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THE DEJECTED

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CHRISTIAN ENCOURAGED:



TWO DISCOURSES PREACHED

IN THE

Independent or Congregational Church,

CHARLESTON, S. C.

BY BENJ. M. PALMER,

One of the Pastors of said Church.

CHARLESTON, S. C.

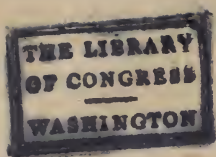
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CHRISTIAN ENCOURAGED.

Psalm xliii. 5. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance and my God.

DAVID uttered this apostrophe to his own soul at a time, when by the successful rebellion and usurpation of his son Absalom, he was driven from his throne and from his home a wretched wanderer and exile. The whole of the preceding Psalm, which is connected with this, is exquisitely tender, and peculiarly pathetic. It begins with a declaration of his ardent attachment to the ordinances of God's house, the privileges of the sanctuary, and most feelingly describes the longings of his heart to be restored to the possession, and reinstated in the enjoyment, of these interesting means of grace. "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God." After indulging in this strain of lamentation, he chides himself, and encourages his expectations, by addressing his soul in the language of the text, which is twice used in that chapter.

The book of Psalms has been generally and justly considered, as describing with admirable accuracy and fulness, those inward exercises of the heart which are common to believers in every age, and had they been written but yesterday, and written by a christian instead of a Jewish pen, they could not have been better adapted than they are, for the use and consolation of Christian believers. It is the peculiar honor of the book of Psalms, that it is more fully and frequently quoted in the new Testament, than any other portion of the old. How very often have the disciples of Christ found themselves, either internally or externally, in a situation, to which David's words, which we have selected as

the topic of discourse, admirably apply. “Why art thou cast down, &c.”

Let us ascertain the most general and frequent causes for that dejection and disquietude, under which the children of God are found to labour; and then point out the remedy which is here prescribed for the alleviation or removal of this distressing state of mind.

Why then are the friends of God and favorites of heaven subjected to dejection and disquietude? They are so on many accounts: some relating to themselves, and some, appertaining to others. It may be noticed that we consider these words as descriptive of Christian experience; for no others but those who sustain a christian character can be directed to the source of consolation pointed out here. And whatever substantial rest these may acquire when “weary and heavy laden they come to Christ” however true it be that wisdom’s “ways are pleasantness and her paths peace,” on the whole,—it is manifest that a perpetual warfare is to be maintained notwithstanding. It is singular, that the same description of character and course of life should be represented in two such opposite lights. Yet the scriptures have given us this apparently contradictory view of religion, and, while we are sometimes to develope in their wide extent the safety and happiness of the Christian character and life; we are at others to display the snares and fears, the sorrows and trials, the difficulties and temptations, the inward and the outward circumstances, that render Christians conformable to their Lord in this, as well as in other respects, that they too are “men of sorrows and acquainted with grief.”

Deep dejection and distressing disquietude are often the portion of the believer, on account of his *occasional sins*, and his *constant infirmities*. Though the believer, when first brought in the exercise of penitence and the actings of faith, to the Redeemer, is found at the foot of the Cross “abhorring himself and repenting in dust and ashes”—tho’ with the experience which he at that moment has, that “sin is an evil and bitter thing which God hates” and which his own soul now detests, he fondly flatters himself that he has come to a perpetual divorce from it, and will proclaim interminable war against it, yet very soon experience teaches him, that his enemies though discomfited and defeated, are not slain, nor are they dispossessed of the whole territo-

ry. God seems to have left the best Christians in this world in the situation, in which he left the Israelites, after they had taken possession of the land of Canaan.

These descendants of the father of the faithful, to whom the promise was given, that "his seed should inherit this land," were unequivocally and indisputably masters of the country. But the ancient inhabitants were not all exterminated and could not be entirely driven out. In some part or other they remained, in spite of all that Israel could do to dispossess them. They were tributary, it is true, to their Jewish masters, but time after time they made such stout and formidable opposition to the new occupants who took possession of the territory in the name of the Lord, as to give evidence, that they would not forget the claim they had on the ground of prior possession. Much Jewish blood was shed, and much treasure expended, in quelling the insurrections and subduing the rebellions which they occasionally excited. Often were God's chosen people obliged to "cry mightily to him" for help against these powerful foes.

