

BETTER THAN GOLD;

OR,

The Precious Blood of Christ.

BY

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"YE KNOW THAT YE WERE NOT REDEEMED WITH CORRUPTIBLE THINGS
SUCH AS SILVER AND GOLD. . . . BUT WITH THE PRECIOUS BLOOD
OF CHRIST, AS OF A LAMB WITHOUT BLEMISH."

1 Peter i. 18, 19.



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PREFACE.

GOLD is the standard of value in the world's market. All things are measured by it. Even a man is reckoned "worth" the amount of gold he has at his command.

It is the emblem of wealth, the basis of commerce, the "sinews of war."

By its power the mightiest enterprises are undertaken and successfully carried out. Whatever schemes the intelligence of man devises, their fulfilment ultimately becomes "only a question of money."

How men hunt for gold ! How they hunger and thirst for it ! How they will toil like slaves in a mine, losing health, peace of mind, the joys of home, and all the sweets of life in the eager search. Alas ! how many there are who "have made gold their hope, and have said to the fine gold, 'Thou art my confidence,'" while millions are ever ready to "fall down and worship the golden image" which "the god of this world" hath set up.

Gold is indeed mighty, and "the rich hath many friends," for "men will praise thee when thou doest well to thyself." It supplies many comforts, provides countless luxuries, and mitigates many wants.

Yet many toil a lifetime and never grow rich ; and many grow rich, but their riches "make themselves wings

and fly away," while God is offering them as a *free gift* that which is infinitely better than "thousands of gold and silver."

Strange that men, immortal beings, with an eternity of weal or woe before them, should spend so much time and labour upon "that which satisfieth not;" while they lightly esteem and even hate that which would unlock for them the richest storehouses of heaven. With eyes fixed upon the ground, and all their thoughts intent upon the gains or pleasures of this passing world, they despise, to their souls' eternal loss, that which is precious in the sight of the Lord, and which would bring them "*durable riches and righteousness.*"

But there are many who, dissatisfied with everything this world can give, are longing to find rest unto their *souls*. They want pardon, peace, joy ; they "hunger and thirst after righteousness," and are perhaps earnestly inquiring, "*What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?*"

There are also many others who have indeed been delivered from the horrible pit and the miry clay, and whose feet have been set upon the "Rock of Ages," but who are sorely troubled and cast down from want of a clear understanding of their position before God.

To both of these the following pages may prove useful. They are an humble attempt, by the grace of God, to show forth in some measure the preciousness of "*the blood of Christ.*"

Should the Lord be graciously pleased to use this little book in any way for His glory, in leading souls to the Saviour, or in building up, strengthening, or comforting any of His own children, to Him be all the praise.

"NOT UNTO US, O LORD, NOT UNTO US, BUT
UNTO THY NAME GIVE GLORY, FOR
THY MERCY AND FOR THY
TRUTH'S SAKE."

London.

II. D. B.



CHAPTER I.

PRECIOUS TO THE SINNER.

WHO women lay in a Spanish prison under condemnation of death. They had been convicted of murder, and were awaiting the day of execution. They were daily visited by the priest, who sought to administer such consolation as the Church of Rome can afford. The elder woman seemed to think lightly of her crime and was easily comforted, but with the other the case was far different.

It was not merely the prospect of a speedy and a violent death that moved her, but she knew that "after death the judgment" was to come, and that her soul, stained with the blood of a fellow-creature, must shortly appear before

the tribunal of a righteous God to receive in eternity the due reward of her deeds. The sins of her past life, moreover, rose up before her, and she knew that she could not answer for one of a thousand of her transgressions.

In vain the priest told her of the merits of saints, the virtue of prayers, and the efficacy of the mass. In vain he sought to comfort her by reminding her of past good deeds and her faithful adherence to "the Church." The soul, face to face with its sin, finds all such considerations but "miserable comforters" at the best. "If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart;" and when once the sinner awakes to the awful fact that he is "guilty before God," nothing but the sure Word of God Himself can give him peace.

The poor priest was deeply grieved for the woman, and in great perplexity; he had never before had such a case to deal with, but he tried everything he could think of to assuage her grief. At last, he said hesitatingly, "I have surely heard somewhere about the blood of Jesus Christ cleansing from all sin."

"Oh, say that again!" cried the poor prisoner, bending eagerly forward to catch the blessed words which "the mouth of the Lord hath spoken." The priest repeated them, and said

he thought they would be found in the Protestant Bible.

She entreated him to procure a Bible for her and let her see the words herself, and he, really concerned for her, and anxious to do anything to pacify her, promised.

After making diligent inquiry, he succeeded in obtaining a Bible, and having found the passage in 1 John i. 7, he hurried off to the prison with the "glad tidings of great joy." And as the poor sin-stricken soul heard the glorious truth read out, and knew of a surety that it was the testimony of God Himself, she was enabled to lay hold of it by faith, and to cast her burden upon Him who had "made peace through the blood of his cross" (Col. i. 20).

Reader ! does it seem strange to you that one who was guilty of so great a crime should obtain forgiveness on such easy terms ? Does it seem unreasonable that one who had but a little while before hurried a fellow-creature, perhaps unprepared, into eternity, should herself be saved but a few days, or perhaps hours, before her death, with nothing to commend her to the favour of God ?

Most unreasonable, judged from a human standpoint; but we are not here considering the *sinner's deserts*, but *the value of the blood*.

God says: "The blood of Jesus Christ His

Son cleanseth us from *all* sin." The proclamation of the gospel is, "WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH IN HIM shall receive remission of sins" (Acts x. 43). No limitation is put upon the magnitude or the multitude of the sins, nor on the time which the sinner still has to live. At any moment, from the cradle to the grave, "whosoever will" may "have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace" (Eph. i. 7); and "being justified by faith, have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. v. 1).

Let me take you in thought to another scene. On a little mount stand three crosses, round which a cruel mocking multitude surges like the waves of the sea. On the outer two hang two malefactors, after a life of infamy dying a death of agony and shame. On the inner cross is crucified "the Lord of glory," "the Holy One of God," "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth," yet who was dying a death of deeper shame, and enduring a far more terrible agony, than His companions in suffering.

Marvellous paradox! "The wages of *sin* is *death*;" but here, side by side, the sinner and *the sinless One* are suffering the same penalty.

Why is this? It is not merely that wicked men "hated Him without a cause;" it was not

only that this was their "hour and the power of darkness."

Heaven, earth, and hell had each proclaimed His perfect innocence. The "unclean devil" had "cried out with a loud voice, I know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God." Pilate, the earthly judge, had declared, "I find no fault in Him." His bitterest enemies had left unanswered His challenge, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" And God Himself had twice proclaimed, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Now it was impossible for God, the righteous Judge, to permit His Holy One to suffer, *unless He suffered justly*. Not a hair of His head might fall to the ground, notwithstanding all the rage of men and devils, while God sat on the throne of the universe, except in accordance with undeviating justice, for "justice and judgment are the habitation of His throne."

But although no accusation was found against *Him*, there was an accusation found against *us*, and "the Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all." He who knew no sin was *made sin for us*. He who was "without blemish and without spot," "*bare our sins in His own body* on the tree, that we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness."

Here was the grand secret of this great mystery. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." Here we behold "the exceeding riches of His grace." Here we begin to "comprehend what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height" of "the love of Christ which passeth knowledge."

It is in the cross of Christ that we see the fullest manifestation of God's infinite hatred to sin, and His infinite love to the sinner, interwoven, as it were, the warp and the woof of the Divine mind.

Because the Son of God had taken upon Himself our iniquity, His "righteous Father" could not abate one jot of sin's dread penalty, even though the sin-bearer were His "holy child Jesus." "*The wages of sin is death.*" "*Without shedding of blood there is no remission;*" therefore, if sinners were to be saved, the blood of atonement must flow. The sword of eternal justice must hear the cry, "Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow!"

"But He was wounded for *our* transgressions, He was bruised for *our* iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." How intense is the holiness of God! no sin can stand before Him:

even the bearer of *imputed* sin must "abide the fierceness of His anger."

But while sin is "the abominable thing" which God hates; while He is "of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look upon iniquity;" while eternal justice demands that He should "by no means clear the guilty," yet, "herein is love; not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John iv. 10).

Oh, poor sinner! can you, for one moment, doubt the wondrous love, the tender compassion of God toward you? What more could He have done than He has done? What greater proof could He have given that He loves you, and yearns over you, guilty and defiled though you be? "God commendeth His love toward us, in that *while we were yet sinners*, Christ died for us."

"Jehovah lifted up His rod ;
O Christ, it fell on Thee !
Thou wast sore stricken of Thy God :
There's not one stroke for me.
Thy tears, Thy blood beneath it flowed ;
Thy bruising healeth me."

How amazing is this love! and to whom was it shown? "God so loved *the world*." Did He, then, see *any* thing in us to draw out His love?

Listen ! "God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God. Every one of them is gone back, they are altogether become filthy ; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." "Corrupt are they and have done abominable iniquity" (Psalm liii.). "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. vi. 5).

