

## A Devotional Commentary on the Gospels

Arranged for family devotions,  
for every day in the year.

By [Favell Lee Mortimer](#)

### OCTOBER 1

#### **Luke 22:7-13. *Peter and John prepare the Passover.***

The day before his death seems to have been by the Savior passed in holy retirement near Mount Olivet. How different were the scenes of the next day! scenes of tumult and uproar, scenes of barbarity and blood! A sweet season of refreshment was enjoyed by the Lord and his disciples before those horrors were perpetrated. How often God grants such a season to his children before he exposes them to the wintry storm and tempest!

The passover was always eaten in Jerusalem. It was unlawful to kill the lamb in any other place than in the temple, or to eat it anywhere but in the holy city. The Jews at this day having no temple, cannot partake of the paschal lamb. When they celebrate the passover, they cause the *shoulder bone* of a lamb to be placed on the table instead of the animal itself. Many thousands flocked to Jerusalem in olden times to keep the feast. The citizens were kind to their brethren on those occasions, opened their doors, and received freely all who pleased to come; so that no man could say to his friend, "I have not found a fire to roast the lamb with, nor a bed to rest in."

With what holy awe the two apostles must have beheld the man carrying a pitcher, of whom their Master had spoken! Here was a fresh display of his omniscience. Though Jesus has not *foretold* the circumstances of our *lives*, we are persuaded that he knows them *all*, both small and great. If he did not appoint the *small* incidents of our lives, he could not rule the *great events*, because small incidents give rise to great events. Jesus knew the exact moment when the man bearing a pitcher would be walking near the entrance of Jerusalem; and he knows what we shall be doing at this moment tomorrow, and ten years hence. He knows whom we shall meet today, if we go out, and who will come to see us, if we stay at home. He not only *knows* these circumstances, but he will, *if we love him*, so order them that they shall work together for our good; "for all things work together for good to them that love God." (Rom. 8:28.)

How blessed are we if we have committed ourselves, and all we possess, into his

hands! Then we need feel no anxiety about the future, for the Lord will provide. At the very *moment* we need a friend, he will raise one up. There is no request too *small* for him to regard, nor too *great* for him to grant. The people of God, especially his aged servants, can relate wonderful histories of his power and truth. They can tell how in their perplexity they were directed, and in their extremity relieved. Had their friends been *miraculously* informed of the particulars of their cases, they could not have afforded them more suitable or opportune help. At the exact time they needed the supply, the exact sum they required has been sent, and often by the hand of one who knew nothing of their distresses. But the God, who answered the prayer of Abraham's servant, who led Rebekah to the well, and inclined her to utter the very words that servant had asked that she might say, still listens to his people's prayers, and still condescends to give them the request of their lips. "O taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusts in him. O fear the Lord, you his saints, for there is no lack to them that fear him." (Ps. 34:8, 9.)

## October 2

### **Luke 22:14-18. *Christ gives the cup before supper.***

We are too apt to forget that each action of our life will at some period be performed for the *last* time. It often appears as if we shall continue *forever* to tread certain rounds of duties or enjoyments; but this appearance is false. As there was a *first* time of going to the house of God, so there will be a *last*. Perhaps we can remember the first time—but we cannot foresee the last. It is most probable that when the last time arrives, we shall not be aware of it. As there was a time when our infant lips *first* pronounced the name of Jesus, so there will be a time when our lips will utter it for the last time on *earth*. How many happy souls have departed this life, saying, "Come, Lord *Jesus*, come quickly!"

Some of us, perhaps, can look back upon the time when we first approached the table of the Lord to eat the bread and drink the wine. If we came with a formal spirit—because *others* came—because we thought it *right* to come—because our *friends* expected us to come, there is no sweetness in the remembrance of that time. But if we came as contrite sinners to a bleeding Savior, then we desire never to forget the blessed season. There will be a *last* time for partaking of the holy communion; it may be in the sanctuary; it may be in the dying chamber. Whenever it arrives may it find us in the same loving spirit in which our blessed Lord sat down with his twelve apostles to partake of his *last* passover!

Though he knew that one of these apostles would soon deny him, and that all would forsake him, yet his heart lingered over them with inexpressible tenderness. What fervent affection is implied in the words, "With desire have I desired to eat *this* passover *with you* before I *suffer!*" Though death was to follow, yet this feast of love was an object of desire to the Savior.

A cup of red wine was usually drunk before the passover was eaten. This cup Jesus took, and said to his disciples, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves." By desiring them to drink out of the *same* cup, he instructed them to love one another, even as he had loved them. There was *another* cup which he gave *after* supper, saying, "This is my blood." The *first* cup was given *before* supper.

When the Lord partook of this passover, his heart was bowed down with sorrow. There is an hour approaching when He will rejoice *with his* people. In the day of his trouble he spoke of that hour, for he said, "I will not drink of the fruit of the vine *until* the kingdom of God shall come." If he desired so earnestly to partake of the passover before he suffered, how much more must he desire to eat and drink with his people in the kingdom of God! No *last* time will ever come to that feast, no parting will then be near, no sin will then be feared, no tear will then be shed. Are we *meet* for the inheritance of the saints in light? *All* who approach the table of the Lord *now*, will not surround it hereafter.

The *heart* must be prepared for heavenly joys; it must be broken by a sense of sin; it must be bound up by a living faith. Christ alone can prepare us to sit with him at his table. He is now preparing the *feast*, and preparing the *guests*—and at the appointed time he will come and say, "Eat, O *friends*; drink, yes, drink abundantly, O beloved." (Solomon's Song 5:1.)

### October 3

#### **John 13:1-17. Christ washes his disciples' feet.**

The apostle Paul might well say, "I beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ." (2 Cor. 10:1.) Jesus knew that the feet he washed would flee from him that very night, and leave him alone in his troubles; but offences could not quench his love.

When afterwards Peter had denied his Lord, it must have been a comfort to him, in the midst of his bitter tears, to remember what the Lord had said to him as he washed his feet. He had said that Peter was already washed from his sins, and that he needed only to have his feet washed. This is the state of every true believer. He has been washed in the Savior's blood, but still he needs continually to wash his feet; for as he walks in this world he defiles them by sin. Every day he has occasion to say, "Forgive me my trespasses." Whatever sins we have committed, we should go instantly to Jesus to be washed. We need not fear to go to this condescending, this loving Master. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, even Jesus Christ the righteous." He who now lives to make intercession, is the same tender Savior who once took a towel and girded himself, who "poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which he was girded."

But by this action Jesus intended not only to teach his disciples what *he* had done for them, but also what *they* ought to do for *each other*. When he sat down again, he plainly said, "You ought to wash one another's feet."

How apt we are to think that it is degrading to perform lowly offices! yet nothing can degrade us but sin. Angels in heaven are not too proud to serve the saints on earth. "Are they not all *ministering spirits*, sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation?" (Heb. 1.)

A holy woman, belonging to a wealthy family, often repeated the following lines, because they expressed the fondest desires of her heart—

O that the Lord would count me meet  
To wash his dear disciples' feet,  
To share the grace to angels given,  
And serve the royal heirs of heaven."

Her life proved that her words were sincere. The destitute orphan and the helpless cripple found a home beneath her roof.

But how different is any condescension that *man* can show, from the condescension the Son of God displayed! Creatures are only raised a very small degree above their fellows; and even that small distinction will exist for a very little while. At the present moment, in the sight of God, all men are equal. How unbecoming it is in any of us to lift up our hearts above our fellow-creatures! We may indeed remain in the station in which God has placed us; but we must remember that he is no respecter of people; the slave and the beggar are as precious in his sight as the king upon his throne. If we have the mind of Christ, we shall esteem it an honor to be permitted to minister to the wants of a poor saint; and we shall often think in our hearts, "This destitute creature, who now inhabits a neglected hovel, may perhaps shine more brightly than myself in the kingdom of glory."

#### **October 4**

#### **John 13:18-22. *Christ foretells that one of the twelve shall betray him.***

The Lord Jesus had just given his disciples a proof of his *love* by washing their feet. Now he gave them a proof of his *omniscience*. He showed them that he knew *all* things, by foretelling who should betray him.

Had he intended to convince them at *that moment* of his wisdom, he would have revealed the *past* secrets of their lives, as he once had done to the woman of Samaria. He told her so much of her past life, that she said to her townsmen,

"Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did." But on *this occasion* he sought rather to strengthen the disciples' faith in a trying hour that was approaching. He knew that the betrayal of Judas would tend to shake their faith. He knew that they might be tempted to think—"If our Master were the Son of God, he would have known that Judas sought to betray him, and he would have hid himself in some secret retreat." *Therefore* he told them beforehand; as he said, "Now I tell you *before* it comes, that *when* it comes to pass, you may believe that I am he."

For the same reason he has foretold many events that are now coming to pass. He has declared, "Many shall be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another." Whenever hypocrites are detected, instead of being staggered by the discovery, we ought to be confirmed in the faith, and to think, "Did not Jesus say that there should be many who would call him Lord, but who would work iniquity?"

Can we conceive what our feelings would be, if we could foresee what would befall those around us? How would our hearts be pained by the thought, "This dear brother will languish long under a tormenting disease. This beloved sister will lose the children that are now smiling on her knees." But how much more should we be grieved, if we could foresee that some who *seem* to be faithful followers of Jesus would finally betray him, and perish forever. What, then, must have been the feelings of the compassionate Savior, when he looked around and beheld the face of one who would soon plunge into the depth of crime, and sink into the abyss of misery! "He was troubled in spirit, and testified, saying, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me."

He still grieves over the sorrows that he foresees. When he looks down upon us, he sees the way that we shall take. Among the guests at the sacramental table he can distinguish those who will sell their birthright, from those who will inherit his kingdom.

Those who do not love their Master, will not always follow him. Judas found it easy to walk with Jesus when an admiring throng tracked his steps; but when circumstances were altered he changed his plan, and found it more convenient to betray him. There are seasons when the way of godliness appears even to the worldly-minded a pleasant and a glorious path; but these seasons do not last. A time arrives, sooner or later, when the path becomes steep and rugged; then the unconverted man turns aside into some by-way. He goes after the world he had forsaken, and seeks for a share in its smiles. At first, perhaps, he does not leave the assemblies of the saints. Like Judas, he may be found by turns in the councils of the ungodly, and in the society of the believers. Is there any one among us who is secretly siding with Christ's enemies, while he appears to be his friend? With what compassion Jesus regards such a miserable creature! He foresees the sorrows that his sins will bring upon him. He knows what remorse will one day tear him; what despair will take hold of him!