We do not know a better comparison, by which to illustrate that state of things, which takes place in one who has been "called out of darkness into God's marvellous light." Before this inward and effectual call, the whole territory of the heart is in the occupation of "the God of this world." There Satan reigns—there is the region of sin—all the affections of the soul, all the inclinations and purposes and propensities of the will are on the side of iniquity, and ranged under the banners of one, who has set up a kingdom in opposition to the Saviour's. But when such a soul is subdued to the obedience of faith, a great internal revolution is accomplished; the most cherished idols of the heart become objects of disgust and horror, and the astonished, contrite individual exclaims, "What have I to do any more with Idols?" From this time forth and forever "thou art the Lord my God." Such, we say, is the transformation in the spirit of the mind, which is accomplished in those, who once were "conformed to this world" and "by nature children of wrath, even as others." But is the victory which grace has achieved over sin, entire and complete? does it resemble that of the Israelites, who saw all their Egyptian enemies, who had been drowned in the Red Sea, dead upon the Sea-shore? Alas! no "the Canaanite and

the Perizzite are still in the land," and they will prove "thorns in the eyes and scourges in the sides." The believer brought to Christ, fondly hopes indeed, in the fervors of his first affection to the Lamb that "washed him in his blood," that his heart shall never more be the seat of those sins, which "crucified the Lord of glory." He believes, that now, "renewed" as he is "in the spirit of his mind," "his mountain shall stand strong, and he never shall again be moved." He has only to go forward, and all opposition will fall before him. But, like Peter, who in sincere piety, yet accompanied with much self ignorance, said to the Lord whom afterwards he denied, "though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee;" the new made Christian soon finds, that "the old man," though he may have received his death wound, is not dead, and will be so far from immediately or entirely dying, unless the stroke is followed up, he may yet overpower "the new man." Many Christians feel the depravity of their hearts *more*, after they have embraced the Saviour, than they ever did before. The subsequent dispensations of Providence, the instructions of the word, the increasing illuminations of the spirit open more fully to their view, what they really are in themselves, than any previous advantages they may have enjoyed for self-acquaintance. It does not follow, that, because a sinner has seen enough of his sinful character and desperate case, to constrain him to fly to Christ for refuge, that therefore he has seen the whole of himself. Far from it: This discovery and conviction of sinfulness sometimes progresses to such a degree, as to make him think, that his former views, even those on which he grounded his escape to Christ, were essentially defective; and that he came to the Physician too soon, before he had learned all the extent of his spiritual disease. He fears, that as his own knowledge of his case was not sufficiently thorough, his application to the Redeemer could not have been sufficiently cordial and sincere, and that he has failed to give that degree of honor and credit which was due unto his Lord. He is apt to charge himself with presumption, and to apprehend that such an unprepared approach can hardly be forgiven. But all these exercises, however painful, should rather be considered as encouraging than disheartening. There is no surer evidence of "growth in grace," than advance in self-

knowledge and in the humiliation that arises from it. Yet dejection and disquietude are often the result of these discoveries.

The constant spiritual infirmities, of which the children of the highest have ever reason to complain, deject and disquiet them. Let them attempt to engage in prayer, especially in secret prayer—what backwardness, what reluctance do they often feel—where has the *spirit* of prayer fled? and without the *spirit*, what signifies *the form*—without the *sensations* and *sentiments* of prayer, what avail the *words*? O for something that might furnish an excuse to satisfy conscience for its neglect.—Such are the Christian's trials before he prays—how gladly would he get away from the duty altogether. But there is no avoiding it—to the duty he must go—and how is he employed there—in the presence of the searcher of hearts, in the very act of addressing him, scarce a minute elapses, before he detects his thoughts running upon the veriest trifle in Creation—again he recalls the guilty wanderers, and again before he is aware, they have made their second escape from the solemn business in hand, and are found “with the fool's eyes to the ends of the earth”—a third time he rallies them, and a third time they are gone. It has not unfrequently been the case, that the Christian has been more afflicted with distraction of mind, with dissipation of thought, with wandering and vain imaginations in prayer, than at any other season. He can acquire more composure in any undertaking to which he bends his attention than in this. The duty at length is over, and a mixture of mortification and congratulation is felt, that the task is finished for this time—extreme mortification at the unworthy and polluted manner in which it has been discharged—congratulation, that the drudgery of such a lifeless senseless service is at an end.