Man was made to be "the image and glory of God ;" but, alas ! he turned that glory into shame.

God looked upon the *heart*, whose whole affections ought to have been centred on Himself, but He found that it was "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." He looked upon the tongue which was made for His praise, but behold it was "full of cursing and bitterness ;" yea, "the whole head was sick, and the whole heart faint ; from the sole of the foot to the crown of the head there was no soundness in it."

Such was the character of those upon whom He poured out His love. For such He "spared not His own Son," and to such He speaks even now in words of tenderest entreaty.

Let us turn again to the scene on Calvary. The Saviour of the world was in the hour of His deepest humiliation. He was “being made a curse for us, for it is written : Cursed is every one that hangeth upon a tree.” In the words of David, David’s Lord could now say : “I am a worm and no man, a reproach of men and despised of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn ; they shoot out the lip ; they shake the head. They gaped upon me with their mouths, as on a ravening and a roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint ; my heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to the roof of my jaws ; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death” (Psalm xxii.).

How deep was the degradation He received at the hand of man ! “They crucified Him, parting His garments and casting lots. And sitting down, they watched Him there. And they that passed by reviled Him, wagging their heads, and saying, If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking Him, with the scribes and elders, said: He saved others, Himself He cannot save. He trusted in God, let Him deliver Him

now if He will have Him" (Matt. xxvii.). And—deeper degradation still—the very "thieves which were crucified with Him cast the same in His teeth."

And this was "the only-begotten of the Father," "His well-beloved Son;" yet no thunderbolt of God's wrath fell upon the revilers of His Holy One. Surely this was the hour when His love was proved to the uttermost, while "more than twelve legions of angels," looking on in adoring wonder, waited but the slightest intimation of His will, ready to sweep the blasphemers in one moment into everlasting destruction.

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," uttered by those parched lips and the tongue that clave to His jaws, ascended to the heavenly throne, and "entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth." How quickly the prayer was answered. Suddenly the light from heaven broke in upon the darkened soul of one who but a little while before had taken part in the cruel mockery. The penitent thief, confessing his sin, trusted his soul to the crucified Nazarene; and the Saviour's spirit was refreshed with a draught of that infinite joy which awaits Him, when "He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied," when "a great multitude

which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, shall stand before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands."

" O grace above all measure !
O love beyond all bound !
Behold its richest treasure
Poured out upon the ground.
The crimson blood
From Christ that flowed
To heal man's mortal wound.

" Here see the blessed token
Of sin's dread curse removed ;
Here see His body broken
For sinners whom He loved ;
Whom for their sake,
Their peace to make,
To suffer it behoved."



CHAPTER II.

THE DYING THIEF.



HE conversion of the thief upon the cross is the most remarkable instance of the power of God, as manifested in the salvation of a sinner recorded in the Bible.

This dying malefactor was the *first sinner who looked to the cross of Christ* for salvation.

How clear or how dim was the perception which God gave him of the wondrous truth, we are not told, but in the rebuke he administered to his fellow-criminal—"Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? and we, indeed, justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds, but this man hath done nothing amiss;" hereby acknowledging the righteous-

ness of God, confessing his own guilt, and vindicating the character of Christ—do we not perceive the first rays of the light from heaven piercing the gloom of his own soul, and shining brightly amid the surrounding darkness; growing stronger and clearer, as, turning his eye upon the dying Saviour, he acknowledged Him as the Lord of life, and sought His salvation?

Undoubtedly it was the shadow of the cross falling backward over man's history to the fall in Eden that gave efficacy to the sacrifices enjoined by the law. But the great mystery of "God manifest in the flesh" had "been hid from ages and from generations;" and though the prophets, who "prophesied of the grace that should come," "inquired and searched diligently," "searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory which should follow" (1 Pet. i. 11), yet it was not given them fully to understand the wonderful plan of salvation.

Not even to the eleven, who had accompanied the Lord during the three years of His public ministry, who had seen His wonderful works, and listened to His teaching; not to the three who had enjoyed most intimate communion

with Him ; not to the beloved disciple who leaned on Jesus' breast ; but to a poor outcast, an abandoned criminal, suffering "the due reward of his deeds," and on the very point of death, did the Spirit of God *first* reveal that "that same Jesus which was crucified was both Lord and Christ."

How this magnifies the sovereign and boundless grace of God, and shows that the Holy Spirit alone can reveal to a man "the deep things of God." So said our Lord Himself. "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."

This is not as man would have it, but "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord ; for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

How marvellously was this man taught of the Spirit ; how keen had his spiritual vision become, and how strong was his faith.

As Jesus hung upon the cross, derided by the rulers, reviled by the chief priests, railed on by the multitude, mocked by the soldiers, and to all appearance forsaken by His God, one solitary

human voice proclaimed Him LORD ; one man alone confessed Him to be God's anointed, and spoke of His kingdom.

That one man was a dying malefactor. Even the faith of His disciples had completely failed ; they "trusted that it had been He who should have redeemed Israel," but the cross had put an end to their hopes. Not so with this poor sinner ; the cross was no stumbling-block to him. Neither was his own past guilty life, nor his utter inability to make any amends ; but with a simple childlike faith he perilled his soul's eternal welfare upon "Jesus Christ and Him crucified." Millions have trusted in Christ since His exaltation ; only one sinner trusted in Him during His deepest humiliation.

"Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." How simple the prayer ! and how speedy the answer, "Verily, I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise."

Jesus knew it all—all the guilt of his past life, the depths of iniquity into which he had plunged, the corruption of his heart, and the stains of sinful deeds that blackened his soul ; but for this purpose He had come, for this cause was His blood even now being shed, that He might offer "one sacrifice for sins for ever," so "blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us,

which was contrary to us, nailing it to His cross" (Col. ii. 14).

If, then, such a sinner at such a time could be pardoned, surely no one need despair.

This man had done nothing to commend him to the favour of God. Neither was it his penitence, nor his faith, nor his prayer that drew towards him the love of God, or that procured for him the forgiveness of his sin. It was while he was yet "dead in trespasses and sins" that the love of God the Father yearned towards him, the love of God the Son interceded for him, and the love of God the Holy Spirit wrought in him. It was a manifestation of the free, unmerited, infinite mercy of God, and the mighty power of the Spirit working in the heart of the lost sinner, "to the praise of the glory of His grace."

And such is a type of the conversion of every sinner who turns to the Lord. It is not the prayers and tears of the penitent that touch the heart of God. It is not the desire for pardon and deliverance on the part of the awakened soul that moves Him to pity; but the very first motions towards grief and hatred of sin are begotten by God Himself in the heart of the sinner. Alarm for the *consequences* of sin may be but the result of natural fear, but the first cry

of the *sin-burdened* soul, like the first wail of the new-born infant, is an evidence that God has breathed into it the breath of life.

It is the Holy Spirit's first work to convince of sin, and the soul that is truly seeking the Lord may know that it is God Himself who is drawing him with the cords of His love.

Another remarkable feature in the conversion of the dying thief was, that it was accomplished entirely without the use of any human instrumentality.

We often hear of deathbed repentance, and, blessed be God--

“As long as life its term extends,
Hope’s blest dominion never ends.
For while the lamp holds on to burn,
The greatest sinner may return.”

Foolish and wicked as it is to put off salvation to the fag end of life, with all the risk, moreover, of being “suddenly cut off, and that without remedy,” yet even up to the last moment, if the soul can but look to Jesus with the eye of faith, as the glazing eye of the serpent-bitten Israelite might have turned towards the serpent of brass and found healing, He who is “able to save to the uttermost” will be found “ready to save” the soul that is “ready to perish.”

But oh, how awful is the folly of trusting to such a time as that! Men who hazard all they possess on one cast of the dice are not to be compared in folly to those who risk their eternal destiny upon the frail chance of a dying bed.

In the bloom of youth and health, not in the days of weariness and pain, is the best time to "seek the Lord."

"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, whence thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." Yet "the Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy;" and even to the last "let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."

But almost invariably—and more especially in cases of deathbed confessions—God makes use of some human instrumentality to lead the soul to Himself. A man of God is sent to read and expound the Word, to point out the way of life, to plead with and pray for the poor sinner; but here, to the dying thief, God in a most remarkable manner showed Himself wholly independent of all creature service.

In the midst of intense bodily anguish, where it might have seemed the thoughts could only be concentrated on the terrible passing moments, with no one able to breathe a word of comfort in his ear, with no one to pray for him or tell him the way of salvation, the dying malefactor might have presented to man an utterly hopeless case.

But "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness," shined into the poor darkened heart of this criminal, "to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

What was the extent of that knowledge which he received, we know not, or whether he was an Israelite and had any previous knowledge of the prophecies regarding Christ, or whether he had heard, in Pilate's judgment-hall, our Lord's claims to a "kingdom from above," we are not told ; but this we know—that, in view of a speedy death, and conscious of his guilt in the sight of God, he cast himself entirely upon the mercy and intercession of the crucified Jesus, he showed an undoubting faith in His present sovereignty, and sought a place in His coming kingdom, which, had it not been the exercise of saving faith, would have been in so vile a sinner an act of the most daring presumption.

