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WARNINGS AND ENCOURAGEMENTS.

SWEET MEDITATION.

NOTES OF A SERMON, PREACHED AT ALVESCOF, BY MR. HULL,
WEDNESDAY EVENING, AUGUST 22, 1894.

“My meditation of Him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord.”—PSALM civ. 34.

THE latter sentence in the text, especially, sounds strongly, and I remember the time when I should not have been able to use it as my own. “I will be glad in the Lord.” But I have lived to learn things that I did not know I should be favoured to learn. I have lived to know that “wonders of grace to God belong.” He is able to do everything, “able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.” I have lived to know that our unbelief does not prevent His carrying on the great work in the souls of His people. “If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful: He cannot deny Himself.” The Apostle Paul could say, “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.” And he says to the Church of God, in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Philippians, “Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”

Now, I find it very sweet to meditate upon the condescension of Jesus Christ.

B

"How condescending, and how kind
Was God's eternal Son!
Our misery reached His heavenly mind,
And pity brought Him down."

• And though He has now ascended on high, the Victor, the Conqueror, and has led captivity captive, and received gifts for men, yet He has not lost His tender heart, nor forgotten His people; He looks upon them still; He condescends to our weakness and ignorance, to our doubts and fears. Instead of pushing us hither and thither because we are not stronger in the faith, as some professors would, He sympathizes with us. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust." He sits upon the throne as the Church's Intercessor. He is no stranger to my fears, no stranger to my sins, no stranger to my wants, or to my needs. He knows them all. He has trodden all these paths. For He was made "perfect through suffering." "And being made perfect, He became the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him." God's people are always learning, and they will be as long as they live, but when we have got to the end of the lessons here we shall see things as we have never seen them before. How many things will be made straight! "We shall see as we are seen, and know as we are known." I know some people differ from me in this. They will, however, never make me believe that I shall forget that which God will ever remember. "Thus saith the Lord, I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown." I remember when He sought me as a stranger, when His mercy flowed into my heart, when He set me on a rock, and I do not want to forget that, I shall take that remembrance to heaven, and sing of it, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood." I shall not sing alone. No; it will not be a solo, it will be one grand chorus from those who have come out of great tribulation. Will they forget the tribulation? No, never. Heaven will ring with the song of these delivered ones throughout all eternity. It is sweet to get on the top of the mountain now, and remember all the way the Lord hath led us these forty years in the wilderness. I can go back more than forty years, as the Lord sometimes brings things to my remembrance. When the Holy Ghost revives them how new they are! There is in them the saviour

and the fragrance of everlasting and redeeming love. It is a great thing to have a religion that wears. "His grace shall to the end stronger and brighter shine." Now, if I put the question, will you not say that you never felt Christ more suitable than you do now? Well, He has said He will be with you to the end. "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." You can, as you look back, sometimes sing—

"Thus far my God has led me on,
And made His truth and mercy known."

It is sweet to remember Him thus. You remember some of the fears and some of the foes you have had, yet here you are tonight. And as I was saying to a friend just now, what a lot you have left behind—a lot of old troubles are gone, though new ones come. You have the remembrance of your sins, but they can never become unpardoned. The Gospel comes to us finished. What a mercy to have a salvation that is comprised in four letters—*Done*. Some have one of only two letters—*Do*. "Cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned." If God has pardoned, I do not care who brings it up; once receive the witness in your heart, and nothing can undo it. You will carry the plague (of unbelief) as long as you live, but though you may fear the pardon was not good, He will come again and prove that it is as good to-day as it was forty years ago. "There is therefore *now no condemnation* to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

Now turn to the text. We have to learn the secrets of God's Word. I have often said, when some parts of it have been before me, "I can have no hope of attaining to that high standard." But, friends, it is a gift. The grace is brought to us, yet I like to see people try what they can do. Have you ever tried to do anything? I sometimes set some folks by the ears when I tell people to work, and work well. I like to see people, when they say they are concerned, act as if they really were concerned about their souls. Try on, as long as you have got a bit of strength. And when you come to the end, you will be glad to hear of Jesus Christ. It is the worn-out people that are glad of Jesus Christ. And when these poor sinners who have nothing to pay, and nothing good they can do, feel the weight of their case, it brings them on their knees, and the Word says that,

"Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

What a mercy there is prayer when there is no strength! I say again, I like to see people in earnest about their souls. You will find many so-called religious men far more in earnest about buying a horse than about their souls. There were some people in the time of Jesus Christ who cared more about their swine than they did for Him, and asked Him to depart out of their coasts. That generation is not dead yet. Those that can speak about what God has done for their souls can understand the language of the text. You will find a parallel in Psalm cxvi. 1, "I love the Lord, because He hath heard my voice and my supplications." Hart says—

"That Christ is God I can avouch,
And for His people cares,
Since I have prayed to Him as such,
And He has heard my prayers."

