

HOME PREACHER OR CHURCH IN THE HOUSE.

THIRTY-FIFTH WEEK.

MORNING WORSHIP.

MOST gracious God, who hast given us the spirit of adoption, whereby we call Thee our Father, in the name of Thy Son we now entreat that our prayer may come up before Thee as incense. Grant that we, mortifying the deeds of the body, and being led by thy holy Spirit, may live as becomes Thy children, and joint heirs with Christ, who counted it his meat and his drink to do the will of his Father in heaven; that so we may finally be glorified together with Him, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. *Amen.*

HYMN, *or Psalm* lxxvii. 16-20.

GOD moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants his footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill,
He treasures up his bright designs,
And works his sovereign will.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take:
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust him for his grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.

His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.

Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan his work in vain;
God is his own interpreter,
And he will make it plain.

JUDGES VI. 11-23.

AND there came an angel of the Lord, and sat under an oak which was in Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash the Abi-ezrite: and his son Gideon thrashed wheat by the wine-press, to hide it from the Midianites. 12. And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him, and said unto him, The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour. 13. And Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? but now the Lord hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites. 14. And the Lord looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee? 15. And he said unto him, Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? Behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house. 16. And the Lord said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man.

17. And he said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, then shew me a sign that thou talkest with me. 18. Depart not hence, I pray thee, until I come unto thee, and bring forth my present, and set it before thee. And he said,

I will tarry until thou come again. 19. And Gideon went in, and made ready a kid, and unleavened cakes of an ephah of flour: the flesh he put in a basket, and he put the broth in a pot, and brought it out unto him under the oak, and presented it. 20. And the angel of God said unto him, Take the flesh and the unleavened cakes, and lay them upon this rock, and pour out the broth. And he did so, &c.

Prayer.

O LORD, we come to Thee under a deep sense of our weakness, and proneness to stray from Thy paths, yet emboldened by the assurance Thou givest us, that Thy “strength is made perfect in weakness.” Yea, Thou hast taught us that “to them who have no might Thou increasest strength.” May we, therefore, deeply conscious of our utter helplessness, “have no confidence in the flesh,” but have ever in us an enlightened apprehension of the truth, and deem it worthy of all acceptance, that our sufficiency is of Thee. May we feel that we can neither renew our own parts, nor keep them when, through Thy grace, they are renewed, and that it is “not in man that walketh to direct his steps.” Yet, Lord, suffer us not to make our weakness

an excuse for sin, or to forget that Thy grace has left us without an excuse. Suffer us not to rest contented with endeavours to flee from that which is evil; but incline our hearts to cleave to that which is good, and to go on unto perfection. Thou hast said, “My grace is sufficient for thee.” Thou hast taught us that we have only to ask, that we may receive the Holy Spirit. Thy divine Son has condescended to reason with, and has said unto us, “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.” We beseech Thee, therefore, to grant us this gift: May the divine Spirit be imparted to us, to enlighten our understanding in the knowledge of the truth; to quicken knowledge of the truth; to quicken our souls, naturally dead in trespasses and sins; to save us by the washing of regeneration; and to guide, strengthen, and sustain us amid all the perplexities and difficulties and duties of life. Give us confidence in Thee, that Thy faithful promises shall assuredly be fulfilled to all who trust in Thee. Help us to take hold of Thee, and plead them with Thee; and may we find, in our happy experience, that they are “yea and amen in Christ Jesus.” May we ever have the spirit and habit of those who say, “We are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything, as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God.” Thus may we be enabled to use all the means of grace with which Thou hast so abundantly

blessed us -- not trusting in them, but finding them to be “wells of salvation” that yield abundantly the water of life to them who by faith seek for Jesus and his Spirit in them. “As new-born babes may we desire the sincere milk of the word that we may grow thereby. May we look for the fulfilment of the divine promise, and attain unto it, “that they who are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God, and shall bring forth fruit even to old age.: May Thy sanctuary be very dear to us, so that we shall be constrained to say, “This is none other than the house of God, and the gate of heaven.” May the sacraments be to us the seals of the everlasting covenant, rightly understood, and abundantly enjoyed. May the sabbath be our delight, holy unto the Lord, and honourable, so that we shall not think our own thoughts, nor find our own pleasure, nor speak our own words on it. Thus may we “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,” to whom, with Thee and the Spirit of all grace, be glory for ever and ever. *Amen.*

THE CHURCH IN THE HOUSE.

ALMIGHTY God, the fountain of all wisdom, who knowest our necessities, before we ask, and our ignorance in asking, we beseech Thee to have compassion upon our infirmities; and those things which for our unworthiness we dare not, and for our blindness we cannot ask, vouchsafe to give us, for the worthiness of thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

HYMN, *or Psalm* xxii. 23-28.