During the whole of our Lord's ministry on earth "He continually went about doing good." Now He Himself testified, "It is more blessed to give than to receive;" and, great as must have been His grief and pain as He mingled amongst men, and came in close contact with the misery and wretchedness of fallen human nature, yet exquisite must have been His joy in the knowledge and exercise of His power to heal and save.

And oh! who can fathom the depth of that joy which He must have experienced as He hung upon the accursed tree and received as "a kind of first-fruits" this returning prodigal, "plucked as a brand from the burning," on the borders of eternity.

In His agony in Gethsemane, we are told, "there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him," and may not this also have been given Him to strengthen Him for that terrible ordeal He had yet to pass through, that deep, mysterious woe into which He entered when He cried, as His Father's face was hid from Him, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" "Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, all Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over me."

It was "for the joy that was set before Him"

that "He endured the cross, despising the shame ;" and though He is now "set on the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens," He tells us "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

Overwhelming thought ! Not one poor sinner on earth, however vile, but can stir the heart of the "majesty in the heavens" to its infinite depths by returning unto the Lord.

Is there such an one now reading this—groaning under the burden of sin, longing for salvation ? Be of good cheer : you have only to trust Him, to cast yourself believably upon His own Word, to accept His finished work as an "atonement" for your soul, to yield yourself to His loving embrace, and "He will save, He will rejoice over you with joy, He will rest in His love, He will joy over you with singing."

Harder than the nether millstone must be that heart that can reject such love as this.



CHAPTER III.

ATONEMENT.



POOR woman stood in the dock of a London police court. She had been but a short time a widow ; her husband had, through drunkenness, brought himself and his family to utter destitution ; but his wife, herself a child of God, had long prayed for his conversion, and at last rejoiced in seeing her prayer answered. Through the instrumentality of a colporteur who visited the house, the poor sinner had been led to cry unto Him who came to "seek and to save that which is lost." His soul was restored, but his shattered health made him an easy prey to the small-pox which some months afterwards visited the neighbourhood, and to which he quickly succumbed.

A heavy burden then fell upon the poor wife ; for, besides maintaining the family by her needle-work, she had to nurse her husband in this his last illness, and provide as well as she could for the extra expenses which it entailed. Yet a quiet joy filled her heart, for was not her prayer answered, and her husband safe for eternity ? And when at last he closed his eyes in death, she need not to "sorrow as others who have no hope."

But want stared the little family in the face, and even while the dead body of her husband lay in the house, the poor widow had to continue her needlework to procure bread for her children. The garment finished she took it home and received the payment. Unhappily the wearer caught the infection and fell ill of small-pox. The sanitary inspector hearing of the case made inquiry, and the result was that the sempstress was summoned before the magistrate. This was why she now stood a prisoner in the dock.

The case was clearly proven. The woman made no denial, but pleaded that she did not know she was breaking the law, and being pressed with want had not thought of the danger in which she was placing her employer. This plea was useless, however ; the law had been broken, and the penalty must be paid—all the more

so, because the woman's want of thought had brought suffering upon another.

The penalty was, for her, a heavy fine, with an alternative of fourteen days' imprisonment. The poor woman was in consternation when she heard the sentence, and with tears she pleaded, "Oh, have mercy, have mercy! I have not a penny to pay the fine, and if I am sent to prison what will become of my poor children?" The magistrate appeared much moved as he replied gravely, but kindly, "My good woman, I am *deeply, deeply* grieved for you; but I am only here to administer the law, and *the law knows no mercy.*"

In utter bewilderment she was led from the dock to the cell below, to await the arrival of the prison van. There she was left alone, and falling on her knees she poured out her soul to Him who makes the widow and the fatherless His peculiar care. She prayed for deliverance for the sake of her little ones; yet she could not conceive whence deliverance could come. She had no friends on earth to whom she could look for help; her husband's evil ways had brought her to the company of only the poorest of the poor; so she just cried unto the Lord, and left her case with Him, though she hardly dared to hope for relief.

After a short time had elapsed she heard the key turn in the lock, and quite expected they had come to lead her to the prison van; but to her amazement she was told to go to the office and she would get a free pass. She could not believe that she heard aright, but the warder repeated the words, and added that the fine had been paid and she was now free. She then did as she was told, and having obtained a pass went out a free woman, her heart filled with joy, and praising God, though it seemed almost like a dream. She afterwards learned that the sanitary inspector, touched with her sad case, and her pitiful entreaty, had himself paid the fine, and so set her free. Thus God fulfilled His promise, "While they are yet speaking I will hear."

In this incident we have a striking illustration of the position of the sinner before God *as a transgressor of the law*, and of salvation by free grace.

First. The woman did not know she was breaking the law, yet she was not therefore held guiltless; the law was broken, and the penalty had to be paid. So if we break the law of the Lord, even unwittingly, through ignorance, it is still sin, and *must* be atoned for or punished. "The thought of foolishness is sin" (Prov. xxiv.

9). “Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, shall be guilty of all” (James ii. 10).

Not our conscience, but the Word of God is the infallible standard of holiness. This was also the teaching of the Levitical law. “If a soul touch any unclean thing, whether it be a carcase of an unclean beast, or the carcase of unclean cattle, or the carcase of unclean creeping things, *and it be hidden from him, he also shall be unclean and guilty*” (Lev. v. 2).

Second. The woman’s guilt was aggravated through the consequences that followed, she having, although unintentionally, caused suffering to another. So a man is responsible to God, not only for his acts, but also for the *fruit of his doings*” (Jer. xvii. 10). “*Every idle word* that men shall speak they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment” (Matt. xii. 36). Who can estimate “the fruit,” for time and for eternity, of an “idle word” or a careless act?

Third. The woman’s transgression was not a personal offence against the magistrate, which he might therefore have passed over; it was *the law* which had been broken, and he was bound by the law to inflict the penalty. So sin is not *only* a personal offence against the Most High—although it is doubtless in this that its peculiar

heinousness lies—but it is also the transgression of the law which is “ holy and just and good ;” it is an offence against the moral government of the universe, to pass over which *would be an act of injustice* on the part of the “ Judge of all.”

Some men talk foolishly of God being *too just* to punish a sinner for simply, as they say, following the bent of his nature; but they entirely mistake the province of justice. If the law condemn, *justice must* enforce the penalty. Every one will agree to this, that “ he that ruleth over men must be just ” (2 Sam. xxiii. 3). Yet “ shall mortal man be more just than God ? ” (Job iv. 17). The Lord is “ a God of truth, and without iniquity ; just and right is He ” (Deut. xxxii. 3). Yea, He “ will by no means clear the guilty ” (Exod. xxxiv. 7).

Others imagine that God is *too merciful* to punish. “ God is love ” is a favourite text with them ; but they forget that it is not *love*, either human or Divine, but simply *weak indulgence*, that is based on aught but *justice*. They would charge the “ Judge of all the earth ” with conduct which they themselves would deem most reprehensible in the obscurest magistrate. “ Far be it from God that He should do wickedness, and from the Almighty that He should commit iniquity. *For the work of a man shall He render*

unto Him, and cause every man to find according to his ways. Yea, surely God will not do wickedly, nor will the Almighty pervert judgment" (Job xxxiv. 10-12).

"Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne" (Ps. xcvi. 2); and were it possible for God to deviate one hairsbreadth from the strictest justice, that moment His throne would be shaken to its very foundation.

God, indeed, *is love*, infinite, eternal, unchangeable love; but He manifests His love, not by allowing His righteous law to be broken with impunity, but by devising and carrying out a plan whereby He might be both "*a just God and a Saviour*."

Oh, sinner! trust not to the benevolence of God apart from Christ. Freely, indeed, you may obtain the remission of *all* your sins, but only through Him who died in your stead, who "*suffered, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God*" (1 Pet. iii. 18).

To return to our illustration. The inspector, in desiring to set the poor woman free, *had himself to pay the penalty*. He had no more power to set aside the sentence than had the prisoner herself.

So He who came "*to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them*

that are bound" (Is. lxi. 1), to deliver from death them that were "sold under sin," had Himself to pay the full penalty to the uttermost.

It is very popular nowadays to endeavour to set aside what is called the *legal* aspect of the death of Christ. But if the element of atonement be taken away from the cross, the fulfilling of the demands of a broken law, the suffering of the penalty in the place of another, then the death of Christ has absolutely no meaning whatever.

Some seek to represent it as merely a manifestation of love, in order to win our love back to God. It is a manifestation of love, amazing love, unparalleled love; but were it not that therein the Son of God was made "the *propitiation for our sins*," it would only have been an exhibition of unparalleled folly.

Some who believe, like Nicodemus, that Christ was only "a teacher sent from God," represent that He died in attestation of the principles He taught. Had He been a mere man of like passions with ourselves, this might have been the case; but as the Son of God, who had power over His own life, it was utterly impossible.