I know this path, I have walked it. "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me; I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the Lord; O Lord, I beseech Thee, deliver my soul." Can you bear your witness that you have been there? "Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful. The Lord preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and He helped me." He declares, "Thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling." "He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings; and He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God."

He does, then, regard the prayer of the destitute. Here (verse 33) he says he will sing. Now let us hear the song. "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: who forgiveth all thine iniquities." That would make any man sing. "Who healeth all thy diseases," body and soul, too. "Who redeemeth thy life from destruction." Have you ever been brought up from the grave? I have, more than once or twice. Oh, this last time when God recovered me, contrary to the sentence of one who afterwards said, "It is a miracle; I cannot understand it," I said, "I think I can; there is a God in heaven that hears and answers prayer, and I believe

there were many prayers put up for me." Yes, and some by friends at Alvescott and Bampton, and God heard and answered them. It is no new thing for Him to do wonders. "Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies." Did you ever wear that crown? He wore the crown of thorns that we might wear the crown of loving-kindness and of glory. Do you wonder at this man saying, "I will be glad in the Lord"? We believe it is a reality, we believe God does do these things for poor sinners: Someone may say, "I do not feel that I am the character. I am afraid I shall never be able to say, 'I will be glad in the Lord.'" There is encouragement for you in the Word of God. If you look at the first chapter in the Song of Solomon, it says, "Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me." - Yet though she was a poor swarthy black sinner, she says, "Tell me, O Thou whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest, where Thou makest Thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of Thy companions?" Black as she was, she wanted to feed in the pastures with His flock, and He did not upbraid her about her blackness, but said, "If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tent."

Again, the poor dying thief, when he hung upon the cross, mocked the Lord Jesus Christ with his fellow; but he was stopped, and then when the other continued to revile Him, he said, "Dost thou not fear God? We receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man hath done nothing amiss." He took his sin to himself, and that is what every sensible sinner will do. If you have been convinced of sin by God the Holy Ghost, you would be sorry to lay it at God's door as some do. Another thing; a sensible sinner will not lay his sin at Adam's door. Adam said, "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." Why do people try to excuse themselves thus? Because they love their sin, and will even charge it upon God, and wrest His Word in order to encourage themselves in it. They will lay it at God's door, or at Adam's door, or at Satan's door, in order to excuse themselves; but I contend that when God convinces of sin, and when He puts it away, He will allow of no excuse. "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight." The sin is mine. He makes the man know it. What a mercy to know the pardon of sin! David knew it, the dying thief knew it;

though a malefactor, he put in a plea, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." And He did not miss the door; it was open for him. The Lord gave him his answer, "Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise."

Then again, there was that poor woman who followed the Lord into Simon's house. There were a lot of women in that city, but this poor woman was the marked one. God had singled her out. She received the arrow of conviction, and the wounded deer left the herd, and she found her way into Simon's house. She went behind the Lord; she could not look Him in the face. She washed His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Ah! she "was a sinner," but the Lord knew all about it. He knew the grief of her soul. Simon was indignant at her conduct, but the Lord read him a lesson about the two debtors. "And He turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest Me no water for My feet: but she hath washed My feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven"; and then, "He said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. . . . Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." She came in at mercy's door, Christ opened His heart and set her soul at liberty, and she went away a joyful woman. Saul of Tarsus was a persecutor, yet the Lord brought him down at His feet; and He still finds poor lost sinners out, whom He not only brings out of Egypt, but He brings them to His house and His home. He has a place for them at His table.

"Numbered with them may I be,
Now and through eternity."

Come now, listen, these were made glad in the Lord, even poor black ones, like the dying thief and Saul of Tarsus, all were brought in and made glad in the Lord; and who can tell but the day will soon come when you shall say, "I will be glad in the Lord"?

Nothing else in the world could have satisfied the desire of my heart, for

"None but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good."

"My meditation of Him shall be sweet." Some of us can

meditate of our thoughts about Him when He was to us as "a root out of a dry ground." We had no burning desire for Christ then, and such had I been to this day had God left me in that state. The bow was drawn at a venture, and the arrow hit its mark. I knew, I felt, in a moment that I was the sinner. That is about forty-two years ago. It was in 1853. My heart was in the world. I was a stranger to Him, and I had no wish to be otherwise, for I felt sure that real religion would keep me from following my desires in the world. Yet "He loved me notwithstanding all," and

"Determined to save,
He watch'd o'er my path,
When, Satan's blind slave,
I sported with death."