HARK! the herald angels sing --
“Glory to the new-born King!”
Peace on earth and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconcil’d!”

Christ, by highest heav’n ador’d,
Christ the everlasting Lord,
Lowly lays his glory by;
Born for men, for men to die.

Hail the heav’n-born Prince of Peace!
Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
Light, and life, and joy He brings,
Ris’n with healing in his wings.

Let us then with angels sing,
“Glory to the new-born King!”
Peace on earth and mercy mild,

God and sinners reconcil'd!"

ISAIAH XL. 9-11, 16-31.

O ZION, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength: lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! 10. Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. 11. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young. 16. Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt-offering. 17. All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity. 18. To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him? 19. The workman melteth a graven image, and the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold, and casteth silver chains. 20. He that is so impoverished that he hath no oblation chooseth a tree that will not rot: he seeketh unto him a cunning workman to prepare a graven image, that shall not be moved. 21. Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not

understood from the foundations of the earth? 22. It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in; 23. That bringeth the princes to nothing: he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity. 24. Yea, they shall not be planted; yea, they shall not be sown; yea, their stock shall not take root in the earth: and he shall also blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble. 25. To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. 26. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names, by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth. 27. Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God? 28. Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. 29. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. 30. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: 31. But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

SERMON XXXV.

“THOU WILT KEEP HIM IN PERFECT PEACE WHOSE MIND IS STAYED ON THEE: BECAUSE HE TRUSTETH IN THEE. TRUST YE IN THE LORD FOR EVER; FOR IN THE LORD JEHOVAH IS EVERLASTING STRENGTH.” Isaiah xxvi. 3, 4.

HERE is the secret of life -- peace, perfect peace, and the sure way of obtaining it. True, it ought not to be a secret, for it has been long published, recommended and even urged on the notice and acceptance of men. But, alas! they are generally blind to its excellence, insensible to its claims, and opposed to its counsels. Blessed be God, however, it stands as of old, unchanged and unchangeable. No neglect, or unworthiness, or abuse on the part of man, has caused it to be withdrawn. It still occupies its ancient place in the immutable word of the living and true God, and needs only to be accepted that its value may be proved. The stars in the heavens may be obscured by the mists that arise from the earth's surface; but although they are thus hidden from our view for a season, no change has passed over them, and they will be seen in all their glory when the intervening clouds are dispersed. So also the precious truths of the text may fail to be discerned by reason of the mists which

ignorance and unbelief and sin raise around us; but no sooner are these scattered by the light of the divine word and Spirit than the old and indestructible inscriptions are recognized on the firmament of revelation -- “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the Lord for ever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.”

In considering these words, we may notice -- 1, *The character contemplated* -- “whose mind is stayed on thee;” 2, *The blessing promised* -- Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace;” 3, *The duty enjoined* -- “trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.” It will be seen, as we proceed, that there is a close and instructive connection between these several views of the text.

1. The text contemplates a special case -- *the condition* of the man “whose mind is stayed” on God. The term employed is very forcible. It means the fixed thought of the mind, when it is set with such intensity of any object that it cannot be diverted from it. The idea is well described in the 112th Psalm, when it is said of the righteous man “he shall not be moved for ever; he shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. His heart is established, he shall not be afraid.” The same sentiment is expressed by the apostle Paul when he says, The foundation

of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his.”

In this condition of mind there is supposed to be a discovery of the vanity of all human confidence. Solomon has said, “He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool.” Its desires will lead him astray, its devices will prove to be folly, and its promises will end in disappointment. No more can we depend on anything we possess. “Riches make to themselves wings and fly away.” Nor is there any other creature on whom we can rely. Every one is as deceitful, evanescent, and unsatisfying as ourselves. The language of the Scriptures is singularly strong: “Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of? Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord.”

To have the “mind stayed” on God is to trust unhesitatingly in Him, in Him exclusively, but in Him universally. It is to meet all we learn of Him with a corresponding and becoming confidence. His perfections are apprehended as these are manifested in His Son Jesus Christ, and we commit ourselves to them. There is faith in God, and we betake ourselves to each perfection as it offers the needed refuge to the soul. Are we in perplexity? We know not what to do, for the way is equally dark and dangerous. The wisdom of God is then the open door by