Would you not suppose, my brethren, that we were describing the prayers of the very worst of men, should they be supposed to attempt this exercise? We have however given you a description, the meaning of which the very best of men sometimes know by painful and personal experience. Examine the christian on the score of his infirmities on any other subject, in which the testimony of his experience can be brought to bear, and you will find him the same poor wretch in himself. If he wishes to indulge a leisure hour

in reading—how much more inclination does he often feel to lay his hand upon a newspaper or a history, than on a volume containing religious matter—or if he choose the latter, how much more likely to select a human Author, than go to the pure biblical fountain. Take him to the house of God, and often, could you see his heart, as he feels it himself, you would think that the North and South are not farther asunder than his heart and his work. And thus it is from time to time in every other department of his duty. The table of the Lord itself, and all its interesting circumstances and connections are *sometimes* insufficient to remove his apathy, arouse him from his slumbers, or animate his heart. This is to one degree or another the common complaint of christians, with some indeed more frequently and more deeply than others; but all know well what it means. “I can read,” (says the excellent and truly spiritual John Newton; long after he had known the grace of God in truth, and long after he had preached it too) “I can read or write, or converse, or hear with a ready will; but prayer is more spiritual and inward than any of these, and the more spiritual any duty is, the more my carnal heart starts from it.” We have no doubt, that this discription of Christian feelings and Christian exercises must excite the astonishment of those who are not, and do not pretend to be, persons of pious character. They may be ready to ask, what then are christians better than others? if we could see their hearts, it seems, they would be found no better than ourselves: what then are all their external pretensions, but mere hypocrisy? Enquirer of this discription, they are not better than you by nature, and if by grace their character is changed, they are ready to acknowledge, “By the grace of God we are what we are,” and they are not better than you by grace, unless that holy influence is *continued with* them as well as *imparted to* them. Left to themselves, even after being for years attached to the Saviour and rejoicing in him, they would soon “make shipwreck” of all that they have felt, of all they have believed, of all that they have known, of all they have enjoyed. But the difference, the wide, the boundless difference between you and them is, that, while you go on perfectly secure and easy, though conscious that you feel nothing and love nothing in true religion,—while the listlessness about or this aversion to the

exercises of piety gives you no concern,—while you sleep with as much indifference and rise again with as much calmness, as though your “heart were right with God,” the case is otherwise with them. They know not a greater hell on earth than to be in this situation—it sits as easy upon you, as though it were your heaven. They cannot bear these distractions in duty—these wanderings of soul, this stupor, this insensibility—it is their guilt, their grief, their shame, their burden, their curse. On account of it, they “go mourning all the day long.” Under it, they cry out in anxiety and in agony “O that I were as in months past!” “O that I knew where I might find him!” Yes, their “soul is cast down and disquieted within them” on account of these things.

The *imperfection of their characters* again is a source of considerable uneasiness to the true children of God. There is not a greater mystery in Creation or in Providence, than that God should suffer his dear children, whom he has redeemed to himself by the blood of Christ, to remain so much under the influence of something or other that is sinful, in heart or in life. He could easily render them as holy as the angels in heaven, and deliver them from the painful apprehension that too often agitates them, at the prevalence of their corruptions. “I shall one day fall by the hand of mine enemy,” they involuntarily exclaim, at finding, that “when they would do good, evil is present with them.” How rarely is the Christian to be found, with regard to whom when we say (as we may say of multitudes) he is a very excellent man, it is not in our power to qualify what we have said, by at least a solitary *but*,—*but* he is too much attached to the love of money—*but*, he is too apt to be overcome by the impetuosity of his temper—*but* he is too imprudent in the use of his tongue—*but* he is too unforgiving, too impatient of opposition, too unsubmissive in affliction, too elated with his excellencies, too addicted to censoriousness, too untender, or something or other which is left to prove that “the best of men are but men at the best.” But, whatever be the “spots of God’s children,” whatever the “sins” that most sorely or most “easily beset them,” they “water their couch with their tears” on account of them; their heart knows its own bitterness on these accounts, and they must all be glad to meet Christ in