**October 5**

**Luke 22:21-30. *The apostles dispute concerning which shall be greatest.***

We are not surprised that the apostles should be agitated by the thought that one of them should betray their beloved Master. But we are surprised that they should at the same time dispute who should be the greatest. Such a contest would have been sinful at *any moment*, but it was especially unseemly on *this* occasion. Their Master was going to suffer the deepest shame, and the acutest torture; his spirit was troubled, and his soul exceeding sorrowful. All his followers should have been engrossed by the desire to console him. Instead of disputing who should be greatest, they should have exhorted each other to cleave closely to their Lord in the trying hour.

How easy it is for us to perceive how *they* ought to have behaved! But how difficult it is for us to act as *we* ought to do! A desire to be great, and to be *greater* than others, is deeply rooted in our sinful nature. Even after we have turned to God, we are troubled by this evil propensity. We often betray it in our conversation, when we are not aware of the spirit that actuates us. We delight to dwell upon the esteem that others feel for us, to describe the exertions we have made, the plans we have suggested, and the influence we have obtained. Even when we keep *silence* on these subjects, because we think it unbecoming to praise ourselves, we often indulge *feelings* of self-complacency, and are elated when others notice and commend us. It would not be thus with us, if we were engrossed with the glory of Christ. Then we should desire only to speak of his wondrous works, and to talk of his power, and of the glory of *his* kingdom. If we spoke of ourselves, it would be with a view of showing his forbearance and faithfulness.

It must have grieved the Lord to hear his disciples striving for the first place in his kingdom. But he would not utter a severe rebuke when partaking with them of his last supper. He had endeavored to teach them humility by washing their feet, and he continued by the softest persuasions to impress the lesson on their hearts. But he knew that *circumstances* would soon teach them how unworthy they were even of the *lowest* place in his kingdom. *That night* they would all *forsake* him. When they saw him again after his resurrection, they disputed no more who should be greatest; for each felt that he had forfeited all claim even to the *lowest* place. Thus will Jesus deal with us, if we are cherishing pride in our hearts. It is wonderful to observe how he humbles his people in their own eyes. Sometimes he allows them to stumble for a moment, that they may not fall into everlasting perdition. He has reserved for them the highest honors—places at his table, and thrones in his kingdom, but he must prepare them for their exaltation by deep humiliation. He knows when they are in danger of *becoming* proud, and sometimes in his mercy he sends an affliction to keep them humble.

He dealt in this manner with the apostle Paul. These are the apostle's own words—"Lest I should be exalted beyond measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted beyond measure." (1 Cor. 12:7.)

**October 6**

**Matthew 26:21-25. *The apostles inquire who shall betray their Master.***

What a sorrowful moment it was to the affectionate disciples when the Lord said, "One of you shall betray me." He *himself* was troubled in spirit, and they were exceeding sorrowful. Each anxiously inquired, "Is it I?" It was right in them to ask this question, rather than to say, "Is it Peter?" "Is it John?" "Is it James?" Not one was so ungenerous as to fix his suspicion upon his fellow. This is the spirit we ought to cultivate. Are we not more apt to suspect our *fellows* than to distrust *ourselves*? No doubt each of the apostles felt in his heart that he could not betray his Master, but then each believed that the Lord knew his heart better than he knew it himself—"God is greater than our hearts, and knows all things." (1 John 3:21.) Did *Judas* believe that God knew all things when he asked, "Is it I?" Surely he must have hoped that he had deceived his *Master* as well as his *fellow-disciples*. But how must he have felt when he heard the answer, "You have said!" Probably it was spoken in a low voice, so that none but Judas heard the words.

But even when detected, he was not turned aside from his base purpose; for Satan had entered into him. No threatenings could terrify him; not even the words, "It would be better for that man if he had never been born." More terrible words cannot be imagined. They prove that the lost spirits can *never* be released from hell, for if at *any* period (however remote) they were to enter heaven, it would be good for them *in the end* that they had been born. Judas must have disbelieved this truth. Unbelief prepares the heart for committing the most appalling crimes. Satan finds no easier method of leading men captive than by filling their minds with doubts concerning God's word. He began his communion with our race by saying, "You shall not surely die."

But if Judas could not be awed by *fear*, could he be melted by *love*? No, he could behold his Lord seated at his last supper, and hear all his moving words, and still brood over his dark design. He could hear him utter this touching sentence, "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer;"—he could see him, girded with a towel, stooping to wash his disciples' feet—he could permit him to wash his own feet—and yet still determine to betray him into the hands of his enemies. Truly may God say of the human heart, that it is desperately wicked. The old serpent has made it his habitation, and he exerts his subtlety in keeping it in his possession. But the grace of God can change the unfeeling, deceitful heart of man. It was grace that made the other disciples so different

from Judas. Did not the Lord declare this, when he said, "I speak not of you *all*; I know whom I have *chosen*?" (John 13:18.)

When we consider a wicked character, when we follow its windings, and try to fathom its depths, let us remember that we are studying our own disease. If we were attacked with any dreadful malady for which no cure was known, what should we feel in viewing the body of one who had died of that malady? We should think, "My symptoms will increase, until I am reduced to the same miserable state." Sin is a malady that naturally grows worse and worse, and ends in eternal destruction. None can stop its course, but Jesus alone. Had it not been for him, it might have been said of each of us, "It would be good for *this man* if he had never been born; it would be good for *this woman*, for *this child*." May God of his infinite mercy grant that the reverse may be said of each of us! Whatever afflictions we may pass through, if we keep faithful to Jesus we shall see in the end that it was good for us that we were born. The blessed Savior *died*, that we might have *cause* to rejoice forever in having been called into being.

## October 7

### John 13:23-30. Christ gives the sop to Judas.

How many incidents recorded by John alone are so interesting that we could not bear the idea of being ignorant of them! It is a touching circumstance that one of the disciples leaned his head upon the bosom of Jesus at the last supper. That disciple's name is not mentioned in this place; but we know, from other passages, that it was John. It was the custom in the East to recline upon couches at mealtimes. This custom was not always observed at common meals, but it was considered indispensable at the passover. It is true, the first passover was eaten standing, but in later times the Jews preferred the posture of lying, because they thought it was a better emblem of their freedom from toil and slavery.

Could we have conjectured (had we not heard the fact) that a sinful man should be permitted to lean his head upon the bosom of our Lord? Such condescension became him who took little children in his arms, and who permitted a weeping woman to kiss his feet. Ought we to be afraid of coming to such a Savior? Can we believe he would roughly reject us? Or rather can we conceive how graciously he would receive us, how faithfully he would cleave to us? There is no friend who would so tenderly support our aching heads when oppressed by care and sorrow, or when damp with the dews of death.

We naturally suppose that all the apostles must have considered it a high privilege to sit next the Lord. It seems probable that Judas sat on one side of him, as it was to him he gave the sop when he had dipped it. Peter seems to have occupied a more distant place, as he beckoned, instead of whispering to John,

when he desired him to ask a question.

It was not sufficient for Peter to know that it was not *he* who should betray the Lord; he wanted to discover who it was. When John whispered, "Who is it?" the Lord did not check him for curiosity, but gave him a sign by which he discovered the traitor. It is lawful for Christians to desire to detect hypocrites. Paul exhorts them to look "diligently lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble them, and thereby many be defiled." (Heb. 12:15.)

The token by which the traitor was distinguished was an act of friendship—dipping his morsel in the same dish with the Lord. On the Passover-table a dish was placed composed of the juice of figs and other fruits, mixed with vinegar; and into this mixture all the guests dipped their morsels of the unleavened cake before returning thanks. For the *last* time the Lord dipped his morsel, wrapped in bitter herbs, in such a dish—for the *last* time Judas did so also. Both the traitor and his Master were eating their *last* supper on earth. Often had they supped together; but never to all eternity would they sit again at the same table, or share the same bread. The other apostles would again eat and drink with their Lord in another manner and in another state; but Judas would hunger forever amid the famished spirits in hell.

How eager the traitor must have felt to escape from the presence of his injured Master! Jesus himself furnished him with an excuse, by saying, "*That* you do, do quickly." The tone was so gentle in which those words were uttered, that none conjectured they referred to a deed of murder. Judas obeyed, and did his dreadful work *quickly*—for Satan hurried him on to perpetrate the crime. The wicked spirit who *suggested* the scheme sustained him while he executed it—"After the sop Satan entered into him." Man's courage would often fail before he had performed his dark designs, if it were not for Satan's help. He strengthens the thief to encounter the darkness, and he nerves the arm of the murderer to raise the bloody knife; but when they have done his will, *then* he encourages them no more; *then* he abandons them to remorse and despair.

## October 8

### John 13:31-35. *Christ gives a new commandment.*

When the traitor had left the room, the full tide of the Savior's love began to flow out upon his disciples. Many sorrowful words had been uttered at this last supper; but in the midst of *grief* gleams of *joy* burst forth. There was holy triumph, no, even rapture, in the words, "Now is the Son of man glorified; and God is glorified in him." Why did the Lord rejoice at the speedy approach of his bitter sufferings? Because *in* those sufferings his own glory and his Father's glory were manifested.

Have we seen the glory of the cross? Does it appear to us a glorious way of reconciling guilty rebels to their insulted sovereign? Does it not show how God hates sin, yet loves the sinner? He hates *sin* so much that he would not pardon without an atonement; he loves *sinner*s so much that he consented to give up his only Son to be that atonement. Paul did not *behold* the Savior expiring on his cross; but like us, he *heard* the touching history—and what was its effect upon his heart? The cross put out all other glory. He no longer saw any glory in exalted titles and shining thrones, in human learning, or eloquence, or even in a reputation for righteousness—all these appeared to him as dross. The cross alone seemed glorious, and he testified, saying, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." (Gal. 6:14.)

But in the hour when Jesus rejoiced, he looked not only at the glory connected with his *sufferings*, but also at the glory of his *exaltation*. "If God shall be glorified in him, God shall also glorify in himself, and shall *immediately* glorify him." *Very soon* God would raise him from the dead, and exalt him to his own right hand. He longed for that glorious hour; he showed his anxiety, when he said to Judas, "What you do, do *quickly*." If Paul in later days had a desire to depart and to be with Christ, how much more must God's own Son have desired to depart to be with his *Father!* He remembered the glory he had with the Father before the world was; this glory he knew he should soon possess again at his Father's right hand. A few *weeks* afterwards the dying Stephen looked up, and saw him standing there. A few *months* afterwards the astonished Paul beheld his brightness above the brightness of the sun. A few *years* afterwards, and the enraptured John heard him say, "I am he who lives and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore." Well might the prospect of such glory cheer the Savior's heart, as he sat at his last supper.