which we must enter into his temple. Devoutly kneeling within its sacred precincts, we must seek its guidance, and cast ourselves on its direction. As we do so with confidence we honour God, and as we rest in the assurance that he will make our path plain, so may our mind be said to be stayed upon God. So also under a sense of weakness. Is there a deep sense of inability either to resist the temptations that beset us, or to discharge the duties that are required of us? This is a call to commit ourselves to the power of God. It was thus the apostle acted when he was conscious of being “buffeted by a messenger from Satan.” “For this thing,” he says, “I besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” So that he concluded, “when I am weak then am I strong,” and showed that his “mind was stayed” on the power of God. Or are we in trouble, and do we feel ourselves sinking under the burden of it? A fine example is presented by Hezekiah when at such a time he said, “O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me.” His mind was stayed on the all-sufficiency of God. Is it a sense of guilt that distresses us? Our unworthiness and vileness stare us in the face, and we blush and are ashamed before both God and man. Even then there is an open door to the chamber of his mercy. We can read, “God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins,

hath quickened us together with Christ; by grace are ye saved.” As we embrace this truth our minds may well be stayed on the mercy of God. Even the justice of God may be pleaded by the sinner. It has been satisfied and magnified in Christ, and they who confide in Him honour it while they accept his satisfaction to it as the ground of their hope. His holiness, too, is a guarantee that all things shall be ordered for the highest and best interests of those who confide in Him; and his truth may be pleaded for the fulfilment of all the promises contained in his word. On any one of them may we lay the hand of faith and plead, “Do as thou hast said.” In short, God himself is the confidence of his people. We have named his perfections, but this is only to help our infirmities. We must guard against any reliance on any mere abstract perfections. It is on God himself we must depend. These are only the porches by which we enter into his presence and deal with Him. We are to say with David, “Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My heart and my flesh faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.” It is then the mind may be said to be stayed upon God. This is the case contemplated in the text, and we are now prepared to consider --

2. *The promised blessing* -- “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace.”

In the 17th chapter of Jeremiah, at the 7th verse, there are the following words: -- “Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is: For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of draught, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.” In this beautiful passage there is one sentiment in exact accordance with the term “keep” used in the text. They both suggest the idea of habitual and continued blessedness. They who are the subject of it are preserved in the enjoyment of it. The elements of peace are begun in the soul, and they are brought to maturity in the whole course of the future life. If it is interrupted, there must be the introduction of some opposing power. The promise is, “I will extend peace to her like a river,” both for abundance and permanence. It shall be continued as the habitual enjoyment of the mind that is stayed upon God. Both the means and source of so high a blessing, however, are pointedly noticed in the text, and it is important to observe them. As to the former -- the means -- if we are to be kept in peace, the mind must be kept stayed upon God. Peace will not continue to flow into the mind of its own accord. As food is habitually taken for the preservation of health, so the mind must be fed with living bread from day to day. If God is forgotten, or distrust of his perfections is admitted, or a doubt of his word, or disbelief

of his Son, or neglect or disobedience of his commandments, then peace is broken: the means of maintaining it have not been observed. This is the lamentation of God over an unfaithful people -- “O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves the sea.” In a word, the sentiment of the text is, that just as the mind is stayed upon God, in the same proportion, and no farther, can we expect to have peace. Then, in connection with the means of securing it, observe the view that is given of its author -- “Thou wilt keep him in peace.” It is ascribed to the immediate agency of God. Not only must peace begin from Him, but it must be maintained by Him. He is the author and finisher of this grace in the soul. The mind that would enjoy it must look to Him continually for it. It is the union of these two views that gives us a correct apprehension of the subject -- when we understand what are the means to be used and diligently employ them, and when we look over to God to render effectual. Then we adopt the counsel and imbibe the spirit of the command, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”

When we thus act we may expect to realize the blessing that is promised, even “perfect peace” -- peace, of all kinds, in the highest degree, at all times, and under all circumstances. Thus may we enjoy peace in our own

minds, peace of conscience, peace with God. The mind, stayed upon Him as “God manifest in the flesh,” may say, “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” There is a sense of pardoned sin, an assurance of the divine favour, a persuasion of sufficient grace for every duty and emergency of life. Just as we trust in God and have the mind stayed upon Him, personally, so will be the permanent enjoyment of peace. And it is the same with all the disturbing causes of this peace from without as well as from within. A confidence in God himself and his perfections leads to similar confidence in his providence. We are enabled to trust Him under all the events that prove a trial to our faith. Are we afflicted in our families? Observe how David was sustained in such circumstances, while his mind was stayed upon God: “Although my house be not so with God, yet hath he made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; for this is all my salvation and all my desire, although he make it not to grow.” Are we discouraged by the low state of religion and the difficulties and trials with which the church is called to contend? See David again, when, oppressed by such a contemplation in his day; lifting up his soul to God, he cried, “Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion. When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory.” Or are we alarmed and confounded by the events that are distracting and destroying the best

interests of society? We can call to mind how David sung at such time, “The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof. Clouds and darkness are round about him; righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne. Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous; and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.” Thus may we universally realize the promised blessing -- “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee.”

