

MATTHEW HENRY
DAILY READINGS

MARK 16:1-8

To Aaron on your Special d
I hope this Book will help
with your daily walk with
Our LORD lots of love Gram

MATTHEW HENRY
DAILY READINGS

MARK 16 ✓ 16.

EDITED BY
Randall J. Pederson

CHRISTIAN
HERITAGE

Dedication
For Lois Mol and Dr. Au

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INTRODUCTION

The church has profited much from devotional literature throughout the centuries. Thousands of books have been published in this century alone. And the question readers often face is which ones are worth their time and effort. This devotional is not unlike many others, in that it seeks to edify readers and encourage them in their path. But it is different in the weightiness of the material. The selections are taken from the most popular commentary of the eighteenth century, Matthew Henry's six-volume *An Exposition of All the Books of the Old and New Testament*. While it may seem daunting to read the works of a seventeenth-century author, these selections have been selected and edited with contemporary readers in mind (e.g. "hath's" have been removed; the ESV has replaced the KJV). Further, Henry was a lifelong proponent of a certain genre of literature known as seventeenth-century British Puritan practical divinity, which sought not only to explicate the biblical text but also to instruct and apply its message to the needs of daily life, educating families how to worship and live *coram Deo*. In fact, Henry's commentary has often been referred to as a devotional commentary. Thus, his prose is well suited to be revived for the present generation.

Henry lived in an age when printing presses were overflowing with godly and uplifting literature. Perhaps few centuries have produced as many devotional manuals (which aimed to direct the interior life towards spiritual maturity) as the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Known as an age of piety, the Reformation and Post-Reformation periods witnessed a great boom in the promotion of a Word-centered spirituality, much in contrast to earlier, more ritualistic forms that were deeply embedded in medieval Catholicism. This word-centered piety moved Christians to refocus their lives on the central truths of God's word and the demands there placed upon them, and Henry was

a living example of the sort of Christian piety that can develop from a serious attempt to conform one's life according to Scripture. He submitted himself to a rigorous discipline of prayer and Bible study, which no one knew about except his family and those who spent time in their home. Henry strived to live as he preached, and this truth adds immense worth to his thoughts collected here.

Far too often our ignorance of the past leads to our own spiritual impoverishment. As our generation becomes more and more focused on visual media, we would do well to heed the profound depths of Henry's word-centered spirituality. That is not to say that visual forms of presentation are always wrong, but rather that we need to do more than see with our eyes; we need to be convinced in our hearts and minds and become as wholeheartedly Christian as those saints who have gone before us (see Heb. 12:1). We must always have a high sense of the authority of Scripture and bow to its demands. Henry's commentary on the Bible abounds with this sensibility.

It is hoped that this new devotional will serve as a worthy successor in a long string of godly and uplifting material. Drawn from the most popular commentary of all time, these brief and succinct excerpts were chosen to pierce the heart with pointed truths, to instruct, console, motivate towards holiness, and to encourage pilgrims in their long journey home, all the while remembering the busy and chaotic lives people now live. Its small size will be well suited for travel, suitable for reading on a plane or train; the entries can be read in only a few minutes, perhaps between flights or just prior to bed. Further, it can be used to introduce readers to the Puritans and the profit in reading them. It might also be useful as a companion to Henry's *A Method for Prayer*.

These concise selections were taken from two different editions of Henry's commentary (from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries). The entries have been edited for consistency of

style, and the text has been modernized to reflect current English usage. Biblical references have been changed to the English Standard Version (ESV), one of the most popular and faithful translations of our time. Citations at the bottom of each devotional refer to the place in Henry's commentary where the selections were taken from, and may also serve as complimentary reading texts. I am hopeful that readers will enjoy Henry's poetic imagination and disciplined use of language; as always, any remaining fault in the editing is mine and mine alone.

This book would never have seen completion without the efforts of several people. I extend my deepest gratitude and thanks to those at Christian Focus Publications for seeing the value of Henry's seventeenth-century prose and suggesting this updated revision. Special thanks are due to Anthony Gosling for his many winsome visits to the States.

I also wish to express deep gratitude to Peter A. Lillback, friend, mentor, and president of Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, for allowing a siesta from my normal work as research assistant to finish this devotional; his godly life and witness is in the true vein of Matthew Henry. Thanks are also due to Joel R. Beeke, Carl R. Trueman, Richard A. Muller, Gijsbert van den Brink, Michael Haykin, Terreth Klaver, Derek Thomas, and Jonathan ("Bud") Beeke, for their winsome friendships reminiscent of seventeenth-century camaraderie.

Last but not least I want to thank my beautiful wife, Sarah; my son, Tyler; and my parents, Gary and Rosa, for their love and support. I owe them a profound debt of gratitude and I can never thank them enough.

Randall J. Pederson
Cheltenham, Pennsylvania
March 2009

JANUARY 1

Before All Time and Worlds

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

GENESIS 1:1

The foundation of all religion being in our relation to God as our Creator, it was fit that the book of divine revelations [the Bible], which was intended to be the guide, support, and rule, of religion in the world, should begin, as it does, with a plain and full account of the creation of the world. This is all in answer to that first enquiry of a good conscience, "Where is God my Maker?" (Job 35:10). Concerning this the pagan philosophers blundered, and became vain in their imaginations, some asserting the world's eternity and self-existence, others ascribing it to a fortuitous concourse of atoms; thus, "the world did not know God through wisdom" (1 Cor. 1:21), but took a great deal of pains to lose him. The Holy Scripture therefore, designing by revealed religion to maintain and improve natural religion, to repair the decays of it and supply the defects of it, since the fall, for the reviving of the precepts of the law of nature, lays down, at first, this principle of the unclouded light of nature: that this world was, in the beginning of time, created by a Being of infinite wisdom and power, who was himself before all time and all worlds. The entrance into God's word gives this light (Ps. 119:130). The first verse of the Bible gives us a surer and better, a more satisfying and useful, knowledge of the origin of the universe, than all the volumes of the philosophers. The lively faith of humble Christians understands this matter better than the elevated fancy of the greatest wits (Heb. 11:3).

[Genesis 1]

JANUARY 2

Our Great God

For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods.

PSALM 95:3

As the earth has not only its surface adorned with grass and flowers, but also its bowels enriched with metals and precious stones ... so the heavens are not only beautified to our eye with glorious lamps which garnish its outside ... but they are within replenished with glorious beings, out of our sight, more celestial, and more surpassing them in worth and excellence than the gold or sapphires surpass the lilies of the field. In the visible world it is easy to observe great variety, several sorts of beings vastly differing in their nature and constitution from each other; "Lord, how manifold are your works" (Ps. 104:24), and all good! It is also easy to observe great beauty. The azure sky and verdant earth are charming to the eye of the curious spectator, much more the ornaments of both. How transcendent then must the beauty of the Creator be! See also great exactness and accuracy. To those that, with the help of microscopes, narrowly look into the works of nature, they appear finer than any of the works of art ... There is great order, a mutual dependence of beings, an exact harmony of motions, and an admirable chain and connection of causes. And great mystery – there are phenomena in nature which cannot be solved, secrets which cannot be fathomed nor accounted for. But from what we see of heaven and earth we may easily enough infer the eternal power and Godhead of the great Creator, and may furnish ourselves with abundant matter for his praises. And let our make and place, as men, remind us of our duty as Christians, which is always to keep heaven in our eye and the earth under our feet.

[Genesis 1]

JANUARY 3

The Spring of Motion

For "In him we live and move and have our being."

ACTS 17:28

The Spirit of God was the first mover. He "was hovering over the face of the waters" (Gen. 1:2). When we consider the earth without form and void, I think it is like the valley full of dead and dry bones. Can these live? Can this confused mass of matter be formed into a beautiful world? Yes, if a spirit of life from God enters into it (Ezek. 37:9). Now there is hope concerning this thing; for the Spirit of God begins to work, and, if he work, who or what shall hinder? God is said to make the world by his Spirit (Ps. 33:6; Job 26:13); and by the same mighty worker the new creation is brought forth. He moved upon the face of the deep, as Elijah stretched himself upon the dead child, and "as a hen gathers her brood under her wings," and hovers over them, to warm and cherish them (Matt. 23:37), and as the eagle stirs up her nest, and flutters over her young (it is the same word that is here used) (Deut. 32:11). Learn therefore, that God is not only the author of all being, but the fountain of life and spring of motion. Dead matter would be forever dead if he did not quicken it. And this makes it credible to us that God should raise the dead. That power which brought such a world as this out of confusion, emptiness, and darkness, at the beginning of time, can, at the end of time, bring our vile bodies out of the grave, though it is "a land of gloom like thick darkness, like deep shadow without any order" (Job 10:22), and can make them glorious bodies.

[Genesis 1]

JANUARY 4

Shepherd of Our Souls

Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases.

PSALM 115:3

From God's being his shepherd, David infers that he shall not want anything that is good for him. See 1. The great care that God takes of believers; he is their shepherd and they may call him so. Time was when David was himself a shepherd; he was taken from following the ewes great with young (Ps. 78:70-71), and so he knew by experience the cares and tender affections of a good shepherd towards his flock. He remembered what need they had of a shepherd, and what a kindness it was to them to have one that was skilful and faithful; he once ventured his life to rescue a lamb. By this therefore he illustrates God's care of his people; and to this our Savior seems to refer when he says, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11). He that is the shepherd of Israel, of the whole church in general is the shepherd of every particular believer; the meanest is not below his cognizance (Isa. 40:11). He takes them into his fold, and then takes care of them, protects them, and provides for them, with more care and constancy than a shepherd can that makes it his business to keep the flock. If God is as a shepherd to us, we must be as sheep, inoffensive, meek, and quiet, silent before the shearers, nay, and before the butcher too, useful and sociable; we must know the shepherd's voice, and follow him. 2. The great confidence which believers have in God: "If the Lord is my shepherd, my feeder, I may conclude I shall not want anything that is really necessary and good for me."

[Psalm 23]

JANUARY 5

Sweet Preservation

*... that I may look upon the prosperity of your chosen ones,
that I may rejoice in the gladness of your nation, that I may
glory with your inheritance.*

PSALM 106:5

Job had comfort in his God. This was the chief thing he rejoiced in, in his prosperity, as the spring of it and the sweetness of it, that he had the favor of God and the tokens of that favor. He did not attribute his prosperity to a happy turn of fortune, nor to his own might, nor to the power of his own hand, but makes the same acknowledgment that David does: "By your favor, O LORD, you made my mountain stand strong" (Ps. 30:7a). A gracious soul delights in God's smiles, not in the smiles of this world. Four things, then, were very pleasant to holy Job: The confidence he had in divine protection. They were "the days when God watched over me" (Job 29:2). Even then he saw himself exposed, and did not make his wealth his strong city, nor trust in the abundance of his riches, but "the name of the Lord was his strong tower" (Prov. 18:10), in that only he thought himself safe, and to that he ascribed it that he was then safe and that his comforts were preserved to him. The devil saw a hedge about him of God's making (Job 1:10), and Job saw it himself, and owned it was God's care that preserved his spirit. Those only whom God protects are safe and may be easy; and, therefore, those who have ever so much of this world must not think themselves safe unless God preserve them.

[Job 29]

JANUARY 6

God's Rule

... to walk in God's Law that was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the Lord our Lord.

NEHEMIAH 10:29

The Lord God commanded the man, who stood now as a public person, the father and representative of all mankind, to receive law, as he had lately received a nature, for himself and all his. God commanded all the creatures, according to their capacity; the settled course of nature is a law (Ps. 148:6; 104:9). The brute-creatures have their respective instincts; but man was made capable of performing reasonable service, and therefore received, not only the command of a Creator, but the command of a Prince and Master. Though Adam was a very great man, a very good man, and a very happy man, yet the Lord God commanded him; and the command was no disparagement to his greatness, no reproach to his goodness, nor any diminution at all to his happiness. Let us acknowledge God's right to rule us, and our own obligations to be ruled by him; and never allow any will of our own in contradiction to, or competition with, the holy will of God ... Let us never set up our own will against the holy will of God. There was not only liberty allowed to man, in taking the fruits of paradise, but everlasting life made sure to him upon his obedience. There was a trial appointed of his obedience. By transgression he would forfeit his Maker's favor, and deserve his displeasure, with all its awful effects; so that he would become liable to pain, disease, and death. Worse than that, he would lose the holy image of God and all the comfort of his favor; and feel the torment of sinful passions, and the terror of his Maker's vengeance, which must endure for ever with his never dying soul.

[Genesis 2]

JANUARY 7

The Godly Man

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.

PSALM I

The psalmist begins with the character and condition of a godly man, so that those may first take the comfort of that to whom it belongs. Here is, first, a description of the godly man's spirit and way, by which we are to try ourselves. The Lord knows those that are his by name, but we must know them by their character; for that is agreeable to a state of probation, that we may study to answer to the character, which is indeed both the command of the law which we are bound in duty to obey and the condition of the promise which we are bound in interest to fulfill. The character of a good man is here given by the rules he chooses to walk by and to take his measures from. What we take at our setting out, and at every turn, for the guide of our conversation, whether the course of this world or the word of God, is of material consequence. An error in the choice of our standard and leader is original and fatal; but, if we be right here, we are in a fair way to do well. A godly man, that he may avoid the evil, utterly renounces the companionship of evil-doers, and will not be led by them. He walks not in the council of the ungodly, etc.

[Psalm 1]

JANUARY 8

Departing from Evil

The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away.

PSALM 1:4

Those that will keep the commandments of their God must say to evil-doers, "Depart from us" (Ps. 119:115), and departing from evil is that in which wisdom begins. He sees evil-doers round about him; the world is full of them; they walk on every side. They are here described by three characters: ungodly, sinners, and scornful. See by what steps men arrive at the height of impiety. None reach the height of vice at once. They are ungodly first, casting off the fear of God and living in the neglect of their duty to him; but they rest not there. When the services of religion are laid aside, they come to be sinners, that is, they break out into open rebellion against God and engage in the service of sin and Satan. Omissions make way for commissions, and by these the heart is so hardened that at length they come to be scorers, that is, they openly defy all that is sacred, scoff at religion, and make a jest of sin. Thus is the way of iniquity down-hill; the bad grow worse, and sinners themselves become tempters to others and advocates for Baal. The word which we translate "ungodly" signifies such as are unsettled, aim at no certain end and walk by no certain rule, but are at the command of every lust and at the beck of every temptation. The word for sinners signifies such as are determined for the practice of sin and set it up as their trade. The scornful are those that set their mouths against the heavens. These the good man sees with a sad heart; they are a constant vexation to his righteous soul.

[Psalm 1]

JANUARY 9

The Married State

So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife.

RUTH 4:13

Naomi's care for her daughter's comfort is without doubt very commendable, and is recorded for imitation. She had no thoughts of marrying herself (Ruth 1:12), but, though she that was old had resolved upon a perpetual widowhood, yet she was far from the thoughts of confining her daughter-in-law to it, that was young. Age must not make itself a standard to youth. On the contrary, she is full of contrivance how to get her well married ... That which should be desired and designed by those that enter into the married state is that it may be well with them, in order to which it is necessary that they choose well; otherwise, instead of being a rest to them, it may prove the greatest uneasiness. Parents, in disposing of their children, must have this in their eye that it may be well with them. And be it always remembered that is best for us which is best for our souls. It is the duty of parents to seek this rest for their children, and to do all that is fit for them to do, in due time, in order to it. And the more dutiful and respectful they are to them, though they can the worse spare them, yet they should the rather prefer them, and the better ... Thus must we lay ourselves at the feet of our Redeemer, to receive from him our doom. "Lord, what will you have me to do?" (See Acts 9:6). We may be sure, if Ruth had apprehended any evil in that which her mother advised her to, she was a woman of too much virtue and too much sense to promise as she did. Thus must the younger submit to the elder, and to their grave and prudent counsels.

[Ruth 3]

JANUARY 10

Images as Idolatry

You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

EXODUS 20:4

We are here forbidden to worship even the true God by images, (Exod. 20:4-5). The Jews (at least after the captivity) thought themselves forbidden by this commandment to make any image or picture whatsoever. Hence the very images which the Roman armies had in their ensigns are called an abomination to them (Matt. 24:15), especially when they were set up in the holy place. It is certain that it forbids making any image of God or the image of any creature for a religious use, for to whom can we liken God? It is called the changing of the truth of God into a lie (Rom. 1:25), for an image is a teacher of lies; it insinuates to us that God has a body, whereas he is an infinite spirit (Hab. 2:18). It also forbids us to make images of God in our fancies, as if he were a man as we are. Our religious worship must be governed by the power of faith, not by the power of imagination. They must not make such images or pictures as the heathen worshipped, lest they also should be tempted to worship them. Those who would be kept from sin must keep themselves from the occasions of it. They must not bow down to them occasionally, that is, show any sign of respect or honor to them, much less serve them constantly, by sacrifice or incense, or any other act of religious worship. When they paid their devotion to the true God, they must not have any image before them, for the directing, exciting, or assisting of their devotion.

[Exodus 20]

JANUARY 11

JANUARY

Witnesses to His Majesty

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life.

I JOHN 1:1

The life assumed a mouth and tongue, that he might utter words of life. The apostles not only heard of him, but they heard him himself. Above three years might they attend his ministry, be auditors of his public sermons and private expositions (for he expounded them in his house), and be charmed with the words of him who spoke as never man spoke before or since. The divine word would employ the ear, and the ear should be devoted to the word of life. And it was suitable that those who were to be his representatives and imitators to the world should be personally acquainted with his ministrations. To their eyes, "That which we have seen with our eyes," the Word would become visible, would not only be heard, but seen, seen publicly, privately, at a distance and at nearest approach, which may be intimated in the expression, with our eyes – with all the use and exercise that we could make of our eyes. We saw him in his life and ministry; we saw him in his transfiguration on the mount, hanging, bleeding, dying, and dead, upon the cross, and we saw him after his return from the grave and resurrection from the dead. His apostles must be eye-witnesses as well as ear-witnesses of him. Wherefore, of these men that have accompanied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection (Acts 1:21, 22). And we were eye-witnesses of his majesty (2 Peter 1:16).

[1 John 1]

JANUARY 12

Beholding Christ's Glory

Behold, the Lord our God has shown us his glory and greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire. This day we have seen God speak with man, and man still live.

DEUTERONOMY 5:24

And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father. The word is not applied to the immediate object of the eye, but to that which was rationally collected from what they saw. "What we have well discerned, contemplated, and viewed, what we have well known of this Word of life, we report to you." The senses are to be the informers of the mind. To their hands and sense of feeling: And our hands have handled (touched and felt) of the Word of life. This surely refers to the full conviction our Lord afforded his apostles of the truth, reality, solidity, and organization of his body, after his resurrection from the dead. When he showed them his hands and his side, it is probable that he gave them leave to touch him; at least, he knew of Thomas's unbelief, and his professed resolution too not to believe, till he had found and felt the places and signatures of the wounds by which he died. Accordingly, at the next congress he called Thomas, in the presence of the rest, to satisfy the very curiosity of his unbelief. And probably others of them did so too. Our hands have handled of the Word of life. The invisible life and Word was no despiser of the testimony of sense. Sense, in its place and sphere, is a means that God has appointed, and the Lord Christ has employed, for our information. Our Lord took care to satisfy (as far as might be) all the senses of his apostles, that they might be the more authentic witnesses of him to the world.

[1 John 1]

JANUARY 13

When in Trouble

The Lord is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble.

PSALM 9:9

God and his servant Jonah had parted in anger, and the quarrel began on Jonah's side; he fled from his country that he might outrun his work; but we hope to see them both together again, and the reconciliation begins on God's side. Not long ago we found God returning to Jonah in a way of mercy, delivering him from going down to the pit, having found a ransom; and now we find Jonah returning to God in a way of duty; he was called up in the former chapter to pray to his God, but we are not told that he did so; however, now at length he is brought to it. Now observe here, *when he prayed*: Then Jonah prayed; then when he was in trouble, under the sense of sin and the tokens of God's displeasure against him for sin, then he prayed. Note, when we are in affliction we must pray; then we have occasion to pray, then we have errands at the throne of grace and business there; then, if ever, we shall have a disposition to pray, when the heart is humbled, and softened, and made serious; then God expects it (in their affliction they will seek me early, seek me earnestly); and, though we bring our afflictions upon ourselves by our sins, yet, if we pray in humility and godly sincerity, we shall be welcome to the throne of grace, as Jonah was. Then when he was in a hopeful way of deliverance, being preserved alive by miracle, a plain indication that he was reserved for further mercy, then he prayed. An apprehension of God's good-will to us, notwithstanding our offences, gives us boldness of access to him, and opens the lips in prayer which were closed with the sense of guilt and dread of wrath.

[Jonah 2]

JANUARY 14

Every Place for Prayer

In my distress I called upon the Lord; to my God I cried for help. From his temple he heard my voice, and my cry to him reached his ears.

PSALM 18:6

Note *where [Jonah] prayed*: in the fish's belly. No place is amiss for prayer. "I will that men pray everywhere." Wherever God casts us we may find a way open to heavenward, if it be not our own fault. The heavens are equally accessible from every part of the earth. He that has Christ dwelling in his heart by faith, wherever he goes carries the altar along with him, that sanctifies the gift, and is himself a living temple. Jonah was here in confinement; the belly of the fish was his prison, was a close and dark dungeon to him; yet there he had freedom of access to God, and walked at liberty in communion with him. Men may shut us out from communion with one another, but not from communion with God. Jonah was now in the bottom of the sea, yet out of the depths he cries to God; as Paul and Silas prayed in the prison, in the stocks. *To whom he prayed*: to the Lord his God. He had been fleeing from God, but now he sees the folly of it, and returns to him; by prayer he draws near to that God whom he had gone aside from, and engages his heart to approach him. In prayer he has an eye to him, not only as the Lord, but as his God, a God in covenant with him; for, thanks be to God, every transgression in the covenant does not throw us out of covenant. This encourages even backsliding children to return.

[Jonah 2]

JANUARY 15

The Excellent Wife

An excellent wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels.

PROVERBS 31:10

A virtuous woman is a woman of spirit, who has the command of her own spirit and knows how to manage her affairs, one that is pious and industrious, and a help meet for a man. In opposition to this strength, we read of the weakness of the heart of an imperious whorish woman (Ezek. 16:30). A virtuous woman is a woman of resolution, who, having espoused good principles, is firm and steady to them, and will not be frightened with winds and clouds from any part of her duty. The difficulty of meeting with such a one: "Who can find her?" This intimates that good women are very scarce, and many that seem to be so do not prove so; he that thought he had found a virtuous woman was deceived; "Behold, it was Leah," and not the Rachel he expected. But he that designs to marry ought to seek diligently for such a one, to have this principally in his eye, in all his enquiries, and to take heed that he be not biased by beauty or elegance, wealth or parentage, dressing well or dancing well; for all these may be and yet the woman not be virtuous, and there is many a woman truly virtuous who yet is not recommended by these advantages. The unspeakable worth of such a one, and the value which he that has such a wife ought to put upon her, showing it by his thankfulness to God and his kindness and respect to her, whom he must never think he can do too much for. Her price is far above rubies, and all the rich ornaments with which vain women adorn themselves. The more rare such good wives are the more they are to be valued.

[Proverbs 31]

JANUARY 16

Christ is Knocking

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.

REVELATION 3:20

Christ is graciously pleased by his word and Spirit to come to the door of the heart of sinners; he draws near to them in a way of mercy, ready to make them a kind visit. He finds this door shut against him; the heart of man is by nature shut up against Christ by ignorance, unbelief, sinful prejudices. When he finds the heart shut, he does not immediately withdraw, but he waits to be gracious, even till his head is filled with the dew. He uses all proper means to awaken sinners, and to cause them to open to him: he calls by his word; he knocks by the impulses of his Spirit upon their conscience. Those who open to him shall enjoy his presence, to their great comfort and advantage. He will sup with them; he will accept of what is good in them; he will eat his pleasant fruit; and he will bring the best part of the entertainment with him. If what he finds would make but a poor feast, what he brings will make up the deficiency: he will give fresh supplies of graces and comforts, and thereby stir up fresh actings of faith, and love, and delight; and in all this Christ and his repenting people will enjoy pleasant communion with each other. Alas! What do careless obstinate sinners lose by refusing to open the door of the heart to Christ!

[Revelation 3]

JANUARY 17

COUNT IT ALL JOY

JANUARY

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds...

JAMES 1:2

We must not sink into a sad and disconsolate frame of mind, which would make us faint under our trials; but we must endeavor to keep our spirits dilated and enlarged, the better to take in a true sense of our case, and with greater advantage to set ourselves to make the best of it. Philosophy may instruct men to be calm under their troubles, but Christianity teaches them to be joyful because such exercises proceed from love and not fury in God. In them we are conformable to Christ our head, and they become marks of our adoption. By suffering in the ways of righteousness, we are serving the interests of our Lord's kingdom among men, and edifying the body of Christ; and our trials will brighten our graces now and our crown at last. Therefore, there is reason to count it all joy when trials and difficulties become our lot in the way of our duty. And this is not purely a New Testament paradox, but even in Job's time it was said, "Behold, blessed is the one whom God reproves" (Job 5:17). There is the more reason for joy in afflictions if we consider the other graces that are promoted by them. Let us take care, in times of trial, that patience and not passion, be set at work in us; whatever is said or done, let patience have the saying and doing of it: let us not allow the indulging of our passions to hinder the operation and noble effects of patience; let us give it leave to work, and it will work wonders in a time of trouble.

[James 1]

JANUARY 18

Crown of Life

Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all.

PSALM 34:19

Afflictions cannot make us miserable, if they are not our own fault. A blessing may arise from them, and we may be blessed in them. They are so far from taking away a good man's happiness that they really increase it. Sufferings and temptations are the way to eternal blessedness: "When he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life" (James 1:12) – when he is approved, when his graces are found to be true and of the highest worth (so metals are tried as to their excellence by the fire), and when his integrity is manifested, and all is approved of the great Judge. To be approved of God is the great aim of a Christian in all his trials; and it will be his blessedness at last, when he shall receive the crown of life. The tried Christian shall be a crowned one; and the crown he shall wear will be a crown of life. It will be life and bliss to him, and will last forever. We only bear the cross for a while, but we shall wear the crown to eternity. This blessedness, involved in a crown of life, is a promised thing to the righteous sufferer. It is therefore what we may most surely depend upon: for, when heaven and earth shall pass away, this word of God shall not fail of being fulfilled ... The crown of life is promised not only to great and eminent saints, but to all those who have the love of God reigning in their hearts. Every soul that truly loves God shall have its trials in this world fully recompensed in that world above where love is made perfect.

[James 1]

JANUARY 19

Joyful Worship

Worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness; tremble before him, all the earth!

PSALM 96:9

Serve the Lord with gladness. This intimates a prediction that in gospel-times there should be special occasion for joy; and it prescribes this as a rule of worship: "Serve the LORD with gladness!" By holy joy we do really serve God; it is an honor to him to rejoice in him; and we ought to serve him with holy joy. Gospel-worshippers should be joyful worshippers; if we serve God in uprightness, let us serve him with gladness. We must be willing and forward to it, glad when we are called to go up to the house of the Lord (Ps. 122:1), looking upon it as the comfort of our lives to have communion with God; and we must be pleasant and cheerful in it, must say, "It is good to be here", approaching to God, in every duty, as to God our exceeding Joy (Ps. 43:4). We must "come before his presence with singing", not only songs of joy, but songs of praise. "Enter his gates with thanksgiving" (Ps. 100:4a). We must not only comfort ourselves, but glorify God, with our joy, and let him have the praise of that which we have the pleasure of. "Give thanks to him; bless his name!" (Ps. 100:4b); that is, we must take it as a favor to be admitted into his service, and give him thanks that we have liberty of access to him, that we have ordinances instituted and opportunity continued of waiting upon God in those ordinances. We must inter-mix praise and thanksgiving with all our services. This golden thread must run through every duty (Heb. 13:15), for it is the work of angels ... Know what God is in himself and what he is to you. Knowledge is the mother of devotion and of all obedience: blind sacrifices will never please a seeing God.

[Psalm 100]

JANUARY 20

ELECT ACCORDING TO GOD

To those who are elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood.

1 Peter 1:1-2

The value of good people ought not to be estimated by their present external condition. Here was a set of excellent people, beloved of God, and yet strangers, dispersed and poor in the world; the eye of God was upon them in all their dispersions, and the apostle was tenderly careful to write to them for their direction and consolation. They are described by their spiritual condition: "elect ... according to the foreknowledge of God the Father," etc. These poor strangers, who were oppressed and despised in the world, were nevertheless in high esteem with the great God, and in the most honorable state that any person can be in during this life; for they were elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. Election is either to an office (so Saul was the man whom the Lord chose to be king, and our Lord says to his apostles, "Have not I chosen you twelve?"), or it is to a church-state, for the enjoyment of special privileges (thus Israel was God's elect) ... This election is said to be according to the foreknowledge of God. Foreknowledge may be taken for mere prescience, foresight, or understanding that such a thing will be, before it comes to pass. Thus a mathematician certainly foreknows that at such a time there will be an eclipse. This sort of foreknowledge is in God, who at one commanding view sees all things that ever were, or are, or ever will be.

[1 Peter 1]

JANUARY 21

A Kiss of Peace

Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth!

SONG OF SOLOMON 1:2

The spouse, in this dramatic poem, is here first introduced addressing herself to the bridegroom and then to the daughters of Jerusalem. To the bridegroom, not giving him any name or title, but beginning abruptly: "Let him kiss me." Like Mary Magdalene to the supposed gardener, "If you have carried him away" (John 20:15), meaning Christ, but not naming him. The heart has been before taken up with the thoughts of him, and to this relative those thoughts were the antecedent, that good matter which the heart was indicting (Ps. 45:1). Those that are full of Christ themselves are ready to think that others should be so too. Two things the spouse desires, and pleases herself with the thoughts of: First, the bridegroom's friendship; "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth," that is, "reconciled to me, and let me know that he is so; let me have the token of his favor." Thus the Old-Testament church desired Christ's manifesting himself in the flesh, to be no longer under the law as a schoolmaster, under a dispensation of bondage and terror, but to receive the communications of divine grace in the gospel, in which God is reconciling the world unto himself, binding up and healing what by the law was torn and smitten; as the mother kisses the child that she has disciplined ... All gospel duty is summed up in our kissing the Son (Ps. 2:12); so all gospel-grace is summed up in his kissing us, as the father of the prodigal kissed him when he returned a penitent. It is a kiss of peace.

[Song of Solomon 1]

JANUARY 22

Worldly Rest

Woe to those who are at ease in Zion, and to those who feel secure on the mountain of Samaria, the notable men of the first of the nations, to whom the house of Israel comes!

AMOS 6:1

The first words of Amos 6 sound very strangely, and contrary to the sentiments of a vain world: "Woe to those that are at ease!" We are ready to say, "Happy are those that are at ease, that neither feel any trouble nor fear any, that lie soft and warm, and lay nothing to heart"; and wise we think are those that do so, that bathe themselves in the delights of sense and care not how the world goes. Those are looked upon as doing well for themselves that do well for their bodies and make much of them; but against them this woe is denounced, and we are here told what their ease is, and what the woe is. Here is a description of their pride, security, and sensuality, for which God would reckon with them. They were vainly conceited of their own dignities, and thought those would secure them from the judgments threatened and be their defense against the wrath of God and man. Those that dwelt in Zion thought that was honor and protection enough for them, and they might there be quiet from all fear of evil, because it was a strong city, well fortified both by nature and art ... and because it was a royal city, where were set the thrones of the house of David (it was the head-city of Judah, and therefore truly great), and especially because it was the holy city, where the temple was, and the testimony of Israel; those that dwelt there doubted not but that God's sanctuary would be a sanctuary to them and would shelter them from his judgments.

[Amos 6]

JANUARY 23

Spiritual Blessings

*You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.*

PSALM 23:5

"You prepare a table before me", that is, "you have provided all things pertaining both to life and godliness, all things requisite for body and soul, for time and eternity." Such a bountiful benefactor is God to all his people; and it becomes them abundantly to utter his great goodness, as David does, who acknowledges, first, that he had food convenient, a table spread, a cup filled, meat for his hunger, drink for his thirst; second, that he had it carefully and readily provided for him. His table was not spread with any thing that came next to hand, but prepared, and prepared *before him*; third, that he was not stinted, was not straitened, but had abundance: "my cup overflows" enough for myself and my friends too; fourth, that he had not only for necessity, but for ornament and delight: "You anoint my head with oil." Samuel anointed him king, which was a certain pledge of further favor; but this is rather an instance of the plenty with which God had blessed him, or an allusion to the extraordinary entertainment of special friends, whose heads they anointed with oil (Luke 7:46). Nay, some think he still looks upon himself as a sheep, but such a one as the poor man's ewe-lamb (2 Sam. 12:3), that did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom; not only thus nobly, but thus tenderly, are the children of God looked after. Plentiful provision is made for their bodies, for their souls, for the life that now is and for that which is to come. If Providence does not bestow upon us thus plentifully for our natural life, it is our own fault if it is not made up to us in spiritual blessings.

[Psalm 23]

JANUARY 24

Running the Race

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us...

HEBREWS 12:1

Run with endurance the race that is set before us. The apostle speaks in the gymnastic style, taken from the Olympic and other exercises. Christians have a race to run, a race of service and a race of sufferings, a course of active and passive obedience. This race is set before them; it is marked out unto them, both by the word of God and the examples of the faithful servants of God, that cloud of witnesses with which they are compassed about. It is set out by proper limits and directions; the mark they run to, and the prize they run for, are set before them. This race must be run with patience and perseverance. There will be need of patience to encounter the difficulties that lie in our way, of perseverance to resist all temptations to desist or turn aside. Faith and patience are the conquering graces, and therefore must be always cultivated and kept in lively exercise. Christians have a greater example to animate and encourage them in their Christian course than any or all who have been mentioned before, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ: "Looking unto Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith." The Lord Jesus is the author and perfecter of their faith – the beginning, perfecter, and rewarder of it. He is the author of their faith; not only the object, but the author. He is the great leader and precedent of our faith, he trusted in God; he is the purchaser of the Spirit of faith, the publisher of the rule of faith, the efficient cause of the grace of faith, and in all respects the author of our faith.

[Hebrews 12]

The Spirit in Prayer

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness.

ROMANS 8:26

While we are in this world, hoping and waiting for what we see not, we must be praying. Hope supposes desire, and that desire offered up to God is prayer; we groan. Observe our weakness in prayer, "For we do not know what to pray for as we ought." As to the matter of our requests, we know not what to ask. We are not competent judges of our own condition. "For who knows what is good for man while he lives the few days of his vain life?" (Eccles. 6:12). We are short-sighted, and very much biased in favor of the flesh, and apt to separate the end from the way. "You do not know what you are asking" (Matt. 20:22). We are like foolish children that are ready to cry for fruit before it is ripe and fit for them. As to the manner, we know not how to pray as we ought. It is not enough that we do that which is good, but we must do it well, seek in a due order; and here we are often at a loss – graces are weak, affections cold, thoughts wandering, and it is not always easy to find the heart to pray (2 Sam. 7:27). The apostle speaks of this in the first person: "We do not know." He puts himself among the rest. Folly, and weakness, and distraction in prayer, are what all the saints are complaining of. If so great a saint as Paul knew not what to pray for, what little reason have we to go forth about that duty in our own strength! The assistances which the Spirit gives us in that duty is such that he helps our infirmities, meant especially of our praying infirmities, which most easily beset us in that duty, against which the Spirit helps.

[Romans 8:26-28]

JANUARY 26

Beware of Hypocrisy

Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

MATTHEW 6:1

As we must do better than the scribes and Pharisees in avoiding heart-sins, heart-adultery, and heart-murder, so likewise in maintaining and keeping up heart-religion, doing what we do from an inward, vital principle, that we may be approved of God, not that we may be applauded of men; that is, we must watch against hypocrisy, which was the leaven of the Pharisees, as well as against their doctrine (Luke 12:1). Almsgiving, prayer, and fasting, are three great Christian duties – the three foundations of the law, say the Arabians; by them we do homage and service to God with our three principal interests; by prayer with our souls, by fasting with our bodies, by alms-giving with our estates. Thus we must not only depart from evil, but do good, and do it well, and so dwell for evermore. Now we are cautioned against hypocrisy in giving alms. Beware of practicing it. Our being bid to “beware of practicing” intimates that it is sin. We are in great danger of; it is a subtle sin; vain-glory insinuates itself into what we do before we are aware. The disciples would be tempted to it by the power they had to do many wondrous works, and their living with some that admired them and others that despised them, both which are temptations to covet to make a fair show in the flesh. It is a sin we are in great danger by. Beware of hypocrisy, for if it reigns in you, it will ruin you. It is the dead fly that spoils the whole box of precious ointment.

[Matthew 6:1-4]

Kingdoms of Anti-Christ

The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his Anointed.

PSALM 2:2

We have here a very great struggle about the kingdom of Christ, hell and heaven contesting it; the seat of the war is this earth, where Satan has long had a usurped kingdom and exercised dominion to such a degree that he has been called the prince of the power of the very air we breathe in and the god of the world we live in. He knows very well that, as the Messiah's kingdom rises and gets ground, his falls and loses ground; and therefore, though it will be set up certainly, it shall not be set up tamely. The mighty opposition that would be given to the Messiah and his kingdom, to his holy religion and all the interests of it, are observed in Psalm 2:1-3. One would have expected that so great a blessing to this world would be universally welcomed and embraced, and that every sheaf would immediately bow to that of the Messiah and all the crowns and scepters on earth would be laid at his feet; but it proves quite contrary. Never were the notions of any sect of philosophers, though ever so absurd, nor the powers of any prince or state, though ever so tyrannical, opposed with so much violence as the doctrine and government of Christ – a sign that it was from heaven, for the opposition was plainly from hell originally. We are here told who would appear as adversaries to Christ and the devil's instruments in this opposition to his kingdom. Princes and people, court and country, have sometimes separate interests, but here they are united against Christ; not the mighty only, but the mob, the heathen, the people, numbers of them ... though usually fond of liberty, yet they were averse to the liberty Christ came to procure and proclaim.

[Psalm 2:1-6]

JANUARY 28

FIRST FRUITS

...for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness.

TITUS 1:1

The highest officers in the church are but servants. The apostles of Jesus Christ, who were employed to spread and propagate his religion, were therein also the servants of God; they did not set up anything inconsistent with the truths and duties of natural religion. Christianity, which they preached, was in order to clear and enforce those natural principles, as well as to advance them, and to add what was fit and necessary in man's degenerate and revolted state; therefore, the apostles of Jesus Christ were the servants of God "for the sake of the faith of God's elect." Their doctrine agreed with the faith of all the elect from the beginning of the world, and was for propagating and promoting the same. There are elect of God (1 Pet. 1:2), and in these the Holy Spirit works precious divine faith, proper to those who are chosen to eternal life (2 Thess. 2:13-14): "God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." Faith is the first principle of sanctification. The gospel is truth; the great, sure, and saving truth, "the word of the truth, the gospel" (Col. 1:5). Divine faith rests not on fallible reasoning and prob-able opinions, but on the infallible word, the truth itself, which is after godliness, of a godly nature and tendency, pure, and purifying the heart of the believer. By this mark judge of doctrines and of spirits whether they are of God or not; what is impure, and prejudicial to true piety and practical religion, cannot be of divine original.

[Titus 1:1-4]

JANUARY 29

The Fool's Paradise

The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, doing abominable iniquity; there is none who does good.

PSALM 53:1

He is a fool (in the account of God, whose judgment we are sure is right) that harbors such corrupt thoughts, such as there is no God. Atheists, whether in opinion or practice, are the greatest fools in the world. Those that do not seek God do not understand; they are like brute-beasts that have no understanding; for man is distinguished from the brutes, not so much by the powers of reason as by a capacity for religion. The workers of iniquity, whatever they pretend to, have no knowledge; those may truly be said to know nothing that do not know God (Ps. 53:4-5) ... Sinners are corrupt; their nature is vitiated and spoiled, and the more noble the nature is the more vile it is when it is depraved, as that of the angels. The best things, when corrupted, become the worst. Their iniquity is abominable; it is odious to the holy God, and it renders them so; whereas otherwise he hates nothing that he has made. It makes men filthy, altogether filthy. Willful sinners are offensive in the nostrils of the God of heaven and of the holy angels. What decency proud sinners pretend to, it is certain that wickedness is the greatest defilement in the world ... There will come a Savior, a great salvation, a salvation from sin. Oh that it might be hastened! for it will bring in glorious and joyful times. There were those in the Old-Testament times that looked and hoped, that prayed and waited, for this redemption.

[Psalm 53:1-6]

JANUARY 30

God Almighty

Thus says the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped, to subdue nations before him and to loose the belts of kings, to open doors before him that gates may not be closed.

ISAIAH 45:1

The Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus. Note that the hearts of kings are in the hand of the Lord, and, like the rivulets of water, he turns them which way soever he will. It is said of Cyrus that he knew not God, nor how to serve him; but God knew him, and how to serve himself by him (Isa. 45:4). God governs the world by his influence on the spirits of men, and, whatever good is done at any time, it is God that stirs up the spirit to do it, puts thoughts into the mind, gives to the understanding to form a right judgment, and directs the will which way he pleases. Whatever good offices therefore are, at any time, done for the church of God, he must have the glory of them. The reference it had to the prophecy of Jeremiah, by whom God had not only promised that they should return, but had fixed the time, which set time to favor Zion had now come. Seventy years were determined (Jer. 25:12; 29:10); and he that kept the promise made concerning Israel's deliverance out of Egypt to a day (Exod. 12:41) was doubtless as punctual to this. What Cyrus now did was long since said to be the confirming of the word of God's servants (Isa. 44:26). Jeremiah, while he lived, was hated and despised; yet thus did Providence honor him long after, that a mighty monarch was influenced to act in pursuance of the word of the Lord by his mouth.

[Ezra 1]

JANUARY 31

Growing to Maturity

Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity...

HEBREWS 6:1

JANUARY

We have here the apostle's advice to the Hebrews – that they would grow up from a state of childhood to the fullness of the stature of the new man in Christ. He declares his readiness to assist them all he could in their spiritual progress; and, for their greater encouragement, he puts himself with them: "Let us leave". In order to their growth, Christians must leave the principles of the doctrine of Christ. How must they leave them? They must not lose them, they must not despise them, they must not forget them. They must lay them up in their hearts, and lay them as the foundation of all their profession and expectation; but they must not rest and stay in them, they must not be always laying the foundation, they must go on, and build upon it. There must be a superstructure; for the foundation is laid on purpose to support the building. Why did the apostle resolve to set strong meat before the Hebrews, when he knew they were but babes? *Answer:* Though some of them were but weak, yet others of them had gained more strength; and they must be provided for suitably. And, as those who are grown Christians must be willing to hear the plainest truths preached for the sake of the weak, so the weak must be willing to hear the more difficult and mysterious truths preached for the sake of those who are strong. He hoped they would be growing in their spiritual strength and stature, and so be able to digest stronger meat.

[Hebrews 6:1-8]

FEBRUARY 1

God's Errand

And he said to them, Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.

MARK 16:15

Call out against it. Jonah must not whisper his message in a corner, but publish it in the streets of Nineveh; he that has ears let him hear what God has to say by his prophet against that wicked city. When the cry of sin comes up to God the cry of vengeance comes out against the sinner. He must go to Nineveh, and cry there upon the spot against the wickedness of it. Other prophets were ordered to send messages to the neighboring nations, and the prophecy of Nahum is particularly the burden of Nineveh; but Jonah must go and carry the message himself. Arise quickly; apply yourself to the business with speed and courage, and the resolution that becomes a prophet. Arise and go to Nineveh. Those who go on God's errands must rise and go; they must stir themselves to the work cut out for them. The prophets were sent first to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, but not only to them; they had the children's bread but Nineveh eats of the crumbs. Here we must note that sin brings storms and tempests into the soul, into the family, into churches and nations; it is a disquieting disturbing thing. The tempest prevailed to such a degree that the ship was likely to be broken; the mariners expected no other. Other ships were upon the same sea at the same time, yet, it should seem, that ship in which Jonah was tossed more than any other and was more in danger. This wind was sent after Jonah, to fetch him back again to God and to his duty; and it is a great mercy to be reclaimed and called home when we go astray, though it be by a tempest.

[Jonah 1]

FEBRUARY 2

Rejecting the Call

But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.

JONAH 1:3

FEBRUARY

There was much dishonor that Jonah did to God in refusing to obey his orders and to go on the errand on which he was sent. Instead of rising to go to Nineveh, Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish, to the sea, not bound for any port, but desirous to get away from the presence of the Lord; and, if he might but do that, he did not care where he went, not as if he thought he could go anywhere from under the eye of God's inspection, but from his special presence, from the spirit of prophecy, which, when it put him upon this work, he thought himself haunted with, and coveted to get out of the hearing of. Some think Jonah went upon the opinion of some of the Jews that the spirit of prophecy was confined to the land of Israel (which in Ezekiel and Daniel was effectually proved to be a mistake), and therefore he hoped he should get clear of it if he could but get out of the borders of that land ... Providence seemed to favor his design, and give him an opportunity to escape. We may be out of the way of duty and yet may meet with a favorable gale. The ready way is not always the right way. He found the ship just ready to weigh anchor perhaps, and to set sail for Tarshish, and so he lost no time. Or, perhaps, he went to Tarshish because he found the ship going there; otherwise all places were alike to him. He did not think himself out of his way, the way he would go, provided he was not in his way, the way he should go.

[Jonah 1]

FEBRUARY 3

Streams of Comfort

This is my comfort in my affliction, that your promise gives me life.

PSALM 119:50

All streams of earthly comfort are muddy; but these are clear, and refreshing. They give life, and preserve life, to those who drink of them, and thus they will flow for evermore. These point to the quickening and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, as given to sinners through Christ. The Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Father and the Son, applies this salvation to our souls by his new-creating love and power. The trees of life are fed by the pure waters of the river that comes from the throne of God. The presence of God in heaven is the health and happiness of the saints. This tree was an emblem of Christ, and of all the blessings of his salvation; and the leaves for the healing of the nations, mean that his favor and presence supply all good to the inhabitants of that blessed world. The devil has no power there; he cannot draw the saints from serving God, nor can he disturb them in the service of God. God and the Lamb are here spoken of as one. Service there shall be not only freedom, but honor and dominion. There will be no night; no affliction or dejection, no pause in service or enjoyment: no diversions or pleasures or man's inventing will there be wanted. How different all this from gross and merely human views of heavenly happiness, even those which refer to pleasures of the mind! And note the supreme felicity of this paradisiacal state, where the saints shall see the face of God; there they shall enjoy the beatific vision.

[Revelation 22:1-5]

FEBRUARY 4

Living Praises

Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens!

PSALM 150:1

FEBRUARY

We are here stirred up to praise God. Praise God for his sanctuary, and the privileges we enjoy by having it among us; praise him because of his power and glory in the firmament. Those who praise the Lord in heaven, behold displays of his power and glory which we cannot now conceive. But the greatest of all his mighty acts is known in his earthly sanctuary. The holiness and the love of our God are more displayed in man's redemption, than in all his other works. Let us praise our God and Savior for it. We need not care to know what instruments of music are mentioned. Hereby is meant that in serving God we should spare no cost or pains. Praise God with strong faith; praise him with holy love and delight; praise him with entire confidence in Christ; praise him with believing triumph over the powers of darkness; praise him by universal respect to all his commands; praise him by cheerful submission to all his disposals; praise him by rejoicing in his love, and comforting ourselves in his goodness; praise him by promoting the interests of the kingdom of his grace; praise him by lively hope and expectation of the kingdom of his glory. Since we must shortly breathe our last, while we have breath let us praise the Lord; then we shall breathe our last with comfort. Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. Such is the very suitable end of a book inspired by the Spirit of God, written for the work of praise; a book which has supplied the songs of the church for more than three thousand years.

[Psalm 150]

FEBRUARY 5

The Shadow of Death

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

PSALM 23:6

When they come to die, God will rebuke the enemy; he will guide them with his rod, and sustain them with his staff. There is enough in the gospel to comfort the saints when dying, and underneath them are the everlasting arms. The Lord's people feast at his table, upon the provisions of his love. Satan and wicked men are not able to destroy their comforts, while they are anointed with the Holy Spirit, and drink of the cup of salvation which is ever full. Past experience teaches believers to trust that the goodness and mercy of God will follow them all the days of their lives, and it is their desire and determination, to seek their happiness in the service of God here, and they hope to enjoy his love for ever in heaven. While here, the Lord can make any situation pleasant, by the anointing of his Spirit and the joys of his salvation. What he promises himself is goodness and mercy, all the streams of mercy flowing from the fountain, pardoning mercy, protecting mercy, sustaining mercy, supplying mercy. The manner of the conveyance of it is that it shall follow him, as the water out of the rock followed the camp of Israel through the wilderness; it shall follow into all places and all conditions, shall be always ready. Those that would be satisfied with the blessings of his house must keep close to the duties of it.

[Psalm 23]

FEBRUARY 6

The Vineyard of the Lord

I made great works. I built houses and planted vineyards for myself.

ECCLESIASTES 2:4

The church is represented as a vine and a vineyard. The root of this vine is Christ, the branches are believers. The church is like a vine, needing support, but spreading and fruitful. If a vine does not bring forth fruit, no tree is so worthless. And are not we planted as in a well-cultivated garden, with every means of being fruitful in works of righteousness? But the useless leaves of profession, and the empty boughs of notions and forms, abound far more than real piety. It was wasted and ruined. There was a good reason for this change in God's way toward them. And it is well or ill with us, according as we are under God's smiles or frowns. When we consider the state of the purest part of the visible church, we cannot wonder that it is visited with sharp corrections. They request that God would help the vine. Lord, it is formed by yourself, and for yourself, therefore it may, with humble confidence, be committed to yourself ... That God would help the vine, that he would graciously take cognizance of its case and do for it as he thought fit: "Return, we beseech you, O Lord of hosts! for you have seemed to go away from us. Look down from heaven, to which you have retired, – from heaven, that place of prospect, where you see all the wrongs that are done us, that place of power, whence you can send effectual relief, – from heaven, where you have prepared your throne of judgment, to which we appeal, and where you have prepared a better country for those that are Israelites indeed, give a gracious look, make a gracious visit, to this vine."

[Psalm 80:8-16]

FEBRUARY 7

Loving God's Son

So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

PHILIPPIANS 2:1-2

The example of our Lord Jesus Christ is set before us. We must resemble him in his life, if we would have the benefit of his death. Notice the two natures of Christ; his divine nature, and human nature. Who being in the form of God, partaking the divine nature, as the eternal and only-begotten Son of God (John 1:1), had not thought it a robbery to be equal with God, and to receive divine worship from men. His human nature; herein he became like us in all things except sin. Thus low, of his own will, he stooped from the glory he had with the Father before the world was. Christ's two states, of humiliation and exaltation, are noticed. Christ not only took upon him the likeness and fashion, or form of a man, but of one in a low state; not appearing in splendor. His whole life was a life of poverty and suffering. But the lowest step was his dying the death of the cross, the death of a malefactor and a slave; exposed to public hatred and scorn. The exaltation was of Christ's human nature, in union with the divine. At the name of Jesus, not the mere sound of the word, but the authority of Jesus, all should pay solemn homage. It is to the glory of God the Father, to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord; for it is his will, that all men should honor the Son as they honor the Father (John 5:23). Here we see such motives to self-denying love as nothing else can supply. Do we thus love and obey the Son of God?

[Philippians 2:5-11] .

FEBRUARY 8

Using the Means

I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord.

PSALM 116:13

We must be diligent in the use of all the means which lead to our salvation, persevering therein to the end with great care, lest, with all our advantages, we should come short. Work out your salvation, for it is God who works in you. This encourages us to do our utmost, because our labor shall not be in vain. We must still depend on the grace of God. The working of God's grace in us is to quicken and engage our endeavors. God's good-will to us is the cause of his good work in us. Do your duty without murmurings. Do it, and do not find fault with it. Mind your work, and do not quarrel with it. By peaceableness, give no just occasion of offence. The children of God should differ from the sons of men. The more perverse others are, the more careful we should be to keep ourselves blameless and harmless. The doctrine and example of consistent believers will enlighten others, and direct their way to Christ and holiness, even as the light-house warns mariners to avoid rocks, and directs their course into the harbor. Let us try thus to shine. The gospel is the word of life; it makes known to us eternal life through Jesus Christ. Running, denotes earnestness and vigor, continual pressing forward; laboring, denotes constancy, and close application. It is the will of God that believers should be much in rejoicing; and those who are so happy as to have good ministers, have great reason to rejoice with them.

[Philippians 2:12-18]

FEBRUARY 9

Natural Duty

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

I CORINTHIANS 10:31

It is best with us when our duty becomes natural to us. Naturally, that is, sincerely, and not in pretence only; with a willing heart and upright views. We are apt to prefer our own credit, ease, and safety, before truth, holiness, and duty; but Timothy did not so. Paul desired liberty, not that he might take pleasure, but that he might do good. Epaphroditus was willing to go to the Philippians that he might be comforted with those who had sorrowed for him when he was sick. It seems, his illness was caused by the work of God. The apostle urges them to love him the more on that account. It is doubly pleasant to have our mercies restored by God, after great danger of their removal; and this should make them more valued. What is given in answer to prayer should be received with great thankfulness and joy ... Seeking our own interest to the neglect of Jesus Christ is a very great sin, and very common among Christians and ministers. Many prefer their own credit, ease, and safety, before truth, holiness, and duty, the things of their own pleasure and reputation before the things of Christ's kingdom and his honor and interest in the world ... Those who truly love Christ, and are hearty in the interests of his kingdom, will think it very well worth their while to hazard their health and life to do him service, and promote the edification of his church. They were to receive him with joy, as newly recovered from sickness. It is an endearing consideration to have our mercies restored to us after danger of removal, and should make them the more valued and improved. What is given us in answer to prayer should be received with great thankfulness and joy.

[Philippians 2:19-30]

FEBRUARY 10

Assurance of Faith

Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! For your love is better than wine.

SONG OF SOLOMON 1:2

The church, or rather the believer, speaks here in the character of the spouse of the King, the Messiah. The kisses of his mouth mean those assurances of pardon with which believers are favored, filling them with peace and joy in believing, and causing them to abound in hope by the power of the Holy Ghost. Gracious souls take most pleasure in loving Christ, and being loved of him. Christ's love is more valuable and desirable than the best this world can give. The name of Christ is not now like ointment sealed up, but like ointment poured forth; which denotes the freeness and fullness of the setting forth of his grace by the gospel. Those whom he has redeemed and sanctified, are here the virgins that love Jesus Christ, and follow him whithersoever he goes ... The unfolding of Christ's name is as the opening of a box of precious ointment, which the room is filled with the odor of. The preaching of his gospel was manifesting the savor of his knowledge in every place. The Spirit was the oil of gladness wherewith Christ was anointed and all true believers have that unction, so that he is precious to them, and they to him and to one another. A good name is as precious ointment, but Christ's name is more fragrant than any other. Wisdom, like oil, makes the face to shine; but the Redeemer outshines, in beauty, all others. The name of Christ is not now like ointment sealed up, as it had been long, but like ointment poured forth, which denotes both the freeness and fullness of the communications of his grace by the gospel.

[Song of Solomon 1:2-6]

FEBRUARY 11

Christ's Benefits

This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

I JOHN 1:5

That essential Good, that uncreated Excellence, which had been from the beginning, from eternity, as equal with the Father, and which at length appeared in human nature for the salvation of sinners, was the great subject concerning which the apostle wrote to his brethren. The apostles had seen Him while they witnessed his wisdom and holiness, his miracles, and love and mercy, during some years, till they saw him crucified for sinners, and afterwards risen from the dead. They touched him, so as to have full proof of his resurrection. This divine Person, the Word of life, the Word of God, appeared in human nature, that he might be the Author and Giver of eternal life to mankind, through the redemption of his blood, and the influence of his new-creating Spirit. The apostles declared what they had seen and heard that believers might share their comforts and everlasting advantages. They had free access to God the Father. They had a happy experience of the truth in their souls, and showed its excellence in their lives. This communion of believers with the Father and the Son is begun and kept up by the influences of the Holy Spirit. The benefits Christ bestows, are not like the scanty possessions of the world, causing jealousies in others; but the joy and happiness of communion with God is all-sufficient, so that any number may partake of it; and all who are warranted to say, that truly their fellowship is with the Father, will desire to lead others to partake of the same blessedness.

[1 John 1:1-4]

FEBRUARY 12

FEBRUARY

Taking God's Name in Vain

But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your "yes" be yes and your "no" be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation.

JAMES 5:12

The sin of swearing is condemned; but how many make light of common profane swearing! Such swearing expressly throws contempt upon God's name and authority. This sin brings neither gain, nor pleasure, nor reputation, but is showing enmity to God without occasion and without advantage. It shows a man to be an enemy to God, however he pretends to call himself by his name, or sometimes joins in acts of worship. But the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. In a day of affliction nothing is more seasonable than prayer. The spirit is then most humble, and the heart is broken and tender. It is necessary to exercise faith and hope under afflictions; and prayer is the appointed means for obtaining and increasing these graces. Observe, that the saving of the sick is not ascribed to the anointing with oil, but to prayer. In a time of sickness it is not cold and formal prayer that is effectual, but the prayer of faith. The great thing we should beg of God for ourselves and others in the time of sickness is, the pardon of sin. Let nothing be done to encourage any to delay, under the mistaken fancy that a confession, a prayer, a minister's absolution and exhortation, or the sacrament, will set all right at last, where the duties of a godly life have been disregarded. To acknowledge our faults to each other, will tend greatly to peace and brotherly love.

