

The background features a stylized night scene. On the left, a lamp with a white shade and a dark base is shown. The sky is dark blue with several white stars and a prominent bright star with a lens flare in the upper right. The foreground is composed of abstract, overlapping geometric shapes in shades of blue, orange, and yellow, suggesting a landscape or a patterned surface.

# **SCRIPTURE NIGHT LIGHTS**

**PHILIP BENNETT POWER**

# Scripture Night Lights

Philip Bennett Power

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# Preface

**T**his little volume is called “Scripture Night Lights,” because it is hoped that as a very little night light gives comfort to the watcher through the long hours of night, so a very little word of Scripture may cheer the spiritual night watcher through some of his seasons of gloom.

If any are offended at the title, let them remember how our Lord made things natural subserve to the teaching of things spiritual; and how He Himself is represented in glory as walking amid the seven golden candlesticks.

Scripture Night Lights, then, these pages are, and they for the most part treat of such subjects as will prove assuring and comforting in times when the heart, from one circumstance and another, is prone to sink; they may not be able to dispel gloom, but they may be privileged to remove some of the weight from that thick darkness which at times oppresses the soul.

We all know from experience, how assuring to the nerves is the appearance of the smallest light, when we find ourselves in thick darkness

in an unknown place; the mariner hails the twinkling of the lamp of the far distant lighthouse, as he tosses upon the stormy waves; the traveller, bewildered in the gloom of night, presses on afresh, as he descries the glimmering of it may be but a farthing candle in the window of a distant hut; and the sick man, who would otherwise be affrighted at every sound, lies calm and tranquil as he looks at his little night light. Very wonderful are the rays into which that light is broken, as the sick man watches it with an eye half closed from weakness, or, it may be, suffused with the tear, which is the expression of silent suffering and pain; and very wonderful are the rays of comfort which stream forth from each word of Scripture, as weak, and weary, and pain stricken men watch them earnestly and long.

Have you ever lain, dear reader, and watched a night light, with a half opened or a tearful eye? How did its rays dart upward, how did they dart like thin arrows of fire straight to yourself; how instantaneously did they glitter and flash with full a lightning speed? Even thus may it be with these little words of Scripture; may they beam upwards, leading your eye to the great Fountain of all light; may they beam inwards, proving to you the truth of what the Psalmist says in Psalm cxix, 130: “The entrance of Thy words giveth light”

# "ALL"

**"...and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from ALL sin." 1 John 1:7.**

**T**his little word "ALL" is inestimably precious; it contains within it illuminating power, sufficient to dispel even the grossest darkness that comes in upon the poor troubled heart: and it has a power of continuance, sufficient to last, not only through one or two nights, but through whole years of gloom. This little word has streaming from it blessed rays of light, which falling upon the soul of the vilest sinner as he dies, can illumine for him, if he believe, even the valley of the shadow of death itself.

I might have read in scripture of sacrifice, and said, "I know sin is taken away by the shedding of blood;" but I might also have said, "Not all sin—



mine is beyond the reach of atonement;” if I were left to myself I should never think that the whole extent of my iniquity were reached. I might have read in scripture of prophecy—how Jesus was to bear the sins of many; but I should perhaps have said, “I am outside the pale of prophecy, for my sins have been beyond forgiveness.” Yes! I might have even read the history of Christ; and yet my sins, rising like mountains before mine eyes, might have made me feel that there was no remission for one like me; but when I find Jesus saying “Come unto me **ALL** ye that labour and are heavy laden;” when I find His apostle telling us that His blood cleanseth from **ALL** sin; then I think “my case is reached”—this **ALL** suits me—I want a great covering word; I want one that will embrace everything that I have ever said or done amiss; this word **ALL** embraces everything; praised be God that it is found in His sacred word.

Let us ponder awhile upon what this word **ALL** includes.

***ALL** in Number.*

***ALL** in Variety.*

***ALL** in Degree.*

***ALL** in Aggravation.*

With regard to the number of our sins; do they not often seem, almost to smother the poor conscience-stricken soul? Satan keeps steadily before us the fact, that they are as many as the sand on the sea-shore; he says to us, “the number of your sins shall be your ruin; they have been going on ever since your infancy; they have been so many, that it is impossible for you to count them up, and you are adding to them every moment.” Even a very faint idea of the number of our sins, is in itself enough to daunt us from seeking pardon from God. If a man owe only a moderate sum, he may have heart and spirit to try and work it off; but if he owe an overwhelming sum,

one beyond all possible reach, then he gives up in despair; thus is it with the conscious sinner; he cries out, “Oh! the number is so great, I can never overtake them.” Yes! the man that has the fewest sins, cries out this, when his eyes have been opened of the Spirit; and what would become of him, if this ALL did not cover them every one. Dear reader, when you are oppressed with a consciousness of the multitude of your sins; if you can do no more, then cry out within your soul this word ALL—cry it out over and over again; and meet the whole crowd of your sins with this simple word; and it will turn them, and disperse them, and break entirely their condemning power.

But, perhaps, you are more troubled with the variety than the number of your sins; you remember their great diversity; you see under what a number of different heads they may be classed; you have not been the victim of some one besetting sin, but of a great variety of iniquities; “in all your doings your sins do appear,” (Ezekiel xxi, 24,) and Satan says, “ You must be thoroughly bad to have been sinning in everything; you are not like a man that has been overborne of some or two sins, but you must be bad in the very grain, when you sinned in so many different ways.”

We must, indeed, at once admit, that there has been a horrible variety in our sin—that we must most terribly have provoked God by our sinfulness in every department of life; but thanks be to God, this ALL abundantly covers even every variety of sin. We have a long bill sent in to us from a creditor—it contains a multitude of items, perhaps fifty different things but we feel no trouble about this variety, if the creditor write “Paid” and put his name at the foot of the account. This is enough for us; this word “Paid” covers all. And just thus, is it, dear reader, with you, if you be leaning upon the blessed Saviour—He writes “Paid” at the foot of the long and varied account, which

God's justice brings against you—the ALL includes the variety as well as the number. Sins of the heart—the affections; sins of the mind; sins of the body; sins of the tongue; sins in society, sins at home; sins in childhood, in manhood, and in old age, Christ Jesu's "Paid" covers them ALL. Oh! the devil will be well pleased, if he can always keep us looking at the items of God's great account against us; he knows that so long as he can do that, so long can the poor believer have no hope; the poor man's thought will be, "Oh how can I ever defray this item, and this,"—but take courage—insist on looking at the bottom of the account—there, and there only, can you find any peace—Christ says, ALL is Paid, and thus the variety of our sins cannot secure our being lost.

But we have not done with them yet; that which troubles us, is, perhaps, not so much the number or the variety, as the heinousness of our guilt—the degree of our sin. We say to ourselves, "Oh! such a sin was a very bad one; it was a weighty, dark, and odious sin;" "I can understand," says Satan, taking a part in the conversation, "how ever so great a variety of little sins are forgiven; but such is the turpitude of this one of yours, that I should not be surprised, if it were beyond the reach of forgiveness altogether " It will be well for any poor soul who is tempted by this suggestion of the devil, to turn to I Cor. vi, 9, &c. "Be not deceived," says the apostle, "neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God"—we can scarce imagine a more horrible catalogue of criminals than this; here is iniquity of the very deepest darkest dye; but what says the apostle? "Such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." "Ye ARE!" Does not that

word “ARE,” when we bring it into contact with our night light, seem as though it made it burn with fresh brilliancy; it is almost as though we lit up a second light; we see that the degree of crime, does not put it beyond the reach of the blood of Jesus—the amount of value in the blood, will always more than cover the amount of guilt in the sin.

But we have not even yet done with what this ALL includes; it covers also the aggravation of our iniquity.

Every man, whose eyes have been opened, sees something of the aggravated nature of his sin—the same evil has been done over and over again—the same sin has been committed, even against an increase of light and knowledge—and this makes a man miserable indeed. The following letter from Daniel Wilson, the late eminent Bishop of Calcutta, written to his mother in an early part of his spiritual career, would in many points serve as a description of others besides himself.

*“Oct. 18th, 1798.*

*“Alas! my dearest mother, I continue a sinner, lying under an awful curse, and groaning under a grievous burden. Every day furnishes me strong proof of my total helplessness and inability; and yet, such is the deceitfulness of sin, I constantly forget at the time of temptation, to whom I should flee for refuge; and so, trying to resist in my own strength, I am always worsted; and Satan triumphs over me, to the destruction of my own peace, and the discredit of my Christian profession, in the eyes of those around me. Day after day do I fall into scandalous sin, insomuch that, I think, I am worse now in my relative capacity, than I was some time back. And it is my grief and burden that it is so; and often night after night do I bitterly bemoan myself, either for my levity, or my moroseness, or my overbearing proud temper and forgetfulness of God, or my vile and*

*abominable thoughts and imaginations, my intemperate language, and every other sin, which naturally springs from, a corrupt heart. But alas! what avails me all this? Words won't save me; and though I again and again resolve against my sins and implore God's gracious support; yet soon as I arise from my knees and go into the warehouse, my thoughts, which were solemnized, suddenly disperse. No sooner does temptation present itself, than I resolve to oppose it, and think I can easily overcome it. I am therefore silent for a little while. Then something is said, or done, which goes against the grain; and this puts me out of humor and I feel morose and sulky; and so everything gets wrong; sin gains strength faster and faster; my words are akin to my tempers; my actions, correspond; and when the devil has thus got possession of me, I love the sin and hug it, and feel an unwillingness to part with it Yet at the very same time, I am conscious that I am heaping up cause for future repentance; but I think I will go on a little longer; and then, perhaps, a conviction strikes me; I secretly cry unto God; suddenly a fresh temptation occurs, and again I fall. When I am in this melancholy state, my only way is, to leave the warehouse, and go into the cellar and there make known my complaint unto the Lord, and pour out my heart before him: and on these occasions, I feel much abhorrence of myself, and find sin the cause of so much anguish to my soul, that often and often at night, have I earnestly besought the Lord, that if He would not have mercy on my soul hereafter, and deliver me from the guilt and condemnation of my sins, at least to deliver me from the power of them, and not let sin make me wretched and miserable in this world as well as in the next," (Life of Daniel Wilson, Vol. I, pp. 17,18.)*

The actual experience of one believer will often do more to comfort and instruct us than a thousand theories or mere practical reflections; and,

perhaps, as the reader thus sees how one who became a shining light was troubled at one period by his sins, in their number, variety, degree, and aggravation, he will hopefully look to Him who drew, and will ever draw, the poor prisoner out of the pit. The blood which has been effectual in taking away all the sins of all the saints now in glory, will not fail you, dear reader; if it fail you, you will be the first thus failed; and why after all these years should it begin to fail, and begin with you?

Cheer up then poor desponding soul, and take this little word, and strain at it with all your need, with all your guilt; you will find that it can stretch even to the measure of your necessity—even to the covering of all your iniquity. There is an elasticity in this word, which makes provision for every form of need; it is deeper than the depth of our transgressions, higher than their height, broader than their breadth, longer than their length.

But let us, beloved, who use this word, abuse it not. The effects of its use are glorious, the effects of its abuse are terrible. Ours must not be the doctrine, “Let us continue in sin that grace may abound.” Far from it. We are saved by being made partakers of the blood, i.e. the death of Christ; we are dead with him—”and how shall we, who are dead unto sin, live any longer therein?” Not so! ours must be the life of blood-bought men; of those who realize these two truths—how terrible is the nature of sin, the guilt of which could be done away with, only by the blood-shedding of Christ—how glorious is that blood which can do this—the blood of Jesus Christ, which cleanseth from ALL sin.

# "Also"

**"Also take your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone." Exodus xii, 32.**

In perusing the history of the deliverance of the children of Israel from Egypt, this little word "Also" has probably been read over and over again, without having attracted much attention. And yet, when we come to investigate it, in its immediate connection with what precedes and follows it, we shall find that it is capable of teaching us many important and comforting lessons.

It is true that it only refers to cattle. "Also take your flocks and your herds;" but we are taught deeper spiritual truth by its having reference to cattle, than if it had referred to children. This we shall see as we proceed.

May the Holy Spirit give such light from this word, to all who read these pages, that small though it be, it may shed some brightness upon, perhaps, weary watching hours, when, though some blessing be enjoyed, something else is needed also.

The circumstances, under which we find this word, give to it its great importance; and it will be well to sum them up very briefly. The children of Israel were in bondage to Pharaoh; God commanded Pharaoh by the mouth of Moses to let them go; Pharaoh refuses, and God sends plague after plague upon Egypt, to force the king to obey His word. Under the pressure of these plagues several concessions are wrung from the persecutor. In chap, viii, 28, he agrees to let them go, only they shall not go "very far away"—then in chap, x, 11, he will allow those who are men to go—then in verse 24 of the same chapter, he agrees to let the little ones go, but the flocks and herds must be left behind. And it is not until God has put forth yet greater exhibitions of His might, that Pharaoh says, "Also take your flocks and your herds;" and the deliverance is complete. One ray of light which streams from this little word, is

**A manifestation of God's purpose in delays.** There were long delays before the great deliverance was accomplished; but if this had not been the case, how imperfect would have been the blessing; it was through the continuance of the delay that the blessing matured and ripened. Now, delays are very trying; the people of God feel them, they are often unpleasantly circumstanced during them, just as we may be sure the children of Israel were unpleasantly circumstanced amongst the Egyptians; and this trial would be very hard to bear, were it not that increased good will come at the end of it; the blessing is bearing interest every hour the trial lasts. These delays are testing also. Saul was tested by delay and was found wanting, (1



Sam. xiii, 8,) and the faith and patience of the saints are often undergoing a more subtle trial, by having to wait for a blessing, than by having to endure persecution. If you, dear reader, are now waiting for any promised blessing; yea, if God be working—only slowly, and without any present result, for you—oh! think that He is working nevertheless; as the way in which He works is a trial of your faith; so the results of that work will be an evidence of His love. These delays appear also at certain times to give the enemy an apparent advantage. Over and over again, Pharaoh, by sheer obstinacy, seemed to prove too strong for the Israelites' God; plague after plague was sent, and yet they were not delivered. It may be even thus, dear friend, with you. Some may say, "Where is thy God?" (Psalm xlii, 3,10,) or, "he trusted in God, let Him deliver him now, if He will have him," (Matt, xxvii, 43;) but God is putting the enemy really at a disadvantage; He is letting him spend himself, and show his impotence; and his power is being broken, even when he thinks it is most being shown. And sometimes God does not appear openly in delays. If only we could see Him working for us—not only ordering by His providence, or even miraculously interfering, but shewing Himself as it were visibly; we should, as we think, be wonderfully cheered and strengthened; but He, the Secret One, remains hidden, and so our hearts are weak. But remember, dear reader, God has purposes in delays; blessings are never arbitrarily delayed; we say—and that, perhaps, in the matter of some blessing, that we are desiring now—"why does it not come—is it not the same to God whether He give it to me, to day, or ten years hence—what good can come out of this delay?" ah! we must leave all that in His hands—the time is as important an item of the blessing as anything else.