death as they met him, when first closing with the offers of his grace—"God be merciful to me a sinner." After our best and highest attainments upon earth, on no other ground than that of mercy, can we hope to enter heaven. That everlasting "rest which remains for the people of God" will on no account be more desirable, than on this, that it will be a rest from sin. In anticipation of it, the struggling wearied believer, "cast down and disquieted in his soul," more than once exclaims during his pilgrimage, "O that I had the wings of a dove; for then would I fly away and be at rest."

"Sin, my worst enemy before,
Shall vex my eyes and ears no more;
My inward foes shall all beslain,
Nor Satan break my peace again."

The last line of this descriptive stanza reminds us of another reason why the souls of Christians are cast down and disquieted within them. viz.

The buffetings and temptations of Satan. The doctrine of extraneous and supernatural influence both good and bad upon the human soul, appears to be as clearly revealed in scripture, as almost any point whatever. Criticism has indeed explained them both away, and we are too apt, both in our public discourses and in our private conversations, to speak and act, as though by general consent they were to be expunged, as too ridiculous for the wisdom, or too humbling to the dignity, of modern times. It is seldom we ever hear religious persons speak, as though either the spirit of God or "the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience," had any thing to do with them. We often think it arrogant to lay claim to the former—we feel ashamed to admit the latter. But both have the strong attestation of the holy volume: The subtle tempter never plies his temptations with more success than when he contrives to "strike and hide his hand," to suggest and urge his schemes, but conceal himself. Those who deny his influence are of all persons the most likely to be completely under it. It is indeed generally difficult, and may be often impossible, for us to distinguish between the workings of our own depravity or the thoughts and reasonings of our own minds, and those suggestions and impressions which wicked spirits may be capable of making on our minds. But unquestionably,

many of the severest internal trials, to which believers are subjected, owe their origin and their rancor to the malicious and mischievous interference of the powers of darkness. In those cases especially, when the most horrible and blasphemous thoughts, at which every feeling and principle of the soul revolts, are with a kind of officious violence forced upon it,—when it strives to its utmost to avoid these pestilential suggestions, but still is worried with them, there can be no difficulty or uncertainty in referring them to him, who “as a roaring Lion goeth about, seeking whom he may devour.” His they are, and if we do not give them voluntary admission and entertainment, his will be all the guilt attached to them, and all the woe consequent upon them. They are distressing, but will not be destructive, to the mind that abhors them. Yet, because believers are thus “in heaviness through manifold temptations,” their “soul is cast down and disquieted within them.”

A similar depression of mind arises from *the afflictions of life*. So much of our mortal course is consumed in the sorrows we experience from bodily uneasiness, from worldly losses, from sympathy with the distresses of friends, or from bereavement by their removal in death, that like Jacob most persons may say, “Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been.” When billow after billow rushes over us, and we appear to be “set up as a mark for the arrows” of the Almighty to be aimed at, it is hardly possible, particularly if faith becomes enfeebled, that our souls should be otherwise, than “cast down and disquieted within us.”

The *drooping state* or *discouraging prospects of the church of the Redeemer* furnish grounds too for the complainings of the upright. The Lord Jesus being himself “precious to believers,” they naturally feel a lively interest in every thing that concerns the progress and promotion of his empire in the world. Jerusalem cannot be forgotten by her genuine children; sooner shall “their right hand forget its cunning, and their tongue cleave to the roof of their mouth, than they cease to prefer Jerusalem above their chief joy.”

The moral state of the world, compared with the requirements of its “builder and maker,” must produce the same discouraging and disquieting effects upon their spirits.