[James 5:12-18]

FEBRUARY 13

Overflowing Mercy

Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us, for we have had more than enough of contempt.

PSALM 123:3

It is no mark of a wise or holy man, to boast of being free from error, or to refuse to acknowledge an error. And there is some doctrinal mistake at the bottom of every practical mistake. There is no one habitually bad, but upon some bad principle. This is conversion; to turn a sinner from the error of his ways, not merely from one party to another, or from one notion and way of thinking to another. There is no way effectually and finally to hide sin, but forsaking it. Many sins are hindered in the party converted; many also may be so in others whom he may influence. The salvation of one soul is of infinitely greater importance than preserving the lives of multitudes, or promoting the welfare of a whole people. Let us in our several stations keep these things in mind, sparing no pains in God's service, and the event will prove that our labor is not in vain in the Lord. For six thousand years he has been multiplying pardons, and yet his free grace is not tired nor grown weary. Certainly divine mercy is an ocean that is ever full and ever flowing. May the Lord give us a part in this abundant mercy, through the blood of Christ, and the sanctification of the Spirit ... And then, by such conversion of heart and life, a multitude of sins shall be hid. A most comfortable passage of Scripture is this. We learn hence that though our sins are many, even a multitude, yet they may be hid or pardoned; and that when sin is turned from or forsaken it shall be hid, never to appear in judgment against us.

[James 5:19-20]

FEBRUARY 14

One Way to Heaven

Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.

LUKE 13:24

Those who would establish any other way to heaven than what the gospel of Christ reveals will find themselves wretchedly mistaken. The apostle presses upon the Galatians a due sense of their guilt in forsaking the gospel way of justification; yet he reproves with tenderness, and represents them as drawn into it by the arts of some that troubled them. In reproving others, we should be faithful, and yet endeavor to restore them in the spirit of meekness. Some would set up the works of the law in the place of Christ's righteousness, and thus they corrupted Christianity. The apostle solemnly denounces, as accursed, everyone who attempts to lay so false a foundation. All other gospels, other than that of the grace of Christ, whether more flattering to self-righteous pride or more favorable to worldly lusts are devices of Satan ... we must also declare, that all dependence for justification on good works, whether real or supposed, is as fatal to those who persist in it. While we are zealous for good works, let us be careful not to put them in the place of Christ's righteousness, and not to advance anything which may betray others into so dreadful a delusion. Thus the apostle endeavors to impress upon these Galatians a due sense of their guilt in forsaking the gospel way of justification; and yet at the same time he tempers his reproof with mildness and tenderness towards them, and represents them as rather drawn into it by the arts and industry of some that troubled them than as coming into it of their own accord, which, though it did not excuse them, yet was some extenuation of their fault.

[Galatians 1:6-9]

FEBRUARY 15

Called to Better Things

...waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ...

TITUS 2:13

Christians are called out of the world, from the evil spirit and temper of it; they are called above the world, to higher and better things, to heaven, things unseen and eternal; called from sin to Christ, from vanity to seriousness, from uncleanness to holiness; and this according to the divine purpose and grace. If sanctified and glorified, all the honor and glory must be ascribed to God and to him alone. As it is God who begins the work of grace in the souls of men, so it is he who carries it on, and perfects it. Let us not trust in ourselves or in our stock of grace already received, but in him, and in him alone. The mercy of God is the spring and fountain of all the good we have or hope for; mercy, not only to the miserable, but to the guilty. Next to mercy is peace, which we have from the sense of having obtained mercy. From peace springs love; Christ's love to us, our love to him, and our brotherly love to one another. The apostle prays, not that Christians may be content with a little; but that their souls and societies may be full of these things. None are shut out from gospel offers and invitations, but those who obstinately and wickedly shut themselves out ... God takes great care of the good name of his sincere and useful servants. Why then should we be prodigal of our own or one another's reputation and usefulness? Our apostle here calls himself a servant of Jesus Christ, esteeming that a most honorable title. It is more honorable to be a sincere and useful servant of Christ than to be an earthly king, how potent and prosperous soever.

[Jude 1-4]

FEBRUARY 16

The Wicked Tremble

...how much less one who is abominable and corrupt, a man who drinks injustice like water!

JOB 15:16

Outward privileges, profession, and apparent conversion, could not secure those from the vengeance of God, who turned aside in unbelief and disobedience. The destruction of the unbelieving Israelites in the wilderness shows that none ought to presume on their privileges. They had miracles as their daily bread; yet even they perished in unbelief. A great number of the angels were not pleased with the stations God allotted to them; pride was the main and direct cause or occasion of their fall. The fallen angels are kept to the judgment of the great day; and shall fallen men escape it? Surely not. Consider this in due time. The destruction of Sodom is a loud warning to all, to take heed of, and flee from fleshly lusts that war against the soul (1 Pet. 2:11). Stand in awe, therefore, and sin not (Ps. 4:4). Let us not rest in anything that does not make the soul subject to the obedience of Christ; for nothing but the renewal of our souls to the divine image by the Holy Spirit, can keep us from being destroyed among the enemies of God. Consider this instance of the angels, and see that no dignity or worth of the creature is of avail. How then should man tremble, who drinks iniquity like water ... There is a judgment to come; the fallen angels are reserved to the judgment of the great day; and shall fallen men escape it? Let every reader consider this in due time. Their chains are called everlasting, because it is impossible they should ever break loose from them, or make an escape; they are held fast and sure under them.

[Jude 5-7]

FEBRUARY 17

Soul Prosperity

Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul.

3 JOHN 2

Those who are beloved of Christ will love the brethren for his sake. Soul prosperity is the greatest blessing on this side of heaven. Grace and health are rich companions. Grace will employ health. A rich soul may be lodged in a weak body; and grace must then be exercised in submitting to such a dispensation. But we may wish and pray that those who have prosperous souls, may have healthful bodies; that their grace may shine where there is still more room for activity. How many professors there are, about whom the apostle's words must be reversed, and we must earnestly wish and pray that their souls might prosper, as their health and circumstances do! True faith will work by love. A good report is due from those who receive good; they could not but testify to the church, what they found and felt. Good men will rejoice in the soul prosperity of others; and they are glad to hear of the grace and goodness of others. There are those who are not called to preach the gospel themselves who may yet contribute to the progress of it. The gospel should be made without charge to those to whom it is first preached. Those who know it not cannot be expected to value it; churches and Christian patriots ought to concur to support the propagation of holy religion in the pagan countries; public spirits should concur according to their several capacities; those who are freely communicative of Christ's gospel should be assisted by those who are communicative of their purses.

[3 John 1-8]

FEBRUARY 18

Godly Adornments

For the Lord takes pleasure in his people; he adorns the humble with salvation.

PSALM 149:4

And as it is a joy to good parents, it will be a joy to good ministers, to see their people adorn their profession. Gaius overlooked petty differences among serious Christians, and freely helped all who bore the image, and did the work of Christ. He was upright in what he did, as a faithful servant. Faithful souls can hear their own praises without being puffed up; the commendation of what is good in them, lays them at the foot of the cross of Christ. Christians should consider not only what they must do, but what they may do; and should do even the common actions of life, and of good-will, after a godly sort, serving God therein, and designing his glory. Those who freely make known Christ's gospel should be helped by others to whom God gives the means. Those who cannot themselves proclaim it, may yet receive, help, and countenance those who do so ... Christians should consider not only what they must do, but what they may do, what they may most honorably and laudably do: the liberal mind devises liberal generous things. Christians should do even the common actions of life and of good-will after a godly sort, as serving God therein, and designing his glory ... But ambition will breed malice against those who oppose it. Malice and ill-will in the heart will be apt to vent themselves by the lips. The heart and mouth are both to be watched ... we must learn humility as well as love. The lowest in the church of Christ should be greeted. And those may well salute and greet one another on earth who hope to live together in heaven. And the apostle who had lain in Christ's bosom lays Christ's friends in his heart.

[3 John 1-8]

FEBRUARY 19

Heart and Mouth

For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.

MATTHEW 12:50

Both the heart and mouth must be watched. The temper and spirit of Diotrephes was full of pride and ambition. It is bad not to do good ourselves; but it is worse to hinder those who would do good. Those cautions and counsels are most likely to be accepted, which are seasoned with love. Follow that which is good, for he who does good, as delighting therein, is born of God. Evil-workers vainly pretend or boast acquaintance with God. Let us not follow that which is proud, selfish, and of bad design, though the example may be given by persons of rank and power; but let us be followers of God, and walk in love, after the example of our Lord ... Also, by associating with and copying the example of godly Christians, we shall have peace within, and live at peace with the brethren; our communications with the Lord's people on earth will be pleasing, and we shall be numbered with them in glory everlasting ... Imitate not such unchristian pernicious evil; but pursue the contrary good, in wisdom, purity, peace, and love. Caution and counsel are not needless to those who are good already. Those cautions and counsels are most likely to be accepted that are seasoned with love. Beloved, follow not that which is evil. Follow that which is good; for he that does good is of God, is born of God. The practice of goodness is the evidence of our filial happy relation to God. Follow not that which is evil, for he that does evil has not seen God, is not duly sensible of his holy nature and will. Evil-workers vainly pretend or boast an acquaintance with God.

[3 John 9-14]

FEBRUARY 20

God Speaks

For God speaks in one way, and in two, though man does not perceive it.

JOB 33:14

God speaks many ways to the children of men: by conscience, by providences, by his voice, to all which we ought carefully to attend; but he never spoke at any time so as he spoke the Ten Commandments. This law God had given to man before; it was written in his heart; but sin so defaced it, that it was necessary to revive the knowledge of it. The law is spiritual, and takes knowledge of the secret thoughts, desires, and dispositions of the heart. Its grand demand is love, without which outward obedience is mere hypocrisy. It requires perfect, unfailing, constant obedience; no law in the world admits disobedience to itself. Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all (James 2:10). Whether in the heart or the conduct, in thought, word, or deed, to omit or to vary anything, is sin, and the wages of sin is death ... Pride makes a god of self, covetousness makes a god of money, sensuality makes a god of the belly; whatever is esteemed or loved, feared or served, delighted in or depended on, more than God, that we do in effect make a god of. This prohibition includes a precept which is the foundation of the whole law, that we take the Lord for our God, acknowledge that he is God, accept him for ours, adore him with admiration and humble reverence, and set our affections entirely upon him. In the last words, before me, it is intimated, that we cannot have any other God but he will certainly know it. There is none besides him but what is before him. Idolaters covet secrecy; but shall not God search this out?

[Exodus 20:1-2]

FEBRUARY 21

Sermon in the Wilderness

And the Lord said to Moses, Go down and warn the people, lest they break through to the Lord to look and many of them perish.

EXODUS 19:21

Never was there such a sermon preached, before or since, as this which was preached to the church in the wilderness. It might be supposed that the terrors would have checked presumption and curiosity in the people; but the hard heart of a slumbering sinner can trifle with the most terrible threatenings and judgments. In drawing near to God, we must never forget his holiness and greatness, nor our own meanness and pollution. We cannot stand in judgment before him according to his righteous law. The convinced transgressor asks, "What must I do to be saved?" And he hears the voice, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." The Holy Ghost, who made the law to convince of sin, now takes of the things of Christ, and shows them to us. In the gospel we read, Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. We have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins. Through him we are justified from all things, from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses. But the divine law is binding as a rule of life. The Son of God came down from heaven, and suffered poverty, shame, agony, and death, not only to redeem us from its curse, but to bind us more closely to keep its commands.

[Exodus 19:16-25]

FEBRUARY 22

The Flood

FEBRUARY

For behold, I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life under heaven. Everything that is on the earth shall die.

GENESIS 6:17

The most remarkable thing concerning the old world is the destroying of it by the deluge, or flood. We are told of the abounding iniquity of that wicked world: God's just wrath, and his holy resolution to punish it. In all ages there has been a peculiar curse of God upon marriages between professors of true religion and its avowed enemies. The evil example of the ungodly party corrupts or greatly hurts the other. Family religion is put an end to, and the children are trained up according to the worldly maxims of that parent who is without the fear of God. If we profess to be the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty, we must not marry without his consent. He will never give his blessing, if we prefer beauty, wit, wealth, or worldly honors, to faith and holiness. The Spirit of God strove with men, by sending Enoch, Noah, and perhaps others, to preach to them; by waiting to be gracious, notwithstanding their rebellions; and by exciting alarm and convictions in their consciences. But the Lord declared that his Spirit should not thus strive with men always; he would leave them to be hardened in sin, and ripened for destruction. This he determined on, because man was flesh: not only frail and feeble, but carnal and depraved; having misused the noble powers of his soul to gratify his corrupt inclinations. God sees all the wickedness that is among the children of men; it cannot be hid from him now; and if it be not repented of, it shall be made known by him shortly.

[Genesis 6:1-7]

FEBRUARY 23

J u d g m e n t s

The Lord roars from Zion and utters his voice from Jerusalem; the pastures of the shepherds mourn, and the top of Carmel withers.

AMOS 1:2

Amos was a herdsman, and engaged in agriculture. But the same divine Spirit influenced Isaiah and Daniel in the court, and Amos in the sheep-folds, giving to each the powers and eloquence needful for them. He assures the twelve tribes of the destruction of the neighboring nations; and as they at that time gave themselves up to wickedness and idolatry, he reproves the Jewish nation with severity; but describes the restoration of the church by the Messiah, extending to the latter days... God employed a shepherd, a herdsman, to reprove and warn the people. Those to whom God gives abilities for his services, ought not to be despised for their origin, or their employment. Judgments are denounced against the neighboring nations, the oppressors of God's people. The number of transgressions does not here mean that exact number, but many: they had filled the measure of their sins, and were ripe for vengeance. The method in dealing with these nations is, in part, the same, yet in each there is something peculiar. In all ages this bitterness has been shown against the Lord's people. When the Lord reckons with his enemies, how tremendous are his judgments ... Even royal palaces are no defense against the judgments of God, though ever so richly furnished, though ever so strongly fortified. That the enemy shall force his way into the city: God will break the bar of Damascus, and then the gate flies open. Or it may be understood figuratively: all that which is depended upon as the strength and safety of that great city shall fail, and prove insufficient. When God's judgments come with commission it is in vain to think of turning them out.

[Amos 1]

FEBRUARY 24

God's Sovereign Care

Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love.

MICAH 7:18

The meanest and most feeble, who have just begun to trust the Lord, are as much entitled to be protected as those who have long and faithfully been his servants. It is our duty to defend the afflicted, who, like the Gibeonites, are brought into trouble on our account, or for the sake of the gospel. Joshua would not forsake his new vassals. How much less shall our true Joshua fail those who trust in Him! We may be wanting in our trust, but our trust never can want success. Yet God's promises are not to slacken and do away, but to quicken and encourage our endeavors. Notice the great faith of Joshua, and the power of God answering it by the miraculous staying of the sun, that the day of Israel's victories might be made longer. Joshua acted on this occasion by impulse on his mind from the Spirit of God. It was not necessary that Joshua should speak, or the miracle be recorded, according to the modern terms of astronomy. The sun appeared to the Israelites over Gibeon, and the moon over the valley of Ajalon, and there they appeared to be stopped on their course for one whole day. Is anything too hard for the Lord? forms a sufficient answer to ten thousand difficulties, which objectors have in every age started against the truth of God as revealed in his written word.

[Joshua 10:7-14]

FEBRUARY 25

Life's Work

*But know that the Lord has set apart the godly for himself;
the Lord hears when I call to him.*

PSALM 4:3

We must never think our work for God done, till our life is done. If he lengthens out our days beyond what we expected, like those of Joshua, it is because he has some further service for us to do. He who aims at the same mind which was in Christ Jesus, will glory in bearing the last testimony to his Savior's goodness, and in telling to all around, the obligations with which the unmerited goodness of God has bound him. The assembly came together in a solemn religious manner. Joshua spoke to them in God's name, and as from him. His sermon consists of doctrine and application. The doctrinal part is a history of the great things God had done for his people, and for their fathers before them. The application of this history of God's mercies to them is an exhortation to fear and serve God, in gratitude for his favor, and that it might be continued ... Put away the strange gods, both Chaldean and Egyptian idols, for those they were most in danger of revolting to. It should seem by this charge, which is repeated, that there were some among them that privately kept in their closets the images or pictures of these dunghill-deities, which came to their hands from their ancestors, as heir-looms of their families, though, it may be, they did not worship them; these Joshua earnestly urges them to throw away. Jacob pressed his household to do this, and at this very place; for, when they gave him up the little images they had, he buried them under the oak which was by Shechem (Gen. 35:2).

[Joshua 24:1-14]

FEBRUARY 26

Loving Service

And you shall observe all my statutes and all my rules, and do them: I am the Lord.

LEVITICUS 18:5

It is essential that the service of God's people be performed with a willing mind. For, love is the only genuine principle wherein all acceptable service to God can spring. The Father seeks only such to worship him as worship him in spirit and in truth. The carnal mind of man is enmity against God, therefore, is not capable of such spiritual worship. Hence the necessity of being born again. But numbers rest in mere forms, as tasks imposed upon them. Joshua puts them to their choice; but not as if it were indifferent whether they served God or not. Choose you whom you will serve, now the matter is laid plainly before you. He resolves to do this, whatever others did. Those that are bound for heaven must be willing to swim against the stream. They must not do as the most do, but as the best do. And no one can behave himself as he ought in any station, who does not deeply consider his religious duties in family relations. The Israelites agree with Joshua, being influenced by the example of a man who had been so great a blessing to them. We also will serve the Lord. See how much good great men do, by their influence, if zealous in religion. Joshua brings them to express full purpose of heart to cleave to the Lord. They must come off from all confidence in their own sufficiency; otherwise their purposes would be in vain.

[Joshua 24:15-28]

FEBRUARY 27

Heart - Grief

*O Lord, how long shall I cry for help and you will not hear?
Or cry to you "Violence!" and you will not save?*

HABAKKUK 1:2

The servants of the Lord are deeply afflicted by seeing ungodliness and violence prevail; especially among those who profess the truth. No man scrupled doing wrong to his neighbor. We should long to remove to the world where holiness and love reign forever, and no violence shall be before us. God has good reasons for his long-suffering towards bad men, and the rebukes of good men. The day will come when the cry of sin will be heard against those that do wrong, and the cry of prayer for those that suffer wrong. They were to notice what was going forward among the heathen by the Chaldeans, and to consider themselves a nation to be scourged by them. But most men presume on continued prosperity, or that calamities will not come in their days. They are a bitter and hasty nation, fierce, cruel, and bearing down all before them. They shall overcome all that oppose them. But it is a great offence, and the common offence of proud people, to take glory to themselves ... When God seems to connive at the wickedness of the wicked, nay, and to countenance it, by suffering them to prosper in their wickedness, it shocks the faith of good men, and proves a sore temptation to them to say, "All in vain have I kept my heart clean" (Ps. 73:13), and hardens those in their impiety who say, God has forsaken the earth. We must not think it strange if wickedness be suffered to prevail far and prosper long. God has reasons, and we are sure they are good reasons, both for the reprieves of bad men and the rebukes of good men; and therefore, though we plead with him, and humbly expostulate concerning his judgments.

[Habakkuk 1:1-11]

FEBRUARY 28

God is Our God

Truly God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart.

PSALM 73:1

However matters may be, yet God is the Lord our God, our Holy One. We are an offending people, he is an offended God, yet we will not entertain hard thoughts of him, or of his service. It is great comfort that, whatever mischief men design, the Lord designs good, and we are sure that his counsel shall stand. Though wickedness may prosper a while, yet God is holy, and does not approve the wickedness. As he cannot do iniquity himself, so he is of purer eyes than to behold it with any approval. By this principle we must abide, though the dispensations of his providence may for a time, in some cases, seem to us not to agree with it. The prophet complains that God's patience was abused; and because sentence against these evil works and workers were not executed speedily, their hearts were the more fully set in them to do evil. Some they take up as with the angle, one by one; others they catch in shoals, as in their net, and gather them in their drag, their enclosing net. They admire their own cleverness and contrivance: there is great proneness in us to take the glory of outward prosperity to ourselves. This is idolizing ourselves, sacrificing to the drag-net because it is our own. God will soon end successful and splendid robberies. Death and judgment shall make men cease to prey on others, and they shall be preyed on themselves. Let us remember, whatever advantages we possess, we must give all the glory to God.

[Habakkuk 1:12-17]

FEBRUARY 29

Prepare to Meet God

Oh sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth!

PSALM 96:1

When Christ finished his work on earth, and was received into his glory in heaven, the church began to sing a new song unto him, and to bless his name. His apostles and evangelists showed forth his salvation among the heathen, his wonders among all people. All the earth is here summoned to worship the Lord. We must worship him in the beauty of holiness, as God in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself. Glorious things are said of him, both as motives to praise and matter of praise. We are to hope and pray for that time, when Christ shall reign in righteousness over all nations. He shall rule in the hearts of men, by the power of truth, and the Spirit of righteousness. His coming draws nigh; this King, this Judge stands before the door, but he is not yet come. The Lord will accept the praises of all who seek to promote the kingdom of Christ. The sea can but roar, and how the trees of the wood can show that they rejoice we know not; but he that searches the heart knows what the mind of the Spirit is and understands the words, the broken language of the weakest. Christ will come to judge the earth, to execute just vengeance on his enemies, and to fulfill his largest promises to his people. What then are we? Would that day be welcome to us? If this be not our case, let us now begin to prepare to meet our God, by seeking the pardon of our sins and the renewal of our souls to holiness.

[Psalm 96]

MARCH 1

Chastisements

But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed.

ISAIAH 53:5

Because God does not desire the death and ruin of sinners, therefore in mercy he desires their chastisement. The children of iniquity still remained in Israel. The enemies would be gathered against them. It is just with God to make those know what hardships mean, who indulge themselves in ease and pleasure. Let them cleanse their hearts from all corrupt affections and lusts, and be a broken and contrite spirit. Let them abound in works of piety towards God, and of justice and charity towards one another: herein let them sow to the Spirit. Seeking the Lord is to be every day's work, but there are special occasions when to seek him. Christ shall come as the Lord our righteousness, and grant us of it abundantly. If we sow in righteousness, we shall reap according to mercy; a reward not of debt, but of grace. Even the gains of sin yield the sinner no satisfaction. As our comforts, so our confidences in the service of sin will certainly fail us. Come and seek the Lord, and your hope in him shall not deceive you. See what cruel work war makes. Whatever mischief is done, it is sin that does it. What miseries men's sins bring on them, even in this world! Let them sow to themselves in righteousness; let them return to the practice of good works, according to the law of God, which is the rule of righteousness; let them abound in works of piety towards God, and of justice and charity towards one another, and herein let them sow to the Spirit, as the apostle speaks. Every action is seed sown. Let them sow in righteousness; let them sow what they should sow, do what they should do.

[Hosea 10:9-15]

MARCH 2

Peace with God

Agree with God, and be at peace; thereby good will come to you.

JOB 22:21

After the Lord had convinced and humbled Job, and brought him to repentance, he owned him, comforted him, and put honor upon him. The devil had undertaken to prove Job a hypocrite, and his three friends had condemned him as a wicked man; but if God says, "Well done, good and faithful servant," it is of little consequence who says otherwise. Job's friends had wronged God, by making prosperity a mark of the true church, and affliction a certain proof of God's wrath. Job had referred things to the future judgment and the future state, more than his friends, and therefore he spoke of God that which was right, better than his friends had done. And as Job prayed and offered sacrifice for those that had grieved and wounded his spirit, so Christ prayed for his persecutors, and ever lives, making intercession for the transgressors. Job's friends were good men, and belonged to God, and He would not let them be in their mistake any more than Job; but having humbled him by a discourse out of the whirlwind, he takes another way to humble them... Those who differ in judgment about lesser things, yet are one in Christ the great Sacrifice, ought therefore to love and bear with one another. When God was angry with Job's friends, he put them in a way to make peace with him. Our quarrels with God always begin on our part, but the making peace begins on his. Peace with God is to be had only in his own way, and upon his own terms.

[Job 42:7-9]

MARCH 3

Vanity of Vanities

Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity.

ECCLESIASTES 1:2

Solomon tried all things, and found them vanity. He found his searches after knowledge weariness, not only to the flesh, but to the mind. The more he saw of the works done under the sun, the more he saw their vanity; and the sight often vexed his spirit. He could neither gain that satisfaction to himself, nor do that good to others, which he expected. Even the pursuit of knowledge and wisdom discovered man's wickedness and misery; so that the more he knew, the more he saw cause to lament and mourn. The truth itself here asserted is that all is vanity, all besides God and considered as abstract from him, the all of this world, all worldly employments and enjoyments, the all that is in the world, 1 John 2:16. All that which is agreeable to our senses and to our fancies in this present state, which gains pleasure to ourselves or reputation with others, is vanity. It is all vanity, not only in the abuse of it, when it is perverted by the sin of man, but even in the use of it. Man, considered with reference to these things, is vanity, and, if there were not another life after this, were made in vain; and those things, considered in reference to man (whatever they are in themselves), are vanity. They are impertinent to the soul, foreign, and add nothing to it; they do not answer the end, nor yield any true satisfaction; they are uncertain in their continuance, are fading, and perishing, and passing away, and will certainly deceive and disappoint those that put a confidence in them. Let us learn to hate and fear sin, the cause of all this vanity and misery; to value Christ; to seek rest in the knowledge, love, and service of the Savior.

[Ecclesiastes 1:12-18]

MARCH 4

Heaven's Wealth

Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce.

PROVERBS 3:9

Solomon was a type of Christ, who is not only rich himself, but enriches all that are his. Solomon was instrumental to bring so much gold into the country, and disperse it, that silver was nothing accounted of. There was such plenty of it in Jerusalem that it was as the stones; and cedars, that used to be great rarities, were as common as sycamore trees. Such is the nature of worldly wealth, plenty of it makes it the less valuable; much more should the enjoyment of spiritual riches lessen our esteem of all earthly possessions. If gold in abundance would make silver to seem so despicable, shall not wisdom, and grace, and the foretastes of heaven, which are far better than gold, make earthly wealth seem much more despicable? Solomon increased his wealth. Silver was nothing accounted of. Such is the nature of worldly wealth, plenty of it makes it the less valuable; much more should the enjoyment of spiritual riches lessen our esteem of all earthly possessions. If gold in abundance makes silver to be despised, shall not wisdom, and grace, and the foretastes of heaven, which are far better than gold, make gold to be lightly esteemed? See in Solomon's greatness the performance of God's promise, and let it encourage us to seek first the righteousness of God's kingdom. This was he, who, having tasted all earthly enjoyments, wrote a book, to show the vanity of all worldly things, the vexation of spirit that attends them, and the folly of setting our hearts upon them: and to recommend serious godliness, as that which will do unspeakably more to make us happy, than all the wealth and power he was master of; and, through the grace of God, it is within our reach.

[1 Kings 10:14-29]

MARCH 5

Newness of Life

...that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word...

EPHESIANS 5:26

God promises that he will work a good work in us, to qualify us for the good work he intended to bring about. We had promises that God would cleanse us from the pollutions of sin. "I will sprinkle clean water upon you," which signifies both the book of Christ sprinkled upon the conscience to purify that and to take away the sense of guilt (as those that were sprinkled with the water of purification were thereby discharged from their ceremonial uncleanness) and the grace of the Spirit sprinkled on the whole soul to purify it from all corrupt inclinations and dispositions, as Naaman was cleansed from his leprosy by dipping in Jordan. Christ was himself clean, else his blood could not have been cleansing to us; and it is a Holy Spirit that makes us holy. Water is an emblem of the cleansing of our polluted souls from sin. But no water can do more than take away the filth of the flesh. Water seems in general the sacramental sign of the sanctifying influences of the Holy Ghost; yet this is always connected with the atoning blood of Christ. When the latter is applied by faith to the conscience, to cleanse it from evil works, the former is always applied to the powers of the soul, to purify it from the pollution of sin. All that have an interest in the new covenant have a new heart and a new spirit, in order to their walking in newness of life. God would give a heart of flesh, a soft and tender heart, complying with his holy will. Renewing grace works as great a change in the soul, as the turning a dead stone into living flesh. God will put his Spirit within, as a Teacher, Guide, and Sanctifier.

[Ezekiel 36:25-38]

MARCH 6

Utter Ruin

When a man's folly brings his way to ruin, his heart rages against the Lord.

PROVERBS 19:3

Ruin is coming, utter ruin; destruction from the Almighty. The servants of God all proclaim, "There is no peace for the wicked." The expressions are figurative, speaking everywhere desolation; the land shall be left without inhabitants. The sinners to be consumed are, the professed idolaters, and those that worship Jehovah and idols, or swear to the Lord, and to Malcham. Those that think to divide their affections and worship between God and idols will come short of acceptance with God; for what communion can there be between light and darkness? If Satan has half, he will have all; if the Lord has but half, he will have none. Neglect of God shows impiety and contempt. Those that are turned back from the Lord, that were well taught, and began well, that had given up their names to him, and set out at first in the worship of him, but have flown off, and turned aside, and fallen in with idolaters, and deserted those good ways of God which they were brought up in, and despised them. Those God will be sure to reckon with who are renegades from his service, who began in the Spirit and ended in the flesh; they shall be treated as deserters, to whom no mercy is shown. Those that have not sought the Lord, nor ever enquired for him, never made any profession of religion, and think to excuse themselves with that, shall find that this will not excuse them; nay, this is the thing laid to their charge; they are atheistical careless people, that live without God in the world; and those that do so are certainly unworthy to live upon God in the world. May none of us be among those who draw back unto perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of their soul!

[Zephaniah 1:1-6]

MARCH 7

MARCH

Fruits of Repentance

Put on sackcloth and lament, O priests; wail, O ministers of the altar. Go in, pass the night in sackcloth, O ministers of my God! Because grain offering and drink offering are withheld from the house of your God.

JOEL 1:13

The sorrow of the people is turned into repentance and humiliation before God. With all the marks of sorrow and shame, sin must be confessed and bewailed. A day is to be appointed for this purpose; a day in which people must be kept from their common employments, that they may more closely attend God's services; and there is to be abstaining from meat and drink. Everyone had added to the national guilt, all shared in the national calamity, therefore every one must join in repentance. When joy and gladness are cut off from God's house, when serious godliness decays, and love waxes cold, then it is time to cry unto the Lord. The prophet describes how grievous the calamity. The prophet stirs them up to cry to God, with the consideration of the examples given them for it. His own example: "To you, O Lord, I call!" (Joel 1:19). He would not put them upon doing that which he would not resolve to do himself. See even the inferior creatures suffering for our transgression. And what better are they than the beasts who never cry to God but for corn and wine, and complain of the want of the delights of sense? Yet their crying to God in those cases, shames the stupidity of those who cry not to God in any case. Whatever may become of the nations and churches that persist in ungodliness, believers will find the comfort of acceptance with God, when the wicked shall be burned up with his indignation.

[Joel 1:14-20]

MARCH 8

U n t o l d M e r c y

But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry.

JONAH 4:1

Jonah being now so much out of temper and therefore unfit to die. How durst he think of dying, and going to appear before God's judgment-seat, when he was actually quarrelling with him? Was this a frame of spirit proper for a man to go out of the world in? ... What all the saints make matter of joy and praise, Jonah makes the subject of reflection upon God; as if showing mercy were an imperfection of the divine nature, which is the greatest glory of it. It is to his sparing, pardoning mercy, we all owe it that we are out of hell. He wishes for death: this was the language of folly, passion, and strong corruption. There appeared in Jonah remains of a proud, uncharitable spirit; and that he neither expected nor desired the welfare of the Ninevites, but had only come to declare and witness their destruction. He was not duly humbled for his own sins, and was not willing to trust the Lord with his credit and safety. In this frame of mind, he overlooked the good of which he had been an instrument, and the glory of the divine mercy. We should often ask ourselves, "Is it well to say so, to do so? Can I justify it? Do I well to be so soon angry, so often angry, so long angry, and to give others ill language in my anger? Do I well to be angry at the mercy of God to repenting sinners? That was Jonah's crime. Do we do well to be angry at that which is for the glory of God, and the advancement of his kingdom?" Let the conversion of sinners, which is the joy of heaven, be our joy, and never our grief.

[Jonah 4:1-4]

MARCH 9

BROTHERS IN THE LORD

MARCH

By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

JOHN 13:35

All true Christians are brethren one to another. As all good ministers, so all good Christians, are brethren one to another, who stand in a near relation and owe a mutual love. Towards God they must be saints, consecrated to his honor and sanctified by his grace, bearing his image and aiming at his glory. And in both these, as saints to God and as brethren to one another, they must be faithful. Faithfulness runs through every character and relation of the Christian life, and is the crown and glory of them all. Faith, hope, and love, are the three principal graces in the Christian life, and proper matter for prayer and thanksgiving. The more we fix our hopes on the reward in the other world, the more free shall we be in doing good with our earthly treasure. It was treasured up for them; no enemy could deprive them of it. The gospel is the word of truth, and we may safely venture our souls upon it. And all who hear the word of the gospel ought to bring forth the fruit of the gospel obey it, and have their principles and lives formed according to it. Worldly love arises, either from views of interest or from likeness in manners; carnal love, from the appetite for pleasure. To these, something corrupt, selfish, and base always cleaves. But Christian love arises from the Holy Spirit, and is full of holiness.

[Colossians 1:1-8]

MARCH 10

True Sacrifices

Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.

HEBREWS 13:15

It is taken for granted that people would be inclined to bring offerings to the Lord. The very light of nature directs man, some way or other, to do honor to his Maker, and pay him homage as his Lord ... Those who could not offer a bullock, were to bring a sheep or a goat; and those who were not able to do that, were accepted of God, if they brought a turtle-dove, or a pigeon. Those creatures chosen for sacrifices were mild, and gentle, and harmless to show the innocence and meekness that were in Christ, and that should be in Christians. The offering of the poor was as typical of Christ's atonement as the more costly sacrifices, and expressed as fully repentance, faith, and devotedness to God. We have no excuse, if we refuse the pleasant and reasonable service now required. But we can no more offer the sacrifice of a broken heart or of praise and thanksgiving, than an Israelite could offer a bullock or a goat, except as God has first given to us. The more we do in the Lord's service, the greater are our obligations to him, for the will, for the ability, and opportunity. In many things God leaves us to fix what shall be spent in his service, whether of our time or our substance; yet where God's providence has put much into a man's power, scanty offerings will not be accepted, for they are not proper expressions of a willing mind. Let us be devoted in body and soul to his service, whatever he may call us to give, venture, do, or suffer for his sake.

[Leviticus 1:10-17]

MARCH 11

Forever the Same

MARCH

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

HEBREWS 13:8

The people of God express deep concern for the ruins of the temple, more than for any other of their calamities. But whatever changes there are on earth, God is still the same, and remains for ever wise and holy, just and good; with him there is no variability or shadow of turning. They earnestly pray to God for mercy and grace, "Turn us to you, O Lord." God never leaves any till they first leave him; if he turns them to him in a way of duty, no doubt he will quickly return to them in a way of mercy. If God by his grace renew our hearts, he will by his favor renew our days. Troubles may cause our hearts to be faint, and our eyes to be dim, but the way to the mercy-seat of our reconciled God is open. Let us, in all our trials, put our whole trust and confidence in his mercy; let us confess our sins, and pour out our hearts before him. Let us watch against repinings and despondency; for we surely know, that it shall be well in the end with all that trust in, fear, love, and serve the Lord. Are not the Lord's judgments in the earth the same as in Jeremiah's days? Let Zion then be remembered by us in our prayers, and her welfare be sought above every earthly joy. Spare, Lord, spare your people, and give not your heritage to reproach, for the heathen to rule over them.

[Lamentations 5:17-22]

MARCH 12

Victory in Jesus

But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

I CORINTHIANS 15:57

All our victories over Satan are obtained by power derived from Jesus Christ, and he must have all the praise. They entertain themselves with the comfort of it; they speak of it with an air of exultation: Even the devils, those potent enemies, are subject to us. Note, the saints have no greater joy or satisfaction in any of their triumphs than in those over Satan. Satan and his kingdom fell before the preaching of the gospel. He falls as lightning falls from heaven, so suddenly, so irrecoverably, so visibly, that all may perceive it, and say, "See how Satan's kingdom totters, see how it tumbles." They triumphed in casting devils out of the bodies of people; but Christ sees and rejoices in the fall of the devil from the interest he has in the souls of men, which is called his power in high places (Eph. 6:12). If devils are subject to us, what can stand before us? But let us beware of spiritual pride, which has been the destruction of many. Our Lord rejoiced at the prospect of the salvation of many souls. It was fit that particular notice should be taken of that hour of joy; there were few such, for he was a man of sorrows: in that hour in which he saw Satan fall, and heard of the good success of his ministers, in that hour he rejoiced. He has ever resisted the proud, and given grace to the humble. The more simply dependent we are on the teaching, help, and blessing of the Son of God, the more we shall know both of the Father and of the Son; the more blessed we shall be in seeing the glory, and hearing the words of the divine Savior; and the more useful we shall be made in promoting his cause.

[Luke 10:17-24]

MARCH 13

Relieve the Poor

MARCH

I relieved your shoulder of the burden; your hands were freed from the basket.

PSALM 81:6

If we speak of eternal life, and the way to it, in a careless manner, we take the name of God in vain. No one will ever love God and his neighbor with any measure of pure, spiritual love, who is not made a partaker of converting grace. But the proud heart of man strives hard against these convictions. Christ gave an instance of a poor Jew in distress, relieved by a kind Samaritan. This poor man fell among thieves, who left him about to die of his wounds. He was slighted by those who should have been his friends, and was cared for by a stranger, a Samaritan, of the nation which the Jews most despised and detested, and would have no dealings with. It is lamentable to observe how selfishness governs all ranks; how many excuses men will make to avoid trouble or expense in relieving others. But the true Christian has the law of love written in his heart. The Spirit of Christ dwells in him; Christ's image is renewed in his soul. The parable is a beautiful explanation of the law of loving our neighbor as ourselves, without regard to nation, party, or any other distinction. It also sets forth the kindness and love of God our Savior toward sinful, miserable men. We were like this poor, distressed traveler. Satan, our enemy, has robbed us, and wounded us: such is the mischief sin has done us. The blessed Jesus had compassion on us. The believer considers that Jesus loved him, and gave his life for him, when an enemy and a rebel; and having shown him mercy, he bids him go and do likewise.

[*Luke 10:25-37*]

MARCH 14

Mercy Enough

The Lord is good to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made.

PSALM 145:9

It is good for those under the same trial, or infirmity of body or mind, to join in prayer to God for relief, that they may quicken and encourage one another. There is mercy enough in Christ for all that ask. They were earnest in prayer. They cried out as men in earnest. Cold desires beg denials. They were humble in prayer, casting themselves upon and referring themselves cheerfully to the Mediator's mercy. They showed faith in prayer, by the title they gave to Christ. Surely it was by the Holy Ghost that they called Jesus, Lord. They persevered in prayer. When they were in pursuit of such mercy, it was no time for timidity or hesitation: they cried earnestly. Christ encouraged them. That to suffer for Christ is to drink of a cup, and to be baptized with a baptism. It is true, that affliction abounds. It is supposed to be a bitter cup, that is drunk of, wormwood and gall, those waters of a full cup, that are wrung out to God's people; a cup of trembling indeed, but not of fire and brimstone, the portion of the cup of wicked men. It is supposed to be a baptism, a washing with the waters of affliction; some are dipped in them; the waters compass them about even to the soul; others have but a sprinkling of them; both are baptism, some are overwhelmed in them, as in a deluge, others ill wet, as in a sharp shower. The wants and burdens of the body we are soon sensible of, and can readily relate. Oh that we did as feelingly complain of our spiritual maladies, especially our spiritual blindness!

[Matthew 20:29-34]

MARCH 15

Slothful Service

Slothfulness casts into a deep sleep, and an idle person will suffer hunger.

PROVERBS 19:15

Christ keeps no servants to be idle: they have received their all from him, and have nothing they can call their own but sin. Our receiving from Christ is in order to our working for him. The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. The day of account comes at last. We must all be reckoned with as to what good we have got to our own souls, and have done to others, by the advantages we have enjoyed. It is not meant that the improving of natural powers can entitle a man to divine grace. It is the real Christian's liberty and privilege to be employed as his Redeemer's servant, in promoting his glory, and the good of his people: the love of Christ constrains him to live no longer to himself, but to Him that died for him, and rose again. Those who think it impossible to please God, and in vain to serve him, will do nothing to purpose in religion. They complain that he requires of them more than they are capable of, and punishes them for what they cannot help. Whatever they may pretend, the fact is, they dislike the character and work of the Lord. The slothful servant is sentenced to be deprived of his talent. This may be applied to the blessings of this life; but rather to the means of grace. Those who know not the day of their visitation shall have the things that belong to their peace hid from their eyes. His doom is, to be cast into outer darkness. It is a usual way of expressing the miseries of the damned in hell ... Let us not envy sinners, or covet any of their perishing possessions.

[Matthew 25:14-30]

MARCH 16

At Christ's Feet

Therefore the Lord waits to be gracious to you, and therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you. For the Lord is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for him.

ISALAH 30:18

Whatever our case is, the only way to find ease and relief is to lay it at Christ's feet, to submit it to him, and refer it to his disposal. Those who would have spiritual healing from Christ must be ruled as he pleases. See what work sin has made; what various diseases human bodies are subject to. Here were such diseases as fancy could neither guess the cause nor the cure of, yet these were subject to the command of Christ. The spiritual cures that Christ works are wonderful. When blind souls are made to see by faith, the dumb to speak in prayer, the maimed and the lame to walk in holy obedience, it is to be wondered at. His power was also shown to the multitude, in the plentiful provision he made for them: the manner is much the same as before. All did eat, and were filled. Those whom Christ feeds, he fills. With Christ there is bread enough, and to spare; supplies of grace for more than seek it, and for those that seek for more. Christ sent away the people. Though he had fed them twice, they must not look for miracles to find their daily bread. Let them go home to their callings and their own tables. Lord, increase our faith, and pardon our unbelief, teaching us to live upon your fullness and bounty, for all things pertaining to this life, and that which is to come.

[Matthew 15:29-39]

MARCH 17

Hypocrisy

MARCH

So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander.

I PETER 2:1

False teachers are described as hypocrites. Faithful ministers must oppose such in good time, that their folly being made manifest, they may go no further. They had a base end in what they did; serving a worldly interest under pretence of religion: for the love of money is the root of all evil. Such should be resisted, and put to shame, by sound doctrine from the Scriptures. Shameful actions, the reproach of heathens, should be far from Christians; falsehood and lying, envious craft and cruelty, brutal and sensual practices, and idleness and sloth, are sins condemned even by the light of nature. But Christian meekness is as far from cowardly passing over sin and error, as from anger and impatience. And though there may be national differences of character, yet the heart of man in every age and place is deceitful and desperately wicked. But the sharpest reproofs must aim at the good of the reproved; and soundness in the faith is most desirable and necessary. To those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; they abuse, and turn things lawful and good into sin. Many profess to know God, yet in their lives deny and reject him. See the miserable state of hypocrites, such as have a form of godliness, but are without the power; yet let us not be so ready to fix this charge on others, as careful that it does not apply to ourselves. To good Christians that are sound in the faith and thereby purified all things are pure. Meats and drinks, and such things as were forbidden under the law (the observances of which some still maintain), in these there is now no such distinction, all are pure (lawful and free in their use).

[Titus 1:10-16]

MARCH 18

Redemption through Christ

O Israel, hope in the Lord! For with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with him is plentiful redemption.

PSALM 130:7

Those who are thoroughly convinced of their misery and danger by sin would spare no cost to obtain the remission of it. But as they cannot make satisfaction for sin, so God cannot take any satisfaction in them, otherwise than as expressing love and duty to him. The good work wrought in every true penitent is a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart, and sorrow for sin. It is a heart that is tender, and pliable to God's word. Oh that there were such a heart in every one of us! God is graciously pleased to accept this; it is instead of all burnt-offering and sacrifice. The broken heart is acceptable to God only through Jesus Christ; there is no true repentance without faith in him. Men despise that which is broken, but God will not. He will not overlook it; he will not refuse or reject it; though it makes God no satisfaction for the wrong done to him by sin. Those who have been in spiritual troubles know how to pity and pray for others afflicted in like manner. David was afraid lest his sin should bring judgments upon the city and kingdom. No personal fears or troubles of conscience can make the soul, which has received grace, careless about the interests of the church of God. And let this be the continued joy of all the redeemed, that they have redemption through the blood of Christ, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace.

[Psalm 51:16-19]

MARCH 19

Our Corrupt Nature

MARCH

*Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.*

PSALM 51:1

David, being convinced of his sin, poured out his soul to God in prayer for mercy and grace. Whither should backsliding children return, but to the Lord their God, who alone can heal them? He drew up, by divine teaching, an account of the workings of his heart toward God. Those that truly repent of their sins will not be ashamed to own their repentance. Also, he instructs others what to do, and what to say. David had not only done much, but suffered much in the cause of God; yet he flees to God's infinite mercy, and depends upon that alone for pardon and peace. He begs the pardon of sin. The blood of Christ, sprinkled upon the conscience, blots out the transgression, and, having reconciled us to God, reconciles us to ourselves. The believer longs to have the whole debt of his sins blotted out, and every stain cleansed; he would be thoroughly washed from all his sins; but the hypocrite always has some secret reserve, and would have some favorite lust spared. David had such a deep sense of his sin that he was continually thinking of it, with sorrow and shame. His sin was committed against God, whose truth we deny by willful sin; with him we deal deceitfully. And the truly penitent will ever trace back the streams of actual sin to the fountain of original depravity...Those who sincerely endeavor to do their duty shall be taught their duty; but they will expect good only from divine grace overcoming their corrupt nature.

[Psalm 51:1-6]

MARCH 20

Our Great God

For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

I TIMOTHY 2:5

In all our addresses to God, we must desire that he would look on Christ, his Anointed One, and accept us for his sake. We must look to him with faith and then God will, with favor, look upon the face of the Anointed. Without him, we dare not show our faces. The psalmist pleads love to God's ordinances. Let us account one day in God's courts better than a thousand spent elsewhere; and deem the meanest place in his service preferable to the highest earthly preferment. We are here in darkness, but if God be our God, he will be to us a Sun, to enlighten and enliven us, to guide and direct us. We are here in danger, but he will be to us a Shield, to secure us from the fiery darts that fly thick about us. Though he has not promised to give riches and dignities, he has promised to give grace and glory to all that seek them in his appointed way. And what is grace, but heaven begun below, in the knowledge, love, and service of God? What is glory, but the completion of this happiness, in being made like to him, and in fully enjoying him forever? Let it be our care to walk uprightly, and then let us trust God to give us everything that is good for us. If we cannot go to the house of the Lord, we may go by faith to the Lord of the house; in him we shall be happy, and may be easy. That man is really happy, whatever his outward circumstances may be, who trusts in the Lord of hosts, the God of Jacob.

[Psalm 84:8-12]

MARCH 21

MARCH

The Righteous and the Wicked

Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; for the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

PSALM 1:5-6

The ungodly are the reverse of the righteous, both in character and condition. The ungodly are led by the counsel of the wicked, in the way of sinners, to the seat of the scornful; they have no delight in the law of God; they bring forth no fruit but what is evil. The righteous are like useful, fruitful trees: the ungodly are like the chaff which the wind drives away: the dust which the owner of the floor desires to have driven away, as not being of any use. They are of no worth in God's account, how highly soever they may value themselves. They are easily driven to and fro by every wind of temptation. The chaff may be, for a while, among the wheat, but he is coming whose fan is in his hand, and who will thoroughly purge his floor. Those who by their own sin and folly make themselves as chaff will be found so before the whirlwind and fire of divine wrath. The doom of the ungodly is fixed, but whenever the sinner becomes sensible of this guilt and misery he may be admitted into the company of the righteous by Christ the living way, and become in Christ a new creature. He has new desires, new pleasures, hopes, fears, sorrows, companions, and employments. His thoughts, words, and actions are changed. He enters on a new state, and bears a new character. Behold, all things are become new by divine grace, which changes his soul into the image of the Redeemer. How different the character and end of the ungodly!

[Psalm 1:4-6]

MARCH 22

Christ's Salvation

He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken.

PSALM 62:6

Even the greatest of men may be much in trouble. Neither the crown on the king's head, nor the grace in his heart, would make him free from trouble. Even the greatest of men must be much in prayer. Let none expect benefit by the prayers of the church, or their friends, who are capable of praying for themselves and yet neglect it. Pray that God would protect his person, and preserve his life. That God would enable him to go on in his undertakings for the public good. We may know that God accepts our spiritual sacrifices, if by his Spirit he kindles in our souls a holy fire of piety and love to God...Our first step to victory in spiritual warfare is to trust only in the mercy and grace of God; all who trust in themselves will soon be cast down. Believers triumph in God, and his revelation of himself to them, by which they distinguish themselves from those that live without God in the world. Those who make God and his name their praise, may make God and his name their trust. This was the case when the pride and power of Jewish unbelief, and pagan idolatry, fell before the sermons and lives of the humble believers in Jesus. This is the case in every conflict with our spiritual enemies, when we engage them in the name, the spirit, and the power of Christ; and this will be the case at the last day, when the world, with the prince of it, shall be brought down and fall; but believers, risen-from the dead, through the resurrection of the Lord, shall stand, and sing his praises in heaven.

[Psalm 20]

MARCH 23

Judge and Father

Arise, O God, judge the earth; for you shall inherit all the nations!

PSALM 82:8

Holy confidence in God as a Father, and awful fear of him as a Judge, agree together; and to regard God always as a Judge makes him dear to us as a Father. If believers do evil, God will visit them with corrections. Then, let Christians not doubt God's faithfulness to his promises, nor give way to enslaving dread of his wrath, but let them reverence his holiness. The fearless professor is defenseless, and Satan takes him captive at his will; the desponding professor has no heart to avail himself of his advantages, and is easily brought to surrender. The price paid for man's redemption was the precious blood of Christ. Not only openly wicked, but unprofitable conversation is highly dangerous, though it may plead custom. It is folly to resolve, "I will live and die in such a way, because my forefathers did so." God had purposes of special favor toward his people, long before he made manifest such grace unto them. But the clearness of light, the supports of faith, the power of ordinances, are all much greater since Christ came upon earth, than they were before. The comfort is, that being by faith made one with Christ, his present glory is an assurance that where he is we shall be also (John 14:3). The soul must be purified, before it can give up its own desires and indulgences. And the word of God planted in the heart by the Holy Ghost, is a means of spiritual life, stirring up to our duty, working a total change in the dispositions and affections of the soul, till it brings to eternal life.

[1 Peter 1:17-25]

MARCH 24

Heirs of God

...giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light...

COLOSSIANS 1:12

Faith unites the weak believer to Christ, as really as it does the strong one, and purifies the heart of one as truly as of another; and every sincere believer is by his faith justified in the sight of God. Faith works godliness, and produces effects which no other grace in the soul can do. In Christ all fullness dwells, and pardon, peace, grace, and knowledge, and new principles, are thus given through the Holy Spirit. The promises to those who are partakers of a divine nature will cause us to inquire whether we are really renewed in the spirit of our minds; let us turn all these promises into prayers for the transforming and purifying grace of the Holy Spirit. The believer must add knowledge to his virtue, increasing acquaintance with the whole truth and will of God. We must add temperance to knowledge; moderation about worldly things; and add to temperance, patience, or cheerful submission to the will of God. Tribulation works patience, whereby we bear all calamities and crosses with silence and submission. To patience we must add godliness. This includes the holy affections and dispositions found in the true worshipper of God; with tender affection to all fellow Christians, who are children of the same Father, servants of the same Master, members of the same family, travelers to the same country, and heirs of the same inheritance. The preciousness of faith, as well as our obtaining it, is through the righteousness of Christ. The satisfactory meritorious righteousness and obedience of Christ gives faith all its value and preciousness: and the righteousness of such a person cannot but be of infinite value to those who by faith receive it.

[2 Peter 1:1-11]

MARCH 25

The Divine Word

To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together...

I CORINTHIANS 1:2

Peter stood up to show that he was not drunk, with the eleven, who concurred with him in what he said, and probably in their turns spoke likewise to the same purport; those that were of greatest authority stood up to speak to the scoffing Jews, and to confront those who contradicted and blasphemed, but left the seventy disciples to speak to the willing proselytes from other nations, who were not so prejudiced, in their own language. Thus among Christ's ministers, some of greater gifts are called out to instruct those that oppose themselves, to take hold of sword and spear; others of meaner abilities are employed in instructing those that resign themselves, and to be vine-dressers and husband-men. Peter's sermon shows that he was thoroughly recovered from his fall, and thoroughly restored to the divine favor. He who had denied Christ, now boldly confessed him. His account of the miraculous pouring forth of the Spirit was designed to awaken the hearers to embrace the faith of Christ, and to join themselves to his church. It was the fulfilling the Scripture, and the fruit of Christ's resurrection and ascension, and proof of both. Though Peter was filled with the Holy Ghost, and spoke with tongues as the Spirit gave him utterance, yet he did not think to set aside the Scriptures. Christ's scholars never learn above their Bible; and the Spirit is given, not to do away the Scriptures, but to enable us to understand, approve, and obey them. Assuredly none will escape the condemnation of the great day, except those who call upon the name of the Lord, in and through his Son Jesus Christ, as the Savior of sinners, and the Judge of all mankind.

[Acts 2:14-21]

MARCH 26

Godly Ruth

So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife. And he went in to her, and the Lord gave her conception, and she bore a son. Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without a redeemer, and may his name be renowned in Israel!"

RUTH 4:13-14

Ruth bore a son, through whom thousands and myriads were born to God; and in being the lineal ancestor of Christ, she was instrumental in the happiness of all that shall be saved by him; even of us Gentiles, as well as those of Jewish descent. She was a witness for God to the Gentile world, that he had not utterly forsaken them, but that in due time they should become one with his chosen people, and partake of his salvation. Prayer to God attended the marriage, and praise to him attended the birth of the child. What a pity it is that pious language should not be more used among Christians, or that it should be let fall into formality! Here is the descent of David from Ruth. And the period came when Bethlehem-Judah displayed greater wonders than those in the history of Ruth, when the outcast babe of another forlorn female of the same race appeared, controlling the counsels of the Roman master of the world, and drawing princes and wise men from the east, with treasures of gold, and frankincense, and myrrh to his feet. His name shall endure forever and all nations shall call him blessed. In that Seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.

[Ruth 4:13-22]

MARCH 27

Running the Race

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

I PETER 2:9

As the traveler, the racer, the warrior, and the laborer, gathered in their long and loose garments, that they might be ready in their business, so let Christians do by their minds and affections. Be sober, be watchful against all spiritual dangers and enemies, and be temperate in all behavior. Be sober-minded in opinion, as well as in practice, and humble in your judgment of yourselves. The best Christians have need to be exhorted to sobriety. These excellent Christians are put in mind of it; it is required of a bishop, of aged men, the young women are to be taught it, and the young men are directed to be sober-minded (Titus 2:4-6). A Christian's work is not over as soon as he has got into a state of grace; he must still hope and strive for more grace. When he has entered the strait gate, he must still walk in the narrow way, and gird up the loins of his mind for that purpose. A strong and perfect trust in the grace of God is agreeable with best endeavors in our duty. Holiness is the desire and duty of every Christian. It must be in all affairs, in every condition, and towards all people. We must especially watch and pray against the sins to which we are inclined. The written word of God is the surest rule of a Christian's life, and by this rule we are commanded to be holy every way. God makes those holy whom he saves.

[1 Peter 1:13-16]

MARCH 28

Sorrow for Sin

My soul is consumed with longing for your rules at all times.

PSALM 119:20

When we find ourselves dull we must go to God and beg of him to quicken us; he has an eye to God's word as a means of quickening (for the words which God speaks, they are spirit and they are life to those that receive them), and as an encouragement to hope that God would quicken him, having promised grace and comfort to all the saints, and to David in particular. God's word must be our guide and plea in every prayer. While the souls of the children of this world cleave to the earth as their portion, the children of light are greatly burdened, because of the remains of carnal affections in their hearts. It is unspeakable comfort to a gracious soul, to think with what tenderness all its complaints are received by a gracious God. We can talk of the wonders of redeeming love, when we understand the way of God's precepts, and walk in that way. The penitent melts in sorrow for sin: even the patient spirit may melt in the sense of affliction; it is then its interest to pour out its soul before God. The way of lying means all false ways by which men deceive themselves and others, or are deceived by Satan and his instruments. Those who know and love the law of the Lord, desire to know it more, and love it better. The way of serious godliness is the way of truth; the only true way to happiness: we must always have actual regard to it. Those who stick to the word of God may in faith expect and pray for acceptance with God. Those that are going to heaven should still press forward. God, by his Spirit, enlarges the hearts of his people when he gives them wisdom. The believer prays to be set free from sin.

[Psalm 119:25-32]

MARCH 29

God's Promises

I entreat your favor with all my heart; be gracious to me according to your promise.