But did he forget his sorrowing disciples? O no, he turned to them with tender love, saying, "Little children, a little while am I with you." While he was with them, they had basked in his love; when he was gone how desolate would they feel! But if they should love each other as *he* loved them, *then* they would not be desolate. Therefore he said unto them, "Love one another, as I have loved you." Jesus desires that his people should be happy. This is *one* reason why he charges them to love each other. But he has *another* reason. It is his *own* glory. "By this shall all men *know* that you are *my* disciples, if you have love one to another." Love is the badge of Christ's disciples. Is it then so *rare* for men to love each other, that true believers can be known by this mark? Yes, it is even so. There is much that *looks* like love to be found in the world. There is natural affection—there is particular friendship—there is patriotism—there is party-spirit—but there is no love, such as Christ bore towards his disciples. There is no love of this *kind* to be found on earth but in the heart of a Christian. No human creature, indeed, can love as Jesus does—but his love, though very inferior in *degree*, may be the same in *kind*. Paul, the prisoner of the Lord, was filled with this love when he said, "Therefore I endure all things for the *elect's* sake, that

they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." (2 Tim. 2:10.) Such love has led missionaries to leave comfortable homes to dwell among snows that never melt, or deserts that are always parched, to brave the hungry lion's roar, and to encounter the savage warrior's shriek. Such love glows in the heart of many who stand in less conspicuous places. They may be found in crowded alleys instructing ragged children, or in miserable hovels, comforting dying saints. "May the Lord make *us* to increase in love toward one another, and toward *all men*." (1 Thess. 3:12.)

## October 9

### John 13:36 to end. *Christ foretells Peter's denial.*

It must have grieved *all* the disciples to hear their Lord say, "Where I go, you cannot come." But Peter, as usual, was the *first* to express his sorrow. This he did by asking the question, "Where go you?" These words were evidently uttered with deep anxiety. Jesus repeated the assurance he had before made, "Where I go, you can not follow me *now*;" but he added a most comforting declaration, "You shall follow me *afterwards*." These words must have proved a healing balm to Peter's troubled heart, when a few hours afterwards he was weeping bitterly for his base denial of his Lord. Jesus well knew how much he would require cordials for his faith in that agonizing moment; and he gave him several such cordials, both in the upper room and in the garden of Gethsemane. Had Peter's faith failed after his sin, he would have been driven to despair like Judas, and he would have perished like him. But Jesus sustained his faith by his word and Spirit, and kept him "by his power unto salvation." (1 Peter 1.)

Doubtless there are many who wish that they could obtain such a promise as Peter received, "You shall follow me afterwards." But though it is the privilege of only a *few* of the saints to hear such an assurance from the lips of their Master, it is the privilege of *all* to have the inward witness of the Spirit, for it is written, "The Spirit bears witness with our spirits that we are the children of God." Let all believers listen to his gentle voice in their souls. It is a voice not to be heard by the outward ear, but only by the inward ear of the soul or spirit, and it says, "You are mine." When the children of God hear that spiritual voice, they reply, "Father;" as it is written in the Romans, "We have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father." No slave among the Jews was allowed to use the word "Abba," in speaking to his Master—but believers are not *slaves*, but *children*. Only let them beware of grieving by their sins that holy Spirit, who delights in filling their hearts with peace, and joy, and love.

Peter knew not *when* he should follow his Lord. He was impatient to go immediately, and inquired, "Why cannot I follow you *now*?" Jesus knows how long it will be before each of us will follow him to glory, (if we shall follow him,)

and he knows why one must follow him soon, and another a great while later. He has appointed for each of us that length of pilgrimage that is best for us, and best for others. We are sometimes disposed to wish to alter his arrangements. When tried by lingering sickness, we are apt to cry "how long?" and when surrounded by those who look up to us for help and comfort, to cry, "O spare me before I go away." But the Lord will judge for us, and call us to himself at the right moment. Moses and Elijah, and Jonah, and Job, all desired, in times of great trouble, to die; but the Lord prolonged their lives. Peter, in the fervor of his affection, desired the same; but his request also was denied. Had he, *at that time*, been called to lay down his life, he would have shrunk from the trial—for far from having courage to shed his blood, he had not enough to bear a scornful look. The Lord would not bring upon him a temptation greater than he was able to bear, but only such a temptation as showed him what was in his heart, and then he made a way of escape, that he might be able to bear it.

At length Peter obtained a martyr's courage, and now he wears a martyr's crown. The time came when he fulfilled his own declaration, "I will lay down my life for your sake;" and he was stretched on a cross like his beloved Master.

Jesus now hears his people's vows of fidelity. He will try them all and prove their sincerity. In what *way* he will try us, at what *time*, we cannot tell. When the trials come, may we be found faithful. Then we shall know the truth of the promise, "Blessed is the man who endures temptation, for when (as *often*) he is tried he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to them that love him." (James 1:12.)

## October 10

### **Luke 22:31-35. Christ tells Peter he has prayed for him.**

What a view this passage gives us of the malice of Satan. That wicked spirit desired to have *all* the apostles, for Jesus said, "Satan has desired to have *you*," not Peter only, but the *others* also. No wonder that he desired to have those men who were to spread the Savior's name throughout the world. He succeeded in obtaining *one* of them as his prey, even Judas; but his place was afterwards filled up by another apostle (Matthias, Acts 1).

Can we doubt that Satan still desires to tempt the servants of Christ? If *we* are his servants, he longs to destroy us. He goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. (1 Peter 5:8.) These words are the words of one who had himself been rescued from the jaws of the lion. It was Christ who delivered him. He knows all the designs of the enemy. When he sees any of his sheep in danger, he does not flee, but he stays to deliver them. He watched with tender care over all the apostles during their season of temptation, but especially over Peter, who seems to have been the *most* exposed to the enemy. He had already

*prayed* for him; now he *warns* him; soon he takes him to the garden with him, and there bids him pray for himself; and even when standing before his judges, does not forget him, but turns and looks at him.

Such is the care Jesus still takes of his people. Were he less watchful, no soul would ever reach the heavenly fold. If we do not fall into some fatal sin, it is because his eye is always upon us. No little child is so dependent upon the watchfulness of its nurse, as we are upon that of Jesus.

Satan desired to sift the apostles as corn is sifted in a sieve, when it is thrown up in the air, and when the chaff is blown away. He hoped that Judas was not the only hypocrite among them; for Satan cannot search the heart. He suspected Job of being a hypocrite, but he was mistaken. He suspected Peter, but in this also he was mistaken. It seems Satan is allowed to try the saints, but these trials do them good, and make them brighter Christians afterwards. Peter loved the Lord *before* he denied him; but he loved him far better *afterwards*. "That kind upbraiding glance" could never be erased from his memory; that affectionate message, ("Tell his disciples and *Peter*;"") that early meeting with him *alone*, (for he was seen by Peter or Cephas *before* he was seen by the twelve,) (1 Cor. 15:5,) were tokens of forgiving grace beyond all human thought.

How it binds the hearts of believers to their Lord, to remember the various instances in which their backslidings have been healed! Is there anyone here who, like Peter, has given himself to the Lord, and who yet, like Peter, has been unfaithful? Do you not feel your heart glow with love when you think of the Lord's free forgiveness of your ungrateful wanderings? What does Jesus expect of his restored backsliders? He expects that they should strengthen their brethren. He said to Peter, "When you are converted strengthen your brethren." By the term "converted," he meant "turned back again" into the way of righteousness. David declared, after his grievous fall, "I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners shall be converted unto you." It encourages a wanderer to return to hear another wanderer say, "The Lord has forgiven *me*." All the apostles must have felt afraid to meet their Lord again, after having forsaken him; but when they heard Peter say, "I did *worse* than you, I denied him; yet he has forgiven me; I know it by the look he has cast upon me," would they not all be strengthened by such words? We ought not to be ashamed to own our faults to our brethren; but we ought rather to take delight in magnifying the riches of Christ's forgiving love. If we have obtained mercy, why should not others also? What Jesus has done for *us* is a pattern of what he will do for all, who, like us, shall believe in him to life everlasting. (1 Tim. 1:16.)

**October 11**

**Luke 22:35-38. *Christ prepares the apostles for approaching danger.***

The Lord deals with his people in various manners. Sometimes he causes all things to go smoothly—at other times he permits difficulties to arise. When Jacob left his father's house, he was cheered on his way by a vision of angels, and he arrived safely at his uncle's abode; but when Joseph left his home, he was assaulted by his brethren and sold as a slave into Egypt. The Lord knows *when* to appoint trials, and when to bestow prosperity.

Solomon knew this when he said, "To everything there is a *season*, and a *time* to every purpose under heaven"—that is, to every *purpose* of God. He then enumerates various times, "a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to weep and a time to laugh." (Eccl. 3.) There were such various times in the lives of the apostles. When their Master first sent them out to preach, he desired them to make no provision for the way. He said, "Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, nor bag for your journey." (Matthew 10:9, 10.) They obeyed this command, and at the last supper they testified that they had lacked nothing during their journey. The disciples of Jesus can always testify that their Lord has kept his promises—not one of them has ever failed, or ever will.

On this occasion the Savior gave different directions to the apostles from those he had formerly given. He desired them to take, not only bags and purses, but even *swords*. Why did he give this command? To prepare them for the great troubles that were coming upon them. He knew that now few would be willing to give them food, and that many would desire to take away their lives; because their Master was soon to be crucified as a criminal. Who would favor the followers of a crucified Master? He reminded them of these words of Isaiah 53, "He was numbered with the transgressors." One of the trials the Savior endured was DISGRACE. He was put to death *as a wicked man, with wicked men, and in the manner* in which wicked men were put to death. The *disciples* of such a master ought to expect disgrace. They should not be surprised when they are insulted, reviled, and falsely accused.

But ought they to defend themselves with the *sword*? We know they ought not. When Peter took one of these two swords and cut off the ear of the high priest's servant, his Lord rebuked him, and said, "All those who take the sword shall perish with the sword." If Jesus had intended that his servants should fight, he would not have said that *two* swords were enough. The only sword that they should use is the sword that their Master wielded when attacked by the prince of darkness in the wilderness—the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. (Eph. 6:17.)

When temptations come upon us, let us use that sword. Satan cannot resist it. Had Peter used it in that terrible night when his Lord was condemned, he would not have denied him. We know not what great temptations may soon assail us. God often makes the first part of a believer's course very smooth, because he knows his weakness, and will not try him above his strength. But an *evil day* will come. How shall we stand in that day? Not by our own strength. We must take

unto us *now* the whole armor of God, the bosom-plate of righteousness, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit. When clothed in this armor, we must watch and pray, and then we shall be able to resist all the wiles of the devil. (Eph. 6:11.)

## October 12

### Luke 22:19, 20. *Christ ordains his holy supper.*

Of all the touching words that Jesus uttered at the last supper, the *most* touching were these—"This is my body; this is my blood." The disciples had been unwilling to believe that he would die; but could they doubt it any longer when they heard these words, and looked upon the broken bread and the poured out wine? He would not only *die*, but he would die a *cruel* death; his body would be broken like the bread; his blood would be poured out like the wine.