When it is considered, that the gospel is the only instrument of Salvation,—that faith in Jesus is the principle of divine life,—and that this very faith is “the gift of God” and the operation of his spirit; how must the heart of one that believes these things, be affected and oppressed with the insensibility, that is manifested on this subject by the far greater part of those with whom he has intercourse. Among these, are many, that are the associates of his life, the partakers of his own blood, his “kinsmen according to the flesh.” To see them every moment liable to death, yet making and having made no preparation for it—to know, that he himself cannot help them, and that nothing but the influence of the spirit can,—to see them making no exertions to obtain this influence,—and to be filled with anxiety on account of *their* latter end as well as *his own*, these considerations overwhelm and tumultuate the soul. What a prospect does this world present to him who takes his views of things from the representations of the Bible. Daily his fellow-men are descending to the tomb.—Of the vast multitudes that thus “go down to the house appointed for all living,” how small comparatively is the number, whose course, there is reason to believe, has terminated well. The world seems to present to view an extensive prison, out of which many criminals are daily taken for execution. Many are “the wicked” that “are driven away in their wickedness,” and few “the righteous” that “have hope in their death.” To feelings of genuine benevolence, and such in the highest degree every Christian ought to be possessed of, the contemplation of such scenes as these must be exquisitely affecting and overpowering. Take any one of these causes for dejection and disquietude that have been mentioned, and it will appear of itself sufficient to produce such a state of mind. Take them all together, and it would appear, that christians must “of all men be the most miserable.” But we have seen as yet only the dark side of this picture. There is a more cheering prospect yet to be presented. Materials for its formation are to be drawn from the exhortation which the Psalmist administers to his own soul in the conclusion of the verse. “Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him who is the health of my countenance and my God.” But this must be reserved for another opportunity. Amen.

SERMON II.

Psalm xliii. 5. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance and my God.

THE depth of dejection into which the sincerest christians sometimes sink—the disquieting apprehensions which occasionally agitate their hearts and interrupt their peace, together with some of the causes that give rise to this tumultuous state of mind, have already been the subject of enquiry and meditation. We have seen the believer in the shade of discouragement—but we ought not to leave him there: for the word of God does not, but declares that “unto the upright there ariseth light in darkness.” “Hope in God,” says David to his soul, in the midst of its complaints: “for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance and my God.” We are brought then to consider the remedy provided for these distressing evils: That remedy is hope. How many uneasy hours might the children of God *entirely escape*—and under how many, which are not altogether unavoidable, might they be rendered considerably tranquil and serene, were the grace of christian hope but in that degree of exercise, which the scriptures of truth abundantly authorize. The hope of the wilfully wicked is the most unauthorized presumption: The hope of the ungodly, whatever be its foundation, shall perish. But, with those who are tremblingly alive to the glory of the divine character, who are humbly and penitently conscious of their own guilty character, and desirous of salvation from it and from the consequences it entails, in such a way as shall be consistent with all the perfections of Jehovah; with these, hope is a rational and consistent principle. To them it proves “an anchor sure and stedfast,” to prevent them from being wrecked by either their temporal or spiritual trials. Hope looks forward to a brighter day, in which the darkness of the present night being effectually and eternally dispelled, “the sun of righteousness will arise” on the now disconsolate soul, “with healing in his beams.” When we can say in the time of our distress,

however long this distress has continued; and however exquisite it has been, "I shall yet praise him;" what an almost almighty efficacy has such a persuasion to soothe and calm the agitated heart. "I shall yet praise him," I cannot say when—perhaps not to morrow—perhaps not next year—and perhaps not even in this life—but the time will come, either here or hereafter, when my tongue, that is now by my sufferings sealed in silence, and made to "cleave to the roof of my mouth," shall be "as the pen of a ready writer," shall fully and feelingly and perpetually express my obligations to delivering goodness, my immense indebtedness to redeeming mercy. Therefore "though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." Let us take the true believer then in any of the various stages, or in any of the various kinds of his complaints, as they were stated in the former discourse. Is it the constant and lamented imperfection that adheres to and that defiles all his services—is it the open actual sin, into which he is occasionally surprised by sudden temptation from without, or betrayed by corruption from within, that makes him "hang his harp upon the willow, and refuse to sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" Is he filled with confusion at the selfishness, the vanity, the lukewarmness, the distraction and division of soul that often infest him in his best attempts to serve the Saviour that bought him with his blood? This is truly trying to a mind upon the whole ingenuous, and that feels, and is never unwilling to confess, how much it owes to the mercy of the Father, and the merits of the Son. Is the complaint made by such a soul, a complaint of the barrenness of its services, the langour of its affections, the slowness and uncertainty of its spiritual progress, the inadequacy of the returns it attempts to make? In addition to these standing testimonies against itself, is it obliged to confess, that sometimes its vows have been forgotten, its Lord has been denied, the interests of the Saviour injured, his cause impeded and himself and his disciples wounded through some foul miscarriage of its own? In this case it will "seek where to weep," it will with Peter, similarly situated, "weep bitterly." And if, in the course of Providence, as generally happens, its "sin is made to find it out," being rendered legible in the sufferings it has drawn after it, such a soul will acknowledge it is meet to say "I will bear the chastise-