He brought me to His dear feet, a poor seeking sinner. How I feared He would never show mercy to me. Nevertheless, He took me by surprise when I was longing to know Him. "Lord," I said, "if I had the whole world, I could lay it all down to be able to say 'Thou art mine'"; and He said, "Ye are complete in Him." I stood before God perfect in His comeliness. I said, "Lord, what a wonder this is! my sins, that were my trouble, are all gone." I felt I was set free. *That* is the pardon that purges them away, so that "when they are sought for they shall not be found." And He will hear your cries, too, when you feel the evidence is dim, yes, He will come and put His seal to it again, and make it plain. I liken it to an old mile-stone I saw in Warwickshire. It was all overgrown with moss, so that you could not read what was upon it; but going along that way a little while afterward, there was the old mile-stone; someone had cleaned it, and you could see the letters and figures as plainly as ever. Dear me, that is what the Lord has done in my heart again and again, as He by His own hand has deepened the impress, and then we know it is God's own testimony that we are His loved ones. I love to think of His having loved me when I said, "I will not have this Man to reign over me," when I would rather have heard any other music than His name. Yet His blessed heart was toward me all the time. Oh, what great grace! I can never love Him enough for it.

"Jesus sought me when a stranger,
Wandering from the fold of God."

Yes; and

"He plucked me as a brand from hell;
My Jesus has done all things well."

I remember how He broke my heart, and sometimes His name JESUS is so sweet, that we ask, "Could He ever bear a more blessed name?" "Thou shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins." There is the Gospel, the beginning and the end of it. He is the Saviour. He saves His people, not in their sins, but from their sins—those sins which crucified Him.

"I hate my sins, I loathe myself,
O Lord, the sinner cries."

The Crucified One, the Lord Jesus Christ, bore that blessed name, and His whole life, His work, His conduct, and His character prove Him to be worthy of the name. In order that He might save His people, He must be equal with God. Yet "He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same," that we might dwell in the everlasting arms. You, perhaps, can remember the time when you felt the blessed deed was done, and you were filled with gratitude and thanksgiving.

"Jesus who lived above the sky
Came down to be a man and die,"

that He might "finish transgression, and make an end of sin, and bring in everlasting righteousness, which is to all and upon all them that believe." He came to do the work, and now do you watch Him through all His life, and through all His labours, and mark where it is said, "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." All His people shall be brought home to God; the body shall be complete, the Church shall be presented "without spot or blame before Him in love." When the cloud gathered, and when the trouble was before Him, He said, "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished." There was His mighty strength as the God-man, who came forth as the Redeemer of the Church.

"O love divine, how sweet thou art!
When shall I find my willing heart
All taken up by thee?
I thirst, I faint, I die to prove
The greatness of redeeming love;
The love of Christ to me."

My dear young friends, do you like this kind of meditation? I wish I could exalt Him more. I do not wonder at Lady Huntingdon, who, when she heard George Whitefield preaching, exclaimed, "Lift Him up, George, lift Him up!" Where is there one that meditates upon the love of Christ but wishes Him to be lifted up? You want Him to come and reign in your heart, and you wish Him to have the increase. I once heard of some one saying, "I am glad I have a little corner in my heart for Christ." Now, that won't do. That little grain of mustard-seed will not be content with a little corner. It will say, "I must have a larger dwelling than this." It will prevail against everything else, for it must and shall be the reigning power, the sin-subduing and soul-humbling power. The living have holy affections, and they say, "I wish I was altogether holy, my thoughts, my desires, and my affections." If you could live as you list, I know how you would live—just as the Son of God lived when He was here below; and because you cannot, you are glad to know that "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin." Had I not that blood to plead, I could have no hope. I was once so beset by the enemy that I said I would never preach again, but the Word, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God," stood before me, and the Blessed Spirit helped me to answer the accuser, by saying, "I am quite as bad as you represent me to be, but there is the precious blood of Christ, and I will cling to that whether I go to heaven or to hell. The Holy Ghost thus helped me to "turn the battle to the gate," and the enemy was defeated. Yes, that blessed Name is the standard to lift up against the adversary. Nothing but a confidence in His unsullied righteousness will do for us. Thank God for that little grain of mustard-seed. You will be a beggar for grace at His footstool as long as you live. I bless God for ever putting that in my heart which says, "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness." I am a thorough perfectionist, but not perfection in the flesh. Nothing will satisfy my heart short of being like Christ.

I do not expect it while in the body, but the day is coming when I shall be as He is, when He "shall change this vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body." For, "We know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." This is a blessed religion, good in the beginning and it ends well at last. I must leave the subject; the Lord help you to meditate upon it, and to have sweet thoughts of this blessed Friend, and may His Name be increasingly precious in your heart. "This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend, O daughters of Jerusalem."

May the Lord add His blessing, and He shall bear the glory.