Was Judas present at this scene? It is not certain whether he was there or not. He had partaken of one cup—of the cup *before* supper—but we know not whether he partook of the cup *after* supper.

No doubt it was with bitter grief that the loving disciples ate that broken bread, and drank that cup of wine. With what different feelings they partook of the ordinance the *next* time! When, *after* their Lord's resurrection, they met together to break bread, how thankful they felt for his dying love! We know not *when* they *first* met for this purpose. It must have been an interesting communion! Each must have thought, "What would have become of me if that spotless body had not been lacerated and bruised upon the cross—if that precious blood had not flowed from the pierced hands, and feet, and side!" This is the feeling of every believer when he approaches the table of his Lord.

Ever since man sinned, he has been spared only for the sake of Jesus. When Abel brought a spotless lamb and offered it on the altar, he knew that he deserved to die instead of that lamb. The blood of that lamb was a faint shadow of the blood of the Lamb of God.

What did Jesus mean when he said, "This cup is the new testament in my blood which is shed for you?" By the word "testament," he meant covenant or promise. God made a covenant with Israel in the wilderness. The blood of bulls and goats was shed to confirm the *first* covenant. As it is written, "Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant." (Ex. 24:8.) From everlasting God made a covenant with his beloved Son concerning the salvation of man; but it was not fully revealed until after Christ had been crucified. His blood was shed to confirm this *new* covenant. It can never be shed again. But lest we should forget that it was *once* shed, we are commanded to drink wine at his table. And *can* we forget such love as Christ has shown? Yes,

when he said, "Do this in remembrance of me," he knew well that we were disposed to remember *everything* sooner than his love.

There are only a few who even *desire* to remember it. Why do so many turn away from the Lord's table? Is it not because they do not love their crucified Savior? They are not ashamed or afraid to say by their actions, "We do not love him." They know he is patient—they know he is generous—they know he is forgiving—they hope he will bear their insults, and that, when he spreads his table in his Father's kingdom, he will invite them to sit down with him there. But *what* if he should come in a day when they do not think, and in an hour when they are not looking for him; and what if he should say, "You shall *not* taste of my supper; you despised the supper to which I invited you on earth, and you shall not be admitted to my supper in heaven!" But if he should forgive their ungrateful conduct, and welcome them to his heavenly table, will they not wish they had honored his sacramental board?

If grief could enter heaven, it would be felt at the remembrance, *not* of past trials, but of past ingratitude shown to the Lamb of God. When we feel that all our bliss was purchased by the wounded Savior, shall not we desire that we had *always* loved, and honored, and adored him?

### October 13

#### **John 14:1-3. Christ promises his disciples to receive them into his Father's house.**

As we read these words, let us remember in what interesting circumstances they were uttered. Jesus was conversing with his eleven apostles, in an upper room, only a few hours before his crucifixion.

There was a moment in which He himself was troubled in spirit, but now it seems that his disciples were more troubled than himself, for he undertakes to comfort them. He had made one declaration that had grieved them exceedingly; He had said, "Where I go, you cannot come." Peter had expressed his sorrow, and had obtained this sweet assurance, "You shall follow me afterwards." The other apostles must have desired to hear words like these addressed to themselves. Their desire was fully satisfied when Jesus said, "In my Father's house are *many* mansions. I go to prepare a place for *you*." There was a mansion, *not* for Peter only, but also for John and James, and *all* the apostles. And are these mansions for *them alone*? Does not each of us inquire, "Is there a mansion for *me* also?" Yes, there is not only a mansion, but a *crown* for everyone who loves the Lord. Hear what the apostle Paul says, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a *crown* of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me in that day; and not to *me only*, but unto *all* them also that *love* his appearing." (2 Tim. 4:8.) Here is *hope*, here is *assurance*, for every one who can sincerely say, "Come, Lord

Jesus, come *quickly*."

Well might the disciples be troubled at the thought of losing such a friend as their Lord had been to them. The kindest friend we have ever known has sometimes treated us coldly, impatiently, or harshly; but Jesus had *always* been affectionate, sympathizing, and tender. The *best* friend we have ever had was subject to error and infirmity, but Jesus possessed unspotted holiness, unerring wisdom, and unblemished loveliness. In losing his presence the disciples felt that they should lose the chief joy of their existence. He knew the desire of their hearts, therefore he said, "That where I am, there you may be also." They have now tasted the fulfillment of this promise! The *apostles* are where Jesus is. Absent from the body they are present with the Lord.

Some who were once with *us*, are now with *him*. Would we wish to call them back? Could we make them as happy as Jesus is now making them? While we are enduring trials, exposed to temptations, and subject to sin, they rest in the mansions that he prepared for them in his Father's house. They do not desire to return to us, but they long for *us* to come where they are. There are mansions enough for a multitude which no man can number. Every hour some happy spirit is ascending to inhabit the place the Savior has prepared for him. The dying Stephen looked up steadfastly into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God; and as they stoned him he called upon God, saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." (Acts 7:55, 60.)

## October 14

### John 14:4-7. *Thomas makes an inquiry.*

How condescending it was in the Lord Jesus to permit his disciples to ask him questions! Yet he discouraged *presumptuous* inquiries. On this account the disciples, when they saw him conversing with the Samaritan woman, were once afraid to say, "What do you? or, why talk you with her?" But he encouraged them to ask, in a humble spirit, explanations of his doctrines.

At an early part of the conversation at the last supper, Peter interrupted his Lord by saying, "Where are you going?" The answer seems to have satisfied him, for he said soon afterwards, "I will lay down my *life* for your sake." By this reply, Peter showed that he believed his Master was going to *die*. But Thomas was not so soon satisfied as Peter. He was a man hard to be convinced, though not slow to act *when* convinced. It was *he* who on a former occasion had said, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." (John 11:16.) And it was he who, a long while afterwards, carried the gospel to the end of the world, even to the coasts of India. Even now, near Madras, his name is remembered, and the Mount of Thomas may still be seen there. It was *this* Thomas, this unbelieving Thomas, who now said, "Lord, we know not *where* you go, and how can we know the *way*?" His

patient teacher repeated the instructions he had so often given, "I am the *way*, the truth, and the life." But did he reveal where he was going? Yes, for he added, "No man comes unto the *Father*, but by me." He was going to the *Father*—he was going to return to that bosom whence he came out—he had been despised and rejected of *men*; but he was going to Him who had said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And was he going *alone*? No—had he not said, "I go to prepare a *place* for you?"

But he was going to do still more—to prepare a *way* as well as a *place*. Of what avail would it have been to us, if a *place* had been prepared, but if no *way* to that place had been opened? To see, *afar off*, those glorious mansions, and to feel there was no *way* by which we could attain them, would be wretchedness indeed. Yet there is no way, except through *Jesus*. As well might one of us hope to reach the *stars*, by any contrivance of our own, as to reach heaven through our own goodness, or prayers, or tears, or sufferings. When man had sinned, it was impossible that the *just* God could receive him as an inhabitant of his palace. What would be thought of a sovereign who should appoint some notorious murderers to be his ministers of state? How was it, then, possible that the holy God should continue to show favor to guilty rebels? But the Son of God took upon him our load of guilt, and died in our stead. Thus he became the *way* to his Father. Sinners may approach God through him. The great gulf that sin had made between heaven and earth, is now closed. The Son of God is the *ladder* by which sinners climb up into heaven. It is a useless thing to attempt to come to God in any other way than by Jesus. The men who began the tower of Babel *thought* they could reach the heavens, but they were *mistaken*. There are some who fall into a more fatal mistake. They fondly imagine that they shall be able to pile up good works enough to enable them to mount to God's throne; but they shall never succeed—while the humble believer, trusting in his Savior, shall be borne by his Almighty arm into the presence of the King of kings.

## October 15

### John 14:8-12. *Philip makes a request.*

Philip expressed the feeling of a pious heart when he said, "Lord, show us the Father, and it suffices us." There was something in this request that must have pleased the Son of God. Love to his Father always pleased him. It grieved him to see the creatures of his Father's hand so indifferent to his name. He had beheld another scene in heaven, where every angel and every saint glows with love to his glorious Creator. But worldly men do not care for the Being who made them. Far from wishing to see Him, as Philip did, they wish to hide themselves from him. Instead of saying, "Show us the Father," they say in their hearts, "Give us corn and wine; give us favor with men; give us success in our schemes, and prosperity in our families, and—*it suffices us.*"

But the children of God desire to see their Father's face. Philip was a child of God, and he desired to see his glorious countenance; therefore he said, "Show us the Father." Yet he ought not to have made this request. He ought to have known that Jesus was the brightness of his Father's glory. How gently the Lord reproached him for his unbelief when he said, "Have I been so long time with you, Philip, and yet have you not known me?" *Three* years was a *long* time to have familiar communion with the Son of God. Patriarchs and prophets thought themselves highly favored, when they enjoyed short and occasional interviews with their glorious Redeemer. They were more ready to acknowledge him as God than Philip was. When Jacob had wrestled with the angel, he said, "I have seen the face of *God*, and my life is preserved." But the apostles found it hard to believe how great their Master was! They had seen him hungry and thirsty, weary and weeping. They had even heard him talk of *dying*. Was it not hard to believe, that the face so marred with sorrow was the express image of the Father's? Yet they ought to have believed this, because of his *words* and his *works*.

He spoke as never *man* spoke; he did works that *man* never performed. His divine glory shone through the veil of mortal flesh. No light around his person distinguished him from other men; but the apostle John declares, "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father." (John 1:14.) *Once*, indeed, his face did shine as the sun, and his clothing was white as the light; but only *once*; and *then only three* of the apostles beheld that glorious sight. But his countenance always shone with the light of *holiness*, and his garments were *always* white with spotless purity.

When did Jesus fulfill this wonderful promise, "He who believes on me, the works that I do shall he do also, and *greater* works than these shall he do?" At the day of Pentecost, when the apostles, by the power of the Spirit, turned *three thousand* souls to God. When *Jesus* preached, only a few repented. Chorazin and Bethsaida, Capernaum and Jerusalem, repented *not*; but when the apostles preached, three thousand, by one sermon, were pierced in their hearts. (Acts 2:37-41.) What was the reason for this difference? Jesus explained the reason in these few words, "Because I go unto the Father." Since he has gone unto the Father, to sit at his right hand, multitudes have received the gifts of repentance, and of the forgiveness of sins, because he has gone there for that *very purpose*; as it is written, "Him has God exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." (Acts 5:31.) Have we received these precious gifts? Has the *great work* been done in our souls—the work of conversion? If it has, then we shall be anxious to do great works ourselves, by saving the souls of our fellow-sinners, and snatching them as brands from the burning.