3. To this promise it is appropriately added, “because he trusteth in thee;” and this *reason* we shall now, in the third place, consider.

There is a fine sentiment and an encouraging truth suggested by the connection between this reason and the promise of the text. It is not merely that when we trust in God we are delivered from confiding in those vain confidences which deceive all who depend upon them, whether themselves or others of their fellow creatures. Nor is it merely that by trusting in God we commit ourselves to perfections which can never fail us -- unerring wisdom, almighty power, unbending justice, immaculate holiness, boundless mercy, and inviolable truth. All this there is, but there is more -- the grand thought is that by trusting in God we honour Him. And this is clearly the force of the argument in the text -- “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace

whose mind is stayed on thee, *because* he trusteth in thee.” Let this argument be now considered.

This is the deep and broad basis on which the gospel of Christ is laid. The heavenly host proclaimed, when Jesus was born, “Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace, good will to men,” And the apostle Paul has expressed the spirit and design of the whole economy -- negatively thus, “that no flesh should glory in his presence;” and positively, “that according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.” Its high design is the honour of God, and we fall in with its purpose just as we give Him glory.

How shall this glory, then be rendered? There are many ways in which we may do so, -- in our hearts, by our lips, and our lives. But there is one element essential to every expression of the divine honour, and which is itself accounted the highest ascription of praise. This is confidence in God. The more we trust Him, the more we honour Him. As the spirit of distrust creeps in, we do Him dishonour, and act unworthily of Him. The strongest faith renders the greatest glory to God; and hence it is written of Abraham, “He was strong in faith, giving glory to God, being persuaded that *what he had promised he was able also to perform.*”

Nor was Abraham singular in this confidence. It is written in the 22nd Psalm, “Our fathers trusted in thee; they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. They cried unto

thee, and were delivered; they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.” So did Moses, when he said to Israel, as the Egyptians were behind them and the sea before them, “Stand still, and see the salvation of God.” So did Joshua, when he fell down on the discomfiture of Israel at Ai, and pleaded with God, “What wilt thou do unto thy great name?” So did Jehoshaphat, when beset by the children of Moab and Ammon, he called on Jehovah, and said, “O our God, wilt thou not judge them? For we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do; but our eyes are upon thee.” So did Hezekiah, when he went up to the house of the Lord and spread before Him the threatening and insulting letter of the proud Sennacherib. And so did the prophet Habbakuk when, in the prospect of famine, he confidently sung, “Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.” David did so when he went forth, a stripling with a sling and a stone, against the great Goliath who defied the armies of the living God. The apostles did so when, weak and helpless as they were, they set out on the high mission of subduing the world to Christ. All the worthies did so of whom Paul testifies -- “Out of weakness they were made strong, they

waxed valiant in fight, and turned to flight the armies of the alien.” Luther did so when he stood up boldly against the whole papal world. The missionary does so when he goes forth to seek the conversion of the heathen to Christ. All these have trusted in God, and by their confidence have honoured Him.

This, then, is the example for us. We are to remember what faith accomplished in others, and the reason of it -- that it honoured God, and was therefore honoured by Him. This is the force of the argument in the text, “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee.” And now, to complete the subject, it only remains to consider --

4. *The duty of cultivating trust in God* -- “Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.”

So long as the views which have been advanced are before the mind, and are allowed to influence it, trust in God seems to be an easy duty. The blessed revelations which the divine word gives of God himself, and the many examples which it records of confidence in Him, with the glorious results that followed, inspire the soul with the purpose of never distrusting Him. It is felt to be reasonable, if not irresistible, to yield to the appeal that is made to us; and we may say, with some measure of enthusiasm, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; for the Lord

Jehovah is my strength and my song; he is become my salvation.”

All this might be expected. Yet when we come to the realities of actual life a very different state of things is found to exist. Jesus had reason to say to his immediate followers, who had constant opportunities to witness his all-sufficiency, “Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?” They needed to pray, “Lord, increase our faith.” When the temptation of his arrest arose, even the courageous Peter denied Him, and all the rest of the disciples forsook Him and fled. This, alas! is too just a picture of the real condition of his professed followers in all ages. They lose sight of the perfections and promises of God. They forget the noble examples of other men and times. They yield to the suggestions of their own carnal mind, the temptations of a sinful world, and the allurements of Satan, and so become, like Samson shorn of his hair, weak as other men. The forms in which this weakness of faith appears are many, and we need to be on our guard against them that we may withstand them. It may be well to advert to some of them:--