Are you, dear friend, at present, waiting for any blessing; does your soul (as the Psalmist says in Psalm cxxx, 6,) "wait for the Lord, more than they that watch for the morning?" Remember how Israel had to wait all the time that a long complicated dealing of God was going on; and remember how their trial issued in an "Also," which embraced the meanest animal they had; so that not only were they themselves and their children saved; but of their cattle, "not even a hoof was left behind."

**This word "Also" shews us the extent of the victory won by the lord for his chosen people.** In all things, God is better to us than we are to ourselves; His designs are larger for His people than their own are; He gives us exceeding abundantly above what we either desire or deserve. The Israelites would have, doubtless, been well content to have left Egypt with their children, and without any of their cattle; so thankful would they have been to escape from the bondage in which they were held, that they would have considered their deliverance cheaply purchased, at the price of their goods. It would never have entered into their heads to stipulate for this "Also," but God had their matters in hand, and He must secure for them, and in them, a perfect victory for Himself. The comparative unimportance of the cattle brings this vividly before us; we should have supposed that they would have gladly parted with them; but there was a great principle involved in the matter, and so God says, "not a hoof shall be left behind;" and Pharaoh is obliged to say "Also"—the cattle must go also.

Is it not a fact, dear reader that we would sometimes be satisfied with very little? Are we not falling far short of aiming at perfect victory? Are we not looking at our circumstances, at our own weakness and the enemy's strength, and thinking "we must not expect too much?" We are afraid to say "Also;" perhaps, we do not feel that we are called upon to say it. Now, if we

have the Lord for our God, why should we have low views, and low expectations, and why should we be afraid of expecting great things? Men do not generally put up with less than they have a right to, or even than they think they can get, in their worldly matters; why should we in our spiritual? Here is a believer downcast at his little attainment in holiness, and instead of striving after more, he is comforting himself in a morbid and dangerous kind of way by saying to himself, "I suppose it will be ever so, as long as we are in the flesh;" here is another who has gained a measure of victory, and he thinks, "I am very well off to have gotten even this much; and if this involved so much difficulty, how can I expect to triumph in some harder pass;" but we can never attain to any point so high, but that there is an "also" which may be ours; there is something higher, which we may have also. Think, dear friend, not of what you have reason to expect in yourself, but in God—and when you see how point after point has to be won; remember how He won them for His people from Pharaoh, until at last He forced that wicked man to say "Also"—thus making the enemy himself proclaim the triumph of those, for whom the Lord fought.

But sometimes the danger of a believer is not from satisfaction with a little, but with a good deal. The Israelites had obtained no mean concession from Pharaoh, when they were told to go, and to take their children with them; and had they been content with that concession, we could not have been surprised; but God could not permit the cattle to remain behind; had He done so Pharaoh would have triumphed to a certain extent; the people of the Lord would have been impoverished; and their minds might have been ensnared to turn back towards Egypt again; all must go on in the order of divine dealing, until the cattle were let go also. Let us; dear reader, not rest in any decided advantages won from our enemy, the devil; many an army

has been destroyed by presumptuous exultation; by carelessness after a great victory; by resting in it; we must in a manner consider that nothing has been done, whilst there is anything to be done; remembering that the rest remaineth for the people of God.

And let us be careful how we undervalue little things in the way of spiritual victory. Sometimes we are inclined to say, "Oh what does so and so matter; that is a little thing;" we say, "We have just gained a victory in a great matter, we need not trouble ourselves about this small one; but remember, dear reader, the greatest victories are often won in the smallest matters; it is often a greater victory to conquer petty fretfulness than explosive passion—to disturb our ordinary ease, than to brace ourselves to great effort—the cattle were less than the children. And let us not think that great efforts, when required, are thrown away upon apparently small spiritual victories—the fact that great efforts were required shew that the victories are not really small; victories are not to be measured by visible, but by moral results. Let us see the wonderful putting forth of God's power before the cattle were let go. In order to produce that result, the Lord sent forth the angel of death; He desolated the whole land of Egypt in blood; He slew one in every house—here we see the importance which He attaches to final perfect victory, to the "Also" which forms the capstone of the deliverance of His people; may we never undervalue any victory because it is apparently small.

And now, dear reader, does not this little word shed abroad a comfortable light for your soul? Does it not shew you that the enemy may resist, but not successfully—that no matter how long he may stand out, the Lord who is on your side is mightier far than he? Oh! you complain of the power of your foe, and of his long persistence in oppressing you, and of the difficulty of

getting any advantage over him, but take courage, see how the Lord can deal with him, yea, see how thoroughly. He does His work. If you are resisted for a long time and with great power, you see that nothing more has happened to you than is common to all—we must not expect to gain all our victories at once; we must not expect to find an enemy either too weak, or too kind-hearted to press against us with exceeding might; the Evil-one will do this; but more are they that be for you, than they that be against you. God will act for you, dear friend, continuously, even as He did for the Israelites; and that continuous acting, shall be with a reference to final and perfect victory.

"Why am I thus?" is the question of some poor tried believer, perhaps, dear friend, this is your question; you can detect, it may be, but little faults in yourself; you can number up many great victories; you say, "let me go at once from this scene of conflict"—but there is perhaps more than one "Also" to be spoken with reference to you, God is intending that you shall have a perfect deliverance. We read in Judges i, that Caleb's daughter Achsah said unto him, "Give me a blessing; for thou hast given me a south land; give me also springs of water. And Caleb gave her the upper springs and the nether springs." And if man, who is evil, thus knows how to give good gifts to his children, when they ask him; what may we not expect from Him of whom it is written, "He that spared not His own son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not, with Him also, freely give us all things?"

# "AND"

**"Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus."  
John x, 5.**

**T**his little word and, so very common in ordinary reading and speaking, as to be scarcely noticed, is here of inestimable price.

This small verse gives us a picture of the communion of saints; this small word gives us a picture of their individuality. Jesus is represented to us as loving a family, and as loving each individual member of it—the "AND" which we have here, is like the gold which connects, and yet keeps distinct, the diamonds in a costly ring.

May the Holy Spirit apply His own fire to this little word, and make it shed forth light for every reader of these pages; if the Spirit illuminate this word for us, it can cheer our hearts in many a long and dreary night.,

The great idea brought before us here is,

**The Individuality—The Personality Of Christ's Love;** i.e. in other words, that the Lord Jesus not only loves His church, as one vast body of believers, but that He loves the members of it, one by one—this one, and that one, and that other one—each individual by him or herself; He loved Martha, **and** her sister, **and** Lazarus.

Let us first think for a moment of

**The fact of this individuality.** We argue it from Christ's own individuality, as the man Christ Jesus. A man has particular feelings; he knows what it is to love individuals, and not to spend his heart's affections in mere vague generalities. Jesus was not merely some vague indefinite head of humanity, but He was a particular man; and just as with His eyes He looked not merely on the general face of nature, but on each particular tree; and as with His mouth He ate, not food generally, but a particular morsel of bread, and drank a particular cup of water, so with His heart He loved this person and that. The heart's affections do not expend themselves on vague generalities alone; they must have something more precise.—Christ, being an individual, knew what it was to feel individual love.

And we would argue this from the importance of each soul; "I shed my blood for thee; thou hast an eternity before thee; I know thy capacities for misery or joy." Christ looks at His people, as though He threw Himself into all their interests and feelings; and surely He cannot do that, without having each one distinctly in His mind and love. Scripture shews us in sundry places that the Lord's people are looked at individually. Thus "Then shall every (Greek, 'each') man have praise of God." (1 Cor. iv, 5.) "He calleth his own sheep by name," (John x, 3,) and nothing can point out "individuality" more distinctly, than the white stone spoken of in Rev. ii, 17." To him that

overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." If Jesus know His church at all, and if He love that church, He must know and love it man by man.

It is the very nature of love to crave what is definite; to fix itself on something definite; thus our heart craves the particular love of Jesus, thus we may be assured Christ's heart desires ours; "My beloved is mine, and I am His." (Cant, ii, 16.) These are the true experiences of particular saints. The very feelings of our own hearts seem to tell us, that each one must be remembered individually in the love of Jesus. Oh! how distinctly each member of our families has his place in our minds; if one be absent from the table we miss him: if we be away from home, and some one visit us, that has been at our house, we ask him not only how they all are, but how each is; how did this one look, and this one, and this, down to the little infant in the crib; we name them each. And is Jesus less precise, less interested, than we are? Away with the thought; even our own dull hearts may teach us something of the love that beams in His.

And is it not pleasant, dear reader, to consider how Jesus loves each of His family of believers, although their characters may vary very much? We sometimes think that all whom Christ loves, must be of necessity exactly alike; perhaps we set up some pattern person in our minds, and can scarce believe that Jesus loves such and such a one, unless they be exactly like the person we look up to. We understand how Jesus loves all the Marys; we cannot understand how He loves any of the Marthas. Ah! poor heart, sad because thou art not a Mary, forget not how it is written that Jesus loved Martha. He corrected her faults, but He loved herself. Yes! very imperfect creatures have a specific corner in the heart of Jesus; the very fact of Jesus'



loving each individual believer, makes Him take cognizance of each believer's faults; and when particular chastening comes, it is the chastening of particular love.

Thus the believer has his own particular place in the heart of Christ—he is in the family—but he is also one in it; Jesus can count up all the family one by one, with an "and" between the name of each; we are thankful that the record here is not "Now Jesus loved the family at Bethany"—nor, "Now Jesus loved Lazarus and his sisters"—but "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus."

And let us turn to some of

**The consequences of this individuality.** In the first place I may say, "I am known." What a comfort! My own sins may say to me, "Go and hide yourself"; my own consciousness of unworthiness may say, "When Jesus has so many to think of, why should he think particularly of you?" but while I own myself a sinner, and confess my demerit, I say there is an "and" which is for me.

And if I be thus known—all about me is known. All my particular wants, all my failings, all my struggles, all my desires. The Psalmist says, "The Lord is my shepherd," (Psalm xxiii,) and there was shepherding, not only for all the flock, but for this particular sheep. Yes! each believer may take great comfort to himself from the personal relation that he bears to Jesus; he may say to himself, "my particular case is worth being inquired into; my wants are deemed important enough to be thought of; I have not slipped, I shall not slip out of the mind of Jesus." Men slip out of the minds of their fellow men, but no believer slips out of the mind of Jesus. Thus Jesus has the believer ever before Him; but remember, He always has him before Him, as he is—not as he ought to be, not as he shall be hereafter—but as he

is. It was not a perfect Martha, but a Martha cumbered with much serving that Jesus loved. And does not this give us courage to hope that Jesus will do for us all that our several needs require. Am I struggling? then if He see me at all, He must see me struggling; am I mourning, then if He see me at all, it must be mourning; and can He see this, and yet not do for me, what my case requires?

Moreover, it is a great comfort that Satan cannot hurt the believer, from the fact of his being a mere unit in the family of God— one comparatively unknown. The strong often oppress the weak on earth—no one hears of the oppression; the person oppressed is little known, has no influence, has no one particularly interested in him, and so he becomes the oppressor's prey. But Satan makes a grievous mistake, if he think that any believer is so uninfluential with Christ, that he can be hurt without any notice being taken of it; the church below may hear only of the great saints, but the head of the church hears all about the little ones—just think of the Lord's naming all His great saints by name—this one and that, and that, —and then coming down the roll to some poor weak believer—perhaps yourself—and stopping short after the last "And"—for there is a blank—Satan has made off with that poor soul. "Nay! Nay!" you say, "that can never be; it seems absurd that when Jesus is just going to pronounce a name, and has actually come to the 'And' that is to join it to the others, it should be gone." Right! quite right! It is absurd; Satan desired Peter, but he was not allowed to get him; (*We find a beautiful case for the individual believer, brought out in an "and" in Mark xvi, 7. "But go your way, tell his disciples, and Peter, &c. "The poor fallen one, who had denied Him with cursing and swearing, is especially remembered.)* the ninety and nine were left to the shepherd, but that was not enough, he went to seek the one that was lost, and brought it home upon his

shoulders rejoicing. It is very true the believer is only a unit, but he is a costly unit—the baby is only the baby in a family—if you count all the children down, it will come after the last "And;" but let any try to injure it, and then see at what a price it is held.

And we would remind the believer not to throw away the benefit, which he may derive from his position as an individual in the mind of Jesus. Do not lose yourself, dear friend, in the crowd, do not try to hide yourself there. Keep steadily before you your position as an individual in Christ's heart; say to yourself, "He is looking at me— thinking of me—He would miss me"—Oh! if Christ would miss you out of His heart, be assured you shall never be missed out of heaven.

Nor let us use this word for ourselves alone, it is a very useful little word in intercessory prayer. When we are asking for blessing upon our children, let us speak of them all by name; if we use this and aright, we shall thus bring the whole family before God for blessing, and each will be presented separately. Remember that the High Priest of old bore the names of the tribes, all distinct, upon his breast—all in the one breast-plate, but each in its own setting, each on its own stone, each in its own letters. So let it be with us; our children may be as distinct in shades of character, as these precious stones were in their colour, let us bear them on our hearts before God; and above all things, may they be borne upon the breast of the great High Priest, Christ.

It will not be amiss to say a word or two, in conclusion, upon

**The responsibility of this individuality.** If Jesus love His people one by one, then how conscious must He be of the failings of each individual. Ah! we little reflect upon our own personal individual injuries to Christ; how often might Jesus say, dear reader, of you, and of me, those terrible words

which we find in Psalm Iv. "It was not an enemy that reproached me, then I could have borne it, neither was it he that hated me, that did magnify himself against me, then I would have hid myself from him, but it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance." Jesus has been often sorely wounded in the house of His friends.