ment of the Lord, because I have sinned against him." But, while thus whelmed in reasonable sorrow, acknowledging his desert of that temporal trouble that has befallen him, or that inward agony that rends his soul, such a christian should still find ground to say, "Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him." His construction ought to be, "God is just in what he has brought upon me"—because I am a child, he sees fit to chasten and correct me now for my humiliation and my profit, that "I may not be condemned with the world." David, we find, did not complain, that the disquietude and dejection he now was in, were undeserved; but he believed, that mercy would one day triumph over what now appeared to be judgment, and that he should yet know experimentally and personally the joys of God's salvation. "He was afflicted from his youth up, and while he suffered the Almighty's terrors he was distracted." Yet still he could add in the language of Paul "Cast down but not destroyed, afflicted but not forsaken, persecuted but not in despair." In the midst of his cheerless moans, he strikes at least one note that borders upon cheerfulness, by adding "I shall yet praise him."

When the heart of the true Christian is exposed to his view in all its native spiritual nakedness—when its deformity is seen with increasing clearness, and felt with keener sensibility, an effect that ever must follow the growing discoveries made by the inward illumination of God's spirit in conjunction with the outward instructions of his word, even "growth in grace" may be mistaken for increase in depravity. It is not so much *the evil* we discover in our hearts, as *the manner in which we are affected* by that discovery, that must decide our spiritual state and character. It does not follow, that because we *see* in our natures more wickedness, than we discerned a year ago, or than we were conscious of, when first we made our application to the Redeemer's blood for pardon, we are actually more guilty now than we were then—it is that we see farther into ourselves than we ever did before—and if, with the comparatively imperfect view we once had of ourselves, we discovered how desirable and necessary it was to be interested in the Saviour, "in whom all fulness dwells,"—if we discovered even then, how precious an object of faith and trust he was; how much more endeared ought he to be to our hearts now, when

further self-acquaintance has brought us more than ever to know and feel, that we are "poor and miserable and wretched and blind and naked." Instead of saying, in the disquietude and dejection of our souls, "my sins are too great to be forgiven," we should plead their greatness as the very argument, why the God of all grace, why the Saviour who "has power on earth to forgive sins," should remit them. Precisely such was David's argument, which he plead in prayer in the 25 Psalm 11th verse "For thy name's sake, O Jehovah, pardon mine iniquity; for it is *great*." A singular reason we should think, on which to found a plea. Many people hope to be forgiven on the ground, that their sins are not great, that they "are not as other men," that there is some grand and essential distinction between them and many others they could name,—that while these latter are "sinners that need repentance" and require an atonement, they are "just persons who need no repentance," or whose sins are comparatively so trivial, that they may be pardoned without the Saviour's sacrifice.

But they, whose religion is internal; who know that "out of the heart proceed the issues of life;" that "God's commandment which is exceeding broad" has primary and principal reference, to *its* thoughts, desires, purposes and motives; who feel, that the "heart itself is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked;" who believe therefore, that no scheme of religion is worth a farthing as to its influence on another world, that does not make the heart its *immediate* and its *main* object,—these ought to say to their soul, covered, as they behold it to be, with pollution, and stained with guilt "Hope in God; for I shall yet praise him." Mary Magdalene "loved much," because "much had been forgiven her." Her transgressions were probably of an external and gross kind; but the devout, the moral, the upright, the Pharisaical Paul, found, "when the commandment came" in all its power and spirituality to his heart, that "sin revived and he died"—that even he, like Mary Magdalene, had "much to be forgiven," and was under obligations to "love much." And therefore when he proclaims it as "a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners;" he adds, as the best and brightest evidence of the fact that he was capable of producing, "of whom I am chief." And