There is sometimes darkness and desertion of mind. An example occurs in the 143rd Psalm -- “The enemy hath persecuted my soul; he hath smitten my life down to the ground; he hath made me to dwell in darkness, as those that have been long dead. Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed

within me; my heart within me is desolate.” This sad condition of mind is ascribed to the agency of Satan; he is represented to produce it by blinding the mind against the perception of truth; and it issues in great dejection and unhappiness of spirit. Let it be remembered this is on record for our warning. We are subject to the same temptation. We may lose sight of God and cry with Job, “O that I knew where I might find him.” It is surely a solemn duty to guard against it, for it is alike dishonouring to God and distressing to us. The psalm that discloses it suggests also the remedy for it -- “I remember the days of old. I meditate on all thy works; I muse on the works of thy hands. I stretch forth my hands unto thee; my soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land.” Prayer and meditation, and active usefulness -- for it is added, “teach me to do thy will” -- are the means of deliverance. We should use these, saying “Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted in me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise him who is the health of my countenance and my God.”

Disappointments, again, strengthen these temptations to distrust. We are disappointed with ourselves, for we expected to make attainments which we have never reached. We are disappointed with others, for we looked for help where we have found a hinderance. And we are disappointed with measures which have proceeded from

both ourselves and others, which we had fondly expected to find efficient while they have proved unsatisfying, if not deceitful. Our hands thus hang down, and our graces are feeble. We are tempted to abandon in despair either the hope of a vigorous faith in ourselves or an extensive improvement in others.

Difficulties are superadded to disappointments. Some are real, and many imaginary. Together, they create a lion in the way. Then the temptation is to wait for better opportunities and other times. "The time is not come that the house of the Lord should be built." Our circumstances forbid, as we fancy, either that there should be great growth in ourselves or much usefulness abroad. And there is danger of falling into listlessness toward the one and unconcern for the other.

Against these and all similar temptations it is an urgent duty to cultivate trust in God. It is the neglect of doing so of which the prophet complains, saying, "There is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee." Here is the very duty -- to "call on the name of Jehovah," meditating on his divine perfections until we are inspired with confidence in them -- to "stir up ourselves to take hold of him," indulging every reflection that can awaken our minds, either by causing us to see the danger that urges us, or the encouragements that draw us to God. We should take hold of Him -- of his word, his promises, his

covenant, his attributes, himself. We should strive against unbelief and distrust, refreshing ourselves with such words as these -- "Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary. There is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall. But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." In the text itself there is great emphasis -- Trust ye in the *Lord* -- trust ye in the Lord *for ever* -- trust ye in the Lord for ever; for in the Lord Jehovah is *everlasting strength*." -- JAMES MORGAN, D.D.

THE CHILDREN'S SERVICE.

OF THE SUPPER MADE TO JESUS IN BETHANY,
SOME DAYS BEFORE HIS DEATH.

HAVE you ever thought how wise the Bible is in not telling us about some things we might wish to hear of? Have you ever noticed that it does not speak of matters,

merely to answer curious questions? The silence of Scripture is often as wonderful as its speech. I dare say most little children would like to know something about Christ's life when he was seven, or eight, or ten years old. Now the New Testament does not say a word about it. I suppose we could not as yet understand the child-life of the Lord Jesus if it were told us. We shall need the light of heaven to read it by; here we should read it amiss. At all events, it has seemed meet to the Holy Spirit not to say more to us about Jesus, from the time that he was taken to Nazareth still an infant til he was twelve years of age, then what is contained in these beautiful but general words, "The child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him."

In the same way, it seems at first strange that not a word should be said in all the Bible about how the different persons that came back from the dead acted and spoke after they were raised. Did the little boy of the woman of Shunem remember that he had died on his mother's knees? or did he just feel as if he had slept and waked up? Did the man, whom the touch of Elisha's bones brought back to life, ever talk to his friends about where his soul had been? Was Jairus' little daughter able to answer any questions about the other world? Could Lazarus tell his sisters, Mary at least, something about the wonders of paradise? Or could he only say with Paul, that the things he saw and heard were

“unspeakable,” and not lawful for a man to utter?” or had he forgotten all about them? All these questions it is natural, but idle, to put. The Scripture, which alone could answer them for us, says nothing on the subject. When it has told us about the different resurrections recorded in its pages, it does not even allude to the raised persons any more, with one single exception. This is striking; but if you think a little about it, you will see that it is better as it is than otherwise. I think it likely, however, that if we could have seen and talked with the widow of Nain’s son, and all the others that lived on earth again after they were dead, they could have told us nothing more about the other world than the Bible tells us. To know more we must go there to see.