Let this And lead us to think of our personal failing also. The church generally comes sadly short of the glory of God, but the question for me is; Wherein do I come short? Jesus looks at me, as an individual, and my failing is before Him, and my failing is touching Him. If one of our family fail in love to us, do not we immediately notice it? the love of all the rest does not hide out that one's short coming; yea, the love of all the rest does not make up for it; and if you, dear reader, be failing now, in love and service; oh! does not Jesus see you; does not Jesus suffer from you?

And see, also, how personal holiness is required. If Jesus love me, and take an interest in me, must He not be desirous of seeing me exhibit the beauty of holiness. There is a general oversight which Jesus takes of all His church: there is a particular inspection which He makes of each individual; in such an inspection how do I appear?

Henceforth, dear friend, let our life be more of a personal, individual one with Jesus; let each reader of this little book say, "He is thinking of me, He is looking at me;" say to yourself, "I can grieve Him," "I can please Him," and seek to be kept from the one, and to be enabled to do the other. Hereafter, all will be eminently personal; it we walk now individually with Jesus, we shall, as it were, begin heaven upon earth.

And should this little night-light be called to shed its feeble beams through silent hours of sorrow, anxiety, or pain; oh, may it be privileged,

dear believing reader, to give you some gleams of comfort. Jesus loves you individually, just as He "loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus."

# "ANY"

**"Neither shall ANY man pluck them out of my hand."**

**John x, 28.**

**M**en make use of indefinite words, such as "ANY," and "every," "anyone," or, "everyone" in a very loose and inaccurate kind of way. So much is this the case, that it is by no means safe to act at all times upon such words, up to their full extent. But God's words are "yea" and "amen;" they have full, large meaning; and no matter how much they embrace, we may be sure that they do not go too far. When man said "any" and "every" he, perhaps, did not calculate on this or that happening; or, he did not think of this person or that, over whom he had no control; but when God says it, He thinks of everything and every person; He makes His word cover and embrace them all. This is very important for us to remember,

when we take this little and yet this great word “ANY,” and use it in the night season to bring light into our souls.

What does our blessed Saviour say here? Twice does He assure us of the poor believer’s safety; He tells us in verse 28, that “He gives unto His sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of His hand;” and then in verse 29, He tells us that, “His Father who gave Him His sheep is greater than all; and that no man is able to pluck them out of His Father’s hand.” The Father and the Son are one in their interest in the sheep, in their good will toward them, and their kindly offices on their behalf

But is there any surrounding darkness which makes such light as can be derived from this little word “ANY,” of great use to the soul? Undoubtedly there is; we have here Safety threatened, as well as Safety secured; darkness—and a light lit up in that darkness.

The believer’s safety is threatened. Your safety, dear reader, is threatened; I do not say that it is endangered, but it is threatened. And why should it not be? Why should Satan allow your precious soul to slip away from him forever, without making every effort to keep it for himself? It is not reasonable, seeing that Satan is what he is, to expect that he should lose you, without making every effort in his power to keep you; you would not allow anything of great value to be taken from you, without an effort to retain it; nothing is so valuable in Satan’s eyes as a soul. Why should he not try to keep yours?

But you must not write bitter things against yourself, because Satan threatens your safety; you are by no means ruined, or even near to ruin, because he does this; you cannot help Satan’s brandishing a sword in your

eyes, but you can help being terrified at it; look at this “Any”—believe it—and be at peace.

Perhaps you say, beloved, that the darkness is very thick around you; that it is pitch dark—well! be it so—but all the darkness that ever overspread the world, even though it were as bad as that which wrapped the land of Egypt in gloom, cannot put out the tiniest night light; and all the darkness, which even the prince of darkness himself has at his command, cannot put out this little word “ANY.” The darkness may close in around it; it may continue long as well as thick, but this word shines on unchanged amid it all, and if you do but fix your eye upon it, you will escape many a nervous fear which the Evil One would excite by mysterious sounds for which you cannot account.

And should it not be a comfort to you, O nervous night watcher, that Jesus foresaw that your safety would be threatened—that someone would try to harm you? If we translated the Greek very accurately, it would read thus, “not any shall pluck,” &c. So then, Jesus recognises the truth that someone would try to do this—there was a someone who would attempt it, but Jesus says, it ‘will be of no use for him to try—he may, he will try, but he shall not succeed.’

Might we not say to our souls; “if the strong man be come, the stronger than he knew that he was coming; and that ‘stronger’ is my Saviour; and He has made preparation for his defeat.”

But it cannot be denied that the threatening of our safety (however decidedly it may be secured) is the cause of many troubles. Why is there all this doubt and argument going on in the soul? It is all the result of this threatening; the believer is timid, and the wicked one is very terrific, and very argumentative and cunning, and he has a thousand reasons why the



poor believer should not be saved; he brings up all his old sins before he was a believer; and still worse, all his sins since he became a believer; and he is threatening him with ruin for all these. These are horrible sounds in the dark; even if it be only a whisper that we hear in the dark it alarms us; but look poor tried believer at your night light—'none shall pluck thee out of thy Saviour's hand,' Look with your night light for what is making the mysterious whispering; one look for it, with the light, will be worth a thousand arguments about it, in the dark; here is your night light, now look about for your disturber—"neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."

Safety **threatened**, is not safety **endangered**, if by God and Christ, safety has been **secured!**

And safety has been thus secured. It is secured

1. By the power of the Father, and
2. By the power of the Son, and
3. By the oneness of Father and Son.

What do we read here about the power of the Father? He, the High and Almighty One appears upon the scene, and we are told that He has the poor believer in His hand— "no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."

Great things are spoken in Holy Scripture of the power of this hand; and it will be very comforting to look at some of them, seeing, our whole hope of final safety consists in our being shut up in it.

See how strong the Israelites found this hand. Pharaoh would keep them in bondage, in spite of God; indeed, he fairly measured his strength with God; the question was, could he keep the children of Israel in Egypt, or could the Lord bring them out; and we know how the question was decided,

“Remember,” says Moses, “this day, in which ye came out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, for by strength of hand, the Lord brought you out from this place;” —(Exodus xiii, 3,) and when they had come out, and entered into conflict with Sihon king of the Amorites, and Og the king of Bashan, and overcome them; though these were great victories, Moses speaks of them as only the beginning of the great things which God’s hand could do; “O Lord God, thou hast begun to shew thy servant thy greatness, and thy mighty hand; for what God is there in heaven or in earth, that can do according to thy works, and according to thy might?” (Deut. iii, 24.)

And remember, beloved, as you are wakeful, and looking at this night light, that many rays stream forth from it. Perhaps you are thinking, “Yes! God will give the great deliverance, but I have many lesser needs; perhaps, I may suffer in some of the preliminary steps, before I attain the great end of all.” Well! let us follow the good hand of the Lord, (in which you are) in the case of one man who trusted all to Him, and then our night light will burn all the brighter, when we look at it for ourselves. See what Ezra says in chap, vii, of the power of the hand of the Lord. In verse 6 he tells us that the king, to whom he was a captive, actually let him go away from Babylon to Jerusalem; he asked leave to go, and that, for the restoration of the house of the Lord; “and the king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the Lord his God upon him.” Four long months was he travelling, exposed to dangers of every kind; but he tells us in the ninth verse that all went on well; “on the first day of the fifth month came he to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon him.” And when Ezra came to Jerusalem, he found abundance of materials for his work, and he himself was able for that work. “And I was strengthened as the hand of the Lord my God was upon me.” (verse 28.)

Beloved, if you be a believer, then you are in the Father's hand. The hand has a grasping power; you are in God's grasp; He will hold you tight, just as you yourself would hold tight some precious treasure— you are in God's shelter; we hide the flickering flame with the hollow of our hand, lest the rough wind should blow it out; God's hand is round you. You have all the complicated resources of God to help you; what part of the body has a more complicated organization than the hand; and is it not as though Christ said, "all my Father's resources are round thee, and so none can destroy thee?" Remember the words "out of;" the believer is *in* God's hand, and Satan must be able to take him out of it, before he can do anything; yes! he must operate, and that successfully against God.

And not only against God the Father, but against God the Son also—the Father says, "I have the believer in my hand;" and the Son also says, "and I have the believer in my hand;" and before the believer can be destroyed, Satan must overcome both the Father and the Son. Now Satan has been in conflict with the Son; he tried him in the temptation in the wilderness, but he had to depart, miserably overcome; and he must try that conflict again, and succeed in it also, before he can destroy the believer, for the believer is in the hand of Christ—the hand that bears the mark of the cruel nail. All that we have been considering with reference to the power of the hand of the Father, we are to consider also with reference to the power of the hand of the Son.

Thus, believer, you are secured by the separate action of the Father and the Son; but you are yet further secured by their joint action also—"I and my Father are one." There is a union between the Father and the Son in Godhead, but there is also a union in intention, in action, and operation; they are perfectly agreed together with reference to the believer's interest,

and everything connected with him. We may have two powerful friends, and yet derive very little benefit from them, for with the best designs of serving us, they may pull different ways, and perhaps even spend their strength against each other; but here, our two great friends are agreed on every point, on how to act, and when to act, and against whom to act, and with what end in view; in a word they are perfectly agreed about everything connected with the believer.

Look off then, poor tried believer, from yourself—from your own weakness and insufficiency and shortcoming; and look at those of whom it is said that none shall pluck you out of their hand. Fix your eye upon this little word “ANY,” and think how the apostle realized it, when he said, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril or sword, \* \* \* nay in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor *any* other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Rom. viii, 35, &c.) Believer! if God be for you, who can be against you? There are no reservations in the declaration, “neither shall *any* man pluck them out of my hand.” It may be night time with your soul—that, perhaps, you cannot help; but here is something to comfort you through the night—one little word—a night light that will burn until “the day break, and the shadows flee away”— “neither shall ANY man pluck them out of my hand!

# **"But"**

**“The Lord hath chastened me sore, but He hath not given me over unto death.” Psalm cxviii, 18.**

**H**ow can the diamond be bright except it be cut? how can the wheat be clean except it be winnowed? how can the gold be pure except it be refined? and how can the believer be made meet for heaven unless he be disciplined by God? “Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth;” and it is “through much tribulation” that we “enter into the kingdom of God.” Beloved, dismiss all hard thoughts of God, because in one way or another He has given you the cup of suffering to drink; “despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him; for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth; if ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you, as with sons; for

what son is he whom the father chasteneth not;” for the present the chastening does not seem to be “joyous but grievous, nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.” (Heb. xii.) Chastening and sonship go together—thus we light our little night light from a bright page of God's own word— may it help to dispel thick darkness, while we wait, and watch, and pray for the dawn.

And, first of all, we observe that the Hebrew word which we translate “chasten,” has an extensive meaning. It means to “bind,” “discipline,” “correct,” “chasten,” “restrain from doing wrong,” “reduce to duty and obedience,” to “reform” &c.; and the very varied meaning of the word, will help us to understand the verse before us now. The Lord's dealings with thee, believer, are not for thy destruction, but for thy blessing— to restrain thee from evil—to bring thee to closer obedience—yea, to make thee more meet for heaven and Himself.

*Chastening,*

*Sore Chastening,* and

*Measured Chastening*

will now occupy our minds for a little time.

The believer says, “The Lord hath chastened me.” I enquire not now, what turn the affliction has taken; whether the suffering be in mind, body, or estate; enough is it for us to feel that it is chastening; we are in a suffering state. Inconvenience, or discomfort, or disappointment, or actual acute pain of mind or body are upon us, and we feel them very much. A man who knows not the ways of the Lord, might have said, “Surely, God, if He loved His people, would blunt their sensibility to suffering, or take them out of the place of suffering;” but ah! how little does such a one know of the ways of

God. No doubt there is much calculated to make us suffer, above which we are raised by faith and rest on God; but there are always tender points in which God can reach us—so tender—that when He wants to chasten us sore, He need not strike us a heavy blow, but only give a gentle touch in the right and susceptible place. Strive, dear reader, to recognise the Lord's hand in your chastening; He has permitted it, let that be enough. This is what David did, as you read in 2 Sam. xvi. Shimei cursed him, and Abishai, the son of Zeruiah, was so enraged with him, that he could not restrain himself, “Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head;” but David recognised the hand of the Lord; he said, “so let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, ‘Curse David;’ who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so? Let him alone, and let him curse; it may be that the Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day.” When Samuel told Eli every whit, and hid nothing from him; he said, “It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth him good.” Beloved, see God in thy chastening, and be deeply thankful, that thou art in His hand, sad though the chastening be—if thou wert not, it would be much worse for thee than it is now. Thou mayest be in a great strait, as David was, when he spake to God; but let your words be the same as his, “Let us fall now into the hand of the Lord, for His mercies are great, and let me not fall into the hand of man.” (2 Samuel xxiv, 14.) Chastening from an enemy would prove perhaps our death; but chastening from a father, will be in measure, and will issue in our advance to higher life.

But you say, dear reader, “Mine is *Sore Chastening*.” You speak, as David does in Psalm li, of “the bones which God has broken,” of being “cast away from His presence,” of your “sore running in the night season and ceasing not,” (Psalm lxxvii, 2,) of your “heart being sore pained within

you, of the terrors of death having fallen upon you, of fearfulness and trembling coming upon you, and of horror overwhelming you,” (Psalm lvi, 4, 5;) and, so hard are things going with you, that you take the third chapter of the Lamentations of Jeremiah as the fittest description of your state; you say, you are the man that hath “seen affliction by the rod of His mouth,” you declare, that you are “pulled in pieces,” and that God has “set you as a mark for His arrows,” making you “drunk with wormwood,” “breaking your teeth with gravel stones,” and “covering you with ashes.”