it is the natural and necessary effect of the illumination of the divine spirit, to make the subject of its influence feel and believe, that he must be the very worst of characters in the sight of God—has most abused his goodness—most despised his love—and must be, if a saint at all, “less than the least of all saints.” Every heart, that has been convinced of sin, “knows its own bitterness,” while it cannot pry into “the gall and wormwood” of another’s state, who perhaps feels equally guilty, and is equally distressed.

But all such are called upon to “hope in God,” and to believe, that they “shall yet praise him” for “casting their sins behind his back,” for “burying them in the depth of the sea.” “Looking unto Jesus” is the exercise, in which every soul, that is “cast down and disquieted” on account of sin, should be found employed. “There hangs all human hope”—“that nail supports our falling universe:” “that gone, we drop.” Looking to Christ, and to God through him, as “reconciling the world unto himself,” is the sublime, the sweet and salutary employ, in which every convinced sinner should engage, whether in the first stages of his conviction, or when convinced anew, and more deeply than ever, of the evil of sin, long after having made application to “the blood of sprinkling which cleanseth from all sin.” This is the “fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness” eighteen centuries ago, and whose virtues will last, if the world is to endure so long, eighteen centuries to come. Here David bathed his guilty soul, while his faith anticipated what his pen-predicted—in this Job realized his meaning, when he said “I know that my Redeemer liveth.” Here were found, in the attitude of faith and hope, all those, who “came out of great tribulation and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”

“The dying thief rejoic’d to see,
That fountain in his day;
And there may we tho’ vile as he,
Wash all our guilt away.”

And as this great Redeemer, and that great salvation which he effected by his “obedience unto death,” is the hope of the penitent and contrite, when first constrained to flee from the wrath to come; so is it the hope of those spiritual pilgrims, who are travelling forward in much disquietude and discouragement, to the Canaan above. “Faint,

yet pursuing" is the motto, that may be written on the forehead of a large proportion of those who "name," and name sincerely too, "the name of Christ." 'Tis their bounden duty to "depart from iniquity," and as far as it relates to their outward general conduct, unless they do so, and sustain a very reputable character in the sight of men, for honesty, justice, sincerity, integrity, humanity, and every virtue that constitutes morality; their profession is vain, entirely vain—they are "yet in their sins." But, very many, who have nothing, and who ought ever to have nothing, to reproach themselves with on this score, are far from being satisfied, that they are "perfecting holiness" as they ought, "in the fear of God." Their deficiencies humble them—their love of the world alarms them—the weakness of their faith, the coldness of their love, the languor of their zeal, the defectiveness of their obedience, the poverty of their spiritual enjoyments, and the leanness and barrenness of their souls, all contribute to induce them to "write bitter things against themselves," and to fear, that "they have no part nor lot in the matter." It is to these the word of consolation is commanded to be addressed. "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people; saith your God." To these we would say, "Hope in God; for you shall yet praise him, who is the health of your countenance and your God." These we would recommend to bear in mind, that their Redeemer is also their *Intercessor*; that in this latter interesting character, he is at present acting in our nature, as well as in his own, at the right hand of God. On this fact of his intercession, the Apostle founds the certainty of the salvation of believers through every extremity. "He is able to save unto *the uttermost* all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." *Unto the uttermost*—their lies the emphasis of the passage—*unto the uttermost*—that is *the marrow* of the sentiment. Every Christian believes, and finds little hesitation in believing that "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." Every Christian is satisfied, that pardon for all repented sin is sure. But what is to be done, they ask, when after having come, as they supposed, in all the ardor of love, in all the fixedness of faith, in all the contrition of penitence to Immanuel's arms, we find our hearts again "like a deceitful bow,

turning aside." What is to be done, when we see and feel so much inconsistency, so much contradiction within! when we are

"Now hot, now cold, now freeze, now burn!"