PSALM 119:58

That God, who had given him the promise in the word, had by his grace wrought in him a hope in that promise and enabled him to depend upon it, and had raised his expectations of great things from it. Has God kindled in us desires towards spiritual blessings more than towards any temporal good things, and will he not be so kind as to satisfy those desires? Has he filled us with hopes of those blessings, and will he not be so just as to accomplish these hopes? He that did by his Spirit work faith in us will, according to our faith, work for us, and will not disappoint us. Those that make God's promises their portion may with humble boldness make them their plea. He that by his Spirit works faith in us will work for us. The word of God speaks comfort in affliction. If, through grace, it makes us holy, there is enough in it to make us easy, in all conditions. Let us be certain we have the divine law for what we believe, and then let not scoffers prevail upon us to decline from it. God's judgments of old comfort and encourage us, for he is still the same. Sin is horrible in the eyes of all that are sanctified. Ere long the believer will be absent from the body, and present with the Lord. In the mean time, the statutes of the Lord supply subjects for grateful praise. In the season of affliction, and in the silent hours of the night, he remembers the name of the Lord, and is stirred up to keep the law. All who have made religion the first thing, will own that they have been unspeakable gainers by it.

[*Psalm 119:49-56*]

MARCH 30

Better Than We Deserve

You have dealt well with your servant, O Lord, according to your word.

PSALM 119:65

However God has dealt with us, he has dealt with us better than we deserve, and all in love and for our good. Many have knowledge, but little judgment; those who have both are fortified against the snares of Satan, and furnished for the service of God. We are most apt to wander from God, when we are easy in the world. We should leave our concerns to the disposal of God, seeing we know not what is good for us. Lord, you are our bountiful Benefactor; incline our hearts to faith and obedience. The psalmist will go on in his duty with constancy and resolution. The proud are full of the world, and its wealth and pleasures; these make them senseless, secure, and stupid. God visits his people with affliction that they may learn his statutes. Not only God's promises, but even his law and his precepts, though difficult to ungodly men to love, are desirable, and profitable, because they lead us with safety and delight unto eternal life. Many have knowledge who have little judgment; those who have both are well fortified against the snares of Satan and well furnished for the service of God and their generation. This petition is backed with a plea: "You have dealt well with your servant, O Lord, according to your word. Teach me a good judgment and knowledge, for I believe in your commandments." Where God has given a good heart a good head too may in faith be prayed for.

[Psalm 119:65-72]

MARCH 31

Forever Sure

Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; his understanding is beyond measure.

PSALM 147:5

The settling of God's word in heaven is opposed to the changes and revolutions of the earth. And the engagements of God's covenant are established more firmly than the earth itself. All the creatures answer the ends of their creation: shall man, who alone is endued with reason, be the only unprofitable burden of the earth? We may make the Bible a pleasant companion at any time. But the word, without the grace of God, would not quicken us. See the best help for bad memories, namely, good affections; and though the exact words be lost, if the meaning remain, that is well. "I am yours, not my own, and not the world's; save me from sin, save me from ruin." The Lord will keep the man in peace, whose mind is stayed on him. It is poor perfection which one sees an end of. Such are all things in this world, which pass for perfections. The glory of man is but as the flower of the grass. The psalmist had seen the fullness of the word of God, and its sufficiency. The word of the Lord reaches to all cases, to all times. It will take us from all confidence in man, or in our own wisdom, strength, and righteousness. Thus shall we seek comfort and happiness from Christ alone. The best evidence of our love to the word of God is never to forget it. We must resolve that we will never, at any time, cast off our religion, and never, upon any occasion, lay aside our religion, but that we will be constant to it and persevere in it.

[Psalm 119:89-96]

A P R I L 1

I n a T h o u s a n d W a y s

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

HEBREWS 1:1-2

God spoke to his ancient people at sundry times, through successive generations, and in diverse manners, as he thought proper; sometimes by personal directions, sometimes by dreams, sometimes by visions, sometimes by divine influences on the minds of the prophets. The gospel revelation is excellent above the former; in that it is a revelation which God has made by his Son. In beholding the power, wisdom, and goodness of the Lord Jesus Christ, we behold the power, wisdom, and goodness of the Father (John 14:7); the fullness of the Godhead dwells, not typically, or in a figure, but really, in him. When, on the fall of man, the world was breaking to pieces under the wrath and curse of God, the Son of God, undertaking the work of redemption, sustained it by his almighty power and goodness. From the glory of the person and office of Christ, we proceed to the glory of his grace. The glory of His person and nature, gave to his sufferings such merit as was a full satisfaction to the honor of God, who suffered an infinite injury and affront by the sins of men. We never can be thankful enough that God has in so many ways, and with such increasing clearness, spoken to us fallen sinners concerning salvation. That he should by himself cleanse us from our sins is a wonder of love beyond our utmost powers of admiration, gratitude, and praise.

[Hebrews 1:1-3]

T e m p o r a l S u f f e r i n g s

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

ROMANS 8:18

The sufferings of the saints strike no deeper than the things of time, last no longer than the present time, are light afflictions and are but for a moment. How vastly different are the sentence of the word and the sentiment of the world, concerning the sufferings of this present time! Indeed the whole creation seems to wait with earnest expectation for the period when the children of God shall be manifested in the glory prepared for them. There is an impurity, deformity and infirmity, which have come upon the creature by the fall of man. There is an enmity of one creature to another. And they are used, or abused rather, by men as instruments of sin. Yet this deplorable state of the creation is in hope. God will deliver it from thus being held in bondage to man's depravity. The miseries of the human race, through their own and each other's wickedness, declare that the world is not always to continue as it is. Our having received the first-fruits of the Spirit, quickens our desires, encourages our hopes, and raises our expectations. Sin has been, and is, the guilty cause of all the suffering that exists in the creation of God. It has brought on the woes of earth; it has kindled the flames of hell. As to man, not a tear has been shed, not a groan has been uttered, not a pang has been felt, in body or mind, which has not come from sin. This is not all; sin is to be looked at as it affects the glory of God. Of this how fearfully regardless are the bulk of mankind!

[Romans 8:18-25]

A P R I L 3

C h r i s t i n U s

Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

ROMANS 5:2

If the Spirit be in us, Christ is in us. He dwells in the heart by faith. Grace in the soul is its new nature; the soul is alive to God, and has begun its holy happiness which shall endure forever. The righteousness of Christ imputed, secures the soul, the better part, from death. From hence we see how much it is our duty to walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. If any habitually live according to corrupt lustings, they will certainly perish in their sins, whatever they profess. And what can a worldly life present, worthy for a moment to be put against this noble prize of our high calling? Let us then, by the Spirit, endeavor more and more to mortify the flesh. Regeneration by the Holy Spirit brings a new and divine life to the soul, though in a feeble state. And the sons of God have the Spirit to work in them the disposition of children; they have not the spirit of bondage, which the Old Testament church was under, through the darkness of that dispensation. The Spirit of adoption was not then plentifully poured out. Also it refers to that spirit of bondage, under which many saints were at their conversion. Many speak peace to themselves, to whom God does not speak peace. But those who are sanctified have God's Spirit witnessing with their spirits, in and by his speaking peace to the soul. Though we may now seem to be losers for Christ, we shall not, we cannot, be losers by him in the end.

[Romans 8:10-17]

APRIL 4

APRIL

Grace and Humility

The fear of the Lord is instruction in wisdom, and humility comes before honor.

PROVERBS 15:33

Humility preserves peace and order in all Christian churches and societies; pride disturbs them. Where God gives grace to be humble, he will give wisdom, faith, and holiness. To be humble, and subject to our reconciled God, will bring greater comfort to the soul than the gratification of pride and ambition. But it is to be in due time; not in your fancied time, but God's own wisely appointed time. Does he wait, and will not you? What difficulties will not the firm belief of his wisdom, power, and goodness get over! Then be humble under his hand. Cast "all your care," personal cares, family cares, cares for the present, and cares for the future, for yourselves, for others, for the church, on God. These are burdensome, and often very sinful, when they arise from unbelief and distrust, when they torture and distract the mind, unfit us for duties, and hinder our delight in the service of God. The remedy is, to cast our care upon God, and leave every event to his wise and gracious disposal. Firm belief that the divine will and counsels are right calms the spirit of a man. Truly the godly too often forget this, and fret themselves to no purpose. Refer all to God's disposal. The golden mines of all spiritual comfort and good are wholly his, and the Spirit itself. Then, will he not furnish what is fit for us, if we humbly attend on him, and lay the care of providing for us, upon his wisdom and love? The whole design of Satan is to devour and destroy souls. He always is contriving whom he may ensnare to eternal ruin.

[1 Peter 5:5-9]

APRIL 5

Lord of Glory

My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.

JAMES 2:1

Those who profess faith in Christ as the Lord of glory must not respect persons on account of mere outward circumstances and appearances, in a manner not agreeing with their profession of being disciples of the lowly Jesus. St. James does not here encourage rudeness or disorder: civil respect must be paid; but never such as to influence the proceedings of Christians in disposing of the offices of the church of Christ, or in passing the censures of the church, or in any matter of religion. Questioning ourselves is of great use in every part of the holy life. Let us be more frequent in this, and in everything take occasion to discourse with our souls. As places of worship cannot be built or maintained without expense, it may be proper that those who contribute thereto should be accommodated accordingly; but were all persons more spiritually-minded, the poor would be treated with more attention than usually is the case in worshiping congregations. A lowly state is most favorable for inward peace and for growth in holiness. God would give to all believers' riches and honors of this world, if these would do them good, seeing that he has chosen them to be rich in faith, and made them heirs of his kingdom, which he promised to bestow on all who love him. Consider how often riches lead to vice and mischief, and what great reproaches are thrown upon God and religion, by men of wealth, power, and worldly greatness; and it will make this sin appear very sinful and foolish.

[James 2:1-13]

APRIL 6

APRIL

FULL ASSURANCE OF HOPE

And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

HEBREWS 6:11-12

The hope here meant, is a sure looking for good things promised, through those promises, with love, desire, and valuing of them. Hope has its degrees, as faith also. The promise of blessedness God has made to believers is from God's eternal purpose, settled between the eternal Father, Son, and Spirit. These promises of God may safely be depended upon; for here we have two things which cannot change, the counsel and the oath of God, in which it is not possible for God to lie; it would be contrary to his nature as well as to his will. And as He cannot lie; the destruction of the unbeliever, and the salvation of the believer, are alike certain. Here observe, those to whom God has given full security of happiness, have a title to the promises by inheritance. The consolations of God are strong enough to support his people under their heaviest trials. Here is a refuge for all sinners who flee to the mercy of God, through the redemption of Christ, according to the covenant of grace, laying aside all other confidences. We are in this world as a ship at sea, tossed up and down, and in danger of being cast away. We need an anchor to keep us sure and steady. Gospel hope is our anchor in the storms of this world. It is sure and steadfast, or it could not keep us so.

[Hebrews 6:11-20]

APRIL 7

Ambassadors for Christ

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:20

The Gentiles must not have the gospel brought them, till the Jews have refused it. This restraint on the apostles was only in their first mission. Wherever they went they must proclaim, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." They preached, to establish the faith; the kingdom, to animate the hope; of heaven, to inspire the love of heavenly things, and the contempt of earthly; which is at hand, that men may prepare for it without delay. Christ gave power to work miracles for the confirming of their doctrine. This is not necessary now that the kingdom of God is come. It showed that the intent of the doctrine they preached was to heal sick souls, and to raise those that were dead in sin. In proclaiming the gospel of free grace for the healing and saving of men's souls, we must above all avoid the appearance of the spirit of a hireling. They are directed what to do in strange towns and cities. The servant of Christ is the ambassador of peace to whatever place he is sent. His message is even to the vilest sinners, yet it behooves him to find out the best persons in every place. It becomes us to pray heartily for all, and to conduct ourselves courteously to all. They are directed how to act as to those that refused them. The whole counsel of God must be declared, and those who will not attend to the gracious message, must be shown that their state is dangerous. This should be seriously laid to heart by all that hear the gospel, lest their privileges only serve to increase their condemnation.

[Matthew 10:5-15] .

APRIL 8

NEW CREATION

APRIL

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17

Proud, vain, and carnal hearts are content with just so much religion as will help to keep up a fair show. But the apostle professes his own faith, hope, and joy; and that his principal glory was in the cross of Christ. By which is here meant, his sufferings and death on the cross, the doctrine of salvation by a crucified Redeemer. By Christ, or by the cross of Christ, the world is crucified to the believer, and he to the world. The more we consider the sufferings of the Redeemer from the world, the less likely shall we be to love the world. The apostle was as little affected by its charms, as a beholder would be by any thing which had been graceful in the face of a crucified person, when he beholds it blackened in the agonies of death. He was no more affected by the objects around him, than one who is expiring would be struck with any of the prospects his dying eyes might view from the cross on which he hung. And as to those who have truly believed in Christ Jesus, all things are counted as utterly worthless compared with him. There is a new creation; old things are passed away, and new views and dispositions are brought in under the regenerating influences of God the Holy Spirit. Believers are brought into a new world, and being created in Christ Jesus unto good works, are formed to a life of holiness. It is a change of mind and heart, whereby we are enabled to believe in the Lord Jesus and to live to God; and where this inward, practical religion is wanting, outward professions, or names, will never stand in any stead.

[Galatians 6:12-15]

APRIL 9

Good from God

For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favor and honor. No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly.

PSALM 84:11

As all good comes from God, so no good can be hoped for by sinners, but from God in Christ. And the best good may be expected from God, as our Father, for the sake of Christ. We should pray, not only for ourselves, but for others also; remembering them without ceasing. Wherever there is a true faith, it will work; it will affect both the heart and life. Faith works by love; it shows itself in love to God, and love to our neighbor. And wherever there is a well-grounded hope of eternal life, this will appear by the exercise of patience; and it is a sign of sincerity, when in all we do, we seek to approve ourselves to God. By this we may know our election, if we not only speak of the things of God without lips, but feel their power in our hearts, mortifying our lusts, weaning us from the world, and raising us up to heavenly things. Unless the Spirit of God comes with the word of God, it will be to us a dead letter. Thus they entertained it by the power of the Holy Ghost. They were fully convinced of the truth of it, so as not to be shaken in mind by objections and doubts; and they were willing to leave all for Christ, and to venture their souls and everlasting condition upon the truth of the gospel revelation.

[1 Thessalonians 1:1-5]

APRIL 10

F O R G I V E N E S S w i t h G o d

But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared.

PSALM 130:4

The only way of relief for a sin-entangled soul, is by applying to God alone. Many things present themselves as diversions, many things offer themselves as remedies, but the soul finds that the Lord alone can heal. And until men are sensible of the guilt of sin, and quit all to come at once to God, it is in vain for them to expect any relief. The Holy Ghost gives to such poor souls a fresh sense of their deep necessity, to stir them up in earnest applications, by the prayer of faith, by crying to God. And as they love their souls, as they are concerned for the glory of the Lord, they are not to be wanting in this duty. Why is it that these matters are so long uncertain with them? Is it not from sloth and despondency that they content themselves with common and customary applications to God? Then let us up and be doing; it must be done, and it is attended with safety. We are to humble ourselves before God, as guilty in his sight. Let us acknowledge our sinfulness; we cannot justify ourselves, or plead not guilty. It is our unspeakable comfort that there is forgiveness with him, for that is what we need. Jesus Christ is the great Ransom; he is ever an Advocate for us, and through him we hope to obtain forgiveness. "But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared" (Ps. 130:4). The fear of God often is put for the whole worship of God. The only motive and encouragement for sinners is this, that there is forgiveness with the Lord.

[Psalm 130:4]

APRIL 11

God's Shining Face

Make your face shine on your servant; save me in your steadfast love!

PSALM 31:16

When things are well with us, we are very apt to think that they will always be so. When we see our mistake, it becomes us to think with shame upon our carnal security as our folly. If God hide his face, a good man is troubled, though no other calamity befall him. But if God, in wisdom and justice, turn from us, it will be the greatest folly if we turn from him. No; let us learn to pray in the dark. The sanctified spirit, which returns to God, shall praise him, shall be still praising him; but the services of God's house cannot be performed by the dust; it cannot praise him; there is none of that device or working in the grave, for it is the land of silence. We ask aright for life, when we do so that we may live to praise him. In due time God delivered the psalmist out of his troubles. Our tongue is our glory, and never more so than when employed in praising God. He would persevere to the end in praise, hoping that he should shortly be where this would be the everlasting work. But let all beware of carnal security. Neither outward prosperity, nor inward peace, here, are sure and lasting. The Lord, in his favor, has fixed the believer's safety firm as the deep-rooted mountains, but he must expect to meet with temptations and afflictions. When we grow careless, we fall into sin, the Lord hides his face, our comforts droop, and troubles assail us.

[Psalm 30:6-12]

The Unclean Spirit

And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him."

MARK 1:27

The devil is an unclean spirit because he has lost all the purity of his nature, because he acts in direct opposition to the Holy Spirit of God, and by his suggestions defiles the spirits of men. There are many in our assemblies who quietly attend under merely formal teachers. If the Lord comes with faithful ministers and holy doctrine, and by his convincing Spirit, they are ready to say, like this man, "What have we to do with you, Jesus of Nazareth!" No disorder could enable a man to know Jesus to be the Holy One of God. He desires to have nothing to do with Jesus, for he despairs of being saved by him, and dreads being destroyed by him. See whose language those speak that say to the Almighty, "Depart from us." This unclean spirit hated and dreaded Christ because he knew him to be a Holy One; for the carnal mind is enmity against God, especially against his holiness. When Christ by his grace delivers souls out of the hands of Satan, it is not without tumult in the soul; for that spiteful enemy will disquiet those whom he cannot destroy. This put all who saw it upon considering, "What is this new doctrine?" A work as great often is wrought now, yet men treat it with contempt and neglect. If this were not so, the conversion of a notorious wicked man to a sober, righteous, and godly life, by the preaching of a crucified Savior, would cause many to ask, "What doctrine is this?"

[Mark 1:23-28]

A P R I L 13

F o l l o w i n g C h r i s t

The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me."

JOHN 1:43

Jesus began to preach in Galilee, after that John was put in prison. If some be laid aside, others shall be raised up, to carry on the same work. Observe the great truths Christ preached. By repentance we give glory to our Creator whom we have offended; by faith we give glory to our Redeemer who came to save us from our sins. Christ has joined these two together, and let no man think to put them asunder. Christ puts honor upon those who, though mean in this world, are diligent in their business and kind to one another. Industry and unity are good and pleasant, and the Lord Jesus commands a blessing on them. Those whom Christ calls, must leave all to follow him; and by his grace he makes them willing to do so. Not that we must needs go out of the world, but we must sit loose to the world; forsake everything that is against our duty to Christ, and that cannot be kept without hurt to our souls. Jesus strictly kept the Sabbath day, by applying himself unto, and abounding in the Sabbath work, in order to which the Sabbath rest was appointed. There is much in the doctrine of Christ that is astonishing; and the more we hear it, the more cause we see to admire it. Though Christ needs not the help of man, yet he is pleased to make use of it in setting up his kingdom, that he might deal with us not in a formidable but in a familiar way, and that in his kingdom the nobles and governors may be of ourselves. Christ puts honor upon those who, though mean in the world, are diligent in their business, and loving to one another; so those were whom Christ called.

[Mark 1:14-22]

APRIL 14

Soothing Graces

But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall.

MALACHI 4:2

Wherever Christ comes, he comes to do good. He cures, that we may minister to him, and to others who are his, and for his sake. Those kept from public ordinances by sickness or other real hindrances, may expect the Savior's gracious presence; he will soothe their sorrows, and abate their pains. Observe how numerous the patients were. When others speed well with Christ, it should quicken us in seeking after him. Christ departed into a solitary place. Though he was in no danger of distraction, or of temptation to vain-glory, yet he retired. Those who have the most business in public, and of the best kind, must yet sometimes be alone with God ... How powerful the Physician was; he healed all that were brought to him, though ever so many. Nor was it some one particular disease, that Christ set up for the cure of, but he healed those that were sick of divers diseases, for his word was a soothing grace – a salve for every sore. And that miracle particularly which he wrought in the synagogue, he repeated in the house at night; for he cast out many devils, and suffered not the devils to speak, for he made them know who he was, and that silenced them. Or, he suffered them not to say that they knew him (so it may be read); he would not permit any more of them to say, as they did, "I know you, who you are."

[Mark 1:29-39]

APRIL 15

Christ, Our Refuge

How precious is your steadfast love, O God! The children of mankind take refuge in the shadow of your wings.

PSALM 36:7

Whatever we rejoice in, in this world, it must always be with trembling, because of the uncertainty of all things in it. To welcome Jesus Christ, and to submit to him, is our wisdom and interest. Let him be very dear and precious; love him above all, love him in sincerity, love him much, as she did, to whom much was forgiven, and, in token of it, kissed his feet (Luke 7:38). And with a kiss of loyalty take this yoke upon you, and give up yourselves to be governed by his laws, disposed of by his providence, and entirely devoted to his cause. Unbelief is a sin against the remedy. It will be utter destruction to yourselves; lest you perish in the way of your sins and from the way of your vain hopes; lest your way perish, lest you prove to have missed the way of happiness. Christ is the way; take heed lest you be cut off from him as your way to God. They thought themselves in the way; but neglecting Christ, they perish from it. Blessed will those be in the day of wrath, who, by trusting in Christ, have made him their Refuge. To reverence God and to stand in awe of him is the great duty of natural religion. God is great, and infinitely above us, just and holy, and provoked against us, and therefore we ought to fear him and tremble before him; yet he is our Lord and Master, and we are bound to serve him, our friend and benefactor, and we have reason to rejoice in him. We must serve God in all ordinances of worship, and all instances of a godly conversation, but with a holy fear, a jealousy over ourselves, and a reverence of him.

[Psalm 2:10-12]

APRIL 16

Early Religion

APRIL

Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.

PROVERBS 22:6

It is good to be trained to early religion; and children may be beloved for their parents' sake. It gave great joy to the apostle to see children treading in their parents' steps, and likely in their turn to support the gospel. May God bless such families more and more, and raise up many to copy their example. How pleasing the contrast to numbers who spread irreligion, infidelity, and vice, among their children! Our walk is true, our converse right, when according to the word of God. See how good it is to be trained up to early religion! Though religion is not to be founded upon education, yet education may be and often is blessed, and is the way to fortify youth against irreligious infection. Hence too let young travelers learn to carry their religion along with them, and not either leave it at home or learn the ill customs of the countries where they come. It may be observed, also, that sometimes election runs in a direct line; here we have an elect lady, and her elect children; children may be beloved for their parents' sake, but both by virtue of free grace. From the apostle's joy herein we may observe that it is pleasant to see children treading in good parent's steps; and those who see this may well congratulate their parents thereupon, and that both to excite their thankfulness to God for, and to enlarge their comfort in, so great a blessing. How happy a lady was this, who had brought forth so many children for heaven and for God!

[2 John 1:4-6]

A P R I L 17

B e a r i n g B u r d e n s

Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

GALATIANS 6:2

We are to bear one another's burdens. So we shall fulfill the law of Christ. This obliges to mutual forbearance and compassion towards each other, agreeably to his example. It becomes us to bear one another's burdens, as fellow-travelers. It is very common for a man to look upon himself as wiser and better than other men, and as fit to dictate to them. Such a one deceives himself; by pretending to what he has not, he puts a cheat upon himself, and sooner or later will find the sad effects. This will never gain esteem, either with God or men. Everyone is advised to prove his own work. The better we know our own hearts and ways, the less shall we despise others, and the more be disposed to help them under infirmities and afflictions. How light soever men's sins seem to them when committed, yet they will be found a heavy burden, when they come to reckon with God about them. Though as Christians we are freed from the law of Moses, yet we are under the law of Christ; and therefore, instead of laying unnecessary burdens upon others (as those who urged the observance of Moses's law did), it much more becomes us to fulfill the law of Christ by bearing one another's burdens. No man can pay a ransom for his brother; and sin is a burden to the soul. It is a spiritual burden; and the less a man feels it to be such, the more cause has he to suspect himself. Most men are dead in their sins, and therefore have no sight or sense of the spiritual burden of sin. Feeling the weight and burden of our sins, we must seek to be eased thereof by the Savior, and be warned against every sin.

[Galatians 6:1-5]

APRIL 18

City of God

APRIL

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering.

HEBREWS 12:22

The church is compared to a city, and every converted sinner is free of it. It is also compared to a house, and every converted sinner is one of the family; a servant, and a child in God's house. The church is also compared to a building, founded on the doctrine of Christ; delivered by the prophets of the Old Testament, and the apostles of the New. God dwells in all believers now; they become the temple of God through the working of the blessed Spirit. Let us then ask if our hopes are fixed on Christ, according to the doctrine of his word? Have we devoted ourselves as holy temples to God through him? Are we habitations of God by the Spirit, are we spiritually-minded, and do we bring forth the fruits of the Spirit? Let us take heed not to grieve the holy Comforter. Let us desire his gracious presence, and his influences upon our hearts. Let us seek to discharge the duties allotted to us, to the glory of God. All believers, of whom it consists, being united to Christ by faith, and among themselves by Christian charity, grow unto a holy temple, become a sacred society, in which there is much communion between God and his people, as in the temple, they worshiping and serving him, he manifesting himself unto them, they offering up spiritual sacrifices to God and he dispensing his blessings and favors to them.

[Ephesians 2:19-22]

A P R I L 19

T H E G O O D S H E P H E R D

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

JOHN 10:11

Christ is a good Shepherd; many who were not thieves, yet were careless in their duty, and by their neglect the flock was much hurt. Bad principles are the root of bad practices. The Lord Jesus knows whom he has chosen, and is sure of them; they also know whom they have trusted, and are sure of Him. See here the grace of Christ; since none could demand his life of him, he laid it down of himself for our redemption. He offered himself to be the Savior; "Lo, I come." And the necessity of our case calling for it, he offered himself for the Sacrifice. He was both the one who offered and the offering, so that his laying down his life was his offering up himself. From hence it is plain, that he died in the place and stead of men; to obtain their being set free from the punishment of sin, to obtain the pardon of their sin; and that his death should obtain that pardon. Our Lord laid not his life down for his doctrine, but for his sheep. The eye that Christ had to the poor Gentiles he had sometimes intimated his special concern for the lost sheep of the house of Israel; to them indeed his personal ministry was confined; but, he says, "I have other sheep." Those who in process of time should believe in Christ, and be brought into obedience to him from among the Gentiles, are here called sheep, and he is said to have them, though as yet they were uncalled, and many of them unborn, because they were chosen of God, and given to Christ in the counsels of divine love from eternity.

[John 10:10-18]

APRIL 20

Our Eternal Good

APRIL

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

ROMANS 8:28

If Christ be ours, all things, one way or another, shall be for our eternal good. The man who is a new creature in Christ may rejoice in all the precious promises God has spoken in his holiness. His present privileges, and the sanctifying influences of the Spirit, are sure earnest of heavenly glory. David rejoices in conquering the neighboring nations, which had been enemies to Israel. The Israel of God are through Christ more than conquerors. Though sometimes they think that the Lord has cast them off, yet he will bring them into the strong city at last. Faith in the promise will assure us that it is our Father's good pleasure to give us the kingdom: But we are not yet made complete conquerors, and no true believer will abuse these truths to indulge sloth, or vain confidence. Hope in God is the best principle of true courage, for what need those fear who have God on their side? It is only through God, and by the influence of his grace, that we do valiantly; it is he that puts strength into us, and inspires us, who of ourselves are weak and timorous, with courage and resolution. Though we do ever so valiantly, the success must be attributed entirely to him; for it is he that shall tread down our enemies, and not we ourselves. All our victories, as well as our valor are from him, and therefore at his feet all our crown must be cast.

[Psalm 60:6-12]

A P R I L 21

Flee to Christ

But Israel is saved by the Lord with everlasting salvation; you shall not be put to shame or confounded to all eternity.

ISAIAH 45:17

When careless, ignorant and immoral persons are turned from their carnal pursuits and connections, to believe in and obey the Lord Jesus, to live soberly, righteously, and godly, the matter speaks for itself. The believers under the Old Testament waited for the coming of the Messiah, and believers now wait for his second coming. He is yet to come. And God had raised him from the dead, which is a full assurance unto all men that he will come to judgment. He came to purchase salvation, and will, when he comes again, bring salvation with him, full and final deliverance from that wrath which is yet to come. Let all, without delay, flee from the wrath to come, and seek refuge in Christ and his salvation. And this is one of the peculiarities of our holy religion, to wait for Christ's second coming, as those who believe he will come and hope he will come to our joy. The believers under the Old Testament waited for the coming of the Messiah, and believers now wait for his second coming; he is yet to come. And there is good reason to believe he will come, because God has raised him from the dead, which is full assurance unto all men that he will come to judgment. And there is good reason to hope and wait for his coming, because he has delivered us from the wrath to come. He came to purchase salvation, and will, when he comes again, bring salvation with him, full and final deliverance from sin, and death, and hell, from that wrath which is yet to come upon unbelievers, and which, when it has once come, will be yet to come, because it is everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

[1 Thessalonians 1:6-10]

A P R I L 22

T R U E L O V E

It is he who remembered us in our low estate, for his steadfast love endures forever.

PSALM 136:23

Religion turns compliments into real expressions of respect and love. An old disciple is honorable; an old apostle and leader of disciples is more so. The letter is to a noble Christian matron, and her children; it is well that the gospel should get among such: some noble persons are called. Families are to be encouraged and directed in their love and duties at home. Those who love truth and piety in themselves should love it in others; and the Christians loved this lady, not for her rank, but for her holiness. And where religion truly dwells, it will abide forever. From the divine Persons of the Godhead, the apostle craves grace, divine favor, and good-will, the spring of all good things. It is grace indeed that any spiritual blessing should be given to sinful mortals. What the apostle craves from these divine persons: grace – divine favor and good-will, the spring of all good things: it is grace indeed that any spiritual blessing should be conferred on sinful mortals. Mercy – free pardon and forgiveness; those who are already rich in grace have need of continual forgiveness. Peace – tranquility of spirit and serenity of conscience, in an assured reconciliation with God, together with all safe and sanctified outward prosperity. And these are desired in truth and love, either by sincere and ardent affection in the saluter (in faith and love he prays them from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ), or as productive of continued truth and love in the saluted; these blessings will continually preserve true faith and love in the elect lady and her children; and may they do so!

[2 John 1-3]

A P R I L 23

S a c r e d A n o i n t i n g

Then Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it on his head and kissed him.

I SAMUEL 10:1A

He anointed him and kissed him. This was not done in a solemn assembly, but it was done by divine appointment, which made up the want of all external solemnities, nor was it ever the less valid for its being done in private, under a hedge, or, as the Jews say, by a fountain. God's institutions are great and honorable, though the circumstances of their administration be ever so mean and despicable. Samuel, by anointing Saul, assured him that it was God's act to make him king ... The sacred anointing, then used, pointed at the great Messiah, or Anointed One, the King of the church, and High Priest of our profession, who was anointed with the oil of the Spirit, not by measure, but without measure, and above all the priests and princes of the Jewish church. For Saul's further satisfaction, Samuel gives him some signs which should come to pass the same day. The first place he directs him to, was the sepulcher of one of his ancestors; there he must be reminded of his own mortality, and now that he had a crown before him, must think of his grave, in which all his honor would be laid in the dust. From the time of Samuel there appears to have been schools or places where pious young men were brought up in the knowledge of divine things. Saul should find himself strongly moved to join with them, and should be turned into another man from what he had been. The Spirit of God changes men, and wonderfully transforms them. Saul, by praising God in the communion of saints, became another man, but it may be questioned if he became a new man.

[1 Samuel 10:1-8] .

APRIL 24

Sinful Pride

For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.

MARK 7:21-23

Pride is a sin in us by nature; we need to be cautioned and armed against it. All the saints make up one body in Christ, who is the Head of the body, and the common Centre of their unity. In the spiritual body, some are fitted for and called to one sort of work; others for another sort of work. We are to do all the good we can, one to another, and for the common benefit. If we duly thought about the powers we have, and how far we fail properly to improve them, it would humble us. But as we must not be proud of our talents, so we must take heed lest, under pretence of humility and self-denial, we are slothful in laying out ourselves for the good of others. We must not say, "I am nothing, therefore I will sit still, and do nothing;" but, "I am nothing in myself, and therefore I will lay out myself to the utmost, in the strength of the grace of Christ." Whatever our gifts or situations may be, let us try to employ ourselves humbly, diligently, cheerfully, and in simplicity; not seeking our own credit or profit, but the good of many, for this world and that which is to come. We must, therefore, have a sober opinion of ourselves. Pride is a sin that is bred in the bone of all of us, and we have therefore each of us need to be cautioned and armed against it.

[Romans 12:3-8]

T r a n s f o r m i n g C i r c u m s t a n c e s

Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him."

MATTHEW 2:13

Egypt had been a house of bondage to Israel and particularly cruel to the infants of Israel; yet it is to be a place of refuge to the holy Child Jesus. God, when he pleases, can make the worst of places serve the best of purposes. This was a trial of the faith of Joseph and Mary. God intimates the continuance of his care and guidance, when he says, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you," so that he must expect to hear from God again, and not stir without fresh orders. Thus God will keep his people still in a dependence upon him. But their faith, being tried, was found firm. If we and our infants are at any time in trouble, let us remember the straits in which Christ was when an infant. Herod killed all the male children, not only in Bethlehem, but in all the villages of that city. Unbridled wrath, armed with an unlawful power, often carries men to absurd cruelties. It was no unrighteous thing with God to permit this; every life is forfeited to his justice as soon as it begins. The diseases and deaths of little children are proofs of original sin. But the murder of these infants was their martyrdom. How early did persecution against Christ and his kingdom begin! Herod now thought that he had baffled the Old Testament prophecies and the efforts of the wise men in finding Christ; but whatever crafty, cruel devices are in men's hearts, the counsel of the Lord shall stand.

[Matthew 2:13-15]

A P R I L 26

T h e D a y - S t a r

A P R I L

When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.

MATTHEW 2:3-4

It was a mark of humiliation put upon the Lord Jesus that he was the Desire of all nations and yet his coming into the world was little observed and taken notice of. His birth was obscure and disregarded: herein he emptied himself, and made himself of no reputation. If the Son of God must be brought into the world, one might justly expect that he should be received with all the ceremony possible, that crowns and scepters should immediately have been laid at his feet, and that the high and mighty princes of the world should have been his humble servants ... Those who live at the greatest distance from the means of grace often use most diligence and learn to know the most of Christ and his salvation. But no curious arts, or mere human learning, can direct men unto him. We must learn of Christ by attending to the word of God, as a light that shines in a dark place, and by seeking the teaching of the Holy Spirit. And those in whose hearts the day-star is risen, to give them any thing of the knowledge of Christ, make it their business to worship him. Though Herod was very old, and never had shown affection for his family, and was not himself likely to live till a new-born infant had grown up to manhood, he began to be troubled with the dread of a rival. He understood not the spiritual nature of the Messiah's kingdom. Let us beware of a dead faith. A man may be persuaded of many truths, and yet may hate them, because they interfere with his ambition, or sinful indulgences.

[Matthew 2:1-8]

A P R I L 27

T a s t e a n d S e e

Taste and see that the Lord is good.

PSALM 34:1

We are likely to seek and find when we seek with affection and seek in tears. But many believers complain of the clouds and darkness they are under, which are methods of grace for humbling their souls, mortifying their sins, and endearing Christ to them. A sight of angels and their smiles will not suffice without a sight of Jesus, and God's smiles in him. None know, but those who have tasted it, the sorrows of a deserted soul, which has had comfortable evidences of the love of God in Christ, and hopes of heaven, but has now lost them, and walks in darkness; such a wounded spirit who can bear? Christ, in manifesting himself to those that seek him, often outdoes their expectations. See how Mary's heart was in earnest to find Jesus. Christ's way of making himself known to his people is by his word; his word applied to their souls, speaking to them in particular. It might be read, "Is it my Master?" See with what pleasure those who love Jesus speak of his authority over them. He forbids her to expect that his bodily presence look further, than the present state of things. Observe the relation to God, from union with Christ. Those that have a true affection for Christ cannot but be in great affliction when they have lost either the comfortable tokens of his love in their souls or the comfortable opportunities of conversing with him and doing him honor in his ordinances. A sight of angels and their smiles will not suffice without a sight of Christ and God's smiles in him. All creatures, the most excellent, the most dear, should be used as means, and but as means, to bring us into acquaintance with God in Christ.

[*John 20:11-18*]

APRIL 28

APRIL

Approaching Christ

At that time the Feast of Dedication took place at Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the colonnade of Solomon.

JOHN 10:22-23

He will come again with his scars that they may look on him whom they pierced. These marks he showed to his disciples for their conviction. They had not only the satisfaction of seeing him look with the same countenance, and hearing him speak with the same voice they had been so long accustomed to. Such were his gestures, such his eyes and hands! But they had the further evidence of these peculiar marks: he opened his hands to them, that they might see the marks of the wounds on them; he opened his breast, as the nurse hers to the child, to show them the wound there. The exalted Redeemer will ever show himself open-handed and open-hearted to all his faithful friends and followers. When Christ manifests his love to believers by the comforts of his Spirit, assures them that because he lives they shall live also, then he shows them his hands and his side. ... All who have anything to say to Christ may find him in the temple. Christ would make us to believe; we make ourselves doubt. The Jews understood his meaning, but could not form his words into a full charge against him. He described the gracious disposition and happy state of his sheep; they heard and believed his word, followed him as his faithful disciples, and none of them should perish; for the Son and the Father were one. Thus he was able to defend his sheep against all their enemies, which proves that he claimed divine power and perfection equally with the Father.

[John 10:20-30]

APRIL 29

E a r n e s t P r a y e r

O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer; give ear, O God of Jacob! Selah.

PSALM 84:8

Our prayers must be seconded with serious endeavors, else we mock God. We are not limited to certain moments in our addresses to the King of kings, but have liberty to go to him at all times; approaches to the throne of grace are never out of season. But the sense of God's displeasure and the afflictions of his people, are causes of sorrow to the children of God, under which no earthly delights can comfort. The king encouraged Nehemiah to tell his mind. This gave him boldness to speak; much more may the invitation Christ has given us to pray, and the promise that we shall speed, encourage us to come boldly to the throne of grace. Nehemiah prayed to the God of heaven, as infinitely above even this mighty monarch. He lifted up his heart to that God who understands the language of the heart. Nor should we ever engage in any pursuit in which it would be wrong for us thus to seek and expect the divine direction, assistance, and blessing. There was an immediate answer to his prayer; for the seed of Jacob never sought the God of Jacob in vain. We see the power and grace of God in that Nehemiah gained his point, not according to his merit, his interest in the king, or his good management, but according to the good hand of his God upon him. Gracious souls take notice of God's hand, his good hand, in all events which turn in favor of them. This is the Lord's doing, and therefore doubly acceptable.

[Nehemiah 2:1-8]

Blessed in Duty

Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!

PSALM 34:8

God's gracious visits usually meet us in the way of duty; and to those who use what they have for others' benefit, more shall be given. This interview with Christ was unexpected; but Christ was nigh them, and still is nigh us in the word. The salutation speaks the good-will of Christ to man, even since he entered upon his state of exaltation. It is the will of Christ that his people should be a cheerful, joyful people, and his resurrection furnishes abundant matter for joy. Be not afraid. Christ rose from the dead, to silence his people's fears, and there is enough in that to silence them. The disciples had just before shamefully deserted him in his sufferings; but, to show that he could forgive, and to teach us to do so, he calls them brethren. Notwithstanding his majesty and purity, and our meanness and unworthiness, he still condescends to call believers his brethren. Being the First-begotten from the dead, he is become the First-born among many brethren, even of all that are planted together in the likeness of his resurrection. Christ did not now converse so constantly and familiarly with his disciples as he had done before his death; but, lest they should think him grown strange to them, he gives them this endearing title. They had shamefully deserted him in his sufferings; but, to show that he could forgive and forget, and to teach us to do so, he not only continues his purpose to meet them, but calls them brethren. Being all his brethren, they were brethren one to another, and must love as brethren. His owning them for his brethren put a great honor upon them, but withal gave them an example of humility in the midst of that honor.

[Matthew 28:9-10]

MAY 1

Wants and Hopes

Now there was no water for the congregation. And they assembled themselves together against Moses and against Aaron.

NUMBERS 20:2

After thirty-eight years' tedious abode in the wilderness, the armies of Israel advanced towards Canaan again. There was no water for the congregation. We live in a wanting world, and wherever we are, must expect to meet with something to put us out. It is a great mercy to have plenty of water, a mercy which, if we found the want of, we should more own the worth of. Hereupon they murmured against Moses and Aaron. They spoke the same absurd and brutish language their fathers had done. It made their crime the worse, that they had smarted so long for the discontent and distrusts of their fathers, yet they venture in the same steps. Moses must again, in God's name, command water out of a rock for them; God is as able as ever to supply his people with what is needful for them. But Moses and Aaron acted wrong. They took much of the glory of this work of wonder to themselves; "Must we fetch water?" As if it were done by some power or worthiness of their own. They were to speak to the rock, but they smote it. Therefore it is charged upon them, that they did not sanctify God, that is, they did not give to him alone that glory of this miracle which was due unto his name. And, being provoked by the people, Moses spoke unadvisedly with his lips. The same pride of man would still usurp the office of the appointed Mediator; and become to ourselves wisdom, righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. Such a state of sinful independence, such a rebellion of the soul against its Savior, the voice of God condemns in every page of the gospel.

[Numbers 20:1-13] .

Trusting Christ

Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on.

LUKE 12:22

Christ largely insisted upon this caution not to give way to disquieting, perplexing cares (Matt. 6:25-34). The arguments here used are for our encouragement to cast our care upon God, which is the right way to get ease. As in our stature, so in our state, it is our wisdom to take it as it is. An eager, anxious pursuit of the things of this world, even necessary things, does not become the disciple of Christ. Fears must not prevail; when we frighten ourselves with thoughts of evil to come, and put ourselves upon needless cares how to avoid it. If we value the beauty of holiness, we shall not crave the luxuries of life. Let us then examine whether we belong to this little flock. Christ is our Master, and we are his servants; not only working servants, but waiting servants. We must be as men that wait for their master, which sit up while he stays out late, to be ready to receive him. In this Christ alluded to his own ascension to heaven, his coming to call his people to him by death, and his return to judge the world. We are uncertain as to the time of his coming to us; we should therefore be always ready. If men thus take care of their houses, let us be thus wise for our souls. Be therefore ready also; as ready as the good man of the house would be, if he knew at what hour the thief would come.

[Luke 12:22-40]

MAY 3

True Holiness

Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness.

PSALM 29:2

The more pure and holy the heart is it will have the more quick feeling as to the sin that remains in it. The believer sees more of the beauty of holiness and the excellence of the law. His earnest desires to obey, increase as he grows in grace. But the whole good on which his will is fully bent, he does not do; sin ever springing up in him, through remaining corruption, he often does evil, though against the fixed determination of his will. The motions of sin within grieved the apostle. If by the striving of the flesh against the Spirit, was meant that he could not do or perform as the Spirit suggested, so also, by the effectual opposition of the Spirit, he could not do what the flesh prompted him to do. How different this case from that of those who make themselves easy with regard to the inward motions of the flesh prompting them to evil; who, against the light and warning of conscience, go on, even in outward practice, to do evil, and thus, with forethought, go on in the road to perdition! For as the believer is under grace, and his will is for the way of holiness, he sincerely delights in the law of God, and in the holiness which it demands, according to his inward man; that new man in him, which after God is created in true holiness.

[Romans 7:18-22]

T R O U B L E S o f t h e W i c k e d

The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who live in the clefts of the rock, in your lofty dwelling, who say in your heart, "Who will bring me down to the ground?"

OBADIAH 3

Carnal security ripens men for ruin, and makes the ruin worse when it comes. Treasures on earth cannot be so safely laid up but that thieves may break through and steal; it is therefore our wisdom to lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven. Those that make flesh their trust, arm it against themselves. The God of our covenant will never deceive us: but if we trust men with whom we join ourselves, it may prove to us a wound and dishonor. God will justly deny those understanding to keep out of danger, who will not use their understandings to keep out of sin. All violence, all unrighteousness, is sin; but it makes the violence far worse, if it be done against any of God's people. Their barbarous conduct towards Judah and Jerusalem is charged upon them. In reflecting on ourselves, it is good to consider what we should have done; to compare our practice with the Scripture rule. Sin, thus looked upon in the glass of the commandment, will appear exceedingly sinful. Those have a great deal to answer for who are idle spectators of the troubles of their neighbors, when able to be active helpers. Those make themselves poor, who think to make themselves rich by the ruin of the people of God; and those deceive themselves, who call all that their own on which they can lay their hands in a day of calamity. Though judgment begins at the house of God, it shall not end there. Let sorrowful believers and insolent oppressors know that the troubles of the righteous will soon end, but those of the wicked will be eternal.

[Obadiah 1-16]

MAY 5

Our Appointed Means

Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.

MATTHEW 7:7-8

Prayer is the appointed means for obtaining what we need. Pray; pray often; make a business of prayer, and be serious and earnest in it. Ask, as a beggar asks alms. Ask, as a traveler asks the way. Seek, as for a thing of value that we have lost; or as the merchantman that seeks goodly pearls. Knock, as he that desires to enter into the house knocks at the door. Sin has shut and barred the door against us; by prayer we knock. Whatever you pray for, according to the promise, shall be given you, if God see it fit for you, and what would you have more? This is made to apply to all that pray aright; every one that asketh receiveth, whether Jew or Gentile, young or old, rich or poor, high or low, master or servant, learned or unlearned, all are alike welcome to the throne of grace, if they come in faith. It is explained by a comparison taken from earthly parents, and their readiness to give their children what they ask. Parents are often foolishly fond, but God is all-wise; he knows what we need, what we desire, and what is fit for us. Let us never suppose our heavenly Father would bid us pray, and then refuse to hear, or give us what would be hurtful.

[Matthew 7:7-11]

MAY 6

G O D K E E P S C O U N T

When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had already been there a long time, he said to him, "Do you want to be healed?"

JOHN 5:6

We are all by nature impotent folk in spiritual things, blind, halt, and withered; but full provision is made for our cure, if we attend to it. An angel went down, and troubled the water; and what disease soever it was, this water cured it, but only he that first stepped in had benefit. This teaches us to be careful, that we let not a season slip which may never return. The man had lost the use of his limbs thirty-eight years. Shall we, who perhaps for many years have scarcely known what it has been to be a day sick, complain of one wearisome night, when many others, better than we, have scarcely known what it has been to be a day well? Christ singled this one out from the rest. Those long in affliction may comfort themselves that God keeps account how long. Observe, this man speaks of the unkindness of those about him, without any peevish reflections. As we should be thankful, so we should be patient. Our Lord Jesus cures him, though he neither asked nor thought of it ... What a joyful surprise to the poor cripple, to find himself of a sudden so easy, so strong, so able to help himself! The proof of spiritual cure, is our rising and walking. Has Christ healed our spiritual diseases, let us go wherever he sends us, and take up whatever he lays upon us; and walk before him.

[John 5:1-9]

MAY 7

Knowing Christ

After this Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, and he revealed himself in this way.

JOHN 21:1

Christ makes himself known to his people, usually in his ordinances; but sometimes by his Spirit he visits them when employed in their business. It is good for the disciples of Christ to be together in common conversation, and common business. The hour for their entering upon action was not come. They would help to maintain themselves, and not be burdensome to any. Christ's time of making himself known to his people, is when they are most at a loss. He knows the temporal wants of his people, and has promised them not only grace sufficient, but food convenient. Divine Providence extends itself to things most minute, and those are happy who acknowledge God in all their ways. Those who are humble, diligent, and patient, though their labors may be crossed, shall be crowned; they sometimes live to see their affairs take a happy turn, after many struggles. And there is nothing lost by observing Christ's orders; it is casting the net on the right side of the ship. Jesus manifests himself to his people by doing that for them which none else can do, and things which they looked not for. He would take care that those who left all for him should not want any good thing. And latter favors are to bring to mind former favors, that eaten bread may not be forgotten. He whom Jesus loved was the first that said, "It is the Lord." John had cleaved most closely to his Master in his sufferings, and knew him soonest. Peter was the most zealous, and reached Christ the first.

[John 21:1-14]

Christian's Warfare

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

EPHESIANS 6:10

Spiritual strength and courage are needed for our spiritual warfare and suffering. Those who would prove themselves to have true grace must aim at all grace and put on the whole armor of God, which he prepares and bestows. The Christian armor is made to be worn; and there is no putting off our armor till we have done our warfare, and finished our course. The combat is not against human enemies or against our own corrupt nature only. We have to do with an enemy who has a thousand ways of beguiling unstable souls. The devils assault us in the things that belong to our souls, and labor to deface the heavenly image in our hearts. We must resolve by God's grace, not to yield to Satan. Resist him, and he will flee. If we give way, he will get ground. If we distrust either our cause, or our Leader, or our armor, we give him advantage. The different parts of the armor of heavy-armed soldiers, who had to sustain the fiercest assaults of the enemy, are here described. There is none for the back; nothing to defend those who turn back in the Christian warfare. Truth, or sincerity, is the girdle. This girds on all the other pieces of our armor, and is first mentioned. There can be no religion without sincerity. The righteousness of Christ, imputed to us, is a breastplate against the arrows of divine wrath. The righteousness of Christ implanted in us, fortifies the heart against the attacks of Satan ... Faith is all in all in an hour of temptation.

[Ephesians 6:10-18]

MAY 9

Heralds of the King

*For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior,
who is Christ the Lord.*

LUKE 2:11

Angels were heralds of the new-born Savior, but they were only sent to some poor, humble, pious, industrious shepherds, who were in the business of their calling, keeping watch over their flock. We are not out of the way of divine visits, when we are employed in an honest calling, and abide with God in it. Let God have the honor of this work; Glory to God in the highest. God's good-will to men, manifested in sending the Messiah, redounds to his praise. Other works of God are for his glory, but the redemption of the world is for his glory in the highest. God's goodwill in sending the Messiah brought peace into this lower world. Peace is here put for all that good which flows to us from Christ's taking our nature upon him. This is a faithful saying, attested by an innumerable company of angels, and well worthy of all acceptation, that the good-will of God toward men is glory to God in the highest, and peace on the earth. The shepherds lost no time, but came with haste to the place. They were satisfied, and made known abroad concerning this child, that he was the Savior, even Christ the Lord. Mary carefully observed and thought upon all these things, which were so suited to enliven her holy affections. We should be more delivered from errors in judgment and practice, did we more fully ponder these things in our hearts. It is still proclaimed in our ears that to us is born a Savior, Christ the Lord. These should be glad tidings to all.

[Luke 2:8-20]

MAY 10

Heaven and Earth

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

GENESIS 1:1

The first verse of the Bible gives us a satisfying and useful account of the origin of the earth and the heavens. The faith of humble Christians understands this better than the fancy of the most learned men. From what we see of heaven and earth, we learn the power of the great Creator. And let our make and place as men, remind us of our duty as Christians, always to keep heaven in our eye, and the earth under our feet. The Son of God, one with the Father, was with him when he made the world; nay, we are often told that the world was made by him, and nothing was made without him. Oh, what high thoughts should there be in our minds, of that great God whom we worship, and of that great Mediator in whose name we pray! And here, at the beginning of the sacred volume, we read of that divine Spirit, whose work upon the heart of man is so often mentioned in other parts of the Bible. Observe that at first there was nothing desirable to be seen, for the world was without form, and void; it was confusion, and emptiness. In like manner the work of grace in the soul is a new creation: and in a graceless soul, one that is not born again, there is disorder, confusion, and every evil work: it is empty of all good, for it is without God; it is dark, it is darkness itself: this is our condition by nature, till Almighty grace works a change in us.

[Genesis 1]

MAY 11

Means of Grace

They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises.

ROMANS 9:4

Faith in God's promises ought not to do away, but to encourage our diligence in the use of proper means. The providence of God directed the spies to the house of Rahab. God knew where there was one that would be true to them, though they did not. Rahab appears to have been an innkeeper; and if she had formerly been one of bad life, which is doubtful, she had left her evil courses. That which seems to us most accidental, is often overruled by the divine providence to serve great ends. It was by faith that Rahab received those with peace, against whom her king and country had war. We are sure this was a good work; it is so spoken of by the apostle (James 2:25); and she did it by faith, such a faith as set her above the fear of man. Those only are true believers, who find in their hearts to venture for God; they take his people for their people, and cast in their lot among them. The spies were led by the special providence of God, and Rahab entertained them out of regard to Israel and Israel's God, and not for lucre or for any evil purpose. Though excuses may be offered for the guilt of Rahab's falsehood, it seems best to admit nothing which tends to explain it away. Her views of the divine law must have been very dim: a falsehood like this, told by those who enjoy the light of revelation, whatever the motive, would deserve heavy censure.

[Joshua 2:1-7]

MAY 12

Usefulness

And strip Aaron of his garments and put them on Eleazar his son. And Aaron shall be gathered to his people and shall die there.

NUMBERS 20:26

God bids Aaron prepare to die. There is something of displeasure in these orders. Aaron must not enter Canaan, because he had failed in his duty at the waters of strife. There is much of mercy in them. Aaron, though he dies for his transgression, is not put to death as a malefactor, by a plague, or fire from heaven, but dies with ease and in honor. He is not cut off from his people, as the expression usually is concerning those that die by the hand of divine justice, but he is gathered to his people, as one that died in the arms of divine grace. There is much of type and significance in them. Aaron must not enter Canaan, to show that the Levitical priesthood could make nothing perfect: that must be done by the bringing in of a better hope. Those priests could not continue by reason of sin and death, but the priesthood of Christ, being undefiled, is unchangeable, and to this, which abides forever. Aaron is gathered to his people, as one who dies in the arms of divine grace. Aaron submits, and dies in the method and manner appointed; and, for aught that appears, with as much cheerfulness as if he had been going to bed. It was a great satisfaction to Aaron to see his son, who was dear to him, preferred; and his office preserved and secured: especially, to see in this a figure of Christ's everlasting priesthood. A good man would desire, if it were the will of God, not to outlive his usefulness. Why should we covet to continue any longer in this world, than while we may do some service in it for God and our generation?

[Numbers 20:22-29]

MAY 13

Moses and Providence

Now the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river, while her young women walked beside the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her servant woman, and she took it.

EXODUS 2:5

Come, see the place where that great man, Moses, lay, when he was a little child; it was in a bulrush basket by the river's side. Had he been left there long, he must have perished. But Providence brings Pharaoh's daughter to the place where this poor forlorn infant lay, and inclines her heart to pity it, which she dares do, when none else durst. God's care of us in our infancy ought to be often mentioned by us to his praise. Pharaoh cruelly sought to destroy Israel, but his own daughter had pity on a Hebrew child, and not only so, but, without knowing it, preserved Israel's deliverer, and provided Moses with a good nurse, even his own mother. That he should have a Hebrew nurse, the sister of Moses brought the mother into the place of a nurse. Moses was treated as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. Many who, by their birth, are obscure and poor, by surprising events of Providence, are raised high in the world, to make men know that God rules. Many who, by their birth, seem marked for obscurity and poverty, by surprising events of Providence are brought to sit at the upper end of the world, to make men know that the heavens do rule. Those whom God designs for great services he find out ways to qualify and prepare beforehand. Moses, by having his education in a court, is the fitter to be a prince and king.

[Exodus 2:5-10]

God's Hot Displeasure

At a lodging place on the way the Lord met him and sought to put him to death.

EXODUS 4:24

God met Moses in anger. The Lord threatened him with death or sent sickness upon him, as the punishment of his having neglected to circumcise his son. He met him, and, probably by a sword in an angel's hand, sought to kill him. This was a great change; very lately God was conversing with him, and lodging a trust in him, as a friend; and now he is coming forth against him as an enemy. Omissions are sins, and must come into judgment, and particularly the contempt and neglect of the seals of the covenant; for it is a sign that we undervalue the promises of the covenant, and are displeased with the conditions of it. He that has made a bargain, and is not willing to seal and ratify it, one may justly suspect, neither likes it nor designs to stand to it. God takes notice of, and is much displeased with, the sins of his own people. If they neglect their duty, let them expect to hear of it by their consciences, and perhaps to feel from it by cross providences: for this cause many are sick and weak, as some think Moses was here. When God discovers to us what is amiss in our lives, we must give all diligence to amend it speedily. This is the voice of every rod; it calls us to return to him that smites us. God sent Aaron to meet Moses. The more they saw of God's bringing them together, the more pleasant their interview was. Let us but arise and try at our proper work; the Lord will be with us and prosper us. If Israel welcomed the tidings of their deliverance, and worshiped the Lord, how should we welcome the glad tidings of redemption!

[Exodus 4:24-31]

MAY 15

Bread of Heaven

Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.

JOHN 6:26

Constant exercise of faith in Christ is the most important and difficult part of the obedience required from us, as sinners seeking salvation. When by his grace we are enabled to live a life of faith in the Son of God, holy tempers follow, and acceptable services may be done. God, even his Father, who gave their fathers that food from heaven to support their natural lives, now gave them the true Bread for the salvation of their souls. Coming to Jesus, and believing on him, signify the same. Christ shows that he is the true Bread; he is to the soul what bread is to the body, nourishes and supports the spiritual life. He is the Bread of God. He is the Bread which the Father gives, which he has made to be the food of our souls. Bread nourishes only by the powers of a living body; but Christ is himself living Bread, and nourishes by his own power. The doctrine of Christ crucified is now as strengthening and comforting to a believer as ever it was. He is the Bread which came down from heaven. It denotes the Divinity of Christ's person and his authority; also, the divine origin of all the good which flows to us through him. May we with understanding and earnestness say, Lord, evermore give us this Bread. Those who look high in their expectations, and hope to enjoy the glory of God, must aim high in those endeavors, and study to do the works of God, works which he requires and will accept, works of God, distinguished from the works of worldly men in their worldly pursuits. It is not enough to speak the words of God, but we must do the works of God.