But the most popular teaching is that which may be called the doctrine of salvation by self-sacrifice, which, however, is but another term for

self-righteousness. These teachers rear a super-structure very fair to look upon, and adorned with many texts of Scripture, but they *leave out the foundation*, or build upon one of sand. They even speak of Jesus as the Saviour, and admit that He “died for us;” but it was, according to them, merely as an *example* of complete submission to the will of God, and of self-sacrifice for the good of others. All this, however, is merely their pride of heart. They have “great faith in human nature,” it only requires to be purged and renovated and patched up a bit; they will not admit themselves to be morally bankrupt, having “nothing to pay,” but think that by the *help* of God they may yet pay all their own debts, and win their way to perfect holiness.

Christ truly showed us a perfect example of submission to the will of God, and of self-sacrifice for the sake of others; but had this been all that was needed, His death would have been an act of *self-immolation*, which is criminal, and utterly incompatible with the righteousness of God.

The only thing that made *possible* the death of the Christ of God, was the fact that the Lord “laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”

When Jesus prayed in Gethsemane, “O my Father, *if it be possible*, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt”

(Matt. xxvii. 39), had there been a *possibility* of carrying out the will of God in the reconciliation of the world unto Himself by any other means, without a doubt that cup would never have been given Him to drink ; but ere He who is *our peace* could come and *preach peace* to them that were afar off, He had to *make peace* through the blood of His cross.

One more illustration we may draw from our story. The contract for setting the woman free was made without the concurrence or even the knowledge of the prisoner. So it was without the concurrence, without the knowledge, without even the desire on the part of fallen man, that the holy covenant was entered into for his salvation.

As in holy conclave the Three-One God said, "Let us make man," so in the secret counsels of the Most High the scheme for man's redemption was devised, "according to His own purpose and power," and the covenant entered into by the Three Persons of the Godhead. "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or, being His counsellor, hath taught Him ?" (Isa. xl. 13.) So also it was by His own will that the plan was *carried out*—though man was the instrument, the free-will and responsible instrument—and the work for our salvation was completed.

Oh, how does this magnify the sovereignty

of God ! Men are wont to talk of His sovereignty as if it were the exercise of an arbitrary will, whereas it is the exercise of His free, unmerited, boundless grace ; the manifestation of His sovereign unsought love, whereby He looked in tenderest pity upon us while we were "dead in trespasses and sins," and "for the great love wherewith He loved us" "spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all." And the same sovereignty of will was manifested in the boundless grace and love of Him "who through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God."

" When thou wast in sin undone
God looked in pity from on high,
The Father freely gave *His Son*,
And Jesus gave *Himself* to die.
O the mercy ! O the grace !
O the everlasting love !
Its glory fills the heavenly place :
The theme of angels' songs above."



CHAPTER IV.

THE BOUNDARY LINE.

SOME years ago the writer stood on the rock of Gibraltar, and, looking towards the Spanish mainland, saw two lines of white tents with a considerable space between them. Upon asking the meaning, he was told they were the British and Spanish lines respectively, and the space between was "no man's land," or neutral ground belonging to neither kingdom; and any one standing upon it was neither in English nor Spanish territory.

Now there are many who seem to think that a similar kind of neutral zone, or "no man's land," exists between the kingdom of sin and the kingdom of grace. They cannot say they are *altogether* saved, but at the same time they will

not believe that they are as yet *altogether unsaved*. This is a grievous mistake: the boundary line between the two kingdoms is sharply cut and well defined, and a man must either be an enemy or a child of God. There is not a hairsbreadth of neutral ground.

That boundary line is "the blood of Christ." Outside the line all are under "the power of darkness;" inside are those whom God "hath translated into the kingdom of His dear Son."

God says, "When I see *the blood* I will pass over you;" not "When I see you are doing the best you can," or "When I see you are well inclined," or "When I see signs of reformation."

No amiability of disposition, no nobleness of aim, no earnestness of purpose, no uprightness of character is of any avail to justify us before God. These are but some of the talents we receive to be used in His service and for His glory. Even at best we are "unprofitable servants," and our very *righteousness* is as filthy rags in His sight. "For though thou wash thee with nitre, and take much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord God" (Jer. ii. 22).

And the reason is plain. Nothing short of absolute perfection can stand in the presence of the holiness of God.

How clear and definite is the teaching of Scripture on this point. Not even a son of Aaron who had the slightest blemish or imperfection in his body might approach God to minister in the holy place (Lev. xxi. 17); and whatsoever was offered to the Lord must "be *perfect* to be accepted" (Lev. xxii. 21).

This was to teach that nothing that bore the slightest taint of sin could appear before Him whose "eyes are as a flame of fire."

But "who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from sin?" (Prov. xx. 9.) Are not the words of Job true of every one? "If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me; if I say I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse" (Job ix. 20).

It is ignorance of oneself and ignorance of God that leads a man to think lightly of his sin, and to have a high estimation of his own goodness.

Job was a man of whom God Himself said, "There is none like him on the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil" (Job i. 8); yet when tried in the furnace of affliction, and irritated by the false accusations of his three friends, he sought to justify himself, and beginning to count up his good deeds and publish his righteousness (Job

xxxi.), he became so proud and self-confident that he cried out, "Behold my desire is that the Almighty would answer me . . . as a prince would I come before him." But when he got a glimpse of the glory and majesty of God, he exclaimed, "Now mine eye *seeth Thee*; wherefore *I abhor myself*, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job xlvi. 5, 6).

Ah! it is when the shutters are taken down, and the sunlight streams in through the window, that the small dust is seen; and it is when the blinded eyes are opened, and "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God" shines into the soul, that the sin of the heart is discovered in all its corruption.

There is no such thing as *little* sin or *venial* sin; *all sin* is "abomination to the Lord." The germ of all the iniquity that has abounded in the earth since the fall lay hidden in that one act of disobedience.

The young ruler who seemed so earnestly to seek eternal life, whose youthful character, as judged by the outward observance of the law, appeared so fair that, as we read, "Jesus beholding him loved him," yet had the cankerworm in his heart, and it only required the omniscience of Him who "needed not that any should testify of man, for He knew what was in

man," to point to the spot where the corruption showed itself, and reveal to the young man that he was not fit to "enter into the kingdom of God."

Doubtless among the Egyptians who were slain on that terrible night, "from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat upon the throne, to the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon," very many differences of character were to be found, and many degrees of wickedness; yet none were spared, for "the Lord smote *all* the firstborn in the land of Egypt." On the other hand, many of the Israelites were no doubt, morally, as bad as the Egyptians, and were equally deserving of punishment; but the blood sprinkled upon the doorposts and lintels was "for a token," and God had said, "When I see the blood I will pass over you."

Is not this, then, setting a premium upon sin, encouraging men to say, "Let us continue in sin that grace may more abound"?

By no means. Sin carries with it its own evil consequences. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap;" and though the blood of Christ ever avails to cleanse from the guilt, and the power of God is ever able to deliver from the dominion of sin, yet every evil thought, word, and deed leaves its mark behind, and every sinful

habit becomes a thorn in the flesh which makes a rankling wound, and often becomes a "sin that doth most easily beset" even the ransomed child of God.

In the lives of many of God's most eminent servants the power of former sinful indulgences has been painfully manifest; and even where it is hidden from every eye but that of God alone, and though they have been delivered from the *dominion* of such sins, yet they have often found by a bitter experience that there has been left "a root that beareth gall and wormwood" (Deut. xxix. 18). Doubtless it was to this that good John Bunyan referred when he described Faithful meeting with the old man at the foot of the hill Difficulty.

Moreover, sin is itself a cruel bondage, and a loathsome disease; and so soon as a sinner realises this he no longer desires to continue in it, but his cry is for immediate deliverance. Until he does realise this he will seek no Saviour; we must preach to him rather "of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come." Until he stands self-condemned before God, crying out, "What must I do to be saved?" the cross will be to him foolishness, and Christ will be to him "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence."

There is, however, a still more terrible aspect

of the power of indulged sin : it enfeebles the will, and often keeps a sinner back from accepting Christ and His salvation, even when "the terror of the Lord" is visibly before his eyes.

A poor degraded woman who had battened like an unclean bird upon the sin and misery of her own sex, lay on her dying bed. Her iniquity rose up before her, and the forebodings of "the wrath to come" made her tremble and cry out. She sent for one whom she knew to be a man of God, and eagerly asked him what she must do to be saved. Like a skilful physician, wishing first to discover if her desire for salvation was real, he probed her deeply, and told her if she would have Christ she must be willing to give up her ungodly gains. Awful as her state was, the price was too high—she died in her sin. Ah ! how true is the Word of the Lord, "His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, *and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins*" (Prov. v. 22).