The one exception to entire silence about the persons raised from the dead, after their resurrection, is in the case of Lazarus. His name is four times mentioned afterwards in connection with the story I am about to tell: and we know from what is said about him that he still lived in Bethany with his sisters; that at a supper made to Jesus in the town he sat at the table with him; that many Jews came to see him; and that the chief priests had talk with each other about killing him, as well as Jesus, because numbers of the people were led through him to believe on the Saviour. All this, at the same time, is told us as it were by the way,

when John is giving account of what happened at the supper alluded to.

That supper was made, not in the house of Martha, but of Simon the leper. Jesus probably had cured him, and he was glad to give his house in honour of Jesus. Jesus, as man, needed food and lodging like others; and it was a great joy to those who loved him in Bethany, after Lazarus was given back to them from the grave, to ask Jesus to come with his disciples, and accept a feast at their hands. On this occasion, Martha would serve him, as before in her own house, with her own hands. But she was not cumbered now, nor did she complain of her sister's leaving all to her. The sisters understood each other better since they had been mourners together for the loss of their brother. Each has her own happy duty tonight, and rejoices in the service of the other. Meanwhile, both are glad to see Lazarus, their lost one found, among the guests; and often, I feel sure, must their eyes have passed from Jesus to their brother, every look at Lazarus leading them back again with fresh thankfulness and joy and love to their blessed Lord.

Mary's service that night was a strange one. I do not know that she told any one about it beforehand. Perhaps she mentioned to her sister and brother what she designed to do, and they were quite pleased. Even if she did, however, I hardly think they knew what she meant by it. For her thought was deep. This was what she did. She had

a large quantity of very sweet and costly ointment in the house, a whole pound; and she went and brought it all in a box of alabaster, and breaking the box, she poured it on the Saviour's person from head to feet. Then, like another whom Jesus had found and saved, she took the hair of her head and wiped the Lord's feet; while the house was filled with the sweet perfume. There was a sweeter odour than that of the ointment there; but only Jesus as yet perceived it.

When Mary poured out the sweet unguent without stint, the disciples saw her deed with wonder. One among them could not keep in a murmur. It was Judas, who was treasurer to Christ's little company, and had ere now helped himself to what was in the purse. He was a thief, and wickedly took away, for his own use, part of what was given by Christ's friends to support him and his disciples. Observe how sin grew in that bad, wretched man. He began by taking money from Christ's treasury, and ended in taking thirty pieces of silver for his Master's life. On the present occasion he was very angry to see what he called "this waste." He pretended that it was for the sake of the poor he protested against it. He said that the spikenard was worth more than three hundred pence, and how many poor people would such a sum have helped! All the while his heart's thought was, If I could have got hold of that money for the bag, what a fine sum I would have made out of it!

What he said, however, was about the poor, and had a sound of sense and charity in it. So some of the other disciples joined with Judas, sincerely thinking that the ointment was not wisely used, in being all poured out on their Lord's feet. They came to think very differently afterwards.

Jesus saw into Mary's heart. He knew that this was from her a farewell gift. She will mind the poor afterwards, her Lord must be thought of now. For she had come to understand that he was about to die. What his disciples stumbled at, she had been taught to receive. She believed his own word, and saw that he who raised her brother from death, was himself to be dragged to death. Whether her faith went further than this, and saw him rise again from the dead, I know not; only we do not read of her joining the other women in preparing spices to anoint his dead body, or going with them to the sepulchre. Christ's own words show that, at least, she knew better than all the rest that the Lord's hour was come. He answered the murmur of the disciples by telling them that Mary had kept this to anoint his body beforehand to the burying. It was a last service; could its costliness be grudged? The poor, he said, ye have with you always, but me ye have not always. And then he commended Mary's action in a very marked and wonderful way. He said that wherever the gospel should be preached throughout the whole world, this story would be told to her

honour. Christ's word in this has come to pass. The story is told by three of the evangelists, and is read wherever the gospel is known. His word shows that there was more to be commended, than the mere liberality and love that did not spare so costly a gift. Christ commended her clear-eyed faith, which took in what he had taught about his coming sufferings and death, even when his own disciples refused to understand its meaning. See what grew from Mary's faith and love! Mary filled the house with the odour of her gift; he has filled the world with it.

Dear young readers, have you any fragrant ointment for the Lord? Broken hearts are better still than broken alabaster. Repentance, faith, love, are better than costliest spikenard. Can you bring to Jesus broken, lowly hearts? Can you offer him trust and love? He will value them more than angels' songs. You can give him the very perfection of praise. Come, then, with your offerings, little hearts, loving, lowly, longing? Mary's ointment filled the room with sweetness; yours will send fragrance past the stars, in and before the throne of God itself.