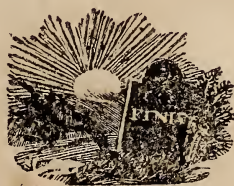
What is to be done with that "law in our members which is always warring against the law of our minds!"--what are we to think of ourselves in those periods in which, "when we would do good, evil is present with us!" when "the good that we would, we do not, and the evil that we would not, that we do." Can we be christians and have all this conflict? Christians, and have all this contradiction of character about us? Christians and yet obliged to cry out "O wretched that we are, who shall deliver us from the body of this death?" Yes, you can be Christians, and feel all these sorrows, and suffer all these conflicts, and make all these complaints too, *provided*, you can in sincerity say, "Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me"—*provided* you can conscientiously attest, that you "delight in the law of God after the inward man"—*provided* you loathe this state of things and yourselves on account of it, and can feelingly exclaim "woe is me, that I live in Meshech and sojourn in the tents of Kedar"—*provided* you are incessantly labouring to "lay aside every weight and the sin that so easily beset you, and endeavouring to run with patience the race set before you." Under these circumstances, the Christian is to look unto Jesus, sustaining the delightful character of his Intercessor, and saving *to the uttermost* through all this tempest and this sea of conflict, those that not only have once come, but continue every day to "come unto God by him." Continue to "fight the goodly fight of faith," and the great "Captain of your salvation," under whose banners you have enlisted, and whose cause you have espoused, and who has not sent you on this "warfare at your own charges," will make you at last "more than Conquerors." "Hope in God for you shall yet praise him for the health of his countenance." Let it continue to be your prayer "Lord, lift up the light of thy countenance upon me," and this prayer being answered, as it will be sooner or later, you will exchange for this song of praise, "Thou has put joy and gladness in my heart, more than in the time when the corn and wine and oil of the wicked have most abounded."

We noticed in the former discourse the temptations of Satan as another source of those disquietudes under which the faithful sometimes labour, but as these in their ordinary operation are with much difficulty to be distinguished from our own thoughts, and in their extraordinary attacks have been already noticed, we shall only say at present, that the same "Son of God who was manifested to destroy the works of the Devil," has promised in his word that Satan shall be "bruised under the feet" of his saints, if they, instead of yielding to, will resist the Devil, that he may flee from them. He that trembled at the sight of Jesus when on earth, and exclaimed "art thou come hither to torment us before the time," must instantly leave his work of malignity and mischief at the command of that Intercessor on whose name and for whose help we are authorized to call.

Those occasional desertions too, to which the sincerest of God's children are sometimes liable, after having enjoyed his friendship and had communion with him, in his institutions, are scenes, in which the soul, however disconsolate, ought to find it "good both to hope and quietly wait for the salvation of God." "For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath have I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy upon thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer." These are cases, in which like Abraham, we are to "hope, even against hope"—only God can bring relief, which he may do, by the instrumentality of his word or some other mean, or by the immediate "manifestation of himself to the soul, as he does not unto the world." To such we would say "though the fulfilment of his promise tarry, wait for it, it will surely come, it will not tarry."—Do not say "I am a hypocrite," while your very anxiety about it proves you are not—do not say, "I am not a child of God at all," when your very crying after him is just as good, though not as comfortable an evidence of it, as if you were rejoicing in him.

Do not say, you have grievously sinned in believing yourself a christian when, as subsequent evidence you think has convinced you, you were not. For even if the case be so, as your desponding mind has represented it, still for this your mistake, allowing that it is chargeable to you, as for every other that is discerned and repented of, you "have

an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." To his bleeding heart resort, to his affectionate and friendly heart repair—take of the waters of life and drink them freely. Do not more dishonour him by unbelief, than you can possibly do by any other sin with which in you present conscientiousness you think you have to charge yourself. "Tossed with tempest" as you are, "and not comforted," go, as well as you can, if you cannot go as well as you would, to him who "knows your fame," who sees your sorrows, who witnesses your temptations, and who was himself "tempted in all points as we are, only without sin." He knows how "to succour them that are tempted," and when he brings such sufferers through the fires of temptation, he will cause them to retain a more lively lasting remembrance of his unfailing love. Say then to your soul, "why art thou cast down O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance and my God."



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