Dear reader ! Let me beseech you, dally not with sin, trifle not with the longsuffering of God. Felix trembled only once under the preaching of Paul. "Go thy way for this time," he said ; "when I have a more convenient season I will send for thee ;" and during two whole years he often sent for Paul and communed with him, but

we do not read that he ever trembled again. "My spirit shall not always strive with man, saith the Lord." "Now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation." *The sinner has not a single promise for to-morrow.*

But the most appalling characteristic of sin is its *hardening power*. Like the whirlpool, which every moment draws the doomed ship closer within the fatal circle, so sin ever tightens its hold upon the soul, and every sin indulged hardens the heart and deadens the conscience.

"Stolen waters are sweet" to the depraved taste of the soul that has never drunk, nor even thirsted for, the "river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Rev. xxii. 1); and though every one learns sooner or later "that it is an evil thing and bitter" to forsake the Lord, yet so hardening is the influence of sin that the longer it is indulged in the less desire is there on the part of the sinner to be delivered from its thrall. Alarm for the consequences of sin is not the same as hatred of it, and many would gladly "flee from the wrath to come" were it not for the necessity of becoming holy. *Conviction* is not *conversion*, and that is why so many fall away who once made a fair show of repentance, but never had any real desire toward God.

Jesus, indeed, "is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him" (Heb. vii. 25); but he who wishes to go to the uttermost before being saved, not only lives in momentary "danger of hell fire," madly imperilling his eternal welfare that he may "fill his belly with the husks that the swine do eat" (Luke xv. 16), but, as he advances in evil, he ever more effectually stops his ears, alike to the warning thunders of "the terror of the Lord" and the "still small voice" of His pleading love.

Yet a Christless morality is as deadening to the conscience as open sin, and there are many who sit under the sound of the gospel, and rigidly perform many religious duties, giving largely, it may be, of their substance to the Lord's cause, and perhaps known as amiable, well-meaning people, who are yet "without God in the world :" whose consciences are encased in scales like those of leviathan, which no arrow can pierce through.

A man, hotly pursued, leaped across a chasm to save his life ; he missed the other side by an inch, and was dashed to pieces—he might as well have missed it by a yard. So to be *almost saved* is yet to be *altogether lost* ; to be "not far from the kingdom of God" is still to be outside of it, and under the power and dominion of sin.

There is no shading off from the one to the other. The boundary line is clear and distinct ; a man must be *completely* saved, *completely* justified, *completely* redeemed, "by the precious blood of Christ," or he is still under condemnation, and "the wrath of God abideth on him" (John iii. 36).



CHAPTER V.

WHAT IS FAITH?

AVESSEL, under a heavy gale, was driven too near the land and ran aground. There it lay, exposed to the fury of the waves, and was rapidly becoming a total wreck. One man after another was washed overboard, until only two remained clinging to the rigging, in momentary danger of perishing with the rest. But now the lifeboat arrived, and with great daring and skill the brave boatmen brought it right under the two survivors, and shouted to them to drop in. They let go their hold, dropped into the boat, and were conveyed in safety to the shore.

This was faith—saving faith. Had they simply believed that the lifeboat was *able* to

save them, or even that it had come expressly to rescue them, but had not *dropped into it*, they would nevertheless have perished ; or, had they merely dropped their feet into the lifeboat, and still clung to the old wreck, afraid to let go, their destruction would have been inevitable.

So it is not enough that a sinner merely believes that Jesus came to save, or that He is able and willing and ready to save, but he must *act upon that belief*, and cast himself as a poor, lost, helpless sinner upon Him, taking God at His word, and trusting entirely to *Him* for the salvation of his soul ; “ for with *the heart* man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation ” (Rom. x. 10).

God will accept no half-and-half trust. There must be no clinging half to Christ and half to the filthy rags of our own righteousness ; we must “ let go ” completely the old wreck, and cast ourselves upon Christ, just as these two men, who were “ ready to perish,” *dropped* into the lifeboat.

“ But,” urges some one, “ I hear so many Christians talk of having a joyful sense of forgiveness, and I often read and hear of anxious souls receiving, as it were, a sudden flash of light enabling them to *know* that they have been accepted ; ought not I to look for the same,

or may I *trust* even without receiving the sense of forgiven sin?"

Certainly ; *faith* is one thing, *assurance* is another. To return to our illustration : the two men, having heard the shouting of the boatmen, obeyed their voice, and, letting go their hold upon the wreck, dropped into the lifeboat, *and were both saved*. This exemplifies faith. But suppose that one of them, from the moment his feet touched the boat, had all his fears relieved, and had perfect confidence that he would be carried on shore in safety ; while the other, as he looked upon the raging storm, trembled exceedingly, and never lost his fear until he stepped ashore ; his fearfulness *did not affect his safety*, though it wofully affected his comfort. One had *assurance*, the other had not, but *both were saved* ; they were, to use a common expression, " both in the same boat."

There are many Christians, alas! who seem to float toward heaven as if they were clinging to a log. They get to shore at last, but theirs is a poor half-drowned kind of faith at the best, while others, *resting* with confidence on the sure Word of God, sail through the roughest seas without the shadow of a fear. These honour God most and please Him best, for He wants to be implicitly trusted. God's children can give

Him no greater joy than when they *believe* in Him, *delight* in Him, and *rest* in Him.

Yet "He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax." He hears "the burden of a sigh." He notes, with joy, the repentant tear. "The Lord *taketh pleasure* in them that fear Him, in those that *hope* in His mercy" (Ps. cxlvii. 11). "The Lord is *gracious* and *full of compassion*" (Ps. cxlv. 8). "The Lord is *very pitiful*." His bowels yearn over the sinner, and even if He hears but the half-despairing cry coming from the troubled heart, "Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief," His hand is at once stretched out to save.

"But how may I be sure that God's invitation is addressed to *me* personally? How can I know that God had *me* in His thoughts when He gave His Son to die for sinners?"

Listen! "WHOSOEVER believeth." "WHOSOEVER WILL." Could any invitation be more universal? "Go preach the gospel to EVERY CREATURE." Could any command be sent to you more personally? "But," do you still urge, "I am *such a sinner*: I have not sinned in ignorance, but deliberately, wilfully; I have sinned again and again; against light, against love, against conscience. I have despised and rejected the offers of mercy, and have drunk in iniquity like water"?

It is well you should see the greatness of your sin, especially the baseness of your ingratitude to God ; it is well you should look right into your heart, and see how black it is, how "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." Sit down, then, and write out a list of all your sins ; multiply the number a hundred-thousand-fold for what you cannot remember ; intensify the degree beyond all computation, to try to form a faint idea of what they must be in the sight of the Infinitely Holy One ; and as you stagger beneath the contemplation, write down God's own statement : "THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST HIS SON CLEANSETH US FROM ALL SIN."

Did God make a mistake when He wrote that ? Had He not calculated upon the depth of wickedness of which *you* would be guilty ? Never mind, just take Him at His Word ; *claim* the fulfilment of His promise, and you will find that "God is not man that He should lie, nor the son of man that He should *repent*."

"But may I, a poor, vile sinner, *claim* the fulfilment of God's promise ?" Yes, dear friend, with humility and reverence you may ; and this but presents another view of the "exceeding riches of His grace." He has even bound Himself with an oath (Heb. vi. 17, 18). He has entered into a covenant, and has declared :

“ My covenant will I not break nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.”

Oh, wondrous grace ! God gives you, poor sinner, a *claim* upon His forgiveness ; not so much as a matter of mercy, as of *faithfulness* and *justice*. “ If we confess our sins, He is *faithful* and *just* to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Not faithful and just to *us*, but faithful to His covenant, just to His own dear Son.

God has made a covenant with His Son Jesus Christ. That covenant was made in Heaven : Jesus Christ came to the earth and fulfilled His part to the utmost letter. God has bound Himself to receive every sinner that pleads the blessed name of Jesus ; the “ blood of the covenant ” is now before the throne, and it is impossible for God to break faith with His Son.

To the poorest, the weakest, the vilest sinner that cries for mercy in the name of Jesus, the answer comes straight from the throne, “ I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins ” (Is. xlivi. 25). Yea, the pardon is already completed, for He says : “ I HAVE blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins : return unto me ; for *I have* redeemed thee ” (Is. xliv. 22).

“But what about election?” Do you still ask? Strange that troubled souls should seem more anxious to put stumbling-blocks in the way of their coming to Christ than to have them removed.

You have nothing to do with the question of election, nor has it anything to do with you. Election may keep *saints in*, it never will keep *sinners out*. It is only *in Christ* that any one can belong to God’s elect. Out of Christ all sinners are alike; alike under condemnation, alike offered pardon and deliverance.

“But did not the Lord Jesus say, ‘No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him’?” He did, and this ought to give you the greatest encouragement of all. How does God “draw” any one? Is it not by the influences of His Spirit working in the heart? Who put those desires into your heart? Surely they do not proceed from the natural man, for “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto Him” (1 Cor. ii. 14). It can only have been the Spirit of God who has “convinced you of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come.” “And He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit.” It is your Father Himself who is drawing you, and

Jesus said, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me ; and Him that cometh to me I will *in no wise cast out*" (John vi. 37).

Again, I say, *take God at His Word*: no matter how insuperable the difficulties may appear to you, leave them to Him, and you will find that "He abideth faithful, He cannot deny Himself."