QUESTIONS ON THE BIBLE STORY.

1. Do you remember a curious question put once to Christ, which he answered with a word of practical advice, putting the inquiry aside?
2. Of what growing child in the Old Testament are words spoken somewhat similar to those spoken of Jesus in the New?
3. What prophet, besides Elisha, is recorded in the Old Testament to have raised the dead?
4. What place does Paul say he once was caught up into, as well as paradise?
5. Which of the evangelists tells us about the other woman that wiped Christ's feet with her hair, and who was she?
6. Can you find two texts, one in the Old, another in the New Testament, which shows that God regards what is given to the poor as given to himself?
7. How could you prove that even Peter and James and John did not believe what Christ said beforehand about his death?
8. Can you find two texts, showing that God takes delight in hearts that are humble and sorry for sin?
9. Can you find a text where gifts to Christ are said to have a sweet smell?
10. Can you find a text where Christ's sacrifice is said to be very sweetly fragrant?

11. Is there any text in the Old Testament where God is said to have found a sweet smell in the oblation of animals?

12. Where are the prayers of God's people called odours?

ANSWERS to the foregoing questions will be found easily by turning to the following chapters: -- Luke xiii.; 1 Sam. ii. and iii.; 1 Kings xvii.; 2 Cor. xii.; Luke vii.; Prov. xix. and Matt. xxv.; Mark ix.; Ps. li. and Isa. lxvi.; Phil iv.; Eph. v.; Gen. viii.; Rev. v.

Prayer.

O THOU who givest us life, breath, and all things, when Thou art pleased to ask gifts from us for Thy cause on earth, move our hearts to give freely and joyously. Help us to remember the poor, whom Thou countest specially Thine own. May we pity them, and be ever ready to help them. May we have grace to offer Thee, what is better than all outward gifts, the heart of love. May we be sorry for sin, meek and lowly in Thy sight, seeking Thyself above all things. O how shall we thank Thee for Jesus' death and Jesus' resurrection! May we now give our heart to the risen Lord, and seek to be guided by Him; and when His people

feast with Him anew in His Father's house above, may we be among the happy guests. All we ask is in the Lord's name; to whom be glory for ever. *Amen.*

EVENING WORSHIP.

ASSIST us mercifully, O Lord, in these our supplications and prayers, and dispose the way of Thy servants towards the attainment of everlasting salvation, that among all the changes and chances of this mortal life they may ever be defended by Thy most gracious and ready help, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

HYMN, *or Psalm* xvi. 7-11

BLEST be the everlasting God,
The Father of our Lord;
Be his abounding mercy praised,
His majesty adored.

When from the dead He raised his Son,
And called Him to the sky,
He gave our souls a lively hope

That they should never die.

What though our inbred sins require
Our flesh to see the dust;
Yet as the Lord our Saviour rose,
So all his followers must.
There's an inheritance divine
Reserved against that day;
'Tis uncorrupted, undefiled,
And cannot fade away.

Saints by the power of God are kept
Til the salvation come;
We walk by faith as strangers here
Till Christ shall call us home.

MATTHEW VII. 21-27.

NOT every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. 22. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? 23. And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work

iniquity. 24. Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock. And when the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. 26. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand; 27. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

MATTHEW XXV. 31-46.

WHEN the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. 32. And before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: 33. And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. 34. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world, &c.

Prayer.

O LORD, at the close of another day, we would, in the name of Jesus, make our prayer to Thee. How good art Thou in permitting us to begin the day, and to end it, with Thee. All the blessings we have enjoyed upon it come from Thy bountiful hand, and to Thee we give the glory. Wherein we have been restrained from sin, or have been enabled to serve Thee with fidelity, or to participate in the enjoyments of Thy favour and service, we render Thee the praise. Wherein we have been led astray, or have proved unfaithful, or neglectful, or sinful, we crave Thy pardoning mercy. Enable us to return to “the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness,” and wash therein afresh. Thanks be to Thee that “the blood of Jesus Christ, Thy Son, cleanseth us from all sin;” that this fountain is always open, and always full, and always effectual. May we know at once how necessary it is, and how sufficient for our cleansing. Help us to wait ever by it, as the poor and afflicted ones at Bethesda’s pool, knowing that the Angel of the Covenant will surely and constantly come and trouble its waters, and believing that whosoever steppeth in shall be made whole of whatsoever disease he may have. So may we be ever clean in Thy sight, O Lord. And as time hastens on may we feel