[John 6:28-35]

MAY 16

Christ Crucified

MAY

The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

JOHN 6:52

The flesh and blood of the Son of man, denote the Redeemer in the nature of man; Christ and him crucified, and the redemption wrought out by him, with all the precious benefits of redemption; pardon of sin, acceptance with God, the way to the throne of grace, the promises of the covenant, and eternal life. These are called the flesh and blood of Christ, because they are purchased by the breaking of his body, and the shedding of his blood because they are meat and drink to our souls. Eating this flesh and drinking this blood mean believing in Christ. We partake of Christ and his benefits by faith. The soul that rightly knows its state and wants, finds whatever can calm the conscience, and promote true holiness, in the redeemer, God manifest in the flesh. Meditating upon the cross of Christ gives life to our repentance, love, and gratitude. We live by him, as our bodies live by our food. We live by him, as the members by the head, the branches by the root: because he lives we shall live also. The work of faith is the work of God. They enquire after the works of God (in the plural number), being careful about many things; but Christ directs them to one work, which includes all, the one thing needful: that you believe, which supersedes all the works of the ceremonial law; the work which is necessary to the acceptance of all the other works, and which produces them, for without faith you cannot please God. It is God's work, for it is of his working in us, it subjects the soul to his working on us, and quickens the soul in working for him.

[John 6:52-59]

MAY 17

Promise of Life

Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God."

JOHN 6:68-69

When we admit into our minds hard thoughts of the words and works of Jesus, we enter into temptation, which, if the Lord in mercy prevent not, will end in drawing back. The corrupt and wicked heart of man often makes that an occasion for offence, which is matter of the greatest comfort. Our Lord had, in the foregoing discourse, promised eternal life to his followers; the disciples fastened on that plain saying, and resolved to cleave to him, when others fastened on hard sayings, and forsook him. Christ's doctrine is the word of eternal life; therefore we must live and die by it. If we forsake Christ, we forsake our own mercies. They believed that this Jesus was the Messiah promised to their fathers, the Son of the living God. When we are tempted to backslide or turn away, it is good to remember first principles, and to keep to them. And let us ever remember our Lord's searching question. Shall we go away and forsake our Redeemer? To whom can we go? He alone can give salvation by the forgiveness of sins. And this alone brings confidence, comfort, and joy, and bids fear and despondency flee away. It gains the only solid happiness in this world, and opens a way to the happiness of the next. In times of temptation to apostasy it is good to have recourse to our first principles, and stick to them; and, if we faithfully abide by that which is past dispute, we shall be the better able both to find and to keep the truth in matters of doubtful disputation.

[John 6:66-71]

Living Unbelief

So he said to them again, "I am going away, and you will seek me, and you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come."

JOHN 8:21

Those that live in unbelief are forever undone, if they die in unbelief. The Jews belonged to this present evil world, but Jesus was of a heavenly and divine nature, so that his doctrine, kingdom, and blessings, would not suit their taste. But the curse of the law is done away to all that submit to the grace of the gospel. Nothing but the doctrine of Christ's grace will be an argument powerful enough and none but the Spirit of Christ's grace will be an agent powerful enough, to turn us from sin to God. Some say, "Who is this Jesus?" They allow him to have been a Prophet, an excellent Teacher, and even more than a creature; but cannot acknowledge him as over all, God blessed for evermore. Will not this suffice? Jesus here answers the question. Is this to honor him as the Father? Does this admit his being the Light of the world, and the Life of men, one with the Father? All shall know by their conversion, or in their condemnation, that he always spoke and did what pleased the Father, even when he claimed the highest honors to himself. We see their eternal separation from Christ and all happiness in him: "Where I go you cannot come." When Christ left the world, he went to a state of perfect happiness; he went to paradise. There he took the penitent thief with him, that did not die in his sins; but the impenitent not only shall not come to him, but they cannot; it is morally impossible, for heaven would not be heaven to those that die unsanctified and unmeet for it.

[John 8:21-29]

MAY 19

Mother's Care

The words of King Lemuel. An oracle that his mother taught him...

PROVERBS 31:1

The description of a virtuous woman, especially in the relation of a wife and the mistress of a family, which Lemuel's mother drew up, not as an encomium of herself, though, no doubt, it was her own true picture, but either as an instruction to her daughters or as a direction to her son in the choice of a wife; she must be chaste and modest, diligent and frugal, dutiful to her husband, careful of her family, discreet in her discourse, and in the education of her children, and, above all, conscientious in her duty to God. When children are under their mother's eye, she has an opportunity of fashioning their minds aright. Those who are grown up, should often call to mind the good teaching they received when children. The many awful instances of promising characters who have been ruined by vile women, and love of wine, should warn everyone to avoid these evils. Wine is to be used for want or medicine. Every creature of God is good, and wine, though abused, has its use. By the same rule, due praise and consolation should be used as cordials to the dejected and tempted, not administered to the confident and self-sufficient. All in authority should be more carefully temperate even than other men; and should be protectors of those who are unable or afraid to plead their own cause. Our blessed Lord did not decline the bitterest dregs of the cup of sorrow put into his hands; but he puts the cup of consolation into the hands of his people, and causes those to rejoice who are in the deepest distress.

[Proverbs 31:1-9]

Winds and Clouds

Why then has this people turned away in perpetual backsliding?

JEREMIAH 8:5

The people of Israel were very careless of their duty and interest. Owing to slothfulness and cowardice, they would not be at the pains to complete their conquests. It was also owing to their covetousness: they were willing to let the Canaanites live among them, that they might make advantage of them. They had not the dread and detestation of idolatry they ought to have had. The same unbelief that kept their fathers forty years out of Canaan, kept them now out of the full possession of it. Distrust of the power and promise of God deprived them of advantages, and brought them into troubles. Thus many a believer who begins well is hindered. His graces languish, his lusts revive, Satan plies him with suitable temptations, the world recovers its hold; he brings guilt into his conscience, anguish into his heart, discredit on his character, and reproach on the gospel. Though he may have sharp rebukes, and be so recovered that he does not perish, yet he will have deeply to lament his folly through his remaining days; and upon his dying bed to mourn over the opportunities of glorifying God and serving the church he has lost. We can have no fellowship with the enemies of God within us or around us, but to our hurt; therefore our only wisdom is to maintain unceasing war against them. Upon the whole matter it appears that the people of Israel were generally very careless both of their duty and interest in this thing; they did not what they might have done ... They would not be at the pains to complete their conquests; like the sluggard, that dreamed of a lion in the way, a lion in the streets, they fancied insuperable difficulties, and frightened themselves with winds and clouds.

[Judges 1:21-26]

MAY 21

Mary, Mother of Jesus

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary.

LUKE 1:26-27

We have here an account of the mother of our Lord. She was a daughter of the royal family, lineally descended from David, and she herself and all her friends knew it, for she went under the title and character of the house of David, though she was poor and low in the world ... Though we are not to pray to her, yet we ought to praise God for her. Christ must be born miraculously. The angel's address means only, "Greetings, you that are the special chosen and favored of the Most High, to attain the honor Jewish mothers have so long desired." This wondrous salutation and appearance troubled Mary. The angel then assured her that she had found favor with God, and would become the mother of a son whose name she should call Jesus, the Son of the Highest, one in a nature and perfection with the Lord God. JESUS! the name that refreshes the fainting spirits of humbled sinners; sweet to speak and sweet to hear, Jesus, a Savior! We know not his riches and our own poverty, therefore we run not to him; we perceive not that we are lost and perishing, therefore a Savior is a word of little relish. Were we convinced of the huge mass of guilt that lies upon us, and the wrath that hangs over us for it, ready to fall upon us, it would be our continual thought, Is the Savior mine? And that we might find him so, we should trample on all that hinders our way to him.

[Luke 1:26-38]

MAY 22

Universal Providence

Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows.

LUKE 12:7

A firm belief of the doctrine of God's universal providence, and the extent of it, would satisfy us when in peril, and encourage us to trust God in the way of duty. Providence takes notice of the meanest creatures, even of the sparrows, and therefore of the smallest interests of the disciples of Christ. Those who confess Christ now, shall be owned by him in the great day, before the angels of God. To deter us from denying Christ, and deserting his truths and ways, we are here assured that those who deny Christ, though they may thus save life itself, and though they may gain a kingdom by it, will be great losers at last; for Christ will not know them, will not own them, nor show them favor. But let no trembling, penitent backslider doubt of obtaining forgiveness. This is far different from the determined enmity that is blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, which shall never be forgiven, because it will never be repented of ... Whatever trials they should be called out to, they should be sufficiently furnished for them, and honorably brought through them. The faithful martyr for Christ has not only sufferings to undergo, but a testimony to bear, a good confession to witness, and is concerned to do that well, so that the cause of Christ may not suffer, though he suffer for it; and, if this be his care, let him cast it upon God: "And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious about how you should defend yourself or what you should say" (Luke 12:11).

[*Luke 12:1-12*]

MAY 23

The Word

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.*

JOHN 1:1

There is nothing we are surer of than that we think, yet nothing we are more in the dark about than how we think; who can declare the generation of thought in the soul? Surely then the generations and births of the eternal mind may well be allowed to be great mysteries of godliness, the bottom of which we cannot fathom, while yet we adore the depth. There is the word uttered, and this is speech, the chief and most natural indication of the mind. And thus Christ is the Word, for by him God has in these last days spoken to us (Heb. 1:2), and has directed us to hear him (Matt. 17:5). The plainest reason why the Son of God is called the Word seems to be that as our words explain our minds to others so was the Son of God sent in order to reveal his Father's mind to the world. What the evangelist says of Christ proves that he is God. He asserts his existence in the beginning and his coexistence with the Father. The Word was with God. All things were made by him, and not as an instrument. Without him was not anything made that was made, from the highest angel to the meanest worm. This shows how well qualified he was for the work of our redemption and salvation. The light of reason, as well as the life of sense is derived from him, and depends upon him. This eternal Word, this true Light shines, but the darkness comprehends it not. Let us pray without ceasing, that our eyes may be opened to behold this Light that we may walk in it; and thus be made wise unto salvation, by faith in Jesus Christ.

[John 1:1-5]

MAY 24

Self-Reform

But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged.

I CORINTHIANS 11:31

We must judge ourselves, and judge of our own acts, but not make our word a law to everybody. We must not judge rashly, nor pass judgment upon our brother without any ground. We must not make the worst of people. Here is a just reproof to those who quarrel with their brethren for small faults, while they allow themselves in greater ones. We must not judge uncharitably, unmercifully, nor with a spirit of revenge, and a desire to do mischief ... We must not judge the hearts of others, nor their intentions, for it is God's prerogative to try the heart, and we must not step into his throne; nor must we judge of their eternal state, nor call them hypocrites, reprobates, and castaways; that is stretching beyond our line; what have we to do, thus to judge another man's servant? Counsel him, and help him, but do not judge him. Some sins are as motes, while others are as beams; some as a gnat, others as a camel. Not that there is any sin little; if it be a mote, or splinter, it is in the eye; if a gnat, it is in the throat; both are painful and dangerous, and we cannot be easy or well till they are got out. That which charity teaches us to call but a splinter in our brother's eye, true repentance and godly sorrow will teach us to call a beam in our own. It is as strange that a man can be in a sinful, miserable condition, and not be aware of it, as that a man should have a beam in his eye, and not consider it; but the god of this world blinds their minds. Here is a good rule for those who reprove: first reform yourself.

[Matthew 7:1-6]

MAY 25

Provoke Graces

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called.

EPHESIANS 4:1

The best Christians need to bear one with another, and to make the best one of another, to provoke one another's graces and not their passions. We find much in ourselves which it is hard to forgive ourselves; and therefore we must not think it much if we find that in others which we think hard to forgive them, and yet we must forgive them as we forgive ourselves. Now without these things unity cannot be preserved. The first step towards unity is humility; without this there will be no meekness, no patience, or forbearance; and without these no unity. Pride and passion break the peace, and make all the mischief. Humility and meekness restore the peace, and keep it. Nothing is pressed more earnestly in the Scriptures than to walk as becomes those called to Christ's kingdom and glory. By lowliness, understand humility, which is opposed to pride. We must walk in meekness, that excellent disposition of soul, which makes men unwilling to provoke and not easily to be provoked or offended. We find much in ourselves for which we can hardly forgive ourselves; therefore, we must not be surprised if we find in others that which we think it hard to forgive. There is one Christ in whom all believers hope, and one heaven they are all hoping for; therefore they should be of one heart. They had all one faith, as to its object, Author, nature, and power. They all believed the same as to the great truths of religion; they had all been admitted into the church by one baptism, with water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, as the sign of regeneration.

[Ephesians 4:1-6]

MAY 26

MAY

Filthy Words

Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.

EPHESIANS 4:29

Filthy words proceed from corruption in the speaker, and they corrupt the minds and manners of those who hear them: Christians should beware of all such discourse. It is the duty of Christians to seek, by the blessing of God, to bring persons to think seriously, and to encourage and warn believers by their conversation. Be kind one to another. This sets forth the principle of love in the heart, and the outward expression of it, in a humble, courteous behavior. Mark how God's forgiveness causes us to forgive. God forgives us, though we had no cause to sin against him. We must forgive, as he has forgiven us. All lying, and corrupt communications that stir up evil desires and lusts, grieve the Spirit of God. Corrupt passions of bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, evil-speaking, and malice, grieve the Holy Spirit. Provoke not the holy, blessed Spirit of God to withdraw his presence and his gracious influences. The body will be redeemed from the power of the grave at the resurrection day. Wherever that blessed Spirit dwells as a Sanctifier, he is the earnest of all the joys and glories of that redemption day; and we should be undone, should God take away his Holy Spirit from us. Christians must distinguish themselves from Gentiles. You have not so learned Christ; no, rather, you have learned Christ in a different way. Those who have learned Christ are saved from the darkness and defilement which others lie under; and, as they know more, they are obliged to live in a better manner than others. Christ is the lesson; we must learn Christ.

[Ephesians 4:29-32]

MAY 27

Times for Prayer

...praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication...

EPHESIANS 6:18A

There are other duties of religion, and of our stations in the world, but we must keep up times of prayer. Though set and solemn prayer may not be seasonable when other duties are to be done, yet short pious prayers darted out, always are so. We must use holy thoughts in our ordinary course. A vain heart will be vain in prayer. We must pray with all kinds of prayer, public, private, and secret; social and solitary; solemn and sudden: with all the parts of prayer; confession of sin, petition for mercy, and thanksgiving for favors received. And we must do it by the grace of God the Holy Spirit, in dependence on, and according to, his teaching. We must preserve in particular requests, notwithstanding discouragements. We must pray, not for ourselves only, but for all saints. Our enemies are mighty, and we are without strength, but our Redeemer is almighty, and in the power of his might we may overcome. Wherefore we must stir up ourselves. Have not we, when God has called, often neglected to answer? Let us think upon these things, and continue our prayers with patience. We must join prayer with all these graces, for our defense against these spiritual enemies, imploring help and assistance of God, as the case requires: and we must pray always. Not as though we were to do nothing else but pray, for there are other duties of religion and of our respective stations in the world that are to be done in their place and season; but we should keep up constant times of prayer, and be constant to them.

[Ephesians 6:10-18]

MAY 28

A r m o r a n d F a i t h

Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

EPHESIANS 6:11

Make use of all the proper defenses and weapons for repelling the temptations and stratagems of Satan – get and exercise all the Christian graces, the whole armor, that no part be naked and exposed to the enemy. Those who would approve themselves to have true grace must aim at all grace, the whole armor. It is called the armor of God, because he both prepares and bestows it. We have no armor of our own that will be armor of proof in a trying time ... Faith, as relying on unseen objects, receiving Christ and the benefits of redemption, and so deriving grace from him, is like a shield, a defense every way. The devil is the wicked one. Violent temptations, by which the soul is set on the fire of hell, are darts Satan shoots at us, as are hard or difficult thoughts of God and as to ourselves. Faith applying the word of God and the grace of Christ quenches the darts of temptation. Salvation must be our helmet. A good hope of salvation, a Scriptural expectation of victory, will purify the soul, and keep it from being defiled by Satan. To the Christian armed for defense in battle, the apostle recommends only one weapon of attack; but it is enough, the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. It subdues and mortifies evil desires and blasphemous thoughts as they rise within; and answers unbelief and error as they assault from without. A single text, well understood, and rightly applied, at once destroys a temptation or an objection, and subdues the most formidable adversary. Prayer must fasten all the other parts of our Christian armor

[*Ephesians 6:10-18*]

MAY 29

Children in Public Worship

After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.

LUKE 2:46

The Jewish doctors say that at twelve years old children must begin to fast from time to time, that they may learn to fast on the day of atonement; and that at thirteen years old a child begins to be a son of the commandment, that is, obliged to the duties of adult church-membership, having been from his infancy, by virtue of his circumcision, a son of the covenant. It is for the honor of Christ that children should attend on public worship. His parents did not return till they had stayed all the seven days of the feast. It is well to stay to the end of an ordinance, as becomes those who say, "It is good to be here." Those that have lost their comforts in Christ, and the evidences of their having a part in him, must bethink themselves where, and when, and how they lost them, and must turn back again. Those that would recover their lost acquaintance with Christ must go to the place in which he has put his name; there they may hope to meet him. They found him in some part of the temple, where the doctors of the law kept their schools; he was sitting there, hearkening to their instructions, proposing questions, and answering inquiries, with such wisdom, that those who heard were delighted with him. Young persons should seek the knowledge of divine truth, attend the ministry of the gospel, and ask such questions of their elders and teachers as may tend to increase their knowledge.

[Luke 2:41-52]

MAY 30

The Sabbath

Call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day of the Lord honorable...

ISAIAH 58:13

The Sabbath is a sacred and divine institution; a privilege and benefit, not a task and drudgery. God never designed it to be a burden to us, and therefore we must not make it so to ourselves. The Sabbath was instituted for the good of mankind, as living in society, having many wants and troubles, preparing for a state of happiness or misery. Man was not made for the Sabbath, as if his keeping it could be of service to God, nor was he commanded to keep outward observances to his real hurt. He had much more regard to our souls. The Sabbath was made a day of rest, only in order to its being a day of holy work, a day of communion with God, a day of praise and thanksgiving; and the rest from worldly business is therefore necessary, that we may closely apply ourselves to this work, and spend the whole time in it, in public and in private; but then time is allowed us for that which is necessary to the fitting of our bodies for the service of our souls in God's service, and the enabling of them to keep pace with them in that work. What we should aim at in our Sabbath work is the good of our own souls. If the Sabbath was made for man, we should then ask ourselves at night, "What am I the better for this Sabbath day?" What care we ought to take not to make those exercises of religion burdens to ourselves or others, which God ordained to be blessings; neither adding to the command by unreasonable strictness, nor indulging those corruptions which are adverse to the command. Every observance respecting it is to be interpreted by the rule of mercy.

[Mark 2:23-28]

MAY 31

Practical Atheism

The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, doing abominable iniquity; there is none who does good.

PSALM 53:1

A practical disbelief of God's government was at the bottom of all Israel's wickedness; as if God could not see or did not heed it. Their sins appear on every side of them. Their hearts were inflamed by evil desires, like a heated oven. In the midst of their troubles as a nation, the people never thought of seeking help from God. This is the sinner's atheism; as good say that there is no God as say that he is either ignorant or forgetful, that there is none that judges in the earth as that he remembers not the things he is to give judgment upon. It is a high affront they put upon God; it is a damning cheat they put upon themselves; they say, "The Lord does not see" (Ps. 94:7). They cannot but know that God remembers all their works; they have been told it many a time; nay, if you ask them, they cannot but own it, and yet they do not consider it; they do not think of it when they should, and with application to themselves and their own works, else they would not, they dare not, do as they do. The actual wickedness of men's lives bears a very small proportion to what is in their hearts. But when lust is inwardly cherished, it will break forth into outward sin. Those who tempt others to drunkenness never can be their real friends, and often design their ruin. Thus men execute the divine vengeance on each other. Those are not only heated with sin, but hardened in sin, who continue to live without prayer, even when in trouble and distress.

[Hosea 7:1-7]

JUNE 1

JUNE

Triumphant Faith

I lay down and slept; I woke again, for the Lord sustained me.

PSALM 3:5

Care and grief do us good when they engage us to pray to God, as in earnest. David had always found God ready to answer his prayers. Nothing can fix a gulf between the communications of God's grace towards us, and the working of his grace in us; between his favor and our faith. He had always been very safe under the divine protection. This is applicable to the common mercies of every night, for which we ought to give thanks every morning. Many lie down, and cannot sleep, through pain of body, or anguish of mind, or the continual alarms of fear in the night. But it seems here rather to be meant of the calmness of David's spirit, in the midst of his dangers. The Lord, by his grace and the consolations of his Spirit, made him easy. It is a great mercy, when we are in trouble, to have our minds stayed upon God. Behold the Son of David composing himself to his rest upon the cross, that bed of sorrows; commending his Spirit into the Father's hands in full confidence of a joyful resurrection. Behold this, O Christian: let faith teach you how to sleep, and how to die; while it assures you that as sleep is a short death, so death is only a longer sleep; the same God watches over you, in your bed and in your grave. David's faith became triumphant. He began the psalm with complaints of the strength and malice of his enemies; but concludes with rejoicing in the power and grace of his God, and now sees more with him than against him ... All that have the Lord for their God are sure of salvation; for he who is their God, is the God of Salvation.

[Psalm 3:4-8]

JUNE 2

Mixed Mercy

I will ponder the way that is blameless. Oh when will you come to me?

PSALM 101:2

The Lord's providences concerning his people are commonly mixed; mercy and judgment. God has set the one over against the other, both to do good, like showers and sunshine. When, in his providence, he exercises us with the mixture of mercy and judgment, we must make suitable acknowledgments to him for both. Family mercies and family afflictions are both calls to family religion. Those who are in public stations are not thereby excused from care in governing their families; they are the more concerned to set a good example of ruling their own houses well. Whenever a man has a house of his own, let him seek to have God to dwell with him; and those may expect his presence, who walk with a perfect heart, in a perfect way. David resolves to practice no evil himself. He further resolves not to keep bad servants, nor to employ those about him that are wicked. He will not admit them into his family, lest they spread the infection of sin. A downcast heart (one that delights to be cross and perverse) is not fit for society, the bond of which is Christian love. Nor will he countenance slanderers, those who take pleasure in wounding their neighbor's reputation. Also, God resists the proud, and false, deceitful people, who scruple not to tell lies, or commit frauds. Let everyone be zealous and diligent to reform his own heart and ways, and to do this early; ever mindful of that future, most awful morning, when the King of righteousness shall cut off all wicked doers from the heavenly Jerusalem.

[Psalm 100]

JUNE 3

JUNE

Prayer and Tears

Attend to me, and answer me; I am restless in my complaint and I moan, because of the noise of the enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked.

PSALM 55:2-3

First, we see David praying. Prayer is a salve for every sore, and a relief to the spirit under every burden. Second, we see David weeping. Grievings are thus, in some measure, lessened, while those increase that have no vent given them. David in great alarm. We may well suppose him to be so, upon the breaking out of Absalom's conspiracy, and the falling away of the people. Horror overwhelmed him. Probably the remembrance of his sin in the matter of Uriah added much to the terror. When under a guilty conscience we must mourn in our complaint, and even strong believers have for a time been filled with horror. But none ever was so overwhelmed as the holy Jesus, when it pleased the Lord to put him to grief, and to make his soul an offering for our sins. In his agony he prayed more earnestly, and was heard and delivered; trusting in him, and following him, we shall be supported under, and carried through all trials. See how David was weary of the treachery and ingratitude of men, and the cares and disappointments of his high station: he longed to hide himself in some desert from the fury and fickleness of his people. He aimed not at victory, but rest; a barren wilderness, so that he might be quiet. The wisest and best of men most earnestly covet peace and quietness, and the more when vexed and wearied with noise and clamor. This makes death desirable to a child of God, that it is a final escape from all the storms and tempests of this world, to perfect and everlasting rest.

[Psalm 55:1-8]

JUNE 4

Trust in the Lord

But I call to God, and the Lord will save me.

PSALM 55:16

In every trial let us call upon the Lord, and he will save us. He shall hear us, and not blame us for coming too often; the oftener the more welcome. David had thought all were against him; but now he sees there were many with him, more than he supposed; and the glory of this he gives to God, for it is he that raises us up friends, and makes them faithful to us. There are more true Christians, and believers have more real friends, than in their gloomy hours they suppose. His enemies should be reckoned with, and brought down; they could not ease themselves of their fears, as David could, by faith in God. Mortal men, though ever so high and strong, will easily be crushed by an eternal God. Those who are not reclaimed by the rod of affliction will certainly be brought down to the pit of destruction. The burden of afflictions is very heavy, especially when attended with the temptations of Satan; there is also the burden of sin and corruption. The only relief under it is, to look to Christ, who bore it. Whatever it is that you desire God should give you, leave it with him to give in his own way and time. Care is a burden, it makes the heart stoop. We must commit our ways and works to the Lord; let him do as seems good to him, and let us be satisfied. To cast our burden upon God is to rest upon his providence and promise. And if we do so, he will carry us in the arms of his power, as a nurse carries a child; and will strengthen our spirits by his Spirit, so that they shall sustain the trial.

[Psalm 55:16-23]

Acceptable Service

So they gave a dinner for him there. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him at table.

JOHN 12:2

Christ had formerly blamed Martha for being troubled with much serving. But she did not leave off serving, as some, who when found fault with for going too far in one way, peevishly run too far another way; she still served, but within hearing of Christ's gracious words. Mary gave a token of love to Christ, who had given real tokens of his love to her and her family. God's Anointed should be our Anointed. As God poured on him the oil of gladness above his fellows, let us pour on him the ointment of our best affections. In Judas a foul sin is gilded over with a plausible pretence. We must not think that those do not serve in our way do not acceptable service. The reigning love of money is heart-theft. The grace of Christ puts kind comments on pious words and actions, makes the best of what is amiss, and the most of what is good. Opportunities are to be improved; and those first and most vigorously, which are likely to be the shortest. To consult to hinder the further effect of the miracle, by putting Lazarus to death, is such wickedness, malice, and folly, as cannot be explained, except by the desperate enmity of the human heart against God. They resolved that the man should die whom the Lord had raised to life. The success of the gospel often makes wicked men so angry, that they speak and act as if they hoped to obtain a victory over the Almighty himself.

[John 12:1-11]

JUNE 6

Love of Money

For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

I TIMOTHY 6:10

What wickedness is it which men will not be brought to by the love of money! Here was large money given to the soldiers for advancing that which they knew to be a lie, yet many grudge a little money for advancing what they know to be the truth. Let us never starve a good cause, when we see bad ones so liberally supported. The priests undertook to secure them from the sword of Pilate, but could not secure these soldiers from the sword of God's justice, which hangs over the heads of those that love and make a lie. Those men promise more than they can perform, who undertake to save a man harmless in doing a willful sin. But this falsehood disproved itself. Had the soldiers been all asleep, they could not have known what passed. If any had been awake, they would have roused the others and prevented the removal; and certainly if they had been asleep, they never would have dared to confess it; while the Jewish rulers would have been the first to call for their punishment. Again, had there been any truth in the report, the rulers would have prosecuted the apostles with severity for it. The whole shows that the story was entirely false. And we must not charge such things to the weakness of the understanding, but to the wickedness of the heart. God left them to expose their own course. The great argument to prove Christ to be the Son of God is his resurrection; and none could have more convincing proofs of the truth of that than these soldiers.

[Matthew 28:11-15]

JUNE 7

JUNE

Spiritual Desertion

*I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved,
that you tell him I am sick with love.*

SONG OF SOLOMON 5:8

Churches and believers, by carelessness and security, provoke Christ to withdraw. We ought to notice our spiritual slumbers and distempers. Christ knocks to awaken us, knocks by his word and Spirit, knocks by afflictions and by our consciences. When we are unmindful of Christ, still he thinks of us. Christ's love to us should engage ours to him, even in the most self-denying instances; and we only can be gainers by it. Careless souls put slights on Jesus Christ. Another could not be sent to open the door. Christ calls to us, but we have no mind, or pretend we have no strength, or we have no time, and think we may be excused. Making excuses is making light of Christ. Those put contempt upon Christ, who cannot find in their hearts to bear a cold blast, or to leave a warm bed for him. See the powerful influences of divine grace. He put in his hand to unbolt the door, as one weary of waiting. This betokens a work of the Spirit upon the soul. The believer's rising above self-indulgence, seeking by prayer for the consolations of Christ, and to remove every hindrance to communion with him; these actings of the soul are represented by the hands dropping sweet-smelling myrrh upon the handles of the locks. But the Beloved was gone! By absenting himself, Christ will teach his people to value his gracious visits more highly. Observe, the soul still calls Christ her Beloved. Every desertion is not despair...Awakened souls are more sensible of Christ's withdrawals than any other.

[Song of Solomon 5:2-8]

JUNE 8

Sin and Misery

Go and learn what this means, "I desire mercy, and not sacrifice." For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.

MATTHEW 9:13

Those who are thoroughly convinced of their misery and danger by sin would spare no cost to obtain the remission of it. But as they cannot make satisfaction for sin, so God cannot take any satisfaction in them, otherwise than as expressing love and duty to him. The good work wrought in every true penitent, is a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart, and sorrow for sin. It is a heart that is tender, and pliable to God's word. Oh that there were such a heart in every one of us! God is graciously pleased to accept this; it is instead of all burnt-offering and sacrifice. The broken heart is acceptable to God only through Jesus Christ; there is no true repentance without faith in him. Men despise that which is broken, but God will not. He will not overlook it; he will not refuse or reject it; though it makes God no satisfaction for the wrong done to him by sin. Those who have been in spiritual troubles know how to pity and pray for others afflicted in like manner. David was afraid lest his sin should bring judgments upon the city and kingdom. No personal fears or troubles of conscience can make the soul, which has received grace, careless about the interests of the church of God. And let this be the continued joy of all the redeemed, that they have redemption through the blood of Christ, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace.

[Psalm 51:16-19]

JUNE 9

A Smiling World

For God alone my soul waits in silence; from him comes my salvation. He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be greatly shaken.

PSALM 62:1

Those who have found the comfort of the ways of God themselves, will invite others into those ways; we shall never have the less for others sharing with us. The good counsel given is, to trust wholly in God. We must so trust in him at all times, as not at any time to put that trust in ourselves, or in any creature, which is to be put in him only. Trust in him to guide us when in doubt, to protect us when in danger, to supply us when in want, to strengthen us for every good word and work. We must lay out wants and our wishes before him, and then patiently submit our wills to his: this is pouring out our hearts. God is a refuge for all, even for as many as will take shelter in him. The psalmist warns against trusting in men. The multitude, those of low degree are changeable as the wind. The rich and noble seem to have much in their power, and lavish promises; but those that depend on them, are disappointed. Weighed in the balance of Scripture, all that man can do to make us happy is lighter than vanity itself. It is hard to have riches and not to trust in them if they increase, though by lawful and honest means; but we must take heed, lest we set our affections unduly upon them. A smiling world is the most likely to draw the heart from God, on whom alone it should be set.

[Psalm 62:8-12]

JUNE 10

Built on Christ

So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation.

1 PETER 2:1-3

Evil-speaking is a sign of malice and guile in the heart; and hinders our profiting by the word of God. A new life needs suitable food. Infants desire milk, and make the best endeavors for it which they are able to do; such must be a Christian's desires after the word of God. Our Lord Jesus Christ is very merciful to us miserable sinners; and he has a fullness of grace. But even the best of God's servants, in this life, have only a taste of the consolations of God. Christ is called a Stone, to teach his servants that he is their protection and security, the foundation on which they are built. He is precious in the excellence of his nature, the dignity of his office, and the glory of his services. All true believers are a holy priesthood; sacred to God, serviceable to others, endowed with heavenly gifts and graces. But the most spiritual sacrifices of the best in prayer and praise are not acceptable, except through Jesus Christ. Christ is the chief corner-stone that unites the whole number of believers into one everlasting temple, and bears the weight of the whole fabric. Elected, or chosen, for a foundation that is everlasting. Precious beyond compare, by all that can give worth. To be built on Christ means, to believe in him; but in this many deceive themselves, they consider not what it is, nor the necessity of it, to partake of the salvation he has wrought. Though the frame of the world falls to pieces, that man who is built on this foundation may hear it without fear.

[1 Peter 2:1-10]

D O C T R I N E a n d L I F E

Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.

PHILIPPIANS 4:8

As a remedy against perplexing care, constant prayer is recommended. Not only stated times for prayer, but in everything by prayer. We must join thanksgivings with prayers and supplications; not only seek supplies of good, but own the mercies we have received. God needs not to be told our wants or desires; he knows them better than we do; but he will have us show that we value the mercy, and feel our dependence on him. The peace of God, the comfortable sense of being reconciled to God, and having a part in his favor, and the hope of the heavenly blessedness, are a greater good than can be fully expressed. This peace will keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus; it will keep us from sinning under troubles, and from sinking under them; keep us calm and with inward satisfaction. Believers are to get and to keep a good name; a name for good things with God and good men. We should walk in all the ways of virtue, and abide therein; then, whether our praise is of men or not, it will be of God. The apostle is for an example. His doctrine and life agreed together. The way to have the God of peace with us, is to keep close to our duty. All our privileges and salvation arise in the free mercy of God; yet the enjoyment of them depends on our sincere and holy conduct. These are works of God, pertaining to God, and to him only are they to be ascribed, and to no other, neither men, words, nor deeds.

[Philippians 4:2-9]

JUNE 12

Repentance

Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams.

I SAMUEL 15:22

Repentance in God is not a change of mind, as it is in us, but a change of method. The change was in Saul. "He is turned back from following me." Hereby he made God his enemy. Samuel spent a whole night in pleading for Saul. The rejection of sinners is the grief of believers: God delights not in their death, nor should we. Saul boasts to Samuel of his obedience. Thus sinners think, by justifying themselves, to escape being judged of the Lord. The noise the cattle made, like the rust of the silver (James 5:3), witnessed against him. Many boast of obedience to the command of God; but what means then their indulgence of the flesh, their love of the world, their angry and unkind spirit, and their neglect of holy duties, which witness against them? See of what evil covetousness is the root; and see what the sinfulness of sin is, and notice that in it which above anything else makes it evil in the sight of the Lord; it is disobedience. Carnal, deceitful hearts, like Saul, think to excuse themselves from God's commandments by what pleases themselves. It is hard to convince the children of disobedience. But humble, sincere, and conscientious obedience to the will of God, is more pleasing and acceptable to him than all burnt-offering and sacrifices. God is more glorified and self more denied, by obedience than by sacrifice. It is much easier to bring a bullock or lamb to be burned upon the altar, than to bring every high thought into obedience to God, and to make our will subject to his will.

[1 Samuel 15:10-23].

A Firm Foundation

Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.

ISAIAH 53:10

Come, and see how Christ loved us! We could not put him in our stead, but he put himself. Thus he took away the sin of the world, by taking it on himself. He made himself subject to death, which to us is the wages of sin. Observe the graces and glories of his state of exaltation. Christ will not commit the care of his family to any other. God's purposes shall take effect. And whatever is undertaken according to God's pleasure shall prosper. He shall see it accomplished in the conversion and salvation of sinners. There are many whom Christ justifies, even as many as he gave his life a ransom for. By faith we are justified; thus God is most glorified, free grace most advanced, self most abased, and our happiness secured. We must know him, and believe in him, as one that bore our sins, and saved us from sinking under the load, by taking it upon himself. Sin and Satan, death and hell, the world and the flesh, are the strong foes he has vanquished. What God designed for the Redeemer he shall certainly possess. When he led captivity captive, he received gifts for men, that he might give gifts to men. While we survey the sufferings of the Son of God, let us remember our long catalog of transgressions, and consider him as suffering under the load of our guilt. Here is laid a firm foundation for the trembling sinner to rest his soul upon.

[Isaiah 53:10-12]

JUNE 14

True Love

*For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.
And his commandments are not burdensome.*

1 JOHN 5:3

True love for the people of God, may be distinguished from natural kindness or party attachments, by its being united with the love of God, and obedience to his commands. The same Holy Spirit that taught the love will have taught obedience also; and that man cannot truly love the children of God, who, by habit, commits sin or neglects known duty. As God's commands are holy, just, and good rules of liberty and happiness, so those who are born of God and love him, do not count them grievous, but lament that they cannot serve him more perfectly. Self-denial is required, but true Christians have a principle which carries them above all hindrances. Though the conflict often is sharp, and the regenerate may be cast down, yet he will rise up and renew his combat with resolution. But all, except believers in Christ, are enslaved in some respect or other, to the customs, opinions, or interests of the world. Faith is the cause of victory, the means, the instrument, the spiritual armor by which we overcome. In and by faith we cleave to Christ, in contempt of, and in opposition to the world. Faith sanctifies the heart, and purifies it from those sensual lusts by which the world obtains sway and dominion over souls. It has the indwelling Spirit of grace, which is greater than he who dwells in the world. The real Christian overcomes the world by faith; he sees, in and by the life and conduct of the Lord Jesus on earth that this world is to be renounced and overcome.

[1 John 5:1-5]

Prayer and Forgiveness

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.

I JOHN 5:13

Upon all evidence for the gospel, it is but right that we believe on the name of the Son of God. Believers have eternal life in the covenant of the gospel. Then let us thankfully receive the record of Scripture. We must always abound in the work of the Lord, knowing that our labor is not in vain. The Lord Christ invites us to come to him in all circumstances, with our supplications and requests, notwithstanding the sin that besets us. Our prayers must always be offered in submission to the will of God. In some things they are speedily answered; in others they are granted in the best manner, though not as requested. We ought to pray for others, as well as for ourselves. There are sins that war against spiritual life in the soul, and the life above. We cannot pray that the sins of the impenitent and unbelieving should, while they are such, be forgiven them; or that mercy, which supposes the forgiveness of sins, should be granted to them, while they willfully continue such. But we may pray for their repentance, for their being enriched with faith in Christ, and thereupon for all other saving mercies. We should pray for others, as well as for ourselves, beseeching the Lord to pardon and recover the fallen, as well as to relieve the tempted and afflicted. And let us be truly thankful that no sin, of which any one truly repents, is unto death.

[1 John 5:13-17]

JUNE 16

Cleave to God

And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.

I JOHN 5:20

True believers belong to God: they are of God, and from him, and to him, and for him; while the rest, by far the greater number, are in the power of the wicked one; they do his works, and support his cause. This general declaration includes all unbelievers, whatever their profession, station, or situation, or by whatever name they may be called. The Son leads believers to the Father, and they are in the love and favor of both; in union with both, by the indwelling and working of the Holy Spirit. Happy are those to whom it is given to know that the Son of God is come, and to have a heart to trust in and rely on him that is true! ... Your God is an incomprehensible Spirit, and is disgraced by such sordid representations. Hold no communion with your heathen neighbors in their idolatrous worship. Your God is jealous, and would have you come out, and be separated from among them; mortify the flesh, and be crucified to the world, that they may not usurp the throne of dominion in the heart, which is due only to God. The God whom you have known is he who made you, who redeemed you by his Son, who has sent his gospel to you, who has pardoned your sins, begotten you unto himself by his Spirit, and given you eternal life. Cleave to him in faith, and love, and constant obedience, in opposition to all things that would alienate your mind and heart from God.

[1 John 5:18-21]

F O R B E A R A N C E o f G o d

Why, O Lord, do you stand far away? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?

PSALM 10:11

The psalmist speaks with astonishment, at the wickedness of the wicked, and at the patience and forbearance of God. God prepares the heart for prayer, by kindling holy desires, and strengthening our most holy faith, fixing the thoughts, and raising the affections, and then he graciously accepts the prayer. The preparation of the heart is from the Lord, and we must seek unto him for it. Let the poor, afflicted, persecuted, or tempted believer recollect, that Satan is the prince of this world, and that he is the father of all the ungodly. The children of God cannot expect kindness, truth, or justice from such persons as crucified the Lord of glory. This once suffering Jesus, who now reigns as King over all the earth, his dominion shall have no end. Let us commit ourselves unto him, humbly trusting in his mercy. He will rescue the believer from every temptation, and break the arm of every wicked oppressor, and bruise Satan under our feet shortly. But in heaven alone will all sin and temptation be shut out, though in this life the believer has a foretaste of deliverance ... Why then should we be afraid of the fury of the oppressor when he is but man that shall die, a son of man that shall be as grass? He that protects us is the Lord of heaven; he that persecutes us is but a man of the earth. Secondly, God has him in a chain, and can easily restrain the remainder of his wrath, so that he cannot do what he would. When God speaks the word Satan shall by his instruments no more deceive, no more oppress.

[Psalm 10:12-18]

JUNE 18

We Belong to God

The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein...

PSALM 24:1

We ourselves are not our own; our bodies, our souls, are not. Even those of the children of men are God's, who know him not, nor own their relation to him. A soul that knows and considers its own nature, and that it must live forever, when it has viewed the earth and the fullness thereof, will sit down unsatisfied. It will think of ascending toward God, and will ask, "What shall I do, that I may abide in that happy, holy place, where he makes his people holy and happy?" We make nothing of religion, if we do not make heart-work of it. We can only be cleansed from our sins, and renewed unto holiness, by the blood of Christ and the washing of the Holy Ghost. Thus we become his people; thus we receive blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of our salvation. God's peculiar people shall be made truly and for ever happy. Where God gives righteousness, he designs salvation. Those that are made meet for heaven, shall be brought safe to heaven, and will find what they have been seeking ... All the parts and regions of the earth are the Lord's, all under his eye, all in his hand: so that, wherever a child of God goes, he may comfort himself with this, that he does not go off his Father's ground. That which falls to our share of the earth and its productions is but lent to us; it is the Lord's; what is our own against all the world is not so against his claims. That which is most remote from us, as that which passes through the paths of the sea, or is hidden in the bottom of it, is the Lord's and he knows where to find it.

[Psalm 24:1-6]

JUNE 19

JUNE

Our Christian Profession

Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands...

EPHESIANS 4:28

Notice the particulars wherewith we should adorn our Christian profession. Take heed of everything contrary to truth. No longer flatter or deceive others. God's people are children who will not lie, who dare not lie, who hate and abhor lying. Take heed of anger and ungoverned passions. If there is just occasion to express displeasure at what is wrong, and to reprove, see that it be without sin. We give place to the devil, when the first motions of sin are not grievous to our souls; when we consent to them; and when we repeat an evil deed. This teaches that as sin, if yielded unto, lets in the devil upon us, we are to resist it, keeping from all appearance of evil. Idleness makes thieves. Those who will not work, expose themselves to temptations to steal. Men ought to be industrious, that they may do some good, and that they may be kept from temptation. They must labor not only that they may live honestly but that they may have to give to the wants of others. What then must we think of those called Christians, who grow rich by fraud, oppression, and deceitful practices! Alms, to be accepted of God, must not be gained by unrighteousness and robbery, but by honesty and industry. God hates robbery for burnt-offerings. Sinful inclinations and desires are deceitful lusts: they promise men happiness, but render them more miserable, and if not subdued and mortified betray them into destruction. These therefore must be put off as an old garment that we should be ashamed to be seen in: they must be subdued and mortified. These lusts prevailed against them in their former conversation, that is, during their state of sin and heathenism.

[Ephesians 4:25-28]

JUNE 20

Doubts and Fears

He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure.

PSALM 40:2

Doubts and fears about the eternal state are a horrible pit and miry clay, and have been so to many a dear child of God. There is power enough in God to help the weakest, and grace enough to help the most unworthy of all that trust in him. The psalmist waited patiently; he continued believing, hoping, and praying. He waited patiently, which intimates that the relief did not come quickly; yet he doubted not but it would come, and resolved to continue believing, and hoping, and praying, till it did come. Those whose expectation is from God may wait with assurance, but must wait with patience. Now this is very applicable to Christ. His agony, both in the garden and on the cross, was the same continued, and it was a horrible pit and miry clay. But those that wait patiently for God do not wait in vain. Those that have been under religious melancholy, and by the grace of God have been relieved, may apply the balms of God's love. Tried Christians are very feelingly to themselves; they are brought up out of a horrible pit. Christ is the Rock on which a poor soul can alone stand fast. Where God has given steadfast hope, he expects there should be a steady, regular walk and conduct. God filled the psalmist with joy, as well as peace in believing. Multitudes, by faith beholding the sufferings and glory of Christ, have learned to fear the justice and trust in the mercy of God through him. Many are the benefits with which we are daily loaded, both by the providence and by the grace of God.

[Psalm 40:1-5]

But for the Grace of God

For our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience, that we behaved in the world with simplicity and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God...

2 CORINTHIANS 1:12

The best saints see themselves undone, unless continually preserved by the grace of God. But see the frightful view the psalmist had of sin. This made the discovery of a Redeemer so welcome. In all his reflections upon each step of his life, he discovered something amiss. The sight and sense of our sins in their own colors must distract us, if we have not at the same time some sight of a Savior. If Christ has triumphed over our spiritual enemies, then we, through him, shall be more than conquerors. This may encourage all that seek God and love his salvation, to rejoice in him, and to praise him. No grief or poverty can render those miserable who fear the Lord. Their God, and all that he has or does, is the ground of their joy. The prayer of faith can unlock his fullness, which is adapted to all their wants. The promises are sure and the moment of fulfillment hastens forward. He who once came in great humility shall come again in glorious majesty. This may encourage the saints, in distress and affliction, to trust in God and comfort themselves in him. David himself was one of these: "I am poor and needy (a king, perhaps now on the throne, and yet, being troubled in spirit, he calls himself poor and needy, in want and distress, lost and undone without a Savior), yet the Lord thinks upon me in and through the Mediator, by whom we are made accepted." Men forget the poor and needy, and seldom think of them; but God's thoughts, towards them are their support and comfort. They may assure themselves that God is their help.

[Psalm 40:11-17]

JUNE 22

Christian Sabbath

And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done.

GENESIS 2:2

The Sabbath of the Lord is truly honorable, and we have reason to honor it – honor it for the sake of its antiquity, its great Author, the sanctification of the first Sabbath by the holy God himself, and by our first parents in innocence, in obedience to him. The Sabbath Day is a blessed day, for God blessed it, and that which he blesses is blessed indeed. God has put an honor upon it, has appointed us, on that day, to bless him, and has promised, on that day, to meet us and bless us. The Sabbath Day is a holy day, for God has sanctified it. He has separated and distinguished it from the rest of the days of the week, and he has consecrated it and set it apart to himself and his own service and honor. Though it is commonly taken for granted that the Christian Sabbath we observe, reckoning from the creation, is not the seventh but the first day of the week, yet being a seventh day, and we in it, celebrating the rest of God the Son, and the finishing of the work of our redemption, we may and ought to act faithfully upon this original institution of the Sabbath Day, and to commemorate the work of creation, to the honor of the great Creator, who is therefore worthy to receive, on that day, blessing, and honor, and praise, from all religious assemblies.

[Genesis 2]

Prayer - Hearing God

Give ear to my words, O Lord; consider my groaning.

PSALM 5:1

God is a prayer-hearing God. Such he has always been, and he is still as ready to hear prayer as ever. The most encouraging principle of prayer, and the most powerful plea in prayer, is, to look upon him as our King and our God. David also prays to a sin-hating God. Sin is folly, and sinners are the greatest of all fools; fools of their own making. David takes notice of this as a warning to himself, and all other praying people, to remember that, as the God with whom we have to do is gracious and merciful, so he is pure and holy; though he is ready to hear prayer, yet, if we regard iniquity in our heart, he will not hear our prayers. As an encouragement to his prayers against his enemies; they were wicked men, and therefore enemies to God, and such as he had not pleasure in. We see here the holiness of God's nature. When he says, "You are not a God who delights in wickedness" (Ps. 5:4), he means, "You are a God that hates it as contrary to your infinite purity and holiness of will." Though the workers of iniquity prosper, let none thence infer that God has pleasure in wickedness, no, not in that by which men pretend to honor him, as those do that hate their brethren, and cast them out, and say, Let the Lord be glorified. God has no pleasure in wickedness, though covered with a cloak of religion. Let those therefore who delight in sin know that God has no delight in them

[Psalm 5:1-6]

JUNE 24

Full Redemption

O Israel, hope in the Lord! For with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with him is plentiful redemption.

PSALM 130:7

It is for the Lord that my soul waits, for the gifts of his grace, and the working of his power. We must hope for that only which he has promised in his word. Like those who wish to see the dawn, being very desirous that light would come long before day; but still more earnestly does a good man long for the tokens of God's favor, and the visits of his grace. Let all that devote themselves to the Lord, cheerfully stay themselves on him. This redemption is redemption from all sin. Jesus Christ saves his people from their sins, both from the condemning and from the commanding power of sin. It is plenteous redemption; there is an all-sufficient fullness in the Redeemer, enough for all, enough for each; therefore enough for me, says the believer. The persons to whom the benefits of this redemption belong: He shall redeem Israel, Israel according to the spirit, all those who are in covenant with God, as Israel was, and who are Israelites indeed, in whom is no guile. Redemption from sin includes redemption from all other evils; therefore it is a plenteous redemption, through the atoning blood of Jesus, who shall redeem his people from all their sins. All that wait on God for mercy and grace, are sure to have peace. "This one will say, 'I am the Lord's,' another will call on the name of Jacob, and another will write on his hand, 'The Lord's,' and name himself by the name of Israel" (Isa. 44:5).

[Psalm 130:5-8]

JUNE 25

Gifts and Peace

JUNE

But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.

EPHESIANS 4:7

Unto every believer is given some gift of grace, for their mutual help. All is given as seems best to Christ to bestow upon every one. He received for them, that he might give to them, a large measure of gifts and graces; particularly the gift of the Holy Ghost. Not a mere head knowledge, or bare acknowledging Christ to be the Son of God, but such as brings trust and obedience. There is a fullness in Christ, and a measure of that fullness given in the counsel of God to every believer; but we never come to the perfect measure till we come to heaven. God's children are growing, as long as they are in this world; and the Christian's growth tends to the glory of Christ. The more a man finds himself drawn out to improve in his station, and according to his measure, all that he has received, to the spiritual good of others, he may the more certainly believe that he has the grace of sincere love and charity rooted in his heart. The seat of Christian unity is in the heart or spirit: it does not lie in one set of thoughts, nor in one form and mode of worship, but in one heart and one soul. This unity of heart and affection may be said to be of the Spirit of God; it is wrought by him, and is one of the fruits of the Spirit. This we should endeavor to keep. Endeavoring is a gospel word. Peace is a bond, as it unites persons, and makes them live friendly one with another. A peaceable disposition and conduct bind Christians together, whereas discord and quarrelling disband and disunite their hearts and affections. Many slender twigs, bound together, become strong. The bond of peace is the strength of society.

[Ephesians 4:7-16]

JUNE 26

Seeking the Heavenly

And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone...

MATTHEW 28:2

Christ rose the third day after his death; that was the time he had often spoken of. On the first day of the first week God commanded the light to shine out of darkness. On this day did he who is the Light of the world, shine out of the darkness of the grave; and this day is from henceforward often mentioned in the New Testament, as the day which Christians religiously observed in solemn assemblies, to the honor of Christ. Our Lord Jesus could have rolled back the stone by his own power, but he chose to have it done by an angel. The resurrection of Christ, as it is the joy of his friends, so it is the terror and confusion of his enemies. The angel encouraged the women against their fears. Let the sinners in Zion be afraid. But do not fear, for his resurrection will be your consolation. Our communion with him must be spiritual, by faith in his word. When we are ready to make this world our home, and to say, "It is good to be here," then let us remember our Lord Jesus is not here, he is risen; therefore, let our hearts rise and seek the things that are above ... For the proof of Christ's resurrection, we have the testimony of an angel, and of Christ himself, concerning his resurrection. We may have wished there were a large number of witnesses but Infinite Wisdom ordered it differently; many saw him risen who did not see him rise. His incarnation was a mystery; so was this second incarnation (if we may so call it), this new making of the body of Christ, for his exalted state; for here we must walk by faith, not by sight.

[Matthew 28:1-8]

Goodness and Greatness

These are the clans of the sons of Noah, according to their genealogies, in their nations, and from these the nations spread abroad on the earth after the flood.

GENESIS 10:32

The account of the posterity of Canaan, of the families and nations that descended from him, and of the land they possessed, is more particular than of any other because these were the nations that were to be subdued before Israel, and their land was in process of time to become the holy land, Immanuel's land; and this God had an eye to when, in the mean time, he cast the lot of that accursed devoted race in that spot of ground which he had selected for his own people; this Moses takes notice of (Deut. 32:8). When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. The posterity of Canaan were numerous, rich, and pleasantly seated; yet Canaan was under a divine curse, and not a curse causeless. Those that are under the curse of God, may, perhaps, thrive and prosper in this world; for we cannot know love or hatred, the blessing or the curse, by what is before us, but by what is within us. The curse of God always works really, and always terribly. Perhaps it is a secret curse, a curse to the soul, and does not work so that others can see it; or a slow curse, and does not work soon; but sinners are reserved by it for a day of wrath. Canaan here has a better land than either Shem or Japheth, and yet they have a better lot, for they inherit the blessing. Goodness is true greatness.

[Genesis 10:15-32]

JUNE 28

Purifying Water

Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

HEBREWS 10:22

Water is an emblem of the cleansing of our polluted souls from sin. But no water can do more than take away the filth of the flesh. Water seems in general the sacramental sign of the sanctifying influences of the Holy Ghost; yet this is always connected with the atoning blood of Christ. When the latter is applied by faith to the conscience, to cleanse it from evil works, the former is always applied to the powers of the soul, to purify it from the pollution of sin. All that have an interest in the new covenant have a new heart and a new spirit, in order to their walking in newness of life. God would give a heart of flesh, a soft and tender heart, complying with his holy will. Renewing grace works as great a change in the soul, as the turning a dead stone into living flesh. God will put his Spirit within, as a Teacher, Guide, and Sanctifier. The promise of God's grace to fit us for our duty should quicken our constant care and endeavor to do our duty. God's holy name is his great name. His holiness is his greatness; so he reckons it himself. Nor does anything make a man truly great but being truly good, and partaking of God's holiness. God will magnify his name as a holy name, for he will sanctify it. When God proves his own holy name, and his saints praise it, then he is sanctified in them, and this contributes to the propagating of the knowledge of him.

[Ezekiel 36:25-38]

Divine Displeasure

O God, you have rejected us, broken our defenses; you have been angry; oh, restore us.

PSALM 60:1

David owns God's displeasure to be the cause of all the hardships he had undergone. And when God is turning his hand in our favor, it is good to remember our former troubles. In God's displeasure their troubles began, therefore in his favor their prosperity must begin. Those breaches and divisions which the folly and corruption of man make, nothing but the wisdom and grace of God can repair, by pouring out a spirit of love and peace, by which only a kingdom is saved from ruin. The anger of God against sin is the only cause of all misery, private or public, that has been, is, or shall be. In all these cases there is no remedy, but by returning to the Lord with repentance, faith, and prayer; beseeching him to return to us. Christ, the Son of David, is given for a banner to those that fear God; in him they are gathered together in one, and take courage. In his name and strength they wage war with the powers of darkness. Those that fear God are his beloved; they are dear to him as the apple of his eye. They are often in distress, but they shall be delivered. God's own right hand shall save them; for those that have his heart have his hand. "Save them, and hear me." God's praying people may take the general deliverances of the church as answers to their prayers in particular. If we improve what interest we have at the throne of grace for blessings for the public, and those blessings be bestowed, besides the share we have with others in the benefit of them we may each of us say, with peculiar satisfaction, "God has therein heard me, and answered me."

[Psalm 60:1-5]

JUNE 30

The Mercy-Seat

Above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat.

HEBREWS 9:5

Those whom God leads he leads to his holy hill, and to his tabernacles; those therefore who pretend to be led by the Spirit, and yet turn their backs upon instituted ordinances, certainly deceive themselves. That God by his grace would bring him into communion with himself, and prepare him for the vision and fruition of himself in the other world; we are to pray for God's light and truth, the Spirit of light and truth, who supplies the want of Christ's bodily presence, to lead us into the mystery of godliness and to guide us in the way to heaven. When God sends his light and truth into our hearts, these will guide us to the upper world in all our devotions as well as in all our aims and expectations; and, if we conscientiously follow that light and that truth, they will certainly bring us to the holy hill above. Those that come to the tabernacles should come to the altar; those that come to ordinances should qualify themselves to come, and then come to special ordinances, to those that are most affecting and most binding. The nearer we come, the closer we cleave to God, the better. Those that come to the altar of God must see to it that therein they come unto God, and draw near to him with the heart, with a true heart: we come in vain to holy ordinances if we do not in them come to the holy God. Those that come unto God must come to him as their exceeding joy, not only as their future bliss, but as their present joy, and that not a common, but an exceeding joy, far exceeding all the joys of sense and time.

[Nahum 2:11-13]

JULY 1

VICTORY OVER SATAN

JULY

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

JAMES 4:7

Christ's being led into the wilderness gave an advantage to the tempter; for there he was alone, none were with him by whose prayers and advice he might be helped in the hour of temptation. He who knew his own strength might give Satan advantage; but we may not, who know our own weakness. Being in all things made like unto his brethren, Jesus would, like the other children of God, live in dependence upon the divine Providence and promise. The word of God is our sword, and faith in that word is our shield. God has many ways of providing for his people, and therefore is at all times to be depended upon in the way of duty. All Satan's promises are deceitful; and if he is permitted to have any influence in disposing of the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, he uses them as baits to ensnare men to destruction. We should reject at once and with abhorrence, every opportunity of sinful gain or advancement, as a price offered for our souls; we should seek riches, honors, and happiness in the worship and service of God only. Christ will not worship Satan; nor, when he has the kingdoms of the world delivered to him by his Father, will he suffer any remains of the worship of the devil to continue in them. Satan also tempted Jesus to be his own murderer by unfitting confidence in his Father's protection, such as he had no warrant for. Let not any abuse of Scripture by Satan or by men abate our esteem, or cause us to abandon its use; but let us study it still, seek to know it, and seek our defense from it in all kinds of assaults.