Never mind, though you do not *realise* that you are under "the blood of the everlasting covenant." God did not say, when *you* see the blood, but "when *I* see the blood I will pass over you!" Peace comes through faith, not faith through peace, and in the degree in which you implicitly trust the Lord, *resting* in His infallible Word, will you have that "peace of God which passeth all understanding." "WHOSOEVER WILL, let him take the Water of Life FREELY."

"But does not the Bible speak about repentance as being necessary to salvation ?"

Certainly ; but faith and repentance are inseparably connected. There can be no true faith without repentance, and no genuine repentance without faith.

Repentance is the natural outcome of faith, for it is by believing the Word of God that a man begins to repent.

But repentance is not so much a greater or

less measure of sorrow for sin, as a turning from it unto God. "Whither shall I flee from His presence?" is the cry of the unrepentant man. "Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" is the burden of the repentant sinner's desire.

But a man must not look into his own heart for the evidences of his salvation ; it is neither our faith nor our repentance, but "*the blood of Christ*," to which God looks, with which He is perfectly satisfied, and which "maketh atonement for the soul."



CHAPTER VI.

PRECIOUS TO THE SAINT.

IF the blood of Christ is exceeding precious to the sinner, it is surpassingly so to the saint. The drowning man to whom a rope is thrown, while battling for dear life, thinks of nothing at the time but deliverance from a terrible death; so the awakened sinner, conscious of his guilt and danger, thinks of nothing but escaping for his life and fleeing from the wrath to come; but when by faith he finds his feet firmly planted upon the Rock, when the joy of the Lord is filling his heart, and he walks in the light of His countenance, then he is able to look round and contemplate the beauty, the grandeur, and the ineffable glory of the "inheritance of the saints."

As his enraptured soul drinks deeper and deeper of the "wells of salvation," as, like Abraham, he "walks through the length and the breadth of the land," as he sweetly meditates upon "the unsearchable riches of Christ," and discovers, by a growing experience, that not earth, not heaven, but *God Himself* is his portion and his "exceeding great reward" (Gen. xv. 1), he learns more and more of the infinite value of the price that was paid, "the precious blood of Christ."

Let us consider some of the chief blessings he obtains through "the blood of sprinkling which speaketh better things than that of Abel."

First, there is REDEMPTION.

"*We have redemption through His blood*" (Col. i. 14), and oh, what a redemption! Formerly, he was "sold under sin"—a lawful captive, who could not be set free until the full penalty of the broken law had been paid. At one time, perhaps, he had fancied himself to be in the enjoyment of liberty, and under no restraint but that of his own will. But so soon as he tried to rid himself of one sin, he discovered that he was simply bound, hand and foot, a slave to the most grievous thraldom; the more he had struggled against his evil thoughts and passions, the more had he found that he was not their master, but they his; and he

learned to his cost that while he had been vainly fancying himself a free man, he was really under a more galling bondage than that of Israel in Egypt.

“Then he cried unto the Lord in his trouble, and He delivered him out of all his distresses” (Psa. cvii. 6). He owned he “had nothing to pay,” then God said, “I have found a ransom.” Jesus paid the penalty of the law “to the uttermost farthing,” and set him free. And now he has entered upon “the glorious liberty of the children of God.” Sin is still there with its baneful presence, but he is no longer under its dominion (Rom. vi.). His heel has been placed upon Satan’s head, and though he must ever “watch and pray” lest the enemy gains an advantage over him, he has not to trust to feeble efforts of his own, but he “can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth him.” His “Redeemer is strong, the Lord of Hosts is His name” (Jer. L. 34).

Formerly he had heard of the “*restraints* of religion,” but now he finds there are none—absolutely none—it is a sweet *constraint*. “The *love of Christ* constraineth” him. The law of the Lord he finds to be “the perfect law of *liberty*,” and he can sing with the Psalmist, “I will *walk with liberty*, for I seek Thy precepts.”

Truly "the redemption of his soul is precious," precious beyond all compare.

He is "redeemed from the *curse* of the law" (Gal. iii. 13). Redeemed from the *bondage* of the law and elevated to the position of sonship (Gal. iv. 3-5). Redeemed from the dominion of indwelling sin (Titus ii. 14; 1 Peter ii. 24; Rom. vi. 14-18), from "the hand of the terrible" (Jer. xv. 25), and from the victory of the grave (Psa. xlix. 15; Hosea xiii. 14; Rom. viii. 23; 1 Cor. xv. 53-57). Redeemed from the evil that is in the world (Gal. i. 4; John xvii. 15, 16), and—most blessed of all—redeemed to God (1 Peter iii. 18; Rev. v. 9). And as he contemplates the greatness of the deliverance, and the priceless value of the ransom, with an overflowing heart he breaks forth into singing, "O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good, for His mercy endureth for ever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy" (Psa. cvii. 1, 2).

Second, there is JUSTIFICATION. "*Being now justified by His blood*" (Rom. v. 9).

If a lawful prisoner amongst men be redeemed, the ransom being paid, he is set free, and the law has no more claim upon him for the past transgression, yet he is not thereby *justified*.

If his crime were theft, he remains a thief still;

if perjury, he remains a perjurer ; if murder, a murderer.

A story is told of a little boy who was carrying fruit for sale from door to door. At one house his basket was taken, and when returned he was paid for what had been kept. The purchaser then asked if he was not afraid to let his basket be taken out of his sight, lest he should not be honestly dealt with. "Ah, sir," said the boy, "if you had not dealt honestly, your loss would have been greater than mine, for I should have lost a little fruit, but you *would have been a thief for life.*"

Crime does not consist in the act being detected and punished, so when the punishment is fulfilled or remitted, it does not remove the guilt.

But God, in the riches of His grace, not only pardons the sinner, but He also *justifies* him.

He makes us *judicially innocent* in His sight. Being united to Christ "through faith in His blood," our guilt has been imputed to Him, His righteousness is imputed to us, so that when the saint enters heaven, it will not be as a pardoned rebel, but as a *justified child of God.*

Oh, wonderful transformation ! Formerly he stood with all the world, "guilty before God," "born in sin, and shapen in iniquity," but now

Jesus hath "*blotted out* the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross," and God Himself now declares that "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel."

Marvellous words! Yet they tell us of the completeness of our justification; and now the saint of God can boldly meet his accusers, without the slightest tinge of shame, for "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God *that justifieth*. Who is he that condemneth?"

Third, there is RECONCILIATION. "*For it pleased the Father . . . having made peace through the blood of His cross by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself*" (Col. i. 19, 20).

God is not at enmity with sinners, but He cannot be at peace with sin.

If the sinner would seek the face of God by any other but "the new and living way which He hath consecrated for us," he will find that "clouds and darkness are round about Him."

In all God's universe there is but one spot where man may without fear meet with his Maker. That spot is the cross.

The fall in Eden shut him out for ever from

the presence of God, as far as anything that man can do. We may admire the Creator in His wonderful works ; we may be overawed by the manifestations of His wisdom and might and majesty ; we may talk of rising from " nature up to nature's God," and essay to worship Him in our own way, making an offering, as Cain did, upon an unhallowed altar, of the fruits of a sin-cursed earth ; we are still afar off until we are "*made nigh by the blood of Christ.*"

The saint looking back can remember the time when he wandered "in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness," far from home, far from God.

He remembers how he had often tried to banish from his mind all thoughts of God, for his heart was at enmity with God, and the prospect of meeting his Maker was only a terror to him. At that time he hungered and thirsted ; but he had tried to satisfy his hunger with " that which was not bread," and to quench his thirst out of "broken cisterns that could hold no water."

He had been an "alien from the commonwealth of Israel, and a stranger from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world."

Without Christ ! without hope ! without God ! Could anything be more desolate ?

In vain he had sought for peace to his troubled conscience. He had looked back upon his past life ; it was but the record of a broken law—he found no grounds for peace there ; forward to the future and to a meeting with the righteous Judge—no peace was there ; down into the depths of his own heart, but it was “ like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt”—there was no peace there ; he looked up, but the heavens were as brass, for his iniquities had separated between him and his God, and his sins had hid His face from him.

Now “old things are passed away, behold all things are become new.” He is “no more a stranger and foreigner, but a fellow-citizen with the saints and of the household of God.”

He has come “to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant,” and his heart has been “sprinkled from an evil conscience.”

Now he can look back upon the past, and all is peace : for his sins and iniquities have been “cast into the depths of the sea ;” forward to his meeting with the righteous Judge, but his Surety is there before him, and he has nothing to fear ; down into his own heart, but it is at rest, for “God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in his heart

to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." He looks up ; it is a Father's face that smiles upon him ; it is a Father's eye that guides him ; a Father's voice that speaks ; and a Father's hand that leads him.

