themselves. Thus the Father speaks of himself all through the word; and the Son speaks of himself in Scripture after Scripture; but the Holy Ghost, though he speaks in the Scripture, for by his divine inspiration the whole was written, yet does not speak of himself in a positive, direct manner, nor call upon us in a clear, personal way to believe in, worship, and adore him. But his office and work are to testify to our conscience and bear witness to our spirit of both the Father and the Son. Thus as a Spirit of adoption he

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enables the soul to cry, "Abba, Father," and so testifies of the Father. As a Spirit of revelation he manifests to the soul the glorious Person of Christ, and thus testifies of the Son. But he does not in a personal manner manifest himself, or testify of himself. How, then, do we know him? By his operations, his influences, his teachings, his consolations, his sealings, his softening, meltings, humblings, waterings, enlargings, openings, liberatings, strengthenings, and enablings. The Lord therefore said to his disciples, "But ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." Thus we know his indwelling by the light he gives to see our evidences clear and bright; by the life which he diffuses into the soul, to renew and revive our drooping graces; by the submission which he imparts in affliction and tribulation to the sovereign will of God; by the meekness which he bestows under the chastening rod; by the gracious confidence which he will not suffer us to cast away; by the holy boldness which he grants before the enemies of truth; by the zeal which he kindles in the heart for the truth as it is in Jesus, and for the glory of God; by the suitable words which he brings to the mind in defence of the gospel; and by the power which he gives to speak them forth with an authority which silences, if it does not convince, the adversary. Thus, though the blessed Spirit does not speak of himself, he makes himself effectually known by his indwelling power and grace. O blessed Teacher, holy Comforter, gracious Intercessor, and heavenly Witness, come and take up thine abode in our heart; there reveal and form Jesus, the hope of glory; there shed abroad the love of God; there bear thy divine testimony to our sonship; there cry, "Abba, Father;" there teach and sanctify and bless, that we and all in whom thou