**October 16**

**John 14:13-20. *Christ promises to answer his disciples' prayers.***

When friends are about to part, they agree together how they shall serve and please each other while separated. The Son of God was the most tender and faithful of friends. What was it he engaged to do for his disciples when about to leave them? He said, "If you shall ask anything in my name, I will do it." But what could *they* do for him? He said, "If you love me, keep my commandments." Jesus has not failed to fulfill *his* part. As soon as he was ascended up on high, his disciples asked in his name for a glorious gift, and he bestowed it. They asked for what he had *promised*; for, as Luther says, prayer is the reminding God of his promises. What had he promised? Another comforter, that is, another *teacher*. "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you forever." The apostles remembered this promise; and when they had parted from their Lord, "they all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren." (Acts 1:14.) Then it was that the Holy Spirit came down from heaven with a sound like a rushing mighty wind, and in appearance like cloven and flaming tongues. Peter then preached to the wondering multitude, and said, "Being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has shed forth this, which you now see and *hear*." (Acts 2:33.)

Thus Jesus fulfilled his own promise, "If you shall ask anything in my name, I will do it." But has he withdrawn that precious promise? May we not *still* expect its fulfillment? Assuredly we may. How many believers can witness that Jesus has heard *their* prayers! Sometimes we are certain that the letter we sent to a friend has been received; and why? Because we receive an answer to it. Have we never received answers to our prayers sufficient to convince us that they have been heard? Sometimes Jesus does not grant the *very thing* his people ask for; because he has promised only to give them *good* things, and sometimes, in their ignorance, they ask for things not good for *them*. The apostle Paul *thought* it would be good for him to be relieved from the thorn in his flesh—but his Savior knew it would be better for him to bear it, lest the abundant revelations he had received should exalt him above measure. Therefore when he besought the Lord *three times* to take it away, he received this answer—"My grace is sufficient for you." And he *found* it sufficient; for he was able afterwards to say, "I take pleasure in infirmities." If, then, we do not obtain the very thing we ask, let us not be discouraged. We may have asked for a *stone*—our heavenly Father will not give us *that*; but He will give us *bread* instead.

Christ has not forgotten what he promised to do for us. Let us not forget what he has enjoined us to do for *Him*. He said, "If you love me, keep my commandments." If we forget this charge, he will be released from his promise. For John says in his epistle, "Whatever we ask, we receive of him, *because* we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." (1 John 3:22.) What are his commandments? He had given *two* while sitting at supper with his disciples. One was the *new* commandment, "Love one another as

I have loved you." The other was, "Believe in me." (John 14:1.) Jesus did not say, "Love me." He knew his disciples loved him. He even appealed to their love as a motive of obedience, saying, "If you love me, keep my commandments." Does this tender appeal touch *our* hearts? If we love the Lord it will be a stronger motive to obedience than the severest threatening. God *threatened* Adam when he said, "In the day that you eat thereof, you shall surely die." But this threatening did not deter him from eating the forbidden fruit. How many who love Jesus have been deterred from disobeying him by the tender words, "If you love me, keep my commandments!"

## October 17

### John 14:21-23. *Jude asks an explanation.*

How it must have gladdened the hearts of the apostles to hear Jesus say, "I will manifest myself unto him," (that is, unto the man who loves me!) As it was the prospect of his *absence* that troubled them, the promise of his *presence* (if they believed that promise) must have cheered them. He had said before, "I will come again and receive you to myself." But he had not said *when* he would come again. Years might pass away before he took them to the place where he was going. But now he promises to visit those whom he left behind.

To *whom* did he address the promise? To those who *loved him*. The apostle Jude well knew that *he* loved him. Therefore he did not inquire, "Will you manifest yourself unto us?" But he asked, "How will you manifest yourself unto us?" It is a comfortable thing when a man's own heart assures him that he loves his Lord. Our hearts tell us that we love our children and our friends. If we really love the *Lord*, our hearts will tell us that we do. Yet, lest we should deceive ourselves upon so important a subject, Jesus has given us a sign by which to try our hearts. "If a man love me, he will keep my words." But who keeps the words of Jesus? If tried by this rule who shall stand? *None* keep them *perfectly*; but some do keep them in the sense that Jesus meant; for he said, speaking of his own *apostles*, in prayer to God, "They have kept your word." (John 17:6.) This declaration has been a great comfort to many believers. The history of the apostles shows that they did not keep their Master's words *perfectly*—they neither believed in him as fully, nor loved one another as warmly, as they ought. Yet still Jesus said to his Father, "They have kept your word."

When he lived upon earth the world saw him as well as his disciples; but, since he has ascended to heaven, the world have seen him no more—but those who love him do see him by *faith*. There are many who have experienced the truth of this promise—"My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." That faithful servant of God, Dr. Payson, when racked with pain upon his dying bed, declared, "It is not the *prospect* of heaven that makes me happy, but the *sense* of heaven in my own bosom." Where the Father and the

Son abide, there must be heaven. While sin remains in the heart, the believer's heaven will be darkened by clouds, and shaken by storms—but when sin is utterly destroyed, there will be no more storms, and no more clouds.

The glorified saints are not only in *heaven*, but heaven is in *them*. The *dawn* of this heaven is in believers upon *earth*. Is there heaven in our souls? Do the Father and the Son make their abode with us? If they dwell not with *us now*, we shall not dwell with *them hereafter*. Remember the declaration of the apostle, "Christ *in* you, the hope of glory." Remember also his prayer, "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." (Eph. 3:17.)

## October 18

**John 14:24-26. Christ promises his disciples that the Holy Spirit shall teach them.**

When about to part with a friend, we often have cause to regret that we have not profited more from his society. A child standing by the bed of a dying parent, feels the value of those instructions he shall receive no longer—of those prayers he shall never join in again. He endeavors to recall the faithful counsels, to imprint on his memory the familiar expressions, but day by day they fade away.

What must the disciples have felt at the thought of hearing the sayings of the Lord no more! They heard him declare, "He who loves me not, keeps not my sayings." They must have feared lest they should not be able even to *remember* them, much less to KEEP them. But Jesus knew their feelings, and he gave them a promise suited to their state. He promised that One should come who should bring to their remembrance all that he had said to them, and who should teach them many things he had *not* taught them. For he had treated them as children whose understandings were unripe, and had kept back many things that it would *hereafter* be good for them to know. These things the Holy Spirit would teach them. Did Jesus fulfill this promise? Let us look into the epistles of Peter and Jude, of James and John, and we shall find treasures of heavenly wisdom that the Holy Spirit had taught them. The very discourse which we are now reading was brought back to the memory of John by the Holy Spirit. The precious words which dropped from the Savior's lips as he sat at his last supper, did not fall to the ground; they were gathered up and reserved for our instruction. Do *we feel* them to be precious? Do we consider these holy words better than gold, and sweeter than honey? Or do we take more delight in a trifling song and an entertaining story, than in the words of the Son of God? The true believer can say with David, "Your word is very pure, therefore your servant loves it."

If we really love it, we may trust that the Holy Spirit will bring it to our remembrance in our time of need. In the hour of temptation he is a faithful friend, and whispers in the ear of the *tempted soul* such a text as this, "How can I do this

great wickedness and sin against God?" In the hour of *affliction* the Holy Spirit brings to the desponding mind such a promise as this, "Whom the Lord loves he chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives." (Heb. 12:6.) And in the hour of *death* he sustains the sinking soul by such an assurance as this, "When you pass through the waters I will be with you, and through the floods they shall not overflow you." (Is. 43:2.)

## October 19

### John 14:27-29. *Christ promises to give his disciples peace.*

We sometimes read of a rich man dying and leaving a vast property to his heirs. But the greatest riches ever bequeathed, were bequeathed by one of the poorest of the sons of men. None was ever poorer in this world than Jesus. Yet he left his disciples the costly gift of "Peace." "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." This is what all the world are pursuing. They are seeking for peace and happiness. They desire an abundant earthly portion because they imagine it will confer peace. Some think that *power* will confer it; others that *praise* will impart it; while many hope to find peace in a round of amusements, in the attainment of knowledge, in the endearments of home, or in the performance of active duties. But *none* of these things, not even the *best* of them, ever bestowed peace. None has peace to bestow but Jesus. He gives it to those who *love* him, and to them alone. He gave it to the weeping sinner; he said to her, "Go in *peace*," and she went in peace. He gave it to the dying thief; he said, "Today shall you be with me in paradise," and that once guilty man *died* in peace. He is willing to give it to each of you. Ask him for his peace. You will obtain it. Perhaps there are some here who have obtained it already; who know they have been filled with joy and *peace* since they believed in the Son of God.

But when Jesus promised this rich gift to his disciples, what was going to become of *him*? He also was going to be happy. He was going to the *Father*. Who can conceive the joy which he felt when he uttered these words, "I go unto the Father." He knew what it was to be with the Father. He had been with him from the *beginning*, for he himself was God. When he said, "My Father is *greater* than I," he spoke only of the greatness of his Father's *office*, not of the greatness of his *nature*; for it is declared in other places, that Jesus is *equal* with God. "He thought it not robbery to be *equal* with God." (Phil. 2:6.) "I and my Father are one." (John 10:30.) But Jesus took upon him the form of a *servant*, and was made in fashion as a *man*. While he continued on earth he was exposed to insults; but when he returned to heaven, he sat down again with his Father on his throne.

Did it ever rejoice *us* to think that the Savior's sufferings are all over, and that he is "made most blessed forever?" If we *loved* him, this thought would comfort us under our own sorrows. It *did* comfort the disciples, for when they saw him

carried up into heaven, they returned to Jerusalem with great joy. (Luke 24:52.) The same thought may comfort us under the loss of pious relatives. If we love them, we shall rejoice when we think that they are with the Father. When troubles overtake us, it will be soothing to reflect, "My mother is with the angels, and she can weep no more; my child is in the midst of the happy cherubs, singing praises to his God." When we ourselves are going to leave this world, may we also rejoice at the thought that we are going to the Father; and may those who love us rejoice because they know we are going there! A child of four years old, when dying, saw his parents weeping and praying around his bed. Suddenly rising up from his pillow, and stretching out his little arms, he cried out earnestly, "Let me go to God, let me go to God." Who could desire to detain him here!

## October 20

### John 14:30 to end. *Christ goes forth to meet the prince of this world.*

It required more than human courage to utter these words, "Arise, let us go hence." It was the call of the Captain of our salvation to his children—it was their summons to accompany him to the field of battle. The last supper was now over, and the parting scene was almost closed. What tender assurances, what faithful warnings had flowed from the lips of Jesus while he sat at the table surrounded by his beloved disciples! But now he says, "Hereafter I shall not talk much with you." These sweet conversations would soon be ended. Instead of *talking* with his *disciples*, the Son of God must be *struggling* with his *foes*.