And all this, perhaps, is true; your affliction has been to you, bitter in the extreme; and you feel that anyone who made light of it, was only insulting you in your misery. Oh! “making light” of another person's sorrow, is but a poor way of getting rid of it—God never makes light of human suffering—He counts it heavy, even when it has been inflicted by Himself. And there is much comfort to us in this thought; for we should utterly despair of any sympathy from the Lord, any feeling for us in our woes, if He thought them light. God never underrates human suffering, and God understands all the circumstances which make suffering heavy to us. Even that which is not heavy in itself is, perhaps, from my peculiar temperament, really heavy to me, He knows it all. Oh! how thankful ought we to be that God can see so deep; man does not see all the extent of the wounds he inflicts; God sees the extent of all His chastenings, and so we may be sure that however sore His chastening is, it will not be too sore. God knows the point beyond 'which His knife should not go; when He “with rebukes doth correct man for iniquity, He maketh His beauty to consume away like a moth,” but He “spares him also that he may recover strength before he goes hence, and is no more.” (Psalm xxxix.)



This is what is brought before us in the word “But.” “The Lord hath chastened me sore, but He hath not given me over unto death.” Dear brother or sister, God will give thee Measured Chastening. We think, God is going to make a clean end of us, but “restoration” not “destruction” is the end He has in view. If God wanted to destroy you, dear reader, He could do it easily enough; He need not have wasted you away by any long process. He might have put an end to you at once; but He has done nothing of the kind, He has held your soul in life, (Psalm lxvi, 9;) He has stayed His rough wind, in the day of His east wind, (Isa. xxvii, 8;) He has said of you, as He said of Job, “but save his life;” (Job ii, 6;) He has sat, as a refiner, and purifier of silver; (Mai. iii, 3;) and we know that the refiner sits by his fire, and will not allow the metal to be subjected to its influence, beyond a certain time. Satan desired to have Peter, that he might sift him as wheat, but Jesus prayed for him that his faith should not fail. (Luke cxii, 31.) Despair will take possession of your heart, dear reader, if you allow yourself to think that God wants to destroy you; with this idea in your mind, you never can look up to Him with any confidence or hope; you never can pray; where indeed would be the use of prayer? There would be nothing for you, but to meet your doom. You are not given over unto death; with rebukes, you may be corrected for iniquity; and your beauty may be made to consume away like a moth; you are made to feel that you are vanity, (Psalm xxxix, 11;) but, in all this dealing of God, you are only made to feel what you are in yourself, in your own demerit—you have another standing in His love, and in virtue of that, you shall not be given over unto death. You may take up the words of the godly Rutherford in his letter to Robert Gordon of Knockbrex. *“But my Lord Jesus hath a good eye, that the tempter should not play foul play, and blow out Christ's candle when He burned the house He saved His own*

*goods. And I believe the devil and the persecuting world shall reap no fruit of me, but burned ashes, for He will see to His own gold, and save that from being consumed in the fire. Oh! what I owe to the file, to the hammer, to the furnace of my Lord Jesus! Who hath now let me see how good the wheat of Christ is, that goeth through His mill, and His oven, to be made bread for His own table. 'Grace tried,' is better than grace; and it is more than grace; it is glory in its infancy. Why should I start at the plough of my Lord, that maketh deep furrows on my soul? I know He is no idle husbandman, He purposeth a crop."*

Beloved, if God had given you over unto death, Satan could have made a clean end of you long ago. The strivings of the Spirit with you, the stirrings of the Spirit in you would have ceased; He would have said of you as He did of Ephraim, "Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone." (Hosea iv, 17.) All present feelings are signs of life; where mortification has set in, feeling ceases; but you are not thus given over unto death, and therefore you feel.

Thank God with all your heart, that He has not given you over unto death—you are not a sentenced criminal—a forlorn castaway—a sheep doomed to the shambles—a man utterly undone; so far from that, you are one that God holds back from death. When you are weak from chastening, Satan wants to make an end of you: he thinks, "now that he has no strength I will give him the finishing stroke," but that, God will not allow, and Satan cannot give the death-wound unless He permit. This was the attempt that Apollyon made upon Christian.

*"Then Apollyon straddled quite over the whole breadth of the way, and said, I am void of fear in this matter. Prepare thyself to die; for I swear by my infernal den, that thou shalt go no further: here will I spill thy soul. And*

*with that, he threw a flaming dart at his heart, but Christian had a shield in his hand, -with which he caught it, and so prevented the danger of that.*

*“Then did Christian draw; for he saw it was time to bestir himself; and Apollyon as fast made at him, throwing darts as thick as hail; by the which, notwithstanding all Christian could do to avoid it, Apollyon wounded him in his head, his hand, and foot. This made Christian give back a little: Apollyon therefore followed his work amain, and Christian again took courage, and resisted as manfully as he could. This sore combat lasted for about half a day, even till Christian was almost spent. For you must know that Christian, by reason of his wounds, must grow weaker and weaker.*

*“Then Apollyon, espying his opportunity, began to gather up closer to Christian, and wrestling with him, gave him a dreadful fall, and, with that, Christians' sword flew out of his hand. Then said Apollyon, 'I am sure of thee now.' And with that, he almost pressed him to death, so that Christian began to despair of life. But as God would have it, while Apollyon was fetching of his last blow, thereby to make a full end of this good man, Christian nimbly reached out his hand for his sword, and caught it, saying, 'Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy; when I fall I shall arise,' (Micah vii, 8,) and with that, gave him a deadly thrust, which made him give back, as one that had received his mortal wound. Christian perceiving that, made at him again, saying, 'Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.' (Rom. viii, 37.) And with that Apollyon spread forth his dragon's wings, and sped him away, that Christian saw him no more.” (James iv, 7.)*

However hard, then, you, dear reader, have been pressed, whether by permitted assaults of the enemy, or by chastening and discipline coming directly from God, pluck up your courage—take good heart; to put the

matter in the lowest point of view, as regards comfort, you have not been made a clean end of yet; and while there's life there's hope. Let this little word “But,” kindle a light within your soul; it is God's great reservation on your behalf; it is as though He said, “I will chasten thee, but I will not slay thee.”

We thank Thee, O Lord, for that little word; we will make great use of it; through our dark hour we will see some light streaming from it—we will acknowledge Thy chastening, and bow beneath Thy rod; but we will see that in the midst of judgment Thou rememberest mercy. “The Lord hath chastened me sore, but He hath not delivered me over unto death.”

# "How"

**“The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation.” 2 Peter ii, 9.**

**I**n this small word “*HOW*,” we have materials for making not merely a little night light, which shall glimmer through some few silent hours of spiritual darkness; but for making, if need be, a blazing lamp, which shall throw its brightness over many a mile of troubled waters, guiding the storm-tossed Christian, as he sails onward to the haven of his eternal rest.

We must, however, resist the temptation of attempting to draw from this little word all its hidden stores; and just take from it as much, as our space will allow.

This passage of Holy Scripture shews us *the abundance of God’s resources*—a most comforting thought for us, who are continually in need

of help—and it tells us, that God knows how to use those resources—and thus it directs us to Him, and to Him alone, in our hour of need. Happy would it be for us, if we had nothing to say about our own resources; but alas! have we not often to learn that we have no real resources in ourselves, before we throw ourselves thoroughly upon our resources in God? We have first to learn that we cannot do what we want ourselves; and then, that He can do it for us. “Why gaddest thou about so much to change thy way?” (says the Lord to Israel in Jer. ii, 36,) “thou also shalt be ashamed of Egypt, as thou wast ashamed of Assyria; yea, thou shalt go forth from him, and thine hands upon thine head: for the Lord hath rejected thy confidences, and thou shalt not prosper in them.” That is the Lord's declaration to Israel; and a very similar one He gives to us, making our resources fail us, one after another, and saying to us very much what He says to this same Israel, by the mouth of the prophet Hosea, (xiv, 2.) “Take with you words, and turn to the Lord; say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously, so will we render the calves of our lips. Asshur shall not save us, we will not ride upon horses, neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods; for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.”

Our little night light must help us to see our own short comings, as well as God's resources; and thus it is doing us good service; for the less we lean on self, the more shall we lean on Him. It may be very pleasing to the natural man, and very flattering to his pride, to be told that he is a fine fellow! that self-dependence, and self-help, are manly and noble; and that it is a great thing not to be under an obligation to anyone; but all this is only a cunning trick of Satan's, to occupy our minds and keep them away from God—to keep us scraping the bare bones in our own lean hungry larder, when there is plenty for us in the rich store-houses of the Lord. How often

we are for filing away the bars of our prison windows, and running the chance of breaking our limbs as we fall to the ground; when the Lord would have opened the door for us, if we had asked Him, and set us free. Many a time have we been in bonds, and full of the gloomiest anticipations for the future; when we might have been singing the joyous words of Psalm cxxiv. “Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers; the snare is broken, and we are escaped. Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.”

And now, let us look at some of the deliverances which God has vouchsafed to His people, and see how varied were the methods of His dealings, and consequently how varied the resources at His command; they will help to confirm us in the belief, that He knows how to deliver us in our hour of need.

When the Lord would preserve the life of Moses, He led Pharaoh's daughter to the spot where his frail ark was laid; and He restored him to the tender care of his own mother— there was not one amongst the Hebrews who could solve the problem of how that child's life was to be spared; even the fertile resources of a mother's heart were exhausted; she could do no more for her son than lay him there, while one watched to see “what would become of him;” but the Lord knew “*how*” to do it all; He supplied the link between the tears of the outcast babe, and the compassion of Pharaoh's daughter's heart. Was not that an admirable deliverance? Did not the Lord know how to do it?

When Benhadad, the king of Syria, besieged Samaria, and reduced the place to such a depth of misery and starvation, that the mother boiled her son and eat him; and when there seemed no shadow of hope of its relief: — then the Lord in mercy told Elisha to prophesy plenty—”Thus saith the

Lord; to-morrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel in the gate of Samaria;” but nothing was more unlikely than that this should come to pass; and so the lord, on whose hand the king leaned, answered the man of God and said, “Behold if the Lord would make windows in heaven might this thing be.” The gate was besieged —man was watching there—man was apparently an impediment to such a blessing —whatever might drop down from heaven, nothing could come through the gate; but the Lord knew how to bring corn through the gate of Samaria—corn, not gotten in any of the usual ways, neither grown nor bought —corn provided—how? By ways of His own; He “made the host of Syrians to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, even the noise of a great host; and they said one to another, Lo! the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites, and the kings of the Egyptians to come upon us, wherefore they arose and fled in the twilight; and left their tents and their horses, and their asses, even the camp as it was, and fled for their life.” (2 Kings vii.)

But our space will not allow our entering at length upon many more such examples, although the word of God abounds in them. If any person had been asked how Peter could have been delivered from Herod's prison, seeing that there were no less than four quaternions of soldiers, whose business it was to keep him; and more especially, how he could have made his escape, when he was between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and the keeper before the door, and a first and second ward to be gone through, and also an iron gate; he would have given up the matter in despair—but the Lord had a “how,” wherewith to do it; and so, Herod was disappointed, and the apostle was delivered. God's resources are good for the first ward, and the second ward, and also for the iron gate!



But, perhaps, it may not be amiss to think for a moment upon the way in which God delivers—how He does it. Sometimes the Lord rebukes the temptation or evil, of whatever kind it be, which is about to hurt His children—He speaks directly to it, and it must be gone. And we may dwell comfortably upon God's rebuking power; Satan cannot withstand it; when he says, “hitherto shalt thou come and no farther, here must thy proud waves be stayed,” there is an end of all his power; and though he were crested with wrath but a moment before, he has to sink down into angry but harmless foam. At times God overrules affairs; when everything seems going on under the influence of some power hostile to us, He appears in the midst of our affairs; a new power begins to work; and the effect is seen in the change which things take for the better. At times God arranges and fits, and makes a number of circumstances form the pattern of His gracious dealing, just as a number of pieces form the pattern upon a mosaic brooch.

Let me give you, dear reader, one example of how God does what is needful for us. There lay upon his sick bed, a young man, dying of consumption. He came by his illness and eventually his death, from excessive dancing at a saloon, which resulted in the bursting of a blood vessel. It was considered very advisable that the poor youth should be removed, and that speedily, to the Consumptive Hospital; he felt himself a burden where he was; and he had no friends in the world. He and I prayed together, at one of my visits, that God would enable us to get an in-patient's ticket for the hospital; but we had really, humanly speaking, no chance of getting one, for we did not know any of the governors, and such tickets are very difficult to be got. After leaving his house, I had occasion to go up the street, to get the invalid a few grapes; and while on that errand, I was delayed by a beggar man, to whom I did not wish to give money, but for

whom I went across the street to procure a piece of bread. Mark that beggar—for if I had not met him, and been delayed about two minutes, I should have missed the ticket. As soon as I returned to the sick man's door, and while I was waiting to have it opened, I saw a gentleman coming down a street at right angles to the one where I was; he was a comparative stranger, whom I had seen only two or three times before; I asked him, if he knew anyone who would give me a ticket for the Consumptive Hospital—he said, “I’ll give you one;” so there, at the door of the sick man—ten minutes after we prayed, we found the answer. Now mark, dear reader, how God did this. As the house was at the angle where the two streets met; one minute would have made all the difference. Had I not been delayed by the beggar; or had I given him a penny instead of going for the bread, I should have returned, and, gone away from the sick man's door, before this gentleman came in sight! or had I been delayed half a minute more by the man weighing the grapes, the gentleman would have passed the door before I reached it; or had the gentleman, during the previous half hour, walked a little slower, or a little faster, I must have missed him. Had I overtaken that gentleman, I should probably never have asked him for a ticket; nor should I, if I had met him any-where else than where I did; but being at the sick man's door, my mind was full of the subject, and I just, as men say, “took chance;” perhaps I asked more mechanically than otherwise; but the gracious God knew that the case was urgent; and He knew how to bring the whole thing to pass; and that poor sick man, who once used to sit in the public houses abusing religion, and its ministers, died a happy death, and I have now before me, on my desk, a manuscript book taken from under his pillow, when he was dead, containing a letter to the careless young men of the town in which he lived, exhorting them to turn to the Lord.

But, we must remember what a little book this is to be, and just add one or two words of caution and comfort.

Dear reader! there is often great evil in expecting God to act in a particular way. We mark out a way, that is our “how;” but it is not God's “how;” and hence it comes to pass that we are so cast down, if our particular way should fail—when our particular way is dried up, we cease to pray; we say, God does not mean to answer; and all the while the answer may be coming by some other road. Some of God's deliverances run, some walk; some travel on the common road, some by out-of-the-way paths; surely God may send His mercies how He will.