[Luke 4:1-13]

JULY 2

Not to Angels

Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind...

COLOSSIANS 2:18-19

It looked like humility to apply to angels, as if men were conscious of their unworthiness to speak directly to God. But it is not warrantable; it is taking that honor which is due to Christ only, and giving it to a creature. There really was pride in this seeming humility. Those who worship angels, disclaim Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and man. It is an insult to Christ, who is the Head of the church, to use any intercessors but him. When men let go their hold of Christ, they catch at what will stand them in no stead. The body of Christ is a growing body. And true believers cannot live in the fashions of the world. True wisdom is, to keep close to the appointments of the gospel; in entire subjection to Christ, who is the only Head of his church. Self-imposed sufferings and fasting might have a show of uncommon spirituality and willingness for suffering, but this was not "in any honor" to God. The whole tended, in a wrong manner, to satisfy the carnal mind, by gratifying self-will, self-wisdom, self-righteousness, and contempt of others. The things being such as carry not with them so much as the show of wisdom; or so faint a show that they do the soul no good, and provide not for the satisfying of the flesh. What the Lord has left indifferent, let us regard as such, and leave others to the like freedom; and remembering the passing nature of earthly things, let us seek to glorify God in the use of them.

[Colossians 2:18-23]

JULY 3

JULY

Prince of Peace

And he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald.

REVELATION 4:3

There can be no true peace, where there is not true grace; and where grace goes before, peace will follow. This blessing is in the name of God, of the Holy Trinity, it is an act of adoration. The Father is first named; he is described as the Jehovah who is, and who was, and who is to come, eternal, unchangeable. The Holy Spirit is called the seven spirits, the perfect Spirit of God, in whom there is a diversity of gifts and operations. The Lord Jesus Christ was from eternity, a Witness to all the counsels of God. He is the First-born from the dead, who will by his own power raise up his people. He is the Prince of the kings of the earth; by him their counsels are overruled, and to him they are accountable. Sin leaves a stain of guilt and pollution upon the soul. Nothing can fetch out this stain but the blood of Christ; and Christ shed his own blood to satisfy divine justice, and purchase pardon and purity for his people. Christ has made believers kings and priests to God and his Father. As such they overcome the world, mortify sin, govern their own spirits, resist Satan, prevail with God in prayer, and shall judge the world. He has made them priests, given them access to God, enabled them to offer spiritual and acceptable sacrifices, and for these favors they are bound to ascribe to him dominion and glory forever.

[Revelation 1:4-8]

JULY 4

To the Living God

But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more?

GALATIANS 4:9

The happy change whereby the Galatians were turned from idols to the living God, and through Christ had received the adoption of sons, was the effect of his free and rich grace; they were laid under the greater obligation to keep to the liberty wherewith he had made them free. All our knowledge of God begins on his part; we know him because we are known of him. Though our religion forbids idolatry, yet many practice spiritual idolatry in their hearts. For what a man loves most, and cares most for, that is his god: some have their riches for their god, some their pleasures and some their lusts. And many ignorantly worship a god of their own making; a god made all of mercy and no justice. For they persuade themselves that there is mercy for them with God, though they repent not, but go on in their sins. It is possible for those who have made great professions of religion, to be afterwards drawn aside from purity and simplicity. And the more mercy God has shown, in bringing any to know the gospel, and the liberties and privileges of it, the greater their sin and folly in suffering themselves to be deprived of them. Hence all who are members of the outward church should learn to fear and to suspect themselves. We must not be content because we have some good things in ourselves ... every man must remember his place and calling.

[Galatians 4:8-11]

JULY 5

JULY

Wise by Affliction

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.

JAMES 1:2-3

Christianity teaches men to be joyful under troubles: such exercises are sent from God's love; and trials in the way of duty will brighten our graces now and our crown at last. Let us take care, in times of trial, that patience, and not passion, is set to work in us: whatever is said or done, let patience have the saying and doing of it. When the work of patience is complete, it will furnish all that is necessary for our Christian race and warfare. We should not pray so much for the removal of affliction, as for wisdom to make a right use of it. And who does not want wisdom to guide him under trials, both in regulating his own spirit, and in managing his affairs? Here is something in answer to every discouraging turn of the mind, when we go to God under a sense of our own weakness and folly. If, after all, any should say, "This may be the case with some, but I fear I shall not succeed," the promise is, "To any that asks, it shall be given." A mind that has single and prevailing regard to its spiritual and eternal interest, and that keeps steady in its purposes for God, will grow wise by afflictions, will continue fervent in devotion, and rise above trials and oppositions. When our faith and spirits rise and fall with second causes, there will be unsteadiness in our words and actions. This may not always expose men to contempt in the world, but such ways cannot please God. No condition of life is such as to hinder rejoicing in God

[James 1:1-11]

JULY 6

Cleaving to God

Nevertheless, I am continually with you; you hold my right hand.

PSALM 73:23

God would not suffer his people to be tempted, if his grace were not sufficient, not only to save them from harm, but to make them gainers by it. This temptation, the working of envy and discontent, is very painful. In reflecting upon it, the psalmist owns it was his folly and ignorance thus to vex himself. If good men, at any time, through the surprise and strength of temptation, think, or speak, or act amiss, they will reflect upon it with sorrow and shame. We must ascribe our safety in temptation, and our victory, not to our own wisdom, but to the gracious presence of God with us, and Christ's intercession for us. All who commit themselves to God, shall be guided with the counsel both of his word and of his Spirit, the best counselors here, and shall be received to his glory in another world; the believing hopes and prospects of which will reconcile us to all dark providences. And the psalmist was hereby quickened to cleave the closer to God. Heaven itself could not make us happy without the presence and love of our God. The world and all its glory vanishes. The body will fail by sickness, age, and death; when the flesh fails, the conduct, courage, and comfort fail. But Christ Jesus, our Lord, offers to be all in all to every poor sinner, who renounces all other portions and confidences. By sin we are all far from God. And a profession of Christ, if we go on in sin, will increase our condemnation. May we draw near, and keep near, to our God, by faith and prayer, and find it good to do so.

[Psalm 73:21-28]

JULY 7

JULY

Flee Temptation

Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did.

I CORINTHIANS 10:6

Carnal desires gain strength by indulgence, therefore should be checked in their first rise. Let us fear the sins of Israel, if we would shun their plagues. And it is but just to fear, that such as tempt Christ, will be left by him in the power of the old serpent. Murmuring against God's disposals and commands, greatly provokes him. Nothing in Scripture is written in vain; and it is our wisdom and duty to learn from it. Others have fallen, and so may we. The Christian's security against sin is distrust of himself. God has not promised to keep us from falling, if we do not look to ourselves. To this word of caution, a word of comfort is added. Others have the like burdens, and the like temptations: what they bear up under, and break through, we may also. God is wise as well as faithful, and will make our burdens according to our strength. He knows what we can bear. He will make a way to escape; he will deliver either from the trial itself, or at least the mischief of it. We have full encouragement to flee from sin, and to be faithful to God. We cannot fall by temptation, if we cleave fast to him. Whether the world smiles or frowns, it is an enemy; but believers shall be strengthened to overcome it, with all its terrors and enticements. The fear of the Lord, put into their hearts, will be the great means of safety.

[1 Corinthians 10:6-14]

JULY 8

Sign of Jonah

An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.

MATTHEW 12:39

Though Christ is always ready to hear and answer holy desires and prayers, yet those who ask amiss, ask and have not. Signs were granted to those who desired them to confirm their faith, as Abraham and Gideon; but denied to those who demanded them to excuse their unbelief. The resurrection of Christ from the dead by his own power, called here the sign of the prophet Jonah, was the great proof of Christ's being the Messiah. As Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale, and then came out again alive, thus Christ would be so long in the grave, and then rise again. The Ninevites would shame the Jews for not repenting; the queen of Sheba, for not believing in Christ. And we have no such cares to hinder us, we come not to Christ upon such uncertainties. This parable represents the case of the Jewish church and nation. It is also applicable to all those who hear the word of God, and are in part reformed, but not truly converted. The unclean spirit leaves for a time, but when he returns, he finds Christ is not there to shut him out; the heart is swept by outward reformation, but garnished by preparation to comply with evil suggestions, and the man becomes a more decided enemy of the truth. Every heart is the residence of unclean spirits, except those which are temples of the Holy Ghost, by faith in Christ.

[Matthew 12:38-45]

JULY 9

JULY

Looking to Jesus

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

HEBREWS 12:1-2

The persevering obedience of faith in Christ was the race set before the Hebrews, wherein they must either win the crown of glory, or have everlasting misery for their portion; and it is set before us. By the sin that does so easily beset us, understand that sin to which we are most prone, or to which we are most exposed, from habit, age, or circumstances. This is a most important exhortation; for while a man's darling sin, be it what it will, remains unsubdued, it will hinder him from running the Christian race, as it takes from him every motive for running, and gives power to every discouragement. When weary and faint in their minds, let them recollect that the holy Jesus suffered, to save them from eternal misery. By steadfastly looking to Jesus, their thoughts would strengthen holy affections, and keep under their carnal desires. Let us then frequently consider him. What are our little trials to his agonies, or even to our deserts? What are they to the sufferings of many others? There is proneness in believers to grow weary, and to faint under trials and afflictions; this is from the imperfection of grace and the remains of corruption. Christians should not faint under their trials.

[Hebrews 12:1-11]

JULY 10

Envy of the Wicked

The wicked man sees it and is angry; he gnashes his teeth and melts away; the desire of the wicked will perish!

PSALM 112:10

The heart touched by the Spirit of God, as the needle touched with the loadstone, turns direct and speedily to God, yet still with trembling, being filled with this holy fear. Blessings are laid up for the faithful and their children's children; and true riches are bestowed on them, with as much of this world's possessions as is profitable for them. In the darkest hours of affliction and trial, the light of hope and peace will spring up within them, and seasonable relief shall turn mourning into joy. From their Lord's example they learn to be kind and full of compassion, as well as just in all their dealings; they use discretion, that they may be liberal in that manner which appears most likely to do good. Envy and slander may for a time hide their true characters here, but they shall be had in everlasting remembrance. They need not fear evil tidings. A good man shall have a settled spirit. And it is the Endeavor of true believers to keep their minds stayed upon God, and so to keep them calm and undisturbed; and God has promised them both cause to do so, and grace to do so. Trusting in the Lord is the best and surest way of establishing the heart. The heart of man cannot fix any where with satisfaction, but in the truth of God, and there it finds firm footing. And those whose hearts are established by faith, will patiently wait till they gain their point. Compare all this with the vexation of sinners. The happiness of the saints is the envy of the wicked.

[Psalm 112]

JULY 11

God's Blessing

July

Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name give glory, for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness!

PSALM 115:1

It is folly to trust in dead images, but it is wisdom to trust in the living God, for he is a help and a shield to those that trust in him. Wherever there is right fear of God, there may be cheerful faith in him; those who reverence his word may rely upon it. He is ever found faithful. The greatest need his blessing and it shall not be denied to the meanest that fear him. God's blessing gives an increase, especially in spiritual blessings. And the Lord is to be praised: his goodness is large, for he has given the earth to the children of men for their use. The souls of the faithful, after they are delivered from the burdens of the flesh, are still praising him; but the dead body cannot praise God: death puts an end to our glorifying him in this world of trial and conflict. Others are dead, and an end is thereby put to their service, therefore we will seek to do the more for God. We will not only do it ourselves, but will engage others to do it; to praise him when we are gone. "Lord, you are the only object for faith and love. Help us to praise you while living and when dying, that your name may be the first and last upon our lips: and let the sweet savor of your name refresh our souls forever."

[Psalm 115:9-18]

JULY 12

Wonders of Love

Your testimonies are wonderful; therefore my soul keeps them.

PSALM 119:129

The wonders of redeeming love will fix the heart in adoration of them. The Scriptures show us what we were, what we are, and what we shall be. They show us the mercy and the justice of the Lord, the joys of heaven, and the pains of hell. Thus they give to the simple, in a few days, understanding of those matters, which philosophers for ages sought in vain. The believer, wearied with the cares of life and his conflicts with sin, pants for the consolations conveyed to him by means of the sacred word. And every one may pray, "Look upon me and be merciful to me as you use to do to those who love your name." We must beg that the Holy Spirit would order our steps. The dominion of sin is to be dreaded and prayed against by everyone. The oppression of men is often more than flesh and blood can bear. He who knows our frame will not refuse to remove it in answer to the prayers of his people. Whatever obscurity may appear as to the faith of the Old Testament believers, their confidence at the throne of grace can only be explained by their having obtained more distinct views of gospel privileges, through the sacrifices and services of their law, than is generally imagined. Go to the same place, plead the name and merits of Jesus, and you will not, you cannot plead in vain. Commonly, where there is a gracious heart, there is a weeping eye. "Accept, O Lord, the tears our blessed Redeemer shed in the days of his flesh, for us who should weep for our brethren or ourselves."

[Psalm 119:129-136]

JULY 13

Christ is Precious

How precious is your steadfast love, O God! The children of mankind take refuge in the shadow of your wings.

PSALM 36:7

None can truly perceive how precious Christ is, and the glory of the gospel, except the broken-hearted. But while they feel they cannot enough express self-aborrence on account of sin, and admiration of his mercy, the self-sufficient will be disgusted, because the gospel encourages such repenting sinners. The Pharisee, instead of rejoicing in the tokens of the woman's repentance, confined his thoughts to her former bad character. But without free forgiveness none of us can escape the wrath to come; this our gracious Savior has purchased with his blood that he may freely bestow it on every one that believes in him. Christ, by a parable, forced Simon to acknowledge that the greater sinner this woman had been, the greater love she ought to show to Him when her sins were pardoned. Learn here, that sin is a debt; and all are sinners, are debtors to Almighty God. Some sinners are greater debtors; but whether our debt be more or less, it is more than we are able to pay. God is ready to forgive; and his Son having purchased pardon for those who believe in him, his gospel promises it to them, and his Spirit seals it to repenting sinners, and gives them the comfort. Let us keep far from the proud spirit of the Pharisee, simply depending upon and rejoicing in Christ alone, and so be prepared to obey him more zealously and more strongly to recommend him unto all around us. The more we express our sorrow for sin, and our love to Christ, the clearer evidence we have of the forgiveness of our sins.

[Luke 7:36-50]

JULY 14

Search the Scriptures

You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.

JOHN 5:39-40

The Jews considered that eternal life was revealed to them in their Scriptures, and that they had it, because they had the word of God in their hands. Jesus urged them to search those Scriptures with more diligence and attention . . . They did indeed search the Scriptures, but it was with a view to their own glory. It is possible for men to be very studious in the letter of the Scriptures, yet to be strangers to its power. Or, "Search the Scriptures," and so it was spoken to them in the nature of an appeal. You profess to receive and believe the Scripture, let that be the judge. It is spoken to us as advising or commanding all Christians to search the Scriptures. Not only read them, and hear them, but search them; which denotes diligence in examining and studying them. We must search the Scriptures for heaven as our great end; "for in them you think you have eternal life." We must search the Scriptures for Christ, as the new and living Way, that leads to this end. To this testimony Christ adds reproofs of their unbelief and wickedness; their neglect of him and his doctrine. Also he reproves their want of the love of God. But there is life with Jesus Christ for poor souls. Many who make a great profession of religion show they lack the love of God by their neglect of Christ and contempt of his commandments. It is the love of God in us, the love that is a living, active principle in the heart, which God will accept.

[John 5:39-44]

New Life in the Soul

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience.

EPHESIANS 2:1-2

Sin is the death of the soul. A man dead in trespasses and sins has no desire for spiritual pleasures. When we look upon a corpse, it gives an awful feeling. A never-dying spirit is now fled, and has left nothing but the ruins of a man. But if we viewed things aright, we should be far more affected by the thought of a dead soul, a lost, fallen spirit. A state of sin is a state of conformity to this world. Wicked men are slaves to Satan. Satan is the author of that proud, carnal disposition which there is in ungodly men; he rules in the hearts of men. From Scripture it is clear, that whether men have been most prone to sensual or to spiritual wickedness, all men, being naturally children of disobedience, are also by nature children of wrath. What reason have sinners, then, to seek earnestly for that grace which will make them, children of wrath, children of God and heirs of glory! God's eternal love or good-will toward his creatures is the fountain whence all his mercies flow to us; and that love of God is great love, and that mercy is rich mercy. And every converted sinner is a saved sinner; delivered from sin and wrath. The grace that saves is the free, undeserved goodness and favor of God; and he saves, not by the works of the law, but through faith in Christ Jesus. Grace in the soul is a new life in the soul.

[Ephesians 2:1-10]

JULY 16

HOLINESS AND HAPPINESS

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age...

TITUS 2:11-12

The doctrine of grace and salvation by the gospel, is for all ranks and conditions of men. It teaches to forsake sin; to have no more to do with it. An earthly, sensual conversation suits not a heavenly calling. It teaches to make conscience of that which is good. We must look to God in Christ, as the object of our hope and worship. A gospel conversation must be a godly conversation. See our duty in a very few words; denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, living soberly, righteously, and godly, notwithstanding all snares, temptations, corrupt examples, ill usage, and what remains of sin in the believer's heart, with all their hindrances. It teaches to look for the glories of another world. At, and in, the glorious appearing of Christ, the blessed hope of Christians will be complete: To bring us to holiness and happiness was the end of Christ's death. Jesus Christ, that great God and our Savior, who saves not only as God, much less as Man alone; but as God-man, two natures in one person. He loved us, and gave himself for us; and what can we do less than love and give up ourselves to him! Redemption from sin and sanctification of the nature go together, and make a peculiar people unto God, free from guilt and condemnation, and purified by the Holy Spirit. All Scripture is profitable. Here is what will furnish for all parts of duty, and the right discharge of them. Let us inquire whether our whole dependence is placed upon that grace which saves the lost, pardons the guilty, and sanctifies the unclean.

[Titus 2:11-15]

JULY 17

Christian Graces

JULY

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

MATTHEW 5:3

Our Savior here gives eight characters of blessed people, which represent to us the principal graces of a Christian. First, the poor in spirit are happy. These bring their minds to their condition, when it is a low condition. They are humble and lowly in their own eyes. They see their want, bewail their guilt, and thirst after a Redeemer. The kingdom of grace is of such; the kingdom of glory is for them. Second, those that mourn are happy. That godly sorrow which works true repentance, watchfulness, a humble mind, and continual dependence for acceptance on the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, with constant seeking the Holy Spirit, to cleanse away the remaining evil, seems here to be intended. Heaven is the joy of our Lord; a mountain of joy, to which our way is through a vale of tears. Such mourners shall be comforted by their God. Third, the meek are happy. The meek are those who quietly submit to God; who can bear insult; are silent, or return a soft answer; who, in their patience, keep possession of their own souls, when they can scarcely keep possession of anything else. These meek ones are happy, even in this world. Meekness promotes wealth, comfort, and safety, even in this world. Fourth, those who hunger and thirst after righteousness are happy. Righteousness is here put for all spiritual blessings. These are purchased for us by the righteousness of Christ, confirmed by the faithfulness of God. Our desires of spiritual blessings must be earnest. Though all desires for grace are not grace, yet such a desire as this is a desire of God's own raising and he will not forsake the work of his own hands.

[Matthew 5:3-12]

JULY 18

Christian Graces (Cont.)

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

MATTHEW 5:7

Fifth, the merciful are happy. We must not only bear our own afflictions patiently, but we must do all we can to help those who are in misery. We must have compassion on the souls of others, and help them; pity those who are in sin, and seek to snatch them as brands out of the burning. Sixth, the pure in heart are happy; for they shall see God. Here holiness and happiness are fully described and put together. The heart must be purified by faith, and kept for God. "Create in me such a clean heart, O God." None but the pure are capable of seeing God, nor would heaven be happiness to the impure. As God cannot endure to look upon their iniquity, so they cannot look upon his purity. Seventh, the peace-makers are happy. They love, and desire, and delight in peace; and study to be quiet. They keep the peace that it be not broken, and recover it when it is broken. If the peace-makers are blessed, woe to the peace-breakers! Eighth, those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake are happy. This saying is peculiar to Christianity; and it is more largely insisted upon than any of the rest. Yet there is nothing in our sufferings that can merit of God; but God will provide that those who lose for him, though life itself shall not lose by him in the end. Blessed Jesus! How different are your maxims from those of men of this world! They call the proud happy, and admire the gay, the rich, the powerful, and the victorious. May we find mercy from the Lord; may we be owned as his children, and inherit his kingdom. With these enjoyments and hopes, we may cheerfully welcome low or painful circumstances.

[Matthew 5:3-12]

With a Samaritan

God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.

JOHN 4:24

The disciples wondered why Christ talked with a Samaritan. Yet they knew it was for some good reason, and for some good end. Thus when particular difficulties occur in the word and providence of God, it is good to satisfy ourselves that all is well that Jesus Christ says and does. Two things affected the woman: the extent of his knowledge – Christ knows all the thoughts, words, and actions, of all the children of men; and the power of his word – he told her secret sins with power. She fastened upon that part of Christ's discourse, many would think she would have been most shy of repeating; but the knowledge of Christ, into which we are led by conviction of sin, is most likely to be sound and saving. They came to him: those who would know Christ must meet him where he records his name. Our Master has left us an example that we may learn to do the will of God as he did; with diligence, as those that make a business of it; with delight and pleasure in it. Christ compares his work to harvest-work. The harvest is appointed and looked for before it comes; so was the gospel. Harvest-time is busy time; all must be then at work. Harvest-time is a short time, and harvest-work must be done then, or not at all; so the time of the gospel is a season, which if once past, cannot be recalled. God sometimes uses very weak and unlikely instruments for beginning and carrying on a good work

[John 4:27-42]

JULY 20

Christian Sunday

When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.

JOHN 20:20

That one day in seven should be religiously observed was an appointment from the beginning. And that, in the kingdom of the Messiah, the first day of the week should be that solemn day, was pointed out, in that Christ on that day once and again met his disciples in a religious assembly. The religious observance of that day has come down to us through every age of the church. There is not an unbelieving word in our tongues, nor thought in our minds, but it is known to the Lord Jesus; and he was pleased to accommodate himself even to Thomas, rather than leave him in his unbelief. We ought thus to bear with the weak. This warning is given to all. If we are faithless, we are Christless and graceless, hopeless and joyless. Thomas was ashamed of his unbelief, and cried out, "My Lord and my God." He spoke with affection, as one that took hold of Christ with all his might; "My Lord and my God." Sound and sincere believers, though slow and weak, shall be graciously accepted of the Lord Jesus. It is the duty of those who read and hear the gospel, to believe, to embrace the doctrine of Christ. There were other signs and proofs of our Lord's resurrection, but these were committed to writing, that all might believe that Jesus was the promised Messiah, the Savior of sinners, and the Son of God; that, by this faith, they might obtain eternal life, by his mercy, truth, and power. May we believe that Jesus is the Christ, and believing we have life through his name.

[John 20:26-29]

Works of the Lord

So Joshua went up from Gilgal, he and all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valor. And the Lord said to Joshua, "Do not fear them, for I have given them into your hands."

JOSHUA 10:7-8

The lowest and most feeble who just have begun to trust the Lord are as much entitled to be protected as those who have long and faithfully been his servants. It is our duty to defend the afflicted, who, like the Gibeonites, are brought into trouble on our account, or for the sake of the gospel. Joshua would not forsake his new vassals. How much less shall our true Joshua fail those who trust in him! We may be wanting in our trust, but our trust never can want success. Yet God's promises are not to slacken and do away, but to quicken and encourage our endeavors. Notice the great faith of Joshua, and the power of God answering it by the miraculous staying of the sun, that the day of Israel's victories might be made longer. Joshua acted on this occasion by impulse on his mind from the Spirit of God. It was not necessary that Joshua should speak, or the miracle be recorded, according to the modern terms of astronomy. The sun appeared to the Israelites over Gibeon and the moon over the valley of Ajalon, and there they appeared to be stopped on their course for one whole day. Is anything too hard for the Lord? forms a sufficient answer to ten thousand difficulties, which objectors have in every age started against the truth of God as revealed in his written word. Proclamation was hereby made to the neighboring nations, "Behold the works of the Lord, and say, 'What nation is there so great as Israel, who has God so nigh unto them?'"

[Joshua 10:7-14]

JULY 22

Help and Healing

And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

MARK 10:47

Bartimaeus had heard of Jesus and his miracles and learning that he was passing by hoped to recover his eyesight. In coming to Christ for help and healing, we should look to him as the promised Messiah. The gracious calls Christ gives us to come to him, encourage our hope, that if we come to him we shall have what we come for. Those who would come to Jesus must cast away the garment of their own sufficiency, and must free themselves from every weight and the sin that, like long garments, most easily besets them (Heb. 12:1). He begged that his eyes might be opened. It is very desirable to be able to earn our bread; and where God has given men limbs and senses, it is a shame, by foolishness and slothfulness, to make themselves, in effect, blind and lame. His eyes were opened. "Your faith has made you whole — faith in Christ as the Son of David, and in his pity and power; not your repeated words, but your faith; Christ setting your faith to work." Let sinners be exhorted to imitate blind Bartimaeus. Where the gospel is preached, or the written words of truth circulated, Jesus is passing by, and this is the opportunity. It is not enough to come to Christ for spiritual healing, but, when we are healed, we must continue to follow him; that we may honor him, and receive instruction from him. Those who have this spiritual eyesight see Christ's beauty and so run after him.

[Mark 10:46-52]

JULY 23

Mercy and Grace

We give thanks to you, O God; we give thanks, for your name is near. We recount your wondrous deeds.

PSALM 75:1

We often pray for mercy, when in pursuit of it; and shall we only once or twice give thanks, when we obtain it? God shows that he is nigh to us in what we call upon him for. Public trusts are to be managed uprightly. This may well be applied to Christ and his government. Man's sin threatened to destroy the whole creation; but Christ saved the world from utter ruin. He who is made of God to us wisdom, bids us be wise. To the proud, daring sinners he says, Boast not of your power, and persist not in contempt. All the present hopes and future happiness of the human race spring from the Son of God. No second causes will raise men to preferment without the First Cause. It comes neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. He mentions not the north; the same word that signifies the north, signifies the secret place; and from the secret of God's counsel it does come. From God alone all must receive their doom. There are mixtures of mercy and grace in the cup of affliction, when it is put into the hands of God's people; mixtures of the curse, when it is put into the hands of the wicked. God's people have their share in common calamities, but the dregs of the cup are for the wicked. The exaltation of the Son of David will be the subject of the saints' everlasting praises. Then let sinners submit to the King of righteousness, and let believers rejoice in and obey him.

[Psalm 75]

JULY 24

Christ's Two States

Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

PSALM 2:12

The example of our Lord Jesus Christ is set before us. We must resemble him in his life, if we would have the benefit of his death. Notice the two natures of Christ; his divine nature, and human nature. He was in the form of God, partook of the divine nature as the eternal and only-begotten Son of God (John 1:1). He did not think it a robbery to be equal with God, and to receive divine worship from men. His human nature; herein he became like us in all things except sin. Thus low, of his own will, he stooped from the glory he had with the Father before the world was. Christ's two states, of humiliation and exaltation, are noticed. Christ not only took upon him the likeness and fashion, or form of a man, but of one in a low state; not appearing in splendor. His whole life was a life of poverty and suffering. But the lowest step was his dying the death of the cross, the death of a malefactor and a slave; exposed to public hatred and scorn. The exaltation was of Christ's human nature, in union with the divine. At the name of Jesus, not the mere sound of the word, but the authority of Jesus, all should pay solemn homage. It is to the glory of God the Father, to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord; for it is his will, that all men should honor the Son as they honor the Father (John 5:23). Here we see such motives to self-denying love as nothing else can supply. Do we thus love and obey the Son of God?

[Psalm 2:5-11]

JULY 25

JULY

Fellowship in Suffering

More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance.

ROMANS 5:3

In these verses we have Christ suffering, and Christ praying; by which we are directed to look for crosses, and to look up to God under them. The very manner of Christ's death is described, though not in use among the Jews. They pierced his hands and his feet, which were nailed to the accursed tree, and his whole body was left so to hang as to suffer the most severe pain and torture. His natural force failed, being wasted by the fire of divine wrath preying upon his spirits. Who then can stand before God's anger? or who knows the power of it? The life of the sinner was forfeited, and the life of the Sacrifice must be the ransom for it. Our Lord Jesus was stripped, when he was crucified, that he might clothe us with the robe of his righteousness. Thus it was written; therefore thus it behooved Christ to suffer. Let all this confirm our faith in him as the true Messiah, and excite our love to him as the best of friends, who loved us, and suffered all this for us. Christ in his agony prayed, prayed earnestly, prayed that the cup might pass from him. When we cannot rejoice in God as our song, yet let us stay ourselves upon him as our strength; and take the comfort of spiritual supports, when we cannot have spiritual delights. He prays to be delivered from the divine wrath. He that has delivered, doth deliver, and will do so. We should think upon the sufferings and resurrection of Christ, till we feel in our souls the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings.

[Psalm 22:11-21]

JULY 26

FATHER'S COMPASSION

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest.

PSALM 22:1-2

The suffering of the Redeemer was graciously accepted as a full satisfaction for sin. Though it was offered for sinful men, the Father did not despise or abhor it for our sakes. This ought to be the matter of our thanksgiving. All humble, gracious souls should have a full satisfaction and happiness in him. Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, in Christ, do not labor for things that do not satisfy. Those who are much in praying, will be much in thanksgiving. Those that turn to God will make conscience of worshipping before him. Let every tongue confess that he is Lord. High and low, rich and poor, bond and free, meet in Christ. Seeing we cannot keep alive our own souls, it is our wisdom, by obedient faith, to commit our souls to Christ, who is able to save and keep them alive for ever. A seed shall serve him. God will have a church in the world to the end of time. They shall be accounted to him for a generation; he will be the same to them that he was to those who went before them. His righteousness, and not any of their own, they shall declare to be the foundation of all their hopes, and the fountain of all their joys. Redemption by Christ is the Lord's own doing. Here we see the free love and compassion of God the Father, and of our Lord Jesus Christ, for us wretched sinners, as the source of all grace and consolation.

[Psalm 22:22-31]

JULY 27

Loving Jesus

JULY

I love the Lord, because he has heard my voice and my pleas for mercy.

PSALM 116:1

We have many reasons for loving the Lord, but are most affected by his loving-kindness when relieved out of deep distress. When a poor sinner is awakened to a sense of his state, and fears that he must soon sink under the just wrath of God, then he finds trouble and sorrow. But let all such call upon the Lord to deliver their souls, and they will find him gracious and true to his promise. Neither ignorance nor guilt will hinder their salvation, when they put their trust in the Lord. Let us all speak of God as we have found him; and have we ever found him otherwise than just and good? It is of his mercies that we are not consumed. Let those who labor and are heavy laden come to him, that they may find rest to their souls; and if at all drawn from their rest, let them haste to return, remembering how bountifully the Lord has dealt with them. We should deem ourselves bound to walk as in his presence. It is a great mercy to be kept from being swallowed up with over-much sorrow. It is a great mercy for God to hold us by the right hand, so that we are not overcome and overthrown by a temptation. But when we enter the heavenly rest, deliverance from sin and sorrow will be complete; we shall behold the glory of the Lord, and walk in his presence with delight we cannot now conceive.

[Psalm 116:1-9]

JULY 28

Life and Holiness

I give you thanks, O Lord, with my whole heart; before the gods I sing your praise.

PSALM 138:1

When we can praise God with our whole heart, we need not be unwilling for the whole world to witness our gratitude and joy in him. Those who rely on his loving-kindness and truth through Jesus Christ will ever find him faithful to his word. If he spared not his own Son, how shall he not with him freely give us all things? If God gives us strength in our souls, to bear the burdens, resist the temptations, and to do the duties of an afflicted state, if he strengthens us to keep hold of himself by faith, and to wait with patience for the event, we are bound to be thankful. Though the Lord is high, yet he has respect to every lowly, humbled sinner; but the proud and unbelieving will be banished far from his blissful presence. Divine consolations have enough in them to revive us, even when we walk in the midst of troubles. And God will save his own people that they may be revived by the Holy Spirit, the Giver of life and holiness. If we give to God the glory of his mercy, we may take to ourselves the comfort. This confidence will not do away, but quicken prayer. Whatever good there is in us, it is God works in us both to will and to do. The Lord will perfect the salvation of every true believer, and he will never forsake those whom he has created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works.

[Psalm 138]

JULY 29

FRESH THANKS

JULY

I will sing a new song to you, O God; upon a ten-stringed harp I will play to you, who gives victory to kings, who rescues David his servant from the cruel sword.

PSALM 144:9-10

Fresh favors call for fresh returns of thanks; we must praise God for the mercies we hope for by his promise, as well as those we have received by his providence. To be saved from the hurtful sword, or from wasting sickness, without deliverance from the dominion of sin and the wrath to come, is but a small advantage. The public prosperity David desired for his people is stated. It adds much to the comfort and happiness of parents in this world, to see their children likely to do well. To see them as plants, not as weeds, not as thorns; to see them as plants growing, not withered and blasted; to see them likely to bring forth fruit unto God in their day; to see them in their youth growing strong in the Spirit. Plenty is to be desired, that we may be thankful to God, generous to our friends, and charitable to the poor; otherwise, what profit is it to have our garners full? Also, see uninterrupted peace. War brings abundance of mischiefs, whether it is to attack others or to defend ourselves. And in proportion as we do not adhere to the worship and service of God, we cease to be a happy people. The subjects of the Savior, the Son of David, share the blessings of his authority and victories, and are happy because they have the Lord for their God.

[Psalm 144:9-15]

JULY 30

Godly Homes

I will ponder the way that is blameless. Oh when will you come to me? I will walk with integrity of heart within my house.

PSALM 101:2

In this psalm we have David declaring how he intended to regulate his household, and to govern his kingdom, that he might stop wickedness, and encourage godliness. It is also applicable to private families, and is the householder's psalm. It teaches all that have any power, whether more or less, to use it so as to be a terror to evil-doers, and praise to them that do well. The chosen subject of the psalm is God's mercy and judgment. The Lord's providences concerning his people are commonly mixed; mercy and judgment. God has set the one over against the other, both to do good, like showers and sunshine. When, in his providence, he exercises us with the mixture of mercy and judgment, we must make suitable acknowledgments to him for both. Family mercies and family afflictions are both calls to family religion. Those who are in public stations are not thereby excused from care in governing their families; they are the more concerned to set a good example of ruling their own houses well. Whenever a man has a house of his own, let him seek to have God to dwell with him; and those may expect his presence, who walk with a perfect heart, in a perfect way. David resolves to practice no evil himself. He further resolves not to keep bad servants, nor to employ those about him that are wicked. He will not admit them into his family, lest they spread the infection of sin.

[Psalm 101]

JULY 31

JULY

Prayer and Sufferings

Do you work wonders for the dead? Do the departed rise up to praise you?

PSALM 88:10

Departed souls may declare God's faithfulness, justice, and loving-kindness; but deceased bodies can neither receive God's favors in comfort nor return them in praise. The psalmist resolved to continue in prayer, and the more so, because deliverance did not come speedily. Though our prayers are not soon answered, yet we must not give over praying. The greater our troubles, the more earnest and serious we should be in prayer. Nothing grieves a child of God so much as losing sight of him; nor is there anything he so much dreads as God's casting off his soul. If the sun be clouded, that darkens the earth; but if the sun should leave the earth, what a dungeon would it be! Even those designed for God's favors, may for a time suffer his terrors. See how deep those terrors wounded the psalmist. If friends are put far from us by providences, or death, we have reason to look upon it as affliction. Such was the calamitous state of a good man. But the pleas here used were peculiarly suited to Christ. And we are not to think that the holy Jesus suffered for us only at Gethsemane and on Calvary. His whole life was labor and sorrow; he was afflicted as never man was, from his youth up. He was prepared for that death of which he tasted through life. No man could share in the sufferings by which other men were to be redeemed. All forsook him, and fled. Oftentimes, blessed Jesus, do we forsake you; but do not forsake us, O take not your Holy Spirit from us!

[Psalm 88:10-18]

AUGUST 1

False Way

Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of the evil.

PROVERBS 4:14

The way of evil men may seem pleasant, and the nearest way to compass some end; but it is an evil way, and will end ill; if you love your God and your soul, avoid it. It is not said, Keep at a due distance, but at a great distance; never think you can get far enough from it. The way of the righteous is light; Christ is their Way, and he is the Light. The saints will not be perfect till they reach heaven, but there they shall shine as the sun in his strength. The way of sin is as darkness. The way of the wicked is dark, therefore dangerous; they fall into sin, but know not how to avoid it. They fall into trouble, but never seek to know wherefore God contends with them, nor what will be in the end of it. This is the way we are bid to shun. Attentive hearing the word of God is a good sign of a work of grace begun in the heart, and a good means of carrying it on. There is in the word of God a proper remedy for all diseases of the soul. Keep your heart with all diligence. We must set a strict guard upon our souls; keep our hearts from doing hurt, and getting hurt. A good reason is given; because out of it are the issues of life. Above all, we should seek from the Lord Jesus that living water, the sanctifying Spirit, issuing forth unto everlasting life.

[Proverbs 4:14-27]

AUGUST 2

The Messiah

In that day the Lord will whistle for the fly that is at the end of the streams of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria.

ISAIAH 7:18

Secret disaffection to God is often disguised with the color of respect to him. Those who are resolved that they will not trust God pretend they will not tempt him. The prophet reproved Ahaz and his court for the little value they had for divine revelation. Nothing is more grievous to God than distrust but the unbelief of man shall not make the promise of God of no effect; the Lord himself shall give a sign. However great your distress and danger, of you the Messiah is to be born, and you cannot be destroyed while that blessing is in you. It shall be brought to pass in a glorious manner; and the strongest consolations in time of trouble are derived from Christ, our relation to him, our interest in him, our expectations of him and from him. He would grow up like other children, by the use of the diet of those countries; but he would, unlike other children, uniformly refuse the evil and choose the good. And although his birth would be by the power of the Holy Ghost, yet he should not be fed with angels' food...If the prospect of the coming of the divine Savior was a never-failing support to the hopes of ancient believers, what cause have we to be thankful that the Word was made flesh! May we trust in and love him, and copy his example.

[Isaiah 7:10-16]

AUGUST 3

Heavy Trials

Be gracious to me, O God, for man tramples on me; all day long an attacker oppresses me; my enemies trample on me all day long, for many attack me proudly.

PSALM 56:1-2

The heavy and continued trials through which many of the Lord's people have passed, should teach us to be silent and patient under lighter crosses. Yet we are often tempted to repine and despond under small sorrows. For this we should check ourselves. David comforts himself, in his distress and fear, that God noticed all his grievances and all his griefs. God has a bottle and a book for his people's tears, both the tears for their sins, and those for their afflictions. He observes them with tender concern. Every true believer may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and then I will not fear what man shall do unto me; for man has no power but what is given him from above. Thy vows are upon me, O Lord; not as a burden, but as that by which I am known to be your servant; as a bridle that restrains me from what would be hurtful, and directs me in the way of my duty. And vows of thankfulness properly accompany prayers for mercy. If God deliver us from sin, either from doing it, or by his pardoning mercy, he has delivered our souls from death, which is the wages of sin. Where the Lord has begun a good work he will carry it on and perfect it. David hopes that God would keep him even from the appearance of sin. We should aim in all our desires and expectations of deliverance, both from sin and trouble, that we may do the better service to the Lord; that we may serve him without fear.

[Psalm 56:8-13]

AUGUST 4

Comfort in Prayer

AUGUST

When my spirit faints within me, you know my way!

PSALM 142:3

There can be no situation so distressing or dangerous in which faith will not get comfort from God by prayer. We are apt to show our troubles too much to ourselves, poring upon them, which does us no service; whereas, by showing them to God, we might cast the cares upon him who cares for us, and thereby ease ourselves. Nor should we allow any complaint to ourselves or others, which we cannot make to God. When our spirits are overwhelmed by distress, and filled with discouragement; when we see snares laid for us on every side, while we walk in his way, we may reflect with comfort that the Lord knows our path. Those who in sincerity take the Lord for their God shall find him all-sufficient, as a Refuge, and as a Portion; everything else is a refuge of lies, and a portion of no value. In this situation David prayed earnestly to God. We may apply it spiritually; the souls of believers are often straitened by doubts and fears. And it is then their duty and interest to beg of God to set them at liberty that they may run the way of his commandments. Thus the Lord delivered David from his powerful persecutors, and dealt bountifully with him. Thus he raised the crucified Redeemer to the throne of glory, and made him Head over all things for his church. Thus the convinced sinner cries for help, and is brought to praise the Lord in the company of his redeemed people; and thus all believers will at length be delivered from this evil world, from sin and death, and praise their Savior forever.

[Psalm 142]

AUGUST 5

Endless Praise

O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom have you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. Here is the sea, great and wide, which teems with creatures innumerable, living things both small and great.

PSALM 104:24-25

We are to praise and magnify God for the constant succession of day and night. And see how those are like to the wild beasts, who wait for the twilight, and have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. Does God listen to the language of mere nature, even in ravenous creatures, and shall he not much more interpret favorably the language of grace in his own people, through weak and broken groanings which cannot be uttered? There is the work of every day, which is to be done in its day, which man must apply to every morning, and which he must continue in till evening; it will be time enough to rest when the night comes, in which no man can work. The psalmist wonders at the works of God. The works of art, the more closely they are looked upon, the more rough they appear; the works of nature appear more fine and exact. They are all made in wisdom, for they all answer the end they were designed to serve. Every spring is an emblem of the resurrection, when a new world rises, as it were, out of the ruins of the old one; but man alone lives beyond death. When the Lord takes away his breath, his soul enters on another state, and his body will be raised, either to glory or to misery. May the Lord send forth his Spirit, and new-create our souls to holiness.

[Psalm 104:19-30]

AUGUST 6

Christ's Sheep

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

PSALM 23:6

The greatest abundance is but a dry pasture to a wicked man, who relishes in it only what pleases the senses; but to a godly man, who by faith tastes the goodness of God in all his enjoyments, though he has but little of the world, it is a green pasture. The Lord gives quiet and contentment in the mind, whatever the lot is. Are we blessed with the green pastures of the ordinances, let us not think it enough to pass through them, but let us abide in them. The consolations of the Holy Spirit are the still waters by which the saints are led; the streams which flow from the Fountain of living waters. Those only are led by the still waters of comfort that walk in the paths of righteousness. The way of duty is the truly pleasant way, and the work of righteousness is peace. In these paths we cannot walk, unless God lead us into them, and lead us on in them. Discontent and distrust proceed from unbelief; an unsteady walk is the consequence: let us then simply trust our Shepherd's care, and hearken to his voice. The valley of the shadow of death may denote the most severe and terrible affliction, or dark dispensation of providence, that the psalmist ever could come under. Between the part of the flock on earth and that which is gone to heaven, death lies like a dark valley that must be passed in going from one to the other ... It is but the shadow of death; the shadow of a serpent will not sting, nor will the shadow of a sword kill ... Death is a king of terrors, but not to the sheep of Christ.

[Psalm 23]

AUGUST 7

Looking to Jesus

If a man does not repent, God will whet his sword; he has bent and readied his bow; he has prepared for him his deadly weapons, making his arrows fiery shafts.

PSALM 7:12-13

David flees to God for succor. But Christ alone could call on heaven to attest his uprightness in all things. All his works were wrought in righteousness; and the prince of this world found nothing whereof justly to accuse him. Yet for our sakes, submitting to be charged as guilty, he suffered all evils, but, being innocent, he triumphed over all. The plea is, "For the righteous God tries the hearts and the reins." He knows the secret wickedness of the wicked, and how to bring it to an end; he is witness to the secret sincerity of the just, and has ways of establishing it. When a man has made peace with God about all his sins, upon the terms of grace and mercy, through the sacrifice of the Mediator, he may, in comparison with his enemies, appeal to God's justice to decide. David is confident that he shall find God his powerful Savior. The destruction of sinners may be prevented by their conversion; for it is threatened that if he does not turn from his evil way he will come to ruin. But amidst the threatenings of wrath, we have a gracious offer of mercy. God gives sinners warning of their danger, and space to repent, and prevent it. He is slow to punish, and long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish. The sinner is described as taking more pains to ruin his soul than, if directed aright, would save it. This is true, in a sense, of all sinners. Let us look to the Savior under all our trials.

[Psalm 7]

AUGUST 8

Tempests and Storms

Thus says the Lord of hosts: These people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the Lord.

HAGGAI 1:2

Those employed for God may be driven from their work by a storm, yet they must go back to it. They did not say that they would not build a temple, but, "not yet." Thus men do not say they will never repent and reform, and be religious, but, "not yet." And so the great business we were sent into the world to do, is not done. There is a proneness in us to think wrongly of discouragements in our duty, as if they were a discharge from our duty, when they are only for the trial of our courage and faith. They neglected the building of God's house, that they might have more time and money for worldly affairs. That the punishment might answer to the sin, the poverty they thought to prevent by not building the temple, God brought upon them for not building it. Many good works have been intended, but not done, because men supposed the proper time was not come. Thus believers let slip opportunities of usefulness, and sinners delay the concerns of their souls, till too late. If we labor only for the meat that perishes, as the Jews here, we are in danger of losing our labor; but we are sure it shall not be in vain in the Lord, if we labor for the meat which lasts to eternal life. If we would have the comfort and continuance of temporal enjoyments, we must have God as our Friend.

[Haggai 1:1-11]

AUGUST 9

Hearty in Service

I will take you, O Zerubbabel my servant, the son of Shealtiel, declares the Lord, and make you like a signet ring, for I have chosen you, declares the Lord of hosts.

HAGGAI 2:23

Those who are hearty in the Lord's service shall receive encouragement to proceed. But they could not build such a temple then, as Solomon built. Though our gracious God is pleased if we do as well as we can in his service, yet our proud hearts will scarcely let us be pleased, unless we do as well as others, whose abilities are far beyond ours. Encouragement is given the Jews to go on in the work notwithstanding. They have God with them, his Spirit and his special presence. Though he chastens their transgressions, his faithfulness does not fail. The Spirit still remained among them. And they shall have the Messiah among them shortly. Convulsions and changes would take place in the Jewish church and state, but first should come great revolutions and commotions among the nations. He shall come, as the Desire of all nations; desirable to all nations, for in him shall all the earth be blessed with the best of blessings; long expected and desired by all believers. The house they were building should be filled with glory, very far beyond Solomon's temple. This house shall be filled with glory of another nature. If we have silver and gold, we must serve and honor God with it, for the property is his. If we have not silver and gold, we must honor him with such as we have, and he will accept us. Let them be comforted that the glory of this latter house shall be greater than that of the former, in what would be beyond all the glories of the first house, the presence of the Messiah, the Son of God, the Lord of glory, personally, and in human nature.

[Haggai 2:1-9]

AUGUST 10

Infinite Worth

AUGUST

...so that the tested genuineness of your faith – more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire – may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

I PETER 1:7

Persons of strong passions are apt to be cast down with any trifle that crosses them, or to be lifted up with a trifle that pleases them. See what our creature-comforts are, and what we may expect them to be; they are withering things. A small worm at the root destroys a large gourd: our gourds wither, and we know not what the cause is. Perhaps creature-comforts are continued to us, but are made bitter; the creature is continued, but the comfort is gone. God prepared a wind to make Jonah feel the want of the gourd. It is just that those who love to complain should never be left without something to complain of. When afflicting providences take away relations, possessions, and enjoyments, we must not be angry at God. What should especially silence discontent, is, that when our gourd is gone, our God is not gone. Sin and death are very dreadful, yet Jonah, in his heat, makes light of both. One soul is of more value than the whole world; surely then one soul is of more value than many gourds: we should have more concern for our own and others' precious souls, than for the riches and enjoyments of this world. It is a great encouragement to hope we shall find mercy with the Lord, that he is ready to show mercy ... Do we wonder at the forbearance of God towards his perverse servant? Let us study our own hearts and ways; let us not forget our own ingratitude and obstinacy; and let us be astonished at God's patience towards us.

[Jonah 4:5-11]

AUGUST 11

Peace with God

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

ROMANS 5:1

A blessed change takes place in the sinner's state when he becomes a true believer, whatever he has been. Being justified by faith he has peace with God. The holy, righteous God cannot be at peace with a sinner, while under the guilt of sin. Justification takes away the guilt, and so makes way for peace. This is through our Lord Jesus Christ; through him as the great Peace-maker, the Mediator between God and man. The saints' happy state is a state of grace. Into this grace we are brought, which teaches that we were not born in this state. We could not have got into it of ourselves, but we are led into it, as pardoned offenders. Therein we stand, a posture that denotes perseverance; we stand firm and safe, upheld by the power of the enemy. And those who have hope for the glory of God hereafter have enough to rejoice in now. Tribulation works patience, not in and of itself, but the powerful grace of God working in and with the tribulation. Patient sufferers have most of the divine consolations, which abound as afflictions abound. It works needful experience of ourselves. This hope will not disappoint, because it is sealed with the Holy Spirit as a Spirit of love. It is the gracious work of the blessed Spirit to shed abroad the love of God in the hearts of all the saints. A right sense of God's love to us will make us not ashamed, either of our hope, or of our sufferings for him.

[Romans 5:1-5]

AUGUST 12

Christ's Blessings

On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples.

JOHN 2:1-2

It is very desirable when there is a marriage, to have Christ own and bless it. Those that would have Christ with them at their marriage must invite him by prayer, and he will come. While in this world we sometimes find ourselves in straits, even when we think ourselves in fullness. There was want at a marriage feast. Those who are come to care for the things of the world, must look for trouble, and count upon disappointment. In our addresses to Christ, we must humbly spread our case before him, and then refer ourselves to him to do as he pleases. In Christ's reply to his mother there was no disrespect. He used the same word when speaking to her with affection from the cross; yet it is a standing testimony against the idolatry of after-ages, in giving undue honors to his mother. His hour is come when we know not what to do. Delays of mercy are not denials of prayer. Those that expect Christ's favors must observe his orders with ready obedience. The way of duty is the way to mercy; and Christ's methods must not be objected against. The beginning of Moses' miracles was turning water into blood (Exod. 7:20); the beginning of Christ's miracles was turning water into wine; which may remind us of the difference between the law of Moses and the gospel of Christ. He showed that he improves creature-comforts to all true believers, and make them comforts indeed. And Christ's works are all for use.

[John 2:1-11]

AUGUST 13

Knows Our Hearts

But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.

JOHN 2:24-25

The first public work in which we find Christ engaged, was driving from the temple the traders whom the covetous priests and rulers encouraged to make a market-place of its courts. Those now make God's house a house of merchandise, whose minds are filled with cares about worldly business when attending religious exercises, or who perform divine offices for love of gain. Christ, having thus cleansed the temple, gave a sign to those who demanded it, to prove his authority for so doing. He foretells his death by the Jews' malice, "Destroy this temple; I will permit you to destroy it." He foretells his resurrection by his own power: "In three days I will raise it up." Christ took against his own life. Men mistake by understanding that according to the letter, which the Scripture speaks by way of figure. When Jesus was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered he has said this. It helps much in understanding the divine word, to observe the fulfilling of the Scriptures. Our Lord knew all men, their nature, dispositions, affections, designs, so as we do not know any man, not even ourselves. He knows his crafty enemies, and all their secret projects; his false friends, and their true characters. He knows who are truly his, knows their uprightness, and knows their weaknesses. We know what is done by men; Christ knows what is in them, he tries the heart. Beware of a dead faith, or a formal profession: carnal, empty professors are not to be trusted, and however men impose on others or themselves, they cannot impose on the heart-searching God.

[John 2:12-25]

AUGUST 14

Sin and Misery

He sent out his word and healed them, and delivered them from their destruction. Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man!

PSALM 107:20-21

If we knew no sin, we should know no sickness. Sinners are fools. They hurt their bodily health by intemperance, and endanger their lives by indulging their appetites. Thus their way is their folly. The weakness of the body is the effect of sickness. It is by the power and mercy of God that we are recovered from sickness, and it is our duty to be thankful. All Christ's miraculous cures were emblems of his healing diseases of the soul. It is also to be applied to the spiritual cures which the Spirit of grace works. He sends his word, and heals souls; convinces, converts them, makes them holy, and all by the word. Even in common cases of recovery from sickness, God in his providence speaks, and it is done; by his word and Spirit the soul is restored to health and holiness. Let those who go to sea, consider and adore the Lord. Mariners have their business upon the tempestuous ocean, and there witness deliverances of which others cannot form an idea. How seasonable it is at such a time to pray! This may remind us of the terrors and distress of conscience many experience, and of those deep scenes of trouble which many pass through, in their Christian course. Yet, in answer to their cries, the Lord turns their storm into a calm, and causes their trials to end in gladness.

[Psalm 107:17-32]

AUGUST 15

Selfishness and Love

Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up!

ECCLESIASTES 4:9-10

Frequently, the more men have the more they would have; and on this they are so intent, that they get no enjoyment from what they have. Selfishness is the cause of this evil. A selfish man cares for nobody; there is none to take care of but himself, and yet he will scarcely allow necessary rest to himself and the people he employs. He never thinks he has enough. He has enough for his calling, for his family, but he has not enough for his eyes. Many are so set upon the world, that in pursuit of it they bereave themselves, not only of the favor of God and eternal life, but of the pleasures of this life. The distant relations or strangers who inherit such a man's wealth never thank him. Covetousness gathers strength by time and habit; men tottering on the brink of the grave, grow more grasping and griping. Alas, and how often do we see men professing to be followers of him, who, though he was rich, for our sakes became poor, anxiously scraping money together and holding it fast, excusing themselves by commonplace talking about the necessity of care, and the danger of extravagance! Surely he has more satisfaction in life who labors hard to maintain those he loves, than the miser has in his toil. In all things union tends to success and safety, but above all, the union of Christians. They assist each other by encouragement, or friendly reproof. They warm each other's hearts while they converse together of the love of Christ, or join in singing his praises. Let us improve our opportunities of Christian fellowship.

[Ephesians 4:7-12]

AUGUST 16

Blessed John

And Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up..."

MATTHEW 11:4-5

What Christ said concerning John was not only for his praise but for the people's profit. Those who attend on the word will be called to give an account of their improvements. Do we think when the sermon is done, the care is over? No, then the greatest of the care begins. John was a self-denying man, dead to all the pomps of the world and the pleasures of sense. It becomes people, in all their appearances, to be consistent with their character and their situation. John was a great and good man, yet not perfect; therefore he came short of glorified saints. The least in heaven knows more, loves more, and does more in praising God, and receives more from him, than the greatest in this world. But by the kingdom of heaven here, is rather to be understood the kingdom of grace, the gospel dispensation in its power and purity. What reason we have to be thankful that our lot is cast in the days of the kingdom of heaven, under such advantages of light and love! Multitudes were wrought upon by the ministry of John, and became his disciples. And those strove for a place in this kingdom, that one would think had neither right nor title to it, and so seemed to be intruders. It shows us what fervency and zeal are required of all. Self must be denied; the bent, the frame and temper of the mind must be altered. Those who will have an interest in the great salvation, will have it upon any terms, and not think them hard, nor quit their hold without a blessing.

[Matthew 11:7-15]

AUGUST 17

Convinced Sinners

At that time Jesus declared, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children..."

MATTHEW 11:25

It becomes children to be grateful. When we come to God as a Father, we must remember that he is Lord of heaven and earth, which obliges us to come to him with reverence as to the sovereign Lord of all; yet with confidence, as one able to defend us from evil, and to supply us with all good. Our blessed Lord added a remarkable declaration, that the Father had delivered into his hands all power, authority, and judgment. We are indebted to Christ for all the revelation we have of God the Father's will and love, ever since Adam sinned. Our Savior has invited all that labor and are heavy-laden, to come unto him. In some senses all men are so. Worldly men burden themselves with fruitless cares for wealth and honors; the gay and the sensual labor in pursuit of pleasures; the slave of Satan and his own lusts, is the merest drudge on earth. Those who labor to establish their own righteousness also labor in vain. The convinced sinner is heavy-laden with guilt and terror; and the tempted and afflicted believer has labors and burdens. Christ invites all to come to him for rest to their souls. He alone gives this invitation; men come to him, when, feeling their guilt and misery, and believing his love and power to help, they seek him in fervent prayer. Thus it is the duty and interest of weary and heavy-laden sinners, to come to Jesus Christ.

[Matthew 11:25-30]

AUGUST 18

High as Heaven

To you, O Lord, I call; my rock, be not deaf to me, lest, if you be silent to me, I become like those who go down to the pit.

PSALM 28:1

Has God heard our supplications? Let us then bless his name. The Lord is my strength, to support me, and carry me on through all my services and sufferings. The heart that truly believes, shall in due time greatly rejoice: we are to expect joy and peace in believing. God shall have the praise of it: thus must we express our gratitude. The saints rejoice in others' comfort as well as their own: we have the less benefit from the light of the sun, nor from the light of God's countenance, for others' sharing therein. The psalmist concludes with a short, but comprehensive prayer. God's people are his inheritance, and precious in his eyes. He prays that God would save them; that he would bless them with all good, especially the plenty of his ordinances, which are food to the soul. And direct their actions and overrule their affairs for good. Also, lift them up forever; not only those of that age, but his people in every age to come; lift them up as high as heaven. There, and there only, will saints be lifted up forever, never more to sink, or be depressed. Save us, Lord Jesus, from our sins; bless us, Son of Abraham, with the blessing of righteousness; feed us, good Shepherd of the sheep, and lift us up forever from the dust, O you, who are the Resurrection and the Life.