There have been many bloody battles fought since evil entered into this world. On some occasions hundreds of thousands have met each other in the field. But there never was such a battle as that fought in the garden Gethsemane, and on the cross of Calvary. There legions of wicked spirits, marshaled under the prince of this world, assaulted the Son of God. On Satan's side there was an innumerable host—on the other *one man*, even the man Christ Jesus. None can conceive what pangs he endured in the conflict. Agony of mind caused him to sweat great drops of blood, and wrung from him the bitter cry, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" We find in the psalms a description of the workings of his sorrowful soul, when writhing beneath the pressure of Satan's temptations. If we would sympathize with our suffering Savior, let us read the twenty-second psalm. What expressions are these! "My heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my affections." What a prayer is this, "Save me from the lion's mouth!"

But how was it Satan could not prevail against the Son of God? Jesus himself explains the reason. "The prince of this world comes, and has nothing in me." There was no *sin* in the Savior's heart, there was nothing on which Satan could work. A marble quarry cannot be set on fire, and the Son of God was proof against temptation. Satan had once seduced spotless angels from their obedience. But there is an infinite difference between the holiness of a creature

and that of the Creator. Even those creatures who have never sinned are not, like God, incapable of pollution. Therefore it is written, "He charged his angels with folly," (Job 4;) and "The heavens are not clean in his sight." (Job 15.)

But though the Son of God knew he should win the victory, he looked forward with horror to the conflict. With *joy* he had said, "I go unto the Father." With *anguish* he declared, "The prince of this world comes." Satan was coming to make a *last* attempt to wrench the scepter from his hands, and to snatch the crown from his head. Terrible indeed was the hour of the power of darkness.

What was the mighty *motive* which urged the Son of God to meet the enemy? It was love. To whom? To his Father. It was love to his *Father* that drew him from the table around which his disciples sat, and led him to the garden to which his enemies were hastening. Therefore he said, "But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence."

## October 21

### John 15:1-5. *Christ declares he is the true vine.*

When Jesus uttered these words he was no longer seated at his last supper with the twelve. He had said, "Arise, let us go hence." It is recorded by Matthew, that before he left the table, he sang a hymn with his disciples. (Matthew 26:30.) It is probable that the hymn consisted of several psalms, beginning at the 113th, and ending with the 118th. They were called the Hallel, because they open with the words, "Praise the Lord." They celebrate the deliverance of Israel from the land of Egypt, and on that account were always sung at the feast of the Passover. But they also describe a greater deliverance than that from Egypt, even the deliverance of God's people from the depths of hell. Though many prophets had sung these psalms year after year at the holy feast, none had ever understood them as HE did, who sung them that night with his beloved apostles. He knew the meaning of the words, "Bind the sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar." (Ps. 118:27.) Before the next setting sun this prophecy was fulfilled by the cry, "Crucify him, crucify him."

Now let us follow the sorrowful little band as they descended the stairs, proceeded through the dark streets of Jerusalem, and along the path that led down the valley of Kedron. It is probable that beside that stream vine-trees grew, and that our Savior pointed to those trees when he said, "I am the true vine." By the means of a plant he wished to teach his disciples this most important truth, that all their safety lay in *union* with himself. The branches of the vine, while united to the stem, bear precious fruit, but when cut off are worthless, and only fit for the fire. The prophet Ezekiel thus describes the vine, "Shall wood be taken thereof to do any work? Behold it is cast into the fire for fuel." (Ezek. 15:3, 4.)

The Lord was going to leave his disciples, yet he said, "Abide in me and I in you." How would they be able to do this when he would be with the Father, and they on the earth? They would abide in him by *believing* in him; and he would abide in them by his Spirit. This is the union which exists between the exalted Savior and all his people *now* upon earth. Though they see him not, they *believe* in him, and thus they *abide* in him; though he reigns in the highest heaven, he dwells in their hearts by his Spirit, and thus *he dwells in them*. This union is not to be seen, but the effects are to be seen. We might not be able to tell whether a branch grew upon the vine, or whether it was only skillfully fastened on it. But if we watched the tree, we should know by two signs.

The false branch would bear no fruit, and at length it would wither. False professors of religion bear no fruit. They may do what are *called* good works; they may be very active and charitable; they may refrain from worldly amusements, and go to religious assemblies, but they cannot *love* Christ or love his people for *his* sake. Love is the fruit. "Love is of God. Every one that loves is born of God, and knows God." If a man say, "I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar." (1 John 4:7, 20.)

Those branches which do not bear fruit will at length *wither*. None but God can tell *when*. They may wither *soon*; they may, like Judas, fall into some open and atrocious sin, which shall unmask their characters, and cover their names with infamy. Or they may not wither until they die. Angels shall gather up the withered branches and cast them into the fire, and they shall be *burned*. Are we united to the true vine? To *appear* to belong to this vine, and *not* to belong to it, is to be *twice dead*. Jude describes false professors as "trees whose fruit withers, *without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots*."

## October 22

### **John 15:9-12. Christ assures his disciples of his love.**

It is a great comfort to an affectionate child to receive from a dying parent an assurance of his love. Though he knew before that his parent loved him, yet there is a satisfaction when the time of parting approaches, to hear fresh expressions of attachment. Many failings on his own part rushing to his recollection, make him feel that he does not deserve to be loved; and he listens eagerly to the tender words which dispel his fears.

Such must have been the feelings of the disciples when their Master was going to leave them. He knew the state of their hearts, and applied the healing balm they needed. But he did not say simply, "I have loved you." He told them how *much*. And how much did he love them? If the Son of God had not declared it we could not have believed that his love was so very great; even the *thought* would

have seemed the height of presumption and profaneness. "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you." How great must be the love with which the Father has always loved his only-begotten Son, the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person! The Son speaks of this love as existing before the worlds were made. "Then I was by him, as one brought up with him; I was daily *his delight*, rejoicing always before him." (Prov. 8:30.) And *this* is the love with which we are desired to love one another, for Christ said, "This is my commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you." As the Father loves the Son, so the Son loves us, and so we ought to love one another. Such love does not spring up naturally in our hearts. This is the description the word of God gives of sinful men—"Hateful, and hating one another." (Titus 3:3.)

Jesus presents the strongest motives to incite us to love each other. Do we desire to *continue* to enjoy *his* love? Then we must love one another; for he says, "If you keep my commandments you shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love." He had said before, "If you love me, keep my commandments." *Then* he appealed to *their* love for *him*, now he refers to his *own* for *them*. With both these silken cords he sought to bind their hearts together in the bonds of brotherly love.

He urges yet another motive. He was while on earth a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; yet sometimes he rejoiced in spirit. It was over his disciples he rejoiced. If they desired to continue to be his joy, they must love one another. "These things have I spoken to you, that *my* joy might remain in you."

It is a delightful thought to give joy to the Son of God. We have caused him *grief* enough, and *pain* enough, and *shame* enough—and shall we cause him *no* joy? To see his children on earth living together in love, is *his joy* now he is in heaven. How must he be grieved when he sees them suspecting each other's motives, exposing each other's faults, thwarting each other's wishes, and wounding each other's feelings! Disciples who act thus cannot be the joy of the God of love—neither can they be happy themselves—their joy cannot be full. Where there is *little love*, there can be *little joy*. If heaven were not full of love, it could not be full of joy.

Let us observe our own feelings. When a dark suspicion enters our hearts—are we happy? When a revengeful feeling is kindled—are we happy? When selfishness freezes, or pride puffs us up—are we happy? But when we melt in sympathy with our suffering brethren, or glow with desire to do them good, does not our joy increase? We are being trained up here to join the multitude which no man can number. We are to love *all* those happy spirits. Not one is to be treated with contempt or dislike, or even with shyness and reserve. *All* are to be loved by us with the love with which the Father loves the Son, with which the Son loves us. Let us begin this happy life now. Let us love one another. Though there are a multitude of sins in our brethren as well as in ourselves, yet love is a mantle wide enough to cover them all.

**October 23**

**John 15:13-16. *Christ calls his disciples his friends.***

The Lord Jesus showed more tenderness to his disciples in the last scene than he had ever shown before. Though he received them graciously at first, and treated them kindly afterwards, yet he reserved the choicest expressions of his love for the moment of parting. We never read until we come to this passage such a declaration as, "You are my *friends*."

This is the manner in which the Lord deals with all his people. It is in the latter stages of their pilgrimage that he makes them know most of his loving-kindness. When they are weighed down by the infirmities of age, or racked by the pains of sickness, he often lifts up the light of his countenance upon them, as he had never done before, so that their *last* days are their *best* days. Like the aged Simeon, they exclaim, "My eyes have seen your salvation;" or, like the dying Stephen, "I see the heavens opened, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God."

One of the proofs of friendship is confidence. The Lord treated his disciples with confidence. He said to them, "All things that I have heard of my Father I have made known to you." But while on *his* part there was *confidence*, he expected on *their* part *obedience*; for he did not wish them to forget he was their Father, as well as their *Friend*, therefore he said, "You are my friends, if you do whatever I *command* you." It is written in the Psalms—"The secret of the Lord is with them that *fear* him, and he will show *them* his covenant." (Ps. 25:14.) The covenant is that secret which Jesus had heard from his Father, and which he unfolds to his friends. It is the secret of his love before time began. Jesus loved his apostles *before* they loved him. He declared this truth to them when he said, "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." If he had not chosen them, they would never have *desired* to serve him. When Andrew with another disciple stood by John the Baptist, and heard him say, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world," they would have felt no inclination to follow that Lamb, had not Jesus first chosen them. His love was the invisible magnet that drew them after their Savior.

Christ not only chose his apostles to be his friends; he also ordained them to bear fruit. In all things he pleased not himself. He did not call them to leave their employments that they might be his companions as he walked from place to place, or his defenders when assaulted by his enemies. Angels would gladly have left their habitation to be his solace and his guard. It was not his own comfort that he sought, but his Father's glory. He appointed the apostles to bear the tidings of salvation to the ends of the world; and he promised that their labor should not be in vain. To this hour their fruit remains. On *earth* there are

thousands rejoicing in the Gospel which the apostles preached; in *heaven* a multitude that no man can number. The works of worldly men who lived in the apostles' days have perished. The victories they won have conferred no lasting benefit; the buildings they reared are fallen or crumbling into ruin; the books they wrote, if they still survive, never yet made one creature happy. But the labors of the apostles can never be forgotten; the sinners they converted are saved; and at length the world, through the truths they preached, shall be made holy and happy. Let us tread in their steps. We also are the friends of Jesus, if we do what he commands us. We may bring forth fruit that shall never wither. Feeble as we are, Christ will not despise us. He says to us, "Be not weary in well doing; for in due season you shall reap, if you faint not." It is far better to convert one soul, than, like Columbus, to discover a continent; or, like Herschell, a planet. The fruits of science will pass away, but the fruits of grace will abide unto eternal life.