Yield, dear friends to God's arrangements; trust His promises; and then, though you fall into a place where two seas meet, and your ship be run aground, and the fore part be stuck fast and remain unmoveable, and the hinder part be broken with the violence of the waves; then, whether it be by swimming, or on boards, or on broken pieces of the ship, so it will come to pass that you shall all escape safe to land.

Yes, keep from despair—have comfortable thoughts as to final safety; you may be as badly off now, as Lot was in Sodom; but the Lord knoweth how to deliver you. Perhaps you say, “Oh I am not one of the godly; if I were, I should have no fear; I am sure that God would then do everything for me;” but remember, how far from perfect, Lot was; and the God who was merciful in delivering him, will if you love him, not fail to deliver you.

And now, our little night light is flickering and nearly burned out, and that, because the case is too small to hold all that we fain would put into it. Enough will it be, if it have helped you through a few hours of gloom—if it have encouraged you to commit yourself to God— if it have shown you

that, what is impossible with men is possible with Him. Dear reader—  
believe, trust, and ask not “HOW.”

# "LEST"

**“And I will not send them away fasting, LEST they faint in the way.” Matthew xv, 32.**

There are certain small words which embody within themselves, not merely the turning points, but absolutely no inconsiderable part of the history of our lives. The word “If” has often been the turning point of a man's career—“if” he did this, he entered upon a successful course; “if” he did that, he went down-hill for the remainder of his days; almost all the great turning points of our lives involve an “if;” the one side of which is gain, and the other loss.

But the word “Lest,” seems to appropriate to itself the largest part of our waking life. It may not openly appear, but it is exercising its power nevertheless, and that, in matters great and small. Look at that man tossing

all night upon his bed in wakeful thought; he is giving up his nights rest to planning how he can arrange his affairs, “*lest*” he should become a bankrupt. Look at that lawyer perusing that document, which he has already closely scanned a dozen times; why can't he let it alone now? he is making sure, doubly sure, “*lest*“ there should be a single point left unmastered. This man is working “*lest*” his children should come to want — that one is providing pleasure, “*lest*” the day should hang heavy on his hands; and so on, all through life, we spend far more energy and strength in guarding against evil, than in enjoying good.

And now, we have our Lord Jesus Christ, perfect man as well as perfect God, making use of this word “*Lest.*” Jesus knew well the weakness of the human frame; He knew the effects of hunger upon it; He Himself had experienced those effects in the great temptation in the wilderness; and throwing Himself, in the fulness of sympathy, into the circumstances of the hungry multitude before Him, He says, “I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way.”

This was a blessed little word for the multitude in the mountain by the sea of Galilee; may it not be an equally blessed word for us? Assuredly it may; and if only the SPIRIT’S gracious influences be vouchsafed, there will stream forth from it, light enough to cheer us in many a gloomy, and perhaps, restless hour.

One little ray which streams forth distinctly from this word is. *The forethought of our Lord Jesus Christ.* He thought about the possibility of the multitude's suffering harm. And in doing so, our Lord, no doubt, took into account all the circumstances of the case before Him. The multitude had been a long time with Him; they had no resources whatever wherewith to help themselves; they were no doubt at that very time, hungry; they had a

long road before them, on their return home; many of them were weak women and children; there was no store of bread from which they could purchase, even if they had the money wherewith to buy; and yet if they were not fed, they might “*faint in the way.*” How blessed is it to contemplate this forethought of Jesus, forecasting even the possibility of harm—the harm not yet come—but which might come; which to some at least, was almost sure to come; (perhaps only to some woman or child,) and so Jesus made it a matter of thought, and of provision also—“*Lest they faint in the way.*”

To us, this consideration should bring great comfort. If the Lord thought about this multitude, many of whom, doubtless, stood in no peculiar relationship to Him; how much more will He think of such as are His, by a living faith! Be comforted, believer, by the reflection that Jesus is thinking about you— thinking, as to what will do you harm; and as to how that harm is to be averted. Jesus says a *LEST* with reference to you. If we, then, be fearing as to what may betide us in life; as to what may betide us at the time of death; if we be overwhelmed with thoughts of our own weakness; of the length of the way, or anything else, which may cast a gloom over our souls, let us seek for grace to repose ourselves upon the forethought of Jesus. Let us remember that He thinks, not only of what may do us good, but also of what may do us harm; and that harm, possible or probable, will never come before His mind, without His making provision against it. “*Lest,*” in the mouth of Jesus, means, oh how much!

And then, we are to look at *The provision of Jesus to avert harm.* The same One that thinks about what would hurt us, makes provision against that hurt. In the case before us, this provision seems to have been entirely above the people's expectation; they do not seem to have thought of looking

to Him for bread, although they had thought of casting at His feet their lame, and blind, and dumb, and maimed, and many others. The fact is, Jesus was better to them than their expectation; until they were told to sit down on the ground, they probably did not look for any food at all. They, in their shortsightedness, had no "*Lest*" before their minds, but Jesus had; and so, even where they had no expectation, He made provision. To do exceeding abundantly, "above what we desire or deserve," is the great delight of Jesus; and it is well for us that it is so; for we often expect nothing from Him; we either hope to avert the evil ourselves, or if we cannot, then, at least to bear it ourselves; if we never got more than our expectations led us to look for, we should be left poor and destitute indeed.

The Lord Jesus seems to have made a provision above the consciousness of the need of those for whom He thus provided. They appear to have been wholly taken up with the miraculous cures, which were wrought by the hand, and no doubt, also, with the wonderful teachings which fell from the lips of the Lord; a need lay before them, yea, was almost upon them, though they knew it not. Is it not well, dear reader, for you and for me, that our Lord provides for us out of a knowledge far above that which we ourselves have of our necessities? What would become of the little child, whose parent did not think for it? its consciousness of need does not extend beyond the present hour; it is provided for out of the parent's knowledge, and not out of its own—it is well for us that the provision made for us, is out of Christ's deep knowledge of our necessity—that knowledge is infinitely minute, as well as infinitely comprehensive; and we shall hereafter trace to it the averting of harm, as well as the communication of good. Beloved! let us rest upon the knowledge of Jesus, casting all our care on Him for He careth for us.



Observe also, how Jesus makes this provision out of His own resources of power. It is very true that there were seven loaves, and a few little fishes upon which this power wrought but what were they amongst so many? It is thus that Jesus makes provision for us; “His power has resources which penetrate into every crumb; our resources are poor, no more than, as it were, a crumb, (and surely there was only a minute crumb for each of the multitude,) His resources are distinct from the crumbs, though they develop themselves in operating upon them. Beloved, if your resources be small, consider them not in themselves, but as blessed by Jesus. And do not refuse to see the interference of your Lord, because He chooses to give His blessing, through what is at hand. There are some who will not recognise divine interference, unless it be exercised apart from all ordinary things; they will not believe that multiplied bread, is providentially provided bread; nothing short of manna will persuade them that they are fed from heaven; they would perhaps think a great deal of meal coming out of an empty barrel, and oil out of an empty cruse, but the continually multiplied handful, and never failing drop, do not excite either their wonder or their praise. Often has the word “Lest” entered into very common things indeed in life; they have been blest through Christ, lest harm should happen to His people.

And many a time are the actual probabilities and certainties of evil before us, all ready to do us harm, but they are neutralized by Christ's use of this word “Lest.” Just as certain stones and ruts are on the road, over which we have to drive or walk in performing our journey, so there are certain temptations and evils before us in our journey through the spiritual life; these Jesus foresees, and He deals with them in the power of this word “Lest”—some of them He removes altogether, lest they prove too strong for His weak ones; some, He weakens so that they have not the measure of

power which Satan intended them to have; and some He leaves as they are, but infuses fresh strength and wisdom into His people, so that they are well able to get over them. But the believer must remember that this word “Lest” often implies the provision of discipline. The work done for the Lord's people is not all external; much of it is internal, and if only we knew how to interpret God's dealings aright, we should say, “Ah, this has happened 'Lest' my heart should be too proud: and this has happened 'Lest' my affections should be too earthly; and this, 'Lest' I should lean too much upon mine own strength; and this, 'Lest' I should depend upon others more than God;” many of the Lord's dealings are dealings of discipline, and the intention of the discipline, is not always to chastise for evil past, but to avert evil which lies ahead; it is in point of fact God's saying, ”Lest”— lest evil fall upon the believer.

And now let us ponder for a moment or two upon the *condescension of the blessed Jesus* in thinking of this hungry crowd, and making provision lest they should faint by the way. He might have said, “I have done great things for them, now I will leave them to themselves.” And great things, indeed, He had done; He had spoken the word of life; He had healed their diseases; He had scattered both temporal and spiritual blessings abroad with a large hand; and He had laid Himself open in His healing power to the need of all. But Jesus never forgets the lesser in the greater; “the great” He does, “the less” He does not leave undone; He condescends to all need—to the sigh as well as to the groan—to the want of the bread that perisheth, as well as to the need of that bread which endureth unto everlasting life. This is very necessary for us to bear in mind; we live in a world of needs; most of our sorrows and fears have reference to comparatively small things; and we need a Saviour who can descend into the minutiae of life. Our Lord does

this from experience; He had taken knowledge of hunger in His own body; He knew its weakening influences; He knew how hard it was to travel a long weary road without enough to sustain poor sinking human nature; and so He condescended to the need He knew so well. To Jesus, the question was not merely one of a momentary supply, it was one which entered into the future—what would happen to this helpless company unless He put forth His hand to aid? Is it not a comfortable thought to you, dear friend, that Jesus will enter into the consequences which attach to every little need you feel, be it never so small—into consequences which He can see, though you cannot.

Let these thoughts, then, upon this little word “Lest” bring blessing to our souls; let us see ourselves encompassed with the tender thoughtfulness of Jesus; let us see how all the contingencies of the future are not only open before His mind, but also provided against, by His love. Let us remember, moreover, the liberality so richly displayed here: Christ's taking into consideration this “*Lest*,” with reference to the multitude, involved His doing great things on their behalf, His putting forth a great display of power, His producing a great result; but He was equal to the occasion, and so the four thousand men besides women and children, were provided with enough and to spare. When we, then, dear reader, are troubled with any of the many “*Lests*,” which perplex and harass us through life; let us ask Jesus to make it a “Lest” in His mind also; let us commit it to His thoughtfulness and His provision, to His liberality and His power. None could have extricated the multitude from their position of want; but He could, if there were need, command even the stones to be made bread— He—who knew that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Let us come to Him, and He will say to us, even

what He said of the multitude. “I will not send them away fasting, *lest* they faint in the way.”

# "Never"

**"I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." <sup>1</sup> Hebrews  
xiii, 6.**

**T**here is a common saying that "Never is a long day!" In this case, the "Never" is a long day indeed, stretching out even into eternity itself. This word is assuredly a part of that provision, which God has made in Holy Scripture, for the infirmities, fears, and needs of His people; all of which have been thought of in His mind; for He knoweth our infirmities, He knoweth that we are but flesh.

Now first of all, dear reader, who is it that makes use of this word *Never*? As much importance is often to be attached to the persons by whom certain words are spoken, as to the words themselves. If a man be an untruthful, or a poor man, his promise to give me £1000 is worth very little; but if he be

truthful and rich, the promise will be very valuable indeed. Now, who speaks here; who is this “*I*?” It is God Himself. We wish to put this “*I*” in contradistinction with all others; the value of the promise consists in the fact that it has been spoken by God. Man may indeed make a like promise; he may vow everlasting fidelity; but man is often the creature of circumstances and is obliged to change; man is too often fickle in his disposition, and desires to change; man, even if he go as far as he can, must stop at the mouth of the grave; God is the unchangeable and the eternal One; therefore, when He says, “*I*,” the promise is of exceeding worth.

Realize this promise, dear friend, as spoken by a personal individual God—by One whose character enters into what He says; God's truth, and love, and faithfulness, and power, all come into exercise in the fulfilment of this promise. He could not carry out His promise into practical performance, if it were not that He were infinitely faithful, loving, and true, and full of power. The all-important point is this; when God says “*I* will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,” He pledges Himself—all that goes to make up His very being; here, poor trembling believer, is your security; and what better security could you have? As we think of this, a ray of comfort ought assuredly to stream in upon our souls; if we begin to doubt as to whether God will really befriend us through all circumstances, and up to the end, let us say to ourselves over and over again, “God said He will”—“God said it”—“God said it;” let us fall back upon the necessity of God's speaking the truth, and thus reassure our poor unbelieving hearts. “It is *I*,” said Jesus in the storm, and the words brought peace to the disciples’ hearts—It is “*I*,” says God—“*I* say, “*I* will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”—Oh! may that “*I*,” settle the matter for our souls.

But we must pass on to the word which is to form the immediate subject of our consideration, viz., the strong negation “never.” “I will *NEVER* leave thee.” Now, here there is no attempt to deny that many evils may happen to us—evils and dangers, in which we shall sorely need the kind offices of a powerful friend—on the contrary, all these are taken for granted, and a promise made, that we shall not be left to go through them alone.

We must particularly observe, how the Lord arms and prepares us for the manifold trials of the way. He does not catalogue them all, and say of each, “I will not desert thee in this, and in this;” but He uses one word which takes in all—the word “*NEVER,*” —“I will never leave thee.” Now this is not the way in which man, with his unbelieving heart, would have the promise given. In order to make sure that such and such a thing will not hurt him, he expects to find some specific promise connected with it; he seldom trusts the general declarations which God gives of Himself; he will not argue from them to his own particular need; but it is thus that God is pleased to give His promise, and we can partly understand the reason why. God, dear reader, would ever lead His people to trust upon Himself; to feel that they have His love and watchfulness and care; and that these will be applied to all circumstances as they arise. And see, how much better off we are by having this general promise before us now, than if we had a number of specific promises. No matter how long the list of circumstances furnished to us, under which God promised not to desert us, we should find that from time to time we were placed in such a position as to make it doubtful, whether the exact letter of the promise applied to us —whether our circumstances were precisely those to which reference is made; but now — we have a word that covers everything—one that is ready to apply itself

to every need and emergency as it arises—one that takes in alike our highest form of woe, and the various necessities of daily life- Be assured, dear reader, that you are better off with this promise, than you would be with one which, perhaps, came more home to you in only some one or two particular forms of grief.