[Psalm 28:6-9]

AUGUST 19

God Our Hope

Thus says the Lord: "Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the Lord. He is like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see any good come. He shall dwell in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land."

JEREMIAH 17:5-6

He who puts confidence in man shall be like the heath in a desert, a naked tree, a sorry shrub, the product of barren ground, useless and worthless. Those who trust to their own righteousness and strength, and think they can do without Christ, make flesh their arm, and their souls cannot prosper in graces or comforts. Those who make God their hope shall flourish like a tree always green, whose leaf does not wither. They shall be fixed in peace and satisfaction of mind; they shall not be anxious in a year of drought. Those who make God their hope have enough in him to make up the want of all creature-comforts. They shall not cease from yielding fruit in holiness and good works. The heart, the conscience of man, in his corrupt and fallen state, is deceitful above all things. It calls evil good, and good evil; and cries peace to those to whom it does not belong. Herein the heart is desperately wicked; it is deadly, it is desperate. The case is bad indeed, if the conscience, which should set right the errors of other faculties, is a leader in the delusion. We cannot know our own hearts, or what they will do in an hour of temptation. Who can understand his errors? Much less can we know the hearts of others, or depend upon them ... Men may be imposed upon, but God cannot be deceived.

[Jeremiah 17:5-11]

AUGUST 20

Days of Prayer

AUGUST

I cry aloud to God, aloud to God, and he will hear me.

PSALM 77:1

Days of trouble must be days of prayer; when God seems to have withdrawn from us, we must seek him till we find him. In the day of his trouble the psalmist did not seek for the diversion of business or amusement, but he sought God, and his favor and grace. Those that are under trouble of mind must pray it away. He pored upon the trouble; the methods that should have relieved him did but increase his grief. When he remembered God, it was only the divine justice and wrath. His spirit was overwhelmed, and sank under the load. But let not the remembrance of the comforts we have lost, make us unthankful for those that are left. Particularly he called to remembrance the comforts with which he supported himself in former sorrows. Here is the language of a sorrowful, deserted soul, walking in darkness; a common case even among those that fear the Lord. Nothing wounds and pierces like the thought of God being angry. God's own people, in a cloudy and dark day, may be tempted to make wrong conclusions about their spiritual state, and that of God's kingdom in the world. But we must not give way to such fears. Let faith answer them from the Scripture. The troubled fountain will work itself clear again; and the recollection of former times of joyful experience often raises a hope, tending to relief. Doubts and fears proceed from the want and weakness of faith. Despondency and distrust under affliction, are too often the infirmities of believers, and, as such, are to be thought upon by us with sorrow and shame. When, unbelief is working in us, we must thus suppress its risings.

[Psalm 77:1-10]

AUGUST 21

Stand in Awe

Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?

EXODUS 15:11

The favor and protection of God are the only sure rest and comfort of the soul in this evil world. Christ Jesus is the refuge and dwelling-place to which we may repair. We are dying creatures, all our comforts in the world are dying comforts, but God is an ever-living God, and believers find him so. When God, by sickness, or other afflictions, turns men to destruction, he thereby calls men to return unto him to repent of their sins, and live a new life. A thousand years are nothing to God's eternity: between a minute and a million of years there is some proportion; between time and eternity there is none. All the events of a thousand years, whether past or to come, are more present to the Eternal Mind, than what was done in the last hour is to us. And in the resurrection, the body and soul shall both return and be united again. Time passes unobserved by us, as with men asleep; and when it is past, it is as nothing. It is a short and quickly-passing life, as the waters of a flood. Man does but flourish as the grass, which, when the winter of old age comes, will wither; but he may be mown down by disease or disaster. The afflictions of the saints often come from God's love; but the rebukes of sinners, and of believers for their sins, must be seen coming from the displeasure of God ... See the folly of those who go about to cover their sins, for they cannot do so. Our years, when gone, can no more be recalled than the words that we have spoken ... We are taught by all this to stand in awe.

[Psalm 90:1-11]

AUGUST 22

Perfect Love

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

I JOHN 4:7

The Spirit of God is the Spirit of love. He that does not love the image of God in his people has no saving knowledge of God. For it is God's nature to be kind, and to give happiness. The law of God is love; and all would have been perfectly happy, had all obeyed it. The provision of the gospel, for the forgiveness of sin, and the salvation of sinners, consistently with God's glory and justice, shows that God is love. Mystery and darkness rest upon many things yet. God has so shown himself to be love, that we cannot come short of eternal happiness, unless through unbelief and impenitence, although strict justice would condemn us to hopeless misery, because we break our Creator's laws. None of our words or thoughts can do justice to the free, astonishing love of a holy God towards sinners, who could not profit or harm him, whom he might justly crush in a moment, and whose deserving of his vengeance was shown in the method by which they were saved, though he could by his almighty Word have created other worlds, with more perfect beings, if he had seen fit. Should we search the whole universe for love in its most glorious displays? It is to be found in the person and the cross of Christ. Does love exist between God and sinners? Here was the origin, not that we loved God, but that he freely loved us. His love could not be designed to be fruitless upon us, and when its proper end and issue are gained and produced, it may be said to be perfected.

[1 John 4:7-13]

AUGUST 23

Wondrous Love

No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

I JOHN 4:12

The Father sent the Son; he willed his coming into this world. The apostle attests this. And whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwells in him, and he in God. This confession includes faith in the heart as the foundation; makes acknowledgment with the mouth to the glory of God and Christ, and profession in the life and conduct, against the flatteries and frowns of the world. There must be a day of universal judgment. Happy those who shall have holy boldness before the Judge at that day; knowing he is their Friend and Advocate! Happy those who have holy boldness in the prospect of that day, who look and wait for it, and for the Judge's appearance! True love to God assures believers of God's love to them. Love teachès us to suffer for him and with him; therefore we may trust that we shall also be glorified with him. We must distinguish between the fear of God and being afraid of him; the fear of God imports high regard and veneration for God. Obedience and good works, done from the principle of love, are not like the servile toil of one who unwillingly labors from dread of a master's anger. They are like that of a dutiful child, who does services to a beloved father, which benefit his brethren, and are done willingly. It is a sign that our love is far from perfect, when our doubts, fears, and apprehensions of God, are many. Let heaven and earth stand amazed at his love ... The love of God in Christ, in the hearts of Christians from the Spirit of adoption, is the great proof of conversion.

[1 John 4:14-21]

AUGUST 24

Christian Duty

For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.

DEUTERONOMY 4:24

Did we consider what a God he is with whom we have to do, we should surely make conscience of our duty to him, and not dare to sin against him. Shall we forsake a merciful God, who will never forsake us, if we are faithful unto him? Whither can we go? Let us be held to our duty by the bonds of love, and prevailed with by the mercies of God to cleave to him. Moses urged God's authority over them, and their obligations to him. In keeping God's commandments they would act wisely for themselves. The fear of the Lord is wisdom. Those who enjoy the benefit of divine light and laws ought to support their character for wisdom and honor, that God may be glorified thereby. Those who call upon God shall certainly find him within call, ready to give an answer of peace to every prayer of faith. All these statutes and judgments of the divine law are just and righteous, above the statutes and judgments of any of the nations. What they saw at Mount Sinai, gave an earnest of the Day of Judgment, in which the Lord Jesus shall be revealed in flaming fire. They must also remember what they heard at Mount Sinai. God manifests himself in the works of the creation, without speech or language, yet their voice is heard; but to Israel he made himself known by speech and language, condescending to their weakness. The rise of this nation was quite different from the origin of all other nations. See the reasons of free grace; we are not beloved for our own sakes, but for Christ's sake.

[Deuteronomy 4:24-40]

AUGUST 25

The Believer's Happiness

The day that is coming shall set them ablaze, says the Lord of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch.

MALACHI 4:1B

Here is a reference to the first and to the second coming of Christ: God has fixed the day of both. Those who do wickedly, who do not fear God's anger, shall feel it. It is certainly to be applied to the Day of Judgment, when Christ shall be revealed in flaming fire; to execute judgment on the proud, and all that do wickedly. In both, Christ is a rejoicing Light to those who serve him faithfully. By the Sun of Righteousness we understand Jesus Christ. Through him believers are justified and sanctified, and so are brought to see light. His influences render the sinner holy, joyful, and fruitful. It is applicable to the graces and comforts of the Holy Spirit, brought into the souls of men. Christ gave the Spirit to those who are his, to shine in their hearts, and to be a Comforter to them, a Sun and a Shield. That day which to the wicked will burn as an oven, will to the righteous be bright as the morning; it is what they wait for, more than those that wait for the morning. Christ came as the Sun, to bring, not only light to a dark world, but health to a distempered world. Souls shall increase in knowledge and spiritual strength. Their growth is as that of calves of the stall, not as the flower of the field, which is slender and weak, and soon withers. The saints' triumphs are all owing to God's victories; it is not they that do this, but God who does it for them ... How great then the happiness of the believer, when he goes from the darkness and misery of this world, to rejoice in the Lord for evermore!

[Malachi 4:1-3]

AUGUST 26

TO CHRIST AND HOLINESS

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes.

MALACHI 4:5

Conscience bids us remember the law. Though we have not prophets, yet, as long as we have Bibles, we may keep up our communion with God. Let others boast in their proud reasoning, and call it enlightening, but let us keep near to that sacred word, through which this Sun of Righteousness shines upon the souls of his people. They must keep up a believing expectation of the gospel of Christ, and must look for the beginning of it. John the Baptist preached repentance and reformation, as Elijah had done. The turning of souls to God and their duty is the best preparation of them for the great and dreadful day of the Lord. John shall preach a doctrine that shall reach men's hearts, and work a change in them. Thus he shall prepare the way for the kingdom of heaven. The Jewish nation, by wickedness, laid themselves open to the curse. God was ready to bring ruin upon them; but he will once more try whether they will repent and return; therefore he sent John the Baptist to preach repentance to them. Let the believer wait with patience for his release, and cheerfully expect the great day, when Christ shall come the second time to complete our salvation. But those must expect to be smitten with a sword with a curse who turn not to him that smites them with a rod. None can expect to escape the curse of God's broken law, or to enjoy the happiness of his chosen and redeemed people, unless their hearts are turned from sin and the world, to Christ and holiness.

[Malachi 4:4-6]

AUGUST 27

Petitions for Mercy

Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me, for in you my soul takes refuge; in the shadow of your wings I will take refuge, till the storms of destruction pass by.

PSALM 57:1

All David's dependence is upon God. The most eminent believers need often repeat the publican's prayer, "God be merciful to me a sinner." But if our souls trust in the Lord, this may assure us, in our utmost dangers, that our calamities will at length be overpast, and in the mean time, by faith and prayer, we must make him our refuge. Though God be most high, yet he condescends so low, as to take care that all things are made to work for good to his people. This is a good reason why we should pray earnestly. Look which way we will on this earth, refuge fails, and no help appears; but we may look for it from heaven. If we have fled from the wrath to come, unto Jesus Christ, he that performed all things needful to purchase the salvation of his people will do for us and in us all things needful for our enjoyment of it. It made David droop to think there should be those that bore him so much ill-will. But the mischief they designed against him, returned on themselves. And when David was in the greatest distress and disgrace, he did not pray, "Lord, exalt me," but, "Lord, exalt your own name." Our best encouragement in prayer, is taken from the glory of God, and to that, more than to our own comfort, we should have regard in all our petitions for mercy.

[Psalm 57:1-6]

AUGUST 28

O w n i n g G o d ' s H a n d

My days are like an evening shadow; I wither away like grass.

PSALM 102:11

We are dying creatures but God is an everlasting God, the protector of his church; we may be confident that it will not be neglected. When we consider our own vileness, our darkness and deadness, and the manifold defects in our prayers, we have cause to fear that they will not be received in heaven; but we are here assured of the contrary, for we have an Advocate with the Father, and are under grace, not under the law. Redemption is the subject of praise in the Christian church; and that great work is described by the temporal deliverance and restoration of Israel. Look down upon us, Lord Jesus; and bring us into the glorious liberty of your children, that we may bless and praise your name. Bodily distempers soon weaken our strength, then what can we expect but that our months should be cut off in the midst; and what should we do but provide accordingly? We must own God's hand in it; and must reconcile this to his love, for often those that have used their strength well, have it weakened; and those who, as we think, can very ill be spared, have their days shortened. It is very comfortable, in reference to all the changes and dangers of the church, to remember that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. In reference to the death of our bodies and the removal of friends it is best to remember that God is an everlasting God. Do not let us overlook the assurance this psalm contains of a happy end to all the believer's trials. Though all things are changing, dying, perishing, like a vesture folding up and hastening to decay, yet Jesus lives, and thus all is secure; "Because I live you also will live" (John 14:19).

[Psalm 102:12-28]

AUGUST 29

Great and Precious Promises

Blessed is the man whom you discipline, O Lord, and whom you teach out of your law.

PSALM 94:12

That man is blessed, who, under the chastening of the Lord, is taught his will and his truths, from his holy word, and by the Holy Spirit. He should see mercy through his sufferings. There is a rest remaining for the people of God after the days of their adversity, which shall not last always. He that sends the trouble will send the rest. The psalmist found succor and relief only in the Lord, when all earthly friends failed. We are beholden, not only to God's power, but to his pity, for spiritual supports; and if we have been kept from falling into sin, or shrinking from our duty, we should give him the glory, and encourage our brethren. The psalmist had many troubled thoughts concerning the case he was in, concerning the course he should take, and what was likely to be the end of it. The indulgence of such contrivances and fears, adds to care and distrust, and renders our views more gloomy and confused. Good men sometimes have perplexed and distressed thoughts concerning God. But let them look to the great and precious promises of the gospel. The world's comforts give little delight to the soul, when hurried with melancholy thoughts; but God's comforts bring that peace and pleasure which the smiles of the world cannot give, and which the frowns of the world cannot take away. God is his people's Refuge, to whom they may flee, in whom they are safe, and may be secure. And he will reckon with the wicked. A man cannot be more miserable than his own wickedness will make him, if the Lord visits it upon him.

[Psalm 94:12-23]

AUGUST 30

Word of God

AUGUST

The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.

PSALM 19:7

The Holy Scripture is of much greater benefit to us than day or night than the air we breathe or the light of the sun. To recover man out of his fallen state, there is need of the word of God. The word translated "law," may be rendered doctrine, and be understood as meaning all that teaches us true religion. The whole is perfect; its tendency is to convert or turn the soul from sin and the world, to God and holiness. It shows our sinfulness and misery in departing from God, and the necessity of our return to him. This testimony is sure, to be fully depended on: the ignorant and unlearned believing what God says become wise unto salvation. It is a sure direction in the way of duty. It is a sure fountain of living comforts, and a sure foundation of lasting hopes. The commandments of the Lord are pure, holy, just, and good. By them we discover our need of a Savior; and then learn how to adorn his gospel. They are the means which the Holy Spirit uses in enlightening the eyes; they bring us to a sight and sense of our sin and misery, and direct us in the way of duty. The fear of the Lord, that is, true religion and godliness, is clean and it will cleanse our way; it endures forever. The judgments of the Lord, his precepts, are true; they are righteous, and they are so altogether; there is no unrighteousness in any of them. Gold is only for the body, and the concerns of time; but grace is for the soul, and the concerns of eternity. The word of God, received by faith, is more precious than gold; it is sweet to the soul, sweeter than honey.

[Psalm 19:7-10]

AUGUST 31

To Live to Praise

Sing praises to the Lord, O you his saints, and give thanks to his holy name.

PSALM 30:4

When things are well with us, we are very apt to think that they will always be so. When we see our mistake, it becomes us to think with shame upon our carnal security as our folly. If God hide his face, a good man is troubled, though no other calamity befalls him. But if God, in wisdom and justice, turn from us, it will be the greatest folly if we turn from him. No; let us learn to pray in the dark. The sanctified spirit, which returns to God, shall praise him, shall be still praising him; but the services of God's house cannot be performed by the dust; it cannot praise him; there is none of that device or working in the grave, for it is the land of silence. We ask aright for life, when we do so that we may live to praise him. In due time God delivered the psalmist out of his troubles. Our tongue is our glory, and never more so than when employed in praising God. He would persevere to the end in praise, hoping that he should shortly be where this would be the everlasting work. But let all beware of carnal security. Neither outward prosperity, nor inward peace, here, are sure and lasting. The Lord, in his favor, has fixed the believer's safety firm as the deep-rooted mountains, but he must expect to meet with temptations and afflictions. When we grow careless, we fall into sin, the Lord hides his face, our comforts droop, and troubles assail us.

[Psalm 30]

SEPTEMBER 1

He Does Not Slumber

*I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come?
My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.*

PSALM 121:1-2

We must not rely upon men and means, instruments and second causes. Shall I depend upon the strength of the hills or upon princes and great men? No; my confidence is in God only. Or, we must lift up our eyes above the hills; we must look to God who makes all earthly things to us what they are. We must see all our help in God; from him we must expect it, in his own way and time. We are taught to comfort ourselves in the Lord when difficulties and dangers are greatest. It is almighty wisdom that contrives, and almighty power that works the safety of those that put themselves under God's protection. He is a wakeful, watchful Keeper; he is never weary. He not only does not sleep, but he does not so much as slumber. Under this shade they may sit with delight and assurance. He is always near his people for their protection and refreshment. The right hand is the working hand; let them but turn to their duty, and they shall find God ready to give them success. He will take care that his people shall not fall. You shall not be hurt, neither by the open assaults nor by the secret attempts of your enemies. The Lord shall prevent the evil you fear and sanctify, remove, and lighten the evil you feel. He will preserve the soul, that it is not defiled by sin and disturbed by affliction; he will preserve you from perishing eternally. He will keep you in life and death, when you go out to your labor in the morning of your days and when you come home to your rest when the evening of old age calls you in.

[Psalm 121]

S E P T E M B E R 2

C o n f i d e n c e a n d J o y

And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family.

ACTS 16:32-33

The consolations of God to his suffering servants are neither few nor small. How much more happy are true Christians than their prosperous enemies! As in the dark, so out of the depths, we may cry unto God. No place, no time is amiss for prayer, if the heart be lifted up to God. No trouble, however grievous, should hinder us from praise. Christianity proves itself to be of God, in that it obliges us to be just to our own lives. Paul cried aloud to make the jailer hear, and to make him heed, saying, "Do yourself no harm." All the cautions of the word of God against sin, and all appearances of it, and approaches to it, have this tendency. Even as to the body, we are cautioned against the sins which do harm to that. Converting grace changes people's language of and to good people and good ministers. How serious the jailer's inquiry! His salvation becomes his great concern; that lies nearest his heart, which before was furthest from his thoughts. It is his own precious soul that he is concerned about. Those who are thoroughly convinced of sin, and truly concerned about their salvation, will give themselves up to Christ ...When the fruits of faith begin to appear, terrors will be followed by confidence and joy in God.

[Acts 16:25-34]

SEPTEMBER 3

Meeting God

Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob, who turns the rock into a pool of water, the flint into a spring of water.

PSALM 114:7-8

Let us acknowledge God's power and goodness in what he did for Israel, applying it to that much greater work of wonder, our redemption by Christ; and encourage ourselves and others to trust in God in the greatest straits. When Christ comes for the salvation of his people, he redeems them from the power of sin and Satan, separates them from an ungodly world, forms them to be his people, and becomes their King. There is no sea, no Jordan, so deep, so broad, but, when God's time is come, it shall be divided and driven back. Apply this to planting the Christian church in the world. What ailed Satan and his idolatries that they trembled as they did? But especially apply it to the work of grace in the heart. What turns the stream in a regenerate soul? What affects the lusts and corruptions that they fly back; that prejudices are removed, and the whole man becomes new? It is at the presence of God's Spirit. At the presence of the Lord, not only mountains, but the earth itself may well tremble, since it has lain under a curse for man's sin. As the Israelites were protected, so they were provided for by miracles; such was that fountain of waters into which the flinty rock was turned, and that rock was Christ. The Son of God, the Rock of Ages, gave himself to death, to open a fountain to wash away sins and to supply believers with waters of life and consolation; and they need not fear that any blessing is too great to expect from his love ... Let us now prepare to meet our God, that we may have boldness before him at his coming.

[Psalm 114]

SEPTEMBER 4

Type of Christ

Vindicate me, O Lord, for I have walked in my integrity, and I have trusted in the Lord without wavering.

PSALM 26:1

David here, by the Spirit of prophecy, speaks of himself as a type of Christ, of whom what he here says of his spotless innocence was fully and eminently true, and of Christ only, and to Him we may apply it. We are complete in him. The man that walks in his integrity, yet trusting wholly in the grace of God, is in a state of acceptance, according to the covenant of which Jesus was the Mediator, in virtue of his spotless obedience even unto death. This man desires to have his inmost soul searched and proved by the Lord. He is aware of the deceitfulness of his own heart; he desires to detect and mortify every sin; and he longs to be satisfied of his being a true believer, and to practice the holy commands of God. Great care to avoid bad company is both a good evidence of our integrity, and a good means to keep us in it. Hypocrites and dissemblers may be found attending on God's ordinances; but it is a good sign of sincerity, if we attend upon them, as the psalmist here tells us he did, in the exercise of repentance and conscientious obedience. He feels his ground firm under him; and, as he delights in blessing the Lord with his congregations on earth, he trusts that shortly he shall join the great assembly in heaven, in singing praises to God and to the Lamb for evermore.

[Psalm 26]

SEPTEMBER 5

The Comforter

Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.

JOHN 16:7

Christ's departure was necessary to the Comforter's coming. Sending the Spirit was to be the fruit of Christ's death, which was his going away. His bodily presence could be only in one place at one time, but his Spirit is everywhere, in all places, at all times, wherever two or three are gathered together in his name. See here the office of the Spirit, first to reprove, or to convince. Convincing work is the Spirit's work; he can do it effectually, and none but he. It is the method the Holy Spirit takes, first to convince, and then to comfort. The Spirit shall convince the world of sin; not merely tell them of it. The Spirit convinces of the fact of sin; of the fault of sin; of the folly of sin; of the filth of sin, that by it we are become hateful to God; of the fountain of sin, the corrupt nature; and lastly, of the fruit of sin, that the end thereof is death. The Holy Spirit proves that all the world is guilty before God. He convinces the world of righteousness; that Jesus of Nazareth was Christ the righteous. Also, of Christ's righteousness, imparted to us for justification and salvation. He will show them where it is to be had, and how they may be accepted as righteous in God's sight. Christ's ascension proves the ransom was accepted, and the righteousness finished, through which believers were to be justified; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. All will be well, when his power is broken, who made all the mischief.

[John 16:7-15]

SEPTEMBER 6

Saints' Rejoice

O you who love the Lord, hate evil! He preserves the lives of his saints; he delivers them from the hand of the wicked.

PSALM 97:10

Though many have been made happy in Christ, still there is room. And all have reason to rejoice in Christ's government. There is a depth in his counsels, which we must not pretend to fathom; but still righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne. Christ's government, though it might be matter of joy to all, will yet be matter of terror to some; but it is their own fault that it is so. The most resolute and daring opposition will be baffled at the presence of the Lord. And the Lord Jesus will ere long come, and put an end to idol worship of every kind. The faithful servants of God may well rejoice and be glad, because he is glorified; and whatever tends to his honor, is his people's pleasure. Care is taken for their safety. But something more is meant than their lives. The Lord will preserve the souls of his saints from sin, from apostasy, and despair, under their greatest trials. He will deliver them out of the hands of the wicked one, and preserve them safe to his heavenly kingdom. And those that rejoice in Christ Jesus, and in his exaltation, have fountains of joy prepared for them. Those that sow in tears shall reap in joy. Gladness is sure to the upright in heart; the joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment. Sinners tremble, but saints rejoice at God's holiness. As he hates sin, yet freely loves the person of the repentant sinner who believes in Christ, he will make a final separation between the person he loves and the sin he hates, and sanctify his people wholly, body, soul, and spirit.

[Psalm 97]

SEPTEMBER 7

Safe as Noah's Ark

The Lord sits enthroned over the flood; the Lord sits enthroned as king forever.

PSALM 29:10

When we come before him as the Redeemer of sinners, in repentance faith, and love, he will accept our defective services, pardon the sin that cleaves to them, and approve of that measure of holiness which the Holy Spirit enables us to exercise. We have here the nature of religious worship; it is giving to the Lord the glory due to his name. We must be holy in all our religious services, devoted to God, and to his will and glory. There is a beauty in holiness, and that puts beauty upon all acts of worship. The psalmist here sets forth God's dominion in the kingdom of nature. In the thunder, and lightning, and storm, we may see and hear his glory. Let our hearts be thereby filled with great, and high, and honorable thoughts of God, in the holy adoring of whom, the power of godliness so much consists. O Lord our God, you are very great! The power of the lightning equals the terror of the thunder. The fear caused by these effects of the divine power, should remind us of the mighty power of God, of man's weakness, and of the defenseless and desperate condition of the wicked in the Day of Judgment. But the effects of the divine word upon the souls of men, under the power of the Holy Spirit, are far greater than those of thunder storms in the nature world ... If we have heard God's voice, and have fled for refuge to the hope set before us, let us remember that children need not fear their Father's voice, when he speaks in anger to his enemies. Let those who abide in his appointed refuge bless him for their security, looking forward to the day of judgment without dismay, safe as Noah in the ark.

[Psalm 29]

SEPTEMBER 8

Go to God

To you I lift up my eyes, O you who are enthroned in the heavens!

PSALM 123:1

Our Lord Jesus has taught us to look unto God in prayer as our Father in heaven. In every prayer a good man lifts up his soul to God; especially when in trouble. We desire mercy from him; we hope he will show us mercy, and we will continue waiting on him till it come. The eyes of a servant are to his master's directing hand, expecting that he will appoint him his work. Also, we are to see his supplying hand. Servants look to their master or their mistress for their portion of meat in due season. And to God we must look for daily bread, for grace sufficient; from him we must receive it thankfully. Where can we look for help but to our Master? And, further, to his protecting hand. If the servant is wronged and injured in his work who should right him, but his master? We also see his correcting hand. Whither should sinners turn but to him that smote them? They humble themselves under God's mighty hand. Lastly, we see his rewarding hand. Hypocrites look to the world's hand, thence they have their reward; but true Christians look to God as their Master and their Rewarder. God's people find little mercy with men; but this is their comfort, that with the Lord there is mercy. Scorning and contempt have been, are, and are likely to be, the lot of God's people in this world. It is hard to bear; but the servants of God should not complain if they are treated as his beloved Son was. Let us then, when ready to faint under trials, look unto Jesus, and by faith and prayer cast ourselves upon the mercy of God.

[Psalm 123]

SEPTEMBER 9

Free Mercy

The Lord is good to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made.

PSALM 145:9

It is very difficult to bring sinful man humbly to accept free mercy, with a full confession of his sins and self-condemnation. But the true and only way to peace of conscience, is, to confess our sins, that they may be forgiven; to declare them that we may be justified. Although repentance and confession do not merit the pardon of transgression, they are needful to the real enjoyment of forgiving mercy. And what tongue can tell the happiness of that hour, when the soul, oppressed by sin, is enabled freely to pour forth its sorrows before God, and to take hold of his covenanted mercy in Christ Jesus! Those that would speed in prayer must seek the Lord, when, by his providence, he calls them to seek him, and, by his Spirit, stirs them up to seek him. In a time of finding, when the heart is softened with grief, and burdened with guilt; when all human refuge fails; when no rest can be found to the troubled mind, then it is that God applies the healing balm by his Spirit. God teaches by his word, and guides with the secret intimations of his will. David gives a word of caution to sinners. The reason for this caution is that the way of sin will certainly end in sorrow. Here is a word of comfort to saints. They may see that a life of communion with God is far the most pleasant and comfortable. Let us rejoice, O Lord Jesus, in you and in your salvation.

[Psalm 32:3-11]

SEPTEMBER 10

Future Recompense

To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power.

2 THESSALONIANS 1:11

Religion, if worth anything, is worth every thing; and those who have no religion, or none worth having, or know not how to value it, cannot find their hearts to suffer for it. We cannot by all our sufferings, any more than by our services, merit heaven; but by our patience under sufferings, we are prepared for the promised joy. Nothing more strongly marks a man for eternal ruin, than a spirit of persecution and enmity to the name and people of God. God will trouble those that trouble his people. And there is a rest for the people of God; a rest from sin and sorrow. The certainty of future recompense is proved by the righteousness of God. The thoughts of this should be terrible to wicked men, and support the righteous. Faith, looking to the great day, is enabled partly to understand the book of providence, which appears confused to unbelievers. The Lord Jesus will in that day appear from heaven. He will come in the glory and power of the upper world. His light will be piercing, and his power consuming, to all who in that day shall be found as chaff. This appearance will be terrible to those that know not God, especially to those who rebel against revelation, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the great crime of multitudes, the gospel is revealed, and they will not believe it; or if they pretend to believe, they will not obey it. Believing the truths of the gospel is in order to our obeying the precepts of the gospel. Though sinners may be long spared, they will be punished at last.

[2 Thessalonians 1:5-10]

SEPTEMBER 11

HARDNESS OF HEART

Still Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the Lord had said.

EXODUS 7:13

Those hearts are hard indeed that will neither be melted by the mercies of the Lord, nor broken by his judgments. Those that sin still must expect to be in trouble still. And the reason why we live with so little comfort, and to so little purpose, is, because we do not live by faith. Under these rebukes they professed repentance, but they were not sincere, for they were not constant. In Israel's history we have a picture of our own hearts and lives. God's patience, and warnings, and mercies embolden them to harden their hearts against his word. And the history of kingdoms is much the same. Judgments and mercies have been little attended to, until the measure of their sins has been full. And higher advantages have not kept churches from declining from the commandments of God. Even true believers recollect that for many a year they abused the kindness of Providence. When they come to heaven, how will they admire the Lord's patience and mercy in bringing them to his kingdom! Let not those that receive mercy from God, be thereby made bold to sin, for the mercies they receive will hasten its punishment; yet let not those who are under divine rebukes for sin, be discouraged from repentance. The Holy One of Israel will do what is most for his own glory, and what is most for their good. Their forgetting former favors, led them to limit God for the future. God made his own people to go forth like sheep; and guided them in the wilderness, as a shepherd his flock, with all care and tenderness.

[Psalm 78:9-55]

SEPTEMBER 12

Debtor to Grace

I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus.

I CORINTHIANS 1:4

The same God that raised up the spirit of Cyrus to proclaim liberty to the Jews raised up their spirits to take the benefit. The temptation was to some to stay in Babylon; but some feared not to return, and they were those whose spirits God raised, by his Spirit and grace. Whatever good we do, is owing to the grace of God. Our spirits naturally bow down to this earth and the things of it; if they move upward in any good affections or good actions, it is God who raises them. The calls and offers of the gospel are like the proclamation of Cyrus. Those bound under the power of sin, may be made free by Jesus Christ. Whosoever will, by repentance and faith, return to God, Jesus Christ has opened the way for him, and raises him out of the slavery of sin into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Many that hear this joyful sound, choose to sit still in Babylon, are in love with their sins, and will not venture upon a holy life; but some break through all discouragements, whatever it cost them; they are those whose spirit God has raised above the world and the flesh, whom he has made willing. Thus will the heavenly Canaan be filled, though many perish in Babylon; and the gospel offer will not have been made in vain. The bringing back the Jews from captivity represents the redemption of sinners by Jesus Christ.

[Ezra 1:5-11]

SEPTEMBER 13

Fool's Paradise

The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds, there is none who does good.

PSALM 14:1

The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." The sinner here described is an atheist, one that says there is no Judge or Governor of the world, no Providence ruling over the affairs of men. He says this in his heart. He cannot satisfy himself that there is none, but wishes there were none and pleases himself that it is possible there may be none; he is willing to think there is none. This sinner is a fool; he is simple and unwise, and this is evidence of it: he is wicked and profane, and this is the cause. The word of God is a discernor of these thoughts. No man will say, "There is no God," till he is so hardened in sin, that it is become his interest that there should be none to call him to an account. The disease of sin has infected the whole race of mankind. They are all gone aside, there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Whatever good is in any of the children of men, or is done by them, it is not of them, it is God's work in them. They are gone aside from the right way of their duty, the way that leads to happiness, and are turned into the paths of the destroyer. Let us lament the corruption of our nature, and see what need we have of the grace of God: let us not marvel that we are told we must be born again. And we must not rest in anything short of union with Christ, and a new creation to holiness by his Spirit ... Those that care not for God's people, for God's poor, care not for God himself.

[Psalm 14]

SEPTEMBER 14

The Best Blessings

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

EPHESIANS 1:3

Spiritual and heavenly blessings are the best blessings; with which we cannot be miserable, and without which we cannot but be so. This was from the choice of them in Christ, before the foundation of the world, that they should be made holy by separation from sin, being set apart to God, and sanctified by the Holy Spirit, in consequence of their election in Christ. All who are chosen to happiness as the end, are chosen to holiness as the means. In love they were predestinated, or fore-ordained, to be adopted as children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, and to be openly admitted to the privileges of that high relation to himself. The reconciled and adopted believer, the pardoned sinner, gives all the praise of his salvation to his gracious Father. His love appointed this method of redemption, spared not his own Son, and brought believers to hear and embrace this salvation. It was rich grace to provide such a surety as his own Son, and freely to deliver him up. This method of grace gives no encouragement to evil, but shows sin in all its hatefulness, and how it deserves vengeance. The believer's actions, as well as his words, declare the praises of divine mercy ... All who are chosen to happiness as the end are chosen to holiness as the means. Their sanctification, as well as their salvation, is the result of the counsels of divine love. And without blame before him – that their holiness might not be merely external and in outward appearance, so as to prevent blame from men, but internal and real, and what God himself will account such, such holiness as proceeds from love to God and to our fellow-creatures, this being the principle of all holiness.

[Ephesians 1:3-8]

SEPTEMBER 15

Divine Fidelity

*O God, save me by your name, and vindicate me by your might.
O God, hear my prayer; give ear to the words of my mouth.*

PSALM 54:1-2

SEPTEMBER

Even though men are not to be trusted, God is faithful and it is well for us that it is so. David has no other plea to depend upon than God's name, no other power to depend upon than God's strength, and these he makes his refuge and confidence. This would be the effectual answer to his prayers. Looking unto David, betrayed by the men of Judah, and to Jesus, betrayed by one of his apostles, what can we expect from any who have not set God before them, save ingratitude, treachery, malice, and cruelty? What bonds of nature, or friendship, or gratitude, or covenant, will hold those that have broken through the fear of God? Mark this: let us set God before us at all times; for if we do not, we are in danger of despair. Behold, God is mine Helper. If we are for him, he is for us; and if he is for us, we need not fear. Every creature is that to us, and no more, which God makes it to be. The Lord will in due time save his people, and in the mean time he sustains them, and bears them up, so that the spirit he has made shall not fail. There is truth in God's threatenings as well as in his promises; sinners that repent not will find it so to their cost. David's present deliverance was an earnest of further deliverance. He speaks of the completion of his deliverance as a thing done, though he had as yet many troubles before him; because, having God's promise for it, he was as sure of it as if it was done already.

[Psalm 54]

SEPTEMBER 16

H o l i n e s s i s ¹ H a p p i n e s s

*Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in his ways!
You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands; you shall be
blessed, and it shall be well with you.*

PSALM 128:1-2

Only those who are truly holy are truly happy. In vain do we pretend to be of those that fear God, if we do not make conscience of keeping steadfastly to his ways. Blessed is every one that fears the Lord; whether he is high or low, rich or poor in the world. If you fear him and walk in his ways, all shall be well with you while you live, and better when you die, and best of all in eternity. By the blessing of God, the godly shall get an honest livelihood. Here is a double promise; they shall have something to do, for an idle life is a miserable, uncomfortable life, and shall have health and strength, and power of mind to do it. They shall not be forced to live upon the labors of other people. It is as much a mercy as a duty, with quietness to work and eat our own bread. They and theirs shall enjoy what they get. Such as fear the Lord and walk in his ways, are the only happy persons, whatever their station in life may be. They shall have abundant comfort in their family relations. And they shall have all the good things God has promised, and which they pray for. A good man can have little comfort in seeing his children's children, unless he sees peace upon Israel. Every true believer rejoices in the prosperity of the church. Hereafter we shall see greater things, with the everlasting peace and rest that remain for the Israel of God.

[Psalm 128]

SEPTEMBER 17

Come to the Banquet

The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come.

MATTHEW 22:2-3

The provision made for perishing souls in the gospel, is represented by a royal feast made by a king, with eastern liberality, on the marriage of his son. Our merciful God has not only provided food, but a royal feast, for the perishing souls of his rebellious creatures. There is enough and to spare, of everything that can add to our present comfort and everlasting happiness, in the salvation of his Son Jesus Christ. The guests first invited were the Jews. When the prophets of the Old Testament prevailed not, nor John the Baptist, nor Christ himself, who told them the kingdom of God was at hand, the apostles and ministers of the gospel were sent, after Christ's resurrection, to tell them it was come, and to persuade them to accept the offer. The reason why sinners come not to Christ and salvation by him is not because they cannot but because they will not. Making light of Christ, and of the great salvation wrought out by him, is the damning sin of the world. They were careless. Multitudes perish for ever through mere carelessness, who show no direct aversion, but are careless as to their souls. Also the business and profit of worldly employments hinder many in closing with the Savior. Both farmers and merchants must be diligent; but whatever we have of the world in our hands, our care must be to keep it out of our hearts, lest it come between us and Christ.

[Matthew 22:1-14]

SEPTEMBER 18

Lord of Glory

My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.

JAMES 2:1

Those who profess faith in Christ as the Lord of glory must not respect persons on account of mere outward circumstances and appearances, in a manner not agreeing with their profession of being disciples of the lowly Jesus. Saint James does not here encourage rudeness or disorder: civil respect must be paid; but never such as to influence the proceedings of Christians in disposing of the offices of the church of Christ, or in passing the censures of the church, or in any matter of religion. Questioning ourselves is of great use in every part of the holy life. Let us be more frequent in this, and in everything take occasion to discourse with our souls. As places of worship cannot be built or maintained without expense, it may be proper that those who contribute thereto should be accommodated accordingly; but were all persons more spiritually-minded, the poor would be treated with more attention than usually is the case in worshipping congregations. A lowly state is most favorable for inward peace and for growth in holiness. God would give to all believers' riches and honors of this world, if these would do them good, seeing that he has chosen them to be rich in faith, and made them heirs of his kingdom, which he promised to bestow on all who love him. Consider how often riches lead to vice and mischief, and what great reproaches are thrown upon God and religion, by men of wealth, power, and worldly greatness; and it will make this sin appear very sinful and foolish.

[James 2:1-13]

SEPTEMBER 19

Our Eternal Hope

For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from him.

PSALM 62:5

The hope here meant, is a sure looking for good things promised, through those promises, with love, desire, and valuing of them. Hope has its degrees, as faith also. The promise of blessedness God has made to believers is from God's eternal purpose, settled between the eternal Father, Son, and Spirit. These promises of God may safely be depended upon; for here we have two things which cannot change, the counsel and the oath of God, in which it is not possible for God to lie; it would be contrary to his nature as well as to his will. And as he cannot lie; the destruction of the unbeliever, and the salvation of the believer, are alike certain. Here observe, those to whom God has given full security of happiness, have a title to the promises by inheritance. The consolations of God are strong enough to support his people under their heaviest trials. Here is a refuge for all sinners who flee to the mercy of God, through the redemption of Christ, according to the covenant of grace, laying aside all other confidences. We are in this world as a ship at sea, tossed up and down, and in danger of being cast away. We need an anchor to keep us sure and steady. Gospel hope is our anchor in the storms of this world. It is sure and steadfast, or it could not keep us so. The free grace of God, the merits and mediation of Christ, and the powerful influences of his Spirit, are the grounds of this hope, and so it is a steadfast hope. Christ is the object and ground of the believer's hope. Let us therefore set our affections on things above, and wait patiently for his appearance, when we shall certainly appear with him in glory.

[Hebrews 6:11-20]

SEPTEMBER 20

Glimpse of God

And the Lord said to Job: "Shall a faultfinder contend with the Almighty? He who argues with God, let him answer it."

JOB 40:1-2

Communion with the Lord effectually convinces and humbles a saint, and makes him glad to part with his most beloved sins. There is need to be thoroughly convinced and humbled, to prepare us for remarkable deliverances. After God had shown Job, by his manifest ignorance of the works of nature, how unable he was to judge of the methods and designs of Providence, he puts a convincing question to him; shall he that contends with the Almighty instruct him? Now Job began to melt into godly sorrow: when his friends reasoned with him, he did not yield; but the voice of the Lord is powerful. When the Spirit of truth is come, he shall convince. Job yields himself to the grace of God. He owns himself an offender, and has nothing to say to justify himself. He is now sensible that he has sinned; and therefore he calls himself vile. Repentance changes men's opinion of themselves. Job is now convinced of his error. Those who are truly sensible of their own sinfulness and vileness, dare not justify themselves before God. He perceived that he was a poor, mean, foolish, and sinful creature, who ought not to have uttered one word against the divine conduct. One glimpse of God's holy nature would appall the stoutest rebel. How then will the wicked bear the sight of his glory at the Day of Judgment? But when we see this glory revealed in Jesus Christ, we shall be humbled without being terrified; self-abasement agrees with filial love.

[Job 40:1-5]

SEPTEMBER 21

Bands of Love

I led them with cords of kindness, with the bands of love, and I became to them as one who eases the yoke on their jaws, and I bent down to them and fed them.

HOSEA 11:4

Those that put to sea in a calm, even at Christ's word, must yet prepare for a storm, and for great peril in that storm. There is no relief for souls under a sense of guilt, and fear of wrath, but to go to Christ, and call him Master, and say, I am undone, if you do not help me. When our dangers are over, it becomes us to take to ourselves the shame of our own fears, and to give Christ the glory of our deliverance. We may learn much out of this history concerning the world of infernal, malignant spirits, which though not working now exactly in the same way as then, yet all must at all times carefully guard against. And these malignant spirits are very numerous. They have enmity to man and all his comforts. Those under Christ's government are sweetly led with the bands of love; those under the devil's government are furiously driven. Oh what a comfort it is to the believer that all the powers of darkness are under the control of the Lord Jesus! It is a miracle of mercy, if those whom Satan possesses, are not brought to destruction and eternal ruin. Christ will not stay with those who slight him; perhaps he may no more return to them, while others are waiting for him, and glad to receive him.

[Luke 8:22-40]

SEPTEMBER 22

Want of God's Favor

There is no one who calls upon your name, who rouses himself to take hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us, and have made us melt in the hand of our iniquities.

ISAIAH 64:7

God sometimes hides his face, and leaves his own children in the dark concerning their interest in him: and this they lay to heart more than any outward trouble whatever. But anxious cares are heavy burdens with which believers often load themselves more than they need. The bread of sorrows is sometimes the saint's daily bread; our Master himself was a man of sorrows. It is a common temptation, when trouble lasts long, to think that it will last always. Those who have long been without joy, begin to be without hope. We should never allow ourselves to make any complaints but what drive us to our knees. Nothing is more killing to a soul than the want of God's favor; nothing more reviving than the return of it. The sudden, delightful changes in the book of Psalms are often very remarkable. We pass from depth of despondency to the height of religious confidence and joy. All is gloomy dejection but the mind of the despondent worshipper rises above all its distressing fears, and throws itself, without reserve, on the mercy and care of its Divine Redeemer. See the power of faith, and how good it is to draw near to God. If we bring our cares and griefs to the throne of grace, and leave them there, we may go away like Hannah, and our countenances will no longer be sad.

[Psalm 13]

SEPTEMBER 23

Love of the World

I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord," and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.

PSALM 32:5

Filthy lusts must be rooted out. These sins must be dreaded and detested. Here are not only cautions against gross acts of sin, but against what some may make light of. But these things are so far from being profitable that they pollute and poison the hearers. Our cheerfulness should show itself as becomes Christians, in what may tend to God's glory. A covetous man makes a god of his money; places that hope, confidence, and delight, in worldly good, which should be in God only. Those who allow themselves, either in the lusts of the flesh or the love of the world, belong not to the kingdom of grace, nor shall they come to the kingdom of glory. When the vilest transgressors repent and believe the gospel, they become children of obedience, from whom God's wrath is turned away. Dare we make light of that which brings down the wrath of God? Sinners, like men in the dark, are going they know not where and doing things they know not what. But the grace of God wrought a mighty change in the souls of many. Walk as children of light, as having knowledge and holiness. These works of darkness are unfruitful, whatever profit they may boast; for they end in the destruction of the impenitent sinner. There are many ways of abetting, or taking part in the sins of others; by commendation, counsel, consent, or concealment. And if we share with others in their sins, we must expect to share in their plagues. If we do not reprove the sins of others, we have fellowship with them.

[Ephesians 5:3-14]

SEPTEMBER 24

Ready to Forgive

The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty. . .

EXODUS 34:6B-7

The Lord descended by some open token of his presence and manifestation of his glory in a cloud, and thence proclaimed his *Name*; that is, the perfections and character which are denoted by the name *Jehovah*. The Lord God is merciful and ready to forgive the sinner, and to relieve the needy. He is gracious and kind, and ready to bestow undeserved benefits. He is long-suffering, slow to anger, giving time for repentance, and only punishing when it is needful. He is abundant in goodness and truth; even sinners receive the riches of his bounty abundantly, though they abuse them. All he reveals is infallible truth; all he promises is in faithfulness. Keeping mercy for thousands; he continually shows mercy to sinners, and has treasures, which cannot be exhausted, to the end of time. Forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin; his mercy and goodness reach to the full and free forgiveness of sin. And will by no means clear the guilty; the holiness and justice of God are part of his goodness and love towards all his creatures. In Christ's sufferings, the divine holiness and justice are fully shown, and the evil of sin is made known. God's forgiving mercy is always attended by his converting, sanctifying grace. None are pardoned but those who repent and forsake the allowed practice of every sin; nor shall any escape, who abuse, neglect, or despise this great salvation. Moses bowed down, and worshiped reverently. There is every perfection in the name of God, and the believer may plead with him for the forgiveness of his sins, the making holy of his heart, and the enlargement of the Redeemer's kingdom.

[Exodus 34:5-9]

SEPTEMBER 25

Found the Fools

The Lord is far from the wicked, but he hears the prayer of the righteous.

PROVERBS 15:29

To forbid prayer for thirty days is, for so long, to rob God of all the tribute he has from man, and to rob man of all the comfort he has in God. Does not every man's heart direct him, when in want or distress, to call upon God? We could not live a day without God; and can men live thirty days without prayer? Yet it is to be feared that those who, without any decree forbidding them, present no hearty, serious petitions to God for more than thirty days together, are far more numerous than those who serve him continually, with humble, thankful hearts. Persecuting laws are always made on false pretences; but it does not become Christians to make bitter complaints, or to indulge in reviling. It is good to have hours for prayer. Daniel prayed openly and avowedly; and though a man of vast business, he did not think that would excuse him from daily exercises of devotion. How inexcusable are those who have but little to do in the world, yet will not do thus much for their souls! In trying times we must take heed, lest, under pretence of discretion, we are guilty of cowardice in the cause of God. All who throw away their souls, as those certainly do that live without prayer, even if it be to save their lives, at the end will be found to be fools ... In a word, the duty of prayer is founded upon the sufficiency of God as an almighty Creator and Redeemer, and upon our wants as sinful creatures. To Christ we must turn our eyes. Thither let the Christian look, thither let him pray, in this land of his captivity.

[Daniel 6:6-10]

SEPTEMBER 26

Consider the End

For at the window of my house I have looked out through my lattice, and I have seen among the simple, I have perceived among the youths, a young man lacking sense, passing along the street near her corner, taking the road to her house in the twilight, in the evening, at the time of night and darkness.

PROVERBS 7:6-9

Here is an affecting example of the danger of youthful lusts. It is a history or a parable of the most instructive kind. Will any one dare to venture on temptations that lead to impurity, after Solomon has set before his eyes in so lively and plain a manner, the danger of even going near them? Then is he as the man who would dance on the edge of a lofty rock, when he has just seen another fall headlong from the same place. The misery of self-ruined sinners began in disregard to God's blessed commands. We ought daily to pray that we may be kept from running into temptation; else we invite the enemies of our souls to spread snares for us. Ever avoid the neighborhood of vice. Beware of sins which are said to be pleasant sins. They are the more dangerous, because they most easily gain the heart, and close it against repentance. Do nothing till you have well considered the end of it. Were a man to live as long as Methuselah, and to spend all his days in the highest delights sin can offer, one hour of the anguish and tribulation that must follow, would far outweigh them.

[Proverbs 7:6-27]

SEPTEMBER 27

This Worldliness

So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night.

I THESSALONIANS 5:6-7

Most of mankind do not consider the things of another world at all because they are asleep, or they do not consider them aright, because they sleep and dream. Our moderation as to all earthly things should be known to all men. Shall Christians, who have the light of the blessed gospel shining in their faces, be careless about their souls, and unmindful of another world? We need the spiritual armor, or the three Christian graces, faith, love, and hope. Faith; if we believe that the eye of God is always upon us, that there is another world to prepare for, we shall see reason to watch and be sober. True and fervent love to God, and the things of God, will keep us watchful and sober. If we have hope of salvation, let us take heed of anything that would shake our trust in the Lord. We have ground on which to build unshaken hope, when we consider, that salvation is by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, to atone for our sins and to ransom our souls. We should join in prayer and praise one with another. We should set a good example one before another, and this is the best means to answer the end of society. Thus we shall learn how to live to him, with whom we hope to live forever.

[1 Thessalonians 5:6-11]

SEPTEMBER 28

Glorious and Gracious

Walk about Zion, go around her, number her towers, consider well her ramparts, go through her citadels, that you may tell the next generation that this is God, our God forever and ever. He will guide us forever.

PSALM 48:12-14

We have here the improvement which the people of God are to make of his glorious and gracious appearances for them. Let our faith in the word of God be hereby confirmed. Let our hope of the stability of the church be encouraged. Let our minds be filled with good thoughts of God. All the streams of mercy that flow down to us must be traced to the fountain of his loving-kindness. Let us give to God the glory of the great things he has done for us. Let all the members of the church take comfort from what the Lord does for his church. Let us observe the beauty, strength, and safety of the church. Consider its strength; see it founded on Christ the Rock, fortified by the divine power, guarded by him who neither slumbers nor sleeps. See what precious ordinances are its palaces; what precious promises are its bulwarks, that you may be encouraged to join yourselves to it; and tell this to others. This God, who has now done such great things for us, is unchangeable in his love to us, and his care for us. If he is our God, he will lead and keep us even to the last. He will so guide us, as to set us above the reach of death, so that it shall not do us any real hurt. He will lead us to a life in which there shall be no more death.

[Psalm 48:8-14]

SEPTEMBER 29

Ocean Ever Full

SEPTEMBER

My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

JAMES 5:19-20

It is no mark of a wise or holy man to boast of being free from error or to refuse to acknowledge an error. And there is some doctrinal mistake at the bottom of every practical mistake. There is no one habitually bad, but upon some bad principle. This is conversion; to turn a sinner from the error of his ways, not merely from one party to another, or from one notion and way of thinking to another. There is no way effectually and finally to hide sin, but forsaking it. Many sins are hindered in the party converted; many also may be so in others whom he may influence. The salvation of one soul is of infinitely greater importance than preserving the lives of multitudes, or promoting the welfare of a whole people. Let us in our several stations keep these things in mind, sparing no pains in God's service, and the event will prove that our labor is not in vain in the Lord. For six thousand years he has been multiplying pardons, and yet his free grace is not tired nor grown weary. Certainly divine mercy is an ocean that is ever full and ever flowing. May the Lord give us a part in this abundant mercy, through the blood of Christ, and the sanctification of the Spirit.

[James 5:19-20]

SEPTEMBER 30

Remembered Mercies

I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your wonders of old.

PSALM 77:11

We need often to be reminded of the mercies we have received; which add much to the evil of the sins we have committed. They had helps for their souls, which taught them how to make good use of their earthly enjoyments, and were therefore more valuable. Faithful ministers are great blessings to any people; but it is God that raises them up to be so. God gives liberally, and upbraids us not with our meanness and unworthiness, and the disproportion between his gifts and our merits; but he justly upbraids us with our ingratitude, and ill requital of his favors, and tells us what he has done for us, to shame us for not rendering again according to the benefit done to us. Mercies to our ancestors were mercies to us, for, if they had been cut off, we should not have been. Sinners' own consciences will witness that he has not been wanting to them in the means of grace. They did what they could to lead believers aside. Satan and his agents are busy to corrupt the minds of young people who look heavenward; they overcome many by drawing them to the love of mirth and pleasure, and into drinking company. Multitudes of young men who bade fair as professors of religion, have erred through strong drink, and have been undone forever. Though God's long-suffering is tired, his power is not, and so the sinner will find to his cost. When men reject God's word, adding obstinacy to sin, and this becomes the general character of a people, they will be given up to misery, notwithstanding all their boasted power and resources. May we then humble ourselves before the Lord, for all our ingratitude and unfaithfulness!

[Amos 2:9-16]

OCTOBER 1

Watchfulness

Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.

I CORINTHIANS 16:13

Job proceeds to contrast his former prosperity with his present misery, through God's withdrawing from him. A gracious soul delights in God's smiles, not in the smiles of this world. Four things were then very pleasant to holy Job. 1. The confidence he had in the divine protection. 2. The enjoyment he had of the divine favor. 3. The communion he had with the divine word. 4. The assurance he had of the divine presence. God's presence with a man in his house, though it is but a cottage, makes it a castle and a palace. Then also he had comfort in his family. Riches and flourishing families, like a candle, may be soon extinguished. But when the mind is enlightened by the Holy Spirit, when a man walks in the light of God's countenance, every outward comfort is doubled, every trouble is diminished, and he may pass cheerfully by this light through life and through death. Yet the sensible comfort of this state is often withdrawn for a season; and commonly this arises from sinful neglect, and grieving the Holy Spirit: sometimes it may be a trial of a man's faith and grace. But it is needful to examine ourselves, to seek for the cause of such a change by fervent prayer, and to increase our watchfulness. That which Job complained most of now was a load upon his spirits, through God's withdrawing from him; and therefore he wishes he now had his spirit as much enlarged and encouraged in the service of God as he had then and that he had as much freedom and fellowship with him as then thought himself happy in. Those that prosper in the days of their youth know not what black and cloudy days they are yet reserved for.

[Job 29:1-6]

OCTOBER 2

Eternal Riches

For you are great and do wondrous things; you alone are God.

PSALM 86:10

He gives glory to God; for we ought in our prayers to praise him, ascribing kingdom, power, and glory, to him, with the most humble and reverent adorations. Our God alone possesses almighty power and infinite love. Christ is the way and the truth. And the believing soul will be more desirous to be taught the way and the truth. And the believing soul will be more desirous to be taught the way and the truth of God, in order to walk therein, than to be delivered out of earthly distress. Those who set not the Lord before them seek after believers' souls; but the compassion, mercy, and truth of God, will be their refuge and consolation. And those whose parents were the servants of the Lord may urge this as a plea why he should hear and help them. It is his goodness that is over all his works, and therefore should fill all our praises; and this is our comfort, in reference to the wickedness of the world we live in that, however it be, God is good. God is not only compassionate, but full of compassion, and in him mercy rejoices against judgment. He is long-suffering towards us, though we forfeit his favor and provoke him to anger, and he is plenteous in mercy and truth, as faithful in performing as he was free in promising. We see that God is a kind friend and bountiful benefactor towards us. We ought to praise God as good in himself, but we do it most feelingly when we observe how good he has been to us. In considering David's experience, and that of the believer, we must not lose sight of him, who though he was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich.

[Psalm 86:10]

OCTOBER 3

M a d e t o S e r v e

Your hands have made and fashioned me; give me understanding that I may learn your commandments.

PSALM 119:73

God made us to serve him, and enjoy him; but by sin we have made ourselves unfit to serve him, and to enjoy him. We ought, therefore, continually to beseech him, by his Holy Spirit, to give us understanding. The comforts some have in God should be matter of joy to others. But it is easy to own, that God's judgments are right, until it comes to be our own case. All supports under affliction must come from mercy and compassion. The mercies of God are tender mercies; the mercies of a father, the compassion of a mother to her son. They come to us when we are not able to go to them. Causeless reproach does not hurt, and should not move us. The psalmist could go on in the way of his duty, and find comfort in it. He valued the good will of saints, and was desirous to keep up his communion with them. Soundness of heart signifies sincerity in dependence on God, and devotedness to him. David prays for sincerity, that his heart might be brought to God's statutes, and that it might be sound in them, not rotten and deceitful, that he might not rest in the form of godliness, but be acquainted with the subject to the power of it; indeed, that he might be hearty and constant in religion, and that his soul might be in health. David dreads the consequences of hypocrisy; for shame is the portion of hypocrites, either here, if it be repented of, or hereafter, if it be not.

[Psalm 119:73-80]

OCTOBER 4

Loving God's Word

Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day.