He looks around him, and the whole earth is clothed with a beauty it never had before. It is part of his own inheritance, his Father's property, for "the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." The birds have sweeter songs, the flowers a fairer bloom ; the very air is redolent with love, and joy, and peace. The clouds above, the waters beneath, the mountain peaks, the lowly vales, the roaring cataract, the tiny stream, the thunder-peal, the lightning flash, fire, hail, snow, vapour, the storm and the calm, day and night, winter and summer—all, all are the works and the servants of his Father, and "do His pleasure."

Thus the Psalmist contemplating these things, his soul filled to overflowing, burst into a torrent of praise, singing—

"Praise ye the Lord. Praise ye the Lord from the heavens : praise Him in the heights.

"Praise ye Him, all His angels : praise ye Him, all His hosts.

“Praise ye Him, sun and moon : praise Him, all ye stars of light.

“Praise Him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens.

“Let them praise the name of the Lord : for He commanded, and they were created.

“He hath also stablished them for ever and ever : He hath made a decree which shall not pass.

“Praise the Lord from the earth, ye dragons, and all deeps :

“Fire, and hail ; snow, and vapours ; stormy wind fulfilling His word :

“Mountains, and all hills ; fruitful trees, and all cedars :

“Beasts, and all cattle ; creeping things, and flying fowl :

“Kings of the earth, and all people ; princes, and all judges of the earth :

“Both young men, and maidens ; old men, and children :

“Let them praise the name of the Lord : for His name alone is excellent ; His glory is above the earth and heaven.”—*Psalm cxlviii. 1-13.*

A little boy, on arriving at his father's new mansion, ran up and down, gazing at everything in an ecstasy of delight, ever and anon exclaiming, “Is it all *ours*, father—everything *ours*? ” The little fellow thus naively claimed a title to what properly belonged only to his father.

And so may you, O child of God, without presumption, humbly yet joyfully claim a title to all

God's universe, for "all things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come ; all are yours ; and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's" (1 Cor. iii. 22, 23).



CHAPTER VII.

PRECIOUS TO THE SAINT

(Continued).

WE have been contemplating the height of privilege which, on this earth the saint obtains "through the blood of Christ." He is "redeemed from all evil" (Gen. iv. 8-16). "Justified from all things" (Acts xiii. 39). "Reconciled to God" (Rom. v. 10).

But, alas! this Pisgah view is sadly marred by the remaining corruption of the human heart. Too often does the believer fail to "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free;" too little does he realise the glorious truth of his sonship; too seldom does he "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith he is called."

The consequence is that his feet are often defiled with the "miry clay," his garments are

not kept "unspotted from the world." He is unwatchful, while Satan is ever on the alert ; ere ever he is aware, evil thoughts, unholy passions, ungodly desires spring up in his heart ; his hands, alas ! are not always clean, his walk is lame ; continually he is "ready to halt," and often would be in absolute despair, were it not for the CLEANSING power of the "blood of Christ." "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to *cleanse* us from all unrighteousness."

How tender is the teaching of the sin- and trespass-offerings in the Levitical law. Nothing grieves a true child of God so much as a defiled conscience. As the eye cannot bear the light if the slightest speck of dust be upon it, so the Christian cannot look up into the face of God if the slightest stain be upon his conscience ; and, until it is sprinkled afresh with the sweet atoning blood, he can find no rest for his soul.

The law of the sin-offering teaches us that the infinitely holy God cannot be satisfied with anything short of spotless purity—absolute perfection. Neither can the child of God. Heaven would be no heaven to him were it possible for him to retain one spot of defilement. Being "made a partaker of the Divine nature," he will in his heart hate sin as God hates it. "Whoso-

ever is born of God doth not commit sin ; for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God " (1 John iii. 9).

We are taught, then, by the Levitical law that every sin, even the smallest, though it be a "sin of ignorance," sin unwittingly committed, needs the "blood of atonement" just as much as the greatest of crimes.

But it shows also that for every sin the sin-offering "lieth at the door." It shows the abundant provision that our loving God has made for all our failings ; it shows the "fountain opened for sin, and for uncleanness ;" it is the illustration of those words of the Holy Spirit : " If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous, who is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world."

Oh, how comforting is this to the poor Christian, weary with the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of his own heart, mourning over his continual backsliding and shortcomings.

How very blessed to know that though God may be "wearied with our iniquities" (Isaiah xliii. 24), He is never wearied with our presenting the true sin-offering which He Himself has provided. This we can plead before Him at all times, and be able anew to rejoice in possessing

a cleansed conscience, and to sing, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered" (Psa. xxxii. 1).

But not only to the Christian "overtaken in a fault," but to the saint at all times, during his life on earth, no matter what his attainments in grace may be, up to the time that he is "made perfect" by the Captain of his salvation, and ready to be "presented faultless before the presence of His glory," "the blood that maketh atonement" is his one comfort and strong confidence.

It is to the saint who is "walking in the light as He is in the light," and whose "fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ," that the Spirit of God more especially addresses these infinitely precious words, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin;" as if to show that the greatest saint stands in need of the atoning blood, just as much as the greatest sinner.

SANCTIFICATION is another blessing obtained by the saint through "the precious blood of Christ."

Sanctification has a twofold signification in Scripture. There is sanctification through *the blood* (Heb. xiii. 12), and sanctification through *the truth* (John xvii. 17).

The one refers to the work of the Holy Spirit within the believer, the process of purification by "the washing of water by the word" (Eph. v. 26). The other refers to the *setting apart* for a special purpose, or, more particularly, *to a holy use*. This, like justification, is an *act*, not a *process*.

It is essential to bear this distinction in mind, for the misapprehension of the true meaning of the term not unfrequently leads on the one hand to presumptuous error, or on the other to a low spiritual tone.

Before sin ever entered the world, God "blessed the seventh day, and *sanctified* it" (Gen. ii. 3). In Exod. xiii. 1, 2 we read, "The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, *Sanctify* unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast; it is mine." And in verses 12 and 13, Moses, obeying this injunction, commanded the people, saying, "Thou shalt *set apart* unto the Lord all that openeth the matrix, and every firstling that cometh of a beast that thou hast; the males shall be the Lord's. And every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb; and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break his neck, and all the firstborn of man among thy children shalt thou redeem."

So likewise the only-begotten son of God, who was “the *firstborn* of every creature,” and “the *firstborn* from the dead” (Col. i. 15-18), “that He might be the *firstborn* among many brethren” (Rom. viii. 29), was “*sanctified*,” or *set apart*, to His sacred office.

Thus He spoke of Himself to the Jews as “Him whom the Father hath *sanctified* and sent into the world” (John vi. 36). Again, in His intercessory prayer to His Father, in John xvii., He says—verses 18-20—“As Thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world; and for their sakes I *sanctify myself*, that they also might be *truly sanctified*” (see margin).

So also we read, in Heb. xiii. 12, “Wherefore Jesus also, that He might *sanctify* the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate.”

Now the fact of Him “suffering without the gate” could have no bearing upon *sanctification* if that meant *growing in holiness*; but we learn the true signification from the next verse: “*Let us go forth, therefore, unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach.*”

This, then, is what is meant by being “*sanctified* in Christ Jesus,” “called saints,” God’s *holy ones*, as we read in 1 Cor. vi. 11: “But ye *are* washed, ye *are* sanctified, ye *are* justified in the

name of our Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

How high and how glorious is this honour, to be *set apart unto God*—vessels “sanctified and meet for the Master’s use;” and how great is the responsibility thus laid upon us! As our blessed Lord was “separate from sinners,” so must we be. “Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord” (2 Cor. vi. 17).

It is this sanctification that teaches us the close and intimate bond of union between Christ and His people; “for both He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one” (Heb. ii. 11). One, in separation from the world (John xv. 18, 19, xvii. 16); one, in witness-bearing for God (John iii. 32, 33, xi. 27); one, in suffering for righteousness’ sake (1 Pet. iv. 13; Phil. i. 49); one, in the death that is past (Rom. vi. 3; 2 Cor. v. 14); one, in the newness of His resurrection life (John xiv. 19; Col. iii. 1-4; Rom. vi. 4); one, in the enjoyment of communion with God; one, as being the object of the Father’s infinite and everlasting love (John xiv. 23, xvii. 23); one, in humiliation here (Heb. xiii. 13; Acts iv. 41); and one, in the inheritance of eternal glory hereafter (John xvii. 22; 1 John iii. 2; Heb. ii. 27, iii. 21).

Reader, art thou a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ? Remember thou art *sanctified unto God*

by the offering of the body of His Son. Therefore "be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Rom. xii. 2). "What communion hath light with darkness, and what concord hath Christ with Belial?" (2 Cor. vi. 15, 16.) "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20).

But even all this is not the sum of the blessings derived by the saint through the "blood of Christ." There is a privilege accorded to him which no other creature of God possesses: this is ACCESS TO THE FATHER (Eph. ii. 15). He has "liberty (margin) to enter *into the holiest*" by the blood of Jesus (Heb. x. 19).

Sinners dare not even stand afar off beholding the glory of God. Angels stand in His presence adoring Him, and ready to do His will at all times; but it is only "the redeemed of the Lord" that dwell "in the *secret place* of the Most High" (Ps. xci. 1).