And now let us think awhile over the exceeding blessedness of this word “*NEVER.*”

It is as though God said, “Though your circumstances change, I will not. I am the same ‘yesterday, and to-day, and forever.’” Now, this is very blessed—our circumstances are always changing—man never continues in one stay—and the change is not always for the better; and we know that when circumstances change for the worse, friends often change also. But God's word “*Never,*” covers all these changes; He knew that circumstances would continually change, when He made the promise; He meant to stand to us through all the changes; He meant to be above all changes, and not to be carried away by them

Perhaps, dear reader, there is a prospect of your trouble deepening; whether that trouble be temporal or spiritual, it may be, that it is likely to grow worse and worse; every step that you take forward, you seem to yourself to feel the cold waters creep higher and higher; now is it not a comfort that the “*Never*” applies to this time? How can you tell how much deeper you are to go; how do you know but that you are about to pass out of your depth—out of the reach of all human comforting's? Oh! what a terrible prospect, if we have to go through all this alone! How do flesh and blood fail at such a prospect! but the word “*Never*” covers all these circumstances; deepening trouble will bring more and more to light a present God.



But perhaps, our trouble is destined rather to vary than to deepen; our trial is to consist of many, and it may be, rapid changes in trouble; and here the precious promise, “I will ‘Never’ leave thee,” becomes of inestimable value. Many of the Lord's people have been tried by variety in their sorrows; they no sooner got accustomed to one form of suffering, than another took its place; and they had to commence afresh all the discipline of endurance, all the mental conflict belonging to their new phase of trial. Many a believer has been cast now into the fire, and now into the water; and the change has sometimes been very sudden indeed. Oh! what a comfort is it to us to know, that if God be with us, the new trouble cannot take advantage of our inexperience—it will have to deal with God; with His experience; with His presence; with Him as the Comforter and Strengtheners of His people under all circumstances. This word “*Never*” is a great comfort to us; if we contemplate the sudden and varied shifting's of temptation and trial in the spiritual life; we say to ourselves, “Ah! I am as it were at home in this form of trial, but what if something new come upon me?” then, dear reader, God will be with you in the new trial, even as He has been in the old ones; He will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

Sometimes our trial assumes the form of solitariness. How often has it been thus temporally, when husband or wife have departed; or when we are left, the last of a family; when the poor believer is like the last fruit upon the autumn tree—all—all gone, and winter hastening on apace; oh! for such an one, there is something better than the dry rustling of withered leaves, and the dismal howling of winter winds, there is a whispering voice, saying, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” Or, is the solitariness, spiritual—are we left alone? perhaps amid the worldly—alone! because none can sympathize with, or understand us, none can counsel or teach us; then let

the poor solitary one, thus left alone, call upon the word “*Never*” to put forth its working power, and cheer him, by shewing him the company of God. Perhaps our solitariness may be aggravated by desertion; we see many cases of desertion in the world; and if we have once been deserted by a friend, we become suspicious; but there was one only who was ever deserted of God; and that was His own Son, who for a season was left alone, and cried out, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” His desertion, then, secures to all who trust in Him, that they shall never be deserted; to be deserted of God is the sinner's due; if Jesus underwent the desertion for us, we shall not be called upon to undergo it for ourselves. As we remember His desertion on the cross, we may with the more confidence lay hold of the promise before us now, “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.”

Sometimes our spiritual trial takes the form of nervousness; we forecast all manner of evil; we are full of fears and doubts and thoughts of the possibility of danger, and dismal forebodings of one kind and another; we are like children who feel afraid lest they should be left alone in the dark. If you are asked, when labouring under this spiritual nervousness, what precisely it is that frightens you, you cannot tell; we cannot explain feelings in our body, nor can we in our soul either; and just because they are only feelings, and have no ground in fact, they are all the harder to be grappled with; well! let us grapple with them in this way—suppose the worst that we anticipate really does happen, our God will be with us through it all; “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”

It is very possible that our necessities may be so great, as to cause us to make heavy demands upon the One, by whom this promise is given; but the beauty of this word “*Never*” consists in this, that it is elastic enough to

cover all. Wilt Thou leave me, O Lord, if I be very poor? “*Never.*” Wilt Thou leave me if I be very ill? “*Never.*” Wilt thou leave me if I be very much despised? “*Never.*” And if not under these circumstances, then when wilt Thou leave me? “*Never*”—“*Never.*” “I will 'never' leave thee, nor forsake thee.”

It may be, dear reader, that you have yet a long way before you; much has yet to be endured, and much to be undergone; you see that friends fail, and human resources do not hold out; oh! do not argue spiritual failure from temporal; God's word “*Never*” reaches to the journey's end—to the finishing of life—to the entrance into rest. Oh! see how free all this is on God's part; and let this very freeness be a help to us to repose upon Him in trust.

*We could not keep God;* if He tarry with us, it must be of His own free will; and if He thus will to tarry with us, why should we be always fearing, as though He would ever change His mind?

*The natural result of our sin would be to drive Him from us;* but He knows whereof we are made; and though He may discipline, yet He will not desert us. He will not forsake us, spent, in giving help, as men often are—giving up tired, as men often do. We shall find Him at the journey's end, the same that He has been all through—and the Psalmist's words shall be ours, “Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me, Thy rod, and Thy staff, they comfort me,” Courage, then, dear child of God—your way in journeying may be long-or your night in watching may be weary; but One will be with you even unto the end—the One who says, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,”

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1. There are no less than five negatives in the original Greek. Translated literally the words would read, “No, I will not leave thee—no, neither will I not utterly forsake thee.”

# "Sown"

**"Light is SOWN for the righteous." Psalm xcvi, 11.**

**T**here is seed time and harvest for the body; there is seed time and harvest for the soul also; "Light is sown for the righteous," and a day is coming when light shall be reaped also. "A day is coming"—let us not want to antedate the time; and when the proper day has come, the harvest of the saints will be ripe, and their sickle shall be thrust in. This is a glorious prospect; and if now we have night seasons of barrenness or trouble, let us look onward, and comfort ourselves with glowing prospects of this day of light.

The little word which is now to form our subject of meditation, and it is to be hoped, of comfort also, is "**SOWN.**" We shall have to think of the

harvest; but there is something which precedes the harvest, and which must not be forgotten, viz., the preparation—the sowing.

And in truth, much need have we of keeping this preparation well before our mind's eye; for at present, there may be but very little to see; darkness rather than light is around; there is darkness in the political world, darkness in the social world, darkness in the spiritual world; perhaps, darkness in our own circumstances, and it may be even in our souls, and we need great brightness in the future to cheer us up at all. We are perhaps like men, who look at the fields, and say, "They are bare;" but the one who knows the ground says to us; "They are so now, but the seed is sown in them; it is under the clods, and they are destined to be bare, only for a season; when all the needful processes have been carried on; then a harvest shall be reaped."

Let us ponder a little this word **SOWN**. What is meant by it? A learned writer suggests that it means "scattered," i.e. light is shed abroad for the righteous, just as rays are scattered or shed forth from the sun. As the one hand throws abroad very many seeds, and that, in all directions; so the one great Source of light and comfort provides richly in all ways for His people.

This is indeed most blessed truth; and God's people desire to recognise it fully; they say, "He is the One from whom there cometh every good and perfect gift; my soul has many and varied needs and cravings, and I look to the one source for a supply;" but there is more than this contained in the word; there is all the preparation which is made for the saints—God's sowing for our reaping. In the first place, then; let us not despond, because we cannot see immediate results; we must not say, "there will never be anything, because I cannot see anything." As well might the farmer say, "there will be no harvest this year," because he stands in a fresh ploughed field; or the traveller say, "I shall have neither bed nor supper to night.

because there are many miles of road between me and the inn,” as the believer, “There is no good thing in store for me, because I can see nothing now.” Must we see signs and wonders before we believe; must we have God’s arrangements and orderings all put out of place, before we can feel sure that He means us any good? This must not be so; as we wait, and believe, in the world of nature, so must we also in the world of grace. What a comfortable thought is it for you, dear reader, if you be a believer, that God has Himself already sown every good thing for you; that the process is even now going on, by which those good things will mature; that He has put them in the way of coming to perfection. When the husbandman drops the seed into the ground, he puts it in the way of producing a harvest; he brings it into contact with the various chemical agents, by which it is to be made to sprout, and to be nourished, and bring forth blade and ear; this is just what God has done, dear reader, for you; He has put everything in train for great blessing for you; you, on your part, must allow all the needful processes to be worked out.

And let us remember that our future good things are not to come by chance. It is not “perhaps” they will come; it is not “they will spring up just like the bramble berries anywhere, or everywhere;” it is not “we may get light, or we may not;” all this would afford but a poor prospect for the believer; it is “Light is **sown.**” Now “Sowing” is a deliberate act; it is expected to be followed by certain results; it is done with a fixed design; and when we come to think that God is the sower of light for His people; that He deliberately intends that His seed shall sprout; that He has in His own hands, and under His own control all the elements of its success; how can we doubt that great blessing is in store for us, when the proper time has come.

But we must allow God's sowings time to sprout, and then time enough to mature into harvest. We must not be -like children always scratching up the seeds, to see how they are getting on; if we go to disturb God's gracious dealings, we shall be sure to retard them; let us be patient; "Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain, be ye also patient;" (James v, 7,) every day brings on the harvest—no day is lost—in each one, something is done to further the great end--blessings hidden out of our sight, are not hidden out of God's mind!

But it will be very comfortable, to think for a little while upon some of the grains of the coming harvest—to see what is really sown for the people of God.

*The Light of a large Revelation* will form one part of the great harvest of the saints. Here God's revelation, restricted though it be, and but little understood, is a light unto our feet and a lamp unto our path; cannot we then well believe, how glorious it will be in that time, when God gives a full revelation, and we have the capacity for understanding it? Now we pant to know more of God, and of God's ways, and we sometimes weary ourselves over mysteries, which we have at present no capacity to understand; but by and bye we shall not have, as it were, mere broken rays of truth, but a full light shining into our souls. "Now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face; now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." (1 Cor. xiii, 12.) Alas! how many are rejecting divine truths, because these are beyond their comprehension; because the present twilight is not strong enough for them to make out all the particulars of a truth, they ignore it altogether; and refusing to look at it in the twilight of early morn, they bid fair never to see it under the full blaze of the meridian sun. Dear



reader, remember the word “**Sown;**” he who uses twilight revelation is daily approaching in the divine life, nearer and nearer to the noontide revelation; and his present knowledge is, as it were, but the blade, which is yet to be crowned with the full and ripened ear.

Then, there is *the Light of Glory*. Oh! what a prospect outstretches itself before the believer in the harvest of glory for which preparation is even now being made. What light will shine from the resurrection body; what light from the countenance radiant with joy; what light from the crown which fadeth not away; no eye hath seen, no ear hath heard, no heart hath conceived what God hath thus prepared for them that love Him. But let us remember that this light is *sown*; many of God’s dear people are now treated like the apostles, as the very offscouring of all things; the Jews saw no beauty in the apostles’ Master that they should desire Him; the world sees no beauty in the disciples of the Master to make them desire any part or lot with them. If you, dear reader, have to bear scorning; if you are made little of; if you have the galling consciousness of being despised, oh remember that you, as a believer, are a person who from the very nature of the case have but little to shew. The people of the world may have something to shew (such as it is) for this is their harvest time, their “hour,” but your harvest time is to come; it requires perhaps faith, even on your part, to discern the first sprouting of the seed. We read in John i, that when Jesus, the true light came into the world, “the light shone in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not,” shall the disciple be above his master? If the glory of the Lord Jesus was not discerned in a world that lieth in sin, we need not be surprised if the glory of His people be not discerned either. God does not intend that it shall be discerned; and fall in, dear reader, with

God's design, and be content to be nobody, and wait for the day of "the manifestation of the sons of God."

Then, there is *the Light of Joy*. Now joy is the heart's light; night, and darkness, are the emblems which we use for sorrow and sadness; day and light, those with which we express happiness and joy. When Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost and prophesied, (Luke i, 78, 79,) he spoke of Jesus, the bringer of all real joy, as the "day-spring from on high," and he said that He was "to give light to them that sat in darkness, and in the shadow of death," and old Simeon (ii, 32,) sings of Jesus in the same key, when he calls Him "a light to lighten the Gentiles." "There be many" (said the Psalmist, Psalm iv, 6,) that say, "Who will shew us any good? Lord lift thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us." Oh! there is indeed a harvest of light and joy preparing for the poor believer, in that place of which it is written that "there shall be no night there," (Rev. xxii, 5,) no more crying, for "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Rev. xxi, 4; and the poor believer shall be with Him, "in whose presence there is the fulness of joy, and at whose right hand there are pleasures for evermore." (Psalm xvi, 11.) Earthly joy may be, and often is, but scarce with the believer; there are seasons, when the "endurance of afflictions" seems to be his lot, but his harvest is none the less sure on this account; many a one has to live low until his crop ripens; thank God, the believer is not left destitute now, but wealth of joy is reserved for the great harvest day.

Perhaps, the poor believer who reads these lines, has often to spend a night of wakefulness—the feeble rays of his night-light, his only companions during long dreary hours; or perhaps while others are active all the day long, he has to pass his time in bearing pain— oh! dear afflicted brother, or sister, think of what is sown for you in that harvest of which the

apostle speaks, in 1 Cor. xv, when he says of the body of the believer, “It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption, it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory, it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.” If your experience of the present life be, that it is “endurance,” your experience of the future one shall be, that it is “enjoyment;” if here it be “lassitude,” there it will be “energy;” if now, it be restrained groanings, then it will be outbursting psalmody of holy joy. Courage, poor afflicted one—the pain *is* bad; he mocks you, who says it is not—courage, poor long worn one, the weariness *is* depressing, he knows nothing of weariness, who says it is not—courage, poor deprived one; it is hard to have the light shut out from your chamber, to have the flowers blooming but not for your eye, and the birds singing but not for your ear; he knows little of the privations of illness, who says that there are no heart pinings for such things as these. Wait but yet a little while, dear friend; something is sprouting for thee; yes, the sprouts are coming up fast and thick; thy Lord hath sown the seed, thy Lord is superintending the growth; thy Lord will secure the harvest; yea, He will send thee to reap it, and it shall be all thine own. If thou art in Christ — then, however feeble and imperfect, thou art amongst the righteous in God’s eyes—and what is said of them? “Light is *sown* for the righteous.” Thus God hath sown—thus believer, mayest thou reap.