increasingly the necessity of leading “a life of faith upon the Son of God.” May we be sensible that, every day, we are drawing nearer to death and the judgment. May we be enabled to appropriate the blessed truth, that “there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit;” and to cherish the thought of union with Christ as our only security for present and eternal salvation. And grant, that satisfied with this hope, we may ever walk worthy of it, living in the Spirit, walking in the Spirit, and led by the Spirit, thus perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord, and cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the mind. May our personal piety increase, and our relative holiness abound, and our public usefulness grow according to our opportunity; sensible that the time is short, and that we must soon stand before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one of us may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. With these solemn impressions, suffer us not to be entangled with the things of time, or burdened with its cares, or hardened by its occupations and temptations. May we live as those who feel they are mortal, and yet immortal. May our weak and perishing bodies keep us mindful of our mortality, and may the aspirations of our souls keep us alive to a constant sense of our immortality. May we be ever conscious that we are sailing on the sea of life, in a brittle

bark that is receding more and more from the shores of time and the landmarks of earth, and approaching nearer and nearer to eternity and its solemn issues in unending happiness or hopeless misery. Help us in our earthly and dangerous voyage to cast out the anchor of hope, and may that keep us sure and steadfast, entering within the veil, whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, “made an high priest for ever.” Enable us to “give all diligence, adding to our faith virtue, and knowledge, and temperance, and patience, and godliness, and brotherly kindness, and charity;” and so may an abundant entrance be ministered unto us into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

MORNING AND EVENING MEDITATIONS.

MONDAY.

Morning.

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

There is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord.

In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind.

Therefore am I troubled at his presence: when I consider, I am afraid of him.

In thee do I trust: cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto thee.

Prov. iii. 5. Prov. xxi. 30. Job xii. 10. Job xxiii. 15. Ps. cxliiii. 8.

Evening.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.

And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

Heb. iv. 16. 1 John v. 14, 15.

TUESDAY.

Morning.

Therefore also now, saith the Lord, Turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning;

And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.

For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee.

Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men.

The righteous shall see it, and rejoice.

Joel ii. 12, 13. Isa. liv. 9. Ps. cvii. 31, 42.

Evening.

Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.

And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness: thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer.

The Lord hath heard my supplication; the Lord will receive my prayer.

James v. 11. 2 Cor. xii. 9. Ps. iv. 1. Ps. vi. 9.

WEDNESDAY.

Morning.

It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High:

To shew forth thy loving-kindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night,

Upon an instrument of ten strings, and upon the psaltery; upon the harp with a solemn sound.

For thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy work; I will triumph in the works of thy hands.

O Lord, how great are thy works! and thy thoughts are very deep.

I will praise thee, O Lord, with my whole heart; I will shew forth all thy marvellous works.

That I may shew forth all thy praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion: I will rejoice in thy salvation.

Ps. xcii. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. Ps. ix. 1, 14.

Evening.

I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God.

And now, saith the Lord that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength.

And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.

Isa. xlix. 4, 5, 6.

THURSDAY.

Morning.

Mine eyes fail with looking upward: O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me.

What shall I say? He hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done it: I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul.

O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit: so wilt thou recover me, and make me to live.

Behold, for peace I had great bitterness; but thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption for thou has cast all my sins behind thy back.

The Lord was ready to save me: therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of the Lord.

Isa. xxxviii. 14, 15, 16, 17. 20.

Evening.

Thou shalt call me, My father; and shalt not turn away from me.

Surely as a wife treacherously departeth from her husband, so have ye dealt treacherously with me, O house of Israel, saith the Lord.

A voice was heard upon the high places, weeping and supplications of the children of Israel: for they have

perversed their way, and they have forgotten the Lord their God.

Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the Lord our God.

Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains: truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel.

If thou wilt return, O Israel, saith the Lord, return unto me.

Jer. iii. 19, 20, 21, 22, 23. Jer. iv. 1.

FRIDAY.

Morning.

I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the Lord; because they called thee an Outcast, saying, This is Zion whom no man seeketh after.

Behold, I will bring again the captivity of Jacob's tents, and have mercy on his dwelling-places

And out of them shall proceed thanksgiving, and the voice of them that make merry;: and I will multiply them, and they shall not be few; I will also glorify them, and they shall not be small.

Jer. xxx. 17, 18, 19.

Evening.

I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.

They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will lead them; I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble; for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my first-born.

Hear the word of the Lord, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, he that scattereth Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock.

Jer. xxxi. 3, 9, 10.

SATURDAY.

Morning.

And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:

And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit.

And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke.

The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come.

Joel ii. 28, 29, 30, 31.

Evening.

For, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem,

I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people, and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations and parted my land.

But the Lord will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel.

So shall ye know that I am the Lord your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain; then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more.

Joel iii. 1, 2, 16, 17.