## October 24

### John 15:17 to end. *Christ prepares his disciples for the world's hatred.*

The Lord Jesus did not tell his disciples at the *beginning* of this conversation, that the world would hate them. He told them *first* of his *own* great love. After hearing of that love, they ought to be able to bear to hear that the world would hate them. For what is the *hatred* of the world compared to the *love* of Jesus! If all the *creatures* were to hate us, they could not harm us, while the *Creator* loved us.

There is another reason why we should not care for the world's hatred. It is this—the world hated Jesus; though he was perfectly lovely, they hated him. Some young Christians imagine that they can escape the hatred of the world. They think that very amiable manners, and very prudent conduct, and very benevolent actions, will prevent even wicked men disliking them. But who can be as amiable as Jesus was, or as prudent, or as benevolent? There are some called Christians who stand high in the world's esteem; but *how* do they win this esteem? Is it not by keeping silence when they ought to speak, by joining in amusements which they ought to shun, and by cultivating friendships which they ought to renounce? Why did the world hate Jesus? He has told us the reason. Because he testified that its works were evil. (John 7:7.) We ought to do the same. The apostle Paul says, "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." (Eph. 5:11.) There may be occasions in which we cannot reprove in *words*; but we should never, even by a *smile*, *seem* to approve wicked actions or discourse.

It is a comfort to the faithful Christian to think that he shares in his Master's reproach. It was a comfort to the Son of God to know that he was hated for his *Father's* sake. He said, "The reproaches of them that reproached *you*, have fallen upon *me*." (Rom. 15:3.) He was the express image of his Father, and the world did not admire that image. The disciples of Jesus are not his *express*

image; but they bear *some* likeness to him, and even that likeness, faint as it is, the world abhors. How astonished angels must be to see him whom they adore, despised by men! No sin that man commits can be compared to the sin of hating God. If they hated him because they did not *know* him, their guilt would not be so great; but they hate him the *more*, the *more* they know him. The missionaries in Africa have been struck with this singular fact. *Distant* tribes show more desire to hear the Gospel than the tribes that lie *near* the missionary station. And why? Because the tribes that lie near know better what Christianity is, how pure, how peaceable, how gentle. Their wicked hearts turn from such a religion; they prefer their own cruel practices, and unholy customs, to the loving and pure doctrines of the Gospel. The carnal mind is *still* enmity against God. If the Son of God were *again* to descend to this world, and if, clad in a humble garb, he were to visit *this* country, he would *again* be despised and rejected. Do we feel that we should not despise him? Let us inquire what proof we give that we should not. Do we love his servants, whoever they are, and *wherever* we find them? And is it for their *holiness* we love them? If we prefer a real Christian, though unlearned, unpolished, unpleasing, to the most eloquent, agreeable, and accomplished worldly person, then we have reason to hope that we actually *do* love Jesus.

**October 25**

**John 16:1-4. Christ prepares his disciples for afflictions.**

None of us know what particular afflictions we shall be called to endure. The Lord Jesus was the only man who knew all things that would befall him. Even the apostle Paul, who was a prophet, said, "Now behold I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, *not* knowing the things that shall befall me there." (Acts 20:22.) Yet God has sometimes revealed to men a few of the future events of their lives. He told David that he would sit upon a throne, and afterwards he predicted that the sword would never depart from his house. He has wise reasons for spreading a thick curtain over the future, and he has wise reasons for sometimes *lifting up* a little corner of the curtain and permitting men to have a glimpse into his counsels.

The Lord Jesus thought fit to tell the disciples *some* events that would happen to them. He said, "They shall put you out of the synagogue; yes, the time is coming, that whoever kills you will think he does God service." What was his reason for acquainting them with these afflictions? He himself states the reason—"These things have I spoken unto you that you should not be offended," or made to stumble. There is a strong temptation in times of great affliction to distrust God. It is very hard when he smites us, to believe that he loves us. When we are prosperous and happy, then it is easy to say, "As many as he loves he rebukes and chastens." It is easy then to believe, or to *think* we believe, that he does not willingly grieve or afflict the children of men. But when pining in a dungeon, or threatened with the stake, then it is hard *not* to imagine that God has forgotten to be gracious. When Satan desired to deprive Job of all his comforts, he knew how

much that faithful man would be tempted to speak against his God. Those who have experienced sore afflictions can remember the struggle in their hearts at such times. Jesus knew the weakness of his disciples—he knew what they would feel when cast out of the synagogues, and sentenced to die a cruel death. Therefore he prepared them for these trials, that when they were afflicted they might think, "These are no strange things that have come upon us; our Lord told us before that they would happen."

Some years ago a Malagassy woman was persecuted cruelly by the queen of Madagascar. For five months she was shut up in an iron cage that prevented her from moving a limb, and for a long while she wandered in the forests, living upon wild roots, to escape the spear of the executioner. Afterwards, when in England, she was asked whether she was surprised at these trials. She replied, "O no, I had read in the word of God that 'we should suffer tribulation,' and I expected trials to come."

## October 26

### **John 16:5-11. *Christ promises to send the Comforter to reprove the world.***

Why did the Lord Jesus say to his disciples, "None of you asks me, Where are you going?" Had they not asked him already, and had he not told them that he was going to his Father? Many times he had said, "I go unto the Father." Yet the apostles continued to mourn as if their Master had been going to an *enemy* instead of to his *Father*—as if he had been going where *they* could never come, and where *he* would never return—as if he had been going where he could not hear their prayers, or send them help in trouble. Do we not often mourn as if we had no merciful Mediator to present our prayers to the Father—no Almighty Savior to send us support from on high? The Lord gently reproveth his disciples for their excessive sorrow, saying, "Because I have said these things unto you, sorrow has filled your heart."

Afterwards he continued to make them comforting promises. One of these promises was that he would send the Holy Spirit. He had before told them of many blessings that the Holy Spirit would confer on THEM—he now tells them what he would do for the *world*. He would reprove (or convince) the world of *three* things—sin—righteousness—and judgment. The world were not yet convinced of these things. If they had been, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

The world did not know that it was a *sin* not to believe in Jesus. They did not know that the *righteousness* of Christ atoned for the unrighteousness of men, and that his ascension to his Father proved that his offering had been accepted. They did not know that Satan, the prince of this world, was judged when Jesus, the Prince of life, expired on the cross.

And did the world *ever* know these things? Three thousand of the world were convinced of sin, righteousness, and judgment, when Peter preached his first sermon. When they flocked around the apostles, anxiously asking, "What shall we do?" then did our Savior's promise begin to be fulfilled.

Since that time many thousands of the children of this world have been pierced in their hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit, and they also have asked, "What shall we do?" Have *we* ever asked this question? Are *we* convinced of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment? It is only those whom the Spirit has taught who feel unbelief to be a great sin. It is only *they* who desire to be found in the righteousness of Christ. It is only *they* who rejoice that the prince of this world has been overcome. We were all ignorant of these things once. If we understand them now, a great change must have taken place in our hearts. It was the Holy Spirit who wrought that change, who taught us to mourn for sin, to believe in Christ, and to resist Satan. Have we come as *penitents* to Christ? As *believers* let us cleave to him. As *conquerors* we shall reign with him.

**October 27**

**John 16:12-15. *Christ promises to send the Spirit to teach the disciples.***

The Lord Jesus knew that this was his last conversation with his disciples before his death. He had said to them, while sitting at the supper-table, "Hereafter I will not talk much with you." But if he had had more *time* for discourse, he could not have taught them *all* he wished. And why not? Because their hearts were not in a fit state to receive *all* his instructions. The disciples were only *babes* in Christ, and they had need of *milk*, and not of meat. They had *shown*, a few hours ago, that they were only *babes*, for even at the last supper there had been a *strife* among those who should be the greatest. Christians who have grown much in grace do not desire to be exalted above their brethren.

The disciples must have been grieved when they heard their Master say, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now." They must have been grieved to find they lost many sweet disclosures of grace from the lips of the Son of God himself. There were many precious truths in their Lord's heart, which he would have communicated to his beloved children had they been able to receive them. If we would grow in the knowledge of the truth, we must lay aside all malice, and envies, and evil-speakings; for these sinful passions clog up the soul, and prevent the entrance of the truth.

In this farewell discourse the sympathizing Savior never dwelt long upon any *sorrowful* topic, for it appears to have been his great desire to *comfort* his disciples. It was to *comfort* them he spoke of the coming of this Spirit, and of all the benefits he would confer. He made three promises concerning the Spirit. "He

will guide you into all truth." "He will show you things to come." "He shall glorify me," that is, he will show you my glory. The writings of the apostles prove that the Lord fulfilled these promises.

In their epistles, (as in the whole Bible,) we find *truth*, without any admixture of error. In them we are told of "things to come." What a description the apostle Peter gives, in his second epistle, of the burning up of the world! and what wonderful scenes are opened to our eyes in the Revelation granted to the apostle John! In the epistles we see the accomplishment of the promise, "He shall glorify me." Three of the apostles had seen the glory of Christ on the mount of transfiguration. But there is a glory which cannot be seen by human eyes. The Spirit reveals *this* glory to the *souls* of all true believers, as the apostle Paul declares, "But *we all*, with open face, beholding, as in a glass, the *glory of the Lord*, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the *Spirit of the Lord*." (2 Cor. 3:18.) Unbelief is the veil that hides the glory from the heart—but when the Holy Spirit, by his might, takes away this veil, then the glory of Christ shines into the inmost soul, true believers look with *open or unveiled* face into the gospel glass, (or mirror,) and behold the glory of the Son of God. At first they see it very dimly—but they are changed into the same image from *glory* to *glory*. They *grow* in the knowledge of Christ. Let not those be cast down who have only just begun to seek Christ. Perhaps now you often say with tears, "Help my unbelief." Perhaps now you feel that these words concerning Jesus do not apply to you. "In whom, though now you see him not, yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." (1 Peter 1:8.) Pray that the Holy Spirit may enlighten your eyes, that you may by faith behold the glory of Christ—of that "High Priest who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens." (Heb. 8:1.) Earth contains no glory like his. Why has the heavenly city no need of the sun or moon to shine in it? Because "the glory of God lightens it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." (Rev. 21:23.)