# “Upon”

**“The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing.” Psalm xli, 3.**

**T**he Lord will choose the scenes of His own glory. He seeth not as man seeth; what marvel if He chooseth not as man would choose. If man were to choose the scene of his own glory, it would be on the battle field, or in the senate, or in the philosophical school; or, if he were a physician, it would be in the speed and success with which he performed some cure; but never would it enter into the head of any, even of the physician, to get glory in simply “strengthening upon the bed of languishing.”

We must pay particular attention to this word **UPON**; all that is to be said in these pages hang upon that single word; we have not to consider deliverance out of languishing, but strengthening in languishing. This will,

no doubt, give to this little night-light its value with many; for many there are, who have no prospect of coming forth from a condition of languishing; in that condition they are to remain, until their body be sown in weakness to be raised in power. God will no doubt manifest His glory by and by in the resurrection bodies of the redeemed, but He is being glorified now also upon their beds of languishing, and by the strengthening He gives them there.

“*The bed of languishing!*” not of necessity the bed of torture; not the bed of violent disease, but of languishing—the bed of weariness, of weakness, of tossing to and fro, of drooping, of wearing out to the body, to the mind, and sometimes almost to the soul itself. And sometimes not the “bed” alone, but the couch, the great chair; where, though we do not seem, to the common eye, to be such invalids, as if we were confined to our beds, we are languishers, nevertheless; there are languishers who are able to be dressed, as well as languishers who must lie in bed.

Perhaps, you dear reader, know what it is to languish in body; you have no energy; you feel as if you had no nervous power; you toss to and fro; you weary; you cannot find a soft place for your head; nor a resting place for your arm; nor any position, in which you can stay long; you feel as if you did not know what to do with your body. Many of God's dear people have suffered thus; they have thus gone on for years, and have known little or no bodily relief, until they laid down the body altogether and entered into the joy of their Lord.

And this languishing invades the mind also. The mysterious union between body and mind makes itself felt in our deep depression of spirits; in our restlessness; in our inability to fix our attention; in our loss of power to grasp truth; in perhaps, even our appetite for the soul's food. Deep

despondency will at times invade the mind; it will cast its own hue over everything within our field of vision; it will make us feel almost indifferent; the exertion of thought becomes too much for us; and all the while, we feel, and sit in judgment upon our state, and write bitter things against ourselves, because we are so helpless.

And the soul languishes also; Adelaide Newton's bodily weakness became at times so oppressive to her, that she could scarcely even bear to be prayed with. "I can sink into Christ," she said on one of those occasions, "though I cannot rise to Him." (*Memoir of Adelaide Newton, page 353.*) Sometimes we find only the languishing body; sometimes body and mind; sometimes body and mind and soul.

Now, dear reader, the Lord does not leave His people under these circumstances; He does not permit Satan to come and destroy them at his leisure; He will never stand by, and see their afflictions taken advantage of to their ruin; it is His glory to preserve in danger as well as to draw forth from it; and so He appears as:

***Strengthening "upon", the bed of languishing.*** Now, who is it that thus strengthens? It is the Lord—the whole secret of the strengthening lies in the fact that He does it. Man can give the poor languisher no tonic; friends can bring no cordial; there is, perhaps, no acute disease either of body or of mind for them to grapple with; they can try to raise up the poor afflicted one from the bed of languishing; but they are quite unable to sustain him while he lies there—all strengthening upon the bed must come from the Lord.

Many are the ways in which the Lord thus strengthens upon the languishing bed. Sometimes He lets in bright prospects of the future, when all weariness and languishing of body and mind shall be done away with forever. He opens a little chink in the curtains of the sky, and lets us look

through; and sometimes so much is seen, even through a little chink, that the poor languishing one is cheered, and says, "Does all that blessing, all that rest, lie before me? Then I will hold on patiently; for assuredly that is a sweet rest that remaineth for the people of God." There is nothing more cheering to anyone who is sad and depressed, than the prospect of a change for the better; it may be only a prospect; it may be some time before the change can come, but the very expectation of it is full of sustaining power. If you, dear reader, are a languisher, think that your state is but a transient one; listen, if you like, to the ticking of the clock in your room, and count the seconds, and say— "There—I am so many seconds nearer my rest—listen how fast the clock ticks;" think how fast you are speeding to the place where pain and languishing are known no more.

Many of God's strengthening's come to the poor languishing believer, just as the dew comes to the languishing flower. In drops invisible the dew descends upon the curling leaves, and refreshes without being perceptible to eye or ear; and in ways almost unknown to the believer himself, the strengthening influences of God pervade his soul. What can be more imperceptible than just the bare thought that God is looking at us; we often think that, without deriving any special comfort from the thought; but when this thought is stirred of God's Spirit within us, then many other thoughts connect themselves with it. The thoughts seem to come of themselves; we are, perhaps, too languid to think them; and there comes before us the blessedness of being the object of God's thought, of the love and tenderness, which make Him care for a languisher; the consciousness that we shall not be either overburdened or forsaken. What! God see a poor languishing one, and not feel for him! see a poor wounded man, and not be better than the good Samaritan to him— Oh no! and before we know that we have been

thinking at all, in some mysterious way, we find ourselves strengthened. God's dew has fallen upon us, and the languishers are refreshed. Sometimes the Lord reveals to us the need of the bed of languishing, and then we feel deep content, and are strong, in the conviction that it is best for us to be even as we are. A young man, who had long been confined with a diseased limb, and was near dissolution, was attended by a friend, who requested that the wound might be uncovered. This being done, "There," said the young man, "there it is, and a precious treasure it has been to me; it saved me from the folly and vanity of youth; it made me cleave to God as my only portion, and to eternal glory as my only hope; and I think it has now brought me very near to my Father's house." "In all cases of affliction," says Simeon in a letter to a friend, "it is my habit to ask, 'Whence come you?' And the answer I invariably receive, speedily and effectually composes my mind: 'I come from your Father, to bring you into closer communion with Him, and richer knowledge of Him, and more entire conformity to His image;' I apprehend this had been Paul's habit, when in the midst of such afflictions, as no other man ever sustained for so long a time, he cried in reference to them all, (2 Cor. xii, 10. See James i, 2. ('I take pleasure'—'count it all joy.')

And be assured, dear reader, that God has good reasons for strengthening His people upon their beds of languishing. He knows how Satan would take advantage of their protracted weakness, and depress them even unto death; He knows exactly the measure of our strength, and praised be His name, He knows also the blessed depths and impulses of His own heart; we shall find the best reason for our refreshment, in the well-spring of His love. For His own honour, for His own love's sake, the Lord will never leave His people to perish unhelped upon the languishing bed. Only remember the word



upon. There are some who think that they are not helped at all, unless they be taken off the bed of languishing—that is the only way in which they look for blessing; and the consequence is, they mistake altogether the intended dealings of God with them, and miss the blessing suitable to their present need. Our opinion of this state must not be, that the only blessing we can receive, is to get out of it; we must rather think what blessing is to be had in it. We sometimes say “Lord, take me off”—the Lord says, “I will strengthen thee upon the bed of languishing.”

And now, what views shall we take of the bed of languishing? Shall we look upon it as an accursed spot, and set down the one that lies thereon as under the malediction of his God? Shall we deem it a desert place, where no fruit ripens, no flower blossoms, no leaf buds? Shall we call it a dry and thirsty land in which no water is? Far from it! There was one who said it was good for him to have been afflicted there are some who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the bed of man's languishing is often the bed of God's strengthening. Here, on this bed of languishing has many a man received day by day tokens of the loving kindness of His God; they came to him silently, as the dew comes to the languishing plant—silently, as the manna fell around the Israelite's tent. He who knew how short a way the weak and weary one could reach, has dropped the blessing into his very hand; and given him without toil, that for which others have to seek. Many a languishing one, too weak to pursue blessing, has received it, he knew not exactly how— it seemed to come to him mysteriously; and men, perhaps, doubted whether it were genuine, because he could not argue about it, or perhaps account for it; but the secret of the matter lies here, God's Holy Spirit moved within him, and he was blessed.

Oh! there are special blessings for special seasons, and special circumstances; God is a discriminating God, and He gives according to our particular need; He knows that the same dealings will not suit the place of languishing, and that of strife. Great warriors have their blessing; great mourners have theirs; great languishers have theirs; the same God is over life's busy street, and life's lonely path—the warrior in the strife, the labourer in the field, the languisher upon the bed. Be not afraid of the bed of languishing, as though it would find you too worn out for your God; if He have food for the strong man, and milk for the babes, He has also a cordial for the weak—the bed of languishing may be the place of blessing.

And it is a place, also, for a *manifestation of the glory of God*. If you be on this bed, you are occupying a position to God's glory, just as truly as he who is astir in the world for Him. Luther described himself as being only a windy frothy preacher, when compared with an afflicted brother. Yes! God can manifest His glory in sustaining His people upon the bed of languishing; and they may manifest His glory by being sustained; the evil spirits around their beds, doubtless witness their endurance and patience and holy testimony in the power of Divine strength, and thus the Lord is glorified. The records of eternity will, no doubt, contain the hours of the night watching's of the saints; if their tears be put into God's bottle, doubtless, their tossing's are written in His book; the languishing bed will prove a field from which God's harvest of glory gains a sheaf; and the remembrance of it will be blessed in the land where there shall be no more pain.

**“YE”**

**“And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not *YE*; for I know that ye seek Jesus which was crucified.” Matt, xxviii, 5.**

**N**ever had women more cause to fear than these helpless creatures, who came forth with trembling steps, but loving hearts, to the sepulchre of the crucified Christ. We can gather from the Greek that they had been witnesses of all the events, of which we have an account in the beginning of this chapter,—of the appearance of the angel whose “*countenance was like lightning, and whose raiment was white as snow,*”—of the violent shock wherewith the stone of the sepulchre was rolled away—and of the terror of the guards, who, men and soldiers though they were, could not bear the angel-sight, but quaked and became as dead. Such sights

as these, were in themselves enough to appall a manly heart; let us not forget, that they who witnessed them were women; and that the natural weakness of their sex, and the unprotected circumstances in which they were placed, together with the depressed condition of their minds, from all that they had recently gone through, must have added to the terror with which they had been struck at a moment such as this. Most blessed then to them must have been the angel's words, "Fear not." Such words, even when spoken by mere human lips, are cheering, soothing sounds; what must they have been when uttered by an angel's lips? when softly, and balmily, they stole in upon and quelled the fluttering's of these women's hearts? Upon them, doubtless they did their special work; but when they did that, their mission was not fulfilled. They have to speak to us as much as to the women at the sepulchre; they have a mission to many a sorrowing disciple of the Lord; they have a depth of meaning which will not be exhausted, so long as there is one to be comforted, who, sorrowful and affrighted, is seeking Jesus in His death. And it is thus we must consider these words now,—not with reference to these holy women only, but to such sorrowing ones as may read these lines. Light streams forth upon us in this passage, from three distinct sources:

(I.) *From the persons addressed.* (II.) *From the work in which they were engaged.* (III.) *From the special knowledge that was taken of them.*

And first, with regard to the persons addressed by the angel—they were women; women, who from their sex were naturally timid; who had in themselves nothing to enable them to face a supernatural appearance, or any of the terrors of such a scene as we have here. No doubt woman has a heroism of her own; but it is not the heroism that can face the beings of another world, without being moved; or that will leave her with an

unblanched cheek and unquivering lip, when soldiers, trained to arms from their youth, become as dead men. Let us remember what they were—women—because this contains a part of the important spiritual teaching of this passage, when we connect this fact with one little word further on. Inherent weakness is a doctrine, which now-a-days must never be let slip; for often, even where the existence of inward misery and ruin is granted, it is not allowed that man is in himself too weak, too bad, to repair the breach.

These, then, were poor women, with every element of weakness in themselves; but it was not on this score that they heard the comforting words from the angel of the Lord.

Let our attention now be fixed on the word “**ye**,” that word is emphatic, and from this the most important instruction is to be derived. It is as though the angel said: “Look at yonder corpse-like men, good cause have they to fear; they are the enemies of Jesus; but ‘ye’ are Jesus’ friends; ‘ye’ are wholly distinct from them; no cause for fear have ‘ye.’” And is not this full of teaching to some reader, who, weak, frightened, and sorrowful, is seeking Jesus? “Fear not **ye!**” as though the heavenly voice would say to such: “I do not count you among the enemies of Jesus; I draw a distinctive line between you and them; ye are not to be terrified with that which terrifies them; there is a wholly different message from heaven to you, and to them.” And we may be assured, that it is so; there is a strong distinction made between those who love Jesus and those who do not; between those who are seeking Him sorrowing, and those who, like the armed guards, are only concerned, that so far as they can help, Jesus and His preachings shall trouble men no more. The “**ye**” of this passage are in existence now; they are in existence amongst sorrowing disciples; there are those of whom Jesus would say; “Fear not **ye.**” It is blessed to be thus marked off; for a man to

have it said to him, “you need not be afraid; that which with good reason terrifies another, and stiffens him with fright, until he becomes even like a corpse, has nothing to do with you,—nothing but good.”

And is it not an inestimable comfort to many of my readers, that they have an existence, as the “ye“ spoken of in the text; that while they feel themselves to be weak, and low, and sorrowful, to be intrinsically no stronger than the women in the text, they, nevertheless, are safe, and spoken comfortably to in the power of their relationship to Jesus? They are as weak as the women in themselves; but they have a safety which the strongest of the earth cannot possess, in their relationship to Him. Oh! what a glorious thought it is for the saints of God—even for the very weakest—that they stand in the power of their relationship to Christ; that they are in the distinctive family of God; that they are members of a class, to whom words of distinctive recognition and peace are applied. They need desire no more. A place amid the ranks of the greatest warriors of earth, would not have won for these women the privileges connected with this word “ye” Had they been numbered among the monarchs and high estates of this world’s nobility, their rank, and style, and title, their crowns, their purple, and their gems would have gained from Heaven no such respect as this;—far from it—This “ye” was beyond all worth; it could do what could not be done by any human might. All that man could do in his strength and armour, was to be seen in the guards who had become as dead; but here, in the case of the women, was human weakness, and yet great strength in relationship with Christ. That word “ye,” at once drew the trembling women out of their connection with anything which could affright; the word is small, but the depth of mystery in it is great;—to be known it must be felt. May the Holy

Spirit make us know somewhat more of it, and add to the blissful knowledge of those who know anything about it at all.