PSALM 119:97

David had an inexpressible love to the word of God. He protests his affection to the word of God with a holy vehemence; he found that love to it in his heart which, considering the corruption of his nature and the temptations of the world, he could not but wonder at, and at that grace which had wrought it in him. He not only loved the promises, but loved the law, and delighted in it after the inner man. What we love, we love to think of. All true wisdom is from God. A good man carries his Bible with him, if not in his hands then in his head and in his heart. By meditation on God's testimonies we understand more than our teachers, when we understand our own hearts. The written word is a more sure guide to heaven, than all the fathers, the teachers, and ancients of the church. We cannot, with any comfort or boldness, attend God in holy duties, while under guilt, or in any by-way. It was divine grace in his heart that enabled the psalmist to receive these instructions. The soul has its tastes as well as the body. Our relish for the word of God will be greatest, when that for the world and the flesh is least. The way of sin is a wrong way; and the more understanding we get by the precepts of God, the more rooted will be our hatred of sin; and the more ready we are in the Scriptures, the better furnished we are with answers to temptation.

[Psalm 119:97-104]

OCTOBER 5

With Our Whole Heart

With my whole heart I cry; answer me, O Lord! I will keep your statutes.

PSALM 119:145

David's good prayers, by which he sought to God for mercy; these he mentions here, not as boasting of them, or trusting to any merit in them, but reflecting upon them with comfort, that he had taken the appointed way to comfort. Supplications with the whole heart are presented only by those who desire God's salvation, and who love his commandments. Whither should the child go but to his father? Save me from my sins, my corruptions, my temptations, all the hindrances in my way, that I may keep your testimonies. Christians who enjoy health, should not suffer the early hours of the morning to glide away unimproved. Hope in God's word encourages us to continue in prayer. It is better to take time from sleep, than not to find time for prayer. We have access to God at all hours; and if our first thoughts in the morning are of God, they will help to keep us in his fear all the day long. Make me lively and cheerful. God knows what we need and what is good for us, and will quicken us. If we are employed in God's service, we need not fear those who try to set themselves as far as they can out of the reach of the convictions and commands of his law. When trouble is near, God is near. He is never far to seek. All his commandments are truth. And God's promises will be performed. All that ever trusted in God have found him faithful.

[Psalm 119:145-52]

OCTOBER 6

MORE CERTAIN

Great is your mercy, O Lord; give me life according to your rules.

PSALM 119:156

The closer we cleave to the word of God, both as our rule and as our stay, the more assurance we have of deliverance. Christ is the Advocate of his people, their Redeemer. Those who were quickened by his Spirit and grace, when they were dead in trespasses and sins, often need to have the work of grace revived in them, according to the word of promise. The wicked not only do not God's statutes, but they do not even seek them. They flatter themselves that they are going to heaven; but the longer they persist in sin, the further it is from them. God's mercies are tender; they are a fountain that can never be exhausted. The psalmist begs for God's reviving, quickening grace. A man, who is steady in the way of his duty, though he may have many enemies, needs to fear none. Those that hate sin truly, hate it as sin, as a transgression of the law of God, and a breaking of his word. Our obedience is only pleasing to God, and pleasant to ourselves when it comes from a principle of love. David here comforts himself with the faithfulness of God's word, for the encouragement of himself and others to rely upon it. It has always been found faithful and never failed any that ventured upon it; It is true from the beginning. Ever since God began to reveal himself to the children of men all he said was true and to be trusted. The church, from its beginning, was built upon this rock. It has not gained its validity by lapse of time, as many governments, whose best plea is prescription and long usage. All, in every age, who receive God's word in faith and love, find every saying in it faithful.

[*Psalm 119:153-60*]

OCTOBER 7

Reigning Love

Princes persecute me without cause, but my heart stands in awe of your words.

PSALM 119:161

Those whose hearts stand in awe of God's word, will rather endure the wrath of man, than break the law of God. By the word of God we are unspeakable gainers. Every man hates to have a lie told him, but we should more hate telling a lie; by the latter we give an affront to God. The more we see the beauty of truth, the more we shall see the hateful deformity of a lie. The pleasure David took in the word of God. He rejoiced at it, rejoiced that God had made such a discovery of his mind, that Israel was blessed with that light when other nations sat in darkness that he was himself let into the understanding of it and had had experience of the power of it. He took a pleasure in reading it, hearing it, and meditating on it and everything he met with in it was agreeable to him. The more reverence we have for the word of God the more joy we shall find in it. We are to praise God even for afflictions; through grace we get good from them. Those that love the world have great vexation, for it does not answer what they expect; those that love God's word have great peace, for it outdoes what they expect. Those in whom this holy love reigns will not perplex themselves with needless scruples, or take offence at their brethren. A good hope of salvation will engage the heart in doing the commandments. And our love to the word of God must subdue our lusts, and root out carnal affections: we must make heart work of it, or we make nothing of it.

[Psalm 119:161-68]

OCTOBER 8

Praise in Zion

When iniquities prevail against me, you atone for our transgressions.

PSALM 65:3

All the praise the Lord receives from this earth is from Zion, being the fruit of the Spirit of Christ, and acceptable through him. Praise is silent unto you, as wanting words to express the great goodness of God. Our sins prevail against us; we cannot pretend to balance them with any righteousness of our own: yet, as for our transgressions, of God's own free mercy, and for the sake of his righteousness, we shall not come into condemnation for them. Observe what it is to come into communion with God in order to blessedness. It is to converse with him as one we love and value; it is to apply ourselves closely to religion as to the business of our dwelling-place. Observe how we come into communion with God; only by God's free choice. There is abundance of goodness in God's house, and what is satisfying to the soul; there is enough for all, enough for each: it is always ready; and all without money and without price. By faith and prayer we may keep up communion with God, and bring in comfort from him, wherever we are. But it is only through that blessed One, who approaches the Father as our Advocate and Surety, in which sinners may expect or can find this happiness. He is the confidence of all the ends of the earth that is, of all the saints all the world over and not theirs only that were of the seed of Israel; for he is the God of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews, the confidence of those that are afar off from his holy temple and its courts, that dwell in the islands of the Gentiles, or that are in distress upon the sea.

[Psalm 65:1-5]

OCTOBER 9

All for Good

Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever. As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds his people, from this time forth and forevermore.

PSALM 125:1-2

All those minds shall be truly stayed, that are stayed on God. They shall be as Mount Zion, firm as it is; a mountain supported by providence, much more as a holy mountain supported by promise. They cannot be removed from confidence in God. They abide forever in that grace which is the earnest of their everlasting continuance in glory. Committing themselves to God, they shall be safe from their enemies. Even mountains may molder and come to nothing, and rocks be removed, but God's covenant with his people cannot be broken, nor his care of them cease. Their troubles shall last no longer than their strength will bear them up under them. The rod of the wicked may come, may fall upon the righteous, upon their persons, their estates, their liberties, their families names, on anything that falls to their lot; only it cannot reach their souls. And though it may come upon their lot, it shall not rest thereon. The Lord will make all work together for their good. The wicked shall only prove a correcting rod, not a destroying sword; even this rod shall not remain upon them, lest they distrust the promise, thinking God has cast them off. God considers the frame of his people, and will proportion their trials to their strength by the care of his providence, as well as their strength to their trials by the power of his grace. Oppression makes a wise man mad, especially if it continues long; therefore for the elect's sake the days shall be shortened, that, whatever becomes of their lot in this world, they may not lose their lot among the chosen.

[Psalm 125:1-3]

OCTOBER 10

L O R D ' s S E R V A N T

What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits to me?

PSALM 116:12

When troubled, we do best to hold our peace, for we are apt to speak unadvisedly. Yet there may be true faith where there are workings of unbelief; but then faith will prevail; and being humbled for our distrust of God's word, we shall experience his faithfulness to it. What can the pardoned sinner, or what can those who have been delivered from trouble or distress, render to the Lord for his benefits? We cannot in any way profit him. Our best is unworthy of his acceptance; yet we ought to devote ourselves and all we have to his service. I will take the cup of salvation; I will offer the drink-offerings appointed by the law, in token of thankfulness to God, and rejoice in God's goodness to me. I will receive the cup of affliction; that cup, that bitter cup, which is sanctified to the saints, so that to them it is a cup of salvation; it is a means of spiritual health. The cup of consolation; I will receive the benefits God bestows upon me, as from his hand, and taste his love in them, as the portion not only of mine inheritance in the other world, but of my cup in this. Let others serve what masters they will; truly I am the Lord's servant. It is a great mercy to be children of godly parents. David was a king, and yet he glories in this, that he was God's servant. It is no disparagement, but an honor, to the greatest kings on earth, to be the servants of the God of heaven. David does not here compliment God, as it is common among men; he repeats it, as that which he took pleasure in the thoughts of and which he was resolved to abide by.

[Psalm 116:10-19]

OCTOBER 11

Forever Comforted

When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream.

PSALM 126:1

The beginnings of mercies encourage us to pray for the completion of them. And while we are in this world there will be matter for prayer, even when we are most furnished with matter for praise. Suffering saints are often in tears; they share the calamities of human life, and commonly have a greater share than others. But they sow in tears; they do the duty of an afflicted state. Weeping must not hinder sowing; we must get good from times of affliction. And they that sow, in the tears of godly sorrow, to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting; and that will be a joyful harvest indeed. Blessed are those that mourn, for they shall be forever comforted. When we mourn for our sins, or suffer for Christ's sake, we are sowing in tears, to reap in joy. And remember that God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows that shall he reap. They shall have a harvest of joy. The troubles of the saints will not last always, but, when they have done their work, shall have a happy period. The captives in Babylon were long sowing in tears, but at length they were brought forth with joy, and then they reaped the benefit of their patient suffering, and brought their sheaves with them to their own land, in their experiences of the goodness of God to them. Job, and Joseph, and David, and many others, had harvests of joy after a sorrowful seedness. Those that sow in the tears of godly sorrow shall reap in the joy of a sealed pardon and a settled peace.

[Psalm 126:4-6]

OCTOBER 12

Imprecatory Prayer

Grant not, O Lord, the desires of the wicked; do not further their evil plot, or they will be exalted!

PSALM 140:8

Believers may pray that God would not grant the desires of the wicked, nor further their evil devices. False accusers will bring mischief upon themselves, even the burning coals of divine vengeance. And surely the righteous shall dwell in God's presence, and give him thanks for evermore. God's judgments shall fall upon the wicked, compared to burning coals in allusion to the destruction of Sodom; as in the deluge the waters from above, and those from beneath, met for the drowning of the world, both the windows of heaven were opened and the fountains of the great deep were broken up, so here, to complete the ruin of the enemies of Christ and his kingdom, they shall not only have burning coals cast upon them from above, but they themselves shall be cast into the fire beneath; both heaven and hell, the wrath of God the Judge and the rage of Satan the tormentor, shall concur to make them miserable. And the fire they shall be cast into is not a furnace of fire, out of which perhaps they might escape, but a deep pit, out of which they cannot rise. This is true thanksgiving, even thanks-living; this use we should make of all our deliverances, we should serve God the more closely and cheerfully. Those who, though evil spoken of and ill-used by men, are righteous in the sight of God, being justified by the righteousness of Christ, which is imputed to them, and received by faith, as the effect of which, they live soberly and righteously; these give thanks to the Lord, for the righteousness whereby they are made righteous, and for every blessing of grace, and mercy of life.

[Psalm 140:8-13]

OCTOBER 13

Confide in God

Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord his God.

PSALM 146:5

The psalmist encourages us to put confidence in God. We must hope in the providence of God for all we need as to this life, and in the grace of God for that which is to come. Let us take a view of the character here given of those whom God will uphold. Those shall have God for their help who take him for their God, and serve and worship him accordingly, those who have their hope in him, and live a life of dependence upon him, who have good thoughts of him, and encourage themselves in him, when all other supports fail. Every believer may look upon him as the God of Jacob, of the church in general, and therefore may expect relief from him, in reference to public distresses, and as his God in particular and therefore may depend upon him in all personal wants and straits. The God of heaven became a man that he might become our salvation. Though he died on the cross for our sins, and was laid in the grave, yet his thoughts of love to us did not perish; he rose again to fulfill them. When on earth, his miracles were examples of what he is still doing every day. He grants deliverance to captives bound in the chains of sin and Satan. He feeds with the bread of life those who hunger for salvation; and he is the constant Friend of the poor in spirit, the helpless: with him poor sinners, that are as fatherless, find mercy; and his kingdom shall continue forever. Then let sinners flee to him, and believers rejoice in him; as the Lord shall reign forever, let us stir up each other to praise his holy name.

[Psalm 146:5-10]

OCTOBER 14

No Fear of God

Have those who work evil no knowledge, who eat up my people as they eat bread, and do not call upon God?

PSALM 53:4

The scope of Psalm 53 is to convince us of our sins. God, by the psalmist, here shows us how bad we are, and proves this by his own certain knowledge. He speaks terror to persecutors, the worst of sinners. He speaks encouragement to God's persecuted people. How comes it that men are so bad? It is because there is no fear of God before their eyes. Men's bad practices flow from their bad principles; if they profess to know God, yet in works, because in thoughts, they deny him. See the folly of sin; he is a fool, in the account of God, whose judgment we are sure is right, that harbors such corrupt thoughts. And see the fruit of sin; to what it brings men, when their hearts are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. See also the faith of the saints, and their hope and power as to the cure of this great evil. There will come a Savior, a great salvation, a salvation from sin. God will save his church from its enemies. He will save all believers from their own sins, that they may not be led captive by them, which will be everlasting joy to them. From this work the Redeemer had his name JESUS, for he shall save his people from their sins (Matt. 1:21). God will, in due time, save his church from the sinful malice of its enemies, which will bring joy to Jacob and Israel, that have long been in a mournful melancholy state. He will save all believers from their own iniquities, that they may not be led captive by them, which will be everlasting matter of joy to them.

[Psalm 53]

OCTOBER 15

The Creator's Kindness

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.

PSALM 19:1

Every object we behold calls on us to bless and praise the Lord, who is great. His eternal power and Godhead are clearly shown by the things which he has made. God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. The Lord Jesus, the Son of his love, is the Light of the world. When we reflect upon the provision made for all creatures, we should also notice the natural worship they render to God. The divine providence not only furnishes animals with their proper food, but vegetables also with theirs. The trees of the Lord are full of sap, not only men's trees, which they take care of and have an eye to, in their orchards, and parks, and other enclosures, but God's trees, which grow in the wildernesses, and are taken care of only by his providence; they are full of sap and want no nourishment. Even the cedars of Lebanon, an open forest, though they are high and bulky, and require a great deal of sap to feed them, have enough from the earth; they are trees which he has planted, and which therefore he will protect and provide for. We may apply this to the trees of righteousness, which are the planting of the Lord, planted in his vineyard; these are full of sap, for what God plants he will water, and those that are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. Yet man, forgetful ungrateful man, enjoys the largest measure of his Creator's kindness, the earth, varying in different lands. Nor let us forget spiritual blessings; the fruitfulness of the church through grace, the bread of everlasting life, the cup of salvation, and the oil of gladness.

[Psalm 104:1-18]

OCTOBER 16

Miserably Forever

The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray from birth, speaking lies.

PSALM 58:3

When wrong is done under the form of law, it is worse than any other; especially it is grievous to behold those who profess to be children of God, joining together against any of his people. We should thank the Lord for merciful restraints; we should be more earnest in seeking renewing grace, more watchful over ourselves, and more patient under the effects of fallen nature in others. The corruption of their nature was the root of bitterness. We may see in children the wickedness of the world beginning. They go astray from God and their duty as soon as possibly they can. And how soon will little children tell lies! It is our duty to take pains to teach them, and above all, earnestly to pray for converting grace to make our children new creatures. Though the poison is within, much of it may be kept from breaking forth to injure others. When the Savior's words are duly regarded, the serpent becomes harmless. But those who refuse to hear heavenly wisdom must perish miserably, forever. God's design, in his word and providence, is to cure serpents of their malignity; to this end how wise, how powerful, how well-chosen are the charms! How forcible the right words! But all in vain with most men; and what is the reason? It is because they will not hearken. None are so deaf as those that will not hear. "We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn" (Matt. 11:17); how should they, when they have stopped their ears?

[Psalm 58:1-5]

Matter for Praise

My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food, and my mouth will praise you with joyful lips, when I remember you upon my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night; for you have been my help, and in the shadow of your wings I will sing for joy.

PSALM 63:5-7

As the sweetest of Paul's epistles were those from prison, so some of the sweetest of David's psalms were those penned, as this was, in a wilderness. That which grieved him most in his banishment was the want of public ordinances; these he here longs to be restored to the enjoyment of; and the present want did but whet his appetite. Yet it is not the ordinances, but the God of the ordinances, that his heart is upon. Even in affliction we need not want matter for praise. When this is the regular frame of a believer's mind, he values the loving-kindness of God more than life. God's loving-kindness is our spiritual life, and that is better than temporal life. We must praise God with joyful lips; we must address ourselves to the duties of religion with cheerfulness, and speak forth the praises of God from a principle of holy joy. Praising lips must be joyful lips. David was in continual danger; care and fear held his eyes waking, and gave him wearisome nights; but he comforted himself with thoughts of God. The mercies of God, when called to mind in the night watches, support the soul, making darkness cheerful. How happy will be that last morning, when the believer, awaking up after the Divine likeness, shall be satisfied with all the fullness of God, and praise him with joyful lips, where there is no night, and where sorrow and sighing flee away!

[Psalm 63:3-6]

OCTOBER 18

The Morning Hours

Let us go out early to the vineyards and see whether the vines have budded, whether the grape blossoms have opened and the pomegranates are in bloom. There I will give you my love.

SONG OF SOLOMON 7:12

The best and dearest of God's saints and servants may sometimes have their lot cast in a wilderness, which speaks them lonely and solitary, desolate and afflicted, wanting, wandering, and unsettled, and quite at a loss what to do with themselves. All the straits and difficulties of a wilderness must not put us out of tune for sacred songs; but even then it is our duty and interest to keep up a cheerful communion with God. There are psalms proper for a wilderness, and we have reason to thank God that it is the wilderness of Judah we are in, not the wilderness of sin. "Early I seek you." The true Christian devotes to God the morning hour. He opens the eyes of his understanding with those of his body, and awakes each morning to righteousness. He arises with a thirst after those comforts which the world cannot give, and has immediate recourse by prayer to the Fountain of the water of life. The true believer is convinced, that nothing in this sinful world can satisfy the wants and desires of his immortal soul; he expects his happiness from God, as his portion. When faith and hope are most in exercise, the world appears a weary desert, and the believer longs for the joys of heaven, of which he has some foretastes in the ordinances of God upon earth.

[Psalm 63:1-2]

OCTOBER 19

All Our Springs

Singers and dancers alike say, "All my springs are in you."

PSALM 87:7

OCTOBER

Christ himself is the Foundation of the church, which God has laid. Holiness is the strength and firmness of the church. Let us not be ashamed of the church of Christ in its meanest condition, or of those that belong to it, since such glorious things are spoken of it. Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, even Jesus Christ. The glorious things spoken of Zion by the Spirit were all typical of Christ and his work and offices; of the gospel church, its privileges and members; of heaven, its glory and perfect happiness. The church of Christ is more glorious and excellent than the nations of the earth. In the records of heaven, the meanest of those who are born again stand registered ... To them much was given, and of them much will be required. Let those that dwell in Zion, mark this, and live up to their profession. Zion's songs shall be sung with joy and triumph. The springs of the joy of a carnal worldling are in wealth and pleasure; but of a gracious soul, they are in the word of God and prayer. All grace and consolation are derived from Christ, through his ordinances, to the souls of believers. So the psalmist says, reckoning the springs from which his dry soul must be watered to lie in the sanctuary, in the word and ordinances, and in the communion of saints. The springs of the joy of a carnal worldling lie in wealth and pleasure; but the springs of the joy of a gracious soul lie in the word of God and prayer. Christ is the true temple; all our springs are in him, and from him all our streams flow. It pleased the Father, and all believers are well pleased with it too, that in him should all fullness dwell.

[Psalm 87]

OCTOBER 20

Deliverance of the Church

If it had not been the Lord who was on our side...

PSALM 124:1

God suffers the enemies of his people sometimes to prevail very far against them, that his power may be seen the more in their deliverance. Happy the people whose God is Jehovah, a God all-sufficient. Besides applying this to any particular deliverance wrought in our days and the ancient times, we should have in our thoughts the great work of redemption by Jesus Christ, by which believers were rescued from Satan. God is the Author of all our deliverances, and he must have the glory. The enemies lay snares for God's people, to bring them into sin and trouble, and to hold them there. Sometimes they seem to prevail; but in the Lord let us put our trust, and we shall not be put to confusion. God's people are taken in the snare, and are as unable to help themselves out as any weak and silly bird is; and then is God's time to appear for their relief, when all other friends fail; then God breaks the snare, and turns the counsel of the enemies into foolishness. The believer will ascribe all the honor of his salvation, to the power, mercy, and truth of God, and look back with wonder and thanksgiving on the way in which the Lord has led him. Let us rejoice that our help for the time to come is in him who made heaven and earth. It is a comfort to all that lay the interests of God's Israel near their hearts that Israel's God is the same that made the world, and therefore will have a church in the world, and can secure that church in times of the greatest danger and distress. In him therefore let the church's friends put their confidence, and they shall not be put to confusion.

[Psalm 124]

OCTOBER 21

Bring Us Home

O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.

PSALM 63:1

A devout and pious soul has little need of direction how to sing this psalm, so naturally does it speak its own genuine language; and an unsanctified soul, that is unacquainted and unaffected with divine things, is scarcely capable of singing it with understanding. True Christians can, in some measure, and at some times, make use of the strong language of David, but too commonly our souls cleave to the dust. Having committed ourselves to God, we must be easy and pleased, and quiet from the fear of evil. Those that follow hard after God would soon fail, if God's right hand did not uphold them. It is he that strengthens us and comforts us. The psalmist doubts not but that though now sowing in tears, he should reap in joy. Messiah the Prince shall rejoice in God; he is already entered into the joy set before him, and his glory will be completed at his second coming. It is our duty to rejoice in the shadow of God's wings, which denotes our recourse to him by faith and prayer, as naturally as the chickens, when they are cold or frightened, run by instinct under the wings of the hen. Having committed ourselves to God, we must be easy and pleased, and quiet from the fear of evil. "Blessed Lord, let our desire towards you increase every hour; let our love be always upon you; let all our enjoyment be in you, and all our satisfaction from you. Be all in all to us while we remain in the present wilderness state, and bring us home to the everlasting enjoyment of you forever."

[Psalm 63:7-11]

OCTOBER 22

H o p i n g a n d T r u s t i n g

My heart overflows with a pleasing theme; I address my verses to the king; my tongue is like the pen of a ready scribe.

PSALM 45:1

This psalm encourages hoping and trusting in God; in his power and providence, and his gracious presence with his church in the worst of times. We may apply it to spiritual enemies, and the encouragement we have that, through Christ, we shall be conquerors over them. He is a Help, a present Help, a Help found, one whom we have found to be so; a Help at hand, one that is always near; we cannot desire a better, nor shall we ever find the like in any creature. Let those be troubled at the troubling of the waters, who build their confidence on a floating foundation; but let not those be alarmed who are led to the Rock, and there find firm footing. Here is joy to the church, even in sorrowful times. The river alludes to the graces and consolations of the Holy Spirit, which flow through every part of the church, and through God's sacred ordinances, gladdening the heart of every believer. It is promised that the church shall not be moved. If God be in our hearts, by his word dwelling richly in us, we shall be established, we shall be helped; let us trust and not be afraid. We then speak best of Christ and divine things when we speak from the heart that which has warmed and affected us; and we should never be rash in speaking of the things of Christ, but weigh well beforehand what we have to say, lest we speak amiss.

[Psalm 45:1-5]

OCTOBER 23

Our Counsels

Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail.

LAMENTATIONS 3:22

Those that will not wait for God's counsel shall justly be given up to their own hearts' lusts to walk in their own counsels. An undue desire, even for lawful things, becomes sinful. God showed his displeasure for this. He filled them with uneasiness of mind, terror of conscience, and self-reproach. Many that fare deliciously every day, and whose bodies are healthful, have leanness in their souls: no love to God, no thankfulness, no appetite for the Bread of life, and then the soul must be lean. Those wretchedly forget themselves that feast their bodies and starve their souls. Even the true believer will see abundant cause to say, "It is because of the Lord's mercies that I am not consumed." Often have we set up idols in our hearts, cleaved to some forbidden object; so that if a greater than Moses had not stood to turn away the anger of the Lord, we should have been destroyed, and if God dealt severely with Moses for unadvised words, what do those deserve who speak many proud and wicked words? It is just in God to remove those relations that are blessings to us, when we are peevish and provoking to them, and grieve their spirits. If he deals thus severely with Moses for one unadvised word, what does their sin deserve who have spoken so many presumptuous wicked words? If this was done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry? God deprived them of the blessing of Moses's guidance and government at a time when they most needed it, so that his death was more a punishment to them than to himself.

[Psalm 106:13-33]

OCTOBER 24

Our Songs of Praise

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth! Serve the Lord with gladness! Come into his presence with singing!

PSALM 100:1-2

This song of praise should be considered as a prophecy, and even used as a prayer, for the coming of that time when all people shall know that the Lord he is God, and shall become his worshippers, and the sheep of his pasture. Great encouragement is given us, in worshipping God, to do it cheerfully. If, when we strayed like wandering sheep, he has brought us again to his fold, we have indeed abundant cause to bless his name. The matter of praise and the motives to it are very important. Know what God is in himself, and what he is to you. Know it; consider and apply it, then you will be more close and constant, more inward and serious, in his worship. The covenant of grace set down in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, with so many rich promises, to strengthen the faith of every weak believer, makes the matter of God's praise and of his people's joys so sure, that how sad soever our spirits may be when we look to ourselves, yet we shall have reason to praise the Lord when we look to his goodness and mercy, and to what he has said in his word for our comfort ... The saints, who are now the sanctified vessels of mercy, will be, to eternity, the glorified monuments of mercy. That he is a God of inviolable truth and faithfulness, for his truth endures to all generations, and no word of his shall fall to the ground as antiquated or revoked. The promise is sure to all the seed, from age to age.

[Psalm 100]

OCTOBER 25

What God Has Done

Come and see what God has done: he is awesome in his deeds toward the children of man.

PSALM 66:5

That God has given us leave to pray, a command to pray, encouragements to pray, and (to crown all) a heart to pray, is what we have reason to mention with thankfulness to his praise; and the more if, when we cried to him with our mouth, he was extolled with our tongue, that is, if we were enabled by faith and hope to give glory to him when we were seeking for mercy and grace from him, and to praise him for mercy in prospect though not yet in possession. By crying to him we do indeed extol him. We should declare unto those that fear God, what he has done for our souls, and how he has heard and answered our prayers, inviting them to join us in prayer and praise; this will turn to our mutual comfort, and to the glory of God. We cannot share these spiritual privileges, if we retain the love of sin in our hearts, though we refrain from the gross practice, sin, regarded in the heart, will spoil the comfort and success of prayer; for the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination of the Lord. But if the feeling of sin in the heart causes desires to be rid of it; if it be the presence of one urging a demand we know we must not, cannot comply with, this is an argument of sincerity. And when we pray in simplicity and godly sincerity, our prayers will be answered. This will excite gratitude to him who has not turned away our prayer or his mercy from us. It was not prayer that fetched the deliverance, but his mercy that sent it. That is the foundation of our hopes, the fountain of our comforts; and ought to be the matter of our praises.

[Psalm 66:13-20]

OCTOBER 26

Wait for the Lord

Our soul waits for the Lord; he is our help and our shield.

PSALM 33:20

David here encourages himself, in reference to the threatening power of his enemies, with a pious resolution to wait upon God and a believing expectation that he should yet praise him. It is our wisdom and duty, in times of danger and difficulty, to wait upon God; for he is our defense, in whom we shall be safe. It is very comfortable to us, in prayer, to look to God as the God of our mercy, the Author of all good in us, and the Giver of all good to us. The wicked can never be satisfied, which is the greatest misery in a poor condition. A contented man, if he has not what he would have, yet he does not quarrel with Providence, nor fret within himself. It is not poverty, but discontent that makes a man unhappy. David would praise God because he had many times, and all along, found him his refuge in the day of trouble. He that is all this to us, is certainly worthy of our best affections, praises, and services. The trials of his people will end in joy and praise. When the night of affliction is over, they will sing of the Lord's power and mercy in the morning. Let believers now, in assured faith and hope, praise him for those mercies, for which they will rejoice and praise him forever. When we think God's judgments come slowly upon sinners we must conclude that God has wise and holy ends in the gradual proceedings of his wrath. If God has undertaken the protection of his people as their shield, he will doubtless humble and abase all those that fight against them.

[Psalm 59:8-17]

OCTOBER 27

True Freedom

So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

JOHN 8:36

Such power attended our Lord's words that many were convinced and professed to believe in him. He encouraged them to attend his teaching, rely on his promises, and obey his commands, notwithstanding all temptations to evil. Thus doing, they would be his disciples truly; and by the teaching of his word and Spirit, they would learn where their hope and strength lay. Christ spoke of spiritual liberty; but carnal hearts feel no other grievances than those that molest the body, and distress their worldly affairs. Talk to them of their liberty and property, tell them of waste committed upon their lands, or damage done to their houses, and they understand you very well; but speak of the bondage of sin, captivity to Satan, and liberty by Christ; tell of wrong done to their precious souls, and the hazard of their eternal welfare, then you bring strange things to their ears. Gospel truth frees us from the yoke of the ceremonial law, and the more grievous burdens of the traditions of the elders. It makes us free from our spiritual enemies, free in the service of God, free to the privileges of sons, and free of the Jerusalem which is from above, which is free. Jesus plainly reminded them that the man who practiced any sin was, in fact, a slave to that sin, which was the case with most of them. Christ in the gospel offers us freedom, he has power to do this, and those whom Christ makes free are really so. But often we see persons disputing about liberty of every kind, while they are slaves to some sinful lust.

[John 8:30-36]

OCTOBER 28

What Do We Do?

He answered, "Whether he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see."

JOHN 9:25

As Christ's mercies are most valued by those who have felt the absence of them, such that have been blind, and now see; so the most powerful and lasting affections to Christ, arise from actual knowledge of him. In the work of grace in the soul, though we cannot tell when, and how, and by what steps the blessed change was wrought, yet we may take the comfort, if we can say, through grace, "at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light" (Eph. 5:8). The unbelief of those who enjoy the means of knowledge and conviction is indeed marvelous. All who have felt the power and grace of the Lord Jesus wonder at the willfulness of others who reject him. He argues strongly against them, not only that Jesus was not a sinner, but that he was of God. We may each of us know by this, whether we are of God or not. What do we do? What do we do for God? What do we do for our souls? What do we do more than others? Those that are of God will keep the commandments of God; and this is his commandment, that we sanctify the Sabbath. Those that are of God keep up communion with God, and delight to hear from him, and speak to him, and therefore will observe the Sabbath, which is a day appointed for intercourse with heaven. The Sabbath is called a sign, for the sanctifying of it is a sign of a sanctified heart, and the profaning of it a sign of a profane heart.

[John 9:24-34]

OCTOBER 29

Christ Shall Triumph

And many believed in him there.

JOHN 10:42

Christ's works of power and mercy proclaim him to be over all, God blessed for evermore, that all may know and believe he is in the Father, and the Father in him. Whom the Father sends, he sanctifies. The holy God will reward, and therefore will employ, none but such as he makes holy. The Father was in the Son, so that by divine power he wrought his miracles; the Son was so in the Father, that he knew the whole of his mind. This we cannot by searching find out to perfection, but we may know and believe these declarations of Christ. No weapon formed against our Lord Jesus shall prosper. He escaped, not because he was afraid to suffer, but because his hour was not come. And he who knew how to deliver himself, knows how to deliver the godly out of their temptations, and to make a way for them to escape. Persecutors may drive Christ and his gospel out of their own city or country, but they cannot drive him or it out of the world. When we know Christ by faith in our hearts, we find all that the Scripture says of him is true. A man is never undone till he is in hell, and they shall not go down to that. Shepherds that have large flocks often lose some of the sheep and suffer them to perish; but Christ has engaged that none of his sheep shall perish, not one. Those are safe who are in the hands of the Lord Jesus. The saints are preserved in Christ Jesus: and their salvation is not in their own keeping, but in the keeping of a Mediator.

[*John 10:31-42*]

OCTOBER 30

Sickness and Health

The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way.

JOHN 4:50

Honors and titles are no security from sickness and death. The greatest men must go themselves to God, must become beggars. The nobleman did not stop from his request till he prevailed. But at first he discovered the weakness of his faith in the power of Christ. It is hard to persuade ourselves that distance of time and place, are no hindrance to the knowledge, mercy, and power of our Lord Jesus. Christ gave an answer of peace. Christ's saying that the soul lives, makes it alive. The father went his way, which showed the sincerity of his faith. Being satisfied, he did not hurry home that night, but returned as one easy in his own mind. His servants met him with the news of the child's recovery. Good news will meet those that hope in God's word. Diligent comparing the works of Jesus with his word, will confirm our faith. And the bringing the cure to the family brought salvation to it. Thus an experience of the power of one word of Christ, may settle the authority of Christ in the soul. The whole family believed likewise. The miracle made Jesus dear to them. The knowledge of Christ still spreads through families, and men find health and salvation to their souls. Somewhere or other Christ will find a welcome. People may, if they please, shut the sun out of their own houses, but they cannot shut it out of the world. Fresh mercies should revive the remembrance of former mercies, as former mercies should encourage our hopes of further mercies. Christ keeps account of his favors, whether we do or no.

[John 4:43-54]

OCTOBER 31

Sloth and Cowardice

Slothfulness casts into a deep sleep, and an idle person will suffer hunger.

PROVERBS 19:15

The people of Israel were very careless of their duty and interest. Owing to slothfulness and cowardice, they would not be at the pains to complete their conquests. Like the sluggard, that dreamed of a lion in the way, a lion in the streets, they fancied insuperable difficulties, and frightened themselves with winds and clouds from sowing and reaping. It was also owing to their covetousness. They were willing to let the Canaanites live among them, that they might make advantage of them. They had not the dread and detestation of idolatry they ought to have had. The same unbelief that kept their fathers forty years out of Canaan, kept them now out of the full possession of it, and that was unbelief. Distrust of the power and promise of God lost them their advantages, and ran them into a thousand mischiefs. Thus many a believer who begins well is hindered. His graces languish, his lusts revive, Satan plies him with suitable temptations, the world recovers its hold; he brings guilt into his conscience, anguish into his heart, discredit on his character, and reproach on the gospel. Though he may have sharp rebukes, and be so recovered that he does not perish, yet he will have deeply to lament his folly through his remaining days; and upon his dying bed to mourn over the opportunities of glorifying God and serving the church he has lost. We can have no fellowship with the enemies of God within us or around us, but to our hurt; therefore our only wisdom is to maintain unceasing war against them.

[Judges 1:21-36]

NOVEMBER 1

Christ Ascended

So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God.

MARK 16:19

After the Lord had spoken he went up into heaven. Sitting is a posture of rest. He had finished his work; and a posture of rule, he took possession of his kingdom. He sat at the right hand of God, which denotes his sovereign dignity and universal power. Whatever God does concerning us, gives to us, or accepts from us, it is by his Son. Now he is glorified with the glory he had before the world. The apostles went forth, and preached everywhere, far and near. Though the doctrine they preached was spiritual and heavenly, and directly contrary to the spirit and temper of the world; though it met with much opposition, and was wholly destitute of all worldly supports and advantages; yet in a few years the sound went forth unto the ends of the earth. Christ's ministers do not now need to work miracles to prove their message; the Scriptures are proved to be of divine origin, and this renders those without excuse who reject or neglect them. The effects of the gospel, when faithfully preached, and truly believed, in changing the tempers and characters of mankind, form a constant proof, a miraculous proof, that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation, of all who believe. These were proper signs following the word – the reformation of the world, the destruction of idolatry, the conversion of sinners, the comfort of saints; and these signs still follow it, and that they may do so more and more, for the honor of Christ and the good of mankind, the evangelist prays, and teaches us to say "Amen."

[Mark 16:19-20]

NOVEMBER 2

Keep Yourselves Pure

Little children, keep yourselves from idols.

I JOHN 5:21

It is wrong for believers to join with the wicked and profane. The word unbeliever applies to all destitute of true faith. True pastors will caution their beloved children in the gospel, not to be unequally yoked. The fatal effects of neglecting Scripture precepts as to marriages clearly appear. Instead of a help meet, the union brings a snare. Those whose cross it is to be unequally united, without their willful fault, may expect consolation under it; but when believers enter into such unions, against the express warnings of God's word, they must expect distress. The caution also extends to common conversation. We should not join in friendship and acquaintance with wicked men and unbelievers. Though we cannot wholly avoid seeing and hearing, and being with such, yet we should never choose them for friends. We must not defile ourselves by converse with those who defile themselves with sin. Come out from the workers of iniquity, and separate from their vain and sinful pleasures and pursuits; from all conformity to the corruptions of this present evil world. If it is an envied privilege to be the son or daughter of an earthly prince, who can express the dignity and happiness of being sons and daughters of the Almighty? There is a great deal of danger in communicating with unbelievers and idolaters, danger of being defiled and of being rejected; therefore the exhortation is to come out from among them, and keep at a due distance, to be separate, as one would avoid the society of those who have the leprosy or the plague, for fear of taking infection, and not to touch the unclean thing, lest we be defiled. Who can touch pitch, and not be defiled by it?

[2 Corinthians 6:11-18]

NOVEMBER 3

Purity and Godliness

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

2 PETER 3:18A

From the doctrine of Christ's second coming, we are exhorted to purity and godliness. This is the effect of real knowledge. Very exact and universal holiness is enjoined, not resting in any low measure or degree. True Christians look for new heavens and a new earth; freed from the vanity to which things present are subject, and the sin they are polluted with. Those only who are clothed with the righteousness of Christ and sanctified by the Holy Ghost shall be admitted to dwell in this holy place. He is faithful, who has promised. Those, whose sins are pardoned, and their peace made with God, are the only safe and happy people; therefore follow after peace and that with all men; follow after holiness as well as peace. Never expect to be found at that day of God in peace, if you are lazy and idle in this your day, in which we must finish the work given us to do. Only the diligent Christian will be the happy Christian in the day of the Lord. Our Lord will suddenly come to us, or shortly call us to him; and shall he find us idle? Learn to make a right use of the patience of our Lord, who as yet delays his coming. Such a knowledge of Christ as conforms us more to him, and endears him more to us, must needs be of great use to us, to preserve us from falling off in times of general apostasy; and those who experience this effect of the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will, upon receiving such grace from him, give thanks and praise to him.

[2 Peter 3:11-18]

NOVEMBER 4

False Pursuits

And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him."

MATTHEW 2:8

The first who took notice of Christ after his birth were the shepherds who saw and heard glorious things concerning him, and made them known abroad, to the amazement of all that heard them; afterward, Simeon and Anna spoke of him, by the Spirit, to all that were disposed to heed what they said. Those who live at the greatest distance from the means of grace often use most diligence, and learn to know the most of Christ and his salvation. But no curious arts, or mere human learning, can direct men unto him. We must learn of Christ by attending to the word of God, as a light that shines in a dark place, and by seeking the teaching of the Holy Spirit. And those in whose hearts the day-star is risen, to give them any thing of the knowledge of Christ, make it their business to worship him. Though Herod was very old, and never had shown affection for his family, and was not himself likely to live till a new-born infant had grown up to manhood, he began to be troubled with the dread of a rival. He understood not the spiritual nature of the Messiah's kingdom. Let us beware of a dead faith. A man may be persuaded of many truths, and yet may hate them, because they interfere with his ambition, or sinful indulgences. Such a belief will make him uneasy, and the more resolved to oppose the truth and the cause of God; and he may be foolish enough to hope for success therein.

[Matthew 2:1-8]

N O V E M B E R 5

M o r e T h a n W e A s k

For the Lord has chosen Zion; he has desired it for his dwelling place.

PSALM 132:13

Believers know how to make use of the promises both ways, with them to speak to God and in them to hear what God the Lord will speak to us. These promises relate to the establishment both in church and state, both to the throne of the house of David and to the testimony of Israel fixed on Mount Zion. The promises concerning Zion's hill are as applicable to the gospel-church as these concerning David's seed are to Christ and therefore both pleadable by us and very comfortable to us. The Lord never turns from us when we plead the covenant with his anointed Prophet, Priest, and King. How vast is the love of God to man, that he should speak thus concerning his church! It is his desire to dwell with us; yet how little do we desire to dwell with him! He abode in Zion till the sins of Israel caused him to give them up to the spoilers ... God's people have a special blessing on common enjoyments, and that blessing puts peculiar sweetness into them. Zion's poor have reason to be content with a little of this world because they have better things prepared for them. God will abundantly bless the nourishment of the new man, and satisfy the poor in spirit with the bread of life. He gives more than we ask, and when he gives salvation, he will give abundant joy. God would bring to nothing every design formed to destroy the house of David, until King Messiah should arise out of it, to sit upon the throne of his Father. In him all the promises centre. His enemies, who will not have him to reign over them, shall at the last day be clothed with shame and confusion forever.

[Psalm 132:11-18]

NOVEMBER 6

Our Best Plea

Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness! You have given me relief when I was in distress. Be gracious to me and hear my prayer!

PSALM 4:1

"Hear me for your mercy-sake," is our best plea. He who will not ask such blessings as pardon, and justifying righteousness, and eternal life, must perish for the want of them. Alas! that so many should make so fearful a choice. The psalmist warns against sin. Keep up holy reverence of the glory and majesty of God. You have a great deal to say to your hearts, they may be spoken with, let it not be unsaid. Examine them by serious self-reflection; let your thoughts fasten upon that which is good, and keep close to it. Consider your ways, and before you turn to sleep at night, examine your consciences with respect to what you have done in the day; particularly what you have done amiss, that you may repent of it. When you awake in the night, meditate upon God, and the things that belong to your peace. Upon a sick-bed, particularly, we should consider our ways. Be still. When you have asked conscience a question, be serious, be silent, and wait for an answer. Open not the mouth to excuse sin. All confidence must be an answer. Open not the mouth to excuse sin. All confidence only: therefore, after commanding the sacrifices of righteousness, the psalmist says, "Put your trust in the Lord." In singing these verses we must preach to ourselves the doctrine of the provoking nature of sin, the lying vanity of the world, and the unspeakable happiness of God's people; and we must press upon ourselves the duties of fearing God, conversing with our own hearts, and offering spiritual sacrifices; and in praying over these verses we must beg of God grace thus to think and thus to do.

[Psalm 4:1-5]

NOVEMBER 7

Nothing without God

Why do you boast of evil, O mighty man? The steadfast love of God endures all the day.

PSALM 52:1

Those wretchedly deceive themselves, who think to support themselves in power and wealth without God. The wicked man trusted in the abundance of his riches; he thought his wickedness would help him to keep his wealth. Right or wrong, he would get what he could, and keep what he had, and ruin any one that stood in his way; this he thought would strengthen him; but see what it comes to! Those who by faith and love dwell in the house of God shall be like green olive-trees there. And that we may be as green olive-trees, we must live a life of faith and holy confidence in God and his grace. It adds much to the beauty of our profession and to fruitfulness in every grace, to be much in praising God; and we never can want matter for praise. His name alone can be our refuge and strong tower. It is very good for us to wait on that saving name; there is nothing better to calm and quiet our spirits, when disturbed, and to keep us in the way of duty, when tempted to use any crooked courses for our relief, than to hope, and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord. None ever followed his guidance but it ended well. All the saints have experienced the benefit of it, who never attended him in vain, never followed his guidance but it ended well, nor were ever made ashamed of their believing expectations from him. What is good before all the saints let us therefore abide and abound in God's plentiful mercy.

[Psalm 52:6-9]

NOVEMBER 8

Consider the Heavens

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard.

PSALM 19:1-3

We are to consider the heavens, that man thus may be directed to set his affections on things above. What is man, so mean a creature, that he should be thus honored! So sinful a creature, that he should be thus favored! Man has sovereign dominion over the inferior creatures, under God, and is appointed their lord. This refers to Christ. In Hebrews 2:6-8, the apostle, to prove the sovereign dominion of Christ, shows he is that Man, that Son of man, here spoken of, whom God has made to have dominion over the works of his hands. The greatest favor ever showed to the human race, and the greatest honor ever put upon human nature, were exemplified in the Lord Jesus. With good reason does the psalmist conclude as he began, Lord, how excellent is your name in all the earth, which has been honored with the presence of the Redeemer, and is still enlightened by his gospel, and governed by his wisdom and power! What words can reach his praises, who has a right to our obedience as our Redeemer? In singing this and praying it over, though we must not forget to acknowledge, with suitable affections, God's common favors to mankind, particularly in the serviceableness of the inferior creatures to us, yet we must especially set ourselves to give glory to our Lord Jesus, by confessing that he is Lord, submitting to him as our Lord, and waiting till we see all things put under him and all his enemies made his footstool.

[Psalm 8:3-9]

NOVEMBER 9

God's Goodness to All

Truly God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart.

PSALM 73:1

Truly God is good to all. He is in a special manner good to Israel. He has revealed himself and his grace to them. By his ways we may understand his precepts, the ways he requires us to walk in; and his promises and purposes. He always has been full of compassion. How unlike are those to God, who take every occasion to chide, and never know when to cease! What would become of us, if God should deal so with us? The Scripture says a great deal of the mercy of God, and we all have experienced it. The father pities his children that are weak in knowledge, and teaches them; pities them when they are froward, and bears with them; pities them when they are sick, and comforts them; pities them when they are fallen, and helps them to rise; pities them when they have offended, and, upon their submission, forgives them; pities them when wronged, and rights them: thus the Lord pities those that fear him. See why he pities. He considers the frailty of our bodies, and the folly of our souls, how little we can do, how little we can bear; in all which his compassion appears. The continuance of God's mercy belongs to such as these; it will last us longer than our lives on earth, and therefore we need not be troubled though our lives be short, since death itself will be no abridgment, no infringement, of our bliss. God's mercy is better than life, for it will out-live it.

[Psalm 103:6-14]

NOVEMBER 10

Our Comfort

Lead me to the rock that is higher than I, for you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the enemy.

PSALM 61:2B-3

David begins with prayers and tears, but ends with praise. Thus the soul, being lifted up to God, returns to the enjoyment of itself. Wherever we are, we have liberty to draw near to God, and may find a way open to the throne of grace. And that which separates us from other comforts, should drive us nearer to God, the fountain of all comfort. Though the heart is overwhelmed, yet it may be lifted up to God in prayer. No, I will cry unto you, for by that means it will be supported and relieved. Weeping must quicken praying, and not deaden it. God's power and promise are a rock that is higher than we are. This rock is Christ. On the divine mercy, as on a rock, David desired to rest his soul; but he was like a ship-wrecked sailor, exposed to the billows at the bottom of a rock too high for him to climb without help. David found that he could not be fixed on the Rock of salvation, unless the Lord placed him upon it. The service of God shall be his constant work and business: all must make it so who expect to find God their shelter and strong tower. The grace of God and the covenant of grace shall be our constant comfort: I will make my refuge in the covert of his wings, as the chickens seek both warmth and safety under the wings of the hen. Those that have found God a shelter to them ought still to have recourse to him in all their straits. This advantage those have that abide in God's tabernacle, that in the time of trouble he shall there hide them.

[Psalm 61:1-4]

NOVEMBER 11

God's Works and Ways

All your works shall give thanks to you, O Lord, and all your saints shall bless you!

PSALM 145:10

All God's works show forth his praises. He satisfies the desire of every living thing, except the unreasonable children of men, who are satisfied with nothing. He does good to all the children of men; his own people in a special manner. Many children of God who have been ready to fall into sin (and to fall into despair) have tasted his goodness in preventing their falls, or recovering them speedily by his graces and comforts. And with respect to all that are heavy laden under the burden of sin, if they come to Christ by faith, he will ease them, he will raise them. All God's works do praise him, as the beautiful building praises the builder or the well-drawn picture praises the painter; but the saints bless him as the children of prudent tender parents rise up and call them blessed. Of all God's works, his saints, the workmanship of his grace, the first-fruits of his creatures, have most reason to bless him. He is very ready to hear and answer the prayers of his people. He is present everywhere; but in a special way he is nigh to them, as he is not to others. He is in their hearts, and dwells there by faith, and they dwell in him. Having taught men to love his name and holy ways, he will save them from the destruction of the wicked. May we then love his name, and walk in his ways, while we desire that all flesh should bless his holy name forever and ever.

[Psalm 145:10-11]

NOVEMBER 12

The Redeemer's Glory

But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled, my steps had nearly slipped. For I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

PSALM 73:2-3

God sometimes grants prosperity to wicked men in displeasure and yet they flourish but for a moment. Let us seek for ourselves the salvation and grace of the gospel, that being daily anointed by the Holy Spirit we may behold and share the Redeemer's glory. It is from his grace by his word and Spirit that believers receive all the virtue that keeps them alive, and makes them fruitful. Where God gives true grace he will give more grace. God's trees shall grow higher, like the cedars, the tall cedars in Lebanon; they shall grow nearer heaven, and with a holy ambition shall aspire towards the upper world; they shall grow stronger, like the cedars, and fitter for use. He that has clean hands shall be stronger and stronger. They shall flourish, both in the credit of their profession and in the comfort and joy of their own souls. They shall be cheerful themselves and respected by all about them. Other trees, when old, leave off bearing, but in God's trees the strength of grace does not fail with the strength of nature. The last days of the saints are sometimes their best days, and their last work their best work: perseverance is sure evidence of sincerity. And may every Sabbath, while it shows forth the divine faithfulness, find our souls resting more and more upon the Lord our righteousness. Let good Christians aim to excel, that they may be eminent and may flourish, and so may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior, as flourishing trees adorn the courts of a house. And let those who flourish in God's courts give him the glory of it.

[Psalm 92:7-15]

NOVEMBER 13

H a n d s o f C h r i s t

Depart from me, all you workers of evil, for the Lord has heard the sound of my weeping. The Lord has heard my plea; the Lord accepts my prayer. All my enemies shall be ashamed and greatly troubled; they shall turn back and be put to shame in a moment.

PSALM 6:8-10

What a sudden change is here! Having made his request known to God, the psalmist is confident that his sorrow will be turned into joy. By the workings of God's grace upon his heart, he knew his prayer was accepted, and did not doubt but it would, in due time, be answered. His prayers will be accepted, coming up out of the hands of Christ the Mediator. The word signifies prayer made to God, the righteous Judge, as the God of his righteousness, who would plead his case and right his wrongs. A believer, through the blood and righteousness of Christ, can go to God as a righteous God, and plead with him for pardon and cleansing, who is just and faithful to grant both. He prays for the conversion of his enemies, or foretells their ruin. When God has done great things for us, this should put us upon studying what we shall do for him. Our Lord Jesus seems to borrow these words from the mouth of his father David, when, having all judgment committed to him, he shall say, "I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil!" (Luke 13:27), and so teaches us to say so now (Ps. 119:115). In singing this, and praying over it, we must give glory to God, as a God ready to hear prayer, must own his goodness to us in hearing our prayers, and must encourage ourselves to wait upon him and to trust in him in the greatest straits and difficulties.

[Psalm 6:8-10]

NOVEMBER 14

Remembering Jesus

Remember the wondrous works that he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he uttered.

PSALM 105:5

Every time we come to the throne of grace we may, if we please, furnish ourselves out of the word of God (out of the history of the New Testament, as this out of the history of the Old) with new songs, with fresh thoughts – so copious, so various, so inexhaustible is the subject. In the foregoing psalm we are taught to praise God for his wondrous works of common providence with reference to the world in general. In this we are directed to praise him for his special favors to his church. Let us remember the Redeemer's marvelous works, his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth. Though true Christians are few in number, strangers and pilgrims upon earth, yet a far better inheritance than Canaan is made sure to them by the covenant of God; and if we have the anointing of the Holy Spirit, none can do us any harm. Afflictions are among our mercies. They prove our faith and love, they humble our pride, they wean us from the world, and quicken our prayers. Bread is the staff which supports life; when that staff is broken, the body fails and sinks to the earth. The word of God is the staff of spiritual life, the food and support of the soul: the sorest judgment is a famine of hearing the word of the Lord. Such a famine was sore in all lands when Christ appeared in the flesh; whose coming, and the blessed effect of it, are shadowed forth in the history of Joseph. At the appointed time Christ was exalted as Mediator; all the treasures of grace and salvation are at his disposal, perishing sinners come to him, and are relieved by him.

[Psalm 105:8-23]

NOVEMBER 15

Thriving under the Cross

And the Lord made his people very fruitful and made them stronger than their foes.

PSALM 105:24

As the believer commonly thrives best in his soul when under the cross; so the church also flourishes most in true holiness and increases in number while under persecution. Yet instruments shall be raised up for their deliverance, and plagues may be expected by persecutors. See the special care God took of his people in the wilderness. All the benefits bestowed on Israel as a nation, were shadows of spiritual blessings with which we are blessed in Christ Jesus. Having redeemed us with his blood, restored our souls to holiness, and set us at liberty from Satan's bondage, he guides and guards us all the way. He satisfies our souls with the bread of heaven, and the water of life from the Rock of salvation, and will bring us safely to heaven. He redeems his servants from all iniquity, and purifies them unto himself, to be a peculiar people, zealous of good works. Common providence fetches waters from heaven and bread out of the earth; but for Israel the divine power brings bread from the clouds and water from the rocks: so far is the God of nature from being tied to the laws and courses of nature. We are therefore made, maintained, and redeemed, that we may live in obedience to the will of God; and the hallelujah with which the psalm concludes may be taken both as a thankful acknowledgment of God's favors and as a cheerful concurrence with this great intention of them. Has God done so much for us, and yet does he expect so little from us? Praise the Lord!

[Psalm 105:24-45] .

NOVEMBER 16

To All Eternity

I will praise the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.

PSALM 146:2

If it is our delight to praise the Lord while we live, we shall certainly praise him to all eternity. With this glorious prospect before us, how low do worldly pursuits seem! There is a Son of man in whom there is help, even him who is also the Son of God, who will not fail those that trust in him. But all other sons of men are like the man from whom they sprung, who, being in honor, did not abide. God has given the earth to the children of men, but there is great striving about it. Yet, after a while, no part of the earth will be their own, except that in which their dead bodies are laid. And when man returns to his earth, in that very day all his plans and designs vanish and are gone: what then comes of expectations from him? Let us take a view of the character here given of those whom God will uphold. Those shall have God for their help who take him for their God, and serve and worship him accordingly, who have their hope in him, and live a life of dependence upon him, who have good thoughts of him, and encourage themselves in him, when all other supports fail. Every believer may look upon him as the God of Jacob, of the church in general, and therefore may expect relief from him, in reference to public distresses, and as his God in particular and therefore may depend upon him in all personal wants and straits.

[Psalm 146]

NOVEMBER 17

With Our Hearts

I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart; I will recount all of your wonderful deeds.

PSALM 9:1

Holy joy is the life of thankful praise, as thankful praise is the language of holy joy. Whatever occurs to make us glad, our joy must pass through it, and terminate in God only, and not in the gift so much as in the giver. Joy and praise are properly expressed by singing psalms. When God has shown himself to be above the proud enemies of the church we must take occasion thence to give glory to him as the Most High. The triumphs of the Redeemer ought to be the triumphs of the redeemed. If we would praise God acceptably, we must praise him in sincerity, with our whole heart. When we give thanks for some one particular mercy, we should remember former mercies. Our joy must not be in the gift, so much as in the Giver. The triumphs of the Redeemer ought to be the triumphs of the redeemed. The almighty power of God is that which the strongest and stoutest of his enemies are no way able to stand before. We are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth, and that with him there is no unrighteousness. His people may, by faith, flee to him as their Refuge, and may depend on his power and promise for their safety, so that no real hurt shall be done to them. Those who know him to be a God of truth and faithfulness will rejoice in his word of promise, and rest upon that. Those who know him to be an everlasting Father, will trust him with their souls as their main care, and trust in him at all times, even to the end; and by constant care seek to approve themselves to him in the whole course of their lives.

[Psalm 9:1-10]

NOVEMBER 18

Rejoice with Trembling

Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.

PSALM 2:11

Whatever we rejoice in, in this world, it must always be with trembling, because of the uncertainty of all things in it. To welcome Jesus Christ, and to submit to him, is our wisdom and interest. Let him be very dear and precious; love him above all, love him in sincerity, love him much, as she did, to whom much was forgiven, and, in token of it, kissed his feet. And with a kiss of loyalty take this yoke upon you, and give up yourselves to be governed by his laws, disposed of by his providence, and entirely devoted to his cause. Unbelief is a sin against the remedy. It will be utter destruction to yourselves; lest you perish in the way of your sins and from the way of your vain hopes; lest your way perish, lest you prove to have missed the way of happiness. Christ is the way; take heed lest you are cut off from him as your way to God. Blessed will those be who, in the day of wrath, by trusting in Christ, have made him their Refuge. Blessed will those be in the day of wrath, who, by trusting in Christ, have made him their refuge and patron; when the hearts of others fail them for fear they shall lift up their heads with joy; and then those who now despise Christ and his followers will be forced to say, to their own greater confusion, "Now we see that blessed are all those, and those only, that trust in him." In singing this, and praying it over, we should have our hearts filled with a holy awe of God, but at the same time borne up with a cheerful confidence in Christ, in whose mediation we may comfort and encourage ourselves and one another.

[Psalm 2:10-12]

NOVEMBER 19

Pleasure and Profit

I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the Lord!" Our feet have been standing within your gates, O Jerusalem!