## October 28

### **John 16:16-22. *The disciples cannot understand their Lord.***

As the disciples accompanied their Master towards the garden of Gethsemane, they suffered much from the perplexity they felt. They saw they were going to be separated from their heavenly Friend; but they could not tell by what *means*, or for how long a *time*. When he said, "I go to my Father, and you see me no more," then it seemed that the separation would be *long*; but when he said, "A little while, and you shall see me," then it seemed that it would be *short*. Why did they not ask their Lord to explain his words? Four times in the course of this conversation they had ventured to speak. Peter had asked, "Where are you going?" Thomas had said, "How can we know the way?" Philip had exclaimed, "Show us the Father." And Jude had inquired, "How is it that you will manifest yourself unto us?" Each of these apostles had received a gracious answer. Why

did they hesitate again to apply to their condescending Lord? He had once said to *all* weary and heavy-laden sinners, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart." Would he, then, refuse to teach his own beloved disciples? As they were afraid to ask him, he kindly *offered* to instruct them. But instead of explaining what he meant by "a little while," he described the great *sorrow* they would soon feel, and the great *joy* that would succeed. Thus he prepared them, in the tenderest manner, for his own death. He described their grief in these words, "You shall weep and lament."

It is recorded that, while their Lord lay in the grave, "they mourned and wept." (Mark 16.) Were more bitter tears ever shed, than those they shed on that occasion? Since the beginning of the world none had ever experienced so great a calamity as *that* they *thought* had befallen them. Adam and Eve must have felt acute anguish when driven out of the Garden of Eden; yet even they had a promise to sustain them—"The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." But the apostles had scarcely a spark of hope remaining. Their faith was so weak, that they could hardly believe it possible that the wounded body of their Lord should rise from the tomb. But while they were weeping, the world was rejoicing. The chief priests and scribes flattered themselves that they had gotten rid of the man they hated, and that they should hear of him no more. But how soon were the cases reversed! The disciples' *sorrow* was turned into *joy*—the world's *joy* into *sorrow*.

So also it will be when Jesus comes again. Many who *laugh* now will *weep* then; and many who *mourn* now will *rejoice* then. How *would* the world feel now, if they were assured that the Son of God would never return in the clouds of heaven—if they could be certain that there was no hell and no heaven! Would they not rejoice? But how would true Christians feel, if it were possible for them to know that they would never see the Son of God? Would they not feel the bitterest disappointment? Would they not feel that their highest hopes were withered? How should *we* feel? Would it be any disappointment to us to think we should never see Jesus? There are many who only wish to go to heaven, because they know that if they do not go there, they must go to hell. But this is not the Christian's feeling. Were all the pleasures of earth promised to him, he would not wish to live one day longer below in order to enjoy them. This is the desire of his heart and the request of his lips—

*Forever* to behold him shine,  
For evermore to call him mine,  
And see him still before me;  
Forever on his face to gaze,  
And meet his full assembled rays,  
While all the Father he displays  
To all his saints in glory. *Collection of the Rev. W. Carus Wilson.*

**October 29**

**John 16:23-27. Christ assures his disciples of his Father's love.**

A child who has been bereft of wise and pious parents feels the loss of their counsels and of their prayers. But who ever gave such wise counsels as the Lord Jesus? Who ever offered up such fervent prayers as he did? The thought of losing his instructions and his prayers must have grieved the disciples. Whenever they were perplexed they could ask him; and even when they did not venture to ask him, he knew their difficulties, and explained the meaning of his own words. It must have cheered them to hear him say, that when he returned after his short absence they should understand him better than before. "In that day you shall ask me nothing." The word "ask" in this place means "*inquire*." After the resurrection Jesus no longer spoke to his disciples in proverbs, (or short mysterious sayings,) but he showed them *plainly* from the Father. He also opened their understanding to understand the Scriptures, (Luke 24:45,) and the Holy Spirit afterwards carried on the work that he had begun. Did the disciples fear lest they should faint in prayer, now that he who prayed *for* them and *with* them was going to leave them? Jesus gave them this encouraging promise—"Whatever you shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." The word "ask" *here* means request, and *not* "inquire," as in the first part of the verse. And why were they to ask in *his* name? Was the Father unwilling to hear them? O no, his heart is not hardened against his creatures—it does not need to be melted. Why then must we ask in the name of Jesus? Because we are sinners, and God is too *holy* to encourage *sin*; and therefore he has appointed a way by which *sinners* may approach him without polluting his spotless throne. That way is through the merits of his righteous Son. "He ever lives to make intercession for them who come unto God *by him*." (Heb. 7:25.)

The Lord Jesus knows how apt we are to doubt the Father's love. Therefore he said to his disciples, "The Father himself loves you because you have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God." Can the disciples have continued to look sad when they heard this sweet declaration from the lips of him who knew all the secrets of the Father's heart! Everyone who loves Jesus may feel assured that the *Father loves him*. Even *earthly* parents love those who love their children. Though a person have no quality to recommend him, yet the mother's heart will be drawn towards him, if he love her child. How tenderly then must the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ love those who love his only Son!

**October 30**

**John 16:28 to end. Christ foretells that all his disciples will forsake him.**

What caused the disciples to exclaim, "Lo, now you speak plainly, and speak no proverb?" They had been greatly perplexed by hearing their Master say, "A little

while, and you shall not see me;" nor were they relieved from their perplexity until they heard him declare, "I leave the world, and go unto the Father." They had heard him say before, "I go unto the Father," but they could not understand the declaration until he said also, "I leave the world." Perhaps they now imagined he would leave the world in a fiery chariot, as Elijah did, and that they, like Elisha, should behold his glorious ascension. And so he did at length, but *first* he had to pass through the *darkest* valley of the shadow of death ever trod by man. The disciples were especially struck by their Lord knowing their difficulties, when they had never expressed them to *him*. They had only inquired among *themselves*, "What is this that he says unto us?" Yet Jesus knew their perplexity and relieved it. Astonished at this display of his wisdom, they exclaimed, "Now we are sure that you know all things, and need not that any man should *ask* you; by *this* we believe that you came forth from God." They believed in him before, but they *thought* they believed more *now*. In this they were mistaken; their faith, though *real*, was as *weak* as ever. *Warmth* of feeling does not prove strength of faith. What *does* prove it? As fire tries gold, so temptations try faith. Abraham's faith was tried by the command to offer Isaac as a sacrifice to God, and it was found *strong*. Afterwards the Lord said to this eminent believer, "Now I *know* that you fear me, because you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me." Jonah's faith was tried by the command to preach to the men of Nineveh, and it was found *weak*—for he fled from the presence of the Lord.

We cannot tell what is the strength of our faith until it is tried. We may imagine that we would give up brilliant prospects or encounter great dangers for the sake of Christ, and yet when the temptation comes we may be allured by some glittering toy, or terrified by the shaking of a leaf. "Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." A trial was coming on the disciples that showed they did not believe in their Lord so firmly as they supposed. In the hour of danger they left him alone. How must they have been grieved when they heard Jesus say, "You shall be scattered every man to his own, and shall leave me alone." Surely it would cause a child of God far more sorrow to know the sins he would commit than the sufferings he would endure.

But the Lord would not end this discourse with sorrowful words. The beginning of it was, "Let not your heart be troubled." The end was, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." Jesus does not promise his people a *prosperous* life, but he does promise them a *peaceful* one. He says, "In the world you shall have tribulation but in *me* you shall have peace." This is a mystery to the world, because they imagine that happiness arises from prosperous circumstances. It is true *their* happiness proceeds from nothing else; but the happiness of the people of God flows from a sense of forgiving love and a hope of eternal glory. This happiness is often greatest when earthly circumstances are the *least* prosperous. Therefore it is that in prison they have been heard to *sing*, and, even in the flames, seen to *smile*.

In the days of the Reformers, a husband and wife of the town of Perth, in

Scotland, were condemned to die, but NOT *together*—that was esteemed too great a privilege. The woman took leave of her beloved partner in these words, "Husband, rejoice, for we have lived together many joyful days, but this day in which we must die ought to be most joyful unto us both, because we have joy forever. Therefore I will not bid you good-night; for we shall suddenly meet with joy in the kingdom of heaven." She was then led forth to be drowned, holding a little babe in her arms. After giving the infant into the nurse's care she sank beneath the suffocating waters. (English Martyrology, vol. 1. p. 151.)

## October 31

### John 17:1-5. *Christ begins to pray in the presence of his apostles.*

The Lord Jesus often prayed with his disciples; but very few of his prayers are recorded. This is the *last* before his death that he offered up in their presence, and on their behalf. While they listened, they were filled with grief, for they feared it was the last. Jesus knew their feelings, and he avoided using any expressions that could increase their sorrow. When he speaks of his departure, instead of saying, "I die," he says, "I leave the world," "I go to the Father," or, "I come to you." The compassionate Savior sought to bind up the wounded hearts of his disciples. He is the tenderest of friends. If we go to Him in our troubles, we shall find him so. Many who *wish* to console do not know *how*; in attempting to bind up wounds they tear them open, but Jesus has a gentle *hand*, as well as a compassionate *heart*.

While consoling his disciples, he seems for a time to rise above his own afflictions. A little while *before*, at the supper-table, he was troubled in spirit; a little while *after*, in the garden, he was exceedingly sorrowful; but during his solemn walk from Jerusalem to Gethsemane, he appeared to be filled with thoughts of his approaching glory.

He lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son, that your Son also may glorify you." With what feelings must he have lifted up his eyes to that heaven whence he came! He had seen its bright inhabitants, had heard its sweet songs, had breathed its pure air. O how he must have longed to take the wings of a dove, and to return to his rest! But first he must wade through a sea of sorrow. With meekness he says, "Father, the hour is come." And what is his petition—"Glorify your Son." Afterwards he repeats that petition, and enlarges it, saying, "Now, O Father, glorify me with your own self, with the glory which I had with you *before the world began*." (ver. 6.)

*Our* recollections cannot go back even to the *beginning* of our *own* short lives; but the thoughts of Jesus dwelt upon events that took place before the *foundation of the world*. He remembered the glory he once possessed in the bosom of the Father; he remembered the mighty reasons that caused him to

leave it. His Father had entered into a covenant with Him—he had appointed him a *work*, and had promised him a *reward*. That *work* was the destruction of Satan. That *reward* was eternal life to be given to as many as the Father had given him. But had he *finished* the work? By faith he saw it as already finished; for though the most excruciating agonies still remained to be endured, yet he felt as if they were already past; so *short* the suffering appeared, and so *certain* the victory. And the reward would richly compensate for all the pangs of the cross. He would "see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied." (Is. 53:11.) His prayer was, "Glorify your Son." The prayer will be answered through the ages of eternity, as the innumerable saints clothed in white robes with palms in their hands, cry with a loud voice, "Salvation to our God which sits upon the throne, and to THE LAMB." (Rev. 7:10.)

It was *this* prospect which sustained the Savior through all his sufferings. It was because of this "joy" set before him, that he "endured the cross, and despised the shame." (Heb. 12:2.)

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