Thus much, then, in part we learn from this one word, which should ever be read with emphasis, to give to the sentence in the text its real sense and force. Let us now see three or four of the teachings which are to be gathered up, from a consideration of the work in which these holy women were engaged. There was

(1.) *Loving personal search!* and (2.) *Loving service!* and (3.) *Devotion to One rejected!* also (4.) *A work in eminent contradistinction to that which brought terror on the keepers.*

Theirs was a loving personal search; they came in quest of the body of Christ; for even though the life had parted from it, though the eye were closed, and the heart had stopped, though the tongue were silent and the limbs were stiff, the body was still the person of the One they loved; and they came to search for it, with deeper earnestness, than ever a diver searched the ocean's depths for pearls, or a miner the bowels of the earth for gold. The angel knew well what brought those women there. And if this be our business, let us rest assured that we shall have spoken to us some such comfortable words as these trembling women heard. "Fear not ye" is the message which God sends to everyone who is seeking Jesus; none can hurt those who are seeking Him,— in weakness it may be, and in the world's contempt, but in humble, personal love. They are blessed indeed, who are thus seeking after Christ; like these women they want to get to Him, Himself. If you, dear reader, be one of these, you are not in search of doctrines, systems, creeds, forms, ceremonies, or anything of the kind; you are in search of Christ Himself; it is on this errand you have gone forth; it is for this you have determined to brave the armed forces of the world, just as

these women were prepared to brave the terrors of the sepulchre's guard. No matter how many try to keep you from your Lord, and no matter what the weapons which they bear, you desire to search out Jesus; perhaps you also, like the women who loved the Lord, will find, that God makes matters plain before you, stiffening the energies, and throwing down the weapons of those who would forbid approach to Christ. Ah! well the angel knew what brought these lone women there; they had no weapons in their hands; sorrowing love, and not hate to that angel's Lord, was what he saw written upon their faces; those anxious looks were looks of love, and that love was all toward Christ. It is not hard to understand how and why he laid Heaven's own emphasis on this word "ye."

May we not say hence a comforting word to such as are now doing in spirit, what these poor women did in the flesh; who are seeking Christ; Christ Himself, and that in sorrow? Nothing short of Jesus Himself will satisfy you; well! you are known; you are marked; all your heart's feelings are understood; even though you do not find Him immediately, is it not inexpressibly precious to know that God's word concerning you is "Fear not ye?" There is no heavenly manifestation that can hurt you; that which unnerves the enemies of Jesus has no mission against you. In your search after Christ you may meet with "countenances like lightning" and with "raiment white as snow;" God may show you purity and holiness, to such an extent as to make you loathe yourself in dust and ashes; but He will know that you are in search of the One, who can make you pure,—even Jesus Christ Himself; and this is what He will have said to you: "Fear not ye, for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified."

Perhaps there are some also among my readers, who, like the women in the text, are abroad upon loving service; 'tis true that you, even as they, are



but poor and weak; you make no show; you have, it may be, nothing but a poor disturbed and saddened heart, wherewith to serve; but if it be for Christ Himself—if you so love Him, that you cannot but minister unto Him—God says to you “Fear not ye,”—as though He said, “I know the secrets of your heart, I know for whom and to whom you work; while I blast the energies of the world’s mighty men, until from very fear they become as though they were dead; fear not ye, for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.”

Here also was entire devotion to One who was rejected by the world. The world would have none of Him; or would have Him only on its own terms; it could have no sympathy with one bearing the penalty of the broken law and placed under a curse; how much less could it bear One who made no compromise with its sins! It thought not only to cast Him into the tomb, but also to keep Him there; it had its executioners to do the one, and its guards to secure the other. But the world’s apparent rejection, the world’s apparent triumph, had no power to turn aside these loving hearts; it was to Christ Himself they were devoted, and that, whether gloom or sunshine characterized His path.

And in this very devotion to the One rejected by the world, they themselves received the blessed testimony, that they were not rejected of Heaven; whilst they were witnessing how they loved Jesus, the angel of Jesus witnessed how they were loved. What a glorious prospect for all, whose religion is not merely that of fashion— for all who come forth in service to a rejected Lord! In their testimony they shall be testified to; ministering to a personal Christ they shall be ministered to as persons. There can be no vague generality in this “Fear not ye.”

## **"Yet"**

**“-----Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance.” Psalm xlii, 5.**

**A** man cannot be said to be utterly destitute, as long as he has hope within his breast. He may be very poor; he may have no money in the bank, no food in the cupboard, and but scanty clothes upon his back; still, if he have hope within his breast, he will float upon the surface of life's troubled waters, and in all probability, be able eventually to buffet his way successfully through its waves. Hope pours a cordial into the heart, so that it pulsates with a quicker beat; hope kindles a fire in the eyes, so that they beam with a brighter light; hope gives elasticity to the step, and vigour to the limbs; it spreads a flush over the pallid cheek, and relaxes the compressed lip into a smile; as man has need of it everywhere, so

everywhere is it to be found; amid the glassy icebergs of the north; amid the sunny vineyards of the south, wherever there is a footing for human life, there, in some form or another, hope has its abode. “We might take up the words of the poet and say

*“When all forsook the friendless guilty mind*

*“Then hope, the charmer, lingered still behind,*

\*

*“Auspicious hope! in thy sweet garden grow*

*“Wreaths for each toil, a charm for every woe.*

\*

*“Angel of life! thy glittering wings explore*

*“Earth's loneliest bounds, and ocean's wildest shore.”*

*Campbell's “Pleasures of Hope”*

If hope were removed from the earth, man's life-blood would freeze, man's intellect would fail, man's heart would break.

And nowhere is hope more needed, than in the great concerns of the soul. Men suffer depressions from losses in business, from bodily ailments, from family bereavements, and hope carries them through all these; but what are they to the losses, ailments, and bereavements of the soul? The causes of depression are as manifold in the spiritual world as in the natural; every child of God knows this from experience; and what is to become of the poor soul, if it be bereft of hope?

Now here, in the passage which furnishes us with this little word, under present consideration, we have a soul in great depression — almost hopeless—sunk down into the depths; —tears are its meat day and night;

waves and billows have gone over it; there is a sword in the bones, and reproach from the enemies, and casting down, and disquiet on every side.

As we are providing night-lights for common use, we should never gather the materials for one from such a mass of sorrows as we have here, if they were exceptional and uncommon. But the truth is, they are not— they form no inconsiderable part of the experiences of God's people; a night-light is wanted oftentimes for those, who are not merely restless, and anxious, but whose “sore runneth in the night season,” and who “all the night long, water their couch with their tears.”

Let us observe what the Psalmist does here; he *(1) argues with, and chides his soul*; then he *(2) encourages his soul, by bringing before it God's faithfulness, and hope for the future*.

Now, it is a good thing to argue with, and at times to chide ourselves; we shall generally get more good from arguing with ourselves, than from another's arguing with us; if we ourselves, can prove to ourselves, that anything is unreasonable, we shall in most cases be more surely convinced than if this proving be done by another—the practical conviction will be stronger. The truths which we think out, have commonly a firmer hold upon our minds than those which we have been taught. So then, when we are down very low, let us not tamely acquiesce in our prostration, but let us examine into matters, and ask ourselves, “Why is this; Why art thou so utterly cast down, O my soul? I know my trouble, and I know alas! that I have brought my trouble upon myself; but why should my life be, as it were, almost utterly destroyed?” We must not take it for granted, that we are to be destroyed—the matter is of altogether too much importance for that; we must debate and argue the question; and no doubt in the argument, something will turn up that will make for our peace. We would not lose a

property without having our right to it argued in court; we must not utterly lose our spiritual peace, without having an argument for it also.

The believer ought to be vigorous in this matter; he must not only be chidden by sermons, and texts, and godly friends, but he must by the grace of God arouse himself; and take himself in hand; and argue with himself; and do his best against himself; and push himself hard; and make his soul give a reason, if it can, why it should be utterly cast down, seeing that the word of God is so full of promises, and God Himself so full of love.

Remember, believer, that one object of Satan is to depress you out of life—to bring you so low, that lack of hope may prove your death. When Giant Despair beat poor Christian and Hopeful with his grievous crab-tree cudgel, in such sort, that they were not able to help themselves, or to turn them upon the floor; he went on further the next day, when he found them very sore, to tell them that as they were never likely to come out of his dungeon, their only way would be forthwith to make an end of themselves, either with knife, halter, or poison; “for why,” said he, “should you choose to live, seeing it is attended with so much bitterness?”

We must not be ignorant of Satan's devices; we must not sink so low as to part easily with life.

But how shall we encourage our souls? the answer is readily found in the passage before us, “Hope thou in God,” not “Hope thou in thyself,” not “Look thou at any resources in thyself,” not “Extricate thyself,” but, “Let God come upon the scene,” “Look away from self, on Him.”

Now you have every reason, dear reader, to hope in God; He it is who has said that He “willeth not the death of a sinner”— who has said, “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee”—who has shewn you kindness hitherto—who is a covenant God and changes not with circumstances, let them

alter never so much; we must beat ourselves off from ourselves; hard work it often is, nevertheless, it must be done—humbling work it is, nevertheless, it is safe. “I am very much tried in some ways mentally,” said one of God's people, “I feel so stagnant! but I am able to rejoice in what God is; and I hope all this is to humble me, and to lay me, and keep me low.” (*from Adelaide Newton's Life*).

But that to which our attention is particularly to be drawn is the word “**Yet.**”—“**Yet,**” implies a future time—a time is coming when my soul shall be delivered out of all these waves, and despite these waves. If the believer be in trouble, he cannot, by any effort of his will, get rid of the trouble, and say, “I am not in trouble”—that would be untrue. This “**Yet**” is for use at this very troubled season; the happiness offered to the believer is this—you shall emerge from this sorrow; there is a little opening of blue sky in the midst of the murky clouds; brighter days are coming; this dark season has an end; hold on bravely through the storm; when the violence of the gale has passed, there will come a calm. Remember, that the existence of the storm is no proof that you are not a child of God; on the other hand, it is in all probability on this very account that you are tried; it is your part to work through the storm, it will be God's part to see that the storm works itself out.

Perhaps the child of God is full of objections about this word “**Yet.**” You say “I don't see how I'm ever to praise Him again; I don't see how I'm ever to be delivered from this storm, or set at liberty out of this prison.” Well, dear friend, you must not part with your “**Yet**” on that account; God has a great many ways of bringing about this “**Yet;**” it is not necessary that you should know any of them\* He who is about to deliver you by them, knows them, and that is enough. When Hopeful and Christian, to whom we have

already alluded, were shut up in the dungeon of Giant Despair, Hopeful said to Christian, “Let us consider again that all the law is not in the hand of Giant Despair; others, so far as I can understand, have been taken by him as well as we, and yet have escaped out of his hands. Who knows but that God, who made the world, may cause that Giant Despair may die; or that at some time or other he may forget to lock us up; or that he may in a short time have another of his fits before us, and may lose the use of his limbs.” They had many chances of escape; and so, poor troubled soul have you; do not say “I will not believe that there is a bright ‘**Yet**’ for me,” because you can see nothing—it is of the very essence of a “**Yet**,” that it is not now, but is to come.

Perhaps you say “I believe that there is this blessed ‘**Yet**’ in the future, but alas! I cannot hold out until then; while the good time is coming, I am perishing; and shall have perished before it comes.” You certainly are the one with but little strength; and hear what the Lord says to such a one, “I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it, for thou hast a little strength.” (Rev. iii, 8.) You are right in saying you cannot hold out; but God will hold you in the hollow of His hand, until the good time comes. Though the Israelitish nation was afflicted four hundred years, He kept them until their good time had come; though Joseph was in prison thirteen years, He kept him until his good time was come; we are held, when we cannot hold. Take courage then, and believe, poor tried soul, that there is a bright and happy “**Yet**” for thee.

But, perhaps you say, “Why not now? I am surely in sufficiently sore need to be helped at once. ”Times of hoping upon God, are times of honouring God; He is often more honoured in the days of His people’s waiting, than of their receiving. Besides which, it is in such seasons as

these, that high Christian character is formed—and would you, dear friend, be an ill-taught child amid the family of God?

And now, let a few words of encouragement and comfort be added, for they are undeniably wanted, when the waiting time is long.

While waiting for deliverance, be assured that God will not allow you to be tried above what you are able to bear. (1 Cor. x, 13.) He measures the force of every temptation; He measures your strength to resist it; He measures out the grace from Himself that is necessary for you to be borne triumphantly or safely through it; and you shall not perish while the blessing is coming.

Moreover the “**Yet**,” is something positive—it is not a chance—a “perhaps”—it is certain. Dismiss, dear friend, all “ifs,” with reference to this “**Yet**,” rest upon the certainty of God's word; those who are in torment would scarce mind the pains of thousands of years, if they had a certainty of being delivered at the last; the “**Yet**” would sustain them through it all; and will you not bear up during what must be at most temporary trial, when there is a certain “**Yet**” put before you, by God Himself?

And in the power of this little word “**Yet**,” you will be able to act with all that life and vigour which hope inspires. You will say, “I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord;” you will perhaps say, “The Lord hath chastened me sore, but He hath not given me over unto death.” (Psalm cxviii, 17, 18.) You will say, “I am a struggling man, but I am not a doomed man; I am a man in present difficulty, but I am also a man with a glorious prospect; I am troubled on every side, yet not distressed; I am perplexed, but not in despair; I am persecuted, but not forsaken; I am cast down, but not destroyed.” (2 Cor. iv, 8, 9.) The hope inspired by this word “**Yet**,” will strengthen your arms in many a hard wrestling with your foe; it will refresh



your feet in many a weary mile of up-hill road; it will make the misty eyesight clear to see the land of promise afar off; and it will make the dull ear sharp of hearing, to catch the soothing strains of the home and rest of the redeemed. Remember, beloved, that "Light is sown for the righteous;" (Psalm xcvi, 11,) and while the seed is sprouting and the harvest ripening, we must wait. Remember that "there remaineth a rest for the people of God." (Heb. iv, 9.) After you have suffered awhile the Lord will perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. Say unto thy soul "Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance and my God."

**The End**