PSALM 122:1-2

It is the will of God that we should worship him in concert, that many should join together to wait upon him in public ordinances. We ought to worship God in our own houses, but that is not enough; we must go into the house of the Lord, to pay our homage to him there, and not forsake the assembling of ourselves together. The pleasure and profit from means of grace should make us disregard trouble and fatigue in going to them; and we should quicken one another to what is good. We should desire our Christian friends, when they have any good work in hand, to call for us, and take us with them. With what readiness should we think of the heavenly Jerusalem! How cheerfully should we bear the cross and welcome death, in hopes of a crown of glory! Jerusalem is called the beautiful city. It was a type of the gospel church, which is compact together in holy love and Christian communion, so that it is all as one city. If all the disciples of Christ were of one mind, and kept the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, their enemies would be deprived of their chief advantages against them. But Satan's maxim always has been, to divide that he may conquer; and few Christians are sufficiently aware of his designs. To ascribe the glory to God, to give thanks to the name of the Lord, which we have all reason to do, especially those that have the testimony of Israel among them. If God speak to us by his word, we have reason to answer him by our thanksgivings. See on what errand we go to public worship, to give thanks.

[Psalm 122:1-5]

NOVEMBER 20

True Wisdom

So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.

PSALM 90:12

Those who would learn true wisdom must pray for divine instruction must beg to be taught by the Holy Spirit and for comfort and joy in the returns of God's favor. They pray for the mercy of God, for they pretend not to plead any merit of their own. His favor would be a full fountain of future joys. It would be a sufficient balance to former grief. Let the grace of God in us produce the light of good works. And let divine consolations put gladness into our hearts, and a luster upon our countenances. May the work of our hands establish it; and, in order to that, establish us in it. We must live under a constant apprehension of the shortness and uncertainty of life and the near approach of death and eternity. We must so number our days as to compare our work with them, and mind it accordingly with a double diligence, as those that have no time to trifle. Those that would learn this arithmetic must pray for divine instruction, must go to God, and beg of him to teach them by his Spirit, to put them upon considering and to give them a good understanding. Instead of wasting our precious, fleeting days in pursuing fancies, which leave the possessors for ever poor, let us seek the forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance in heaven. Let us pray that the work of the Holy Spirit may appear in converting our hearts, and that the beauty of holiness may be seen in our conduct.

[Psalm 90:12-17]

NOVEMBER 21

Turned to Praise

I will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the peoples; I will sing praises to you among the nations. For your steadfast love is great to the heavens, your faithfulness to the clouds.

PSALM 57:9-10

By lively faith, David's prayers and complaints are at once turned into praises. His heart is fixed; it is prepared for every event, being stayed upon God. If by the grace of God we are brought into this even, composed frame of mind, we have great reason to be thankful. Nothing is done to purpose, in religion, unless it is done with the heart. The heart must be fixed for the duty, put in frame for it; fixed in the duty by close attention. Our tongue is our glory, and never more so than when praising God; dull and sleepy devotions will never be acceptable to God. Let us awake early in the morning, to begin the day with God; early in the beginning of a mercy. When David was driven out into heathen lands he would not only not worship their gods, but he would openly avow his veneration for the God of Israel, would take his religion along with him wherever he went, would endeavor to bring others in love with it, and leave the sweet savor of it behind him. When God comes toward us with his favors, let us go forth to meet him with our praises. David desired to bring others to join in praising God; and in his psalms, he is still praising God among the people, singing to him among the nations. Let us seek to have our hearts fixed to praise his boundless mercy and unfailing faithfulness; and to glorify him with body, soul, and spirit, which are his. Let us earnestly pray that the blessings of the gospel may be sent through every land.

[Psalm 57:7-11]

NOVEMBER 22

Our Only Remedy

You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound.

PSALM 4:7

Worldly people inquire for good, not for the chief good; all they want is outward good, present good, partial good, good meat, good drink, a good trade, and a good estate; but what are all these worth? Any good will serve the turn of most men, but a gracious soul will not be put off so. Lord, let us have your favor, and let us know that we have it, we desire no more; let us be satisfied of your loving-kindness, and will be satisfied with it. Many inquire after happiness, but David had found it. When God puts grace in the heart, he puts gladness in the heart. Thus comforted, he pitied, but neither envied nor feared the most prosperous sinner. He commits all his affairs to God, and is prepared to welcome his holy will. But salvation is in Christ alone; where will those appear who despise him as their Mediator, and revile him in his disciples? May they stand in awe, and no longer sin against the only remedy! In singing these verses, and praying over them, let us, with a holy contempt of the wealth and pleasure of this world, as insufficient to make us happy, earnestly seek the favor of God and pleasingly solace ourselves in that favor; and, with a holy indifference about the issue of all our worldly concerns, let us commit ourselves and all our affairs to the guidance and custody of the divine Providence, and be satisfied that all shall be made to work for good to us if we keep ourselves in the love of God.

[Psalm 4:6-8]

NOVEMBER 23

Fearing God's Name

Let me dwell in your tent forever! Let me take refuge under the shelter of your wings!

PSALM 61:4

There is a people in the world that fear God's name. There is a heritage peculiar to that people; present comforts in the soul, earnestness of future bliss. God himself is their inheritance, their portion forever. The Levites that had God for their inheritance must take up with him, and not expect a lot like their brethren; so those that fear God have enough in him, and therefore must not complain if they have but little of the world. We need desire no better heritage than that of those who fear God. If God deal with us as he uses to deal with those that love his name we need not desire to be any better dealt with. Those that fear God have enough in him, and must not complain. We need desire no better heritage than that of those who fear God. Those abide to good purpose in this world, those who abide before God, serve him, and walk in his fear; those who do so, shall abide before him forever. And these words are to be applied to him of whom the angel said the Lord shall give unto him the throne of his father David, and of his kingdom there shall be no end (Luke 1:32). God's promises, and our faith in them, are not to do away, but to encourage prayer. We need not desire to be better secured than under the protection of God's mercy and truth. And if we partake of that grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ, we may praise him, whatever be our outward circumstances. But renewed experience of God's mercy and truth towards his people in Christ is the main matter of our joy in him, and our praise unto him.

[Psalm 61:5-8]

NOVEMBER 24

Faithful Souls

Beloved, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are, who testified to your love before the church.

3 JOHN 5

As it is a joy to good parents, it will be a joy to good ministers, to see their people adorn their profession. Gaius overlooked petty differences among serious Christians, and freely helped all who bore the image, and did the work of Christ. He was upright in what he did, as a faithful servant. Faithful souls can hear their own praises without being puffed up; the commendation of what is good in them, lays them at the foot of the cross of Christ. Christians should consider not only what they must do, but what they may do; and should do even the common actions of life, and of good-will, after a godly sort, serving God therein, and designing his glory. Those who freely make known Christ's gospel should be helped by others to whom God gives the means. Those who cannot themselves proclaim it, may yet receive, help, and countenance those who do so. Those who know it not cannot be expected to value it; churches and Christian patriots ought to concur to support the propagation of holy religion in the pagan countries; public spirits should concur according to their several capacities; those who are freely communicative of Christ's gospel should be assisted by those who are communicative of their purses. The institution of Christ is the true religion; it has been attested by God. Those that are true in it and true to it will earnestly desire, and pray for, and contribute to, its propagation in the world. In many ways may the truth be befriended and assisted; those who cannot themselves proclaim it may yet receive, accompany, help, and countenance those who do.

[3 John 1-8]

NOVEMBER 25

Crown of Glory

And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

1 PETER 5:4

Consider him that waits for a crop of corn; and will not you wait for a crown of glory? If you should be called to wait longer than the husbandman, is not there something more worth waiting for? In every sense the coming of the Lord drew nigh, and all his people's losses, hardships, and sufferings, would be repaid. Men count time long, because they measure it by their own lives; but all time is as nothing to God; it is as a moment. To short-lived creatures a few years seem an age; but Scripture, measuring all things by the existence of God, reckons thousands of years but so many days. God brought about things in Job's case, so as plainly to prove that he is very pitiful and of tender mercy. This did not appear during his troubles, but was seen in the event, and believers now will find a happy end to their trials. Let us serve our God, and bear our trials, as those who believe that the end will crown all. Our eternal happiness is safe if we trust to him; all else is mere vanity, which soon will be done with forever. The best way to bear afflictions is to look to the end of them; and the pity of God is such that he will not delay the bringing of them to an end when his purposes are once answered; and the tender mercy of God is such that he will make his people an abundant amends for all their sufferings and afflictions. His bowels are moved for them while suffering, his bounty is manifested afterwards. Let us serve our God, and endure our trials, as those who believe the end will crown all.

[James 5:7-11]

NOVEMBER 26

Wholly Sanctified

Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I THESSALONIANS 5:23

The apostle prays that they might be sanctified more perfectly, for the best are sanctified but in part while in this world; therefore we should pray for, and press toward, complete holiness. And as we must fall, if God did not carry on his good work in the soul, we should pray to God to perfect his work, till we are presented faultless before the throne of his glory. We should pray for one another; and brethren should thus express brotherly love. This epistle was to be read to all the brethren. Not only are the common people allowed to read the Scriptures, but it is their duty, and what they should be persuaded to do. The word of God should not be kept in an unknown tongue, but transplanted, that as all men are concerned to know the Scriptures, so they all may be able to read them. The Scriptures should be read in all public congregations, for the benefit of the unlearned especially. We need no more to make us happy, than to know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is an ever-flowing and an over-flowing fountain of grace to supply all our wants. Where the good work of grace is begun, it shall be carried on, be protected and preserved; and all those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus shall be preserved to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. And because, if God did not carry on his good work in the soul, it would miscarry, we should pray to God to perfect his work, and preserve us blameless, till at length we are presented faultless before the throne of his glory with exceeding joy.

[1 Thessalonians 5:23-28]

NOVEMBER 27

Creature - Comforts

Rejoice always.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:16

We are to rejoice in creature-comforts, as if we rejoiced not, and must not expect to live many years, and rejoice in them all; but if we do rejoice in God, we may do that evermore. A truly religious life is a life of constant joy. And we should rejoice more, if we prayed more. Prayer will help forward all lawful business, and every good work. If we pray without ceasing, we shall not want matter for thanksgiving in everything. We shall see cause to give thanks for sparing and preventing, for common and uncommon, past and present, temporal and spiritual mercies. Not only for prosperous and pleasing, but also for afflicting providences, for chastisements and corrections; for God designs all for our good, though we at present see not how they tend to it. Quench not the Spirit. Christians are said to be baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire. He works as fire, by enlightening, enlivening, and purifying the souls of men. As fire is put out by taking away fuel, and as it is quenched by pouring water, or putting a great deal of earth upon it; so we must be careful not to quench the Holy Spirit, by indulging carnal lusts and affections, minding only earthly things. Believers often hinder their growth in grace, by not giving themselves up to the spiritual affections raised in their hearts by the Holy Spirit. We should be thankful in every condition, even in adversity as well as prosperity. It is never so bad with us but it might be worse. If we have ever so much occasion to make our humble complaints to God, we never can have any reason to complain of God, and have always much reason to praise and give thanks.

[1 Thessalonians 5:16-22]

NOVEMBER 28

Youth Not Despised

Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.

1 TIMOTHY 4:12

Men's youth will not be despised, if they keep from vanities and follies. Those who teach by their doctrine must teach by their life. Their discourse must be edifying; their conversation must be holy; they must be examples of love to God and all good men, examples of spiritual-mindedness. Ministers must mind these things as their principal work and business. By this means their profiting will appear in all things, as well as to all persons; this is the way to profit in knowledge and grace, and also to profit others. The doctrine of a minister of Christ must be scriptural, clear, evangelical, and practical; well stated, explained, defended, and applied. But these duties leave no leisure for worldly pleasures, trifling visits, or idle conversation, and but little for what is mere amusement, and only ornamental. Those who teach by their doctrine must teach by their lives, else they pull down with one hand what they build up with the other; they must be examples both in word and conversation. Their discourse must be edifying, and this will be a good example: their conversation must be strict, and this will be a good example: they must be examples in charity, or love to God and all good men, examples in spirit, that is, in spiritual-mindedness, in spiritual worship, in faith, that is, in the profession of Christian faith, and in purity or chastity. May every believer be enabled to let his profiting appear unto all men; seeking to experience the power of the gospel in his own soul, and to bring forth its fruits in his life.

[1 Timothy 4:11-16]

NOVEMBER 29

To God and Duty

*The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart
and a good conscience and a sincere faith.*

1 TIMOTHY 1:5

The professed love of Christians to each other should be sincere, free from deceit, and unmeaning and deceitful compliments. Depending on divine grace, they must detest and dread all evil, and love and delight in whatever is kind and useful. We must not only do that which is good, but we must cleave to it. All our duty towards one another is summed up in one word, love. This denotes the love of parents to their children; which is more tender and natural than any other; unforced, unconstrained. And love to God and man, with zeal for the gospel, will make the wise Christian diligent in all his worldly business, and in gaining superior skill. God must be served with the spirit, under the influences of the Holy Spirit. He is honored by our hope and trust in him, especially when we rejoice in that hope. He is served, not only by working for him, but by sitting still quietly, when he calls us to suffer. Patience for God's sake is true piety. Those that rejoice in hope are likely to be patient in tribulation. We must not only do that which is good, but we must cleave to it. We must love our brethren, but not love them so much as for their sakes to commit any sin, or omit any duty; do not think the better of any sin for the sake of the person that commits it, but forsake all the friends in the world to cleave to God and duty.

[Romans 12:9-16]

Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.

ROMANS 12:9

We should not be cold in the duty of prayer, or soon weary of it. Not only must there be kindness to friends and brethren, but Christians must not harbor anger against enemies. It is but mock love, which rests in words of kindness, while our brethren need real supplies, and it is in our power to furnish them. Be ready to entertain those who do good; as there is occasion, we must welcome strangers. Bless, and curse not. It means thorough good will; not, bless them when at prayer, and curse them at other times; but bless them always, and curse not at all. True Christian love will make us take part in the sorrows and joys of each other. Labor as much as you can to agree in the same spiritual truths; and when you come short of that, yet agree in affection. Look upon worldly pomp and dignity with holy contempt. Do not mind it; be not in love with it. Be reconciled to the place God in his providence puts you in, whatever it be. Nothing is below us, but sin. We shall never find in our hearts to condescend to others, while we indulge conceit of ourselves; therefore that must be mortified. Let not the evil of any provocation that is given you have such a power over you, or make such an impression upon you, as to dispossess you of yourselves, to disturb your peace, to destroy your love, to ruffle and discompose your spirits, to transport you to any indecencies, or to bring you to study or attempt any revenge. "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:21).

[Romans 12:9-16]

DECEMBER 1

Cleaving to Christ

"Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?"

MATTHEW 12:48

Christ's preaching was plain, easy, and familiar, and suited to his hearers. His mother and brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him, when they should have been standing within, desiring to hear him. Frequently, those who are nearest to the means of knowledge and grace are most negligent. We are apt to neglect that which we think we may have any day, forgetting that to-morrow is not ours. We often meet with hindrances in our work from friends about us, and are taken off by care for the things of this life, from the concerns of our souls. Christ was so intent on his work, that no natural or other duty took him from it. Not that, under pretence of religion, we may be disrespectful to parents, or unkind to relations; but the lesser duty must stand by, while the greater is done. Let us cease from men, and cleave to Christ; let us look upon every Christian, in whatever condition of life, as the brother, sister, or mother of the Lord of glory; let us love, respect, and be kind to them, for his sake, and after his example. All obedient believers are near akin to Jesus Christ. They wear his name, bear his image, have his nature, are of his family. He loves them, converses freely with them as his relations. He bids them welcome to his table, takes care of them, provides for them, sees that they want nothing that is fit for them: when he died he left them rich legacies, now he is in heaven he keeps up a correspondence with them, and will have them all with him at last, and will in nothing fail to do the kinsman's part nor will ever be ashamed of his poor relations, but will confess them before men, before the angels, and before his Father.

[Matthew 12:46-50]

DECEMBER 2

Salt of the Earth

You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.

MATTHEW 5:13

You are the salt of the earth. What great blessings they are to the world. Mankind, lying in ignorance and wickedness, were a vast heap of unsavory stuff, ready to putrefy; but Christ sent forth his disciples, by their lives and doctrines, to season it with knowledge and grace, and so to render it acceptable to God, to the angels, and to all that relish divine things. How they must expect to be disposed of. They must not be laid on a heap, must not continue always together at Jerusalem, but must be scattered as salt upon the meat, here a grain and there a grain; as the Levites were dispersed in Israel, that, wherever they live, they may communicate their savor. Some have observed, that whereas it is foolishly called an ill omen to have the salt fall towards us, it is really an ill omen to have the salt fall from us. If they are not such as they should be, they are as salt that has lost its savor. If a man can take up the profession of Christ, and yet remain graceless, no other doctrine, no other means, can make him profitable. Our light must shine, by doing such good works as men may see. What is between God and our souls, must be kept to ourselves; but that which is of itself open to the sight of men, we must study to make suitable to our profession, and praiseworthy. We must aim at the glory of God.

[Matthew 5:13-16]

DECEMBER 3

Always Ready

Alas for the day! For the day of the Lord is near, and as destruction from the Almighty it comes.

JOEL 1:15

To watch for Christ's coming, is to maintain that temper of mind which we would be willing that our Lord should find us in. We know we have but a little time to live, we cannot know that we have a long time to live; much less do we know the time fixed for the judgment. Our Lord's coming will be happy to those who are found ready, but very dreadful to those who are not. If a man, professing to be the servant of Christ, be an unbeliever, covetous, ambitious, or a lover of pleasure, he will be cut off. Those who choose the world for their portion in this life will have hell for their portion in the other life. May our Lord when he comes pronounce us blessed and present us to the Father washed in his blood, purified by his Spirit, and fit to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Christ will come unlooked for, will find people busy at their usual occupations, in the field, at the mill; and then, according as they are vessels of mercy prepared for glory, or vessels of wrath prepared for ruin, accordingly it will be with them; the one taken to meet the Lord and his angels in the air, to be forever with him and them; the other left to the devil and his angels, who, when Christ has gathered out his own, will sweep up the residue. This will aggravate the condemnation of sinners that others shall be taken from the midst of them to glory, and they left behind. And it speaks abundance of comfort to the Lord's people.

[Matthew 24:42-51]

DECEMBER 4

Persevering in Prayer

Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels.

2 TIMOTHY 2:23

The more we follow that which is good, the faster and the further we shall flee from that which is evil. The keeping up the communion of saints, will take us from fellowship with unfruitful works of darkness. See how often the apostle cautions against disputes in religion; which surely shows that religion consists more in believing and practicing what God requires, than in subtle disputes. Those are unfit to teach who are apt to strive, and are fierce and obstinate. Teaching, not persecution, is the Scripture method of dealing with those in error. The same God who gives the discovery of the truth, by his grace brings us to acknowledge it, otherwise our hearts would continue to rebel against it. There is no "perhaps," in respect of God's pardoning those who do repent; but we cannot tell that he will give repentance to those who oppose his will. Sinners are taken in a snare, and in the worst snare, because it is the devil's; they are slaves to him. And if any long for deliverance, let them remember they never can escape, except by repentance, which is the gift of God; and we must ask it of him by earnest, persevering prayer. The happiness of those who repent: they recover themselves out of this snare, as a bird out of the snare of the fowler; the snare is broken and they have escaped; and the greater the danger the greater the deliverance. When sinners repent those who before were led captive by the devil come to be led into the glorious liberty of the children of God; they have their wills melted into the will of the Lord Jesus. The good Lord recovers us all out of the snare.

[2 Timothy 2:22-26]

DECEMBER 5

The Holy Spirit

I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.

MARK 1:8

As Satan is subdued by Christ, this gives us confidence, for no other power can stand before him. We are also confident in the Day of Judgment. The coming of the Spirit would be of unspeakable advantage to the disciples. The Holy Spirit is our Guide, not only to show us the way, but to go with us by continued aids and influences. To be led into a truth is more than barely to know it; it is not only to have the notion of it in our heads, but the relish, and savor, and power of it in our hearts. He shall teach all truth, and keep back nothing profitable, for he will show things to come. All the gifts and graces of the Spirit, all the preaching, and all the writing of the apostles, under the influence of the Spirit, all the tongues, and miracles, were to glorify Christ. It behooves everyone to ask whether the Holy Spirit has begun a good work in his heart? Without clear discovery of our guilt and danger we never shall understand the value of Christ's salvation; but when brought to know ourselves aright, we begin to see the value of the Redeemer. We should have fuller views of the Redeemer, and more lively affections to him, if we more prayed for, and depended on the Holy Spirit. Convincing work is the Spirit's work; he can do it effectually and none but he; man may open the cause, but it is the Spirit only that can open the heart. The Spirit is called the Comforter, and here it is said that he shall convince.

[John 16:7-15]

DECEMBER 6

L o v i n g C h r i s t

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb...

LUKE 24:1-3

See the affection and respect the women showed to Christ after he was dead and buried. Observe their surprise when they found the stone rolled away, and the grave empty. Christians often perplex themselves about that with which they should comfort and encourage themselves. They look rather to find their Master in his grave-clothes, than angels in their shining garments. These women, like the spouse, when found by the watchman (and angels are called watchers), enter not into any other conversation with them than this, "Have you seen him whom my soul loves?" (Song 3:3). They upbraid the women with the absurdity of the search they were making: "Why do you seek the living among the dead?" (Luke 24:5). Witness is hereby given to Christ that he is living and it is the comfort of all the saints, "I know that my Redeemer lives" (Job 19:25). But a reproof is given to those that look for him among the dead, that look for him among the dead heroes that the Gentiles worshipped, as if he were but like one of them, that look for him in an image, or a crucifix, the work of men's hands, or among unwritten tradition and the inventions of men; and indeed all they that expect happiness and satisfaction in the creature, or perfection in this imperfect state, may be said to seek the living among the dead. The angels assure them that he is risen from the dead; is risen by his own power. These angels from heaven bring not any new gospel, but remind the women of Christ's words, and teach them how to apply them. There are many things puzzling and perplexing to us, which would be plain and profitable, if we rightly understood the words of Christ.

[*Luke 24:1-12*]

DECEMBER 7

Truth of God

For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs.

ROMANS 15:8

It is common for those who design to undermine any truth of God to load it with difficulties. But we wrong ourselves and wrong the truth of Christ when we form our notions of the world of spirits by this world of sense. There are more worlds than one; a present visible world, and a future unseen world; and let everyone compare this world and that world, and give the preference in his thoughts and cares to that which deserves them. Believers shall obtain the resurrection from the dead which is the blessed resurrection. What shall be the happy state of the inhabitants of that world, we cannot express or conceive (1 Cor. 2:9), are entirely taken up therewith; when there is perfection of holiness there will be no occasion for preservatives from sin. And when God called himself the God of these patriarchs, he meant that he was a God all-sufficient to them and their exceeding great Reward (Gen. 15:1). He never did that for them in this world which answered the full extent of his undertaking; therefore, there must be another life in which he will do that for them which will completely fulfill the promise. There is a great deal of difference between the state of the children of men on earth and that of the children of God in heaven, a vast unlikeness between this world and that world; and we wrong ourselves, and wrong the truth of Christ, when we form our notions of that world of spirits by our present enjoyments in this world of sense.

[Luke 20:27-38]

DECEMBER 8

Parable of the Sower

A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell along the path and was trampled underfoot, and the birds of the air devoured it.

LUKE 8:5

There are many very needful and excellent rules and cautions for hearing the word, in the parable of the sower, and the application of it. Happy are we, and forever indebted to free grace, if the same thing that is a parable to others, with which they are only amused, is a plain truth to us, by which we are taught and governed. We ought to take heed of the things that will hinder our profiting by the word we hear; to take heed lest we hear carelessly and slightly, lest we entertain prejudices against the word we hear; and to take heed to our spirits after we have heard the word, lest we lose what we have gained. The gifts we have, will be continued to us or not, as we use them for the glory of God, and the good of our brethren. Nor is it enough not to hold the truth in unrighteousness; we should desire to hold forth the word of life, and to shine, giving light to all around. Great encouragement is given to those who prove themselves faithful hearers of the word, by being doers of the work. Christ owns them as his relations. The pleasures of this life are as dangerous and mischievous thorns to choke the good seed of the word as any other. Those that are neither entangled in the cares of this life, nor inveigled with the deceitfulness of riches but boast that they are dead to them, may yet be kept from heaven by an affected indolence, and the love of ease and pleasure. The delights of sense may ruin the soul, even lawful delights, indulged, and too much delighted in.

[Luke 8:4-21]

DECEMBER 9

Jerusalem in Ruins

"Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by? Look and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow, which was brought upon me, which the Lord inflicted on the day of his fierce anger.

LAMENTATIONS 1:12

Jerusalem, sitting dejected on the ground, calls on those that passed by, to consider whether her example did not concern them. Her outward sufferings were great, but her inward sufferings were harder to bear, through the sense of guilt. Sorrow for sin must be great sorrow, and must affect the soul. Here we see the evil of sin, and may be warned to flee from the wrath to come. Whatever may be learned from the sufferings of Jerusalem, far more may be learned from the sufferings of Christ. Does he not from the cross speak to every one of us? Does he not say, "Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by?" It is no marvel that the souls of the saints faint away, when God, who is the only Comforter that can relieve them, keeps at a distance. Let all our sorrows lead us to the cross of Christ; lead us to mark his example, and cheerfully to follow him. It is matter of comfort to us that the troubles which oppress our spirits are open before God's eye. Our prayers may and must agree with God's word; and what day God has here called we are to call for, and no other. And though we are bound in charity to forgive our enemies, and to pray for them, yet we may in faith pray for the accomplishment of that which God has spoken against his and his church's enemies that will not repent to give him glory.

[Lamentations 1:12-22]

DECEMBER 10

Love Thinks No Evil

And David said, "I will deal loyally with Hanun the son of Nahash, as his father dealt loyally with me."

2 SAMUEL 10:2

If a Pharisee gives alms in pride, though God will not reward it, yet he that receives the alms ought to return thanks for it. It is a comfort to children, when their parents are dead, to find that their parents' friends are theirs, and that they intend to keep up an acquaintance with them. It is a comfort to mourners to find that there are those who mourn with them, are sensible of their loss and share with them in it. It is a comfort to those who are honoring the memory of their deceased relations to find there are others who likewise honor it and who had a value for those whom they valued. Those who bear ill-will to their neighbors are resolved not to believe that their neighbors bear any goodwill to them. There is nothing so well meant but it may be ill interpreted, and is wont to be so, by men who love nobody but themselves. The best men must not think it strange if they are thus misrepresented. Charity thinks no evil. According to the usages of those days and countries, Hanun treated David's ambassadors in the most contemptuous manner. David showed much concern for his servants. Let us learn not to lay unjust reproaches to heart; they will wear off, and turn only to the shame of those who utter or do them; while the reputation wrongfully hurt in a little time grows again, as these beards did. God will bring forth your righteousness as the light, therefore wait patiently for him, Psalm 37:6-7.

[2 Samuel 10:1-5]

DECEMBER 11

God's Justice

Blessed are they who observe justice, who do righteousness at all times!

PSALM 106:3

The honor of being admitted into communion with God, and of being employed for him, does not exempt us from the duties of our relations and callings in this world. Moses said nothing to his father-in-law (for aught that appears) of the glorious manifestation of God to him; such favors we are to be thankful for to God, but not to boast of before men. Ministers must expect with many to labor in vain; we must not think it strange if we meet with those who will not be wrought upon by the strongest arguments and fairest reasoning; yet our judgment is with the Lord. After God had appeared to him in the bush to settle a correspondence, it should seem, he often spoke to him, as there was occasion, with less overwhelming solemnity. Pharaoh had hardened his own heart against the groans and cries of the oppressed Israelites; and now God, in the way of righteous judgment, hardens his heart against the teaching of the miracles, and the terror of the plagues. But whether Pharaoh will hear, or whether he will cower, Moses must tell him, "Thus says the Lord." He must threaten Pharaoh with the death of the first-born of Egypt, in case of a refusal. As men deal with God's people, let them expect to be themselves dealt with; with the froward he will wrestle. Though corruption may object much against the services God calls us to, yet grace will get the upper hand, and will be obedient to the heavenly vision.

[Exodus 4:18-23]

DECEMBER 12

Sacred Anointing

And you shall make of these a sacred anointing oil blended as by the perfumer; it shall be a holy anointing oil.

EXODUS 30:25

DECEMBER

The tradition of the Jews is that this very oil which was prepared by Moses himself lasted till near the captivity. But Bishop Patrick shows the great improbability of the tradition, and supposes that it was repeated according to the prescription here, for Solomon was anointed with it. To show the excellence of holiness, there was that in the tabernacle which was in the highest degree grateful both to the sight and to the smell. Christ's name is said to be as ointment poured forth and the good name of Christians better than precious ointment. The incense which was burned upon the golden altar was prepared of sweet spices likewise, though not so rare and rich as those of which the anointing oil was compounded. This was prepared once a year (the Jews say), a pound for each day of the year, and three pounds over for the Day of Atonement. When it was used, it was to be beaten very small: thus it pleased the Lord to bruise the Redeemer when he offered himself for a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savor. The like should not be made for any common use. Thus God would keep in the people's minds reverence for his own services, and teach us not to profane or abuse anything whereby God makes himself known. It is a great affront to God to jest with sacred things, and to make sport with his word and ordinances. It is most dangerous and fatal to use professions of the gospel of Christ to forward worldly interests.

[Exodus 30:22-38]

DECEMBER 13

Providence and Pride

There they cry out, but he does not answer, because of the pride of evil men.

JOB 35:12

Sometimes we cannot sleep because we fain would sleep. Even after a banquet of wine, King Xerxes could not sleep when Providence had a design to serve in keeping him waking. We read of no bodily indisposition he was under that might break his sleep; but God, whose gift sleep is, withheld it from him. Those that are ever so much resolved to cast away care cannot always do it; they find it in their pillows when they neither expect nor welcome it. He that commanded 127 provinces could not command one hour's sleep ... The providence of God rules over the smallest concerns of men. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without him. Trace the steps which Providence took towards the advancement of King Xerxes. See how men's pride deceives them. The deceitfulness of our own hearts appears in nothing more than in the conceit we have of ourselves and our own performances: against which we should constantly watch and pray. Haman thought the king loved and valued no one but himself, but he was deceived. We should suspect that the esteem which others profess for us, is not so great as it seems to be, that we may not think too well of ourselves, nor trust too much in others. How Haman is struck, when the king bids him do honor to Mordecai the Jew, the very man whom he hated above all men, whose ruin he was now designing!

[*Esther 6:1-11*]

DECEMBER 14

Sinfulness of Sin

A perverse heart shall be far from me; I will know nothing of evil.

PSALM 101:4

These plagues are standing monuments of the greatness of God, the happiness of the church, and the sinfulness of sin, and standing monitors to the children of men in all ages, neither to provoke the Lord to jealousy nor to strive with their Maker. They warn the children of men not to strive with their Maker. Pharaoh had pretended to humble himself; but no account was made of it, for he was not sincere therein. The plague of locusts is threatened. This should be much worse than any of that kind which had ever been known. Pharaoh's attendants persuade him to come to terms with Moses. Hereupon Pharaoh will allow the men to go, falsely pretending that this was all they desired. He swears that they shall not remove their little ones. Satan does all he can to hinder those that serve God themselves, from bringing their children to serve him. He is a sworn enemy to early piety. Whatever would put us from engaging our children in God's service, we have reason to suspect Satan in it. Nor should the young forget that the Lord's counsel is, "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth;" but Satan's counsel is, to keep children in a state of slavery to sin and to the world. Mark that the great foe of man wishes to retain him by the ties of affection, as Pharaoh would have taken hostages from the Israelites for their return, by holding their wives and children in captivity. Satan is willing to share our duty and our service with the Savior, because the Savior will not accept those terms.

[Exodus 10:1-11]

DECEMBER 15

MORE LOVE

Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

2 TIMOTHY 2:3

Those who have work to do for God must stir up themselves to do it, and strengthen themselves for it. Being strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus may be understood in opposition to the weakness of grace. Where there is the truth of grace there must be a laboring after the strength of grace. As our trials increase, we need to grow stronger in that which is good; our faith stronger, our resolution stronger, our love to God and Christ stronger. This is opposed to our being strong in our own strength. All Christians, but especially ministers, must be faithful to their Captain, and resolute in his cause. The great care of a Christian must be to please Christ. We are to strive to get the mastery of our lusts and corruptions, but we cannot expect the prize unless we observe the laws. We must take care that we do good in a right manner, that our good may not be spoken evil of. Some who are active, spend their zeal about outward forms and doubtful disputations. But those who strive lawfully shall be crowned at last. If we would partake the fruits, we must labor; if we would gain the prize, we must run the race. We must do the will of God, before we receive the promises, for which reason we have need of patience. Together with our prayers for others, that the Lord would give them understanding in all things, we must exhort and stir them up to consider what they hear or read.

[2 Timothy 2:1-7]

DECEMBER 16

Constant Intimacy

Under the apple tree I awakened you. There your mother was in labor with you; there she who bore you was in labor.

SONG OF SOLOMON 8:5B

The spouse wishes for a constant intimacy and freedom with the Lord Jesus. She was already betrothed to him, but, the nuptials being yet not solemnized and published (the bride, the Lamb's wife, will not be completely ready till his second coming), she was obliged to be shy and to keep at some distance; she therefore wishes she may be taken for his sister, he having called her so, and that she might have the same chaste and innocent familiarity with him that a sister has with a brother, an own brother, that sucked the breasts of the same mother with her, who would therefore be exceedingly tender of her, as Joseph was of his brother Benjamin. Some make this to be the prayer of the Old-Testament saints for the hastening of Christ's incarnation, that the church might be the better acquainted with him, when, forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he should also himself likewise take part of the same, and not be ashamed to call them brethren. It is rather the wish of all believers for a more intimate communion with him, that they might receive the Spirit of sanctification, and so Christ must be as their brother, that is, that they might be as his brethren, which then they are when by grace they are made partakers of a divine nature, and he that sanctifies, and those that are sanctified, are both of one. It becomes brethren and sisters, the children of the same parents, that have been nursed at the same breast, to be loving and tender of one another; such a love the spouse desires might be between her and her beloved, that she might call him brother.

[Song of Solomon 8:1-4]

DECEMBER 17

Because of Grace

But I will declare it forever; I will sing praises to the God of Jacob.

PSALM 75:9

After God has set the blessing before them which would make them a happy people if they would be obedient, he here sets the curse before them, the evils which would make them miserable, if they were disobedient. Two things would bring ruin: First, contempt of God's commandments. They that reject the precept will come at last to renounce the covenant. And second, contempt of his corrections. If they will not learn obedience by the things they suffer, God himself would be against them; and this is the root and cause of all their misery. The whole creation would be at war with them. All God's sore judgments would be sent against them. The threatenings here are very particular, they were prophecies, and He that foresaw all their rebellions, knew they would prove so. Temporal judgments are threatened. Those who will not be parted from their sins by the commands of God shall be parted from them by judgments. Those wedded to their lusts, will have enough of them. Spiritual judgments are threatened, which should seize the mind. They should find no acceptance with God. A guilty conscience would be their continual terror. Those that cast off the fear of God expose themselves to the fear of everything else. It is righteous with God to leave those to despair of pardon who presume to sin; and it is owing to free grace, if we are not left to pine away in the iniquity we were born in, and have lived in.

[Leviticus 26:14-39]

Turning to God

The rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, the temple servants, and all who have separated themselves from the peoples of the lands to the Law of God...

NEHEMIAH 10:28

Conversion is separating from the course and custom of this world, devoting ourselves to the conduct directed by the word of God. When we bind ourselves to do the commandments of God, it is to do all his commandments, and to look to him as the Lord, and our Lord. Having covenanted against the sins of which they had been guilty, the people obliged themselves to observe the duties they had neglected. We must not only cease to do evil, but learn to do well. Let not any people expect the blessing of God, unless they keep up public worship. It is likely to go well with our houses, when care is taken that the work of God's house goes on well. When everyone helps, and every one gives, though but little, toward a good work, the whole will come to be a large sum. We must do what we can in works of piety and charity; and whatever state we are placed in, cheerfully perform our duty to God, which will be the surest way to ease and liberty. As the ordinances of God are the appointed means of support to our souls, the believer will not grudge the expense; yet most people leave their souls to starve. Those that covenant to keep all God's commandments must particularly covenant to keep the Sabbath well; for the profanation of them is an inlet to other instances of profaneness. The Sabbath is a market day for our souls, but not for our bodies.

[Nehemiah 10]

DECEMBER 19

Final Blessedness

I said in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure; enjoy yourself." But behold, this also was vanity.

ECCLESIASTES 2:1

Solomon here, in pursuit of the supreme good, the felicity of man, adjourns out of his study, his library, his laboratory, his council-chamber, where he had in vain sought for it, into the park and the playhouse, his garden and his summer-house; he exchanges the company of the philosophers and grave senators for that of the wits and gallants, and the intelligent men of his court, to try if he could find true satisfaction and happiness among them. Solomon soon found mirth and pleasure to be vanity. What does noisy, flashy mirth towards making a man happy? The manifold devices of men's hearts, to get satisfaction from the world, and their changing from one thing to another, are like the restlessness of a man in a fever. Perceiving it was folly to give himself to wine, he next tried the costly amusements of princes. The poor, when they read such a description, are ready to feel discontent. But the remedy against all such feelings is in the estimate of it all by the owner himself. All was vanity and vexation of spirit: and the same things would yield the same result to us, as to Solomon. Having food and raiment, let us therewith be content. His wisdom remained with him; a strong understanding, with great human knowledge. But every earthly pleasure, when unconnected with better blessings, leaves the mind as eager and unsatisfied as before. Happiness arises not from the situation in which we are placed. It is only through Jesus Christ that final blessedness can be attained.

[Ecclesiastes 2:1-11]

DECEMBER 20

Continue Calling

*Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord! O Lord, hear my voice!
Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleas for mercy!*

PSALM 130:1-2

Whatever condition we are in, though ever so deplorable, we are taught to continue calling upon God. The best men may sometimes be in the depths, in great trouble and affliction, and utterly at a loss what to do, in the depths of distress and almost in the depths of despair, the spirit low and dark, sinking and drooping, cast down and disquieted. But, in the greatest depths, it is our privilege that we may cry unto God and be heard. A prayer may reach the heights of heaven, though not out of the depths of hell, yet out of the depths of the greatest trouble we can be in this world, Jeremiah's out of the dungeon, Daniel's out of the den, and Jonah's out of the fish's belly. It is our duty and interest to cry unto God, for that is the likeliest way both to prevent our sinking lower and to recover us out of the horrible pit and miry clay. We should continue calling upon God to assure ourselves of an answer of peace from him; for this is what David in faith prays for: "O Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleas for mercy!" (Psalm 130:2). We are taught to humble ourselves before the justice of God as guilty in his sight, and unable to answer him for one of a thousand of our offences. There is an all-sufficient fullness of merit and grace in the Redeemer, enough for all, enough for each; enough for me, says the believer. Redemption from sin includes redemption from all other evils, and therefore is a plenteous redemption.

[Psalm 130]

DECEMBER 21

Our Eternal Helper

He led them in safety, so that they were not afraid, but the sea overwhelmed their enemies.

PSALM 78:53

Christ's government shall be very happy for his subjects; they shall be safe and easy. Under the shadow of protection from the Assyrians, is a promise of protection to the gospel church and all believers, from the designs and attempts of the powers of darkness. Christ is our Peace as a Priest, making atonement for sin, and reconciling us to God; and he is our Peace as a King, conquering our enemies: hence our souls may dwell at ease in him. Christ will find instruments to protect and deliver. Those that threaten ruin to the church of God, soon bring ruin on themselves. This may include the past powerful effects of the preached gospel, its future spread, and the ruin of all antichristian powers. This is, perhaps, the most important single prophecy in the Old Testament: it respects the personal character of the Messiah, and the discoveries of himself to the world. It distinguishes his human birth from his existing from eternity; it foretells the rejection of the Israelites and Jews for a season, their final restoration, and the universal peace to prevail through the whole earth in the latter days. In the mean time let us trust our Shepherd's care and power. If he permits the assault of our enemies, he will supply helpers and assistance for us. Those that threaten ruin to the church of God hasten ruin to themselves; and their destruction is the church's salvation: Thus shall he deliver us from the Assyrian. When Satan fell as lightning from heaven before the preaching of the gospel, and Christ's enemies, that would not have him to reign over them, were slain before him, then this was fulfilled.

[Micah 5:1-6]

DECEMBER 22

Confessed and Bewailed

I confess my iniquity; I am sorry for my sin.

PSALM 38:18

The sorrow of the people is turned into repentance and humiliation before God. With all the marks of sorrow and shame, sin must be confessed and bewailed. A day is to be appointed for this purpose; a day in which people must be kept from their common employments, that they may more closely attend God's services; and there is to be abstaining from meat and drink. Everyone had added to the national guilt, all shared in the national calamity, therefore every one must join in repentance. When joy and gladness are cut off from God's house, when serious godliness decays, and love waxes cold, then it is time to cry unto the Lord. If God's ministers cannot prevail to affect others with the discoveries of divine wrath, yet they ought to be themselves affected with them; if they cannot bring others to cry to God, yet they themselves should be much in prayer. In time of trouble we must not only pray, but cry, must be fervent and importunate in prayer; and to God, from whom both the destruction is and the salvation must be, ought our cry to be always directed. The prophet describes how grievous the calamity. See even the inferior creatures suffering for our transgression. And what better are they than the beasts who never cry to God but for corn and wine, and complain of the want of the delights of sense? Yet their crying to God in those cases, shames the stupidity of those who cry not to God in any case. Whatever may become of the nations and churches that persist in ungodliness, believers will find the comfort of acceptance with God, when the wicked shall be burned up with his indignation.

[Joel 1:14-20]

DECEMBER 23

A Figure of the Church

Glorious things of you are spoken, O city of God.

PSALM 87:3

Those who aim to ruin the church can never do that but will ruin themselves. What dismal changes sin can make! It turns a fruitful land into barrenness, a crowded city into a wilderness. Let us compare all we discover in the book of the Lord, with the dealings of providence around us, that we may be more diligent in seeking the kingdom of God and his righteousness. What the mouth of the Lord has commanded, his Spirit will perform. And let us observe how the evidences of the truth continually increase, as one prophecy after another is fulfilled, until these awful scenes bring in more happy days. As Israel was a figure of the Christian church, so the Edomites, their bitter enemies, represent the enemies of the kingdom of Christ. God's Jerusalem may be laid in ruins for a time, but the enemies of the church shall be desolate forever. As long as a people keep up a succession of sinners, God will have a succession of plagues for them; nor will any that fall under the wrath of God be ever able to recover themselves. It will be found, however light men make of it, it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. If the land be doomed to destruction, none shall pass through it, but travelers will choose rather to go a great way about than come within the smell of it. Sin will soon turn a paradise into a chaos, and sully the beauty of the whole creation. When there is confusion there will soon be emptiness; but both are appointed by the governor of the world, and in exact proportions.

[Isaiah 34:9-17]

BROTHERLY LOVE

Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity! It is like the precious oil on the head, running down on the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down on the collar of his robes!

PSALM 133:1-2

How commendable it is: Behold, how good and how pleasant it is! It is good in itself, agreeable to the will of God, the conformity of earth to heaven. It is good for us, for our honor and comfort. It is pleasant and pleasing to God and all good men; it brings constant delight to those who do thus live in unity. Behold, how good! We cannot conceive or express the goodness and pleasantness of it. Behold it is a rare thing, and therefore admirable. Behold and wonder that there should be so much goodness and pleasantness among men, so much of heaven on this earth! Behold it is an amiable thing, which will attract our hearts. Behold it is an exemplary thing, which, where it is, is to be imitated by us with a holy emulation. Note how the pleasantness of it is illustrated. It is fragrant as the holy anointing oil, which was strongly perfumed, and diffused its odors, to the great delight of all the bystanders, when it was poured upon the head of Aaron, or his successor the high priest, so plentifully that it ran down the face, even to the collar or binding of the garment. This ointment was holy. So must our brotherly love be, with a pure heart, devoted to God. We must love those who are begotten for his sake that begat.

[Psalm 133]

DECEMBER 25

Truths Made Known

I approached one of those who stood there and asked him the truth concerning all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of the things.

DANIEL 7:16

It is desirable to obtain the right and full sense of what we see and hear from God; and those that would know must ask by faithful and fervent prayer. The angel told Daniel plainly. He especially desired to know respecting the little horn, which made war with the saints, and prevailed against them. Here is foretold the rage of papal Rome against true Christians. St. John, in his visions and prophecies, which point in the first place at Rome, has plain reference to these visions. Daniel had a joyful prospect of the prevalence of God's kingdom among men. This refers to the second coming of our blessed Lord, when the saints shall triumph in the complete fall of Satan's kingdom. The saints of the Most High shall possess the kingdom forever. Far be it from us to infer from hence, that dominion is founded on grace. It promises that the gospel kingdom shall be set up; a kingdom of light, holiness, and love; a kingdom of grace, the privileges and comforts of which shall be the earnest and first-fruits of the kingdom of glory. But the full accomplishment will be in the everlasting happiness of the saints, the kingdom that cannot be moved. The gathering together the whole family of God will be a blessedness of Christ's coming. It concerns God's prophets and ministers to treasure up the things of God in their minds, and there to digest them well. If we would have God's word ready in our mouths when we have occasion for it, we must keep it in our hearts at all times.

[Daniel 7:15-28]

DECEMBER 26

Return to God

"Yet even now," declares the Lord, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning.

JOEL 2:12

DECEMBER

When God crosses our temporal affairs, and we meet with trouble and disappointment, we shall find the cause is that the work we have to do for God and our own souls is left undone, and we seek our own things more than the things of Christ. How many, who plead that they cannot afford to give to pious or charitable designs, often lavish ten times as much in needless expenses on their houses and themselves! But those are strangers to their own interests, who are full of care to adorn and enrich their own houses, while God's temple in their hearts lies waste. It is the great concern of every one, to apply to the necessary duty of self-examination and communion with our own hearts concerning our spiritual state. Sin is what we must answer for; duty is what we must do. But many are quick-sighted to pry into other people's ways that are careless of their own. If any duty has been neglected, that is no reason why it should still be so. Whatever God will take pleasure in, when it is done, we ought to take pleasure in the doing of, and to reckon that inducement enough to set about it, and go on with it in good earnest; for what greater satisfaction can we have in our own bosoms than in contributing anything towards that which God will take pleasure in? It ought to be the top of our ambition to be accepted of the Lord. Those who have long deferred their return to God, if at length they return with all their heart, must not despair of his favor.

[Haggai 1:1-11]

DECEMBER 27

The Protector

How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts!

PSALM 84:1

If God will build Jerusalem for the people and their comfort, they must inhabit it for him and his glory. The promises and privileges with which God's people are blessed, should engage us to join them, whatever it costs us. When Zion is enlarged to make room for all God's Israel, it is the greatest madness for any of them to stay in Babylon. The captivity of a sinful state is by no means to be continued in, though a man may be easy in worldly matters. Escape for your life, and look not behind you. Christ has proclaimed that deliverance to the captives, which he has himself wrought out, and it concerns everyone to resolve that sin shall not have dominion over him. Those who would be found among God's children must save themselves from this world. What Christ will do for his church, shall be an evident proof of God's care and affection. He that touches you touches the apple of his eye. This is a strong expression of God's love to his church. He takes what is done against her as done against the tenderest part of the eye, to which the least touch is a great offence. It shall be an evident proof of Christ's mission: You shall know that the Lord of hosts has sent me to be the protector of his church and that the promises made to the church are "yea and amen" in him. Christ's victory over our spiritual enemies proves that the Father sent him and was with him.

[Zechariah 2:6-9]

DECEMBER 28

Day's Journey

The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore.

PSALM 121:8

The Israelites going out and coming in gives an example to us to begin and end every day's journey and every day's work with prayer. Here is Moses's prayer when the ark set forward, "Rise up, and let your enemies be scattered." There are those in the world who are enemies to God and haters of him; secret and open enemies; enemies to his truths, his laws, his ordinances, and his people. But for the scattering and defeating of God's enemies, there needs no more than God's arising. Observe also the prayer of Moses when the ark rested, that God would cause his people to rest. We can give only what we receive. We can do no more service and kindness to our friends than God is pleased to put it into the power of our hand to do. This is all we dare promise, to do good as God shall enable us. Those that share with God's Israel in their labors and hardships shall share with them in their comforts and honors. Those that are willing to take their lot with them in the wilderness shall have their lot with them in Canaan; if we suffer with them we shall reign with them. The welfare and happiness of the Israel of God consist in the continual presence of God among them. Their safety is not in their numbers, but in the favor of God, and his gracious return to them, and resting with them. Upon this account, happy are you, O Israel, who is like you, O people! God will go before them, to find them resting-places by the way. His promise is and their prayers are that he will never leave them nor forsake them.

[Numbers 10:33-36]

DECEMBER 29

Hid in God

Seek the Lord, all you humble of the land, who do his just commands; seek righteousness; seek humility; perhaps you may be hidden on the day of the anger of the Lord.

ZEPHANIAH 2:3

The prophet calls to national repentance, as the only way to prevent national ruin. A nation not desiring, that has not desires toward God, is not desirous of his favor and grace, has no mind to repent and reform. How careful should we all be to seek peace with God, before the Holy Spirit withdraws from us, or ceases to strive with us; before the day of grace is over, or the day of life; before our everlasting state is determined! Let the poor, despised, and afflicted, seek the Lord, and seek to understand and keep his commandments better, that they may be more humbled for their sins. The chief hope of deliverance from national judgments rests upon prayer. Those that are ever so good must still strive to be better; those that have ever so much grace must be still praying and laboring for more. Nay, those that excel in any particular grace must still seek to excel yet more in that, because in that most assaults will be made upon them by their enemies, in that most is expected from them by their friends, and in that they are most apt to be themselves secure; those that hold fast their integrity, in times of common iniquity, have reason to hope that God will find out a hiding-place for them, where they shall be safe and easy, in times of common calamity. They shall be hid, as Luther says, either in heaven or under heaven, either in the possession of heaven or under the protection of heaven.

[Zephaniah 2:1-3]

DECEMBER 30

God's Righteous

Give ear to my words, O Lord; consider my groaning. Give attention to the sound of my cry, my King and my God, for to you do I pray.

PSALM 5:1-2

God's people are the righteous, for they put their trust in him and are well assured of his power and all-sufficiency; they venture their all upon his promise, and are confident of his protection in the way of their duty; and they love his name, are well pleased with all that by which God has made himself known, and take delight in their acquaintance with him. This is true and pure religion, to live a life of complacency in God and dependence on him. The psalmist prays for them: "Let them rejoice; let them have cause to rejoice and hearts to rejoice; fill them with joy, great joy and unspeakable; let them shout for joy, constant and perpetual; let them ever shout forth with, with holy joy, and that which ends in God; let them be joyful in you and in your favor; in your salvation and not in any creature. Let them rejoice because you defend them, cover them, overshadow them, and dwell among them." Perhaps here is an allusion to the pillar of cloud and fire, which was to Israel a visible token of God's special presence with them and the special protection they were under. Let us learn of David to pray, not for ourselves only, but for others, for all good people, for all that trust in God and love his name, though not in everything of our mind nor in our interest. Let all that are entitled to God's promises have a share in our prayers; grace be with all that love Christ in sincerity. This is to concur with God.

[Psalm 5]

DECEMBER 31

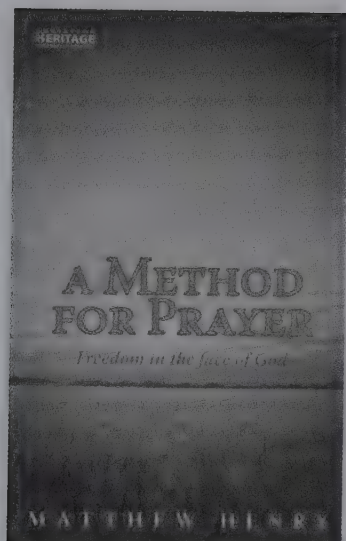
Glory in God

Oh give thanks to the Lord; call upon his name; make known his deeds among the peoples!

PSALM 105:1

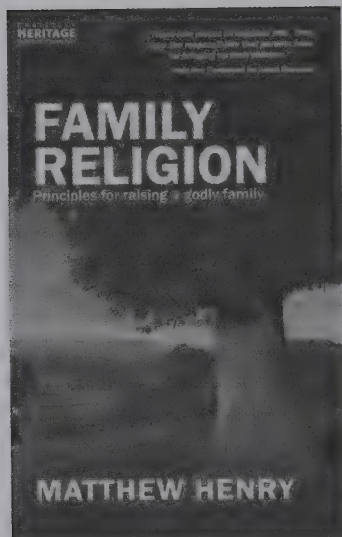
"Sing to him, sing praises to him," as those that rejoice in him and desire to testify that joy for the encouragement of others and to transmit it to posterity, as memorable things anciently were handed down by songs, when writing was scarce. "Glory in his holy name;" let those that are disposed to glory not boast of their own accomplishments and achievements, but of their acquaintance with God and their relation to him. "Praise you his holy name," but it comes all to one, for in glorying in him we give glory to him. "Seek him;" place your happiness in him, and then pursue that happiness in all the ways that he has appointed. "Seek the Lord in his strength," that is, the ark of his strength; seek him in the sanctuary, in the way wherein he has appointed us to seek him. "Seek his strength," that is, his grace, the strength of his Spirit to work in you that which is good, which we cannot do but by strength derived from him, for which he will be enquired of. Fetch strength in God by faith and prayer. "Seek his face evermore;" seek to have his favor to eternity, and therefore continue seeking it to the end of the time of your probation. Seek it while you live in this world, and you shall have it while you live in the other world, and even there shall be forever seeking it in an infinite progression, and yet be forever satisfied in it. "Let the hearts of those who rejoice seek the Lord;" for they have chosen well, are well fixed, and well employed, and they may be sure that their labor will not be in vain.

[Psalm 105:1-7]



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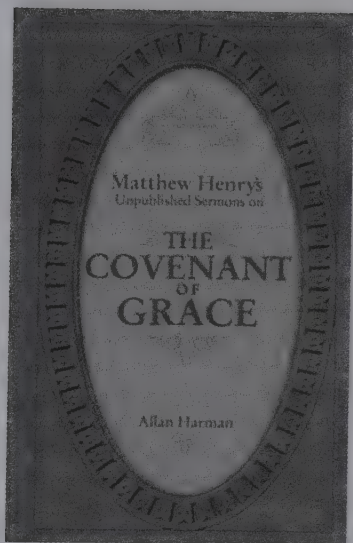
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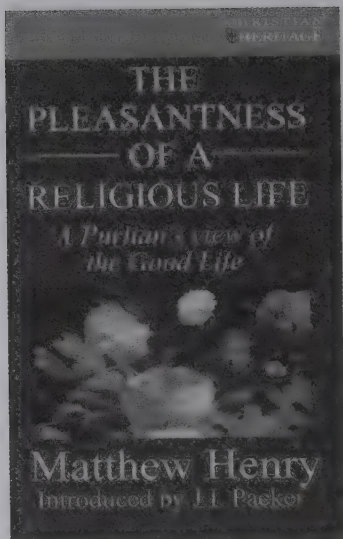
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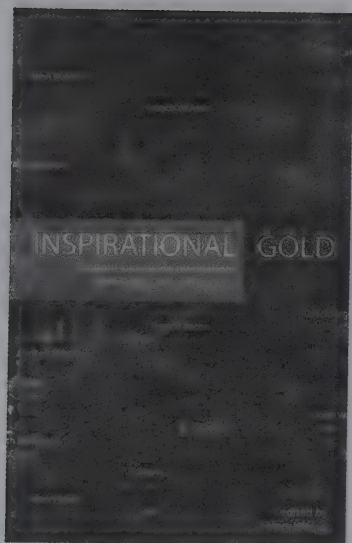
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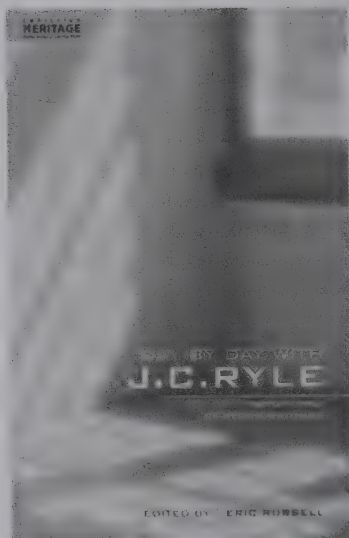
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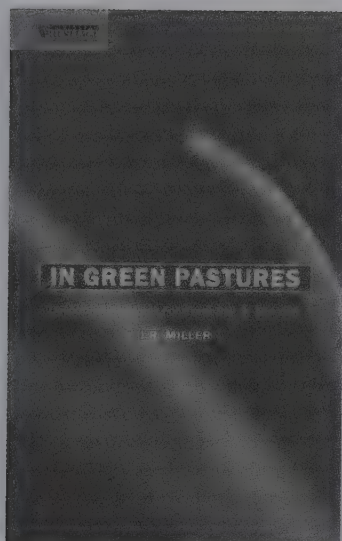
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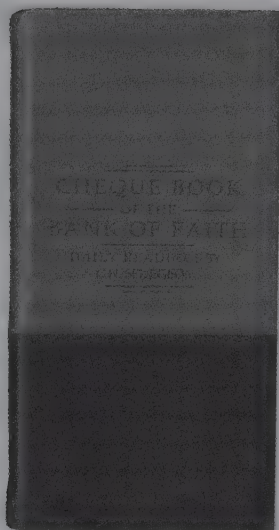
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