He has access to the "hidden wisdom" of God, even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but is now made manifest to His saints (Col. i. 26).

Access to the *power of God*. Every saint is indeed in himself a weak, worthless Jacob, but

in Christ he is a prince, having power with God, and prevailing. Whatever may be the *logic* of prayer, the saint knows by the teaching of Scripture and by his daily experience the reality of its power.

God only knows how many crises in the world's history have been brought about in answer to prayer ; but every saint could tell numberless instances when the power, and the wisdom, and the knowledge of God had been specially manifested on his behalf.

God confers upon His children the office of "an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."

He makes them the channel of untold blessings to men ; they are "the salt of the earth," "the light of the world."

Best of all, the saint has *access to the heart* of God.

"The only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father," was willing for a time to be shut out from the light of His Father's countenance, to be forsaken by His God, that we who had forsaken God, and shut ourselves out from Him, might be brought back again ; and now He carries His "brethren" back with Him, not to the position which Adam held in his innocence, not to the position of angels or archangels, but right

into the infinite depths of the love of God, into the glory which He had with Him before the world was.

“*Our life is hid with Christ in God*,” as Jesus Himself promised, “that where I am, there ye may be also;” and as He prayed the Father concerning us, “that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in me and I in Thee, that they may be one in us . . . that the world may know that Thou has sent me, and *hast loved them as Thou hast loved me*” (John xvii. 21, 23).

“So near, so very near to God,
I cannot nearer be ;
For in the Person of His Son
I am as near as He.

“So dear, so very dear to God,
More dear I cannot be ;
The love wherewith He loves the Son
Such is His love to me.”

And, lastly, the saint obtains complete VICTORY through the blood. “*They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb*” (Rev. xii. 11).

Satan, the great adversary, never ceases to be “the accuser of the brethren;” and to all his accusations they have but one answer—“The blood of the Lamb.”

He accuses them of inconsistency of walk ;

they acknowledge it, but *point to the blood*. He taunts them with defiling their garments ; they mourn over it, but *point to the blood*. He insinuates that they are hypocrites, and deceiving themselves ; tearfully they turn their gaze upon the cross, and reply that their confidence is not in themselves but in Him who died and rose again.

Thus with the shield of faith they are "able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one," until the time arrives when the noise of battle is lost in the pæan of victory. "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father ; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."



CHAPTER VIII.

PRECIOUS TO GOD.

WE now come to tread upon very holy ground. Let us "take our shoes from off our feet" and humbly and reverently seek to know what the Holy Spirit has revealed of the infinite preciousness of "the blood of Christ" in the sight of God the Father.

In the mind and purpose of God "the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world," and four thousand years before that blood was actually shed, the very shadow of it was sacred in His sight. The blood of "righteous Abel," the first human blood that was spilt, cried unto Him from the ground ; and even David, the man after God's own heart, was forbidden the honour and privilege of building a house unto the name

of the Lord, because he had shcd much blood upon the earth (1 Chron. xxiii. 8).

Even the blood of animals might not be eaten, but was to be poured out upon the ground as being holy unto the Lord. It was *the blood* of the sacrifice that made atonement, and *the blood* was the only part of any offering that was ever brought within the vail.

All this may have had other lessons, but it was specially designed to teach man the extreme sanctity of "the blood of Christ" in the sight of God.

Was it not the blood of His own dear Son, His *only begotten*?

Other sons He had—immortal beings of surpassing glory; ministering spirits who delight to do His will; "angels that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His Word;" the sons of God who "shouted for joy" when He laid the corner-stone of the earth: but unto none of these said He at any time, "*Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee.*"

Our first father Adam, too, as he came from the hand of his Maker a pure and holy being, was called "the son of God," and was destined to far higher honour than even the angels, for God had said at his creation, "Let us make man *in our own image, after our likeness*, and let them have

dominion . . . over all the earth." But, alas, that image and likeness was completely lost until He came who, being Son of God and Son of man, was the brightness of His Father's glory, and the express image of His person. (Heb. i. 3.)

He alone "dwelt in the bosom of the Father," He alone "came from the Father," He alone was "in the beginning with God," "from everlasting," and He alone could receive and reciprocate the Father's infinite and eternal love.

The whole Scripture tells of the infinite delight that God had in His Son Jesus Christ, who when His holy law had been broken and trampled under foot, and His high purpose in Creation *seemed* frustrated, magnified that law and made it honourable, saying, "Lo, I come ! in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do Thy will, O my God : yea, Thy law is within my heart."

He was "daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him." The Father calls Him, "Mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth" (Isa. xlii. 1). "My beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased." He was pre-eminently "the servant of the Lord," "who was faithful to Him that appointed Him" (Heb. iii. 2), whose meat it was to do His Father's will.

He did the will of God as He alone could,

making His soul an offering for sin that He might take away the sin of the world and destroy the works of the devil. "By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ" (Heb. x. 10). He finished the work His Father gave Him to do, and glorified Him upon the earth (John xvii. 4).

He laid down His life in obedience to His Father's command. His was an infinitely precious life. It was His own, an uncreated life. The highest archangel could not claim his life as his own, nor could he lay it down of himself; but Christ had power over His own life. "I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again," He said; and in loving, cheerful obedience to His Father's will, He laid it down that He might take it again. "This commandment have I received of my Father," He said, and "therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again;" as if the pre-eminent reason for God's joy in Him and love to Him was this of His laying down His life a ransom for sinners.

This, indeed, was the grand purpose for which He assumed our human nature; not merely that He might teach us His Father's will and lead us in the way of holiness, but that the life which was His own might be laid down for us, that

that sacred body might bear the whole imputation of our guilt, and be "offered one sacrifice for sins for ever," that having "through death destroyed him that had the power of death," and having risen again in the newness of resurrection life, He might communicate His own Divine nature, His *eternal* life, to as many as believed on Him, thus becoming the divinely-appointed medium of "bringing many sons unto glory."

Deep, awful mystery! The Divine nature could not be communicated to the creature except through death and resurrection. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John xii. 24). "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God; how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!"

Measured, then, by the grandeur of His person, the infinite delight the Father had in Him, the perfection of His obedience, and the greatness of the work He accomplished, how inestimably — yea, infinitely — precious unto God must be the shed blood of His most blessed and adorable Son.

Oh, sinner! what must be the love of God to *you*, when He spared not *His Son*, but delivered Him up for *you*.

How does the thought of it add intensity to the meaning of those marvellous words, "GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY - BEGOTTEN SON, THAT WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH ON HIM SHOULD NOT PERISH, BUT HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE" (John iii. 16).

Who, then, can doubt His tender compassion, His willingness to forgive? If He withheld not His own Son, but gave Him up for our salvation, how shall He turn a deaf ear to the cry of a contrite heart?

And oh, believer in Christ, does not your heart burn within you as you contemplate this "unspeakable gift"? "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us!" "Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John iv. 10). Can you ever for a moment forget the price of the ransom that was paid for you—purchased with the blood of the Son of God?

Surely a constant remembrance of this would ever serve to deepen our hatred of sin, and inflame our hearts with holy desires, to keep our consciences tender and sensitive, to purge us of every selfish aim and thought, for the dear sake of Him "who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto

Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus ii. 14).

But if "the blood of Christ" be so precious to God, how will His anger burn in the great day of His wrath against all who despise it? If the blood of any human being is so sacred in His sight that He will require it whenever shed at the hand of every man, and even at the hand of every beast (Gen. ix. 5, 6), how much more will He require the blood of Him who was the brightness of His glory—His well-beloved Son, who by wicked hands was crucified and slain (Acts ii. 23)? That blood was shed by man and spilt upon the ground, and every soul of man, from Adam to his last descendant, has to do with it, whether he will or no. How, at the day of judgment, it will affect those to whom the gospel has never been preached, God only knows; but of this we may be sure, "the Lord the righteous Judge" will "judge righteously."

But unto all who have heard and have neglected this great salvation, to all who from pride of heart refuse the offer of God's mercy through Jesus Christ His Son, the Word of the Lord cries, "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish!" "For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a *just recompence of reward*;

how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses : of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" (Heb. ii. 2, 3 ; x. 26-29).

Oh, haste then, sinner, to the "fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness," to the arms that are outstretched to save ; to the heart that is longing to bless ; to Him who is still "*waiting to be gracious.*" "Flee from the wrath to come." "BEHOLD THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT." Add not to your guilt the sin of having despised the "gift of God."

In love the Father pleads with you, "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?" *In love* the Saviour complains, "Ye will not come unto Me that ye might have life." *In love* the Spirit strives to convince you "of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come."

Unto what have you received the loving invitation? To the inexpressible sweetness of the forgiveness of God, the "joy unspeakable and full of glory;" to "the peace of God which passeth all understanding;" to a present and everlasting salvation; to union with the redeemed Church of the living God, that holy company who "have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Yea, all this, and a thousand times more than you can conceive of, is freely offered to you *now*. "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if *any man* hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh *will I grant to sit with me in my throne*, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne" (Rev. iii. 20, 21).

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